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# WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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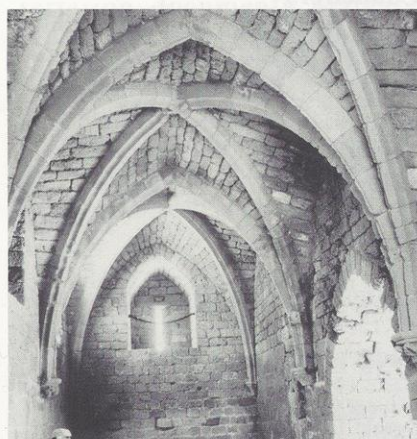
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# WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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# Editorial

I became editor of the *Wisconsin Academy Review* in March 1980, after an extremely helpful fall term internship with Elizabeth Durbin. It serves my sense of symmetry, then, for the March 1990 issue to be my last. In this decade I have enjoyed learning about the broad subjects of the articles and reading the fiction and poetry submitted. I have enjoyed the unusual freedom to explore particular topics for special issues from mining and water quality to Wisconsin painters, printmakers, and sculptors. Most of all I have enjoyed working with authors and artists we have published and with members of the *Review* editorial board. Wherever I travel in Wisconsin, I connect a person—a poet, an academic, an artist—with that town and feel that I have a friend there.

Magazine editors always leave their mark on a publication—for better or worse—if they stay long enough, but when a magazine has a staff of one, that mark is particularly noticeable. After a time, personal preferences or eccentricities become codified in the production processes, and no colleague is there to point out that something is merely an eccentricity. This magazine, however proprietorial I might sometimes have felt, is the publication of an association and, as such, must reflect the goals and values of that association. Thus a decade of hegemony is long enough; it is time for me to move on and to bring in a fresh vision of what the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters is—or can be. Although I will see this issue through production, my term at the Academy ended in December. Faith B. Miracle, who has often contributed to these pages, will be the new editor. I wish for my successor all the pleasure and all the freedom I enjoyed—without, of course, any of the headaches.

*Patricia Powell*  
Patricia Powell

After more than seven years as administrator and executive director of the Wisconsin Library Association, I have joined the Academy staff as managing editor of the *Review*. It is a bit like returning home for me; my previous office was located in the Academy building, and over the years I have enjoyed many a pleasant social time with the Academy staff. Pat Powell and I have benefited from exchanging information and ideas, and we have enthusiastically worked together on a variety of projects.

I'm not completely leaving the library world. I am currently president of the Friends of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, serve on the Special Advisory Council for the General Library System on the Madison campus, and continue to look to my many friends in the library community for ways in which we can share resources to our mutual advantage. I will remain involved with the Wisconsin Center for the Book as a member of its steering committee. I hope that these activities, in addition to my past experiences with such related organizations as the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, will complement my efforts to help meet the goals of the *Review*.

I have been an unabashed fan of the *Review* and I appreciate the high standards Pat set while she was its editor. While I've been pleased to contribute book reviews and articles to Academy publications from time to time, I'm conscious of the challenge facing me as a participating editor. You may notice some changes in future issues of the *Review* as we experiment with and explore different ways of producing this publication, and we encourage your comments and suggestions. I very much look forward to my role here at the Academy.

*Faith B. Miracle*  
Faith B. Miracle

THE WISCONSIN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ARTS AND LETTERS  
The Wisconsin Academy was chartered by the state legislature on March 16, 1870 as an incorporated society serving the people of the state of Wisconsin by encouraging investigation and dissemination of knowledge in the sciences, arts, and humanities.

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**Mary Ann Brehm** holds a Ph.D. in dance from UW-Madison. Her dissertation documents Margaret H'Doubler's approach to dance education and traces the influence of that approach on two educators currently teaching dance at UW-Madison. Brehm has taught at UW-Madison and UW-Whitewater.

**Ron Ellis** teaches writing and literature at UW-Whitewater, is widely published, and edits the poetry journal *Windfall*. He has a special interest in relating poetry to other arts, in what he calls fusion poetry. His "Canto 65," which appears in *Poetry Northwest*, is the basis for an inter-arts performance featuring Madison artists Chris Stevens of the Kanopy Dance Company, composer Joseph Koykkar, and computer graphics designer Amy Arntson.

**Kathleen Young Fenner** is director of the Aaron Bohrod Fine Arts Gallery, UW Center-Fox Valley, Menasha. A nationally published calligrapher, she is cited as one of Montana's top watercolorists. She studied with the late calligraphy master Father Edward Catich, among others.

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**Kathleen Levy** lives in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, with her husband and two children. She has taught high school science, been a full-time mother, and has studied writing for the past six years. This is her first published fiction.

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**Patricia Powell** is editor for the Elvehjem Museum of Art in Madison. She has traveled frequently to and written about the Mediterranean world.

**Mary Rivers** spent her childhood on a farm in Rice Lake County. She has won numerous university awards for her writing. In 1989 she attended the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference as a scholar in poetry. She now lives in Connecticut.

**Merton Sealts, Jr.**, Henry A. Pochmann Professor of English, emeritus, UW-Madison, is a rail buff of long standing. Operating one floor beneath his study at the Sealts residence in Madison is the Nakoma Central Railroad, of which he is sole owner and proprietor.

**Fannie Taylor** joined the first staff of the new Wisconsin Union Theater in 1939. She was appointed theater director in 1946. She remained in the post until June 1966, when she was named first director of the music program of the new National Endowment for the Arts in Washington. She returned to UW-Madison in 1976 to coordinate the newly established University Consortium for the Arts and retired in 1984. In 1986 she was elected Fellow of the Academy. She has just published a lavishly illustrated history, *The Wisconsin Union Theater: Fifty Golden Years*, available from the Wisconsin Union Theater Box Office.

**Deborah Thomas** is executive director of the Hancock Center for Movement Arts and Therapies. When she came to Madison in 1974 to teach the undergraduate dance therapy program at UW, she became acquainted with the dance curriculum and educational philosophy of Margaret H'Doubler. Before becoming a dance therapist, Thomas received a B.A. and M.A. in dance and worked professionally in both concert and commercial dance in New York City.



The Wisconsin Union Theater in September 1939 is being rushed to a finish for the gala opening the week of October 8. Lobby is still not ready. No curtains in box office windows. Poster, barely perceptible inside door, reads "Lunt and Fontanne — *The Taming of the Shrew*."

## A Building for the Future

By Fannie Taylor

**T**he record would amaze the planners. Ten million patrons. More than 15,000 uses. At the Wisconsin Union Theater every mixture of social and cultural opinion has been examined in this lively campus laboratory during the half century since it was built at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Some of the greatest names of the twentieth century—Vladimir Horowitz, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin

Luther King, Jr., Itzhak Perlman, Martha Graham, Henry Fonda, Frank Lloyd Wright, John F. Kennedy, Jesse Jackson—have appeared there. But building the Wisconsin Union Theater to house these stars in the depths of the Great Depression—an era of breadlines—was surely the greatest performance of all. It took energy, courage, and extraordinary commitment from many people, from the UW Board of Regents to the student body.

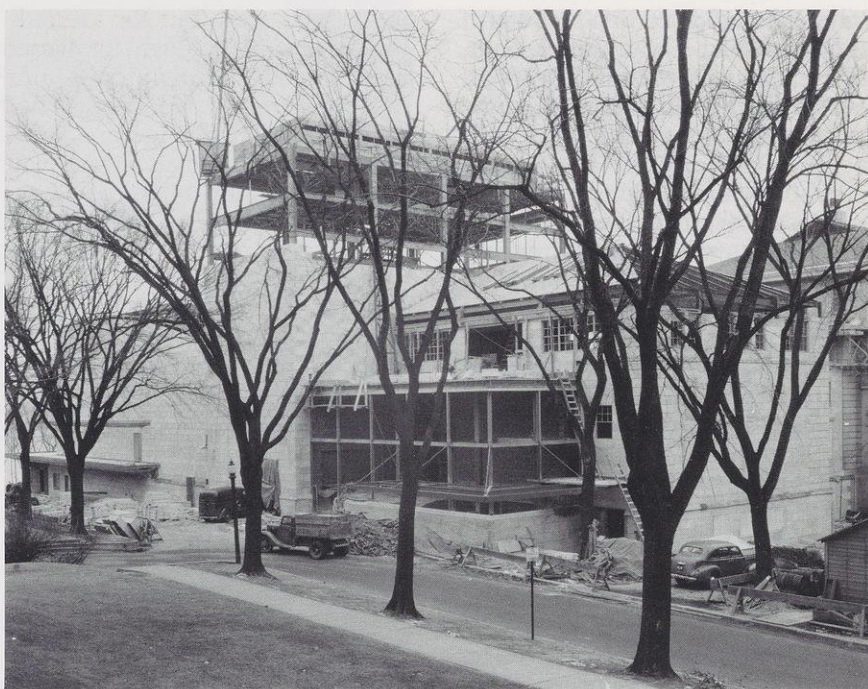
In the fall of 1939 the sparkling new auditorium on the shore of Lake Mendota opened to international acclaim. Author Sinclair Lewis called it the most beautiful theater in the world. But behind the gala premiere were decades of careful planning for a "theater and arts addition" to serve the growing cultural needs of the Madison campus.

Fifty years later, as the golden anniversary season of 1989-90 is celebrated, the careful planning is still evident. The building is still noted

for its distinguished architecture and is as busy as ever. Added is the patina of memories of star-studded music, dance, and theater performances and world-famous speakers who challenged audiences with a ferment of ideas and ideological confrontations—a program shaped by wars, peace, apathy, the cultural revolution, the disruptions of the sixties, the “me generation,” the worries of Wall Street in constant bubbling interaction.

Such a cultural center and campus-community meeting place was a critical need in the early twentieth century when most of the university auditoriums were too small, too old, and too heavily booked with daily academic use. For years the various student and professional performers put up with makeshift arrangements. For example, in 1922, the three student drama societies—Edwin Booth, Twelfth Night, and Red Domino—were pulled together by Professor Gertrude E. Johnson into Wisconsin Players, as the production arm of the speech department. This was an organizational improvement, but their performance spaces still consisted of classrooms and the so-called Bascom Theater with completely inadequate facilities on the second floor of Bascom Hall. When the Wisconsin Players offered the annual pre-junior prom play, the production went downtown to the old Fuller Opera House (later known as the Parkway Theater) where no one could use the stage for dress rehearsal until nearly midnight, after the last movie showing.

Another performing organization was the Haresfoot Club, established in 1898. One of its founders was F. H. Clausen, who became president of the UW Board of Regents in 1933-35. The club was an all male student group, which offered very successful musicals annually and even toured the state and played Chicago. Their slogan was “all our girls are men and every one’s a lady,” and their trademark was the beefy, hairy-legged dancing chorus belting out popular songs of the era. But Haresfoot, for all its



Union Theater outlines are becoming recognizable. Elm trees still lined the University of Wisconsin campus streets and walkways.

popularity, had to rehearse in downtown ballrooms and catch-all spaces, an exhausting schedule. Performances were also held in the Fuller Opera House where the late-starting dress rehearsal would run to five in the morning.

The Men’s Union Board sponsored Union Vodvil, begun before World War I. It was a popular theatrical activity featuring members of student organizations in competing acts. In 1911 an “entertainment in eight acts” was staged to a sold-out house in the gymnasium—admission ten cents. After the war, the union board decided to improve the quality of the show by increasing prices and to turn the net proceeds into the memorial fund for the union building, then in the early planning stage. Union Vodvil became “an anticipated event” according to the *The Daily Cardinal*. Union Vodvil began the distinguished career of actor Fredric March (then Freddie Bickel and president of the senior class), who won five awards during his participation.

Other major performance activities of the twenties and thirties included recitals by the school of music in old Music Hall, which doubled as a classroom. The department of dance presented Orchestis, its performing group, in Lathrop Hall or Bascom Theater, and sometimes outside on the grass behind Bascom Hall, where the Commerce Building now stands.

Since 1920 the keystone of the cultural programming of the Wisconsin Union has been the Union Concert Series. The suggestion of a star series came from Charles H. Mills, director of the school of music, who felt that the enterprising students of the men’s union could undertake the project which was “a way of raising funds for the Memorial Union and perhaps bring[ing] good music closer to the interests of the student body.” In the first season the beloved violinist Fritz Kreisler was featured, and he and other artists performed in the old Red Gym. As the Union Concert Series grew in popularity, artists were also presented in the Stock Pa-

vilion, and after the first sections of the Memorial Union were built, Great Hall was used. Both Vladimir Horowitz and Andres Segovia, as young artists, played there.

Great Hall also presented problems. On one occasion in the early thirties the German baritone Heinrich Schlusnuss was performing on the small stage. A telephone, left behind from a radio hook-up the previous day, began to ring. The artist paused in his concert, picked it up, and answered with aplomb in a thick German accent. "You can't call now!"

The almost insurmountable difficulty in those days was to find an auditorium of adequate size and equipment where productions could be properly staged, be given rehearsal space as needed, and be comfortable for the audience. When the Union Concert Series was offered in Great Hall, the public sat on folding chairs. The old Red Gym held the aroma of the pool, while the Stock Pavilion combined folding chairs, the strong fragrance of a cattle barn, and passing trains thundering by blowing their whistles. The old barn boasted great acoustics which made the primitive conditions and difficult set-up tolerable.

The dream of a real theater was long delayed. In 1919, when the idea of building a community center as the university's memorial to World War I was given formal approval, an auditorium was included as a principal element. The first architectural drawings of the union show the west wing designated for a theater. However, the inflation of the twenties eroded the funds raised by the Memorial Union building committee, and only the social and dining units were constructed. The theater wing was delayed for eleven years, during which the economy fell from the boom years of the twenties into the Depression of the thirties.

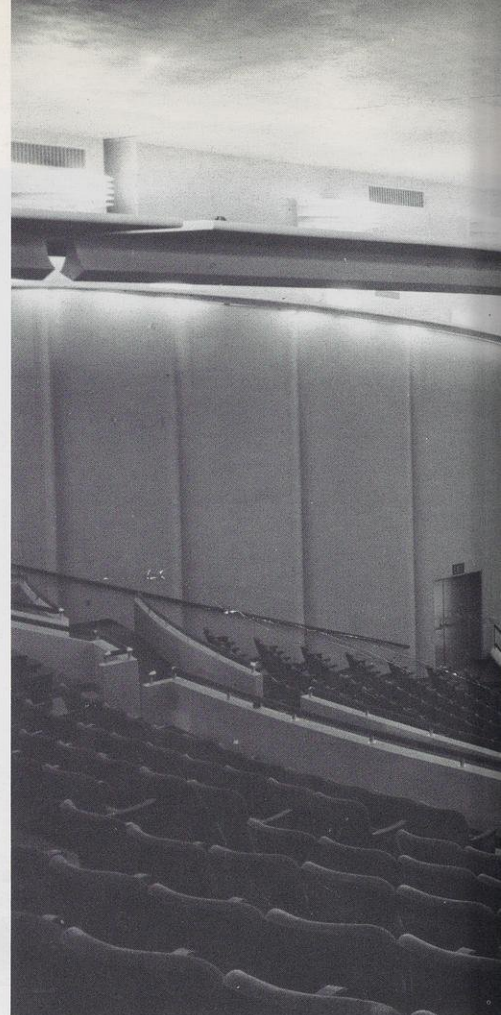
Porter Butts, young director of the Memorial Union, was undaunted. As a student performer in both Union Vodvil and Haresfoot, he understood the need, not only

for a good stage but for an auditorium flexible enough for varied use. He and the Memorial Union building committee, which had raised funds for the original structure, were determined to complete the tripart union building. In the middle thirties there was hope that the university could be included in the new Public Works Administration programs of the New Deal.

A campus survey determined what facilities students most desired; out of seven hundred students voting, 53.6 percent wanted a theater and concert hall. Departments which were expected to have future concerns with the building and its multiple use possibilities were studied. A statistician analyzed building traffic; cards were made available for students to submit ideas.

By the fall of 1936 two breakthroughs had occurred that changed the financing outlook for the proposed union addition. One was the possibility of federal money; the other, a change in the state law affecting borrowing. In earlier years, when the first units of the union were erected, borrowing for state buildings was against the law. In his taped recollections of this period Professor Butts recalls that "the breakthrough came with the building of the union and the men's dormitories because we didn't have enough money to equip the first units." Philip La Follette, later governor of Wisconsin, and Theodore Kronshage, president of the UW Board of Regents "devised a plan for a quasi-public building corporation that did the borrowing, built the building, and then leased it back to the state for a rental charge." The rental was the equivalent of an annual mortgage payment of principal and interest which the building corporation, in turn, used to pay off the indebtedness.

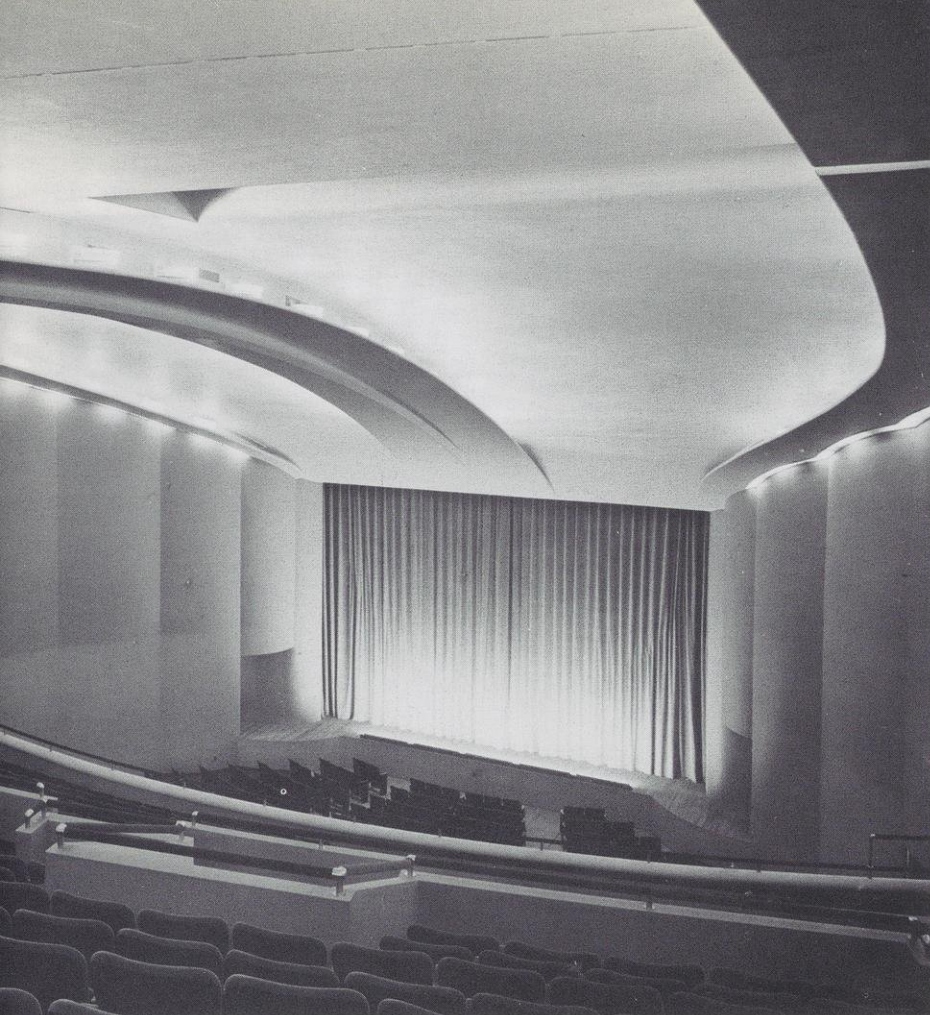
The plan was a tremendous advance for the university, which could now finance needed dormitories as well as the union and other university and state buildings. A friendly test suit went to the Su-



preme Court, which ruled in favor of the plan, and one of the great stumbling blocks impeding the dream of a real theater was cleared away.

Under the Public Works Administration certain types of public facilities were eligible for federal grants. Application was made. Professor Butts recalls that "theaters were considered entertainment" and not essential in the Depression, "but in the plan submitted we showed washrooms and dressing rooms for people who used the lake for swimming, and this was a health and hygiene and sanitation problem of great significance for the federal government."

The strategy worked and \$266,000 was awarded under PWA. On May 4, 1937 acting upon recommendations of the union council and the Memorial Union building committee, the UW Board of Regents approved the financing method for the theater wing: the PWA grant, a loan, gifts from stu-



Interior of Union Theater in 1939. There are 1300 seats total in the orchestra, mezzanine, chair circle, and balcony. (Photo by Charles Bradley)

dents and alumni, and union operating surpluses. The regents also authorized the director to begin arrangements for architectural planning, and Butts contacted Lee Simonson, an international authority on theaters and community centers. "Somehow in the dark days of the Depression we found the money for consultant fees to bring him to Madison," Butts recalls. Simonson determined that the project needs were feasible for a facility about the size of most Broadway theaters of the period, and he was enthusiastic about the lakeshore site.

Under the new state regulations \$585,000 was borrowed, and \$135,000 came from union surplus and gifts. The final total was just under one million dollars. No state funds were involved. The federal

grant brought with it unexpected good luck. The grant money had to be spent as quickly as possible to help create employment and revive the economy. In those days the Wisconsin law required that the state architect design all state buildings. However, the incumbent was in no position to produce drawings that fast and had no experience with theaters. Because of the pressure of the federal deadlines, the State Bureau of Engineering agreed to contract the Corbett and McMurray architectural firm of New York, which had planned Radio City. The firm was selected because consultant Lee Simonson recommended its junior partner Michael Hare as an imaginative, progressive young architect who had done several theaters. Charles Potwin was acoustic consultant.

In June 1937 President Clarence A. Dykstra appointed a union building planning committee and an advisory committee for the facilities and functioning of the new addition. These groups included student, faculty, and community representatives; the success of the theater is due in large part to the inclusion of all groups in the planning process.

There was still trouble ahead. Jealousy appeared in the state architect's office. Where was the classical Renaissance facade? Violent objections were raised. A French designer, Paul Cret, who had earlier planned the overall campus development in Italian Renaissance style (hence the style of the original union buildings and the old university hospital) was hurriedly called back. He found no reason to build a theater at a university. Indeed, he considered theaters sinful. Because he spoke only French, arguments were difficult. Fortunately, Lee Simonson eloquently expounded in French the importance of theater in the history of civilization. Finally the French designer acquiesced and endorsed the plan to the regents, who had final approval. The state architect, the state engineer, and the UW superintendent of buildings and grounds all continued to protest. The regents and the university administration were unsettled.

Dr. Harold Bradley, who chaired the planning committee, came to the rescue. He won the day with a short dissertation on women's hats: how they changed in style every year or two, how when they first appeared he did not think much of them, how he finally got used to them and thought they looked better than before. He agreed that the design for the new theater did not look much like Italian Renaissance. It looked new and different. Perhaps, he suggested, that would appeal to young people.

The case was won, except that the regents felt the front of the theater wing had to match the commons wing—if not Italian Renaissance, at least the same flat plane.

Brass railings to the balcony lobby. (Photo by Charles Bradley)



In making that change the original design for the Play Circle was modified, and about 125 seats were cut out of the small experimental theater to its detriment.

Time was lost with the design controversy, so the final approval did not come until almost the end of 1937. With the federal grant officers insisting that the building be under contract by February or the grant would be withdrawn, Michael Hare and his firm had to move fast to produce a full set of working drawings between December and mid-February.

Everything fell into place. The designs were completed on schedule. The old Union (the former presidential home) on the corner of Langdon and Park Streets was razed in January of 1938. A great fence went up. Students walking up Langdon Street to Bascom Hill watched the foundation hole grow deeper and wider, then gradually begin to fill in with construction until the "form follows function" design of the building became clearly defined.

The governor's purchasing counsel, who did not understand that the theater was being built without tax money, decided without warning to hold up requisitions for supplies for the new theater—in August, less than six weeks before the opening: "In financially straightened [sic] times, such as these," said he, "the requests of the Wisconsin Union Theater must be secondary to the pressing needs of the state's mental, correctional, and charitable institutions."

It could have spelled disaster. Artists' contracts had been signed. Tickets were on sale for the premiere with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in *The Taming of the Shrew*. All the arrangements for a gala opening were underway. People from all over the state were making plans to come to Madison for the October 8 open house. Just in time the bureaucrat learned he was wrong. The open house on October 8 took place for several thousand excited people. The Lunts per-

formed *The Taming of the Shrew* the next night to great applause.

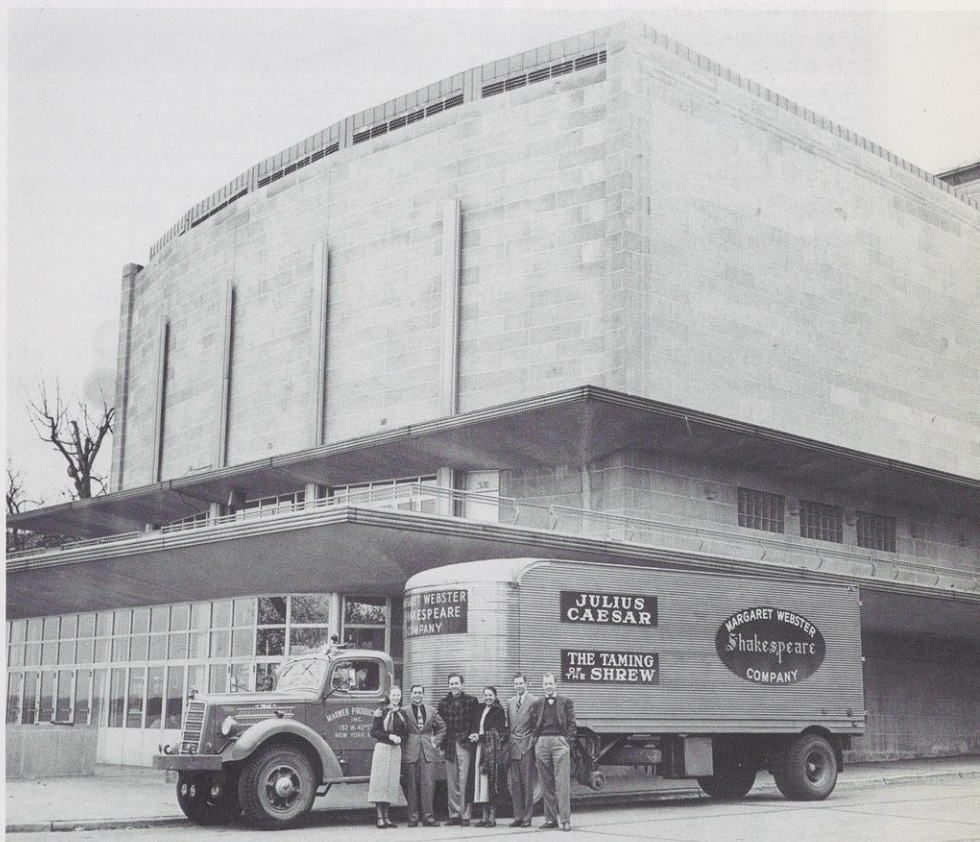
In his final report, "The Theater as a Community Center," Lee Simonson wrote: "This building, once in use, should prove a genuine stimulus to the development of the arts in a university world and demonstrate, as few theater buildings have done up to now, how all the arts can be housed so that they can be an integral and vital part of American life."

The success of the building was immediate. Twenty years of imaginative study of the multipurpose needs of the growing university resulted in a flexible auditorium where plays, concerts, dance performances, lectures, variety shows,

rehearsals, conferences, and official university occasions could work together with relative ease. It was a proper role for a campus auditorium but not a standard approach for the late thirties when the design for multiple use was first proposed.

Fifty years later, completely refurbished, with its spare exterior lines still cleanly delineating the inner shell of the theater, and its brass railings polished like those of a battleship, the Wisconsin Union Theater is a landmark. As *The Milwaukee Journal* once stated, "No building on the old and beautiful campus of the university has had a more welcome impact on students, faculty, and townsfolk than the theater. . . ."■

**When actress-producer-director Margaret Webster established a "bus and truck" tour for her Shakespeare company, it was a new system for road shows and helped revolutionize theatrical travel. Picture taken at the Madison engagement in November 1949.**



# The Crusading Order of St. John

Text and Photographs by Patricia Powell

I first came into contact with the Knights of St. John at their crusader castle in Kos, a Greek island off the western coast of Turkey. I was there to see the classical site of the Aesculapeion, the place of healing set up by Hippocrates (c. 460 B.C.), and the monuments belonging to the Christian world held scant interest for me compared to those of classical antiquity. But the enormous and complex fourteenth-century castle on the nearby island of Rhodes was so impressive that I became intrigued with the organization which had created it. When I again encountered castles built by the Knights of St. John outside Limassol, Cyprus, and in Akko, Israel, I began to apprehend the immense power and wealth this international order had wielded. I started reading about the order variously called the Hospitallers, the Knights of Jerusalem, the Knights of St. John, the Knights of Rhodes, or the Knights of Malta. The story of this extraordinary religious order starts in the late Byzantine era, when militant Islamic forces were challenging Christianity throughout the Near East.

Jerusalem, the Holy City, had been a place of Christian pilgrimage from as early as the third century, with the cave at Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives, and the Garden of Gethsemane places of especial reverence. The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, made her pilgrimage to Jerusalem in about 325 looking for Calvary, the hill where Jesus was crucified. In 333 the Roman Emperor Constantine built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where his mother determined the crucifixion had occurred.

Pilgrimages have not decreased through the centuries. We were there in the first spring of the Palestinian uprising, but danger had not deterred the many tours from every western country from visiting the holy places. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is one of the central shrines of Christendom, but I found it most distressing. The fourth-century church is partitioned off by Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Syrians, Copts, Ethiopians; each group maintains its relics, holds its services (simultaneously on Sundays), and offers (or sells) its blessings. The cacophony is more like that of an eastern bazaar than a holy place. The Christian groups regard one another with great suspicion, making every effort to preserve the shrine difficult.

## *Jerusalem and the Crusades*

By the middle of eleventh century Italian merchants from Amalfi had either established or restored the monastery of St. Mary of the Latins in Jerusalem, south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Founded for care of the sick and poor, the order of Hospitallers, which soon became known as the Knights of St. John, required the priests and laymen alike to take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In 1063 they built the Church of St. John, the oldest intact church in Jerusalem, just south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Between the Church of St. John and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Knights built a large hospital to care for pilgrims.

The Knights Hospitallers founded hospitals and offered treatments superior to any in medieval

Europe. Although their hospital in Jerusalem has disappeared, we examined the extant hospital in Rhodes, which is now the Archaeological Museum. It was built around a large, sun-drenched courtyard and surrounded by open galleries. The ceilings are very high with windows placed near them at opposing ends for ventilation. The ward held thirty-two beds with brocaded canopies. Records show that two surgeons were on duty at all times. In addition to the common wards there were enclosed areas for patients with contagious diseases. Below the wards were offices, store-rooms, and a pharmacy where herbs were stored and ground. Care was given to diet; the records often mention that patients were served the finest bread available on silver plates and soup in silver bowls. The Knights were pledged to forego luxury themselves to provide the best food to the patients. They also had superior sanitation, efficient sewage systems which were unknown in medieval Europe. In some of their fortified cities they maintained the Roman public baths. In the Levant, especially, the physicians of St. John maintained the Greek medical tradition, unknown in Europe, using treatments proposed by Galen.

From 638 to 1076 Jerusalem was ruled by the Abbasids, Moslems who permitted Christians and Jews to practice their religion. But in 1076 the city was occupied by Seljuk Turks, who desecrated the Christian monuments and imprisoned or massacred the Christians. Pope Urban II called for a holy war to reclaim the city, declaring that anyone who died in the battle would have absolution and remission of sins. The term "crusader"

means to take the cross, to vow to give one's life in defense of Christianity and as a token to wear a cross on outer clothing. In 1097 an estimated 150,000 crusaders from western Europe gathered outside the walls of Constantinople for the journey to Jerusalem. Despite the tension between the western and eastern branches of the church, the emperor, Alexius Comnenus, welcomed the crusaders, offered provisions, and helped to speed them on their way—out of his kingdom.

We, too, have stood at the walls of Constantinople. Starting from the Kariye Museum (a fifth-century Christian church on the eastern side of Constantinople), we walked south along the walls of the city to the Sea of Marmara. The twelve-foot thick, forty-three feet high walls were begun in 413 by Theodosius II. The strongest fortified walls of the Middle Ages, they were first breached in 1204 by Latin crusaders, then again by the Turks in 1453. As we walked along the walls, we saw modern city squalor—Gypsy camps, a dying horse, begging children.

The crusaders besieged and conquered Nicaea, Tarsus, and Antioch in Asia Minor, all in present-day Turkey. In 1099 they reached Jerusalem. Breaching the walls on July 15, they slaughtered without distinction all Moslem and Jewish inhabitants, an act which had repercussions for centuries, encouraging strife between Christian and Moslem. With the Christians ruling the Holy City, pilgrims from western Europe swelled from a trickle to a river. The Knights of St. John built hospices across Europe and Asia Minor along the old Roman roads to provide shelter and medical attention for weary pilgrims on their long journey to Jerusalem and castles to protect them.

By 1109 the crusader states had been established. They were to last for nearly two centuries. The western occupation of the Kingdom of *Jerusalem*, which stretched from the Gulf of Aqaba north to Beirut; the principality of *Antioch* in northwestern



Acre, the last stronghold of the Knights of St. John in the Holy Lands, now Akko, Israel

The crusader/Arabic walls of Acre



Syria, which controlled the coast north to Aleppo, never actually taken by the crusaders; the county of *Tripoli*, north of Damascus; and the county of *Edessa*, an area northeast of Antioch. Collectively these states were known as the Outremer (*oultre mer*, land beyond the seas).

In 1113 a papal Bull confirmed the Knights of St. John as an international religious order independent even of the pope. From another Bull of 1139-42 referring to the protection of pilgrim routes, we know that by this time the Hospitallers had a significant contingent of fighting men in addition to the healing men. Before 1160 the Knights Hospitallers were responsible for the defense of seven or eight castles in the Outremer. In the 1160s they acquired eleven or twelve more castles to defend. The head of the order from 1163-70, Grand Master Gilbert, expanded the order's military might and spoke of the Knights Hospitallers in the same terms as the crusaders: "Soldiers of Christ . . . our brethren mixing knighthood with religion, sweat in the unending toil of defending [the Holy Land]." By 1160 gifts from grateful pilgrims and rulers of the Christian world to the hospital made it one of the richest of medieval corporations. The order had power, wealth, prestige. The Knights of St. John were recruited only from the noble families of western Europe.

In 1169 the Knights marched to Cairo to try prevent the union of Egyptian and Syrian Moslems, their two most powerful enemies. They failed at great expense of money and lives. Yet the order's great wealth in European possessions (especially hospitals along the pilgrim route) enabled the Hospitallers to recoup both their finances and their power. The Knights of St. John became essential to the western (Latin) defense of the Holy Land. No important council of war or expedition could be conducted without them.

On the death of Almaric, king of Jerusalem, in 1174, the Christian

monarchs in the Outremer were caught up in internal squabbles over who should rule the kingdom of Jerusalem. The sultan of Egypt and Syria, Saladdin, took advantage of their dissention to retake Jerusalem in 1187. He drove out the Hospitallers, permitting only ten Knights to remain behind and care for the wounded in the hospital. Once again Western Christendom was called upon to recover the Holy Lands. In 1189 Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Philip Augustus of France, and Richard I of England assembled arms and men. The three rulers, however, were more interested in personal glory than in conducting an integrated campaign. Frederick was drowned in the Goksu River near the southern coast of Turkey, above which river stands the castle of Silifke fortified by the Knights of St. John. Philip gave up and went back to France. Richard Coeur de Lion continued the campaign. Though he never retook Jerusalem, he finally achieved a five years' truce with Saladdin which allowed pilgrims free access to Jerusalem. The Knights of St. John held several fortified cities in the Holy Land for the next century, but their last stronghold, Acre, fell to the Moslems in 1291.

Acre, today Akko, Israel, is still dominated by the crusader town plan, though the massive walls we see were rebuilt in the late eighteenth century by Arabs. Below the street level is a subterranean town entered near the Mosque of el-Jaazar ("the wall builder"). The twelfth-thirteenth century walls and massive pillars are unchanged in the Knights' Church of St. John, the vaulted halls empty but for tourists straining to make out the rooms in the dim light. Other buildings of the Knights Hospitallers were resurrected by the Muslim rulers in the eighteenth century and are used now as a prison.

#### **The Knights in Cyprus and Rhodes**

After the fall of Acre Grand Master John de Villiers and



**Kolossi Castle, on the southern coast of Cyprus, was built by the Order of St. John in the late thirteenth century and rebuilt by an Englishman in mid-fifteenth century**

the other survivors of the order went to Cyprus where the Hospitallers owned a castle at Kolossi and estates in Limassol and Nicosia and constructed a new hospital for pilgrims. The stark fortification of Kolossi is today softened by lovely gardens surrounding the high stone walls. Tourists examine the massive fireplace decorated with chain and leaf motifs and climb the narrow spiral stairs to the roof.

Cyprus had for a century been used as a base to attack Egypt and Syria, to harass the infidel and fight for Christian hegemony of the Holy Lands. The Knights rapidly developed a naval unit and selected the first Admiral of the Hospital in 1299.

A civil war in Cyprus forced the commander of the Knights on Cyprus to look for a new home. After a siege of some years the Knights took Rhodes from the Christian Byzantines, supposedly their allies



against the Moslems. From 1311-1523 from their fortified city on the northeastern part of the island the Knights conducted their naval raids against Moslem Turkey.

In the city of Rhodes high walls divide the preserve of the Knights of St. John from the town. Inside the walls are the palace of the grand masters (the elected leaders of the order) and the residences of the eight tongues—according to the land of origin—the Tongues of Italy, France, England, Germany, Auvergne, Aragon, Castille, Provence. The extremely impressive buildings were carefully restored in 1913-16 to present a faithful picture of a working late medieval military order. The palace of three grand masters, completed at the end of the fourteenth century, was built around a spacious courtyard with its own fortified walls and store-rooms. The palace was refurbished from 1939-43 to be a summer palace for Mussolini, though he never occupied it. There are magnificent Roman mosaics from Kos as well as Renaissance art from Italian churches. During their 200 years on Rhodes, the Knights also fortified



**The steps leading to the fourteenth-century castle of the Knights of St. John at Lindos, Rhodes**

Lindos, a city to the south, also on the coast facing Turkey.

Suleiman the Magnificent, sultan of the Ottoman Empire, finally defeated the Knights in a long siege of the fort in 1523. He had such respect for the Knights' fighting ability that he allowed Grand Master Villiers de l'Isle Adam to load his boats with the archives of the order and depart, while the Moslem armies still encircled the island. Suleiman would have cause to regret his chivalry.



The Byzantine castle, overlooking present-day Silfke on the southern coast of Turkey, was remodeled by the Knights of Rhodes into a stronghold of twenty-three towers with several cisterns to withstand siege

Valletta. The Co-Cathedral of St. John, the principal church of the Knights of Malta. (Photo by Christopher Kleinhenz.)



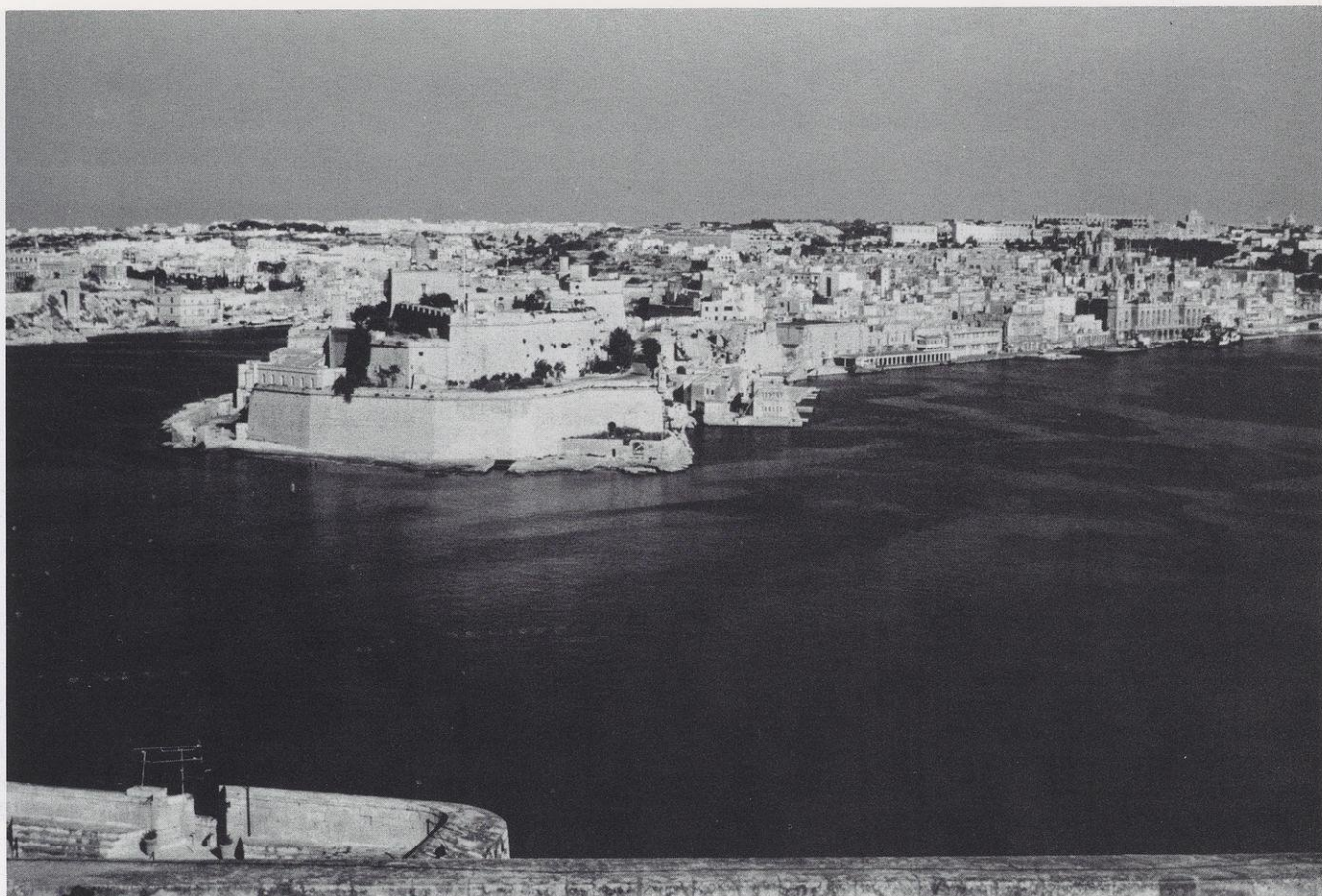
### *The Knights of Malta*

The European monarchs watched as the last western outpost of Christendom in the East fell. Only Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor 1519-56) understood the menace of the Ottoman Empire to western trade on the Mediterranean. Charles offered to the homeless Knights the port of Tripoli and the rocky, barren island of Malta. The order established itself on strategic Malta. They fortified the island as well as the order's home base, Valletta, named after the Grand Master, Jean de la Valette. In the summer of 1565 Suleiman besieged Malta unsuccessfully; he lost 30,000 lives.

Now known as the Knights of Malta, members of the order wore only the eight-pointed Maltese cross, which had been designated as their symbol by Pope Alexander IV in 1259. Admission to rank of knight was still jealously sought by noblemen of Europe. Noble lineage had still to be exhaustively, and expensively, proven. Knights from Italy were required to document merely four noble grandparents, but those from Germany required sixteen noble great-great-grandparents, with no blot on their records.

During the Knights' two-and-a-half centuries on Malta (1530-1798), both the order and the world changed. When the Knights first came to Malta under Grand Master l'Isle Adam, they were recruited to fight the Moslem infidel, to keep the Mediterranean safe for Christian ships. Vows of poverty and chastity were enforced. But by the eighteenth century the French had made treaties and trade agreements with the Ottoman Empire, rendering less vital the Knights' mastery of the sea. Doubts grew about the order's mission.

Within the order, moral strictures were relaxed. Few young knights were serious about their vows of poverty and chastity. Unlike in Rhodes, the knights were not separated from the community. Many maintained mistresses in town houses. They lived in halls,



The Fort of Sant'Angelo in the city of Vittoriosa across the Grand Harbor from the Sceberras peninsula, location of the city of Valletta. This was the site of the Great Siege in which a small number of Knights withstood the attack and siege of 40,000 Turks in 1565. (Photo by Christopher Kleinhenz.)

which were something like fraternity houses. They dined off silver plate and wore rich clothes. Their exploits on the high seas were frankly piratical, except that the Knights turned over some booty to the order.

Almost one half of the Knights' revenue came from their holdings in France. When Napoleon stopped French hospices from sending money to Malta, the order's revenue was curtailed, and when Napoleon, on his way to Egypt, brought his fleet to Malta, the Knights capitulated with little fight. In 1798 the Knights, much reduced in power and numbers, left Malta though they continued to play minor roles in European politics from centers in Russia and in Rome. They never again exercised major military or political power. They exist still today, an elite philan-

thropic organization, supporting hospitals and convalescent homes across Europe, not unlike the purpose for which they were first formed in the eleventh century.

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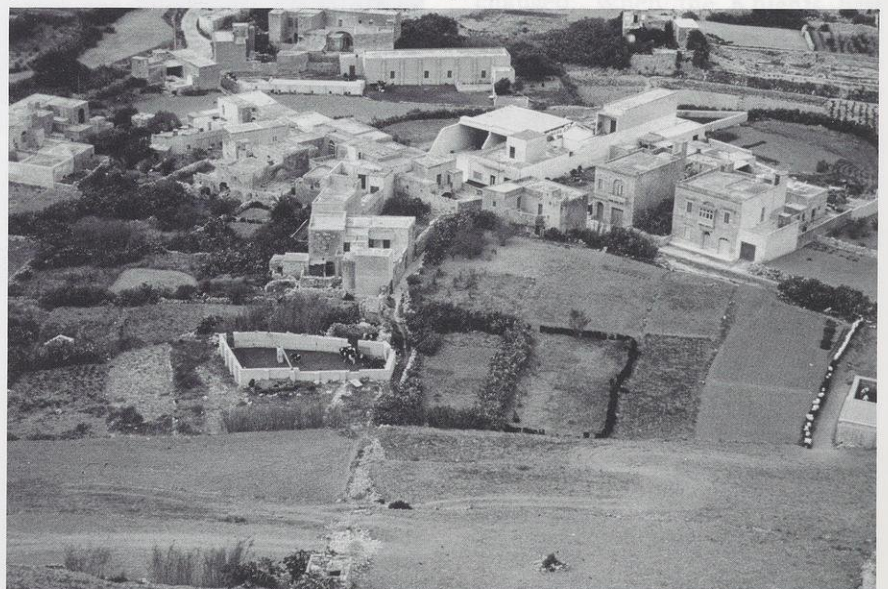
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**Fig. 1: Map: The Maltese Archipelago, Malta, Gozo, and Comino (University of Wisconsin Cartography Laboratory)**

**Aerial view of homes and farmyards. Animals in Malta are frequently confined in small enclosures such as these because the harsh, dry landscape does not provide adequate fodder for their browsing.**



# *Malta in the Center and on the Margin*

By Fannie LeMoine and Christopher Kleinhenz  
Photographs by Christopher Kleinhenz

**B**y tradition, Malta is identified as Calypso's isle, the place where Odysseus was hidden from the turbulent world of the eastern Mediterranean for seven long years. In much the same way, the island itself has passed long periods of history as an obscure member of a small archipelago (Fig. 1) seemingly untouched by the main-streams of history. Yet more than once, it has played a pivotal role in the course of events, and its people have earned a reputation for heroic tenacity which even the wily Odysseus would envy.

Malta's geographic position has placed it both on the margin and in the center of Western history. It has served as a quiet waystation and safe harbor for travelers. It has also formed the hinge on which major world events have turned. If it had not stood as a fortress against the Turks in the mid-sixteenth century, the border between Christendom and Islam might be different today. If it had not stood against the Axis powers in World War II, the course of that war might have been altered. In those two moments of history what happened on Malta defined the extent and the identity of vast regions around it. Conversely, much of Malta's identity has been defined by its position on the border between cultures and major alliances.

This last point is directly relevant today. Last December's summit meeting between American President George Bush and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev took place on board ship in Marsaxlokk harbor in Malta. This friendly and productive encounter between heads of state reminds us of Malta's historical position between East and West.

**T**he central position of the Maltese archipelago—Malta, Gozo, and Comino—in the Mediterranean south of Sicily helps to explain its strategic importance in military campaigns over the centuries and its paradoxical position as a fortress and a crossroads. Located just sixty miles south of Sicily, Malta provides an interesting and often stunning contrast to her closest island neighbor. In terms of size Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean, almost 100 times larger than Malta. The rich soil in parts of Sicily makes the island green with vegetation and lush with tropical fruits, unlike Malta which is brown and arid. In fact, to increase the fertility of the land, rich soil from Sicily was imported. (Malta's neighboring island Gozo is richer. It serves as the Maltese breadbasket, produces most of the local fruit and vegetables, and remains reasonably green throughout the year.)

Yet, in the past, the richness of Sicilian soil was not mirrored by the wealth and health of the inhabitants. The testimony of a late-eighteenth-century English visitor, for example, contrasts the richness of Malta and the poverty of Sicily. In his letters to William Beckford (1770), Patrick Brydone writes:

On getting on shore [Malta], we found ourselves in a new world indeed. —The streets crowded with well-dressed people, who have all the appearances of health and affluence; whereas at Syracuse, there was scarce a creature to be seen, and even those few had the appearance of disease and wretchedness.

Comparisons and contrasts extend beyond the physical appearance of the two islands and their inhabitants. In Sicily Italian is the language used by all of the populace, although local dialects are still very much in evidence. In Malta, the official languages are English and Maltese—the Semitic language supposedly brought by the Phoenicians, but which today discloses much Italian influence. In both lands Roman Catholicism is the state religion, but the Maltese are much more strict in their religious observances. Both Malta and Sicily are famous for their celebration of religious holidays. The Maltese calendar, like the Sicilian, is filled with

numerous feast days, especially in honor of local patron saints. On both islands, these occasions are marked by parades, by religious processions which bear the statues of patron saints through the streets of the town, by musical concerts in the main square during the afternoon, and by colored rockets and fireworks at night. The streets are illuminated, churches are richly decorated, and colorful banners adorn the balconies of buildings. Although Malta is so close to Sicily, even the briefest examination of its history and society shows astonishing differences.

Whether approaching Malta from sea or air, visitors are immediately struck by two contrasting sights: the stark, dry landscape and the large number of churches whose domes and spires pierce the sky. The churches would please one of Malta's well-known early visitors. In 60 A.D., St. Paul, like Odysseus, was shipwrecked on its rocky shores. The account of Paul's journey through the Mediterranean and his three-month sojourn on Malta (until February or early March of 61 A.D.) is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and has been embellished in later local tradition.

Following the description of the shipwreck (Acts 27), chapter 28 begins with Paul's safe arrival on Malta:

1. Once we had reached safety we learned that the island was called Malta. 2. The natives showed us extraordinary hospitality; they lit a fire and welcomed all of us because it had begun to rain and was cold. 3. Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire when a viper, escaping from the heat, fastened on his hand. 4. When the natives saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man must certainly be a murderer; though he escaped the sea, Justice has not let him remain alive." 5. But he shook the snake off into the fire

and suffered no harm. 6. They were expecting him to swell up or suddenly to fall down dead but, after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god. (The New American Bible)

In addition to providing the basis for the plethora of local legends about Paul and his numerous miracles, this description of the Apostle's arrival on Malta discloses some interesting details about the island of the first century A.D. For example, the inhabitants are called *barbaroi* in the Greek text. This means that the inhabitants did not speak Greek, although, as later verses make clear, Greek-speaking visitors, like Paul, were hospitably received. That Paul gathered wood for a bonfire suggests that the island was forested, or that it was at least more verdant than is now the case. In fact, through fossil remains we know that the island had an incredibly rich natural environment before 4,000 B.C. These remains remind a present-day visitor that Homer's description of Calypso's lush isle may indeed accurately reflect what Greek sailors first venturing into the western Mediterranean saw in the eighth century B.C.

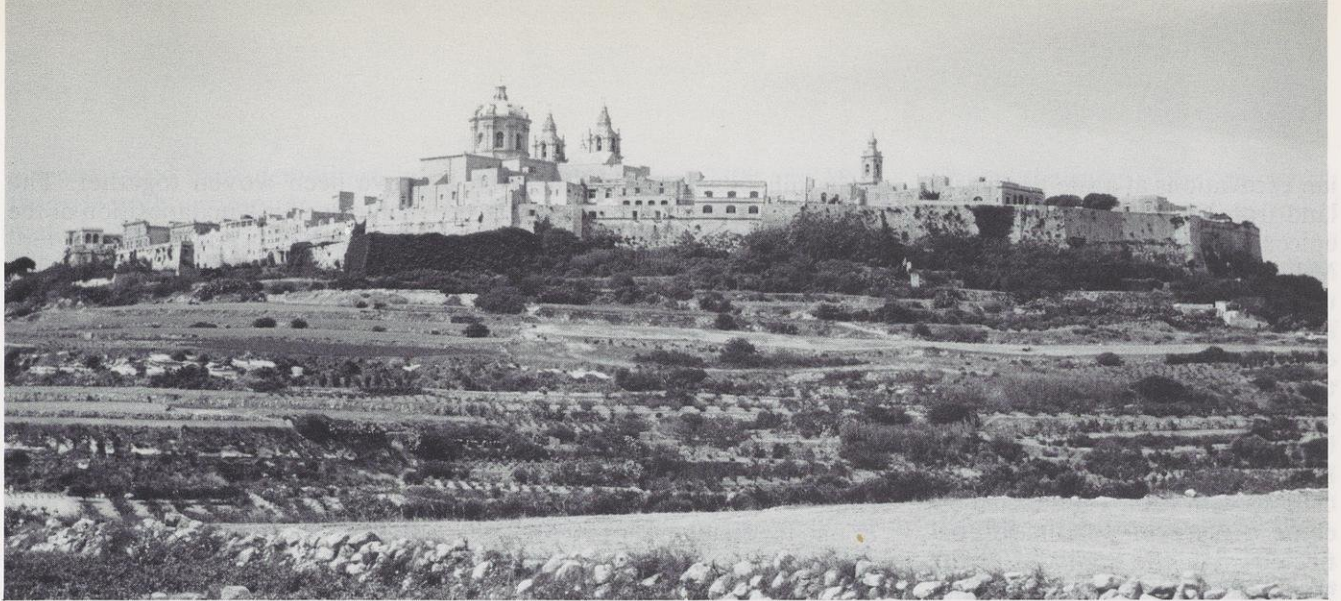
The passage in Acts may also tell us something about health conditions in the first century A.D. and about the nature of Paul's influence. The Apostle's possible eye problems—which have their popular source in Galatians 4:15—may have made it difficult for him to see a snake amidst the bundle of sticks he had gathered. Moreover, eye disease was very common in antiquity, and Paul's infirmity may have contributed to what came to be seen as a miracle. However that may be, the entire episode in Acts sets Paul apart from other men both by events and by the miracles attributed to him. The snake which emerged from the sticks is called in the Greek text *echidna*, a word which commonly denotes a non-poisonous constrictor snake. Whether poisonous or not, the

snake was taken as a supernatural sign, first of an avenging deity, then of Paul's miraculous power. Among other things, the Apostle—like St. Patrick in Ireland—is credited with removing all venomous snakes from the island.

The story of Paul's stay on Malta, as presented in Acts, concludes with the Apostle's reception in the house of Publius, the chief man of the island, and the account of the miracles he performed:

7. In the vicinity of that place were lands belonging to a man named Publius, the chief of the island. He welcomed us and received us cordially as his guests for three days. 8. It so happened that the father of Publius was sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and, after praying, laid his hands on him and healed him. 9. After this had taken place, the rest of the sick on the island came to Paul and were cured. 10. They paid us great honor and when we eventually set sail, they brought us the provisions we needed.

At this time, Malta and Gozo were part of the Roman province of Sicily. The legate of the *praetor* of Sicily ruled the island and was called *Melitensium primus omnium* ("first of all the citizens of Malta," according to *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum* 10.7495). Publius clearly spoke Greek and was able to provide for the needs of Paul and of others accompanying the Apostle to Rome on this official mission. According to tradition, Publius became the first bishop and was instrumental in expanding and solidifying the inhabitants' conversion to Christianity which Paul's preaching and good works had begun. Many places on Malta are associated with Paul. The wreck of the Apostle's ship is usually located at Selmunett (St. Paul's Islands), on the north-west side of what has been named St. Paul's Bay. Although Publius' house was thought to be in Mdina, recent Ital-



A view of Mdina with the cupola and bell towers of the Cathedral.



The Cathedral in Mdina, which reputedly stands on the site of Publius' house, the chief man of the island who received Paul in 60 A.D., and who later became the first bishop.

ian excavations at a site not far inland from St. Paul's Bay—the seventeenth-century church of St. Paul Milqi (St. Paul Welcomed)—have unearthed three earlier churches and a Roman villa. The villa was occupied from the first century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. A graffito showing a wrecked ship and a well-head inscription bearing the name *Paulus* strongly suggest early associations with Paul. The site had become a place of pilgrimage connected with the Apostle by the seventh century A.D. at the latest.

Finally, the passage in Acts may help us to understand the devout piety which has characterized the Maltese people over the centuries and which remains true today. Their early conversion to Christianity has endured through the centuries, even through the period of Arab rule (870-1090). Although

some inhabitants converted to Islam during those two centuries, belief in Christianity remained strong. For example, in a census of 991 it appears that on the island of Malta there were 13,000 Muslims and 3,500 Christians, but on Gozo the Christian population was twice that of the Muslims. The strength of the Christian faith can be measured today in the large number of churches on the islands—over 400, or one for about every 850 Maltese citizens, all in an area of 122 square miles. It has been estimated that in the sixteenth century there were some 430 churches in Malta, or one church for every fifty inhabitants.

Several of these churches have become major pilgrimage centers in recent years. For example, Mosta Dome, the site of a recent miraculous event, illustrates how different cultures and historical events

have been woven together. The name itself is a juxtaposition of the Arabic *Mosta* meaning “center” with the word derived from the Medieval Latin *domus* for “church” or “house.” Located approximately at the geographic center of Malta, this church was a major landmark before World War II. On April 9, 1942, many people had gathered in the church for Benediction. During the service the Axis powers began one of the thousands of air-raids which pounded the island during the war. A bomb pierced the dome, crashed to the marble floor, and skidded around among the congregation. It did not explode. Had it done so, the blast would have destroyed the church and killed everybody in it.

Another, even more famous pilgrimage church is on Gozo. This small, dilapidated shrine to the Vir-

**Mosta Dome has the third largest unsupported dome in the world and was the site of a miraculous occurrence on April 9, 1942.**



gin was saved from demolition in the sixteenth century by a man named Philip. Here on June 22, 1883, Carmela Grima, a forty-five-year old woman, heard the Virgin invite her to enter the chapel and recite three Hail Marys. Church authorities examined Carmela's claims and accepted them as true. The modern basilica built on this site and named Ta' Pinu ("of Philip") after the church's savior Philip continues to attract large numbers of pilgrims from the islands and elsewhere.

Veneration of the Virgin in particular and of female saints in general is especially strong in Malta and suggests how important female religious figures have been for the Maltese people over the centuries. In prehistoric times (2400-1800 B.C.) Malta was a site of great devotion to an amply proportioned deity whose cult statues have been found in several places, particularly the Tarxien Temples and the Hypogeum. Although the sex of the deity is not sure, recumbent figures have been found in these sites which are clearly female and undoubtedly connected with the religious rites of the temples. During the Phoenician period Gozo was also the site of a major temple to the powerful Phoenician goddess Astarte or Tanit, and subsequent devotion to Hera and/or Juno—who was identified with Astarte—was widespread in the Roman period. The rapacious and notorious Verres, the first-century B.C. governor of Sicily prosecuted by Cicero, robbed Malta of priceless statues of Juno with as much gusto and greed as he showed in Sicily.

As noted above, fossil remains give evidence of the rich natural environment found on the island in prehistoric times. Now-extinct species of dwarf elephants, hippopotamoi, and giant land tortoises roamed amidst rich vegetation including types of flora which are now either extinct or no longer present on the island. Certainly it was a far richer agricultural land when the gigantic ancient temples

were built between 2400 and 1800 B.C.

Around 5,000 B.C. neolithic farmers braved the often treacherous ninety-odd kilometer expanse of sea between southeastern Sicily and the islands of Malta, Gozo, and Comino. They brought with them a characteristic pottery, known as Impressed Ware. This pottery has geometric patterns impressed on the surface before firing by the ridges of seashells or fingernails or a pointed stick. The designs have close parallels with ancient pottery found in southeastern Sicily and at Monte Kronio, a site near Agrigento. The island limestone still provides an abundance of caves and rocky shelters. The first inhabitants put them to good use for shelter and lodging. In fact, Ghar

Dalam, the name of the cave which has been given to the first period of Maltese history, has yielded a wealth of tools made of obsidian, flint, and bone.

Throughout the following nine or ten centuries of the Neolithic age, the inhabitants of Malta maintained trading and cultural contacts with the people of Sicily. They imported—probably via Sicily—flint and obsidian, which originated in the rich volcanic deposits of the islands of Lipari and Pantelleria. In the period from 4,500 to 4,100 the patterns of pottery change and other signs suggest new religious and cultural developments. At Skorba, a site near Mgarr, artifacts and other evidence provide us a glimpse of the religious practices and beliefs of the neolithic island-

The "Temple of the Giants" (Ggantija) on Gozo. This megalithic complex was built between c. 3,600 and 3,000 B.C. This view shows the common outer wall that surrounds two temple units and an entrance to one of them.



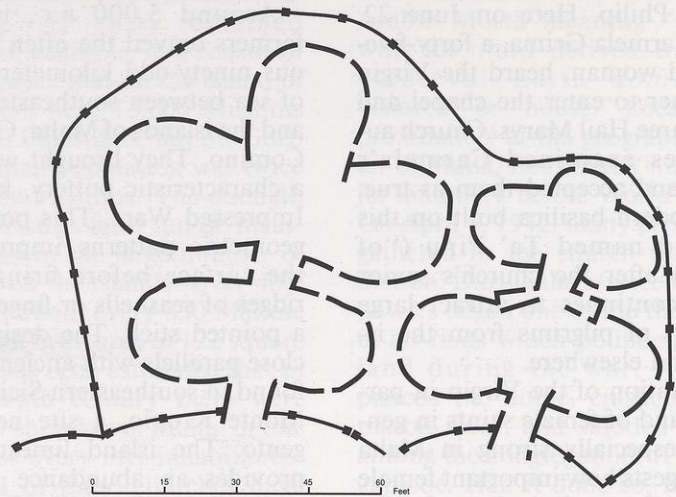
ers. Two huts of a larger than normal size probably were used as shrines. In one of them fragments of several female figurines were found. Their exaggerated sexual attributes suggest that the cult at Skorba was devoted to a fertility goddess, an ample mother whose abundance could benefit the community.

Yet these signs seem a modest and unpromising beginning to one of Malta's greatest periods. Between c. 4,100 B.C. and 2,500 B.C. the neolithic people on Malta produced a series of extraordinary temple complexes, gigantic rock edifices which surely rank among the wonders of the ancient world. A truly megalithic complex found on the island of Gozo, Ggantija was built between c. 3,600 and 3,000 B.C. and consists of two temple units surrounded by a common outer wall (Fig. 2). Each temple unit follows a five-apse plan and has a separate entrance leading from the common wall. The sheer size of the blocks used in the construction and the good state of preservation of the entire site are astounding.

Collective rock-cut tombs dating from this entire period can be found in a number of places on the islands. It seems likely that prehistoric people connected a cult of the dead or of the tribe or family ancestors with a worship of Mother Earth and with some type of return to an earthly tomb or womb at death. This link appears to be especially strong in one of the most unusual prehistoric sites on Malta. Called the Hypogeum, it is an extraordinary temple and burial place carved deep underground in three successive stories. Unfortunately, after its discovery in 1902, it was not excavated with care, and much about the site remains a mystery.

The paved passageway to the South Temple at Ggantija. The limestone blocks facing the passageway have been beautifully finished in contrast to the rough, unworked stone on the walls.

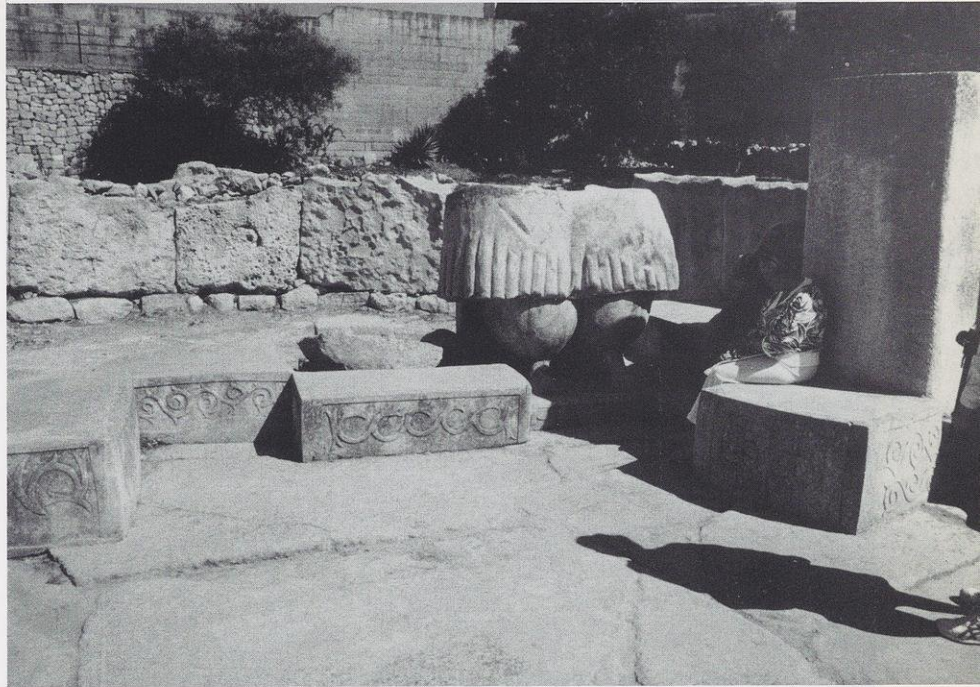
Fig. 2: Outline drawing of the Ggantija temple complex. (University of Wisconsin Cartography Laboratory)



Several thousand individuals had been laid to rest there and personal ornaments and pottery were found with their remains. The Hypogeum also served as a place of worship, perhaps as a site for oracles and incubation. The practice of incubation, sleeping in a temple or a holy spot in hopes of divine intervention through a dream or vision, was well known in antiquity. One of the figurines found in the Hypogeum, a very amply proportioned woman lying on her right side on a couch, has suggested that such a ritual practice might have occurred here as well. The Hypogeum also yielded an example of the grotesquely fat figure found in other neolithic sites on the island.

The climax of the temple cultures comes between c. 3,000-2,500 B.C. During this period a number of temple complexes were erected, as, for example, the megalithic complex at Tas-Silg (discussed below). The most famous among these complexes is located only a few hundred meters away from the Hypogeum and has given its name, Tarxien, to the entire period. There are four distinct temple units at Tarxien. The earliest one was built during the Ggantija phase and has the same type of five-apse plan as the two temple units at Ggantija.

The other three share a common outer wall and show some amazing architectural and aesthetic developments. For example, some architectonic features suggest these neolithic builders were beginning to deal with the vertical arch and dome construction. Similarly, the richness of the decoration hints at a civilization wealthy and complex enough to encourage very specialized talents to develop in service to the community. Signs which attest to this level of cultural organization are plentiful in the Tarxien complex. A fat figure of colossal size was found within the vestibule. Fine relief sculpture in front and on either side of the statue traces variations on the form of the spiral and contrast with the naturalistic carvings of animals in relief found close by.



The lower part of a colossal figure found in the first apse of the South Temple at Tarxien. The statue may have been well over six feet tall. The original of this statue and other suggestively large figures are in the National Museum of Archeology in Valletta.

At the end of this period, sometime before 2,500 B.C., the people who created these great temples disappeared. The islands were deserted by their entire population, probably because of over-exploitation of the natural resources and successive years of disastrous drought. A new people came around 2,500. They bring a different culture which will develop and last through the Bronze Age in Malta. At the end of this period (900-700 B.C.), Malta begins to enter history.

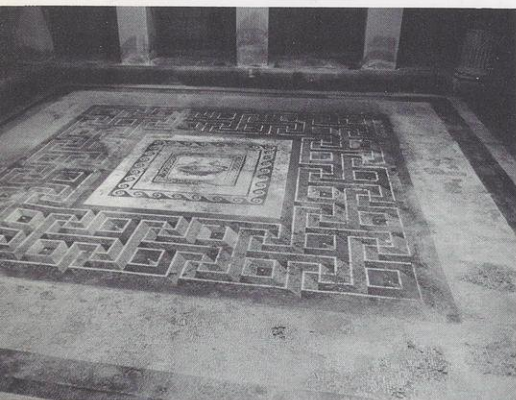
Phoenicians and Greeks touch its shores and leave signs of their passage as the islands begin to move into the time of Odysseus. Phoenician artifacts have been found in tombs from the period between 700 and 550 B.C. near Rabat on Malta, near Rabat (present-day Victoria) on Gozo, and in the Tas-Silg sanctuary which overlooks the Marsaxlokk harbour. The sanctuary dedicated to the Phoenician goddess Astarte incorporates the megalithic temple and illustrates the continuity of sacred places of worship,

even when entire peoples and cultures have changed. How extensive Phoenician settlements were is not known. Further excavations may yield more conclusive evidence. Phoenician traders may have used the islands only as a port and waystation on their long passage from the eastern Mediterranean to their great western colonies, such as Carthage. They may have settled in large numbers and remained on the islands in considerable force.

Later, the islands begin to play the strategic role they will assume as an important post between Rome and the Carthaginians. Certainly, by the middle of the sixth century, B.C., Malta was firmly in the orbit of Carthaginian influence and depended heavily on Carthage for its economic life and its cultural enrichment. This link to Carthage would continue until 218 B.C. Then, at the beginning of the Second Punic War, the Maltese islands passed to Roman control. From that point until the end of the ancient Roman world Maltese history was intertwined with that of Sicily.



The eighteenth-century gate to Mdina. Although its name comes from the Arab occupation in the early Middle Ages, Mdina is perhaps the oldest continuously inhabited site on the island.



Mosaic pavement floor from the first century B.C. which served as the floor of the peristyle in a Roman house. Optical illusions are created by the labyrinthine pattern.

The islands shared some of the same blessings and vicissitudes.

There were, however, some notable differences. Punic culture survived for centuries in Malta. The Phoenicians were credited with introducing the Semitic language which the Maltese still speak today, and the Punic word for safe harbor—*Malat*—may be the origin of the name of the island. Punic legends on the coins minted in Malta, several inscriptions from the first and second century A.D., and the evidence from the Acts of the Apostle cited above, indicate that Punic was still spoken extensively on the islands throughout the Roman period. Although the Carthaginians had a strong presence in Sicily, especially in the western part of the island, Punic language and culture never acquired the pervasive influence it seems to have had on the Maltese archipelago.

At the same time, signs of Greek and Roman cultural influence become more and more apparent. The town of Melita [Rabat-Mdina] was a major urban center, as Cicero's prosecution of the corrupt Verres makes abundantly clear. Relics of Roman buildings still survive and are preserved in the Museum of Roman Antiquities in Rabat. Just outside the Mdina walls, a spectacular Roman townhouse has been excavated. No doubt the property of a wealthy and prominent citizen, its architecture and mosaics date from the first half of the first century B.C. It had a Doric peristyle which surrounded a courtyard paved with a hypnotic labyrinthine mosaic. Whoever owned the house in the first century A.D. had exquisite taste in marble statuary and the wealth necessary to import some of the finest sculpture. A portrait of the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) and one of Claudius' mother Antonia the Younger are not only outstanding pieces, they also attest to the close ties wealthy provincial dignitaries maintained with the political and cultural life of the Roman capital.

Cicero in the first century B.C. and Ptolemy in the second century A.D. mention an important temple to the goddess Juno, without doubt the sanctuary of Tas-Silg. This place has served as an important religious site for thousands of years. The earliest temple dates back to the Tarxien phase (ca. 3,000-2,000 B.C.). That temple was extended in Phoenician times. Then, successive Punic, Roman, and Byzantine builders constructed religious edifices, which provide strong archeological evidence for the long associations of this place with powerful deities. Toward the end of the fifth century an early Christian church was erected at Tas-Silg and the dominance of the great female deities associated with Astarte and Juno comes to an end. This fifth-century building is a mute but clear witness to the strength of Christianity which by the fifth and sixth century was certainly the religion of the majority. The vast numbers of catacombs from this period with Christian typology confirm the success of Paul's mission. Through the centuries of first Byzantine and then Muslim rule Christian religious devotion remained strong.

The Punic language was enriched by additional Arab words during the Muslim centuries. In the period following the end of Arab rule (1090) the chief foreign influence on the island was Aragonese, and it is from the Aragonese that Malta passed to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem.

In 1522 the besieging Turks forced the crusading order to leave their well-developed fortress on the island of Rhodes. They moved westward in search of a permanent home. After temporary residence in, among other places, Crete and Civitavecchia, the Knights received the islands of Malta and Gozo from Charles V for the yearly rent of one falcon. They first settled in Birgu (present-day Vittoriosa) near Fort Sant'Angelo. Initially, they had planned to stay in Malta a short while. The climate seemed inhospitable, virtually all building materials and foodstuffs had to be

imported, and the fortifications were very weak. Even up to the Great Siege in 1565 the Knights were ambivalent about their stay in Malta. Repeated incursions by the Turks in their first twenty years, however, persuaded them to strengthen their position. Moreover, the foresight of Jean de la Valette and others led to the recognition that Malta would be the best place for the Knights to continue to serve an important role in the larger arena of Mediterranean politics. Thus, they began to construct a series of fortresses around what would come to be known as the Grand Harbor and especially Fort St. Elmo at the tip of the high Scceberras peninsula.

The major issue which would lead to the Great Siege in 1565 was control of the sea-lanes in the central Mediterranean. Because of its strategic position, Malta was the key. The huge invading Turkish force (estimated at upwards of 40,000 troops) laid siege to Malta in mid-May of 1565. After innumerable skirmishes, fierce battles with many casualties on both sides, and several crucial lapses in their strategy, the Turks abandoned the island in early September. This defeat and its sequel at Lepanto in 1571 determined the extent of Turkish expansion in the Mediterranean.

Following their glorious triumph, the Knights began a major building campaign, much larger than that earlier planned—fortifications, palaces, new towns. On the Scceberras peninsula the Knights constructed the fortified city of Valletta—named for the forty-eighth Grand Master of the Order, Jean de la Valette, who had led them through the Great Siege. The Co-Cathedral, the Grand Master's Palace, the encircling walls, and the harbor stand as architectural reminders of this era and the subsequent, prosperous two and one half centuries of the Knights' regime. After the expulsion of the Order in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Napoleon ceded Malta by treaty (1814) to the British who

ruled for more than 150 years.

Napoleon called Malta the "Key to the Mediterranean," and this judgment has proven accurate many times. However, it may be less true today when short-range and intercontinental missiles underlie so much military strategy. Yet as recently as World War II, Malta played that role. When war was declared between England and Italy in 1940, Malta's proximity to Sicily made it very susceptible to invasion. Moreover, the island was a vital stopping point for British airplanes traveling to Egypt. Mussolini's exaggerated claims that Malta would fall to Italian troops in a matter of a few days or even hours were no more accurate than those of the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in 1565, for, once again, in what has come to be known as the Second Great Siege the island fortress withstood relentless aerial attacks and bombardments from Italians and Germans alike. Just as Grand Master Jean de la Valette had defeated the Turks in 1565, so did British Governor William Dobbie secure victory against seemingly insurmountable odds. General Eisenhower estimated that Malta's heroic and solitary defense against the terrible fury of the air war waged by the Axis powers shortened the war by a year. Indeed, in the North African campaign and in the Allied invasion of Sicily the island played a crucial and decisive role. For their courage during the war King George VI awarded the George Cross to the people of Malta.

Following the Second World War and the reestablishment of internal rule on the islands, some attempts were made to integrate Malta with the United Kingdom. They were unsuccessful, and on September 21, 1964, Malta gained full political independence. On December 13, 1974, after ten years as an independent state in the British Commonwealth, it became a republic. The British legacy is readily apparent in the continuing use of the English language alongside Maltese, the traffic convention of

driving on the left, and the hordes of English tourists who seek out the beaches for their holidays.

In short, from the time of the Phoenicians in the ninth century B.C., Malta's safe harbors have been important to merchants, pirates, and navies. A succession of visitors remained to leave their mark on the islands: Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Muslims, Aragonese, Knights of Malta, the French, and the British. Yet Malta and Gozo, despite all these visitors, have maintained a distinctive identity.

. . . .

For many, if not most Americans, Malta probably remains a distant and exotic land, an island fortress that seems perpetually relegated to the margins of Western history. Yet, its name is associated with at least one cultural memory that is closer to home: specifically, Dashiell Hammett's mystery novel, *The Maltese Falcon*, and its 1941 film version directed by John Huston and starring Humphrey Bogart as the private investigator Sam Spade. Both the novel and the film play in part on the romantic notion of fabled riches and lost glory with which the Grand Master's annual tribute of a falcon to the Emperor's viceroy in Sicily is charged. In the film the statuette of the Maltese falcon is not exactly what it is purported to be, and this discrepancy leads Bogart in the final scene to define it as "The stuff that dreams are made of." In the movie the Maltese falcon represents that elusive artifact, that symbol of material wealth which regrettably inspires base emotions and leads to disappointment and death. In actuality, Malta and its people stand as examples of courage and endurance at the center and on the margin of Western civilization.■

# "Pulse of the Continent"

## *The Railroad in American Literature*

By Merton M. Sealts, Jr.

Long before twentieth-century Americans became entranced with space travel and space ships, both the lure of distant prospects and the urge to build machines to reach them were part of our national heritage. From the very beginnings of the nation our people have been travelers and explorers, whether bound toward some prospective haven ahead or rushing, like Melville's *Pequod*, from all havens astern. As our machines have grown ever larger and more complex, so mechanization and industrialization have increasingly modified and complicated the character and quality of American life itself. During the nineteenth century the harnessing of steam power for travel, first by water and later by rail, greatly accelerated the pace of westward movement across the continent. By the 1860s the greater concentration within our northern states of railroads and the factories they served had a significant economic, political, and ultimately military effect on relations between the American North and South.

Though development of the steamboat in the first decade of the century had been both exciting and profitable, the excitement it generated "was nothing compared to the railroad." So wrote Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden*, his provocative study of "technology and the pastoral ideal in America"—a book



**The Night Express:** reprinted from a lithograph by Currier and Ives.

drawn upon here.<sup>1</sup> According to Marx, the Iron Horse became “a kind of national obsession” during the 1830s as railroad-building burgeoned along our eastern seaboard. Americans thought of it as “the embodiment of the age, an instrument of power, speed, noise, fire, iron, smoke,” Marx tells us, “—at once a testament to the will of man rising over natural obstacles, and, yet, confined by its iron rails to a predetermined path, it suggested a new sort of fate.” In *Walden* (1854) Henry Thoreau specifically called the steam locomotive “a fate, an *Atropos*, that never turns aside,” proposing “*Atropos*” as a fitting name for an engine.

By the time of *Walden* the Iron Horse was “the ‘industrial revolution incarnate’” for Americans, as Marx observes, noting that like most visible symbols of power, railroads and especially steam locomotives aroused varying reactions in the public at large. On the one hand they were hailed in the rhetoric of the

day as “the triumphs of our own age, the laurels of mechanical philosophy, of untrammelled mind, and a liberal commerce,” while on the other they were characterized with covert misgivings as “iron monsters” and “dragons of mightier power, . . . breathing smoke and flame through their blackened lungs.” By the Civil War years modern technology had become a source of both pride and fear, of revulsion as well as excitement, among our forebears; a similar ambivalence is familiar in our own century.

Even Thoreau, who had little use for most of the mechanical gadgetry that so enthralled his countrymen, revealed contradictory feelings. “Our inventions,” he charged in *Walden*, “are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York.” Still, both sight and sound of the locomotive aroused Thoreau’s undenied interest. He describes with evident pleasure the “golden and silver wreaths” of the steam cloud trailing behind it; he notes with admiration the regularity of its passage and acknowledges its tireless energy; he goes on to salute the “enterprise and bravery” of commerce generally—though not without significant qualification: “If all were as it seems, and men made the elements their servants for noble ends! . . . If the enterprise were as heroic and commanding as it is protracted and unwearied!” And finally, with particular reference to the machine itself, the veritable Iron

1. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). See also his essay “The Railroad-in-the Landscape: An Iconological Reading of a Theme in American Art,” in Susan Danly and Leo Marx, editors, *The Railroad in American Art: Representations of Technological Change* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: The MIT Press, 1988), pp. 183-208. For an interview with Marx on “a deeply American conflict concerning technology and the memory of a lost way of life,” see “Paradise Limited,” *American Heritage of Invention & Technology* (Fall 1988), pp. 34-39.

Horse: "I will not have my eyes put out by its smoke and steam and hissing."

Emerson, Thoreau's Concord mentor, took a somewhat different view of the railroad. But as befitted a man carrying "a Greek head on stout Yankee shoulders," as Lowell said of him, he too had a double reaction to this latest means of travel from the very beginning. In the spring of 1834, meditating about an excursion by rail, when "our tea-kettle hissed along through a field of mayflowers," the Yankee in him first thought of its "hitherto uncomputed mechanical advantages"; then the philosopher took over, seeing "a practical confirmation of the ideal philosophy that Matter is phenomenal whilst men & trees & barns whiz by you as fast as the leaves of a dictionary. . . . The very permanence of matter seems compromised." So Emerson wrote in his private journal.

Like Wordsworth before him, who had described man's inventions as Nature's "lawful offspring," Emerson found no essential difference between the bounty of Nature herself and the artificial products of man's mind and hand. Moreover, with his dynamic conception of an inner life ever seeking to express itself outwardly in whatever form might readily serve, he drew no hard-and-fast line between the so-called fine arts and those thought of only as useful. Thus he affirmed in "The Poet" (1844) that "the factory-village, and the railway" are, for the true poet, as much a part of nature as "the bee-hive, or the spider's geometrical web"; all are outward expressions of the Life Within that gave them birth and being.

Such an inclusive view of nature and art, such a poetic vision, Emerson readily acknowledged, was not yet that of his age, for all its confirmed interest in material things: "I look in vain for the poet whom I describe," he wrote. But "America is a poem in our eyes . . . and it will not wait long for metres." Eleven years later, having received from an exnewspaperman in Brooklyn a small volume of unconventional verse called *Leaves of Grass*, Emerson felt that his call for the poet and poetry he wished for was being answered at last. Writing to Walt Whitman in 1855, he praised Whitman's new book as "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed." Whitman's response to Emerson's fulsome comments was exuberant, though not exactly to the master's liking. Without asking permission, he passed the letter along for publication in the *New York Tribune*, he printed it again himself in the 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and he had stamped on the spine of the book one of Emerson's most generous sentences: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career. R. W. Emerson."

For Whitman, who in "Song of the Exposition" (1876) was to call on his special Muse to "migrate from Greece and Ionia" to "a better, fresher, busier sphere" in the New World, the Emersonian regard for modern inventions as fit subjects for modern poetry

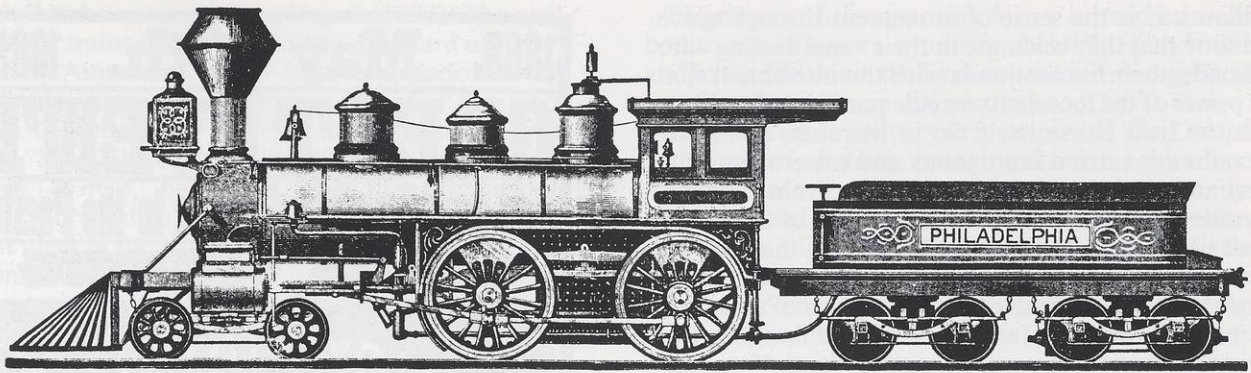
was welcome confirmation of his own taste and inclination, which was unreservedly given to what Emerson had termed "the barbarism and materialism of the times." Unlike his more genteel Bostonian contemporaries, Whitman discerned that the poetic Muse—that "illustrious emigré"—was manifestly answering his own invitation to migrate by "making directly" for nineteenth-century America,

By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle  
undismay'd,  
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial  
fertilizers,  
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,  
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!<sup>2</sup>

It was probably inevitable that Whitman should repeatedly work locomotives into such later verses as "A Song of Joys" (1860) and "Passage to India" (1871), feeling as strongly as he did about the poetic qualities of machinery and the sound of steam whistles. "To a Locomotive in Winter" (1876) directly addresses his "fierce-throated beauty," the basic intention being (according to his preliminary note) to "Ring the bell all through & blow the whistle." In the poem, rich in both auditory and visual imagery, he calls on the machine itself to "serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee":

Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow,  
the winter-day declining,  
Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing  
and thy beat convulsive,  
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery  
steel,  
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting  
rods, gyrating, shuddering at thy sides,  
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering  
in the distance,  
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,  
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with  
delicate purple,  
Thy dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy  
smoke-stack,  
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous  
twinkle of thy wheels,  
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily  
following,  
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet  
steadily careering;  
Type of the modern—emblem of motion and  
power—pulse of the continent. . . .

2. Passages from "Song of the Exposition" and "To a Locomotive in Winter" (below) are reprinted by permission of New York University Press from *Walt Whitman: Leaves of Grass, Reader's Comprehensive Edition*, edited by Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley. Copyright © 1965 by New York University.



### “EMBLEM OF MOTION AND POWER”

A typical locomotive of the 1870s, when Whitman wrote “To a Locomotive in Winter.” This standard eight-wheeler (a 4-4-0 American type) was designed in 1871 for the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia, the leading American manufacturer. Reproduced by permission of the publisher from John H. White, Jr., *Early American Locomotives: with 147 Engravings* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), Plate 40.

“To a Locomotive in Winter” has had an indifferent reception, both popular and critical, since Whitman’s day. I applaud Whitman’s effort, being mindful not only of Emerson’s teaching in “The Poet” but also of Hart Crane’s warning that “unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e., *acclimatize* it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles,” it has “failed of its full contemporary function.” If Whitman, obeying the Emersonian injunction to translate modern America into poetry, has even partially succeeded in realizing the locomotive as “Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent,” he has to that degree countered an assumption of traditional artists noted in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907): “the power embodied in a railway train could never be embodied in art.”

Few poets of the nineteenth century even attempted such an embodiment, as Adams was well aware, although there is another surprising exception besides Whitman himself: Emily Dickinson, in a playful poem that has been called “her cartoon of a railway train”:

I like to see it lap the Miles—  
And lick the Valleys up—  
And stop to feed itself at Tanks—  
And then—prodigious step

Around a Pile of Mountains—  
And supercilious peer  
In Shanties—by the sides of Roads—  
And then a Quarry pare

To fit its Ribs  
And crawl between  
Complaining all the while  
In horrid—hooting stanza—  
Then chase itself down Hill—

And neigh like Boanerges—  
Then—punctual as a Star  
Stop—docile and omnipotent  
At its own stable door—<sup>3</sup>

These lines may have been suggested in part by a “remarkable truth” that Dickinson had presumably come across in a newspaper: that every locomotive “has a distinct individuality of its own.” A related idea, that of a personal relationship between man and machine, is illustrated in certain versions of the ubiquitous popular ballad of “Casey Jones,” that “brave engineer” who had his own unmistakable way with the Iron Horse and with its steam-whistle—the feature so beloved of Whitman. “All the switchmen knew by the engine’s moans, / That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones.” When Casey “Took his farewell journey to the Promised Land” aboard his doomed locomotive, his “Fireman jumped off” safely before the final crash, “but Casey stayed on,” like the traditional captain going down with his ship, with the engine’s whistle screaming forth his warning to the endangered train ahead.

Among more finished works by such recognized American poets as Carl Sandburg and William Carlos

3. Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright 1951, © 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. The poem is also included as No. 585 in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1960).

Williams, it is the sense of movement through space and time that they celebrate in their verse dealing with railroads; their fascination is with the movement that the power of the locomotive made possible rather than with the Iron Horse itself. So in literature as in life, the railroads carried immigrants and easterners to the West and Midwest. Often the moving train becomes a symbol of escape from the ordinary life of farms and small towns, like Melville's ships leaving the land behind and heading for the open sea. So it is for Sandburg's "Mamie," whose romantic dreams of escape to the big city from her Indiana home are nourished as she sees the morning papers brought by train from far-off Chicago and watches the dwindling trail of smoke as a locomotive disappears down the tracks. (Poor Mamie! She finally goes to Chicago, where—disillusioned, but still a dreamer—she wonders about some even bigger city to which the railroad might yet take her.)<sup>4</sup>

In American prose, long before Mamie's escape by train from Indiana, Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon, in what Nathaniel Hawthorne called "The Flight of Two Owls," had also chosen the railroad in a desperate effort to get away from their ancestral New England *House of the Seven Gables* (1851). The hapless Clifford, under the illusion of freedom while aboard a moving train, extravagantly hails the railroads as "positively the greatest blessing that the ages have wrought out for us." But Hawthorne himself was obviously less sanguine about the supposed blessings of Modern Progress. In "The Celestial Rail-road" (1843), where he had ironically professed to describe an easier way to heaven than the route followed in an earlier day by Bunyan's toiling pilgrims, he had also provided cautionary signs for his readers. The engineer, "own brother to the engine that he rides upon," is Apollyon, the "old antagonist" of Bunyan's struggling Christian, who now seems happily transformed by the spirit of progress into a useful citizen; his Iron Horse itself, however, looks "much more like a sort of mechanical demon, that would hurry us to the infernal regions, than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City."

In later American writing of a more realistic cast the railroad figures repeatedly as the normal means of long-distance transportation—if not to heaven or hell, at least to wherever the trains are running—during the hundred years between travel by stage coach and our own century of travel by automobile or airplane. Within less than a dozen years of Mark Twain's trip to Nevada Territory by stage in 1861, passengers were crossing the entire continent in "Pullman's hotels on


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4. From *Chicago Poems* (1916); see *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg: Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), p. 17.

wheels," as he noted in *Roughing It* (1872). The well-appointed trains represented a new standard of luxury for many Americans. "Ever been in a parlor-car before?" asks the groom in Stephen Crane's "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" (1898), a story with a Texas setting. "No," the bride replies. "I never was. It's fine, ain't it?" "Great," he returns. "And then after a while we'll go forward to the diner, and get a big lay-out. Finest meal in the world. Charge a dollar." Now, alas, not only the dollar meal and parlor cars but even the luxury trains themselves have for the most part vanished, like the figures in Sandburg's "Limited": their coaches and diners and sleepers have long since become scrap and rust and their passengers of another era have indeed passed into ashes.<sup>5</sup>

Moving to the city in American fiction, one finds William Dean Howells in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) celebrating "the superb spectacle" of New York at night. "In the Central Depot" are "the great night trains lying on the tracks dim under the rain of gas-lights," waiting there "like fabled monsters of Arab story ready for the magician's touch, tractable, reckless, will-less—organized lifelessness full of a strange semblance of life." Howells evidently "admired the impressive sight," sharing his characters' "thrill of patriotic pride in the fact that the whole world perhaps could not afford" anything quite like it. Such an attitude was a common one at the time. By 1892, according to a double-edged passage in *The Education of Henry Adams*, the American railway system seemed to have become the "one active interest" of the country, an interest "to which all others were subservient, and which absorbed the energies of some sixty million people to the exclusion of every other force, real or imaginary." American society was "content with its creation, for the time, and with itself for creating it."

But not all Americans were unreservedly proud of the railroads and their place in national life. Of course the burgeoning companies and their customers were fair game for those more interested in making money than in serving the public, whether they were robber barons manipulating rail stocks on Wall Street or humbler villains like those depicted in that early movie "The Great Train Robbery" (1903). Thoreau had asked in *Walden* whether Americans rode on the railroads or the railroads on Americans; his question about masters and servants was posed again at the beginning of a new century in Frank Norris's novel *The Octopus* (1901). His book concerns the struggle of a group of California wheat farmers against the ruthlessly monopolistic Pacific and Southwestern Railroad—a transparent disguise for the grasping Southern Pacific of Stanford, Huntington, and Harriman.

Norris saw these opposing forces as respective embodiments of Nature, symbolized chiefly by the wheat, and of the Machine, the System—the railroad generally and the Iron Horse in particular. The contrast is sharply drawn in the very first chapter of *The Octopus*, where a herd of sheep, breaking through a wire fence, wanders onto the track, there to be run down by a speeding engine—an "iron monster . . . , merciless, inexorable," like the whole economic mechanism it both serves and represents. To the poet Presley, a surrogate for Norris himself who witnesses this "massacre of innocents," the locomotive is a "terror of steel and steam, with its single eye, Cyclopean," whistling "with the accents of menace and defiance," appearing to him as

the symbol of a vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the reaches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction on its path, the leviathan, with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless Force, the iron-hearted Power, the monster, the Colossus, the Octopus.

There is a similar polarity, rhetorically understated by comparison, in one of the poems included in Robert Frost's volume of 1928, *West-Running Brook*. A lone man who hates the railroad would gladly wreck a passing engine if only he could. "Too late though, now," he cries. Then, picking up a turtle's living egg, he confronts "the gods in the machine":

"I am armed for war.

The next machine that has the power to pass  
Will get this plasm in its goggle glass."<sup>6</sup>

More commonly, however, mention of the railroad in American writing of the 1920s and 1930s involves not confrontation but evocation.

Consider Nick Carraway in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), with his nostalgic "memories . . . of coming back West" at Christmas time on "the thrilling returning trains of my youth," the "murky yellow cars of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad," passing "the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations" en route to the Twin Cities. Think of Thomas Wolfe and his various fictional spokesmen, responding with all their senses to the sights, sounds, and movement of the railroad—even to "the acrid and powerfully exciting smell of engine smoke" itself. In railroad stations across the country they admire the waiting locomotives, which, "passive and alert as cats, purred and panted softly, with the couched menace of their tremendous stroke." This is from *Of Time and the River* (1935), which is characteristically filled with images of a vast, sprawling America rushing past in the

5. From *Chicago Poems* (1916); see *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg* (1970), p. 20.

6. Lines from "The Egg and the Machine" and "The Oven Bird" (below) are reprinted from *The Poetry of Robert Frost* edited by Edward Connery Lathem. Copyright 1916, 1928, © 1969 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Copyright 1944, © 1956 by Robert Frost. Reprinted by arrangement with Henry Holt and Company, Inc.



### TWO TRANSCONTINENTAL LIMITEDS.

En route from Chicago to New York, the Pennsylvania Railroad's **BROADWAY LIMITED** and the New York Central's **TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED** pull out of Englewood Union Depot on 14 October 1944.

Photograph by Paul Slager; reproduced by permission of the publisher from John Gruber, *Focus on Rails* (North Freedom, Wisconsin: Mid-Century Railway Historical Society, 1989), p. 16.

night outside the windows of her darkened passenger trains,

the great barn-shapes and solid shadows in the running sweep of the moon-whited countryside, the wailing whistle of the fast express . . . flares and steamings on the tracks, and the swing and bob and tottering dance of lanterns in the yards; . . . dings and knellings and the sudden glare of mighty engines over sleeping faces in the night; . . . the Transcontinental Limited . . . , stroking eighty miles an hour across the continent and the small dark towns whip by like bullets. . . .

For Fitzgerald and Wolfe, with their recurrent feeling for the passage of time, the loss of youth and the dream, these remembered trains were symbolic less of modern progress than of an era already vanishing—vanishing with a speed that even they themselves could scarcely realize, though both lived long enough to be familiar with the newer modes of travel that in a relatively few years would doom most railroad passenger service in the United States. The “terrific pistoned wheels” of the steam locomotive that so entranced Wolfe gave way in the 1940s and 50s to the prosaic trucks of the more efficient but far less romantic Diesel. And those expressive steam whistles, worthy of Walt Whitman’s admiration and responsive to the expert touch of a Casey Jones, were succeeded by merely blatant air horns—though at the time of conversion from steam to Diesel power the Chicago and North Western assured the public that the horns on its shiny new engines were being tuned to sound as much like the old steam whistles as possible!

But an age has now passed, the Age of Steam, and the poetic spectacle of the older locomotives is gone from the rails—excepting, of course, a few retired Iron Horses, standing patiently along the main line as fixed monuments to other times, or museum dwellers occasionally brought out of their stables for excursion runs into yesterday. If you visit a railroad museum—there are many across the country—where the rolling

stock is not altogether off limits, climb into the cupola of a freight train’s caboose and look ahead, like the boy in William Faulkner’s “The Bear” (1935/1942), at all that’s left from the Age of Steam:

Then the little locomotive shrieked and began to move: a rapid churning of exhaust, a lethargic deliberate clashing of slack couplings travelling backward along the train, the exhaust changing to the deep slow clapping bites of power as the caboose too began to move. . . .

So with a little ten-wheeler Baldwin I know, built in 1906 and ultimately retired to pasture in North Freedom, Wisconsin, after years of faithful service in Faulkner’s South.

Now we are back in the present, no longer in the Age of Steam but in the new Age of Flight—like it or not. Yes, the railroads are still very much in operation, though chiefly as freight-haulers. But who today is making poems about moving wheat or coal by unit trains, about piggyback loading, and about double-headed Diesels? By and large, traveling Americans have cast their votes for speed, thus shifting allegiance from the railroad to a newer, faster “emblem of motion and power,” a newer symbol of modernity than the old Iron Horse. In our hurried times, when human beings are journeying not only across the plains, or from small towns to the city, but around the moon, the popular imagination is not likely to fix itself on an earth-bound AMTRAK train. The older locomotive still surviving and active—and of course I mean the working steam engine, with its mechanism honestly visible, busily smoking, hissing, and whistling, not a buttoned-up Diesel—can no longer typify “the modern” as it did for Whitman in 1876; the competition has undoubtedly taken over. For us the Iron Horse is less a symbol, even of the past, than just a relic—a literal museum-piece, standing at the end of the line and addressing us directly like Frost’s “Oven Bird,” asking “in all but words . . . what to make of a diminished thing.”■

# *Soil and Water Conservation Needs*

## **of the Republic of Iraq After the War**

By Bashar J. Alhajjar

**T**he modern state of Iraq has existed only since 1920, when it was created as a mandate kingdom under British aegis. The early 1920s, which brought the creation of the state, also marked the beginning of strident opposition to foreign control. Nationalist opposition dominated the political scene right up to 1958 and the proclamation of Republic of Iraq. The desire for a more open political system and for more freedom and decisive action in remedying the country's economic and social problems led to a revolution in 1968. Iraq's strategic position at the crossroads of three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa) and its peculiar geographic features have played an overwhelming role in its history. Iraq has been the home of several early civilizations and the spot of the greatest advances in humankind's cultural and scientific evolution. The Sumerians thrived in the fourth millennium B.C., and the Akkadians built an empire in central and southern Iraq about 2400 B.C. The Akkadian Empire was followed by the Babylonian (1900-1600 B.C.), the Kassite (1600-1150 B.C.), the Chaldeans (1150-953 B.C.), and the Assyrians (953-605 B.C.). In the fourth century B.C., a cosmopolitan civilization was established in Mesopotamia by the Greeks. A golden era of prosperity and brilliant civilization in Iraq and the greatest in Islamic history was during the Abbasid Caliphate (650-1258). Baghdad, founded in 762 as a new capital of Abbasid, by the tenth century had a population estimated at 1.5 million and a lux-

ury trade reaching from the Baltic to China. Dark ages followed after the destruction of Baghdad by Mongol invaders and continued throughout the Ottoman Turkish Empire until World War I and the occupation of Iraq by the British Western forces.

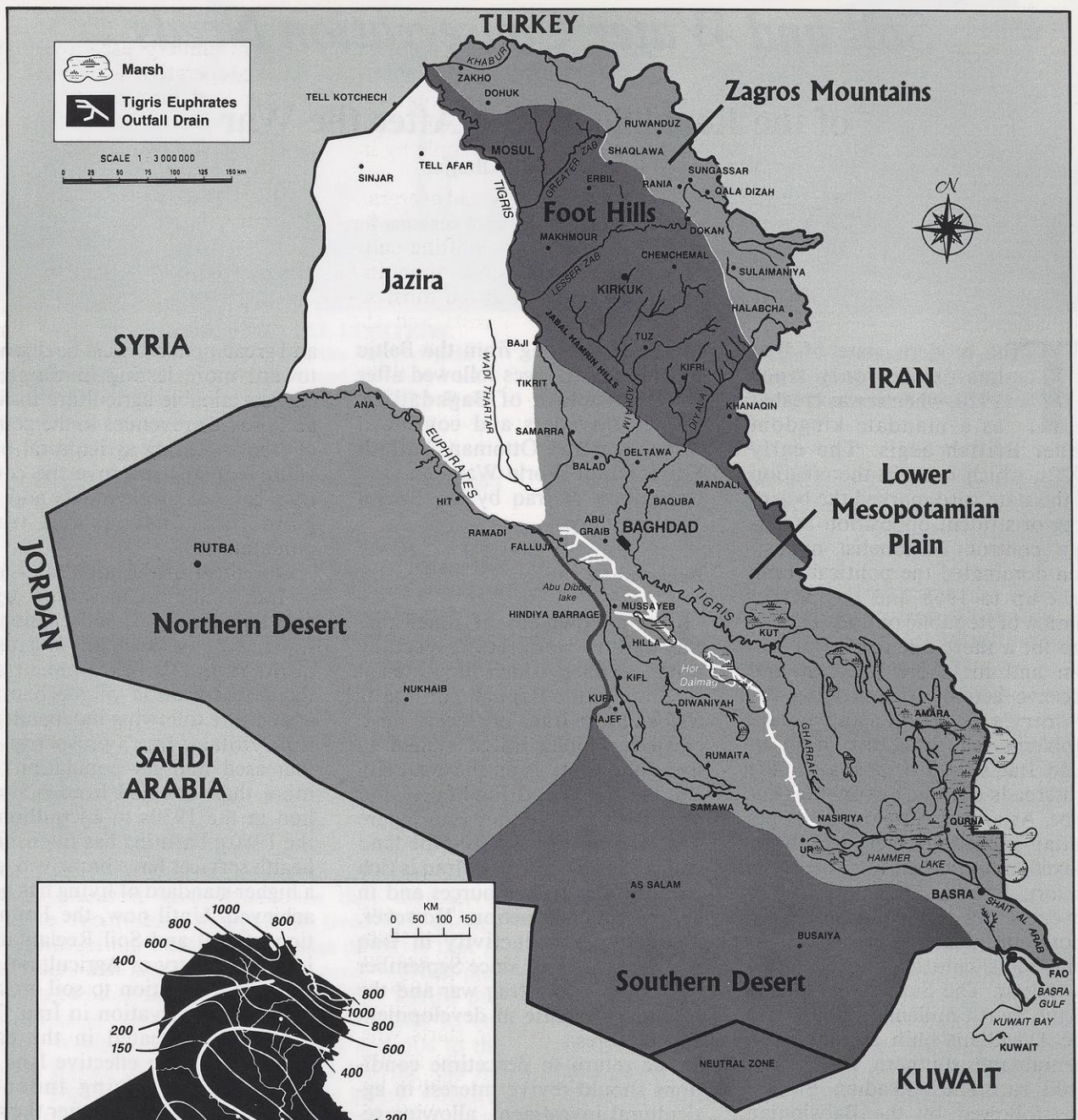
### *Background*

**T**he endowment of renewable natural resources, especially water supplies, which supports agriculture in the Republic of Iraq is tremendous. Iraqi engineers have created a sophisticated system of hydraulic controls on the great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, and their major tributaries (see Figure 1, a map of Iraq showing the land and its water resources.) Iraq is rich in water and soil resources and in agricultural production. However, agricultural productivity in Iraq has been impeded since September 1980 by the Iran-Iraq war and the resultant decrease in development expenditures.

The return to peacetime conditions should revive interest in agricultural investment, allowing revitalization of the water-control and irrigation projects begun earlier. Innovative ideas for major irrigation and agricultural projects are needed to exploit the agricultural potential of Iraq. It is possible to make the Republic of Iraq a bread-basket for Iraq, neighboring countries, and the world at large. Such an ambitious project requires the urgent attention of the decision-makers of Iraq to ensure the prosperity of the country, now and in the future. Oil wealth is temporary,

and greater efforts must be directed toward more lasting investments, e.g., sustainable agriculture to feed and provide revenues to the people of Iraq. A strong agricultural base will eventually improve the country's balance of payments and expand its industrial and trade potential.

One third of the total land area of Iraq is subject to serious wind and water erosion. Soil erosion in Iraq has increased greatly as a result of the country's development and the intensification of mechanized agriculture following independence from Britain. Iraq's prosperity has increased and its population has more than doubled from 6.5 million in the 1930s to 14 million in the 1980s. Farming has intensified, health services have improved, and a higher standard of living has been achieved. Until now, the Foundation of Soil and Soil Reclamation in the Ministry of Agriculture has paid little attention to soil erosion and soil conservation in Iraq. The foundation—created in the early 1950s to initiate effective land reclamation following independence—was expanded after the revolution of 1968. However, the effectiveness of this organization was undermined by two key factors. First was a lack of sound agricultural policy. The country spent large sums of money on land reclamation, in part on the poor-quality land of the lower high-salinity Mesopotamian plain, but little or no attention was paid to erosive destruction of the potentially productive lands, especially in the Adhaim area (Figure 1). Second, a common misconception persists that the



farmers of Iraq have preserved their land and no serious erosion problem exists in Iraq. Furthermore, most areas in the uplands and mountains have been in production for 5,000 to 6,000 years with little erosion damage. This is clearly a delusion, since similar areas in the United States and elsewhere have been measurably damaged after continuous cultivation for much shorter periods. We must be alerted to the seriousness of soil erosion in Iraq.

Soil erosion is most evident in the Zagros mountains, foothills, and the area between the 200 and 400 mm isohyets (Figure 1). Most of the eroded sediments are carried by rivers—especially the Adhaim—and deposited either on the irrigated lands of the Mesopotamian plain as a silt cover or in the marshes of southern Iraq (Figure 1). This silt mantle does not markedly improve soil conditions there, despite being a source of soil fertility, because the lower Mesopotamia is extremely saline. Another problem is the sediment clogging irrigation canals and ditches, dredging of which is very expensive. Many historians believe that the fall of the great civilizations of Babylonia, Chaldea, and Assyria were partially caused by the sedimentation of canals and ditches. Agriculture has been practiced since prehistoric times in Mesopotamia (Iraq) by canal irrigation using the muddy waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The muddy waters were the undoing of empire after empire. As the flow rate of the muddy rivers slowed, the canals became choked with silt separating from the water. It was necessary to keep this silt out of the canals, which year after year were dug farther and farther from the rivers as the empire grew, in order to supply water to irrigate farm lands and to satisfy the needs of the cities of the plains. Great public works—generally executed by captive slave labor—for cleaning silt from canals were interrupted by internal unrest and foreign invaders,

mostly from neighboring Persia. Many historians claimed that the silt blockage of canals depopulated villages and cities more effectively than the slaughter of people by invading armies.

**Shifting cultivation and overgrazing are among the main reasons for soil erosion in Iraq.** Shifting cultivation, practiced since time immemorial in Iraq, is the most serious menace to forests and the probable cause of much badly eroded land of Iraq. In the driest part of the rain-fed zone, between the 200 and 400 mm isohyets at the transition with the arid zone, most land is cultivated. Farmers plow some land in one place, some in another. The success of cultivation depends on the rainfall pattern, which is highly variable. Crop success depends largely on one or two showers in early spring. Most land is planted only once in three or more years. The practice of shifting cultivation was adapted to the characteristic climatic conditions of the region before modern technologies were introduced. Nearly all the land has been cultivated at some time, so that the natural grass cover has been entirely destroyed, and even annual grasses are adversely affected.

Overgrazing, especially by such browsing animals as goats, sheep, and camels, occurs mostly near villages and waterwells. Plants are grazed far beyond their capacity to sustain vigor; grazing starts when plants are just above the ground. The perennial grasses which best protect the soil are destroyed and are replaced by less protective annual grasses. The surface soil is compacted by trampling livestock, water infiltration is decreased, and runoff is prevalent. Soils are exposed to enhanced wind erosion when livestock wander over the land.

In Iraq, the zone between the 200 and 400 mm isohyets (Figure 1) has been transformed into a barren area of shifting cultivation and overgrazing. These destructive processes were intensified by modern

farm machinery used by government cooperative farmers. Modern mechanized farming is too intensive for this area. Some of the problems have been recognized by Iraq's decision-makers, which has led in part to breakdown of the cooperative farming program.

### *Forest fires and overcutting*

Forest fires in the mountains and uplands consume about 300 km<sup>2</sup> of timberland every summer. Overcutting for charcoal and firewood production decreases the number of protective forests. Squads of fire fighters should be organized and trained to battle forest fires with new technologies. Intensive programs are needed to educate the public about the environment and the importance of forest preservation. Laws to protect forests against overcutting and other abuses are urgently needed. General environmental protection must become one of Iraq's top priorities.

The forests of Iraq are deemed to be poor, but the understory vegetation of grasses and shrubs and the litter of dead leaves protects the soil from erosion when the land is carefully managed. Good grass cover can be as effective as forest in soil conservation. Because it is the cheapest and most effective method of soil conservation, vegetative cover should be maintained on mountain and hillslopes.

### *Water erosion*

Soil is eroded by water on cultivated hill and mountain slopes. Plowing hill slopes—even steep slopes (15 to 25 percent)—has increased in recent years and caused serious land erosion. Terracing could establish barriers by creating a permanent grass cover or forest to slow down hillslope erosion by running water.

Severe gully erosion in the flatter lands south of the uplands results from occasional heavy showers, low infiltration rates, excess irrigation, and mismanagement due to farmers' lack of information about

sound soil conservation practices. Agricultural education programs are needed to fill the gap between farmers and the scientific community. Extension programs based on those effective in the United States should be modified by Iraqi scientists to suit local conditions.

Water erosion is serious in the lower Mesopotamian plain, particularly on the silty irrigation levees sloping to the basin depressions. Erosion in desert areas is related to overgrazing by livestock and low water infiltration rates. Surface water runs over the surface to depressions and wadis. The Jabal Hamrin, south of Kirkuk (Figure 1), is the most intensively eroded area in Iraq, proving the seriousness of the problem. Other severely eroded areas are found west of Tuz, north of Mosul (the site of the ancient city of Nineveh), and west of the Tigris in upper Jazira near the Turkish-Syrian border. These examples justify the need for effective conservation practices for Iraq.

### *Wind erosion*

Accelerated wind erosion results mainly from overgrazing and shifting cultivation, especially in high-salinity areas with loose surface layers. Here the fine soil particles, which are flocculated, act like sandy material, sometimes forming dunes or sheets. Such material is called pseudo-sand. Wind erosion is prevalent in the barren noncultivated areas that form the dunes.

In the river valleys of the north and along the river beds in southern and central Iraq, soil particles are removed by heavy storms. For example, since wind erosion affects the Adhaim area south of the Jabal Hamrin, much productive land in the valley is covered by a thick sand layer.

In the gypsum areas (the Jazira, Figure 1), wind erosion is common, the rather sandy surface material is easily removed, and large sections of the area have a hummocky surface consisting of small dunes comprised of fine sand. In many places, gypsum bedrock and sometimes

gypsum pedogenic crusts are present.

Large areas of the deserts are covered with a gravelly desert pavement, indicating the severity of wind erosion in the past. At present the gravelly layer protects the soil from further erosion. Eroded soil particles often are transported over immense distances by dust storms, and layers of soil material are annually deposited in the lower Mesopotamian plain. Some archaeologists have invoked wind erosion and deposition to explain the thick layer of aeolian soil material covering the centers of ancient civilizations in Iraq.

### *Conservation recommendations*

Methods applied by the Soil Conservation Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture) and outlined in county reports may be valuable for Iraq. Experimental conservation areas and demonstration projects must be established to show how cooperative efforts between farmers, extension officials, the scientific community, and the Ministry of Agriculture can greatly curtail soil erosion. For each conservation area, a program based on detailed investigation of the physical conditions of the land (e.g., land use, soils, vegetation, topography, crops, crop rotations, etc.) must be completed. Experienced personnel and economic resources must be used to carry out sophisticated conservation tasks. The key to success is optimal management of human, natural, and economic resources.

Iraq, after successful land reform in 1970, initiated improvements of the land, water, and vegetation resources. Cultivation was restricted in some areas. Specific crops and crop rotations (including forage crops) were introduced to restrict grazing and promote reforestation and restoration of natural grass cover. Such programs showed benefits, and new programs should build on these tentative foundations.

Detailed or semi-detailed soil

maps must be prepared, if not for the whole of the Republic, at least for specific areas according to their productivity value. It should be possible to map the types and degrees of soil erosion, the general character of the land and soils, the hill slopes, present land use, and vegetation. Aerial photographs and photo-mosaics with application of aerial photo-interpretation, and some detailed or semi-detailed field work are probably the quickest and most useful methods of survey. Soil maps are urgently needed by land developers, farmers, zoning administrators, consulting engineers, government officials, and scientific researchers.

### *Conclusions*

Soil erosion is the critical problem facing modern agriculture in the Republic of Iraq. Erosion is going unchecked in the northern and northeastern parts of the country, because the program adopted by Iraq's agricultural policy-makers was to reclaim the poor soils of lower Mesopotamia rather than cultivate—with adequate conservation measures—the more productive soils of the north and northeast. The reclamation of lower Mesopotamia, begun seventeen years ago, has been costly because reclamation of the salt-affected soils require extensive engineering to build irrigation and drainage systems. The engineers constructed a separate network of tiles and large outfalls to lower the watertable in the subsoil by channeling groundwater into the marshes in southern Iraq and to the Arabian Gulf through a major canal constructed between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers (Figure 1). The channel is so large it is called "the third river." Gravity flow is occasionally sufficient to dispose of the drainage water, but often expensive pumping is required. Maintenance of such a vast irrigation system is difficult because drainage tiles clogged by silt deposits need periodic flushing.

Water control for the irrigation and drainage systems requires the construction of large dams. Over twelve major dams have been built, and several more are under construction.

The oil money boom of the 1950s led to the initiation of land reclamation programs in Iraq. The unstable local socio-political situation at that time turned the country's attention almost totally toward reclamation of the rather poor soils of the lower Mesopotamian plain. These soils have saline and sodic characteristics, poor structure, high water tables, and poor drainage capabilities. The reclamation program was, in the minds of many planners and policy makers, an attempt to "reincarnate" the glorious agricultural history of the ancient Arab civilizations which flourished in the lower Mesopotamian plain.

This plain is no longer the productive land of ancient times, since climate and vegetation and physical conditions have changed. Although large amounts of money were spent on the reclamation program, results were catastrophic. Almost all reclamation programs undertaken by the Foundation of Soil and Soil Reclamation have been severely criticized in the media and in local and national public hearings. Economic, social, and especially technological reasons are offered for the failure. However, the reclamation drive has increased the public's awareness of the importance of agricultural development and has created jobs, expanded hopes, and established a new work ethic and sense of pride. In these respects, the reclamation program has been a great working camp where young Iraqi men and women learn from mistakes, often through first-hand experience.

The reclamation of the Mesopotamian plain is no longer Iraq's economic priority. Priority must be given to cultivating the more productive lands of the north and northeast, especially of the Adhaim area. Here soils are fertile, well drained, and have good structure.

Provided they are well managed, these soils can ensure not only a self-sufficiency of food for Iraqi citizens but an agricultural surplus for export. Successful cultivation must incorporate conservation practices to control erosion and runoff and ensure future productivity as well as decrease the suspended sediment loads of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Reclamation of the desert soils of Jazira (Figure 1) might also be a sound project since the soils are sandy, naturally well drained, and need only water and fertilizer to produce the vegetables which are in scarce supply in Iraq and neighboring countries. An ambitious project would be a large channel to divert water from the Tigris River near Mosul to the Euphrates River near Ana. This channel would allow reclamation by bringing water to a large desert area located in the triangle subtended between Mosul and Samarra on the Tigris and Ana on the Euphrates. The geology and gently rolling topography of the area would naturally facilitate such a water diversion. Two major dams, one near Mosul and the other near Ana, could control the massive flow. The construction of the channel would contribute to the bread-basket project and increase flow in the Euphrates River which is in short supply compared to that of the Tigris River because of the continuous water removals to irrigate farmlands in the lower Mesopotamian plain. The Tigris is supplied by abundant water from its many tributaries between Baghdad and Mosul, and much of its water could be diverted to the Euphrates.

Another benefit from construction of a Jazira channel would be the offsetting of the water shortages created by the recent expansion in up-river water storage and irrigation projects in neighboring Syria and Turkey which reduce flow in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. A third benefit would be that infiltration of surface water would recharge the groundwater, used to irrigate small fields that produce vegetables. Groundwater recharge

in the area is from rainfall and the Wadi Thartar reservoir, a natural depression used to store excess Tigris River water which is diverted near the Samarra Barrage to prevent flooding of the lower Mesopotamian plain. The suggested Jazira channel is an appropriate project to supplement ongoing programs of desert reclamation. Current groundwater supplies in Jazira are insufficient and many places have brackish water; construction of the proposed channel is practical and would remedy these problems. The channel would also benefit the environment and wildlife habitat of the area. Making the desert bloom could become a reality in Iraq in a peacetime economy.

It is more economically feasible to develop the northern and north-eastern districts and the deserts of Iraq than the Mesopotamian plain. While maintenance of land already reclaimed in lower Mesopotamia should continue, further reclamation is not advisable. Judicious management of water resources remains the key to Iraq's development and the well being of its people, now and in the future. Greater revenues generated from oil should be invested in innovative projects to increase agricultural production by implementing "best management" protocols. Oil could be only a temporary economic crutch, but agricultural productivity could be everlasting.

Peace in the region is necessary for the economic and human development of Iraq. Policymakers must make every effort to ensure that the bitter years of war are not repeated and must concentrate on the country's development as the future's top priority. The authorities must correct the dearth of recent scientific information regarding Iraq's natural resources. Iraq's stature in the world is greater now than in the years before or during the war. The peacetime (postwar) economy should provide a fresh start for scientific and economic development. Research should be encouraged to utilize Iraqi's natural resources.■

# The Scratch of Plum-Colored Lace

By Kathleen Levy

“G od, Claire, you’ve really done wonders to this room.” Beverly’s spike heels crunched into the ankle-deep rubble on the bedroom carpet. Pine boughs, Christmas tree balls, sprays of artificial berries, silk flowers, and statice, statice everywhere. The cats had gotten into the red and green plaid ribbon, and it twisted and coiled over the whole mess. Now the cats avoided the floor and the hazards of pins and wires and traveled over dresser tops, brushing against dishes they had already licked clean. “Let me guess the theme,” Beverly said, “Christmas in the Epicenter.”

Claire’s eyes stung with fresh tears. She was balled up in a rocking chair at the far corner of the bedroom. Her red hair hung in wet clumps on her neck, soaking the collar and shoulders of her terry-cloth robe. With her knees pulled up to her chin and her arms wrapped tight around them, her mass threatened to hurl the rocking chair over every time it began its backward motion. She was too near the window, and a draft hit her wet head whenever the horse chestnut’s branches clattered against the glass. Her bare feet hurt, they were so cold.

“Clothes-R-Us,” Beverly said as she brandished the dresses she carried in her right hand. “Red or green: both nice, modest selections for Midnight Mass.” The plastic hangers clacked together as she laid the dresses out on Claire’s and Mark’s rumpled bed. She pulled a plum-colored slip and matching bikini panties out of the pocket of her camel’s hair coat. “Have clothes, will travel. Mark said you didn’t have any clean underwear either.”

Claire looked at her sister’s face and knew Beverly was on a mission to stomp out her unhappiness. It was okay for Bev to be depressed and miserable, but she couldn’t bear the thought of Claire unhappy. That face. At forty-four, Beverly still put foundation on too thick and still thought racing stripes of rouge on each cheek flatteringly contoured the face. Pale, watery blue eyes were protected by spikes of hardened mascara. “I trust you have clean shoes,” Beverly said, her mouth defined by dark brown lip liner. Claire just stared at Beverly, who now dangled pantyhose up for inspection. Mark had called Beverly’s face a ten-dollar-a-day habit. To Claire it was endearing because it was Beverly.

“For God’s sake, Claire, dry your hair,” Mark said from the doorway. His hands in fists pressed to his thighs, he waited, then turned to Beverly as he pretended to wring a neck. “See what I’m up against?” He whirled around and stormed down the hallway,

but returned immediately to pound his knuckles against the door frame. He never could just stand still and talk, Claire thought, he always had to be doing something. Even watching TV, he’d have to jump up and fidget with the aerial or run to the kitchen for a beer. A perpetual motion machine. Once Claire had made the mistake of asking his mother how she had handled a hyperactive child. Even to suggest a possible defect in her athletic, handsome son had sent the woman into a tailspin which left her suspicious of Claire for life. Mark readily admitted his lack of *standard residential wiring*, but claimed his frenzied basketball and racquetball obviously left him more at peace with himself than Claire’s precious buds and blossoms left her.

Claire wondered how much Mark had told Beverly on the phone. Did he tell her how he had found her lying in the bathtub in water turned cold? That he had to reach into the tub in long sleeves to lift her out? Poor Mark. Claire knew she was acting like a crazy woman. It had just been such a letdown. After a week of no sleep and the manic pace of decorating more homes than any other Christmas season, all demands had just stopped. The adrenaline had stopped. In the tub her mind had struggled with lack of focus. With her body stretched out before her, she was struck by how human it appeared under water—a real human foot, a real human leg. The whole month of December there’d been no sex, no meals she could remember, absolutely nothing human except work. Despite all her good intentions, her promises to Mark, this year had been more of a disaster than last year. Twenty strangers had sumptuously decorated homes to share with family and friends this Christmas; she had a filthy flat, a flower shop always on the brink of insolvency, no children, few friends, and guilt. She was a rotten wife. She had taken advantage of Mark’s good nature again and worked him silly, swallowed him into her mania.

When Mark had come into the bathroom to say Beverly was on the phone, Claire realized she had nothing clean, nothing even remotely clean to wear to Midnight Mass. She had groaned and rolled over in the tub, turning her backside to Mark, then started to cry because anyone this out of control of her life had to be crazy.

“God, Claire, if you catch pneumonia and die, there’s nothing clean to bury you in,” Beverly said. “You want to rest in dirty underwear for all eternity? No RIP on your tombstone, just RIDU.”

The old Beverly, Claire thought as she shivered. She had come out of her black mood to deliver Claire out

of hers. If they didn't look like sisters, a brunette and a red head, the family resemblance could be seen in their bouts of depression. Actually, Bev had seemed immune for so long. An early marriage had ended in divorce and baby Jessica. But being a single parent had only seemed to fuel Beverly's enthusiasm, and Claire had grown up marveling at how nothing could break Beverly's spirit. It was middle age that brought Bev down.

"The hell with Midnight Mass," Mark said as he opened the closet door and grabbed an army duffel bag overflowing with dirty clothes. He reached down and picked up clothes fallen to the floor and stuffed them back in. "I'm doing laundry." He swung the bag over his shoulder and stepped on an ornament, shattering it. He shook his head and rolled his eyes. "You girls enjoy yourselves," he said as he left the room.

Beverly took off her coat and folded it carefully down the middle seam and laid it on the bed next to the dresses. She wore a mustard-colored suede outfit with crewel neck—Beverly didn't mind spending money on clothes. She got the hair dryer and a pair of slippers from the closet and brought them over to Claire. "You'll need the slippers, this static is brutal." She put the slippers in front of the rocker, facing Claire. "Come on! Come on! If you die, I dump Townsend and marry Mark, and Mark will be miserable for the rest of his life. Think of Mark, for God's sake."

"I'm making Mark miserable all by myself." Claire said as she let her feet slide into the slippers. Opening her body up to the room temperature made her shudder, and she ran to the bathroom to exchange her wet robe for Mark's. She returned in maroon flannel, plugged the hair dryer in next to the bed, turning it on high and directing it to the hair on her neck.

Beverly had found an empty box and was waddling like a duck on her spike heels, picking up junk off the floor. "It's not like this is the first time you've done this," Beverly said. "Anyway, Mark likes being the flower shop's delivery man. How many times has he bragged that he gets the in-out, in-out while you just get stuck?" Beverly smiled her wicked smile, and her eyes crinkled in appreciation of her own mouthiness. Resuming her clean-up efforts, she picked up a Rudolph ornament, and her long fingers with fire-red nails pulled the string which lit up his nose. "Can I have this? For Bobby's stocking?"

"Take everything, take it all. I never want to see it again." Claire pulled the front of the robe tighter and cinched the belt. In her crouched position, Beverly was inching along the floor with her knees splayed out in front of her so that her mustard-colored dress sagged in a valley between them. "You look like a fucking duck!" Claire said.

"How do ducks fuck? I always wondered about that," Beverly said, her knees trembling from the effort of maintaining her balance. "Or doves?" she asked, lifting a white ceramic dove of peace up from the floor

and examining it at various posterior angles. "Very peacefully, I assume."

Claire smiled and crossed her legs, yanking the flap of her robe over her bare knees. "Mrs. William Tietjen has thirty of those babies on her tree. I even strung garlands of white satin ribbon and hot waxed the ribbon to each dove's beak." Claire lifted hair up to get the dryer under it. "I had to send Mark back to the shop for the wax gun, because I forgot it."

Beverly struggled to her feet, taking several small steps before regaining her land legs. She kicked the box into a corner and brushed off her hands. "You are so lucky to have Mark. You don't know what bastards men can be."

So much like Beverly. No imagination about other people's lives. If she never saw Claire with a lover, if Claire never told her she had had a lover, then there had never been a lover in Claire's life. If only that were true, Claire thought. She had been so young, her first year out of high school, and the whole affair had been such a stupid cliché: an art student seduced by her teacher—actually a combination of clichés—all the more embarrassing. After just a few weeks in Greg's still-life class, she had become aware of his approval of her thick braid down her back, of her not wearing a bra, and, curiously, of her mouth. The exact mechanism of this communication was a mystery to her because Greg was a subtle man, a conventional-looking man with neatly clipped salt-and-pepper hair, no Casanova given to scorching looks of passion. And yet the message was clear enough to hold her in front of the mirror searching for the secret of her allure. She practiced her smile over and over again, learning to appreciate the curl of her upper lip. She saw herself as shades of pink and regretfully, because by recognizing it she feared she diminished it, she saw her innocence. She spent her nights and soon her days, projecting herself into Greg's mind, trying to experience the passion he must feel for her, arousing herself by his imagined lust for her.

When he made his move, she was helpless. The affair lasted a little over a month. Before he became impatient with her, before the cruel remarks which battered her eighteen-year-old self-confidence and insured the breakup of their relationship, she had been dumb enough to think he really loved her.

"I know what bastards men can be," Claire said.

"Humph. Right. Is your hair dry yet?" Beverly asked, her face tilted to the full-length mirror on the closet door. She scraped lipstick caked at the corner of her mouth with a red fingernail. "Townsend's at the house with Jessica and Bobby. There could be dead bodies if I don't get back soon."

"Just so it's not Jessica's or Bobby's dead body," Claire said.

"Townsend's not all bad," Beverly said, talking directly to the mirror, studying her own face; age lines held her mouth clamped in a tight little fist of red. "I

know I badmouth him a lot but . . ." Her lips suddenly became elastic as she broke into a smile. "Sometimes we get in these laughing jags . . ."

Beverly's laughing jags were wonderful. At Jessica's wedding Bev had turned the mother-of-the-bride bit into a tour de force of laughing jags. Holed up in the ladies' lounge at the end of the evening with her slightly sloshed audience, Beverly had broken into a stream of ex-husband-bald-biker jokes. Her ex-husband's appearance after all this time had proved conclusively to her that years of riding into the wind turned his face and bald head into a living extension of the leather jacket he had been so fond of. Claire had looked to each woman in the room, listened to the fractured moans and gasps for air that followed the belly laughs, and knew that every woman there, most assuredly herself, loved Beverly.

Now Claire, her raised arm growing weary and mostly misdirecting the warm air, watched Bev's reflection in the mirror as she poised her long, graceful fingers at either side of her neck and pushed the skin back mercilessly until all the wrinkles had been stretched out. Then Bev tried fingers at each temple to force laugh lines up into her hairline. "You know, if I were the dead body," Beverly said, seemingly fascinated with her own lips as they moved, "they wouldn't have to make me up, would they? They could just hang me up on their meat hook and drain me, and I'd be all ready to go."

"God, Beverly!"

"I'm sorry," Beverly laughed, coming over to the bed and sitting down next to Claire. She rubbed the sticky pink foundation makeup off her fingertips with her thumbs. "Christmas Eve brings out the maudlin in me." She gave Claire's knee a sisterly pat. "Just remember," Bev started giggling, "get an itemized bill from the funeral home and don't let them charge you for makeup." Beverly's eyes teared up from the giggling. "See if you can get them to apply the credit from the makeup to a vinegar douche—in case yeast infections occur after death. Hey, it could happen! Hair and nail still grow after death. I wouldn't want a future civilization digging me up and thinking I was a pig." She leaned backwards, twisted across the bed as she reached into her coat pocket for a tissue which she dabbed under her eyes to soak up the muddy rivers of mascara. "Well, have I cheered you up?"

"Talking dead bodies on Christmas Eve always seems to do the trick for me." With an ache, both tender and raw, Claire realized just how much she had grieved for the old, outrageous Beverly, not seen in recent years.

Carrying a basket of laundry, Mark came into the room. He dropped it on the littered floor and looked from woman to woman. Claire knew he was trying to size up the situation, to figure out each woman's mental state. She also knew that within seconds he'd give up, admitting he hadn't the foggiest and not let it

bother him. "There were some clean clothes in the washer—God only knows from when—they were almost dry. You've at least got clean underwear now."

"I'm already wearing Beverly's," Claire said as she put her feet through the plum-colored silk. She lifted herself off the bed as she adjusted them under her robe.

"I think you'll need your own bra," Mark said, throwing a beige one at Claire, seeing it land on her shoulder. He raised his arms as if to ward off an attack from Beverly. "No offense, Sis."

"I'll have you know, I had breast-reduction surgery as a teenager," Beverly said, smiling.

"And chickens have lips," Mark said as he rummaged through the clothes basket. Finding two reasonably matched socks, he sat down on the rocker, almost tipping it over, and pulled off his socks. "These are a little ripe," he said, holding them up pinched between two fingers, sniffing, color appearing on his cheekbones. "Are we still going to try for Midnight Mass?" he asked, shimmying a fresh sock onto his foot.

"Yes!" Beverly said before Claire had a chance to respond.

Mark slapped his thighs and bounced up. "Then I'll go shovel a path through the snow."

"Maybe you could teach Townsend how to use a shovel sometime," Beverly said as Mark walked past her.

"Who knows," Mark said, his gaze connecting with Claire's. He shook each of his thick, muscled legs to get his jeans to fall back down over his socks. "Well, ladies, I am outta here."

They put up with Townsend for Bev's sake. Mark usually grimaced at the name and called him "my type of guy." Of course, Mark was prejudiced against any man who made his living talking to drunks till 2:00 in the morning. Bar talk: passive encounters of an interminable kind, according to Mark. Once, when Beverly got on the phone bitching about Townsend, Mark threatened to challenge him to a game of racquetball—purge his sloshy brain and doughy gut with jock-strap therapy—but Townsend would have only declined, citing the bar receipts that could be expected on any given night of the week as his excuse not to miss work.

"So which dress, the red or the green?" Beverly asked.

"Mom would never approve of a carrot top in red."

"Among other things," Beverly said arching an eyebrow and plastering on a grin. She handed Claire the pantyhose. "Move it. Dead bodies, remember."

As Claire slid the nylon foot over her toes, the radiators banged, then hissed, which sent the cats leaping through the air to the bed, one to a sister, nuzzling. From outside, the steady scrape of the shovel against cement could be heard. Claire actually felt a flutter of anticipation at the thought of going out into the still night with the air smelling of new snow. So what if she was a failure, tonight she'd be with Mark, wearing an expensive dress that flattered her red hair and fair

complexion, and there'd be candles and carols and each breath tingling with the good will shared 'round the world tonight. And there would be that almost imperceptible scratch of plum-colored lace across the sensitive skin below her navel as she accepted thanks from the nuns for generously decorating their little chapel again this year.

Wiggling the pantyhose up over her hips, Claire asked, "Is Jessica bringing Bobby tonight?"

"Of course. Doesn't every good mother bring a three-year-old whose cheeks are burning with fever out into the cold late at night? Poor little guy."

Claire instantly regretted asking the question. She couldn't bear to get into Bev's problems tonight, her nerves were frayed enough from lack of sleep. The reality of the evening set in; she'd have to witness the Cold War between Beverly and her daughter again tonight. At Bobby's birthday party last month, Beverly had tried to stand back and let Jessica run the show, but her daughter had just acted out-and-out spacey. Claire, herself, had had the uncomfortable urge to light a fire under Jessica. Finally, Beverly had taken charge of opening the presents, lighting the candles, and cutting the cake. Claire had come home, exhausted from wishing that things would be okay between Beverly and Jessica.

"Remember how I used to wonder if the nuns had any shape at all under their habits?" Claire asked hopefully, sneaking a peek at Beverly's solemn face. She bunched up Bev's slip in her hands and slid it over her head, lifting her arms to the ceiling, letting the slip cascade down over her figure. In the mirror, the freckles on her shoulders and chest appeared darker brown next to the plum. Her hair flamed. "You took one of the dolls from foreign lands I used to collect and pulled up its skirt and said, 'If you don't use it, you lose it,' remember?"

Beverly's fingers efficiently unzipped the green dress and lifted it off the hanger. She gathered it up and held it out to Claire. "Can you believe we both wanted to be nuns at one time or another?" Claire asked as she glided her head through the dress in Bev's hands. Claire flattened out the skirt as Beverly's nails gripped her upper arms, turning her around. Bev zapped the zipper up with neck-prickling speed. Her fingers fussed, plumping up the shoulders, smoothing out creases. When Claire stepped back for the inspection, Bev's eyes glistened with tears.

"The bastard thinks he knows everything," Bev blurted out. "I'm encouraging Jessica's dependence on me. I'm wrecking my daughter's life. I'm destroying my grandson. I certainly am some kind of witch, aren't I?"

Dropping down on the bed, Claire's shoulders cramped as her sister's pain became her own sinking brand of cold.

"Do I tell the bastard to take a hike? Or do I tell

my own daughter and grandson to move out?" The words kept gushing out—ugly, hardened pellets of pain. "Jessica would have to go on welfare; she couldn't make it on her own and stay in school. Bobby would suffer. And I should kick out my own flesh and blood for some bastard I don't even like half the time?"

Trembling, Claire fumbled for the hair dryer, switched it on high and let the hot air blast away at her face. Her cold scurried in stinging flutters down her arms and legs. The problem was almost three years old now, with barely a ripple of change. At first Claire had rallied around Beverly, sharing her pain, offering outrage and advice, anxious to listen and help in any way. But after three years, after no change, all that survived was an immobilizing sadness.

"Bobby's the most important one to consider, right?" Beverly asked, as she had asked time and time again.

## A Girl

sold her sister for drugs.

Both are missing.

If there were ransom, words could pay,  
or notes that could sing it—

Press forehead to door-jamb.

Unload the empty freighter for either girl,  
wherever she lingers,  
through whatever window she may stare.

Put lights and bells on her feet.

See her step into the meadow  
or the murder  
where thistles make her bed of fleece.

Let words riff

in empty lyrics  
under the long sentence we bear.

Ron Ellis

This poem was first published in an anthology resulting from the 1989 Spring Poetry Festival at UW-Whitewater, *Verbal Events*, Volume IV, Number 2.

Claire's answer felt like such used goods that she couldn't utter it; if she did, the old rehashing would begin, which only seemed to invest a permanence to Beverly's desperation. If she suggested breaking up with Townsend, Bev would talk about how she never could handle loneliness. To suggest helping Jessica get an apartment was like speaking the unnatural.

Seen through the waves of heat from the hair dryer, the woman before Claire, pleading with her for answers, seemed to shimmer, as if in a dream. Bev's stance—the firm, pointy breasts atop a prominent rib cage, the shift of weight to her right hip, her fingers suppliant to the air—was so familiar, so loved; it was the same way Beverly had held herself when she was ten years old. Once baby fat, now makeup tried to hide Beverly's features, but she was still there, loud and clear. Even depression couldn't obscure who she was. And yet Beverly stood before her, lost to herself, begging for reassurances that she wasn't a witch, or a rotten mother, or a rotten human being. And all reassurances sounded empty to her.

Unwilling to give up the warmth of the hair dryer for even a minute, Claire held it on her lap where it jerked around as she reached behind and unzipped the dress. She told Beverly that she, all of a sudden, felt woozy, because she didn't know how to tell her that she was too fragile for this; her own depression was easy compared to witnessing Bev's. Even after she put Mark's bathrobe back on and slipped under the quilt, the shivering didn't stop. Beverly said her chills were probably the flu and went to fix a cup of tea.

It would have been impossible to stand in the chapel next to Beverly and listen to St. Luke's gospel, Claire reasoned. She didn't need to think about the innkeeper who turned away Mary and Joseph. She doubted that even that infamous Bethlehem innkeeper would have turned away a loving sister who raced over to help him. But her body was telling her a truth she could no longer ignore. It wouldn't let her respond to Beverly because the old Beverly was too precious to be lost forever. She could no longer be part of Beverly's system of depression.

The sermon she'd miss tonight would be about the power of love, Claire thought, as she tucked each side of the quilt under her, tight against her trembling body.

Nobody had to tell her about love's power. It could make hearts swell with good will, feed hungry children, and bring peace to troubled souls, maybe even troubled regions of the world. Who knows? The world resounded with possibilities tonight. But love could also leave you crumpled and shivering under a quilt in a messy room with that almost imperceptible scratch of plum-colored lace to remind you that your sister was suffering.■

## The Angel

So fleeting,  
he appeared like a phantom  
with his white chest thrust  
from beneath his firm chin  
gentle enough to bow  
to the carpet of snow  
rolled out before him.

In the dark  
I saw him lit up frozen,  
his shadow against a mountain  
bursting to the stars,  
his antlers reaching  
into the hair of trees  
that walked up the mountain  
where Moses once was.

I put on the brakes  
and looked around,  
counting every star  
in the sky  
strung around his antlers  
like Christmas tree lights.

I drew out my heart  
and saw its flaws  
perched on the mountain  
like sparrows.

Beyond this piece of road,  
I turned back  
and kneeled to the mountain  
with the snow turning to steam  
like a giant kettle  
and poured libations  
into a cup  
and drank until  
the angel had gone.

Mary Rivers

# *The Paper/Arts Festival in the Fox River Valley*

By Kathleen Young Fenner

**C**ut by glaciers and filled with the tears of a melting age, the Fox River winds through a giant forest belt which once stretched from New England through the Great Lakes to Wisconsin. Drawn by the lushness of the valley, many tribes gathered; Dakotah, Algonquin, and Iroquois savored its natural beauty.

The first boats were birchbark canoes of Indians, then of French explorers and trappers. Earlier fur traders depended on bateaux; Durham scows were brought by Americans, and followed by stern-wheelers and steamboats in 1856. The growth of the valley's pioneer economy was directly related to its waterways.

Despite the depleted fur supply, the land was still looked upon as a bottomless reservoir of raw materials and resources. Lumbering and flour milling were eclipsed by papermaking when the first mill was built in Appleton in 1853 by the Richmond brothers. Appleton Mills was regarded as a "risky, dare-devil type operation" by a cautious editor of the time. But by 1854 it was running night and day, filling orders for wrapping paper. The following year fourteen industries depended on the river, and growth was nothing short of phenomenal.

To trace the source of papermaking, we must go back almost two thousand years. Tracing the beginnings of paper is almost as difficult as tracking the spoor of fur-bearing animals on the muddy banks of the fast-flowing Fox River. Convention holds that paper was invented by a Chinese court official in the second century A.D. The craft made its way westward slowly. French forebears produced paper in Herault in 1189 after it had come from North Africa through Moorish Spain. One of the first Italian mills, Fabriano, still makes fine papers

used by today's artists.

Paper as a surface only is in 1990 a somewhat outdated idea among artists. And the Fox River Valley is the hub of the paper industry with the heaviest concentration of mills in the world.

Perhaps the best-known Wisconsin paper maker was Dard Hunter. Chronicler of handmade paper, he worked in experimental channels. Paying a long-overdue tribute to Hunter in April 1990 will be all those whose lives are touched by this versatile and universal commodity. In the Appleton, Neenah, Menasha tri-city area alone, 25,000 are employed by the paper industry.

A supremely malleable medium, paper can take on any appearance. It can be poured, cast, sculpted, deckled, painted, pierced, dyed, quilted, appliqued. Artists have been doing all these things and more since the mid 1970s. Combined with other media and found objects, it is sometimes unrecognizable. Paper in the art world is no longer merely the traditional base for paint. As an art form itself, it is a relative newcomer. Through the specialized activity in paper production, the Fox River Valley supports numerous skilled craftsmen and artisans in the industry that is rarely duplicated elsewhere. The basic Wisconsin additives of white pine, straw, and cotton are only the beginning.

A celebration not only of paper arts, the Paper/Arts Festival encompasses the vast role paper plays in our modern world and especially in the forested lands surrounding the Fox River in east central Wisconsin. Papermaking is the Fox River Valley's heritage. Along with pollution, it has brought prosperity, tradition, and innovation. The very fiber which provides the backdrop for industry and lives in the valley has become since the 1970s its ar-

tistic imagination. This salute, appropriately, will include works on paper. Displays of such traditional magazines as UW Center-Fox Valley's *Fox Cry* and of published area authors also will be featured.

The Moyer Gallery in Green Bay uses paper's sophisticated properties as a backdrop for an appearance by the Wisconsin Ballet Theater. Thirteen galleries from Green Bay to Oshkosh will participate by scheduling paper art exhibitions. The UW-System is well represented: UW Center-Fox Valley's Aaron Bohrod Fine Arts Gallery offers both a preview and an April Show. UW-Green Bay's Lawton Gallery will host an exhibition and a two-day paper workshop by nationally acclaimed artist Walter Klottingham.

An event of magnitude, the festival will include musical, theatrical, and dance events as well as more informal activities uniting the entire Fox Cities area in a celebration of artistic, community, and corporate friendship. Eye-attracting vignettes are being created by window designers throughout the Fox communities. Area-wide focus will also be on industrial exhibits; libraries and historical museums will feature displays and programs commemorating the lifeblood of the Fox River Valley.

## *Acknowledgements*

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## *Readings*

Dard Hunter. *Papermaking Through Eighteen Centuries*. New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1930.■

# *Give Me Literacy or Give Me Death!*

By Robert L. Nicholas

**M**y corruption of Patrick Henry's famous exclamation has not been made lightly, for my version also has liberty very much at heart. Indeed, without literacy there is no basic human freedom. I am not referring to freedom of speech as much as to that which precedes the expression of words, the freedom of thought itself. Governments can control the former rather easily. The latter, too, can be shaped and modified, but mind control—cultural “reeducation”—is a long, arduous endeavor which in the end can be undone rather quickly. Recent events in Poland, Hungary, China, and the Soviet Union itself underscore this truism with real poignancy. The Chinese statue of the Goddess of Liberty, shortlived as it was, is glorious tribute to the freedom to think and hope as one wishes. But I am not referring to the political management of thought or even to Madison Avenue's relentless campaign of commercial claptrap. I am think-

ing, rather, of the ability to form thoughts, the creative process responsible for the formulation of new ideas or the comprehension of the most complex notions that our cultural heritage bestows upon us.

To illustrate this point, I must retreat briefly to our cultural past. I shall use the Roman Empire as my model, for I am most familiar with the development of the Romance languages. And, of course, it is through language that we “live and breathe and have our being.”

The over two dozen recognized Romance languages (i.e., those having a substantial literature) developed from the Latin of late Imperial Rome. As the centuries passed, the languages of the various regions became more and more distinct. Indeed, in the fourth century St. Jerome's translation of the Bible, known as the Vulgate, was done in a simpler Latin he thought people would understand. By the ninth or tenth century A.D. the basic differences among the languages were well established. In the Iberian peninsula, for example,

Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Leonese, Aragonese, and Portuguese dominated in their respective areas. That is, they dominated oral communication, since the moment anything was committed to writing, the clerics—the only ones who knew how—wrote it in Medieval Latin.

My point here is that the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries were pivotal moments in linguistic development because people began to write in the vernacular. At first it was a marginal gloss to a Latin text, or a utilitarian note of some sort—a bill, a list, etc. Orthography was not systematized for several hundred more years. To realize the difficulty of writing down something that has never been written before, consider how to spell a horse's whinny, a dog's bark, or a pig's grunts. We have humanized these sounds to make them spellable, but “neigh” is not at all similar to a real whinny, nor is “bow wow” remotely akin to a bark (the Chinese say “wang, wang”). So, how are we to spell these sounds?

A more serious aspect of the problem is the creation of ideas themselves. Did people experience existential anguish before the term was coined in the late nineteenth century and popularized in the twentieth? Did romantic love exist before it was invented by the Provençal troubadours of southern France in the thirteenth century? Remember La Rochefoucauld's comment: "If man had never heard talk of love, he would never have fallen in love." But my incredulous students, when confronted with the startling revelation that romantic love was actually invented at some point in history, have been known to ask: "How were there babies?" My reply is straightforward: sex, of course. You don't need to be in love to have sex, which is a strange statement to have to utter today. In this regard I would submit that our oversexed age is quite similar to the Middle Ages. In fact, it is not an idle query to wonder if our concept of love has not changed radically in just the last generation. Unrequited love or Platonic love, logical adjuncts to romantic love seven hundred years ago, are total strangers to the notion today.

After the initial marginal glosses and lists came more sophisticated expressions—short verses, parables and other didactic stories, translations of Latin tales, epic narratives dedicated to heroic figures, etc. The creation of universities at the end of the twelfth century gave rise to a new merchant class and a real lecture. In a sense, there was a switch from literature for illiterates, which was essentially "auditure," to a lay literate society.

In the later Middle Ages, ever larger doses of irony, satire and morally neutral musings demanded an increasingly higher level of sophistication on the part of the reader who, as a result, was slowly but surely being civilized and educated. As literature became more varied, ambiguous and layered with multiple meanings, so also increased the reader's linguistic acumen and philosophical profundity.

This process continues even today, of course. A cursory comparison of the twentieth-century novel with the realistic masterpieces of the late nineteenth century underscores the progression towards a total subjectivism. As the medieval painter's brush depicted each object, as the impressionist's evoked not the thing but the perspective with which we see it, and as the cubist's brought forth the conceptual abstractions formed behind the retina, as it were, so also does the modern novel increasingly probe our subconscious. But only for a few. The level of sophistication demanded by serious literature today is farther and farther beyond the reach of many.

Most current indicators show that our educational level is diminishing. Whether the analyst be a Bloom or a Hirsch, whether the measurement be the SAT or assorted achievement tests, whether our students be minorities or not, many of them are falling by the educational wayside. To some extent, we are experiencing the opposite trend of the Middle Ages. The rising trajectory of progress, in terms of the general populace at least, may have peaked. Is the downturn we see now inevitable?

We should be appalled by the level of language usage now propagated in our society. Language, for many, has ceased to be a skill to refine and manipulate with ease; it is no longer an instrument capable of the finest tuning. For them oral expression apparently serves only the primary needs: food, shelter, bodily functions. In this regard, consider some of the lyrics of pop music. Consider the profanity that abounds in many movies. The linguistic violence foisted upon us may, in terms of our intellectual capacity, be more damaging in the long run than the visual violence. Consider some athletes and others who struggle with simple declarative sentences: "Like you know what I mean, well, that is, like you get what I'm saying, right?" Does their active vocabulary in English

exceed one thousand words? No wonder that many publishers want trade books written at the fifth-grade level, that talk shows feature loudmouths who assault our ears and our common sense, that television sitcoms are embarrassingly inane. How can we expect audiences comfortable with such fare to read or watch, for example, a Shakespeare play, let alone appreciate it?

An adjunct to this inability to read critically is the dearth of what E. D. Hirsch calls "cultural literacy." Here are two personal illustrations of his point. Last year while observing a teaching assistant's class I overheard two students, irritated by the inclusion in a reading of the names "Stanley and Livingstone," ask a classmate if he knew who they were. He didn't but surmised that it was a historical reference of some kind. That seemed to satisfy the first two; at least their impatience subsided. Several years ago a secretary in our department typed a letter for a colleague that included the phrase "the patience of Job." She didn't know the reference and changed Job to Bob, since that was the letter writer's name. As language usage declines in quality, so also does the ability to think.

Why is this happening? Firm answers are hard to come by, but let me offer a few musings. José Ortega y Gasset, a well-known Spanish philosopher, wrote in his *Revolt of the Masses* that the Industrial Revolution gave rise to what he called "mass man." What previously had been out of reach or a privilege became a right. And by the early twentieth century the masses imposed their mediocre methods and tastes on much of society. Ortega is not referring to democracy per se, but of course the Industrial Revolution coincides, approximately, with our own revolution, the French Revolution and, only a few decades later, the seeds of the Marxist Revolution. In a relatively short span of time the Western

world was radically wrenched out of its age-old channel. The change was as profound as reversing the Mississippi River's southward flow.

But what happens to the mass mentality in a post-industrial age, an age when the high pay for assembly-line work is almost gone? We seem to be entering an era of extreme polarization: high tech versus no tech at all. And there may be no middle ground. In literary criticism a new baroque obscurantism among a few intellectuals contrasts with the inability of many to read well or to think deeply. The following quotation from a review of a recent book of criticism, although tongue-in-cheek, provides a peek at one of today's literary trends:

The propaedeutic foreword . . . is an indispensable introduction to [the author's] obliquely maieutic, overtly pleonastic, mildly synergistic, seemingly desultory, partly exacerbating, totally etymonic, and completely mnemonic, transumptive discourse.

In scientific circles some researchers' teams of graduate students are forced to specialize so quickly that, in the words of a colleague from geophysics, they become "needle sitters," neophytes whose forced early specialization is achieved at the sacrifice of much general scientific knowledge.

This same polarization is reflected in other sectors of our society. The medical delivery system provides catscans, laser surgery, organ transplants, genetic engineering, and, yet, forty million Americans do not enjoy basic health care at all. There are five and six county areas in some states where no hospital will deliver a baby. Our post-industrialist money makers are just that, money makers. They manufacture no new products. And greed and corruption abound, whether in HUD, the S.&L.s, the giant mergers, C.E.O.s' salaries, etc. Our current language reflects their values: "supply-side economics," "leveraged buyouts," "unfriendly take-

overs," "insider trading," "trickle-down theory," "junk bonds." And, all the while, the number of Americans living below the official poverty level is alarmingly high. The polarization deepens.

What can be done? How can we turn our society around? I really don't think it would be that difficult. New ideas are often disarmingly simple. Barbed wire was, perhaps, the single most important civilizing force in the American West of the nineteenth century. And, yet, it had an inauspicious beginning, for it was first conceived to keep things out. Only with the reversal of that principle—to keep things in—was it accepted and popularized.

Patrick Henry's exclamation was a grand challenge. Mine is a tiny plea. I'm only asking for a little poetry, a bit more pride in that which distinguishes us from animals. And could we be a little less hedonistic? How about downplaying somewhat our adversarial approach to everything? We might even get courageous and consider some action against the blatant obscenity of selected movies or music videos. I really don't think that would endanger our First Amendment rights. Why not encourage more permanence and less planned obsolescence? Couldn't we pay a trifle more attention to our children? Shouldn't we read to them a little more?

There is, of course, much that is good about our society. Many bright young people are much advanced over what previous generations were at their age. Still, many others are completely turned off. Recent comments by a secondary teacher, writing in a local newspaper, attribute our failing students to the new generation of parents:

I've taught wealthy students, poor students, whites, blacks, Haitians, Cubans, Hispanics, Orientals, Vietnamese and migrant workers, very often all in the same class and in various degrees of intellect that were in no

way dependent on their races. Their intellects were, however, almost solely based on one thing: their learning environment at home, particularly in their very early years.

Today I can go into any lower-level class and ask the students if they remember being read to often when they were young. Almost no hands go up. How many of their parents read a newspaper every day or subscribe to a couple of magazines? Almost no hands. How many of your parents smoke? Almost all their hands go up. How many of your parents take an interest in your progress at school and encourage and make you feel proud of your accomplishments? Few hands. How many of your parents go out at night quite often? Lots of hands. Do you and your family watch more than two hours of TV a night? Lots of hands. But if I were to go to any upper-level class and ask these same questions, the response would be reversed.

Again, high tech or no tech at all.

What we need are a few new ideas, some rekindled linguistic elegance and renewed cultural pride to go with them. If we can exult over what we say and how we say it, if we can be better readers and thinkers, we will recover. If not, our very democratic processes will be at risk. So, give us literacy and all it signifies—the ability to entwine words into new thoughts, to create through others' words memories that were never ours, to fill the empty pages of our children's lives, to perpetuate in ourselves life's highest values, in a word, to create and renew ourselves, thereby affirming over and over our fundamental human dignity. Without such affirmation there is death of the spirit. And only a living spirit promotes social justice, encourages charity and engenders hope. Give us literacy and the civilization it embodies, for there really is no alternative.■



Margaret H'Doubler in the 1920s. (Courtesy UW Archives X26 2136)

## H'Doubler and the Wisconsin Dance Idea

By Deborah Thomas

Margaret H'Doubler perceived dance as an art form that is accessible to scientific exploration. She provided a structure for the student to experience self-directed learning. In her 1950 thesis, *The Wisconsin Dance Idea*, Ruth June Rose (student of H'Doubler) clarified the concepts that strongly influenced this special approach to dance education. H'Doubler always used a skeleton to help students understand the voluntary muscle system and movement principles. As she explained, "Man

belongs to physics because he moves, and because he has a body mass that is capable of having its position and the position of its parts changed by the application of force."

Learning from psychology H'Doubler asked: "How does man learn? Why is movement important to man? Why does man create art? Is dance an art? How and why does man learn to dance? Is dance of value? The answers were found by analyzing personal experience.

In physiology H'Doubler found

the basis of rhythmic structure and experience: "The nature of muscle action is inherently rhythmic." The experience of space and rhythm came from exploration of body position, joint action, balance, tension, weight, and resistance.

H'Doubler was influenced profoundly by a book by Yrjö Hirn, *Origins of Art*, published in 1900. He observed that movement toward pleasure and away from pain serves to promote emotional balance. H'Doubler noted that this parallels the movement of the single-celled animal. Well before Merce Cunningham espoused the idea, H'Doubler felt that movement itself could be a subject for dance.

The relevance of H'Doubler's teaching to the later development of dance therapy was noted by Rose:

Miss H'Doubler could distinguish for dance two phases . . . one, the unseen inner dance of motor imagery, and two, the outer observed dance. If the outer form grew from inner conditions and was genuine and sincere in its expression of them, it was biological and organic form."

In the vocabulary of dance therapy this is known as "authentic movement."

In her second book, *Dance and Its Place in Education* H'Doubler explains something which reveals the nature of her ideas:

The average person finds his body, if not an expensive liability, at least an instrument over which he has limited control and with which he can express still less. Every teacher therefore faces the problem in both its forms, the fear of emotion and of emotional expression, and the imprisonment of the personality in the still unresponsive body. [Yet] . . . the emotional life of the normal human being must find some outlet of expression and some answering satisfaction from his fellows.■

# Margaret H'Doubler's Ideas on the Role of Dance in Education:

## *Using Art and Science to Promote Individual Growth*

By Mary Ann Brehm

**M**argaret H'Doubler believed that dance could play an important role in basic education. Her written works and my interviews with six dance educators who studied under her are the sources for this article on her innovative thinking. H'Doubler believed self-knowledge is the basis for understanding the needs of others and that learning to control and be responsible for one's own movements would lead to responsible action in society. H'Doubler's approach to dance education rested upon two convictions about education in general: **the purpose of education is to enable each individual to live as fully as possible, and the educational process must be based upon scientific facts concerning the nature of human life.**

Originally trained as a biologist, H'Doubler viewed reality through the eyes of a natural scientist. Looking at art and its relation to life from a biological standpoint, she observed that even single living cells need to adapt and change according to the situation and environment: "Science reveals that there is embedded in the living protoplasm of the fertilized human cell self-regulating, goal-seeking, purposeful tendencies that direct development toward a unified whole." (1948, p. 2) H'Doubler saw these as creative tendencies. Survival depends on an organism's creative use of its resources: "Life's creative principle of adjustment . . . is an inherent biological principle before it is an art principle." (1940,

Discovering the inherent rhythm of movement was important in H'Doubler's teaching. (Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin)



p. xxi) Here H'Doubler identified a biological basis for mankind's urge to create art. Furthermore, "since creativeness has at its source nature's plan for survival, we must view it as an innate capacity possessed in some degree by everyone." (1940, p. 4)

H'Doubler saw dance as an endeavor that fulfills the human need for both physical activity and creativity. It was the combination of body movement and creativity in dance which excited her. She recognized that "all that man has accomplished has been executed by bodily movement." (1940, p. xvii) In order to survive people must move. Vigorous physical activity and its counterpart, relaxation, are exhilarating, tension-releasing, and "re-creative in the best meaning of the word." (1940, p. 163) The potential for dance to combine both the joy in creating and joy in movement led H'Doubler to develop an approach to dance that recognizes everyone's right and need to dance.

The feeling of joy of movement was not enough, however, for H'Doubler's vision of dance education. Dancers must also understand what they are doing, since humans are not only moving, and feeling but also thinking beings. Because she wanted to educate the whole person, she stressed understanding as well as responding emotionally to movement. She articulated the scientific facts of movement as she understood them. For H'Doubler, part of the nature of movement was that people feel a response to their movements and that those movements can be consciously understood and directed. H'Doubler believed that emotional material was the "central subject matter" of all art (1940, p. xxi) and that "science cannot certainly make art, but it can contribute to a truthful art." (1971, p.5) In H'Doubler's view thinking and feeling and science and art are closely intertwined and support each other.

H'Doubler summarized the analytic framework she developed in

## H'Doubler and Dance

By Deborah Thomas

Margaret H'Doubler was born in Beloit, Kansas in 1889 of Swiss heritage. She grew up in Madison. In 1910 after receiving a Bachelor's degree in biological sciences at the University of Wisconsin, she began teaching there in what was then the women's physical training program. (Basketball was her favorite subject!) Six years later her chairperson Blanche Trilling began urging Margaret to investigate the idea of teaching dance at the college level. In 1916-17 H'Doubler was studying philosophy at Columbia College in New York, and she reluctantly visited some dancing schools there. She did find some useful experiential ideas in music classes for children, and her classes at Columbia exposed her to the ideas of John Dewey and William James.

In 1919 she began to teach dancing at the University of Wisconsin. From the beginning she was full of enthusiasm for the special gifts of each student; as she developed her principles and methods of teaching, it became clear to her that dance could be a vehicle for self-understanding and a well-directed life. Her knowledge of anatomy and physiology influenced her ways of teaching movement exploration. Contemporary thinking in physics, psychology, and aesthetics had a profound influence on the development of her educational philosophy and methods. By 1926 she had published two books on the role of dance in education, and in that year the University of Wisconsin granted her request to establish a dance major. This was the first college dance department in the world and was for several years the only one. During the more than thirty years that Margaret H'Doubler taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison many dance majors were developed in colleges and universities all over the United States by her students.

H'Doubler's most well-known book, *Dance—A Creative Art Experience*, was published in 1940. After her official retirement in 1952 she continued to write on dance education. She frequently taught during Madison summer sessions and returned in 1976 for the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the dance major. She died in a nursing home in 1982. Louise Kloepper and Mary Fee carried forward the dance curriculum at UW-Madison that H'Doubler had developed over the years, which exerted a powerful and continuing effect on dance education in the United States.

Resource: Judith Anne Gray. To Want to Dance: A Biography of Margaret H'Doubler. Ph.D. dissertation. Tucson: University of Arizona, 1978.

her *Guide for Analysis of Movement*, which consists of four charts analyzing different aspects of movement. The **Anatomical Considerations** describe the mechanical limits and possibilities of human movement in terms of joint actions—bending, stretching, or twisting. The **Dynamic Considerations** analyze movement in terms of

space, time, and force. **Rhythmic Analysis** of movement is based on her observation of the nature of the nerve-muscle action: "Muscle action is characterized by a period of action followed by a period of rest." (1971, pp. 13-14) Thus, muscular action is inherently rhythmic in nature. Rhythm is "an attribute of man's nature. It is a constant prin-

ciple of muscular action which is control and release, work and rest, and is the only form in which muscular action can take place." (1940, p. 86) The final chart, **Quality Considerations**, focuses on the use of force by the body structure and on the subjective nature of that experience of movement. The movement framework permits one to look at the objective facts of movement and to focus on one or a few of its aspects at a time. UW-Madison dance educator Louise Klopper stated that H'Doubler's study of movement formed a strong basis from which to work:

She defined everything long before anybody else did . . . She defined what a walk was, from a point of view . . . of weight transference . . . And she also defined what direction meant. All these terms people use, but she defined them. And, of course, this gives your mind an anchor. You know, you don't float up, be in the clouds somewhere. There was plenty of floating, but not where the facts were concerned.

Both Mary Fee and Ellen Moore, who trained with H'Doubler and taught at UW-Madison, pointed out that H'Doubler analyzed movement in order to understand it better as a whole, integrated process. Fee noted that H'Doubler often said: "The purpose of analysis is to make a better synthesis."

H'Doubler emphasized the kinesthetic sense as central to her thinking and teaching methodology. The kinesthetic sense, a part of the neuro-muscular system, allows a person to be aware of his or her own movements. It has three phases: a feedback phase, bringing information from the muscles, joints, and tendons; an associative phase, taking place within the brain; and a feed-forward phase, sending messages back to the muscles.

Proprioceptive sense organs in the muscles, tendons, and joints relay messages concerning conditions at these sites to the brain. These

H'Doubler commonly used a skeleton to demonstrate the action of joints and the relationship of body parts in a movement. This classic photo of her lecturing has come to symbolize her use of anatomical principles in dance education. (Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin, X3 29934)



messages are conveyed along neural pathways. These proprioceptors provide kinesthetic feedback on the specifics of the movements which the body is performing. The kinesthetic sense enables humans to be aware of the location of their limbs in space, the quality of tension in the muscles, and the direction and timing of movement. Without this ability, a person would not perceive the body and its actions or remember how to perform movement tasks. The kinesthetic sense is crucial to a sense of self; it is used constantly by people, although with varying degrees of understanding and awareness of its function. It pro-

vides the objective facts of body movement. The more highly developed the kinesthetic sense, the more accurate will be the information perceived about how the body is performing a movement. A trained kinesthetic sense makes a performer more likely to execute efficiently controlled movements.

Once the proprioceptive information has reached the brain, the associative capabilities of the mind translate this objective information into a subjective experience unique to the individual. This experience is what it feels like to be moving, a feeling that may be a very clear emotion or mood or may be more subtle in texture, less easily de-

scribed in words. Awareness of a movement imbues the individual experience with associations or meaning. If, in this associative phase, the person performing the motion also understands intellectually what he or she is doing, an informed choice can be made to complete the cycle by sending an appropriate response back to the muscles. This final phase in the kinesthetic feedback loop is based on the mind's interpretation of the information it received from the muscles. The nerve impulse from the brain activates the muscles, causing the body to move. The movement in turn activates the proprioceptors and the kinesthetic cycle continues.

H'Doubler considered this cycle as an integration of moving, thinking, and feeling. In her teaching she highlighted the ability to have the objective experience of movement; to understand that experience; and, through the subjective feeling aspect of that experience, to identify it as one's self. This is the kind of experience from which art originates: "Self identification with experience is the very core of creative effort." (1940 p. xxi) With this awareness of and identification with the experience of movement an individual can begin to take responsibility for that activity and to make choices concerning the form it will take. In dance, this is the art-making process which fulfills an inherent need to "order, express, and communicate." (1940, p. xix) Because H'Doubler's concepts of art, rhythm, and movement execution and awareness all have a biological basis, her dance technique was based on natural movements. She encouraged the development of each individual's own movement vocabulary, based on the physical laws common to all moving bodies. She wanted students to find their own way of moving, rather than to imitate a teacher. From the desire to have students find their own ways to execute a desired movement she developed a problem-solving approach to dance.

Through this nonimitative ap-

proach H'Doubler wanted to help students become the best version of themselves they could be. Striving for excellence according to their own endowments allowed students, in a noncompetitive fashion, to demand the most they could of themselves. H'Doubler wanted this for all students. Moore summarized this aspiration as follows:

Her whole mission with us was to make good teachers who could help . . . kids could grow up believing in themselves and not wanting to be someone else . . . Regularly at the end of class [she] called our attention to how we felt as a result of the effort we had made and how we had challenged ourselves to find the coordination. Our bodies and our heads had worked together to help us do that . . . We could be very pleased to be ourselves. And our pleasure in our own wholeness is what she called integrity.

H'Doubler encouraged dance movements which expressed the body's natural coordination, such as these exuberant leaps of dancers in the 1920s. (Courtesy UW Archives X25 2262)



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## BOOK MARKS/WISCONSIN

**TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY** edited by F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. 343 pp. \$40 cloth.

By Robert C. Ross

In recent years scholars in many disciplines have studied the Mediterranean world in the first thousand years A.D. for numerous reasons. This superior collection of essays attempts to explicate the origins of medieval Europe and, ultimately, the emergence of the modern European state. An ancillary goal is the study of the rise and expansion of Islam as a revealed religion and as a political and social force; in both contexts Islam impressed itself on western Europe in ways that still require investigation. But the collapse of Rome, *imperium sine fine*, is the central issue in this scholarly enterprise. The break-up of the Roman state fascinated even the Romans of the late first and second centuries A.D. The subject takes on a greater attraction as the rhythm of that disintegration picks up in the late third and fourth centuries A.D. The pressure on Rome increased externally, while the forces of internal disintegration gained strength and even respectability. Hence the modern study of this period comes in part from the parallel with the contemporary western world.

This collection is a solid contribution to the study of late antiquity, a phrase which has diverse temporal meanings for those scholars who participated in these seminars offered at UW-Madison and the University of Chicago in 1984. In a fine introductory paper, "Toward a Definition of Late Antiquity," Clover and Humphreys, book editors and seminar organizers, summarize the question of chronology succinctly and accurately. Their essential point is that in the Roman world a real change took place between 400 and 700, while the world of Islam was actually created between 600 and 900. Late antiquity thus would extend for five hundred years.

This first essay ensures that the reader will be acutely conscious of the question of periodization. In this context Michael Morony's brief contribution, "Teleology and the Significance of Change," has added relevance. Change is with mankind always; what is lost has importance to the historian as well as what has endured. Thus what may be historically significant can never be measured or predetermined.

Part II, "The Interactions of Cosmopolitan and Local Cultures," includes three papers. John Matthews's contribution, "Hostages, Philosophers, Pilgrims, and the Diffusion of Ideas in the Late Roman Mediterranean and Near East," hardly takes its subject beyond 400 A.D. The chronological constraints

he invokes may help define the topic, but they also mean that his evidence is severely circumscribed. Moreover, much of the so-called interaction between the Mediterranean and eastern societies was informed by the tradition created by Alexander's conquests. Late Medieval Europe had to start all over when direct contact between east and west resumed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In addition a clear distinction between the Holy Land and the lands further east must be insisted on. The friars who went beyond Egypt and Jerusalem were exploring a mythic world, scarcely encompassed by the known universe.

I am not competent to analyze Thomas Markey's contribution, "Germanic in the Mediterranean: Lombards, Vandals, and Visigoths." I think it most interesting that even in such a well-attested phenomenon as *Restsprache* the linguistics scholar must restate the basic problem in the analysis of the evidence, continuity versus discontinuity. No such difficulty attends the subject of Fred Donner's essay, "The Role of Nomads in the Near East in Late Antiquity (400-800 C.E.)." The conflict between bedouin and fellahin is ancient, particularly in those marginal places of the Middle East. This is probably why his paper has an inconclusive quality; the subject cannot really be documented before the Islamic era, and even then evidence is intuitive. The topic is worth exploring, but

perhaps not much more can be done in the context of early Islam.

Part III, "Models for a New Present: *Romania*," is balanced by Part IV, "Models for a New Present: *The Qur'an*." Part III begins with a brilliant exposition by Jorg Schlumberger, translated by Clover and Thea Schlumberger, "*Potentes and Potentia in the Social Thought of Late Antiquity*." Schlumberger's philological analysis is a model of its kind; yet he takes his subject no further than Ammianus Marcellinus of the fourth century. He demonstrates that the semantic overtones of the words late antiquity reveal a new social and political order. The contribution of Kathleen Shelton, "Roman Aristocrats, Christian Commissions: The Carand Diptych," and its art historical counterpart, Terry Allen's "The Arabesque, the Beveled Style, and the Mirage of an Early Islamic Art," suffer grievously when compared to pieces by Schlumberger, Clover ("Felix Carthago"), Averil Cameron ("Gelimor's Laughter: The Case of Byzantine Africa"), and Walter Kaegi ("Variable Rates of Seventh-Century Change"). The problem is in the discipline. The expository technique is similar; the lack of extant evidence critical; the consequent results are basically unsatisfactory and unsatisfying. There are interesting points in both papers, especially Shelton's remarks about Christian iconography. But there must be qualitative reasons why these two papers are in substance so inferior to all that surrounds them.

Utilizing his considerable numismatic expertise and an unrivaled knowledge of late Roman and Vandal Carthage, Clover demonstrates how pre-Vandal Carthage was effectively integrated into the Vandal kingdom and thus in what way and to what degree Roman Africa continued to exert a powerful influence long after its demise. The two remaining essays both treat regions of the Mediterranean under Byzantine control; Cameron with her usual acumen unravels some aspects of Byzantine Africa and its

loss. Kaegi's contribution is problematic because of the paucity of evidence for the administration of the eastern provinces of the Byzantine world. Kaegi is conscious of this limitation and is careful to state what he believes the evidence implies but does not actually substantiate. He documents the continuity of Roman/Byzantine institutions in the eastern provinces up to the Islamic conquest.

The last two papers discuss the Islamic world. J. Lassner discusses revolution in the context of the overthrow of the Umayyads by the 'Abbasids in the mid-eighth century A.D. Of particular interest to this reader is his insistence on the need of the 'Abbasids to employ the past, in particular those people directly associated with the Prophet, as a paradigm for their overthrow of the Umayyids. "The 'Abbasid Dawla: An Essay on the Concept of Revolution in Early Islam" beautifully complements the essays on the western world. To Humphreys's paper, "Quranic Myth and Narrative Structure in Early Islamic Historiography," I must take exception. Revisionist theories on the relative meaning and importance of Islamic historians (sic) of the pre-Fatimid period are gaining ground, perhaps because western scholars tend to ascribe to Islamic savants more than is there. I find historiography as an intellectual discipline almost completely lacking in Islamic thought until well into the nineteenth century. Despite special pleading in this essay, it is brilliantly written and as concise and precise a presentation of controversial argument as is possible.

Every paper in this book bemoans the scarcity of evidence. Yet we have here a remarkable demonstration of what can be done given an interdisciplinary approach to what at first would appear an intractable void of evidence. This volume has been expertly edited and proofread by The University of Wisconsin Press editors and offers a helpful bibliography and excellent index.

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**THE GIANT'S SHADOW** by Thomas Bontley. New York: Random House, 1988. 300 pp. \$17.95.

**By Mark Dintenfass**

It is a familiar sociological fact that novelists in contemporary America inhabit two separate realms. One is the realm of "serious fiction," which nowadays is generally written by people who earn their daily bread teaching "creative writing" in universities and is generally read only by their more conscientious students. The other is the realm of "genre fiction"—those romances, horror tales, westerns, and spy thrillers, which are concocted by guileless entrepreneurs like Stephen King and Tom Clancy (who are more or less to the art of literature what Donald Trump is to the art of architecture), and which in recent times have dominated the best-seller lists and rudely elbowed their more artistically ambitious competitors right off the display racks of the chain bookstores. The genre writers, in short, have all the commercial success, and serious writers, in general, have to console themselves with a sense of their own greater integrity, and tenure.

Occasionally, though, a writer from the "serious" realm decides that a border raid might be worthwhile. After all, for someone schooled in the mountainous intricacies of Joyce or Nabokov, the pastiche flatlands of the genre realm seem easy enough to conquer. And if the conqueror is clever enough, he might even raise a genre form, the spy novel, for instance, to the heights of real art. Joseph Conrad managed it, after all, and so did Graham Green.

Thomas Bontley, who teaches English and coordinates the graduate program in creative writing at UW-Milwaukee, has proven in his three previous novels that he is a serious novelist. Now, in *The Giant's Shadow*, he has given us what appears on the surface to be an old-fashioned spy thriller, complete with a plot too complicated to summarize, a skull-faced villain, KGB agents, exotic locales, a couple of obligatory bedroom scenes, and enough gratuitous violence at the end to satisfy a Sylvester Stallone fan. That he has successfully conquered a bit of lucrative genre territory may be attested to by the fact that his book has already been reprinted, in condensed form, by the *Reader's Digest*. Whether he has also succeeded in elevating the landscape is another matter.

At the center of *The Giant's Shadow* (the title is complicatedly symbolic) is Sam Abbot, a middle-aged college professor with a drinking problem and a failing marriage. A burnt-out case, Abbot is spending time teaching in Germany on an exchange program and trying to gain perspective on his drab existence ("his chief problem these last few years had simply been an excessive and irrational fear of death"), but he manages to brood and mope like a character from a more serious novel for only a few pages before people start getting murdered all around him.

The "giant" is a man named Jeremy Sawyer, who was Abbot's friend twenty years ago at Oxford. Jeremy in those days was everything Abbot wished to be: a poet, a philosopher, a political activist, a free spirit, a great talker, in short, a type of romantic genius—think of Conrad's Mr. Kurtz and you'll have the prototype. In fact, poor self-effacing Abbot was so much in awe of Jeremy at the time that he surrendered up to him the only woman he ever really loved, and that sad betrayal of himself proved the turning point in his life. But Jeremy never quite lived up to Abbot's expectations. Defecting to Russia to protest the Vietnam War, he has

lived there ever since, a giant shadow cast over Abbot's life from a political heart of darkness. Now, however, dying of coronary problems and not trusting Soviet medicine to cure him, Jeremy wants to return to the West, and Abbot has been caught up unwittingly in the bloody maneuvering that surrounds his return.

Of course, as in most spy novels, with their built-in epistemological paranoia, none of this—except Abbot—turns out to be quite what it seems, and Bontley has great fun multiplying the giants and shadows, and orchestrating the appropriate labyrinthine effects. The book is, in short, "a good read." But is there any more to it than that? I believe Bontley wants there to be—wants, that is, to be orchestrating meanings and not just effects. Unfortunately, it is often at those points where the book appears to be pushing up against the limits of its genre that it is often the weakest.

For one thing, the character of Abbot is too well drawn—too real and perhaps too autobiographical—for the genre scenes and heroic adventures the plot puts him through. In this world of masked villains and German noblemen running private spy networks and hard-bitten CIA agents and sudden bursts of machine-gun fire in the night, Abbot seems to have wandered into the proceedings from another sort of book. When, for example, the villain ties a noose around his neck and then tosses him out of a window, the Abbot we have come to know would, well, die. But the plot calls for Abbot to rebound like James Bond, with little more than a sore neck and nary a hint of authentic trauma, and so he does. And when Abbot ends up in bed with Jeremy's still-beautiful former wife, and they start quoting *Lady Chatterley's Lover* while they fondle each other, credibility, and sympathy, vanish altogether. At such moments the reader almost feels that he knows Abbot better than his author does.

On the other hand, if Abbot is too real, Jeremy is not nearly real enough. To be sure, one of the hardest feats in literature is the creation of a convincing genius—in fact, only a writer who is a genius, Shakespeare, say, or Dostoevski, ever manages it. But Jeremy is all cardboard masks, which get stripped away one by one to reveal—more cardboard. And though Abbot keeps telling us that Jeremy's brilliance is revealed best in conversation, the Jeremy we finally get to listen to is merely lewd-mouthed and tiresome, far more reminiscent of Francis Ford Coppola's cinematic Kurtz, the bloated, bald Marlon Brando spouting platitudes, than the original Conradian item. (Conrad, incidentally, was shrewd enough to let his readers imagine Mr. Kurtz's wonderful conversation rather than trying to record it.)

Finally, when Bontley, through Abbot's introspection, attempts to give his story some political-social-moral resonance, the results are often embarrassing. Pondering the Vietnam War, for example, Abbot muses:

Individuals were always more or less guilty of the crimes they committed, cultures always more or less innocent. If the German culture—Mozart, after all, and Brahms, Goethe and Schiller, Einstein and Freud—was not to be blamed for Hitler's evil, why should America take the rap for the cynical miscalculations of its politicians and generals?

The moral denseness and confusion of this passage is manifest, but it is difficult to determine if Bontley is being ironic and, if he is, which way the irony is meant to cut.

The trouble with conquering enemy territory is that when you try to inhabit it, it ends up conquering you. Thomas Bontley has written a spy novel that follows the formulas and then keeps winking out at us from inside of it, trying to convince us that he is still a serious writer after all. But it takes a much higher sense of style than he manages here

to complete the conquest. And maybe a higher sense of purpose, too. Bontley is a good enough writer to have written the "serious" story of Sam Abbot and made it worth reading for its own sake. I wish he had.

*Mark Dintenfass, who teaches English and fiction writing at Lawrence University, is at work on his seventh novel.*

**THE BOOK OF RUTH** by Jane Hamilton. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1988. 328 pp. \$18.95.

**By Margaret George**

First the good news: *The Book of Ruth*, a first novel by a Rochester, Wisconsin author, uses language well and has been honored with the 1989 Banta Award—the Wisconsin Library Association's medallion for literary achievement by a Wisconsin author.

Now the bad news: the novel is virtually unreadable. Now that in itself may not be so bad. After all, there are plenty of lofty but unreadable novels: *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry, *This Side of Paradise* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer. But in the three examples cited above, the aim of the author is at least vaguely clear, the novels at least have a theme—the experience and consciousness of drink, ditto for the glories of youth and coming of age, last the possibility of multiple lives and echoes of selves.

But *The Book of Ruth* has no discernible theme, and its plot—the workhorse of a novel—is not strong or interesting enough to hold the reader's attention. It also lacks what could be its salvation, even with the glaring weaknesses noted above: compelling, believable, or memorable characters. The characters in *The Book of Ruth* alternate between being boring and being repulsive.

The plot, such as it is, is this: a family from a small town on the Illinois-Wisconsin border has a brilliant son named Matt who escapes to M.I.T. and a daughter named Ruth, who may or may not be retarded (this is never made clear), who marries a ne'er-do-well dopehead who goes berserk and kills her irritating mother one day.

This is the sort of family where the women are called Sid and the men are called Ruby and the mother is called by her first name (May) instead of Mother, by the first-person narrator, who also neglects to tell you her own name until the end. This makes for rather heavy going for the reader.

The retarded/neglected Ruth grows up and has no fun in her life, ever, except for a few instances before her father leaves her mother. Ruth calls him "Elmer" rather than "Father" and her only comment about him is "Elmer had a rear end the size and shape of a tractor seat and fingers the thickness of a corn stalk." She is ignored by her mother, disgraced at school, and after she graduates must take a job at a dry cleaners called the Trim 'N Tidy.

She also has a stereotypical bad-girl-with-a-heart-of-gold sidekick named Daisy, who takes her on moonlit swims where she meets the seedy, toothless man of her dreams, Ruby (actually Reuben). When she first sees him floating passed out on an inner tube, she thinks he is dead. Not a bad guess, because he acts dead throughout most of the rest of the novel, except when he rouses himself out of his torpor to bludgeon Ruth's mother to death.

What is the reader to make of all this? Supposedly it is a novel about 'mercy.' ('Ruth' means 'mercy,' although its main usage is in its antonym 'ruthless.') But the mercy shown to Ruby by his longsuffering, nebbish-y wife seems less mercy than spinelessness or even lack of emotion. The narrator has shown no emotion at her father's leaving her mother, no emotion at Ruby's accident (caused by drugs), no emotion at her circumscribed, hopeless

life. Since emotions are the main way in which a reader can come to know and identify with a fictional character, Ruth remains remote and inaccessible to the reader, in spite of the first-person narration. She is a stranger to us, and we never know her motives or wellsprings of being. Hence she does not seem real to us, and we do not empathize or suffer with her.

The narrator has, in a heavy-handed manner, been forewarning us of the "terrible event" to come, which pulls us on through the long pages of nonevents leading up to "it." But the murder is curiously flat and provokes no horror. This is in part because as a culture we are now so steeped in horror from the newspapers every day that atrocities have become commonplace; but in this instance, since we feel no identification with the victim it does not stir our emotions as it is supposed to. When a fictional character is murdered we are supposed to want to save him—"No, Othello, don't do it!"—but here we feel no such inclination.

The implied message of the novel is that Ruth has compassion on Ruby even after he has murdered her mother. But no clue is given as to what direction her life will take after this. Even if she wanted to, she could not continue with Ruby, as he will be imprisoned for life.

Well, you may say, for a supposedly dull novel you certainly are emotional about it. The answer is: yes, I am. Because Jane Hamilton, ironically, is a fine and talented writer! Her use of imagery is especially striking. "She's wearing a hot pink cotton dress from Goodwill, makes her look like lipstick out of its tube." "I wonder if she took whiffs of the clothes, if she noticed that they smelled like they were dancing partners with grass and dew and sunshine." "The two aunts were proper ladies with dusty velvet couches in rooms with warped floors, and shelves full of china dogs children weren't supposed to touch." "Sitting high you can see the land stretched out flat,

as if there's four people at each corner, holding a blanket." "12-cylinder cars that shift like melting chocolate."

And she is able to evoke the wonder and grandeur of ordinary people being made extraordinary—for the first and only time in their plain lives—by falling in love. She does this twice: with May's first husband Willard and with Ruth and Ruby, almost as if to prove the first time was no fluke and it's within her special talent to perform this difficult literary feat again and again.

She has a keen eye for detail and a deliciously barbed sense of humor. For example, "She sat at the head of the table in her extra-large fuzzy green sweater that looked like a bloated zucchini consuming her" and "we watched the soap operas where people don't have anything to do except fall in love with the wrong person" and I actually laughed out loud in several places. In fact, one of the incongruities was that this supposedly dull narrator had such perceptive comments and a wicked sense of humor. The author strains to break through the bonds of the narrator in her delicate observations and knowledge of literature; supposedly this is accounted for by the fact that Ruth had to listen to books-on-tape with a blind lady she took care of.

Jane Hamilton, with her obvious talent and mastery of language, can have a fine future in writing if she will select vehicles more worthy of her considerable gifts.

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*Margaret George is the author of The Autobiography of Henry VIII, the 1987 Banta Award winner.*

**THE WOMAN IN THE GLASS HOUSE SPEAKS** by Martha Mihalyi, illustrated by Lois Bergerson. Madison: Stone and Water Press (Box 3143, 53704), 1989. \$5.00 (plus \$1.50 for postage and handling).

### By Tim Hirsch

As a teacher I work with books every day. Their shapes move through my hands with a familiar feel and heft—utilitarian, work-day tools. They help me do my work, but they leave my spirit dry. At rare times, however, I find a book which satisfies like cold spring water. *The Woman in the Glass House Speaks* by Wisconsin poet Martha Mihalyi speaks to the reader's hand as soon as the fingers touch. This book says "loving care and attention to details" both in the selection and quality of the poems and in their display in this elegantly illustrated and printed book.

The light falling on cover and inside leaf reflects colors more subtle and rich in patina. The shape of the title on the half-title page echoes the title on the cover, and then again, the full title page; this gives an impression of looking into windows inside of windows.

Familiar to many through her powerful performances as a reader, Mihalyi's poems have appeared in journals throughout the U.S. and Canada. *The Woman in the Glass House Speaks* puts sixteen of her pieces together in one volume, and it provides her readers an opportunity to examine and enjoy the thematic and technical interplay among them. As we read and reflect on her poems, we see that the whole book is profoundly more than a sum of the individual poems read separately.

Mihalyi introduces one of her major themes with a quotation from Mekkel McBride: "What light there is I gather and plant." More than half the poems draw on this motif—do what you can with what you've got. If you live in a "glass house," "Walk gracefully." Several of the poems grow out of handicaps or injuries—limbs lost in farming accidents, the effects of abuse, blindness. Others begin with a loss or separation—a child departs, a love is lost, a friend dies. But each poem comes back to hope, to discovering the possibilities in loss—a

"mending," a sudden gladness," a reassuring "lullaby spoon of consolation." Perhaps a collection of poems unified so firmly by theme needs no table of contents, but I would have preferred to have one to help me see the unity more quickly.

In the final line of her poem "Advice" for her creative writing students, she encourages them to "Be like the rain." In this poem and others, she develops her credo as a poet—the poet is one who "names," someone who accepts the necessity of naming, even when it is painful. Naming heals.

Though her sustaining theme is one of hope and healing, Mihalyi's poems confront the human condition as it is. Life involves pain, a suffering sometimes complex, often paradoxical. Though the images in her poetry are familiar objects, these are not simple poems. They have grown out of the experience of a poet for whom each day adds another layer of complexity and wonder, like the onion in her poem. She is able to "keep any small dead thing / alive with possibility."

Mihalyi succeeds with these complex materials, in part, because of her mastery of words and poetic forms. She has achieved the kind of power over form which permits the reader's attention to poetics and diction to evaporate into understanding. Lois Bergerson's illustrations and design enhance the poetry and add a layer of meaning. An hour or two with this book washes away the dust and quenches the spirit.

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*Tim Hirsch teaches English at UW-Eau Claire.*

**THE OPEN ROAD TRIP** by Donald Kummings. Tunnel, NY: Geryon Press Limited, 1989. 30 pp. \$9.50 cloth; \$5.00 paper.  
**FOLLOWING THE SWAN** by Victoria Ford. Madison: Fireweed Press, 1988. 48 pp. \$5.00 paper.

**DISTANCE, RATE, TIME** by  
R. S. Chapman. Madison:  
Fireweed Press, 1989. \$5.00  
paper.

**By Patrick McGuire**

Donald Kummings, Victoria Ford, and R. S. Chapman are three Wisconsin poets who are quite different from each other in language and themes. They know the past, of course, and they each require intelligence and subtlety of their readers, but they each are mining different veins. The startling pleasure of reading them is that each is constantly striking gold.

Kummings teaches English at UW-Parkside, but according to "Hardball Poem" in *The Open Road Trip*, he might have become a player in that tedious, injurious world of pro baseball: "I say sorry, no, / can't sign the contract, / bind myself to such risky sport. // So I go into poetry instead, / a game, it seems, / far safer." How safe poetry is Kummings lets us know in a grotesque comic roster of the players who include "Dylan out in the sweet grass . . . / mid dying bottles" and "John B. jumping / from the upper deck."

Kummings's clever comedy is always language based. In "Revelations" a doctor and patient exchange cliché after cliché in what passes for intelligent conversation. In another poem, an old wheel chair-ridden black man daydreams about making jelly rolls. His images emerge as a thinly veiled erotic fantasy that is, for poet and reader, a purposely grotesque vision of sexual stereotyping.

Kummings isn't just laughs, however. Other poems are quite poignant as when, for example, a half-squashed flying ant—not quite dead—becomes the symbol of the poet's grief for a dead child.

*The Open Road Trip* is quite good poetry: various and interesting and funny and poignant.

Victoria Ford's *Following the Swan* offers quite good poetry also. She lives in Madison and writes in the grand tradition of the poetic

risk-takers. In the first half of "Dead Leaves," for example, through the sheer oddity of her simile, she shows how leaves are like crab shells. That's risky enough, for such a simile might be dismissed as poetry-workshop disingenuity. Then in the poem's second half, Ford unveils the full process and shows her previous simile to be inadequate for not being odd enough. Speaking of the dead leaves on the ground she says:

The rains  
    unvein them,  
        cloud and mud them,  
and the winds  
    grass them  
        out of shape and molecule,  
        sky them  
        into solitudes of air  
as though they never knew  
    of fecundity or wood,  
        and a wind  
eggs them  
    into shells and roots,  
        to be starfish  
        on another shore.

"Dead Leaves" is a fine poem not least because the poet constantly risks absurdity. Another kind of risk she takes is in using a borrowed style on a borrowed theme; yet Ford's version comes out new and fresh. The last stanza of "Loon on the Lake," for example, is filled with Hopkins, Stevens, and Robert Penn Warren, but it is also quite other. Ford's poem ends with an aftermath while those other poets' works end with a kind of depressive transcendence.

R. S. Chapman writes about ordinary things, too, but again not in ordinary ways. Chapman teaches at UW-Madison in the department of communicative disorders. She is also editor of the Wisconsin Poets' Calendar: 1988. That connection may be more telling, for *Distance, Rate, Time* seems to blend two literary genres: the shepherd's calendar and the modern poetic sequence. Each poem is a discrete unit with its own logic and form. But together the poems progress through the sequence of the year. The first poem, after a kind of envoi, is "January Weather Report"

and other titles mention February, March, August. The final poem is "The Last Warm Day of Winter," which returns the volume thematically to its beginning.

Each poem in the cycle offers an intense moment that runners and joggers endure or enjoy within the year. They are not earth-shattering moments, but pleasures and pains and insights.

"Madison in March" describes the landscape as runners see it: the geese, the cranes, the children are trifles seen as "Runners splash past / Yards dotted with cans." The poet then draws her conclusion: We measure the spring—  
Joggers who run,  
Blackbirds that call—  
By the afternoon sun,  
Or not at all.

There is a noticeable Dickinsonian cadence to these lines. And it's not mere musical allusion; it's a reminder that the volume's envoi is entitled "For Emily." With its punctuation and capitalization, "For Emily" is itself a Dickinsonian coup: "Wisdom—is knowing what comes after— / The point in every run— / When the Body says—let's quit— / And the Will—move—on"

Like a good poetic sequence *Distance, Rate, Time* contains resonances amongst all its parts. Another example is how the January poem is five stanzas of imagist compression. The middle one provides a good example: "Shore ice / A thick wind sock / Pointing back." Chapman is sure in her imagery and she works it into the resonances. "The Last Warm Day of Winter" pulls the January imagism into itself with its final-line allusion to the great imagist Ezra Pound: "Wet black branches bow."

Such connections are subtle and quite pleasing. But subtlety is common to all three of these poets. Bravo to them and to us whom they think worthy to read such fine stuff.

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*Patrick McGuire teaches composition at UW-Parkside and writes fiction and essays.*

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# WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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