Wisconsin Academy review. Volume 44, Number 1 Winter 1997-1998

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CLEOPATRA • WOMEN WRITERS • CARTOONS
ART, CHEMISTRY, MYSTERY

Wisconsin Academy Review

A JOURNAL OF WISCONSIN CULTURE

Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters

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James S. Watrous painting Babe the blue ox in Memorial Union at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1935.

FRONT COVER: When Babe the blue ox was young he grew so fast that every night he busted out a whole new barn.

BACK COVER: The Big Swede, Hels Helsen, who wanted to be boss, once fought with Paul for days. The fight was so fierce and destructive that it wore down a mountain range to what is now the Black Hills.

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The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters was chartered by the State Legislature on March 16, 1870, as a membership organization serving the people of Wisconsin. Its mission is to encourage investigation in the sciences, arts, and letters and to disseminate information and share knowledge.

Editor's Notes

Someone once referred to Wisconsin as "the writingest state in the nation," undoubtedly an exaggeration which I won't attempt to prove or disprove here or anywhere. But it is true that among today's finest writers are many who have chosen to live in Wisconsin, and we have an opportunity to become better acquainted with some of them in this issue of the *Review*. In fact, we can find novelist Margaret George in three areas: She has provided our lead story; she is one of the authors included in the Ronnie Hess interview feature; and her recent book, *The Memoirs of Cleopatra*, is reviewed by Patricia Powell in the review section.

George's *Cleopatra* feature was initially intended to be part of the novel; however, the St. Martin's Press editor decided not to include a contemporary protagonist in the final text. It is particularly satisfying to George to learn that archaeologists recently claimed to have found the actual ruins of Cleopatra's palace in the waters off Alexandria, a discovery already realized by her young fictional character Sandy Grant.

The other four writers interviewed by Ronnie Hess—Martha Bergland, Kelly Cherry, Jesse Kercheval, and Jacquelyn Mitchard—all have contributed significantly to Wisconsin's continuing and growing fame as a literary place, a place of and for writers.

Circe *by Rose Van Vranken. Bronze, 17 x 6 x 6 inches.*

We are honored to include representations of sculpture forms by Rose Van Vranken in this issue. Van Vranken, who has recently moved from Houston to Madison, finds her inspiration in nature and in the art and lore of ancient cultures, which makes her work a fine complement to Margaret George's *Cleopatra* feature.

Whenever we find an example of someone who truly integrates the disciplines referred to in our organization's name, we are happy because the convergence of sciences, arts, and letters is what the Academy has been about for over 125 years. In this instance, Academy fellow Alfred Bader has provided the basis for our corporate and collective smiles through his fascinating piece on Prussian blue, in which he shares his expertise as scientist, old masters art scholar, and writer.

As Wisconsin turns 150 years old it is natural for us to glance back as well as ahead, and one of the state's most endearing and enduring characteristics can be found in its legends. In this issue we explore the mythical character Paul Bunyan through the murals painted by Academy fellow James Watrous, and we take a scholarly look at the myths themselves through the research of two contributors to a 1914 edition of *Transactions*.

We also look back on pre-World War II culture as seen through the eyes of *New York Herald Tribune* cartoonist H.T. Webster, who spent many of his growing-up years in Tomahawk. Our thanks to Carol Liddle of Fort Atkinson for calling Webster's Wisconsin connection to our attention. Also we owe appreciation to one Billy McDonald, who is sorting and organizing the collection of original drawings by H.T. Webster held in the visual materials department at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, making them accessible for anyone interested in seeing these charming works. Billy McDonald is a great admirer of Webster, commenting, "What a mind he had!"

Given the centuries of British history available for exploration by the British Broadcasting Corporation, one wonders why the BBC would come to Wisconsin; but here they are, attracted by Michael Lesy's 1973 book *Wisconsin Death Trip*, described by *Newsweek* as "history with a wrench . . . a drama of an American nightmare." James A. Gollata answered the BBC's call for local actors to participate in the filming, and he provides us with a chronology of his experience. *Wisconsin Death Trip* may have been a nightmare for some, but for Jim it is a bit like a dream come true: an opportunity to shoot with the prestigious BBC. Incidentally, Jo Vukelich, daughter of Academy staffperson Helen Vukelich, also will appear in the production, which is scheduled for completion in the summer of 1998.

Poems, reviews, and an index of Volume 43 of the *Review*, compiled by Jean Sebranek, complete this issue.

Wisconsin Academy Gallery schedule

December: Douglas Hyslop, paintings
January: Christie Brokish, fiber
February: David Wells, installation

Faith B. Miracle

CONTRIBUTORS

- Alfred Bader, founder and former chairman of Aldrich Chemical Company in Milwaukee, was born in Vienna, Austria. He received degrees from Queen's University in Ontario and Harvard University as well as honorary degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Purdue University, the University of Sussex, and Northwestern University. Among his credits are many patents and publications relevant to chemistry. He has long been interested in old masters paintings and currently operates an art gallery in Milwaukee. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in Britain and was named a fellow of the Wisconsin Academy in 1986.

- Harriet Brown's essays and features appear in mainstream magazines and newspapers, and her poems have appeared in such publications as *Prairie Schooner, Indiana Review*, and *The Glacier Stopped Here*. She is currently writing a book on child care titled *Tales from the Goodbye Window: A Year in the Life of a Good Child-Care Center*, scheduled for release by The University of Wisconsin Press in September 1998, and is working on a collection of poems called *Learning to Pray*. She lives in Madison.

- Alice D'Alessio, Madison, retired from a corporate executive position and is now "making a foray into an even more challenging world" of poetry. One of her poems has recently been published by the College of the Redwoods in their magazine *The Kerf*.

- James Dott grew up in Madison, attended the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and now lives in the Pacific Northwest, Oregon to be exact. Themes for many of his poems arise from his Wisconsin years.

- Margaret George, Madison, is the author of three historical novels for which she spent years doing research: *The Autobiography of Henry VIII* (1986), *Mary Queen of Scotland and the Isles* (1992), and *The Memoirs of Cleopatra* (1997). *Cleopatra* will air in 1998 as a Hallmark miniseries. The snake which appears in the photo accompanying Powell's review of George's book is the author's pet, Julius Squeezer. Julius is a sixteen-year-old Arizona Glossy with a sweet disposition who lives in Margaret George's dining room.

- James A. Gollata is director of the Miller Memorial Library at the University of Wisconsin–Richland in Richland Center. He is a bibliophile, anglophile, published writer, and theater enthusiast. He has performed in such stage productions as *Spoon River Anthology* and *Murder in the Cathedral*; acted in several videos; and has written, produced, and directed one short feature film. He is the current president of the Wisconsin Academy's Center for the Book.

- David Graham teaches English at Ripon College and has published numerous collections of poetry. His poems and essays have appeared in such literary publications as *American Poetry Review, Georgia Review, New England Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*.

- Ronnie Hess is a broadcast and print journalist who began her career in the 1970s at Wisconsin Public Radio. She was a reporter/producer for CBS News in New York and Paris in the 1980s and has also worked for CNN, A&E's "American Justice" series, Minnesota Public Radio, and most recently WBEZ in Chicago.

- Robert Schuler teaches creative writing and American literature at the University of Wisconsin–Stout in Menomonie. Eight collections of his poems have been published, and he is the recipient of a Wisconsin Arts Board literary fellowship.

- K. Bernice Stewart was born in a Wisconsin logging town and was one of the first writers in the state to explore the popular interest of the Paul Bunyan legends. She began collecting the stories while she was a student at the University of Wisconsin, and in 1914 collaborated with H.A Watt on the article for *Transactions*, excerpts of which appear on this issue of the *Review*.

- Rose Van Vranken's sculpture is influenced by early Greek, Chinese, and Egyptian art, and her work has been exhibited throughout the United States and beyond. She has won numerous awards, and the State Department has included her sculpture in its Art in Embassies program. She holds degrees from Pomona College in California, New York University Graduate Institute of Fine Art, and the University of Iowa. She credits the Art Students League in New York City as being the major factor in her development as an artist. She recently moved to Wisconsin from Texas and now makes her home in Madison.

- James Watrous, who was named a fellow of the Wisconsin Academy in 1983, is emeritus professor of art history at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and was influential in the creation of the Elvehjem Museum of Art on the Madison campus. Painter, author, naturalist, and historian, Watrous continues to contribute to the arts community through his writing and lectures. His painted and mosaic murals can be seen in various buildings throughout Madison and elsewhere, including the campus of Washington University in St. Louis. He is currently working with Art Hove and Warrington Colescott on a book about the print area in the art department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison to be published by The University of Wisconsin Press in the spring of 1998.

- H.T. Webster (1885–1952) was not yet in his teens when his family moved to "a small Wisconsin town which rejoiced (and still does) in the name of Tomahawk." His father owned a drugstore, and young Webby worked in the town's brickyards and the neighborhood harness shop, drove a grocery wagon, and fished the local streams. As a child he read Mark Twain and "drew endless sketches of everything and everybody" in Tomahawk. It is reported that after he became a successful New York cartoonist, the sale of his original drawings all went to the *Herald Tribune* Fresh Air Fund. In the 1960s his widow donated more than 5,000 of his original drawings to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

In Search of Isis-Cleopatra

by Margaret George

Alexandria, 1951

Sandy Grant shielded his eyes to look beyond the deep blue-green of the bay to the brilliant white of the old Kait Bey fort. Its paleness was dazzling and he could almost feel his pupils contract as he focused his eyes. The brisk Mediterranean breeze evaporated the sweat from his face.

Yes, there it was. Imagine how it had looked two thousand years ago, before it became this squat Mameluke fort, when it was still the lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the seven wonders of the world. There it had stood above its square base five hundred feet high, beckoning ships into the great harbor. Later some of the stones had been reused to make the present fort, but most of them must still lie at the bottom of the harbor.

Down there . . . down there must lie not only the ancient stones of the lighthouse, but also of the palace, *her* palace . . .

Perhaps I should take up diving, he thought. I could train myself, like those pearl or sponge divers. The harbor isn't too deep. But no, I would need to stay down longer than that. I would need oxygen tanks. And then I'd need a partner, and another person to watch over us both, and . . .

He shook his head in dismissal. No one would be interested, he thought. I'm already considered weird enough at school. Sandy turned and began walking back to the main part of town. He recalled walking with his dad along this very street, Sharia Faransa, and his dad had explained about how this once had been a narrow causeway linking the island of Pharos to the mainland; it had only silted up a thousand years later. It was Alexander the Great who had figured all this out and had had the Heptastadion built. It had been fun listening to his dad explain it.

❦

Old Alexandria . . . she survived in crumbling bits and pieces, here built into a Mameluke fort, there propping up part of a tottering mosque. But the main parts of the city—Alexander's tomb, the palace of the Ptolemies, the Great Library, the Gymnasium, the Museion—seemed to have vanished into thin air. Not a trace remained above ground, nothing survived except in the imagination.

Old Alexandria . . . she survived in crumbling bits and pieces, here built into a Mameluke fort, there propping up part of a tottering mosque.

Of course there were those rumors that Alexander's tomb lay directly beneath the Mosque of Nebi Danyal in downtown Alexandria, and that as recently as 1850 someone had seen it. But Sandy, in spite of his persistence and ability to speak Arabic, had never been admitted to the underground croft of the mosque to see for himself. And despite Shakespeare's phrase, *She shall be buried by her Antony; no grave on earth shall clip in it a pair so famous*, Cleopatra's tomb had vanished utterly. No one had glimpsed it or described it since ancient times.

If only there were more known about her, he thought. The Roman propaganda that depicted her as the wanton foreign woman, who lived only to corrupt noble Romans, was what had survived in the common lore. Cleopatra's side of the story was lost. If she and Antony had won, instead of Octavian, then Octavian's story would be lost, or he would survive only as a weak, cowardly "boy who owed everything to a name," as Antony had once described him. And all those glorious statues of Octavian, alias Augustus, which made him out to be the handsomest man this side of Alexander the Great, would have been consigned to the dust piles where he had ordered Cleopatra's, so there was now no way of ever seeing an authentic statue of her.

Except perhaps in Upper Egypt. Octavian had not prevailed there. In fact, he had suffered defeats and humiliations, especially from the Nubians, after Antony and Cleopatra had died. And it was known that the priests of Isis at Philae had continued to honor Cleopatra long after her death, in spite of being forbidden to do so.

I really want to go to Philae, he thought. Maybe I can persuade Dad to take us to Aswan over the next vacation. I want to see it for myself.

❦

As the Grant family left their ship and stepped off the gangplank at the Aswan embankment, Sandy looked around at the little town lying alongside the Nile. It was small enough to be explored easily, but it had the feel of being more than just another ordinary market village. That was because since ancient times it had marked the boundary between Egypt and Africa, and its trade goods were the riches of the south: gold, leopard skins, sandalwood, ivory. Here the Nile entered the first rocky bed that made it unnavigable for a stretch—the First Cataract. Altogether there were six cataracts, but this first one acted like a bottle stopper to the Egyptian Nile traffic. Here the village of Aswan had grown up on its banks.

It was mid–December, and the temperatures were just right. During the summer Aswan became almost unbearable, but in winter it was an ideal place for basking. At sunset the Grants were sitting out on the veranda of the Cataract Hotel, watching the triangular sail of the feluccas glide between the rocks that protruded from the Nile far below. The sun had already left the river, but it still warmed the hotel patrons, and a soft breeze was blowing.

"Paradise," murmured Sandy's mother, sipping some of the hibiscus tea she had ordered.

"The frontiers of Egypt," said his father, looking slowly in both directions up and down the Nile. "Good idea to have come, Sandy. I should have long ago. Living in Alexandria is not quite like being in Egypt at all. But it isn't Mediterranean, either. The Romans used to call it *Alexandrea ad Aegyptum*—Alexandria next to Egypt.

"What was it you wanted to see here, Sandy?" he asked abruptly.

"Well, the unfinished obelisk, of course," Sandy said dutifully. Everyone was supposed to go pay homage to it, lying embedded in the quarry where it had cracked long ago. "And—Philae," he added shyly.

❦

The Nile swirled lazily around the golden pylons of the temple complex of Philae. It seemed to be not submerging the buildings so much as nibbling at them, caressing them. The Nubian boatmen were rowing, chanting something to themselves, pulling the little craft toward its goal.

"Look! The water is only halfway up!" shouted Sandy. "That means we can row through the doorway and get into the inner parts. Wow, are we lucky!" He knew that boats could sail into the sanctuary only if at least five feet remained above the doorway.

They approached the first great pylon, carved with figures of Ptolemy XII and the gods Isis, Hathor, and Horus. The water reached their carved shoulders, so it looked as if the gods were wading in a very deep pool.

"Cleopatra's father," breathed Sandy as they floated toward the carvings. Ptolemy XII, depicted as a mighty Pharaoh smiting his enemies in typical fashion—one arm upraised, the other holding the hair of some hapless vanquished foe—was on the far left. The waters allowed only his raised arm to show; the enemies were hidden.

Of course Ptolemy XII hadn't been a mighty Pharaoh or even a strong Ptolemy, Sandy knew. He had had to go begging to Rome, sell himself to them in order to retain his throne. Not that you would ever know from this carving. What had Cleopatra thought of him? Perhaps he was an embarrassment. Or did she feel protective toward him, her father?

❦

Now they were passing under the flat lintel of the doorway, having to duck their heads. An instant of cool dark, with the odor of water-soaked sandstone, then out into the sunshine again. Now they were in a box, with the first pylon behind them, and the second rearing up ahead. The gateway was lower here, giving them less headroom as they passed under it. But as

they approached, Sandy saw the marks of defacement on the faces of the gods.

"The Christians," he muttered angrily.

"Yes, they turned this place into a church," said his father.

"They had no business coming here!" Sandy blurted out. "They should have just left it alone!"

"Ignored the blatant Isis worship still going on here?" his father asked. "It continued for a shockingly long time—shocking to the Byzantine emperor, that is."

"What do you think they did with the statues and the scrolls and the sacred writings?"

"Probably destroyed them, like they tried to destroy the temple."

They had passed through the second pylon and now were floating in the vestibule of the sanctuary of Isis, great carved pillars rising through the water like the giant papyrus stalks they were meant to resemble. The area was partly roofed, and shafts of sunlight streamed down, hitting the thick green water like arrows, disappearing into its depths. Reflections danced off the pillars.

"The vestibule of the goddess," said Sandy's father. "Come and pay respects."

Sandy glanced at him to see if he were being sarcastic, but he was not.

"Yes!" said Sandy, as the boat rocked gently to and fro on the green bosom of the Nile. "Yes, Isis! We are here to see you."

"Maybe the Nubians carried some of her things off," said his father. "Some of them didn't stop worshipping Isis until they were converted to Islam in the 1500s. And they considered Philae their own; to them it wasn't only Egyptian. One of their pharaohs, Arqamani, helped build it along with Ptolemy IV. Yes, maybe the Nubians saved something of yours, Isis."

El Kanayis in the Desert, 1965

"Now then." Sandy spread out his sheets of paper on the rickety table, smoothing them out. The clay candlestick made an excellent paperweight and put the spot of light square in the middle.

It was hot; so hot that he wondered what a thermometer would register. The sun had set two hours ago, but the mud walls of the little house still radiated heat on the outside. The inside of the house, barely tolerable during the day, was stifling and airless at night.

I must trace it, step by step, and see the history, he told himself. Does it add up? There are so many counterfeit art works. I don't want to see it, fall in love with it, and then try to defend it because I so want it to be true. Better to have disproved it ahead of time. And no use telling myself these tribesmen would have had no way to make a copy, or any reason to. There are always reasons, and memory grows dim after a few generations.

During her lifetime Cleopatra had been worshipped as a goddess—as the incarnation of Isis and as Aphrodite as well. Julius Caesar had put a golden statue of her as Aphrodite in his ancestral temple of Venus Genetrix in Rome, scandalizing the city. In the third century it was still there, according to the contemporary historian Dio Cassius. People still must have been worshipping her that late, at least in her Venus mode. Sandy recalled that A.D. Nock, a modern historian, had published a paper saying that the cult of Cleopatra Aphrodite was alive even in the fourth century.

He duly noted *44 B.C.—Julius Caesar, Rome; mid–200 A.D., Rome; mid–300 A.D., Rome.*

In Egypt itself, there was mention of a shrine for her worship erected in 4 A.D. at Rosetta, called a "Cleopatreion." That was well over a generation after her death. Then, in 270 A.D., the Syrian queen Zenobia—Rome's bitter foe—proclaimed herself a descendant of Cleopatra and displayed her collection of Cleopatra's drinking cups as a talisman and prized possession. So, there were things of Cleopatra's that had been handed down . . .

But what of Upper Egypt, where Cleopatra had been so popular that after her death the Egyptians rose against Octavian? While living, she had forbidden them to do so, saying she wished to spare her people unnecessary suffering. But after her death, they could not stomach Octavian.

Sandy wrote on the paper: *373* A.D. That was the last time the statue of Cleopatra in her incarnation of Isis had been mentioned at the temple of Philae. Petesenufe, a scribe of the Book of Isis, chiselled directly on the stone, "I overlaid the figure of Cleopatra with gold," and by the form of words chosen it could be understood that it was a wooden statue, and probably that the scribe had put gold leaf over it.

Philae, of course, was the pilgrimage center of the cult of Isis, and Cleopatra VII, *the* Cleopatra, had also had her cult-worship there. The Ptolemies were deified and had state-run priesthoods and temples so that their subjects might do homage to them. Evidently the official worship and respect shown to

Cleopatra had not ended with her conquest by Rome, but had continued, at least at Philae, nearly five hundred years later.

He next wrote: *536 A.D.: Closure of the temple at Philae, under order of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian.* And then what happened? What about the statue? What about the other artifacts, Isis in her sacred boat, and all the accoutrements of her worship? There must have been costumes, and incense burners, and holy texts and scrolls. Where did they go? Who got them? Did the Christians destroy them outright?

577 A.D., he wrote. They turned part of the temple into a church, carving crosses all over the columns, chiselling away the faces and forms of the gods on the walls. Did the Christians turn Isis into the Virgin Mary so that people would keep coming to the shrine?

He sighed. Sometimes I don't feel any closer to finding Cleopatra than I did when I was just a kid in Alexandria, almost fifteen years ago, he thought. Living there had convinced him something personal and important of hers must have escaped Octavian's agents, and that sooner or later it would be found. He would just hurry the process along. He even felt, in some strange way, that he had been chosen to do it.

Of course, that's Cleopatra, he thought. She always made people feel that way. I am just the latest in a long line. Ask Caesar and Antony how it works!

Whither hast thou led me, Egypt? he asked himself. Good old Shakespeare. Always got it right even if he never saw the place. And what a place. He looked around the miserable dwelling he found himself in, hunched over his insect-smeared, wrinkled papers. Outside he could hear the sounds of goats and donkeys and a few snarling, cantankerous camels. The evening meal was bubbling in the pots over camel-dung fires—mainly beans and rubbery meat from over-the-hill camels that smelled like retreaded tires. In a moment someone would come in and invite him to join the others.

Sandy had come to El Kanayis from Berenice, from the dig that was exploring the old Red Sea port. Not a Ph.D. himself, he had known more of the ancient languages and the peculiarities of the site than people fresh from America. Since his childhood, he had taught himself Attic and Koinic Greek, and demotic and ancient classical Egyptian hieroglyphics. He had often joked that if he met Ramses II, he could at least communicate with him by written notes, if not by spoken Egyptian. When he was asked why he had bothered to learn all these languages if he had no call to academia, he had said lightly, *Only to imitate Cleopatra. She knew eight languages and didn't need interpreters.*

Abdel Halim, his host, poked his turbaned head into the doorway. "Pray join us for the meal," he said. Abdel's leathery lips kept their smile, but Sandy saw his eyes darting around the room, trying to see if Sandy had unwrapped anything of interest. The papers and maps were not what he was hoping for.

"Thank you." Sandy rose, brushed the dirt off his legs, and followed Abdel Halim to the gathering around the fire. The men were filling their plates and some were sinking down on the ground, their robes mushrooming out around them. A camel or two stood guard just behind them, their drooping lips chewing acadia stems. A few children ran out of the mud hut doorways, and robed and veiled women shooed them back in.

Desert hospitality was a fine thing. Many polite questions were asked, and just as politely answered. You are American? How long in Egypt? More than fifteen years! So long! What good Arabic! You Moslem? No? Christian? What? Ancient religion? Amun? Khnum? Osiris? Isis? Yes, Isis.

They looked bewildered. Some of them shifted back and forth on their long legs. Sandy smiled to let them know he was joking. There was no way of making them understand someone could *study* a religion. To them, you either believed in it as absolutely true, or you knew it was false and then you tried to stamp it out. What else was there?

❦

The wind rose, whipping sand along with it. There was a mournful whistle to the sound, one that mingled with the far-away squalls of a baby. The wind was caressing the treasures of the desert. It was swirling past the pyramids at Meroe, farther south, and playing around the avenue of sphinxes sitting half-buried in the desert at Wadi es-Sebua. It was trailing down the arm of the Wadi el-Allaqi, where the gold mines of Nubia had been during Cleopatra's time. Soon the Wadi would be flooded, they said, by the lake that would rise behind the new, massive dam. Time was running out for the treasures of Nubia, the found and the unfound alike would soon perish.

Goatmilk yogurt in a skin was passed around, and its cool acidic taste was soothing. A basket of dates followed. Now the night was settling in; there was nothing to do but sleep until daybreak.

Abdel Halim and his entire family would bed down in the one-room family house they had let Sandy have to himself earlier in the day.

❦

There was silence for a few moments as Sandy and Abdel lay on their pallets. A shaft of white moonlight pierced through the tiny window. Now, Sandy thought. Say it now. You won't get another chance.

They approached the first great pylon, carved with figures of Ptolemy XII and the gods Isis, Hathor, and Horus. The water reached their carved shoulders, so it looked as if the gods were wading in a very deep pool.

Sandy was not here at the little settlement of El Kanayis by accident. He had not come over a hundred miles across the desert, hitchhiking on ancient, wheezing trucks and equally wheezing camels, to make the acquaintance of these particular Nubian villagers, charming though they were. No, he had come by a summons, *her* summons of course, across the centuries. One of the workmen at the Berenice site had casually mentioned El Kanayis, near the old gold Wadi, where a family was believed to live who knew the whereabouts of cult objects from the old Isis temple at Philae. What objects? Well, there was a statue; they tended it themselves, in a hidden place in the steep sides of the Wadi. Probably in a cave somewhere, but who besides a goat would ever know? The workman had laughed and shrugged.

Just as Sandy was clearing his throat to speak, Abdel Halim stirred on his pallet.

"Isis," he whispered. "Do you truly worship her?"

Sandy was so startled by the unexpected question that he hardly knew what to answer. If he said yes, then perhaps this good Muslim would feel called upon to do away with him, either as an infidel-pagan or as an insane person. If he said no, then he would never know where the question was leading.

"I revere her. I think she brought great beauty into the world," he finally replied, cautiously.

"Would you like to see a very old Isis?" asked Abdel Halim.

Sandy told himself not to get too excited. It probably wasn't; no, it couldn't be. "Of course," he said calmly.

"Would you make the journey at night? Now?" Abdel Halim said quickly. "I know the way well. The moon is bright. During the day is not possible. Too many people. Only at night we go. Always. My father took me only then, and his grandfather the same." He paused. "I tell you this only because you say you care for Isis, and because perhaps you can help find a new secret home for her before the waters of the Nile rise near her site. It must be done quickly, and silently. You know of more places than I. I cannot leave my village, but you travel everywhere. I would hope," he said shyly, "that she would not have to leave Nubia, her old home. Not relocate like so many others! After all, she is Isis!" Already the Nile was beginning to back up, to make an artificial lake that was predicted to be enormous. Villages would be relocated, temples dismantled and reassembled elsewhere.

❦

As quietly as they could, the two men rolled off their pallets and crawled across the uneven dirt floor. Only when they were outside did they stand up.

The bright moonlight made it easy to see about them. The village lay still, with only an occasional spot of light from a candle or kerosene lamp showing through a window. Donkeys were dark spots with long ears tethered under clumps of date palms; sleeping camels were larger lumps beside them.

"Bahr el Nil cannot like to be held prisoner," whispered Abdel Halim, pointing to the water shining before them. He looked down at Sandy's shoes. "Are these good for climbing?"

Sandy assured him they were, and, satisfied, the Nubian set out, walking fast down the tract that led alongside the river for a bit. Then he turned off to the left, following a trail that led up through stony hills. The path was treacherous, filled with crumbly material that caused Sandy to slip several times as loose pebbles gave way.

Ahead of them he could see a ravine opening up, its floor descending; along each wall were deep furrows that looked as though a lion had raked giant claws from top to bottom. The cracks were deep enough that the moonlight did not penetrate, so Sandy had no way of knowing how far into the cliff they went.

"Come." Abdel Halim took his hand and pulled him up onto a narrow path hugging the side of the canyon walls. It looked to be only about a yard wide. They would have to go single file, taking care not to trip over the clumps of stubby bushes with gnarled roots.

Sandy wrote on the paper: 373 A.D. That was the last time the statue of Cleopatra in her incarnation of Isis had been mentioned at the temple of Philae.

Yawning before them was the Wadi el-Allaqi, which continued on, Sandy knew, for some fifty miles before reaching the famous old gold mines of the Nubians. Surely the new lake would not reach that far! But what a fitting place for Cleopatra's cult statue to have taken its refuge—near the legendary gold mines.

Ahead of him Abdel Halim had stopped to catch his breath. Sandy waited silently a few moments, then said cautiously, "Do many people know of the Isis statue?" There had been, after all, the workman at Berenice. If he knew of it, presumably others did. Or was it just a common legend, like King Solomon's mines, carelessly repeated? But the workman had mentioned this particular village by name . . .

"It is impossible to know," replied Abdel Halim after thinking hard. "Only our family, I think. But with this business of the new dam, people travel, words and rumors fly. We have had teams of archaeologists about, United Nations people making lists . . . but I have said nothing, and besides me, only my son knows."

"Why did you not tell the archaeologists?"

"They never came *here*. They did not *ask* me. Besides, I see what they have done with Tutankhamen. Unwrapped him, plundered his tomb, put his belongings on display in Cairo, with thousands of sweating tourists looking at them. Is that any fitting end for Cleopatra? Did she not do everything in her power to avoid being led in triumph through the streets of Rome? A museum experience would be a thousand times

worse! You will find a fitting place for her, a place where she can reign in silence and dignity—yes?"

Sandy sighed. "Yes. But how did your family know of her?"

Abdel Halim scraped the soil with his toe as if deliberating how to confess—or even whether he should confess. "My family never became Christian, even after most of Nubia did. In our family we had priests of Isis, serving at Philae, and although most of them converted, we did not. When the temple was closed, we took the Cleopatra-Isis statue away, rather than let her be remade as the Virgin Mary or destroyed. Because she was wood, we could move her. There was nothing we could do for the stone images, except let them meet their fate. For awhile it was necessary to hide her, but the Christians eventually lost interest in her. They are not so determined and single-minded as the Moslems. When the Moslems came—well, we embraced Islam. But rather than destroy the statue, we put her away in the cliff, in a natural shrine. We did not worship her, but it seemed wrong to burn her or destroy her, she who had been in Egypt so long. So my family just tended her once in awhile, to make sure she is still there. And, suddenly four hundred years passed. A short time in Egypt."

"Indeed." Why, that was almost living memory to families like Abdel Halim's.

❦

They continued their slow climb along the cliff-path. Sandy could see that they had ascended quite a bit; the bottom of the Wadi was lost in shadow and he could not estimate how far below it was.

"Here," said Abdel Halim suddenly. He gestured toward a fissure that looked just like all the others, disappearing into a black slit. He took Sandy's hand and gently pulled him toward the dark opening.

About fifteen feet into the slit the air changed, became still and yet charged at the same time. Abdel Halim struck a match and lit the lantern he had brought, an old tin type with pierced sides.

They were in a large natural, but dry, cave. The walls showed no signs of any water erosion, only of slow crumbling. There was no rustling of bats, no scurrying of rodents. The lantern threw a warm yellow light in a small circle, and beyond that, the pinholes and patterns of the pierced sides radiated out.

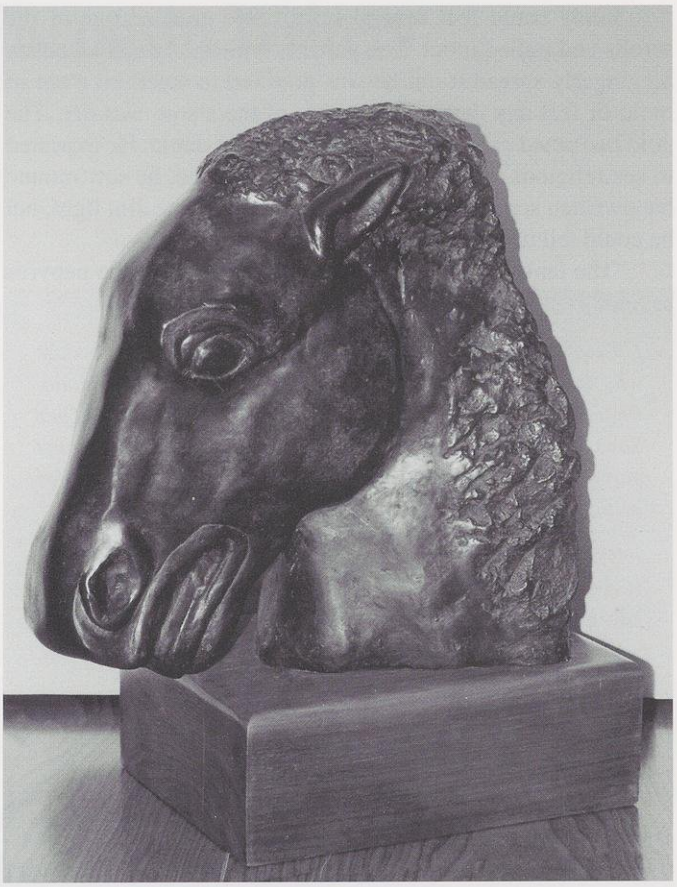
From a far corner Sandy saw a gleam. He made his way over to it, seeing a form standing on a platform of some type. It glinted, showing ripples and indentations.

"*Gold*," he breathed. "Why did you not tell me?"

"I wanted to make sure it was not gold you wanted, but Isis herself."

Feeling almost faint, Sandy reached out and touched the statue. The gold was cool beneath his hand. Looking down at him was Isis-Cleopatra, a smile on her curved lips.

Yes, it was she! *I overlaid the statue of Cleopatra with gold.* Petesenufe had spoken true.



Sandy felt an overwhelming desire to fall on his knees before her, the goddess and woman who had beckoned him for so many years. Suddenly idolatry made sense to him; the golden calf and all the other works fashioned from gold and man's imagination . . .

He was struck dumb. Then he heard stupid, inadequate words coming from his lips. "Beautiful," he said. "Thank you for bringing me."

"We could not have destroyed her, could we?" Abdel said.

"Of course not!" Oh, how close it must have been!

Sandy went around the statue. It was life-sized, and done in the usual manner of Isis depictions. But the face seemed to be different, to be modeled after a living person, if only slightly altered from the formal model. The eyes, slanted and looking straight ahead, seemed to follow him. And the mouth, with its enigmatic smile, had firm, curvaceous lips.

Her feet were encased in high platform sandals, and that was odd. Usually the goddess was depicted with flat soles. He ran his hand along the sides of the sandals and felt a piece of moveable wood. Perhaps offerings were stored there. He pushed on the wood and it gave way easily. Behind it was a hollow space.

"Old," said Abdel Halim. "I cannot read. Books of the priest, I think. Rituals."

Sandy could feel several scrolls. He grasped one of the scrolls and pulled it out. The papyrus was tightly rolled, but as he gingerly spread it out he was gratified to smell no trace of mold or feel any damp. The inside of the statue was dry. The gold had acted as a good protection against damp. He expected to see religious texts of the usual type. Instead, he saw minute handwritten script. He could barely read it in the dim light, but he could tell it was not Egyptian.

"The lantern." Abdel Halim held it up against the papyrus as Sandy saw the words, written in classic Greek:

I, Cleopatra, Thea Philopator, Thea Philopatris, the goddess who loves her father, the goddess who loves her fatherland, Pharaoh of Upper and Lower Egypt, Queen of Kings and of her Sons Who are Kings, do present the goddess Isis with my earthly record. Let none but You judge me! To you do I flee for justice. Let it rest with you.

Isis, Mother, it is you who ordained Laws for men, which no one is able to change. You made the Right stronger than gold and silver. You ordained that the True should be thought good. With you the Right prevails. You overcome Fate. Fate harkens to you.

Hail, Isis, and hear me now! ❧

Sculpture by Rose Van Vranken:

Falcon. Spanish alabaster on mahogany, 23 x 10 x 16 inches.

Shell Form #1. Bronze, 19 inches high.

Equus. Bronze on walnut, 18 x 8 x 11 inches.

Ram. Bronze casting from direct carving in Mexican alabaster. 15 x 15 x 17 inches.

A Conversation with Five Wisconsin Writers

by Ronnie Hess

Remember that old line, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" Well, ask some of America's most accomplished writers, who just happen to be women and who just happen to live in Wisconsin, and they'll tell you it's no coincidence that they're pursuing their writing careers in the Midwest. As far as Jacquelyn Mitchard, Margaret George, Martha Bergland, Jesse Lee Kercheval, and Kelly Cherry are concerned, this is where the action is, where they write, hold down jobs, and take care of their families.

Ronnie Hess

Mitchard is the author of the best-selling *The Deep End of the Ocean*, a poignant story about a family in crisis. It was journalist Mitchard's first novel and its success—it was the first book chosen by talk show host Oprah Winfrey for her book discussion club—turned Mitchard into a "literary all-star." The book was optioned for a movie by Mandalay Entertainment in conjunction with actress Michelle Pfeiffer's production company, Via Rosa. Filming began in September. Shortly before Mitchard began writing the novel, her husband, Wisconsin journalist Dan Allegretti, died and she became the sole support of her five children. Her latest book, *The Rest of Us: Dispatches From the Mother Ship*, was recently published by Viking.

George is one of America's leading historical fiction writers, the author of *The Autobiography of Henry VIII* and *Mary Queen of Scots*. Publishers Weekly called her latest, a 976-page epic titled *The Memoirs of Cleopatra*, "a huge biographical novel that is as disciplined as it is ambitious." It is being adapted by Hallmark Productions for a four-hour television miniseries to be aired in 1998.

Bergland's new novel, *Idle Curiosity*, and her earlier work, *A Farm Under a Lake*, have both received critical acclaim for their poetic and evocative descriptions of farm and family life. Kercheval, whose writing style has been called magical realist, is the author of *The Museum of Happiness*, a novel about the offbeat love story of an American and an Alsatian in 1920s France; *The Dogeater*, an award-winning collection of short stories; and *Building Fiction*, a book on writing. A memoir, *Space*, is slated for publication in January 1998.

And Cherry is an award-winning author who has written over a dozen books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, including the much-acclaimed novel *My Life and Dr. Joyce Brothers* and a memoir, *The Exiled Heart*, which described Cherry's Cold War-era love affair with Latvian musician Imant Kalnin and their separation, imposed by the Soviet government. Collections of poems include *God's Loud Hand*, published in 1993, and a new book titled *Death and Transfiguration*, published in November 1997.

Except for Mitchard, who grew up in Chicago, and Bergland, who was raised in central Illinois, all of the women are transplants to the Midwest. George is from Tennessee; but as the daughter of a career foreign service officer, she had a cosmopolitan upbringing, living in Israel, Taiwan, and

Larry Barnett

Martha Bergland

Washington, D.C. Kercheval was born in France but raised in Florida. And Cherry, with roots in Louisiana and Virginia, considers herself a southerner. All came to Wisconsin to work or to be with husbands who had jobs here. They've found that, for the most part, book publishers and agents will be just as likely to notice writers here as in New York or Los Angeles. And, in the heartland, where commute times and lines for just about anything are shorter, the relative quiet of Midwest living affords the women more opportunity to write.

They've found that, for the most part, book publishers and agents will be just as likely to notice writers here as in New York or Los Angeles.

Bergland teaches English at Milwaukee Area Technical College. The others live and work in Madison. Cherry, who is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, was instrumental in establishing a strong creative writing program and for drawing women writers to it like Kercheval and colleague Lorrie Moore.

Recently, I invited Mitchard, George, Bergland, Kercheval, and Cherry to get together to discuss life in the Midwest. The women talked about the midwestern character, the effect of the Midwest on their writing, and the pressures of the publishing business. Here's the conversation.

❦

HESS: What is the Midwest, and what does it mean to be midwestern?

BERGLAND: My perspective on the Midwest was always a little strange because my mother is from Louisiana and my father is from Wilmington, Delaware. So even as a child our perspective was as outsiders, which was kind of interesting. The culture where I grew up was more constrictive and constricting, and it seems to be very different here. Wisconsin is just more open, more accepting of difference. You can write in various styles, and people don't pay much attention to trends—there isn't much pressure to do a certain kind of writing.

MITCHARD: I grew up in a blue collar family and I'm a working class person by origin. And so the tradition in my family—and it's a big part of the midwestern tradition—was work. For me, self-reliance as expressed through self-employment and independence and hard work as a sacrament is at the core of being a midwesterner. As far as living in Madison is concerned, I think it's beautiful beyond anything, and I think coming here was like coming to the home town I never imagined I'd have.

KERCHEVAL: I teach kids mostly from Wisconsin in my creative writing classes. And they've taught me some interesting lessons. Their language is usually very simple—they don't use metaphor much. And my students are just amazingly honest. They will write about their emotions, their families, so that the other people in the class will all know them. This has taught me to be much more direct in my writing, and my writing has become more midwestern since I've been here even though I've not been writing about the Midwest.

Do you feel that you're at the center of the world or lost somewhere away from where the action is?

MITCHARD: I think the action's wherever you are. You can stand out better here. I mean you're more than a bump on the landscape.

GEORGE: It's almost like we've got a kind of little Eden here. It's both good and bad because a lot of the bad stuff is kept out—a lot of the trendy stuff. On the other hand you sometimes feel like you're out of the loop, which is also good for your work because I think I would be distracted to death if I were still living in Washington. I used to be unhappy I wasn't there when we first moved, but I know I would spend all my time running off to the Smithsonian, going to this lecture and that lecture, and

Ann Cherry

Kelly Cherry

I wouldn't ever get any work done because I'm not all that disciplined. Here I know I'm not likely to be bothered, especially in January and February.

BERGLAND: I like where I am. This is where I feel comfortable. I want to be out of the loop. I don't feel I need a literary scene. I teach at a technical college where what's sort of valued is a craft. And the other people who work there see me in a way as a slightly more exotic craftsperson, and that's a healthy way to be viewed and think of yourself. And that environment has been very supportive for me. They value what I do and I'm left alone to do my work any way I see fit.

KERCHEVAL: I do think because the Midwest maybe has less of a defined sense of identity I can feel a little professionally lost here. I think you have to do that extra effort to get the attention here. And even though I would never want to live in New York, it does seem like you have to make the journey out to meet professional needs.

CHERRY: Part of what any writer has to do anywhere is negotiate some kind of reconciliation between the work and the business. Different writers do this in different ways, but it's a process you're carrying on whether you're in New York or in Madison.

KERCHEVAL: Writers for a long time have lived in the virtual world before there was a virtual world. In other words, we mail our material someplace. The books are printed and then distributed around the country, and we don't have to go with them. Writers mostly need vast quantities of time. And so that's the way the Midwest works out.

MITCHARD: But I live in total turmoil, and if I lived somewhere else there would be more turmoil. It's cyclical, and I know that this year I ate the bear and next year the bear will eat me. But now I would hate to be more available. It would terrify me.

How does where you live inform how you write?

GEORGE: I don't think it does inform the places I write about. When I was living in Israel and I was writing as a little girl, my first books were about the Wild West, though I'd never been there. It was about cowboys and horses. Wherever I am, my writing is about some other place.

BERGLAND: I think it has had considerable influence on my writing. Just physically where I grew up, which was a square-mile farm down in east central Illinois that was as flat as this table top. You learn to look at different things; and much of what you physically look at is either up close or it's a long way away, so that the kind of life in the middle distance that I think

Alison Kaufman

Margaret George

Dan H. Fuller

Jesse Lee Kercheval

people see and pay attention to in other places in some ways doesn't exist.

So you develop a sight for detail and a sight for sky and clouds, and you kind of grow up thinking that you're missing all that drama that you figure must be happening in the middle distance someplace. I'm glad I grew up where I did because I think it sharpened my sight somehow, and there was an absence of action and stimulation. We didn't go anyplace, we just stayed home and walked around outside and talked to each other or talked to ourselves and made up stories. And I read a lot so the isolation, the continuing silence, which wasn't really silence, was very useful to me.

KERCHEVAL: I'm fascinated in my work with what it means to be an American. My first novel is about an American who goes to Paris in 1929 and has those kinds of obsessions about what's different between Europe and America. And so in that way the Midwest functions for me as the heart of the heartland, the true America. I do think there's a quietness that allows you to write about an entire person's life, but it's also just the sense that people here are what's quintessentially American—hard work, attachment to a landscape, and being away from trends and fads that come from some other place. This is where you can discover what the country is all about.

BERGLAND: And people's histories are accessible. In Milwaukee I know writers who live four blocks from where their parents and grandparents live. There's a real continuity; and my students from the south side of Milwaukee, although many of them are economically right on edge, write about Milwaukee like they were writing for the chamber of commerce. They have no desire to move any place else. They like that accessibility of each other's history.

Do you think people have preconceptions about how you should be writing if you are living in the Midwest? That there has to be a particular subject or a particular take on things?

KERCHEVAL: I don't think we get stereotyped about that, except maybe there's this sort of *Thousand Acres* model, in which you write about the farm. If you were in New York or from the South you might be stereotyped. But I think one of the things about the lack of definition of what it's like to be a midwesterner or a midwestern writer is there's no preconception of what we should be writing about.

MITCHARD: I don't consider anyone at this table to be a regional writer, in any sense. No one would say about Jesse that she's from Madison, Wisconsin. I don't think that's part of it at all. You often go somewhere else to write about the landscape that's inside you or the landscape that you want to tell about. I wrote about the west side of Chicago in a way that I couldn't have if I were actually there.

KERCHEVAL: There seems to be no revival of the local color movement in which our entire lives all we write is the small town and its accents.

Why is it that there are so many wonderful women writers in Wisconsin?

CHERRY: We built up a writing program at the university, and that has brought in a lot of writers—some men, but also a lot of women. We've brought them in as fellows, and they've stayed in Madison. I think there has been an increased understanding of what writers are doing, that they help to give some kind of definition to a city that belongs to all of us. And I think that writers feel more comfortable here than they used to.

KERCHEVAL: I'll speculate something more sociological here. There's been a great rise in women writers in general and the table here is split between people who came here because of their jobs and people who came here because of their husbands. Maybe women's lives are so overtaxed generally—you have a job, you have a family. Maybe just living in the Midwest—we were talking about it being a little easier—gives us that extra little bit of time you need to start writing and do our writing because we're not standing in line or going through heavy traffic.

CHERRY: There are hundreds of women writers in New York City and California and in the South, and somehow they're managing to accommodate their work to their lives.

MITCHARD: I think what you're talking about is that they're more visible than they ever were because they've enjoyed a lot of success in the last few years.

KERCHEVAL: Maybe also there's just some *zeitgeist* we can't see. Maybe there's something in midwestern writing that suddenly appeals to the country.

Do you feel that you would get more money if you were men?

BERGLAND: I stopped thinking about it. I owe my credit card company more than I'll ever earn as a writer. It would be nice to have more.

GEORGE: I get penalized one royalty percentage for every 50,000 words over 300,000 because they don't want my books to be that long. But I don't care. The book has to be the way it ought to be.

What is most satisfying about the work you do?

BERGLAND: As far as success goes, I just want to have the time to write. Success for me is somehow getting time or learning how to use time. I would know I was successful if I had a lot of time to do what was in my head.

MITCHARD: There's an intense amount of demand on my time because of success and because the book lasted such a long time, it had such legs that the second book kept getting pushed back. This is strange, and I like it, and I want it to be this way. It's not like I want to give it back, but it's also peculiar for me. I have five children to raise, and they need to have some sense of having known me. They haven't got a dad. I'm not complaining about it. I like the success, but if you want to have some measure of a personal life, this is not the thing to trade into.

But you didn't necessarily know how things were going to turn out, that the book was going to be a sensation.

MITCHARD: No, but I hoped it would be. I wanted security. I'm a widow. I wanted to be able to know that my children would be okay if something happened to me, too. I wanted to be able to work on my own and take care of myself and take care of my kids.

Success for me is somehow getting time or learning how to use time.

CHERRY: This used to bother me a lot because you spend your life writing, and you're doing something that you want somebody else somewhere to grasp. It's not even exactly a question of communication, it's that you're creating this object and you want somebody else to recognize how that object has been made. I have certain ideas. I've always had this kind of bookshelf in my head that I want to write, and there's a sense in which the audience becomes the work. What you're trying to do is establish a relationship between yourself and whatever it is you're working on that is so honest that it becomes a relationship where you no longer exist, there is only the work itself.

Patricia Kelly

Jacquelyn Mitchard

And the audience is essentially an alter ego?

CHERRY: No, the audience is not an alter ego, it's not an imagined audience. The audience is the page, the audience is the poem that doesn't exist until I bring it into being, a poem that nobody else can bring into being. It's somewhere in my mind and needs to be realized.

BERGLAND: I have a responsibility to certain characters. They need me to make them exist.

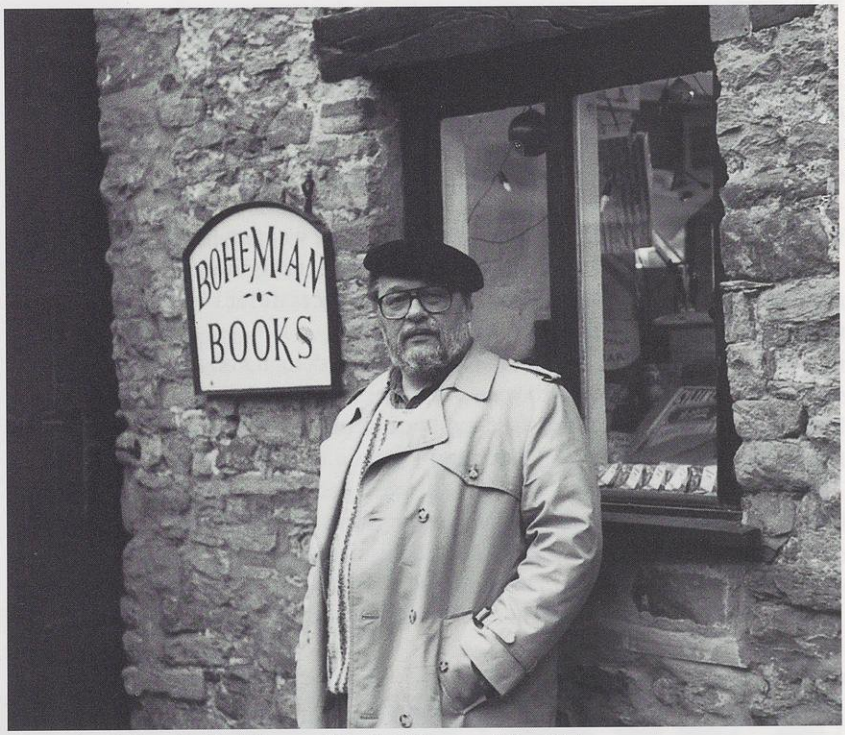
KERCHEVAL: The characters are real, and they depend on you. And in the end for every writer there is always just the work. No one else, no matter what award you get, no matter what advancement you get, no matter what grant you get, nobody writes the work but you, and you have to be able to do that.❧

Shooting with the BBC

by James A. Gollata

Wednesday, 24 September 1997. 8:05 a.m. A notice in the Wisconsin State Journal *announcing that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) will shoot a documentary based on Michael Lesy's book* Wisconsin Death Trip, *which I read over a year ago. I remember it well. What a trip, indeed! Bankruptcy, religious mania, madness, arson, suicide, murder, poisoning with Paris Green, perpetual motion. It was all there.*

Casting call at the Dylan Scott Talent Agency in Madison on Sunday and Monday, local actors, etc. Perhaps . . .



Gladyce Nahbenayash

James A. Gollata in the "Town of Books," Hay-on-Wye, Wales.

Sunday, 28 September 1997. 7:15 p.m. Drove in to Madison early in the afternoon. Found the office building where the call was taking place, a few blocks beyond the used bookstore that I often frequent. Took the elevator. Got in line. Filled out the form. A few young mothers and very young daughters, assorted men of various ages ahead of me. Polaroid shot taken against a blank wall. Was told that "The Director" would want to speak with me, especially because I have a beard. Into the interview room. Camera set up. James Marsh interviews me, after setting a mark, standing me x feet from the camera, having me clip a microphone to my chest. After some questions and answers about my name, my experience, he says: "Probably not this time, but perhaps the next . . . "

Down elevator. I drive to the bookstore, visit for an hour, and then drive the sixty miles home.

Wednesday, 8 October 1997. 7:05 p.m. Telephone call. From the agency, a woman's voice:

"The Director had you in mind for a scene next spring, but the man we called for a shot tomorrow can't make it. Can you do it?"

"What's the scene?"

"It's an assassin. You try to kill a banker, but you're not successful." She reads the words from the book:

> An attempt was made to assassinate W.L. Seymour, cashier (treasurer) of the defunct Seymour Bank of Chippewa Falls. One shot passed between his arm and body, and the other went wide of the mark. *Badger State Banner,* 8/24/1893

"You mean I'm a would-be killer?"

"Yes."

"Where is the shooting? I mean, where would we shoot the scene?"

"Cassville, in the Stonefield Historical Village. Tomorrow, at one o'clock."

"OK, I'll do it."

"Great. Do you know where it is?"

"I'll find it."

We talk of black boots. Do I have any? I just bought some a month ago—Wellingtons. Do I have any old ones? Yes. Bring them both. We discuss sizes and colors of shirts and trousers. She apologizes for the short notice, thanks me and hangs up.

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Thursday, 9 October 1997. 12:50 p.m. I arrive at Cassville, having driven from Richland Center along the hills, through the valleys and tiny hamlets. Check in at the historical village near the Mississippi River beyond the town. Easy enough to find. The film crew isn't there, they've been shooting late elsewhere and are now having lunch at the "Hungry Bear" restaurant, back in Cassville. I drive back, find the restaurant and join the animated group for lunch at the director's invitation. I have a chance to talk with him and ask about the project. He had seen Lesy's book in New York City and was fascinated with it. Now he has stalked all of Wisconsin looking for appropriate locales, authentic venues in which to shoot. Lunch over. Back to the village beyond the town. Park, carry my suitcase of boots and one extra shirt and pair of trousers which might pass for old.

I talk with the director again as we begin the waiting that will continue intermittently throughout the afternoon, waiting for others, waiting for scenes to be set. I ask what part he had had in mind for me in the spring before this role opened. Answer: An arsonist. Not surprising: When I'm not playing someone in authority I'm playing a villain. Now he says that sometimes looking the part is enough. Usually it takes intelligence to be a good actor. I resolve to act intelligently.

Two other actors (including my future intended victim) join us. We walk around the old village, through a covered bridge to the reconstructed bank, where we try on old clothes which instantly become costumes. The wardrobe woman tries several changes. My own new boots feel the best.

The makeup man transforms me in the lobby of the old bank, by windowlight. Hair slicked, beard rendered askew: I will have been drinking for my scene.

The director says: "O.K. Looks good. Lose the coat. Use the new boots, this character isn't all that seedy." Now I'm down to dark pants, my own new boots, light shirt and dark vest. Also a hat. The vest is too short and I look reckless.

I will come out of the corner tavern, not too slow, not too fast, with a revolver in my hand and shoot at the banker as he chats with a friend in the middle of the street. A walkie talkie is placed on the table in the saloon just inside the entrance where I stand. My cue is "Move, James." We rehearse the scene again and again, with fresh directions each time: "You don't have to act drunk—the SALOON sign says it all/too theatrical/too fast/more to the left/a little farther/" etc., etc. While I wait inside I practice the walk and the swinging lifting of the unloaded gun, the two shots to come, the lowering of the gun to my side, not too slow, not too fast, not too theatrically.

Finally, the director tells me to not look down but to concentrate on my intended victim during my walk out of the saloon, down the steps and into the street, where I simply raise the gun but do not fire, yet. I suddenly realize that I am supposed to know all along that the banker is there, having seen him from the saloon. I had thought I was to discover him on the street. Now it all makes sense. Now my concentration is fine. We finally shoot the scene a few times, and it feels right.

❦

It's time to rehearse the horse. It wouldn't do to have it shy or rear in panic. A woman and man in a buggy drive up and down the street several times, turning the corner past the saloon and continuing down the street. The director, assistant director, and actors converse and watch while the camera man and his crew of three assemble the tracking that will allow their camera train to travel along the street to shoot the action scene. Waiting.

When the horse is ready and the tracking is ready, the actors take their positions: Horse and cart, old man sitting in chair alongside saloon, woman walking in street, hated banker and toady crony standing and talking. Cue the horse, cue the woman walking, "Move, James." The camera train is moving as well, along and across the street from the saloon. The horse and buggy go by. The woman walks. I am leaving the saloon, coming down the stairs, concentrating on my victim. The horse and buggy have gone by. I raise the revolver and aim. We rehearse it again and again until it happens in a smooth fashion, and then shoot the scene a few times. I have not yet once shot the gun.

Between scenes, the revolver is taken from me by the prop man. Every time he hands it back to me for another scene he shows me that it is empty of ammunition so that we agree it is safe.

Time for another scene, or part of the same scene. We cue the horse again, and from another angle I raise the gun just after the buggy has passed. This goes fairly smoothly from the start, and it is shot.

Now I must stand on my marks of the previous scenes and hold the gun for long periods of time while distances are measured and light meters are placed near my head and near the gun. The track is rebuilt with great care to make it level, heading straight for me as I aim almost directly into the camera, in exactly the same direction in which I have been aiming all along, toward the now-phantom banker. A large sheet of plexiglass is arranged to protect the camera and its two crew members from the wadding that might accompany the firing of blanks at them.

The prop man manufactures four blanks when all is ready, assuming that we will shoot the scene twice, with two shots each time. He brings the gun over and has me observe closely as he loads it with two blanks. When I agree it is ready, he hands it to me and loudly announces: "Loaded gun on the set!" He will do this three more times before we are through. My cue will not be "Move, James!" since I will not move from my marks. My new cue will be "Tracking!" When I hear that word the camera train will start to roll and I will smoothly raise my right arm, with revolver, from my side, aim where I have aimed before, and: Cock. Shoot. Cock. Shoot. Return revolver down to my right side. Smoothly. Stop. Cut.

The first attempt doesn't work out, since some black cloth draped on top of the plexiglass to ward off reflection and sun has fallen into view in front of the lens and ruined the scene. I have finally shot the gun.

The revolver is reloaded, the warning given, and we shoot again, but the director isn't satisfied. Two new blanks manufactured, the gun reloaded, the appropriate warning, but this time the train doesn't move with the "Tracking!" command and I shoot the blanks without the camera moving toward me, since there has been no order *not* to shoot from the director. The cameraman and director are now frustrated. The director doubles over as if in agony, bending from the waist, staring at the ground, saying nothing. The cameraman mutters.

The director doubles over as if in agony, bending from the waist, staring at the ground, saying nothing.

Finally, after a few moments, the director stands erect, takes a bite from an apple he had been holding all along, and says we will shoot the scene again. New blanks, loading, warning. We do it again, and it feels exactly right in this last take. Raise revolver. Cock. Shoot. Cock. Shoot. Return revolver. Smoothly. Clockwork. The gunshots have been loud and clear, the camera train moved perfectly toward me, the smoke was beautiful and realistic, the afternoon sun was still shining, and it all felt exactly right.

Last take: The only one in which I do not appear. I sit in a canvas director's chair, in full makeup and costume, and watch my target and his friend react on verbal cue to the imaginary gunshots. They disperse on cue, my enemy dropping to the ground as his colleague runs off, holding his derby hat. I almost feel sorry for them. They rehearse the scene again and again, dropping, dropping, dropping, running, running, running again. It feels good to sit and watch, even though the mosquitoes are out now. The scene is shot, and then it is over as the sun is beginning to go down over the little town.

I sign the release form, walk back to the oldtime bank, and change back to my own clothes. There is no place to wash off the makeup, so I will wear it home, an hour and a quarter away. It is 6:00 p.m., and I note that I have been involved with the BBC film company for approximately five hours. I reckon that the full final scene in which I will appear, after editing and cutting, will be twenty or thirty seconds long, just about as long as it takes to read the newspaper account in *Wisconsin Death Trip*.

I drive home. ❧

The Legend of Paul Bunyan, Lumberjack

by K. Bernice Stewart and Homer A. Watt

This is an adaptation of an article which appeared in *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1916), 639–651.

The student of folk-lore has come to expect that wherever large groups of people are isolated from the outside world and are engaged in the same occupation or share in a community of interests, it is almost certain that in time tales will spring up peculiar to that community. It is not, accordingly, surprising that such legends exist among the lumbermen of the Great North, among a community shut off from the world for months at a time and bound together by peculiar bonds. It is among these toilers of the forests that the legends of Paul Bunyan have originated—Paul Bunyan, the greatest lumberjack who ever skidded a log, who with the aid of his wonderful blue ox and his crew of hardy lumbermen cleared one hundred million feet of pine from a single forty and performed other feats related around the roaring fires of the lumber shanties.

The legends of Paul Bunyan are widely distributed throughout the lumber districts of the North. The tales in our little collection have come from lumber-camps in the Northern Peninsula of Michigan and from the Saginaw Valley in the Southern Peninsula, from Langlade County and from camps along the Flambeau and Wisconsin rivers in Wisconsin, from northern Minnesota and from camps as far west as Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. It is quite apparent that the lumberjacks in their slow migration westward have carried the tales freely from camp to camp into all of the lumbering states of the North and into the forests of Canada.

The antiquity of the tales is more difficult to determine than the extent of their distribution. It seems certain, however, from the circumstances that they have been passed down from one generation of lumbermen to another for a long period of time, that these stories of Paul Bunyan date well back into the early days of lumbering in Michigan and were carried from Michigan to Wisconsin about the middle of the nineteenth century. It seems certain, too, that many of the tales now included in the Bunyan cycle were narrated long before Bunyan became the lumberman hero. Similar tales—lacking, of course, the local color of the Bunyan yarns—are to be found in the extravagant stories of Baron Munchausen and of Rabelais as well as in folk-tales from more settled parts of the United States of America.

We have not yet succeeded in definitely finding out whether Paul Bunyan ever lived or is completely mythical. Lumberjacks, of course, believe, or pretend to believe, that he really lived and was the great pioneer in the lumber country; some of the older men even claim to have known him or members of his crew, and in northern Minnesota the supposed location of his grave is actually pointed out. One lumberman interviewed asserted positively that there was a Paul Bunyan and that the place where he cut his hundred million feet from a single forty is actually on the map.

We have found in several localities characters still living about whose prowess as lumbermen exaggerated stories are already being told; it is probable that the tales will continue to be told, with additions, after these local heroes have died. We believe Paul Bunyan came into existence in a similar manner. He was probably some swamper or shacker or lumberjack more skillful and more clever than average, about whose exploits grew a series of stories; after his death his fame probably spread from camp to camp, more tales were added to those told about him, and thus, gradually, he became in time an exaggeration and the hero of more exploits than he could possibly have carried out in his life-time.

The Bunyan stories are usually told in the evening around the fires in the bunk-houses. The older narrators speak in the French-Canadian dialect, and the stories are often full of the technical jargon of the woods. Usually the stories are told to arouse the wonder of the tenderfoot or simply as contributions in a "yarning" contest. They are always of a grotesque and fabulous nature, and they are all more or less closely related to the exploits of Bunyan and his lumbering crew. "That happened," says the narrator, "the year I went up for Paul Bunyan. Of course you have all heard of Paul." And so the tale begins. It is matched by a bigger yarn, and the series grows. Often, the scene of the exploits narrated is quite fictitious, like the Round River,

which is in "section thirty-seven," or the Big Onion River, "three weeks this side of Quebec."

Often too, the lumber-jacks will tell of events that they say occurred on another lumbering stream than the one they are working on; thus the men of the Flambeau camps will tell of the deeds of Paul Bunyan on the Wisconsin River or on the Chippewa River. Sometimes the story-tellers will take Bunyan abroad and will tell of his doings, for example, among the big trees of Oregon, or they will tell of what happened when Paul was a boy on his father's farm. Usually, however, the tales are supposed to have occurred in the "good" days of lumbering, back when the country was new, and in localities not far from the camps in which the yarns are told.

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But to our tales. Bunyan was a powerful giant, seven feet tall and with a stride of seven feet. He was famous throughout the lumbering districts for his physical strength and for the ingenuity with which he met difficult situations. He was so powerful that no man could successfully oppose him, and his ability to get drunk was proverbial. To keep his pipe filled required the entire time of a swamper with a scoop-shovel.

The tendency to group the tales around one hero is universal in legend.

In the gentle art of writing Bunyan had, however, no skill. He kept his men's time by cutting notches in a stick of wood, and he ordered supplies for camp by drawing pictures of what he wanted. On one occasion only did his ingenuity fail; he ordered grindstones and got cheeses. "Oh," says Paul, "I forgot to put the holes in my grindstones."

Bunyan was assisted in his lumbering exploits by a wonderful blue ox, a creature that had the strength of nine horses and that weighed, according to some accounts, five thousand pounds, and according to others, twice that. The ox measured from tip to tip of his horns just seven feet, exactly his master's height. Other accounts declare that the ox was seven feet—or seven ax-handles—between his eyes, and *fourteen* feet between his horns. Originally he was pure white, but one winter in the woods it snowed blue snow for seven days (that was the winter of the snow-snakes) and Bunyan's ox became and remained a brilliant blue from lying out in the snow all winter.

Many of the Bunyan legends are connected with the feats performed by the ox. Bunyan's method of peeling a log was as follows: He would hitch the ox to one end of the log, grasp the bark at the other end with his powerful arms, give a sharp command to the animal, and *presto*, out would come the log as clean as a whistle. On one occasion Paul dragged a whole house up a hill with the help of his ox, and then, returning, he dragged the cellar up after the house. Occasionally, as might have been expected from so huge a creature, the ox got into mischief about camp. One night, for example, he broke loose and ate up two hundred feet of tow-line.

Most of the exploits of Paul Bunyan take place at Round River. Here Bunyan and his crew labored all one winter to clear the pine from a single forty. This was a most peculiar forty in that it was shaped like a pyramid with a heavy timber growth on all sides. The attention of skeptics who refuse to believe in the existence of the pyramid forty is certain to be called by the story-teller to a lumberman with a short leg, a member, the listener is solemnly assured, of Bunyan's crew, who got his short leg from working all winter on one side of the pyramid, and who thus earned the nickname of "Rockin' Horse." From this single forty, Bunyan's crew cleared one hundred million feet of pine, and in the spring they started it down the river. Then began the difficulty, for it was not until they had passed their old camp several times that they realized that the river was *round* and had no outlet whatever.

Bunyan's crew was so large that he was obliged to divide the men into three gangs; of these one was always going to work, one was always at work, and the third was always coming home from work. The cooking arrangements for so many men were naturally on an immense scale. Seven men with seven wheel-barrows were kept busy wheeling the prune-stones away from camp. The cook-stove was so extensive that three forties had to be cleared bare each week to keep up a fire, and an entire cord of wood was needed to start a blaze.

Such a stove as Bunyan's demanded, of course, a pancake griddle of monstrous size. As a matter of fact, one of Bunyan's cooks, Joe Mufferon, used the entire top of the stove for a griddle and greased it every morning by strapping hams to the feet of his assistant cooks and obliging them to skate about on it for an hour or so.

Bread loaves were, of course, gigantic—so big, in fact, that after the crew had eaten the insides out of them, the hollow crusts were used for bunk-houses, or according to a less imaginative account, for bunks. One legend reports that the loaves were not baked in a stove at all but in a ravine or dried river-bed with heat provided by blazing slashings along the sides.

Paul Bunyan's ingenuity in keeping his men supplied with food and drink appears best in the pea-soup lake story, of which there are several versions, and in the wondrous tale of the camp distillery. Near the Round River camp was a hot spring, into which the tote-teamster, returning one day from town with a load of peas, dumped the whole load by accident. Most men would have regarded the peas as a dead loss, but not so Paul. He promptly added the proper amount of pepper and salt to the mixture and had enough hot pea-soup to last the crew all winter. A much exaggerated version of this story comes from northern Wisconsin. According to this account the tote-teamster was driving across a frozen lake when a sudden thaw overtook him. The teamster saved himself, but the ox was drowned. Bunyan dammed up the lake, fired the slashings around the shore, and

then, opening the dam, sluiced down the river to his laboring crew an abundance of excellent hot pea-soup with ox-tail flavor.

Connected very frequently with the Bunyan tales are accounts of fabulous animals that haunted the camp. There is the bird who lays square eggs so that they will not roll down hill, and hatches them in the snow. Then there is the side-hill dodger, a curious animal naturally adapted to life on a hill by virtue of the circumstance that it has two short legs on the up-hill side. Of this creature it is said that by mistake the female dodger once laid her eggs (for the species seems to resemble somewhat the Australian duckbill) wrong end around, with the terrible result that the little dodgers, hatching out with their short legs *down* hill, rolled into the river and drowned. The pinnacle grouse are birds with only one wing, adapted by this defect for flight in one direction about the top of a conical hill. There is little doubt that these animal stories existed outside the Bunyan cycle and are simply appended to the central group of tales.

The story of Bunyan's method of paying off his crew at the end of the season shows the hero's craftiness. Discovering in the spring that he had no money on hand, Bunyan suddenly rushed into camp shouting that they had been cutting government pine and were all to be arrested. Each man thereupon seized what camp property lay nearest his hand and made off, no two men taking the same direction. Thus Bunyan cleared his camp without paying his men a cent for their labor.

❦

What is there in these exaggerated tales of interest to the student of literature? We believe, first, that, crude as they are, they reveal unmistakable indications of having grown up under the same principles of literacy development which produced by a slow process legend-cycles much more romantic and famous. The tendency to group the tales around one hero is universal in legend, as is illustrated by the Arthurian and Robin Hood cycles, and less completely by the folk tales of Rübezahl, the spirit of the Riesengebirge of Germany, Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, and the strong man, Tom Hickathrift, of England. Moreover, like other legend groups, the Bunyan stories tend to be concerned with a single locality, Round River or Big Onion River. Finally, many of the legends are more or less closely connected with a single exploit, the clearing of the pyramid forty, in much the same way, to compare the little with the great, that Greek legends center on the Argonautic Expedition and the Trojan War, and Arthurian legends in the search for the Holy Grail.

Of more interest, however, is the remarkable quality of the exaggeration in the Bunyan legends. This quality is worth analysis not only because it shows universal tendencies, but because it is the basis of what has come to be known as typical American humor. The tendency in all legend is to exaggerate, to make the physical strength or craft of the hero much greater than normal, to make an Ajax or an Odysseus of him. But in classical romance and epic, this exaggeration is a thing of slow growth. It happens naturally, through a desire to make the deeds of the hero seem more wonderful, and not deliberately, through a desire to arouse amusement by gross exaggeration; it is an apotheosis, not a caricature.

The exaggeration in the legends of Paul Bunyan is certainly of a different sort from that in classical legend; it is more Munchausenesque. The teller of the tale of the pea-soup lake, and of the great Round River drive has two motives: first, he wishes to excite wonder; second, he wishes to amuse. In their wonder-motive the Bunyan legends belong to that numerous class of travelers' tales typified by the fabulous accounts in Mandeville and Hakluyt, and in the books of other collectors. They are stories designed to be swallowed by camp-followers and tenderfeet for the entertainment of hardened dwellers in the woods. In their humor-motive they belong to that large class of stories which depend for their effectiveness not upon true representations of facts but upon gross departures from normal standards.

Humor is a difficult thing to define, but one of its important elements is certainly that surprise which comes from the sudden and unanticipated contemplation of an incongruous variation from the normal. Humor has, accordingly, very often taken the form of gross exaggeration or caricature, especially under the spur of a contest in yarning. This type of humor is typically American. It is really only a natural development of the attempt to "boom" new sections of the country by representing conditions as superior to what they actually are. It is but one aspect of the cheerful, rose-colored, but quite distorted optimism which aroused the disgust of Dickens and other Englishmen (see *Martin Chuzzlewit*) and earned for Americans among Europeans, whose boom days are over, the reputation of braggart.

It is this quality of humorous exaggeration, then, and the idea of a contest in lying, which makes the Bunyan legend cycle typically American, or, it might be better to say, typically pioneer, in spirit. And the reader does not have to look far for American parallels. Mark Twain's books are full of tales of the same stamp; Owen Wister's *Virginian* teems with them; in Harry Leon Wilson's *Ruggles of Red Gap* we again meet this characteristically American type of story. The note is the same throughout—gross caricature in fact and characters to arouse the wonder of the tenderfoot and to amuse the initiated by the mere bigness of the yarn.

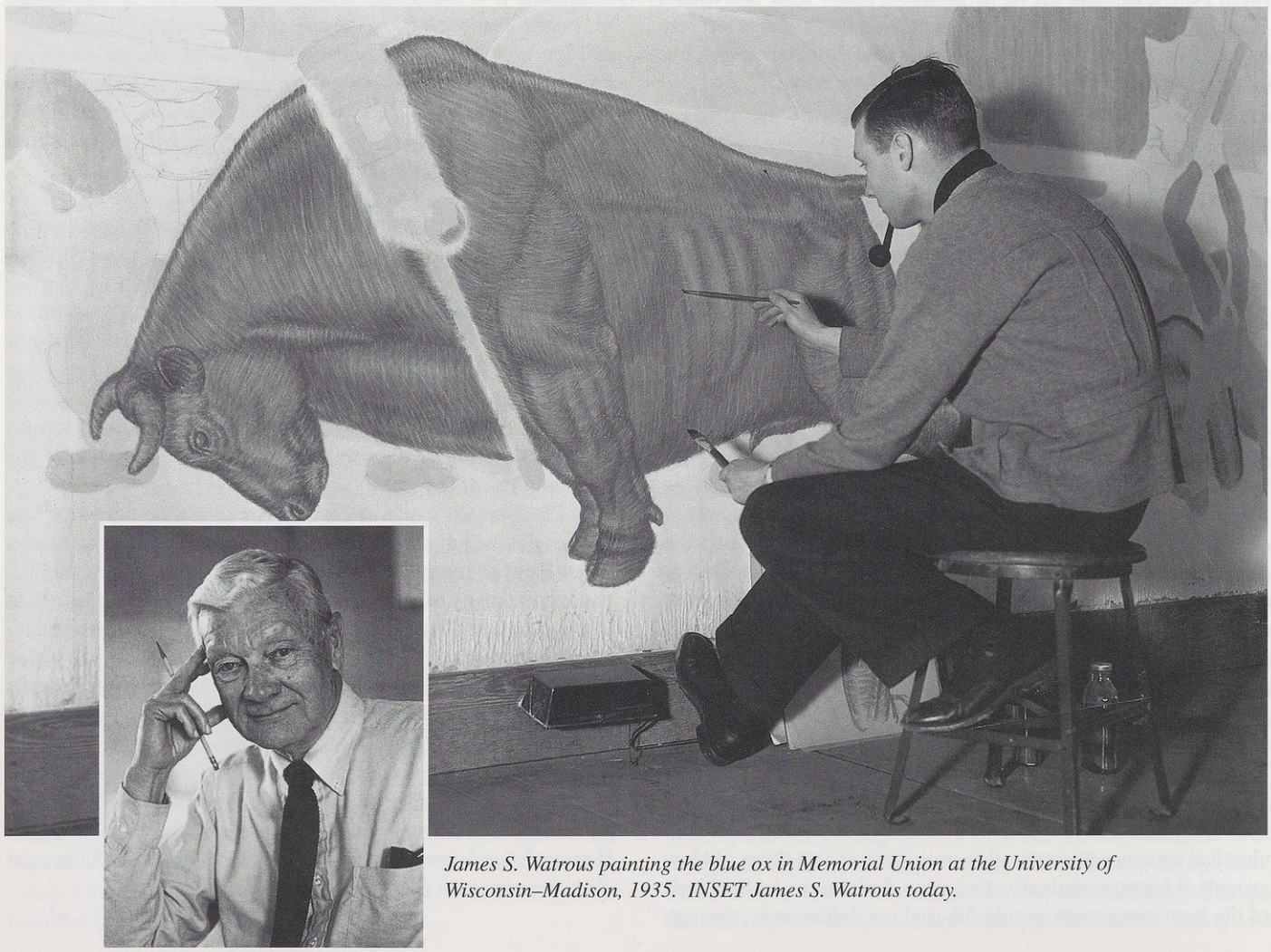
The Bunyan cycle of legends certainly contains a great many tales which sound strangely familiar to the person who meets Bunyan for the first time. It is altogether probable, in fact, that a great many of these stories had their origin elsewhere than in the woods and have simply been added to the Bunyan collection. We have been told on good authority that a legendary blue ox exists in a certain mountain district of Tennessee and that in this same district not only the men but even all the animals have short legs to adapt them to hill-climbing.

With the exception of stories which seem distinctly confined to the lumber districts, and which would, indeed, have little reason for existing elsewhere, we believe the majority of the Bunyan legends are very likely adaptations of tales which exist elsewhere in some form.❧

The Paul Bunyan Murals at Memorial Union in Madison

by James S. Watrous

In 1933 when the Roosevelt administration took over the federal government, the nation was in the depths of the Great Depression. Torrents of hastily organized programs lent temporary employment for the jobless. Among the programs was an experimental plan to hire, at modest wages, American painters and sculptors to create works of art for federal and other kinds of public buildings. It was called the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). Proposed with the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt and her art advisor, Edward Bruce, the novel project was authorized by the U.S. Treasury Department for six months only, from December 1933 to May 1934.



James S. Watrous painting the blue ox in Memorial Union at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1935. INSET James S. Watrous today.

Paul's reversible dog could outrun all the others. When he was tired running on his front legs, he just turned over and ran on his hind legs.

There had never been such a government program, and the announcement of the PWAP astonished American artists. On December 15, 1933, *The Chicago Tribune* carried a story advising that artists in Wisconsin could apply for jobs through the PWAP. They were to submit examples of their work to Charlotte Partridge, director of the Layton Art Gallery in Milwaukee, who had been named coordinator for the project in Wisconsin. Artists whose work was approved by a review committee were hired and received a weekly wage ranging from $25 to $40. I was a recent graduate of the university and was hired on the 26th of December as an "entering artist" (Group II) at $25 a week. It seemed a bountiful wage to a young, unemployed artist.

Those selected for the program were advised that the "American Scene" (which included folklore) was the appropriate subject matter for paintings. And, since the works were to decorate public buildings, murals were especially desirable. The University of Wisconsin Memorial Union building, home of the student Wisconsin Union, had been completed in 1928. During the planning, Porter Butts, the director, sought to connect many spaces in the building with Wisconsin history; the Rathskeller with Old Milwaukee; the Old Madison Room; *Lex Vobiscum*, a meeting room associated with the law school; and Tripp Commons, which was identified with the eastern colleges whose graduates had composed most of Wisconsin's first faculty.

Charles Brown of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and other Madison collectors of American tall tales had urged the creation of a Paul Bunyan Room in the union. The walls of the Bunyan room remained undecorated until an agreement was reached between the PWAP and the union after I proposed a series of murals that would recount the legends of the larger-than-life lumberjack.

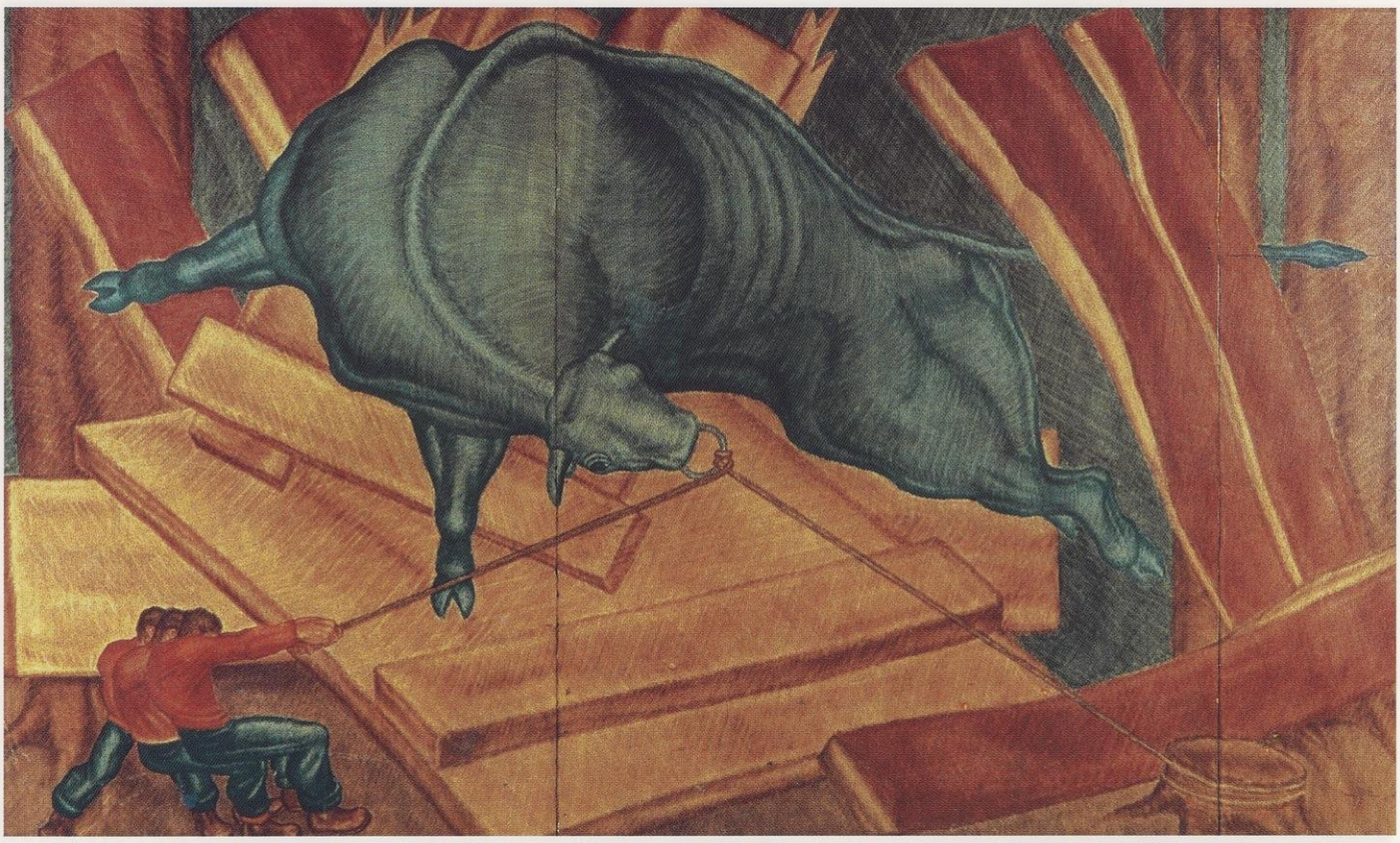
Those selected for the program were advised that the 'American Scene' (which included folklore) was the appropriate subject matter for paintings. And, since the works were to decorate public buildings, murals were especially desirable.

The murals were painted on gessoed panels with an egg tempera medium (an emulsion of egg yolk and water mixed with powdered pigments), a medieval process adopted during the 1920s by American artist Thomas Hart Benton for his murals. I learned the technique from a fellow student who had been one of Benton's assistants on the Indiana Pavilion murals created in 1933 for the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago.

The panels were only partially completed by May 1934 when the PWAP was terminated and I accepted an appointment in the University of Wisconsin art department. I voluntarily worked on the murals in my spare time and finished them in 1936.

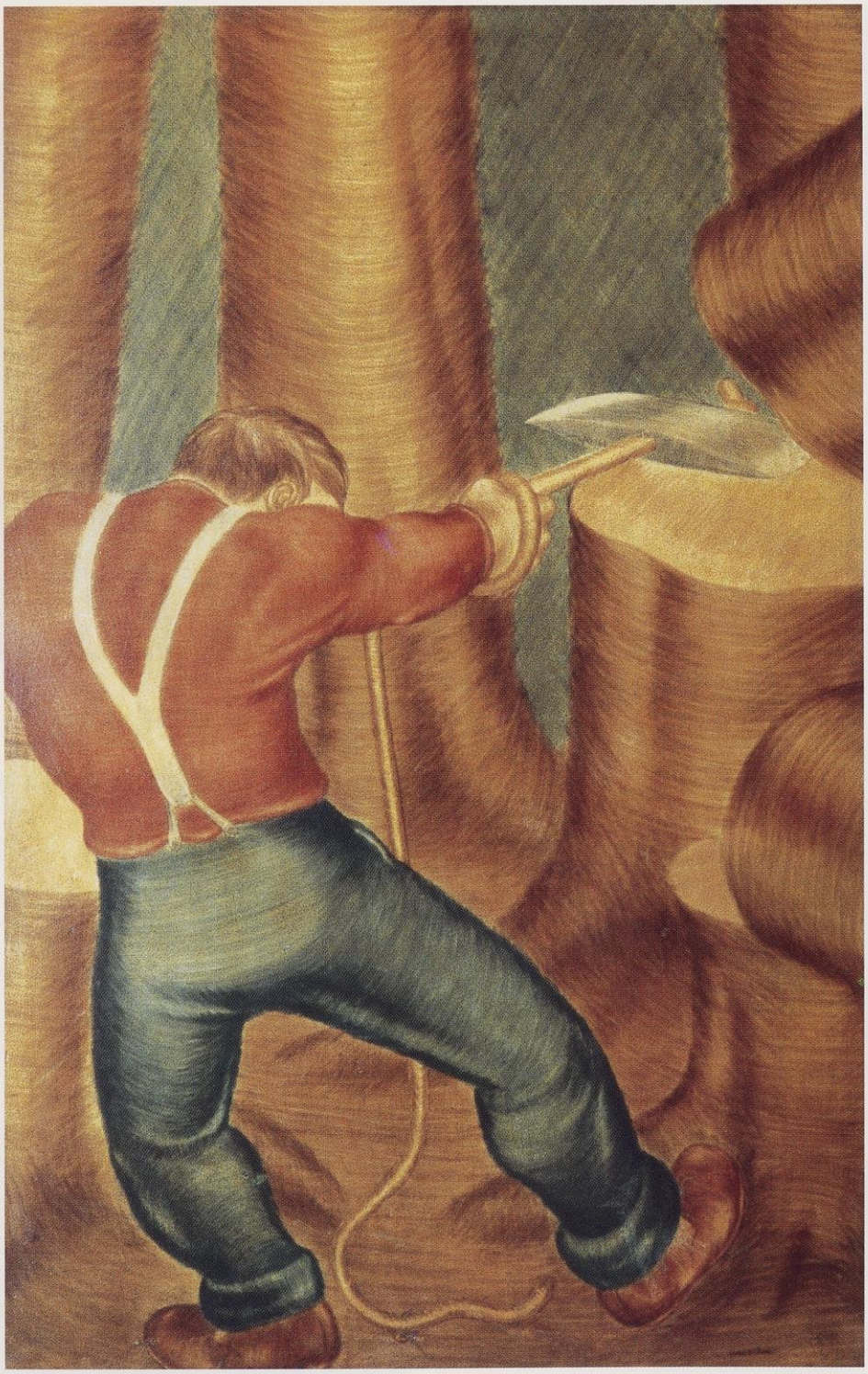
The Bunyan room consists of eleven six-foot-high panels, which vary in width from four to sixteen feet, and two maps. The murals depict various episodes taken from the legendary northwoods adventures of Paul Bunyan, Babe the blue ox, and other characters who appear in the stories, including Sourdough Sam and Hels Helsen.❧

Photographs of the Paul Bunyan murals courtesy the Memorial Union Building Association, University of Wisconsin–Madison.



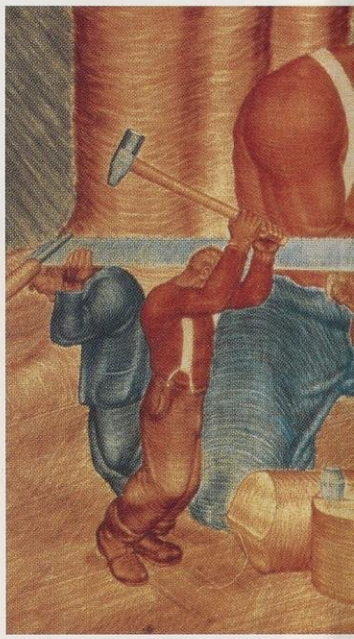
From the beginning Babe the big blue ox was Paul Bunyan's greatest asset—and liability. When Babe was young he grew so fast he busted out a whole new barn.

The mosquito-bee, with a stinger at both ends, stung coming and going.



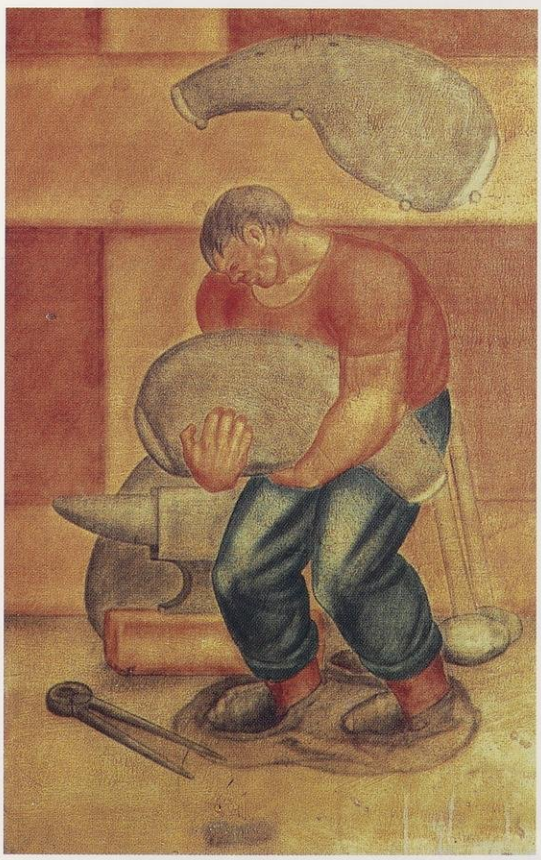
With the blade on the end of a rope each of the seven great axemen could fell a grove of trees with one swing.

Our appreciation to Tom Bliffert of Milwaukee, whose special contribution in recognition of Wisconsin's sesquicentennial helped make color reproduction possible.



By the time the chore boy could give Paul's big grindstone one full turn it was pay day again.

The logging in Paul's camp was done on a big scale. It took the seven great axemen to carry one of Paul's big saws. Babe was hitched up to jerk out stumps and to haul quarter sections of timber land into the camp to be logged off.



Big Ole, the blacksmith, made shoes for the blue ox—when he lifted Babe's iron shoes he sank a foot deep in solid rock.

One blast on the dinner horn knocked down a thousand feet of pine—two blasts raised a cyclone.

Sourdough Sam's griddle was so big that his flunkies greased it with bacon slabs strapped to their feet.

PLATE 1. A chemist's laboratory. *Oil on panel, 17 3/4 x 24 inches, 1827. Courtesy the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford University. DETAIL ABOVE: Artist's monogram—a clue to the origin of the Oxford painting.*

PLATE 2. Untitled painting of student and teacher, owned by Alfred Bader. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 inches. Bader has named his painting The Preparation of Prussian Blue. *Courtesy the author.*

Out of the Blue: Art, Chemistry, Mystery

by Alfred Bader

The Museum of the History of Science at the University of Oxford in England owns a painting, *A chemist's laboratory* (Plate 1 opposite), with a legend that raises more questions than it answers:

> An oil painting of a chemist said to be Sir Humphrey [sic] Davy (1778–1829), with an assistant in his laboratory. The painting is signed and dated LR 1827, and it is probably a derivative. The interest in this painting lies in the glass chemical apparatus depicted, much of it similar to apparatus from the Daubeny Laboratory now in the Museum.

But the teacher does not really look like Sir Humphry Davy, and what is he doing? And who is the student? The date, 1827, is clear, but is the monogram really *LR*? It could be an elaborate *R*, a double *R*, or perhaps *LR*, or *LSR*. The *R* is similar to the *R* in the signature of Ramsay Richard Reinagle (1775–1862), who may have painted the Oxford painting or the work from which it is derived.

The Oxford museum suggests the painting is a derivative, meaning that it may not be original but based on an earlier painting. We can view it on three levels: first, by looking at the contemporary laboratory equipment referred to in the museum's description (the Nooth's apparatus, much like a Kipp's gas generator); secondly, at the two men; and lastly, at the setting, surely inspired by some of the Dutch and Flemish seventeenth-century alchemical paintings that were found among English collections in 1827. The painting's juxtaposition of modern laboratory equipment with a seventeenth-century interior is also quite odd, a sort of *"homage à David Teniers"* an artist might attempt.

Though the identity of the painter remains uncertain, some of the mystery surrounding the Oxford painting has recently been resolved by a chance connection with a second painting that I was offered by an antique dealer in North Carolina in 1989 (Plate 2). This larger painting, which I later bought, depicts an almost identical scene. Not only does it answer the question of what the teacher is doing, but it also suggests the identity of the sitters and provides a possible source for the derivative painting in Oxford.

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Two yellow liquids are poured together, and a blue pigment precipitates. It is the production of Prussian blue.

When I first looked closely at my own painting, I thought, *Why, I have done this reaction myself! Two yellow liquids are poured together, and a blue pigment precipitates. It is the production of Prussian blue.* My observation was quickly confirmed by consulting Floyd Green and his *Sigma-Aldrich handbook of stains, dyes and indicators* (p.590). Prussian blue is made by adding a ferric salt solution to an alkaline ferrocyanide solution and filtering and washing the precipitate to yield the deep blue inorganic pigment.

But what did British chemists know about Prussian blue in 1827? The most important textbook at that time was William Thomas Brande's *Manual of chemistry*. First published in London in 1819, the manual went through six editions and was translated into several languages. His student Michael Faraday had a copy of the work, which was cut up and rebound into three inter-leaved volumes and is now in the collection of The Wellcome Institute Library (Nos. 2332–2334). Faraday made copious additions and hand-written notes on the inter-leaves, including notes on Prussian blue. And despite his discovery of electromagnetic induction in August 1831, it appears that Faraday was still following the literature on Prussian blue a year later—his notes go to 1832.

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Could the teacher in the two paintings be Brande with his student Faraday? Arnold Thackray at the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia was the first to suggest that the teacher was W.T. Brande (1788–1866), a self-taught chemist who began lecturing at the Royal Institution in 1812 and became Sir Humphry Davy's successor as professor of chemistry there in 1813. In a manuscript as yet unpublished, Frank James, the editor of *Faraday's correspondence*, includes a description by Brande himself of the lectures given from 1815 to 1848:

> They were intended for all denominations of students, and were given thrice weekly from October to May. They were the first lectures in London in which so extended a view of chemistry, and of its applications, including technical, mineralogical, and medical chemistry, was attempted.

Frank James continues:

> Initially [Brande] delivered these courses along with the help of Michael Faraday, who as the Assistant Chemist at the Royal Institution was responsible until 1825 for preparing and executing lecture demonstrations for Brande. In 1824 Faraday gave some of the lectures and from the following year the course was given jointly.

Therefore Faraday, who had been Davy's assistant, became Brande's assistant. He soon surpassed Brande, although they continued to work together, as evidenced by etchings, engravings, and photographs done in later years in which they both appear. Brande no doubt thought of Faraday as his most illustrious student, and in 1854 Brande and J. Scoffern published a *Course of ten lectures in organic chemistry* dedicated to Michael Faraday. Three pages of *Lecture I* deal extensively with Prussian blue.

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For years Prussian blue synthesis was a star attraction of Brande's and Faraday's lecture demonstrations at the Royal Institution and elsewhere. Faraday's handwritten notes for *A course of lectures on the philosophy and practice of chemical manipulation*, given at the London Institution in 1827, refers to Prussian blue as an example of precipitation. The notes for his lectures at the Royal Institution also refer in detail to Prussian blue.

In 1827, the date of the Oxford painting, Faraday published a laboratory manual, *Chemical manipulation*, which included a description of the preparation of Prussian blue. Similarly, Brande included a long entry on Prussian blue—"this beautiful dark blue pigment . . ."—in his 1852 *Dictionary of science, literature & art,* using the references gathered by Faraday.

What if Brande had commissioned an artist to depict him with his most illustrious student and good friend, Michael Faraday? Might he not have picked the very experiment, the precipitation of Prussian blue, that both had demonstrated so often? However, Brande was anything but bashful. Is it conceivable that he or Faraday would have commissioned this large work without anybody writing about it?

The previous owner of my painting had acquired it unsigned, nameless, and without provenance, but subsequently wrote to several art historians at the Metropolitan Museum, Yale University, the National Gallery in Washington, the National Portrait Gallery in London, the Wellcome Centre for Medical Science, and the Science Museum of London, inquiring whether the painting might be by John Singleton Copley. Each told her that it could not possibly be by Copley; some strongly suggested Thomas Sully, others suggested it could have been done by some able English artist influenced by Thomas Lawrence. Thomas Sully did paint in England in the 1830s, but monogrammed almost all his works and kept a careful record—in which this painting is not included.

The connection between the Oxford painting and my larger version was first made by Wendy Sheridan, curator at the Science Museum of London. In her letter to William Schupbach, curator at the Wellcome Institute, dated June 18, 1990, she wrote:

> The painting shows considerable individual character and a strong rapport between the sitters, at a moment of scientific 'discovery.' The work may be contemporary to its content, or possibly executed a little later, in the mid–19th century when a genre of nostalgic portraiture was in vogue.

What if Brande had commissioned an artist to depict him with his most illustrious student and good friend, Michael Faraday?

She went on to conclude:

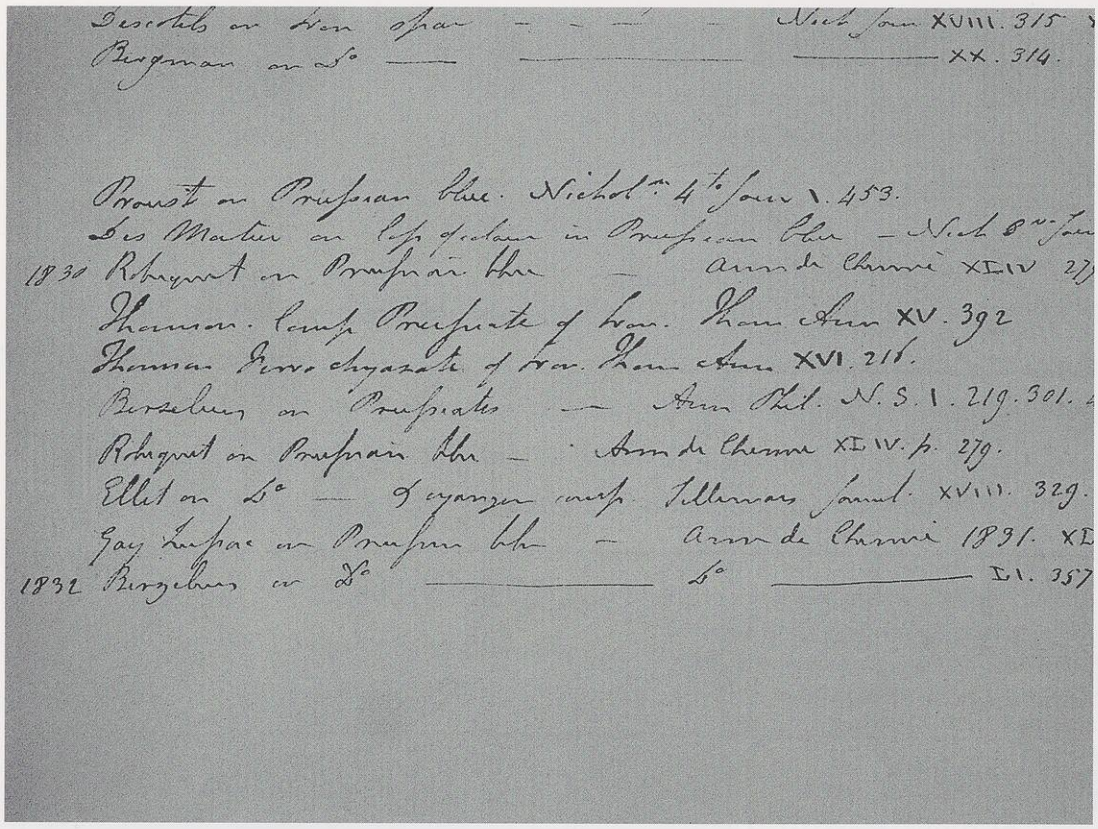
> . . . in the chemistry showcase at the Museum of History of Science, Oxford, is a small oil by 'L.R.', 1827, which puts this exact subject into a context similar to the Oxford Daubeny Laboratory of 1823 and suggests Davy as a sitter. It is not known which version precedes which, or if in fact both are derivative. The larger is a quality work, of a kind probably executed by a professional painter of the status of, for example, Sir Thomas Lawrence and his circle . . . By comparison, the Oxford version is clearly by a lesser although competent hand.

It is often difficult to be certain of the identity of sitters in a historical painting. The younger man looks like Michael Faraday as he appears in subsequent paintings, while the older man looks more like Brande than Sir Humphry Davy. Faraday worked with Brande far longer than he did with Davy, and it was Brande and Faraday who shared the interest in Prussian blue.

But when was the larger painting painted? The previous owner had the painting wax-lined, obscuring all canvas marks. When I had the lining removed, the tax stamp and canvas mark of Thomas Brown, from 163 High Holborn in London were found. Painters' canvases were subject to an excise duty from 1803 to 1831, and the stamp was applied to the canvas when the duty was paid. Cathy Proudlove at the Castle Museum in Norwich has made a study of such marks and identified this as one used on canvas between 1816 and 1830.

❦

So what are the possibilities? Perhaps an able British artist painted the larger work before 1827; and the monogrammist *R* incorporated the image of teacher and student in the Oxford painting. Or maybe *R*'s Oxford painting came first, based on an as-yet-unknown earlier work depicting the student and his teacher.



Michael Faraday's notes on Prussian blue handwritten on his copy of W.T. Brande's Manual of chemistry. *Courtesy the author.*

In my opinion, the Oxford painting of 1827 is a pastiche after the larger work. Yet several art historians have suggested that the larger work dates from much later--1840 to 1860—when there was a nostalgia for genre paintings depicting important earlier events. This supposes that a canvas produced before 1831, a date the marks clearly confirm, was kept for a long time. That, according to Cathy Proudlove, would be highly unusual. Whichever theory is correct, this large canvas must have been the work of an able artist, and there is likely to be a record somewhere—a mezzotint or at least a printed description.

On the 22nd of March 1989, Christopher With at the National Gallery in Washington wrote to the former owner:

> Since trying to identify the artist is like looking for a needle in a haystack, I would suggest a different tack. Namely, if one could identify what scientific experiment is depicted, then one might uncover who the two men are in the painting. Knowing that, it would be easier to track down artists who did portraits of those individuals.

This was excellent advice. I have identified e experiment; it is certainly the formation of Prussian blue. The identity of the two men is also reasonably certain—the student was Michael Faraday and the teacher Sir Humphry Davy or—more likely—W.T. Brande. I am more interested in knowing the reason for this portrayal of such wonderful rapport between Faraday and his teacher. When we learn that, we will probably know the identity of the artist.

This article first appeared in Chemistry in Britain, *the November 1997 issue, and is reprinted here with permission.*

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the many people who have helped in his as yet uncompleted quest, including Clare Ford-Wille, Peter Funnel, Floyd J. Green, Willem Hackmann, Lee Howard, Frank James, Anne-Marie Logan, Keith Moore, Charles Munch, Cathy Proudlove, William Schupbach, Wendy Sheridan, Arnold Thackray, and Malcolm Warner.

References:

1. F.J. Green, *The Sigma-Aldrich handbook of stains, dyes and indicators.* Milwaukee: Aldrich Chemical Co., 1990, p. 590.

2. The subject matter of a course of ten lectures on some of the arts connected with organic chemistry, delivered before the members of the Royal Institution in the spring of 1852 by W.T. Brande, arranged by J. Scoffern. London: Longman, 1854.

3. Royal Institution notes, *Chemical lectures: Faraday.* RI library MS F4K, p 255.

4. M. Faraday, *Chemical manipulation.* London: W. Phillips, 1827, p.231.

5. W.T. Brande, *A dictionary of science, literature & art,* 2nd edition. London: Longman, 1852.

The Cartoons of H.T. Webster

by Robert E. Sherwood

On April 4, 1953, the last new drawing by H.T. Webster was published in the New York Herald Tribune *and a hundred and twenty-five other papers, and for many of us, millions and millions of us timid souls, this day was marked as one of life's darkest moments. There will be other fine artist-cartoonist-critics to inspire us with joy or indignation from day to day, but never another to span the years and the range of human emotions in the same extraordinary way that Webby did. He belongs with Ring Lardner, Will Rogers, George Ade, Heywood Brown—yes, and with Mark Twain and Abe Lincoln.*

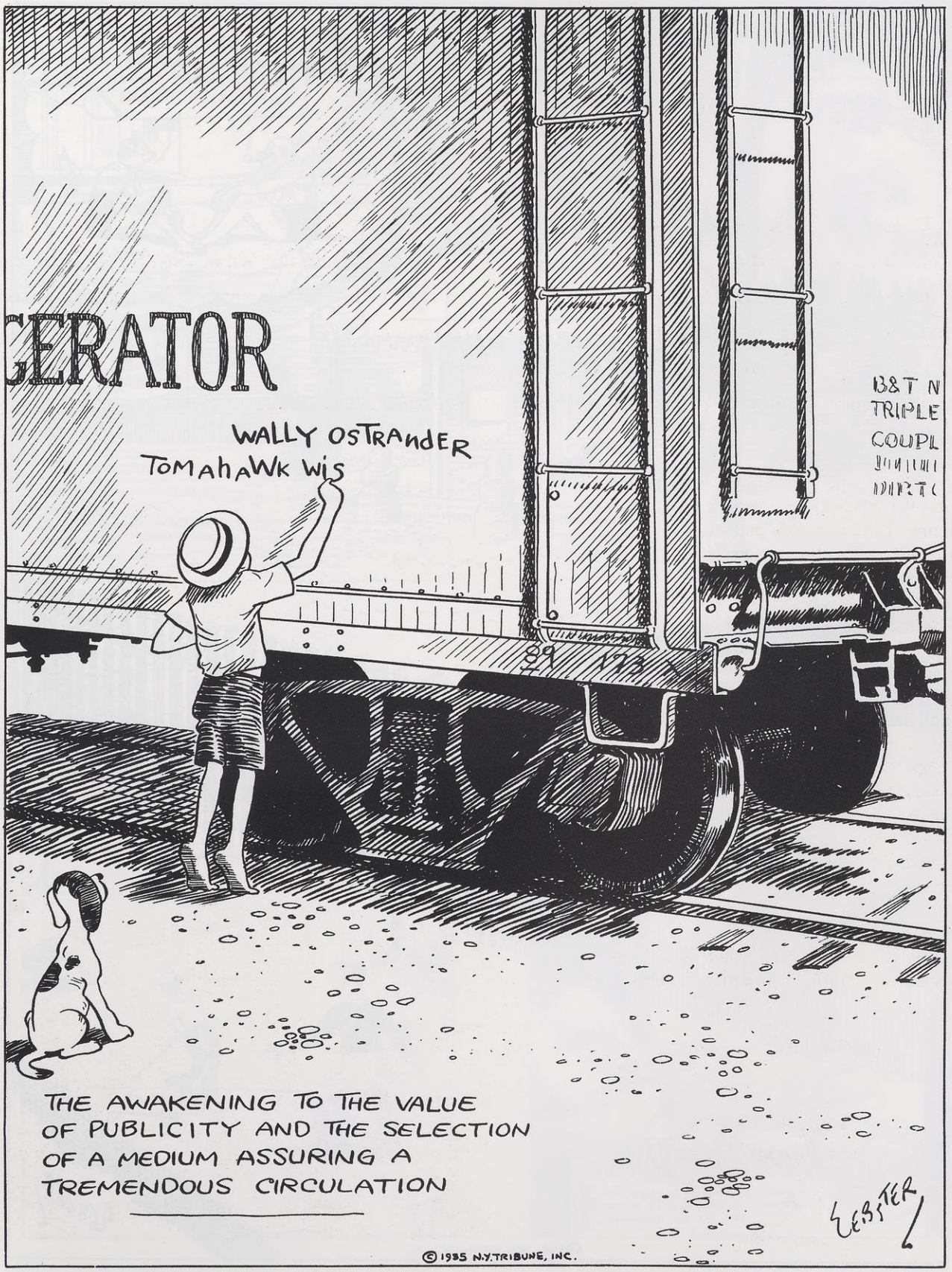
Philo Calhoun, one of Webby's closest friends, points out that the artist's favorite target was himself, that his portraiture of the ineffable and immortal Caspar Milquetoast was sheer autobiography. That is unquestionably true, but Webby was also providing a revealing mirror for all the rest of us, with the exception of those unfortunates who live in a dream world of self-delusion and who fancy they are not impressed by signs that say "No Loitering."

In identifying himself with Mr. Milquetoast, Webby was aligning himself on the side of the Angels, he was standing up as one of the Pushed as opposed to the Pushers. He was our champion.

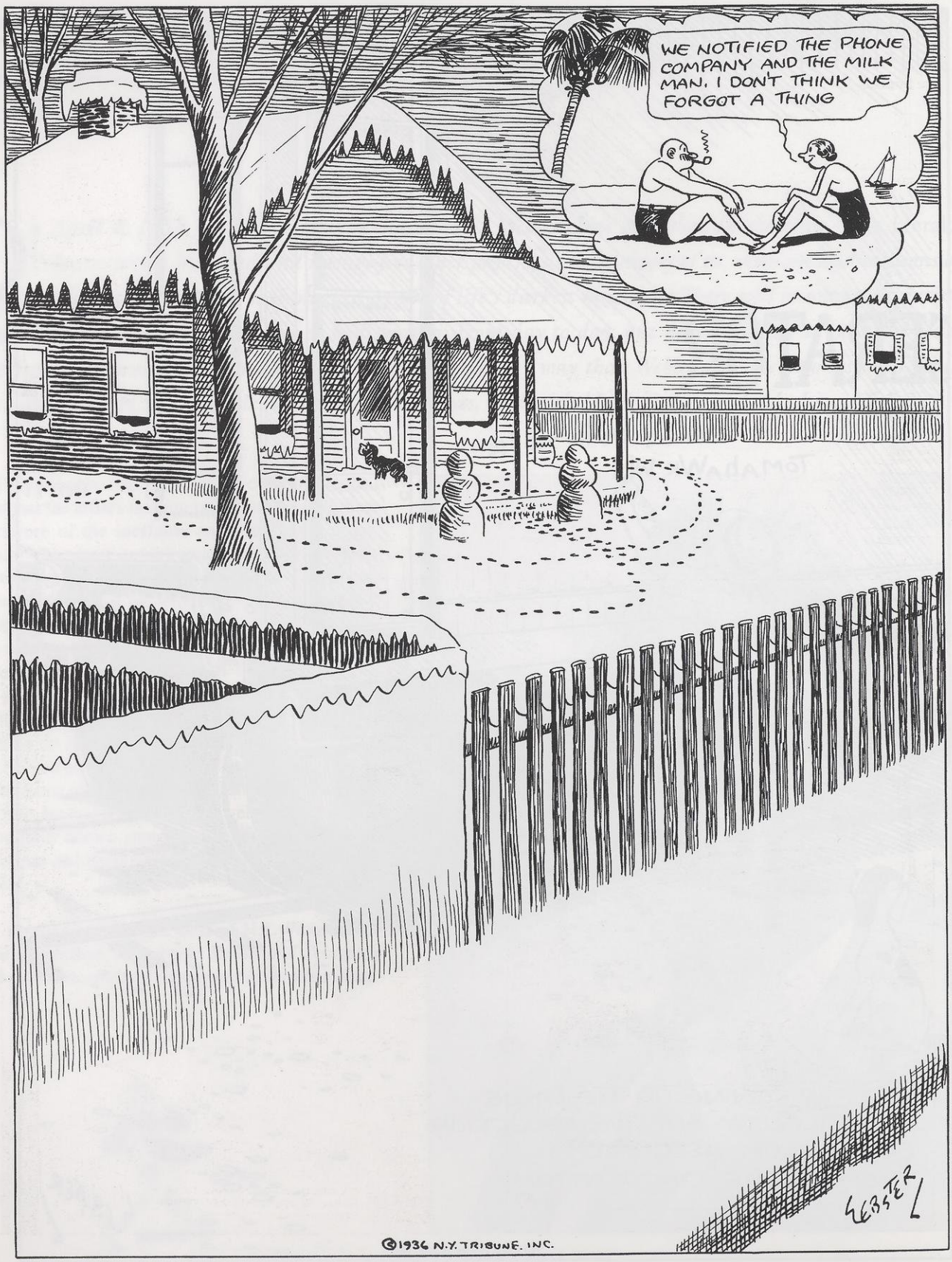
I first came to know Webby about 1925 when I was editor of *Life*. He had a huge heart as well as a sharp bite. When you have known someone like him, you want to remember him and the contributions that he made to the art of living.

Excerpts from preface to The Best of H.T. Webster: A Memorial Collection. *New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953. All cartoons originally appeared in the* New York Tribune.

H.T. Webster (1885-1952)


GERATOR
WALLY OSTRANDER
TOMAHAWK WIS
B&T N
TRIPLE
COUPL
THE AWAKENING TO THE VALUE
OF PUBLICITY AND THE SELECTION
OF A MEDIUM ASSURING A
TREMENDOUS CIRCULATION
WEBSTER
© 1935 N.Y. TRIBUNE, INC.

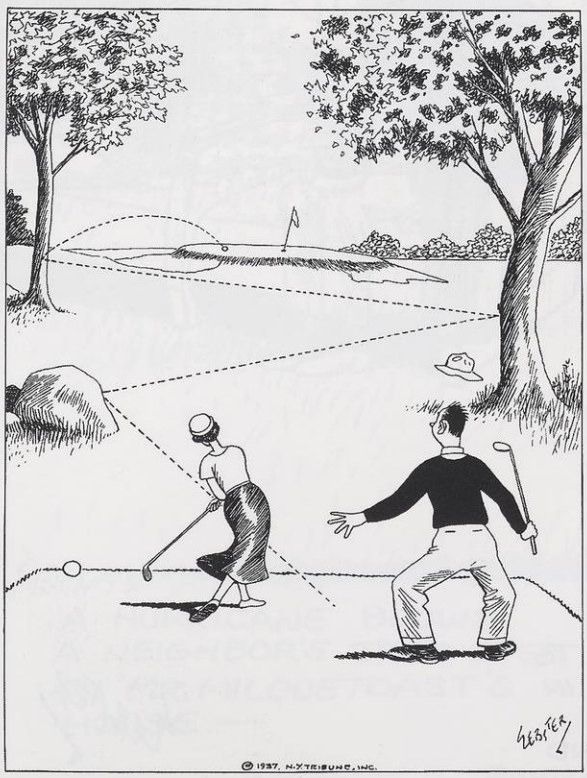
1935


WE NOTIFIED THE PHONE COMPANY AND THE MILK MAN. I DON'T THINK WE FORGOT A THING
©1936 N.Y. TRIBUNE, INC.
WEBSTER

1936

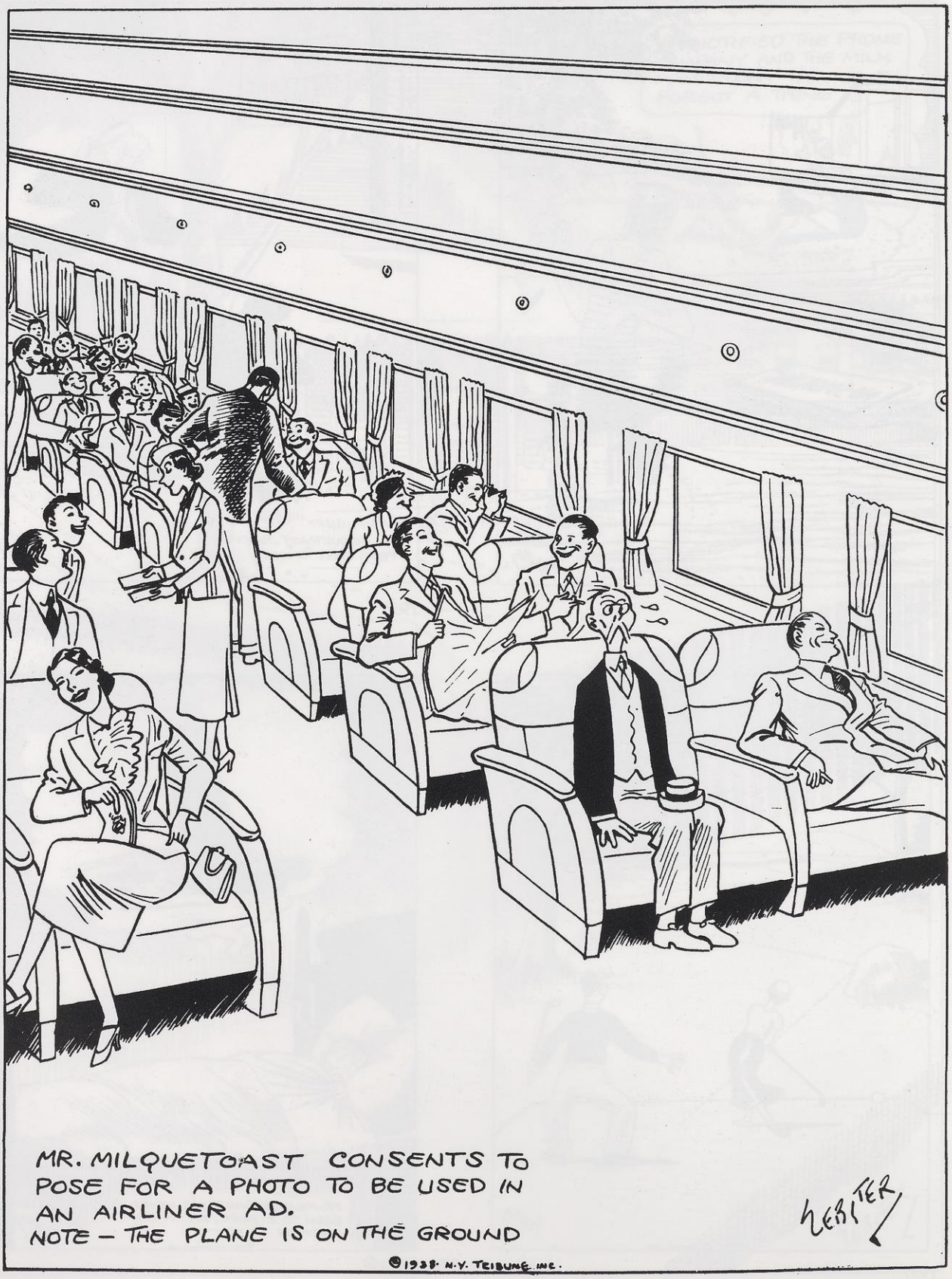
1936

1936



1937

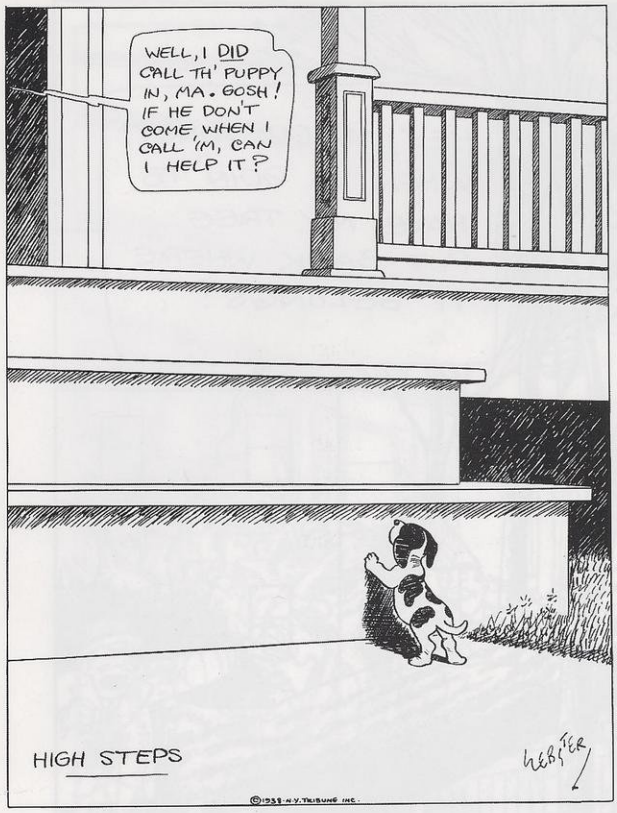
1937


MR. MILQUETOAST CONSENTS TO POSE FOR A PHOTO TO BE USED IN AN AIRLINER AD.
NOTE – THE PLANE IS ON THE GROUND
©1938 N.Y. TRIBUNE INC.
WESTER

1938


HEY, MILQUETOAST, WHEN YA GOIN' TO HAVE MY TREE PUT BACK WHERE IT BELONGS?
A HURRICANE BLOWS A NEIGHBOR'S TREE OVER ON MR. MILQUETOAST'S HOUSE —
©1938-N.Y. TRIBUNE INC.
WEBSTER

1938



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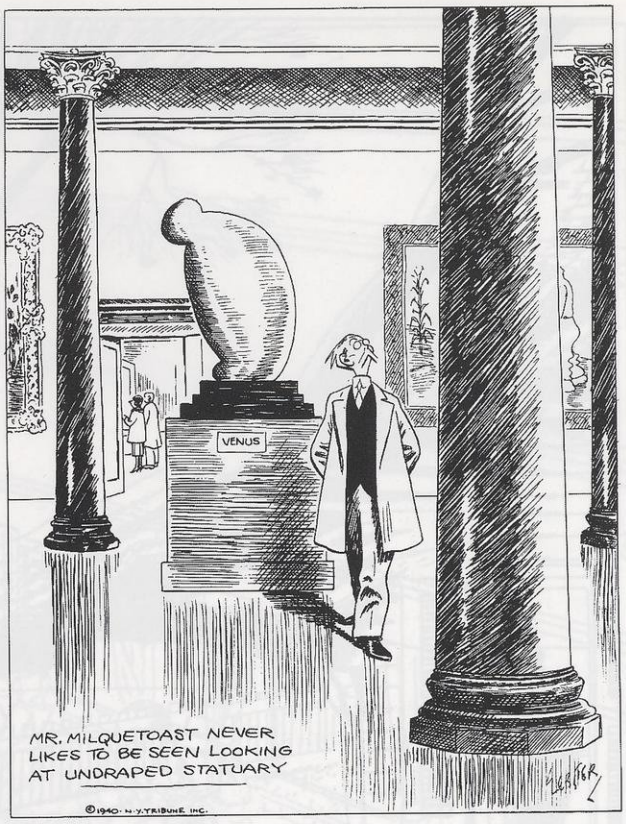


1940

1941

1942

Speaking Midwestern

Now that I've lived six
winters here, and another
coming, I've grown fluent

in the language of coldness,
I've learned to keep cool,
skate on ice so thin

it's invisible, so thin
the slightest flare of heat
and you fall through forever.

Here words are like rock salt,
scattered one pellet at a time
to thaw the surface.

There are other languages
for fire—the one I learned
growing up, the language

of history and oppression,
the deep exotic gutturals
of loving and of loss,

where words simmer
and steam and boil over
like soup left on the stove.

Still, even on the endless
prairie, every now and then
there is a warm spot, a brief

bright rush of grief or lust
out of the frigid land,
an arterial gush of longing

that never freezes, no matter
how long winter lasts.
And this needs no translation.

Harriet Brown

Fever

The old life burning away
in waves, everything
you've ever wanted
like a brand,
scorched into
muscle and bone,
marking you.
What you knew
sucked into air,
fuel for the conflagration.
This must be change,
this pain, this pure
heat near your heart,
this ash overtaking you
in a hurry, forcing you
once more to be born.

Harriet Brown

Suspense

Silent, persistent snow
blankets the days
buries
leftover mistakes; we huddle
winterbound
slowed pulse and breath;
pick at dried hulls,
await the spring's unveiling.

Yet dread the gray trickles.
The sun unwraps old wounds.
What if your bones
are still as raw, my tongue
as sharp? Will we sidestep
blue-eyed puddles, mirroring
last year's scars?

Alice D'Alessio

Peshtigo

Snow swirls in the headlights
as we come into Peshtigo,
close to nine
just the bars and gas stations open.
Smoke and steam rise toward the clouds
from the stacks of the paper mill.

All the town knows
of the fire of 1871
is in an old white brick church
called the Peshtigo Fire Museum,
the grave yard next to it,
and the stories.

There was little snow that winter.
All spring it was dry.
They were laying track for the railroad
from Green Bay to Menomonie,
to get out the pines
not near the rivers
and carry them south
to Chicago.
The railroad crews threw the cleared brush
into huge piles for burning
and the fires got into the woods.
The loggers cut what they wanted
and left the slash
to brown on the ground.
Land was cheap
and there were enough trees
to go on cutting forever
so why think of replanting
or fire?

All summer it was dry.
Smoke from scattered fires
drifted into town with stories
of waves of flames
breaking out onto farms
everything blasted to charcoal
in minutes.
The flames chewed into the dropped needles and leaves,
climbed trunks,
branches blossoming into orange,
pitch heated to gas,
trees exploding
into shards of glowing coal.
When the wind was right
fire danced
from crown to crown.

All fall it was dry.
The fires kept joining.
Deer baked.
Trout boiled in the streams.
The humus fried.
Some days you couldn't see the sun.
On September 24th
it came close to town.
The mill workers turned it back.
Smoke reached all the way to Chicago.
The night of October 8th
they heard it,
first a moaning,
sky glaring orange
above the woods.
Then a deep roar.
The wind hotter
than any in August.
A black ball
glide above the trees
and plunged into town.
Buildings exploded.
Sparks fell like rain.
Men burned in the streets
to little heaps of ash.
When it hit the mill
it was like the Centennial had come
five years early.
Some stood in the river
ducking the flames,
dodging glowing logs,
watching each other
burn and go under
all night.
That same night
blocks and blocks of buildings
built with Wisconsin white pine
burned in the Great Chicago Fire
orange, red, yellow glowing off Lake Michigan.
1,280,000 acres of black stumps
The young aspen and birch coming in
where they'd cut a few years before
along the Peshtigo and Menominee Rivers
ashes.
On the ninth
it rained.

We pass the lumberyard
at the edge of town,
drive on toward Marinette,
birch, pine, and spruce along the road,
watching the snow
swirl like smoke
on the pavement.

James Dott

Love Poem Under Pressure

There is light at the bottom of the ocean,
heat in those iron depths
where ships rain down in crumpled fragments
and monstrous fish inch the bottom
accepting bounty from above.

There is a center to this Earth
which burns, wants to bubble forth
into an ice-black sky, shedding sparks
of lava into the silty, sifted ruins
of gull wing, deck chair, shark tooth.

This lava glows deepest when unseen,
at the lip of frost and fire,
like a red barn swallowed in blizzard,
like the first idea of morning,
like splinters of ice easing your tongue.

David Graham

Three Poems

Winter seclusion

all night trains rattle and howl
with the wind
along the sere black bluffs of the Mississippi
entering the realms of silence and ice

January 11th: Kettling

twenty below icy walls of air
a dozen eagles surge up and stream round
Lake Pepin spouting
high plumes of steam
scattered in the wind

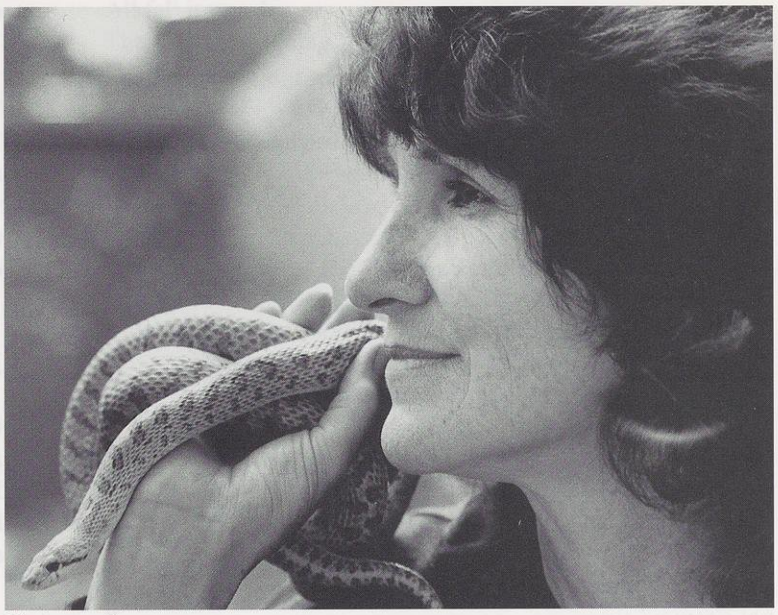
January 11: twenty below

three eagles dive
headlong
white
broad-winged
black
down
into the steaming river

Robert Schuler

THE MEMOIRS OF CLEOPATRA, A NOVEL by Margaret George. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. $27.95 hardcover, 964 pages. ISBN 0–312–15430–5

by Patricia Powell



Alison Kaufman

Margaret George

Madison's Margaret George is the highly successful author of thick, readable, fictional biographies of Henry VIII and Mary Queen of Scots. Now she has published a book on a figure that she says has intrigued her since the age of nine, when she first visited Egypt and wrote a school essay on Cleopatra. It is a passionate defense of a queen maligned by her Roman contemporaries and scorned as a seductress and a temptress by (mostly) male writers for two thousand years, although the queen has also had her supporters.

Margaret George gives Cleopatra attributes much admired in a woman two millennia later: intelligence, wit, the courage to seize and wield great power, and an astute understanding of human character. George plays down the legendary beauty of the queen, even while taking care to show her as attractive. She gives us a Cleopatra who draws the two most powerful men in the world to her by virtue of her mind, rather than her body. And where she can, George brings in historical support for her claims; indeed, the portraits we have on the coins issued by Cleopatra do not show a conventional beauty. The Greek author Plutarch, writing about A.D. 120, suggests that it was her conversation rather than her looks that gave her great success.

What is the appeal of fictionalized biography? If we want to know about a historical figure, why not read a biography? Is this just a sugar-coated pill of history, a false sense of understanding other times, other mores? How do we know when the fact slides into fiction, as a seamless narrative demands (unlike traditional history in which the author declares the move into speculation or resorts to the conditional verb tense)? Or do we accept the postmodern dictum that all history is fiction, anyway, because of the subjectivity of the author?

George helps us to answer the question of delineating fact from fiction in her afterword, where she points out various implausible incidents that are in fact historical—such as Cleopatra's delivery to Caesar rolled up in a carpet—and gives us some guidelines to discerning fact from fiction (pages 958–64). Here she gives her modus operandi, outlines her sources, and notes which characters are historical and which events are authorial invention.

Here are the few facts we know about Cleopatra. She was a Macedonian Greek, probably without any Egyptian blood. A speaker of Greek, she was the first Ptolemy who learned the Egyptian language. Plutarch noted that she was a brilliant linguist, easily learning any language she wished—Hebrew, Ethiopian, Arabic, Syrian, Parthian. Her father, Ptolemy XII, was nicknamed Auletes, "The Flute Player"; he was a weak ruler, became indebted to Rome, and formally asked Rome to oversee the rule of his daughter and son jointly. Cleopatra ascended the throne of Egypt in 51 B.C. at age eighteen and ruled jointly with her brother (and in the Egyptian style, husband), Ptolemy XIII, until 49 B.C., when he expelled her. In 48–47 B.C. Julius Caesar besieged and captured Alexandria and restored the throne to Cleopatra, who thereafter ruled jointly with her younger brother, Ptolemy XIV. From 46 to 44 B.C. Cleopatra lived with Caesar in Rome; they had a son, Ptolemy XV, usually known as Cesarion (little Caesar). After the assassination of Julius Caesar, Cleopatra returned to Alexandria. In the ensuing Roman civil war, she sided with the Triumvirate of Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus, who had been loyal to Caesar. In 41 B.C. she visited Antony at Tarsus, beginning a liaison which resulted in three children: twins born in 40 and a son in 36 B.C. For Cleopatra, Antony divorced his wife Octavia (sister of Octavian); in 31 B.C. Octavian declared war against Cleopatra. The fleet of Antony and Cleopatra was defeated in the battle of Actium, when Cleopatra's ship fled.

Antony killed himself (possibly after hearing a false report of Cleopatra's death). Cleopatra killed herself by the bite of an asp (cobra) soon after Octavian occupied Alexandria. Octavian (later known as Augustus) had Cleopatra's children killed. She had spent her life trying to preserve Egypt's sovereignty by whatever means necessary, and indeed, through skillful use of resources, both personal and the wealth of Egypt, she did hold off the direct rule of Rome for many years longer than her neighbors.

Margaret George takes the above skeleton of facts with some traditions and adds the sensual, voluptuousness of flesh to fill over 900 pages. What she uses to best effect is her sensual portrayal of the love life of Cleopatra (as opposed to the facts of her liaisons with Caesar and Mark Antony) and the marvelous

descriptions of the land, the food, the clothing. Cleopatra's journey up the Nile with Caesar allows a dramatic description of the land and monuments of ancient Egypt—the pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx bathed by moonlight and their wedding ceremony at the temple to Isis at Philae (pages 122–35).

In George's description of Caesar's dinner party designed to introduce her to Roman society, we learn about Cleopatra's clothes: "a close-fitting [white] linen dress with sheer sleeves, tied with a wide sash of red silk" with a wide gold collar, heavy gold bracelet, and gold fillet with the sacred cobra of Egypt (page 234). During a tense social evening they dine on such exotic foods as mackerel in rue, stuffed thrushes fed with myrtle, roasted red mullet (pages 237–42). Such details have been carefully researched and lend an air of authenticity to these fictional events.

The narrative is first person, a diary in nine scrolls, but with detailed presentation of scenes replete with dialogue from all participants—a difficult strategy for a biographer; letters and councillor's reports bring in information the narrator could not know by experience. The narrative device allows the author to get inside the character, and permits the reader to feel closer to the character, a technique that works well when the book is revising a character we might feel we know from the movies and plays.

I'm not sure I accept central tenets of the author's characterization of Cleopatra: that she just happened to fall passionately and selflessly in love twice and it happened to be with the two most powerful men in her world, or that she made love according to a modern sensibility; but George's delightful, sensual retelling of one of the most famous stories in the world held my attention to the end.

Patricia Powell, editor for the Elvehjem Museum of Art, edited the Wisconsin Academy Review *from 1980 through 1989. She has spent many years exploring archaeological sites of the ancient Mediterranean world and has her own favorite memories of trips on the Nile, visits to the temple of Philae, and Abu Simbel by moonlight.*

HOUSE AND HOME by Steve Gunderson and Rob Morris, with Bruce Bawer. New York: Dutton, Inc., 1996. $24.95 hardcover, 327 pages. ISBN 0–525–94197–5

by Michael Perry

Like Steven Gunderson the politician, his memoir *House and Home* (co-written with his partner Rob Morris and writer Bruce Bawer) comes across as sincere, matter-of-fact, and resolutely self-contained. There is no grandstanding, no hyperbole, none of the self-aggrandizing prattle or egocentric navel-gazing so often associated with the cultures of politics and celebrity.

The result, if not electrifying, is edifying.

Judged on its merits, *House and Home* is a brave work of honest intent and substantive necessity. On matters of sex and sexuality, Gunderson is frank and unapologetic, but never prurient. His personal revelations are frequently understated and hardly sensational, but occasionally startling—as when he describes an isolated incident in which a quarrel between him and his partner Morris turned violent. While much has been made of First Wives dictating policy, Gunderson's description of his and Morris's political pillow talk provides an alternative corollary. The inclusion of Morris's comments at the end of several chapters provides an illuminating perspective—and, refreshingly, not one that necessarily parallels Gunderson's. While the book casts Morris as forceful and volatile, his description of his timorous approach to a White House function in a car full of empty pop cans is at once witty and self-deprecating.

In the book, as in life, Gunderson refuses to make obeisance to those who would claim him for marquee effect. In his denunciations of the infamous Republican convention of 1992, Gunderson is specific and unapologetic, casting it as a "horror show" led by Pat Buchanan's "thoroughly un-Christian mean-spiritedness" and "enthusiastically echoed" by Pat Robertson and Dan Quayle. When it comes time to paint some divisions of the gay community as fractious and self-centered, he does so. This evenhandedness is epitomized in the opening pages of the book. Describing Congressman Mel Hancock's disingenuous use of a confrontational quote by gay activist Michael Swift, Gunderson writes, "It was a ludicrous quotation, one that the average gay reader would dismiss as the ravings of a disturbed individual." But then he demands that straight America recognize the source of such vituperation:

> . . . but the rage and severe alienation of a Michael Swift is very much the result of social conditioning—it's the product of years of living in a society that tells you you're worthless, despicable, immoral. Far from supporting Hancock's argument against responsible counseling, Michael Swift's article underscored the desperate need to help young gay people to like and respect themselves and to consider themselves an integral part of the society in which they live.

When a career politician in the twilight of his career tells his own story, the reader's willing suspension of disbelief seems an implicit requirement, and there are times in *House and Home* when Gunderson's narrative—especially when explaining his reasons for his long-delayed coming out, or citing the plaudits of colleagues and supporters—strikes a flat note of self-justification. On the other hand, Gunderson is quick to cut through political pomp. Describing his role as ranking Republican on the dairy and livestock committee, he said his job "was to get people to eat meat, and lots of it!"

It can be legitimately argued that a book of this nature not be subjected to amateur judgments on styles; lamentations on the lack of lyrical prose seem cheap in the face of the personal nature and cultural implications of the issues *House and Home* addresses. Nonetheless, one suspects that a touch of color here and there would have invigorated the story and strengthened its

impact. Consider, for instance, this description of the Hotel Lido, located on the Greek island of Mykonos, where, with Morris, Gunderson experienced what he would describe as, "nothing less than the discovery of my inner self":

> The hotel is absolutely beautiful. It's perched high on the hillside, and affords a sweeping view of the city and the sea beyond. All the rooms have terraces.

It seems a shame that the setting for such a revealing episode be described in prose that sounds as if it has been cribbed from a brochure. Dialogue, too, often suffers from prosaic dispassion, frequently reading as generic approximation employed as expositive shorthand, as in this example quoting a Bob Dole campaigner complimenting Gunderson and his team on organizing a day of appearances in Wisconsin:

> You guys are unbelievable. It's amazing that in a week, in a rural area, you can put together three events like this and bring out so many supporters!

Or Dole himself, quoted by Gunderson:

> Dole listened to both our cases. Finally he said to Block, 'I'm going to side with Steve.' And he said to me, 'I think you're being fair and reasonable.'

It seems a shame to expend quote marks on such pallid revelations. But this is petty aesthetic grousing. As a politician, Gunderson was a great believer in the necessity of compromise in an era when compromise came to be viewed as nothing less than a moral failing. Gunderson's pursuit of compromise, however, always seemed driven by a dogged pragmatism. It is that pragmatism that drives this book. And as a result, *House and Home* emerges as a reasoned, measured work of clarity that stands not only to educate and break down the stereotypes and prejudices of the straight, rural midwesterner, but also the gay urban radical. *House and Home* is a valuable contribution—to tolerance, perhaps, but far more importantly, to understanding.

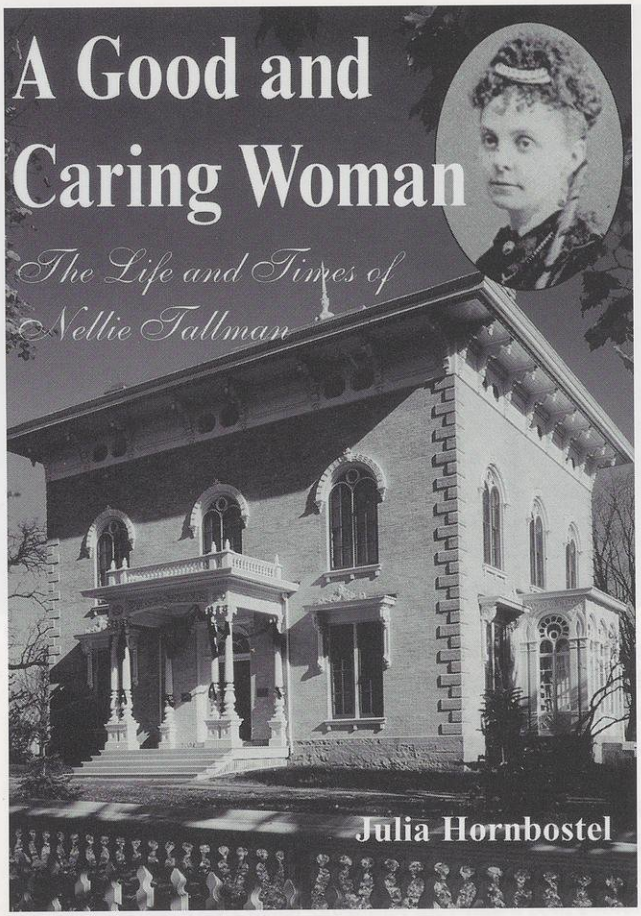
Michael Perry is a free-lance writer who lives in New Auburn.

A GOOD AND CARING WOMAN: The Life and Times of Nellie Tallman by Julia Hornbostel. Galde Press, 1996. $16.95 softcover, 260 pages. ISBN 1–880090–30–9.

by Carol J. Liddle

A vivid sense of life on the Wisconsin frontier as experienced by city settlers in the last half of the 1800s is achieved by Julia Hornbostel, English professor at University of Wisconsin–Rock County, using the diaries of Gussie and Nellie Tallman.

Janesville was the scene for the family and civic events highlighted in the Tallman diaries. They reveal such homely customs as hair puffs and graham gruel; medicinal remedies, including belladonna and onion syrup; and such social events as roller skating contests and temperance lectures.



Today the Lincoln-Tallman restorations' twenty-six-room Italianate Tallman House is Janesville's most notable historic site. Built in 1855–57 by William Morrison Tallman, Gussie's father and Nellie's father-in-law, it was recognized as a landmark home with such modern conveniences as running water, central heating, plumbing, and gas lighting. Tallman, a wealthy attorney and abolitionist from New York, came to Wisconsin in 1849 as a land dealer in the Monroe and Janesville areas. His friend Abraham Lincoln spent a weekend in 1859 with the Tallmans, thus providing today's tourists with a view of the "Lincoln bed."

Spanning the years between the Civil War and World War I, the diaries present a remarkable account of a small town's evolving social and business scenes. Hornbostel has fleshed out these accounts with abundant local newspaper articles, letters, minutes of club meetings, and related published histories.

Gussie Tallman came to Wisconsin in 1850 with her mother and brother, Edgar, to join the father. Her single diary which survives was a tiny book written in 1860 which records riding in carriages, sewing, having tea with friends, and attending local "hops." She reports how her father and two brothers attended the 1860 nominating convention in Chicago and evidently telegraphed the exciting news of their friend Lincoln's selection as the Republican presidential candidate.

Mentioned nearly twenty times in Gussie's 1860 diary is Nellie Norton, who was to become Edgar's wife in 1861. The two women call on each other, trade patterns, and go to Madison where they see "The Capitol House." The Nortons and Tallmans were in the same social group and lived within two blocks of each other.

As a young wife living congenially with her in-laws in the Tallman House, Nellie begins her diaries in 1869. Gaps in the 1869–1917 journals are probably due to lost volumes, but twenty diaries do exist. Though Nellie's prosperous family enjoys a gracious style of life, she offers frequent glimpses of the struggling poor and reports the hard work expected of hired help.

The Tallmans' nineteenth-century style of life required two servants. A man did the horse barn chores and other heavy work, and their faithful longtime maid, Eliza O'Connor, did all manner of household chores including the back-breaking laundry.

Hornbostel succeeds in putting a human face on Nellie's changing life. We see her as a young matron whose primary occupations are organizing her wardrobe and calling on friends. She and Edgar enjoy a continual round of social events, which include balls, Rock River boat excursions, the city's annual Burns Festival, and fancy costume balls like the Dickens party in 1883 where Nellie went as Martin Chuzzlewit's Mrs. Lupin. Card games, especially euchre, seem to have been the rage in 1885. As the years pass, Nellie takes on considerably more chores including arduous canning and housecleaning. She also becomes a mother to two boys whom we see she enjoys and loves as dearly as she loves Edgar.

Another chapter in her life is her long service to Janesville's needy as a leader in the Janesville Associated Charities, which sought "to discover and relieve the worthy poor." She was there in 1886 at the group's inception and spent twenty-five years as an Associated Charities leader, attending to the less fortunate and helping to establish the city's first hospitals. She saw to it that shoes, groceries, coal, bedding, clothes, and nursing care were provided where needed. The group did not just hand out goods to the poor; in 1906 they lobbied for a bill to curb child labor and for another that would restrict immigration.

An intriguing mystery veils Nellie's life. Following Edgar's death in 1896, his Rock County estate probate records indicate that $4,000 is bequeathed to a heretofore unknown daughter, Ida Anderson of Scandinavia, Wisconsin. Nellie's two sons were born in the Tallman House—Stanley in 1874 and Charles in 1877. All are buried in the Tallman lot at Janesville's Oak Hill Cemetery. Charles's grandson, Charles Norton Tallman of Temple City, California, was buried there this past summer.

This "good and caring woman" is a privileged being who inspiringly met the challenge of the frontier. The diaries are short on reflections, but Nellie's joys and daily meanderings are apparent in this charming and insightful work.

Carol J. Liddle recently retired as associate director of the Hedberg Public Library in Janesville. She lives in Fort Atkinson.

VIPoems: A SLIM VOLUME OF POEMS FROM THE VIP PROGRAM. Charles a Wustum Museum of Fine Arts (2519 Northwestern Ave., Racine, WI 53404). $125, 10 x 5 inches, 42 pages. *Printed on letterpress from the photopolymer plates made by children under the direction of Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr., with handmade paper covers. Poems were produced under the direction of Madison poet David Steingass. Proceeds of sales of the book will fund future book projects for the children.*

Peace IS Victory

by Max Yela

Five years. Hard lives. Young writers, young printers, young minds older than their years. Metal type. Polymer plates. Handmade papers. Artists, mentors, teachers with a belief in the book as an agent for social change. Small hands, big hands, light hands, dark hands. The smell and sound of fresh ink kissing a clean page. Like love. Like life.

After five years of effort, what does the Victory in Peace Program (VIP) at the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts in Racine, Wisconsin, have to show for itself? Well, for one thing, a considerable body of work—books in particular, drawn from the creative energy of extraordinary children, and crystallized like statues, small fragments and icons of their lives. These products are perhaps a measure of VIP's success. For five years they have emerged from the presses of the Wustum Museum, finding their way into homes and schools, libraries and academic institutions, museums and the White House. They live a separate existence on book shelves, in collections, and on the inter-library loan circuit. Success breeds success, and the returns are woven back into the fabric of the program. But all this is inconsequential compared to the program's real measure of success: the children, the creators, the very minds themselves.

Since 1993, hundreds of young intellects, primarily between the ages of six and twelve, have participated in the VIP program. These aren't your ordinary students—they are exceptional, because Victory in Peace is a gang-diversion program targeting high-risk children from the inner city. Their daily lives are shaky, their futures are uncertain, but their response to the program and to the book as an expressive form is like the striking of a light in a dark tunnel. The books have become windows into the things they really think and care about; doorways into modes of expression that offer an alternative, the peace and rhythm of the press, to the violence and discord of the gang.

What does the VIP program have to show after five years? A small army of better writers, better researchers, and better students with increased school attendance and expanded prospects for the future. Human beings with a whole new set of tools for self-expression, building confidence, taking pride in ethnic heritage, and fostering cooperation skills. There are also the dedicated artists, mentors, teachers, and volunteers

who make up the staff of the Wustum Museum, including individuals such as Caren Heft, Donna Newgord, Kelly Gallaher, and Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr. It was Amos Kennedy who reminded me a few years ago that while it might take a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to allow that same child to be damaged or destroyed by violence, abuse, or neglect. The VIP program forms part of the Wustum's response to this challenge by transforming art into action. If literacy is gained by reading, and reading engenders knowledge, and knowledge is power, then the skills acquired in the book arts elevate these possibilities to another level.

But the program is not a one-way street. Like all good student-teacher relationships, the process is reciprocal. The teachers, and of course we as readers, gain from the experience of the VIP participant. In Pleschette Robinson's 1995 do-si-do book, *My Life/Historical Women,* we are moved with hope by the juxtaposition of a fourteen-year-old girl's life against the lives of three heroic African-American women. Jeremiah Gonzalez's action-packed booklet, *The Adventure of Fro Man* (1996), inspired Kelly Gallaher to develop an entirely different component to the VIP book-arts program based on the comic book genre. In Pleschette Robinson's *Grandma's Christmas Memories* (1996) we are transported to the rhythms and rituals of an early twentieth-century Christmas in the rural Black South, as recollected via oral transmission by a late twentieth-century granddaughter. Although seen through the eyes of a contemporary teenager, our connection to her grandmother as a young girl is almost palpable. It is a slight tale, but Homeric in its presence.

VIP is not a panacea. It is not an international relief effort. It is a small program that takes the Wustum Museum an immense amount of energy to reach as many children as possible while it waits for the rest of the village to wake up. As Willie Reale observed about his own New York City youth-based art project:

> There is no way to fast forward and know how the kids will look back on this, but I have seen the joy in their eyes and have heard it in their voices and I have watched them take a bow and come up taller.

With the VIP kids, I am a witness to this myself. So in the end, perhaps the greatest, most valuable thing the VIP program has to show is the simple reality that victory, true victory, is ultimately achieved through peace.

Max Yela is head of special collections at the Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

These comments are taken from the book's introduction and are offered in response to reader interest in the article which appeared in the fall issue of the Wisconsin Academy Review, *describing the project in Racine. Editor.*

THE YEAR OF THE BUFFALO by Marshall Cook. Savage Press, Box 115, Superior, WI 54880 (715) 394–9513. 198 pages, softcover. ISBN 1–886028–22–2

by Paul Schultz

The Year of the Buffalo is undeniably a novel about baseball. So much so that well-known baseball novelist and short story writer W.P. Kinsella describes Cook's work as "fine storytelling." But at its heart, *The Year of the Buffalo* is also a paean to small-town Wisconsin in the vein of Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon. It is in this way the work finds its considerable charm.

The fictional town of Beymer, Wisconsin, population 2,186, is located on the business loop of Highway 23 between Darlington and Mineral Point. The town is, as we often hear, "the smallest town in the entire U.S.of A. with its very own professional baseball team." The team is called Buffalo, a compromise reached after locals failed to agree on either the Bulldog or the Badger. It is a team in its final year, unless it can do well in the upcoming season against such teams as the Madison Capitals, the Eau Claire Crushers, and the La Crosse Captains.

Hope for the Beymer Buffalo's chances focus on Dutch Brannigan, the team's new manager; Tommy Lee Smith, a pitcher with a bad knee and nearing the end of his career; and a host of other players, all nicknamed by the town's radio announcer, Bernie Badgags. Others complete the cast: Billie Jo Ferken, who owns and operates the Dime-A-Cup diner, and Bruce Kelly, who runs the local newspaper. The interactions of these many characters make The Year of the Buffalo a fun book to read.

Paul Schultz is a published writer of short stories and for three years was business manager for the Wisconsin Academy.

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compiled by Jean Sebranek

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