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BOBBIE ANN MASON'S PORTRAYAL OF MODERN WESTERN KENTUCKY

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In 1982, Bobbie Ann Mason, who was born and reared on a farm near Paducah, Kentucky, published a collection of short stories entitled *Shiloh and Other Stories*. This collection, made up of sixteen pieces published previously in such magazines as *The New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *the North American Review*, *the Paris Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Esquire*, won the PEN/Hemingway Award for First Fiction and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Award, the American Book Award, and the PEN/Faulkner Award. The title story of the collection, "Shiloh," was selected for *Best American Short Stories of 1981*.

Mason's fiction is about the rural and small-town poor of western Kentucky (south of Paducah, not far from Kentucky Lake). Even when Mason's characters are small-town poor, they are only one or two removes from being rural poor, as usually their parents and always their grandparents are such, and this change is symptomatic of the profound demographic, social, and moral changes that have come to western Kentucky, changes that have generally produced confusion, ennui, and alienation, changes that are "paradigmatic of the contemporary South, and to an extent of modern America" (Ryan 294).

Some of the changes that the characters in *Shiloh* experience have to do with the nature of human life, changes brought on by death, disease and aging, not with the changes that modern society has brought; but these changes are not so common, nor so troublesome, in Mason's stories as the changes brought on by a changing society. These changes, as Edwin T. Arnold correctly observes, are brought about by the fact that the present "has effectively displaced, transformed, and cheapened the traditional," and Mason's characters are depicted as they lose their strengths and beliefs and find nothing substantial to replace them (136).

For example, in Mason's stories we see characters, such as Leroy in "Shiloh," who suddenly realize that Kentucky life around them has changed while they, as Edwin in "A New Wave Format" discovers, "have gone through life rather blindly" (216). Leroy sees that "subdivisions are spreading across western Kentucky like an oil slick" (3). It occurs to him that "the farmers who used to gather around the courthouse square on Saturday afternoons to play checkers and spit tobacco juice have gone. It has been years since Leroy has thought about the farmers, and they have disappeared without his noticing" (4). Many of the farmers like Bill in "The Ocean" are selling their farms, buying fancy campers, and setting out for Florida. Cleo sells her husband's farm in "Old Things" because it is her way of cheating on him and of getting rid of all reminders of the past. There are a few characters, usually young people who once left the country but who have come back, who fight the loss of farms to K-Marts and subdivisions; for they realize as does Mary Lou in "Residents and Transients" that they need cornfields (122). But all too often, the land has changed before the characters realize what has happened, and in most cases the characters do not really care, although some, such as Dolores in "The Climber," mourn the passing of trees, "cut down in full bud," to make way for workshops for husbands who hope to make a little additional income by building picnic tables" (111).

In addition to changes in the face of western Kentucky as people leave the farm, the people themselves are changing. For the first time, children like Nancy Culpepper, Judy, and Sabrina are going to Murray State and "learning for a fact" that people evolved from animals (261). Mabel in "Shiloh" not only goes to Paducah Community College, staying up late outlining paragraphs and writing compositions, but she attends body-building classes, and, most significantly, discovers that she wants to leave Leroy. Georgeann in "The Retreat" also wants to leave her husband, who is "the cream of creation and all, and he's sweet as can be, but he turns out to be the wrong one . . . " (143). Linda, Waldeen, Sandra, Peggy, and Carolyn not only want to leave their husbands, but they do, supporting themselves by working at J.C. Penney's, Kroger, and K-Mart. For the most part these women are unsettled and do not believe, as their mothers did, that they have to stay with a man just because they married him. "Times are different now," Iris tells Pappy in "Drawing Names." We're just as good as the men" (104).

Not only do the women leave the men, but the men leave the women, sometimes for other women, sometimes to go West as does Tom in "Still Life with Watermelons," leading one character to comment, "This day and time, people just do what they please. They just hit the road" (29). In "Old Things" Linda tells her mother that "people don't have to do what they don't want to as much now as they used to" (88). All of these characters, both men and women, are restless. The fact that we almost never learn just what makes them so restless, except that they all feel that they have missed something, something important, perhaps leads to the charge that "Mason takes us into her characters' new Kentucky homes and then runs a made-for-TV movie. Her people's emotions come across merely as dots on the screen" (Vigderman 345). By the same token, it is not unreasonable to suggest that unhappy moderns often do not know exactly what is wrong. They simply feel at loose ends. Mason portrays this, but makes little or no attempt to explain it -- perhaps because she cannot, perhaps because she does not have to.

In short, the families in western Kentucky, like families all across the nation, have broken up or are breaking up. Again, Mason does not delve into why this is true; it is true and she portrays it. She does, however, mourn the death of the traditional family because she believes that the breakup of a family destroys the individuals in the family. Mary Lou in "The Rookers" voices this idea when she compares the breakup of the family to what her daughter has learned about protons in quantum mechanics at Murray State. She thinks, "If you break up a group the individuals could disappear out of existence" (29). Like protons, individuals don't exist outside the group; they lose their identity, and this is what is happening to the modern Kentuckian. In short, "the loss of place and identity is one of the connecting themes of Bobbie Ann Mason's stories" (Arnold 137).

In most of these stories, it takes a traumatic event of some kind to make the characters see that the land has changed or that they no longer know who they are. In Leroy's case, it is his accident and injury in his rig that make him see that the land has changed, that Norma Jean has changed, and that "in all the years he was on the road he never took time to examine anything. He was always flying past scenery" (2). In "New Wave Format," it is Edwin's fear of losing his young girl friend -- he is forty-three and Sabrina is only twenty -- that makes him understand that while life all around him has changed, "he still feels like the same person, unchanged, that he was twenty years ago" (215). He has skimmed through life, not taking it very seriously, failing to develop real relationships with people. He suddenly realizes that this is why his first two wives left him. Now he really has to make an effort, or he will lose Sabrina.

It is Norma Jean's mother's catching her smoking after twenty years that makes her decide to act on the changes that have occurred in her. "Everything was fine till Mama caught me smoking," she says. "That set something off." In reality, though, while this is the catalyst that jars Norma Jean, she must admit: "No, it wasn't fine. I don't know what I'm saying" (15).

Mason's stories also provide us with insight into how we react to these "changing times." Several of Mason's characters react to the changes in their lives by trying, at least momentarily, to go back. Leroy thinks that he can hold onto his wife if he can go back to a simpler time. He decides to accomplish this by building her a log cabin for which he goes so far as to order the blueprints and to build a miniature out of Lincoln Logs. Mabel, Leroy's mother-in-law, is convinced that if Leroy and Norma Jean will go to Shiloh where she and her husband went on their honeymoon, they can somehow begin their fifteen-year-old marriage anew. So does Leroy. He says to Norma, "You and me could start all over again. Right back at the beginning" (15). It is ironic, fitting, and symbolic that it is at Shiloh that Norma tells him she wants to leave him. By story's end, Leroy knows that he cannot go back as "it occurs to him that building a house of logs is . . . empty -- too simple. . . . Now he sees that building a log house is the dumbest idea he could have had. . . . It was a crazy idea" (16). He realizes that "the real inner workings of a marriage, like most of history, have escaped him" (16). Like many of Mason's characters, however, Leroy is endeared to us because he attempts to deal with the problems brought on by the changes in Norma Jean. In the final analysis he tries to deal with the changes, not fight them. He thinks to himself that "he'll have to think of something else, quickly. He will wad the blueprints into tight balls and fling them into the lake. . . . Then he'll get moving again" (16). Despite the fact that Norma Jean has moved away from him and is "walking through the cemetary, following a serpentine brick path," despite the fact that she is "far away," despite the fact that "the sky is unusually pale," Leroy "tries to hobble toward her" (16). Mason says, "I like to think of my characters as being innocent but full of hope and energy (2)." This is certainly the case with Leroy.

In reaction to her own sense of aging and her daughter's leaving her husband and returning home with two children, Cleo of "Old Things," who has always abhorred old things and the past, symbolically re-embraces the past at the flea market when she buys back a whatnot, made by her husband, that she had sold the moment he was dead. While buying back the whatnot is an attempt to step back in time, it is also symbolic of Cleo's wish and need to escape from the troubling present; for on this whatnot is a train, and

> Cleo looks at the train. . . . For a moment she can see the train gliding silently through the pleasant scene, as quietly as someone dreaming, and she can imagine her family aboard the train as it crosses a fertile valley -- like the place down by the creek that Jake loved -- on its way out West. On the train, her well-behaved sons and their children are looking out the window, and Linda and Bob are driving the train, guiding the cowcatcher down the track, while Tammy and Davey patiently count the telephone poles and watch the passing scenery. Cleo is following unafraid in the caboose, as the train passes through the golden meadow and they all wave at the future and smile perfect smiles. (93)

Although Cleo has said earlier that "there's no use trying to hang onto anything. You just lose it in the end. You might as well just not care" (91), she does care, and her reaction to change is to escape to the past and to dream of the land and the family as it used to be.

Mack and Mary Lou in "The Rookers" are suffering from empty-nest syndrome, and Mack makes several different kinds of attempts to deal with this change in his life. He attempts to read philosophy because he thinks his daughter Judy, who has gone to Murray State, is studying philosophy, but she is taking physics. In the final analysis, however, Mack increasingly withdraws, sending Mary Lou to buy his building supplies and becoming obsessed with calling the weather number on the phone. Like a good number of Mason's characters, Mary Lou has a moment of insight when she realizes that "Mack calls the temperature number because he is afraid to talk on the telephone, and by listening to a recording, he doesn't have to reply. It's his way of pretending that he's involved" (33). He is becoming disconnected from everybody (29). At the same time, a recording about the

weather represents a small degree of certainty that he can find nowhere else.

Georgeann, in "The Retreat," is married to a preacher who chops off the heads of sick chickens because "he believes in the necessity of things" (138). When she finally realizes how she has always felt about him, she tries ineffectually to leave him. At the end of the story, however, Georgeann "crashes down blindly" on the neck of a sick chicken and "feels nothing, only that she has done her duty" (147), just as her husband would have. One can thus assume that the title of the story, "The Retreat," has more than one meaning and that Georgeann h as "retreated" from possible change.

The results of the changes taking place in Mason's western Kentucky are many and varied; and, as Mary Sue in "Residents and Transients" says, these changes make people "jittery." Thus, these shifting relationships are still confusing to characters like Waldeen Murdock in "Graveyard Day," who thinks that a stepfather is "something like a substitute host on a talk show" (173). People feel fragmented. They are in one culture but part of another. While Mason does not advocate a sentimental return to the past, her most satisfying characters are those, such as Nancy Culpepper, in "Nancy Culpepper" and "Lying Daggo," and Sandra, in "The Offering," who live in the present but who find stability in family, place, tradition, and history.

Nancy Culpepper, the most educated of all Mason's women, is the assistant principal of a small private school in Pennsylvania where she lives with her husband, Jack, a free lance photographer, and her son, Robert. While Nancy is truly a modern woman, she is very committed, not to holding onto the past, as Jack sometimes accuses her of being, but to understanding its relationship to her. When she discovers that she is the second Nancy Culpepper, she says, "It was like time-lapse photography. I was standing there looking into the past and the future at the same time . . ." (187-88). She is fascinated to know t hat she is the second Nancy Culpepper, a woman whose wedding photograph reveals "bright eyes . . . fixed on something far away" (187), fixed on the future, the modern Nancy believes, not the past.

Sandra of "Offerings" is another Mason character who is a thoroughly modern woman who has a healthy relationship to the past. She is divorced and loves to drink bourbon-and-coke; but at the same time, she has given up city life to live alone, with eight cats, in a shabby farm house, reminiscent of the one on her grandparents' farm which she can barely remember. She much prefers this life to spending her weekends "watching go-go dancers in smoky bars" in Louisville (53). Sandra is completely in tune with herself and with nature around her, so much so that she is willing, she says, to offer her ducks as a sacrifice to nature. Like Nancy Culpepper, she is one of the few fulfilled women in Mason's world. Sandra finds stability and identity in the modern changing world, not by living in the past but by relating to the past through nature.

Bobbie Ann Mason's central theme is the movement of the modern world into a traditional society and the problems that causes. Her characters are everyday, decent, caring people who are struggling to deal with a world in transition. Mason believes that all of us -- North, South, East, or West -- can identify with them; for, she says, "By and large, we're all dealing with a chaotic new experience in the modern world" (2). Mason's characters enlarge our view of each other and of ourselves as we deal with the problems caused by a rapidly changing world.

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EVELYN SCOTT'S *A CALENDAR OF SIN*: FREUDTOWN OR CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE?

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Edwin George, a character modeled after Evelyn Scott's Grandfather Thomas, is a major link in her historical trilogy -- *Migrations* (1927), *The Wave* (1929), and *A Calendar of Sin* (1931). His attitude towards Mimms, a fictionalization of Clarksville, is expressed in *A Calendar of Sin*: "He said it was a distinction to affront Mimms. Opprobrium in Mimms was an inverted compliment. You always earned it some time or other in your life, if you were intelligent" (II, 302). Evelyn Scott, born Elsie Dunn, certainly shared with Edwin George a willingness to affront Clarksville. During the 1920s she scandalized her hometown not only by running off with a married man, but by having the audacity to expose her sin in her finest book, *Escapade* (1923). She became synonymous with the bohemian, globe-hopping, free living and loving of the lost generation.

A Calendar of Sin is Scott's most ambitious novel and her last successful novel. Scott was ill-suited for the 1930s. Her youthful energy was subdued and the 1920s rebel searching for new artistic forms to oppose Victorian deception was oddly transformed into the middle-aged Southerner seeking shelter from the militant left and its strident demand for sociological rather than psychological interpretation. In her best works -- *The Narrow House*, *Escapade*, *The Wave*, and *A Calendar of Sin* -- Scott is a writer of daring psychic exploration. *A Calendar of Sin* is her attempt tot come to terms with the 1930s. She would not yield to economic interpretation, but she did attempt an expansive investigation of social structure while retaining her 1920s preoccupation with Freudian insights. In his biography D. A. Callard explains the influence of Freud on Scott's life and time: "Shadowing almost all of Evelyn's published writings and the whole intellectual atmosphere of the twenties was the figure of Freud. Her letters are dotted with phrases such as 'Freudianly explicable,' and 'Freudianly understandable'" (135). As Carl Van Doren wrote in his review of *A Calendar of Sin*, it might well have been called *A Calendar of Sex* (16). Although Scott is not concerned with phallic symbolism, dream interpretation, or the Oedipus complex, she does emphasize the distortions and neuroses that derive from sexual repression. Her novel is more dependent upon late Freud with its universal interpretations of cultural illusions and the cyclical movements from repression to violent upheaval.

Her subtitle for *A Calendar of Sin* is *American Melodramas*. Robert Penn Warren considered this subtitle "peculiarly accurate, if the term means that the violence and sensational action is not adequately based on examined motive and realized character" (158). Warren was critical of an approach in which the violence was "founded on instinct," and he argued that "behaviorism does not provide a workable basis for literature: a multiplicity of cases proves nothing" (159). Warren, whose later fiction is an ironic secret sharer with the melodramatic sensationalism and sprawling "history" of *A Calendar of Sin*, did admire some of the characterization in this novel. Having lived in Clarksville, he certainly knew the social milieu of the novel. Scott started with actual lives and events and progressed to sensational secrets or violent revelations which refute the calm exterior of ordinary lives. The novel begins with the raids of the KKK in Clarksville and continues through two volumes and 1367 pages to the raids of the Night Riders forty years later. In 1867 the blacks suffer the brunt of mob violence, and in 1907 Scott portrays vigilantes preparing to lynch a black for the rape and murder of a

white girl. It is not progression of history but rather the appalling sameness which disturbed Warren and which is indeed most striking in the novel. Scott dramatizes such factual material as the actual raid against the freedman's school, which occurred in Clarksville after the war, and her youthful memory of the hanging tree in Russellville, Kentucky. She relies upon historically-based but grotesquely-imagined characters whose feigned responsibility merely perverts their sexual impulses. A prime example is Clarksville's Judge Tyler, one of "the original Ku Kluxers" (Background 180), who becomes the mad mob leader, Judge Tyler, in *A Calendar of Sin*.

Scott's technique results in a shocking use of family history. Beginning with *The Narrow House*, she had been preoccupied with the secret hatred and lust within the family structure. In *A Calendar of Sin*, the Dunns, the paternal and Yankee side of Scott's family, become the Dolans; the Thomases, the southern maternal side, become the Georges (Welker 36-54); and the Graceys, Scott's relatives by the marriage of her mother's sister, become the Cowleys. Scott also had stalwart Clarksville relatives from another of her mother's sisters who had married Dr. Drane; these relatives became the Poole family. Scott's memories of Clarksville revolve around the Thomas-Gracey mansion -- the antebellum home owned by her grandfather Thomas, then purchased by her Aunt Minnie and Uncle Julian Gracey, son of the Civil War hero, Captain Frank P. Gracey. Scott's mother was brought up in this mansion and always assumed that she belonged there, although as an adult her long visits were as her sister's guest. One pattern in *A Calendar of Sin* is the older man's lust for a young woman. This lust is never fully admitted but is disguised as polite affection or family concern. When Linda George marries into the Cowley family, she and her husband are forced to struggle for survival until Linda George Cowley goes with her child to visit her recalcitrant father-in-law, Major Cowley, a clear fictionalization of Captain Gracey. Major Cowley despises his own son but is won over by his daughter-in-law, a reaction derived from her sexual vitality and his sexual frustration.

The pattern is repeated more explicitly in the next generation as the Major's son, Eugene Cowley, becomes obsessed with his sister-in-law, Laura Josephine. His attentions take the form of semi-controlled kissing and fondling. He horsewhips youths who court Lolly until she finally breaks away and marries Montgomery Dolan. Lolly is based on Scott's mother, and Eugene Cowley is based on Julian Gracey, the admired Clarksville citizen who until his death in 1929 controlled the Gracey fortune which was used to support Scott's mother. The connection of Eugene Cowley's lust to Julien Gracey's character is not confirmed in Scott's other words. In *Background in Tennessee*, Julien is treated kindly as an "impeccable" gentleman (276). When he is again fictionalized as Uncle George in *Eva Gay*, he appears as a rather pleasant though dull, small-town patriarch. Scott's mother was difficult and hypersensitive; she was not at ease with her demotion to poor relative within the mansion in which she had once been the spoiled child. Her insecurity resulted in a preoccupation with the real and imagined weaknesses of others. As a child Evelyn Scott closely identified with her mother. In *A Calendar of Sin* Scott intensified a childhood reality, relying upon a Freudian emphasis on sexual motivation, to dramatize the hidden tensions beneath Victorian decorum.

The sexual pattern recurs after Lolly George and Montgomery Dolan move to St. Louis with their only child, Edith. Lolly's niece, Patience Poole, comes to live with them, and Montgomery is enchanted by her. Edith, the alter ego of Evelyn Scott, is aware of the tension in the house: "Edith, in bed, heard Patience's name, then Father saying something, her replying; and, at last, Father going out. She lay there. No sound came from Mother's room. Edith, the gloom so queer, the banging of the front door worse than all, wondered if Mother had committed suicide" (II, 561). Later, Edith speaks to her cousin about her father's desire; once the secret has been expressed, Patience flees to Mimms. Montgomery is shocked and angered by his daughter's honesty and retreats even farther from his wife and child. Edith begins to mother her over-sensitive, immature mother. This mother-daughter reversal is central to understanding Scott as the product of a bad marriage. We may doubt whether an infatuation with a Clarksville cousin contributed to the deterioration of the relationship. Scott may have created or exaggerated a sexual situation

to give dramatic expression to her mother's insecurity and her own sense of rejection. The characters in *A Calendar of Sin* participate in a melodrama which externalizes the trauma of Evelyn Scott's childhood and which she explained through a Freudian emphasis on sexual drives. Scott was aware of the infidelity of her father and the frigidity of her mother; these elements are reintroduced in *Eva Gay*. She was caught between a mother absorbed in hypersensitive fears and a father who withdrew his love when he saw his wife's sensibility reflected in his daughter. Given this scenario, it is not surprising that the father, as recounted in *Escapade*, abandoned his wife by dumping her on the doorstep of his impoverished daughter. Nor is it surprising that the daughter felt suffocated by her mother, returned her to the Clarksville relatives, and sought to express both her love and guilt in her fiction.

While much of Evelyn Scott's psychic intensity derives from her relationship with her mother, *A Calendar of Sin* reveals the extent to which her aunt, Minnie Gracey, provided a model for Scott's struggle to attain autonomy and artistic ability and the trap of small-town Victorian values. Minnie Gracey's paintings are still preserved within the Gracey family. She was educated in a Cincinnati art academy. Several paintings were produced during her mid and late teens, but the obligations to a very large family ended her development as an artist. In *A Calendar of Sin*, Linda George is first characterized by Eugene Cowley, her future husband, as "The Woman's Rights, emancipated, painting-nonsense one" (II, 558). Linda and Eugene become secret lovers despite his irritation with her individualism and her realization that his dull-witted conformity will inevitably confine her. Later, as Linda's family grows, she attempts to transform her sexual role into artistic expression by portraying the pure, natural act of suckling her child. In preparation, she carefully studies Madonnas, but the actual painting requires isolation. Scott expands the irony as the mother literally fights off her children. The disparately antithetical roles of Madonna and artist cannot be reconciled. Linda George is left with her private matriarchal power, including the surreptitious writing of public speeches for her unimaginative husband. The actual Aunt Minnie mothered Evelyn Scott along with her own large family and exemplified a forceful femininity far removed from Scott's mother's nervous manipulation. Aunt Minnie revealed the extent to which Victorian motherhood confined a woman, but more importantly the inevitable conflicts of love, freedom, and art. Whether with mate or with child, Scott demands that we recognize the biological nature of love and presents the sexual responses as inevitable within human relationships.

Scott seems to see her mother's hypersensitivity as more typical of the feminine manifestation of sexual repression. Madness abounds in this novel and varies between raging masculine aggression and hysterical feminine repression. The extreme of frigidity is Fanny Sydney Dolan, a character modeled after Scott's paternal grandmother. One of the finest Freudian ironies of *A Calendar of Sin* is that Montgomery Dolan, modeled after Scott's father, detests his mother and recoils from her madness only to marry a woman with a similar disposition. Both are repelled by natural fecundity, which they associate with desire, dirt, and decay. Fanny recoils from her husband, "so horrible when he came close -- that little growth. All was decay!" (I, 399). Her only peace is the momentary creation of a sterile domain: "For her, in perfect order there was perfect peace. Her trouble was that order wouldn't stay. . . . The chairs were moved. The curtains slackened from their crisp rigidity. A smear appeared upon the dusky mirror of a table" (II, 460). In the beginning of their relationship, John Dolan saves Fanny from suicidal drowning; in the end John and Fanny die of asphyxiation. This suicide is based on the actual death of Evelyn Scott's grandparents (Callard 3). Scott begins with the woman she knew as a child and completes the portrait by imaging such scenes as John finding his wife in a stupor, nude in her immaculate kitchen, after a frenzy of cleaning. The image offers a stark enactment faithful to the tension Scott felt as a child and the Freudian interpretations she accepted as an adult.

The masculine counterpart of the sexually repressed Fanny is James Dolan. James may be based on a great-uncle, but in this case he is almost completely a nightmarish invention. Like Fanny, he is repelled by bestial nature but identifies women as the source of impurity. His misogyny is an ironic echo of Fanny's quest for purity: "He'd always hated the diseased and dirty sluts. His life was clean!" (I, 158). In a mad rage he beats a young lover to

death with a stone and drops her down a well. Later, tortured by the memory, he becomes fanatically religious and castrates himself: "And there shall be a bloody sacrifice unto the God of Hosts!" (II, 35). The depiction of James Dolan is consistent with Scott's vision of life destroyed through repression, but it is too clinical and thus partially justifies Warren's complaint that the novel is a collection of case studies. Here Scott lacks an emotional referent. While the depiction of Fanny is powerfully moving, the depiction of James is mechanically sensational. The Freudian influence is no imposition when Scott relies upon the memories and emotions of her youth, but the prose loses its power when Scott creates characters to conform to Freudian expectations.

Freudian theory provided Scott a way of perceiving her early traumas. Her extension of reality is most apparent in the climax as she focuses on Edith Dolan. Like Scott, Edith is born in the mansion in 1893, a breech birth with the umbilical cord around her neck. She becomes the golden-haired only child of a father who fears madness and a mother who courts madness. Scott dramatizes the child's life within a marriage maintained for the sake of convention. She firmly believed that the social world is mostly illusion and that the artist's task is to rip away at all cost. In *A Calendar of Sin* this preoccupation with illusion is expressed by Maurice George: "There's nobody, from top to bottom of this land, who ever stopped to find out anything that was fundamental truth. They've covered several thousand years of outward progress in a century; but what American is grown-up in another sense?" (II, 581). While America remains a land of innocence, Edith is appalled by deception and longs for maturity. As a result of her father's deceptions and her mother's arrested development, Edith is forced into early maturation -- essentially, innocent America robs Edith of her childhood.

In 1907 Edith returns to Mimms in the heat of the night rider controversy and attends a subscription dance at the court house. In her initiation, she is first pawed by an aging gallant, then introduced tot he confusion of sexual awakening by a young night rider. Dr. Barton nearly forces Edith from the court house dance to the public square, yet Edith is also testing as "she wanted to feel awful things" (II, 628). The Freudian influence becomes clear as Dr. Barton "touched her breast. The contact was a loathly pain. . . . I know, she thought .that's how men act. I'm finding out. Nobody told me what men did, but now I know just what they're like! "You make me feel so fatherly,' he said" (II, 628). When Edith flees from Dr. Barton, it is into the arms of Frank Keeler, a character derived from Scott's first love, an adolescent love so overwhelming that its failure sent her into a severe depression. In *Background in Tennessee* she describes falling in love at age fourteen and the pain of the aftermath (260). The event affected her so profoundly that she tells virtually the same story in both *A Calendar of Sin* and *Eva Gay*. In *A Calendar of Sin* they ride down River Road and hide on Cowley's wharf. In her moment of indecision, Edith "felt as if she sank, sank under him; as if some awful spell were holding her, and he and she would drown" (II, 634). When she begins to cry, Frank relents and they return through the Clarksvillian setting from River Road, up Railroad Street to the town square and the court house with the "blank and fiery clock" (II, 635).

The unique form of *A Calendar of Sin* is apparent as Scott begins with this rather typical, autobiographical moment and extends it into a nightmare sequence in which Edith is raped and murdered. Unlike Scott, Edith does not recover from her initiation. In her quest for stark truth, Edith dreams of becoming a social outcast: "It might be just an accident that she was not a prostitute. She almost wanted to sink down and down. To go to jail. (From outcasts, nothing horrible was hid.)" (II, 644). The sinking is associated with the sexual drive and human equality beneath social stratification. In her rebellion she rides alone too far out on River Road. Edith knows that she may see "that foreign-looking man" (II, 645) who always stares at her, but she is determined to return his stare. This man on the edge is Sam Turnley, the rejected mulatto son of John Furness, another aging degenerate of respectable society. When Edith falls from her horse, Sam Turnley takes her to his cabin. The decisive moment occurs as she stands before his mirror: "With a trembling and oppressive sense of wicked vanity, which she, out of a defiant necessity, was compelled to evade, she picked the sidecombs from her hair. A sheet like silver water fell upon her neck. . . . She suspected he was spying on her from the porch. . . . The horrid glamour of the moment held her still, as she

prepared for something she could not prevent -- for the predetermined, dark fatality" (II, 654). As Edith sees Sam in the mirror, Scott presents both characters as helpless within a fixed moment of finality: "Her fingers went on combing her hair mechanically. . . . Repulsion was in every atom of her flesh; and yet she couldn't move. She couldn't even leave off staring at the man, who stood with his back to the outer door" (II, 655). Both characters are victims of a repressive culture, cast out to experience what the culture refuses to admit. What t hey confront is by no means redemptive. The only human nobility is in the act of confrontation. A blood force and an irrevocable fate paradoxically free the individual by precluding rational will. Robert Welker has explained at length the Liebestod theme of love and death in Evelyn Scott, but in this case Scott's Liebestod comes very close to the Freudian id and death wish.

Evelyn Scott is foremost a novelist of human psychology. The influence of Freud was profound -- much more than the fashionable panacea of the 1920s. Her immediate family and early Victorian milieu provided her with experiences for which Freud's interpretations were most apt. At times *A Calendar of Sin* loses its power as the Freudian scheme demands sensational action too far removed from Scott's experience, but generally Scott relies upon the emotional trauma of her early development. This permits her to begin with Clarksville and autobiography, but build toward cathartic, Freudian images which remain true to her psychic reality.

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GIMME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION: JOHN CROWE RANSOM AND WILL D. CAMPBELL AS CRITICS OF AMERICAN RELIGION

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It is a truism to say that the South has been and remains one of the most conservative -- politically and religiously conservative -- regions in the nation. Whereas in the past when one spoke of religion in the South the Scopes trial may have come immediately to mind, today it is school textbook controversies or the contemporary version of circuit riding evangelists, the televangelists, mighty and fallen. Among these are religious broadcaster Pat Robertson of Virginia Beach, Jerry Falwell of Lynchburg, Virginia, Oral Roberts of Tulsa, Jim Bakker (not himself a Southerner) and the Fort Mill, South Carolina, based PTL Club, and Jimmy Swaggart of Baton Rouge. Though these names are familiar, it is too seldom recognized that within Southern religion there are trenchant critics who are as loyal to their Southern identity as they are unforgiving of American -- not just Southern -- religion.

I want to look briefly at two of these Southern critics of American religion, John Crowe Ransom and Will D. Campbell. Widely disparate in terms of vocations, socio-economic backgrounds, and theological commitments, these two men, separated by three decades, nevertheless think of themselves as Southerners and offer a Southern analysis of the ills of American religion. They engage in identical task, to use Biblical language, the task of naming the powers, the invisible forces of evil which manifest themselves in human institutions. And they are in at least partial agreement as to the identity of these powers which oppress the human spirit. A comparison of these two critics may, thus, provide us with some insight into the character of Southern religion and perhaps into the Southern character itself, if there be such a thing.

John Crowe Ransom was born in April of 1888 to John James Ransom and Ella Crowe Ransom. His father a preacher in the Methodist Church and his mother an educated woman from an established family, religion and education were from his earliest days prominent influences upon him. Ransom entered Vanderbilt in 1903 and graduated in 1909, his degree delayed by several years of teaching school during that time. Following his graduation, he was selected as a Rhodes Scholar and entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he studied classics and philosophy. Ransom was taken by England, and excelled in his studies there. He returned to his alma mater in 1913 to teach English. By the mid-twenties he was highly acclaimed for his poetry, having published three volumes. He was also mentor to the group of Nashville poets who published their work in *The Fugitive*. But it was in 1929 that Ransom turned his attention most decidedly to religion. *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy*, his first book of prose, is Ransom's critique of religion.

He made no bold claims for this work. In a letter to Allen Tate in 1929 he described it as "hot and hasty" but nevertheless a sincere and badly needed work (Young, 181). It is a multi-faceted book and we cannot do full justice to it here, but valuable insights may be gleaned from even a hurried look.

Ransom's concern was with what he viewed as the trend to denude God of those traits which had historically been

attributed to God. He found evidence of this trend in secular society with a creeping scientism which "forgets the limitations [of humans]" and which encourages instead hubris [116]. The result of this hubris is that human beings, not content with their role and status in the world, employ their scientific knowledge to alter the world. The result is a war upon nature that fails to recognize either the dignity of nature or the dignity of human beings.

"Progress" and "industrialism" were the two terms employed by Ransom to describe this scientism when applied to human practices. Progress refers to the attempt to mold nature to immediate human purposes and objectives without first having identified ultimate human purposes and objectives, and without having examined the consistency of these immediate objectives with the ultimate purposes of human life. Here is how Ransom put it in his essay, "Reconstructed But Unregenerate," in *I'll Take My Stand*:

> Progress never defines its ultimate objective, but thrusts its victims at once into an infinite series. Our vast industrial machine, with its laboratory centers of experimentation, and its far-flung organs of mass production, is like a Prussianized state which is organized strictly for war and can never consent to peace. Or . . . our progressivists are the latest version of those pioneers who conquered the wilderness, except that they are pioneering on principle, or from force of habit, and without any recollection of what pioneering was for. (8)

The eventual result of this confidence in the human ability to remold nature for human purposes was not the happiness and freedom humans assumed would be gained from this mastery, but rather "slavery" and unhappiness. "Under industrialism," Ransom wrote, "we scourge ourselves like true fanatics" (187).

That is the contemporary problem, Ransom thought, but a problem which could be felicitously resolved for human beings by returning to the old orthodoxy. "Religion," Ransom argued, "enlarges the God and limits man, telling the believer incessantly to remember his limits and be content with his existing condition" (116). Recognize nature's infinite variety, Ransom advises. And recognize the mysterious purposes of an inscrutable God in nature. Therein lies happiness. Therein lies salvation. Ransom does not suggest that man ought to recognize our human limitations and the purposes of an inscrutable God in nature because it would be an impiety not to do so. Rather, a failure to acknowledge these realities is ultimately a sin against the self.

But it is not only in science and in industrialism that men are guilty of the failure to recognize the God of orthodoxy. The same fault can be found in American religion, Ransom contended. In American religion ethics had replaced theology; religion was being reduced to morality. The reason for this was that the God of Israel, a stern and inscrutable God, had been replaced by a New Testament God, an "amicable and understandable God," whose primary concern was the happiness and well-being of the human race. The old God was "mysterious and not fully understood," "was worshipped with burnt offering and sacrifice," and was "the author of evil as well as good" (29). Ransom urged a return, as he put it, to the Old Testament God, an inscrutable God whose concern for human welfare was doubtful, a God who, if he offered salvation after death, would nevertheless effect human casualties in bringing about the salvation of some (154).

Why return to this God? Because without this God man forgets what evil is, much to his own detriment. Without this God he neglects and finally abandons religion and, forgetting his impotence before nature, takes the destiny of the universe into his own hands, thus creating a hellish existence for himself and for all of creation. As Ransom wrote in a letter:

> . . . little by little the God of the Jews has been whittled down by the Spirit of Science or the Spirit

> of Love or the Spirit of Rotary; and now religion is not religion at all, but a purely secular experience, like YMCA and Boy Scouts. (Young 180)

So Ransom called for a return to a God "fully equipped with thunderbolts," a "virile and concrete God" before whom human beings would tremble with fear. Ransom calls man back to that old time religion in which God is God and this world exists to serve God's purposes, not human purposes, a theocentric not anthropocentric universe.

While Ransom's God is fully equipped with thunderbolts, Will D. Campbell's God has no lack of olive branches. Indeed, it might be said that Campbell's God is the very one about whom Ransom warned, a New Testament God, loving in character.

Will D. Campbell, now of Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, was recently described as having "spent his 60 years elevating iconoclasm to a vocation" (Gibble 570). He is, in the words of a *Newsweek* article in 1972, a "bourbon-guzzling, tobacco-spitting, guitar-strumming man who rarely preaches a Sunday sermon and believes that the institutional church is perhaps the greatest barrier to the proclamation of the Gospel" (5/8/72: 84). And he is a Baptist to boot.

Campbell was born in Amite County, Mississippi, in 1924 to a poor but devout Baptist family. Early in his childhood he decided to become a preacher, and at the age of seventeen he was ordained by h is church to the gospel ministry. He attended Louisiana College in Pineville briefly before his less than stellar performance was interrupted by the war. Following his military service he returned to the South where he enrolled first at Wake Forest from which he received an A.B. degree, and then Tulane University from which he received an M.A. in English. After Tulane he enrolled at Yale Divinity School, graduating from there in 1952.

Campbell's first charge was in a small Louisiana parish. He left that pastorate to serve as the chaplain at Ole Miss where he became involved in the civil rights movement. In the mid-fifties at Ole Miss the chaplaincy and civil rights activism did not mix well. For this reason, in 1956 Campbell severed his relationship with the University and became a race-relations specialist for the National Council of Churches. In the early sixties, feeling his freedom stifled by the NCC, Campbell left to become the director of The Committee of Southern Churchmen and publisher of *Katallagete*. He now spends his time in public speaking and writing. His books include: *Brother to a Dragonfly*, *The Glad River*, *Cecilia's Secret*, and *Forty Acres and a Goat*. He is currently at work on a children's book and a book on the Baptists and the Bible. He is pastor to a "pulpitless, roofless, unpropertied and uncodified church," the Church of the Forty Acres and a Goat, in Mt. Juliet.

Campbell's understanding of the Christian faith has remained more or less the same since the early sixties. The cornerstone of his understanding of the Christian gospel is II Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." God, in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, has redeemed and reconciled all people to himself. And there is no reconciliation with God independent of reconciliation with other persons. Furthermore, there can be no genuine reconciliation of one person to another independent of reconciliation to God. Thus the failure of all "non-religious" attempts at solving social problems. The task of the church is to act as the community of the reconciled. And Campbell faults American religion for its failure to take God's reconciliation seriously and to live as those reconciled to God and to one another.

Like Ransom, Campbell recognizes the forces of evil in the world, forces which oppress and enslave the human spirit. And, if anything, Campbell has been more explicit about the identity of these forces of evil. While never denying the presence of evil within the heart of the individual, Campbell has emphasized the expression of evil in institutional form. The state, the military-industrial complex, the corporate economic structure, the academy -- the

public school system as well as the public and private universities, agribusiness, the church -- all have been agents of oppression. All have victimized the poor and the oppressed -- black and white alike. And Campbell has made these victimized blacks and whites the special focus of his ministry. Campbell speaks prophetically against these institutions of oppression, warning people not to misplace allegiances, calling Christians, liberal and conservative alike, from unholy alliances with sinful institutions and back to a life as a reconciled people.

Campbell has also been an outspoken critic of the electronic church, but his criticism of American religion has extended far beyond the television evangelists to the "do-gooders" of the liberal church. His iconoclasm, his radical critique of American religion, his concern for the outcast are exemplified well in the following excerpt from a recent interview. After bemoaning the opulent lifestyle of Jim and Tammy Bakker before a Wisconsin audience eager to hear about the decadent South, Campbell recalls, he went on as follows:

> "All that was built off the backs of the poor. If you chase wealth back far enough, you get into the mines and the fields. It's not the boss man who's digging the coal out of the ground and raising the crops. What's wrong with all this affluence in the name of gentle Jesus is that it's built off the exploitation of the poor." And of course, everybody listening was in general agreement. So I paused and said, "All right, what's the difference between that and the pope's jewels, or all those Lutheran and Presbyterian and Methodist steeples out there casting shadows on whores and pimps and addicts and bums with . . . seldom a gesture in their direction from any of us proportionate to what we spend on ourselves? If you push it to its conclusion, the difference is simply one of taste."
>
> So someone got up and said, "Surely you're not saying that the Sistine Chapel is as ugly as some goddamn condominium with mirrors on the walls?" I answered by saying that I guess it's all right for the poor peasants of Italy to put their pennies in the box for the Sistine Chapel, but it's not all right for the widow on Social Security to send the $5 and $10 to the TV preachers. Then what we're talking about is the annihilation of the hillbillies and the rednecks. And I think when you get right down to it, that is what liberals upset over the electronic church and Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority is all about. (Gibble 572)

Like John Crowe Ransom, Will Campbell calls out for a return to old-time religion. While Ransom called for a return to the Old Testament God, Campbell calls American religion back to the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. What he means, apparently, is that the church should return to small independent ministries to the poor and outcast. The church should renounce its reliance upon the state and its entanglement in institutions that violate the individual. The church should exist as a genuine community of reconciliation with open arms to all. Only then will the church truly be the church.

The differences between Ransom and Campbell ought not to go unnoticed. While both invoke the old-time religion, their understandings of that old-time religion are radically divergent. Ransom calls for a return to a stern, inscrutable God. Campbell believes the face of this God has been revealed, that some, even if not all, mysteries have been resolved, and that this God can be known as a God of love.

Despite these differences, there remain significant areas of agreement. Both recognize the presence of social or institutional forces of evil in the world, an evil that does violence to the dignity of the individual and the possibility of a good life. Both agree that man's humanity is under attack from forces beyond the control of the individual. The pastoral, agrarian ideal of Ransom is not far removed from Campbell's vision of the communal life, free of entanglement in institutions of oppression.

Both recognize the tragic nature of human existence. Ransom wrote in *God Without Thunder*, "In tragedy the mind makes the critical confession that human goodness and intelligent work . . . do not actually produce their triumphant effect upon the material world. . . . The moral order is a wished-for order which does not coincide with the actual order or world order" (47). He is no utopian idealist, nor is Campbell, with his understanding of the depth and extensiveness of social evil. Instead they acknowledge the finitude and limitations of individuals. And both believe that religion is essential for the preservation of the dignity and humanity of persons. Religion, true religion, makes one aware of the forces of evil which denigrate persons and provides resources for combating these forces.

Cleanth Brooks in "The Enduring Faith," published in *Why the South Will Survive*, writes that

> contrary to other Americans, the collective experience of Southerners includes decades of scarcity and poverty rather than of abundance; of guilt rather than innocence; of frustration and defeat rather than of unfailing victory and success. Such a regional experience has made Southerners skeptical with regard to the myths that undergird American nationalism. The Southerners' "historic" experience has given them a better grasp on reality, a heightened suspicion of all utopian schemes, and an antidote to moral complacency. (208)

I think this brief look at Ransom and Campbell bears this out. And, it seems to me, this Southern experience, this Southern theology, is a valuable antidote to the smug candy-coated religion so dominant in America in the current age. The warnings of Ransom and Campbell are important words for Southerners and all Americans as we sit complacently with the instruments for world destruction at our fingertips.

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IN MEMORIAM

William Beasley

Lyman Burbank

longtime members and friends of the Kentucky-Tennessee A.S.A.

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MARK TWAIN VISITS TENNESSEE

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Mark Twain visited Tennessee a number of times but surely not so often as is claimed. It is sometimes said, for instance, that he visited Jamestown, coming back to see the land his father bought while living in Fentress County in the 1820s and 1830s. But such claims ignore Twain's plain statement in his autobiography: "I have written about Jamestown in *The Gilded Age*, a book of mine, but it was from hearsay, not from personal knowledge."[1] Apparently the visits made to Fentress County by Twain's older brother Orion Clemens gave rise to the belief that Twain himself had been there. From time to time intriguing stories about other Twain visits to Tennessee have appeared, some verifiable and some supported by no source other than that in which they were originally published.

A prime example of the latter is the account given by Lela McDowell Blankenship (1886-1966) in *When Yesterday Was Today*, posthumously published in 1966, in which she relates that her father Jackson McDowell met Sam Clemens in a Nashville print shop. McDowell made a trip to St. Louis, apparently in the early 1850s, and was delayed a week at Nashville, waiting for a steamboat. His daughter represents him as saying:

> In that time I found a suitable place for the children and found a few days' work at a printing shop where I learned to set type. There I met a young man of similar age but apparently of much greater experience than I with whom I fell in company. His name was Samuel Clemens, and he was amusing and instructive in an extravagant sort of way, telling tall tales but being friendly and helpful. I liked him in spite of disbelieving much he told.[2]

Mrs. Blankenship's footnote affirms: "Jackson McDowell often talked of Sam Clemens who was of his own age and similar background, being born only a few miles over in Missouri. Jackson never spoke Clemens' name without a chuckle of remembrance." The narrative of Jackson McDowell -- which may have been written by Mrs. Blankenship, since it is not clear that this is an actual quotation from her father -- continues with his visit to St. Louis and his return to Nashville. There, he says, he

> again met up with the young man from Missouri, Sam Clemens, who was a much better travelled young man than I. He told of ways and means to see the world with headquarters in Nashville. Sam Clemens could tell the biggest tales, many of them complete lies or fabrications to interest people, but he was good company. Clemens got me a job of type-setting, and the printing process was of great interest to me.[3]

A third encounter allegedly came when the two met while McDowell was on his way to the Western gold fields. "I stopped in Nashville," Mrs. Blankenship has him say, "and might have stayed, but my original interest was bolstered by more magic tales by Sam Clemens, whom I met again in the print shop." These meetings are not

satisfactorily dated, but in reference to the Western trip McDowell says, "I was gone all the Summer of 1854. . . ."[4]

The 1853 Nashville city directory lists several printing offices: those for newspapers (the *Daily American*, *Nashville Gazette*, and *Republican Banner*) as well as others, such as the Ben Franklin Book and Job Office. But was Sam Clemens really employed by one of them? The evidence quoted, coming from the daughter of the man who supposedly experienced it, is striking, though some shadow is cast over it by the fact that more than 110 years passed between the event and the published account of it. Still more damaging is the fact that no Twain biographer seems ever to have found evidence of Sam Clemens working in a Nashville print shop. He was so employed in Hannibal, St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Muscatine (Iowa), Keokuk (Iowa), and Cincinnati in the 1850s and may have been at Nashville. But proof is lacking.

An account of a Twain visit to Tennessee written by a man who claimed to have witnessed it appears in the autobiography of Opie Read (1852-1939), author and lecturer and Nashville native. Read was, so he says, a student at a classical school called Neophogen College in Gallatin, Tennessee, when the humorist came there to speak:

> It was a delight when Mark Twain came to give a lecture, not in the restricted Hall of Ideas, but in the spacious chapel. Walton [the college president] had objected to Twain's coming, terming him a man of uncouth expression . . . but he gave way to our importunity, listened to a few sentences and walked out to meet Aristotle among the trees. I knew that the humorist had worked in a printing office, and after the lecture I told him that I was a compositor and was typesetting my way toward education; and pleasantly he responded, "Yes, whatever that may mean." He went with a party of us to my room where we sat smoking cob pipes and enjoyably listening to his talk. "Real knowledge lies in the close attention we pay to little things," I remember his saying. "Once I saw a mighty elephant seeking to doze off, to dream, doubtless, of his monstrous ancestors, but a fly kept him awake." Ah, how wiser was he than our book-founded president.[5]

A somewhat different, much more humorous account of the event was offered in Read's posthumously published *Mark Twain and I* ten years later:

> We, the students of the somewhat exaggerated classical institution, Neophogen [sic] College, Gallatin, Tennessee, were fondly looking toward the coming of Mark Twain to deliver us a lecture. President Walton expressed his sensitive concern, "After the lecture you are to sit in a room with the great humorist. I warn you not to light your pipes, for I understand that Mr. Clemens has a contempt for tobacco."
>
> When the thrilling talk had been given, the elder students invited Mark Twain into a small room. "We are going to shut the windows and smoke the humorist out," said one of the leaders.
>
> Soon we began lighting our pipes. After a few moments when some of us began to cough, Mark Twain inquired, "Are you fellows smoking sawdust? Wait a minute, I think I have some regular tobacco."
>
> With that he took from his pocket a big pipe, crumpled off tobacco from a black Kentucky twist and puffed upon us clouds of suffocating smoke.

> When we had coughed our way out of the room we saw Mark Twain silently laughing, as he walked beneath the trees.[6]

One may well ask why, if the second account is true, Read did not give any hint of it in his autobiography. And why was the mood of President Walton so changed that he is solicitous of the comfort of "the great humorist" when before he was quite contemptuous of him? We may also question why in the first account the students gather in Read's own room, yet in the second version it is merely "a small room."

Local tradition concerning the Twain lecture is at variance with both of Read's printed accounts, since it holds that President Walton locked the humorist out, forcing him to deliver his lecture on the lawn to a crowd of students and those who happened to be passing at the time.[7] Read's autobiography, as we have seen, states that the lecture was given in the college chapel.

But did Mark Twain really lecture at Neophogen College? Aside from the fact that no mention is made of such an event in any of the standard Twain sources, there is the problem of the dates to the visit. Neophogen College was chartered in 1873 and ceased to exist in 1878.[8] Twain appears to have spent those years almost entirely in New England, New York, and Europe.[9] There seem to be these possibilities: (1) Read was deliberately lying; (2) Read's faulty memory attributed to Twain a lecture actually given by someone else, or by Twain at another place; or (3) the man who spoke at Gallatin was an impostor.

Opie Read had other stories to tell about the presence of Mark Twain in Tennessee. At the beginning of one we hear that "The old 'Joe Wheeler' carried Mark Twain and our party along the picturesque Tennessee River as we churned toward Chattanooga." In another we hear that "The cooling breezes swept across a Tennessee hotel veranda as Mark Twain and our party awaited the arrival of a carriage that was to take us to a Chautauqua tent." On still another page of *Mark Twain and I*, he recalls that "On the shady side of an old brick hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, Mark Twain sat in a big hickory chair tilted back against the wall." On this occasion Read claims to have introduced to Twain "a gaunt old fellow of the hillbilly type" who said he had come to hear him "talk in the hall tonight" and wanted him to "sling" a joke at him. The old man also remarked that this was the first time he had been over twenty miles from home. "Do you mean to tell men," said Twain, "that you've never been outside the United States?" When the man affirmed that he had not, Twain declared, "Oh, yes you have. How about the time Tennessee seceded from the Union?"[10] Again there seems to be no supporting evidence for Read's story; indeed, there is no evidence that Twain ever lectured at Nashville. It is possible that Read used the name of his birthplace simply because the anecdote needed to be set in some Southern city.

Read's mention of a "Chautauqua tent" leads us to consider a more recent but very brief statement in Radcliffe Squires' biography of Allen Tate that Monteagle was "established in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as an 'Assembly Grounds' where edifying lectures were given along the Chautauqua line. Mark Twain and George Washington Cable both lectured there."[11] It is true that Cable lectured at Monteagle; Twain and Cable for a time appeared together on the lecture platform. It is very likely that the impression thus arose that Twain had been at Monteagle too. All of the evidence I have seen indicates that though Mark Twain spoke in such far-away places as India, South Africa, and Australia, he almost n ever lectured in the American South. And when he did it was in the upper South -- Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland. He seems never to have spoken in the leading Southern cities and certainly not in Tennessee. This, at least, is the witness of all scholarly sources.

The only Tennessee city which seems to have a provable association with Mark Twain is Memphis. During his years as a riverboat man, 1857-1861, he must have visited it a number of times. Indeed, it once served as his

address, for on March 9, 1858, he wrote to Orion and Mollie from St. Louis:

> I got your letter at Memphis as I went down. That is the best place to write me at. The post office here is always out of my route, somehow or other. Remember the direction: "S.L.C., Steamer Pennsylvania, Care Duval & Algeo, Wharfboat, Memphis."[12]

It was the *Pennsylvania* which was to bring about Sam Clemens' most famous experience -- a heartbreaking one -- in Memphis. In chapter 20 of *Life on the Mississippi* and in his autobiography, he told the story of his brother Henry's death there, following an explosion aboard the *Pennsylvania*. The accident occurred about six o'clock on the morning of June 13, 1858, near Ship Island, some sixty miles below Memphis. Half an hour after the explosion, the ship caught fire and burned. Henry Clemens, third clerk, was among those taken to Memphis, to be cared for in the criminal court room of Exchange Hall, which had been converted into a hospital. Sam Clemens arrived on the scene two days later and remained at Henry's bedside until his death. In a letter addressed to his sister-in-law Mollie Clemens, June 18, 1858, Sam recounts the terrible story of the incident in which 300 lives were lost and praises Memphis for the assistance she has rendered the wounded: "But may God bless Memphis, the noblest city on the face of the earth. She has done her duty by these poor afflicted creatures."[13] In *Life on the Mississippi* Mark Twain simply recorded that Henry's injuries were too great and that he died from them. But in the autobiography he states that Henry was actually recovered and out of danger when an overdose of morphine, ignorantly administered, killed him. Twain also recounts in the autobiography his prophetic dream sometime before the accident in which he saw Henry dead in a metallic coffin, wearing Sam's suit, with a bouquet of roses on his chest, all white except for one red rose in the center. According to Twain, the dream vision was duplicated at Memphis in every detail.[14] Twain's account in *Life on the Mississippi*, chapter 20, offers further praise of Memphis as being "experienced, above all other cities on the river, in the generous office of the Good Samaritan."

A later visit to Memphis was both shorter and happier. In the spring of 1882, seeking material for what became *Life on the Mississippi*, he took a trip on the river, at first traveling as C. L. Samuel, since he did not wish to be recognized. He states at the beginning of chapter 33 that his idea was "to tarry awhile in every town between St. Louis and New Orleans," but this had to be given up. On April 22, 1882, he wrote his wife from on board the *Gold Dust*, telling her that he would reach Memphis that night and explaining that since his identity had been discovered "it would be nonsense to stop at Memphis, now, & fall a prey to the newspapers."[15] Clemens did not intend to pass up Memphis entirely, for he promised to telegraph his wife from there on the next morning, April 23. Chapter 29 of Life on the Mississippi records his brief stopover in the city.

Still remembering Memphis' kindness to him and Henry and to the others who had been aboard the stricken *Pennsylvania*, he was high in his praise of "the Good Samaritan City of the Mississippi." "It is a beautiful city," he wrote, "nobly situated on a commanding bluff overlooking the river." Its streets he found "straight and spacious, though not paved in a way to incite distempered admiration." Mention of the town's perfect sewage system brought him to thoughts of the yellow fever plague of 1878 and caused him to include a three-paragraph quotation from Ernst Von Hesse-Wartegg's *Mississippi-Vahrten* (Leipzig, 1881) describing the city at that time. Twain also cites the uncomplimentary view of Memphis given in Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1831) by way of contrast with the aspect it presented in 1882. "We drove about the city," Twain tells us, "visited the park and the sociable horde of squirrels there; saw the fine residences, rose-clad and in other ways enticing to the eye; and got a good breakfast at the hotel." No mention is made of a fact recorded in the notebook kept by Twain's secretary, that he was recognized at the hotel by a lawyer who had noticed the Clemens name on the register. A piece of unfurnished business is mentioned in chapter 49, where we hear of a young man buried in Memphis who heroically stayed at the wheel of a burning steamboat long enough to ground it in shallow water:

> There were two hundred persons on board, and no life was lost but the pilot's. There used to be a monument to this young fellow in that Memphis graveyard. While we tarried in Memphis on our down trip, I started out to look for it, but our time was so brief that I was obliged to turn back before my object was accomplished.

In an autobiographical dictation of 1906 Twain recounted the story of William C. Youngblood, a pilot on the *John J. Roe* who barely escaped with his life after landing his burning boat, remaining at the wheel until everyone else was ashore.[16]

From Memphis Twain travelled south to New Orleans and then back up the Mississippi. No mention of passing or visiting Memphis on this northward journey is made in *Life on the Mississippi*. The only record which seems to have survived is one in Twain's notebooks that he left Memphis at ten o'clock on the morning of May 10, 1882.[17]

The only other Tennessee places which Mark Twain mentions having seen occur in *Life on the Mississippi*: "the wooded mouth of the Obion River," "the famous and formidable Plum Point," Fort Pillow, the Devil's Elbow (above Memphis). The 1864 attack on Fort Pillow by Confederate forces called forth bitter remarks from Twain, who accepted the Northern version of what occurred. To him it was the only true "massacre" in American history, surpassing all such events since the time of Richard the Lionhearted. No such feeling is shown in regard to what he calls "the most famous of the river battles of the Civil War," that at Memphis in which Horace Bixby (the "lightning pilot" who taught Sam the river) was the "head pilot of the Union Fleet" and Montgomery, under whom he had also served, was commodore of the Confederate Fleet.

We can see now that Mark Twain's acquaintance with Tennessee was slight. He knew the extreme western edge of it, along the Mississippi, and he knew Memphis fairly well in the days before the Civil War. If he really worked at a Nashville print shop, lectured at Gallatin, or travelled to Chattanooga, such events have never been accepted by Twain biographers or presented in any scholarly work. There may be some truth in them; but until proven, these stories must be classed with the reports of Twain's death: "greatly exaggerated."

NOTES

[1]*The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, ed. Charles Neider (New York: Harper, 1959), 18.

[2](Nashville: Tennessee Book Col, 1966), 57.

[3]Blankenship, 58.

[4]Blankenship, 58-59.

[5]*I Remember* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930), 29-30.

[6](Chicago: Reilly & Lee, 1940), 9.

[7]Walter T. Durham, *A College for This Community: A History of the Local Colleges* . . . (Gallatin, Tenn.: Sumner

Co. Public Library Board, 1974), 68. Durham recounts the story of Twain's visit to Neophogen, relying almost entirely on Read's account in *Mark Twain and I* and with no mention of the account in *I Remember*. Conversely, the account in Robert Lee Morris, *Opie Read: American Humorist* (New York: Helios Books, 1965), 40, makes use of *I Remember*, without reference to *Mark Twain and I*.

[8]Durham, 55, 72. Neophogen opened in Gallatin in 1874.

[9]Paul Machlis, *Union Catalog of Clemens Letters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), for example, lists no Clemens letters for those years written anywhere near Tennessee. Only four letters are known to have been sent by Clemens from Tennessee during his entire lifetime, all in 1858-59.

[10]These stories appear in *Mark Twain and I*, 71, 42, 72.

[11]*Allen Tate: A Literary Biography* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), 156.

[12]*Mark Twain's Letters*, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York: Harper, 1917), I, 38.

[13]*Mark Twain's Letters*, I, 41. The whole matter of Henry Clemens' death is dealt with fully in Edgar M. Branch, *Men Call Me Lucky: Mark Twain and the Pennsylvania* (Oxford, Ohio: Friends of the Library Society, 1985). Note especially Twain's letter to a Memphis woman who helped care for the wounded, dated October 25, 1876 (38-39). In it Twain anticipates an 1878 journey down the Mississippi.

[14]*The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 98-101.

[15]*The Love Letters of Mark Twain*, ed. Dixon Wecter (New York: Harper, 1949, 208.

[16]*Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals* (Berkeley: Univ. Of California Press, 1975), II, 457, n. 80.

[17]*Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals*, II, 476.

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BORDER STATES ON-LINE

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THE FRONTIER PREACHER IN THE CLARKSVILLE AREA

Danforth Ross
Clarksville, Tennessee

Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian preachers appeared in the Clarksville area hard upon the heels of the hunters and explorers and traders. Elder Isaac Todevine, a Baptist, came to the Spring Creek area in 1785, and a year later the first Baptist church in Middle Tennessee was formed on the Sulphur Fork of Red River near Port Royal. Circuit riding Methodist ministers showed up about the same time as the Baptists, and in 1791 Clarksville was the last point on Rev. Barnabas McHenry's four week circuit. The Presbyterian Church also had taken a firm hold in Middle Tennessee before the turn of the century.

However, religion was a part of the culture that the settlers brought with them, not their motivation for coming, in contrast to some of America's first settlers -- the Pilgrims, for example. In 1979 Francis Asbury, first Methodist bishop in America, observed that not one settler in a hundred went west "to get religion, but rather to get plenty of good land." Indeed, according to one account in *Picturesque Clarksville*, "Bibles were scarce in the early settlements, and few families owned or even looked into a Bible." Often they were too preoccupied with surviving in the wilderness -- fighting off the Indians, building cabins, clearing land, and scratching out crops -- to have much time for religion.

There was also a criminal element that had left civilization in the East because of trouble with the law. James Ross writes in *Life and Times of Elder Reuben Ross* that there "were many wild, rough characters, as in all new countries, who would drink, gamble, and fight, often for no other reason whatsoever than to show their pluck and muscle." *And Picturesque Clarksville* reports that in its early history the area was "full of horse thieves, robbers, and highwaymen." Established law had barely begun to appear, and men so inclined took the opportunity to run wild. Needless to say, they had not brought their Bibles with them.

The frontier itself, with its wildness, with its abundant game and easy access to hiding places, was a destabilizing influence as well as a challenge to carve out a stable society. It permitted, perhaps encouraged, an "anything goes" attitude. It made the drinking, the wild behavior, the disrespect for religion and established ways hard to control.

The drinking may even have been a necessity. A Montgomery County sheriff back in the 1930s explained to me his notion of why prohibition had not even begun to stop drinking in Montgomery County. "You know, Jack," he said, mixing me up with my brother, "drinking got into people's blood back in frontier days. You know, I don't believe this country could have been settled without liquor."

Even when efforts to control drinking were made, the lawmakers were cautious. Samuel Stout, the first tavern keeper that *Picturesque Clarksville* mentions, obtained a license in 1970 to keep an "ordinary" and "was required to give bond in the sum of 500 pounds for the faithful compliance with certain conditions, 'that he shall not suffer

or permit . . . any person to tipple or drink more than is necessary on the Sabbath day.'" Presumably this meant that a man could get as drunk as he pleased six days a week, but that he had to drink in moderation on the Sabbath. Still a shrewd lawyer might make a case that his drunken client was drinking only what was necessary.

The Methodists considered drinking a sin, but the Baptists, though condemning intoxication, did not in frontier days take a teetotaler position. They did not even say, "Never on Sunday." James Ross writes that after rural services the people would gather in homes near the place of worship for food and relaxation:

> On going into the house all would be invited "to take something." What they called something . . . was commonly old peach or apple brandy and honey. All from the old men and preachers down to the boys would help themselves to some of this. You must not be surprised, for besides the belief that something of this kind was conducive to health, we were every one old Calvinistic Baptists at that time, all of whom are supposed *by nature* to like something good to drink. And temperance societies and everything of that sort were no more dreamed of than railroads, telegraphs, or ocean cables.

Despite their relaxed view of drinking, the frontier Baptists practiced anything but a relaxed religion. As James Ross points out, they were Calvinistic Baptists. They believed in the doctrine of man's hereditary depravity, meaning that "when Adam, who was the whole, sinned, we the parts sinned in him," and like Adam deserved to be punished. They also believed in unconditional election, that the Almighty, "looking down, as it were, upon the generations of men yet unborn, without the least regard to character or conduct had elected or selected on here and another there to be saved and had passed all others by as vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." According to this view, Christ died for the elect only, "and not one of the elect would ever be lost, or one of the non-elect be saved." All the preaching in the world would do the non-elect no good, and nothing in the world would prevent the salvation of the elect, even the most heinous behavior.

Since all men were sinners, the problem was to find out whether one was elect or not. Accordingly, the preachers beseeched sinners "to shun outbreaking sins if possible, such as horse-racing, card-playing, cock-fighting, profanity, drunkenness, and fiddling and dancing especially." These might be signs of non-election. But even the preachers could not be sure they were elected, though James Ross had a sneaking suspicion that they "thought they were after all just a little better than others, and were chosen or elected on that account."

So behavior, the halfway covenant, just might help out. But Calvin posited another way, the only really reliable way, the covenant of *grace*. If a person had an overpowering feeling of the presence of God in him and could convince others that it was there, then he was one of the elect. Unfortunately, the covenant of grace confronted Calvinists with a double-edged problem. On the one hand, some believers simply were not mystically inclined and never had this feeling of the presence of God in them. On the other, even those who did had a devil of a time convincing the skeptical of the validity of their experience.

However, old line Presbyterians and Baptists avoided this problem, continuing to hold to unconditional election, with sinners dangling between a glorious and happy state after death if elect and the fires of hell if not. For many this was a religion suitable to the harshness and loneliness of frontier life. But for others it was not.

To the Methodists, who were influenced by Calvinism but were uncomfortable with unconditional election, it was not. They had a method for inducing the grace experience -- a noisy service in which there was spontaneous response from members of the congregation. Apparently this type of service also had a strong appeal to frontier

people. It gave them an opportunity for letting off steam, for expressing emotion, for getting worked up, and for feeling they had that spark of grace.

The Presbyterians on the frontier, despite the formality of their services, also felt the pull of the emotional religion and in about the year 1799 a great religious revival began in which they and the Methodists played a prominent part. The revival spread like wildfire through Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio, and even extended eastward over the mountains. A similar revival had gripped the New England frontier in the early part of the eighteenth century.

The spark that set the Tennessee-Kentucky revival going may have been ignited at a sacramental meeting at the Old Red River Church at Port Royal. James Ross gives the following account of this meeting, which drew an unusually large crowd considering the thinly settled country:

> Elder John McGee of the Methodist Church and Elders Hoge, McGready, and Rankin of the Presbyterian Church were holding the meeting. Elder Hoge had just preached a powerful sermon, the hearers "riveted in their attention" but remaining silent. He had barely concluded his discourse when the Methodist preacher, Elder McGee, rose in the congregation, singing "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove."
>
> [Elder McGee] had not sung more than one verse when an aged lady, Mrs. Pacely, sitting across the congregation to the left, and Mrs. Clark, also advanced in years, seated to the right, began in rather suppressed but distinct tones, to hold a sort of dialogue with each other, and to reciprocate sentiments of praise and thanksgiving to the Most High, for his grace and redemption. Still the preacher sang on, and the venerable ladies praised God, in louder tones.
>
> [Elder Hoge] came down from the pulpit, intending to take the hands of these two happy old sisters, shaking hands, however, as he passed along, with all those within his reach. Suddenly persons began to fall as he passed through the crowd -- some as dead; some piteously crying for mercy; and a few here and there, lifting their voices high, in the praise of the Redeemer. Among the last was Elder McGee, who fell to the floor, and, though shouting praises, was for some time so overpowered as to be unable to rise.
>
> [The three Presbyterian ministers] were so surprised and astonished at this apparent confusion in the house of the Lord, that they made their way out of the door, and stood asking each other in whispers, "What is to be done?" Elder Hoge looking in at the door, and seeing all on the floor, praising or praying, said, "We can do nothing. If this be Satan, it will soon come to an end; but if it be of God, our efforts and fears are in vain. I think it is of God, and will join in ascribing glory to his name."
>
> [Elder Hoge] walked into the house where the others presently followed. Rapidly those who had fallen to the floor mourning and crying for mercy, arose, two or more at a time, shouting, praise, for the evidences felt in their own souls, of sins forgiven -- for "redeeming grace and undying love." So there remained no more place that day for preaching or administering the supper. From thirty to forty, that evening, professed to be converted.

The Great Revival dominated religion in the rural areas for the next fifteen to twenty years and stimulated increased membership and the formation of new churches. At times the worshippers gathered in encampments and

the meetings went on for several days. Six kinds of bodily agitations were observed at the meetings: 1) the falling exercise, 2) the jerks, 3) the dancing exercise, 4) the barking, 5) the laughing exercise, and 6) the running exercise.

The Presbyterians were never happy with their involvement in the revival, but were overawed by the strange phenomenon. Finally, a Presbyterian minister arose at a great camp-meeting near Paris, Kentucky, and in the "strongest terms denounced what he saw as extravagant and monstrous." After that the great movement more or less fell apart, like Humpty-Dumpty.

Meanwhile the Presbyterian Church had fallen apart itself; rather, it had fallen into two parts. Orthodox Presbyterians held faithful to election and predestination and felt more comfortable in town, where they could practice a formal, restrained religion. Their educated ministers lacked the missionary zeal that appealed to the frontier backwoodsmen and were themselves unhappy with the highly emotional revivals.

However, unorthodox Presbyterians, living on the frontier, greatly increased in number during the revival and demanded the mother church to ordain their ministers. But the church would not do this, since the education of these ministers "was not such as the rules of the church required" and since "they were considered unsound in their faith in regard to Election and Predestination, and altogether too noisy in their meetings and worship."

After much contention, the rebelling members withdrew from the mother church and organized an independent presbytery under the leadership of Elders Finis Ewing, Samuel King, and Samuel McAdoo. The new body was called the Cumberland Presbyterian Church because it was organized in the valley of the Cumberland.

James Ross writes that the "celebrated Gideon Blackburn expressed the sentiments of the old order when he declared that the 'noise and nonsense never converted anybody, or the world would have been converted by thunder long ago.'" The response of the Cumberland Presbyterians was that the educated ministers of the mother church preached dull sermons "to a cold, dead people with few exceptions" and belonged in town, not out in the country where the western breezes blew.

Though they, too, felt the pull of the Great Revival, the Baptists apparently held pretty firmly to their strict belief that election was in the hands of God and that religious excitement was not the road to salvation. James Ross said that it rarely appeared at the Baptist meetings "in the shape of any bodily agitations" and that he had witnessed only one instance of the kind when his father was preaching. On this occasion

> a Miss McFadin was taken with the jerks. . . . I watched her closely and expected to see her fall to the floor every moment. But she did not, and when preaching was over went to her horse, and was helped on it, still jerking. I did not think it possible for her to keep her seat in the saddle, but as far as we could see, she held on, still jerking. The expression of her countenance was both unnatural and unpleasant, altogether unlike the heavenly beauty witnessed by others.

Whether the person experiencing the bodily manifestations appeared overcome with a sense of the glory of divine things or with distress about his miserable estate and condition depended, James thought, on the approach of the preacher. If he was describing "the joys of heaven," the emotional members of the congregation would have blissful looks on their faces. If, on the other hand, he presented a view of "dread and horror," they would groan and tremble. Reuben Ross evidently wasn't preaching a joyous sermon on this particular day.

However, he wasn't an emotional preacher. "No one ever saw him descend from the pulpit, pass through the crowd, shaking their hands, and leading them to the 'mourners' bench' or 'anxious seat.'" He liked

> to see men troubled on account of their sins, repenting of their wickedness and folly, reforming their lives, turning to God, confessing him before men, going down into the baptismal waters, and crowding in the churches, full of deep religious emotions, but free from all noise and confusion -- such was his idea of a religious revival!

When Reuben Ross did part company with the "Hard-Shell" Baptists, as they were called, it was over the doctrine of election. He found it harder and harder to accept the belief that God had elected some to be saved, others to be passed over, "without the least regard to character or conduct." He could not understand how this could be when the sacred writings declare that his tender mercies are over all his works; that 'he is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted of him.'" In short, Reuben went "Soft-Shell." Behavior counted. We Rosses have been mostly Soft-Shell ever since, some say soft-headed, whatever denomination we happened to belong to, and James Ross didn't belong to any.

Perhaps the saving grace of religion on the frontier was that it brought lonely people together and that the preachers shared their followers' lives and their warmer human qualities. This the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Cumberland Presbyterians did, as did the orthodox Presbyterians to a lesser extent.

The Episcopalians, in contrast, were lost on this frontier. Episcopalians crossed the mountains in driblets and were slow to establish churches, and then in towns. Matthew Yarrell, father-in-law of Reuben Ross and an Episcopalian, brought his prayer book with him but read from it in solitude.

James Ross speaks of the warmth generated at the frontier religious gatherings. He writes:

> In the neighborhood where the meetings were held, all business was suspended, and the most marked attention was given by the audiences, many coming from a distance guided to the place by trees, from which the bark had been chipped off. On these occasions the hospitality of these people knew no limits. You were welcome to all they had, and to see that you enjoyed it and were satisfied with it seemed to afford them the liveliest pleasure. You were sure to have plenty to eat, a big fire to sit by, your horse well cared for, and the best accommodations for sleeping they had.

The frontier preachers were in many ways like the people they preached to. Like them they usually were short on schooling and were often farmers, since they were paid little for preaching, when they were paid at all. Reuben Ross, who had gone to school long enough to learn the three R's and for many years had a library consisting of only the Bible, farmed five days a week and preached two. Needless to say, he was in close touch with his fellow settlers. He lived in the same lonely isolation that they did, cleared t he land, built his cabin, raised his crops. He suffered the same vicissitudes -- lost a farm because the previous owner didn't have legal title to it, had to leave his next farm because of inadequate water, and lost five children during his first years in Tennessee. "In preaching funeral sermons of little children, which he was often called to do," James writes, "he would give expression to many beautiful thoughts calculated to soothe the bitterness of parental grief." He had been there himself.

But there was also something about the frontier itself that contributed to the humanizing of the frontier preacher. Often, to begin with, he had no church to preach in and carried religion right into the settlers' cabins. Or he would preach in almost idyllic rustic surroundings. For his first sermon west of the mountains, Reuben Ross took "his

stand under the branches of a spreading oak, his audience sitting around him on rude seats or on the ground during the service."

> These men also preached from their horses at times and prepared their sermons while on horseback. James Ross relates that his father's rides from one appointment to another through the thinly settled country "were often long and solitary. This was favorable to deep thought and reflection on what he intended to say when he met his audience." "When thus prepared, his discourse would resemble an edifice, sharply defined in clear atmosphere, exact in all its parts and proportions."

At times the idyllic surroundings became challenging, as when Elder Garner McConnico

> had an appointment to preach under some shade trees on the banks of Big Harpeth River. There fell a heavy rain the night before, and when he reached the river it was past fording. Consequently he could not join his congregation. He spoke to them, however, from the opposite bank and told them if they would seat themselves and be quiet they should hear what he had to say. This being done, he raised his voice a little above its usual pitch and preached a fine sermon, every word of which was distinctly heard on the other side, notwithstanding the distance and the dashing of the swollen stream against its banks. Elder Isaac Todevine used to say that "Brother McConnico has a voice like a trumpet."

These preachers had so much in common with their audiences that their "humanness" at times broke through the harshness of their sermons. Once Elder Todevine, who lived in a solitary cabin on the bank of Spring Creek and whose only companions were his horse Snip and his dog Pup, was off preaching on his circuit and had taken Pup with him, as was his custom. Pup was a good-natured, lazy worthless dog, "but none the less beloved by his master on that account." He "used to have a gay time at the big meetings, playing and romping with the other dogs while his master was preaching. The old man was quite uneasy at time for fear he would leave him." On this occasion, "while preaching, he looked out from the window and seeing Pup, as he thought, going off with a stranger, stopped short and requested one of the brethren to please go and bring Pup back, as he feared he might lose him. He then went on with the discourse again."

Another preacher, Elder Craig, while preaching, happening

> to see from a window the limb of a tree that had a crook exactly suitable for the frame of a pack-saddle, stopped immediately, told the audience the discovery that he had made, informed them that he claimed the crooked limb by the right of discovery, and then went on with his sermon. Such crooked limbs were hard to find and highly prized in those days. . . .

They could be used for pack saddles, and the preachers were just as interested in them as anyone else.

The closeness of the preacher to his people came out also in time of peril. In December of 1811 when tremors from the New Madrid earthquake that formed Reelfoot Lake were felt in the Clarksville area, James Ross "heard the rumbling noise and felt the ground shaking" under his feet. In terror he ran from the field where he had gone to get his father's horse, throwing down his bridle, and fleeing to the house.

"About the same time, the neighbors, and many besides, came pouring" into the Ross yard and remained for the

night and all but demanded that Reuben Ross preach to them. They huddled together before the fires they had built and "many knees bent in prayer that, perhaps, never bent in that way before."

On this occasion, Reuben's sermon of encouragement

> led many of those present to repent of their sins, reform their lives, make a profession of religion, and honor the profession they made. Others again who seemed to have started well, faltered by the way, and as the earth became more and more steady, their faith became more and more unsteady. These were called "earthquake Christians," to distinguish them from those who held out faithful to the end.

As might be expected from the humor that flavors this account, there were humorous preachers, and some delighted in practical jokes. Lorenzo Dow, a famous Methodist minister who appeared in the Clarksville area about 1814, once became upset with one of his brother preachers. At the close of every sermon, this preacher

> would give a description of the day of judgment, when at the sound of Gabriel's trumpet, the Son of man would appear in the clouds of heaven, with all his hold angels to judge the quick and the dead, uniformly adding a description of the alarm and terror that would overwhelm the impenitent sinner, but saying what a glorious day it would be for the righteous, of whom he humbly hoped he was one.
>
> Lorenzo Dow, becoming disgusted with his repetition, resolved to put a stop to it, and engaged a boy famous for his skill in blowing a trumpet, to climb a tree near the church that night, and when the preacher got the day of judgment and Gabriel's trumpet, how his heart would rejoice that the day of deliverance had come, to blow a loud horrible blast.
>
> All worked well, the preacher gave an animated discourse and at its close, as usual, brought in Gabriel and his trumpet. At this the boy came through with such an awful peal from his trumpet that every one's heart died within him, and leaving hat, saddlebags, and umbrella, the preacher cleared the pulpit at one leap, rushed to the door and took to the woods, followed by his terror-stricken hearers. Henceforth the preacher gave Gabriel and his trumpet a wide berth.

To the frontiersman caught between hope of salvation and fear of everlasting hell, the humor of Lorenzo Dow and other preachers like him was reassuring. It was in keeping with the big thing that all these stories bring out: the breaking through of the feeling of isolation that the frontier people experienced. James Ross speaks of "the happiness which those of the same faith felt when they happened to meet in the wilderness." It was, he adds, a happiness "altogether unlike what is felt in densely populated sections at the present day. Their loneliness and isolation caused a thrill of joy at meeting more easily imagined than described." This perhaps was the key to the triumph of frontier religion.

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THE LEGACY OF THE CIVIL WAR: THE DISPARATE VIEWS OF ROBERT PENN WARREN AND ALLEN TATE

Hugo Beiswenger

The two Nashville Agrarians Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate were born in the border state of Kentucky and shared a common cultural heritage. Both emphasized the relationship of the writer to time, place, and traditions from the past. Both believed that the ordinary persons must have myths to live by and that the writer should supply those myths. However, they differed widely in how they interpreted the Civil War.

Robert Penn Warren in his *Legacy of the Civil War* gives us his reason for studying history: "The asking and the answering which history provides may help us to understand, even to frame, the logic of experience to which we shall submit. History cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future" (100). This statement, at first glance, is logical and respectful of the lessons that history may teach us about the Civil War. Upon examination, Warren's views turn out to be somewhat more ambiguous. According to Warren the proximate antecedents of the conflict had their genesis in the 1830s. In the North, the Abolitionist movement showed an overzealous righteousness and irresponsibility in its agitation against the South (*Legacy* 20-34). In the South, "the possibility of criticism - criticism from the inside - was over" and "the stage was set for trouble" when members of the Virginia legislature in the 1830s committed themselves to an ideology of "slavery as a positive good" (35-36). Warren develops this thesis in a way that suggests that the war resulted solely from the ideological stands assumed by each side.

Warren's chief target in his characterization of the North is the Abolitionist movement, and he describes Abolitionism in terms of its most violent fringe, even though the movement ranged from violent fanatics like John Brown to responsible leaders such as Frederick Douglass, from New England religionists like William Lloyd Garrison to transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, from Sojourner Truth to Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Significantly, there is little difference in Warren's approach toward Abolitionism in *Legacy* in the 1960s and that in his first published prose work, *John Brown: Making of a Martyr* (1929).

Warren mitigates the harshness of his attack on the Abolitionists by acknowledging that the Abolitionists labored for a just cause, and often "nobly." "But who can fail to be disturbed and chastened by the picture of the joyful mustering of the darker forces of our nature in that just cause?" (*Legacy* 23). While pursuing the "iniquitous" slave system, the Abolitionists also, at the same time, refused to criticize the "Lords of the Loom" who, in their New England textile mills, mercilessly exploited women and children and reduced them to abject poverty and squalor. In this respect, Warren's argument is similar to the one developed by slavery ideologues in the antebellum South (Fitzhugh, Ruffin) to claim a superior morality for slavery as against New England capitalism.

Warren's treatment of the consequences of the Civil War focuses on "false myths" which developed to justify the roles of the two opponents in the conflict. The North, Warren says, while it reclaimed "the Confederate States for the Union . . . made them more Southern . . ." (14). The North's victory in the Civil War confirmed its ideological

stance of moral superiority with what Warren calls "The Treasury of Virtue" (59). The South, in its defeat, justified the Confederacy with "The Great Alibi." Once the War was over the Confederacy became a "City of the Soul" (56). By the Great Alibi "The South explains, condones, and transmutes everything. . . . He [the Southerner] turns defeat into victory, defects into virtues. . . . If the Southerner, with his Great Alibi, feels trapped by history, the Northerner, with his Treasury of Virtue, feels redeemed by history, automatically redeemed. . . . [With] an indulgence . . . for all sins past, present, and future, freely given by the hand of history" (59).

Warren sees both post-war apologies as rationalizations that have prevented a self-critical examination of our real history and have allowed self-serving myths to substitute for reality. They are among the psychological costs of the Civil War that "condition in a thousand ways the temper of American life today" (54-65). These false myths continue to echo "in the drama we now live . . . the present momentous crisis of our history, when our national existence may be at stake, makes us demand that we learn -- if, alas, anything -- from that great crisis of our national past" (101). Warren makes his reference specific when he likens the U.S. stance of moral superiority toward the Soviet Union in the Cold War as similar to the North's antebellum intransigent attitude of moral superiority toward the South.

Tate also sees the beginnings of the Civil War in the agitation carried on by Abolitionists who first attained national prominence in the 1830s. Abolitionists, he explains in *Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier* (1928), were "people in New England who wanted to destroy democracy and civil liberties in America by freeing the slaves." They weren't very intelligent, Tate says, but they thought they were doing what God had told them to do (25). Tate continues this tone with such statements as, "The institution of slavery was a positive good [because] it had become a necessary element in a stable society, and only in a society of fixed classes can men be free" (39). Blacks in the antebellum South benefited from slavery: the slaveowner, because of his benevolence, protected the slave. "The White man was in every sense responsible for the Black. . . . The Black man, 'free,' would have been exploited" (39). Tate depicts Stonewall Jackson the orphan who, through piety and identification with the code of the Southern professional soldier, was the South's greatest hero. He was also, to complete the idealization, a benevolent slaveholder who loved and cared for his Negroes (53).

The North's stance of moral superiority over the South Tate saw continuing to the present day, as he revealed in his *New Republic* review of Avery Craven's *Edmund Ruffin, Southerner* (1932). Tate says there, "While the Eastern politicians were talking a romantic Union, and Emerson an irresponsible freedom and individualism, Ruffin, Rhett, Calhoun, and George Fitzhugh of Virginia, ignored in their time, were issuing a realistic warning to the 'American system' that is valid today." (26) The ideologues of slavery whom Tate had long warned that the South could be forced to fight a war for its independence in order to preserve the slave system and its way of life. In his review, as in other writings, Tate identifies with the most extreme Southern "fireaters" who opposed all efforts to compromise the "irrepressible conflict." Like them, he saw no room for Southern compromise.

The historical significance of the Civil War was an other issue on which Warren and Tate differed. For Warren the "American experiment" had been tested and the country united by an ordeal of fire. If the fledgling nation was to fulfill the promise of the founding fathers, slavery had to go (*Legacy* 7). In *Jefferson Davis* Tate is sure that the Civil War was not fought over slavery. Early in the Davis biography Tate interjects his conviction that "The issue [of the Civil War] was class rule and religion'" on the Southern side which he favored, versus "democracy and science" on the Northern side which he abhorred (*Davis* 87). He expands his view in the book's epilogue: "The South was the last stronghold of European civilization in the western hemisphere, a conservative check upon the restless expansiveness of the industrial North, and the South had to go" (301).

The sharp differences of interpretation between Warren and Tate extend to post-war Reconstruction as well. For Warren, the victory of the North "catapulted American society from what had been in considerable part an agrarian handicraft society into the society of Big Technology and Big Business" (*Legacy* 8). With the paralyzing controversy over slavery resolved, the pragmatic predilections of the American character, already inherent in American experience, enabled the release of "enormous energies, new drives and know-how for the sudden and massive occupation of the Continent" (10-11). Tate views the rise of Big Business industrial capitalism, the flourishing of a science, and the expansion of popular democracy as leading to a decadent society which has lost its moral bearings. Industrialism was responsible for the decline in influence of traditional Christianity and the abandonment of absolute moral standards. He focuses his attack on positivism in science and humanism in religion, which he describes in much the same terms as the religious right today describe "secular humanism" ("Religion" 158).

The American stance of self-righteousness in today's world arena Warren sees as one of the most pernicious products of the North's Treasury of Virtue: "Righteousness is our first refuge and our strength -- even when we have acted on the grounds of calculated self-interest, and have got caught red-handed, and have to admit, a couple of days later, to a great bumbling horse-apple of a lie. In such a case, the effect of the conviction of virtue is to make us lie automatically and awkwardly, with no élan of artistry and no forethought; and then in trying to justify the lie, lie to ourselves and transmute the lie into a kind of superior truth" (75). Tate also deprecates the mantle of morality used by the United States to justify its policies in the world arena. He objects that the moral decadence of American society precludes a stance of moral superiority.

Warren sees racism as the most serious fruit of both "The Treasury of Virtue" and "The Great Alibi." Why, he asks, after listing the appalling costs of the Civil War in lives and treasure, did not passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery win real freedom for the Negro? He finds the answer in Northern attitudes toward the Negro as much as in the South's. He points out that Northern whites, from the top to the bottom of society, before and during the Civil War, never envisioned Negro equality as a sequel to abolishing slavery, or the abolition of slavery as a war aim. During the war itself there were glaring instances of racism and oppressions of the Negro by the Federal military and in Northern civilian life (*Legacy* 62-63).

Warren proposes these facts to explain why the half-hearted post-war "Reconstruction" culminated in the Northern conspiracy with the white Southern landowners in what he calls "The Big Sell-Out of 1876," the deal "to make Hayes President in return for the end of any Reconstruction whatsoever in the South" (67). With this deal, the North handed back political control in the South to the same landholding class which had been so decisively defeated in the Civil War itself. The legacy of these events has continued their negative consequences into the latter years of the twentieth century as a heavy burden on democracy and the economy, not only in the South, but in the nation as a whole.

Tate was so attached to "the good" in slavery, resulting from the humanity and benevolence of the master class of the Civil War to be "in many ways worse than the old" ("Sanctuary" 151). The defeat of the Confederacy was followed by the "terrors of Reconstruction" (*Davis* 299). Southern whites turned to frequent lynchings of Negroes after the war because "Negroes had been stirred to violence by the Northern whites" (42). He asserts further that "for society as a whole the modern [economic] system is probably inferior to that of slavery . . ." (4). Tate nowhere connects the South of his day (the 1920s to the 1950s) to the Southern landowners' post-emancipation success in maintaining racism and white supremacy by defrauding blacks of the political rights granted them by the Fourteenth (1868) and Fifteenth (1870) Amendments to the constitution.

Warren and Tate both grew up in Kentucky small-towns where the Negro's inferiority was taken for granted. In the 1950s the open rebellion of masses of black people in the South against segregation, discrimination, and oppression which was to explode into the Civil Rights movement was already gathering steam. Warren made it a point to expand his horizons on the issue of white racism, and black reactions to it, and published *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (1965), for which he interviewed Negro leaders in all walks of life.

Tate's attitude toward Negroes continued to assume "natural" genetic superiority of the white race over black people, but Tate was defensive about publicly expressing it after the biographies. He carefully avoided publicly addressing the morally disturbing legacy of slavery and the conditions which followed the failed Reconstruction. His views did not change, however. In a *Sewanee Review* editorial in 1945, Tate still insisted that the place of Negroes in Southern society was solely a question for the [white] South to decide. He opposed "federal intervention" to protect the Negro's civil rights as "not . . . satisfactory to anybody" (659-660). He never later reconsidered his racial attitudes. When the Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis biographies were reprinted in the 1950s and 1960s there were no revisions, repudiations, or corrections of their blatant racial content. Furthermore, although Southern literary history included outstanding literature by black writers of poetry, short stories, and novels from the 1920s through the 1960s, Tate, who was never humble about his literary gifts, did not write criticism of black poets or novelists.

Why Tate chose the self-defeating course of championing the "lost cause" of the Confederacy is not impossible to understand. In his university days at Vanderbilt, as one of the Fugitive poets, Tate already seemed willing to accept a role as poet-martyr (J.L. Stewart 318). He affected the pose of the aloof aristocrat. He never was interested in understanding the "common people." One could not imagine him traveling through the South as Warren did in 1956, button-holing white and Negro Southerners from all stations in life and recording their views for *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South*. Tate's championing of the lost cause was linked in his mind with his religious seekings. Perhaps Tate was trying to defend himself against the world he found so uncongenial and was preoccupied with searching for a reason to believe in a personal God who ordered the lives of men and society. His strong identification with his Southern roots led him to invent his own reality which contained the God he prayed for and a society that had an exalted place for the poet. In his biographies and other writings he sought to reinforce his self-image of a temperamental kinship with the haughty lords of medieval Europe and the "aristocrats" of antebellum society. He saw both societies as led by natural aristocracies that included poets in an honored place.

Warren, like Tate, was and is critical about what he sees as the moral deficiencies of his society. He believes these deficiencies are due to the human reluctance to understand or face its own capacity for rationalization and self-deception about the uncomfortable evil of one's own soul. He does not exempt himself from this self-criticism, and seems to carry an inexplicable burden of guilt about himself. He believes the road to redemption is an individual and solitary matter that requires the recognition of self-complicity in the evil of the world.

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BORDER STATES ON-LINE

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THE REVISED KU KLUX KLAN IN EAST TENNESSEE

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The Ku Klux Klan, born at Pulaski, Giles County, Tennessee, in 1865, became a widespread southern organization and one of the best-known organizations in the history of the United States. It had a short existence in the nineteenth century, but was reborn in the twentieth century when it experienced a longer history, with periodic reappearances after 1930.

The Klan was reborn atop Stone Mountain, Georgia, on Thanksgiving evening, 1915. The American flag fluttered in a cool breeze while a crude flickering cross illuminated a Bible open to the twelfth chapter of Romans. The small group pledged allegiance to the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Shortly thereafter, a preliminary charter was granted to the Klan by the state of Georgia (Jackson 4).

The leader of the group was William Joseph Simmons, an unsuccessful Methodist minister. Born at Harpersville, Alabama, he made a profound impact upon his native state, the South, and the nation. Simmons, a dreamer, projected a fraternal organization patterned after the romantic image of the original Ku Klux Klan. It was not until the 1920s, however, that the movement grew significantly. Conceived at a time when civic clubs of all types thrived and flourished, its secrecy and elaborate ritual appealed to many who felt lost in the masses; its colorful pageantry attracted numerous members and sympathizers. It was dedicated to what members believed to be one hundred per cent Americanism, white supremacy, and Protestantism (Snell 206).

By 1920 the Klan had enrolled 5,000 members, most of whom were in Georgia. Nationwide publicity for the Klan came in the fall of 1921 when Rowland Thomas and the New York *World* began a three-week expose of the organization with particular emphasis upon its more violent aspects. The series estimated that the organization had a membership of 500,000 in 45 states. That same year the United States House of Representatives began an investigation into the alleged financial abuses of the Klan, but congressmen found no evidence of misuse of funds (Jackson 12).

As a result of the newspaper stories and the congressional investigation, the fledgling organization "received a great deal of gratuitous and much needed advertising," which proved a boon to "recruiting." The Klan became a "familiar conversational topic," and the Atlanta headquarters "was deluged with applications," many of them on facsimile blanks printed in the World or sister publications. By 1922 more than 200 klaverns were chartered and membership soared from 100,000 to almost a million (Jackson 12).

The Klan in Tennessee was concentrated in the western and eastern divisions of the state, being introduced into Knoxville in the spring of 1921 when Kleagle Henry P. Fry recruited members there, in Johnson City, Bristol, and other upper East Tennessee cities. The Knoxville Klavern, chartered as Knoxville Klan No. 14, reached a

membership of 500 by fall. Knoxville has the unusual distinction of being one of the few communities for which membership records are available. Kenneth T. Jackson treated it as one of the city Klans (59-65).

This paper, however, focuses on the activities of the Klan in lower East Tennessee, principally in Chattanooga. Chattanooga was a city on the move. Business boomed during the war period, and a new International Harvester plant was constructed. The city's population doubled and approached 100,000 by the end of the 1920s. A local physician headed the Klan, and some of the leading citizens were members. However, the real strength of the Klan was concentrated among the working classes, who labored in the factories, foundries, and mills of East Chattanooga. The Chattanooga Klan was the fourth chapter organized in Tennessee. Its Committee on Moral Reform gave local law-enforcement officials a list of suspected bootleggers and focused much attention on morals. In the mind of Klansmen, however, the real enemies were the alien, the Jew, the Pope, and the Negro (Chalmers 152).

In January 1921, a strong rumor was circulating in Chattanooga that an organizer for the Klan was present in the city. An article in the Chattanooga *Times* was headlined "Ku Klux Klan Coming Here?" Observers expected that a group would be established in Chattanooga and surrounding towns. Klaverns were later begun at Cleveland (No. 12), Charleston, Benton, and other East Tennessee communities. The reporter concluded that the "wheels of the clan, which have been inoperative for fifty years, are now whirring vigorously" (Chattanooga *Times*, February 7, 1921, hereinafter referred to as *Times*).

An organizational meeting was planned for February 24 at the Odd Fellows Hall on West Seventh Street. Mayor Alex W. Chambliss was invited, but he declined to attend. A second organizational meeting was held on March 2 in the courthouse auditorium, which was reserved by S.A. Givens, "one of the chief Klan organizers from Atlanta." Admission was by invitation card only, and newsmen were not invited. However, Mayor Chambliss received another personal invitation by Mr. Givens, but again declined the offer (*Times*, February 26, March 2, 1921).

Reporters were briefed by Mr. Givens and P.E. Pafford, but they were not admitted to the meeting. Approximately 150 people attended the gathering; many of these came out of curiosity. However, most of those attending were from the ranks of labor. Business and professional men were noticeably absent (*Times*, March 3, 1921). The local group was designated as Chattanooga Klan No. 4, and organizers indicated that the Klan was in Chattanooga to stay (Jackson 12).

At this point Simmons had reached his organizational limits; therefore, Edward Young Clarke and Mrs. Elizabeth Tyler formed the Southern Publicity Association to promote the Klan. The pair broadened the program to include prejudices of "uncritical minds against the Catholic, the Jew, the Negro, the Oriental, and the recent immigrant." A 1920 agreement made Clarke imperial Keagle, and he would receive two dollars and fifty cents for each recruit. The Imperial Wizard was undoubtedly troubled by the personal antics of these associates, but he was "unable or unwilling to refuse them support." When well-known northern Klansmen called for their resignations, the northern Klansmen were banished. When the Chattanooga Klan passed a "treasonable resolution" against the pair, Chattanooga's charter was revoked. Tensions subsided after Mrs. Tyler resigned because of failing health, but they intensified again when Clarke admitted that he had been arrested many times (Jackson 9, 13).

In August 1921, 150 Knights marched in a "mirth-provoking" parade in Rossville, Georgia, just south of Chattanooga. The group was "led by a diminutive Knight mounted on a raw-boned little horse and armed with a squeaky trumpet." He was followed by a tall individual with a fiery cross, the American flag, and a "slow-moving procession of white-clad masked Knights." It might have been an impressive sight except that watchers laughed

when they noticed that most of the participants were "run down at the heels," indicating that many in the parade were out of work and were not local businessmen (*Times*, August 14, 1921).

Local observers reported that the Klan did not wish to be made into a political issue although they were actively trying to influence public elections and fill offices. It was reported that Horace Humphreys, and T.S. Hunter, Republican candidates for sheriff, were members of the "Invisible Empire." Humphreys was elected sheriff by a 2,151 vote margin over his opponent (*Times*, June 4, 1922).

In the 1923 municipal primaries the Klan took an active part in the campaign in which religious orthodoxy and anti-Catholicism were major issues. The incumbent city commission was composed of two Roman Catholics, a Jew, and an "undependable Presbyterian," who as head of the Department of Education permitted several Catholic teachers to be hired. A correspondent for the Baltimore *Herald* watched the approaching election with interest. He wrote that the Klan was in "its third or political phase" in East Tennessee and that the coming election would indicate whether it would gain a new lease on life or lapse into obscurity. The leaders of the hooded organization were making a desperate effort to stave off defeat but stood a chance to elect some of their members (*Times*, April 4, 1923). Local observers noted that the Invisible Empire had reached its perihelion "and [now] was traveling rapidly to its inevitable dissolution" (*Times*, April 5, 1923).

Each side pulled out all stops in the campaign that was characterized by two clearly delineated sides, the People's Ticket and the Klan's Ticket. It was rumored that if J.W. Abel were elected, the Klan would run the schools of the city. The Klan, however, was the author of its own defeat. The Klansmen antagonized the people so much that the voters united in opposition to the secret organization. Women voters waged a fight against the Klan. Mrs. Joe Cliff was selected to head up the workers who arranged the meeting on behalf of the present commissioners. J.B.F. Lowry said that "certain preachers in Chattanooga [were] desecrating the pulpit." The *Times* editorial entitled "Renouncing the Klan" quoted Pittsburgh pastor Dr. R.B. Urmy, who said, when sixteen masked men entered his church, "Gentlemen, when you remove your disguise you may remain; otherwise you will have to go." The editor believed that that would have been a good local slogan as well (April 5, 1923).

The meeting, scheduled for the Billy Sunday tabernacle because the Bijou theater was too small, had the theme: "Americanism vs. Intolerance." It was expected to be the "biggest and perhaps the most interesting mass meeting a Chattanooga municipal campaign" had ever witnessed. An advertisement indicated that the "truth about the Ku-Klux" would be uncovered, and "all lovers of true Americanism [were] invited to be present." The Rotary Club passed a resolution disapproving of "any organization whose membership is secret and unknown to the people of the community" (Times, April 4, 5, 6, 1923).

Another editorial supported the meeting. It was good that the women were "organizing to put a quietus once and for all upon this demoralizing, hate-producing and community-destroying influence." D.L. Grayson presided at the meeting which attracted 4,000 persons. When W. I. Frierson asked the audience if two local heroes, both Catholics, were 100 percent Americans, the crowd cheered. When asked to stand up against "religious intolerance," 99 per cent rose to their feet (*Times*, April 7, 1923).

Another editorial on "Intolerance" concluded, "We must banish religious prejudice and fight out political battles in the domain of toleration and moderation or we are headed for troubled waters." A full-page ad in the same issue indicated that the "eyes of the world" were on Chattanooga. "Let's advertise her as a 100% American city with a majority against the Ku-Klux" (*Times*, April 9, 1923).

It was predicted that the heaviest voter turnout ever polled was anticipated, but the response exceeded expectations. More than 12,000 voters participated and defeated the Klan slate. The community's groups -- Jews, Catholics, blacks, and liberal Protestants -- voted against the Klan candidates because they feared the "mask more than the Pope." Blacks, who constituted a third of the city's inhabitants, flocked to the polls and gave impressive results in three precincts (*Times*, April 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 1923; Chalmers, 152). According to Henry P. Fry, Chattanooga manufacturers were opposed to the Klan because they felt that the organization might drive Negro workers to the North (92).

By November 1923, observers noted that the Klan was seemingly on the decline in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. With the political backset in Chattanooga, recent political losses in Memphis, and its inability to gain support in the approaching 1924 political struggles, the Klan in Tennessee was projected to lose its fight (New York *Times*, November 16, 1923).

When the Klan was introduced in Chattanooga in 1921, it was not taken seriously and almost disappeared. By 1922 the Klan was more established and drew mostly from blue-collar workers. The hooded order felt so firmly entrenched in 1923 that members challenged the incumbent municipal leadership. The community decided to meet the challenge and defeated the Klan candidates. The Klan continued to exist in Chattanooga, but its strength was spent.

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WHAT DID SHE LEARN AND HOW DID SHE LEARN IT: FORMATIVE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCES ON URSULA SMITH BEACH OF CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE

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Ursula Smith Beach is currently recognized as a teacher, author, editor, and county historian. Born in 1900 and educated in Clarksville and Nashville, she received her baccalaureate degree from Southwestern Presbyterian College shortly after World War I and her master's degree from Austin Peay State University in 1956. Her teaching career spanned thirty years, the earlier part in Louisiana, Alabama, and West Virginia, the later part in Clarksville public schools as well as at Austin Peay.

Miss Ursula, as she is called by all who know her, achieved celebrity status with publication of her book *Along the Warioto* in 1964, a history of Montgomery County, Tennessee. Her monograph entitled "Rebecca Sevier, Child of the Frontier" was published in 1984. She has served as editor for the Montgomery County News and has contributed a weekly article for the past sixteen years. Her numerous articles have appeared in the *Clarksville Leaf Chronicle*, *The Tennessee Conservationist*, and *The Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, as well as in other publications.

Honors have come to Miss Ursula from outside her home town, too. She has been appointed to the honorary staffs of the governors of Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In 1980 she was named State Woman of the Year by the Tennessee Press and Authors Club. She is regarded as a contributor unsurpassed in research, evaluation, and understanding of the history of Clarksville-Montgomery County.

Ursula Smith Beach is the product of a unique turn-of-the-century environment in the South. She was born into an aspiring middle class family. Her family could not initially claim the prestige and social status of the area's landed gentry, nor could they easily co-opt the traditions plantation owners had perpetuated, except for one: the personal code of honor. Early family influence was important in insuring successful absorption of this code, but schooling had become recognized as an effective ally. Miss Ursula's educational foundation, therefore, rested on an implicit contract between her home with its early family instruction and resources and those emphasized by Miss Sallie Howard, a tuition school teacher who had begun her career in 1857. In significant ways this combination might be difficult to duplicate today.

Miss Ursula tells some intriguing stories of her early life in Clarksville. The pre-school years contributed in important imagination. Her father, Edwin T. Smith, along with his four brothers, worked for his father in the Clarksville Planing Mill. The grandfather was in partnership with E.M. Clark, and Ursula's father was in charge of the mill until 1909. From the time she was old enough to join her mother in the buggy to call for her father at the end of his day's work, Ursula was invited to play with the remnants from the milling machines. She gathered the papery curls and geometric pieces of wooden scraps along with heavy and blunt-edged colored glass bits, used in

transom windows, for construction games she played at home. She also learned to model shapes with some of the putty used in glazing windows.

Ursula learned self-discipline in those first years. Her father told her of a young boy's experience in a prairie fire and how his safe escape had depended on obeying the adult commands he had received. He emphasized the importance of obeying immediately and without question. She was spanked only twice in her life and both times occurred before she was six. One spanking was given when she was five and had slapped her baby sister for saying "ticky, ticky" when Ursula had instructed her to say "chicky, chicky." The second time occurred when she stepped between her napping father and the open fireplace. When she accidentally touched his foot and he awoke, he demanded to know how she dared to be between him and the fire when she had been expressly forbidden to take such a safety risk. She responded, impishly, "I'll do it again if you want me to," and suffered the consequences.

Ursula was early taught to respect the standards her parents had set for their children. Her mother spoke gently to her three young ones, and they could quickly recognize their errors when she looked disappointed. Ursula learned appropriate behavior through the desire to avoid hurting or disappointing her parents, therefore, rather than by admonition. She was expected to be present in adult company but not to be obtrusive until she could join in on their level. She learned to avoid discourtesy through the desire for parental approval.

The Smith parents instilled responsibility early in their children, too. Each Sunday evening they were given thirty-five cents as the week's allowance. They could spend the money any way they chose, but they were expected to have a nickel left for the church collection plate on the following Sunday morning. Thus, each time they made a decision to spend some of their money, they had to consider it in terms of having five cents left for Sunday morning.

In simple ways Ursula Smith learned that her parents valued honesty and unselfishness. The children were encouraged to make gifts for others on special days, within their own limits of ability. In a significant way Ursula took on one responsibility her parents had not directly encouraged. When she was four her eleven-year-old sister died, and she overheard her mother wonder whether her husband would ever be able to accept this loss. Ursula determined inwardly that she would take Gladys's place in her papa's mind, and through the subsequent years she tried to please her father and bring him happiness.

The Smith family apparently was struggling economically during these years, but Ursula recalls early buggy trips to see special places of interest in the surrounding area. She also enjoyed her mother's story-reading from *Little Folks*, a monthly magazine the Smiths received. Each issue contained a story which featured a young girl, and young Ursula thoroughly identified with the independent yet responsible protagonist.

When she reached the age of seven, Ursula was ready for school. Her parents judged the early school environment a crucial one. Howell School, a public facility for the first six years of instruction, had been built in Clarksville in 1879, but the Smiths preferred the tuition school for Ursula because of its special advantages. She would be instructed in a private home with a small number of children of various ages. The environment would reflect the protection of home, yet she would be exposed to more than reading, spelling, and arithmetic with Miss Sallie Howard. The standards encouraged by the Smiths at home would be reinforced in the tuition school with individual attention. In contrast to Howell School's student/teacher ratio of twenty-five to one, Miss Howard limited her group to ten students. She charged five dollars per month per child, a considerable but justified expense for the Smith family at the time.

Whereas a considerable number of tuition schools had existed in Clarksville throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, by 1907 only a handful of these schools remained. Thus, the number of students who experienced this unique introduction to formal education was small. Probably no more than fifty students attended tuition schools the year young Ursula entered, about ten percent of the total number of students attending grades 1-7 in Clarksville at that time. If Miss Howard's was typical of tuition schools, the tuitioners concentrated on reading, spelling, and arithmetic. They received some instruction in cursive writing but none in printing. They needed a slate, a pencil box, pencils, and lined paper for their daily lessons. At this time, incidentally, all students, whether in tuition or public school, had to purchase their own textbooks.

On Ursula's first day, Mrs. Smith told Miss Howard, "Teach her to read if you teach her nothing else." The teacher lifted the young girl onto a table, facing her toward a large wall placard and told Ursula to study the three words on it until she was convinced she would always recognize them. Ursula dutifully and silently obeyed. The words were "ox, box, and fox." When she went home that first day she was convinced she could read and told her parents so. She recalls to this day the great sense of achievement she had when she made the announcement.

The Smiths were both interested in their daughter's progress, and it was an important event when Ursula was able to read a paragraph to her father form the daily newspaper. Thereafter Ursula read at home daily and soon began to explore the public library. Eventually she read four books a week during the summer and then systematically embarked on a reading program which included every book in the Clarksville library.

Each day at Miss Howard's began at 8:30 a.m. Students were encouraged to bring a small snack which was eaten at 10:00. The day's work ended at noon. The teaching system was ungraded, and students progressed at their own pace. Lessons were assigned to begin each day's study and Miss Howard reviewed and judged each child's slate as it was completed. She pointed out any errors on the slate and made suggestions, and the child eventually brought the corrected lesson to her for a second review. When the lesson was accurately represented on the slate, Miss Howard then instructed that it be copied on paper. She inspected it again on paper and if all was correct, she wrote in large letters "O.K." Thus, at each day's end Ursula took home a perfect paper to show her parents, and she developed confidence and pride in each learned lesson.

Miss Howard provided equally important supplemental instruction. Once Ursula was able to write words, she received an unexpected lesson in courtesy. Miss Howard had instructed her to write a letter on her slate to a relative and to write what she knew. She produced the following:

> Dear Ant Anna,
> I go to school. My teacher is Miss Sallie Howard. She wears a black dress. She is tall. She wears a wig. It is red. It is parted in the middle.

When Miss Howard inspected Ursula's work, she picked up her sponge and, with a grand gesture, wiped the slate totally clean, saying "Do not be personal." Then she calmly instructed Ursula that the spelling of "aunt' was "a-u-n-t." Ursula knew she had overstepped important bounds and dutifully wrote a second more appropriate letter for her teacher.

Another significant aspect to Ursula's tuition school experience emphasized responsibility beyond her own performance and behavior. Her sister Agnes entered the same schoolroom two years after Ursula had begun. Agnes apparently rebelled against the reputation of her older sibling by taking a more relaxed attitude toward learning. She found opportunities to cut out and play with paper dolls in the space under her desk top but she was always

eventually caught by Miss Howard. Ursula would then receive an instruction to take Agnes's paper dolls away from her and to see that she got busy with her lesson.

Another practice which Agnes indulged in was to tear off tiny pieces of paper, roll them up tightly and then stuff them up her nose. Miss Howard's practical attention would become involved when Agnes's nose would begin to bleed; then she would instruct Ursula to take her to the bathroom and clean her up.

The ultimate extra-curricular responsibility for Ursula occurred when Miss Howard delayed giving Agnes permission to visit the bathroom and an accident resulted. Ursula was of course then instructed to remedy the situation and bring Agnes back to the classroom. The other children would tease Ursula about this, and she would feel devastated. These kinds of responsibilities were unique, aside from the problems they caused for Ursula. As the older sister, she was expected to resolve the problems Agnes created and then to see Agnes embarked on studying again before she could resume her own lesson. In a graded classroom setting she would never have had similar responsibilities.

Another kind of independence was encouraged by the Smith parents in this period when Ursula and Agnes were invited during summers to spend one week each with two aunts in New Providence, a community then located a short distance beyond the Clarksville city limits. The girls were expected to be courteous guests but to contribute as they could to the household chores. The Smith parents telephoned daily and came to visit by buggy on Sunday afternoon during these weeks. Ursula recalls entertaining herself with making leaf and clover chains as her mother had showed her to do, and instructing Agnes in creating them, too. Ursula recalls taking books with her for these visits, and in her free time she especially enjoyed climbing up into a large dogwood tree for private reading sessions.

When she was ten, Ursula's parents decided she was ready to transfer to the public school environment. Howell School consisted of three floors. Students began on the first floor and were promoted to the floors above as they completed the required grades. Now the teacher/student ratio was very different, yet Miss Ursula recalls that she experienced no difficulty in being at the top of her class in each of her grades there. She is convinced that she had been given a thorough grounding in the basics by Miss Howard. Indeed, when she entered Howell School she had tested as superior in reading and in mathematics.

While Ursula apparently did very well in fourth grade, she recalls meeting an outstanding teacher in the fifth grade, Miss Carrie Boyd, who was successful in inspiring her students to excel. Ursula wrote a play about squirrels and nuts which was imaginative and lively, according to the teacher's comments. Ursula also was exposed to extensive study in English grammar. Miss Boyd first taught her class the grammatical parts of speech. Then students learned to put the words from a sentence into the columns according to grammar, gender and number. Once the students mastered this, they began sentence diagramming. To this day when Miss Ursula lies awake at night, she diagrams sentences in her mind.

Homework was assigned regularly, but it consisted usually of fifteen problems or so, and Ursula did not find them demanding. However, occasionally she had a project which she had to create at home, and her parents emphasized the importance of producing a good job. She made a contour map of the United States which gave her a feeling of pride. She recalls carrying it to school, "hoping not to fall down and break up the nation or have an earthquake."

In another instance (perhaps a formative one for the future Montgomery County historian), Ursula was given a homework assignment to write about the history of Clarksville. When her father learned this, he said she must do it

well or not at all. He showed her a copy of *Picturesque Clarksville: Past and Present*, an 1887 publication by W.P. Titus, which contained photos and facts about the city's development. Ursula wanted to please both father and teacher, and this experience apparently was a critical one for her: she became an achiever from this point in her education.

There seem to have been few discipline problems in Howell School. One which Ursula experienced (she is reluctant to admit) was called "loitering in the lobby." A student earned demerits if he or she spent too much time in visiting the restrooms, and the punishment was to stay ten minutes after school.

When Ursula was promoted to grade six, she moved to the top floor of Howell School where the space was divided into a study hall and two classrooms. Spelling and math were done in the study hall; English, history, science, and art were studied in one of the classrooms with a special teacher. Ursula recalls that a "grown-up atmosphere" existed on the third floor. Periodically a student near the piano would be designated to play a march. This was the only signal to students that a new period was to begin. They all lined up and marched in time with the music to the new study area.

Howell School had only one male teacher during Ursula's years there. Professor O'Neil taught math and therefore presided throughout the day in the study hall. Each morning he would carry a large bottle up and down the rows of desks and fill each of the inkwells. He was strict and challenged students to excel in math, but he conveniently allowed a lapse in rules when the jonquils began to bloom each spring. Students would bring in flowers, put them in the inkwells where they would absorb ink by capillary action, and at the day's end students would leave with lovely green flowers. Not a word would be spoken by teacher or student; the conspiracy was a silent one. Ursula came to recognize that order and decorum were necessary to a good learning environment; she also enjoyed the periodic "freedom" from rules.

Ursula's ability to remember what she studied was exceptional. She learned all the bones of the human body under her science teacher, Miss Agnes Nicolassen, in the seventh grade, and she can still recall every one of them at age 88. She also received comprehensive instruction in English composition and rhetoric as well as an introduction to Bullfinch's *Fables and Myths*. Her assessment of each phrase of her early schooling is that she was thoroughly instructed in each subject and that the next phase directly built upon that foundation.

At home during Ursula's elementary years of schooling, the Smith family provided an enriched setting, though the family was not considered to have had exceptional advantages for the period. Important reference books were available. Ursula read in the fifteen volumes of *Stoddard Lectures* about every country in the world. She learned about nudity by studying the Greek statues. She read of historical events in the twenty-volume series of novels by E.P. Roe. A volume entitled *Poems and Stories Every Child Should Know* answered her questions of what, where, why, and when. Her parents read with her the four Gospels and the book of Acts in the family Bible; then she was on her own. There were other favorites, such as *The Little Colonel, Anne of Green Gables, Stepping Stones to Literature*, books by Kipling, Mary Mapes Dodge, Jack London, Bret Harte, and other adventure story writers.

The Smiths also had a collection of Perry Penny pictures. Each of these featured a reproduction of a famous art work or an outstanding author. Throughout the Smith home there were alabaster art projects which had been obtained from a local man who ordered them, packed in cork, by the barrel from Italy. Music was part of the daily environment, too; the Smiths had a piano, phonograph, and mandolin.

Finally, an additional enrichment source existed outside home and school. Clarksville boasted an 800-seat opera

house, built in the 1870s by John S. Elder. Clarksville residents, including the Smiths, took full advantage of its programs. Prominent speakers of the day, such as Booker T. Washington and many others, appeared on its stage; the traveling circus, concert programs, and amateur play groups all came through town on the Louisville-Memphis route. Chautauqua programs were scheduled, also, for a week every summer, and Ursula remembers attending

them, particularly between 1911 and 1915. Morning activities were participating events, and once, for the edification of an audience, with other Girl Scouts, Ursula demonstrated on "injured" boys that they knew how to provide emergency treatment for broken bones. Afternoon programs were planned for children, and evening programs were for adults.

By 1917 the Clarksville opera house had burned down and the Chautauqua had ended; public schools had proliferated throughout the city, and the tuition school as an institution had disappeared by the 1930s. Ursula Smith Beach thus lived through a period unique in Clarksville's history in which she developed a code of honor, forthright honesty, self-discipline, a sense of responsibility, an intellectual curiosity, and a standard of excellence -- all of which epitomize her today. She undoubtedly possesses unique traits in intelligence and memory capacity, but the early and formative influences that came from family, school, and community environment have played a crucial part in producing the adult she became.

NOTE

This essay is based on interviews conducted at Miss Ursula's antebellum home during the late fall and early winter of 1986-7. A videotape documentary on Ursula Smith Beach's life is being prepared by the writer and a colleague at Austin Peay State University with funding provided by a variety of Clarksville community organizations.

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