

GRASS, GRAIN, GRIEF AND GOD
(Not Necessarily in that Order)
A STUDY OF THE KANSAS NOVEL

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Larry K. Meredith
August, 1971

The

Approved for the Major Department

Robert H. H. H. H.

Approved for the Graduate Council

James L. Boyer

316064

FOR ALLEY, SUZY AND GREG,
WHO MADE THIS
A FAMILY EFFORT

PREFACE

In the spring of 1971, after reading the manuscript of a novel I had written with Kansas as a setting, Dr. Green Wyrick, Professor of English at Kansas State Teachers College, suggested that I consider a study of Kansas novels as a thesis topic. Such a study, he noted, might clarify my own understanding of the state and of its people and, additionally, make a contribution to a more widespread comprehension of the many novels which have been written with Kansas as a setting. Because of my interest in the state and the possibilities it holds for novelists, and because no similar study had been written, I became intrigued with the idea. This study is the result. Because of my investigation, which included a careful reading of approximately forty Kansas novels, and a scanning of more than fifty others, the second draft of my own "Kansas novel" will, no doubt, be quite unlike the first draft. I would hope, in addition, that readers of this study will find, if nothing else, food for thought about the future of the Kansas novel. While many novelists have discussed, with great detail, segments of the state's history, few have examined with

any intensity, the state or its people in the most recent three decades of the twentieth century. Perhaps, this study might inspire authors to write contemporary Kansas novels about the state as it is today.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Wyrick for his guidance and understanding, and for his careful critique of the original manuscript. I am also grateful to Dr. Charles Walton, Head of the Department of English at Kansas State Teachers College, whose perceptive criticism of this study helped to clarify and expand many of the principal ideas. His patience and timely comments are sincerely appreciated. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I am indebted to my wife Alyce, and my children, Suzy and Greg, for continuing patience with their husband and father during the course of the composition of this study. Their understanding and encouragement gave the project an added dimension of significance to me. I would hope that readers of this study also find it to be a worthwhile contribution to an understanding of novels dealing with Kansas and Kansans.

July, 1971
Emporia, Kansas

LKM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	iv
I. KANSAS FICTION AND KANSAS VALUES	1
II. THE MASTERY OF THE PAST	35
III. THE MYSTERY OF THE PRESENT	86
IV. KANSAS, TRUE OR FALSE?	137
V. THE UNIVERSAL MAN	189
FIFTY NOVELS WITH KANSAS AS A SETTING	200
BIBLIOGRAPHY	204

CHAPTER I

KANSAS FICTION AND KANSAS VALUES

Kansas--the name brings to mind pictures of vast, grassy prairies, trackless miles of barren, rolling hills, an infinite number of buffalo, tribes of plains Indians who were free for awhile and then beset by settlers, cowboys, and the United States Cavalry. It conjures up names of people and places: John Brown, William Quantrill, Carrie Nation, Wyatt Earp, Abilene, Dodge City, Fort Leavenworth, and the Santa Fe Trail. More recently, one might add to these lists of things indigenous to Kansas, wheat, the aircraft industry, and the site of the exact center of the first forty-eight of the United States. A reader of Kansas novels would mention the frequency of tornadoes, since most of the state lies within what is sometimes called "tornado alley." He might also note that Kansas is situated in the "Bible Belt," that its people are conservative and God-fearing, and that Kansas just might possibly contain more churches and fewer "open saloons" per-capita than anywhere in the nation.

To one whose knowledge of Kansas stems only from its novels, these comments would represent a fair rendering. The "Kansas novel" has done little to inform readers about the state as it is in the 1970's. Instead, novelists writing about Kansas prefer to deal with the past, for the most part, and to ignore contemporary Kansas and Kansans. They find history and the facts of past years evidently easier to deal with than the present and the Kansan of today.

To be sure, the Kansas novel has progressed considerably since the first was published while Kansas was still a Territory. Whether it was an anonymous author's Western Border Life, or What Fanny Hunter Saw and Heard in Kansas and Missouri, which Ben W. Fuson says was published in 1856,¹ or Emerson Bennett's The Border Rover, dated 1857 by Harold Evans,² is not important. Neither novel contributed significantly to Kansas literature because, as Evans puts it, ". . . these extravagances reflected little of the actual Kansas scene and had small literary merit."³ They did form a beginning,

¹Ben W. Fuson (ed.), Centennial Bibliography of Kansas Literature, 1854-1961, p. 32. (Fuson notes the novel has been attributed to Mrs. W. H. Corning and given the publication date of 1862.)

²Harold C. Evans (ed.), Kansas, a Guide to the Sunflower State, p. 129.

however, and were quickly followed by other novels dealing with the state. The earliest included Bennett's Forest or Prairie, or Life on the Frontier (1860); The Border Ruffian by B. F. Craig (1863); Westward, a Tale of American Emigrant Life by Mrs. J. McNair Wright (1870); and Sons of the Border, Sketches of the Life and People of the Far Frontier, by Captain James William Steele (1873).⁴ These novels, despite the fact that they are set in Kansas, offer meager insight into the actual lives and minds of the Kansans of their time. They are either sentimentalized to such a degree that they portray a Kansas so wonderful that it is unrecognizable when compared with more recent novels dealing with the same time period, or they are so full of brutality or feats of heroism that they defy the reality of the time as it is understood today. Because they do not accurately reflect the state (or territory) of Kansas, it can be argued that they are not, in the true sense of the word, "Kansas novels."

Fuson, in his definition of a "Kansas book," does not require that its author be at all honest in his appraisal of the state or of its people. Indeed, he labels as a "Kansas book" any ". . . volume 1/ published by a Kansas writer . . . and concerned with

⁴Fuson, op. cit., p. 32.

Kansas, or 2/ published by a non-Kansas writer but concerned with Kansas."⁵ He is equally generous in his definition of a "Kansas writer":

. . . the term is flexibly and generously interpreted as follows: 1/ any writer born in Kansas (including those who have left the state--even in childhood); and 2/ any writer born elsewhere who has resided for a significant period in Kansas and (a) is now⁶ a resident here, or (b) has since left the state.

Utilizing this definition, one must assume that any novel dealing with Kansas which was written by a "Kansas writer" may be accurately labeled a "Kansas novel." But one should consider other criteria in any serious attempt to study Kansas through her novels. A reader can frequently be beguiled into believing that an individual work, or group of works, is honest in its appraisal of a specific time and place, but one wonders, upon closer consideration, about the authenticity of certain of them. For example, was the author competent to write such a book about such a place? Does the story accurately reflect the time and the thought patterns of its people? Is the story offered in the form of a novel because it is far from the truth, or does there lie within its pages an actual, fairly-presented account

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

⁶Loc. cit.

of an event? Does a character reflect accurately the reactions indigenous to the people of the locale? Has the author captured, and expressed well, the collective unconsciousness of the group with which he is dealing? These are perplexing questions that bear investigation if a sincere reader--one who wishes to learn the truth about a time, a place, a person, or group of persons--is to judge fairly the motives of, not only the author, but also the people of the time and place under consideration.

Little attention has been devoted in recent years to the literature of Kansas as a "body" of work. As long ago as 1961, Warren Kliever and Stanley J. Solomon edited a collection of some of the short fiction of Kansas authors published under the title, Kansas Renaissance. This book brought together a sampling of the works of such authors as Nelson Antrim Crawford, Kirke Mechem, Langston Hughes, W. Arthur Boggs, Charles Burgess and others, but made no attempt to examine novels written by or about Kansans. Allen Crafton, writing in the Introduction to this anthology, suggests that, among theories relating to literary productivity is one which states that ". . . distinctive minds and imaginations of a race or group, stimulated by a sense of urgency, sometimes develop a predominant form of

literary expression."⁷ He believes that Kansans have
 ". . . experienced no impulse for developing a specific
 form such as the lyric, the narrative, or drama."⁸

However, Kansas authors have, indeed, produced a considerable number of novels which use Kansas as their settings. Fuson's bibliography lists approximately 250 novels set in Kansas.⁹ His list was published in 1961, and several "Kansas novels" have been published since then. Despite Crafton's belief that Kansas has not provided inspiration to writers, that there has been little in the state of impelling social-historical significance, and that few events have greatly depressed or uplifted the Kansas author's soul, the state's writers have managed to produce a body of fiction that, while not rivalling that of some other states--Missouri, thanks to Twain, or Mississippi, thanks to Faulkner, for example --is nevertheless impressive in its own way. Indeed, Kansas provided inspiration enough to William Allen White, perhaps the best known of Kansas authors, to Margaret Hill McCarter and Charles M. Sheldon, two of

⁷Warren Kliever and Stanley J. Solomon (eds.), Kansas Renaissance, p. viii.

⁸Loc. cit.

⁹Fuson, op. cit., pp. 32-35.

the state's most prolific writers, and to countless others who have dealt with Kansas in fiction. There has been enough of socio-historical significance in Kansas to inspire Truman Nelson's massive study of John Brown, The Surveyor, and McCarter's factual account of the Border Wars of the 1850's, A Wall of Men. And one must read only a few Kansas novels to discover that the years of settlement and growth both depressed and uplifted the Kansas author's soul.

Crafton notes that another cause for an important literary development is a significant historic event that affects people to such an extent that they are inspired to a rationalization and interpretation of their circumstance. He believes that social history can account for the optimistic style of the Elizabethan period and for the pessimistic, though not hopeless, literature of nineteenth-century Russia. "The settlers of Kansas," he believes, "and their descendants never encountered the stirring experiences of the Elizabethans and the Russians."¹⁰ He, also, suggests that the physical environment of Kansas may have something to do with the lack of a specific body of literature developed within

¹⁰Allen Crafton, in Kansas Renaissance, Warren Kliever and Stanley J. Solomon (eds.), p. viii.

and about the state. He believes that rugged, mountainous regions keep the imagination alive and produce literature, whereas the lowlands and plains do not stimulate men to such an extent. "The plainsman doesn't stand in awe of Nature; he subdues her, uses her, lives by her. He sees little around him to inspire him to creative writing."¹¹ Kansas fiction, of course, may not equal that of the Elizabethans or of nineteenth-century Russians, but its serious efforts at least equal that of many of the mountainous states like Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. And if the Kansas author sees little around him to inspire creative writing, how does one account for Paul I. Wellman's The Walls of Jericho, a novel set on the high plains of western Kansas that is possibly one of the most honest of recent Kansas novels, or Joseph Pennell's The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters, a gripping novel dealing with Civil War veterans who seek peace in Kansas? Yet, Crafton believes, regional writing, except for a short period, has never been popular among the better Kansas writers. He points out that many native Kansans with literary talent have left Kansas when they were young and have written on topics not associated with the state. He does, however, see the

¹¹Loc. cit.

possibility of some kind of a literary renaissance in Kansas:

As the present writers are followed by others, their work may not be regional in the traditional sense; but it may well be a regionalism deriving from the universal human qualities influenced by the midwest, qualities buffeted and blessed by the social, economical and physical climate of Kansas.¹²

But he is speaking here of authors who do not write "Kansas" or "regional" novels. If there is to be a literary renaissance in Kansas, it must stem from Kansans writing about the state.

Fuson's definition of Kansas books leaves much to be desired if one is to decide whether or not there is, indeed, a dearth of Kansas novels (as Crafton suggests) and if hopes for the future of Kansas fiction should be considered dim. Fuson's claim that any book set in Kansas is a "Kansas book" is valid only as long as one is not concerned with the question of literary integrity. A novel may be said to be "about" Kansas but, in truth, be so flagrantly amiss in its interpretation of the state or its people that it cannot be said to be in any way a true Kansas novel. The Artificial Traveler, an existential tryptych in novel form by Warren Fine, is a recent example of a book that takes Kansas as its

¹²Ibid., p. xi.

setting, but cannot be said to be a Kansas novel. This novel which details the fantasy life of an eccentric painter is set, for the most part, near Dodge City, where ". . . this basic prairie exists as though the oil pumps or even its own crops cannot disturb it, this country primitive as stone."¹³ But Kansas has no real meaning to either the reader or to the point of the novel itself. It is a setting that might have been any other basically agrarian area of the country. Although Fine makes no effort to argue the case for calling The Artificial Traveler a Kansas novel, by Fuson's definition it must be identified as one. Similarly, Dorothy Canfield, a well-known early Kansas author, wrote what must be designated a Kansas novel by Fuson's terms, but which, in her own words, is not one at all. Early in Understood Betsy she writes:

When this story begins, Elizabeth Ann, who is the heroine of it, was a little girl of nine, who lived with her Great-aunt Harriet in a medium-sized city in a medium-sized state in the middle of the country; and that's all you need to know about the place, for it's not the important thing in the story; and anyhow you know all about it because it was probably very much like the place you live in yourself.¹⁴

¹³Warren Fine, The Artificial Traveler, p. 54.

¹⁴Dorothy Canfield, Understood Betsy, p. 1.

Is it a Kansas novel? By Fuson's definition, it must be, because it is set in the state, even though the author herself denies claim to the designation.

In both novels, and possibly in countless others, Kansas is no more than a backdrop for a story more universal than regional. The state and its people are not important to the development or to the outcome of the story. Therefore, they cannot be called true Kansas novels. Norton and Rushton support the thesis that setting must be important to a novel before it can be termed a "regional" novel:

The regional novel emphasizes the setting and mores of a particular locality, as these affect character and action ("Wessex" in Hardy's novels, or the state of Mississippi in Faulkner's). If the regional setting, including landscape, dialect, and customs, is exploited particularly for its inherent interest and oddity, it is often referred to as local color (India in Kipling's novels and stories, or the South in Erskine Caldwell's).¹⁵

If a novel set in Kansas does not emphasize that setting to such a degree that is important to the story, it cannot be said to be a regional novel. Barnet, Berman and Burto, while not offering a definition of "regional" novels, note that ". . . the setting, or locale (which can include time--such as a hospital in Milan during

¹⁵Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton (eds.), A Glossary of Literary Terms, p. 61.

World War I), often contribute to atmosphere."¹⁶ Austin Warren provides a more detailed explanation of setting:

Setting is environment; and environments, especially domestic interiors, may be viewed as metonymic, or metaphoric, expressions of character. A man's house is an extension of himself. Describe it and you have described him . . . Setting may be the expression of a human will . . . Again, setting may be the massive determinant--environment viewed as physical or social causation, something over which the individual has little individual control.¹⁷

Therefore, the use of Kansas as a setting for a novel--when that setting suggests nothing of significance to an ultimate understanding of the story, when it is not used in a metaphorical sense--does not necessarily qualify the book for inclusion as a Kansas novel. Warren also warns against taking a novel seriously in the wrong way, that is, as a true story purporting to be an accurate representation of a life and its times. He believes a novel must stand in recognizable relation to life, but the reader must realize that the relations can be variously heightened or antithesized. "We have to have a knowledge independent of literature in order to know what the relation of a specific work to 'life' may be."¹⁸

¹⁶Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burto (eds.), A Dictionary of Literary Terms, p. 9.

¹⁷Austin Warren, "The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction," reprinted in Approaches to the Novel, pp. 16-17.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 6.

In searching for the authentic in the novels of Kansas and for an accurate representation of that which is indigenous to the state, one might easily believe any description that is not too blatantly false. Consequently, a reader must maintain a perspective somewhat distant from the novels under consideration in order to grasp the truth or the make-believe therein. Moreover, to criticize accurately a novel purported to be "Kansan" in nature, a reader familiar with the state should call upon personal experience as well as other methods of literary criticism.

Most of the novels discussed in this study meet several criteria based upon the definition of the term, "regional novel." In addition, one must define what is meant by the term, "novel." Norton and Rushton remark that the term is now ". . . applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being an extended piece of prose fiction."¹⁹ They further distinguish the novel from history (which is a narrative of facts) and from the essay (which presents little more than characters and incidents as illustrative of a point of view). Barnet, Berman, and Burto add that a novel is ". . . a fictional prose narrative, of substantial

¹⁹Norton and Rushton, op. cit., p. 58.

length."²⁰ Realizing the inadequacy of so slight a definition, they differentiate between a novel, a short story, and a "novelette," assigning the novel an arbitrary minimum length of one hundred pages.²¹

The dividing line between a novel and a novelette, for example, is tenuous, to be sure, as illustrated by the publication of Love Story, advertised as a novel. Its 31,496 words, however, are less than the 36,850 words of Albert Camus' The Stranger, generally considered to be a novelette. Despite such discrepancies, there are other guidelines for defining a novel. Usually, a novel probes deeper into any given situation than would a short story or a novelette, looks at the broad scope of a situation rather than at any one given aspect, may encompass a longer time span, and may include a larger cast of characters. Thus, a Kansas novel is a fictional prose narrative of substantial length set in Kansas which makes its setting an integral part of the story. A Kansas novel must not necessarily be written by a "Kansas writer," as defined by Fuson, but must be honest and accurate in its appraisal of the state and its people. Most of the novels to be discussed

²⁰Barnet, Berman and Burto, op. cit., p. 59.

²¹Loc. cit.

in this study are Kansas novels, by this definition, but some are not. No attempt has been made to rationalize their choice because they happen to be the best Kansas novels. Indeed, the quality of these novels ranges from those which, in many ways, might be considered among the worst ever written about the state, to some among the finest. They are included, because they illustrate the many types of novels written about Kansas, because they offer a wide range of subject matter, because they deal with many of the problems which concern most Kansans, and because they span the time period from prior to the Civil War to almost the present. Other novels could have been chosen. Indeed, McCarter wrote sixteen, many with Kansas settings, yet only four of these are used herein extensively as illustrative of her work, while an equal number by William Allen White, who wrote fewer than half as many novels as McCarter, are among those examined. The reasons for this are simple. In many of McCarter's novels, the setting could as easily have been South Dakota or Nebraska. The Peace of the Solomon Valley, on the other hand, utilizes Kansas as one of its most important "characters" as a youth from the East changes his provincial attitudes because of what he found in the state. William Allen White found his inspiration in Kansas, and the state takes

on a great deal of significance in all four of his novels under consideration. Three novels by Paul I. Wellman were chosen for discussion for the same reasons. Kansas itself is significant in them and the actions of some of their characters can be said to be truly Kansan.²²

Kansas "writers" are plentiful; however, most of them have been writers of poetry, history, essays, and short fiction. Their novels are not always set in Kansas, as Crafton has noted and, therefore, are not appropriate to this study. Zula Bennington Greene notes that, even in the 1930's, ". . . self-conscious literati were lamenting that Kansas had no writers."²³ Of course, she says, there were Edgar Watson Howe and William Allen White, both stalwarts of several years by then, and Dr. Charles M. Sheldon. Of the three she mentions, only White wrote Kansas novels. Howe's The Story of a Country Town, which he himself finally published in Atchison after several houses had refused it, made him an instant celebrity of sorts. It was set in Missouri,

²²A supplemental reading list of fifty Kansas novels is appended to this study. These novels can be considered "secondary" since they do not make Kansas as significant to their stories as do those included within the study.

²³Zula Bennington Greene, "Kansas Authors," in Kansas: Its Power and Its Glory, p. 234.

but Fuson notes that it reflects much of the flavor of Atchison ". . . though the town is technically Fairview, Missouri, where young Howe had lived awhile before migrating to Kansas."²⁴ Frank Blackmar feels Howe had a great deal of talent and says his book ". . . as a realistic novel possesses more than local interest, and, while gloomy, has true literary merit."²⁵

In 1896, the same year in which White achieved national fame with an editorial in the Emporia Gazette entitled "What's the Matter With Kansas?", Sheldon of Topeka sprang into equal prominence with a religious novel, In His Steps. This book, which is most definitely not a Kansas novel even though it is set partially in the state, deals with the theme of what Jesus might do if confronted with the problems of a business man of the time. Sheldon's method of presenting his evening sermon in the form of fiction made it possible for him to publish them in book form. They carried a lesson of right living to those beyond the doors of his church. "The value of his books," Blackmar notes, however, "is more ethical than literary."²⁶

²⁴Fuson, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁵Frank W. Blackmar (ed.), Kansas, II, p. 173.

²⁶Ibid., p. 175.

Other writers of early Kansas were also turning out books, but only a few were novels. For example, Greene notes that between 1854 and 1899 there were 264 Kansas books.²⁷ Some were so obscure that they have already disappeared from library shelves. Others had some enduring fame, such as Edward Everett Hale's Kanza and Nebraska, published in 1854 and since called "the first Kansas book."²⁸ Other books, not necessarily novels, dealing with Kansas were written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by such authors as Eugene Ware, a Civil War veteran who turned his talents to poetry, Colonel Henry Inman, whose The Old Santa Fe Trail of 1897 is history, and Andy Adams, whose Log of a Cowboy of 1903 also is not a novel. Kansas writers of the time included May Griffie Robinson, Fletcher M. Sisson, Reynolds Knight, L. Addison Bone, George Alfred Brown, Tracy Stokes Paxton, Effie Graham, Dan Gatlin, Louisa Cooke Don Carlos, and Frances Kaltenborn. Greene notes that many of their novels, however, were propaganda, which never creates lasting fiction, and some touch on times and topics represented better by other novels. Kansas was also the birthplace of several noted writers

²⁷Greene, op. cit., p. 234.

²⁸Loc. cit.

who did not remain and who did not write about the state. Edgar Lee Masters, for example, came from Garnett and may have modeled some of his Spoon River Anthology characters on people he knew there. Damon Runyon, a native of Manhattan, moved to a larger Manhattan--New York City--and created Guys and Dolls. Rex Stout, a former Topekan, writes mystery stories around his well-known character of Detective Nero Wolfe. Brock Pemberton left Emporia to become a noted playwright.²⁹

Possibly the best known and most highly respected author of Kansas novels was William Allen White, although he must rank a poor third in number of novels published, to Sheldon, the latter having written more than thirty novels, and McCarter, whose output totaled sixteen novels, most of which dealt with Kansas history.³⁰ Reviewers were generally kind to White but commented often on his wordiness and frequent preachings. Soon after the publication of A Certain Rich Man, Atlantic said that White ". . . could learn much from some of the more frivolous American writers in the matter of the clean, clear-cut stroke."³¹ Dial took an opposite viewpoint,

²⁹Loc. cit.

³⁰Fuson, op. cit., p. 13.

³¹"White's New Novel," Atlantic, CIV (November, 1909), 82.

however, and said that White's ". . . knowledge, powers and observation, and pointed style impart a considerable degree of interest to his story, despite its amorphous structure."³² Tillinghast was more outspoken in his comments and said that while an individual could purchase any one of a number of neatly bound sermons, ". . . this particular sort of fiction seems not merely superfluous, but not quite honest."³³ The New York Times reviewer was quite direct. He said that ". . . it is such a big book, one must wish it were actually great."³⁴

Three reviewers of In the Heart of a Fool dealt White a two-to-one defeat. Bourne discusses its ending:

The book closes with one of the abruptest turns of the beatitudes in all literature. After painting a long picture of community superstition and ferocity that would disgrace a Central African village--riot and hatred and atrocious murder--Mr. White takes the great war, rubs it like an eraser over the smutched and hideous page, and lo! all is fair and clean again.³⁵

The New Republic addressed White personally:

³²W. M. Payne, "A Certain Rich Man: A Review," Dial, XLVII (September 16, 1909), 180.

³³Phillip Tillinghast, "A Certain Rich Man: A Review," Forum, XLII (September, 1909), 285.

³⁴H. W. Boynton, "A Certain Rich Man: A Review," New York Times, October 23, 1909, 14.

³⁵Randolph Bourne, "In the Heart of a Fool: A Review," Dial, LXV (December 14, 1919), 556.

Well, William Allen White, I admire your purpose, but I stumble over your novel. For two reasons. First, I do not believe in novels when the people in those novels are crudely subordinated to the moral design of the creator. When morality comes in the door, art flies out the window. Second, I do not believe the status of labor is acceptable even when injustice to labor is done away with. The old romantic leader, the Grant Adams type, is like a poster-lithograph of melodramatic generalship.³⁶

Only the New York Times was kind to White, saying that ". . . the handling is finely managed and there are many scenes of real power."³⁷

McCarter's novels generally fared well with reviewers. Especially popular was A Wall of Men. The New York Times commented on the portrayal it makes of life in Kansas in the days when the abolitionists and pro-slavery men were fighting over the question of whether the territory should be admitted to the Union as a free state or a slave state and said, for that reason, ". . . it is well worth reading."³⁸ In 1938 another Kansas writer, William Lindsay White, son of W. A. White, received national attention with a Kansas novel. Christian Century

³⁶"Fool Fools Some," New Republic, XVIII (February 15, 1920), 91.

³⁷"In the Heart of a Fool: A Review," New York Times, November 10, 1919, 23.

³⁸"A Wall of Men: A Review," New York Times, December 29, 1912, 94.

said of his book, What People Said, that ". . . the total result is a Midwest America as genuinely contemporary as a hamburger stand."³⁹

Also in the 1930's, an author who wrote much as McCarter, Rose Wilder Lane, saw her novel, Let the Hurricane Roar, published. Her slim volume attracted some national attention in 1933 and was also treated kindly. Shattuck wrote that, though the novel ". . . lacks the research, satire and retrospective quality, . . . it has the poetry. . . It might have been lifted from a day-to-day journal of the period it covers."⁴⁰ The New York Evening Post said that the story was tailored to fit the demands ". . . of magazine fiction, and the simple dignity of its heroine . . . is of a kind to make a direct appeal to women readers."⁴¹ Joseph Stanley Pennell of Junction City ". . . papered his room at Kansas University with rejection slips before he won success with The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters."⁴² The

³⁹"What People Said: A Review," Christian Century, LV (May 11, 1938), 593.

⁴⁰Katherine Shattuck, "Let the Hurricane Roar: A Review," Bookman, LXXVI (March, 1933), 300.

⁴¹"Hurricane Appeals to Women," New York Evening Post, February 25, 1933, 7.

⁴²Greene, op. cit., p. 244.

novel, placed during and immediately after the Civil War, pleased many reviewers such as Danielson, who wrote that ". . . obscure as it can be, this is yet a book of real power and promise."⁴³ Some reviewers such as Mayberry, compared Pennell with other outstanding writers and said the book is ". . . worth putting beside Brady's photographs, Grant's Memoirs, The Red Badge of Courage, and J. W. De Forest's Miss Ravenel's Conversion. . ."⁴⁴ And Smith wrote that Pennell ". . . has added in his book a solid and memorable volume to the fictional history of America."⁴⁵

The 1940's were fruitful years for Kansas novels. Paul I. Wellman published three in quick succession. They were The Bowl of Brass, published in 1944, The Walls of Jericho, published in 1947, and The Chain, a 1949 novel. Reviewers were reluctant to praise The Chain too highly and commented often on the lack of depth that it offered. Galewski noted that Wellman

⁴³R. E. Danielson, "The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters: A Review," Atlantic, CLXIV (October, 1944), 133.

⁴⁴George Mayberry, "Reliving the Civil War," New Republic, CXI (August 14, 1944), 195.

⁴⁵Harrison Smith, "The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters: A Review," Saturday Review of Literature, XXVIII (July 22, 1944), 34.

was a Kansas newspaper man and says the Kansas background

". . . strikes the only authentic note in a novel that omits none of the sure-fire ingredients of popular fiction."⁴⁶ Fuller was even more critical, writing that

". . . in some of the smart scenes one feels a depressing slickness."⁴⁷ Sears proposed that church people would

enjoy the novel ". . . despite its very pedestrian style and its rather weak construction."⁴⁸ The Walls of Jericho

received better comments, though, such as Gasaway's.

He wrote that the novel packs into its pages ". . . all the drama and violence of the Great Plains country as it emerged from the raw frontier days into the first suggestion of sectional consciousness."⁴⁹ Birney was

equally strong in his praise:

Mr. Wellman has painted a full-bodied canvass of a locale and an era which have been neglected in American fiction. The climax may be melodrama but it is the melodrama to be expected in Jericho and Abilene and Fort Dodge. There are Kansans who

⁴⁶Myron Galewski, "Chain Needs Another Link," New York Times Book Review, March 20, 1949, 20.

⁴⁷Edmund Fuller, "The Chain: A Review," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXII (March 10, 1949), 25.

⁴⁸W. P. Sears, "The Chain: A Review," Churchman, CLXIII (June 1, 1949), 15.

⁴⁹A. E. Gasaway, "The Walls of Jericho: A Review," Chicago Sun Book Week, February 9, 1947, 15.

will not like the novel and who will deny that Mr. Wellman found his fictional city in their town, his fictional characters among their citizens. The denials will be in vain. There are many Jerichos in the Sunflower State and, in this reader's⁵⁰ opinion, few better novels have been written of them.

In the 1950's, at least two Kansas novels were praised by literary critics. Jackson Burgess' Pillar of Cloud was called by Mansten in Saturday Review, ". . . a craftsmanlike interweaving of Americana and exciting fiction."⁵¹ Kilpatrick, in the Library Journal, also praised the novel when he wrote that ". . . what might have been just another pioneer novel of the conquering of the West, becomes a novel of excellent proportions."⁵² And, speaking of Kenneth Davis' novel, Bracke said that ". . . the look and feel of the land have rarely been better caught in words than in Morning in Kansas."⁵³

In 1963, two impressive Kansas novels were published. They were Russell Laman's Manifest Destiny and Gordon Parks' The Learning Tree. Laman's historical

⁵⁰Hoffman Birney, "Walls of Jericho On the Mark," New York Times Book Review, February 2, 1947, 5.

⁵¹S. P. Mansten, "Pillar of Cloud: A Review," Saturday Review, XL (August 10, 1957), 18.

⁵²C. E. Kirkpatrick, "Pillar of Cloud: A Review," Library Journal, XXCII (April 15, 1957), 1064.

⁵³W. B. Bracke, "Morning in Kansas: A Review," New York Herald Tribune Book Review, August 24, 1952, 9.

novel received almost no national literary notice, although it was deserving. Parks, better known at the time as a photographer for Life magazine, was well treated by reviewers. Balliett said that The Learning Tree was a counterpart of Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird, ". . . so we now have at least a composite, melodramatic portrait of life on both sides of the tracks in the sort of . . . town that produced Charles Wright."⁵⁴ Giles noted that the novel was written with ". . . rueful reminiscence, even humor. It is an unassuming and thoroughly conventional book, but it has freshness, sincerity and charm."⁵⁵

William Inge, Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, published his first novel, Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff, in 1970. As with at least two of his plays--Picnic and The Dark at the Top of the Stairs--and one motion picture--Splendor in the Grass--it was set in Kansas. At least one reviewer, Clayton, believed Inge was a better playwright than a novelist. "Inge says nothing he has not expressed better in his plays."⁵⁶ Frankel was equally critical of the novel:

⁵⁴Whitney Balliett, "Book Reviews," New Yorker, XXXIX (November 2, 1963), 209.

⁵⁵Louise Giles, "The Learning Tree: A Review," Library Journal, XXCVIII (October 1, 1963), 3646.

⁵⁶Robert Clayton, "Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff: A Review," Library Journal, XCV (May 1, 1970), 1760.

Small-town Kansas is Inge Country; there is no quarrel with that. Evelyn Wyckoff, unfortunately, is also so familiar she seems more an Inge cliché than a character. If there is something that does not ring a familiar bell in this book it is the graphically described sexual acrobatics. When writing explicitly, Mr. Inge flounders--one can almost see him blush--between anatomical terms and their four-letter counterparts.⁵⁷

Finally, in March of 1971, the most recent novel with a Kansas setting, Jack Curtis' Banjo, was published. Levin, in the New York Times, called the novel ". . . a fabulous folk tale" and said that it was ". . . hatched out of the reality of rural poverty that spawned the gangsters of the prohibition era."⁵⁸ Crafton is admittedly correct in his conclusion that Kansas has not produced a specific body of literature within and about the state, but, nevertheless, Kansas novels are abundant. This study comments--to a greater or lesser degree--on forty of them. An additional, supplemental, list of fifty Kansas novels is also included.

What provides literary inspiration to the authors of Kansas novels? How do they view the state? What values, ideals, and traits do they find indigenous to Kansas? To most of them, the inspiration derives from

⁵⁷Haskel Frankel, "Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff: A Review," New York Times Book Review, June 14, 1970, 24.

⁵⁸Martin Levin, "A Reader's Report," New York Times Book Review, March 14, 1971, 12.

history; to others, from the land itself; and to still others, it comes from specific groups of people, such as religious sects, farmers, or those of minority races. George W. Ogden, author of West of Dodge, found inspiration in several aspects of the country. "This is a different kind of a country. . . Men can't come here and do the same old things over that they've been doing somewhere else and make it go."⁵⁹ To McCarter, at least some of the time, it is the land. Her view of Kansas at the turn of the century is one of an area that is ". . . a whole lot better than you know anything about back in New York."⁶⁰ It is ". . . old and time-seasoned,"⁶¹ ". . . one lovely gem of emerald waters, upon the desert plains,"⁶² and a place that helps one understand ". . . the reward of humble sacrifice."⁶³ At other times, history provided necessary inspiration to McCarter. In The Price of the Prairie her hero notes that ". . . the story of the Kansas frontier is more tragical than

⁵⁹George W. Ogden, West of Dodge, p. 118.

⁶⁰Margaret Hill McCarter, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, p. 41.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 47.

⁶²Ibid., p. 49.

⁶³Ibid., p. 89.

all the Wild West yellow-backed novels ever turned off the press."⁶⁴ Michael Amrine was intrigued with the Kansas of 1934, ". . . with even the simple drought a thing for charts and figures . . . speeches, movies, talks upon the radio . . . and still the drought, the bitter poor people, and the simple evil earth."⁶⁵ To Esther Vogt the important thing about the state was the religious bent of its Mennonites. It is a land where parents warned their children that ". . . to be a Mennonite means to be separate."⁶⁶ Some writers were so enamored of Kansas that they compared the state to the most perfect places on Earth--and even to Heaven:

. . . it's the very perfection of a prairie country--not flat, nor boggy, but gently swelling, with rich valleys and sloping everywhere. Eden sloped, you know, you remember--"beautiful as the garden of the angels upon the slopes of Eden." And the climate is simply celestial, if I may be allowed the word. Do you know, the average temperature of Kansas at the present day is very nearly the same that Greece enjoyed when she was at the pinnacle of her greatness?⁶⁷

Such adoration is not found in all Kansas novels. Indeed, some authors frequently take an opposite viewpoint.

⁶⁴Margaret Hill McCarter, The Price of the Prairie, p. 281.

⁶⁵Michael Amrine, All Sons Must Say Goodbye, p. ii.

⁶⁶Esther L. Vogt, The Sky is Falling, p. 20.

⁶⁷"Ozone," in Kansas in Literature, I, William Herbert Carruth (ed.), p. 29.

Judson Jerome, for example, speaks of ". . . the flat, red wastes of southern Kansas."⁶⁸ A character in Frieda Franklin's novel, None But the Brave, calls the country "barbaric" and says it ". . . brings out the worst, or at least, the most animal-like traits in man."⁶⁹ And even Paul Wellman, whose novels are not known for a lack of praise of the state, allows a visitor to Jericho, Kansas, in The Bowl of Brass to complain bitterly about the country. "No roads! Dust, ankle deep! Sand storms! Cyclones! And a dry state, a prohibition state, Mother of God, for a man with a thirst all the way from Peoria!"⁷⁰

Many of the authors of the novels discussed in this study are native Kansans and have formulated their opinions about the state, their attitudes toward its people, and their ideas regarding its suitability or untowardness after long years of living within its boundaries. William Allen White, for example, was born in Emporia and lived there most of his life. Rose Wilder Lane was a Kansan, who wrote of the state with a sentimental passion that entranced audiences of the time. Russell Laman, author of Manifest Destiny, is also a

⁶⁸Judson Jerome, The Fell of Dark, p. 139.

⁶⁹Frieda Franklin, None But the Brave, p. 40.

⁷⁰Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, p. 27.

native Kansan and a product of Kansas country schooling.

Zoe Dentler, who wrote The Hill or Simmons Point, was born in Lapeer, Douglas County, Kansas, in 1891 near a tract of land her grandfather staked for a claim in 1855 when Kansas was still a territory. Run to Kansas was written by Robert Gard, a native of southeastern Kansas who attended school in Iola and is a 1934 graduate of the University of Kansas. Julia Siebel, a native of Colby, graduated from Northwestern University before writing For the Time Being, and Esther Vogt, though not a native of Kansas, moved to the state when she was eight years old. She is a Tabor College graduate and, in addition to her novel, The Sky is Falling, has written nearly four hundred short stories. Many authors of Kansas novels have left the state to live in other parts of the country. Jack Curtis migrated from Kansas to California several years ago. That fact would not seem to be a hindrance when one considers that his novel, Banjo, deals with Kansas in the 1920's. But it must be realized that to lose touch with Kansas for some time is to lose touch with the intrinsic heartbeat of the state, that special quality of life and thought that makes it different from other states. William Inge is another transplanted Kansan, who has used the state as a setting for plays, movies, and now Good Luck,

Miss Wyckoff. His book is a fine first novel. It is not a fine Kansas novel. Perhaps, Inge has lived too long in California and has forgotten the depth of pain and pride that is possible in his native state. Gordon Parks, author of The Learning Tree, is another native Kansan who left the state for greener pastures. The fact that Parks is black might have had much to do with his decision to leave. His success as a photographer, film-maker, composer, and author indicates his versatility. His novel speaks of a time and a circumstance far removed from many present-day Kansans, and one finds it difficult to criticize him for leaving the state. Joseph Stanley Pennell, author of The History of Rome Hanks, found that with success came the opportunity to become a screen-writer in California and so he, too, left his native Junction City. Paul I. Wellman, a native of Oklahoma, received his early schooling in Kansas and can be called more "Kansan" than "Okie." He graduated from Fairmount College (now Wichita State University) and worked on newspapers in Wichita and Kansas City. He, too, moved to California, away from the "great Dust Bowl."

It is obvious, then, that these authors are at least somewhat qualified to write about Kansas--some much more than others. They have the background and knowledge to have created a literature replete with

that which is indigenous and intrinsic to Kansas. Did they succeed? Was any one individual writer more successful than the others? Do we know Kansas better because of them? Is there a truly Kansas novel among their works? Are they honest in their appraisal of Kansas and of Kansans? Can one say of any of the novels that they accurately reflect the times in which they are set? Because of their special natures, these individual novels offer insights and viewpoints that provide an overall picture which is wide in scope, if not always deep in human understanding. They deal with Kansas and, most importantly, with Kansans, and tell in fictionalized form--often based on historical truth--the story of the state and of the people who first populated it and who grew with it. In fairness, however, it must be pointed out that a comprehensive, overall picture of Kansas is formulated only after reading a number of the novels. No one novel--with the exception of Laman's Manifest Destiny--offers a comprehensive picture of the varying types of people within the state or of their state of mind. Each novel deals with one or more aspects of Kansas during a certain period of time. Only Laman has attempted to provide any sort of long-term historical reference, and his novel deals roughly with the period of time from the days of Rutherford Hayes' tenure in

the White House (approximately 1880) to shortly after World War I, or about 1925. But, without seeming to discount any of the novels, each has its own, peculiar importance. Each makes its own special contributions to the understanding of Kansas and offers special insights and observations that ultimately create, if not a total picture, at least one that is creditable.

CHAPTER II

THE MASTERY OF THE PAST

Lilian Hornstein suggests that, if the last hundred years had to have a designation, they might well be called "the age of the novel."⁷¹ In terms of the Kansas novel, however, they could appropriately be termed "the age of the historical novel." Almost half of the novels discussed in this study deal with the state in the 1800's and many with the early years of the twentieth century. Authors of Kansas novels have found a great source of inspiration in the years just prior to, during and immediately following the Civil War. Stories dealing with the early settlement of the Kansas Territory, the Border Wars of the 1850's, the prolonged fight between abolitionists and pro-slavery men, the cowboys and gun-fighters of Kansas, and the County Seat Wars are plentiful. Kansas' past, from 1850 to 1900, has provided material for some of the state's most proficient writers. McCarter set most of her novels in the 1800's, and her best, A

Lilian Hornstein, The Reader's Companion to
1850-1900, p. 319.

Wall of Men, emphasizes the role that Kansas played in the eventual emancipation of the slaves. Two novelists--Leonard Ehrlich and Truman Nelson--wrote of John Brown and his role in the bitter struggle to make Kansas a free state in God's Angry Man and The Surveyor. Pennell's highly-praised first novel, The History of Rome Hanks, not only describes Kansans' roles in the Civil War, but also their problems when they returned to the peace of the state. In addition, W. R. Burnett's The Dark Command is a roughly accurate fictionalization of the story of William Quantrill; Margaret Lynn's Free Soil is a study of Kansas settlers prior to the Civil War; Frieda Franklin's None But the Brave discusses the Army's role during the final pre-war years; McCarter tells of the state during the war in The Price of the Prairies; William Allen White gleefully writes of the youth of Kansas following the war in Boys Then and Now; The Bowl of Brass is Paul I. Wellman's first mention of Jericho, Kansas, in the 1880's; and several novelists--including White, McCarter, Wellman and popular writer Irving Stone--look at Kansas of the 1890's in A Certain Rich Man, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, The Walls of Jericho, and The Passionate Journey.

Other novelists also drew material from the last half of the eighteenth century for their stories, despite

the fact that Michael Amrine believes Kansas' past offers little to inspire authors. He states that Coronado's exploration of the state may have been the most significant event relating to Kansas history:

Except for the clamshells and the armor, and a few selfconscious Indians at Haskell Institute, Kansas has nothing belonging to its past. After Coronado it was three centuries before white men came again. Kansas began less than eighty years ago.⁷²

Of course, Amrine is speaking of a past that is much more distant than the recent past to which most writers of Kansas novels allude. He is right in that Kansas is young. It began when the first few settlers opened the territory before 1850 and it matured in the turmoil of the battles to make it a free state. Since the Civil War the state has been the setting for a number of events which, if not significant in the history of the United States as a whole, have provided voluble fuel for writers' imaginations.

In 1938, W. R. Burnett, himself the author of a historical Kansas novel, The Dark Command, lamented the lack of novels dealing with the state's history. He wrote that American writers had left the history of Kansas alone. "It's strange that they have," he

⁷²Amrine, op. cit., p. 4.

said, "because the story of Kansas is as interesting and dramatic as any writer could wish."⁷³ Burnett was not the first writer to make use of Kansas history. Indeed, there were many before him, notably White and McCarter, who fashioned their finest novels from a number of events relating directly to the state's history.

Free Soil and Free Staters (The 1850's)

The early 1850's were primarily years of pioneer settlement in the scarcely-yet-civilized Kansas territory. To a young man from St. Louis in Jackson Burgess' Pillar of Cloud, the country ". . . looked . . . like the end of the world."⁷⁴ It was also bleak to a young doctor in Ogden's West of Dodge who found Kansas to be ". . . a land of emptiness; bald, bleak, swept by never-resting winds."⁷⁵ A young Army Sergeant in Franklin's None But the Brave believes the country has a harsh effect on those who try to live in it:

"Back East they say that it's the lack of civilization that makes men out here so harsh and brutal, but I'm not sure. All this. . ." and he gestured westward with his hand. "The wide spaces, harsh lines, few trees, and little greenness

⁷³W. R. Burnett, The Dark Command, p. iii.

⁷⁴Jackson Burgess, Pillar of Cloud, p. 8.

⁷⁵Ogden, op. cit., p. 2.

. . . they're harsh and brutal in themselves and they make men lonely."⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the settlers came, mostly by wagon train, to start a new life on the prairies. A young girl in Sheba Hargreaves' Heroine of the Prairies, was typical of those who sought something new, something free:

Salita marveled at the amount of misery human beings could endure and still cling to life. . . They must keep moving if they were to survive. The only object of the day was to cover the slow-dragging miles. Space became a monster that ate into the girl's being as they plodded along . . . too spent to brood over sorrow and loss. Life was just a dogged placing of one foot ahead of the other, through days eternities long.⁷⁷

Hargreave's novel, according to the Boston Transcript, painted ". . . an authentic picture of the days of a century ago."⁷⁸ It was notable, however, ". . . more for its historical significance, its local color, and its types than as fiction."⁷⁹ The way to Kansas was difficult, and life was even moreso when the settlers reached their destination. But still they came, despite the arduous life before them in a land where the ". . .

⁷⁶Franklin, op. cit., p. 40.

⁷⁷Sheba Hargreaves, Heroine of the Prairies, p. 73.

⁷⁸J. C. G., "A Pretty Prairie Picture," Boston Transcript, October 15, 1930, 2.

⁷⁹"The Heroine of the Prairies: A Review," New York Times, September 28, 1930, 6.

summer heat mounted to torrid intensity" and ". . . the storm pounced with untempered strength upon a land that offered no shelter of forest or wooded brake. . .".⁸⁰

In the early years, it was free land that lured men to Kansas. Later, they came because of other reasons. A youth, obviously excited with what he had found in the state, wrote to his parents in New England:

I tell you it was God's chance of a lark that sent me out here. . . If I had to go back tomorrow I would be paid and over for coming--only I am not going back. You couldn't dream of such a country unless you saw it. It's as different as if the Lord had changed His style. . . Tell everybody that wants good land and plenty of it and some excitement thrown in, to come out here. . . There is going to be a rumpus out here that would make New England stand on her head and shake.⁸¹

Many could not resist such a summons. Not only was the land free and beautiful, but there was to be excitement as well. The issue, of course, was slavery, and the "rumpus" would be the fight over whether Kansas would be a free or slave state. It would provide the reason for the state's new title--"bloody Kansas."

Several Kansas novelists were intrigued by the nameless, faceless, people who came to Kansas in those years. They sought to identify them, if not by name,

⁸⁰Ogden, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸¹Margaret Lynn, Free Soil, pp. 5-6.

at least by their points of origin, their reasons for coming, and by their reasons for staying after they had arrived. Amrine put it succinctly: "The cowards never started, and the weak ones died by the way."⁸² He also identified some reasons for the fortitude of those who made it:

The people who stayed in Kansas came from New England. . . . Otherwise the people who stayed were just pioneers--except for one thing that set them apart from those who stayed in Missouri or Colorado. They hated slavery. Of the thousands who went west, the thousands who stayed in Kansas had all the other reasons and also the reason that they hated slavery. They wanted to make Kansas free.⁸³

The issue of slavery, then, was one of the state's principal drawing cards, the fact that gave men reasons, that gave them purpose. Some came on their own but others were part of a movement in the East which sought abolitionists who would make the treacherous journey solely in order to join the fight which would make Kansas, ultimately, a free state. Burnett says many of them were German or members of various religious sects such as Amish and Dunkard. Some, especially those from Boston, were descendants of the Puritans. They were almost all abolitionists, he wrote in The Dark Command, and they

⁸²Amrine, op. cit., p. 5.

⁸³Ibid., p. 4.

were going to Kansas ". . . to fight a holy war."⁸⁴

They came in groups with a singleness of purpose:

They had been sent out by the Emigrant Aid Society. In spite of their peaceful appearance, the women cooking and serving, the children running about, they were armed to the teeth; their wagons were full of Sharps rifles, Navy Colts and ammunition.⁸⁵

To some, the cause was more than a just one; it offered excitement and the glory of battle that they could find nowhere else at the time. Davis, in Morning in Kansas, notes that many came to Kansas ". . . precisely because Kansas bled--because they were committed to one side or the other of the slavery issue, or sought the excitement of battle."⁸⁶ Many of them found that the term, "bloody Kansas," was appropriately descriptive, though, and kept moving farther west. A man in Pillar of Cloud was frank about it. "I had come to Kansas to get into the anti-slavery fight," he said, "and now I'd got a look at the fight and I'd lost my nerve."⁸⁷ He headed quickly for Colorado.

Times were changing all over the country in the 1850's, and Kansas was feeling the change in many areas

⁸⁴Burnett, op. cit., p. 90.

⁸⁵Loc. cit.

⁸⁶Kenneth S. Davis, Morning in Kansas, p. 115.

⁸⁷Burgess, op. cit., p. 11.

outside the realm of the pending Civil War. Two Kansas novels touch, if briefly, on an aspect of change that affected the Indians, the original populace of the state. Before the settlers came, the prairies were covered with vast herds of buffalo. Their wanton slaughter, though, virtually wiped out what had been the source of food, clothing, shelter, and tools for the Indians. An early-day Kansan recalls the mass killings in The Shooting of Storey James:

A man would spend the day killing, sometimes help rip off the hides; live and eat and sleep with the smell of musk and gore thick in the air; travel all day across prairies littered with the big-chested carcasses, the raw meat-heaps glistening in the sun, slowly puffing and rotting. The stench so thick that it disgusted a man to breathe.⁸⁸

A wagon train must stop near a river in None But the Brave, to let a mile-long herd of buffalo pass, and a guide remarks that, although many of the animals are still alive, they are not as plentiful as they had been. The Army had been responsible for much of the killings, he says, because the buffalo ate the grass so close there was no feed left for military horses. He tells of an officer who ". . . once took a detachment of light artillery out along the Santa Fe Trace and shelled a

⁸⁸John Clifford, The Shooting of Storey James, p. 107.

thousand buffalo to keep 'em from eating out the grass."⁸⁹

While soldiers and others were killing buffalo by the thousands, other killings were going on in the eastern part of the state for other reasons.

War and Reconstruction (The
Late 1850's and 1860's)

"No other state in the union was born in blood as was Kansas, in her struggle for liberty and freedom. . ."⁹⁰ Sister M. Hildalita Carl's statement may seem at first extravagant, but it is reinforced by Burnett's comment that "Kansas, more than any other state in the Union, was responsible for the final eradication of slavery from the U.S.A."⁹¹ Kansas' role was, indeed, a violent one and several Kansas novels deal extensively with it. Phebe Tanner, a young Quaker schoolteacher from Pennsylvania, for example, in Franklin's None But the Brave, becomes a willing participant in the Underground Railroad that helped spirit Negroes from Missouri to Nebraska or to other places of safety. When she volunteers her aid, a minister is dubious about accepting.

⁸⁹Franklin, op. cit., p. 33.

⁹⁰Sister M. Hildalita Carl, Kansas History as Seen in the Works of Margaret Hill McCarter, p. vii.

⁹¹Burnett, op. cit., p. ii.

He reminds her that Kansas has followed Missouri's example and passed laws prohibiting the populace from hiding runaway slaves. Bounty hunters could earn fifty dollars for each slave they returned to Missouri--whether the slave had been freed or not. Under the new Territorial laws the heroine of Franklin's novel could have been tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to pay a large fine or to several years' imprisonment. An individual judge could even impose the death sentence for harboring slaves. Many people chose to ignore the problem at the time, possibly because they feared the penalties were they caught, but just as possibly, because of disinterest. As one character in Franklin's book put it: "It is only a question of property on the one side and of simply minding one's business on the other."⁹² But these unconcerned individuals were rare in Kansas in the late 1850's. The issue affected almost everyone in the eastern part of the state. Again, Franklin offers a description of the mood and activities of the time:

As the spring grew to summer a rash of semi-meaningless violence erupted from one end of the Territory to the other and killing became wanton. In Leavenworth, the Regulators doubled their efforts to rid the countryside of Free-Soil settlers, rounding them up by the hundreds to force them on the steamboats going down to St. Louis, and those allowed to salvage

⁹²Franklin, op. cit., p. 167.

even a part of their possessions were lucky. In a bar along the levee, an unsavory character named Fugit bet six dollars against a pair of boots that he would have the scalp of an Abolitionist within two hours, and his companions, intrigued by the novelty of his boast, took his bet and waited until he returned with his bloody prize. Shortly afterward the Regulators killed William Phillips, a young Leavenworth lawyer, when he defended his home from their attack. Only the year before, pro-slavery men had tarred and feathered him in Weston and had a Negro sell him for a dollar at auction.⁹³

News of such intimidation of the Free Staters was reaching the East, and individuals such as John Brown of Ohio, who was essentially a peace-loving man but who responded to his son's request for arms to help in the fight to end slavery in Kansas. Truman Nelson's account of Brown's part in the Kansas wars includes a great deal of factual information about the activities of the state's government. In 1855 David Atchison, ex-Senator, ex-Vice President, led five thousand invaders into Kansas to take over the polls and establish slavery there by popular sovereignty. The Legislative Assembly of the Territory extended the Missouri Statutes to cover Kansas, setting the death penalty for anyone assisting in an insurrection of slaves or free Negroes. The official document listed the death penalty forty-eight times against the sin of abolitionism. "People who denied

⁹³Ibid., p. 259.

. . . the right of persons to hold slaves in the Territory, were to be punished by prison terms at hard labor."⁹⁴

Soon after the law was passed, John Brown, Jr., wrote to his father:

Here are 5 men of us who are not only anxious to fully prepare, but are thoroughly determined to fight. It is no longer a question of Negro slavery but it is the enslavement of ourselves. Now we want for you to get for us these arms. We need them more than we do bread.⁹⁵

So John Brown, an old man of sixty, was called upon to follow the dictates of his conscience and to do more than send arms to his son. He would take them himself. Brown came to Kansas and tried to farm as he waited for an opportunity to take an active part in the war against slavery. Finally, after Atchison had razed Lawrence, he made his commitment. Leonard Ehrlich recounts his moment of decision in God's Angry Man:

"Do you see like I do a curse laying over the land, do you see a million black people lower than beasts in the field? There'll be no peace in Kansas, none in all our country till the slave sin is wiped out! And it'll be wiped out in blood!"

There was a low ringing in his voice that was like a knell for Townsend. A terrible feeling of helplessness went over him. This old man would

⁹⁴Truman Nelson, The Surveyor, p. 72.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 85.

go on to do the deed. He would do it, he would make them all do it.⁹⁶

What he did is detailed by both Ehrlich and Nelson.

Their novels were received cordially by the press.

Clifton Fadiman, writing in the foreward to God's Angry Man, says the novel is "literature" because it moves readers by its quality of moral passion and of tragic imagination. "These are the qualities of Greek tragedy, and there is something classical about the life, the suffering, and the fall of John Brown as Leonard Ehrlich presents them."⁹⁷ The Boston Transcript noted that Ehrlich could ". . . express all the horror of his feeling at the way Brown, through tenacity to his purpose, slew many an innocent man."⁹⁸ Geoffrey Stone, in Bookman, praised Ehrlich's research and said that ". . . it is probably . . . historical accuracy that makes the book as good as it is."⁹⁹ Nelson's novel was similarly praised in 1960. Guidry, in the Christian Science Monitor, said Nelson has detailed Brown and his role with a

⁹⁶Leonard Ehrlich, God's Angry Man, p. 15.

⁹⁷Clifton Fadiman, in the foreward to God's Angry Man, p. vi.

⁹⁸F.B.B., "A Triumph for Ehrlich," Boston Transcript, December 17, 1932, 1.

⁹⁹Geoffrey Stone, "God's Angry Man," Bookman, LXXV (December, 1932), 875.

thoroughness that throws light not only on his deeds and motivations, ". . . but also on the work and intents of the numerous factions caught up in the turbulent struggle for power in the new territory."¹⁰⁰

Brown's exploits at Potawatomie and throughout eastern Kansas are well known. Nelson and Ehrlich bring power and insight into the man's personality and detail the effects of his activities upon Kansas. An area newspaper, which Ehrlich does not identify, gives an indication of the reaction to Brown's killing of three pro-slavery men at Potawatomie:

"The Potawatomie crime, in short, has had a consequence equivalent to civil war; it sowed a whirlwind; we are witnessing the harvest. . . Thousands of peaceful Free-Staters will of necessity meet with indiscriminate reprisals, and the settlers in the immediate neighborhood of Osawatomie will undoubtedly have a special vengeance wreaked upon them. . ."¹⁰¹

To Ehrlich, Brown was a ". . . devil on a black stallion."¹⁰² He was a man whose life had become ". . . an immolation, an unrelenting vision of freedom for another blood."¹⁰³ Nelson pictures him as being disgusted

¹⁰⁰F. H. Guidry, "The Surveyor: A Review," Christian Science Monitor, April 28, 1960, 7.

¹⁰¹Ehrlich, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 196.

with what was happening in Kansas when he arrived. "So this is what you call the Kansas revolution," he said. "What a fraud."¹⁰⁴ Finally, tired, realizing he was failing in Kansas, Brown still maintained his convictions. Nelson pictures him as ill at the end of the novel, but not without optimism, when he talks to a young Negro:

Young man, for some years now I have been watching for stout men like yourself to rise up and join me and my sons in a play for the immediate and complete emancipation of the Negro race. I see now I cannot bring it off in Kansas but God gave the strength of the Allegheny Mountains for freedom. They are full of natural forts and hiding places. My plan is to take no more than twenty-five picked men and begin on a small scale at some such place as Harpers Ferry in Virginia. . .

--Yes, said the Negro.¹⁰⁵

Brown also appears in McCarter's novel, A Wall of Men. This Kansas novel discusses the turmoil from the point of view of a group of citizens near Lawrence and in terms of their reactions to the Border Wars and to the acts of such men as Brown and William Quantrill. Early in the novel, Brown reminds some of the settlers that the Lord once promised to be a wall of fire round about His people. "There'll be no wall of fire here,"

¹⁰⁴Nelson, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 667.

Brown says, "but a wall of men on this frontier . . . will be round about the State of Kansas and build into it the eternal right of human liberty."¹⁰⁶ The main topic of discussion in Kansas in those days was Territorial settlement and the right to the balance of power at the ballot box. When the settlers finally realized they would have to fight for that right, and when John Brown had convinced them that they were just in their belief, they were resolute in their determination. "Our wives must take care of our homes, for every man and boy must stand for or against the coming tide of violence. In no other way will Kansas be saved."¹⁰⁷ The violence was quick in coming and McCarter describes it with, for her, an unusual lack of restraint:

The first quarter of the year . . . had seen a strange and atrocious record made along the Missouri River borders and inland westward. Men tarred and feathered and set adrift on rafts in the river, men chopped in the face with hatchets and left to perish in the freezing cold; mutilated men flung dying into their homes, whose wives became maniacs from the sight of them; houses burned . . . leaving helpless women and naked children alone. . . ; men forced to flee for their lives, and, under promise of protection, cut down as they ran--these deeds and those too vile to set on record, unbelievable now for their demoniac

¹⁰⁶Margaret Hill McCarter, A Wall of Men, p. 23.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 37.

fiendishness, are a part of the history-making of those days of peril and power.¹⁰⁸

This type of harrassment was more than discouraging to the Free Staters who had done little in retaliation. It was left to John Brown to strike the first blow in their favor at Potawatomie. McCarter calls it the Potawatomie Massacre and says that it was the first event to change the hitherto one-sided record of the struggle for supremacy in the Kansas Territory. Although the horrors of the murders were denounced by the South and the misunderstanding North, she says, ". . . to the men who accomplished it, the perspective of Time has been magnanimous."¹⁰⁹ After Brown left Kansas for Harpers Ferry in Virginia his name was known throughout the country. McCarter offers her own description of him:

He did not seek notoriety. He wanted no official rank nor honor of leadership. He was not an organizer of federations. His acts were circumscribed by his clear sense of his own duty to humanity. The cost of it to him or to anybody else he left with the Power that put this duty before him. His methods will be forgotten. . .¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 286-287.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 348.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 396-397.

McCarter also brings into her novel the name of William Clarke Quantrill, a renegade Kansan who had fled to Missouri to escape punishment for a number of crimes. When the Civil War broke out, Quantrill organized a guerrilla gang, among whom were the Youngers, Yeagers, and Frank and Jesse James, all of whom later became notorious bank robbers.¹¹¹ In August of 1863, Quantrill attacked the town of Lawrence. McCarter says Quantrill hated Kansas. "He knew Kansas ought to destroy him. Hence he would strike first."¹¹² McCarter described the raiders:

The cavalcade of four hundred fifty guerrillas, with their brilliantly dyed overshirts, their rakishly slouched hats, their long matted hair flying in the wind, their bridle reins in their teeth or flung across the saddle bow, their deadly revolvers cocked, their horses at full gallop, swirled along like a tornado of human hate, and fell upon the city in its destroying power.¹¹³

Kansas had a proud role in the Civil War itself and authors have also made use of that part of the state's history. When the Civil War began, in 1861, Kansas had just been admitted to the Union as a state, and the newly organized government had to immediately raise an

¹¹¹Carl, op. cit., p. 101.

¹¹²Margaret Hill McCarter, A Wall of Men, p. 417.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 429.

army to meet the President's requisition. In proportion to population, Blackmar notes, the state provided more men for the Union army than any other state.¹¹⁴ McCarter recounts the Civil War Battle of Cold Harbor but uses it primarily to serve the plot of her novel. A young man who has been thought a coward throughout the novel displays unusual bravery and his Colonel finally approves of the hero's marriage to his daughter.

The Civil War is dealt with best, however, by Joseph Stanley Pennell in The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters. The grandson of Romulus Lycurgus Hanks provides the framework for the lengthy novel by seeking information about his grandfather from several different sources. The stories told by these several narrators are set during and immediately following the Civil War. The novel must stand alone in its graphic and bloody descriptions of Civil War fighting; in this respect, it is even more graphic than Russell Laman's violent scenes of World War I in Manifest Destiny. The importance of The History of Rome Hanks to a study of Kansas novels, however, must be in its valuable insights into the years immediately following the war when veterans were returning

¹¹⁴Blackmar, op. cit., pp. 875-876.

home. Their impact upon Kansas and upon the thinking of Kansans would be felt for many years:

Why, when thousands of those boys got back home. . . --some of them sporting goldbraid shoulder straps--they had travelled. They knew a thing or two. Some of them married the village banker's daughter--a thing they would have never aspired to do, if they hadn't been to and come back from a war.¹¹⁵

While the war was meaningful and meant unexpected success to many, to others it meant a divergence in their life that took them from one course of action which they would have preferred. After reading of Darwin's theory of evolution, Rome Hanks felt his life might have been different had it not been for the war:

Rome wished that instead of tramping from one part of the great North American Continent to another, instead of having followed a vague desire for something, of the name of which, of the shape and color of which he knew positively nothing at all, he had been able to direct his faculties, as Mr. Darwin had done, toward scratching the surface, toward some work of penetration or discovery which would remain to astonish himself with wonder to the end of his days. . . . But Mr. Darwin . . . had never viewed such a segment of the process of Natural Selection . . . as occurred on the banks of the Tennessee River, April sixth and seventh, Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-two, among the higher animals.¹¹⁶

Pennell's novel is concerned mainly with that universal feeling of opprobrium to the Civil War that all who had

¹¹⁵Joseph Stanley Pennell, The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters, p. 36.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 287.

participated in it, or who had been connected in some way with it, felt even long after it was over. The fact that they hated the war and felt disgust in thinking about it, however, did not lessen their almost diabolical life-long concern with it. The war had become the major event in their lives. They would never be able to escape it. As one of the narrators, Wagnal, a doctor, puts it:

Is it not strange that all over Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia are buried pieces of men that I hacked away from them--arms, legs, fingers and toes--even a nose and two left ears? Some I shouldn't have cut off. God, there are men even now living in Des Moines or Keokuk or Salina who wake up at night and think: Jesus Christ it's funny: part of me was buried down on the banks of the Tennessee River in the Spring of 1862. Part of me is already doornail dead, mackerel dead, beef dead, stone dead--bled like a stuck pig. Maybe, by God, the bones are still down there under the dirt, clean and white. My armbones and my hand bones. My meatless hand and arm that used to have such good hard muscles--that I was so proud and vain of. That I figgered ways to get the girls to feel and ways to let them see. God, it's funny; I've got a hand in Tennessee. I can remember how that saw sounded.¹¹⁷

As Wagnal said, many contributed much more to the war effort than a few years of their lives. Moreover, even those who came back whole of body sometimes were not the same men who left so proudly to go to war. Even Wagnal, a doctor during the war and now a minister,

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 112.

remarks on the fact that some of his congregation had begun to think him mad:

Why, by the body of Christ, boy, how could they judge? Had they even a splatter of the gray matter, the wherewithal with which to become mad? . . . Burrus, the jackleg lawyer, whose dignity was beaten out of him by those red and black nightshirts down in Mississippi--they may have been ghosts of the Confederate dead from Shiloh or Chickamauga or only frustrated men who had never had any niggers or money or fine women or any pretense to dignity to lose, who thought then, after the war: The war done it. I woulda been a big man, if it want fur the war, if it want fur the Yankees.¹¹⁸

The war, then, to those who fought in it--particularly to those who fought and killed and saw their friends die--would have an effect upon them for the rest of their lives. Perhaps, it would be more than an effect; it would be their very lives, nothing more, nothing less than life itself; something ingrown and permanent that could not be washed away, ever. Rome Hanks, remembering the war and lamenting the fact that his two brothers had fought against him, knew that because of that terrible experience he could not be happy as a Kansas farmer:

In a moment he was homesick for the Armies of Mexico and Tennessee, for the foolish heart remembers or forgets best. And Rome, in his house at the edge of the Kansas prairie, with his family around him,¹¹⁹ was as a man marooned in an icy waste of solitude.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 238-239.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 300.

And the others? What of those who did not fight, those who came long after the war and could only reflect upon it, learn about it from others, and wonder continually why it had such a frightening, lasting effect? Rome's grandson, Lee, sought such answers and, receiving some of them, had his own thoughts:

You awake, Lee thought, in the vast night of all the years. You awake somewhere in the vast night: Everything is around you, all time forwards and backwards and all space. At night, in your bed, you see everything that has been or will be. And you awake at some place where you have never been, nor ever will be: You awake at Gaines's Mill, lying in the hot, blood-reddened swampweeds with Tom Beckham, or you awake with Robert Lee Harrington, carpenter's bound boy, as he leaves Gadkin County, North Carolina, on his way to make coffins in Abilene, or you awake with Romulus Lycurgus Hanks and General Ulysses S. Grant as they stand in the rain on the night of April 6, 1862 at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. Or you awake lying on your own deathbed in a body you do not know. And you cry out: How could I have known? I tell you, I didn't know! All right! All right, Goddamn it! I'll go back and look again and heed and look again and heed--¹²⁰

And all over Kansas, at that time, were men like Rome Hanks or Wagnal, who knew, and others like Lee, who did not know but who wanted to know and who would feel the after-effects of the Civil War for the rest of their lives. And Kansas would change because of it, and grow, and mature, and never be the same, again.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 302.

Indeed, Kansas would not be the same again. Just prior to, and even during, the Civil War, settlers had to contend with violence initiated by pro-slavery forces from across the Kansas-Missouri border. Following the war, in 1865 and 1866, Indians came into the northwest part of the state and murdered settlers on White Rock Creek in Republic County, and at Lake Sibley in Cloud County. McCarter recalls a band of forty Cheyenne braves led by Chief Black Kettle, who came from the southwest in 1868 planning to raid frontier settlements. "They were as dirty, ragged, and sullen a crew as ever rode out of the wilderness."¹²¹ Because of the danger of Indian raids, a battalion, known as the Eighteenth Kansas, was mustered to protect workers on the Union Pacific railroad, the western settlements, and the wagon trains moving westward across the state. The hero of McCarter's The Price of the Prairies becomes a member of the Eighteenth Kansas and takes part in the battle of the Arickaree which Carl describes as one of the outstanding battles of Indian warfare, ". . . a bloody conflict, with death the stake on one hand, and security for the

¹²¹Margaret Hill McCarter, The Price of the Prairie, p. 247.

scattered homes on the Kansas frontier on the other."¹²²

The battalion, commanded by Major George A. Forsyth, was attacked by Chief Roman Nose of the Cheyennes on the Arickaree fork of the Republic River and the men were stranded on a small island. McCarter lets her here tell of the sight the soldiers saw as they waited for the attack:

And then there came a sight the Plains will never see again, a sight that history records not once in a century. There were hundreds of these warriors, the flower of the fierce Cheyenne tribe, drawn up in military order, mounted on great horses, riding bare back, their rifles held aloft in their right hands, the left hand grasping the flowing mane, their naked bodies hideously adorned with paint, their long scalp-locks braided and trimmed with plumes and quills. They were the very acme of grandeur in a warfare as splendid as it was barbaric.¹²³

Though many soldiers were killed, as was Chief Roman Nose, the Indians were held off long enough for several scouts to break through the Indian lines and bring reinforcements.

So Kansas did change, though the pioneers faced every sort of hardship--floods, droughts, famine, Indian raids, guerrilla warfare, the Civil War, grasshoppers, storms and prairie fires. McCarter summed up the heroism

¹²²Carl, op. cit., p. 111.

¹²³Margaret Hill McCarter, The Price of the Prairie, p. 270.

of the early-day Kansas settlers in The Peace of the Solomon Valley:

He learned long ago how to endure and not complain. One gleans that lesson from the prairie sod when the sunshine is a furnace and the clouds forget their rain and the fierce winds blow all the seed away from the loose, dusty earth. In such years the farmers wait unchanged like Waconda, sure that other seasons will bring fruition of their hopes.¹²⁴

The Growing Years (The 1870's)

In the 1870's more and more people came to Kansas even though the state was still basically the frontier. Settlers pushed on west toward Dodge City and the High Plains area of western Kansas. Jackson Burgess, in Pillar of Cloud, provides an interesting sidelight on the difficulty of moving by wagon train across the state despite its appearance of flatness, promising ease for travelling:

We had hoped that once we got up onto the tableland we would make better speed, but we soon found that the prairie was not nearly as flat as it looked. The whole grassy expanse was cut and scored by hundreds of little dry gullies, some no more than creases and others fifteen or twenty feet across and five or six feet deep. The worst of it was that they all ran north and south, directly across our path.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Margaret Hill McCarter, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, p. 84.

¹²⁵Burgess, op. cit., p. 127.

But the settlers were not ones to let a few gullies stand in their way. There were additional hardships, as well--the harsh weather, gunfighters bent on trouble, and plagues of locusts and grasshoppers--but the frontier moved farther and farther west. "Time pulled up the stakes and set them forward and on. For where water runs and grass grows there always is a chance for a man."¹²⁶ In the East, young men were being encouraged to make their future in Kansas. "Soil deep and the settlers pourin' in. She's opening up, a-bloomin' and a-boomin', so they say. They'll need men of courage in that new place. You go to Kansas, boy."¹²⁷ You go to Kansas, they said, but they added something else:

You've got to be original here; it's no place for small people. If a man can do some big and original thinking out here, and go in and put it through he'll succeed. It calls for preeminence to make a go of it in this country. . . We're not looking for anything else.¹²⁸

But with the challenge came a promise. In this Kansas country, they said, ". . . a man can be what he's a mind to . . . a judge, a colonel, a doctor . . . nobody

¹²⁶Ogden, op. cit., p. 2.

¹²⁷Robert E. Gard, Run to Kansas, p. 25.

¹²⁸Ogden, op. cit., p. 118.

much cares what it is, long as you got a handle."¹²⁹
 And so they came. They came to the small, burgeoning towns that looked as though they had been ". . . dropped heavily at the side of the tracks, and parts of the town had spattered over the landscape."¹³⁰ And they came to the vastness of western Kansas where ". . . it was said, and generally believed by people situated in fairer parts of Kansas, that there was not much chance for a man. . . ." ¹³¹

Nevertheless, they came, some to the towns such as William Allen White's El Dorado of Boys Then and Now, and others to the country of Rose Wilder Lane's Let the Hurricane Roar. White's book deals almost exclusively with town-oriented youth, while Lane's is the story of a young married couple who homestead on the plains far from a town of any sort. The differences are explicit in the two authors' descriptions of their settings. White's El Dorado is in Butler County, Kansas:

. . . a frontier town, a dusty road crossing a prairie creek making a gray streak up a long hill. Beside the road were dingy unpainted wooden buildings, mostly of one story, a stone hotel facing a brick bank on the diagonal corner; a wood culvert crossing

¹²⁹Gard, op. cit., p. 122.

¹³⁰Clifford, op. cit., p. 12.

¹³¹Ogden, op. cit., p. 2.

a ravine that ran from one side to the other of the street; a livery stable facing a saloon; shanties with false fronts stair-stepping down from the thick of the town out toward the sunflowers that lined the gray, dusty streak of a road as it topped the distant hill.¹³²

Lane's description of the country in which Charles and Caroline (their last names are never given), the young homesteaders, will live, is even more stark:

He could hardly wait to show her the dugout. It was under their feet. The prairie sod was smooth over it and the blown grass hid the top of the stove-pipe. A path went slanting down against the steep creek bank to the doorway. The ledge of earth before the door was narrow and could easily be kept clear of snow. The door opened into a room large enough to hold all their supplies. It was clean and neat. The floor was pounded smooth and hard, canvas covered the ceiling and part of the walls. . . Sunshine came through the doorway, which looked across the low western bank of the creek to the endless prairie and the sky.¹³³

Another interesting difference between the town and the country during the same period is found in the two authors' descriptions of the availability of medical aid when necessary. In White's *El Dorado*, it was abundant. The county health unit looked after the schoolhouses and their sanitary condition, ". . . and in the country the health unit inspects the schoolhouse wells to see

¹³²William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 6.

¹³³Rose Wilder Lane, Let the Hurricane Roar, pp. 14-15.

that they are not infected."¹³⁴ The "country" of which White speaks was relatively close to town, though. In Lane's novel, the country is far from any settlement and seventeen-year-old Caroline must struggle through the birth of her first-born without medical attention. Only her husband was nearby, nervous and afraid. Caroline had known that the pain would be bad and was resolved to make it as easy on Charles as possible. "Indian women bore their babies silently. That night was very long. She lay in the bunk and smiled at Charles whenever she could."¹³⁵ The baby was born in the morning of the second day. Ogden and Dentler also make interesting points about the availability of medical aid. In West of Dodge, the men who are laying track for a railroad west to Colorado have the services of a doctor who is forbidden by the company to tend to others. Asked how people survive on the plains without medical aid, a man replies that ". . . they doctor themselves till they're in the last extremity. . . Every family's got a bottle of salts and calomel, take 'em like sugar."¹³⁶ Zoe Dentler notes, in The Hill or Simmons Point, that

¹³⁴William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, pp. 34-35.

¹³⁵Lane, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

¹³⁶Ogden, op. cit., p. 210.

even some small towns on the plains had no doctor and an area midwife performed many medical functions. "If there was sickness, she it was who helped with the mumps, measles, grippe, and chicken pox; and if the neighborhood children looked peaked, she was the first one to offer a worm pill."¹³⁷

Work in the 1870's, however, was basically the same both in town and in the country. Everybody worked and, to hear White tell it, even the youngsters liked it. "The best thing about the boy's home was the work. And always there was plenty of it."¹³⁸ The boys heated slop for the cattle, gathered firewood, cared for the pigs and chickens, sliced turnips, hoed the garden, hauled water, and raked the yard. Lane describes work in the country and, though there were no children to help, it was much the same. Even in the winter, when blizzards howled across the plains, there was work to do:

On clear days Charles went out with his gun and came back with meat and furs. Caroline scrubbed and baked and washed and ironed and cooked. On days when the blizzards came shrieking from the northwest, Charles groped his way only to the barn and back. He had stretched a rope from the top

¹³⁷Zoe Dentler, The Hill or Simmons Point, p. 26.

¹³⁸William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, pp. 21-22.

of the path to the barn door, so he would not lose his way in the blinding storms.¹³⁹

The differences are also clear-cut in terms of association with other people. Caroline and Charles settle in an area far from any town or neighbors and where there is little but ". . . miles of wild grass blowing in the wind."¹⁴⁰ El Dorado, on the other hand, offers plenty of opportunities for contact with others. "It is the average contact of the average ten thousand Americans anywhere upon the North American continent."¹⁴¹

In spite of the hardships they endure, Caroline and Charles remain optimistic about Kansas. Lane is reluctant to find much wrong with Kansas and prefers to picture the state as something of a paradise where all who seek shall find. Soon after their move to Kansas to homestead, for example, Charles and Caroline are filled with optimism:

The whole land was exuberant with change and promise. . . . That year the railroad tracks would be laid within ten miles of the homestead. . . . Lumber was still hauled from the East, but next year the trains would be running. Everywhere men were taking homesteads. Six miles, four miles, three miles away, there were dots of sod shanties on the prairie. Caroline and Charles were glad

¹³⁹Lane, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁴¹William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 29.

they had come first and got the best homestead. All winter the tough sods had been rotting on their plowed land; now Charles plowed the fifty acres again and sowed wheat. They would have the first wheat in that country.¹⁴²

Despite a plague of grasshoppers which wipes out their wheat, and despite a lack of work in the area that forces Charles to go into Iowa to look for a job and leave his wife and child alone, the book is filled with optimism and with a bright point of view that transcends even a seven-day blizzard in which Caroline and the baby almost die. Caroline's heart once seems to enclose ". . . the enormous land, the great sky, the whole West with its outpouring abundance of joy, of freedom."¹⁴³ The poem from which the novel's title is derived is indicative of the tone of the book:

Let the hurricane roar!
It will the sooner be o'er!
We'll weather the blast and land at last,
On Canaan's happy shore!¹⁴⁴

Similar attitudes of faith sustained other settlers.

The County Seat Wars (The 1880's)

Throughout the 1880's, settlers continued to pour into Kansas from the east, many to work small farms,

¹⁴²Lane, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 123.

and others to help establish the small towns which were rapidly being developed, particularly in the western part of the state. Phil Garwood, of Laman's Manifest Destiny, came for the land. Standing in his dugout soon after his arrival, he reread the deed which granted the land "' . . . unto John Phillip Garwood and to his Heirs and Assigns Forever.' Affixed below . . . was the signature: Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States."¹⁴⁵ It was winter, and the former attorney who had lost everything in a stock market crash, like hundreds of others, had hopes of making a successful new start in Kansas. The first appearance of the state was not heartening. He kicked through the snow to the soil beneath, to "' . . . a gray-black armor of congealed mud. In this dirt he was supposed to find wealth . . . to the earth thou shalt return."¹⁴⁶ Garwood soon found he was not alone in his initial despair, however, and was encouraged by members of the local Grange who convinced him that the rewards of staying in Kansas would be worth the difficulties. At his first Grange meeting, Garwood was impressed with these hardy individuals from throughout the East who, "' . . . with right hands raised

¹⁴⁵Russell Laman, Manifest Destiny, p. 11.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 3.

to the flag, recited the pledge of allegiance with a fervor so charged with prophetic energy that prickles ran up Phil's spine."¹⁴⁷ Laman's novel, unlike many Kansas novels, spans the turn of the century and offers readers an interesting story that includes a chinch bug plague, a drought, an effort to leave the land, a try at politics that fails, and the First World War.

In the last years of the decade, two developments provided additional material for Kansas novels. Western Kansas was becoming more and more populated with farmers, and small towns were springing up wherever a land developer felt there was potential for a settlement. The increase in population is discussed by Paul I. Wellman in The

Bowl of Brass:

Men dated time from the Great Blizzard of 1886. It wiped out the cattle industry on the high plains of Kansas. But at the same time it opened the way for the people of the plough--the land-hungry Grangers who hitherto had been kept at bay by the locked opposition of the cattlemen. Into the great abandoned range the farm folk moved, and what lately had been one limitless pasture was broken into countless small, fenced-in homesteads.¹⁴⁸

The population increase required towns from which the farmers could buy supplies. Jericho, Kansas, Wellman's fictitious town, was the result of such a need. Its

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴⁸Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, p. 10.

developer, Henry Archelaus, who might have been typical of many town developers in the 1880's, made his money by selling worthless farms to homesteaders, foreclosing on them when they were unable to meet payment dates, and then reselling the farms to other unsuspecting, optimistic emigrants. Archelaus also sold the land to those who founded the town, and helped in its planning stages. Wellman describes Jericho:

Jericho's Main Street was rutty and wide. In the latter circumstance there was sound logic. Since the planners of the raw settlement had practically the entire limitless landscape with which to work in laying out their town, there was no reason why the thoroughfare should not be as wide as anyone desired. So, from sidewalk to sidewalk in Jericho it was a good shouting distance; and Chet Tooley, the editor, was heard to complain that a man could die of thirst in the time it took to run from the Weekly Clarion office to Potlicker's Drug Store, where he could obtain a whiskey "prescription."¹⁴⁹

As the towns developed, so did pride and jealousy. Competition was intense as individual, closely-situated towns vied for the right to become the County Seat of their newly-formed counties. In The Bowl of Brass, Archelaus sees the acquisition of the County Seat for Jericho as his primary goal, principally because of the additional wealth he feels the town--as well as himself--will realize. The battles that occur as a

¹⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 11-12.

result were not the result of the righteous cause that spurred the abolitionists of the 1850's, but, in many instances, they were just as bloody. Wellman describes the wanton murder of four men from Jericho's opposing town as being unnecessary and unprovoked. Ogden provides some rationale for the County Seat Wars:

The people of Kansas always were a contentious lot; their history begins in controversies, their common wealth was founded on a quarrel. Out of that ancient habit they always have been a great people for having court houses handy for the settlement, or prolongation, of their difficulties, as it may transpire after they bring them within the doors. The first thing they did was vote bonds for a court house whenever a few of them got together on the prairie and organized a county. It is altogether likely there are more court houses to the man, and better ones, in Kansas than any other state in the union.¹⁵⁰

Two reviewers of Wellman's novel indicate that his work is an accurate representation of the County Seat Wars and, since his story is much as Ogden's, one can assume Kansas was much as the two authors picture it. Walker, in the Weekly Book Review, says that ". . . Wellman's accurate and unsparing portrait of Kansas life in the late 1880's . . . has . . . strength and authenticity to a notable degree."¹⁵¹ Kelley, in the Library Journal,

¹⁵⁰Ogden, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁵¹Stanley Walker, "The Bowl of Brass," Weekly Book Review, April 2, 1944, 6.

agrees and says that Wellman's ". . . characters bring to life the land and its customs with reality and intensity."¹⁵²

The Years of Maturation
(The 1890's)

Kansas novelists evidently considered the final decade of the nineteenth century a good time in which to set the beginning of their stories. Several Kansas novels deal with the 1890's, but most authors use the period for only the initial pages of their books. Two novels by William Allen White, for example--In the Heart of a Fool and A Certain Rich Man--deal with the period, but only briefly, and then as stage-setting for the rest of the story. Paul I. Wellman's The Walls of Jericho is similar in its use of the period, as are Irving Stone's The Passionate Journey and Esther Vogt's The Sky is Falling.

The Peace of the Solomon Valley, by McCarter, is set totally in the 1890's but the time period is not as important as is her point, which is that Kansas is not exactly as it is thought of in the East. Her novel details the change in attitude of a young Easterner

¹⁵²E. F. Kelley, "The Bowl of Brass: A Review," Library Journal, LXIX (March 15, 1944), 263.

who finds a great deal more in Kansas than he had expected when his father sent him to the state, ostensibly to cure his rheumatism. The real reason, of course, was to see if he could "find himself" in Kansas and become more of a man than he was in New York City. This epistolary novel sentimentally describes young Roy Ellerton's change of heart. Roy writes his father upon his arrival in the state that ". . . here I am in this God-forsaken Kansas region called the Solomon Valley. It may be a degree better than Death's Valley, which is still further west."¹⁵³ Gradually, however, he begins to realize there is more to the state than he had at first believed. He writes to his mother that ". . . Kansas seems to put purpose into everybody."¹⁵⁴ And, later, he tells his father of a moonrise he witnessed with a girl. "All of the Solomon Valley lay like a dream of peace under its spell. If I live a thousand years, I'll never see . . . another such valley of rest and sweet dreamy quiet beauty."¹⁵⁵ Finally, Roy has made the full commitment and breaks entirely from his New York heritage:

¹⁵³Margaret Hill McCarter, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, p. 16.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 40.

I wakened to my kingdom one day out on the Kansas prairies. I love those grand, open fields on the sunny plains. The growing crops and fattening stock, the bounty of Nature, and the chance to think and live all called to me as nothing else in this world ever did--or ever will.¹⁵⁶

McCarter could not understand how anyone who spent even a short time in Kansas could resist the temptation to stay forever. She even offers a complete rationale for those who did stay. A long-time Kansas farmer writes to Roy's father in New York:

I might have come into my own a little sooner in New York, but I've always been glad I came West; glad that it was my privilege to see this valley change from a stretch of blossomy springtime prairie to a sweep of alfalfa bloom, from a seared waste of burned mid-summer grasses to the green acres of corn. It is worth the best years of one's life to have watched the transformation.¹⁵⁷

But all was not as rosy on the Kansas plains in the 1890's as McCarter would have one believe. Indeed, White's novels are more concerned with the trials and tribulations of the times than with the McCarter-like beauty of the years. John Barclay, the millionaire of A Certain Rich Man, lives in a town composed of ". . . unpainted groups of cabins and shanties cluttered around a well that men . . . knew as Sycamore Ridge."¹⁵⁸ As

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 12-13.

¹⁵⁸William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 3.

a youth, Barclay had run away to join a Kansas regiment in a Civil War battle. The veteran who found Barclay and sent him home believes the war had a detrimental effect on the boy and was responsible, in some ways, for Barclay's greed and desire for power:

Sometimes I think that what that boy saw at Wilson's Creek--the horrible bloodshed, the deadly spectacle of human suffering at the hospital wagon, some way blinded his soul's eye to right and wrong. It was all a man could stand; the picture must have seared the boy's heart like a fire.¹⁵⁹

Contrary to McCarter's simplistic view of Kansas and people, White admits there is some badness in the state. But White was also a humorist and found a great deal in Kansas of the 1890's about which to be lighthearted. In Our Town is the most humorous of White's novels. While the others take Kansas and her people terribly seriously, White wrote this one in a refreshing vein. From his newspaper office he takes on the entire town of Emporia:

We know, for instance, which wives will not let their husbands endorse other men's notes at the banks. We know about the row the Baptists are having to get rid of the bass singer in their choir, who has sung at funerals for thirty years, until it has reached a point where all good Baptists dread death on account of his lugubrious profundo. . . . We know the week that the widower sets out, and we hear with remarkable accuracy just when he has been refused by this particular widow or that, and, when

¹⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 244-245.

he begins on a school-teacher, the whole office has candy and cigars and mince pie bets on the result, with the odds on the widower five to one. . . . We know the woman who is always sent for when a baby comes to town. . . . We know the politician who gets five dollars a day for his "services" at the polls, the man who takes three dollars and the man who will work for the good of the cause. . . .¹⁶⁰

White writes of the Chief of Police, who ". . . may be seen at any point where trouble is least likely to break out,"¹⁶¹ of Mail-Order Petrie, ". . . a miserly old codger who buys everything out of town that he can a penny cheaper than the home merchants sell it,"¹⁶² of the opposing newspaper editor who ". . . still begins the names of the new party leaders in the county in small letters to show his contempt for them,"¹⁶³ and of the minister, who, when he overheard a young reporter talking slanderously about him, ". . . came over the railing like a monkey."¹⁶⁴ The reporter got away. This is one of the best of White's books, and, in it, he offers a new perspective on the people of Kansas. He looks at them with humor and undisguised wit, but

¹⁶⁰William Allen White, In Our Town, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 173.

with a gentleness that indicates his feeling of closeness to them.

Paul I. Wellman, in The Walls of Jericho, provides a wider view of Kansas in the 1890's and, by intermingling the good with the bad, the beautiful with the plain, and the fine points of the state with those less desirable, emerges with a picture of Kansas that may be more honest in its appraisal of the state than that of most Kansas novels. Dave Constable's first impression of Jericho occurs when he steps off the train in a blizzard and sees the brakeman below, shivering in his blue overcoat, ". . . his eyes watering until tears trickled down into his frayed brown mustache and turned into ice there."¹⁶⁵ When Constable asks if the weather is a constant blizzard, the brakeman answers: "If it ain't like this, it's jest the opposite--hottern'n the hinges of hell. An' dry--lime kilns is simply dribblin' with moisture compared to it."¹⁶⁶ To Constable, Jericho itself was ". . . remarkable chiefly for the extreme width of its windswept streets and the poverty of its architecture."¹⁶⁷ But soon after his arrival, Constable

¹⁶⁵Paul I. Wellman, The Walls of Jericho, p. 10.

¹⁶⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 20.

found the citizens of Jericho much to his liking. The men were ". . . inclined to casual attire, dry humor, and chewing tobacco."¹⁶⁸ The women ". . . sometimes were awkward and ungainly, and given to squawking laughter."¹⁶⁹ Few artificialities existed in Jericho:

The banker's wife did not look down her nose at the grocer's wife; indeed both probably did their own cooking, belonged to the same sewing club, and exchanged recipes and household articles. A man was sized up; if he proved able and industrious, he was accordingly respected; but if he were found a spendthrift or lazy, he was put down as "trifling."¹⁷⁰

When a local man who is quite popular attains the position of State Senator, the people of Jericho support him, even though they know he has not been completely honest in his campaign:

Kansas was an abode of many Pharisees who thanked God that they were not as other men. They condemned sin more loudly and constantly than it was condemned anywhere else, but they had their own category of sins. Certain sins were blacker than others.¹⁷¹

And, according to Wellman, that which would be considered a terrible sin if committed by one man, might not be so bad if another man, a popular one, were the offender.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁶⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁷⁰Loc. cit.

¹⁷¹Ibid., pp. 137-138.

Wellman also manages to include in his novel brief, interesting vignettes of the state. A baseball game, for instance, is played on a crudely laid-out diamond. "Low-growing clumps of prickly pear or Russian thistles decorated the outfield. The bases were home-made sandbags, and the baselines had been accentuated by a mowing machine."¹⁷² The religion of the town is spoken of by the editor of the local paper:

Jericho, which in ordinary matters has, I fear, only a slight leaning toward classical learning, profoundly admires it in one place--the pulpit. On his first Sunday in the church, Dr. Widcomb paralyzed his congregation by finishing his prayer thus: "Thou, O Lord, are the ne plus ultra of our aspirations, and the ultima thule of our expectations. Amen."¹⁷³

The farmers of the early part of the century were characterized by Wellman as hard-working, industrious men. "The farmers lived in the moment, forgetful of time, not knowing how they possibly could find the hours they needed to accomplish all the work that had to be done."¹⁷⁴ This closeness to the land characterizes much of Kansas literature, and Wellman makes the most of it in his

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., p. 184.

works. He is, however, concerned with the city dwellers for the most part.

Two novelists touch, if briefly, on the subject of education in the last years of the nineteenth century. Dentler, in The Hill or Simmons Point, emphasizes the fact that families were enthusiastic about schooling for their children, even though, as in this case, the school was two miles away at Enterprise. Going to school was a somewhat hazardous event:

On nice days they can walk; on bad days Herman will have to take them anyway. I feel a group is safer than one or two going up and down the Santa Fe Trail with all the travelers in covered wagons. Of course there will be cousins walking part of the way. They really have only one-half mile by themselves, but it just seems safer if they all start at once.¹⁷⁵

McCarter reminds readers, in The Cottonwood's Story, that some settlers, however, were not concerned with schooling, especially for the girls. An elderly lady remarked that ". . . girls don't haf to have no learning, an' the boys are cute enough already."¹⁷⁶

Irving Stone, who has written a number of popular contemporary novels, including Lust for Life, the story of Vincent Van Gogh, and, most recently, The Passions

¹⁷⁵Dentler, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁷⁶Margaret Hill McCarter, The Cottonwood's Story, p. 11.

of the Mind, a biographical novel of Sigmund Freud, also wrote an interesting Kansas novel about the life of native Wichita artist John Noble. The Passionate Journey is the story of Noble's desperate longing to become one of the world's finest painters. Nobel grew up in Kansas and played the part of a Wild Westerner all his life, seldom being seen without the two-gun holster which he wore strapped about him. He used his guns once to shoot out the lights at the Beaux Arts Ball in Paris and, again, to terrorize banks that refused to loan him money. He slept beside his ten-gallon Stetson in a Buffalo robe, drank prodigiously in cowboy fashion, and knew far too intimately the insides of jails in Kansas, Paris, London, Provincetown, and New York. The most interesting sections of Stone's novel, from a Kansas standpoint, are the early chapters which tell of his life in the state in the 1890's. Noble happened to be in Coffeyville when the Dalton gang made its last and most daring bank holdup. The artist was on the roof of a building sketching the town when the outlaws appeared, separated into two groups, and attempted to rob two banks at once--in broad daylight. The citizens were ready for them, however, and, with a volley of well-placed rifle fire, killed all of them:

Silence fell. The greatest of all Western street battles was over. Seated on the parapet of the First National Bank building, surrounded by his sheets of drawings, John knew that he had witnessed the end not only of the Dalton gang, but of the Wild West itself.¹⁷⁷

Noble proceeded to sketch the outlaws in death and, later, sold his drawings to a newspaper.

Noble not only witnessed several historic Kansas events, but he also knew many people who would later become famous. Victor Murdock of the Wichita Eagle was his friend:

He frequently found young Victor Murdock in Dave's cubbyhole, arguing politics from Plato's Republic down to that morning's speech by Congressman Blowhard. Victor sopped up political history the way other Wichitans did Schnapps; he was wise to the fraud, graft, pretense and hypocrisy of the politico, and endlessly amused by it.¹⁷⁸

Noble once visited Carrie Nation to ask her about visions. He felt that he had been having prophetic visions himself and she was the only Kansan he had heard of who admitted to them. She was quick to reply to him:

Yes, my young friend, God has just sent me the greatest vision of all. Yesterday I stuck a pin into the Bible, and there, in the first verse of the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, it said, "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Three times He said to me, "Go to Kiowa!" Come with me to Kiowa

¹⁷⁷Irving Stone, The Passionate Journey, p. 9.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 32.

tomorrow, young man, and you will receive all the help you need.¹⁷⁹

Noble followed her to Kiowa, saw her smash the mirror and bottles in Dobson's saloon, watched her leave, had a quick drink himself, and tried to forget about visions. Later, Mrs. Nation stormed into the Eaton Bar in Wichita and made a shambles of it, almost totally destroying a mural Noble had painted which was hanging behind the bar. The artist always seemed to be at the heart of whatever excitement was available. When the Cherokee Strip opened, he was there:

John rode Wichita Bill up and down the long line. He felt the terrible tenseness now that the hour of decision had arrived, for the great game of something-for-nothing was no longer a game; it was a contest, a war against barren years, against closed lives, against the hopelessness of monotony and poverty.¹⁸⁰

Noble staked his claim in a wooded grove he had picked out earlier, but when a young girl and her father came by later, too late to claim a good piece of land, he gave his away saying: "I never intended to stay here anyhow. I just wanted to be part of the Run."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 54.

Even after Noble had been gone from Kansas for several years, he still thought of his state with tenderness.

The thing he loved most about the West was the vast, horizonless prairie. Did he not have to admit then that the prairie was synonymous with heaven in his mind, just as the sea was synonymous with the prairie; and the vast dome of the sky synonymous with the prairie and the sea? These were the three scenes which interested him most; in them he always painted the three symbols that were synonymous with God in his mind: the white buffalo on the prairie, the white ship on the sea, the white sun in the sky.¹⁸²

Thus, from an 1878 issue of Atlantic which talked of Kansas in terms of its compatibility with things celestial, Kansas authors have progressed to the present still thinking in those terms. The authors of Kansas historical novels have been kind to the state and, through these stories, the past is made clearer and more alive and more personal.

¹⁸²Ibid., p. 136.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRESENT

Kansas novelists have had little trouble describing and interpreting the events and people of the state's past, but the twentieth century has proven to be an enigma. If the events of the nineteenth century lent themselves easily to fictionalized accounts, those of the twentieth were more difficult to understand and did not provide comparable drama. If the names and places of the 1800's could be dramatized with excitement and adventure, those of the 1900's were drab and low-keyed by comparison. When the twentieth century began, the excitement was over. The Civil War had come and gone and veterans were content to live quiet lives in Kansas and did not seek additional excitement. The smaller, individual, wars within the state were over--the Border Wars, the County Seat Wars, the battles of Lawrence, the Arickaree, the Wakarusa. Kansas crept into the new century quietly, and only a few novelists crept with her. Predominant among them was William Allen White. Both A Certain Rich Man and In the Heart

of a Fool are set, for the most part, in the early years of the twentieth century.

The town of Harvey in which In the Heart of a Fool is set seems, at first, to be the primary interest in the novel, but White quickly recognizes that ". . . Harvey seems to be only a sign of the times, a symptom of the growth of the human soul."¹⁸³ His book, he says, must ". . . tell the tale of a time and place where men and women loved and strove and joyed or suffered and lost or won after the old, old fashion of our race."¹⁸⁴ In other words, White's novel is to deal more with universal questions than with matters pertaining more specifically with Kansas. His story, he writes, ". . . shall explain the America that rose when her great day came . . . and consecrated herself without stint or faltering hand to the challenge of democracy."¹⁸⁵ But if White is to tell a universal tale, perhaps that in itself will offer valuable information about Kansas and Kansans. For, if Harvey is a town not unlike others throughout the country, and if the people of the town

¹⁸³William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, p. 15.

¹⁸⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁸⁵Loc. cit.

and the state are not unique, then perhaps Kansas' significance lies in its universality. White seems to be saying this very thing in his novel. Kansans suffer much the same as Virginians; they are not more sophisticated than Missourians, but neither are they less so than Pennsylvanians. Harvey, for instance, like almost any other small town would, reacted happily to the nearby discovery of coal, gas and oil. The discovery of this wealth brought many changes:

It was a place of adventure; men were made rich overnight by the blow of a drill in a well. Then was the time for that equality of opportunity to come which the pioneers sought if ever it was coming.¹⁸⁶

The pioneer spirit remained in Kansas. People still came to the state from throughout the country, looking for a better life. Many of them found success in Kansas, but others were not so lucky. In the Heart of a Fool presents a vivid picture of emigrant workers who came to Harvey to labor in the mines, and strikes hard at the unjust treatment of the unskilled laborer in Kansas at the turn of the century. Early in the novel one of its principal characters takes a slap at management:

In the mines where I work all the men come up grimy and greasy and vile. . . In Europe we rough-necks know that wash-houses are provided by the

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 63.

company. But here . . . the company doesn't provide even a faucet; instead the men--father and son and maybe a boarder or two have to go home . . . and strip to the hide with the house full of children and wash. What if your girlhood had been used to seeing things like that? . . . Oh, I know they're ignorant foreigners and little better than animals and those things don't hurt them--only if you had a little girl who had to be in and out of your home when the men came to wash up. . .¹⁸⁷

White's story revolves around the efforts of one man, Grant Adams, to help the mine laborers. Adams is labeled an outcast by the complacent members of the community who feel that the foreign element does not deserve help. In one angry moment, he rationalizes the sins of the workers:

If they cheat the company, it is because the company dares them to cheat and cheats them badly. If they steal, it is because they have been taught to steal by the example of the big, successful thieves.¹⁸⁸

Near the end of the novel, White speaks of the result of a strike by the working men, a summing up that indicates that the novel was not so much uniquely Kansan as it was universal. But his comments indicate that Kansas was not free of guilt in terms of how its poor, working class has been treated. Kansas was not, according

¹⁸⁷Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., p. 182.

to White, the total paradise that McCarter, for instance, would have one believe it was:

The episode . . . is one of the long, half-forgotten skirmishes wherein labor is learning the truth that only in so far as labor dares to lean on peace and efficiency can labor move upward in the scale of life. . . . The winning or losing of the strike in the Wahoo meant little in terms of winning or losing; but because the men kept the peace, kept it to the very end, the strike meant much in terms of progress.¹⁸⁹

Another White novel, A Certain Rich Man, also speaks of Kansas of the early 1900's. The rich man is John Barclay, who got his wealth through a dogged persistence that ignored moral questions in business dealings. White tells, in his autobiography, the theme of his novel:

So our . . . novel became the story of the prodigal son. The hero was John Barclay, son of a pioneer Kansas mother; and her faith in some kind of moral law of gravitation toward righteousness took the place of "his father's house" of the parable. He went into life seeking money and power, and he got it. And in his prime, John Barclay saw that the money was husk and that the money-grubbers were swine,¹⁹⁰ and he rose and returned to his father's house.

There are many John Barclays in White's works, and either they come to realize they must change, as Barclay does, or they die unrepentent sinners destined for perdition. There is no "halfway" point in White's novels. His

¹⁸⁹Ibid., p. 609.

¹⁹⁰William Allen White, The Auto-Biography of William Allen White, p. 374.

characters are extremely righteous or extremely sinful, and readers were led to believe that this picture was indicative of Kansas as a whole.

A Certain Rich Man, the story of the returned prodigal, as White termed it, deals more with one man's rise and fall than with the spirit of the times. The time could be any time, and the place could be anywhere in the country. That it was set in Kansas is probably simply because that is the state White knew best. That Barclay's friends are Kansas farmers, businessmen, and others is not so important to the story as the fact that they are universal in type. The events of the time which affect Barclay are the events that are felt throughout the country. In 1903, for example, when the government passed a law prohibiting the giving of railroad rebates, Barclay feels it is a breach of faith with ". . . interests in American politics which may not safely be ignored."¹⁹¹

The people of the Kansas community of Sycamore Ridge are unconcerned about the way Barclay made his money, even though the first portion of his fortune was created in an unscrupulous wheat transaction with local men. To the townspeople, Barclay had demonstrated that

¹⁹¹William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 327.

he had courage, that he was crafty, and that he got results without stopping for scruples of honor. "And the whole community, including some of the injured farmers themselves, . . . thought Barclay a shrewd financier."¹⁹² Most of what Barclay has done has been just within legal boundaries. When the eastern newspapers break the story about some of his operations that were definitely illegal, however, public opinion is reversed. This turn of events is telling on him, and he slowly, little by little, begins to think that there must be a better way. The "better way" to White, of course, is the Christian way. Barclay finally makes that choice and, knowing his daughter has felt burdened all of her life by his money and the threat of it to possible suitors, liquidates most of his business and brings home the last of his stock. He orders his daughter to burn the stock and this act of repentance cleanses Barclay, and he can feel whole and pure once more. The Kansans, those who at first admired his intelligence and ability and then turned on him when they discovered his unscrupulous activities, support him once more when he makes the final change. Kansans are quick to forgive, White says. In fact, after Barclay has drowned trying

¹⁹²Ibid., pp. 201-202.

to save a local woman from a river, the citizens seem to forget what he once was and concentrate, instead, on that which he became, if only for the few final years of his life. Asked about Barclay by a stranger, a local man replies that ". . . the papers seemed to think his act of sacrifice showed the world a real man--and he was that,--he was surely that, was John: yes, he was a real man."¹⁹³

A Certain Rich Man is highly moralistic in tone and purports to show that an evil businessman will either repent and reap the benefits thereof, or he will suffer here on earth and in heaven. Paul I. Wellman's The Walls of Jericho, on the other hand, takes an opposite slant and shows the good inherent in the strong-willed individual efforts of an honest Kansan. In the early part of the century, Jericho, Kansas, is not a mining center like White's Harvey, nor is it a bustling city like his Sycamore Ridge. In fact, the high plains area of western Kansas is not at all like the eastern part where White's novels are set. Returning from Kansas City on a train, Dave Constable, Wellman's hero, comments to himself on the state as he passes through the eastern half:

¹⁹³Ibid., p. 434.

In this part of Kansas there was little in common with the hungry, strenuous, lean West. Kansas was two, perhaps three different places, really. This eastern half was, geographically and physically, a part of Missouri. The south central portion belonged to Oklahoma. Only the West and Northwest possessed truly and inescapably an entity of their own.¹⁹⁴

But if the landscape is different, the people who populate the opposite ends of the state are not, according to Wellman. Like White's Barclay, Constable soon finds himself the object of criticism. It is not from dishonesty, however, but because he refused at the last moment to run for congress. His friends felt he had deserted them when it was too late to campaign for another man. Constable's decision is based on a brief affair he has had with a woman lawyer and, since he is married, he fears it would damage his career. "A candidate for public office undergoes a microscopic examination of his private life; and particularly so in Kansas."¹⁹⁵ Like Barclay, however, he is finally forgiven when he saves several lives by leading rescue parties into the country during a blizzard.

Kansas novels dealing with the early part of the century make much use of politics and seek that which is truly Kansan in their characters' desire to work for

¹⁹⁴Paul I. Wellman, The Walls of Jericho, p. 287.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 243.

the good of the state. Frequently, as in Manifest Destiny, outsiders provided the impetus which resulted in action. In Russell Laman's novel, it is William Jennings Bryan who helps Phil Garwood make the decision to try politics instead of farming. Bryan called for the ". . . liberalism of broadminded, energetic men united for the best interests of Kansas and the nation."¹⁹⁶ Garwood had once been asked to run for County Commissioner and moved away from his farm to the town of Plainsboro. When his wife objected, he expressed feelings which may have been typical of many Kansans of the time:

I'm sorry, but I cannot stay chained to this grind of sweat and dirt that brings hardly enough money to keep interest paid, and I thought you'd be glad to be rid of your hard work, too. Twelve years I've waited for land to rise! I always wanted to get into law or politics and do something worth doing. . . I hate farming!¹⁹⁷

Though he loses the election, Garwood is still caught up with the Populist party which includes in its platform ". . . planks for free silver, graduated income taxes, state aid to education, compulsory grade school attendance, . . . and, to Phil's misgivings, also woman suffrage."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶Laman, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 103.

When President Wilson delivers his war message to Congress in April of 1917, Phil decides to return to the farm:

By the time the 1st Division occupied the line, Kansas fields were plowed and sowed. The winter wheat was up and stored, mile-square fields of lush green dotted by herds of red and white cattle grazing.¹⁹⁹

The war was far away and did not mean a radical departure from his normal way of life. Even to one of Phil's sons, who was beginning college when war broke out, ". . . Europe remained, like Mars, a symbol of eternal wars and an equally long way off."²⁰⁰ When America entered the war it meant higher grain prices for the farmers and, finally, the promise of glory to the youth. At Kansas State College the entire football team announced to the student body at a pep rally that it was joining up en masse:

The students whooped and stamped. Shannon rose after Wakefield with the rest. Behind them the floor trembled to the thudding of two thousand pairs of feet. . . . The coach put them in a row across the stage. Out in the auditorium Shannon saw the student body as a blurred and shifting mass, with some nearest individuals crouched, gritting their teeth in efforts to yell louder.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 332.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 246.

²⁰¹Ibid., p. 334.

It was quite a contrast to today's students' attitudes toward war. The dreams of glory of 1917 would be quickly shredded, however, when the one-time students moved into battle. These hopes for glory and excitement and, then, ultimate disappointment parallel the thoughts of Phil Garwood in the novel. He came to Kansas seeking wealth and contentment. What he found was hardship, frequent unhappiness, the death of some of his family and little hope that things would get better. When he died, just after the war and just before the depression, he could leave his sons little else for which to hope. But hope they would, like all Kansans, and they would recognize there was much to do because ". . . perfection on earth has never yet been attained."²⁰²

Two additional Kansas novels examine the state in the early part of the century. Zoe Dentler's gentle The Hill or Simmons Point spans almost one hundred years and is a simple, kind story about coming of age in Kansas--and growing old there. Much of the story is set early in the twentieth century and one of her more appealing digressions is the description of a trip across western Kansas in a Model T. Every farmer who could raise one thousand dollars was buying one:

²⁰²Ibid., p. 533.

The roads were unmarked; some were only trails used by wagons over the years. They looked forward to the trip and started early so they might make the one hundred miles in daylight driving. They would always remember getting stuck in swales caused by spring rains. They had their share of blowouts and came upon hogbacks, places where the wheels of vehicles had worn deep and had made ditches, and the rains had washed the tracks. Cars would come upon the ridges before the driver was aware of them. Getting free caused a loss of time. . .

The farther west they drove, the fewer signs they saw of farms and homesteads. Many miles were passed without their seeing either fences or roads, only well-worn wagon trails across the prairie. At little towns they were directed on to the next town.²⁰³

Esther Vogt examines the Mennonites of Kansas early in the 1900's in her novel, The Sky is Falling. They were a people who tried to live as neighbors yet "separate" from the "Englishers," those who were not members of their church. Even as recently as the turn of the century, the Mennonite parents were still picking husbands and wives for their children:

You are sixteen and too young to know what you want! . . . But Pa and I think it is best if you are promised even if you don't marry yet for two more years. Johann is a good boy. Comes from a good Mennonite family. He is thrifty and hard working, and he is a Christian. You know how very important these things are!²⁰⁴

²⁰³Dentler, op. cit., p. 127.

²⁰⁴Vogt, op. cit., p. 51.

Their strict adherence to age-old rules and regulations extended into other areas. When a non-Mennonite neighbor asks to have her husband's funeral in the Mennonite church, a deacon is horrified: "We just can't start letting the Smiths into the church. . . . Next thing you know we'll be burying atheists in our churchyard."²⁰⁵ Moreover, when a Mennonite youth, with some indecision, has gone into the noncombatant service at the beginning of World War I, his mother is criticized:

So you let your fellow countrymen do the job in making this world safe for democracy! Hiding behind your religious skirts, that's all. Why, I bet you jabber German at home and at church all the time! How can you pretend to be against the enemy by doing that? Is that how you "love your enemies?"²⁰⁶

The Mennonites changed slowly through the years, but close to the book's end a mother is still concerned when her daughter marries a Baptist: "I can't see why she couldn't have found herself a Mennonite. At least, then we'd know she'd be safe."²⁰⁷

Years of Contrasts (The 1920's)

Several Kansas novelists treat the 1920's with contrasting viewpoints. To Jack Curtis, author of Banjo,

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 148.

²⁰⁶Ibid., p. 138.

²⁰⁷Ibid., p. 172.

the decade was notable for the booze empire gangsters who were beginning to establish "territories" throughout the state; Gordon Parks recalls his youth in a segregated community in The Learning Tree; Mateel Howe Farnham looks at an early attempt at integration in Rebellion; Julia Siebel, in For the Time Being, examines one individual's loneliness; and Anna Matilda Carlson discusses a form of religious integration in The Heritage of the Bluestem. Two of these novels--Banjo and The Learning Tree--provide especially contrasting views of Kansas during the 1920's.

Banjo deals with bootlegging operations in the state and with a farmboy who, in another tale of the returning prodigal son, otherwise almost totally unlike White's A Certain Rich Man, finally realizes that his roots are in the land and not in the city. The Learning Tree, on the other hand, deals with a rural area, but its hero is Newt Winger, a young black boy who faces the problem inherent in growing up in a racially-torn world. These novels, both recent, are set in the same time period, but Banjo has as its setting Dodge City and Kansas City, while The Learning Tree focuses upon southeastern Kansas.

Gus Gilpin, the hero of Banjo, not realizing that he is destined to become the czar of the midwest's

largest bootlegging ring, is still in Dodge City with the advent of prohibition and is not interested in the new law. His reaction might have typified that of many farmers who had overextended their financial resources:

Gus couldn't have cared less that the Volstead Act prohibiting the sale of liquor in the United States was passed over the President's veto. He was more concerned that Poppa had stretched his credit web as far as the banker, Mr. Hundertmarx, would let it spread, accepting the burden of an extra percent or two just to be the first in farming the deep but untried Colorado land.²⁰⁸

His attitude soon changes, however, after he has made his way from his father's farm to Kansas City to become a favorite of one of the gangster leaders. One of his first assignments is to take a convoy of six trucks loaded with liquor to his hometown of Dodge City where the bootleggers are planning to open a new territory. On his way west, Gus passes through several Kansas towns such as McPherson, ". . . where great wooden derricks were rising in the long wheat fields."²⁰⁹ The route took him to Olathe, Baldwin City, McPherson, Great Bend, and Larned. In one amusing episode, Gus and his caravan are confronted by the local law enforcement personnel when they attempt to drive through Larned:

²⁰⁸Jack Curtis, Banjo, p. 14.

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 144.

In the middle of the main intersection stood a ruddy-joweled modern police chief in a tight blue uniform and black billed cap. Another villager in the antiquated uniform of an Army captain stood at the ready on his left, and on the right the local post of the American Legion was assembled at parade rest on the cross street. They all wore blue overseas caps embroidered with gold, decorated with medals. The rest of the attire was democratic American, from the optometrist's suit to the butcher's apron. . . . As Gus observed their soft, pale, alcoholic faces, he belieyed that even they knew how foolish they looked.²¹⁰

The ease with which Gus is able to bribe the police chief, and others along the route, indicates that Kansans were not immune to acts that might be considered hypocritical.

Banjo tries hard to be a book in the contemporary mold, even though it is set in the 1920's. Instead, it becomes a caricature of that famous art form known to millions as the "Western." Gus is captured by law officers in Dodge City and is sent to prison at Leavenworth. Even the classic escape and subsequent flight for their lives is played out by Gus and several hundred prisoners. When the men are outside the walls and Gus is in a car with a few others, he asks where they are heading:

We head for the goddamn border. . . . A thousand miles. We'll make it. . . . We'll steal cars, we'll fight our way. And we'll all meet in Sonora and

²¹⁰Ibid., p. 145.

start over in the mountains. We can make our own
 goddamn country and nobody tell us we can't read
 books.²¹¹

If that paragraph sounds vaguely familiar, it might
 have been written by any number of writers who make
 up the "Dodge City Syndrome," the hundreds of authors
 who have written about the cowboys and gunfighters of
 Kansas over the years.

Gus finally rejoins the "mob" after his escape
 and becomes little more than a hired killer. His sudden
 change of heart, when he decides to "go straight," there-
 fore, is startling and not quite believable. But if
 his reversal does not ring quite true, the reactions
 of the people of Dodge City are easier to understand.
 Gus has become a modern Robin Hood and has brought back
 to that western Kansas city a part of their "Wild West"
 heritage. Both Wellman and White have agreed that Kansans
 are quick to forgive and Curtis bears out this belief.
 Gus ultimately decides, though, that he must undertake
 one more killing--that of the rival gang leader who
 has taken over the Dodge City territory. He tries,
 somehow, to redeem himself:

Jack, someday you may want to tell a story about
 how it was in the Middle West of the Twenties . . .
 and maybe somebody'll bad-mouth me for killin' some

²¹¹Ibid., p. 180.

folks. So remember I never killed anybody that didn't mean to kill me first, and I always gave them the first shot.²¹²

It is straight out of a grade-B movie, and it has little to do with Kansas itself, except in respect to the rough and tumble, sometimes violent, history of the state. And, one must suppose, anything is possible in Dodge City--even Gus Gilpin.

The ending of the novel is worth a brief consideration. If Banjo accomplishes nothing else, it illustrates extremely well the type of novel that has been written, time and time again, about Kansas and has given erroneous ideas about the state to readers across the country. It is not entirely false: such scenes were no doubt played out often in Dodge City and the other cattle towns of the state. That it has become predominant over other, more honest portrayals of the state and its people is regrettable. Banjo's climactic gunfight in Dodge City as Gus stalked the main street at high noon is illustrative:

The old clock springs wheezed and the chime rang --six, seven, eight, nine. . . And Gus walked up the middle of the street, coming up by the bank toward the police station going slowly, wanting Zirp in the wide-open street. . . On the other side of the street, the mass of hungry farm faces, fixed in their awe of entrenched law and order,

²¹²Ibid., p. 253.

stood like a river choked with ice awaiting the hot breath of spring to crack loose and flood to their destiny. . . . Another step. The noon fire whistle howled and the street exploded. A heavy rifle bullet came out of nowhere and caught Gus in the back, driving him to his knees.²¹³

Gus had been ambushed, but a scrubwoman whom he had loved in his youth came to his rescue, knocking down the man with the rifle, and Gus had time to kill him quickly. He had lost his Banjo--the machine gun--but had a .45 and managed to get to his feet and demand that Zirp come out and face him. The outlaw finally came into the open. "His slanted hunchback was twisted to the side, his sliced smile was locked tightly for the death of Gus Gilpin."²¹⁴ In the classic tradition, Gus ultimately wins the gunfight but is mortally wounded.

Not to be outdone by any Western movie ever made, Curtis cannot resist one final temptation: "Gus watched it all happen as the yellow car picked up speed and, chasing the westering sun, smoothly topped the first long hill."²¹⁵ He rides off into the sunset--the crowning act in an over-dramatic novel. The bits of honesty about the state of the 1920's are rare in Banjo, but

²¹³Ibid., pp. 205-206.

²¹⁴Ibid., p. 263.

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 264.

they do appear frequently, often enough, at least, to make the novel significant to this study, particularly so since it treats a subject, that of bootlegging in the prohibition years, that other Kansas novelists have ignored.

Gordon Parks' novel, The Learning Tree, rings with a clearer note of authenticity as he avoids the concocted melodrama with which Curtis' book is filled. Newt Winger, the young black boy, grows up in Cherokee Flats under the most perplexing of double standards:

Like all other Kansas towns, Cherokee Flats wallowed in the social complexities of a borderline state. Here, for the black man, freedom loosed one hand while custom restrained the other. The law books stood for equal rights, but the law (a two-pistol-toting, tobacco-chewing, khaki-putteed, leather-legged cop called Kirky) never bothered to enforce such laws in such books--"mainly 'cause I cain't read," he often bragged.²¹⁶

Newt's total world of the 1920's was his hometown. Until he made the high school's colored basketball team, he had travelled no more than a few miles from the city. While he was segregated in school, at the theater, and in the downtown stores, he still found it acceptable to play with white children and, of course, to work for white men. Newt is filled with youthful wonder about questions which have perplexed all boys his age--

²¹⁶Gordon Parks, The Learning Tree, pp. 25-26.

black and white. He wonders about a God who would allow racial problems but speculates that, since God is white, he probably doesn't care anyway. "Never seen black angels . . . even the chariot horses are white."²¹⁷ Parks' novel is concerned with little other than the Black/White relationships in Cherokee Flats, and particularly with how Newt is affected by those relationships. Newt's mother gives him a new perspective on the segregated town of Cherokee Flats after he has asked her if he will have to stay there all his life:

I hope you won't have to stay here all your life, Newt. It ain't a all-good place and it ain't a all-bad place. But you can learn just as much here about people and things as you can learn any place else. Cherokee Flats is sorta like a fruit tree. Some of the people are good and some of them are bad--just like the fruit on a tree.²¹⁸

But that is small consolation to the young black boy who is, later, called to the school principal's office after an angry confrontation with the school counselor:

"If I turned white before they called me back in there, t'would be a different story altogether. . . ." He knotted his fist and watched the skin lighten from the pressure of the knuckle bones. "Wonder if you tore all the skin off, if it would all come back black? Guess it would. . . don't think I'd like bein' white anyway."²¹⁹

²¹⁷Ibid., p. 183.

²¹⁸Ibid., p. 38.

²¹⁹Ibid., p. 183.

Despite the fact that Newt is black and the novel revolves around racial problems, author Parks seems to be saying, parenthetically, that Newt is not really so different from the white youth of the 1920's. Newt likes cars, radios, a white boy's microscope, girls and circuses. He falls in love, steals apples from an orchard, asks youthful questions about religion, and, finally, experiences adult pain at the death of his mother. The real difference between Newt and the white boys of Cherokee Flats lies in what he is called upon to do at the novel's climax. Newt has witnessed the murder of a white man by a black and must condemn one of his own in a dramatic courtroom scene. Newt risks a small race war by admitting that he saw the murder, but all ends well.

Curtis' Banjo provides another look at a type of racial coexistence in Kansas in the 1920's. Gus Gilpin, the Kansas City gangster (out of Dodge City), falls in love with a black jazz singer who is also a dope addict. When Gus tells a friend he is thinking of marrying her, the man advises him not to, saying that if he does, he's finished with ". . . K.C., the Middle West, the United States . . . and all its possessions. . . You saw what they did to Jack Johnson and

he wasn't even a hophead."²²⁰ Gus does not marry the girl, and she ultimately dies of an overdose of drugs. His Kansas upbringing has made him wary of Negroes, however, and early in the novel, when he is escaping from a policeman in Kansas City, he ducks into a closed bar, and a black man offers to help him. "How could he trust anyone, especially a black man in this hostile city in this evil neighborhood?"²²¹ Curtis and Parks agree that segregation was a major problem in the 1920's, and both attempt to show that the two races--Black and White--could have lived together in closer harmony if each group--and particularly the white people--had made a somewhat greater effort. Gus Gilpin summed up the situation in Banjo. "In the end," he said, "you've got to trust someone."²²²

In 1927, Mateel Howe Farnham was awarded the first prize of \$10,000 in Dodd, Mead and Company's fiction contest for her novel, Rebellion.²²³ This story of the 1920's, which also touches on problems of race, was praised by the Boston Transcript, which called it

²²⁰Curtis, op. cit., p. 94.

²²¹Ibid., p. 69.

²²²Loc. cit.

²²³Evans, op. cit., p. 132.

an ". . . undeniably . . . good story, written with force and artistry."²²⁴ Most reviews, however, were critical of the novel. The New Republic, for example, called it ". . . lamentably inadequate."²²⁵ The Saturday Review of Literature was only a little kinder, calling Rebellion a ". . . wholesome but undistinguished novel."²²⁶ It is a Kansas novel, however, and it focuses on another, previously unexamined, segment of the Kansas population--the "aristocracy."

New Concord, Kansas, in which the story is set, is built on the banks of the Missouri River. It ". . . had a large colored population which almost without exception earned its living serving the well-to-do whites."²²⁷ Unfortunately, the blacks in the novel are almost too stereotyped to be believable--at least in the 1970's. Simon, an aging servant in the household of John Taliaferro Burrell, Jr., was born a slave and had worked for the Burrell family all his life.

²²⁴"Rebellion: A Review," Boston Transcript, December 14, 1927, 4.

²²⁵"Rebellion: A Review," New Republic, LIII (December 7, 1927), 78.

²²⁶"Book Reviews," Saturday Review of Literature, XI (December 24, 1927), 47.

²²⁷Mateel Howe Farnham, Rebellion, p. 71.

Under Howe's pen, Simon takes on the attributes of the pie-eyed, stoop-shouldered, nervous Negro who has been pictured so carelessly by countless novelists. Even Simon's speech is stereotyped:

Your grandpappy most worriet the life outer me, comin' hantin' me day and night ontill I tuk his Prince Albert coat out to the cemetery and left it hangin' there on his tombstone. He had chose that there coat to be buried in but yore grandma had made up her mind that he were to be byrried in his new dress suit and done accordin'.²²⁸

Howe does occasionally present an authentic picture of Kansas or of certain attitudes about the state. When Jacqueline Burrell goes East to attend college at Bryn Mawr, for example, she had to make a quick adjustment to her way of thinking:

She had first to discover that a member of one of the oldest and most prominent families in North Eastern Kansas did not count for much in a select and restricted Eastern school where many of the girls came from parents both nationally and internationally famous and where the very word Kansas, for some unaccountable reason, seemed to be cause for laughter.²²⁹

Later, her English literature instructor urges her to live a rich and full life, insinuating that Jacqueline should leave New Concord. "You come from a small mid-western town, do you not? And small towns everywhere

²²⁸Ibid., p. 33.

²²⁹Ibid., p. 93.

are so--shall we say inhibiting?"²³⁰ Even a cousin cautions her to avoid letting a sense of her own importance go to her head:

Most of us who live all our lives in country towns get an exaggerated idea of our own importance. As far as I can find out none of the branch of the Burrell family to which you belong has achieved anything of any particular importance for the past hundred years. You happen to be where you are today because your great-grandfather Burrell married the clever daughter of a shrewd Scotch storekeeper.²³¹

Howe's novel's significance to this study lies in its examination of wealthy Kansans, since the bulk of Kansas literature deals with the poorer farmers of the state. The novel does not have great literary merit but the Dodd, Mead and Company award of \$10,000 was a tidy sum in 1927.

Julia Siebel's novel, For the Time Being, is among the better Kansas novels from a literary standpoint even though it, too, offers only rare glimpses at anything that could be termed intrinsic to the state. The story is that of Paul Bembroy, a businessman by necessity, and his family, each member of which sets out on markedly different paths in search of fulfillment. How they go about seeking this goal is not peculiar

²³⁰Ibid., p. 112.

²³¹Ibid., p. 200.

to Kansas, but the story of Bembroy, of his fluctuating fortunes, and of his shifting relationships to his world and his wife and children, is poignantly told. Occasionally, one finds passages which help in understanding Kansas, such as Siebel's description of a Kansas town:

To the north the town of Ludlow, in the state of Kansas, stretched along its length of railroad track from the grain elevator, which showed as a flat dark oblong below Cassiopeia in the east, to the two church steeples pricking the sky toward the dipper in the west. . . The undulant treeless plains spread out from there to the full curve of the horizon.²³²

Ludlow is a typical Kansas town with its grain elevator and two churches with tall steeples. Bembroy is the manager of the local grain elevator and Siebel's occasional descriptions of this Kansas business mark another topic hitherto untouched by Kansas authors. At one point, she relates a conversation between Bembroy and a wealthy wheat farmer which indicates that the purchase and storage of grain for shipment to mills was a potentially big business for the state:

I'll get this piece of railroad land alongside east of here and build some concrete towers with this new fast equipment. Then we'll offer it to Campbell for lease at a good high figure. If he doesn't want it, I'll lease this old hull from him--that shouldn't be too hard to do. But if he refuses that too, I'll hire you away from him at about twice the base pay and the same commission on twice the

²³²Julia Siebel, For the Time Being, pp. 4-5.

volume. We'll run him out of business. O.K.? You have time to run three of these plants off season and we'll put on help for harvest. What we can do is channel the small loads through here and big shipments through the new one.²³³

Along with the bootlegging operations of Banjo, wheat was beginning to be a money-making commodity in Kansas as the state entered the 1930's.

The Depression Years (The 1930's)

In 1938, William L. White, son of the "sage of Emporia," created a ". . . sensation in Kansas literary and political circles with his first novel, What People Said."²³⁴ The plot of the story has to do with a financial scandal that rocked the state in 1933. His novel is set in the fictitious state of Oklarada, though it is most certainly Kansas, as Evans indicates. In many ways, White's novel is more realistic than those written by his father. He is not afraid to use the language of the day, four-letter words included, while the elder Mr. White chose to ignore them. The author of What People Said does not attempt to make a pointed moral but, instead, lets his story make its points without preaching.

²³³Ibid., p. 55.

²³⁴Evans, op. cit., p. 132.

The financial scandal that gives plot to the novel is not at all unique to Kansas or the midwest but many passages do provide insight into the Kansas of the 1930's. The story concerns a banker and his son who find they can forge banknotes and transfer money which is not legally theirs from one bank to another at will. They are respected members of the community of Athena until they are discovered. What People Said is more than a story of a scandal, however. It is a telling portrait of Kansas and the midwestern area of the country in the 1930's. Early in his novel, White talks of the Ku Klux Klan:

The Klan in Athena was strong below the tracks, but in the good residence section out toward University Heights they laughed at the Ku Klux Klan. The well-to-do educated people couldn't see why anything needed to be done, and if it did, they were sure the type of fellow who could be duped into paying ten dollars to a travelling Klan organizer would never do it. The well-to-do educated people were against intolerance and the Klan, which in the election was opposing substantial men and endorsing a lot of incompetent rowdies that no one even knew. And the college professors pointed out--although they couldn't say it publicly--that the Klan was merely a passing symptom, a backwash of our splendid war-time patriotism degenerated into foolish nationalism in the minds of illiterates.²³⁵

Some of the people, however, felt the Klan might be a good thing, because it kept the workers' minds off unions.

²³⁵William L. White, What People Said, p. 50.

The division superintendent of the railroad felt ". . . it was better to have them talking Klan than talking union, trying to dictate to the company how to run its business."²³⁶ The young men of the town were more interested in other things, though, like what they were going to do with their lives. For the most part, they felt that ". . . you did what your old man did because you already knew a good deal about it . . . and because there was the business all waiting for you."²³⁷ Some of them searched for more philosophical reasons for going into their father's business, but, in the 1930's, most did not feel the need for better reasons. "Sure they wanted to make money. What the hell else would you want?"²³⁸

The Kansas legislature of those years dealt with some crucial questions, but occasionally there was a moment of levity, such as a debate over whether the state bounty on crow heads should be three cents or five cents each. This debate was entirely in the hands of the farmer members, and the lawyers and professional men sat back and grinned at the passionate speeches. The five-cent farmers (those whose land was infested

²³⁶Ibid., p. 51.

²³⁷Ibid., p. 110.

²³⁸Loc. cit.

with crows) said that at three cents you couldn't even pay for your ammunition. A crow was smart, they said, and knew when a man had a gun and when he did not.

"If he caught the glint of a gun barrel he would rise and flop off when you were a hundred yards away."²³⁹

The three-cent farmers (who weren't bothered by crows) said that at five cents each the state would be paying out forty or fifty thousand dollars a year. "That was too much to pay fellows who were too lazy to shoot crows on their own land unless the state gave them a bounty to do it."²⁴⁰ It was petty, to be sure, but enjoyable:

The debate turned on how smart a crow was, each side submitting evidence. The city fellows grinned and listened. Pretty soon you could tell which side was the strongest. The city fellows would vote with the farm majority, figuring that this would be what most farmers in their district would want done about crows.²⁴¹

Few of the legislators realized that they might have spent their time on more worthwhile matters. The Great Depression was about to make crows a minor matter, indeed. In 1932 it was not just the common laboring element who were out of work. There was practically no building and ". . . even the union fellows were about at the

²³⁹Ibid., p. 180.

²⁴⁰Loc. cit.

²⁴¹Ibid., p. 181.

end of their string."²⁴² The people of Athena were worried, even though they trusted the people in Washington:

They were smart fellows. They ought to know. When they explained it, it sounded good. But when they tried it, nothing happened. Down deep, people in Athena were scared. Because it looked--almost it looked--as though those big fellows in Washington, all those big manufacturers who were on President Hoover's committees, didn't really know any more about what was making this than folks in Athena! Didn't know any more what to do than you did, trying to run your little store!²⁴³

By 1933 even the farmers were demanding gold from the banks instead of paper money. The small businessmen were not depositing all of their day's receipts in the banks, but were saving a little out each day, just in case. Finally, the banks did close and there were rumors about ". . . Hoover and them fellows taking a boat for England with ten trunks of gold, and Roosevelt having them stopped at the pier and bringing them back. . ."²⁴⁴ The people still had hope, however:

But this fellow Roosevelt, they agreed out in Hooverville where the shacks were lined with tar paper and where you pounded tin cans flat and nailed them over the knot holes to keep out the snow, this fellow Roosevelt and his stuff about driving the money changers out of the temple, that was all right;

²⁴²Ibid., p. 225.

²⁴³Ibid., p. 226.

²⁴⁴Ibid., p. 288.

he sounded good. So better wait a while. Take it easy, buddy, at least let's see what he'll do.²⁴⁵

The "Hoovervilles" of which White speaks were not localized to any one particular area. The depression was felt throughout Kansas, as Curtis describes in the portion of Banjo which is set in the 1930's. Returning home after a long absence, Gus Gilpin reflects upon the times and upon the way the Kansas farmer reacted to the reality of the depression:

There were still plenty of horses and wagons, though. For most farmers it was all they had for transport. And those who'd let their wagons rot in the fields while they splurged on flivvers found that you could hitch a team to a Model T chassis and it would serve as a wagon rolling on worn-out rubber tires filled with wheat. No matter how ludicrous, they could do it because they had a basic sense of humor. You had to be able to smile to drive an old retired team of draft horses ahead of a gutted-out car body with a steering wheel and stuffed seats.²⁴⁶

But, if the western Kansas farmer could smile now and then, most of the time he was grim. There was not much to laugh about during the depression years:

Occasionally they would see a diehard family, still hanging on. Threadbare washing whipping on the line, a few scroungy chickens scouting for grasshoppers, thin cattle gnawing at the fence posts. A farm wife, wearing her husband's overalls to save her last dress, would wave, and the man out wandering

²⁴⁵Ibid., p. 289.

²⁴⁶Curtis, op. cit., p. 242.

the shifting silt with his sons wouldn't even look up.²⁴⁷

Both White and Curtis provide significant, if bleak, pictures of Kansas during the depression.

Michael Amrine, in All Sons Must Say Goodbye, is less interested in things indigenous to Kansas in the 1930's than he is in the universal theme of a young man's initiation into maturity. This story of the end of innocence of a young Kansan in 1934 deals with themes that have been dealt with much more effectively before--the first kiss, drinking, smoking, trying not to believe in God. The novel received good reviews, however, such as one by Hindus, who wrote that ". . . it is a fine book, a book full of warm pages in which many a reader may recognize his own early aspiration, frustrations and fulfillments."²⁴⁸ Cournos called it ". . . a sincere, earnest and sympathetic story. . . Mr. Amrine writes with candor, with spontaneity, and often with lyrical beauty."²⁴⁹ But all the good reviews could not make Amrine's book a fine Kansas novel. The few mentions

²⁴⁷Ibid., p. 247.

²⁴⁸Milton Hindus, "All Sons Must Say Goodbye: A Review," Books, XVI (September 20, 1942), 10.

²⁴⁹John Cournos, "Amrine Writes Honest Novel," New York Times, September 13, 1942, 22.

of things indigenous to Kansas in the novel have already been discussed earlier in this study.

Mrs. Pennington, by Katharine Carson, is a story of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of the 1930's, but possibly its most interesting aspect, to Kansans at least, is its description of the programs which came to the state via the Chautauqua circuit. The remainder of the novel deals largely with one woman's concern over the rampant spread of alcoholism and does not relate to Kansas any more than it does to any other portion of the country. The Chautauqua circuit programs were widespread, too, but they were important to Kansans who flocked to each presentation, and few other Kansas novelists touch on them. Carson notes that the programs were one of the first branches of the parent stem at Chautauqua, New York, and they provided for the intellectually hungry inhabitants of the distant prairies the equivalent of a season at the opera, the university and the circus:

For ten crowded days every June, Onawanna thought of nothing but the assembly. Families came from nearby towns to spend their vacation in the tents which were set in orderly rows in Forest Park; a special train brought excursions from Kansas City; you spent \$1.50 for a season ticket, and you saw and heard the most talked of writers, orators, singers and preachers in the nation. You got a short course

of lectures on every subject from pedagogy to astronomy. . . .²⁵⁰

The lectures supplemented the correspondence courses offered during the winter by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, popularly known as the C.L.S.C. Carson says that these mystic letters were translated by ". . . some daring spirits of the younger generation as 'Come Love Sit Closer,' but such levity was frowned upon."²⁵¹

In The Chain, Paul I. Wellman returns to Jericho, Kansas. His first two novels which used Jericho as a setting, The Bowl of Brass and The Walls of Jericho, dealt with Kansas in the 1880's and the 1890's. By the 1930's, the time period in which The Chain is set, Jericho is no longer a youthful frontier town and has developed social castes, and two different segments of the city--the "nicer" part of town and Jugtown, where the men who work in the packing plant live with their families. When Gilda Holme returns from California after two years, she drives to the plant to see her father:

It was late in the day. A handsome car slowly coasted the packing-house area: a convertible roadster, built for luxury, all deep upholstery and flashing chrome, its color a polished apple

²⁵⁰Katharine Carson, Mrs. Pennington, p. 31.

²⁵¹Loc. cit.

green. Such a car was not often seen in this place, for here the politer part of Jericho seldom came. Jericho never had quite accustomed itself to its huge, noisy, malodorous adjunct, even though it was agreed that the packing house was primarily responsible for the surprising metamorphosis, in two decades, of a little prairie town into the present substantial city of seventy-five thousand people.²⁵²

Because the town has grown, the population has shifted, and the most elegant church in town, the one which Jericho's elite attend, is now located in the poorer section.

Plans are underfoot to move the church when a new rector arrives. The problem, as explained by a woman newspaper publisher, is that ". . . we made a mistake in locating St. Alban's. . . The penalty of our times, I suppose."²⁵³

She moodily wishes for the serenity of the Old World and blames city planners for having such little foresight.

"Naturally," another says, "the foreign element dirties up any neighborhood it gets into."²⁵⁴ The workers are, as another puts it, ". . . in Jericho, but not of Jericho."²⁵⁵

Plans are being made to move the church, because, as one local businessman puts it, one of the first rules

²⁵²Paul I. Wellman, The Chain, p. 10.

²⁵³Ibid., p. 30.

²⁵⁴Loc. cit.

²⁵⁵Ibid., p. 10.

of business is to liquidate a bad investment. Carlisle questions whether a church is a business, and the man replies: "Certainly. Everything's a business."²⁵⁶

When Carlisle, after several months in the church, finally convinces several of the "foreign element" to attend church at St. Alban's, the reaction is predictable:

All St. Alban's sat in shocked question. Back and forth went the glances. Old Porter Grimes scowled. Mary Agnes Cox raised supercilious eyebrows, and her father, Timothy Cox, who already had begun to nod, woke suddenly and placed the pince-nez more firmly on his nose, the better to examine the interlopers. Algeria Wedge's glance was one of fastidious distaste. Todd Westcott smiled grimly. And in the same row with the intruders, Sarah Foote, whose late husband had never in his whole life been anything but socially correct, stiffened her black silk back in rigid indignation, while her daughter Connie looked abashed.²⁵⁷

Religion in Kansas in the 1930's was a strange mixture of piety and self-established ideals which individuals adopted as being Christian. The foreigners were called "interlopers," although they, too, were God's children. People scowled, raised eyebrows, were abashed. One man was almost asleep as was evidently his custom in church. Another sums up the town's attitude by calling Carlisle's sermon topic, ". . . Blessed are ye, if you're

²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 31.

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 126.

nice to the bohunks. Your man's in for trouble," he says, "I could tell it by the faces of the people who pay the freight."²⁵⁸ Another flatly says of Carlisle: "If you want my opinion, this fellow's no better than a Red!"²⁵⁹ Wellman's Kansas of the 1930's, then, concerned itself with religion but not with the ways of Christianity. Kansans were more concerned with business progress and with the orderly business operation of the church than with its avowed purpose. When the Bishop comes to call on Carlisle, his comments indicate that the reaction of St. Alban's congregation is not atypical:

You've learned that people are smug, self-centered, and complacent? That they care little for the work of God, wishing only to go through the forms of worship in their own snobbish little circle, as if the church were just another kind of exclusive country club. . . I'm familiar with the whole story, laddie. I was familiar with it before you were born. And don't be thinking that snobbery and worldly pride are confined to St. Alban's--or even that it's confined to the laity. Some of the clergy, who should know better, are among our worst offenders. Worldly pride is something which, like the poor, we have with us always.²⁶⁰

Perhaps, it is worldly pride that causes John Carlisle to keep from his parishoners the fact that he was a former convict, sent to prison for murdering his brother.

²⁵⁸Ibid., p. 130.

²⁵⁹Ibid., p. 133.

²⁶⁰Ibid., p. 157.

It is more likely, however, that he kept the fact a secret because he knew what the reaction would be when it was made known, as it eventually was by the local newspaper, in screaming headlines:

JERICO MINISTER IS EX-CONVICT.

"FATHER" JOHN CARLISLE SERVED TIME FOR SLAYING OWN BROTHER.

PENITENTIARY RECORD OF LOCAL PRIEST DISCOVERED.
AMAZING STORY OF YEARS OF MASQUERADE REVEALED.
CITY STUNNED BY NEWS.²⁶¹

When members of the press confront Carlisle, one asks how he expected to get away with his sham. "Masquerading as a preacher, with that prison record behind you?"²⁶² That type of question and that type of reaction, which is typical not only among the newspaper men but also among the townspeople, preclude any possibility for a reconciliation with God, of course, and indicate that the local feeling is that Carlisle and others like him, no matter how strongly they feel, are not worthy to be ministers. Later, though, after Carlisle is stoned by a mob outside the church, he is near death while a few concerned individuals prepare him for the ambulance.

²⁶¹Ibid., p. 317.

²⁶²Ibid., p. 345.

Someone suggests loosening his clothing, and they find around his body a symbol of his sincerity:

An iron chain. Linked. Rough. Welded inescapably about the gaunt body. . . Penance. The Chain, most ancient of all symbols of penance. . . Carlisle, the patient and forgiving toward others, had been unable to forgive himself. Of his own volition he had endured, through all those hard years, the ever-twisting, ever constricting reminder, his secret burden for that one mad act of his youth.

In its ugliness the crude Chain revealed, more clearly than any words that could be spoken, the tragedy of the sensitive nature crushed by its self-imposed sense of guilt, yet made more gentle and merciful by its own suffering, becoming beautiful because of its fervent and unending effort to atone.

"God forgive us . . . it is a saint. . ."263

In the end, of course, Carlisle is triumphant, and the church stays where it has been, the members welcome the workers, and, though Carlisle has died, the church will forge ahead, dedicated anew to brotherhood and love. Once again, comes the reminder, put by White and Wellman before--Kansans are forgiving people.

The Not-So-Forgiving 1940's

There are some areas, though, William Inge indicates in Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff, that are beyond the realm of forgiveness in Kansas. Evelyn Wyckoff, a

263 Ibid., p. 367.

spinster schoolteacher in Freedom, Kansas, during the late 1940's, lives in a time when:

Some of the townspeople were so terrified of Communism they had objected even to the school's prescribing any student reading on the subject. And whereas there were never any objections to the sums of money spent on athletics, citizens were critical of every penny spent for books in the library or new teaching facilities.²⁶⁴

Though Miss Wyckoff speaks out eloquently at P.T.A. meetings and stands for rigid moral discipline in her classroom, at thirty-seven she is beginning to worry about herself. Inadvertently, seeing a young couple making love in a car outside the school one night, she is overcome with anxiety:

Her Presbyterian background told her this was something "wrong," "depraved," and to be "condemned" by all "decent" people. Fear of being seen by either of the two young people (how could she ever face them again if they knew she had witnessed them in their lust?) forced her to move quietly away. . . .²⁶⁵

When she finally submits to a black junior college student in her own classroom, the initial guilt sends her into ". . . a fit of self-loathing, so filled with anxiety, she didn't see how she could get through the day."²⁶⁶ Rafe Collins, the black student, comes again often,

²⁶⁴William Inge, Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff, p. 14.

²⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 15-16.

²⁶⁶Ibid., p. 149.

and she willingly submits to him. When she is found out, the scandal forces her out of her job, and she must shamefully leave town. She realizes that, in another town, somewhere away from small-town schools, her "scandal" would be considered merely idiosyncratic. "But she didn't know how to gain passport into that bigger world, nor how she could survive there."²⁶⁷ But she had made her choice herself and can have no animosity toward others. She would not want to be without the experience Rafe had given her, though. "Even if the experience cost her her job and her acceptance by society, she would choose experience if it added importantly to her fulfillment."²⁶⁸ She must leave Freedom, Kansas, for Belleville, her hometown, with nothing more from anyone than that which her Principal says: "I don't think I have to tell you how much I regret all this. . . Good luck, Miss Wyckoff."²⁶⁹

Even though she has been rejected by the people of Freedom, Miss Wyckoff has a warm feeling for the community:

²⁶⁷Ibid., p. 174.

²⁶⁸Ibid., p. 45.

²⁶⁹Ibid., p. 31.

She loved Midwestern people with all their faults, their isolationism, their flat speech, their indifference to social and political conflicts. With all these faults, there was a sweetness she found in most of the people, and a quick friendliness, more sincere than the genteel cordiality of the South, more warm and outgoing than the sociability of New Englanders. She could not bring herself to condemn them now.²⁷⁰

Miss Wyckoff's background in Belleville had been a non-integrated one but she had felt very open-minded about having Negroes in her school. Her physical condition--the fact that she was a virgin and that her doctor felt her vital organs might be beginning to atrophy from lack of use--might also have had something to do with the ease with which she was seduced. But Rafe Collins was good looking, too:

But maybe it was the mere fact of his bold sexual attractiveness that placed his affair with Miss Wyckoff in a light that was so degrading to her. It was clearly a relationship unjustified by love (how could a handsome young Negro buck and a thirty-seven-year-old spinster school teacher pretend to be "in love?") that unveiled in the woman a physical lust that women, at least women in responsible public positions, are not supposed to know or feel.²⁷¹

Miss Wyckoff's own terrible feeling of guilt after her "affair" with Rafe begins is more typical of women everywhere, no doubt, than it is indigenous to Kansas. The reactions of those she called friends may be more

²⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 33-34.

²⁷¹Ibid., p. 36.

descriptive of the state. The Principal who must fire Miss Wyckoff says that he will probably not suspend Rafe. "The town's football fans are going to be mighty sore if we kick him out of school."²⁷² He suggests that the next time Rafe makes a touchdown, the town will forget his part in the episode with Miss Wyckoff. "It's an irony of our culture that the male never suffers social opprobrium as does the woman in a situation like this."²⁷³

So there is no way out for Miss Wyckoff, and she must leave, hoping to find another job in a town where she is not known. She did still have her master's degree. She treasured the degree because it might possibly serve to get her another job ". . . in a part of the country far enough away from this town of Freedom for no one to have heard of her disgrace, where she could start life over."²⁷⁴ Perhaps Inge's point is that Kansans, at least small-town Kansans, are narrow-minded and terribly provincial. Perhaps, he is saying that in another town, in another state, Evelyn Wyckoff would have been forgiven and people would have, at least,

²⁷²Ibid., p. 28.

²⁷³Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷⁴Ibid., p. 7.

attempted to understand her. If so, it is the strongest point that he makes about Kansas. There is no moralizing as in White, less pondering the beauty of the state than in McCarter, and no divergences as in Pennell. But one still understands Miss Wyckoff, is able to recognize flashes of Kansas and of Kansas thought, and can understand without a doubt what Inge is trying to accomplish.

Success and Failure in the 1950's

Few Kansas novels deal with the 1950's or later. Among those that do, though, are Paul William Burre's Downstream and Judson Jerome's The Fell of Dark. Downstream is set in the Kansas City, Kansas, suburb of Armourdale, an industrial river town, and tells the story of how the people of that city fought and recovered from a disastrous flood in 1951. The story is based on fact but its characters are fictitious. There is little in the novel to recommend it as being among the finer Kansas novels, but it paints a vivid picture of Kansans' struggle to save their homes from the floodwater. The book tells of several individuals' efforts to save their families and their household goods and indicates that each person reacts differently in such a situation. After the flood,

and during the "reconstruction" period, Burres offers a brief look at Kansas' attitude toward government aid:

I don't like the idea that the government owes us a lot of money. The government is there to protect us and direct things so we'll all have a chance to earn a living and live in peace and freedom. It don't owe me a thing it ain't already give me a dozen times over. But if you think the government owes you some help, you'd better get busy and prove to them you're good risks.²⁷⁵

The hard-working Kansan does prove to be a good risk, and one is to understand that Kansans can recover from any disaster.

The Fell of Dark, on the other hand, is the story of a Kansan who is a failure. The novel tells the story of the aftermath of an accident in which Harry Cable, who is drunk at the time, swerves to avoid an oncoming truck and forces a jalopy off the road, killing its young Negro driver. The truck stops but, Harry, without knowing what damage he has done, keeps on going. When he comes to his senses, Harry is torn between the wish to escape and the wish to confess. The truck driver has described Harry's car and the sheriff knows who must have been driving it. The sheriff, however, was poor as a youth and was helped by Harry's mother, Olive, and can't bring himself to accuse Harry publicly. Olive

²⁷⁵Paul William Burres, Downstream, p. 216.

devises her own form of punishment for Harry, which is to keep him in ignorance of what he has done until long after the accident, since Harry has not seen a newspaper and does not know someone was killed.

The book's value as a Kansas novel, lies not so much in the fact of its story as it does in the Kansas heritage of its characters. The money of its protagonists has come from the earth, from the hard labor and sharp dealing of Harry's father. Since her husband is dead, Olive runs their ranch and is pictured as a manly, strict, hard-nosed woman. Harry, on the other hand, is weak and cannot live up to the comparison Olive continually makes between him and her husband. It is, in that sense, a story of people made by the Kansas frontier when the frontier has long since vanished and deserted them. The realism and determination which made the West are vestigial qualities in these heirs of the original settlers, though in a world of rocket engines, super highways and television, the pioneer virtues can seem anachronistic and sinister. Harry's former wife talks about the pioneer spirit:

I know . . . the old line about taking hold, making do, the same pioneer optimism that walks out of the storm cellar after a tornado and sees

the farm blown away and picks up a bent nail, pockets it, thinking, "That'll come in handy."²⁷⁶

The "pioneer woman" that Olive typifies is also pictured by Jerome. Olive recalls the time when, at fourteen, she entered the junior division corn-shucking contest at the Moxie fair and took second, ". . . ripping the green shuck, the ear between her knees, pitching the golden corn onto a growing pile clean as a whistle."²⁷⁷ Looking up, she saw her future husband standing in the crowd looking at her:

She stood up for congratulations, looking up at him, and indolently, he picked a corn worm off her bosom, then took up her numb, wet, corn-silk-plastered hands (dead in feeling from the elbows down) and stared at them. Olive looked, too: they were square and knuckly and blistered red. "Kee-rist!" Henry finally said. "I was going to ask you to come square-dancing with me this evening. But I guess I'll find me a girl." And turned and walked away. And the glory of her success went with him. She felt an inch high. And God she loved him for making her feel that way.²⁷⁸

The Kansas of the past seems more appealing to Olive than does the state in the 1950's.

Kansas novelists have also felt that way, because they have been reluctant to write about the present at all. Hindsight is easier and simpler, they feel,

²⁷⁶Jerome, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

²⁷⁷Ibid., p. 261.

²⁷⁸Loc. cit.

and the Kansas of years past offers more literary "meat" than the state at the present time. Jack Curtis' Banjo was published in 1971 but its setting is the 1920's. William Inge's Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff, published in 1970, deals with the 1940's. Other recent novelists have also chosen to set their novels in years past. Truman Nelson's 1960 novel deals with John Brown; Irving Stone's The Passionate Journey, published in 1959, is set in the early part of the century. Nevertheless, one can glean much from Kansas novels that helps form an overall understanding of the state, at least as it was up to the 1950's.

CHAPTER IV

KANSAS, TRUE OR FALSE?

Kansas novels have touched on many subjects-- pioneer settlement, the violence of the state's early years, the Civil War, politics, bootlegging and racial problems, to name a few--and have taken for their settings, areas throughout the state. Their characters have run the gamut from farmer to banker, from a young schoolgirl to a spinster schoolteacher, from a boy of twelve to men of old age. Yet, because of their varying subject matter, their differences in setting, and the varying ages, sexes and outlooks of their characters, they provide the reader a far-reaching examination of the state that touches on many topics of consideration. And, despite the fact of their differences of theme, setting and the period in which they were written, they are similar in much of that which they say about the people of the state. The Walls of Jericho, for instance, is strikingly similar in what it says about Kansans' attitudes toward religion to Inge's brief comments on Christianity in Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff. The former

novel was written early in the century, while Inge's appeared in 1970. There are other similarities in terms of the influence of the Civil War, family life, hypocrisy, Kansans' closeness to the land, racial matters, and in other areas.

Few Native Kansans

One of the first things a reader perceives in Kansas novels is that the characters who populate them are rarely native Kansans. The principal characters, at least (except for their offspring, of course), all seem to come to Kansas from somewhere else. This is not always true. Evelyn Wyckoff, for instance, of Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff, is a native of Belleville, Kansas, and Newt Winger, in The Learning Tree, was born in the town in which the story is set. In most cases, however, the heroes are not originally from the state. Phebe Tanner, of Franklin's None But the Brave, is part of a wagon train of emigrants from Pennsylvania, and the Lieutenant with whom she falls in love is originally from the East. Free Soil tells the story of settlers from Ohio and Pennsylvania; John Brown, whose story is the subject of God's Angry Man and The Surveyor, was originally from Ohio; Tom Butler, because of problems in Illinois, is forced to Run to Kansas; and the narrator

of McCarter's The Price of the Prairie speaks of his family's trek to the state: "On the day that Kansas became a Territory, my father . . . with all his household effects started from Rockport, Massachusetts, to begin life anew in the wild, unknown West."²⁷⁹ The railroad doctor, whose story is told in West of Dodge, came to Kansas from the East; Esther Vogt's story of Kansas Mennonites, The Sky is Falling, opens when the first group of this religious sect settled in Kansas near Hillsboro; and in The Hill or Simmons Point, the grandmother of one of the young heroines, tells of her journey to the state:

I was born in Canal Dover, Ohio. . . . There were four of us girls. . . . We came by boat to St. Louis; then north to Westport, Missouri; and across to Paola, Kansas, by stagecoach in 1857. I taught school at Stanton in Lykins County, now known as Miami County, when we first came to Kansas.²⁸⁰

In A Wall of Men, McCarter speaks of the varied types of individuals who travelled the Santa Fe Trail into Kansas in the 1850's:

Along this historic old highway in the middle '50's came the westward-facing people, with purposes as varied as the varied speech and manner of the men who held them: the frontier border raider; the New England emigrant, Pilgrim Father of the

²⁷⁹Margaret Hill McCarter, The Price of the Prairie, p. 16.

²⁸⁰Dentler, op. cit., p. 39.

plains; the Southern gentleman, loyal to the empire-extending spirit; the refugee Negro, sometimes close upon his heels; the half-civilized Indian from Michigan; the staunch-headed Quaker from Indiana; the adventurer, the State-builder, the outlaw, the missionary, the dreamer of a day of better things--the footprint of each was, from time to time, in the dust of this Trail.²⁸¹

Rome Hanks, in Pennell's novel The History of Rome Hanks, was from Iowa and served in the Civil War with an Iowa unit, but later migrated to Kansas with others who were also from east of the Missouri River:

Seems to me, Uncle Pink said, that John Swinton went to Kansas first. Your father wanted to git away from Nawth Cahlina--and Kansas was still purty much the Wild West in those days. I swear, I think I was there the night Robert broached the subject. Fathah, he says to Jud, John Swinton's in Kansas. We could go there. No, Jud said. Not that Free State.²⁸²

Even Wagnal, one of the narrators, came to Kansas from Iowa. His wife had become bored, he said, living there:

And though she loved our old deep-porched, deep-lawned house and all the little iron negroes holding out their iron rings for the horses, she did not want to stay. Thomas, she said, we must leave. I cannot stand this place any longer--I cannot abide it. It is a bore, an evil humdrum bore. I shall die if I live here any longer.²⁸³

White, in Boys Then and Now, speaking of El Dorado in the seventies, notes that ". . . the inhabitants

²⁸¹Margaret Hill McCarter, A Wall of Men, p. 4.

²⁸²Pennell, op. cit., p. 267.

²⁸³Ibid., p. 214.

of the town were for the most part young men and women in their twenties and thirties who had come out from the East and the Middle States. . . .²⁸⁴ Also, in the 1880's, Phil Garwood, late of New York City, shorn of his beginning fortune by a stock market crash, came to Kansas, in Manifest Destiny. "Out of western Iowa and into Nebraska . . . he had watched his beloved woods dwindle to struggling growths rooted along creeks and rivers."²⁸⁵ William Allen White's characters were not always strict Kansas stock. In fact, even in In Our Town, in which he writes of the people of whom he seemed so fond, he notes that one socially-minded individual was from Ohio:

Beverly's greatest joy was in talking about his social conquests in Tiffin, Ohio; therefore he soon was telling us that there was so much culture in Tiffin, such a jolly lot of girls, so many pleasant homes, and a most extraordinary atmosphere of refinement.²⁸⁶

Colonel "Alphabetical" Morrison ". . . came to our part of the country in an early day,"²⁸⁷ the Hon. Andoneran P. Balderson, ". . . late of Quito, Hancock County,

²⁸⁴William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 8.

²⁸⁵Laman, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁸⁶William Allen White, In Our Town, p. 76.

²⁸⁷Ibid., p. 148.

Iowa . . . has finally determined to settle in our midst,"²⁸⁸ and the town itself ". . . was organized fifty years ago by abolitionists from New England."²⁸⁹ An old lady writes in her scrapbook of some of the newcomers:

In those days of the early seventies, before the railroad came, when the town awoke in the morning and found a newly arrived covered wagon near a neighbour's house, it always meant that kin had come. If at school that day the children from the house of visitation bragged about their relatives, expatiating upon the power and riches that they left back East, the town knew that the visitors were ordinary kin; but if the children from the afflicted household said little about the visitors and evidently tried to avoid telling just who they were, then the town knew that the strangers were poor kin--probably some of "his folks"; for it was well understood that the women in this town all came from high connections "back east" in Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Iowa. Newcomers sometimes wondered how such a galaxy of princesses and duchesses and ladyships happened to marry so far beneath their station.²⁹⁰

White's novel, *In the Heart of a Fool*, opens with a wagon train ending its journey at what will be the townsite of Harvey, Kansas:

As the actors unload their wagons the spectators may notice above their heads bright, beautiful and evanescent forms coming and going in and out of being. These are the visions of the pioneers, and they are vastly more real than the men and women

²⁸⁸Ibid., p. 197.

²⁸⁹Ibid., p. 219.

²⁹⁰Ibid., p. 196.

themselves. For these visions are the forces that form the human crystal.²⁹¹

Even John Barclay, the hero of A Certain Rich Man, was not a native Kansan. As a man, he remembered the covered wagon trip of his youth and the death of his father soon after he entered the state:

All his life he remembered the covered wagon in which the Barclays crossed the Mississippi. . . . The man remembered nothing of the long ride that the child and the mother took with the father's body to Lawrence. . . . But he always remembered something of their westward ride, after the funeral of his father. . . . He could not know . . . that he was seeing one of God's miracles--the migration of a people, blind but instinctive as that of birds or buffalo, from old pastures into new ones. All over the plains in those days, on a hundred roads like that which ran through Sycamore Ridge, men and women were moving from east to west.²⁹²

Caroline and Charles, the homesteaders of Let the Hurricane Roar, grew up in the Big Woods country east of Kansas. When they married there was little good land left. "Farther west, the country was not yet settled and the land was said to be rich and level, and without forests. So they went west."²⁹³ They came to Kansas as did the primary characters in Wellman's novels, The Walls of Jericho and The Chain. David

²⁹¹William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, p. 2.

²⁹²William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 5.

²⁹³Lane, op. cit., p. 5.

Constable, the young lawyer, is originally from Tennessee. After his parents died Constable studied law, became a lawyer's clerk in St. Louis, and continued to read law. But, discovering that it is difficult for a young attorney to breast competition in a large city, ". . . he sought another place. And so came to Jericho."²⁹⁴

To the consternation of the inhabitants of Jericho, Tucker Wedge, the editor of the Jericho Chronicle, brought a new wife to the city. "Above all, why had Tucker found it necessary to marry a woman in Peoria, Illinois, when there were so many fine, charming, well-trained girls right at home?"²⁹⁵ The new wife, Algeria, plays an important role in her husband's life and is a powerful influence on the direction of the novel.

In The Chain, the new rector, John Carlisle, comes from an unnamed city in the East. When the story opens, he has been in Jericho ". . . just a month, having been sent from the Cathedral by the Bishop as a supply for the late Reverend Foote."²⁹⁶ Others in the story play an important role and also are not Kansans. They are the workers in the packing house:

²⁹⁴Paul I. Wellman, The Walls of Jericho, pp. 18-19.

²⁹⁵Ibid., p. 5.

²⁹⁶Paul I. Wellman, The Chain, p. 18.

Very early Todd Wescott decided that native American white labor was too costly and too independent for mass-production methods. He hunted the world for cheap workers, so that he changed the whole aspect of Jericho, providing it with a foreign section that was a babel of strange tongues and a rabbit warren of shacks and slumlike flats.²⁹⁷

The parents of Gus Gilpin, in Banjo, like most of the rest, had also come from somewhere east of Kansas.

"Poppa had learned his farming in Iowa; Momma had come from Pennsylvania."²⁹⁸ And, in Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff, while Evelyn Wyckoff was a native of the state, her seducer was not. Rafe Collins was an Okie:

He was one of the out-of-town athletes selected by the coach on his scouting trips. He came from Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and the coach had to promise him a lot of financial aid to persuade him to reject an offer from the University of Oklahoma.²⁹⁹

And so they came. They came primarily for the land, but for other reasons as well, and they helped Kansas become a state of many varied types of individuals.

Civil War Influences

Though most of those who settled Kansas were from somewhere to the east, they were the ones who would eventually come to be known as Kansans and who would

²⁹⁷Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹⁸Curtis, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁹⁹Inge, op. cit., p. 12

bring up their children with Kansas ideals. They brought with them a plethora of diverse ideas, cultures, plans, and hopes. But one thing they all brought, at least in the early days of the state, was an overriding, omnipresent memory of the Civil War and all it meant to them and to the country. This concern with the war and its influences upon all who touched it in some way is evident in many Kansas novels. Perhaps, it is most apparent in The History of Rome Hanks. Lee, Rome's grandson, has an intense desire to know about his ancestors who fought in the war. Though he is living in the 1920's, he still feels the effects of the war himself:

She would be his, if he could impress her, so he was telling her about Granpa Harrington being a confederate officer in Pickett's charge at Shiloh in the cavalry and Grandpa Beckham being a Yankee, thinking it would make her "love" him. He did not even think that the war was fought for something besides the arms of a tall blonde girl. He did not know how it had been fought; he did not know that neither Grandpa Harrington nor Grandpa Beckham had understood what they had been fighting for--and that when they had finished fighting and marching and starving and shaking and squittering and had gone home (to places that were not home then) they had not, even then, found out that what they had supposed they had been fighting for³⁰⁰ had evaporated and become something else.

³⁰⁰Pennell, op. cit., p. 4.

To the old soldiers with whom Lee visits about his relatives, everything relates to the war. They share a secret guilt concerning it, and though they shade it in talk of derring-do and gallantry and blood and death, the guilt is there and the reader cannot help but be conscious of it. Wagnal, who was a doctor in the war, feels the guilt and the pain more than the others as he constantly remembers terrible scenes in hospital tents:

A hospital orderly was picking up a tub of arms and legs preparatory to carrying them out and two more hospital pimps--as we used to call them--were taking a lone-legged man from the bloody pine table. Raith was wiping his hands on a gray uniform coat, leaving it smudged with red. Eh? he said. Oh, him? The ball went in the belly and took out two vertebrae just above the coccyx. Can't move his legs. Don't know why he's alive now.³⁰¹

Wagnal recalls that even when he was miles from where any shot had been fired, ". . . you might suddenly smell the track of war."³⁰² Searching for his own reasons, he can find only one:

I fear that I am the fool of an infinite impractical joke with little humor and less wit. My God! Me down in Tennessee sweating in a dirty blue coat, not because I had any convictions, any hatred, or even any political ambition, but because of the vanity of a little goldbraid which soon

³⁰¹Ibid., p. 28.

³⁰²Ibid., p. 116.

tarnished and a few yards of cloth which soon grew ragged and foul-smelling.³⁰³

The guilt lived with him long after the war, and he continually wondered why he had fought, why others had attempted to kill him, what good it had done. The war's effect was felt everywhere, and everywhere people would remember:

And every little town in America had a post of the Grand Army of the Republic or of the United States Confederate Veterans. And they all wore those old soldier hats, blue or gray. And every little boy said: My Granpa was in the Civil War or the War between the States; he's an Old Soldier. Was your Granpa? And the answer was: Sure, everybody's Granpa's an Old Soldier. And there were two days one for the North and one for the South when the Old Soldiers marched to the cemeteries of the nation. And when there was a military post near, the commandant sent a firing-squad with breech-loading rifles or a battery of three-inch breech-loading cannon. And the Old Soldiers looked at the guns and the metal they threw and said: By Jesus, if we'd a-had them at Gettysburg Pickett wouldn't a-got off Seminary Ridge. By God, if we'd a-had them at Shiloh, Grant would a-been drowned in the Tennessee with his whole Goddamned army.³⁰⁴

So, like elsewhere in the country, the war, and the memory of it, and the regrets because of it, and the effects of it upon the minds and bodies of the men and women who were touched by it, became important in Kansas.

³⁰³Ibid., p. 122.

³⁰⁴Ibid., p. 325.

McCarter, in A Wall of Men, thinks of the Civil War in a manner far different from the narrators of Pennell's novel. Typically, she speaks of it in terms that are patriotic and filled with feelings of worthwhile sacrifice. She does so, even though several of her heroes spent months in prison at Andersonville and others were killed or mutilated in one or another of the war's bloody battles. At the end of the novel, McCarter speaks of the Civil War veterans' descendants:

And their children, the citizens of a great commonwealth, still tell their children of their own young years, when a wall of men, for the love of freedom, stood round about the young pioneer State to defend it from its foes. And how these men, trained on the Western prairies, went forth to larger fields and followed the old flag and battled for it and with their brother soldiers saved it, at last for themselves and their nation forever.³⁰⁵

Once more, in The Price of the Prairie, McCarter speaks of the Civil War when her narrator, then a young boy, laments the fact that few people realize how he and his friends felt when their fathers marched off to join in the battles:

How little the Kansas boys and girls today can understand what that morning meant to us when we saw our fathers riding down the Santa Fe Trail to the east and waving goodbye to us at the far side of the ford. How the sudden fire of patriotism burned in our hearts, and how the sudden loss of

³⁰⁵Margaret Hill McCarter, A Wall of Men, pp. 493-494.

all our strongest and best men left us helpless among secret cruel enemies.³⁰⁶

The Kansas youth of today are definitely not so concerned with the Civil War. Other, more recent, wars have come and gone and their fathers talk more of the Battle of the Bulge or Iwo Jima than of Vicksburg or Shiloh. But in the youth of William Allen White, as he mentions in Boys Then and Now, there was occasional reason to remember Shiloh, or Pickett's Charge, or Seminary Ridge. Nearly fifty thousand dollars, bequeathed to the children of Emporia by Captain L. T. Heritage, a veteran of the Civil War, provided ". . . a fund from which every child in the town, that needs it, may have decent clothing, expert medical care, and hospitalization."³⁰⁷ White's novel In Our Town also mentions the war briefly in terms of a young man who went away a hero:

In his first fight he was shot in the head and was in the hospital for a year demented; when he was put back in the ranks he was captured and his name given out among the killed. In prison his dementia returned and he stayed there two years. Then for a year after his exchange he followed the Union Army like a dumb creature, and not until two years after the close of the war did the poor fellow

³⁰⁶Margaret Hill McCarter, The Price of the Prairie, p. 65.

³⁰⁷William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 4.

drift home again, as one from the dead--all uncertain of the past and unfitted for the future.³⁰⁸

In the Heart of a Fool also mentions the war, this time in terms of a young newspaper editor who had ". . . fought in the great Civil War for the truth that should make men free. And he was sure in those elder days that the new day was just dawning."³⁰⁹ And in A Certain Rich Man, the effect of the war is still felt even many years after its end. A young newspaper reporter who was not yet born when the war was fought complains that a veteran was sent to the town for burial from the National Soldiers' Home at Leavenworth in a shabby, faded blue army uniform. The young reporter is incensed. "Surely this great government can afford better shrouds than that for its soldier dead."³¹⁰ Reading the reporter's editorial, many of the old men in the town weep.

Only one brief mention of the war is made in Banjo. Gus Gilpin's father tells a black hired man that he doesn't have to ". . . go around this farm with your eyes down. You're a free man. My father died

³⁰⁸William Allen White, In Our Town, pp. 131-132.

³⁰⁹William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, pp. 5-6.

³¹⁰William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 433.

fighting for your freedom."³¹¹ The statement is made ironic, though, when the farmer continues to treat the black man like a southern slave. It is also ironic that the effects of the war should be presented by Kansas novelists in terms of only white men. The war affected the minds of many, of course, but the cause for which most of the old soldiers fought seems to have been forgotten. Kansas novelists do not touch on the effects of freedom on former slaves. Nor do they mention how Negroes in Kansas fared after the war. The patriotic, self-righteous causes for which they fought are only secondary to the glory and the horror of battle.

Religion

The role religion plays in the lives of Kansans and in the development of the state is a central theme in many Kansas novels. Only a few novels set in Kansas do not, in some way, touch upon the subject. If Kansas novelists have overlooked the effect of freedom upon Negroes in the state after the Civil War, they have not ignored the question of how Christianity should look upon slavery before the war began. In None But the Brave, Franklin raises the issue:

³¹¹Curtis, op. cit., p. 12.

The Kansas conflict was slowly approaching a climax. Men were flocking to their separate banners, proclaiming their allegiance for or against the "peculiar institution" of slavery. God and the Constitution were continually evoked by one side or the other. Men searched their souls aloud and took their stands. It was hard to reconcile a Christian outlook with slavery, though political morality could always cover and include strange aberrations from human reasonableness and compassion. It was hard to justify slaveholding with the gentle tenets of Christ. Yet many a man of the cloth made the attempt, and many a sincere Christian strove to follow.³¹²

There were, indeed, Christians on both sides of the conflict between the states, and both sides could rationalize their decisions to fight for or against slavery. Although The History of Rome Hanks is more concerned with death than with life, with the blood shed by Civil War soldiers than with that which was shed by Jesus Christ and which was so vital a part of the lives of many pioneers, there is, now and then, a reference to religion. It is never flaunted as in White's novels, though. Indeed, it is often spoken of in mocking tones and, at least once, with a passionate hatred. Wagnal, an admitted "renegade preacher,"³¹³ realizes one day that he is also a cuckold:

From that day onward I began to think: There is no God, or, if there is a God, it is something

³¹²Franklin, op. cit., p. 211.

³¹³Pennell, op. cit., p. 112.

on which I had not reckoned--it is something which is blind and cruel, running in a set of cosmic grooves like a leviathanic shute-the-shutes. Something with no humor but unconscious humor, something whose finest irony is mere accident wedded to chance. They--my congregation and the villagers--who had never reached a cognizance of one small atom of the earth around them, began to say I was mad.³¹⁴

References to religion take on a decidedly different tone in the novels of William Allen White. Religion in those days, was met ". . . by the boys with joy but not much conviction."³¹⁵ The youth of early in the century, as pictured by White, were not really much different from the youngsters of today, at least when it came to reacting to Sunday School:

The Sunday School was a social rather than a religious exercise for the boys. . . . For the boys . . . the Sunday School was their chief social diversion; inexpensive, regular, established by the high powers that controlled the universe.³¹⁶

Because religion was so important to the people of the small towns of early Kansas, the youth, and especially the boys, might have been somewhat overexposed to it, White thinks. The result of religion, whether at camp meetings, revivals or Sunday School, he writes, ". . . was to thrust adolescence into his life several years

³¹⁴Ibid., p. 238.

³¹⁵William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 12.

³¹⁶Ibid., pp. 14-15.

before its time; to make him knowledgeable . . . when he should have been gay and blind."³¹⁷ In Our Town contains a humorous description of a local minister which is provided by a young reporter who is briefing a new man on the newspaper staff:

That was old Milligan that just went out--beware of him. He will load you up with truck about himself. He rings in his sermons; trots around with church social notices that ought to be paid for, and tries to get them in free; likes to be referred to as doctor; slips in mean items about his congregation, if you don't watch him; and insists on talking religion Saturday morning when you are too busy to spit. More than that, he has an awful breath . . .³¹⁸

Dentler provides a less frivolous description of many of the ministers of early twentieth century Kansas in

The Hill or Simmons Point:

Most of the preachers of the time were itinerants, many of whom were peddlers of one kind or another to pay expenses. From this group there came one to the community selling medicine and preaching the gospel. . . . He stated his plan of house-to-house canvass in his effort to establish churches, saying that he usually spent about one week in each neighborhood, provided he could find a place to stay while he carried on the Lord's work.³¹⁹

Frequently, as in Anna Matilda Carlson's The Heritage of the Bluestem, whole communities found they had to bend somewhat to ideas of Christianity other

³¹⁷Ibid., p. 17.

³¹⁸William Allen White, In Our Town, p. 173.

³¹⁹Dentler, op. cit., p. 63.

than their own. This novel tells of the founding of a new town in Kansas, Pilgrim Valley, by a group of Lutherans who did not want people of other denominations settling in their community. "One day Pilgrim Valley awoke to the realization that Christianity is not so much a matter of creed as of the Christ spirit."³²⁰ Settlers of other churches began to settle in the small town and soon new churches--Methodist, Mennonite, Congregationalist--sprang into existence. Carlson's novel details the slow change of heart of the original settlers of the community who finally accept the newcomers as a part of the town's constructive force.

Esther Vogt devotes her entire novel, The Sky is Falling, to a study of Mennonites in Kansas. The concept of "separatism," which Kansas Mennonites followed, precluded any sort of friendship with people who were not of their faith. The grandfather of Hannah Kliwer, the heroine of the story, tells her that she can be neighbors to the "Englishers" but not friends. This bothers Hannah immensely, because she believes she is falling in love with Dan Smith, a non-Christian:

Why did the Mennonites have to be so narrow?
Yes, it was all right to "live separated," to "be

³²⁰Anna Matilda Carlson, The Heritage of the Bluestem, p. 45.

not conformed to this world"--but was being kind and sympathetic toward an unbeliever conforming to the world? Hannah wondered how many good, staunch church folk had ever visited or bothered to approach the Smiths with the gospel.³²¹

The rules of the Mennonites were so strict that they even believed that ". . . no Christian is separated who bobs her hair."³²²

Not all Kansans were Christians, however. Henry Archelaus of Paul I. Wellman's The Bowl of Brass, for example, had never even been inside a church. But he was a shrewd businessman, and when he founded a new town, he knew how to make use of at least something relating to the Bible:

Jericho. He had chosen the name because it had a Biblical sound and he knew that Kansas people were suckers for the Bible. He was no student of the scriptures himself, but somebody once had quoted him a Bible verse that contained the words, ". . . the land, and Jericho." It sounded like a real estate development.³²³

William Allen White was usually deadly serious when he wrote about Kansas religion. He frequently comments on the religious attitudes of Kansans with sadness permeating his message:

³²¹Vogt, op. cit., p. 148.

³²²Ibid., p. 162.

³²³Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, p. 21.

We send our children to Sunday School, and we go to church and learn how God's rewards or punishments fell upon the men of old, as they were faithful or recreant; but we don't seem to be like the men of old, for we are neither very good nor very bad--hardly worth God's while to sort us over for any uncommon lot.³²⁴

White was adamant in In the Heart of a Fool when he stated one of his fundamental beliefs:

About all there is in life is one's fundamental choice between the spiritual and the material. After that choice is made, the die of life is cast. Events play upon that choice their curious pattern, bringing such griefs and joys, such calamities and winnings as every life must have. For that choice makes character, and character makes happiness.³²⁵

This becomes the theme of the novel when conflict arises between the mine workers, who seek better wages and living conditions, and the owners who are pictured by White as greedy heathens. A minister, verbally condemned by many for supporting the workers from his pulpit, relates religion to social problems, saying that Christ once went about preaching a new order and spreading discontent with injustice. "'Yes--and you know what happened to Him,' sneered the courts, which are the keystones of government in the structure of civilization."³²⁶ White stated the

³²⁴William Allen White, In Our Town, p. 93.

³²⁵William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, p. 95.

³²⁶Ibid., pp. 323-324.

moral of his novel succinctly: "'And the fool said in his heart, there is no God!' And this fable teaches, if it teaches anything, that the fool was indeed a fool."³²⁷

White is equally concerned with religion in A Certain Rich Man. Early in the novel, when John Barclay is but a boy, his mother tries to interest him in ". . . Mr. Beecher's sermons which she read to him, but his eyes followed the bees and the birds . . . so the seed fell on stony ground."³²⁸ Indeed, John Barclay does not heed his mother nor the minister at the church that he attended as a youth. As he grows older, he makes his millions without regard to others. His mother tries, again, when he is middle-aged and speaks with the voice of Kansas:

All your nicely built card houses are knocked over. . . In spite of your years of planning and piecing out your little practical system, and the very first puff of God's breath it goes to pieces. . . You have no worldly power. In this practical world you are a failure. . . Look at it from a practical standpoint: what thing in the last thirty years have you advocated, and Philemon Ward opposed, that today he has not realized and you lost? Which of you has won his practical fight in this practical world--his God or your God; the ideal world or the material world, boy?³²⁹

³²⁷Ibid., p. 613.

³²⁸William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 6.

³²⁹Ibid., pp. 395-396.

John Barclay does repent and, therein, lies the moral to White's novel. For Barclay, as a result, is a happier, more fulfilled man.

Lane does not make religion a focal point of her slim novel, Let the Hurricane Roar, but indicates, now and then, that Christianity was an important part of every frontier family's life. For example when Charles and Caroline are married, a circuit rider writes their marriage certificate in the place provided for it in the family Bible. When they are settled on their homestead, they observe the sabbath. "On Sundays they did not work and Charles played only hymns."³³⁰ When Caroline visits for the first time a neighboring Swedish family, they show her their two prized possessions--a Swedish-American grammar and a Swedish Bible.

McCarter, despite her highly sentimental tone in The Peace of the Solomon Valley, does not concern herself with religion, preferring to talk in terms of the beauty and peace of the land without really giving credit to its Creator. Only once does Roy speak of God in a letter to his father:

The sky is too everlasting far up. And only the great hand of God Almighty can fling the little cirri cloud flakes in groups that slope toward the zenith,

³³⁰Lane, op. cit., p. 17.

or pile the black stupendous thunderfolds against the western horizon and illumine them through and through with electric splendor, the token of His own glory.³³¹

In A Wall of Men, McCarter speaks of the lack of ministers on the Kansas frontier in the 1850's and notes, when a travelling minister comes to a small settlement, that ". . . the settlers, glad of the opportunity for any Sabbath service, would have listened to any grade of speaker with eagerness."³³²

As they were able to rationalize their reasons for being on either side in the Civil War through the Bible, Kansans have been able to find justification for just about anything in that book. Even John Brown, who struck the first blow for the abolitionists in Kansas by murdering several people in cold blood, found support for his activities in the Bible. In The Surveyor, Truman Nelson speaks of Brown's source of justification:

He wants to decide everything out of the Bible. He's going to settle the Kansas question by studying the Book of Judges. Judges! Wait now, he ain't got that far yet, his idea of how to operate a government goes back to what the patriarchs did in Israel before the days of Judges.³³³

³³¹Margaret Hill McCarter, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, p. 42.

³³²Margaret Hill McCarter, A Wall of Men, p. 29.

³³³Nelson, op. cit., p. 342.

After Brown has murdered three men at Potawatomie, one of his sons is almost hysterical and accuses him of murdering them needlessly. Brown quotes scripture in his reply:

How long will you vex me? I do it with all my heart, you blind one. For the Lord God is a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons! Are you afraid? Then go home. Go home or be still. I am not afraid.³³⁴

The Bible is a convenient source of rationalization for anything, Kansans have found.

While religion is not of special concern to Wellman in The Walls of Jericho, it receives its share of attention, though not with the fervor with which White uses it, for example. Perhaps, Wellman is more honest in his appraisal of Kansans' attitudes toward religion than is White, who can find no good at all in anyone who is not as dedicated a Christian as he felt himself to be. Early in Wellman's novel Dave Constable walks past a church where a group of women are singing:

A wail of voices. High-pitched women's voices:

And He walks with me
And He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own:
And the joys we share
As we tarry there
No mortal has ever known. . .

³³⁴Enrlich, op. cit., p. 39.

Church hymn at prayer meeting. Why, thought Dave with a curious surprise, it's a love song. A woman is telling of her lover . . . the shrill voices ached. . . Odd for such a song to be disguised as a hymn. Or was it odd? Human hunger, seeking to translate the ineffable into terms of experience . . . the ache in the women's voices seemed suddenly a confession.

. . . Joys we share . . . no mortal has ever known. . .

But they are mortal, he said to himself, and they feel cheated. Because they do not know the joys they sing, in the sere drabness of their mortal existence.³³⁵

Later in the novel, Algeria Wedge gives thought to religion in Kansas and expresses somewhat better than characters in other novels, explicitly what religion meant in the state, at least in the early 1900's, when she speaks about certain sins being considered worse than others:

The very blackest, from a political standpoint, was to be a "wet" in this state of prohibition protestation. It came ahead of fornication or fraud. . . You may have boon companions in Kansas, who will join you in drinking and gambling and sometimes in affairs of a primrose tinge; but it is a curious truth that those same friends will, on election day, go to the polls and vote against you for it.³³⁶

Kansas loves only one thing more than a man without blame and without blemish, she said, ". . . a sinner who has been saved, a brand from the burning."³³⁷

³³⁵Paul I. Wellman, The Walls of Jericho, p. 2.

³³⁶Ibid., pp. 138-139.

³³⁷Loc. cit.

Religion and man's concern for others in a manner dictated by the scriptures make up the whole framework of Wellman's The Chain. Much has already been mentioned about the novel, about the reluctance of the congregation of St. Alban's to admit the poorer people of town into the church, about their concern for running the church as a business, and about the new rector's attempts to reach people of all walks of life. The thrust of the story carries through to John Carlisle's ultimate triumph, even though he dies. In the end, the congregation forgives Carlisle, evidently not realizing that they are the ones who have changed, that they are the ones who have been forgiven.

The Learning Tree offers the black Kansan's view of religion, usually in answer to some question put by youthful Newt Winger. At one point, he asks his mother why some good people die and bad people continue to live. She starts to tell him that one should not question the ways of God, but decides there is more to it than that:

It's true He guides us. But we cain't depend on Him for everything. We gotta do things for ourself. Now, maybe if Jim had built himself a storm cellar or a stronger house, he wouldn't a got killed so easy. . . It's like I say, we got to do some things for ourself. If you got a battle to fight, you cain't

rightfully ask the Lord to help you and not the other fella.³³⁸

Later, Newt's mother expresses some thoughts about religion, and about her son's attitude toward it, to his father:

We been goin' to church all our lives, and so has he; still hearin' the same things we been hearin' since we was his age. The answers that used to satisfy us ain't goin' to satisfy Newt and the young ones comin' up now. They want proof. Some kind they can see and feel. And they're goin' to want more out of this world than we're gettin' out of it. Time's changin', Jack.³³⁹

The times may change, Kansas novelists tend to agree, but Kansas attitudes have stayed basically the same through the years--especially those attitudes which have to do with religion. Kansans, when they settled the state, thought first about religion and built their churches, as in Banjo:

The new church was taller than it was long. Its white spire could be seen for miles across the flat prairie. Its walls built of handsplit post rock, an ocher-colored limestone, rose to a steep shingled roof. To the left was a small graveyard fenced with wire running through chalk-rock posts. There were few graves in it. There wasn't time yet.³⁴⁰

Moreover, if Kansans thought first about religion, they also thought last about it. The non-Christian Smiths

³³⁸Parks, op. cit., p. 45.

³³⁹Ibid., p. 86.

³⁴⁰Curtis, op. cit.,

of The Sky is Falling wanted to bury their dead father in the Mennonite church's graveyard--but they were refused. The Mennonites were following the custom of their church, but they were soon accused of being hypocritical.

Hypocritical Kansans

When Hannah asks her husband, a newly-elected deacon in the Mennonite church, about burying a non-Christian in the church cemetery he is horrified. "You can't mean that. Why, that would never work."³⁴¹ Esther Vogt's people change, however, and the Mennonites decide that trying to live "separate" may not be the best thing for them. As Newt Winger's mother said, times were indeed changing. But Kansans, despite their outward concern for things religious, have nevertheless, been less than true, honest Christians on many occasions, Kansas novelists agree. In The Bowl of Brass, Paul Wellman provides a visual symbol of religious hypocrisy--a false church steeple:

Farther on was the town's single small church. It shared the architectural poverty of the community, which it attempted to relieve with an interesting detail--a false steeple. This was an adaptation to ecclesiastical purposes of the false front affected by commercial houses. . . Jericho accepted it as a permissible if transparent effort at deception, in

³⁴¹Vogt, op. cit., p. 103.

view of the price of lumber which would have been required to build a real steeple.³⁴²

Wellman also discusses the hypocritical Kansan in terms of the way he rationalized drinking:

Funny state, Kansas. Always passin' laws to keep itself from doin' what it wants to do. Reminds me of a hardshell Baptist preacher down at Austin, Texas. He give up eatin' fried chicken. When he was asked why he done so, he said that he liked fried chicken too much. Likin' anything that much was sinful, he figgered, so he give it up. Kansans is a little different though. They may vote dry, but they still drink wet.³⁴³

John Noble, the young artist of Irving Stone's The Passionate Journey, also wonders about the sincerity of Kansans, especially with regard to religion:

In sudden terror he asked himself, Where will I search for God in Wichita? This was a most unlikely place, for barriers had been erected against His appearing which might seem insuperable even to Him. Was this true in all towns where people congregated for worship: a little organ music, the singing of a hymn, the admonitions of the preacher against greed and lust; another hymn, a little more music, and then the social chitchat on the front steps?

Where was God in all this?³⁴⁴

There is, indeed, more to being a Christian than going to church, William L. White indicates in What People Said. A new family in Athena, the Norssexes, brought

³⁴²Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, p. 112.

³⁴³Ibid., p. 26.

³⁴⁴Stone, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

with them a letter from their pastor in Elm Valley and presented it to the Reverend Elihu Phelps of the Athena First Presbyterian Church. Every Sunday they attended church and no one could say that they were "fast." In fact, ". . . they did not dance or play cards. Mr. Norssex neither smoked nor drank. Mrs. Norssex was active in church work."³⁴⁵ But that didn't stop Mr. Norssex from cheating many of the church people. He and his son are eventually caught forging bank notes, but before he can be sent to prison, Mr. Norssex commits suicide.

Pennell, in The History of Rome Hanks, even though he is not especially concerned with religion, frequently reflects on it and on so-called Christians, usually through the narration of Wagnal. After his wife has died and Wagnal knows she had been unfaithful, he pictures her in heaven with her lover:

And I caught in this miserable, bleak, cramped little town in a stale smelling little stone temple mediating with God for a people who did not care for God, or Heaven, or Christ--a people who cared only that the Protestant Episcopal Church had the reputation of being the most stylish church in the town.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵William L. White, What People Said, p. 10.

³⁴⁶Pennell, op. cit., p. 237.

Lee's Uncle Pink also tells him a story of a minister who often managed to do more than preach the gospel:

He used to come up to me and say: Brothuh, don't you feel the sperrit movin'? and whale me on the back hard when I was a little boy--so I was allus skeered of him. He used to go preachin' to camp meetin's. And they tell me that Dan had a passel of brats all through the hills hyear. Him and some sister would git to talkin' in The Tongues and 'fore they knew it, they'd gone and done the business. Seems he was allus able to convince 'em it was Gahd's will. He'd kneel down with 'em and say that they were married in the sight of Gahd. He'd tell their fathahs he felt the sperrit of Solomon in him.³⁴⁷

White indicates that this "easy" attitude toward religion might have been spawned in the young. In Boys Then and Now, he talks of the boys' going to three different Sunday Schools at three different times of the day, more for the purpose of seeing three different girls than for anything resembling a religious purpose. "Thus, he enjoyed a sweet, saintly sense of sin without overt guilt."³⁴⁸

White believes that men have several sides to themselves and that the goodly, religious side is not always strong enough to overwhelm that which preaches greed and lust for power. He illustrates this thought in In the Heart of a Fool, when the daughter of Doctor

³⁴⁷Ibid., p. 271.

³⁴⁸William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 16.

bits watches her father walk away from her after he expressed his love for, and pride in, her:

Naturally she hardly might be expected to see the conscienceless boss of Hancock and Greeley counties, who handled the money of privilege seekers and bought and sold men gayly as a part of the day's work. . . . She saw only a gentle, tender, understanding father . . . a ruddy-faced, white phantom in a golden spring day.³⁴⁹

Some individuals, like John Barclay in A Certain Rich Man, often tried to rationalize their hypocrisy. Barclay, who was brought up by an almost evangelistically Christian father who may have driven him from religion without realizing it, is almost, but not quite, amoral. He tells a friend that he made a million dollars the previous year but has not used it badly. He says he has no yachts, and has bought no villas. But, he says, he is going to erect a monument for a Civil War veteran in the cemetery. "So if I want to steal a mill or so every season . . . I'm going to do it, but no one can rise up and say I am squandering my substance on riotous living."³⁵⁰

Neither Lane nor McCarter let any hypocrisy seep into their sentimentalized accounts of glorious Kansas

³⁴⁹William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, pp. 84-85.

³⁵⁰William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 217.

in Let the Hurricane Roar and The Peace of the Solomon Valley. Wellman, however, is more honest than many Kansas novelists and points out in several instances that what goes on beneath a church's roof on Sunday mornings may not always be a bell-weather indicator of that which is actually in the hearts of men. In The Walls of Jericho, Dave Constable knew, for instance, that John Farthing, the undertaker and an elder of the First Church, received every month a box marked "books" from Kansas City. He also knew that the "books" were ". . . liquid, although John Farthing claimed to be a strict teetotaler, and was an active member of the Anti-Saloon League."³⁵¹ Wellman also indicates that some hypocrisy is evident in the throes of competition between churches. In Jericho, the Community Church was not the fashionable place that the First Church was; the more well-to-do people did not attend it, and it was generally looked down upon by the "upper class" residents of the city. The members of the Community Church, despite the fact that they are supposedly Christians and dedicated to loving one another, are almost overjoyed when a scandal hits the First Church. The choir leader has

³⁵¹Paul I. Wellman, The Walls of Jericho, p. 4.

been caught making love to the lead soprano--in the choir loft:

The Community Church was a natural beneficiary of the scandal. The congregation of the latter institution was able only thinly to conceal its exultation at what had happened. For a long time the Community Church had suffered under the snubs and airs of the First Church. The unfortunate episode of the young preacher in the Community Church pulpit who had cribbed his best oratorical lines from the great atheist, Ingersoll, had never been permitted to be forgotten; the Community Church winced under veiled gibes about this from the rival flock. The Bratten affair, therefore, far from giving the pain that might have been expected to the devout of the Community Church, seemed to fall upon them as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. They appeared, in fact, to drink it up gratefully, almost to revel in it, and were heard exchanging happy comments.³⁵²

While the authors of Kansas novels do not usually make hypocrisy the central issue of their stories, they cannot always escape from indicating that it is, and always has been, a problem in the state, as elsewhere. Laman touches on it briefly in Manifest Destiny when he describes an effort on the part of Phil Garwood and several others to build a church that would be open to people of all faiths. The church would serve even Catholics and Jews, which was a fairly safe offer, since there were no people of either faith in the area at the time. The vote is tabled until the next meeting,

³⁵²Ibid., p. 211.

even after Garwood has put up several hundred dollars toward the building's construction. Behind his back, however, another committee starts the church, and a fight develops over whether it shall be Methodist or Presbyterian. Garwood's money has already been spent. Even though he has cheated Garwood, Ezra Karns says that it was for a ". . . good cause."³⁵³ Garwood sees the beginning of another area battle and believes ". . . they'll still be quarreling at the box-supper. Ez and Henri will end up with a church house but only half a congregation."³⁵⁴

Parks mentions religious hypocrisy only once in The Learning Tree. The book's theme, however, is that of hypocrisy of another nature: the Black/White relationship continues as that of slave and overseer, even though the Civil War supposedly brought all that to an end. Jack Winger once lets loose his emotions and scoffs at the white man's religion: "A white man don't take his religion out of church. He locks it up there for safekeepin' so its fresh and clean on Sunday mornin' when he comes to wash his week's sinnin' away."³⁵⁵

³⁵³Laman, op. cit., p. 165.

³⁵⁴Ibid., p. 166.

³⁵⁵Parks, op. cit., p. 121.

Inge also only briefly looks at hypocrisy in Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff when Evelyn Wyckoff is seeking help. One student she thinks might be of aid, or who might at least understand why she had become involved with a Negro, is dismissed with the thought that ". . . his parents, devout churchgoers, would advise him to 'keep out of it.'"³⁵⁶ Speculating on why people react to her situation as they do, she remembers the few black children in her hometown of Belleville. "If they were allowed to attend the white people's churches, they were not encouraged to, and so attended a church of their own."³⁵⁷

Kansans and the Land

Kansas novels vary in the degree of intensity with which they describe religion and hypocrisy, but they agree that, of all Kansans' idiosyncracies, none is more universal than their unyielding feeling of closeness to the land. It was land that brought people to Kansas in the first place and agriculture has remained the primary industry in the state. Kansans may go elsewhere but they never seem to lose that affinity

³⁵⁶Inge, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁵⁷Ibid., p. 84.

for the soil. Descriptions of Kansas range from Pennell's in The History of Rome Hanks:

In the spring God suddenly reminds you one day what summer is like in Kansas: You begin to feel the great hot suction of the sun pulling the water from the land and you think that here there are only two seasons, violent and sluggish. And then you think that there is only one, summer--and that all the earth is cracked, all the leaves dusty and curling, and all the grass graybrown. . . .³⁵⁸

. . . to McCarter's in The Peace of the Solomon Valley:

Across this spread of land the level rays of sunset fling their splendor, while far up the sky a radiant glory of color no artist can ever paint--well, that's the Solomon Valley. And stretching away to the very bound of the world, fold on fold, is a wavy richness of greens and browns and gold, with purple shadows into which it all melts at last, and the pink tinting overhead slowly softening into silvery cloud mist. It is worth a journey to see.³⁵⁹

To Caroline and Charles in Lane's Let the Hurricane Roar, the land meant everything. It was what they had come west to find, and it meant the entire future to them as it did to hundreds of other homesteaders in Kansas:

There was really nothing more to wish for. The crops were thriving; there would be potatoes, turnips, carrots and flour for next winter, and money enough for other supplies. In less than five years, now, Charles would get the title to the land, and then

³⁵⁸Pennell, op. cit., p. 311.

³⁵⁹Margaret Hill McCarter, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, p. 36.

they would build a frame house. They planned to build four rooms, and finish two at first.³⁶⁰

To some newcomers, the land was exciting, not because of its newness, but because it reminded them of "home." Tom Butler, in Run to Kansas, thought it was much like eastern Illinois, and ". . . he liked the eastern Kansas country, with its rolling prairies, its wooded streams and lush grasses."³⁶¹ A young man, writing to his parents in the East in Free Soil, says the land ". . . rolls and rolls and the thick grass goes uphill and down. When the crops come the grass will go and that's a pity, but they will be crops to console a nation."³⁶²

William Allen White, of course, had much to say about Kansans' closeness to the land. He began with the youth in Boys Then and Now, who ". . . of a Saturday, might roam the prairie, gun in hand, bringing home prairie chickens, quails, and rabbits."³⁶³ White's In the Heart of a Fool is primarily a story of a town and of its

³⁶⁰Lane, op. cit., p. 26.

³⁶¹Gard, op. cit., p. 110.

³⁶²Lynn, op. cit., p. 5.

³⁶³William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 7.

inhabitants. But, first, there was the land and the pioneers coming to settle it:

To the left the prairie grass rises upon a low hill, belted with limestone and finally merges into the mirage on the knife edge of the far horizon. To the southward on the canvas the prairie grass is broken by the heavy green foliage above a sluggish stream that writhes and twists and turns through the prairie, which rises above the stream and meets another limestone belt upon which the waving ripples of the unmowed grass wash southward to the eye's reach.³⁶⁴

The people coming to settle are seeking the ". . . equality of opportunity that is supposed to be found in the virgin prairies of the new West."³⁶⁵ A Certain Rich Man is also concerned primarily with the growth of a town, but White cannot resist the temptation to talk of the land that is so vital to its inhabitants. He speaks of farming methods in the 1870's when men were still learning of the peculiarities inherent in the Kansas land:

In those days wheat-growing upon the plains had not yet become the science it is today, and many Sycamore Valley farmers planted their wheat in the fall, and failed to make it pay, and many other . . . farmers planted their wheat in the spring, and failed, while many others succeeded. The land had not been definitely staked off and set apart by experience as a winter wheat country. . .³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, p. 1.

³⁶⁵Loc. cit.

³⁶⁶William Allen White, A Certain Rich Man, p. 128.

Though Kansas plains lack the powerful ruggedness of the Rocky Mountains or the barren beauty of the Painted Desert, most Kansans find a certain beauty in their state. White was no exception:

For the stage setting of the hills and woods and streams, even without the coloured wings and flies and the painted trees and grass, has its fine simplicity of form and grouping that are good to look upon.³⁶⁷

Wellman, too, realized that the land meant much to Kansas and put the knowledge to good use in The Walls of Jericho. One summer brought heat and a drought to Jericho. It was ". . . not the humid torpor of the Mississippi Valley, but dry, breathless heat, almost with a taste of the furnace in it."³⁶⁸ There is no escaping wheat in Kansas and a drought affects almost everyone:

It was an all-prevading topic of concern and conversation. As the drouth grew longer, faces grew longer with it, as much in the town as on the farms. Times were good or bad as wheat went, and it was becoming evident that unless some miracle occurred, this summer was going to end in a whole-sale failure for the crop.³⁶⁹

When the drought ends, the mood of the country changes.

"Bitterness was forgotten. Merchants extended new credit.

³⁶⁷Ibid., p. 416.

³⁶⁸Paul I. Wellman, The Walls of Jericho, p. 31.

³⁶⁹Loc. cit.

Prosperity was back."³⁷⁰ But the land was hard on people, too, and sometimes, even when crops were good, the farmers showed harsh signs of wear, as Wellman illustrates in

The Bowl of Brass:

The men grew leathery as to skin and bleached as to mustaches: and they were . . . marked by the tell-tale thickening of the eyelids which betrays long squinting over sun-dazzled landscapes. The women became slatternly. As women will always do, they at first made some shift to prettify their premises, but it was to be observed that these efforts faded in discouragement; and where the hopeful little plots once had been spaded for roses, sweet peas, and asters, the wild thistle, the sunflower, and the gross tumbleweed soon ruled.³⁷¹

The farmers stayed, though, most of them, and fought the land, and won, despite the harsh Kansas weather, which is also a favorite topic of Kansas novelists. Wellman comments that ". . . it raineth on the just and the unjust--but it never seems to rain in Western Kansas."³⁷² Jerome notes intensely that ". . . they planned to build Hell in Kansas, but found it was too damned hot!"³⁷³ And they comment on the wind:

The wind. The immeasurable, everlasting wind. Ever since the dead of winter it had been blowing, shipping the fine dust of the bare fields, slipping

³⁷⁰Ibid., p. 34.

³⁷¹Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, p. 10.

³⁷²Ibid., p. 88.

³⁷³Jerome, op. cit., p. 73.

it under doors and around windows, and settling it on the tables and bedspreads, not to mention peppering the food on the table.³⁷⁴

The wind, a boy in For the Time Being notes, ". . .

could blow down a tree, blow the roof off a house, could blow the tool shed off the side of the elevator."³⁷⁵

The wind blew, ". . . not just by hours but in successive days."³⁷⁶

The climate of Kansas, and what it means to Kansans, comes under Wellman's scrutiny in The Chain. To Gilda Holme, the bright cloudlessness of the sky the day following a raging storm, was ". . . characteristic of the Kansas climate--benevolence succeeding fury."³⁷⁷

At another point in the novel, asked what he is talking about, Todd Wescott replies: "What Kansans generally talk about. The weather."³⁷⁸ Later, John Carlisle will demonstrate his manhood to the town in the midst of something with which all Kansans are familiar--the tornado. Gilda watches as a twister approaches Jericho:

³⁷⁴Vogt, op. cit., p. 168.

³⁷⁵Siebel, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁷⁶Laman, op. cit., p. 17.

³⁷⁷Paul I. Wellman, The Chain, p. 11.

³⁷⁸Ibid., p. 22.

She thought of a steam roller. Steam roller of God. An unimaginable steam roller, bearing down on her, which would crush into nothingness everything that came beneath its oncoming prodigious weight. An effort of the mind was required to realize that what she saw was after all only vapor--insanely turbulent, but still vapor which could not readily crush, in spite of the solidity of its appearance.³⁷⁹

It is, perhaps, significant that Wellman chose two aspects of Kansas weather in which to bring out the heroic tendencies of two of his main characters. In The Walls of Jericho, Constable is redeemed in the eyes of his neighbors because he saves the lives of several people in a winter blizzard. In The Chain, Carlisle reacts with bravery in the face of a tornado.

Curtis discusses Kansas in the late fall just before winter in Banjo. It is one of the several times in which he refers to the importance of the land to the state. Early in the novel, Gus takes a long look around his father's farm:

The morning was crispy clear, and though the ice-gray cloud moving over the western horizon carried the first snow in it, Poppa was a thrifty farmer, and the fields were clean, corn was in the corncrib, hay was stacked, the wheat sold at a good price, and Jube had split a mountain of hardwood for the stoves. The coal-oil barrel was full and Momma had the root cellar racked with potatoes and cabbages in straw, and the storm-cellar shelves were heavy with canned green beans and kraut, and tomatoes.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹Ibid., p. 281.

³⁸⁰Curtis, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

Even Evelyn Wyckoff feels a certain affinity to the land. In Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff she makes several bus trips to Wichita to visit a psychiatrist. On one of her trips she muses about the land:

The landscape all through the month of January was bleak and colorless, the sky like granite and the earth soggy with frequent rain and melting snows. It was a landscape Willa Cather had often described in her novels. Miss Wyckoff found beauty even in its bleakness. Sometimes she would see a bright orange and purple sunset through the window of the bus, over twenty miles or more of flat country. Far horizons were much more beautiful to her than mountains, which only got in the way of the sky.³⁸¹

Thus, to Kansas novelists, the setting in which their characters play out their roles is often almost as important as their actions.

Other Kansas Traits

The themes that occur most often in Kansas novels are those just discussed--the influences of the Civil War, the fact that most of the principal characters seem to come from somewhere east of Kansas, the religious attitudes of Kansans, questions of hypocrisy and an almost universal feeling of closeness to the land. But there are other, underlying themes as well. If Kansans are concerned with religion, they are also interested in close family ties. Kansans seem to be men and women

³⁸¹Inge, op. cit., p. 109.

stout of body and fit for the land which means so much to them, they sometimes make decisions quickly, are sentimental to a degree, but practical-minded in matters of business. They are prudish to a point and, at least to someone from the metropolitan centers of the east, they sometimes appear unsophisticated.

A close "togetherness" of families is evident in many of the novels, particularly those written early in the century. In In the Heart of a Fool, even though Daniel Sands, Amos Adams' brother-in-law, had hired a substitute and stayed home from the Civil War and stole Amos' girl, ". . . Amos always tried to be fair with Daniel Sands because he was Mary's brother."³⁸² In A Certain Rich Man, John Barclay gives up his fortune to become more of an honest man because of what it was doing to himself to continue dishonestly, but, more importantly, because of what it had done to his family. In the early days of the state, the young boys ran wild, but White notes in Boys Then and Now, that ". . . inside his home his mother . . . was the boy's . . . civilizing agent."³⁸³ Lane points out in Let the Hurricane Roar, that a young man would stay close to his family because,

³⁸²William Allen White, In the Heart of a Fool, p. 7.

³⁸³William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 10.

for one reason, ". . . his labor belonged to his father until he was twenty-one."³⁸⁴ In The Peace of the Solomon Valley a young girl with a beautiful voice and an outstanding career ahead of her in New York, returns to Kansas instead ". . . because my father wanted me and needed me."³⁸⁵

The family life of Newt Winger in The Learning Tree is about the most important thing in the world to him, and he weighs decisions in the light of what his mother might think of them, though he sometimes, as do all young boys, makes the wrong one even when he knows it is wrong. And even Evelyn Wyckoff, the thirty-seven-year-old spinster school teacher, seduced by a black student, ruefully considers her parents' reaction if they were to find out about it. Asked where she is going, she says she will go home:

That is, if I still have a home in Belleville. I trust I do. I'll stay with my parents a while and try to decide what to do. I don't know how I'll explain my situation to them. I'll have to make up a story. I might later join my sister in Omaha . . . if she'll have me.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴Lane, op. cit., p. 5.

³⁸⁵Margaret Hill McCarter, The Peace of the Solomon Valley, p. 84.

³⁸⁶Inge, op. cit., p. 19.

Kansans seem also to be built for the hard labor that they are called on to do so frequently. In The Learning Tree, Newt is envious of his brother's ". . . muscular arms and wide shoulders and he longed for the time when his own body and strength would match his brother's."³⁸⁷ The women, too, are made for work. In Manifest Destiny Phil Garwood helped his wife into the buggy and ". . . felt strength almost masculine in the muscles of her arm."³⁸⁸ Gus Gilpin was also a large man. "His huge callused hands looked like blocks of oak, the hands that could lift up the ponderous chalk-rock fence posts and set them upright."³⁸⁹ Even John Carlisle, the rector of St. Alban's, has powerful hands. They are ". . . expressive of character, strong, subdued, yet ardent."³⁹⁰ They are hands he used when he was a boxer, hands that led him to discover that ". . . if I hit a man on the chin with my full power, I could knock him out."³⁹¹

³⁸⁷Parks, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁸⁸Laman, op. cit., p. 61.

³⁸⁹Curtis, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁹⁰Paul I. Wellman, The Chain, p. 137.

³⁹¹Ibid., p. 325.

When a lawyer in Run to Kansas offers to help Tom Butler by giving him a job as an apprentice, the Illinois youth decided Kansans make decisions too fast. The lawyer wants an immediate answer:

And to Tom it was too too quick. He had learned, though, that on the frontier things happened faster than in places where folks had been living for a long while. Everything was new, growing. You had to move fast, and make a decision in split seconds. People were generous. Open-handed. So generous and impulsive they might have seemed foolish back home in Illinois. Out here the lawyer's offer didn't seem too fast or foolish. It was, Tom realized, just the way things were done in a new country.³⁹²

And, to Wellman, Kansans seem always to do things the hard way. It is even part of the state's motto:

It's an old Kansas custom, arisin' from a Kansas characteristic. Ad astra per aspera is the motto of this state, meanin' 'To the stars the hard way,' near as I can figger out. No Kansan likes to do anything easy. He raises his crops hard. He takes his religion hard. To be able to git licker easy would jest be contrary to nature for him. So he makes laws to keep him from gettin' it. That's the fust step. The second is to hunt fo' the loop-hole in that law. Every law has its loophole, as yo' know. So when he finds the loophole he goes about the job of gettin' his licker that way. It makes it harder, which gives mo' of a point to drinkin' it, and lo and behold, yo' Kansan thereby derives a greater satisfaction of soul out'n it.³⁹³

Whether or not Wellman's comment is accurate is a matter of whose side one is on, the "wets" or the

³⁹²Gard, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

³⁹³Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, pp. 28-29.

"dry." It is possibly more accurate, however, even in its satiric vein, than some Kansas novelists' reflections on the state. Other passages from Kansas novels, including many of those mentioned in this chapter, may also be labeled "precise" or "contrivance," depending upon what one knows to be true, what one wants to believe is true, or upon how strongly the novelist makes the case for believability. In most cases, the statements made by the authors of the novels discussed in this study are accurate. Many Kansans have migrated to the state from other parts of the country and the world; the Civil War has had a powerful influence upon the state and the course of events during its turbulent early history; most Kansans are concerned, some more than others, with religion; there is a great deal of hypocrisy--religious and otherwise--within the state; Kansans, because of their heritage and because of the predominance of agriculture as an industry in the state, do feel a close kinship to the land; Kansans are concerned with family ties, and they are all the other things mentioned.

It is important to remember, however, that Kansans are not so very different from Iowans, or Missourians, or "Okies," or Nebraskans. Where, then, does Kansas' uniqueness lie? How do its people differ from the people of any other state? Is there anything at all unique

about Kansas that Kansas novelists have seized upon? In fact, Kansas novelists have tried valiantly to pinpoint factors which might be considered unique to Kansas. Indeed, they have found much that is intrinsic and indigenous to the state. But only in one area have they found anything within the state that is its very own--its past. Kansas' past is unique. The history of other states is somewhat akin to that of Kansas, certainly. But no other state can boast of Carrie Nation. The Border Wars fought just prior to the Civil War took place primarily in Kansas; John Brown began his violent efforts in the state; the wagons, horses and men awaiting the opening of the Cherokee Strip were lined up on the Kansas side of the border. However, beyond the history, beyond the nineteenth century, Kansas and Kansans are pictured as being not so much unique as they are universal.

CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSAL MAN

In Morning in Kansas, Kenneth Davis writes that Kansas is a land of "in-between." It is ". . . a country not east enough to be East nor west enough to be West."³⁹⁴ Kansas, for years jealously guarding within its boundaries the exact center of the first forty-eight of the United States, proudly accepting its right to the sole ownership of the "middle of the country," has become, in the process, more and more like other parts of the country. A reviewer of William L. White's What People Said noted that the town of Athena ". . . might be any small town between the Rockies and the Alleghenies."³⁹⁵ And even Paul I. Wellman, whose novels are more uniquely Kansan in many respects than most so-called Kansas novels, notes that Kansans are not unlike people throughout the country: "When are you goin' to learn that here, in Jericho, Kansas, people are peaceful an' farmerlike

³⁹⁴Davis, op. cit., p. i.

³⁹⁵Harold Strauss, "Another White," New York Times, April 10, 1938, 2.

as they are in New York state, or Ohio, or anywhere else?"³⁹⁶ If Kansas was populated by individuals from throughout the country, those emigrants helped the state become a "melting pot" and, little by little, more and more like the parts of the country from which the settlers came. If the Civil War had a great influence upon the state, one of its greatest influences came from those who settled in Kansas after the war was over. They helped it become more like the South, in many ways, and more like the North, in others. If Kansans are religious, they are compelled to live by rules that govern religious people everywhere. And if they are frequently hypocritical, they are no different from hypocrits elsewhere in the country and the world. Farmers everywhere, like Kansas farmers, feel close to the land. And if there were racial problems in Kansas, other parts of the country have experienced similar problems of far greater proportions.

All this is not to say that there is nothing at all unique about Kansas. There may well be. But Kansas novelists have failed to realize just what that quality was, or, if they did realize it, they have failed to capitalize upon it in their novels. Indeed, even in

³⁹⁶Paul I. Wellman, The Bowl of Brass, p. 105.

the case of William Allen White, who was possibly more Kansan than any of the other authors (he was born in Kansas and lived there all his life), with few exceptions the activities within his novels could have happened in almost exactly the same way anywhere else in the country. There are, and have been, hundreds of John Barclays, for example--ruthless, power-hungry men who have forsaken family and city in their lust for wealth. Barclay's ultimate repentance is not unique to Kansas. A Methodist (or Lutheran, or Episcopalian) family in Ohio (or New York or California or Tennessee) might have brought about a similar conversion. Individuals have fought for the rights of laborers since time immemorial and the activities of White's In the Heart of a Fool, because of the proximity of the mining operations, might have been more appropriately set in Pennsylvania. As expressed by Laman in Manifest Destiny, the following comments are not unique to Kansas, and might be utilized better to show a national feeling toward America's entry into World War I than simply that of Kansans:

Why don't he do something for the poor laboring man at home ahead of sending food and clothes and millions of dollars to Belgians? The workers in this country have been browbeaten long enough, and if this government tries to ship 'em off to be

slaughtered for war profiteers, it's liable to have a revolution on its hands.³⁹⁷

This type of concern was, no doubt, that of many Kansans of the time. It was also that of Americans throughout the country.

The youth, too, were like boys and girls everywhere. William Allen White, in Boys Then and Now, notes that the boys of El Dorado late in the nineteenth century found ". . . religion . . . full of hell fire."³⁹⁸

They saw a horse thief killed and found that what they learned at school that day was precious little ". . . compared with what they learned in that tragic, bloody moment under the peach trees in the high grass."³⁹⁹

The youth of White's book ". . . took their morals from a wicked time and an ugly place."⁴⁰⁰ Were the youth of Kansas of the late 1800's unique? They were not.

Nor are the principal characters in most Kansas novels uniquely Kansan; not Evelyn Wyckoff, spinster schoolteacher, who could have lived in Oklahoma, Iowa, Indiana, or in almost any Midwestern state; Gus Gilpin

³⁹⁷Laman, op. cit., p. 303.

³⁹⁸William Allen White, Boys Then and Now, p. 12.

³⁹⁹Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁰⁰Ibid., p. 24.

of Banjo is a caricature of gangsters who carried on their operations through the country. Even Newt Winger of The Learning Tree is far from being more Kansan than anything else. Newt simply happens to be caught up in a nation-wide problem in the corner of Kansas. Dave Constable of The Walls of Jericho is possibly as much Kansan as any of those who populate Kansas novels, but he is still on the fringes of that which is most indigenous to the state. He is an "outsider" looking in, helping when he can, finally becoming a part of the community because of what he can do for others rather than because of his heritage. John Carlisle in The Chain is not a Kansan, and the events of the story--built around a church fight--cannot be said to be a totally indigenous activity.

If these novels, then, which represent the efforts of some of the best Kansas authors to write about the state, do not include among them at least one truly "Kansas" novel, is there one to be found? The answer must be that there is not. The reasons for this void are difficult to find. Each author, in his own way, attempted to write, somehow, a Kansas novel. Each failed for one or more reasons. Most failed because the themes they chose were more universal than regional. William Allen White wrote in his auto-biography that the theme

of A Certain Rich Man was to be that of the return of the prodigal son. That is a story as old as the Bible. White located his story in Kansas and imbued it with some things intrinsic to the state, but did so only briefly, without making them vitally significant to the outcome of his story. The Fell of Dark had an opportunity to become an outstanding Kansas novel but, though its characters are native Kansans and the story, that of a man who tries to rationalize avoiding punishment for accidentally killing a Negro in an automobile accident, could have explored Kansans' attitudes toward blacks, it does not. Instead, it is a more universal tale of one man's inner struggle to make a decision. Russell Laman's Manifest Destiny also narrowly misses. The novel does, in fact, make frequent references to Kansas attitudes and actions, but its hero, Phil Garwood, is more concerned with universal problems such as farming, politics, war and raising his family, and he thinks of his problems as individuals throughout the country think of them.

Only the historians, McCarter, Wellman, Pennell, Franklin and Stone, for example, deal with the true uniqueness of Kansas. McCarter's tales of the Wakarusa Wars, John Brown, the destruction of Lawrence and other historically factual events, could take place only in Kansas. Jericho, Kansas, Wellman's fictitious western

Kansas town, is not unique, but his story of the County Seat Wars is truly Kansan. Civil War veterans settled throughout the country, but Pennell's account of their Kansas years is also historically accurate, and unique to Kansas. Kansas had an underground railroad, described in Franklin's None But the Brave, and, though not unique, the efforts of the Missouri raiders to capture the run-away slaves is another episode in the Border Wars. The Dalton gang, western gunfighters of legendary fame, was active throughout several states, but the gang members died in Kansas in a bloody battle, pictured in Stone's The Passionate Journey, that is a counterpart of many such "shoot-outs" of early-day Kansas.

The Kansan of the twentieth century, however, was more difficult, if not impossible, for Kansas novelists to understand. Philip Roth offers one possible reason for this difficulty. He notes that the American writer in the middle of the twentieth century ". . . has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality."⁴⁰¹ Perhaps the "Kansas" reality is too much for Kansas novelists to deal with. But, more likely, it is simply

⁴⁰¹Philip Roth, "Writing American Fiction," in The American Novel Since World War II, Irving Howe (ed.), p. 146.

too difficult to find and then to understand. Only in a few instances do Kansas novelists say that "this is Kansas because. . ." or "Kansans feel this way because. . ." Frequently, an author does intersperse within his narrative something to the effect that "Kansans are. . ." Usually, they are interested in the weather, or dependent upon wheat, or prone to be set in their ways, or opposed to, or in favor of, a political activity, or they are proud people. These are vague generalizations that tell one little about the people of Kansas except that they are a great deal akin, in their thoughts and activities, to those from other, similar, states. More definitive statements about Kansans are not forthcoming because Kansas novelists are not sure of what Kansans are really like, they do not know what distinguishes a Kansan from a Hoosier or a Buckeye or a Sooner. Kansas authors have been reluctant to delve with any intensity into the collective unconsciousness of Kansans. They have, instead, resorted to the use of universal themes and have made Kansans themselves universal characters.

Perhaps, this universality is exactly what is most unique about the state and its people. Kansas is a halfway point, the "midway U.S.A." of the billboards. It is as much a "melting pot" in itself, in a smaller different way, as the entire country. Kansas has drawn

its heritage, its culture and its aspirations from all parts of the country. Surely, this mixture of cultures, religions, races, and ideals has brought about some sort of intrinsic sub-consciousness that writers could cull from the other, more easily recognized universal ideas which they have used.

Crafton asks: what in Kansas has provided the urge to lyric, dramatic or narrative writing? Why cannot an author draw upon religion, as Wellman has done, in a manner that is more Kansan than universal, and show how the religious attitudes of Kansans are important to their day-to-day existence? Crafton asks: has nothing in Kansas been of social-historical significance? Can one deny the social-historical significance of Carrie Nation's hatchet attacks on Kansas saloons? Can one overlook the historical significance of Kansas' wheat production or its one-time oil boom, or even the effect of Alf Landon's unsuccessful run for the Presidency which took Kansas ideals to the forefront of national attention? Crafton asks: what has greatly depressed or uplifted the Kansan's soul? In reply, one thinks of drought and returning rain, of a tornado which wipes out a small town and of the strength and courage of Kansans who rebuilt it, and of the efforts of Kansans to attract a certain amount of industry to the state

while still seeking to maintain much of the country-- the wheatland and the grassland--as it has been for centuries. The youthful writers leave Kansas, Crafton says, and he is right. They are drawn to the east or west coasts because of lack of literary incentive in Kansas. Kansans, as a whole, this present writer once said in a book review, are ". . . reluctant to examine themselves on the intense level of introspection which a novel--a good, successful novel--requires."⁴⁰² This statement, true as it probably is, is a sad one that bodes ill for the prospects of worthy literary achievements coming from the state. Writers, writing about their own state, must examine themselves, and their fellow Kansans, intensely. They must be honest, and they must not fear the wrath of their fellows should they be critical. But Kansas writers have been unwilling to follow those rules, or they have been uninterested in searching out the Kansas state of mind.

Certainly, Kansas novelists have tried, but they have failed to produce the one, all-encompassing novel that tells just what Kansas is, why it is, and what it hopes to become. Perhaps, the "Kansas novel" will never

⁴⁰²Larry K. Meredith, "Kansan's First Novel Tightly Constructed," The Wichita Eagle and Beacon Magazine, May 25, 1970, 8D.

be written because of the reasons stated. Or perhaps, Crafton is right and the plains do not give rise to high literary ambitions. Even Stone echoes Crafton's thoughts:

The plains stretch to infinity, Amelia, there's nothing to catch hold of your thoughts, there's nothing to break the sameness, yet there's beauty in it all, because everything is so flat that your thoughts must soar to great space beyond the unmarked road. The barren plains are like a world without end.⁴⁰³

One must hope, though, that some Kansan will overcome the barriers, themselves intrinsic to the state, and represent Kansas as being more than universal. But perhaps, the universality of the state and of the state of mind of its people overshadows anything unique. Perhaps, there is nothing strong enough and unique enough within individual Kansans to make it worthwhile to try and find that uniqueness. If so, it is a shame. But the fact remains that the Kansas novel represents not so much "Kansan" or "Kansas" as it does "everyman" and "everywhere."

⁴⁰³Stone, op. cit., p. 318.

FIFTY NOVELS WITH KANSAS AS A SETTING

- Adams, Samuel Hopkins. The Harvey Girls. New York: Random House, 1942.
- Blair, John Alvin. The Flaming Torch. New York: Comet Press, 1955.
- Coates, Grace Stone. Black Cherries. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930.
- Comstock, Sarah. The Soddy. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1912.
- Corcoran, William. Golden Horizons. Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Company, 1937.
- Cretcher, Mack. The Kansan. Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1924.
- Davis, Kenneth S. The Years of the Pilgrimage. Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1948.
- Derby, Florence Powers. Rocks and Roses. Minneapolis: Eerdman, 1957.
- Doneghy, Dagmar. The Border. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1931.
- Emerson, Lucian Waldo. Cimarron Bend. New York: Macauley, 1936.
- Fall, Thomas. The Justicer. New York: Rinehart and Company, Incorporated, 1959.
- Fernald, Helen Clark. Plow the Dew Under. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952.
- Fisher, Dorothy Canfield. The Bent Twig. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1915.
- Gilford, C. B. Quest for Innocence. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961.

- Haldeman-Julius, Mr. and Mrs. Dust. New York: Brentano's, 1921.
- Hickok, G. R. The Trail to Devil's Slide. New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, 1959.
- Hughes, Langston. Not Without Laughter. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930.
- Humphrey, Mary A. The Squatter Sovereign. Chicago: Coburn and Newman Publishing Company, 1883.
- Johnson, Lester Douglas. The Devil's Front Porch. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1970.
- LeMay, Alan. By Dim and Flaring Lamps. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962.
- Lerrigo, Charles Henry. A Son of John Brown. New York: Nelson Publishing Company, 1937.
- Lynn, Margaret. The Land of Promise. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1928.
- Mauck, Hilda. Wings of Hope. New York: Claude Kendall, 1932.
- McCarter, Margaret Hill. A Master's Degree. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1913.
- _____. Cuddy's Baby. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1917.
- _____. Homeland. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922.
- _____. In Old Quivira. Topeka: Crane and Company, 1912.
- _____. The Reclaimers. New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1918.
- _____. Vanguards of the Plains. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1917.
- _____. Widening Waters. New York: A. A. Burt Company, 1924.
- _____. Winning the Wilderness. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1914.

- McGrath, Maura. Out of the Sunset. New York: Pageant Press, 1957.
- Meeker, Ezra. Kate Mulhall. New York: Ezra Meeker, 1926.
- Murdock, Victor. Folks. New York: Macmillan Company, 1921.
- Ogden, George W. Cherokee Trails. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1928.
- _____. There Were No Heroes. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1940.
- _____. Whiskey Trail. New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1936.
- Pearson, P. H. Prairie Vikings. East Orange, New Jersey: Karl J. Olson, 1927.
- Pennell, Joseph Stanley. The History of Nora Beckham: A Museum of Home Life. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.
- Rees, Gilbert. Respectable Women. New York: Random House, 1954.
- Schrachner, Nathan. The Sun Shines West. New York: Appleton-Century Company, 1943.
- Schrag, Otto. The Locusts. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Incorporated, 1943.
- Sedges, John. The Townsman. New York: The John Day Company, 1945.
- Siebel, Julia. The Narrow Covering. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956.
- Smith, Leonard K. Forty Days to Santa Fe. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1938.
- Soles, Gordon H. Cornbread and Milk. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1959.
- Wakeman, Frederic. The Fabulous Train. New York: Rinehart, 1955.

Wellman, Manly Wade. Candle of the Wicked. New York:
G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960.

Williams, John. Butcher's Crossing. New York: Macmillan,
1960.

Winter, Alice. The Velvet Bubble. New York: William
Morrow and Company, 1965.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amrine, Michael. All Sons Must Say Goodbye. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942.
- "A Wall of Men: A Review." New York Times, December 29, 1912, 94.
- Balliett, Whitney. "Book Reviews." New Yorker, XXXIX (November 2, 1963), 209.
- Barnet, Sylvan, Morton Berman, and William Burto (eds.) A Dictionary of Literary Terms. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960.
- B., F. B. "A Triumph for Ehrlich." Boston Transcript, December 17, 1932, 1.
- Birney, Hoffman. "The Walls of Jericho On the Mark." New York Times Book Review, February 2, 1947, 5.
- Blackmar, Frank W. (ed.). Kansas. In II Vols. Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912.
- "Book Reviews." Saturday Review of Literature, XI (December 24, 1927), 47.
- Bourne, Randolph. "In the Heart of a Fool: A Review." Dial, LXV (December 14, 1919), 556.
- Boynnton, H. W. "A Certain Rich Man: A Review." New York Times, October 23, 1909, 14.
- Bracke, W. B. "Morning in Kansas: A Review." New York Herald Tribune Book Review, August 24, 1952, 9.
- Burgess, Jackson. Pillar of Cloud. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1957.
- Burnett, W. R. The Dark Command. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938.
- Burres, Paul William. Downstream. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961.

Canfield, Dorothy. Understood Betsy. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1916.

Carl, Sister M. Hildalita. Kansas History as Seen in the Works of Margaret Hill McCarter. Seneca, Kansas: The Courier-Tribune Press, 1938.

Carlson, Anna Matilda. The Heritage of the Bluestem. Kansas City: Burton Publishing Company, 1930.

Carruth, William Herbert (ed.). Kansas in Literature. In II Vols. Topeka: Crane and Company, 1900.

Carson, Katharine. Mrs. Pennington. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939.

Clayton, Robert. "Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff: A Review." Library Journal, XCV (May 1, 1970), 1760.

Clifford, John. The Shooting of Storey James. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1962.

Cournos, John. "Amrine Writes Honest Novel." New York Times, September 13, 1942, 22.

Crafton, Allen. "Introduction" to Kansas Renaissance. Warren Kliever and Stanley J. Solomon (eds.). Topeka: Coronado Publications, 1961.

Curtis, Jack. Banjo. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971.

Danielson, R. E. "The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters: A Review." Atlantic, CLXIV (October, 1944), 133.

Davis, Kenneth S. Morning in Kansas. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1952.

Dentler, Zoe. The Hill or Simmons Point. New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, 1957.

Ehrlich, Leonard. God's Angry Man. New York: Simon and Schuster, Incorporated, 1932.

Evans, Harold C. (ed.). Kansas: A Guide to the Sunflower State. New York: The Viking Press, 1939.

- Fadiman, Clifton. "Foreward" in God's Angry Man. New York: Simon and Schuster, Incorporated, 1932.
- Farnham, Mateel Howe. Rebellion. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927.
- Fine, Warren. The Artificial Traveler. New York: Coward-McCann, Incorporated, 1968.
- "Fool Fools Some." New Republic, XVIII (February 15, 1920), 91.
- Frankel, Haskel. "Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff: A Review." New York Times Book Review, June 14, 1970, 24.
- Franklin, Frieda K. None But the Brave. New York: Crown Publishers, Incorporated, 1958.
- Fuller, Edmund. "The Chain: A Review." Saturday Review of Literature, XXXII (March 10, 1949), 25.
- Fuson, Ben W. (ed.). Centennial Bibliography of Kansas Literature, 1854-1961. Salina: Kansas Wesleyan University, 1961.
- Galewski, Myron. "The Chain Needs Another Link." New York Times Book Review, March 20, 1949, 20.
- Gard, Robert E. Run to Kansas. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1958.
- Gassaway, A. E. "The Walls of Jericho: A Review." Chicago Sun Book Week, February 9, 1947, 15.
- Giles, Louise. "The Learning Tree: A Review." Library Journal, XCVIII (October 1, 1963), 3646.
- G., J. C. "A Pretty Prairie Picture." Boston Transcript, October 15, 1930, 2.
- Greene, Zula Bennington. "Kansas Authors." In Kansas: Its Power and its Glory, Peg Vines (ed.). Topeka: John R. Peach, 1966.
- Guidry, F. H. "The Surveyor: A Review." Christian Science Monitor, April 28, 1960, 7.
- Hargreaves, Sheba. Heroine of the Prairies. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930.

Hassan, Ihab. "The Novel of Outrage." In The American Novel Since World War II, Marcus Klein (ed.). Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Incorporated, 1969. Reprinted from American Scholar, XXXIV, 1965.

Hindus, Milton. "All Sons Must Say Goodbye: A Review." Books, XVI (September 20, 1942), 10.

Hornstein, Lillian Herlands (ed.). The Reader's Companion to World Literature. New York: The Dryden Press, Incorporated, 1956.

"Hurricane Appeals to Women." New York Evening Post, February 25, 1933, 7.

Inge, William. Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970.

"In the Heart of a Fool: A Review." New York Times, November 10, 1919, 23.

Jerome, Judson. The Fell of Dark. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966.

Kelley, E. F. "The Bowl of Brass: A Review." Library Journal, LXIX (March 15, 1944), 263.

Kirkpatrick, C. E. "Pillar of Cloud: A Review." Library Journal, XXCII (April 15, 1957), 1064.

Kliwer, Warren, and Stanley J. Solomon (eds.). Kansas Renaissance. Topeka: Coronado Publications, 1961.

Laman, Russell. Manifest Destiny. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1963.

Lane, Rose Wilder. Let the Hurricane Roar. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1933.

Levin, Martin. "A Reader's Report." New York Times Book Review, March 14, 1971, 12.

Lynn, Margaret. Free Soil. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920.

Mansten, S. P. "Pillar of Cloud: A Review." Saturday Review, XL (August 10, 1957), 18.

- Mayberry, George. "Reliving the Civil War." New Republic, XCI (August 14, 1944), 195.
- McCarter, Margaret Hill. A Wall of Men. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1912.
- _____. The Cottonwood's Story. Topeka: Crane and Company, 1907.
- _____. The Peace of the Solomon Valley. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1911.
- _____. The Price of the Prairie. New York: A. A. Burt Company, 1910.
- Meredith, Larry K. "Kansan's First Novel Tightly Constructed." The Wichita Eagle and Beacon Magazine, May 25, 1970, 8D.
- Nelson, Truman. The Surveyor. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1960.
- Norton, Dan S., and Peters Rushton. A Glossary of Literary Terms. New York: Rinehart and Company, Incorporated, 1957.
- Ogden, George W. West of Dodge. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1926.
- "Ozone." Reprinted in Kansas in Literature, in II Vols., William Herbert Carruth (ed.). Topeka: Crane and Company, 1900.
- Parks, Gordon. The Learning Tree. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963.
- Payne, W. M. "A Certain Rich Man: A Review." Dial, XLVII (September 16, 1909), 180.
- Pennell, Joseph Stanley. The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944.
- "Rebellion: A Review." Boston Transcript, December 14, 1927, 4.
- "Rebellion: A Review." New Republic, LIII (December 7, 1927), 78.

Roth, Philip. "Writing American Fiction." In The American Novel Since World War II, Irving Howe (ed.). Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Incorporated, 1969.

Sears, W. P. "The Chain: A Review." Churchman, CLXIII (June 1, 1949), 15.

Shattuck, Katherine. "Let the Hurricane Roar: A Review." The Bookman, LXXVI (March, 1933), 300.

Siebel, Julia. For the Time Being. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Incorporated, 1961.

Smith, Harrison. "The History of Rome Hanks and Kindred Matters: A Review." Saturday Review of Literature, XXVIII (July 22, 1944), 34.

Stone, Geoffrey. "God's Angry Man." Bookman, LXXV (December, 1932), 875.

Stone, Irving. The Passionate Journey. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1959.

Strauss, Harold. "Another White." New York Times, April 10, 1938, 2.

"The Heroine of the Prairies: A Review." New York Times, September 28, 1930, 6.

"The Hurricane Roars." Christian Science Monitor, March 4, 1933, 8.

Tillinghast, Phillip. "A Certain Rich Man: A Review." Forum, XLII (September, 1909), 285.

Vogt, Esther L. The Sky is Falling. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1968.

Walker, Stanley. "The Bowl of Brass." Weekly Book Review, April 2, 1944, 6.

Warren, Austin. "The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction," in Approaches to the Novel, Robert Scholes (ed.). San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1961.

Wellman, Paul I. The Bowl of Brass. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1944.

_____. The Chain. Garden City: Doubleday and Company,
1949.

_____. The Walls of Jericho. Philadelphia: J. B.
Lippincott Company, 1947.

"What People Said: A Review." Christian Century, LV
(May 11, 1938), 593.

"White's New Novel." Atlantic, CIV (November, 1909),
82.

White, William Allen. A Certain Rich Man. New York:
The Macmillan Company, 1909.

_____. Boys Then and Now. New York: The Macmillan
Company, 1926.

_____. "Contemporary Scene," in Kansas: A Guide to
the Sunflower State. New York: The Viking Press,
1939.

_____. In Our Town. New York: The Macmillan Company,
1925.

_____. In the Heart of a Fool. New York: The Macmillan
Company, 1919.

_____. The Autobiography of William Allen White.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946.

White, William L. What People Said. New York: The
Viking Press, 1938.