DIVIDING THE HORSES: TRAIL-DRIVING PRACTICES AND THE REALIST NOVEL, AN EXAMPLE FROM ANDY ADAMS' *THE OUTLET*

by
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"the money's in the details"[1]

The Outlet (1905)[2] is a sequel to Andy Adams' novel, *The Log of a Cowboy* (1903), and like its more famous predecessor, it has generally been relegated to the status of a minor regional novel, and if discussed at all, understood to be a souree of Texas folklore. While these characterizations have some validity when applied to *Log*, they have almost nothing to do with either the project or the achievement of *The Outlet*. First of all, we must remember that when Adams set out to write about the various business practices which constitute a trail drive, he could not have known that the trail drive itself would become, over the next fifty years, a major American myth–a source of some of thc most culturally powerful messages about maseulinity, the meaning of the journey, the nature of racial and ethnic conflict and the image of social regeneration. What he did know, in 1905, was that, among serious American fiction writers, there was a eommitment to "realism," to telling the "truth," to depicting "real" social conditions. *The Outlet* ought to be understood, in my view, not as a eontribution, necessarily, to Texas regionalism or folklore, but as a compelling theory of realist literary practice.

In *The Outlet*, Adams follows literally many of the dietates of the praetitioners and theorists of realist fiction in his time–William Dean Howells, Henry James, Frank Norris, just to name a few–with a rather

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more explicit care to following the guidelines, vague or implicit as they might be, than his more famous eontemporaries who published their reflections upon their own writing and upon the desiderata of the realist projeet in gcneral. While I could have picked almost any chapter from Adams' novels or his stories, I will diseuss the sccond ehapter of *The Outlet*, entitled "Organizing the Forees," because I think that the aetion of the chapter offers an example of a literary realist focus that tends to be overlooked in the recent studies of the problems of American literary realism.

The Outlet reintroduces characters who had appeared in *The Log of a Cowboy*. In Chapter One, we learn that Tom Quirk, the figure who narrates the events in *Log* and in *The Outlet*, has been promoted from the status of a "eommon eow-hand," (11) as we see him in *Log*, to "the foremanship of [thie] sixth herd" (11) of a trail drive. Tom got his promotion on the basis of his previous experience on the trail in 1882 (in *Log*) and 1883. He had also gained special favor by performing an unpleasant but necessary task for Lovell, the head of a trail driving business–driving a herd of horses back to Texas from Dodge, when the other members of his outfit rode home on a train. Moreover, as the senior foreman Jim Flood points out to him, he had performed this task without "a whine or whimper." (12) This kind of information is valuable because it allows the readers to understand the nature of certain managerial decisions from the point of view of both the boss and the new foreman. From the very beginning, *The Outlet* is a narrative which takes as its central focus, not the adventure of trail drive, but the relationship between individual decisions, market calculations, and contractual agreements in determining the success of a business enterprise.

As we learn from Chapter One, there was a glut of horses at the shipping depots in 1883, and so, instead of selling his herd, Lovell bought additional horses at a good price and asked Tom to drive them back to his raneh where they will be available for the six trail drives of 1884. When he is pieked to do the dirty work, Tom says, "I felt like an embryo foreman, even if it was a back traek and the drag end of the season." (9) But he also understands that this return drive, with its lack of adventure or incidents worthy of the telling, is a test of character.

As compensation, he has made good use of the trip and gained a practical knowledge of the horses by riding a different horse each day. And this knowledge will take on dramatic significance when, with the five other foremen, he picks his remuda for the new drive north. For Adams, character is not merely a moral idea but is also a matter of practical knowledge, and Tom's authority is based on his ability to do a good job as a cowboy and to think of the success of the various trail driving undertakings as a whole.

Tom's admission into a new perspective, in the fact he is now a foreman and not just a working member of the trail driving outfit, can be seen as a synecdoche for the whole project of the novel which takes as its object the relationship between bosses and workers, the nature of competence and authority, and the meaning of contracts. From these opening chapters especially, and throughout the novel as a whole, Adams depicts decision-making and managerial skill as what make the actual drive possible and as the very stuff of novelistic interest. In this perspective, a trail drive is possible only within the context of institutions and historical developments on the Great Plains and in the nation at large. We, the readers, are thrown into Tom's drama of the constant need to make decisions and to coordinate his decisions with those of his boss and other foreman and various officials. The success of the drive depends upon these decisions. Whether the herd moves forward or moves at all is dependent upon aspects outside and beyond, external to, the herd.

From the foreman's point of view, the issues that may seem peripheral to the drive are, in fact, essential, and it is the movement of the herd that is now peripheral, a subplot, even as it is always the reason for the managerial decisions. These issues may concern the economic reality of the enterprise, but they cannot be limited to the merely economic in their detail. There has to be more to a business contract than merely the economic. The novelistic question here is the interconnectedness of the trail drive to the rest of the cultural institutions, the multiple relationships to the world that inhere in the trail drive phenomenon. Reality is not a substance, not merely a series of details, but a set of relationships to the world in general.

In Chapter Two, first of all, there is the owner's selection of his foremen. Secondly, these men pick their outfits, by interviewing a number of cowboys, checking versions of a dossier (beginning with accounts from other foremen about various performances). And, thirdly, the foremen pick the remudas for their outfits and it is the foremen's selection of the horses for the drive that will be the main focus of attention and the main source of drama in this chapter.

The opening paragraph presents basic information. The herds are all purchased; the foremen have been notified; they have to hire the members of their outfits. Dates and other specific information are given here. ("Don Lovell," "Jim Flood;" "last day of February," "be on hand at the ranch on March 10;" "a week on the Upper Nueces;" "only some ten of us," "about ninety men would be required;" "Lasalle County," "Medina County"). This information is necessary to demonstrate to the reader the way a large trail driving outfit works. The specific details establish rather more than what French literary theorist Roland Barthes calls the "reality effect,"[3] the presentation of details whose narrative function is to offer the reader the aura of a real world; they construct basic background information for the drive. The need for multiple decisions is demonstrated, and we readers witness the decisionist actions, beginning with the opening lines of the novel ("we'll drive all the way"). As Henry James noted, the realist writer and reader cannot "minimize the importance of exactness–of truth of detail." For, he adds, "the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel."[4] We might add, in Adams' case, that such details offer essential information in an account of this particular enterprise. They serve a narrative function as explanation, or motivation, for the action, an especially important feature of realist literary practice.

It might appear that we are given more details than we need, at this moment, for the clear movement of the narrative. We may feel, for instance, that we do not need to know that "the cattle along the river had wintered in fine condition," although such information contributes to a general sense of the enterprise and will help us to appreciate the fact that foremen have to be especially careful on the trail to maintain this condition of the cattle, since the financial success

of the drive depends on their condition at the end of the trail. (Their prospective condition at the end of the trail is, in fact, written into the contract: "above all else, boys, remember. . . that the cattle must be A 1, and that we must deliver them on the spot in prime condition."[30]) A good trail driver is one who keeps the cattle in fine condition for the duration of the drive. But this "excessive" information, this almost intuitive care for details, is also valuable in establishing and maintaining the reality effect.

The point of Adams' attention to the details is a comment not only on the now (i.e., 1905) defunct trail driving industry, but also on the practice of literary realism and the models that lie in the background of that discourse.[5] Certainly, Adams as a realist writer attempted to evoke through representations something like first hand experience which would be recognizable to someone who actually had participated in trail drives. But he was also pointing to the form that representations of reality take.

In Chapter One Lovell, Jim Flood and Tom Quirk go over "a large lot of other important data." (4) The model for the need for this detail is the financial balance sheet. For Adams, a trail drive is an exemplary version of realist narrative because it is first and foremost an economic project, a risky venture in profit and loss. The data have to be added up, subtracted, and a final sum has to be arrived at, first of all as a projection of the possibility of success. In this case, also, a decision will be made on the basis of the data: Lovell will commit to old-fashioned trail driving rather than use railroad shipping for part of the trip. As readers, we can appreciate that the data have been taken into extensive consideration. For William Dean Howells, the realist novel must compete with and distinguish itself from contemporary journalism, a genre committed, it was believed, to pure information, since the realist narrator knows that his novel readers also want information.[6] For Henry James, in his so-called realist phase, the novel must also compete with the vulgarities or sensationalism of popular culture.[7] Literary historian and critic D.A. Miller has theorized that the motive for realistic detail in nineteenth-century British fiction may be police evidence in a crime investigation, a typically British hard-nosed empiricism.[8] In contrast, the practice of Adams would lead us to add

the sense of an economic materialism ("the balance sheet") as a motive for the reality effect within a narrative.

What I am suggesting is not that Adams' novel departs from the realist projeet as described by Howells or James, but rather that it more closely follows the dictates of realism than most praetitioners dared. (Indeed, Miller's focus on the enigma of the unsolved crime as a source of realism justifies the use of older traditions of romanticism that eharacterize the work of most American realist writers.) It is not that there were not writers who experimented with the literary foree of economic detail and economic dramas–including Howells, Willa Cather and the naturalists, and before them, Melville. But for Adams, the relentlessness of detail that must go into planning a trail drive never gives way to other forms of literary legitimacy or interest.[9] "Down to the minutest detail about the wagons and the mule teams, everything was shipshape."(17) Getting a trail driving project under way, like getting a realist novel under way, is an exereise in comprehensive strategy with preeise detail.

What is important to notice here is that the presence of such detail has been reflected upon by the realist author, has been justified, at least by implication. There is, in Adams' work, as in the realism of his eontemporaries, a reflective aspeet, the sense of a need for the justification of, or excuse for, the detail, just as the detail becomes the validation of the realist novel. Detail, thus, works in a kind of ontological circularity for the proof of the fiction. Such implicit reflexivity as a need for justification of the literary practiee of writing in detail finds its perfect alibi in the trail driver's need to enumerate the various aspects of the projected six months on the trail with an outfit of twelve men, three thousand cattle and two hundred horses, in this case, multiplied more or less by six, since Lovell and Flood are performing the calculations for all six drives. Moreover, the initial decisions project an outcome, the success of the drive, as an echo of the writing of a narrative. Narrative need (what Aristotle called "beginning, middle an end"[10]) and the movement of the reference (all of the decisions to keep the herd moving) here coincide.

Thanks to his narrator-cowboy/trail driver, Tom Quirk, Adams is able to present a complex point of view on the materials of his

narrative. For the narrator is both inside and outside of the activity, a fact whieh allows him a complicated and reader-friendly perspective. Thus, as readers, we can always ask for the rationale or meaning of the details provided by the narrator. The narrator offers such an uncomplicated, transparent view onto the world of Texas cowboy activity that we are never really troubled by a technique of point of view. Tom is both a point of view and an omniseient author. Despite his experience, he seems to be always learning what the job of eowboying entails, first as a cowhand and now as a foreman. He is participant/observer of a cultural practice (to a great extent, presented as an economic/legal practice) in a specific temporal/spatial setting, in this case, March and April of 1884 at Don Lovell's ranch in Medina County, just west of San Antonio, Texas. We can believe that his motive for narrative is simply to relate the details of his work, as if his work were what he really knows about the world and about himself. He is interested, invested, in his work, and his narrative implies that, because his work is so interesting to himself, anyone would be interested in it. Moreover, what is espeeially eonvineing about the narrative is that the labor represented in the narrative is such that a working cowboy, we believe, would be able to give a clear and comprehensive aeeount of it. There may be all kinds of mysteries to the expertise of cowboy labor, but, for the most part, this work is not ineffable, is not relegated to the sphere of the unthought or the unrepresentable. If there is something missing from the representation, we may speak of a default of the writer, but the reader, nevertheless, can feel an assurance that the narrative is not a distortion of what is the substance of the narrative.

Herein, I think, lies one aspect of the power of Adams as a writer, his ability to present his book as a straightforward presentation of the facts of the ranching business, both as spectacle (observer), as seen from outside, and as economie enterprise or practice (participant), as seen from inside or as experienced, with the two modes so intricately woven together as to be impossible to separate. In fact, it is the weaving of the two modes that constitutes the ideal of artlessness that his earliest readers praised, a happy mix of objectivity and subjectivity. What Adams wants to claim is that his literary practice captures the

practical mode of knowledge inherent in the practice of trail driving, so that there will be no discrepancy between the narrative representation and the labor and life of the Texas cowboy. The realist objectivity of the reference (trail driving) will be at one with the realist objectivity of the literary representation. What Adams strives for is the nearly pure objectivity of narrative, as if narrative is all that matters. He eliminates what we might call the individual psychological traits of the narrator as irrelevant, despite using the technique of point of view. He would assent to the "laws of fiction" as laid down by Walter Besant and as agreed to by James, that "'the most important point of all is the story,' that 'the story is everything'"[11] [i.e., that character must be generated from, and limited to, the actions of the story, subordinate to the job at hand].

But these considerations about the various spheres of human activity as the authority or sign of the reality effect lead to what is the main feature of Adams' writing in the second chapter of *The Outlet*, the drama of the six foremen picking their remudas as preparation for the trail. The chapter is a good example of the manner in which Adams constructs narrative drama and entertainment in extraordinarily quiet, modest ways, according to the ideals of realist literary practice. Before the choosing begins, Lovell presents a general framework, or guidelines, for the procedures ("This is about my idea of equalizing things." [19]), and the owner's adjudicatory presence will be important throughout the process. It seems, however, that the procedures are not the mere outcome of sheer owner fiat. The big boss wants the remudas to be divided up "equitably." Lovell's guidelines for the selecting process express conventions that have been handed down, no doubt, from examples of previous practices, although they may not be quite stable enough to qualify as conventions, (and certainly they are not presented as mechanical or preregulated enough to qualify as "rules"). His guidelines leave plenty of room for individual strategies and decisions. The authority of such procedures, which may appear to lie in common sense or to be self-evident, has to be supplemented by the presence of Lovell as the owner/big boss, "augur." He is the one with "fifteen years" of experience in the trail driving business, and he is the one with the bank loans for the six projected drives. He stands to lose

the most if the enterprises fail. But whatever might be the source of authority, however strong the desire for equity, the process of six men choosing their remudas turns out to be inherently ambiguous and uncertain, and all of the men seem to be implicitly and explicitly aware of the possibility for individual strategies and for the expression of "personality" in a process that is designed to minimize personality conflicts. For instance, seniority of foremanship allows Flood to pick his former remuda, an already "picked" herd, and seniority allows him to use his past experience and knowledge of a set of horses to his advantage. Besides, of the six foremen, he has the shortest distance to cover with his herd and is the least anxious, "indifferent," concerning the choices for his remuda. All he has to do is get some men from his outfit to ride into the herd and cut out the horses picked the year before. He does not have to enter into the mental labor of making decisions about new horses. Tom, the rookie foreman, actually knows the horses better than the other men, except for Flood, and his knowledge is considered to be an unfair advantage.

The next man, Archie Tolleston, second to Flood in seniority, in the course of selecting his own and his outfit's mounts, picks a blind horse and, when he discovers his error, culls him out of his herd and wants to choose an extra horse. The two newest foremen, who are to pick last, will not agree to this. (What "rule" is it that holds a foreman, regardless of his seniority, to getting permission from junior foremen in order to correct a mistake?) It seems clear that Tom and Quince were able to anticipate this move by Tolleston; they know that he has a tendency to get "hot under the collar" and not obey some unwritten conventions about consulting greenhorn foremen. It is possible that there are two conventions here, which can be variously interpreted in such a way as to lead to conflict. There is the seniority rule, on one hand, in which Tolleston has a right to ignore the wishes of the newer men. And then there is a convention that when one man has picked his horse and then changes his mind, he is obliged to ask the person or persons who select after the older foreman for their permission to correct a mistake or wait until the rest of the foremen have chosen their remudas. In fact, Lovell has expressed the "rule" in this case: after the senior foremen have picked their remudas, all of the horses

are available to the two greenhorn foremen for their selections. After Tolleston has picked his remuda and is performing the cutting, he has no right to exchange a horse in his selected remuda for one among the remaining horses. The two new foremen have rights to the remaining herd. Thus, they stop Tolleston from moving into the herd. Foremen who pick their remudas are expected to have thought about their choices before they actually make their selections, and, if they feel that they have made a mistake, they either have to live with it, or seek recourse from the men below them in seniority rank. Such a "rule" gives significant consideration to all of the foremen, even the newest ones. For everyone except the strong-headed Tolleston, the operative rule in this situation seems clear enough, but Lovell has to enter the conflict as the final arbiter of the matter.

The exercise of selecting the horses is a version, quite complicated and ambiguous in its simplicity, of what we may call a matter of justice, or, to use more modest terms, equity, fairness. The selection of the horses is also a matter of individual professional pride for a foreman and an expression of his sense of responsibility for all of the fellow drivers in his outfit, since both the foreman's and his outfit's jobs in their months on the trail will be a lot easier if they have good, reliable horses.

In the practice of selecting the remuda, everyone knows what is at stake. Although the common cowhands do not get to do the choosing, they are all (some ninety men) present and understand that the selections will affect them in their work for the next five or six months. They also understand that the foreman's pride is at stake, since, in a labor in which one's identity is tied to vocation, a foreman's practical knowledge and his identity and authority can be on the line. He makes his selection in the open, before the men who will be subordinate to him and who will depend upon him to make the right decisions as problems arise on the trail. His authority lies in the extent of his experience, in the quality of his practical knowledge and in his decisions. Or we might say that this kind of authority will always be ambiguous. When a foreman displays his limitations, inadvertently but openly, will he lose his authority and can he regain it to be effective? Given the unpredictability of the trail, as we learn from

Log, there must be ways in which the foreman's authority can be maintained in the face of almost certain failure in some instance. In faet, there must be ways in which this problem will be anticipated by everyone. The answer appears to lie in the "personality" or character of the foreman and, thus, in the possibilities of high drama. Despite the differences in vocational ability and temperament, despite the necessary subordination of the outfit before the "augur" (the boss), an intensely democratic spirit within the outfit prevails over most considerations. Not even the foreman can elaim to be superior to the rest of the outfit. If he is the boss, gets to do the ordering, makes more money than the other cowhands, picks the best and most horses for himself, he also works the hardest and, as we learn from *Log*, takes complete responsibility for the herd. In selecting their horses, then, these six men enter into a situation fraught with contradiction and the possibilities of conflict: they must look out for their own outfit and compete with each other, even while they must consider the success of the six different outfits, although this consideration of the general success is supposed to be taken into account by the general procedures and by the owner's sense of equity. The differences in the foremen's practical knowledge arc on display. The urgency for everything to proceed "equitably" will inevitably run up against complications.

The ambiguous or open-ended nature of the drama of the remuda has been anticipatcd in the faet that, "in the absence of our employer, Flood was virtually at the head of affairs, and artfully postponed the division of horses until the last moment."(18) Every man wants the owner to be presnt at the time of the selection, anticipating the need for an authoritative referee, an adjudicator of the guidelines that he has expressed. Tolleston has already, on his own, ridden through the herd a number of days "and has even boasted that he expected to claim fifteen of the best for his own saddle." (17) Before the ehoosing, with the boss absent and all the men gathered at the ranch, they are in a carnival mood. "[W]ith the exception of a feeling of jealousy among the foremen over the remudas, we were a gay crowd, turning night into day." (18) The task of selecting the horses pits the six men against each other, creating an elementary tension.

Upon the owner's return, he gathers the foremen together and speaks to them. What he dictates is that he wants the division to be equitable, "'so that all interests will be protected,'" (18) and he spells out some of the "interests" at stake in his sense of the equitable. "'One herd may not have near the distance to travel that the others have. It would look unjust to give it the best horses, and yet it may have the most trouble.'" (18) Lovell is probably referring to Flood's herd, which has the shortest drive. What he tries to establish is "'my idea of equalizing things,'" as he covers a number of issues that have to be taken into consideration for each of the foremen, and he ends his statement by saying, "'I'll be present at the division, and I warn you all that I want no clashing.'" (19)

Lovell's speech is not a comprehensive list of all the many "interests," but he offers enough information about what he has on his mind, the complex weighings of one thing against another, to give the reader a sense of the intricate thinking that enters into the dividing of the horses, including Lovell's anticipation of the possibilities of conflict between the men. The delicacies of evaluating the different interests in the different drives can exacerbate the expressions of "jealousy," competitiveness. Even the presence of the rational and judicious owner will not be sufficient to suppress the outbreak of jealousy or what Tom refers to as "my selfishness." (20) For instance, since Tom has ridden a hundred of the ranch remuda already, on his trip back from Dodge, other foremen ask his advice about the horses they are inclined to select, but he remains silent, "dumb as an oyster." Among the foremen, "Tolleston, especially cursed, raved and importuned me to help him get a good private mount, but I was as innocent as I was immovable." (20) And so, "[w]ith all the help he could use, Tolleston was over half an hour making his selections, and he took the only blind horse in the entire herd." (21) How could an experienced cowhand and trail driver make such a mistake? The question, a mini-enigma, arises for the reader as well as for Adams' characters. And Tom quickly offers an explanation. "At the time of his purchase, neither Lovell nor Flood detected anything wrong, and no one could see anything in the eyeball which would indicate he was moon-eyed." (21) The two most experienced horseman were

inattentive enough to miss the detail of the horse's blindness in the first plaee. When one is buying a few hundred horses at a time, one's attention may well miss the specific detail of a defective horse. According to Tom, "any horseman need only notiee him closely to be satisfied of his defect," but the horse in question is also, Tom eoncedes, "a showy animal, dapple gray, fully fifteen hands high." (21) The drama here is in the perception and non-perception of details, a eombination of blindness and insight on the part of experienced horsemen that the narrator presents as perfectly understandable. The drama also points to a possible split in the nature and sources of practical knowledge. Knowledge and learning, what Lovell calls "paying tuition," rely on "experience," but, of course, we can always ask: just what is experience?

"There werc probably half a dozen [cowboys] present who knew of his blindness, but not a word was said until all the extras were chosen and the culling out of the overplus of the various remudas began." (21) Here is an instance of what we might call the cowboy rules of the game. No one is allowed to interrupt the selection process, to interfere with a foreman's seleetion. Would it be permissible for Tolleston to ask Tom or anyone else about the horse? Perhaps so, but he has not asked, and everyone who has noticed that the horse is blind is bound to silence. But now the gossip begins as the information concerning Tolleston's pick moves from man to man. "It started in snickers, and before the cutting back was over developed into peals of laughter, as man after man learned that the dapple gray in Tolleston's remuda was blind." (21)

Tolleston is, thus, the butt of a good cowboy joke. He did not detect the blindness before his selection. Horses can hide certain signs behind the open and obvious signs, and a horse can be difficult to read, even if one is an experienced horseman. A cowboy's pride may take a slight fall in his misrecognition of a sign that he is expected to recognize. In fact, after Tolleston figures out what he has done, Lovell explains to him that it was he, Lovell, who made the initial mistake. "No doubt but the man who sold him has laughed about it often since, and if ever we meet, I'll take my hat off and compliment him on being the only person who ever sold me a moon-eyed horse. I'm still paying

my tuition, and you needn't flare up when the laugh's on you."(22) Lovell is trying to help Tolleston bear up under his mistake by offering him the terms of fellow feeling. Lovell is telling him that he need not feel stupid because of this mistake, because in the business of being a cowboy there are plenty of things to learn and one is always learning the ropes, no matter how experienced. There is a basic wisdom being offered here, the purchase and the selection of the blind horse revealing the limitations of cowboy knowledge. Anyone can make a mistake; knowledge or attention can always fail at any moment. And Lovell continues to try to assuage Tolleston's feelings, as he notes that the mistake is not really crucial to Tolleston's outfit. Be a good sport, Lovell advises, and let the joke that began with me pass around, incorporating everyone in an elementary human sociality. We might understand that Lovell can be as common sensical as he is now because he has found another victim for the joke, thus alleviating something of the onus of the joke played upon him by the former owner. As the ridicule has passed to Tolleston, Lovell is willing to bring some of it back on his own head in order to calm his outraged foreman.

Of course, according to the wisdom of the old cowhand and owner, the guy who has made the mistake has to live with his mistake. He has demonstrated for all to see the limitations of his horse sense. He ought to accept his decision and laugh at himself before the other men who could now join in the laughter as an act of solidarity. Instead, Tolleston stands upon his pride, which he would interpret as his sense of what is just (but no one else sees the issues in this light), and he is fired on the spot. Priest is chosen immediately to take his place as foreman, a fact which suggests the democratic spirit of Lovell's sense of the qualities of his employees.

And so a reader's question might be this: how are we to understand the practice of dividing the horses? It is a procedure more or less easily understood by all of the cowboys. In fact, it is a number of procedures, for after the initial dividing has been completed and the tension caused by Tolleston has been relieved, for the time being, there is another dividing that takes place, this time between the two rookie foremen. But the overall procedure and its variations constitute what

Pierre Bourdieu calls "practice."[12] Cultural practices may look quite formalized, ritualized, to an outsider, but to an insider, the "rules" of the social convention are not really hard and fast. A practice such as dividing up the horses for a trail driving outfit allows for all kinds of variations in strategies; it depends upon human ageney, upon subtle differences between the men; professional skill or practical knowledge and strategy will enter into the process as well as luck. There will be ample room for anxiety and conflict; a sense of unfairness may arise. The anticipated action of jealousy means that there will be restrained but fierce competition for the "best" horses. What is important here is that such a practice is not precisely a ritual, nor is it what might be called a custom. No doubt, certain customs are mixed into the practice, although they might well be customs of the culture at large or at least a cultural ideal of procedure for certain activities, such as the rankings of the foremen according to seniority, according to the temporal stretch of each cowboy's experience. In the narrative here, none of the men questions the seniority rule. It does not have to be explained or justified to anyone. Seniority is accompanied with privileges, and everyone is in tacit agreement. But a number of other issues are at stake in the procedures of selecting a remuda that will almost certainly change from instance to instance, so that the procedures cannot be institutionalized into a ritual, even though certain aspects of Adams' accounts might appear ritualistic. I am thinking of Tolleston's refusal to consult the two young and new foremen before riding into the herd to pick an extra horse to off-set the blind horse. Both Tom and Ferris ride after Tolleston and take the reins away from him. But this is a seemingly soft ritual, since none of the actions of the group can quite be formulated into the hard and fast and implieit rules of ritual. If they could, there would be little room for human drama, for improvisation, for the possibilities of conflict as deriving from the relationships of men with each other, from their practical knowledge of each other, from those everyday assessments human beings make of each other and the consequent inevitable rivalries. In the narrative of a practice, something profoundly social is brought into focus, put on display and made readable.

Adams' narrative captures both the ethnographical specularity of the practice and the literary aspects of the human drama at stake in the practice. And an author does not have to suggest that the practice under consideration is anything more than a social significance. Nor does it conform to what we might call folklore. For the realist imagination, the descriptive narrative of a practice carries all of the satisfactions for the most rigorous literal reference to an actual world. What Adams is dramatizing is that, before the trail drive begins, a complex and deeply social drama of decisions takes place.

Knowledge of horses, the ability to see the signs of a good horse for trail work, is both important for the work of cowboying and a fact that can be enunciated by the men. The fact that there can be minute imbalances in knowledge and experience, that one man can beat another man, adds dramatic excitement, in a subtle and understated way. In addition to what Lovell refers to as the various interests of the different drives, these men also differentiate their horses according to what task they are interpreted as performing best. Some horses have greater endurance than others. There are good night herding horses, good swimming horses, good cutting horses, "best horses," and so forth. Such knowledge of horse specialities cannot be determined by abstract and objective perception but comes only from riding and working the horses. Thus, Tom, who has ridden a hundred of them on his drive back from Dodge, has an advantage over the other foremen, even though he is the lowest in seniority and perhaps in experience of trail driving. Horses, like men, are able to perform some jobs better than others. A good cowboy is one who studies the features and capabilities of the horses, who pays attention to the fact that horses excel in one way or another and fall short in other ways. The foremen picking their remudas have to note or construct the distinctive features of each animal. Thus, for one cowboy to be able to pick a better bunch of horses for his outfit is an indication that he is a better cowboy than someone else. Adams offers an instance of concrete ethnographic/historical practices with high drama.

For Adams, then, a cowboy's vocational authority derives from experience, and that authority can be displayed in the performance of cowboy work. Owen Wister, on the other hand, indicates the

superiority of his cowboy hero, the Virginian, by the narrator's simple fiat. A Philadelphia lawyer who took summer vacations in Wyoming, Wister can only claim that the Virginian is a superior eowboy. Or rather, the Virginian's authority is brought to bear in his abilities to talk, or tell a tall story.[13] His talk, rather than eowboy labor, might well be his praetice because Wister does not, as some of his early cowboy readers noted, seem to understand the actual work of the cowboy and thus does not understand the sources of authority within cowboy culture. For Wister, the authority of the eowboy lies mainly in his Anglo-Saxon heritage, and not in the vocational abilities he has garnered from his experience as a working cowboy. Of course, we may suspect that Adams' belief in the authority of "experience" is just as ideologieal or political as Wister's notion of the authority of birthright. But if we think of realism as always having been an ideological project, the narrative of human praetices or experience is especially compelling and worthy of our serious attention. In American culture, the authority of experienee, rather than genealogy, tends to command assent. Adams is writing in the context of realist literary practices and in the heyday of American philosophical pragmatism.

However vague the stated projects of the realist (and naturalist) spokesmen might have been, they opened up a field of new literary possibilities.[14] And it is within the field of these possibilities that the novels of Andy Adams could be conceived and composed. Especially, in *The Outlet*, Adams is pushing the realist project beyond the focus on and glorification of individual characters and the high drama of relationships between the characters. The realist struggle against "romance" entailed a near journalistic, in some cases an ethnographic, interest in contemporary soeiety and eulture. Social struggle between individuals from different classes and institutions, a kind of reification of the social world, eould now be presumed to be of literary interest. In part, the realist project offered renunciation of the usual themes and modes of novelistic interest in favor of bringing a larger social/economic/political "background" into focus. Adams' depiction of picking remudas represents a version of what Pierre Bourdieu calls a "pure practice without theory," also known as "art."[15] And whereas

choosing the horses is clearly associated with an economic project, the drama of picking the horses for the remudas cannot be reduced to the economic. The men who pick the horses for their remudas are endowed with a social mission, profoundly vocational. In this elementary practice of picking a remuda, which, to my knowledge, has never been written about by any of the many commentators and historians of the classic period of frontier ranching,[16] Adams found a topic at one realistic and novelistic, at least according to the terms at stake in the battle strategies of the most militant realist practitioners and theorists of the literary art. And perhaps also nostalgic, in the sense that, in the new industrial era of American capitalism, the drama of vocational or practical skill as pertinent to an "industry" was rapidly fading from the real or plausible world of mechanization and bureaucratic necessity.

Of course, the drama of neglecting the detail of the horse's blindness serves as a cautionary tale for the rest of the novel, since Lovell himself has overlooked an important detail in his contract with the Washington corporation. The omission of a detail in the contract, and Lovell's overlooking it will generate most of the action for the rest of the novel. *The Outlet* is not only a realist novel, produced in the heyday of the realist literary faith; it is also a theory of realist literary practice.[17] In establishing an analogy between literary practice and the activities and events of the actual social and economic world of a Texas professional trail driver, in validating the need for attention to detail, Adams offers at once insights into cultural/economic practices and an ideological justification for his own contribution to the field of realist literary practices. Social or cultural practices (practices are difficult to categorize) present pre-established objective guidelines for the behavior of human agents. But they do not establish a deterministic nature, as the naturalist writers of the era would have us believe, since they derive from a history of cultural experience, and, despite the appearance of a pre-regulated objectivity, they leave ample room for human agency. The representation of such practices is almost the perfect solution to the realist literary dilemmas and struggles of the period.[18]

NOTES

1. Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, edited by Bernard L. Stein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 74.
2. Andy Adams, *The Outlet* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1905). Page references to this text will be given in parentheses in the text above.
3. "The Reality Effect," in *French Literary Theory Today*, edited by Tzvetan Todorov, translated by R. Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 11-17.
4. "The Art of Fiction," in *The Future of the Novel*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 13-14.
5. Jimmy M. Skaggs, *The Cattle-Trailing Industry* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 120-121. Skaggs dates the definitive demise of the trail driving business in the late 1880s.
6. This is the point that Amy Kaplan makes about Howells in *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 20ff.
7. James' relationship to, his struggle with, popular fiction is presented in William Veeder, Henry James: *The Lesson of Master* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).
8. "The Novel and the Police," in *Poetics of Murder*, edited by Glenn W. Most and William W. Stowe (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1983), 300-326. Actually at one point in *The Outlet*, Adams introduces a detective by the name of Charlie Siringo, to keep an eye on some shady Eastern cattle buyers.
9. Howells, for instance, seemed to believe that a reader's interest could only be grasped by a romantic plot. A love plot "arrests, it detains, till the last word is said, and while there is anything to be hinted. This is what makes a love intrigue of some sort all but essential to the popularity of any fiction." "Criticism of Fiction," [1891] in W.D. Howells, *Selected Literary Criticism*, Volume II: 1886-1897 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 342.
10. *Poetics*, translated with an introduction and notes by Malcolm Heath, (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 13.
11. "The Art of Fiction," 11. James is responding to a lecture by the Victorian English novelist and historian, Walter Besant.
12. *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambrdige: Cambridge University Press, 1977), esp. 78-87.
13. According to Lee Clark Mitchell, in Wister's novel, "quick wit is prized over quick draws." *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 98.
14. In response to what Howells called "the illimitable fields of reality." "Criticism and Fiction," 316.
15. *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 2.

16. David Dary, in *Cowboy Culture*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 289. Dary mentions "remuda" only to note its philological origin in Spanish. Earlier commentators on the American cowboy mention the remuda, but no one, to my knowledge, writes about the practice of picking remudas for the trail drive.
17. *The Social Construction of American Realism*, 15. Amy Kaplan notes, with great insight, that "[r]ather than as a monolithic and fully formed theory, realism can be examined as a multifaceted and unfinished debate re-enacted in the arena of each novel and essay." Despite Howells' sense of the need for a romance plot in realist fiction, he claimed to value "the rude voice" that "comes to us from wherever men are at work, wherever they are truly living," "Criticism and Fiction," 327.
18. Many thanks to Kathleen Morgan for suggestions in the revisions of this essay.