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THE RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES OF WILL ROGERS

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THE RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES OF WILL ROGERS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Question

Will Rogers was a humorist who got himself taken seriously. As early as 1918, Theodore Roosevelt, talking to Albert D. Lasker, the advertising man, is reported to have given this estimate of the Oklahoma cowpuncher:

> This man Rogers has such a keen insight into the American panorama and the American people that I feel he is bound, in the course of time, to be a potent factor in the political life of the nation. His good will can be a great asset to our party.[1]

Some Americans wanted Rogers to exert his political force by seeking public office. In 1928, thousands of voters, perhaps, wanted him to receive the Democratic Presidential nomination. One admirer, refusing to accept Rogers' dismissal of the idea and realizing that the Presidency would require "the strength of Hercules and wisdom of Pericles," wrote to The New York Times as follows:

> In the Times today Will Rogers objects to my nominating him for President seriously. He says "the country hasn't quite got to the professional comedian stage."

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[1]L. H. Robbins, "Portrait of an American Philosopher," The New York Times, November 3, 1935, VII, p. 4. The Roman numeral indicates the appropriate section of the Sunday edition.

> But Will Rogers is far more than a mere comedian. Like Mark Twain, Will Rogers mingles hard common sense and real statesmanship with his humor.
>
> His letters as an unofficial ambassador in Europe and his daily articles in the Times show a grasp of affairs, a keen knowledge of human nature, a far-sighted wisdom and a homely common sense, sugar-coated with flashes of humor, such as no President since Abraham Lincoln has possessed.[1]

A Baptist minister in Brooklyn renewed the nomination from his pulpit. "It might seem like a joke, but when he got down to business, making speeches over the country, the Republicans would find that Mr. Rogers was no joke."[2] Embryonic Presidential booms in Texas and California occurred in 1932, the former being fostered by an ex-governor of Texas, James E. Ferguson; and in 1935 a splinter party announced that it would draft him as its Presidential choice for 1936.[3] Others wanted him for state-level offices; an NRA official suggested his candidacy for the California governorship in 1934, and Senator A.S. Monroney, who as a reporter covered some of Rogers' Oklahoma visits, has said of the humorist, "His own innate modesty always led him to disqualify himself for any political office, which could have been his from his native state, for just the asking."[4]

More important was the force which Will Rogers exerted as a

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[1]Will Atkinson, Letter to the Editor, The New York Times, February 11, 1928, p. 16.

[2]The New York Times, February 13, 1928, p. 19. There is little point in multiplying such expressions; others, however, did appear. See, for example, ibid., March 24, 1928, p. 3 and May 27, 1928, III, p. 5. The latter urges Rogers as a prospective cabinet member.

[3]Ibid., February 7, 1931, p. 9; February 26, 1932, p. 22; July 20, 1935, p. 15.

[4]Ibid., January 10, 1934, p. 23; Monroney's remarks occur in "Biography in Sound: Will Rogers," produced by N.B.C. News, May 22, 1955, part two.

commentator on the American scene. In 1927, the National Press Club in Washington recognized his status by appointing him "Congressman at Large for the United States of America," his duties being to "roam over the country, pry into the state of the Union, check up on Prohibition enforcement and report at regular intervals to the National Press Club."[1] A few months later, a Nebraska Congressman praised him on the House floor during debate on the Nicaraguan question as "the only man of any party in the United States who has had the courage to ask a great question: 'Why are we in Nicaragua and what the hell are we doing there?'"[2] Writing for The Saturday Review of Literature, the reviewer of a 1924 collection of Rogers aphorisms commented, "Somebody once gave him the license of free speech (or perhaps he took it without asking); but, at any rate, in the past few years he has probably turned over more heavy stones and thrown hot sunlight underneath than any man in the United States."[3] Reinhold Niebuhr, delivering his first sermon as a faculty member of Union Theological Seminary and making the point that the church is often cowardly, remarked,

> There was an old tradition that only the king's jester could speak the truth, and he accomplished it by putting hard sayings in the capsules of humor. That has also become the technique by which King Demos is approached; note Will Rogers' facility in puncturing foibles which more pretentious teachers leave untouched.[4]

Indications of the power of the "court jester" with King Demos

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[1]The New York Times, August 28, 1927, p. 22.

[2]Ibid., January 12, 1928, p. 29.

[3]Quoted in Betty Rogers, Will Rogers: His Wife's Story (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Company, 1943), p. 157.

[4]The New York Times, November 19, 1928, p. 22.

exist in the comments immediately following the humorist's death in 1935. House Speaker Byrns, stopping regular debate, said, "Will Rogers had the ear of the public as few in this country did."[1] An editorial in the New Orleans Times-Picayune said, "He was, in the true sense of the term, a national figure, wielding a wider and a more wholesome influence than many who pose--as he did not--as national leaders and guides." In the West, the Denver Rocky Mountain News commented, "The plain people of America lose a spokesman and a beloved friend." And in the East, the Baltimore Sun added, "He made his material out of governments, politics, international situations and the secret, simple urges of the generality of men. Thus he became commentator and philosopher, too."[2]

More than a quarter of a century has passed since such tributes appeared, but during that time evidence of Rogers' influence has continued to accumulate. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the occasion of the launching of a memorial fund drive for Rogers, wrote,

> In addition to my deep appreciation of his marvelous humor, the first time that I fully realized Will Rogers's exceptional and deep understanding of political and social problems was when he came back from his long European trip a good many years ago. While I had discussed European matters with many others, both American and foreign, Will Rogers's analysis of affairs abroad was not only more interesting but proved to be more accurate than any other I had heard.[3]

Later, when the Claremore Memorial was dedicated in 1938, Roosevelt again assessed Rogers' contribution: "Above all things, in a time grown

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[1]Ibid., August 17, 1935, p. 1.

[2]All of these comments were quoted in The Daily Oklahoman, August 17, 1935, p. 10.

[3]The New York Times, November 28, 1935, p. 29.

too solemn and somber, he brought his countrymen back to a sense of proportion."[1] The man whom Roosevelt had defeated in 1932 had voiced similar opinions about Rogers.

> He contributed something to steady thinking over many troublesome years. His whimsicalities kept us nearer to an even keel. They released public fear or anger by the safety valve of laughter.
>
> And his was a great understanding of the background of public events.[2]

To Jesse Jones, longtime federal official, Rogers "was a philosopher, probably as great as any we have known."[3] In 1939, Will Rogers' statue joined those of other esteemed Americans in the National Hall of Fame in the Capitol; he is the only humorist to be so honored. More recently, in 1955, Speaker Sam Rayburn, a long-time acquaintance of Rogers, spoke from a perspective of over forty years in public life.

> Will Rogers really served his day and generation as few men have by calling attention, in public, to matters of public interest upon which he always had fine judgement, and in his criticisms--if he could call them that--he was always kindly; he never carried a barb in anything he said . . . . And I don't think anybody ever exemplified any better than Will Rogers did a great love for human kind, for his country, and for the people throughout the length and breadth of the world.[4]

That Rogers is on his way to becoming an American tradition is indicated by the continuing flow of anthologies of his sayings and biographies.[5] Carl Sandburg, speaking in 1955, did not hinder any such

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[1]*Ibid.*, November 5, 1938, p. 21.

[2]Remarks of Herbert Hoover on Will Rogers Memorial Broadcast, N.B.C., November 19, 1935.

[3]*The New York Times*, November 5, 1938, p. 21.

[4]"Biography in Sound," part two.

[5]The most recent are Paula McSpadden Love, *The Will Rogers Book* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961) and Donald Day, *Will Rogers: A Biography* (New York: David McKay Company, 1962).

tendencies.

> A fine and great American tradition is that of Will Rogers. He ought to be taught in the schools because of what he embodied of the best of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence . . . . I could repeat that the whole Rogers tradition is homely as a mud fence, and yet as beautiful as a sunrise over an Oklahoma field of alfalfa.[1]

Will Rogers was a humorist who got himself taken seriously. The question of how he did so arises naturally and is the general area of inquiry in this study. More specifically, the question is, what did Will Rogers do in his public pronouncements to get his reading or listening audiences to accept him as a commentator?

Others have had their own ideas.

Previous Criticism

One line of thinking about Rogers' effectiveness with his audiences is, in general, that he was a great truth-teller, in the sense that his grasp of foreign and domestic problems enabled him to speak with authority. Some indications of this assessment already included are the 1928 Presidential supporter who extolled Rogers' statesmanship and grasp of affairs, the praise accorded him by Niebuhr, the estimate of his analysis of foreign and domestic affairs by Roosevelt and Hoover, and the "fine judgement" attributed to him by Sam Rayburn. However, while respecting Rogers' penetrating foresight on such matters as the need for air power and the need for an anti-imperialist foreign policy, we should remember that his analysis of other major national and international issues was marked by something less than brilliance.[2]

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[1]"Biography in Sound," part two.

[2]For examples of Rogers' advocacy of air power, see The New York Times, March 12, 1927, p. 3; June 8, 1933, p. 21; December 15, 1934,

He did not, for instance, have any real insight into the economic trouble that brewed in the 1920's and boiled over in the 1930's.[1] At the time, Rogers did not perceive in any way the connection between extended business profits, stock market speculation, and reduced consumer spending power. When the crash came, he--like many other Americans--viewed it as deserved punishment for gambling. Shortly after the collapse, he wrote,

> I have been in Washington on Inauguration Day, Claremore on Fourth of July, Dearborn on Edison's Day. But to have been in New York on "Wailing day"! When Wall Street took that tail spin, you had to stand in line to get a window to jump out of, and speculators were selling space for bodies in the East River. If England is supposed by international treaty to protect the Wailing Wall, they will have to come here to do it. The wall runs from the Battery to the Bronx.
>
> You know there is nothing that hollers as quick and as loud as a gambler, they even blame it on Hoover's fedora hat. Now they know what the farmer has been up against for eight years.[2]

The next day, he was even more explicit on the meaninglessness of the stock market crisis. "Flying from New York, all day just looking down on beautiful lands and prosperous towns, then you read all this sensational collapse of Wall Street. What does it mean? Nothing."[3] On another great

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p. 15. For examples of his advocacy of non-imperialism, see the issues of July 19, 1927, p. 25; December 19, 1932, p. 17; and August 10, 1933, p. 19. Typical are the following. "WHEN WE NEARLY LOSE THE NEXT WAR, AS WE PROBABLY WILL, WE CAN LAY THE BLAME ONTO ONE THING AND THAT WILL BE THE JEALOUSY OF THE ARMY AND NAVY TOWARD AVIATION." Again, "The U.S. Senate sentenced the Philippines to twelve more years of American receivership."

[1]For a comprehensive but brief review of the economic forces at work during the 'twenties and 'thirties, see A.M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Roosevelt, Vol. I: The Crisis of the Old Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), pp. 159-60.

[2]The New York Times, October 25, 1929, p. 31.

[3]Ibid., October 26, 1929, p. 19. See also the issues of May 6, 1931, p. 27; May 15, 1931, p. 25; December 22, 1932, p. 19; and February 8, 1933, p. 21.

question of the time, Will Rogers aligned himself firmly on the side of the isolationists. A 1934 dispatch is typical.

> Lots of headlines today. "Mussolini's troops camped on the Austrian border," "Hitler says nothing," which means he is too busy moving troops, "England lends moral support," yes and two battleships, "France backs Austrian government," and sends a few hundred planes over to deliver the message. "Japan almost on verge of prostration in fear Russia won't get into this European war." Mr. Franklyn [sic] D. shut your front door to all foreign ambassadors running to you with news. Just send 'em these words, "boys, its your cats thats fighting, you pull 'em apart."[1]

To say that Will Rogers was no seer is only honest. Further, if one remembers that audiences sometimes require later developments to prove to themselves the discernment of a truth teller, the idea that Will's impact depended upon other causes occurs naturally. Often right and often wrong, Will Rogers must have gained his influence by means additional to his discerning analyses.

Another line of thought to account for the Oklahoman's influence, perhaps, has already been suggested by his comments on the Wall Streeters and on staying out of Europe's quarrels. This explanation is, in general, that he got the ear of Americans simply by saying well what Americans already thought. An editorial writer for the Rocky Mountain News expressed this view succinctly when he wrote about Rogers that "he said what people were thinking, but he said it first."[2] Croy, a writer friend of Rogers', does not make this explanation his only one, but he agrees. "His philosophy was not very profound. It was what the average person was thinking

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[1]Ibid., February 15, 1934, p. 21. See also the issues of May 31, 1934, p. 21 and of September 10, 1934, p. 19.

[2]Quoted in The Daily Oklahoman, August 17, 1935, p. 10.

but Will stated it in terms of entertainment."[1] Fred Allen, the comedian, came to a similar conclusion:

> With his ungrammatical approach to his subject matter, he was never above the head of the man in the street, and it seemed to me that the little man in the street accepted Will as a voice that he would like to say the things that Will was saying for him.[2]

However, without denying that Rogers often did reflect popular public sentiment in his epigrams, one should be aware that he did not fear opposing that sentiment. To a nation tired of war and complacent about military preparedness, he constantly addressed warnings. In October, 1930, for example, he wrote, "To reduce your navy in these times is exactly like a man who is not doing so well financially cancelling all his life insurance, figuring it's a dead loss because he hasn't died yet."[3] Against an American public all too prone to hysteria in a Red scare, he consistently stood up for an open society that would permit freedom of speech, even for Communists. In 1935, with a world-wide depression apparently aiding Communist efforts at world revolution, Will Rogers commended England for its institutions of free speech and expressed a desire for similar ones in this country. Talking about Fascist and Communist meetings in Hyde Park, Rogers said, "England, you solved that problem. You certainly let 'em talk. I wish we would do a little more of that over here. Maybe it would be better for us. We

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[1]Homer Croy, Our Will Rogers (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1953), p. 325.

[2]"Biography in Sound," part one.

[3]The New York Times, October 28, 1930, p. 25. See also the issues of December 24, 1931, p. 19; February 14, 1933, p. 17; and May 17, 1933, p. 19.

would let 'em get it off their minds."[1] A few years earlier, when the "America First" organization sought to define Americanism and enforce conformity by appeals to super-patriotism, Rogers used his nationally syndicated columns to make the movement appear ridiculous.[2] He opposed public opinion often enough and on sufficiently important questions to raise doubts about the hypothesis that his power arose simply from his saying well what the public already thought. If he did state the thoughts of the people, those thoughts were possibly on a different level from that of opinions on specific events.

A third line of thought about the basis of Rogers' influence is that he was some sort of meaningful symbol to his national constituency.

One such group of opinions seems to cluster around the notion that Will Rogers won his influence because he represented the idealized embodiment of the common man. (While this hypothesis can include, I think, the notion that Rogers was popular by speaking the thoughts of the common folk, it makes possible a more comprehensive view of the Sage of Claremore.) Donald Day, seeking to explain the love which Americans had for Rogers, wrote,

> Will just ambled out in whatever medium he chose as Will, one and inseparable in his person and in his character as a humorist. In this way he could and did become the prototype of "the big Honest Majority." His humor, his comments, his sarcasms were just as much a part of him as his big ears, his shuffling gait, his grin and his unruffled good nature. He was as real as a

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[1]Text of radio speech from ibid., May 12, 1935, p. 29. Further documentation of his stand will appear in chap. iv of this study.

[2]See ibid., November 2, 1927, p. 29 and The Tulsa Daily World, November 13, 1927, Tulsa World Magazine Section, p. 4.

mule wiggling its ears on a hot summer day.[1]

Homer Croy states a similar opinion, with the emphasis on the audience, however. "The average man could more nearly see himself in the mirror as Will Rogers than as any other person on the American scene."[2] L. H. Robbins, a feature writer for The New York Times, explaining why Rogers became the "apotheosis of the common man," wrote,

> Analyze the Rogers body of conceptions, and you have a fairly true map of the average American mind. You have, notably, a strong faith in humanity, a social conscience, tolerance for the other fellow, sympathy for the underdog, a sly admiration for the upper dog, and a passion for fair play for both dogs. You have intellectual curiosity, shrewd observation, high respect for truth, and a candor that "smiles when it says it," disarming resentment. You have beautiful modesty of judgment, strangely coupled with conservative prejudices.[3]

It would be useless to deny that Will Rogers shared many qualities of the average man. In some significant ways, however, Will Rogers did not behave, write, or speak as the embodiment of the man on the street. In spite of his simple tastes, he was a sophisticate, numbering among his friends H. L. Mencken, Will Durant, and Walter Lippmann.[4] I have already mentioned some of his causes which the man on the street did not espouse; another is that of religious tolerance, which many Americans did not accept--if events surrounding the Scopes trial and if individual reactions in the election of 1928 are indications

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[1]Preface to The Autobiography of Will Rogers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), p. xv.

[2]Our Will Rogers, p. 325.

[3]The New York Times, November 3, 1935, VII, p. 4.

[4]E. P. Alworth, "The Humor of Will Rogers" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of English, University of Missouri, 1957), p. 92.

of public opinion on such matters.[1] Moreover, at times, Rogers exhibited an almost aristocratic repugnance for the caprices of public opinion. In 1935, he wrote as follows:

> At the great San Diego Worlds Fair yesterday, Mr. Hoover received a tremendous ovation. There is no country in the world where a person changes from hero to a goat, and a goat to a hero, or visa versa, as they do with us. And all through no change of them, the change is always in us. Its not our public man that you can't put your finger on, its our public. We are the only fleas weighing over 100 pounds. We don't know what we want, but we are ready to bite somebody to get it.[2]

Finally, except for fleeting moments, the "little" people do not install in their pantheon one who truly is one of them. Will Rogers once wrote, "There is nothing impresses the 'common folk' like somebody that ain't common."[3]

Informed opinion has also explained Will's attractiveness by relating him to a nationally symbolic figure, the crackerbox philosopher. Rourke's pathfinding study of American humor in 1931 illumined the historical continuity and the symbolic value of the crackerbox tradition. Showing how the genre related to the characters of the "sharp" Yankee, the roaring backwoodsman, and the Negro minstrel, Rourke held that "their comedy, their irreverent wisdom, their sudden changes and adroit adaptations, provided emblems for a pioneer people who required resilience as a prime trait."[4] At the time of Rourke's work, of course, Rogers

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[1]For examples of Rogers' advocacy of religious tolerance, see The New York Times, April 19, 1927, p. 29 and November 26, 1928, p. 31.

[2]Ibid., June 19, 1935, p. 21.

[3]Ibid., July 13, 1928, p. 19.

[4]Constance Rourke, American Humor: A Study of the National Character (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), p. 99.

was still writing his own story; the scholar gave him one sentence, bracketing him with a fictionalized crackerbox philosopher of a century before. "Will Rogers, rover, lecturer, cowboy, showman, is an adviser in high places, a hundred years after Jack Downing."[1]

In the only doctoral dissertation to date dealing with Rogers, Alworth set out to "examine critically the humor of Will Rogers and to establish the relationship between him and the crackerbox philosophers of the nineteenth century."[2] Alworth examines the techniques of Rogers' humor and compares and contrasts him with earlier, real or fictional "crackerbox philosophers" including Richard Saunders, Jack Downing, Hosea Biglow, Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, Petroleum V. Nasby, Mark Twain, and Mr. Dooley. "By and large," writes Alworth, "the humor of Will Rogers reflected the same techniques employed by the old time American humorists."[3] Like Franklin, Rogers tested a moral system not in the abstract but in application to real life; like Franklin's Richard Saunders, Rogers gave his common sense in an unlearned style and based it upon his experience in practical affairs; like Seba Smith's Jack Downing, Rogers was breezily impudent in his comments on national administrations without often singling out individual politicians for criticism; like Lowell's Hosea Biglow, Rogers clung to regionalism of speech; like comedians Ward, Nasby, and Billings, Rogers used poor grammar, cacography, and illogical punctuation, together with regional idioms and homely metaphor; like Twain, Rogers was provincial and based his humor upon incongruities developed by exaggeration; like Dunne's Mr. Dooley, Rogers punched at

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 290.

[2]"The Humor of Will Rogers," p. 3. [3]*Ibid.*, p. 120.

sham and dishonesty and "casually referred to prominent men of affairs as if they were common citizens."[1] In distinction, however, from such figures, Alworth notes that Rogers fits no category conveniently.

> He was not a rural New England Yankee comedian like Jack Downing and Sam Slick; he had no political ax to grind like James Russell Lowell; he had no talent for political vituperation like Petroleum V. Nasby; he did not often play the fool character like Artemus Ward and Bill Nye; he wrote no sustained literature like Mark Twain; and he had no zeal for political and social reform like Martin Dooley.[2]

Alworth addresses himself to explaining Will's popularity "by examining the characteristics of the Oklahoman which distinguished him from his literary ancestors . . . ."[3] The investigator holds that in addition to Will's lack of long writing apprenticeship, lack of sustained and integrated works of humor, and absence of political partisanship and crusading spirit, three distinctions helped him to his impact upon his fellow Americans. One was "that his stage personality was entirely natural for him"; another was "that Will's language seemed natural, whereas much of the humor of . . . [the newspaper comedians] lay in conscious twisting of grammar and spelling"; and, finally, "another unique quality which elevated Will to the top rank of crackerbox philosophers was his role as 'opinionmaker' for the American mind."[4]

Although Alworth's is the most detailed work relating the Sage of Claremore to the crackerbox tradition, other writers have generally agreed that Will's role as a common sense philosopher accounted for his success. "Will Rogers, with more good humor and less of irony and art [than Twain], came to fill the old bill of crackerbox

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[1]*Ibid.*, pp. 125-31. [2]*Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 132. [4]*Ibid.*, pp. 132-42, *passim*.

philosopher, and join it with that of matinee star," wrote Wecter in his study of heroes.[1] Fishwick credits Rogers' homespun wit, his cowboy's status ("for a generation of Americans, he was Mr. Cowboy,") and his access to the mass newspaper medium with making Will a national figure.[2] In a newspaper interview, Walter Blair, whose first study of the crackerbox tradition did not include Rogers in its scope, credits the Oklahoman's success to his continuation of the homespun tradition through the mass media.

> "While Rogers became more famous than any predecessor because all these media made him known, . . . he carried on a very old tradition. Early in the eighteen [sic] century, Benjamin Franklin created his Poor Richard--a countryman, temperate, pious, uneducated but so wise in the ways of the world that his sayings were read and treasured by a large share of his countryment [sic]."
> "Beginning in the eighteen . . . thirties until 1935 America constantly had at least one homespun commentator on current foibles and events who was highly influential."[3]

No doubt can exist that Will Rogers spoke and wrote as a literary descendant of the likes of Poor Richard, Jack Downing, Hosea Biglow, and the rest. Further, the students of that tradition are aware that its central figure was somehow the type and symbol of America. Of necessity spending most of their effort in showing the continuity of the line of homespun philosophers, these writers have largely left unanswered the question of what the symbol symbolized. To say that Will Rogers was popular because he was a crackerbox philosopher is not to

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[1]Dixon Wecter, The Hero in America: A Chronicle of Hero-Worship (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 478.

[2]Marshall W. Fishwick, American Heroes: Myth and Reality (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1954), pp. 21 and 213.

[3]The New York Times, August 15, 1960, p. 25. Blair's full length study is Native American Humor: 1800-1900 (New York: American Book Company, 1937).

explain what made the crackerbox philosopher so appealing to the American imagination.

Other writers have moved toward a more specific statement of Rogers' appeal as a symbol. Carl Sandburg, of course, is relevant here if one remembers that Sandburg felt that Will should be taught in the schools because of what he "embodied of the best of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence." Novelist Clarence Budington Kelland, puzzling over Rogers' source of power as he watched the cowboy philosopher in action, suddenly experienced the insight that Rogers was really Uncle Sam, minus the costume and the beard.[1] Significant, perhaps, is the work of Klapp, both for the process through which he went in arriving at his final assessment of Rogers' audience appeal and for the assessment itself. Listing heroic roles such as the conquering hero, the Cinderella, the clever hero, the deliverer, the benefactor, and the martyr, Klapp categorized Will Rogers as a clever hero, including Abraham Lincoln and Davy Crockett in the category, also.[2] In a later article, Klapp apparently gave a little less-exclusive emphasis to the role of cleverness in making Rogers a hero: "The same tricks which characterize the jokesters of folklore <u>helped</u> to make Will Rogers a clever hero in

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[1]Cited in <u>Folks Say of Will Rogers: A Memorial Anecdotage</u>, ed. William Howard Payne and Jake G. Lyons (New York: C. P Putnam's Sons, 1936), pp. 198-99. One has the feeling while reading Rourke that she was adumbrating a genetic relationship between Uncle Sam and the merged figures of the Yankee, the frontiersman, and the minstrel.

[2]Orrin E. Klapp, "The Creation of Popular Heroes," <u>American Journal of Psychology</u>, LIV (September, 1948), 136. One observes that Rogers partakes of all the categories listed to some degree except, perhaps, that of the conquering hero: the "poor boy making good" as people thought of him, is the Cinderella role; his benefits and disaster work gave him the cast of the deliverer and benefactor, and his sudden death in the cause of air progress gave him some qualities of the martyr.

America."[1] Still later, in an article devoted exclusively to heroes of the clever type, the investigator dealt with the Oklahoman in more detail, showing how his strategy of humor accorded with the qualities of the clever hero. However, Klapp concluded about Rogers' fame, "I wish to avoid oversimplifying the causes of his popularity as a symbol."[2] For to Klapp, Rogers on close inspection was seemingly more than simply a clever hero who gets the better of opponents in battles of wit and who makes a clown of his antagonist: "As the nation's 'court Jester' and 'ambassador' abroad, he was a democratic hero, friend of the common man, homespun philosopher, national symbol."[3] The student of Will Rogers comes almost full circle in the Rogers criticism, and he sees also the interrelationship of all of it when he reads the comment of Paula McSpadden Love on the meaning of Will Rogers. "To the underprivileged and uneducated he symbolized the triumph of the common man," she believes.[4]

The threads of criticism thus far lead one to the conclusion, first, that Will Rogers operated as a bona fide hero to his national audience, and, second, that in all which previous observers have written, the sources of his influence as a hero constitute a somewhat larger pattern than one might suppose at first glance.

Hypothesis and Divisions of the Study

Without ever holding public office or other powerful position

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[1]"The Folk Hero," Journal of American Folklore, LXII (January-March, 1949), 24. Italics mine.

[2]"The Clever Hero," Journal of American Folklore, LXVII (January-March, 1954), 31.

[3]Ibid. [4]The Will Rogers Book, p. 138.

from which to shape events, Will Rogers achieved great influence, nevertheless, in the role of a hero. The theoretical formulations of writers from fields as diverse as sociology, public opinion, and history provide a basis for an hypothesis in Rogers' case. Klapp writes, "Hero worship in America expresses our characteristic values. It reveals not only the traits we admire most but also our fields of interest."[1] Albig succinctly points out much the same thing. "Which leaders become symbols will be determined by the paramount values of the culture."[2] Fishwick agrees that heroes personify "predominating ideals" and makes a meaningful distinction between a certain kind of leader and the hero. "Reformers follow individual visions, heroes follow communal ones."[3] Dixon Wecter's earlier study concludes with the observation that "the supreme leader is he who can hitch the great bandwagon to the star of American idealism."[4]

Coupled with previous criticism which points to Rogers' symbolic appeal for the American imagination, such statements depicting the necessity of a hero's personifying ideals and values of a nation or culture lead to the hypothesis which this study will explore.

The hypothesis is that Will Rogers got himself taken seriously because he identified himself with the great American dream. I define the dream as a body of aspirations and ideals related, first, to his-

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[1]"Hero Worship in America," American Sociological Review, XIV (February, 1949), 62.

[2]William Albig, Modern Public Opinion (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 118.

[3]American Heroes, pp. 3 and 230.

[4]Hero Worship in America, p. 487.

torical matters--such as the dream of empire in the New World, the Puritan hope for the millennium on this continent, and the revolutionary vision as proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence; second, to the optimism of nineteenth-century writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman; and, finally, to the nature of American heroes, both real and fictional. Assuming that this body of aspirations and ideals constitutes an important basis for the values of the great majority of Americans, the student may be able to understand, in a comprehensive way, the appeal which Will Rogers had for his audiences.[1]

One of the chapters to follow will be a delineation of the great American dream, in one kind of attempt to sketch opinion anchorages held by Will Rogers' national audience. Such anchorages, of course, will not be specific opinions held upon current events but will rather be those reference points in the American dream by which an American audience may judge the credibility of a communicator. Next will follow a chapter attempting three things: an examination of the influences possibly at work in Will Rogers' own life to incline him toward a personal identification with the great American dream of the dignity and worth of the individual, of freedom and equality, of success, and of progress; next, an examination of the decade-and-a-half of Rogers' ascendancy to see to what extent the times required an affirmation of the American dream; and, finally, an examination of the public status given Rogers by publicity, in order to study the extent to which public

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[1]In delineating the American dream, I shall rely on secondary sources. Utilizing the expertise of historians and literary critics who have written on the dream will permit efficiency and provide validity.

knowledge of his life was congruent to the major categories of the dream.[1] A third chapter will examine the degree to which Will Rogers' words and the way he used them served to give him power by associating him with the vision of a paradise to be regained.[2] A final chapter will present conclusions.

Damon Runyon once wrote, "Will Rogers was America's most complete human document."[3] It is time to read the document and the man.

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[1]Partly because the chief end of this study is not biography and partly because no primary biographical materials were available to me, I shall rely in the biographical section of the third chapter upon secondary sources.

[2]The most important primary sources include Rogers' weekly articles for the McNaught Syndicate as carried by The New York Times from December 24, 1922 to September 28, 1924 and by The Tulsa Daily World until August 25, 1935; equally important are the humorist's daily telegrams for the same syndicate as carried by The New York Times from October 15, 1926 to August 15, 1935 (occasional telegrams had appeared earlier but were not syndicated). Of major importance, too, are the articles by Rogers appearing intermittently in such mass-circulation magazines as Saturday Evening Post and American Magazine for the years 1926 to 1932. Only a relatively small number of Rogers' speech texts are available: partial texts or reports of thirty-seven speeches from 1922 to 1935 are published by The New York Times; stenographic texts of twelve radio talks appear in Wit and Philosophy from the Radio Talks of America's Humorist, Will Rogers (New York: Squibb Company, 1930); and phonographic recordings of seventeen radio talks, mostly between 1934 and 1935, are available at the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore, Oklahoma, together with typewritten texts of several other radio speeches. (A survey of networks broadcast schedules between 1927 and 1935 shows that Rogers made at least seventy-five radio speeches; thus, texts are available for only about a third of them.) Only a few of the hundreds of speeches on lecture tours or for banquets are available for this study. In addition to the valuable phonographic recordings, the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore has texts of all Rogers' newspaper and magazine writings, scrapbooks and publicity releases for lecture tours, miscellaneous speech texts, and all the books and theses written so far on Rogers. This collection of materials is indispensable in this study. The staff at the Claremore Memorial is seeking to acquire copies of Will Rogers' motion pictures, in which he often delivered short talks. Staff members are also making a page by page search in The New York Times for all stories on, and references to, the humorist. All such material is being transcribed for scholarly use. A similar project for Variety is contemplated. Altogether, the Memorial at Claremore is the best single repository of research materials on Will Rogers.

[3]Quoted in Day, A Biography, p. vii.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT AMERICAN DREAM

Introduction

From the beginnings of settlement until the zeal for reform in the first Wilson administration and beyond, the great American dream--like a gigantic will-o'-the-wisp--beckoned and cajoled Americans to its pursuit, as powerful in its motivating force as it was vague in its form. Broadly defined as the common man's dream of freedom and the opportunity to rise, its appeal was irresistible from the Revolution of 1776 until sometime after the Populist revolt.[1] In the first decade of this century, the influential reformer Herbert Croly wrote that the vision of a better future for all, in spite of its being "vague, innocent, and unformed . . ." was nevertheless so important that it was "an essential constituent of our national ideal."[2] Indeed, so powerful has been the

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[1]James Truslow Adams, The Epic of America (New York: Triangle Books, 1941), pp. 135, 174, 349, 363. Adams defines the dream thus and interprets the election of Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln, together with the nomination of Bryan and the election of Wilson, as the evidence of its continuing appeal to the masses of Americans. The dream, says Adams, was "a moving force as truly as wheat or gold," p. 174.

[2]Herbert Croly, The Promise of American Life (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), p. 3. Croly was aware that the dream was beginning to tarnish: "This vision of a better future is not, perhaps, as unclouded for the present generation of Americans as it was for certain former generations. . . ." Further testimony to the vagueness and power of the dream comes from Vernon L. Parrington, Jr. in American

dream that one foreign observer has said, "America . . . is the name of a human hope."[1] And while, no doubt, the hope of a better future in some guise is old as humanity, the catalyst which made this hope an American dream was its localization to this continent--the opposite of the "nowhere" of Utopia. With the focusing of the age-old hope upon this actual place, the timeless perfection of a philosophic republic, of a perfect society, or of a kingdom of Heaven became transmuted to a temporal dream of the progressive realization of a better life for all and of the freedom for its pursuit--in short a dream of the ideal democracy.[2] Elusive, vague, and pervasive, the dream was nevertheless a fact of American life.

Careful students of the American dream have, therefore, usually treated it inclusively and with the knowledge that it was full of a sense of new beginnings.

Thus James Truslow Adams subordinated everything he had to say about the dream to the notion that it was the hope of " . . . a better

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Dreams: A Study of American Utopias (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1947), p. 5: "There has always been an American dream, and its greatest charm has been that it was variable, and not bound to a single doctrine."

[1]Alfonso Reyas, quoted in Parrington, American Dreams, p. vii. Parrington adds, "Many of us are quick to forget how much of America has been built on promises. We pretend, rather, that a hard-headed materialism has been our single standard of accomplishment."

[2]Frederick I. Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 6; Charles L. Sanford in The Quest for Paradise: Europe and the Moral Imagination (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1961) develops the thesis that the quest for paradise puts America in the Atlantic community of nations and de-emphasizes the uniqueness of America. He admits, however, that differences in emphasis exist, but after colonization of this continent he drops the parallel European developments, p. viii. The result is that the American dream is no less an American dream--though its uniqueness remains largely undetermined. It is not the function of this study to attempt to do so.

and richer and fuller life for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement."[1] The key terms in Frederick I. Carpenter's full-length study were progress and democracy.[2] Robert E. Spiller, without using the dream terminology, nevertheless found that thus far the cycles of American literature spring from celebration of, or disillusion with, the inclusive and hopeful "natural" rights of man: "... the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety ...."[3] Kenneth S. Lynn apparently treated the great dream less inclusively when he called it simply the dream of success; but he made clear his awareness of the synthesis in the success dream of optimism concerning the common man, individualism, and the pursuit of happiness.[4]

Other writers, stressing the sense of new beginnings, have

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 404.

[2]Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, p. 6.

[3]Quoted from Declaration of the Virginia Convention of 1776 in Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature: An Essay in Historical Criticism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 18. "This is the basic American principle," writes Spiller. "All else in the American tradition leads up to it or away from it or is otherwise related to it."

[4]Kenneth S. Lynn, The Dream of Success: A Study of the Modern American Imagination (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), pp. 6-7. Speaking of Horatio Alger's synthesis of the ideas of the dream, Lynn writes, " . . . the Alger hero represents a triumphant combination--and reduction to the lowest common denominator--of the most widely accepted concepts in nineteenth-century American society. The belief in the potential greatness of the common man, the glorification of individual effort and accomplishment, the equation of the pursuit of money with the pursuit of happiness and of business success with spiritual grace; simply to mention these concepts is to comprehend the brilliance of Alger's synthesis."

chosen to represent the dream more or less in the image of a new Adam in a new Garden. Henry Nash Smith, using myth as a name for the kind of "intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image," found the ideals of the great dream clustered around the mythical figures of the frontiersman and yeoman farmer in the "garden of the world."[1] R.W.B. Lewis chose to subsume both the yeoman and the frontiersman under the image of a new Adam, "the authentic American as a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history."[2] In such a figure Lewis saw the embodiment of the optimistic ideas of the "Party of Hope" in the nineteenth century: the dream that Americans should progress toward complete recovery of the primal innocence of natural man.[3] Leslie A. Fiedler, although deploring the effects of the dream, also interpreted it generally as one of innocence and natural goodness, using this interpretation as a touchstone to explain American culture and politics.[4] Max Lerner, primarily concerned with American

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[1]Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. v. See also chaps. vi and xi, especially pp. 66-70 and 138-62.

[2]R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 1.

[3]Ibid., pp. 23, 42. Lewis is keenly aware of the resistance to "the party of hope" and its members like Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, actually devoting most of his space to "the party of irony," those writers who--like the elder James--had a "tragic optimism" which hoped for the progress of Americans to a wise innocence, based upon a heightened perception and humanity made possible by suffering, pp. 7-8.

[4]Leslie A. Fiedler, An End to Innocence: Essays on Culture and Politics (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 132, 139-49, 163-73, 46-87. Depending upon whether the reaction to the dream is acceptance, acquiescence, or disillusion, Fiedler holds that we can explain the lack of involvement with females on the part of Huckleberry Finn and Leatherstocking, the literary poses of Walt Whitman, and the rise of McCarthyism.

civilization after the "Big Change" of the last thirty years, nevertheless saw the American tradition as "American Dynamism," with an inclusive, historically-continuous hopefulness and sense of new beginnings indicated in its two crucial images of the self-reliant craftsman and of a vast continent to be energized.[1] More recently, and most inclusively, Frederic I. Carpenter has stated that the great hope of the American culture, to which American writers respond and react, is that of "paradise (to be) regained." The typical figure for Carpenter is not a naively innocent American Adam, but rather an Adam who is "wisely" innocent, one who seeks a return to an ideal state of being by adopting a strategy of innocence.[2] Most recently, Charles L. Sanford uses the superordinate image of a return to paradise, showing how the American dream of the return includes not only dreams of wilderness or rural felicity, but also material progress.[3]

Still other writers have approached the dream indirectly by seeking to find American ideals as they are reflected in the heroes of

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[1]Max Lerner, America as a Civilization (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1957), pp. 48-51. As a summary of American Dynamism, Lerner quotes a sentence from a letter of Whitman to Emerson: "'Master, I am a man who has perfect faith. Master, we have not come through centuries, caste, heroisms, fables, to halt in this land today.'" Marshall W. Fishwick, relating the influence of existentialism to American life of mid-century, believes also that our American dynamism departing from the traditional search for a closed system is the truly American tradition. Saturday Review, December 21, 1963, pp. 8-11.

[2]Frederic I. Carpenter, "The American Myth: Paradise (to be) Regained," PMLA, LXXIV (December, 1959), 601-602. To Carpenter, the ideal state of being to which the American Adam has sought a return seems to be an ideal Christian innocence--"'. . . harmless as doves and wise as serpents.'" See his discussion of Faulkner's "The Bear," 606.

[3]Sanford, The Quest for Paradise, pp. vi, 10-11, 157-58, 190 and passim.

the American people. Thus Dixon Wecter, after a study of a variety of American heroes--from Washington to Johnny Appleseed to Henry Ford--suggested not only some basic ingredients for American heroes but also worked back to a dream of progress.[1] Daniel G. Hoffman studied the history of Paul Bunyan in the belief that the great lumberjack embodied the goals of the American people.[2] Marshall Fishwick also interpreted the rise of our national heroes as the result of their personifying the aspirations of the masses.[3] Malcolm Cowley, examining types of American fictional heroes in the belief that they were archetypes of American life in the public mind, found that until sometime after 1890, the first pantheon of American heroes expressed not only humor but "the buoyancy of a new nation, its faith in the individual, and its thirst for perpetual movement and improvement."[4]

Through the work of these writers and others, the content of the great dream has gradually become less ambiguous. The sections to follow will deal with the beginnings of the dream in this country; with the ideals of the dream; with the strategies of behavior that at once follow from and lead back to those ideals; and, finally, with some of the American heroes who embody some of the attributes of the dream. Although clearly it is unitary only in the same way that a body composed

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[1]Wecter, The Hero in America, pp. 478-87.

[2]Daniel G. Hoffman, Paul Bunyan: Last of the Frontier Demigods (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press for Temple University Publications, 1952), pp. vii-viii.

[3]Fishwick, American Heroes, pp. 3, 20, 55, 59-60, 98, 137, 177, 230.

[4]Malcolm Cowley, "American Myths, Old and New," The Saturday Review, September 1, 1962, p. 7.

of many cells is one, the dream of paradise to be regained formed a great common bond among Americans because of its overpowering appeal to the imagination.

The Beginnings

When Columbus made his landfall in the West Indies and thought he had reached Asia, it seemed to be the fulfillment of Renaissance man's dream of boundlessness, a dream not only of a physical passage to India but of gradual movement toward a new synthesis of cosmic unity to replace the broken image of the Virgin, which Henry Adams was to point out as having once satisfied the universal dream of unity among men.[1] With a pause of four centuries enforced by the need to traverse and settle a continent, the American dream developed. The riches of the East were at hand in the West, and the hope of a new unity among men seemed possible in the garden-like newness of the land. Out of the dreams of empire, out of the Puritan hope of the millennium, and out of American adaptations of Locke and Rousseau's personal visions would come the god-of-many-faces, the great American dream.

(Before even the beginnings of the great dream, in what one day would be Georgia, lived the Paint, the Wolf, and the Blind Savannah Clans of the Cherokees, from whom would come grandmothers of Will Rogers.)

The Dream of Empire

After Columbus, the riches of the New World engendered English dreams of empire that would "singe the beard of the king of Spain and

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[1]John Robert Willingham, "The Whitman Tradition in Recent American Literature" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of English, University of Oklahoma), pp. 163, 167. Adams is cited in Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 198.

make a shrewd thrust at the Pope."[1] By the middle of the seventeenth century, though, this grand design, while destined to survive as the dream of an independent American empire, spawned the common man's own dream of empire: personal advancement and escape from Europe. By the 1640's, writes Adams,

> The American dream was beginning to take form in the hearts of men. The economic motive was unquestionably powerful, often dominant, in the minds of those who took part in the great migration, but mixed with this was also frequently present the hope of a better and freer life, a life in which a man might think as he would and develop as he willed. The migration . . . was one in which the common man as well as the leader was hoping for greater freedom and happiness for himself and his children . . . . The dream was as yet largely inchoate and unexpressed, but it was forming.[2]

For most colonials, the hoped-for higher economic estate was either that of the yeoman farmer or of the control of a small estate, either through a nominal quitrent or fee simple.[3] This economic ambition, having hopes of freedom and self-fulfillment associated with it, was strong enough that colonists who by 1750 found themselves disadvantaged along the seaboard settlements drove westward toward the Appalachians, seeking prosperity and social esteem.[4] In this first real frontier in America, the ideal of equality among men seemed natural enough to settlers whose poverty levelled them and whose inferior status as "Buckskins" goaded them not only to prosper but to minimize class distinctions.

A French immigrant who arrived in the colonies at mid-century penned a letter expressing at once the economic motive and the sense of

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 36. [2]Ibid., p. 31.

[3]Leon Howard, Literature and the American Tradition (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1960), p. 59.

[4]Adams, Epic of America, pp. 65-69.

new beginnings in the American dream.

> Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and prosperity will one day cause great changes in the world. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor; this labor is founded on the basis of self-interest; can it want a stronger allurement? Wives and children, who before in vain demanded a morsel of bread, now fat and frolicsome, gladly help the father clear those fields, whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed them all; without any part being claimed either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord. . . . The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor, he has passed to toils of a very different nature rewarded by ample subsistence.[1]

And giving utterance to ideas shared by many of his contemporaries, de Crèvecoeur asserted the relationship between equality and the "security that arises from property."

> Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclestiastical dominion . . . no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We are the most perfect society now existing in the world.[2]

All of this was leading to the "myth of the garden" which Henry Nash Smith found to be a "collective representation, a poetic idea . . . that defined the promise of American life."[3] Benjamin Franklin, in his "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.," gave expression to this developing dream and to the American revision of the old empire idea when he argued that agricultural develop-

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[1]Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur [Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur], Letters from an American Farmer, quoted in Croly, The Promise of American Life, p. 9.

[2]Quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, pp. 143-44.

[3]Virgin Land, p. 138.

ment of the interior would not only produce bigger outlets for the British mercantile empire but would also provide a haven for city laborers, an argument that would later be dubbed the "safety-valve" theory.[1] In 1775, Lewis Evans articulated the American version of the old dream of empire when he foresaw "all the Wealth and Power that will naturally arise from the Culture of so great an extent of good Land, in a happy Climate."[2] There was room in this vision of empire for the dream of the common man; and along with his hopes for an economic rise in the "good land in a happy climate," he looked forward to an equality of opportunity in his progress toward that rise and, further, toward self-dignity and social equality as a result of it.

(By about the middle of the century, the mingling of European and Cherokee blood that was to produce Will Rogers had begun: On the

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[1]Ibid., p. 8. Later, Smith makes clear the emerging American modification of the dream of empire: "The early visions of an American Empire embody two different if often mingled conceptions. There is on the one hand the notion of empire as command of the sea, and on the other hand the notion of empire as a populous future society occupying the interior of the American continent. If these two kinds of empire are not mutually exclusive--for we can readily concede that patriots would want to claim every separate glory for their country--they nevertheless rest on different economic bases and imply different policies. Engrossing the trade of the world is an ambition evidently taken over by the British mercantilist ideal. On the other hand, creating new states in the dreary solitudes of the West is an enterprise that depends upon the increase of population resulting from agricultural expansion into an empty, fertile continent. This second version of American empire, based on agrarian assumptions, more nearly corresponds to the actual course of events during the nineteenth century," p. 13.

[2]Quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, p. 139. Nathaniel Ames had, in 1758, envisioned the mineral riches, great cities, thronging laborers and "infinity of utensils improved in the exercise of art and handicraft among men." The dream of empire existed side by side with its child the dream of the garden. Ames is quoted in Rutherford E. Delmage, "The American Idea of Progress, 1750-1800," American Philosophical Society Proceedings, XCI (December, 1947), 308.

paternal side one great-grandmother was a full-blooded member of the Savannah Clan; another was half-Cherokee, half-Irish; their men were Irish.)[1]

The Puritan Dream

Co-existing in time with the dream of empire, the Puritan vision of an approaching millennium provided a second great source for the American dream; for, as will be seen, its secularization reinforced the economic dream of empire, the social dream of equality, and the political dream of free democracy.

The dream of the millennium, as Carpenter notes, was of "a new Heaven and a new earth."[2] It was thus an explicit statement of a dream of a new and better way of life, with an implicit belief in progress. Its central hope was the establishment of a "New Jerusalem," a city of God. "Wee must consider," wrote John Winthrop, "that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people upon us."[3] By 1650, Edward Johnson envisioned the new land as the site, "where the Lord would create a new heaven and a new earth, new churches and a new commonwealth

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[1]This information, together with names, comes from Croy, Our Will Rogers, pp. 7-9. Aside from interviews with members of the Rogers family, his chief source of information appears to be Emmet Starr, History of the Cherokee Indians and Their Legends and Folklore (Oklahoma City: The Warden Company, 1921). Croy writes that around 1720, an Irish army officer by the name of Downing landed in Georgia and took a wife from the Wolf Clan of the Cherokees; allowing twenty years for a generation, by mid-century his daughter, one of the great, great grandmothers on the Rogers side, would have been married. Dates are missing.

[2]American Literature and the Dream, p. 6.

[3]Quoted in Perry Miller, "The Shaping of the American Character," The New England Quarterly, XXVIII (December, 1955), 445.

together."[1] Later, William Stoughton, in an unmistakable allusion to "The Promised Land," rejoiced that "God had sifted a whole nation that he might send choice grain into the wilderness."[2] Baldwin, after surveying such opinions, concludes that "the Utopian view of America thus began with the Calvinists' belief that they were planting a city of God, and the idea has run all through American history."[3]

John Eliot was a typical architect of the city, in his Christian Commonwealth of 1659. The two assumptions on which his utopia rested were that Christ is the King of Kings and that all laws should "arise and flow from the Word of God."[4] Thus, the basis of the perfect society lay in a covenant with God to live up to His enumerated purposes, with rewards by Divine Providence to the extent that the Puritans kept the covenant. In Eliot's book, men could voluntarily form themselves together to keep the covenant and to elect their rulers, who like them, were to obey the covenant.[5] Though this vision of a New Jerusalem by means of the covenant was to fade and die after a century or more, parts of the Puritan dream in a secularized form lived on, as will be seen.[6]

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[1]Quoted in Leland Dewitt Baldwin, The Meaning of America: Essays Toward an Understanding of the American Spirit (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), p. 128. Samuel Sewell, great diarist of colonial Massachusetts, also wrote down his faith in the approaching millennium: "I propound the new world. . . . It stands fair for being made the seat of the divine metropolis." Quoted in Delmage, American Philosophical Society Proceedings, XCI, 308.

[2]Quoted in Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 128.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Quoted in Parrington, American Dreams, p. 8. [5]Ibid.

[6]The life span of the millennial dream is estimated by Miller, The New England Quarterly, XXVIII, 445.

First, the American dream of prosperity and material success received impetus from the covenant idea and from the Puritan dedication to work. Margaret Mead has remarked that "the essence of puritanism . . . was a belief that there was a relationship here on earth between good behavior and good deserts."[1] Cotton Mather, as witness for orthodox Puritanism, revealed both the belief that success was a sign of virtue and that being busy was being Godly. "His Two Brief Discourses asserted that man must serve Christ, and achieve success in a personal calling."[2] Moreover, as Mather studied such passages as Proverbs 22:29, which set the diligent man in the presence of kings, he could conclude that "tis not honest, nor Christian, that a Christian should have no Business to do."[3] With such views to provide theological underpinning, it is little wonder that preachers like John Lathrop could exult in the immensity of the country and in the increasing population, with a resulting "astonishing commerce with the nations of the world," a "great and highly respectable nation," with "industrious and good people."[4] The dream of economic power had become part of the hope of the millennium. With such legitimizing of the economic motive, the dream of success was destined to become one of the major roads to the hoped-for return to paradise.

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[1]Quoted in Kingsley Davis, Harry C. Bredemeier, and Marion J. Levy, Modern American Society: Readings in the Problems of Order and Change (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1949), p. 40.

[2]Fishwick American Heroes, p. 144.

[3]Quoted in ibid., p. 143.

[4]Quoted in Delmage, American Philosophical Society Proceedings, XCI, 312. Lathrop was minister of Second Church in Boston when he delivered the sermon on November 25, 1784.

Another way to paradise lay in an anticipated equality among men. To this the Puritan synthesis also added strength. Generally speaking, as scholars such as Henry Bamford Parkes have realized, equality of mankind is deducible from the Christian faith in the infinite value of the individual soul.[1] More specifically, however, perhaps the secularization of the Puritan connection between virtue and success resulted in the American insistence on a relationship between what a man does and what he gets. The holding of this concept, believes Mead, is one of the Americans' most distinguishing characteristics: "On it is based our acceptance of men for what they have become rather than for what they were born."[2] Equality seemed a natural ideal in a society where by their own deeds the lowly could rise and the mighty could fall.

Finally, although the Puritan had little or no desire for democracy in government (or liberty in religion), the tenets of Calvinism as held by the English colonists ultimately lent support to the dream of political democracy.[3] Baldwin states the relationship succinctly in one of his essays:

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[1]The American Experience: An Interpretation of the History and Civilization of the American People (2d ed. rev.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 338. See also Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 44, for a statement that Puritanism was a fountain for the idea of the dignity and worth of the individual.

[2]Quoted in Davis et al., in Modern American Society, p. 42.

[3]I do not mean to imply, however, that Puritanism was without its tensions between the democratic and theocratic rationales. One instance of such tensions is that "the efforts of Increase and Cotton Mather to strengthen the theocratic control of the Presbyterian clergy was met by the able efforts of John Wise in support of the Congregational principle and the democratic type of government. He concluded that 'a democracy in church or state is a very honorable and regular government according to the dictates of right reason.'" Raymond G. Gettell, History of American Political Thought (New York: The Century Company, 1928), p. 58.

> As it was, Calvinism lent itself to the democratic mythus. It taught Natural Rights, the compact theory, and the right of revolution. Democracy found all of them useful. The Puritan belief that each man should strive to become prosperous and thus bear a share in social responsibility could be adjusted to the democratic belief that the benefit of one is the benefit of all and that all are responsible.[1]

That the influences of Calvinism and democracy are mutual seems only probable; but doubtless the one was inextricably entwined with the other by the time of the successful conclusion of the American Revolution. By 1783, when John Rodgers preached his sermon revealing the display of Divine Goodness in the American Revolution, the millennium was to be not only a religious one, but a secular one of freedom from oppression of any kind.

> What great things has the God of Providence done for our race! By the Revolution we this day celebrate, he has provided an asylum for the oppressed, in all the nations of the earth, whatever may be the nature of the oppression. And that, while he is hereby accomplishing those great things, that are opening the way for the more general spread of the gospel, in its purity and power; and in due time, the universal establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, in all its benign efficacy on the hearts and lives of men.[2]

In the Puritan dream, the recurrent motifs of an approaching millennium, of the godliness of work, of the earthly reward for earthly virtue, and of the value of the individual all found their way into the manifest content of the emerging American dream--in the form of a

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[1]The Meaning of America, p. 44. Baldwin explains on p. 39, what he intends by the use of mythus: "The Mythus is a body of beliefs (true or false) which by its emotional appeal produces a spirit of loyalty to the leader or the ideal. It is the encrustation of wishful thinking and self-complimentary explanations that forms about human actions and institutions to explain their origin, nature, and development, and to 'mobilize men for action.'"

[2]Quoted in Delmage, American Philosophical Society Proceedings, XCI, 312.

steadily Utopian secular tradition, in the dream of the self-made man who could be equal to anyone else, and in the dream of a government that existed to serve the governed.

(While John Rodgers was active in his ministry, there came and passed the twentieth anniversary of the arrival in northern Alabama of a young Welshman named John Gunter, who was to become a prosperous salt trader with the Cherokees, who was to take to wife a member of the Paint Clan, and who was fated to be a maternal great-grandfather of Will Rogers.)[1]

The American Adaptation of Locke and Rousseau

A third great source for the American dream was the naturalization of personal visions regarding the rights of man held by Locke, Rousseau, and other thinkers, whose immigration to the New World took the form of the printed page.[2] Their arrival was well-timed, for their ideas seemed true to people whose cultural forebears had actually formed a social contract by signing the Mayflower Compact and to people on the frontier whose sense of self-respect could be enhanced by praise of the noble savage. The architects of the American Revolution came to embrace such doctrines as would at once justify revolution and mobilize public opinion for its support.

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[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 8. Croy gives the date of Gunter's arrival as 1760. He would have had to come as a child, for a family chart prepared by Mrs. Paula Love, niece of Will Rogers, shows that Gunter died in 1835.

[2]Locke, as apologist for the Glorious Revolution of 1688, was popular among Puritans; Francis Graham Wilson shows that the writing of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire reached American hands quickly and economically. The American Political Mind: A Textbook in Political Theory (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1949), p. 164.

From 1660 until the beginning of the American Revolution, the British policy that sought to integrate the resources of the American Colonies with those of the mother country had its American opponents.[1] In the early stages, the emphasis in their arguments lay in seeking their rights as Englishmen--first in relation to the colonial charters and then in relation to the nature of the British Empire.[2] However, in the lull after the crisis created by such revenue-producing laws as the Stamp Act and the Molasses Act and before the passage of the Tea Act in 1773 and the "Intolerable Acts" later, an important shift in emphasis was occurring in the Americans' arguments for relief:

> Everywhere thoughtful, farseeing men were thinking--thinking of the constitutional relations with the mother country which had permitted so serious a crisis to arise as that from which they believed they had just happily emerged. . . . The more they pondered the Anglo-American constitutional relation, however, the more it became apparent that if the question should ever have to be forced to an issue, the only ground to take would be the broad one of the rights of man as man.[3]

The English revolutionists of the seventeenth century provided the precedent--especially John Locke, who had synthesized the trends of revolutionary thought of the century.[4] Locke had found the origin of government not in a God-given order to would-be kings, but rather in the necessity of men's forming a social contract to protect the rights of life, liberty, and property which were theirs in the state of nature in which they had originally found themselves. Government thus found its reason for being in the protection of these rights, its power in

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[1]Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 60.

[2]Ibid., p. 70.

[3]Adams, Epic of America, p. 86.

[4]Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 63.

the consent of the protected ones, and its death when it no longer filled its life-purpose.[1] On the continent, Jean Jacques Rousseau tellingly reinforced the social contract idea and praised the happiness of man in the natural state.[2]

The first step in naturalizing Locke had occurred years before; James Otis, for one, had combined Locke's natural rights with British Constitutional rights in his 1764 justification of Colonial claims.[3] It was fiery Samuel Adams, however, who couched the rationalism of Locke in the romantic appeals of Rousseau, blending the two in a heady mixture that could please the palate of aristocrat as well as commoner. In a report to a Boston town meeting in 1772, Adams declared that the natural rights of life, liberty, and property were but a branch of the first law of man-in-nature, that of self-preservation; the report may have served as the model for the Declaration of Rights of the first Congress in 1774, for the Declaration of Independence, and for the Virginia Bill of Rights.[4] In addition to this influence, Adams had the common men--whose hopes and aspirations he had harnessed--urging such pronouncements of his as that "the natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but only to have the law of nature for his rule."[5]

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[1]For summaries of Locke's views, see Gettell, History of American Political Thought, p. 49, and Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 62.

[2]Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 65. [3]Ibid., p. 71.

[4]Gettell, History of American Political Thought, pp. 89-90.

[5]See Adams, Epic of America, p. 83.

Thomas Paine also adapted Locke and Rousseau by combining their spirits in his powerful Common Sense of 1776. "The immense effectiveness of . . . Common Sense . . . consisted not so much in its contention that independence of England made common sense but that only America was close enough to Nature, only these simple people were so uncorrupted by the vices of decrepit civilizations, that only here could common sense operate at all."[1] The Lockeian flavor is also unmistakable in his explanation of the origin and purpose of government.

> Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings were built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For were the impulse of conscience clear, uniform and irresistibly obeyed, men would need no other lawgiver; but that not being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest; and this he induced to do by the same prudence which in every other case advises him out of two evils to choose the least. Wherefore, security being the true design and end of government, it unanswerably follows that whatever form thereof appears most likely to ensure it to us, with the least expense and greatest benefit is preferable to all others.[2]

Rudolf Rocker believes that Paine was the particular one "who struck the spiritual fountain from which the ideas of English liberalism reached America."[3]

It remained for a Virginia aristocrat, however, to make Locke's ideas completely at home. Valuing Locke and Sidney so highly that he would recommend them when applied to for advice on politics and being willing to admit that his doctrines, rather than being original, were

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[1]Miller, New England Quarterly, XXVIII, 447.

[2]Quoted in Rudolf Rocker, Pioneers of American Freedom: Origin of Liberal and Radical Thought in America, trans. Arthur E. Briggs (Los Angeles: Rocker Publications Committee, 1949), p. 5.

[3]Ibid., p. 4.

intended to be an expression of the American mind, Thomas Jefferson accepted the task of drafting the Declaration of Independence.[1] He was Lockeian in his arguing from beliefs in a state of nature, in human equality, and in a government based upon contract through the consent of the governed. It was his modification of Locke's enumeration of the natural rights of man that gave the document its stamp of American idealism. Man was, indeed, naturally endowed with permanent rights of life and liberty, but "the significant change which Jefferson made was to substitute 'pursuit of Happiness' for the Lockian [sic] 'property.'"[2] This substitution recognized the aspirations for a return to paradise that characterized the new Colonial aristocrat as well as the roughest "Buckskin" out on the frontier. By elminating "property" from the list, Jefferson made sure that there would be no reference to the rich or well-born; at the same time, his "pursuit of happiness" left the way open for myriad definitions of happiness: American aristocrats could dream of freedom from the legislative power of Parliament; members of the lower classes could dream of freedom from their own governing classes. The American dream of paradise to be regained was vague but real. It is little wonder that Samuel Adams reported that the people recognized the Declaration as though it were a Heavenly-promulgated decree.[3]

The successful conclusion of the war for independence did

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[1]Gettell, History of American Political Thought, p. 196.

[2]Curtis D. Macdougall, Understanding Public Opinion: A Guide for Newspapermen and Newspaper Readers (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 139.

[3]Adams, Epic of America, p. 89.

much to legalize the claims of the Declaration. It remained for legal minds like James Wilson and the framers of the Constitution to make the gospel of the Revolution the dogma of a new nation.

> The doctrine of natural law was worked out most fully in America in the writings of James Wilson. . . . He denied that law implies a command of superior to an inferior, since that would be inconsistent with the omnipotence of the Deity in the sphere of legislation, and with the natural equality of all men. To Wilson natural law was progressive, since as men advance in knowledge and virtue they become capable of following higher standards. He emphasized the sovereignty of the people rather than the sovereignty of the state, and viewed the consent of those who obeyed, rather than the command of a superior as the sanction of law. In this way he found a legal justification for the American Revolution.[1]

But the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people contained a deep contradiction: how were the problems of an unseen environment to be solved by citizens whose ability to know was limited by restriction on communication? The answer had, somehow, to combine the will of men to decide their own fates with a limitation upon that self-rule.

> They [the democratic philosophers] looked about them. In the city states of Greece and Italy they found a chronicle of corruption, intrigue and war. In their own cities they saw faction, artificiality, fever. This was no environment in which the democratic ideal could prosper, no place where a group of independent and equally competent people managed their own affairs spontaneously. They looked further, guided somewhat perhaps by Jean Jacques Rousseau, to remote, unspoiled country villages. They saw enough to convince themselves that there the ideal was at home.[2]

The answer was a Federal Constitution which effected a compromise between the dreamers of the American democratic dream of the self-contained community, like Jefferson, and the advocates of a strong central government, like Hamilton.[3] Local government kept all powers not expressly

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[1]Gettell, History of American Political Thought, p. 89.

[2]Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 267.

[3]Adams, Epic of America, p. 112.

delegated to the Federal government; the Federal government received basic powers of taxation, coinage of money, and provision for national defense. The constitution of this new nation was an attempt to give substance to the dream of equality, of natural rights, and of the sovereignty of the people as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, which Stewart H. Holbrook calls simply "the greatest American dream."[1]

The accomplishment of the dozen or so years between the Declaration and the Constitution was that ideas of philosophers became an actual political program for a nation. They became so not only because American statesmen adapted them to the American temper but also because those ideas simply reinforced the tendencies noted earlier in the economic and Puritan backgrounds of the dream. "The pursuit of happiness" had been, in practice, often only the pursuit of wealth, but it was a real, if limited, vision; the ideal of equality had flourished on the frontier and had existed implicitly in the Puritan strongholds. The love of freedom had begun in the pioneer desire to be let alone to pursue the dream of success and had reached a crescendo in the agitation that preceded the Declaration. The progress of the colonies from aggregations of underprivileged Englishmen to sovereign states in a new, "more perfect" union certainly lent validity to the common man's dream of a progressive economic rise and to the secularized version of the Puritan millennium, a new Heaven on this earth.

Americans looked upon the new day dawning for mankind and

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[1]Dreamers of the American Dream (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957), p. 35.

called the handiwork good. James Wilson, in an oration delivered July 4, 1788, urged continued American progress toward the perfect existence promised by the American dream.

> A PROGRESSIVE STATE is necessary to the happiness and perfection of man. Whatever attainments are already reached, attainments still higher should be pursued. . . . Let us suppose we have done nothing, while anything yet remains to be done. Let us, with fervent zeal, press forward and make unceasing advances in everything that can SUPPORT, IMPROVE, REFINE OR EMBELLISH SOCIETY. . . . The commencement of our government has been eminently glorious: let our progress in every excellence be proportionately great. It will--it must be so. What an enrapturing prospect opens on the United States! . . . Happy country! May thy happiness be perpetual![1]

Washington, himself, voiced the sense of destiny attaching to the growth and progress of the great dream when in his first inaugural he proclaimed that "the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government are . . . finally staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people."[2]

Out of the common man's dream for a proper economic rise, out of the Puritan covenanter's vision of a New Jerusalem, and out of the common-sense revolutionary's thrust for natural rights emerged the major categories of the great American dream: the belief in the dignity and worth of the individual, the anticipation of enjoying freedom and equality in a democracy, the hoped-for opportunity for success, and a vision of progress toward the perfection of all these. It was, in short, the dream of paradise to be regained.[3]

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[1]Quoted in Delmage, American Philosophical Society Proceedings, XCI, 313.

[2]Quoted in Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 129.

[3]To Frederic I. Carpenter, PMLA, LXXIV, 599-606, I am indebted for this superordinate category of the dream. I use "paradise to be regained," however, in a more inclusive way than Carpenter, who seems to

(And as the American nationality and dream thus began to move out of the mists of origin during the years of quiet that Washington's diplomats tried to buy with the Jay Treaty, the family lines of the still-to-be-born "ambassador of good will" grew clearer. When Emerson was a toddler of about three, the daughter of John Gunter and his Cherokee wife was born and was named Elizabeth; in the same year of 1806 was born her husband-to-be, Martin Matthew Schrimsher of German descent: they would be the maternal grandparents of Will Rogers. On the paternal side, in the year after Thoreau's birth, the one-eighth Cherokee great-granddaughter of Major Downing was born and was named Sallie Vann; her husband-to-be, Robert Rogers II, was two-and-a-half at the time, himself one-fourth Cherokee.)[1]

The Dream of the Dignity and Worth of the Individual

If the American experiment was indeed entrusted to the hands of the American people, a deducible antecedent belief was one in the powers and value of the common man. In the second place not only was the common man capable, but he also was innately good. Finally, if the powers and virtue of the common man be granted, it follows that one of the greatest goods in the American dream would be the highest possible self-fulfillment of every individual. American dreamers provided a strategy for the achievement of the dream, a strategy which itself seemed a part of the hopeful vision. From this cluster of ideas emerges

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limit it to the achievement of a kind of inner paradise only. To Perry Miller, New England Quarterly, XXVIII, 435-54, I am indebted for the terms "puritan covenanter" and "common-sense revolutionary."

[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, pp. 8-9; also interview with Paula McSpadden Love, August 3, 1962.

the image of the New Adam, filled with endless possibilities, virtue, and a sense of new beginnings. This new man found his habitat in the myth of the garden that gradually had been developing, as we have seen, since colonial days.

The Value and Powers of the Common Man

The common man was, in the great American dream, an untapped reservoir of talent, wisdom, and leadership. (This is understandable in part, at least, because the common man was the one who kept the great dream alive through his uprisings in the causes of Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, and Bryan.)[1] So central to the American ideal is this trust in the common man that Henry Bamford Parkes finds in it "the animating principle of American nationality."[2] To James Truslow Adams, America's commitment to a belief in the powers of the common man is the unique idea for which America has stood.[3] As already noted, Malcolm Cowley, examining the literary mythologies produced so far in America, concluded that one of the primary messages transmitted by the pantheon of heroes in the first mythology was faith in the individual.[4]

The high priests of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual were Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau.

> The American dream--the belief in the value of the common man, and the hope of opening every avenue of opportunity to him--was not a logical concept of thought. Like every great

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 174.

[2]The American Experience, p. 337.

[3]Adams, Epic of America, p. 135.

[4]Supra, p. 26.

> thought that has stirred and advanced humanity, it was a religious emotion, a great act of faith, a courageous leap into the dark unknown. As long as that dream persists to strengthen the heart of man, Emerson will remain one of its prophets.[1]

Of Whitman, another student of American idealism has written, "He is American in attitude and idea: the quintessence of the United States; more American than the Declaration of Independence, more characteristic than Abraham Lincoln, more western than Mark Twain: As American as a Sky Scraper or a wisecrack."[2] Among the three figures of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, the assertion of the value of the individual found its most hopeful expression. Indeed, "their optimism is so convinced, their faith in man so invincible, that each in his own manner is either a believer in laissez-faire or an unabashed anarchist."[3] Emerson wrote volumes that were mirrors of the American soul; and Whitman's ideal self in Leaves of Grass was the embodiment of his ideal American folk.[4]

American transcendentalism made articulate this dream of America.[5] Theodore Parker gave theological underpinning to the common man's belief in himself when he asserted, in the front rank of transcendentalism, that man has a spiritual nature to which is given the power to apprehend religious truth directly, without aid of Bible or

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 198.

[2]Holbrook Jackson, Dreamers of Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Nineteenth Century Idealism (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949), p. 255.

[3]Ibid., p. 50.

[4]Adams, Epic of America, p. 199; and Jackson, Dreamers of Dreams, p. 255.

[5]Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, p. 14.

creed.[1] From this it was only a step to Emerson's doctrine that wisdom is not to be acquired; it is, rather, innate.[2] "Emerson was imbued completely with the new spirit of American optimism and with the religion of the infinite possibilities in the individual common man."[3]

In Nature, "Self-Reliance," and "The American Scholar," Emerson expressed indelibly his trust in the capacity of the common man. Summarizing, he declared, "In all my lectures, I have taught one doctrine, namely the infinitude of the private man."[4] Greatness lay within the reach of the common man: "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts. . . ." "Hitch your wagon to a star," he counseled, using a metaphor so thoroughly American that it would thrill his hearers.[5] Not only did the private man have the capacity to be great, but he faced issues which called forth that greatness: did great consequences depend upon the actions of great men of the past? Then "as great a stake depends on your private act to-day as followed their public and renowned steps."[6] As a result of his confidence in the common man, Emerson looked forward to a new epoch in the history of the world: he foresaw "the elevation of what was called the lowest class

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[1]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 181.

[2]Jackson, Dreamers of Dreams, p. 174.

[3]Adams, Epic of America, p. 198.

[4]Quoted in Parkes, The American Experience, p. 189.

[5]See American Poetry and Prose, ed. Norman Foerster (4th ed. rev.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), p. 490; the second is quoted in Adams, Epic of America, p. 198.

[6]Quoted in Adams, Epic of America, p. 198.

in the state," and he anticipated the celebration of "the near, the low, the common, instead of the sublime and beautiful."[1] The quality which made Emerson's idealism typically American, believes Carpenter, is "its close relation to the common experience of his own time, and its appeal to the American experience of the future."[2] As a result, "Emerson's thought became typically the American philosophy, or 'dream.'"[3]

Whitman, too, had unconfined faith in the powers of the common man. Carpenter wrote, "Not the superior, but the average man seemed divine to him because he possessed the qualities most common to all men."[4] James Truslow Adams sensed in Whitman the highest reach of aspirations for the common man.

> The Greeks had sung of their gods and the mediaeval poets of their lord and ladies, but as he saw it "the justification and main purpose of these United States" were "plowing up in earnest the interminable average fallows of humanity." Here at last was a clear attempt to put into winged and singing words the authentic American dream. America was not to be merely an old Europe in a cruder and less finished setting. Something new had come into being, the belief that something fine and noble, something higher than the world had ever seen, would be harvested from "the plowing up in earnest the interminable average fallows of humanity." If America were to make any peculiar contribution to the history of the race . . . , it would be in forging out something new and uncommon from the common man.[5]

For Whitman, that most "American" writer, the common folk of generous nature expressed the real spirit of the country.

> Other states indicate themselves in their deputies--but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors,

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[1]Quoted by Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, p. 27.

[2]Ibid., p. 28. [3]Ibid., p. 29. [4]Ibid., p. 46.

[5]Adams, Epic of America, p. 326.

> or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors--but always most in the common people, south, north, west, east, in all its States, through all its mighty amplitude. The largeness of the nation, however, were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen.[1]

More specifically, Whitman suggested the power of the common man over events: "He, in these states, remains immortal owner and boss, deriving good uses, somehow, out of any sort of servant in office, even the basest."[2] The power to bring good out of evil had previously been reserved to God; Whitman gave a generous portion to the common man.

Another attribute of God in older philosophies had been his infinitude; this, too, Whitman claimed for the common man--even as had Emerson. In the 1856 edition of Leaves of Grass, he had penned this line in answer to his self-posed question on the nature of man: "I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new-washed babe, and am not contained between my hat and boots."[3] Henry Alonzo Myers asks, "Who is Walt Whitman [the ideal self who embodies the ideal folk]?"

> He is infinite; he is of the past and of the present and future, of the old and of the young; his personality admits no barriers; he sees through good and evil, through space and time. He pervades everything, becomes everything; he has died a thousand deaths; he has carefully considered you before you were born. He will admit no limitations.[4]

The exaltation of the common man, the belief in his value and powers,

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[1]Quoted in Willingham, "The Whitman Tradition," pp. 13-14.

[2]Quoted in ibid., p. 14.

[3]Quoted in Henry Alonzo Myers, "Whitman's Conception of the Spiritual Democracy, 1855-1856," American Literature, VI (June, 1934), 244.

[4]Ibid.

may have actually begun centuries before, when noble knights setting out on crusades against the Turks had to sell some of their privileges to good burghers in order to raise travelling cash; it had remained for the dreamers of the American dream, however, to elevate average humanity almost to deity.

The Innate Goodness of the Common Man

As God is good, man-become-God must also be good; an article of faith in the common man was that he was the repository of virtue. A recent observer, although disapproving, testified to the strength of the dream (or, as he would have it, the hallucination) of goodness.

> One knows generally that . . . the mythical meanings of America have traditionally been sustained by the romantic sensibility; . . . that America had been unremittingly dreamed from East to West as a testament to the original goodness of man: from England and the Continent to the Atlantic seaboard; from the Atlantic seaboard to the Midwest; from the Midwest to the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. And the margin where the dream has encountered the resistance of fact, where the Noble Savage has confronted Original Sin . . . we call simply: the Frontier.[1]

A journal editorial in 1839 proclaimed the goodness of an America with "a clear conscience unsullied by the past."[2] The new country was sprung, it seemed, full-grown from the soil of the new world--a new creation, unbesmirched by the tainted breath of Europe. The individual conscience was as clear as the national one. "The key term in the moral vocabulary of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and their followers and imitators . . . was 'innocence.'"[3] About the Emersonian party of hope was a pristine

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[1]Fiedler, An End to Innocence, p. 132.

[2]Quoted in Lewis, The American Adam, p. 7.

[3]Ibid. Lewis points out that strong opposition to Emerson's party of hope came from the party of memory. "As the hopeful expressed

quality that would have delighted Rousseau, even though he may not have stood as master over party members.

Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance supported the faith in man's natural goodness. God, as moral law, was everywhere; the world was an emanation from God; man, subject to moral law and living in a world that was derived from God, was himself divine: the self to which Emerson referred in "Self-Reliance" was the spark of divinity within every man.[1] Because God was good and because God was everywhere, evil was an illusion--or else existed only in the negative sense that good was absent. Man, having God within him, was--of course--naturally good.

> To be truly self-reliant was to be "inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men"; and the Divine Soul would not contradict itself. . . . All things worked together for good. "An eternal beneficent necessity," he said, "is always bringing things right. . . . The league between virtue and nature engages all things to assume a hostile front to vice."[2]

The "natural" man to Emerson was good because he was in harmony with nature, and nature--going beyond mountains, valleys, trees, and flowers--was the operation of moral law. Emerson's idea of the naturally good

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their mounting contempt for the doctrine of inherited sin, the nostalgic intoned on Sundays the fixed legacy of corruption in ever more emphatic accents; and centers of orthodox Calvinism, like Andover and Princeton, became citadels of the old and increasingly cheerless theology." Lewis also discusses a third force, which ultimately hoped for a wise innocence.

[1]H.B. Parkes, The Pragmatic Test, cited in Bartholomew V. Crawford, Alexander C. Kern, and Morriss H. Needleman, American Literature (3d ed. rev.; College Outline Series; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1957), p. 90. The idea of the self as the divine self is based upon my own reading of the essay; I am sure that it is not a new interpretation, as the next quotation in the text will show.

[2]Parkes, The American Experience, p. 189.

man was, perhaps, more commodious than a conception of the "noble savage."

Whitman seems somehow more Rousseauistic in his belief in natural goodness. "Walt Whitman's America was made in France, the Romantic notion out of Rousseau and Chateaubriand of an absolute anti-Europe, an utter anti-culture made flesh, the Noble Savage as a Continent."[1] The picture of the ideal self that emerges from "Song of Myself" shows a being who has thrown off every possible influence of corrupting civilization.

> Trippers and askers surround me
> People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life, or the ward
> and the city I live in or the nation. . . .
> The sickness of one of my folks, or of myself, or the ill-doing
> or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,
> Battles, the horror of fratricidal wars, the fever of doubtful
> news, the fitful events,
> These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
> But they are not the Me myself.
> Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am;
> Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary;
> Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable
> certain rest,
> Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
> Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it.[2]

Ridding himself of influence, the ideal self achieves the detachment and wonder of innocence--and a kind of primeval goodness. The goodness, it should be noted, is more potential than present. Like the tough outer coverings of unpolished pearl, the layers of outworn convention must be peeled off; then the common man can commence his grand experience of

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[1]Fiedler, An End to Innocence, p. 164.

[2]Quoted in Lewis, The American Adam, p. 46. This goodness of the common man affirmed by Whitman lay in his potential self-development. See Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. James E. Miller, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 468. He denied basing the case for democracy on "latent or exhibited qualities, essentially sensible or good" on the part of the masses (see p. 469).

development.

Emerson philosophized about the natural goodness of man; Whitman dreamed of it and created an eidolon of natural goodness; Thoreau engrossed himself in an experiment to recover that goodness by becoming the natural man.

> Thoreau spoke as frequently as he could . . . about a sacrament, a sacred mystery, such as baptism: in order to define the cleansing, not of St. Paul's natural man, but of the traditional man; in order, precisely, to bring into being the natural man. For the new tensions out of which insights were drawn and moral choices provoked were no longer the relations of nature and grace, of man and God, but of the natural and artificial, the new and the old, the individual and the social or conventional. . . . His concern was with the strangulation of nature by convention.[1]

Walden can be read as having a structure similar to Thoreau's own purification rite. At first, Thoreau is in Concord with its conventions; then there is the shearing off of convention by removal to the forest and pond, with the rhythm of nature in the passing seasons; finally, there is the arrival of spring and what Lewis calls "a representative anecdote about the sudden bursting into life of a winged insect long buried in an old table of apple-tree wood."[2] Man's natural goodness, like the life of the long-dormant insect, can assert itself when the dead wood of convention is touched by life.

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[1]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 23. Other observers minimize this motive in Thoreau; see Crawford et al., American Literature, p. 100.

[2]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 25. Carpenter, in PMLA, LXXIV, 599-606, holds that Lewis and other critics mistakenly believe that the innocence of the American Adam was that of Adam before the Fall, being naively innocent or living in a state of noble primitivism. Carpenter asserts that the truly American mythical character is wisely innocent and seeks the "primitive" life not as a savage existence but as the "ideal" life. (See especially pp. 601, 604.) Regardless of whether Carpenter is right, the fact is that the end of essential and natural goodness of the mythical American remained.

The common man, himself, probably made verbal shorthand of all this by simply uttering something like, "There's good in everyone." Certainly, he was less articulate than Thoreau on the purifying effects of a return to wilderness; but he undoubtedly was convinced. The American dream of the goodness of the common man lived in his belief in the virtue possessed by the yeoman farmer living in the nature of his own freehold, as will be seen in a bit more detail later.[1] For the present, it is enough to agree with Carpenter that "the idea of primitivism [defined not as the primeval but as the ideal] outlines the rationale of the American myth."[2] To the American devotee of the great dream, the common man had within him the potential of being uncommonly good.

The Dream of Self-fulfillment

With such dazzling possibilities of talent and virtue in the "great 'average fallows' of humanity," a natural consequence in the great dream was the hope of their highest possible development. This, perhaps, is another dimension for the famous "pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence. Certain it is that the hope of self-fulfillment was a magnet for the imagination of the dreamers of the dream.

> The American dream that has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century has not been a dream of merely material plenty, though that has doubtless counted heavily. It has been much more than that. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman,

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[1]See, <u>infra</u>, for instance, the discussion of the myth of the garden, pp. 69-72 and the discussion of Jefferson's agrarianism, pp. 99-104.

[2]Carpenter, <u>PMLA</u>, LXXIV, 604.

> unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class.[1]

Everything that has been said so far about the dream of the dignity and the worth of the individual can be construed as the dream of self-fulfillment: if the common man can realize his infinitude and his own value and if he can achieve in himself the consciousness of a good self, he will be far along on the road to growing to his "fullest development as man." In addition, however, Whitman could envision traits in his ideal folk that signalled the fullest development of the individual. The ideal American would be possessed of robust health and of the hearty good spirits that would accompany it. He would have developed an abiding sense of hospitality that would open him to brotherhood with man; he would love children, women, and comrades. Yet he would be prudent in all that he felt; in balance, perhaps, to the gregariousness of his personality, he would be self-reliant in the sense of being able to be "both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it."[2]

Along with the theorems of the dream just discussed, the dreamers offered corollaries, in the form of recommended actions, that together constituted a strategy for realizing the vision of the dignity and worth of the individual. The action corollaries were more, however, than simply a means to an end: their observance offered tangible evidence that the common man was developing his boundless possibilities, that he

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 405.

[2]These categories of fullest development of the individual are drawn from the comments of Willingham, "The Whitman Tradition," p. 14.

was claiming virtue for his own, and that he was growing to his fullest possible self-realization. In this light, the action corollaries seemed almost a substantive part of the dream.

Action Corollaries of the Dream of Dignity and Worth of the Individual

The American experiment was a new one under the sun, calling for new answers to new problems. Accordingly, the grand, overall strategy of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau for the realization of the ideal self was threefold: first, the American would reject the conventions of the past; second, he would quest for the ideal American life; finally, he would partially realize that life.[1] The key to the rejection, the quest, and the partial realization was experience, which Emerson defined "inclusively, celebrating both the mystical and the sensuous," and which Whitman's eidolon sought in order to absorb "the whole world . . . into itself."[2] Through this experience, the American would at once develop his powers, reinforce his natural goodness, and reach to his highest self-fulfillment.

From the Transcendentalists' doctrine that wisdom is not acquired, but, rather, is innate and waiting to flower, Emerson deduced advice that would result in self-reliance and personal growth for the new American. "Trust thyself," he wrote, "every heart vibrates to that iron string."[3] And yet, this self-reliance was not an intro-

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[1]Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, p. 17. "Emerson . . . described it abstractly, and Whitman . . . imagined it poetically. . . ."

[2]Ibid., p. 28; and Myers, American Literature, VI, 250.

[3]See American Poetry and Prose, ed. Foerster, p. 491.

spective sort. "Do not craze yourself with thinking," this philosopher counselled, "but go about your business anywhere. Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy."[1] As a result, the ideal American which Emerson celebrated was the "sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all professions, who teams it, farms it, peddles it, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper . . . and so forth, and always like a cat falls on his feet."[2] All of this was appropriate to the strategy for the new American, believed Emerson. "He emphasized the need of intuition and self-reliance for modern men because the new laws and 'traditions' of the new world had not yet been formulated."[3]

Besides relying upon intuition and practicing self-reliance, the new American would develop his powers and virtue, Emerson believed, by attuning himself to the time in which he lived.

> Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age.[4]

The prime influence upon the character was nature, the whole environment of man, at once the experience of the mystical and the sensual. Emerson wrote, "Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, Night and her stars. . . . Every day, men and women, conversing--beholding and be-

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[1]Quoted in Adams, Epic of America, p. 198.

[2]Quoted in Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, pp. 27-28.

[3]Ibid., p. 29.

[4]Quoted in ibid., p. 28.

holden."[1] In summary, the new American would develop himself to the fullest by a balance of the experience of the mystic and sensual. "By putting oneself in alignment with the universe, by developing the talent which is Nature's indication of a call to a vocation, by being one's own self (Carlyle's 'sincerity' and 'unconsciousness'), by being independent and fearless, Man can attain to his highest possibilities."[2]

Whitman had faith in impulses. His program of action, accordingly, was the untethered grazing of the soul in the pastures of varied experience. The perfect image of this strategy appears in "There was a Child Went Forth."

> There was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder,
> pity, love or dread, that object he became;
> . . . . . .
> The early lilacs became part of this child;
> . . . . . .
> The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of
> salt-marsh and shore-mud;
> . . . . . .
> These became part of that child who went forth every day,
> who now goes, and will always go forth every day.[3]

More specifically, the program of behavior for the new American was as follows:

> This is what you shall do: love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men--go freely with the powerful uneducated

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p. 19.

[2]Crawford et al., American Literature, p. 94. The specific essay referred to is "Spiritual Laws."

[3]Quoted in Myers, American Literature, VI, 250.

> persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families--re-examine all you have been told in school or church or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your soul. . . ."[1]

If by such a strategy the complex of hopes for the dignity and worth of the individual could materialize, a richer and fuller life for all Americans would follow; paradise would be within reach. American writers, either inspired or disillusioned with the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual, began to shape the image of an American Adam; they placed him in a new garden; and the result--even for doubters--was a new dimension for the great American dream.

The American Adam

By 1855, believes R.W.B. Lewis, "the image contrived to embody the most fruitful contemporary ideas was that of the authentic American as a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history."[2] The vision of the party of hope led by Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau culminated in this composite picture:

> The new habits to be engendered on the new American scene were suggested by the image of a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritance of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources. It was not surprising, in a Bible-reading generation, that the new hero (in praise or disapproval) was most easily identified with Adam before the fall. Adam was the first, the archetypal, man. His moral position was prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent. The world and history lay all before him. And he was the type of creator, the poet par excellence, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him.

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[1]Quoted in Jackson, Dreamers of Dreams, p. 266.

[2]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 1; see also supra, p. 24.

> All this and more were contained in the image of the American as Adam.[1]

Adam, as the archetypal man, was the ideal to which the dreamer of the American dream would aspire. But was his greatness and heroic innocence to be achieved? Through their heroes, American novelists, tellers of folk tales, and biographers re-stated, denied, or modified the dream.

James Fenimore Cooper affirmed the dream in his Leatherstocking series. His later, younger Natty Bumppo was the gallant hero of the sentimental novel transferred to the garden of the forest and there transformed into a noble primitive with such control of nature that the powers of the natural man seemed unlimited. He, like the ideal American of the dream, evolves to his Adam-like ideal.

> His first appearance in The Pioneers is almost comic--a scrawny, snaggle-toothed fellow who is so absurdly dressed that his name is obvicusly ironic. He is more closely akin to Irving's Ichabod Crane than to Daniel Boone. . . . As he develops in the course of the book, however, his ridiculous appearance is forgotten, and he becomes a self-reliant individualist in rational rebellion against society and its rules, regulations, inflexibility and waste. In The Last of the Mohicans he is a very glorification of the empiricist, the alert and accurate observer whose ready inferences are immediately translated into actions and whose self-reliant individualism is the salvation of those representatives of society . . . in his charge . . . . It is only in the last two books that his intuitive qualities are greatly emphasized and the reader becomes acutely conscious of his natural goodness.[2]

It is precisely this evolution of a new being that prompted D. H. Lawrence to remark that "the Leatherstocking novels . . . go backwards from old age to golden youth. That is the true myth of America."[3] Yet, while

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[1]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 5.

[2]Howard, Literature and the American Tradition, p. 98.

[3]Quoted in Lewis, The American Adam, p. 103.

Natty evolves toward the Adamic ideal of innate wisdom, innate goodness, self-reliance, and newness of innocence, his is not a foolish, helpless goodness that makes him prey for the unscrupulous: his is "a more durable kind" that "must be bounded by an observation of ethical differences."[1]

The result of Cooper's art was that Bumppo, placed in a primeval environment, kept only the highest principles of civilization; he embodied the moral ideal of America.[2] Hawkeye became a genuine folk-hero of the American people, and as such, a pointer toward the nature of the great dream. "For years Cooper more than any single figure held up the mirror in which several generations saw the image of themselves they most wished to see--a free-ranging individualist."[3] As we have seen, the dream of the individual's worth and dignity involved the belief in the unlimited powers of average humanity, together with a belief in his virtue. Bumppo-become-Hawkeye was the personification of will over nature; he was not only master of forest, beast, and foe: he was unstained by the touch of woman or by the sordid savagery of mercenary whites or depraved red men. "If there was a fictional Adamic hero unambiguously treated--celebrated in his very Adamism--it was the hero of Cooper's The Deerslayer. . . ."[4]

Another distinctly Adamic hero is Huckleberry Finn. Perhaps because of his creator's later years of bitterness and pessimism, critics

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[1]Ibid., p. 105.

[2]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 43.

[3]Miller, The New England Quarterly, XXVIII, 449-50.

[4]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 91.

have not developed Huck's Adamism. But the boy who has engaged the fancy of businessmen and of T.S. Eliot is the new, American Adam: if his prowess in overcoming evildoers lies more in his cunning than in the omnipotence of a Hawkeye, it is perhaps a stronger testament to the powers of the common man. Like the American Adam, Huck seems sprung from nowhere: his mother is never mentioned, and his father appears for only brief moments, never as a shaper of his son but only as another tester of his prowess. Like the American Adam, Huck moves in measureless space, the great River his haven of isolation to which he returns for spiritual renewal. Too, he is self-reliant, making his own way in life with only an occasional half-welcome gesture of support from a widow more in need of him than vice-versa. The innate goodness reveals itself in Huck's reflex-like brotherhood with the escaped slave, Jim. His innocence is more complex, and perhaps more satisfying, than that of Hawkeye: his embrace of "evil" (as defined by society) in resolving to aid Jim escape is, on the one hand, profoundly naive; on the other hand, his constant pose of naiveté as a defense against the encroachments of a do-gooder guardian, or against the wiles of a drunken father, or against the fraud of a pair of river rapscallions is the epitome of the same durable, "wise" innocence of Hawkeye, who realized that innocence must take account of differing ethics among men. Finally, like the American Adam, Huck keeps the values, without the trappings, of civilization: he can be an altruistic social being, gallant in the best sense of the word, but he can't stand shoes. Our last sight of him is that he is leaving "civilization" for the Indian Territory that one day would become Oklahoma, birthplace of Will Rogers.

Another Adamic hero of the American people was a mythical personage whom Constance Rourke delineated in her study of the national character as revealed in American humor. The composite figure emerging from her study of the shrewd Yankee, of the tall-tale telling frontiersman, and of the Negro minstrel stood as a symbol of adaptability and irrepressible life; the triumph of a Hawkeye or Huck became, for this folk-hero, a comic triumph over an old-world culture, or a cruel nature, or evil men. Thus the power of Adam and the common man was his. So was the sense of new beginnings in a return to first principles. "These mythical figures partook of the primitive; and for a people whose life was still unformed, a searching out of primitive concepts was an inevitable and stirring pursuit, uncovering common purposes and directions."[1] And, surrounding him--whether sharp-tongued Yankee or roaring backwoodsman--was the aura of a wise innocence: "the two figures seemed to join in a new national mythology, forming a striking composite, with a blank mask in common and a similar habit of sporting in public the faults with which they were charged. . . ."[2] Behind the mask, a wise innocence of reticence would lurk; in the display of faults could be the unconscious innocence of childhood. Finally, in the composite figure, was the detachment from time, space, and tradition, typical of the American Adam.

> The three figures loomed large, not because they represented any considerable numbers in the population, but because something in the nature of each induced an irresistible re-

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[1]Constance Rourke, American Humor: A Study of the National Character (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), p. 99.

[2]Ibid., p. 75.

> sponse. Each had been a wanderer over the land. . . . Each in a fashion of his own had broken bonds, the Yankee in the initial revolt against the parent civilization, the backwoodsman in revolt against all civilization, the Negro in a revolt which was cryptic and submerged. . . . As figures they embodied a deep-lying mood of disseverances carrying the popular fancy further and further from any fixed or traditional heritage.[1]

Adam in his innocence, in his power, in his newness, and in his detachment was a magnet for the American imagination. He was fascinating because he represented one kind of synthesis of the ideas in the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual.

When American writers have amplified one trait of the American Adam, they have, justifiably, denied the warping of the dream. At the same time, significantly, perhaps, their heroes have not engaged the imaginations of readers or audience so strongly as have the Hawkeyes, the Hucks, and the shrewd Yankee or roaring backwoodsman. Robert Montgomery Bird, amplifying the trait of naive innocence, exposed a gentle Quaker to the red fang of an American jungle and produced an almost psychopathic avenger aptly named Nathan Slaughter; certainly, such a dream of innocence to the exclusion of other Adamic traits is a doomed one. Hawthorne, too, exaggerated the hopefulness and the innocence of a Donatello--giving him a faun-like character that is fore-ordained to be ravaged by guilt. Melville, who in Billy Budd was to modify the Adamic image, was also of the band of the disillusioned: he amplified the hopeful expectancy and sent hero after hero to destruction because of it: Redburn, "White-Jacket," and

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[1]Ibid., pp. 98-99. One should note, however, that individual characters, such as that legendary Yankee named Jack Downing, might criticize the dream. Rourke points out that Downing sharply criticized Jacksonian democracy, (p. 23).

Pierre Glendenning.[1] In Moby Dick his denial of the warped dream was at its artistic height:

> Melville adopted a unique and off-beat traditionalism--a steadily ambiguous re-rendering of the old forms and fables once unequivocally rejected by the hopeful--in order to recount the total blasting of the vision of innocence. He went beyond a spurious artistic originality to give narrative birth to the conflict with evil: that evil against which a spurious and illusory innocence must shatter itself.[2]

It is this exaggeration of the dream of innocence that Fiedler finds such an hallucination in the American experience.

> It is never the known and experienced world, but always the dreamed one over the next ridge, beyond the next river: the world of legendary innocence, of Experience as Innocence, where one can undergo all and remain virgin.[3]

Finally, some American writers have modified the American Adam. In their work, the hero retains his innocence either at great cost to himself or as a conscious strategy to overpower enemies.

Herman Melville, with his character of Billy Budd, affirmed the power of innocence and goodness, but the cost to the hero himself was his life. The earlier Melville would have seen the sacrifice of the good seaman to a man-made law as proof of the illusion of the dream; but in Billy's steady acceptance of his unjust sentence, Melville struck a new note, with a consequent radical modification of the Adamic image.

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[1]For the full discussion of the disillusion and these characters, see Lewis, The American Adam, pp. 108-136.

[2]Ibid., p. 146. For another discussion of Melville's denial of the American dream, see Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, pp. 74-78.

[3]Fiedler, An End to Innocence, p. 165. Fiedler applies these strictures to Walt Whitman. Whether the reader agrees with the critic on the appropriateness of the target, the statement of the illusion would appeal to all the writers who denied the dream.

> What Melville thought at the end, when he saw everything he had said was, curiously enough, a dialectically heightened value in something he had supposed irretrievably destroyed. He found a new conviction about the saving strength of the Adamic personality. When this conviction became articulate in Billy Budd, the American hero as Adam became the hero as Christ and entered, once and for all, into the dimension of myth.[1]

The dream of the power, value, and goodness of the common man had modulated to a new key: no longer Adam, he had become a messiah.

Besides Melville, another major writer modified the dream of Adam. Henry James showed his American innocents colliding with evil and developing a new wisdom. Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer, and Lambert Strether all came to Europe for their naive assault upon fastnesses of an older society more than willing to victimize them. Usually, James' characters, bruised but uncrushed, come through the ordeal with a great deal more wordly knowledge and a conscious commitment to the course of innocence: Newman holds the power to ruin his tormentors and declines to use it; Strether, duped by Chad and his mistress, chooses to lend his honor in support of the compromised woman. This modification of the American Adam stops just short of Melville's apotheosis in Billy Budd. In at least one case, however, James inverts the Adamic image, producing a strategy of innocence that can, itself, victimize.

> The final turn occurs in The Golden Bowl. In James's last completed novel, . . . the Adamic metaphor becomes explicit and central. Familiar qualities reverberate in the protagonist's name: Adam Verver, a linking of the first member of the human race with a two-syllable suggestion of greenness or freshness. But those familiar elements have taken on a potency not much less than sinister. . . . The Prince and Charlotte Stance, representatives of "the world," are notably foreshortened; it is their destiny to be brought to heel, even crippled. . . .[2]

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[1]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 130.

[2]Ibid., pp. 153-54. See Carpenter, PMLA, LXXIV, 602-603, for another discussion of the Ververs' wise innocence.

The new Adam remained; but his was an innocence achieved after, rather than prior to, the fall. As the masses of Americans were drawn to the Hawkeyes, the Hucks, or the mythical Yankee or frontiersman, other levels of American society found an ikon of the dream in such heroes as those of James. "The myth of the American Adam was simply a formula for the way life felt to alert and sensitive Americans during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. . . ."[1] It was a dream of Adamism not to which one is born, but rather to which one can only be re-born after the experience of evil.

The Daniel Boone drawn by biographers added a new motif to the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual. On the one hand, this Boone is the familiar figure of the innately good Adam who meets but is unchanged by evil; he is the powerful, larger-than-life apotheosis of the common man. John Filson's biography presented "the innately good man of the forest; a rustic Ben Franklin."[2] When James Audubon visited the real Boone, by this time an old man, the naturalist apparently saw still the unsullied Adamic image.

> The stature and general appearance of this wanderer of the western forests approached the gigantic. [Boone actually was five feet, eight inches tall.] The very motion of his lips brought the impression that whatever he uttered could not be otherwise than strictly true.[3]

The new element is the quality of Boone not only as an Adam but as a

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[1]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 154. When Lewis makes this comment, he is referring specifically to the climate of opinion in which Henry James lived and by which he was influenced. Even though an anachronism exists in my use of the statement, I think no violence is done to the essential truth that the "party of irony," of which the elder Henry James was a member, believed in a modified Adamism (see p. 57).

[2]Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 57. [3]Quoted in ibid., p. 59.

Moses. The real Boone had a capacity for decision and for leadership--in the best tradition of the dream of the common man's powers. As a result of this capacity, believes Fishwick, "the component parts of the myth were recognizable: . . . a Promised Land beyond the mountains; land-hungry families who considered it an Eden; someone leading the people westward; a lone wanderer guiding his generation on a God-sanctioned mission."[1]

Like the great dream, itself, the nature of a new American Adam was ambiguous. Good, but also aware of "the main chance," his return to another first principle, innocence, could range from naiveté, to a conscious choice of the innocent stance, to the use of that stance to win his encounters with an enemy tribe. As a figure representative of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual, however, he fascinated Americans on all social levels. The wise, re-born Adam of Henry James might find his paradise within himself, but the Adam who embodied the hopes of the masses found his habitat in the new garden of the West.

The Dream of the Garden

The vision of a vast agricultural society, as we have seen, had begun as the common man's dream of his own empire and had found its earliest expression in words of spokesmen like de Crèvecoeur and Lewis Evans.[2] During the nineteenth century, Evans' dream of all the wealth and power that would rise through culture of good land in good

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[1] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[2] Supra, pp. 27-30.

climate became "a collective representation, a poetic idea (as Tocqueville noted in the early 1830's) that defined the promise of American life."[1] Present in the nexus of ideas that was the garden dream were at least three key concepts: the land as a safety valve, the soil as a paradise, and the forests and prairies as the givers of virtue.

Adam and Eve had been driven out of the garden. At least as early as the time of Franklin, the American West had promised a haven for artisans and workers driven out of cities because of economic changes: the trek West was a return to the garden.[2] Hamlin Garland, in his preface to Jason Edwards in 1892, stated the genesis of the garden dream through the safety-valve theory.

> For more than a half century the outlet toward the free lands of the West has been the escape-valve of social discontent in the great cities of America. Whenever the conditions of his native place pressed too hard upon him, the artisan or the farmer turned his face toward the prairies and forests of the West. . . . Thus long before the days of '49, the West had become the Golden West, the land of wealth and freedom and happiness. All of the associations called up by the spoken word, the West, were fabulous, mythic, hopeful.[3]

The "primal pair" had been driven out of the eastern gate; having come almost full circle, the American Adam knocked at the western gate.

Green and golden, the American West was the soil as a paradise. James B. Lanman, writing in an 1841 issue of Hunt's Merchants' Magazine,

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[1]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 138.

[2]Supra, p. 29. I vividly recall the remark of an uncle of mine, who as a boy had helped to settle in Oklahoma, the "last frontier." "Depression didn't really hurt us," he said, "as long as there was a West that we could keep kicking the door off of to let the hardup ones get another start." As a matter of fact, Smith presents evidence that the West actually never functioned effectively as a safety valve: see chap. xx.

[3]Quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, p. 288.

recited again the theme begun by de Crèvecoeur almost three-quarters of a century before.

> What healthful habitudes of mind and body are afforded by agricultural enterprise? The exhilarating atmosphere of a rural life, the invigorating exercise afforded by its various occupations, the pure water, the abundance of all the necessaries of subsistence, leading to early and virtuous marriages, all point to this pursuit as best adapted to the comfort of the individual man.[1]

That Hamlin Garland would later expose the dream of a pastoral paradise as a cruel nightmare attests only to the power of the vision.

More than all this, the West had the power to imbue its people with unique virtue. Lanman, reciting all the themes of the garden, spoke for many Americans when he wrote the following.

> The agriculturist, removed from the pernicious influences that are forever accumulated in large cities, the exciting scenes, which always arise from large accumulations of men, passes a quiet and undisturbed life, possessing ample means and motives thoroughly to reflect upon his rights and duties, and holding a sufficient stake in the soil to induce him to perform those duties both for himself and his country. It is to the true-hearted and independent yeoman of a nation that we look, in times of national danger, to uphold its institutions, and to protect themselves in preserving the principles of the state. . . . It can scarcely be denied that agricultural enterprise . . . should be encouraged as the safeguard of a country, the promoter of its virtue, and the solid foundation of its permanent happiness. . . .[2]

Toward the turn of the century, Frederick Jackson Turner rehearsed anew the theme of a beneficent influence emanating from the West to produce not only a paradise but a supremely virtuous common man.

> European men, institutions, and ideas were lodged in the American wilderness, and this great American West took them to her bosom, taught them a new way of looking upon the destiny of the common man, trained them in adaptation to the conditions of the New World, to the creation of new institutions to meet

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p. 162. [2]Quoted in ibid.

> new needs; and ever as society on her eastern border grew to resemble the Old World in its social form and its industry, and ever, as it began to lose faith in the ideal of democracy, she opened new provinces, and dowered new democracies in her most distant domains with her material treasures and with the ennobling influence that the fierce love of freedom, the strength that came from hewing out a home, making a school and a church, and creating a higher future for his family, furnished to the pioneer.[1]

The frontier thus becomes the garden where the common man as the American Adam could develop his talent, nourish his virtue, and fulfill himself. The grand goal of the dream, a return to paradise, was explicit. Smith believes that

> the image of an agricultural paradise in the West, embodying group memories of an earlier, a simpler and, it was believed, a happier state of society, long survived as a force in American thought and politics. So powerful and vivid was the image that down to the very end of the nineteenth century it continued to seem a representation, in Whitman's words, of the core of the nation . . . .[2]

The West was the land of freedom, believed the dreamers of the dream. Turner, as has been shown, viewed it as the source of American democracy. It is time to examine another cluster of ideas in the great American dream--a cluster that meshes with the ideas contained in the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual.

In 1839 were born the parents of Will Rogers: Mary America Schrimsher was one-fourth Cherokee, the daughter of Martin Schrimsher and Elizabeth Hunt Gunter, whose mother had been a member of the Paint Clan; Clem Vann Rogers was three-sixteenths Cherokee, the son of Robert Rogers II and of Sallie Vann, great granddaughter of Major Downing, who had immigrated from Ireland over a century before.[3] In that year of

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p. 198. [2]Ibid., p. 139.

[3]From genealogical chart prepared by Paula McSpadden Love. Also, Croy, Our Will Rogers, pp. 7-9.

1839, Emerson was establishing himself solidly as an essayist and lecturer; Thoreau had only two years before finished Harvard and had begun his stint as a school teacher, in the best tradition of the sturdy lad from Vermont; Herman Melville, too, was teaching, his trip to the South Seas still two years away; Walt Whitman, in his twentieth year, was writing for newspapers in New York; four-year old Mark Twain moved to Hannibal, Missouri; and Cooper was only two years away from finishing the portrait of his American Adam in the last of the Leather-stocking series.)[1]

The Dream of Freedom and Equality

Like meshing cogs, the ideals of freedom and equality turn upon the ideas of the worth and goodness of the common man and upon the vision of his self-fulfillment. Infinite private men could not be finitely limited and had, therefore, to be free; the necessity of an equalitarian society followed from the concept of infinite and therefore equal men. Moreover, the hope of self-fulfillment engendered another dream and a nightmare for Americans.

> By . . . encouraging them to seek the fulfillment of their desires and ideals through the conquest of the wilderness, the civilization of America had produced contradictory tendencies. The hope that had gradually taken shape in America was that of a society characterized by a universal freedom and equality in which all men could live without frustration and without fear . . . . But meanwhile individual Americans . . . acquired an energy and confidence of the will that too often resulted in an unrestrained drive towards domination and exploitation . . . .[2]

The dream of the garden had pictured democracy as a social ideal; de-

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[1]Crawford et al., American Literature, pp. 70, 90-91, 98, 134-35, 187.

[2]Parkes, The American Experience, p. 185.

mocracy as a political ideal was intimately related to the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual. "In the original assumptions of democracy it was held that the expression of each man's will would spontaneously satisfy not only his desire for self-expression, but his desire for a good life, because the instinct to express one's self in a good life was innate."[1] The interrelationship of innate goodness and political democracy is clear. Further, by giving the individual a share in the day-to-day shaping of his society, democracy gave promise of self-fulfillment through self expression. Through this nexus of ideas, the American would be wedded to democracy. Indeed, so confluent are the ideas of the dignity and worth of the individual and the implementation of them in a democratic system that Henry Bamford Parkes finds in the American dream of freedom and equality the core of the American tradition.[2]

The Dream of Freedom

Actually, so inseparable are the dream of the individual's worth and the dream of freedom that everything said thus far about the first could apply to the second. The new Adam in a new garden was not only unfettered in his attempt to develop his powers and his ideal self; his very boundlessness was freedom; his liberation from the past and from evil was freedom. More specifically, however, to Americans like George Bancroft, the dream of freedom took on apocalyptic dimensions. History had been the struggle between freedom and slavery. The contest

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[1]Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 311.

[2]The American Experience, p. 345.

had covered four epochs: from creation to the time of Socrates, from the time of Athens' greatness to the coming of Christ, from that Coming to the American Revolution, and from the Revolution on to the millennium. So magnificent was the prospect, believed Bancroft, that he wrote, "With the latter [the American Revolution] commences a new and more glorious era, of which the one immediately preceding it may be considered as little more than formative."[1]

To more humble Americans, the dream of freedom could seem only a little less apocalyptic. A New England farmer, at the time of adoption of the Federal Constitution, wrote, "We do not need any Goviner but the Guviner of the univarse and him a States Gineral to Consult with the wrest of the united states for the good of the whole."[2] Bizarre as it might sound, such a proposal contained two of the crucial ideas in the American dream of freedom: limitation of a central government's power and government for the good of the whole. Other widely held opinions helped to define the nature of the dreamed-of freedom. One such definition is that which is implicit in the Bill of Rights which public opinion demanded and has sustained: negatively defined, freedom is absence of restraint on "basic rights" such as the right to assemble, to worship according to conscience, to speak, to publish, and to bear arms.[3]

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[1]Quoted in Lewis, The American Adam, p. 164. Parkman, too, was devoted to the ideal of freedom, but he was apparently less motivated by idealism and more by the necessity of freedom to provide for the survival of the fittest in his "world of violence and total, unending war" (see p. 168).

[2]Quoted in Adams, Epic of America, p. 102.

[3]Davis et al., Modern American Society, p. 20.

Another attribute of this sort of freedom was the American dream of freedom from special privilege: from the time of a de Crèvecoeur who rejoiced in liberation from the bondage of "aristocratical families, . . . courts, . . . kings, . . . bishops, . . . [and] ecclestiastical dominion" to the cry of the Populist against "the interests," America was dreamed of as the place where the individual was free from domination by aristocracy, oligarchy, or plutocracy.[1] Lest, however, the dreamed-of state of liberty be construed generally as violent anarchy, the bounds of freedom were qualified to permit freedom of action and expression as long as they did not injure others.[2] In brief, the political dream was one of free institutions; from what has been said, however, it is also clear that the dreamed-of democracy was also an ideal social order. Jackson, that symbol of American democracy, spoke for the dream of freedom when he said of America, "Behold it as the asylum where the wretched and the oppressed find a refuge and a support."[3]

As was the case with the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual, "Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were concerned with what America ought to be" in regard to freedom.[4] To each of them, as to many Americans, freedom was more than political liberty. Thoreau virtually equated freedom with his own highly-ethical anarchy--a position tangential to the core of the dream. Emerson and Whitman,

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[1]Ibid., p. 29. See footnote 2, p. 29, for the source of de Crèvecoeur's words.

[2]Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 44.

[3]Quoted in Macdougall, Understanding Public Opinion, p. 142.

[4]Parkes, The American Experience, p. 196.

differing only in degree, advocated a kind of laissez-faire of the spirit.

Thoreau's own life was his definition of freedom. He was, believes Parkes,

> the almost complete embodiment of the ideal American of the Virginians, cherishing his own moral and economic independence and refusing to exploit others. But although he found the best way of life for himself, as demonstrated by the sustained note of mystical ecstasy that pervades his books and journals, he was not likely to be imitated by other Americans.[1]

Such essays as that on civil disobedience, it seems to me, may place Thoreau--in the words of Francis Graham Wilson--"by the wayside of American life."[2] Thoreau wrote:

> Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is <u>worse</u> than the evil. <u>It</u> makes it worse.[3]

Yet, anarchical as this may sound, Thoreau's dream of freedom was based on comprehensive philosophical grounds that ennobled it. His words pictured a broad freedom.

> America is said to be the arena on which the battle of freedom is to be fought; but surely it cannot be freedom in a merely political sense that is meant. Even if we grant that the American has freed himself from a political tyrant, he is still the slave of an economical and moral tyrant.
> . . . Do we call this the land of the free? What is it to be free from King George and continue the slaves of King Prejudice? What is it to be born free and not to live free?

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 193.

[2] Wilson, <u>The American Political Mind</u>, p. 199.

[3] Quoted in Rocker, <u>Pioneers of American Freedom</u>, p. 31.

> What is the value of any political freedom but as a means to moral freedom? Is it a freedom to be slaves, or a freedom to be free, of which we boast?[1]

If, as some scholars have suggested, Thoreau's personal vision of freedom was not the collective one, it differed only in degree, not in kind.

Emerson, on the other hand, tried to express "the feelings of the generality of American democrats."[2] Possibly as a result, concludes Rudolf Rocker, Emerson exerted a "considerable" influence upon life in America.[3] Whereas Thoreau's dream of freedom went to the extreme of philosophical anarchism, Emerson's ideal was only "closely akin" to that position.[4] Illustrative of the difference is the anecdote, whether apocryphal or not, in which Thoreau exercised his freedom to the point that he would go to jail rather than pay poll tax; Emerson exercised his freedom only to the point of visiting Thoreau in jail. Instead of advising out-and-out civil disobedience, Emerson simply said, "Good men must not obey the laws too well."[5]

Emerson, as already noted, consistently preached the infinitude of the private man. Besides thus expressing his confidence in the

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[1]Quoted in ibid., pp. 27-28.

[2]Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 199. Wilson holds that Emerson's idealism "could not cross from the rational to the real, it could not adjust itself to the facts of political life. . ." (see p. 201). In this study we are less interested with the "fact" of American life than with that communal vision, called the American dream, which had a real existence on another plane.

[3]Pioneers of American Freedom, p. 24.

[4]Wilson, The American Political Mind, pp. 200-201.

[5]Quoted in ibid., p. 200.

dignity and worth of the individual, he also revealed his dedication to other categories of the great American dream. His optimism concerning the private man, says Parkes, "was . . . . a mystical reinterpretation of the American faith in freedom and equality."[1] Infinite personalities cannot be limited; they must, therefore, be free. Emerson's dream of freedom was like a heavenly city with the free individual in a free democracy. Emerson detailed a wise, just, and free society in which the individual was free to develop his innate wisdom and justice. In his words,

> The less government we have, the better--the fewer laws, and the less confided power. The antidote to this abuse of formal government is, the influence of private character, the growth of the Individual; the appearance of the principal to supersede the proxy; the appearance of the wise man, of whom the existing government is, it must be owned, but a shabby imitation. That which all things tend to educe, which freedom, cultivation, intercourse, revolutions, go to form and deliver, is character; that is the end of Nature, to reach unto this coronation of her king. To educate the wise man, the State exists; and with the appearance of the wise man, the State expires. The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary. The wise man is the State. He needs no army, fort, or navy--he loves men too well; no bribe, or feast, or palace to draw friends to him; no vantage ground, no favorable circumstance. He needs no library, for he has not done thinking; no church, for he is a prophet; no statute-book, for he has the law-giver; no money, for he is value; no road, for he is at home where he is. . . . His relation to men is angelic; his memory is myrrh to them; his presence, frankincense and flowers.[2]

For Emerson, freedom was both a prerequisite and a result of character formation; it was not only political freedom: it was social and moral as well. "With this deep-rooted American confidence in the individual and suspicion of authority, he was not willing to recognize that the

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[1]The American Experience, p. 189.

[2]Quoted in Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 201.

individual cannot realize all his moral and spiritual potentialities unless he is guided by appropriate social institutions."[1] In so doing, Emerson may have been out of touch with realities, but he was faithful to the optimism in the dream of freedom.

Like Thoreau, Whitman dreamed of a liberty in which the individual would be law unto himself. "The purpose of democracy . . . is, through many transmigrations and amid endless ridicules . . . to illustrate at all hazards, this doctrine or theory that man, properly trained in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law, and a series of laws, unto himself."[2] The statement of Whitman's dream also contains his qualification of it: only the man "trained in sanest, highest freedom" could become a law unto himself. This follows Emerson's adage that the state exists to educate the wise man and disappears with his appearance. Further, however, Whitman articulated the balance that has to exist between state and individual: "The problem . . . presented to the New World, is, under permanent law and order, and after preserving cohesion (ensemble-Individuality), at all hazards, to vitalize man's free play of special Personalism. . . ."[3] A man who sees that the cohesion of the state must be preserved at all hazards stops short of equating freedom with anarchy, however libertarian his dreams.

Like Emerson and Thoreau, Whitman envisioned a freedom beyond mere political liberty.

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[1]Parkes, The American Experience, pp. 189-90.

[2]"Democratic Vistas," Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Miller, pp. 464-65.

[3]Ibid., p. 479.

> Did you, too, O friend, suppose a democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest form of interaction between men, and their beliefs--in religion, literature, colleges, and schools--democracy in all public and private life, and in the army and navy.[1]

The dreamed-of freedom thus extends to the social, the moral, the religious, and the intellectual spheres of life. Henry Seidel Canby, writing of Whitman's ideals, described another kind of liberty.

> A fraternal love, or at least affection, must be the cement of democracy. And this, of course, harmonizes with Whitman's ideas of self-development. The individual for whom democracy is conducted must know how to love and be loved, or the house of the state is built upon sterile sands. What literature claims for the heroes and the great lovers, Whitman demands as an ideal for the common man. There can be no enduring democracy without emotional freedom.[2]

The freedom to express a comradely love was a unique dream among the great prophets: Thoreau loved humanity, but hated Tom, Dick, and Harry; the sage of Concord generally managed to keep his distance from emotional, comradely involvements such as those at Brook Farm. In Whitman's bold vision of freedom of emotion was a frank sensuousness that expressed a consummatory attitude toward American living: manly love for comrades, passioned love for body--these were to be consumed in the very act of giving. The release of the emotions was at once freedom and self-fulfillment. "To glorify the 'manly love of comrades' was the central purpose both of Whitman's poetry and of his personal life."[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 474-75.

[2] Walt Whitman: An American (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), p. 265.

[3] Parkes, The American Experience, p. 195.

The words of Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman on freedom were not slogans for the masses; but the writers' grand vistas of the free spirit were also celestial cities of a sort to the thousands (or millions) who sympathized with or labored for abolition, women's rights, and labor's rights, and who observed with at least a modicum of toleration the liberated attempts of such free spirits as John Humphrey Noyes to realize in a model community the ideal, free society.[1] To the inarticulate American, the dream of freedom might be expressed simply as the desire for elbow room, for air to breathe, for room to graze; it was no less real for lack of fine words.

Henry Bamford Parks, after examining the ideals of Jefferson, John Taylor, Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman, concluded that "the foundation of an American order can only be a respect for the freedom of every individual, in the confidence that by the fullest development of his own personality he can contribute most fully to the welfare of society and that (since man is a social being) a true individualism prefers to express itself in co-operation rather than in conflict."[2]

The Dream of Equality

The vision of equality, like a "wheel within a wheel," balanced the dream of freedom. Keenly aware of the balance and seeming-paradox

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[1]Space does not permit even a survey of these movements generated by the dream of freedom. For a book-length treatment see Holbrook, Dreamers of the American Dream. Holbrook treats the temperance and women's rights movements, the labor movement, the model communities, the humanitarian movement, and the populist movement.

[2]The American Experience, p. 342.

was Walt Whitman, the symbolic voice of the nineteenth century.[1] Democracy to him meant freedom, "individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being by himself," but democracy also meant to him equality, "the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average."[2] These two principles, believed Whitman, were ever confronting each other and modifying one another's nature, each making the other of the highest avail. What is the nature of the dream of equality?

The Declaration of Independence states as a "self-evident" truth that all men are created equal. The definition of this equality has plagued dreamers of the American dream ever since. The writer of that document believed in the rise of a natural aristocracy of those with superior talents and virtue.[3] Obviously, men are not equal in talent, intellect, or physical endowment. How, then, can one justify such a dream? In general, the answer is twofold: first, men actually are equal spiritually; second, the ideal society will minimize the surface inequalities, producing an approximate outward equality.

Emerson and Whitman are the prophets of the dream of spiritual equality. Certainly, the doctrine follows from Emerson's life-long emphasis on the infinitude of the private man.[4] Equality necessarily exists among unlimited personalities. Whitman, however, is the one who vivified the dream of spiritual equality. Henry Alonzo Myers finds

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[1]Canby, Walt Whitman, p. 341.

[2]Quoted in Parkes, The American Experience, p. 195.

[3]Gettell, History of American Political Thought, p. 190.

[4]Supra, pp. 47-48.

that the first principle in Leaves of Grass is the idea of an unlimited personality. Additionally, that principle "is accompanied by the further principle of equality, for it is not only Walt Whitman who is an unlimited, all-embracing personality."[1]

> I celebrate myself,
> And what I assume you shall assume;
> For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you.

And again, in other verses, the argument becomes explicit:

> Have you thought there could be but one supreme?
> There can be any number of Supremes--one does not
> countervail another any more than one eye-
> sight countervails another, or one life
> countervails another.

The principle of spiritual equality becomes itself a great first principle:

> In all people I see myself--none more, and not one
> a barleycorn less,
> And the good or bad I say of myself, I say to them.[2]

Myers concludes that "finding these principles [of the unlimited personality and of a consequent spiritual equality] in the poems is not a matter of judiciously choosing apt quotations; on the contrary, there is nothing in the 1855 and 1856 Leaves which does not follow a priori from them."[3] The "self" of the Leaves is not only Whitman's dream of the ideal self for all the American people: it is the unlimited being that sees as equals all other selves.

Starting from this transcendental view of human equality,

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[1]Myers, American Literature, VI, 245.

[2]Quoted in ibid., 245-46.

[3]Ibid., 246.

Whitman elaborated it to almost the point of an overt social equality. He believed that the masses of people possessed qualities which--because of their commonality--were most universal and therefore closest to the universal will. This is the sense of his phrase, "the divine average." And yet, to avoid having to exclude the superior talent, he said, "Produce great persons and the rest follows."[1] By that principle, says Holbrook Jackson, he meant "to strike the balance of a higher average rather than to justify inequality."[2] Thus, for Whitman, the spirit of social equality, which was the bedrock of modern society, was nevertheless not incompatible with individuality. For Whitman--and for Emerson, no doubt--the spiritual equality of men was "an eternal fact in the real world of unlimited personalities."[3]

The social dream of equality was, then, to shadow forth men's inner equality--to mitigate the differences that kept men graded in their interrelationships, to prevent the erection of marked class variations. Mere absence of noble titles was not enough, although it constituted a hopeful sign. A man was to be accepted or rejected for what he was, for what he had made himself. Many years after Whitman, James Truslow Adams was to recall incidents that will serve as types of the dream of social equality.

> It is . . . a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances

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[1]Quoted in Jackson, Dreamers of Dreams, p. 271.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Myers, American Literature, VI, 246.

> of birth or position. I once had an intelligent young Frenchman as a guest in New York, and after a few days I asked him what struck him most in his new impressions. Without hesitation he replied, "The way that everyone of every sort looks you right in the eye, without a thought of inequality." Some time ago a foreigner who used to come to do some work for me, and who had picked up a very fair education, used occasionally to sit and chat with me in my study after he had finished his work. One day he said that such a relationship was the great difference between America and his homeland. There, he said, "I would do my work and might get a pleasant word, but I could never sit and talk like this. There is a difference there between social grades which cannot be got over. I would not talk to you there as man to man, but as my employer."[1]

Such an easy gradation of men would have delighted the "Buckskins" of the first frontier, smarting under real or imagined social slights from the better-off seaboard dwellers. American women, Negroes, Jews, and oppressed minorities have dreamed of social equality and have become sisters and brothers in spirit to those "Buckskins."

No small part of social equality was to generate from political equality.

One strategy for political equality was nearly-universal manhood suffrage. Prior to 1787, a majority of states held property qualifications for voting; by 1820, most of these had changed to taxpaying qualifications. In all but Tennessee, states later admitted left out property qualifications, substituting taxpaying ones; in the West, even the latter did not pass into law.[2] In the original states, the dialogue between defenders of the status quo and the dreamers of the dream is illuminating. In the Virginia Convention of 1829-30,

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, pp. 404-405.

[2]Wilson, The American Political Mind, pp. 178-79.

John Randolph apparently saw in the desire to eliminate freehold voter qualifications the "danger" of unpropertied men using the government to further their ends; he sought in a speech to bracket their desire for the vote with the scourge of an undesirable, paternalistic government.

> Among the strange notions which have been broached since I have been on the political theatre, there is one which has lately seized the minds of men, that all things must be done for them by the Government, and that they are to do nothing for themselves: The Government is not only to attend to the great concerns which are its province, but it must step in and ease individuals of their natural and moral obligations.[1]

The non-freeholders of the city of Richmond, on the other hand, asked removal of that voting restriction on the grounds of life and liberty in the Declaration. First, though, they admitted that society-at-large must limit suffrage and that almost-universal opinion rules against women, Negro, and alien voters. Then, in the petition, the words of the non-freeholders compared non-suffrage to robbery.

> It is said to be expedient, however, to exclude non-freeholders also. Who shall judge of this expediency? The society: and does that embrace the proprietors of certain portions of land only? Expedient for whom? for the freeholders. A harsh appellation would he deserve, who, on the plea of expediency, should take from another his property: what, then, should be said of him who, on that plea, takes from another his rights, upon which the security, not of his property only, but of his life and liberty depends?[2]

At other times, as in the convention in New York almost a decade earlier, skillful defenders of the status quo could fall back upon the dream of the garden itself, with its vision of the self-sufficient, independent

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[1]Quoted in <u>ibid</u>., p. 180.

[2]Quoted in <u>ibid</u>., pp. 179-80.

yeoman and of festering cities. In that convention, James Kent defended a property-chosen state senate.

> The senate has hitherto been elected by the farmers of the state--by the free and independent lords of the soil, worth at least $ 250 in freehold estate, over and above all debts charged thereon.
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> . . . . . .
>
> Now, . . . sir, I wish to preserve our senate as the representative of the landed interest. I wish those who have an interest in the soil, to retain the exclusive possession of a branch in the legislature, as a strong hold in which they may find safety through all the vicissitudes which the state may be destined . . . to experience. I wish them to be always enabled to say that their free-holds cannot be taxed without their consent . . . . The tendency of universal suffrage, is to jeopardize the rights of property, and the principles of liberty . . . . We are fast becoming a great nation, with great commerce, manufactures, population, wealth, luxuries, and with the vices and miseries that they engender. One seventh of the population of Paris at this day subsists on charity, and one third of the inhabitants of that city die in the hospitals; what would become of such a city with universal suffrage?[1]

The defenders of the dream of political equality answered that the landed interest itself asked a broadening of voting rights; and delegate Cramer invoked the dream of equality in the Declaration when he added,

> that the great fundamental principle, that all men were equal in their rights, was settled, and forever settled, in this country . . . . In fact, but two states in the union, with the exception of this state, have any freehold distinctions as to electors; . . . and the constitutions of these states were adopted at an early period of the revolutionary war, when the rights of man were little understood and the blessings of a free government had not been realized.[2]

Perhaps the dream of the yeoman in his garden, strong as it was, was not equal to the great superordinate dream in the Declaration of

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[1]Quoted in ibid., pp. 181-82.

[2]Quoted in ibid., pp. 182-83.

Independence; at any rate, prophets of the political dream of equality succeeded in widening increasingly the bounds of suffrage.

Political equality was to arise by means other than conferring the vote. The Bill of Rights promised all citizens equal protection under the laws, with trial by jury of their peers. Majority rule, the explicit principle behind universal suffrage, did not mean a tyranny of the majority; rather, the rights of the minorities could find shelter in a diversity of ways--from rules of legislative debate to the balancing power resident in the courts. Andrew Jackson, the second "people's President," strove to make the Presidency equal in power to the legislative and judicial branches of government, his "democracy . . . a defense of the common man."[1] He constantly reminded officials that all power comes from the people, without at the same time simply standing for the rule of "King Mob." He popularized the notion of making more officials elective ones. He established as the democratic principle the notion of rotation in office.

> In a country where offices are created solely for the benefit of the people no one man has any more intrinsic right to official station than another. Offices were not established to give support to particular men at the public expense. No individual wrong is, therefore, done by removal, since neither appointment to nor continuance in office is a matter of right. The incumbent became an officer with a view to public benefits, and when these require his removal they are not to be sacrificed to private interests. . . . He who is removed has the same means of obtaining a living that are enjoyed by the millions who never held offices.[2]

Jackson justified his spoils system on the bases of the sovereignty of

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[1]Wilson, The American Political Mind, pp. 185-87.

[2]Quoted in ibid., p. 185.

the people, of the equal rights of all to office, and of equality of economic opportunity with all other non-official Americans.

Americans dreamed of a measure of economic equality, for upon it, to a large extent, depended the hope of social equality and, to some extent, that of political equality. Ordinarily, they dreamed not of equal sharing of wealth, for that jarred with their belief in their own unlimited possibilities. Instead, what they asked and hoped for was simply the opportunity for an economic rise. "If America has stood for anything unique in the history of the world, it has been for the American dream, the belief in the common man and the insistence upon his having, so far as possible, equal opportunity in every way with the rich one."[1] Croly, writing shortly after the close of the nineteenth century, believed that such a dream of economic equality was closely related to other aspects of the envisioned return to paradise.

> That idea [the American idea] while not ceasing to be at bottom economic, became more than ever political and social in its meaning and contents. The Land of Freedom became in the course of time also the Land of Equality.[2]

When the economic dream remained uppermost, the American dream became simply the dream of success, of which we shall see more later.

So powerful, in the meantime, was the prospect of equality in all its aspects that a late nineteenth century historian of ideas could see its actual working out in American society.

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 135.

[2]Croly, The Promise of American Life, p. 11.

> There [in America] a natural equality of sentiment, springing out of and resting on a broad equality of material and social conditions, has been the heritage of the people from the earliest times. . . . This broad natural equality of sentiment, rooted in equal material opportunities, equal education, equal laws, equal opportunities, and equal access to all positions of honor and trust, has just sufficient inequality mixed with it--in the shape of greater or less mental endowments, higher or lower degrees of culture, larger or smaller material possessions, and so on--to keep it sweet and human; while at the same time it is all so gently graded, and marked by transitions so easy and natural, that no gap was anywhere to be discovered on which to found an order of privilege or caste. Now an equality like this . . . is the distinct raising of the entire body of a people to a higher level, and so brings civilization a stage nearer its goal. It is the first successful attempt in recorded history to get a healthy, natural equality which should reach down to the foundations of the state and to the great masses of men; and in its results corresponds to what in other lands (excepting, perhaps, in luxury alone) has been attained only by the few--the successful and the ruling spirits.[1]

Crozier's summary of the status of equality in America was itself an assertion of the great dream of equality and of its native American attributes. Combined with the hope of freedom, it provided the vision of the perfect democracy, which to Carpenter seemed to be the authentic American dream.[2]

Its endurance, believed Whitman, depended upon something more than material benefits. To him, unless democracy "goes deeper, gets at least as firm and as warm a hold in men's hearts, emotions and beliefs as, in their days, feudalism or ecclesiasticism, and inaugurates its own perennial sources, welling from the centre forever, its strength will be defective, its growth doubtful, and its main charm wanting."[3]

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[1]John B. Crozier, quoted by Croly, The Promise of American Life, pp. 15-16.

[2]Supra, p. 22.

[3]Quoted in Parkes, The American Experience, p. 193.

The dreams of responsible freedom and of an equality without sameness balanced each other in the glimpsed-of ideal democracy; intimately connected with the hopes for the dignity and worth of the individual, they seemed a pathway to the paradise-to-be-regained. As with the vision of the common man's powers, his goodness, and his self-fulfillment, the dream of the ideal democracy had its action corollaries which seemed almost a part of its content.

Action Corollaries of the Dream of Freedom and Equality

Some comments appearing earlier provide the starting point for a strategy to achieve freedom and equality.[1] To cherish one's own independence, to exercise freedom of thought and action--without at the same time exploiting or injuring others; to stand up for the stupid and foolish, to bow to no man but to be tolerant of all, to accept people for what they are rather than for who they are, to express a comradely love; to seek to keep government at its minimum and to support a system of checks and balances: all of these would go far, thought the American idealists, in producing the great people from which the rest of the ideal democracy would follow.

The essence of the strategy for freedom was cultivation of a free spirit. These dreamers advocated everything from outright disobedience to strong mistrust of authority, thus continuing a tradition begun in colonial times when opinion leaders felt morally justified in

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[1]*Supra*, pp. 58, 73-81.

personally nullifying the king's laws.[1] Moreover, the really free spirit must be willing to live with insecurity, from whatever source it may come. Whitman's ideal free self was both carefree and virile.[2] Rejoicing in his independence, the American Adam in his new garden was to enjoy and preserve that freedom by an isolation from the schemes and intrigues of the wise old serpent, Europe.[3] Destiny had led him away from that continent. In sum, the free-behaving American--given the continent for the grazing of his soul--was to concentrate on that pasture and upon feeding his spiritual sense of elbow-room, somewhat a law unto himself.

In tension, however, with this ideal was the notion that the free American who was worthy of being a law unto himself would freely choose to meet his responsibility in sharing community efforts, benefits, and fun, too, if that were in the offing.[4] Whitman explicitly made such duties a part of his own portrait of the free American individualist.

> To practically enter into politics is an important part of American personalism. . . . It is the fashion among delittants [sic] and fops (perhaps I myself am not guiltless), to decry the whole formulation of the active politics in America, as beyond redemption, and to be carefully kept away from. See that you do not fall into this error.[5]

But the freedom-loving American was to remain aloof from parties, them-

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 50.

[2]Parkes, The American Experience, p. 194.

[3]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 304.

[4]Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 44.

[5]Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Miller, p. 481.

selves. By so doing, the individual in splendid isolation fuses with the responsibly free democrat.

> They [parties] have been useful, and to some extent remain so; but the floating, uncommitted electors, clerks, mechanics, the masters of parties--watching aloof, inclining victory this side or that side--such are the ones most needed, present and future. . . . It behooves you to convey yourself implicitly to no party, not submit blindly to their dictators, but steadily hold yourself judge and master over them.[1]

Over all of his free but socially-responsible acts, the American "personalist" was to apply the gauge of his innate morality.

> Leaving still unspecified several sterling parts of any model fit for the future personality of America, I must not fail, again and ever, to pronounce myself on one, probably the least attended to in modern times--a hiatus, indeed, threatening its gloomiest consequences after us. I mean the simple, unsophisticated Conscience, the primary moral element . . . . I should demand the invariable application to individuality, this day and any day, of that old, ever-true plumb-rule of persons, eras, nations.[2]

The moral stature of the free and equal American was erect; in spirit he was independent; he met his responsibilities to the community with energy and with initiative.

He had normative behavior in the achievement of equality, also. Equality would result from the ideal American's showing his freedom from prejudice. Whitman vivified the idea of such behavior in one of his anonymously-written "biographical" sketches of himself in a review of Leaves of Grass. There, the poetic Walt and the ideal self is a "rude child of the people--likes the ungenteel ways of laborers--is not prejudiced one mite against the Irish--talks readily with them--talks readily with niggers--does not make a stand on being a gentleman,

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 480.

nor on learning or manners."[1] So much for behavior towards persons who in worlds east of Eden might be considered inferiors; what of the stance of the American Adam in the presence of those who by non-democrats' lights would be superior? Given maturity, the superb animal that was the ideal American would be

> brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flippant nor somber; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, . . . a general presence that holds its own in the company of the highest. (For it is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals . . . with aplomb--and not culture, or any knowledge or intellect whatever.)[2]

Thus by his behavior toward all sorts and degrees of people, the American democrat was a leveller of class distinctions.

He was a leveller, too, in that he would practice fair play and uphold the cause of the underdog. With his dedication to fair play passed down from Anglo-Saxon institutions and strengthened by the great American dream, the American democrat, unawed by governmental authority, defined fair play as "'obeying the rules' and the 'rules' . . . [were] thought of as a device for keeping people from bullying or taking an unfair advantage of the other person."[3] The idea of supporting the underdog is thus implicit in the nature of fair play. The American democrat would respond to the plight of oppressed minority or national groups. In so doing, he would be

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[1]Quoted in Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, pp. 41-42.

[2]Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Miller, p. 480.

[3]Margaret Mead, quoted in Davis et al., Modern American Society, p. 39.

acting in a way that identified him as a champion of equality; more: it would be an outward sign of an inward reality, the achievement of part of the great American dream.

As the dreams of freedom and equality balanced in tension, so did their action corollaries. The ideal American democrat would, on the one hand, assert his freedom from governmental power and, on the other, remain the master of the major political parties. He would live in the splendid isolation of his free, individualistic self, but he would also feel greatly responsible for all the members of society. He would make no show of manners or learning, but his behavior in high company would nevertheless be that of the eminently civilized person. Perhaps the tensions were only seeming-paradoxes: the ideal American would be so jealous of his own rights and freedom that he stood ever-ready to defend them for others--as his own best defense; he would understand that manners are the end and not the means of cultivation. He would be, in short, a culture-hero.

Heroes of the Dream of Freedom and Equality

Because of the interfused nature of the ideas of the great American dream, the Adamic hero in the vision of the dignity and worth of the individual symbolized American hopes for freedom, as well. A "hero of space" and boundlessness, he was deliciously free, whether a Leatherstocking or roaring backwoodsman or Yankee peddler. In fact, Constance Rourke saw freedom explicitly symbolized in Charles Farrar Browne's literary role as the crackerbox philosopher, Artemus Ward: "He caught the strolling life . . . almost habitual to the Yankee. His role of showman was a symbol--'ime erflote, ime erflote/ On the

Swift rollin tied/ An the Rovir is free.'"[1] Huck Finn, the wisely-innocent Adamic hero, is also the ikon of freedom and equalitarianism. Talking of Huckleberry Finn, Leo Marx says:

> The political ideal is freedom, freedom from the oppression of society, and freedom to establish the egalitarian community. The escaped slave and the son of the village drunkard set up their model society on the raft. "What you want," says Huck, "above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied, and feel right and kind toward the others."[2]

And in that emotional zenith of the novel, when Huck decides not only to defy society's conventions but also to risk what he thinks will be eternal damnation by committing himself to winning freedom for the fugitive slave, the boy hero embodies perfectly the responsibly-free individual who levels society by accepting Jim for the man he is and by defending the underdog.

It remains, however, to examine briefly the hero supreme among the American pantheon as the symbol of freedom. He has ties, it is true, with heroes of the Leatherstocking-type.

> Rousseau's "natural man", that romantic symbol of freedom which captivated the eighteenth century, triumphantly entered the American forests as the buck-skin clad hunter, only to emerge on the Great Plains a century later as the American cowboy. Somewhere between the Alleghenies and the Rockies the followers of Daniel Boone traded coonskins for sombreros, long rifles for six-shooters, and moccasins for spurs--without losing their fascination for the hero-loving American public.[3]

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[1]American Humor, p. 221.

[2]"The Vernacular Tradition in American Literature," Studies in American Culture: Dominant Ideas and Images, ed. Joseph J. Kwiat and Mary C. Turpie (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960), pp. 120-21.

[3]Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 203. See also p. 222.

The basis of that fascination is that "the legend of the cowboy emphasizes the quality of freedom."[1] No less a hero-worshipper than Theodore Roosevelt saw the cowboy as being doomed by the civilization of which he was the harbinger; yet Roosevelt admired "his bold, free spirit."[2] No historical person became, through legend-making, a real cowboy hero. Perhaps William F. Cody, a frontiersman-on-horseback who lived on the plains at approximately the same time as did the cowboy, comes closest. Taken from his habitat and metamorphosed into a legendary figure by astute press agents, Buffalo Bill entranced audiences. "Everywhere the name of Buffalo Bill was magic, for he personified the American dream."[3] In his Wild West show, he was the image of opulence and triumph, but more importantly, "galloping forward on his white horse, Cody looked as free as the air."[4]

Overshadowing the cowboy's equalitarianism and fair play was his freedom, which went far beyond space-mobility to include psychological liberation.

> He was a free agent . . . . He was not "fenced in," he had his life in invigorating climate amidst magnificent scenery . . . . He engaged in direct action and solved problems of justice directly . . . . His moral choices were of great simplicity, [for] the good and the bad were obviously personified . . . . And the cowboy was innocent of a complex mind-life, was not torn by warring political and economic ideologies or painful philosophic reflections. The cowboy was close to nature and to animal life.[5]

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[1]William Albig, Modern Public Opinion (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p. 144.

[2]Quoted in Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 209.

[3]Ibid., p. 98. [4]Ibid., p. 99.

[5]Albig, Modern Public Opinion, pp. 144-45.

Free in space, in actions, and easy-to-make moral choices, the cowboy presented "psychological free enterprise" in its purest form.[1] He was destined not to die with the passing of the open range, but rather to provide an almost omnipresent safety-valve for Americans caught in the gears of urban life during something called a "cold war."

On the other hand, this free spirit was no mean symbol of equalitarianism. The legendary cowboy had the code of the West, to which he remained faithful: to fight injustice (unless directed against sheep men who were destroying nature's beauty and cattle pasture); to ignore a man's past or origins, judging him instead by his present actions; never to shoot a man in the back, never to draw first, never to shoot an unarmed man; to ride off into the sunset, still the free roamer after having fulfilled his responsibility to the community by restoring law and order. Every American who was a reader of the dime novels or of the pulps knew the code.

As the cowboy was the supreme symbol of freedom, Andrew Jackson was the ultimate hero of equalitarianism. It mattered not that "Old Hickory" had been a practicing attorney and a member of the Tennessee Supreme Court, besides having been elected to national office. To his supporters, the men of the West and the city laborers and small farmers of the East, "he seemed just like one of themselves magnified a few times."[2] The simple fact that he thus identified with the masses made him a symbol of equalitarianism.

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[1]Ibid., p. 145.

[2]Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 146.

> Such a leader . . . must have the frontiersman's [the westerner's] own traits glorified, not those of another group . . . . In Jackson he found the man he needed. At once a born frontiersman, an Indian fighter, duelist, equalitarian, and strong individualist, the conqueror of the British at New Orleans, . . . a man of almost superhuman strength of will, of sterling honesty, uneducated, but with often uncanny good judgment and happy intuition, Jackson provided just the figure the ignorant but hero-loving and idealistic masses could cling to.[1]

In addition to this kind of hero-appeal, the story, itself, of his rise and success in varied spheres of activity seemed proof of the good fruits of the dream of equality of opportunity. The common man in America had believed that the unique gift of America had been equal opportunity for all, based on the rights of men created equal--not merely on property rights. The re-affirmation of that dream by Jackson's career was diamond-bright.

> The fact that opportunity appeared at least to be open to everyone kept alive belief in the American dream. After Andrew Jackson every boy was being told he might be President of the United States.[2]

No greater testimonial to the dream of equality is needed when the highest office in a growing country seems open to all. It was the opposite of the Hamiltonian ideal of government by the rich and well-born.

The Agrarian Synthesis of the Dream of Freedom and Equality

The dream of the garden in which the American Adam had his domestic haven had also its political edifice, of which Jefferson was the chief architect. "Hamilton stood for strength, wealth, and power;

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 173. [2]Ibid., p. 186.

Jefferson for the American dream."[1] The man who had written that all men are created equal was zealously dedicated to freedom. He frequently expressed the opinion that "the last hope of human liberty in this world rests on us."[2] He and like-minded thinkers "had caught sight of a dazzling possibility, that every human being should rise to his full stature, freed from man-made limitations."[3] So complete was Jefferson's expression of the American popular mind that by 1825 de Tocqueville reported that even Federalists applauded republican institutions when in public; Jefferson supplied, says Walter Lippmann, the stereotypes, images, and ideas which Americans still used in 1920 to describe politics to each other.[4] Jefferson's dream of democracy went beyond simply any set of political institutions, but he saw political institutions as necessary means to the ends of his social dream of freedom and equality.

We may deduce the picture of the ideal American society from Jefferson's core of ideas. The individual man was the focal point of Jefferson's thinking. "The cherishment of the people was our principle," he wrote.[5] A libertarian in principle, his authorship of the Kentucky

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[1]Ibid., p. 112. "Whether Jefferson was right or wrong yet remains an open question, for though in political life America's dream and ideal rest on the Jeffersonian faith in the common man, in her economic life she has developed along the lines of Hamiltonian special privilege and moneyed classes," pp. 134-35.

[2]Quoted in Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 129.

[3]Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 272.

[4]Ibid., p. 282. We should note in passing, however, that capitalist and mercantile persuaders had long before appropriated the Jeffersonian values of individual liberty, free enterprise, private ownership, governmental laissez-faire, and decentralized government--together with increased emphasis on local and state government. See Parkes, The American Experience, pp. 229-31.

[5]Quoted in Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 268.

resolutions against the Alien and Sedition acts of 1798 indicated that he would be willing to defy the Federal government in order to protect the civil rights--as he defined them--of freedom of speech and press. He dreamed of complete freedom of the mind in the Virginia statutes on religious liberty, of which he was author.

> Since God had created mind free, all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments, or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness . . . . It is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order, . . . truth is great and will prevail . . . and has nothing to fear from the conflict [with error], unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate . . . .[1]

Necessary for freedom of the mind was education, at state expense. Education not only destroyed superstition and fears of ignorance, it enabled the rise of those naturally superior in virtue and talent to overcome inequalities resulting from other kinds of aristocracy. Believing that man had been happiest in the state of nature, he felt that government should be as simple and limited as possible. As a matter of fact, if the society were small enough, no formal government might be needed. Ownership of property provided the social stability promised by government.[2] In sum, Jefferson's dream of freedom and equality was one in which the individual had equal opportunity with others to develop his talent and virtue to their highest, free from unnecessary restrictions from civil authorities.

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[1]Quoted in Wilson, The American Political Mind, pp. 164-65.

[2]For further elaboration of the ideas in this paragraph, see Wilson, The American Political Mind, pp. 101-102, 160-68, and Gettell, History of American Political Thought, pp. 109, 197-99.

From these ideas emerges the picture of the society of freedom and equality. First, it is a decentralized one, with primary governmental responsibility vested in the local government. The national government, limited in its control, nevertheless guarantees within its authority "equal and exact justice; jealous care of the right of election by the people; the rule of the majority; the preservation of the guaranties of civil liberty--such as freedom of religion, freedom of the press, habeas corpus and trial by jury; the subordination of the military to the civil authority; and economic administration."[1] Besides the state and county, the local unit of government is the "hundred," an area of only five or six miles square, small enough that its inhabitants can be adequately informed of community problems and can participate freely in community affairs. The property necessary to social stability is agricultural real estate, which provides each owner with independent (and therefore free) subsistence. The vast supply of public land assures everyone the opportunity of ownership; no landed aristocracy is the object. One quality of the "natural" aristocracy is its virtue. In Jefferson's words, the land, almost as in the myth of Antaeus, is the source of virtue.

> Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made his depository for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which He keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age or nation has furnished an example.[2]

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[1]Gettell, History of American Political Thought, p. 199.

[2]Quoted in Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 268.

Besides virtue, the natural aristocracy (growing out of equal opportunity) is superior in talent. Education will not only help diffuse political power by qualifying the electorate; it will sharpen and polish the talents of the chosen people. The tax-supported educational system is open to all at the beginning, but only the superior students will find their way to grammar school and to college.[1]

Taken all in all, the agrarian synthesis offered the maximum freedom possible within the framework of an organized society; an aggregate of small farmers offered approximate economic equality; and a public, tax-supported educational system provided equal opportunity for all to develop to their highest potentialities. It was a good dream. For its survival, Jacksonians were to include the stalwart city laborer among the virtuous chosen people.[2] The Populists were to rally it under the banner of free silver, reform, and Bryan.[3] By 1920, its values had been appropriated by an industrial society. To be aware that it did not survive in its pure form, even to the death of its architect, however, is not to deny its appeal to the imaginations of generations of Americans.[4] The dream of freedom and equality was

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[1]Wilson, The American Political Mind, pp. 101-102. Jefferson later admitted the values of manufacturing to America's independence, but he still insisted on a balance of agriculture and industry. See A.M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson, ed. Donald R. Geddes (New York: Mentor Books, 1949), p. 14.

[2]Schlesinger, The Age of Jackson, pp. 118-21.

[3]Adams, Epic of America, pp. 310-24.

[4]See footnote number 1, supra. Jefferson, as the practical politician, was not enslaved to a "foolish consistency."

redolent with the soothing airs issuing forth from the paradise that waited for the new Adam's return.

(In the year of the appearance of Leaves of Grass, a sturdy, self-sufficient sixteen-year-old boy from the Indian Territory made a cattle drive to St. Louis. He was Clem Vann Rogers. In 1859, at twenty, he married Mary America Schrimsher and settled as a farmer and rancher on the Caney River, northeastern I.T. The birth of William Penn Adair Rogers--and the world of success-were before him. The hope for success was probably uppermost.)

The Dream of Success

The dream of success, broadly defined, consists of everything said so far. Success would not unreasonably be equated with a favorable outcome of Americans' hopes for their greatest possible self-fulfillment in a free and equal society. Most Americans, however, had defined success more narrowly. "Analyze the elements of it," an English student of the American scene wrote in 1885, "and you will see that success is identified to some extent with fame; still more with power; most of all, with wealth."[1]

We have already seen that the dream of success arrived almost with the first settlers and that it drew strength from the Puritan theology that viewed success as the reward of virtue.[2] In addition, the succession of frontiers and Wests encouraged an expansiveness of

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[1]Frederick W. Farrar, quoted in Irvin G. Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 9.

[2]Supra, pp. 27-28, 31-33.

economic outlook. The West, says James Truslow Adams, "was a state of mind and a golden opportunity."[1] The disciple of the dream could look at a grass-covered prairie and fill it with people, wealth, and personal triumph. On whatever frontier he was, the success dreamer had a "feeling of vast open space, of pushing ahead of the van of older civilizations, of empire building, of a freer and better chance, of a more democratic ordering of his society, of the possibility of rapidly rising in a new community, or of the opportunities which come with the development of a wholly new country where cities may spring up almost overnight and make him rich and a leading citizen in wealth or political power."[2] Too, because the West was not only a geographical entity but also a state of mind, the success dreamer could flourish in urban as well as in rural or wilderness areas. Philosophers of success agreed that cities offered better chances for money-making than did the country. Material success was an "appealing dream, born of the opportunities of the urban frontier . . . ."[3]

Success, thus identified almost exclusively with getting of wealth, seems a simple dream. Actually, it was more nearly a re-rendering of the complex of ideas in the great dream.

Variations on the Theme

The vision of success modulated the dream of the infinite

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[1]Epic of America, p. 303.

[2]Ibid., p. 304.

[3]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, pp. 19-20. See also pp. 28-29.

possibilities of the common man to a different key. The common man in Europe too often had been in rags; given only opportunity in America, he could rise to riches. In another sense--and perhaps more specifically--the success legend affirmed its belief in the common man by elevating the average man. Genius was suspect. In 1844, Henry Ward Beecher gave tongue to the proposition. Speaking of the supposedly-ineffectual species of intellectuals, he found that

> they abound in academies, colleges, and Thespian societies; in village debating clubs; in coteries of young artists, and young professional aspirants. They are to be known by a reserved air, excessive sensitiveness, and utter indolence; by very long hair, and very open shirt collars; by the reading of much wretched poetry, and the writing of much, yet more wretched; by being very conceited, very affected, very disagreeable, and very useless . . . .[1]

That husbandman of little acorns, William Holmes McGuffey, expressed for generations the faith in the common man's ability to succeed.

> Thus, plain, plodding people, we often shall find,
> Will leave hasty, confident people behind;
> Like the tortoise and hare, though together they start,
> We soon clearly see they are widely apart.[2]

If there was anything uncommon about the common man, it was drive and close application to work in order to succeed. But genius, itself, was unnecessary, as did testify such other American spokesmen as Theodore Parker and Ralph W. Emerson.[3]

The success dream affirmed also the goodness of the common man.

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p. 35. College graduates and genius were treated alike by the prophets of success before 1900, but gradually with the growth of the complex organizations of the modern corporation the onus fell from the college graduate (see p. 107).

[2]Quoted in ibid., p. 36.

[3]Ibid., pp. 36-37.

In the best tradition of the American Adam, it glorified the rural origins of those travelling the high road to success.

> The alleged advantages of rural beginnings concerned mostly health and morals. Fresh air and good food kept the country boy in good condition, and his daily round of work left him little time for the mischief that distracted his less busy city cousin. Whereas city boys wasted their lives and their substance in saloons, gambling dens, and houses of prostitution, country boys supposedly led a Spartan life that prepared them for the hard struggle of the business world.[1]

So effective was the country in eliciting virtue that the farm boy was a paragon: work was sacred; perseverance was natural; frugality was a pleasing form of simplicity; and sobriety characterized the whole moral deportment. Minor virtues of obedience, loyalty, and initiative added brightness to the armor of character. Crowning all was honor, which tender and loving mothers called forth.[2] The reward was clear: "as Albert J. Beveridge remarked, American mothers trained their sons in honor rather than success, but success was the inevitable by-product."[3] Important, however, as were pastoral environment and mothers in nurturing goodness of character, the qualities had naturally to be waiting within the individual himself.

> Sound doctrine demanded that explanations for success be found within the man and not outside him. As Emerson remarked, "the reason why this or that man is fortunate is not to be told. It

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[1]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[2]Ibid., pp. 29, 43-51. If "country boys" like Daniel Drew, Jay Gould, and Cornelius Vanderbilt seemed not to exemplify the goodness necessary to success, it was not fatal to the dream. Ministers who were prophets of the dream of success were as quick to condemn such lack of virtue as they were to view success as being evidence of virtue rewarded in worthy men (see pp. 70 ff.).

[3]Ibid., p. 29.

lies in the man; that is all anybody can tell you about it."[1] The common man carried innate virtue in his breast.

The success dream was also a specific version of the dream of self-fulfillment. The charm of American life, observed de Tocqueville, lay in the anticipation of success.[2] Self-fulfillment of a sort came merely through the process, the motions, of winning wealth. But the success legend did not mistake the short-run good for the ultimate one. "The central precept of the folklore of success . . . says that money has no value except in relation to its uses."[3] It was the stewardship of wealth that led to self-fulfillment.

> In the year 1898, Charles P. Masden, a Methodist clergyman in Milwaukee, told a group of business college students that business was not just an occupation but a divine calling. "It is sacred," Masden declared. "It is a means of grace. It is a stewardship. It is building up for eternity, and laying up treasures in heaven."[4]

Such pronouncements, echoing those of Mather which had set the diligent man in the presence of kings, could be--and often were-construed as a new theory of rule by Divine Right. But the philosophers of success "agreed that the man of affairs had far-reaching social responsibilities."[5] Emerson spoke for the dreamers of the dream when he said,

> They should own who can administer, not they who hoard and conceal; not they who, the great proprietors they are, are only the great beggars, but they whose work carves out the

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[1]Ibid., p. 32.

[2]Cited in Lynn, The Dream of Success, p. 35.

[3]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 5.

[4]Quoted in ibid., p. 62.

[5]Ibid., pp. 75-76.

> work for more, opens a path for all. For he is the rich man in whom the people are rich, and he is the poor man in whom the people are poor . . . .[1]

Thus, Peter Cooper found self-fulfillment when he said, "I do not recognize myself as owner in fee of one dollar of the wealth which has come into my hands; I am simply responsible for the management of an estate which belongs to humanity."[2] All the great distributors of largesse, including Carnegie and Rockefeller, would have liked the name of good stewards.

The dream of success had its own brand of freedom, too. The successful man, like all other Americans, was to recognize that he must live a responsible freedom. True, he was to be largely free from interference by other forces in his affairs; but he was to justify this freedom by his regard for the good of the community. The cornerstone of the success dreamers' social faith, believes Wyllie, was the pronouncement on the matter of Timothy S. Arthur, in 1848.

> The common good ought to be regarded by every man, and whoever seeks to secure the common good most effectively secures his own. This does not mean that a man should throw all his earnings into the treasury of the commonwealth, or do any act of similar kind . . . .[3]

The dreamer of success was free in another way: he was free to will success for himself. Just as the prophets of the dream could condemn the failing man as having consciously chosen that course, the successful man could brush aside all obstacles to material well-being. The author of the success manual <u>Money for the Million</u> wrote, "<u>Will</u> it,

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[1]Quoted in <u>ibid</u>., pp. 73-74.

[2]Quoted in <u>ibid</u>., p. 88.

[3]Quoted in <u>ibid</u>., p. 76.

and it is thine. No longer grovel as though the hand of fate were upon thee. Stand erect. Thou art a man, and thy mission is a noble one."[1] The posture of the free individualist able to will his own fortune accords well with the stance of the American Adam.

The dream of success, even though containing the taint of inequality in its lifeblood of the rags-to-riches motif, nevertheless was an affirmation of the dream of equality. In the first place, prior to the Civil War, any form of aristocracy seemed possible of assault by the rags-to-riches conception.

> There was a democratic ring in its assurance that every ordinary man could aspire to wealth, and through wealth to the power and prerogatives previously monopolized by the high- and well-born. Public boasting about self-made men represented a challenge to those whose social positions depended upon inheritance rather than accomplishment.[2]

A residue of this feeling surely remained after the war, when the success legend became additionally useful to consolidate power against infringement and to provide social control.[3] In the second place, the philosophers of the dream affirmed a basic equality of aspirants.

> In respect to character, presumably, all started as equals. It was not the boast of the self-made man that nature had made him stronger and more intelligent than his fellows, it was that through the cultivation of good character he had managed his own elevation.[4]

In the third place, the success dream had a built-in corrective for the inequalities that might eventually arise because of superior character development. It was the doctrine of shirtsleeves-to-shirtsleeves in two or three generations. The effect came about in two ways.

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[1]Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 40. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 152.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 154. [4]*Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

Russell Conwell suggested the first when he said,

> It is no help to a young man or woman to inherit money. It is no help to your children to leave them money, but if you leave them education, if you leave them Christian character, if you leave them a wide circle of friends, if you leave them an honorable name, it is far better than that you would leave them money.[1]

One way, then, was for the rich man to leave the second generation out of the will. For those rich men who might have passed on money and less virtue to their sons, the success spokesmen had another inexorable process to restore equality. One typical handbook of success stated it as follows: "If rich men's sons will not endure the drudgery by which nearly all their fathers secured money and position, they must take a secondary place in the next generation."[2] Sometimes the new position could be worse than "secondary" for the unfortunate sons of the rich: "Oftener they drop out of sight amid the idle, worthless herd, if indeed they escape an association with loafers and criminals."[3] Thus, even if money remained concentrated by inheritance, prodigality redistributed it. Even though some great fortunes, such as that of Rockefeller, remained intact, the dreamers of shirtsleeves-to-shirtsleeves saw in their doctrine provision for a continuing equality of opportunity and a perpetually-renewed natural aristocracy in the best manner of the dream of freedom and equality. Further, at times, a dream of equal distribution of wealth seemed possible by a combination of individual acquisitiveness and largesse. To the eyes of foreign observers, the American dream of equality took on a literally

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p. 89. [2]Quoted in ibid., p. 90.

[3]Quoted in ibid.

golden glow of reality. One British paper in 1882 found it so.

> What is especially remarkable in the present development of American energy and success is its wide and equable distribution. North and south, east and west, on the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific, along the chain of great lakes, in the valley of the Mississippi, and on the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico, the creation of wealth and the increase of population are signally exhibited. It is quite true . . . that some sections of the Union have advanced relatively to the rest, in an extraordinary and unexpected degree . . . . The fact is that the present tide of prosperity has risen so high that it has overflowed all barriers, and has fill'd up the backwaters, and established something like an approach to universal success.[1]

To the success dreamer, a place of universal success was indeed a paradise.

Action Corollaries of the Dream of Success

The American Adam, full of boundless possibilities, naturally good, and seeking self-fulfillment in a garden where freedom and equality reigned, was more the doer than the thinker; but when he strove for the crown of the capitalist's silk hat, he was activism personified. The result was that the dream of success was identical with a strategy of behavior for its realization; everything said so far, then, is not only the essence of the dream but also its substance. Because, however, the success dream provided for one kind of natural aristocracy and thus carried with it a new doctrine of noblesse oblige, a glance at this aspect of the strategy of success seems appropriate.

The American Adam practiced a wise innocence. Applied to the dogma of success, this innocence produced an American logic. "Be

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[1]Quoted by Walt Whitman in "Democratic Vistas," Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Miller, p. 457.

intelligently good and you will be successful."[1] This touchstone of intelligent goodness was the key also to the obligations of the successful American. With his subordinates, he was a modern ideal liege lord, requiring from them unwavering loyalty and having, in return, great responsibilities for their well-being. Naturally, subordinates were to have a living wage that would "take care of every physical necessity and . . . assure peace of mind."[2] Moreover, the successful man had to be intelligently good in his wages of human dignity.

> Clerks and wage-earners . . . were entitled to recognition and praise for work well done. A responsible master would reward his employees with promotions to positions of greater responsibility, provide them with opportunities for self-improvement, and, when they had proved their worth, help them to become independent businessmen. Even if the hireling lacked ambition and chose to remain with his master through a lifetime, he still deserved kind treatment. The honorable employer, understanding that his men were equals in the sight of God, would treat them as self-respecting human beings, not as animals or machines.[3]

Earning quick fortunes by speculation might have been intelligent but not good, for speculation was, in the words of Andrew Carnegie, "a pure gambling operation."[4] Rather, summarized Wyllie, with competitors, the successful man's jousts were to be based upon honesty.

> In his dealings with competitors the moral man of affairs was to be open, fair, and friendly, not deceitful and malevolent. He was not supposed to disregard or deliberately invade the economic rights of others, for he knew that "a little, justly gained, is better than thousands secured by stealth, or at the expense of another's rights and interests." He took no advantage, even where it was legal to do so, because he understood that advantage-taking, like stealing, involved the appropriation of

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[1]Davis et al., Modern American Society, p. 41.

[2]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 82.

[3]Ibid., pp. 282-83.

[4]Quoted in ibid., p. 78.

another's property without his knowledge or consent.[1]

The same basic honesty must be the rule with customers, so that no victimizing of them would occur by misrepresentation, short measure, or overcharging. In all his dealings with employers, competitors, and customers, the successful man was good; it was an enlightened goodness, for his continued success depended upon it.

In his stewardship of wealth, the philanthropist was also to use wisdom in choosing the objects of his generosity.

> Though . . . self-made men sometimes gave money for the relief of distress, most of them preferred to use their wealth in ways that opened new opportunities for the ambitious poor . . . . No young man was compelled to use Carnegie's libraries, museums, or music halls; or the universities endowed by Vanderbilt, Cornell, Stanford, and Rockefeller; or the institutes and art galleries organized by Cooper, Peabody, and Mellon. These agencies offered broad opportunities for self-improvement, and through them the self-made men of one generation tried to prepare the way for their successors in the next.[2]

Through his intelligent goodness, the American success-figure proved that he possessed those inward virtues for which success was the reward and, consequently, that he deserved the crown of the silk hat. That this idealized picture of the successful man often departed from reality did not destroy his appeal. He became, in his posture as the self-made man, a legendary hero for Americans.

Heroes of the Dream of Success

"Under his different guises," writes Marshall Fishwick, "the self-made hero is always the Cinderella of our bourgeois society, the

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[1] Ibid., p. 80.

[2] Ibid., p. 92.

personification of the equalitarianism of our political structure."[1] Thus, not only is Andrew Jackson an emblem of freedom and equality, but he is an ikon of success, too. A self-taught lawyer and military tactician, he rose from obscurity to the highest office in the land. His connection between success and equalitarianism is natural in view of Americans' dream that the real criterion of worth is a man's deeds rather than his birth. The free cowboy, rugged individualist who combined self-reliance, loyalty, honesty, and talent, was also a self-made hero. In a sense, too, the ideal American portrayed in the pages of Leaves of Grass is a self-made man. But the gallery of American heroes also has an extensive wing devoted only to the heroes of self-earned wealth.

"Appropriately Benjamin Franklin became the first object of adoration . . . , the convenient symbol which linked the success traditions of two centuries."[2] Franklin--influenced by that progenitor of the success dream, Cotton Mather--rose to affluence by diligent application to work and by his virtues of thrift, honesty, cleanliness, and frugality. His was an honestly acquired fortune. His origins had been urban; but to the nostalgic memory, in colonial America even the cities may have provided a rustic simplicity of environment. By 1857, Franklin's statue stood in Boston, and his identification as a success of the self-made variety was explicit. On the occasion of the unveiling, the speaker of the day rehearsed

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[1]American Heroes, p. 157.

[2]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 13.

the themes of the success dream and sought to inspire others to emulate Franklin.

> Behold him, Mechanics and Mechanics' Apprentices, holding out to you an example of diligence, economy and virtue, and personifying the triumphant success which may await those who follow it! Behold him, ye that are humblest and poorest in the present condition or in the future prospect,--lift up your heads and look at the image of a man who rose from nothing, who owed nothing to parentage or to patronage, who enjoyed no advantages of early education which are not open, --a hundred fold open,--to yourselves, who performed the most menial services in the business in which his early life was employed, but who lived to stand before Kings, and died to leave a name which the world will never forget.[1]

At least one poor farm boy risen to financial eminence testified that Franklin was his model in achieving success. Thomas Mellon read the autobiography and saw the rise of a poor and friendless Franklin by means of industry, thrift, and frugality. Leaving the farm for the city and for power in banking circles, Mellon erected a statue of his beloved Benjamin and provided free copies of Franklin's autobiography to young men seeking counsel and money.[2] That Franklin was a self-taught scientist and diplomat only added glory to his rise; that he may have been a genius received no mention: it did not fit the paradigm of the dream.

Another American hero who was trimmed to fit the pattern of the success dream was born a half-dozen years after the dedication of Franklin's statue in Boston. Henry Ford, unlike Franklin, was a farm boy of humble origins; and if he were a genius, the ability lay along lines that were easily recognizable and not suspect: he was a mechanic. Marshall Fishwick has outlined the legend of the "Henry B" created by

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[1]Robert C. Winthrop, quoted in Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, pp. 14-15.

[2]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, pp. 15-16.

such publicists as William Cameron. There was the dramatic, single-minded devotion to his work.

> Legend makers have succeeded in dramatizing early Ford stories, such as his first successful run in a gasoline buggy . . . . They have made as much of the last hours of preparation as of the hours when . . . Lincoln was awaiting word of the chance meeting of the Northern and Southern armies at Gettysburg. Ford worked around the clock until, at two in the morning, he was ready for the final test. Rain drenched the muddy Detroit streets, but he didn't even notice it. Would the contraption run? Mrs. Ford put a cloak over her shoulders and went ahead of him with a lantern. For a terrible moment nothing happened. Then Ford found that a screw had come off; he replaced it. The thing ran. The automobile age had begun.[1]

And after the country boy--through virtue and hard work--became wealthy, he was a good steward with his wealth, providing not only a living wage for his workmen, but guiding them along the paths of his own virtue.

> The Ford five dollar minimum day came with a number of strings attached. Only workmen who were morally fit qualified. Married men had to be living with and supporting their family; single men over 22 had to be living "wholesomely" and displaying "proud thrifty habits;" [sic] men under 22 and all women had to be sole support of their next of kin . . . . Rural America, fearing the sins of the city, thought it a fine idea.[2]

Through the words of publicists, the remote and inaccessible Ford became a warm and engaging liege lord: "Cameron pictured him as lovable 'Henry,' the workingman's friend, moving about his plant in shirtsleeves, figuring out ways to make life better via higher production."[3] Moreover, Ford's fortune, as James Truslow Adams remarked, was often cited as being an honest one. This made him suitable for the success pantheon; all the same, he kept a sufficient gap between cost of production and prices to accumulate $1,000,000,000 for himself.[4] Not only was Ford's success

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[1]American Heroes, p. 121. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 128. [4]Adams, Epic of America, p. 408.

the result of production rather than speculation; he was--in the public mind--an antagonist of that symbol of speculation, Wall Street. Proof lay in that entity's attack on Ford through the Wall Street Journal.[1] Finally, Ford kept his success image bright by seeming to be the unspoiled child of fortune. True, he was a billionaire,

> yet, said the legend, he was as simple and sturdy as when he plowed his corn fields or tinkered in his tiny garage. This popular conception of Ford collided with certain historical facts, but overran them and rolled on. It was hard to explain how a humanitarian could allow cold water to be turned on shivering unemployed workmen, or have police spies to watch all employees. It was hard to reconcile Ford's alleged simplicity with his 100,000 acre Georgia plantation, fashionable London home, private railroad car, and million dollar Dearborn estate . . . . Ford's legend-makers answered . . . Didn't Henry love the old-time square dances and country hikes? Wasn't he still a dirt farmer at heart? Hadn't he borrowed 2 cents to buy the first Edison commemorative stamp, being out of change at the time? Hadn't he foiled the Wall Street bankers who tried to destroy him?[2]

With the aid of publicists who understood the appeal of the success hero, Ford had little difficulty in remaining as one of America's supreme symbols of economic equality. It really mattered little that he was less the diplomatic success than Franklin.

When the writers of novels produced success heroes, they did not have to contend with the weak flesh of real persons. They could make their demigods perfect embodiments of the dream, with no embarrassing aberrations to disguise. The apeiron of such heroes of fiction is Horatio Alger's Ragged Dick. Climbing the pyramid of success through scores of novels, he may have changed his name and some details of outward appearance, but his was a consistent characterization that

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[1]Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 121.

[2]Ibid.

kept him Ragged Dick. A poor city boy, he nevertheless had all the country virtues of honesty, thrift, industry, and sturdiness of moral fiber. He had an inspiring optimism that required no help from alcohol. Fatherless, isolated from enjoyment by the necessity of supporting his mother, he cheerfully accepted his lot as ragged newsboy, earning honest pennies and further chastening his spartan character. When opportunity came for him to work for a tycoon, he demonstrated his unwavering loyalty by not only giving overtime effort all the time, but also by foiling the attempts of a corrupt representative of Social Position to subvert the company for his own decadent uses. The reward for such works and such character was always material success further sweetened by the hand in marriage of the tycoon's daughter, who had earlier laughed at his ragged trousers, unaware of the real worth of Dick's character. At the last, Dick's cup was full, his rise complete and satisfying--to himself and his readers.[1] As the prototype of the self-made man, he kept a strong hold on the American imagination.

> Time has transformed but not destroyed his rugged image. Detractors have ridiculed him in vain. He still shouts "Invictus," . . . and plunges into the open market place. He is, and has long been, the nation's <u>beau ideal</u>.[2]

Contained in the legendary Alger hero is a brilliant synthesis of values in the great American dream--although, as Lynn has remarked, the expression of the values finds a level appropriate to the dream of material success.

> Like many simple formulations which nevertheless convey a heavy intellectual and emotional charge to vast numbers of people, the Alger hero represents a triumphant combination--

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 141-42. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 142.

> and reduction to the lowest common denominator--of the most widely accepted concepts in nineteenth-century American society. The belief in the potential greatness of the common man, the glorification of individual effort and accomplishment, the equation of the pursuit of money with the pursuit of happiness and of business success with spiritual grace: simply to mention these concepts is to comprehend the brilliance of Alger's synthesis.[1]

The Alger hero thus represented a kind of secular synthesis of the dream of success. There remains for brief consideration another kind of synthesis.

The American Adam and the Theology of Success

At least one leading prophet of the success dream interfused it with the Adamic myth. Writing in Hunt's Merchant's Magazine, which was the equivalent of today's Fortune, Matthew H. Smith insisted that business was divinely fore-ordained, making Adam his rhetorical example.

> The race were [sic] made for employment. Adam was created and placed in the Garden of Eden for business purposes; it would have been better for the race if he had attended closely to the occupation for which he was made.[2]

If Adam's sin had been his aspiring toward godhead, the theology of success allowed him the role denied him after the eating of the forbidden fruit. True, during his rise to opulence, he stood under the constant judgment of a Jehovah-figure, thus maintaining the relationship in the garden. But after his arrival at the peak of the holy mount of success, he was the god of the world of business. A just god, he awarded the salvation of success to those who willed it and who chose the virtuous, narrow way of initiative, industry, obedience, loyalty,

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[1]Lynn, The Dream of Success, p. 7.

[2]Quoted in Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 61.

perseverance, punctuality, sobriety, and frugality. For those who chose damnation by failure to cultivate those qualities of soul, he recorded their sins as carefully as he had the virtues of the self-determined elect and dispensed hellfire-hot failure in just proportion to the sins. The damned could cry out from their black pit of poverty, but their very plight--imposed by a just and honest god--was proof of their being weighed and found wanting.[1]

It is little wonder, in view of the re-rendering in the success dream of the values of the great dream, that Emerson and Whitman could include it in their personal visions. Emerson saw in success the natural law of the universe.

> Success consists in the close appliance to the laws of the world and since these laws are intellectual and moral, an intellectual and moral obedience . . . . Money . . . is, in its effects and laws, as beautiful as roses. Property keeps the accounts of the world and is always moral. The property will be found where the labor, the wisdom and the virtue have been in nations, in classes, and . . . the individual also.[2]

Whitman, whose views on the connection of material success and progress will appear in more detail later, also included the success dream in his grand scheme for democracy. "For fear of mistake," he wrote, "I may as well distinctly specify, as cheerfully included in the model and standard of these Vistas, a practical, stirring, worldly, moneymaking, even materialistic character."[3]

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[1]See ibid., p. 54.

[2]Quoted in Parkes, The American Experience, p. 191.

[3]"Democratic Vistas," Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Miller, p. 471.

The dream of success was a high road to paradise.

(By 1886, when the success dream was at its height in the popular imagination, Clem Rogers was a former officer of the Confederate Army who had rebuilt his fortune to the point that he was considered one of the most prosperous and respected men in the Indian Territory. His last child, Willie, was in his seventh year. In December of that year of 1886, Henry G. Grady inspired the imaginations of Northerners and Southerners alike with his speech looking forward to a New South "thrilling with the consciousness of growing power and prosperity."[1] The speech was in tune with the national song of progress.)

The Dream of Progress

With the coming of the age of commerce, invention, and natural science, the idea of progress grew up in western civilization, carrying with it the prospect of "an immense future for mortal mankind, of the conquest of the material world in human interest, [and] of providing the conditions for a good life on this planet without reference to any possible hereafter."[2] In America, a number of causes combined to emphasize progress, believed Beard: the economic motive that had spurred settlement, the abundance of free land, the lack of a national serf-labor class, the looseness of American class structure, and the rise of business enterprise with its innovators and inventors. The

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[1]"The New South," as reprinted from the text of the Proceedings of the New England Society in Donald C. Bryant and Karl R. Wallace, Fundamentals of Public Speaking (3d ed. rev.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960), p. 564.

[2]Charles A. Beard, in the introduction to J.B. Bury, The Idea of Progress (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), p. xi.

result was that progress became "the leading principle of society."[1] In America, too, "the idea of progress was inextricably related to the age-old millennial dream of Christianity, to the concepts of popular sovereignty and natural rights in government, and to the belief that knowledge of nature and of nature's laws could be employed to improve the human estate."[2] On the one hand, the American vision of progress was a natural accompaniment of all the other ideas in the great dream; on the other hand, it was also a hope for an earthly re-creation of paradise by equating material with moral progress.

Progress as Counterpoint

Dreamers of other aspects of the American dream also envisioned an ideal of linear advancement of humanity. The Constitution, itself, contrived to implement the dream of freedom and equality which was articulated by the Declaration of Independence, had the idea of progress written into it in the form of its avowed purpose of establishing "a more perfect union."

> Nowhere does it assume perfection and completeness. Its language, deliberately made general in several parts, leaves room for wide and various interpretations, according to time and circumstance, thus assuring flexibility for ages to come.[3]

Further, with its built-in provisions for change, the Constitution stands as an "open-ended" instrument always adaptable to the end of producing the dreamed-of more perfect union. Progress was the natural accompani-

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[1]Ibid., p. xxxi. See also, pp. xxxi-xxxv.

[2]Delmage, American Philosophical Society Proceedings, XCI, 307.

[3]Beard, Introduction to the Idea of Progress, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

ment of Jefferson's vision of the effects of universal education, in his hopes for religious liberty, and in his belief that government existed to serve the welfare of the governed, that it could effect the better future. "Government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation, or community," he wrote in the Virginia Bill of Rights, and, he continued, "of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety, and is most effectively secured against the dangers of maladministration."[1] Jackson and his followers, dedicated to rule of the masses, not only fostered American hopes for equality and freedom, but they also committed themselves to an inevitable and natural progress by the American people. The Jacksonians, drawing their political strength from the little people, found progress and democracy interfused.

> The defenders of democracy from its beginning in America have insisted, not that all is perfect in the new Zion, but that the potentialities of the democratic system indicate a better future; that is, democracy and the doctrine of progress have been in large measure joined together. The promise of American life has been the promise of democracy.[2]

Progress thus provided counterpoint to the dream of freedom and equality.

The prophets of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual also had their versions of progress. Emerson, after a lifetime of questioning the doctrine of progress, returned at the end to a measure of the optimism he had felt as a youth. On the deepest level,

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p.xxxviii.

[2]Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 175. For the explicit role of the Jacksonians, see pp. 183-86.

according to Mildred Silver, progress for Emerson was dependent on the progress of the individual.

> The self-reliant man, depending on the deeper, higher self, which is God, will through his own effort to express the indwelling Spirit make his pilgrim's progress. Others will be encouraged by his example to do likewise. Since Providence out of our evil not only seeks to bring forth good but succeeds in doing so, in the course of time there will be progress for the race.[1]

For his part, Whitman dreamed of the common man's highest fulfillment by progressing to a universal brotherhood. In his "Passage to India," he returned to a theme which he once remarked had lurked underneath every page and every line he had written.[2] In the poem, he pictures the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve questing, baffled, for a return to happiness and fulfillment. At last, with the completion of the Suez Canal, the laying of an Atlantic cable, and the finishing of transcontinental railways, the purpose of God--and the things for which Adam's children quested--came clear.

> The people [are] to become brothers and sisters,
> The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
> The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
> The lands to be welded together.[3]

To such an end Whitman placed all his hope for the common man--his power, his virtue, and his self-fulfillment. A one-time spokesman for many Americans less poetic than Walt Whitman, William Jennings Bryan, also dreamed of an American progress toward universal brotherhood.

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[1]Mildred Silver, "Emerson and the Idea of Progress," American Literature, XII (March-June, 1940-1941), 19.

[2]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 50.

[3]Quoted in ibid., p. 51.

"'Behold,' he prophesied, 'a republic increasing in population, in wealth, in strength and in influence, solving the problems of civilization and hastening the coming of an universal brotherhood [,] . . . a republic gradually but surely becoming the supreme moral factor in the world's progress . . . .'"[1]

The success dream carried a counter-theme of progress, too. It contained, as did the myth of the garden, a vision of gigantic economic development--even though the one was agrarian, the other industrial. Success and material progress were often signs of one another. Emerson, sure as he apparently was that progress depended upon the individual, nevertheless could praise material progress. In an essay written after the Civil War, when his optimism might have been on an upswing, he wrote,

> Who would live in the stone age or the bronze or the iron or the lacustrine? Who does not prefer the age of steel, of gold, of coal, petroleum, cotton, steam, electricity, and the spectroscope? . . . Consider, at this time, what variety of issues, of enterprises public and private, what genius of science, what of administration, what of practical skill . . . all on a national scale have evoked.[2]

Whitman, having accepted a material kind of success in his Democratic Vistas and having at the same time been aware of the shallowness and crassness too often associated with it, kept the success dream as the foundation stone of progress.

> I perceive clearly that the extreme business energy, and this almost maniacal appetite for wealth prevalent in the United States, are parts of amelioration and progress, indispensably

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[1]Quoted by Boyd C. Shafer, "The American Heritage of Hope, 1865-1940," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVII (June-March, 1950-1951), 435.

[2]Quoted by Beard in Introduction to The Idea of Progress, p. xxxix.

> needed to prepare the very results I demand. My theory includes riches, and the getting of riches, and the amplest products, power, activity, inventions, movements, etc. Upon them, as upon sub-strata, I raise the edifice design'd in these Vistas.[1]

Indeed, the counterpoint of progress to success may have been the most nearly universal definition of advancement in America. So strong was the connection between success and material progress that the latter became not only the foundation for moral progress (as it was for Whitman) but also the approximation of moral progress.

The American Equation of Material with Moral Progress

From the time, of course, that the Puritans taught that success was virtue rewarded, the material progress resulting from success constituted a moral rise. In more comprehensive fashion, however, Americans associated material and moral progress.[2] The pairing of ideas took place to a lesser or greater degree in all the activities ranging from chamber of commerce promotions, to the writing of utopian novels, to the growth of the social gospel, to the spiralling of technology. The grand idea was the mastery of man over his environment.

One way to control environment--at least in a continent empty except for a few hapless red men--was to populate it as thickly as possible and share the task of pruning Adam's garden, of founding a civilization. The idea of "bigger and better" was the sloganized version, and to a point it was correct. Whitman, for example--as we

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[1]"Democratic Vistas," Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Miller, p. 471.

[2]Sanford, The Quest for Paradise, p. 266.

have seen--based his hopes for progress upon a spiritualization of material progress. But as Adams has pointed out, in the America after 1830, the material advance was often taken for the spiritual one.

> In the frontier stage, size, as also the material development of houses and farms and roads and stores, did mean the scaffolding on which a civilized life had to rest; and numerous frontiers burned that thought deep into the developing American soul. Unfortunately the scar which it left has been the transporting of ultimate value to the scaffolding instead of the civilization, and the adoration of business and size for themselves and not as means to lives of cultural value . . . . "Bigger and better" did mean something real at one time, but it was much easier, in a land of unlimited opportunity, to make things bigger than to make them better, and in working for bigness first we came to a great extent to forget the ultimate purpose of humane value.[1]

Thus, the tub-thumping of promotional schemes to turn villages into towns and towns into cities, became identified with moral advancement.

Boyd C. Shafer has remarked that the most numerous and significant post-1865 American writings dealing with the future were those on the subject of economic life.[2] The laissez-faire, individualistic dreamers found expression, as we have seen, in the plethora of success manuals. Another significant body of opinion in America, however, offered visions of group advancement rather than of individual material progress: they were, in general, "those who wanted to widen equality and increase productivity by governmental action."[3] A favorite, but not quite universal, manner of expression came to be the utopian novel.

Henry George, although not a novelist, exerted great influence

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, pp. 216-17.

[2]Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVII, 442.

[3]Ibid.

upon writers of utopian fiction.[1] George disagreed with classical economists who held that wages are drawn from capital and that poverty is the natural accompaniment of population increase. He held that wages came directly from social effort through the work of hands and that poverty resulted from ever-rising rents on agricultural or industrial land, with the rents--ironically--being based upon the increased land value because of social effort. Thus, the increase of wealth became an unearned increment for the landowner and a deprivation to the worker. George examined other advanced societies of the past, concluded that the paradox of the increase of wealth accompanied by the increase of poverty had in each case eventually caused a reversion to primitive conditions, and believed that if such cycles were to become linear progress, strong government action was necessary.

> I do not propose either to purchase or to confiscate private property in land. The first would be unjust; the second, needless. Let the individuals who now hold it still retain, if they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call their land . . . . It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent . . . . We already take some rent in taxation. We have only to make some changes in our modes of taxation to take it all. What I, therefore, propose, as the simple yet sovereign remedy, which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence, purify government and carry civilization to yet nobler heights, is--to appropriate rent by taxation.[2]

Henry George's proposal of a single tax to achieve material progress

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[1]Parrington, American Dreams, p. 54.

[2]Quoted by Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 304. For short treatments of George's dream of progress, see ibid., pp. 302-305; Shafer, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVII, 443; and Parrington, American Dreams, pp. 53-54.

was shot through with hopes for moral advancement.

Among the utopian novels, none more than Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward spoke the progress dream of masses of Americans. "The book appealed to the middle class, who are usually the last to realize the need for an alteration of the existing economic scheme."[1] The hero, after being put into a condition resembling suspended animation, awakes over a century later to discover the perfect society which had evolved by the year 2000. In brief, the new society was simply the "idealization of capitalism."[2] The evolution toward a state free from corruption and inequality, with peace, plenty, and education for all had become apparent early in the twentieth century.

> The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profits, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed; it became the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared. In a word, the people of the United States concluded to assume the conduct of their own business, just as one hundred odd years before they had assumed the conduct of their own government, organizing now for industrial purposes on precisely the same grounds that they had then organized for political purposes.[3]

That Bellamy equated material and moral progress is evident. "His was a materialistic and technological society, but one in which the human spirit blossomed."[4] In a later novel, Equality, he continues his vision,

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[1]Parrington, American Dreams, pp. 69-70.

[2]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 190.

[3]Quoted in Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 298.

[4]Ibid., p. 297. See also Sanford, The Quest for Paradise, p. 187.

providing a current of idealism that managed to accept and extend materialistic values.

Other utopians were active. John Macnie in 1883 portrayed a world federation based upon capitalism in his The Diothas; or, a Look Ahead. Achieved after a long and bloody struggle, the new state was despotic but benevolent, full of natural and mechanical marvels but one in which the main business of life was education.[1] Richard Michaelis, responding to Bellamy in a novel called Looking Further Backward, urged a broad mend-and-repair road to material and moral paradise rather than a national super-monopoly.[2] Ignatius Donnelly, in 1890 with Caesar's Column, envisioned economic paradise by action of a government that had as its three divisions of authority the producers, the employers, and the intelligentsia--the latter of whom held the balance of power in disputes between the first two.[3] On the eve of the first Wilson administration, Edward M. House published Philip Dru, Ambassador, which in its delineation of corrupt government owed much to the muckrakers. House's government sought a paradise through economic reform: with high taxes on improved land, with income taxes on big incomes, with labor given a share of profits, with nationalization of utilities, with destruction of loan sharks, and with easy credit.[4] Other Utopians urged visions of paradise without government action; for other writers, apparently, the ideal state had already

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[1]Parrington, American Dreams, pp. 58-59.

[2]Ibid., p. 86.

[3]Ibid., pp. 106-107.

[4]Ibid., pp. 188-90.

arrived and required defense against the likes of Bellamy.[1] However, utopians, regardless of political orientation, were concerned that the ideal state have a purposeful system of education to produce citizens capable of useful and upright lives--with considerable variation, of course, in dreamed-of curricula and methods of financing education. Women's rights received some attention. However, the greatest imagination appears to have been employed in picturing material advancement.

> Model housing appeared in almost modern form. And so did suggestions for a simplified tax system. There were proposals for everything from a single tax on land to a single tax on time . . . . There were plans for better eating, to be achieved either by pellets or vegetarianism; there were plans for better streets, better clothing, better stores, better fertilization, better irrigation and crop control, and not only a better, but an absolute control of the weather. And, of course, there were a few utopians who put their whole faith in a revised financial system. Americans have been self-conscious about money since the days of Jackson's first attack on the United States Bank.[2]

That these dreams of progress were infused with a sense of moral rise is evident from their tone.

> Whether these utopian novels are denouncing an institution, or praising some reform enthusiastically, they are always intensely, almost mystically serious of purpose. They are never light-hearted or casual. Reform was a serious business. The fate of their country, and the world was at stake; reformers did not intend to fail from lack of zeal.[3]

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[1]For discussion of examples of these strains, see Parrington, American Dreams: for utopias achieved by cooperation rather than governmental reform see the account of Bradford Peck, The World a Department Store (1900), pp. 152-55; Charles W. Caryl, New Era (c1897), pp. 155-57; and Milan Edson, Solaris Farm (1900), p. 158: for reactions against the likes of Bellamy, see the description of Anna Bowman Dodd, The Republic of the Future (1887), pp. 61-64; J.W. Roberts, Looking Within (1893), pp. 77-81; and George Sanders, Reality (1898), pp. 86-87. Parrington shows, of course, that a strain of utopian writing has continued from almost the beginnings of settlement to the time of his study. But apparently the last quarter of the nineteenth century was accompanied by the greatest volume of such writing.

[2]Parrington, American Dreams, p. 180. [3]Ibid., p. 177.

Drawing most of their ideas from contemporary sources, the utopian vision was an index to ideas that were in the air; that some of the suggestions have been acted upon is further testimony to the living quality of the ideas in the minds of their dreamers.[1]

If the connection between material progress and moral advancement is clear in the utopian novels, it becomes so intimate in the social gospel movement as to make the two forms of progress confluent. Wasn't the Christian to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, visit the criminal? Would not the elimination of such material evils be at once the fruit and seed of moral advancement?

As early as 1845, well before the social gospel had the name, Sylvester Judd pictured in Margaret a community which through application of Christian ethics achieved "a clean, neat, tidy town" free of crime and women who spent money unwisely.[2] By 1888, Christian dreamers of progress were approaching the concerns central to the social gospel movement: Edward Everett Hale's How They Lived in Hampton showed how the application of Christian ethics in a textile town produced decent working and living conditions.[3] Charles M. Sheldon, with his In His Steps (1896), reflected the move of the social gospel away from nineteenth-century pietism. The minister-hero of the novel is shocked out of his pleasant pietism by the appearance in church of a destitute man who asks what the church offers the poverty-stricken. At the end of the novel, after the Christian utopia has not yet appeared, the hero

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., pp. 28-34.

[3]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

nevertheless "realizes that Christianity provides a solution for man's economic and social ills."[1] Thus, the gradual emergence of the Christian ideal of material progress is evident in such novels.

The movement, of course, involved figures other than novelists. In 1886 Cardinal Gibbons kept the secular Knights of Labor from coming under papal condemnation.[2] Other Catholic thinkers supported the idea of social legislation which would provide a secure standard of living for workers. Among protestants, many men espoused the cause of social economics.

> We might mention Lyman Abbott, Beecher's successor in Brooklyn; Josiah Strong, general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance; George D. Herron, who wrote The Christian Society in 1894; and Washington Gladden, the author of Applied Christianity (1886) and Tools and the Man: Property and Industry under the Christian Law (1893). The Federal Council of Churches, formed by thirty-three evangelical sects in 1908, adopted a social program which demanded a recognition of labor's rights to organize, a living wage, shorter hours of work, a six-day week, and old-age insurance, while it denounced child labor and the sweating system.[3]

Walter Rauschenbusch, writing mainly in the first two decades of the twentieth century, insisted that the message of the Bible was clearly on the side of social justice and that economic exploitation in industry was socially unjust. Moreover, such injustice was subject to remedy. "Like Walter Rauschenbusch . . . prophets [of the social gospel] usually felt that progress was divine, that the Kingdom of Heaven was possible on this earth, and that men through their own will could mold such a society."[4] Standing in a direct line of descent from

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[1]Ibid., pp. 167-70.

[2]Wilson, The American Political Mind, p. 425. [3]Ibid., p. 426.

[4]Shafer, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXVII, 440.

the millennial dream of the Puritans, the social gospel nevertheless exhibited a distinctive turn in its move away from pietism to a concern with the physical well-being of the American Adam and his progeny. Physical progress was moral progress.

The dream of material progress through a spiralling technology is harder to document, for as Shafer has commented, technologists simply have said and have written less about their visions.[1] Americans, however, from mechanics to Henry Adams must have been aware that the dynamo intensified the technical revolution and sped up material advancement. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, moving in the regions of science and technology, took time in one of his "medicated" novels to give words to the prospect: "The attitude of modern science is erect, her aspect serene, her determination inflexible, her onward movement unflinching; because she believes in herself, in the order of providence, the true successor of the men of old who brought down the light of heaven to men."[2] The stance of modern science is--as R.W.B. Lewis has pointed out--appropriate to the American Adam: "The qualities that Holmes attributes to science could be attributed with the same buoyant confidence to the individual in America."[3] In addition, the movement of science was unwaveringly forward, its gifts Promethean in their value to man. Finally, technology offered no closed system: rather than being cyclical, its change was linear, as was that of progress.[4]

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[1]Ibid., 441.

[2]Quoted in Lewis, The American Adam, p. 34. [3]Ibid.

[4]Beard, Introduction to The Idea of Progress, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

How does this view of scientific and technological progress become identified with moral and spiritual advancement? Is this not completely counter to the dream of the new Adam in a new Eden? Charles L. Sanford believes that the horn of plenty produced by science and technology is in itself an outward sign of Edenic virtue. To Americans, as part of Western Civilization,

> the lost state of innocence to be regained is associated with or interpreted as a paradise of material bliss. This association rests upon a primitivistic assumption somewhat similar to what is discovered in Augustine--that things in their natural abundance as originally created by God retain the innocence of God.[1]

Thus, the dream of progress is at once open-ended and a means of closure in the great American dream: dynamic by its nature, material progress seemed limitless; bountiful in its harvest, it seemed to promise the "enamel'd fruits" of paradise--thus linking up with the cluster of associations contained in the images of the new Adam and the myth of the garden. Technology promised a form of the "wise innocence." And like the other major categories of the great dream, the vision of progress carried with it ideals of behavior for the American Adam.

Action Corollaries of the Dream of Progress

As an accompaniment of all the other categories of the dream, the hope for progress included in its strategy many of the tactics already mentioned. It was not difficult to recognize as an ikon of progress the American whose behavior marked him as being on the way to realizing his potential powers and virtue in a free and equal society

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[1]The Quest for Paradise, p. 11.

that rewarded those qualities with material prosperity.

The American Adam was to reject the stifling traditions of the past in order to prepare himself for highest self-fulfillment. Correspondingly, as a child of progress, he was to look to the future, where a richer and better way of life waited for him. But there was more waiting in the future: the American had a particular destiny with the still-to-come. "The belief that America has a peculiar mission to establish a new and higher way of life has, in fact, become a part of the American character, even though few Americans have been prepared to interpret it in any very radical fashion."[1] It is this sense of mission that probably contributed so heavily to the trait perceived by Adams in Americans after 1830: the builder of the future had a primary responsibility to "boost" the growth of his society; so strong was the compulsion that any criticism could be taken for "kicking."[2] In any event, if the forward-looking American ever faced east, it was only to salute the rising sun and turn with its rays to the west-beckoning future.

The new Adam seeking to perfect his virtues in freedom and equality had to go forth on a quest. The quest meant an openness to nature, comprehensively considered: there was the face of the earth to learn to know, and there were the faces of people to be known and accepted in brotherhood. The quest also meant an activism, a doing-above-thinking--a scrambling after the material "good things of life"

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[1]Parkes, The American Experience, p. 78.

[2]Adams, Epic of America, p. 217.

as a test of the perfection of virtues and powers; it was a quest that called for a happy reliance upon intuition. And all the time that the American Adam did so quest, he gave forth the signs of progress. For all these reasons, perhaps, "one of the most striking and significant American characteristics has been rootlessness: the lack of attachment to any certain place."[1] The quester might digress or move sidewise for a time, but his general movement was forward, the way of progress, or if he did move in a cycle, it was so large that it was man's return to paradise. In "Enfans d'Adam" Whitman expressed, perhaps, the spirit of the search.

> Inquiring, tireless, seeking that yet unfound,
> I, a child, very old, over waves, toward the house of maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,
> Look off over the shores of my Western sea--having arrived at last where I am--the circle almost circled;
> For coming westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,
> From Asia--from the north--from the God, the sage, and the hero;
> From the south--from the flowery peninsulas, and the spice islands,
> Now I face the old home again--looking over to it, joyous, as after long travel, growth, and sleep;
> But where is what I started for, so long ago?
> And why is it yet unfound?[2]

Americans have had a fever in the blood, an itch in the feet, and a constant look in the eye toward the horizon; even if they moved for such mundane reasons as economic depression or worn-out, exploited land, the change was potentially a "move up." The wanderlust and its associated searching were an integral part of the New Adam.

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[1]Baldwin, The Meaning of America, p. 121.

[2]Quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, p. 49.

> Always, the mythical American innocent has sought the good life, and sometimes has progressed toward maturity in seeking it. He has experienced the simple freedom of the frontier. He has sought the economic independence of the farm, and of Walden. He has gone forth with Walt Whitman to explore the America of the imagination. He has voyaged abroad with Mark Twain, and with Henry James he has explored the culture of the European past . . . . But always he has been the seeker--one who has tasted of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and, still a stranger in the world, hopes to regain some paradise vaguely imagined or remembered.[1]

After looking resolutely to the future and after questing, the ideal American experienced a partial realization of his dreamed-of return to paradise: he developed his potentiality; he enjoyed freedom and equality; he savored the taste of the fruits of his virtue and labor. As the ikon of the progress dream, he sought to keep the door open to further vistas that might lie before him. Thus he had sought to learn to live with insecurity; he had accepted his responsibilities in order to preserve his freedom; he had cultivated an open nature that practiced brotherhood and fair play. He had done all these deeds that he might not limit himself. He remained, like the dream of progress, an "open-ended" system. Appropriately, he developed and exhibited buoyancy, optimism, and a spirit of boundlessness. A British observer during the 1890's was able to draw the following conclusions--among others--about the ideal American behavior.

> The American note includes a sense of illimitable expansion and possibility, an almost childlike confidence in human ability and fearlessness of both the present and the future, a wider realization of brotherhood than has yet existed, a greater theoretical willingness to judge by the individual than by the class, a breezy indifference to authority and a positive predilection for innovation, a marked alertness of mind, and a

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[1]Carpenter, PMLA, LXXIV, 603.

manifold variety of interest--above all, an inextinguishable hopefulness and courage.[1]

Looking to the future, roaming and questing, living in hopefulness, the American Adam was identified with the dream of progress.

Heroes of the Dream of Progress

In some respects, heroes of other categories of the great American dream became identified with that of progress. The wandering, restless spirits of Leatherstocking, of the cowboy, and of Huck Finn symbolized not only freedom but the quest. Particularly suitable for progress was Daniel Boone, rejector of Atlantic seaboard culture, lone wanderer of the forest, optimistic dreamer of new empire in old "Kaintuck," and leader of the people to a new and better life in a new Eden. Moreover, wasn't Old Hickory raising the masses to new heights of influence, affluence, and aspiration? Certainly, the Horatio Alger hero on his road to success travelled on a highway that had made junction with the route to progress; the self-made man, indeed, was not only the embodiment of the dreams of the dignity and worth of the individual and of freedom and equality, but also of progress.

> The history and evolution of the self-made hero in America is a complex thing, involving our belief in progress, the rise of capitalism, the migration of Calvinism and Darwinism, the role of the frontier, the notion of "calling," and the effect of the man-land ratio on a new culture. The rise of cities, industry, individualism, and the middle class come in too.[2]

Since the self-made man so clearly stood both for success and

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[1]James Muirhead, quoted in Croly, The Promise of American Life, p. 18.

[2]Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 143.

progress, it is no surprise that Henry Ford's legend fitted him for a double title in the American peerage of heroes. A mechanical genius whose restless rejection of the horse-and-buggy brought a billion dollars to his own treasury, he was also the Promethean bringer of fire-on-wheels to the people. The jokes that Americans told about Ford were an index to this aspect of his hero-worship.

> Ford jokes flourished like Ford labels, both orally and in printed jokebooks. The usual theme was confidence in the man and cars which were transforming America. They stressed inventiveness, productivity, or some ingenious triumph at the Ford plant. After-dinner speakers told about the old lady who sent her tomato cans, or the farmer his tin roof, to Detroit, and got a Ford car back by return mail . . . . Neither Jove nor Charlemagne nor Beowulf had done anything more remarkable than Henry Ford, who turned bits of tin into automobiles.[1]

In a country where progress and technological advance were almost synonymous, Henry Ford stood as a provider of mechanical largesse which in turn promised a measure of the material bliss expected from the new Eden.

Ford had a fellow-demigod in the realm of progress, one who perhaps even better symbolized that dream.

> Both Ford and Edison were cut from the same extraordinary bolt of cloth. Considering how highly we prize the artifacts with which their two lives were obsessed, it is small wonder indeed that America had lionized them. They were the Rover Boys on the Trail of New Trinkets.[2]

Edison, of course, was also a self-made hero of success. With sayings like "Genius is ninety-nine per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration," he at once kept the "common touch" and affirmed the gospel of success that were two of the "many levels at which Edison appealed

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[1]*Ibid.*, pp. 122-23. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 118.

strongly to the popular mind as an object of hero worship."[1] Mistrustful of college-trained thinkers, making a gospel of work, he typified the self-made man; and when he travelled to Dearborn in 1929 for the "Golden Jubilee," his re-enactment on the train of his old candy selling was "sheer symbolic drama, the American dream reenacted before the world's newspapers and movie cameras."[2]

But it was as an inventor that Edison captured the American fancy. Improving telegraphy, developing stock tickers, working in telephone research, inventing the phonograph, and "wizarding" innumerable gadgets, his greatest identification with the dream of progress was his invention of the incandescent light.[3] By the time of the World's Fair at St. Louis in 1904, Edison was identified in most Americans' minds as the modern giver of light--a Prometheus in spirit if one unnamed. "Edison symbolized electricity--thoughts and words soaring across great distances; energy freed from the engine and belt by smokeless motors; cities wreathed in light."[4]

That Edison's technological progress was fulfilling the American dream was obvious to at least one of his admirers. Henry Ford was to remark in 1930, "Our prosperity leads the world, due to the fact that we have an Edison. His inventions created millions of new jobs . . . .

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[1]Matthew Josephson, Edison: A Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), p. 434.

[2]Ibid., p. 479.

[3]For discussion of these developments and inventions, see ibid., pp. 54-56, 62-130, 138-55, 159-74, 177-279.

[4]Ibid., p. 433.

Edison has done more toward abolishing poverty than all the reformers. . . ."[1] Perhaps most Americans agreed with Ford. For whatever they are worth, public opinion surveys in newspapers and magazines between 1904 and 1924 consistently indicated that the American people regarded Edison as America's "greatest" or "most useful" citizen.[2]

The titanic stature of this hero of the dream of progress is indicated in a newspaper reporter's paraphrase of Pope: "God said, Let Edison be! And there was Light."[3] The connection between America's technological paradise and God's original Eden was explicit.

(In 1890, when the frontier as a continuous line was ending, and when Edison's fame as an inventor was already secure, the census taken in Oklahoma revealed that Clem Vann Rogers had made considerable progress in the accumulation of material goods. On the other hand, he had problems: eleven-year-old Willie, in the best tradition of the self-made man, had just successfully resisted a year of education at the Cherokee tribal school at Tahlequah, and in May of that watershed year, the mother and wife had died.)

Conclusion

Dixon Wecter concludes his study of the hero in America with a summary of qualities necessary for an emerging hero. The material requires quotation at length, for it makes explicit the necessity of behavior which can be read as revealing the American commitment to the goodness of the common man, to the belief in his powers and

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[1]Ibid., p. 464. [2]Ibid., p. 434.

[3]Quoted in Wecter, The Hero in America, p. 418.

"common sense," to the idea of equality, to the urge to "get ahead," and, finally, to the dream of progress.

> The sort of man whom Americans admire, trust, and are willing to follow can be sketched with a few lines. East and west, north and south, his portrait is familiar. At the basic level he must be self-respecting, decent, honorable, with a sense of fair play; no Machiavelli nor Mussolini need apply. He must be firm and self-confident in leadership . . . . Mother wit and resourcefulness we love. But a reputation for "genius" is unnecessary and may do the hero harm . . . . By our standards one is sometimes allowed to "put over a fast one"--. . . but he must not appear to relish the coup for its own sake . . . . Uncle Sam allows his favorites to be shrewd in a good cause, but there must be no avowal of cynicism in principle . . . .
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> Vanity or personal arrogance in any form is taboo . . . . The arrogance of caste is equally dead in American hero-worship.
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> . . . . . .
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> . . . The hero of a democracy--unlike the Stuarts, Bourbons, and Napoleons of the Old World--cannot invite public opinion to go to hell . . . . Fundamentally, the hero is required to be chaste, loyal, honest, humble before duty and before God . . . .
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> . . . We believe that character is more important than brains. Hard work, tenacity, enterprise and firmness in the face of odds are qualities that Americans most admire, rather than originality or eloquence of tongue and pen.
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> The hero must be a man of good will and also a good neighbor, perferably something of a joiner . . . . Manliness, forthright manners, and salty speech are approved. Love of the soil, of dogs and horses and manual hobbies and fishing, is better understood than absorption in art, literature, and music . . . . The hero must not lose touch with his birthplace and origins, however humble . . . . Also the touch of versatility and homely skill is applauded in a hero . . . .
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> . . . . . .
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> Our most powerful hero epics center about our leaders. What, then, in the final analysis do Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Jackson, [and] Lincoln . . . have in common? . . . What is their common denominator?
>
> All of them, the people believe, loved America more deeply than any selfish consideration. The hero as made in America is a man who has the power and yet does not abuse it . . . . More clearly than the great heroes of Europe, military and political, ours stand for a progress concept. They spring from a stock that has bred schemes both wise and foolish--with its talk about the pursuit of happiness, the more abundant life, and the American Dream . . . such as civil liberty, equality of opportunity, faith in the average man, social justice, respect for the rights of weaker nations and for the good estate of democracy throughout the earth.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 482-87.

If Americans become heroes to the extent that they are identified in the public mind with the categories of the great dream, then the more completely a figure satisfied the definitions, the wider would be his appeal. In the case of Abraham Lincoln, there is some evidence to support the idea that our supreme heroes fit several categories of the American dream. Roy P. Basler, winnowing the fact from the legend about Lincoln, nevertheless does not lose sight of the importance of both to Lincoln's pull on the American imagination. "It was the clustering of significances about his figure that made him immortally the American. He was the self-made man, the type of honesty, perseverance and grit, the intrepid Indian fighter, etc."[1]

Regardless of whether it was fact or fiction, Lincoln's public status made him seem the incarnation of the dreams of the dignity and worth of the individual and of freedom and equality. To Emerson, Lincoln's life justified all the American hopes for the powers and goodness of the common man. Speaking April 19, 1865, in Concord, he said,

> He was thoroughly American, had never crossed the sea, had never been spoiled by English insularity or French dissipation; a quite native, aboriginal man, as an acorn from the oak; no aping of foreigners, no frivolous accomplishments, Kentuckian born, working on a farm, a flatboatman, a captain in the Black Hawk War, a country lawyer; a representative in the rural legislature of Illinois;--on such modest foundations the broad structure of his fame was laid.[2]

So much for the Adamic qualities of Lincoln; what had Emerson to say of

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[1]Roy P. Basler, The Lincoln Legend: A Study in Changing Conceptions (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), p. 131. Basler, of course, shows also the calumny to which Lincoln was exposed.

[2]Quoted in ibid., pp. 236-37.

his virtues and powers?

> This middle-class country had got a middle-class president, at last. Yes, in manners and sympathies, but not in powers, for his powers were superior . . . .
>
> There, by his courage, his justice, his even temper, his fertile counsel, his humanity, he stood a heroic figure in the centre of a heroic epoch. He is the true history of the American people in his time . . . the true representative of this continent . . . .[1]

Another contemporary of Lincoln's had seen earlier than Emerson the qualities in Lincoln that Americans would adore; John Motley was, in Basler's word, a "diviner" of Lincoln.[2] "His wisdom, courage, devotion to duty, and simplicity of character seem to me to embody in a very striking way all that is most noble in the American character and American destiny," wrote Motley in 1862.[3] The equation of Lincoln's powers and virtue with those of the American nation became explicit for Motley in 1865, as it would later for an adulating people.

> I venerate Abraham Lincoln exactly because he is the true honest type of American Democracy. There is nothing of the shabby genteel, the would-be but couldn't-be fine gentleman; he is the great American Demos, honest, shrewd, homely, wise, humorous, cheerful, brave, blundering occasionally, but through blunders struggling onward towards what he believes the right.[4]

To Motley as a "diviner" and to masses of Americans later, Lincoln was naturally good and wise in his character, intuitive and self-reliant in his leadership. Stories would grow up, mostly legendary, telling of Lincoln's unswerving honesty that made him walk miles to return pennies of mistaken overcharge or telling of the mercy and goodness shown to widows or court-martialled soldiers.[5] The significant thing

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[1]Quoted in ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 97. [3]Quoted in ibid., p. 99.

[4]Quoted in ibid. [5]For examples, see ibid., pp. 124-26.

about such fictions is that Americans were projecting the qualities of their ideals to Lincoln and that such stories are an index to the dreamed-of new Adam. He was, in the words of James Russell Lowell, "New birth of our new soil, the first American."[1] Lincoln's numerous parallels with Christ, which Basler shows as being so important in his legend, are only the upgrading of the American Adam, as was the case with Melville's Billy Budd.[2]

In Lincoln's identification with the dream of freedom and equality was also a strengthening of his association with the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual. The single motif powerful enough to place him above all other heroes of the dream of freedom and equality is that of the great Emancipator, with some help from his role as savior of the Union. In the poetry of the time (with some exceptions), Lincoln was the savior of a race, the embodiment of conscience and right, the smiter of chains, the husbandman of brotherhood.[3]

> Such is the legend of the Emancipator who, with the stroke of a pen, shattered the manacles of four millions of human souls in a state of servitude. It is of little import in the legend that men had campaigned for years against slavery and that many had done far more than Lincoln to bring about a sane view of the situation on the part of the general public, that Lincoln's dislike for slavery was never strong enough to make him an Abolitionist, and that the Emancipation Proclamation was itself only a promise of freedom. In this phase of the legend Lincoln functions again as a magnetic symbol around which all the ideal attributes, hopes, prayers, and achievements of a horde of crusading predecessors are clustered.[4]

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[1]Quoted in ibid., p. 35.

[2]For this development in detail, see ibid., pp. 164-201.

[3]For examples, see ibid., pp. 213-19.

[4]Ibid., p. 219.

Lincoln was also a hero of the success dream. He appeared as the type of the poor-but-honest lad rising in an uphill struggle in the successive versions of one of the most popular biographies, that of William M. Thayer. Starting out as The Pioneer Boy in 1863 and ending with From Pioneer Home to White House in 1882, Thayer made free use of his own powers of fiction; one result was that the book's popularity caused each edition to pass through many printings.[1] In one of the versions, Thayer made explicit the same connection between virtues and success as did the writers of success manuals.

> The child is ever father of the man. It is our purpose to show, in this volume, how the inherent qualities of industry, honesty, perseverance, and cheerful devotion to duty, which characterized the PIONEER BOY, and were the means, under Providence, of his elevation to the PRESIDENCY, have sustained him in that high office, and enabled him to bear the unequalled cares and responsibilities it entailed upon him.[2]

While Thayer's books were most popular, other writers also worked the vein of the success dream. One such "dime novelist" biographer was J.O. Victor, whose tome was published in 1864; its content, says Basler, was "a perfect treatment of the theme which was later to make Horatio Alger, Jr., famous."[3]

The Lincoln success story had many of the Alger ingredients besides the mere rise. He was the model boy in the legend-colored reminiscences of those who had known his early life.

> Thus it was recalled that he was never late to school. He was a model of neatness and "noted for keeping his clothes clean." He was "very quiet during playtime; never was rude; seemed to have a liking for solitude; was the one chosen in almost every

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[1] Ibid., p. 8. [2] Quoted in ibid., p. 58.

[3] Ibid.

> case to adjust difficulties between boys of his age and size, and when appealed to, his decision was an end of the trouble." Again, "No stimulant ever entered his lips, no profanity ever came forth from them."[1]

In keeping with the success dream, the mother exerted the major influence on the boy. In biographies such as those by Thayer, Victor, J.G. Holland, and Horatio Alger, himself, "Nancy Hanks was presented quite naturally, as a kind and loving mother who was a continual inspiration to her family."[2] J.G. Holland, for instance, wrote (with little chance of contradiction, since little was known),

> A great man never drew his infant life from a purer or more womanly bosom than her own; and Mr. Lincoln always looked back to her with an unspeakable affection . . . . His character was planted in this Christian mother's life. Its roots were fed by this Christian mother's love; and those who have wondered at the truthfulness and earnestness of his mature nature, have only to remember that the tree was true to the soil from which it sprang.[3]

Thus was the bare success plot of log-cabin-to-White-House embellished.

If there was a category of the great dream with which Lincoln identified to a lesser extent, it was that of the dream of progress. Certainly, however, the freeing of the slaves was progress to all Americans opposed to the South's "peculiar institution." Further, in his second inaugural speech that reached the nation via telegraph and press, he held out--almost Christlike?--hope for a new and better day for the whole nation.

> With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the

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[1] Ibid., p. 121.

[2] Ibid., p. 106. The mother, of course, came in for her share of calumny, too.

[3] Quoted in ibid., p. 109.

> nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan--to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among our selves, and with all nations.[1]

These are, says Basler, "the words which are most commonly cited as indicative of his character and associated with his name."[2] They are words hopeful of the future, rendered memorable by what has become in the light of what happened a month later, dramatic irony.

The result of all this is that up to 1900, Lincoln was the patron saint of America; since 1909 he has tended to become fixed in his status as America's greatest leader and statesman; contemporary poets have made him embody their conception of America--extolling his values of "freedom and equality, charity and justice, love and tenderness."[3]

Lincoln is a hero of the great American dream. He was so by serving to attract most of the associations connected with the dream of the common man's talents, his goodness, his possibilities for self-fulfillment; with associations connected with the dream of a responsible freedom in a society moving toward equality by practicing fair play; by proving the truth of the gospel of success; and by moving America and Americans through sectional hatred forward to a hoped-for greater brotherhood. He is the supreme symbol of the supreme American dream of paradise to be regained.

Having his greatest power during the years that the American experiment seemed most endangered, Lincoln achieved a timely affir-

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[1]Quoted in ibid., pp. 164-65. [2]Ibid., p. 164.

[3]Ibid., pp. 34, 39, 44.

mation of the great dream. Only a decade-and-a-half after his death, another American was growing up to be an embodiment of the American dream in a time of need.

He was Will Rogers.

CHAPTER III

TRIAD: THE DREAM, THE MAN, AND THE TIMES

Introduction

Permeating the idea-climate of America and interacting with other causes and with unique individuals, the great American dream produced effects in no way predictable or uniform in its dreamers. I grant that Will Rogers possibly inherited certain predisposing tendencies that were as important to his embodiment of the dream as were the experiences that shaped him to it; to do so is simply to admit that all the young Americans of Rogers' time and locale did not develop into ikons of the great dream. With such concession made, one point of the forthcoming discussion is that, given the unique being that Rogers was, certain precipitating factors turned him toward a quality of living which became a potential affirmation of the great dream for the American people. A second point is that the times of Rogers' ascendancy, roughly from 1922 to 1935, were auspicious for an affirmation of the dream. A final point is that public knowledge of Will Rogers' life corresponded with the major features of the great American god-of-many-faces.

Shaping of the Man to the Dream

Woven together of a paradisical landscape, warm human relation-

ships, and free-as-air experiences, together with times of darkness, the environment of Will Rogers turned him toward a life that could be identified with the dream of paradise to be regained. His world inclined him to be one with the dreams of the dignity and worth of the individual, of equality and freedom, of success, and of progress.

Toward the Dream of the Dignity and Worth of the Individual

Much in the surroundings of Will Rogers was suitable to effect in him the character of the new Adam. In the first place, the land to which his people had been driven for refuge seemed itself to be a paradise regained. At the time of Cherokee settlement, what is now northeastern Oklahoma was Eden-like. It was a land of plentiful rain, of sweet air, of gold-suffused light, of purple distances. More specifically,

> it was a savage land teeming with wild life. Great flocks of green parakeets drifted over the bottom lands feeding on the sycamore balls there; wild turkeys and geese gobbled and honked from the prairies and marshes; and among the blue stem grass that grew to the height of a deer's shoulders, quail and prairie chickens were as thick as black birds.[1]

And like Adam, the children of Sequoyah named the land with melodic syllables: Talala, Oowala, Tahlequah, and Cooweescoowee--the last being the territory of Will Rogers' birth. He assuredly did not open the eye of his consciousness upon the virgin scene that spread itself before the Cherokee exiles around 1838. But much of it surely remained to give him a sense of a new country and of new beginnings, especially

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[1]Harold Keith, Boys' Life of Will Rogers (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1937), p. 2.

in contrast to the population centers of Kansas City, St. Louis, and Chicago which he was to visit. The Indian Territory of the Cherokee nation was a good place for testing the myth of the garden.

Perhaps more important to the development of Will's stance as the new American Adam was his exposure to the folkways and mores coming from the mixture of Indian and White culture in his family. Descending from white men who had put behind them the society of the old world and being born of Indian great-grandmothers, Will could be expected to catch what may well have been accompanying attitudes of detachment from the past, of facing to the future, and of living in readiness to front anything that might present itself. In his mixture of races, Will Rogers was a new man; but more importantly, his forebears had probably possessed new attitudes that were a mixture of East and West and that were passed down by family culture. Certain it is that in Will Rogers' family were influences that would produce an Adamic sense of ironic detachment strong enough to enable its possessor to face difficulties equably. Years later, when a burglar was to make off with Will's savings, he would try to comfort his wife by illustrating his family's Adamism; Mrs. Rogers told the story.

> I was brokenhearted. Will wanted to laugh it off and tried to console me with the story of what a good sport his sister Maude had been when her house burned. They had been curing meat in the smokehouse that day and a spark had blown to the roof of the main house, which was being painted. The fresh paint caught fire and in a moment the whole place was in flames, with the painters rolling and jumping from the roof. Though Maude had lost everything, the antics of the painters were so ludicrous that she saw the funny side of it and laughed. And she always laughed afterward whenever the fire was mentioned. I listened to the story and admired Maude's fortitude, but still I couldn't laugh.[1]

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[1]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 108.

Regardless of whether this saving grace of humor was a gift of the Cherokees, as Day believes, the objectivity and detachment which it conferred to Will Rogers' character was appropriate to the character of a forward-looking Adam.[1]

Besides the Edenic landscape and the family Adamism, boyhood odysseys contributed to the natural man in Will Rogers. There were all-day fishing trips to the perch-filled "Four-Mile" branch--lazy, sun-and-shade-filled days when time slowed down; there were joyous Frostian ridings of "buckin," sapling trees; there were days of swimming in the Verdigris River, nights of sleeping out under the Cooweescoowee sky, mornings and afternoons of pony racing across the prairie country.[2] The world of Will Rogers' roamings had all the appeal of Tom Sawyer's Jackson Island. "To young Will Rogers, growing up on his father's range, that frontier was the garden spot of the world."[3]

Out of all this came Will Rogers' ability to live a complex life simply, the epitome of Thoreau's dreamed-of return to the state of natural man.[4] Will's observing wife, who was to watch him live for a quarter of a century, has reported on his never-ending zest for life.

> Will had superb health, great physical energy and mental vitality; and along with this, an inner serenity that was

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[1]Day, A Biography, p. 8.

[2]Keith, Boy's Life, pp. 25-27, 48.

[3]Ibid., p. 30.

[4]"There are two kinds of simplicity,--one that is akin to foolishness, the other to wisdom. The philosopher's style of living is outwardly simple but inwardly complex. The savage's style of living is both outwardly and inwardly simple." Quoted by Frederick I. Carpenter, PMLA, LXXIV, 601-602.

> seldom ruffled. Through his whole life, including those years when his activities multiplied and every minute was crowded with action, he was unhurried, and worry was unknown to him. If things went wrong they just went wrong and were forgotten with a new day.
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> . . . . . .
>
> That was Will's secret. He either worked at something or he rested. There was no spending of nervous energy in worry or the futile threshing of a problem. When he had a job to do, he did it. But when the job was done he was able to turn off a faucet of energy or to turn it in a different direction.[1]

Will Rogers was always to retain the quality of Adamic boyishness. As an adult, he would return to his California ranch from long journeys with all the interest of a boy with an ever-new toy; he rode, he roped, and he played polo not as a devotee of physical fitness but as a young spirit revelling in the joys of the body.[2] "I'd play golf if a fellow could play it on horseback," he would tell visitors to the golf course built on his ranch for their amusement.[3]

Living in a new land, springing from a new people, possessing a strong forward thrust born in turn of a basic good humor and of an undying sense of the newness of life, Will Rogers was the new American Adam. Concomitantly, the man from Oologah had a trust in the goodness of people. One revealing anecdote was told by his wife. The young couple had wanted to raise cash by selling a valuable diamond ring; Rogers entrusted it for sale to a man to whom he had barely been introduced by another acquaintance, a fellow named Brady. Will did not even know the name of the prospectiver buyer. Betty was amazed at her husband's naiveté.

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[1]Rogers, His Wife's Story, pp. 23, 25-26.

[2]Ibid., pp. 255, 261.

[3]Ibid., p. 268.

> "Don't worry," he told me, "he's all right; Brady knows a friend of his." More weeks passed and I decided that Will might at least get some much-needed worldly wisdom in exchange for his big yellow diamond. As more weeks went by, even Will had begun to wonder. But one day an envelope arrived and we learned the name of the racing man. It was written on the bottom of a check for $1,000. That was all the envelope contained. Will was not surprised. He took for granted that every man was honest, until he proved himself otherwise.[1]

As will be seen later, Will Rogers also believed in the powers of the average American.[2] Aside from his being the new Adam, how could he be shaped to trust the virtues and powers of the normal American? Perhaps the answer to his belief in the worth and dignity of the individual lies in the same experiences that aided in his commitment to the dream of equality and freedom.

Toward the Dream of Equality and Freedom

The human relationships which Will the child experienced gave him trust in people and an awareness of their worth. His home life for his first ten years was "full of warmth, love and security."[3] Perhaps more importantly, the family circle was widened to include many of the neighboring families.

> Between the Cherokee families there was more feeling of kinship than of just being neighbors. Everybody was "Aunt" or "Uncle." Homes were hospitable, warm and friendly. Often a whole family would drive for miles over the dim wagon trails to spend a few days with Aunt Mary and Uncle Clem [Will's parents]. When Clem was a judge of Cooweescoowee District, farmers and ranchers from many miles around came to him with their problems.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

[2] See chap. iv, pp. 242-47 of this study.

[3] Day, *A Biography*, p. 9.

[4] Rogers, *His Wife's Story*, p. 43.

On Sundays, Will's mother invited some neighboring family for dinner; because of the distances of travel and slowness of transport, the guests stayed the rest of the day and often through the night as well. Besides the hospitality of the dinner table and the good bed, visitors always received a special going-away gift either of baskets of grapes, peaches, or apples from the Rogers orchard or else a delicacy from Mary America Rogers' oven. On his part, Will's father would plan and carry out all-day fishing excursions for several families at the famous "Four-Mile" Branch, which had so many perch and bass that the fish at times would strike at the colored corks on the lines; the Rogers house was the gathering point and the eating place for these trips.[1] The mood of such occasions was important. "An atmosphere of such friendliness could not fail to leave its impress on the child, Will Rogers, and it implanted in him an open-hearted generosity that was one of his chief characteristics throughout his life."[2] The Indian territory may have been a refuge for outlaws from the United States, but the people upon whose faces young Willie Rogers looked were those whom he could trust.

Will Rogers came to know the worth of the Negroes in Cooweescoowee. First came the day-long visits to the rambling, two-story frame house and the eleven children of Clem's former slave, Rab Rogers, a two-hundred-sixty-five pound giant who wore his hair shoulder length, Indian-style.[3] At visits end, Clem would call for his son.

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[1]Keith, Boy's Life, pp. 12-13.

[2]Ibid., p. 13.

[3]Ibid., pp. 16-23.

> "Ready to go home, Will?" Clem would ask him.
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> "No, Papa," Will would answer, "I'll come home next Sunday. Jack and Hous will bring me home."
>
> Clem would laugh heartily at this, and though Will eventually would be persuaded to leave, it was not without a struggle.[1]

Later came the months and years with "Aunt Babe" and "Uncle Dan" Walker, who shortly after their marriage had moved into a three-room frame house just over the hill from Clem's. Clem and Dan, reports one biographer, "seemed to have had each other's respect."[2] As far as the youngest Rogers child was concerned, both Babe and Dan had their influence. Having a good deal of the care of Willie, "Aunt Babe" impressed the boy as the "soul of kindness, an extremely religious woman who read the Bible . . . or sang religious hymns" when her work was done.[3] As for Dan Walker, he was the best roper on the ranch: he could lasso a "cow crittur" around its neck, or its four feet, or its horns; he was the top bronco rider on the ranch, too.[4] When he undertook to show little Willie how to rope, the fact that he was a top roper and rider, rather than that he was a Negro, was what mattered to the boy. "When his mother couldn't find him, she knew where to look: at Uncle Dan's and Aunt Babe's."[5] Will played with their children; he played with Indian children; he played with white children: segregation, if he had ever known the word as a boy, would have been a meaningless

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[1]Ibid., p. 18.

[2]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 19.

[3]Day, A Biography, p. 11.

[4]Keith, Boy's Life, p. 24.

[5]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 19.

word to him.

Yet, without still another influence toward a dedication to the worth, the equality, and the freedom of the human spirit, these warm interpersonal relationships may have called forth little more than a fund of good will for friends of the family, regardless of race. Will Rogers' people had been the victims of the worst kind of discrimination against a minority group. In 1838, the United States Government, aware of the mineral riches in the Cherokee holdings in the Southern states, drove the Indians off their lands. Perhaps one of every four Cherokees died on the "Trail of Tears" to the new homes in Arkansas and what is now Oklahoma.[1] Tebbel and Jennison report of the Cherokees that

> the manner and method of their destruction wrote the last and saddest chapter of Indian life east of the Mississippi. For they were not destroyed by war; the white man simply removed them from the land, as the English had moved the Acadians. There was no Evangeline to immortalize their tragedy, but their story remains one of the best known in American history, perhaps because it epitomizes everything that happened to the red man in his long battle against white supremacy.[2]

Although in the immediate Rogers family circle the Trail of Tears had taken no toll, Will Rogers identified himself to some extent, at least, with the plight of the tribe. For instance, there would come the time when the boy had become a famous humorist, lecturer, and roper and would appear before three thousand Cherokees who had remained in or near the ancient tribal territory in the South.

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[1]Keith, Boy's Life, pp. 1-2.

[2]Quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 2.

> They listened stoically to his performance, showing no emotion and not cracking a smile. He gave them a thrilling performance with his rope and still no response. "Then, suddenly," reported Ben Dixon MacNeil, "he became furious. His transformation was terrifying, and for three minutes his astonished audience was treated to a demonstration of what primitive, instinctive hatred could be. Some long-forgotten, in-bred memory welled up in his heart and he ripped into Andrew Jackson. To the Cherokees, Jackson is known as 'the betrayer' and their removal to Oklahoma is 'the betrayal.' No enemy of Jackson was ever more bitter than was Rogers. The Indians listened, and then the quiet was ripped by the screaming war cry of the tribe . . . ."[1]

Even when we grant that a good part of Will Rogers' attack on Jackson could well have been motivated by his persuader's desire to adapt to that audience, earlier incidents had borne out his identification with the Cherokee tribe. To begin with, his name appeared on the Tribal Rolls, and he received, as a member of the tribe, his share of funds from the sale of lands in the Cherokee Outlet.[2] A couple of incidents at Kemper Military Academy also point to Will's personal feeling of kinship with a persecuted minority.

> It was at Kemper that Willie first flaunted his pride in his Cherokee blood. Many of the cadets came from other sections of the country and some of them openly made fun of anyone with Indian blood. In one class an instructor referred to an Indian as a thoroughbred.
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> "A horse is a thoroughbred," Willie protested, jumping to his feet. "An Indian chief is a full blood."
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> At another time he was standing in the local bank gazing at a print of the painting, "Custer's Last Stand."
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> "You know, I like that picture," he said.
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> "Why?" another cadet asked.
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> "It's the only time my people got the best of it."[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 227-28.

[2] Crey, Our Will Rogers, p. 30.

[3] Day, A Biography, p. 22. Moreover, racial prejudice had cut both ways in Will Rogers' school life. At his first school, Drumgoole, established by and for Cherokees, he was treated with suspicion by the full-bloods: "I had just enough white in me to make my honesty questionable," Will said (see p. 17).

Those who know the pain of discrimination are those who become keenly aware of their rights as men and their dignity in the sight of God, whether they be American Indians or "second-class" citizens of the British Empire who a little more than a century before Rogers' time had revolted in the name of natural rights and equality of all men. From Will Rogers' trust in the goodness of people, from his knowledge of the worthiness of others of different race, and from his own awareness of a tie to a badly-treated minority group could well have come his own brand of equalitarianism and his sympathy for the underdog.

Son of the soil in the American garden, accustomed to the land's spreading spaciousness and big sky, Will Rogers was also the child of freedom. Horses and schools had a great deal to do with his free flying spirit. Before he was old enough to sit on a horse, he would ride in his mother's buggy, drawn by a white horse that moved the woman and the boy across the space of the prairie, freeing them of being place-bound.[1] Later, he would learn to ride one of Uncle Dan's horses, and still later that magic moment on his fifth birthday would come when he found a just-right pony, saddled and waiting outside his door. With a worried mother and a determined father looking on, he mounted.

> With a touch of the rein he turned the pony, rode out the open gate and down a lane toward the river, waving to them as he passed out of sight. A wonderful feeling of exhilaration came over him. He had a horse under him and he was on his way. Never was he to feel so much at home, so much a complete being, as when on a horse.[2]

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[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 24.

[2]Day, A Biography, p. 16.

His experiences with schools were less happy. By the time of his thirteenth year, he was ready to enter his fourth school, a Methodist Church South one, located at Vinita. He saw "the same confining classrooms, each a snug, orderly, little prison, with desks and blackboards and only one door."[1] Perhaps feeling as lonely as much as imprisoned when he heard the old students greeting each other,

> he looked out of one of the windows and his face lighted up as he saw the greenish-brown sweep of prairie, and took a long whiff of the sweet air that blew into the room, stirring the window curtains. Will had never before realized how well he liked plain commonplace things such as grass and wind and horses and freedom.[2]

Given his respect for the individual and his dedication to equality, Will Rogers found his love of mobility and lack of restraint turning him toward the life of a free spirit. His identification with the ways of the American cowboy confirmed him as a disciple of the way of the liberated. From the day that little Willie first admired Uncle Dan Walker's skill to the end of the humorist's life, his beau ideal was the knight of the range. He was charmed by the movements of the men and their horses, studying how the riders swung up to the saddle in a single, graceful maneuver and how they handled the reins gently, never hurting the horses' mouths.[3] Riding his own pony, he roped everything in sight; then came the day that he was given a role which would prove his worthiness. Clem asked him and another boy to help with the spring branding of the calves. Will was thrilled by being a part of

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[1]Keith, Boy's Life, p. 56.

[2]Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[3]Day, A Biography, p. 14.

the activities--even the dust, the heat, the cursing, and the smell of sweat of men were beautiful to him.[1] He was being shaped to the life of the cowboy.

> Clem Rogers was doing a wise thing in giving Will a taste of hard work, and giving it to him early. And Will loved it. Roping and riding were forever in his thoughts. They became his chief interest in life, and the aroma of the cow country seemed to cling to him like hickory flavor to good barbecue meat, and to be reflected in his actions, writings, conversation, and everything he did.[2]

So powerful a pull on his imagination did the cowboy have that in the year before he was to die, Will Rogers would make a vacation pilgrimage to the "Mashed O" ranch near Amarillo, would rope and drag calves to the branding, and would revel in the heat and activity. Betty would report, "He was hot, dirty and dog tired and the sweat was pouring down his face, when he overheard an old slow-talking cowboy say to another, 'Some folks sure got a hell of an idea about a vacation.'"[3]

Reinforcing his boyhood identification with the cowboy was a trip to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. The high point of the journey was his being seated in a huge horseshoe amphitheatre among twenty-two thousand people and watching the four hundred riders from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show open the performance at full chase; then came the breathless moment of the triumphant entry of that symbol of freedom, Buffalo Bill, himself. Before the boy's eyes, Cody

> came thundering into the arena on his big sorrel horse, Old Duke, the grandest parade horse on earth. Majestically he swept off his big hat and in a dramatic, far-reaching voice

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[1]Keith, Boy's Life, pp. 39-40. [2]Ibid., p. 40.

[3]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 58.

he shouted:

"Permit me to introduce the Congress of Rough Riders of the World!"[1]

Later followed Vincente Oropeza, the great rope artist from Mexico, gracefully spinning the lariat, leaping dancingly in and out of the circling loop, then snaking it out and gracefully lassoing a dashing horse by the front feet, then the back feet, then all four feet--by the saddle horn, and even the tail! To close, the artist widened the eyes of the boy from Oologah by spelling his name in the air, one letter at a time, with the rope that seemed alive.[2] Was it here at Chicago, with the freedom of the West luring six millions to vicarious participation, that Will Rogers first thought of showing his own westernness to the public?

Besides all the rest, one other man attracted Will Rogers to the life of the cowboy: Clem Vann Rogers. Clem could ride free and easy in the saddle and could cover long distances. The boy had heard from his father's lips how as a teen-aged boy he had taken the foremanship of a long drive of two thousand head, first to Kansas City and then to St. Louis--with the loss of only one steer![3] Clem must have seemed a latter-day David winning over Goliath. He was also the source, directly or indirectly, of Will's own drive to success.

Toward the Dream of Success

When the eyes of Willie Rogers travelled around the breakfast table in the rambling home near Oologah, they fell upon his sisters

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[1]Keith, Boy's Life, p. 68.

[2]Ibid., pp. 67-72.

[3]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 35.

Maude and May, across from him, upon sister Sallie, next to him, upon his mother at the foot of the table, and upon his papa, at the head. The father was a big man with heavy eyebrows and mustache; he wore a white shirt with a stiff collar, a tie, vest, and coat.[1] He looked important, and he was important.

Willie knew enough about his father to know that he had succeeded by "hard work, perseverance, and taking advantages of his opportunities."[2] He knew the story of Clem's first ranching venture, before the Civil War; he knew of Clem's service as a Confederate officer; he knew of Clem's recouping of fortune after the war, first by hauling freight and then by a return to ranching and farming.[3] About the whole saga of the rise was the aura of the self-made man--the same honesty, grit, brains, and inspiration that found its epitome in the story of the great cattle drive in 1855 to St. Louis. Willie knew, too, that his father was a big man in Cherokee politics. The details of Clem's being district judge and later a Cherokee senator probably were foggy to the mind of a little boy; but Willie knew that his papa was a big man in the Cherokee nation from the way in which men with serious faces came to have long talks with Clem.[4] In the future, the boy would see his father become a delegate to Washington for purposes of protecting Cherokee interests before the Dawes Commission in 1898; he would see Clem become a successful banker in Claremore; he would

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[1]Day, A Biography, p. 15. [2]Ibid., p. 5.

[3]Croy, Our Will Rogers, pp. 10-17.

[4]Day, A Biography, p. 7.

see him become a delegate to the Constitutional Convention for Oklahoma.[1]

Meanwhile, however, before the boy's eyes during the decade of the 'eighties passed scenes that dramatized the energy and success of the strong, often-silent man on horseback who was Clem Rogers. Work went on for seven days of the week on the ranch; Clem could still take a direct hand, but his maze of affairs often took him away from home. As Willie watched, the acreage of the ranch grew, together with the number of cattle, cowboys, and cropland. With cattle the main source of income, Clem still profited from grain farming, either as feed or cash crops. In one hot day in June, young Will saw fourteen binders working at one time in the family's sprawling wheat field.[2]

Sometimes Will would hear his mother discussing her dreams for him with his papa. Will had become even more precious to Mary America after the death of the last brother, Robert. Looking at her only son, she may have felt like the mother of the prophet Samuel: she wanted to dedicate Will to God; she wanted her son to be a Methodist minister. Clem would not argue; he would simply comment that there was not much money in preaching.[3] The gospel for Clem was hard work. He set an example of driving ambition and hard work that may have seemed impossible of emulation to the son. Betty Rogers recounts a story that may be symbolic of the relationship between Will and Clem:

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[1]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 28.

[2]Ibid.; Day, A Biography, p. 9.

[3]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 21.

> "Riding along with papa," Will told me, "I never could keep up with him. Papa could ride all day long and his horse would never be out of a little fast walk or dogtrot. We'd start out in the morning side by side, but my horse was soon lagging way behind and I'd have to kick him in the sides to catch up. At the end of the day I was plumb played out and my horse was in a lather, but papa wasn't tired and his horse never turned a hair."[1]

Will may well have despaired of succeeding in the way his father had. By the 'nineties, the open range was ending; homesteaders were taking up parcels of 160 acres; the big spreads were being carved up and fenced off. Besides, with a father of such physical and mental prowess, how could he equal him? Too, the boy seemed to be more of his mother's temperament than of his father's--gay spirited, loving of jokes, folks, and singing.[2]

The father, though, did his best to guide the boy toward a successful career. In Will's boyhood, Clem had given him a herd of orphan or "dogie" calves and had allowed Will his own "dogiron" brand.[3] After Will had left his last school and done a stint of cowpunching in the Texas panhandle, Clem had offered him what was left of the once-great Rogers range, or--if Will desired--a place in the bank at Claremore.[4] But for Will to accept the boost and its lifetime of respectability would have been harder, perhaps, than to strike out alone in a new territory: he would not have been riding his own horse; his

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[1]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 34.

[2]See Croy, Our Will Rogers, pp. 24, 26; also Day, A Biography, p. 10.

[3]Keith, Boy's Life, pp. 50-51.

[4]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 73.

success would not have been his own.

In a geography book at one of his numerous schools, Will had seen a picture of verdant grazing land in Argentina.[1] Didn't that "new" country offer possibilities for the son of a well-off man to be a self-made man, himself? He went to Argentina. Whatever other reasons the boy from Oologah may have had for going, his letters to his father show that he was interested in success, that he wanted to please his father, and that he cared about what neighbors thought about his career. In one of the earliest letters to Clem, Will wrote, "I have been out into the interior and have seen a little of the country, which looks like a good cattle and farming country, but it's no place to make money unless you have at least $10,000 to invest."[2]

Later, when he was ready to quit the country after a try at cowpunching, he sent a revealing letter to Clem. It began with immediate plans and with a concern for worldly success.

> I will write you again, as I guess I will get away from this country about the third of August, or four more days. I have given this place a trial and I know that it is no better or, for that matter, any other place any better than the U.S. for a man with a small capital, or none at all.

There followed a rationalized disclaimer of an interest in money, and then he showed concern for his reputation.

> All that worries me is people there all say--"Oh, he is no account, he blows in all his father's money," and all that kind of stuff, which is not so. I am more than willing to admit that you have done everything in the world for me and tried to make something more than I am out of me (which is not your fault) but as to our financial dealings, I think I paid

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[1]Day, A Biography, p. 40.

[2]Quoted in Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 64.

you all up and everyone else.

I only write these things so we may understand each other. I cannot help it because my nature is not like other people, and I don't want you all to think I am no good because I don't keep my money . . . . I have always dealt honestly with everyone and think the world and all of you and all the folks, and will be among you all soon as happy as any one in the world, as then I can work and show the people that I am only spending what I make.[1]

Will Rogers did not go directly home. Instead, he worked his way to South Africa aboard a freighter carrying a cargo of cattle for an English rancher. Later, a chance meeting with the American proprietor of Texas Jack's Wild West Show won for him a place as a fancy roper. It was not the type of sound business success that his father had achieved, but it was done by "riding his own horse." And in another letter to Clem he showed that his rise in show business could be marked by the same kind of moral purity as that possessed by Ragged Dick.

It isn't a wild mob like them at home, for Jack don't drink a drop or smoke or gamble, and likes his men to be the same. He is a man about 40 years old and has traveled all over the world. He is a much finer shot than Buffalo Bill. Of course, the business is not the best business, but as long as there is good money in it and it is honest, there is no objection to it. I still keep sober and don't gamble, and Jack thinks a lot of me.[2]

Perhaps more important than Jack's moral influence, cash pay, and good opinion was that he gave Will Rogers a role of success. One biographer reports that "Will was so pleased with his rise in the world that he had a professional card printed."[3] Will's identification with the

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[1]Quoted in ibid., pp. 68-69. The year was 1902; Will was approaching his twenty-third birthday.

[2]Quoted in ibid., p. 78.

[3]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 82.

Cherokees persisted: he billed himself on the card as "The Cherokee Kid." Texas Jack made the success role fit Will explicitly when he wrote a letter of recommendation to his departing employee for what both hoped might be fairer fields.

> I have the very great pleasure of recommending Mr. W. P. Rogers to circus proprietors. He has performed with me during my present South African tour and I consider him to be the champion trick rough rider and lasso thrower of the world. He is sober, industrious, hard working at all times and is always to be relied upon. I shall be pleased to give him an engagement at any time should he wish to return.[1]

Not only was Will the champion rough rider and lasso thrower, but Texas Jack also confirmed to him that he had the qualities so important to success in that dream. He was sober, hard-working, and reliable. Not all figures in the entertainment world have found such traits necessary.

After completing a round-the-world odyssey by doing stints with wild west shows in Australia and New Zealand, Will Rogers returned to Claremore, his road to success surveyed, if not graded and open for traffic.

By the time the wife whom he took in 1908 had the opportunity to observe him closely, Will exhibited all the marks of Ragged Dick's winning ways with employers. By this time, Will was an established performer, and Mrs. Betty Rogers studied his success closely. She wrote,

> From the beginning Will was ambitious. On tour during the old vaudeville years, our little hotel room was always littered with ropes. He practised roping day in and day out, creating new tricks or perfecting the old ones. Later, when talking became a part of his act, Will exercised the same thoroughness in keeping himself posted on what was going on. He strove for per-

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[1]Quoted in Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 79.

> fection in whatever he tried; he was restless and impatient when he felt he had fallen into a rut and that he wasn't going ahead fast enough. And he was keenly alert when a new opportunity presented itself.[1]

From almost the first of his life, Will Rogers had felt some need to rise in the world. In his boyhood, he once had admitted to Mary America Rogers, "If it wasn't for my pony and rope, I might grow up to be famous."[2] And long after that, while waiting for his first successful chance at a New York audience outside the vaudeville houses, he was making what could have been a serious joke when he complained to a friend, Jack Lait, "Can you imagine when I die and St. Peter asks me what I did on earth to qualify for heaven, and I answer, 'I spun a rope and kidded myself so's other people wouldn't kid me first'?"[3]

Given Will's urge to rise, his restless activity would ensue--behavior which was also appropriate to the nature of the dream of progress.

Toward the Dream of Progress

In the span of his lifetime, Will Rogers saw big changes in the patterns of living in America. In his own pasture, he saw the free range give way to homesteaders. He was eleven years old when the 1890 census declared that the frontier, in the sense of a continuous line of new settlement, was ended. He was forty-one when the 1920 census confirmed (what was already self-evident) that America was an industrial society: it was the first census which reported that over 50% of the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[2]Day, A Biography, p. 16.

[3]Quoted in ibid., p. 72.

population lived in cities. He saw the horse give way to the automobile and the airplane; he saw the kerosene lamp replaced by the incandescent light, the telegraph supplemented by the radio, vaudeville outmoded by movies, silents by talkies, and on and on: many of the circlings of the technological spiral. Too, he saw much of the change from a laissez-faire capitalism to a mixed economy; besides the steady raising of women's hem lines, the rise of the woman in political endeavor happened during his lifetime. He witnessed the ascent of the labor union to a position of both political and economic power. Like millions of other Americans, he saw attempts to epitomize the change by means of expositions, such as that one in 1904 where Will and Betty had met again, as in the song, in St. Louis. "Nineteen hundred and four was a wonderful year," she wrote. "Theodore Roosevelt was President; there was general prosperity; and to youngsters of my generation the World's Fair in St. Louis was the last word in progress."[1] For many Americans, no doubt, the changes were synonymous with progress. Will Rogers, however, would--in the good company of Emerson--maintain some doubt about the real progress of the people--while at the same time accepting with a kind of joyous skepticism the mechanical innovations of the time.[2] In so doing, he was in harmony with "Thoreau's 'Adam' [who] did not seek to regain his paradise at Walden by rejecting all mechanical means . . . ."[3]

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[1]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 82.

[2]Supra, chap. ii, pp. 124-25. For examples of his comments that show him addressing to the public his questions about progress, see infra, pp. 378-79.

[3]Carpenter, PMLA, LXXIV, 601.

The marvel of physics and mechanics which Rogers was most to appreciate was the airplane. From the time of Will Rogers' first cattle drive in 1898, when he had been exhilarated by riding up each "long, green, sage-dotted slope with the thought that over the top would be unseen country," he had yearned for the sight of new lands.[1] A visit to the Chicago World's Fair a few years earlier had suggested to him, perhaps, new worlds to be known. The original Ferris Wheel, reaching almost three-hundred feet into the air and carrying more than two thousand people at a time, carried the boy from Oologah to its height--with the boy's heart thumping.

> His alarm lasted but a moment. Disciplining his fear, he opened his eyes and, from his perilous perch in the air, he looked down at the splendid view of the Fair buildings and saw the far-away gleam of the lake and, beyond it, the smoky mist that hid the city.[2]

There would come the day in 1915 when Will would again swallow his fear and allow himself to be carried out by a wading porter to a Glenn Curtiss flying boat at Atlantic City and a five-dollar ride. "When he landed," wrote the waiting Betty, "he was still scared, but vastly excited, and so pleased that he had a picture made of himself in the plane and took delight in exhibiting it."[3] Later, he would become strongly associated with the progress promised by the airplane, for his love of it was so great. It would satisfy his great need to see the new country just over the rise.

What accounted for his lifelong questing that would fit so well the hero of the dream of progress? In addition to any possibly

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[1]Keith, Boy's Life, p. 127. [2]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[3]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 200.

innate tendency, his role as a free, drifting cowboy probably helped to confirm it. To add to the wandering the dimension of a quest, however, perhaps another event in the boy's life may have been significant. Will Rogers lost his mother to typhoid fever when he was ten years old, himself too ill to go to the funeral. What did she mean to him? "My folks have told me what little humor I have comes from her," he once would say. "I can't remember her humor but I can remember her love and understanding of me."[1] The loss of Mary America finished the destruction of the warm and secure household that the boy had known in his first decade: Sister Sallie was married and gone, May and Maude were gone to school, and Clem was mostly gone on business and official trips. All in all, the loss of his mother remained poignant the rest of his life. Mrs. Betty Rogers, perhaps Will Rogers' only real confidant, would recall it thus:

> Will never quite got over his mother's death. He cried when he told me about it many years later. It left in him a lonely, lost feeling that persisted long after he was successful and famous. "My mother's name was Mary," he wrote, "and if your mother's name was Mary and she was an old-fashioned woman, you don't have to say much for her. Everybody knows already."[2]

Possibly an Adamic, symbolic search for the old, lost "home" partly motivated Will Rogers' lifelong questing. Whatever the reasons, what his public would see would be that he was a quester, one who was living out the implications of the dream of progress.

In such ways as we have seen so far, Will Rogers may have been

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[1]Day, A Biography, pp. 18-19.

[2]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 47.

influenced to an identification with the great American dream. A final process leading to his public representation of that vision remains to be sketched.

Will Rogers and His Magic Mirror

We have seen that even after the Oklahoma cowboy had become an established vaudeville performer, he had spoken of himself as having spun a rope and "kidded" himself so that others wouldn't "kid" him first. As he approached the end of his career, however, he sometimes talked of "influencing thought in America."[1] The process at work in effecting the change in Rogers' conceived role of himself is implicit in a remark on his career by his wife.

> His whole career was the development and unfolding of a personality through the various vehicles that seemed to be constantly and almost miraculously presenting themselves. His comment on the stage during his roping act was incidental at first, if not accidental. His writing came the same way. His entrance into the movies, too, was not of his own seeking. But once started in these fields, he made the most of each, giving to them the same enthusiasm and energy he had given to the rope in the early days.[2]

What I should like to suggest here is that public reactions to Will Rogers formed a mirror to his self that aided in "the development and unfolding of a personality through . . . various vehicles." The first gleam from that mirror had come when Texas Jack praised not only Will's skill but also his virtues that would presage a rise appropriate to the theology of the success dream. Every succeeding triumph reinforced his notion that hard, steady work was what was needed

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[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 293. Croy also reports that Will knew himself to be an international figure, but that "he didn't take it seriously," p. 230. This was an earlier Will.

[2]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 24.

in order to succeed by "riding his own horse."

He came before his first American vaudeville audience as a man out of the West, the cowboy.

> Sunday, June 11, 1905, a few people were drowsing in the audience when a cowboy shuffled out on the stage, saying not a word at all; coils of rope dangled from his hand. He tossed the rope here and there and hopped through a loop or two, as silent as a giraffe. Then suddenly from the wings a horse darted out, a rider on his back. The cowboy threw his rope and caught the horse--the first time a running horse was ever roped on the stage in the history of the world.[1]

That audience liked the performance--both because of the skill and because of the fact that the performer wore the cowboy's garb.

Later came an accidental laugh when Will, following advice to explain tricks enough that their intricacy would be clear, mumbled that he was not sure that he would be lucky enough to catch the pony; after being assured that laughter was good for the act, he sought to be funny--writing out as many as seven jokes to be used when missing the horse's nose.[2] Then he noticed that the best laughs came on jokes on which it was clear that he was really more intelligent than he seemed to be. "Swinging a rope is all right," he would say between loops, and then add with a perfectly straight face, "when your neck ain't in it." Or if he had failed to dance through a loop (either purposely or accidentally) he would look embarrassed and then smile to the audience in feigned naiveté, "Well, I got all my feet through but one."[3] certainly, many of his lines were of the sort as the number five alternative "gag" for use when missing the horse's nose: "I should of [sic] sprinkled a

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[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 103. [2]Ibid., p. 107.

[3]Quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 57; Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 107.

little musilage [sic] on his nose, this thing might then hang on." But from the audience response to the "wisely innocent" jokes, the images of the old American comic figures and of the American Adam began to fuse with the figure of the cowboy hero.

From Betty Rogers, the listener whom Will most wanted to enchant, came the gleam of the mirror that told him to talk on public events and prominent men. Around ten years after that first vaudeville appearance, he got a job with Ziegfeld at the famous Midnight Frolic, only to suffer from a problem of needing more new material than ever. Without knowing that he was about to be fired at Ziegfeld's order, he came to the Ziegfeld writer and producer and asked for a raise.

> Gene Buck did not have the heart to tell him the bad news.
>
> Finally, as they talked, Will said, "My wife says I ought to talk about what I read in the papers. She says I'm always readin' the papers, so why not pass along what I read?"
>
> "You might get us sued."
>
> "I think I could keep away from that. I'd keep it principally to public figures."
>
> "Try it out," said Gene Buck and went away, leaving the sword dangling.[1]

The audiences came, they heard, and Will conquered. He was so successful that in the fall of 1915, he was asked to be a part of a travelling Friar's Club show that would make a quick tour of principal cities in the East. In Baltimore, the President of the United States occupied a box seat. A nervous Will Rogers played the wise innocent with the American punitive expedition to Mexico and with the lack of American preparedness and then, encouraged by the President's own laughter, made a frontal attack--sidewise. With pauses marked by rope tricks, he

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[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 137.

commented,

> We are facing another Crisis in Europe tonight . . . but our President here has had so many of them lately that he can just lay right down and sleep beside one of those things . . . . President Wilson is getting along fine now to what he was a few months ago . . . . Do you realize, People that at one time in our negotiations with Germany that he was five Notes behind![1]

Here was the wisely-innocent American Adam from the free-and-easy West, talking on such audacious terms with the President of the United States that his action was a testimonial both to equality and to the penetrating powers of the seemingly-plain cowboy. His magic mirror had led him not only to triumph but to the beginnings of his own public identification with the great American dream.

With time, Will Rogers would add to and amplify his embodiment of the great dream, both by action and by word. His period of national fame and influence was to coincide with times that were appropriate for an affirmation of the dream.

Call of the Times

A spectator at the Ziegfeld Follies of 1921 would see an incongruity that was an inspiration of showmanship: standing amid the overpowering orchid-like splendor of beautiful girls in pastel silks designed to glorify the American girl's form, Will Rogers lent a breath of prairie air with his blue flannel shirt, his leather chaps, his lariat, and his pungent comments. The picture was symbolic, perhaps, of the relation of Will Rogers to his times. The years between 1920 and 1935 required an affirmation of the great American dream in

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[1]Quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 81.

somewhat the same way as the saccharinity of the Follies needed Will's tang. Between the Populist Revolt and the end of Wilson's regime, only a few clues pointed to what would become the disillusion and unrest of the 'twenties. Then, 1929 brought the worse depression the world had ever known. These were times when an identification with the great dream would speak to the hearts of the people.

Before the 'Twenties: Faint Tremors

While Theodore Roosevelt was pacifying the Muckrakers and Woodrow Wilson was preaching his New Freedom, some signs presaged the challenges to the great dream in the 'twenties and 'thirties. The point is that the troublous times had their beginnings amidst the promises of the reform era.

In the world of the intellect, however, the dream of progress reigned strong. Noble believes that the social philosophers, coming from the fields of social science and technical philosophy, committed themselves to the inevitability of progress right up to the moment of World War I. "They did this by forcing their technical ideas into strange patterns, and by ignoring the actual behavior of men in the new urban-industrial communities."[1] On the other hand, that the flow of new reform ideas began to ebb around the turn of the century may have been significant.[2]

Among writers of note, optimism was much less marked. Mark

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[1]David W. Noble, "Dreiser and Veblen in the Literature of Cultural Change," Studies in American Culture, ed. Kwiat and Turpie, p. 146.

[2]Parrington, American Dreams, pp. 101-102.

Twain, that microcosm of the American experience, had turned the dream into nightmare with the creation of Satan in The Mysterious Stranger; instead of the hopeful American Adam, readers witnessed in 1916 a "totally cynical commentator on human nature [who had] moved into the center of Mark Twain's imagination."[1] Created, partly, no doubt, to purge Twain's self-imposed guilt at the death of a daughter, as De Voto has argued, Satan was also the natural result of Twain's earlier disgust with the Gilded Age and of his acceptance of a Darwinian universe that denied man his free will to act.[2] Earlier had appeared Jack London's Martin Eden, and characters like him, who succeeded by material standards but who failed in the dreamed-of pursuit of happiness.[3] Theodore Dreiser, steeped in Nietzsche and Darwin via Spencer, transformed the success dream with the creation of Frank Cowperwood in 1912: this success figure was an Alger hero, all right, but Lynn shows he was also a "'rebellious Lucifer . . . glorious in his sombre conception of the value of power,'" Nietzschean, and full of "chemisms" that gave him personal magnetism together with powers of thought transference.[4] Other writers, such as Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Hamlin Garland, David Graham Phillips, and Robert Herrick, either were denying the optimism of the times or else were searching for alternatives to the dominant values of their society.

Political thinkers and politicians exhibited the same mixture

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[1]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 161.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Lynn, The Dream of Success, pp. 107-117. [4]Ibid., p. 51.

of optimism and pessimism as did the philosophers and littérateurs. Writing in 1909, near the end of the Roosevelt years, Herbert Croly was not so sanguine of the future as were some of the intelligentsia and was also less confident in the foresight of the people.

> This vision of a better future is not, perhaps, as unclouded for the present generation of Americans as it was for certain former generations; but in spite of a more friendly acquaintance with all sorts of obstacles and pitfalls, our country is still figured in the imagination of its citizens as the Land of Promise. They still believe that somehow and sometime something better will happen to good Americans than has happened to men in any other country . . . .[1]

After the Taft years and during the first Wilson administration, however, perhaps even the doubters like Croly found hope in the New Freedom as enunciated by Wilson, who described it thus:

> Human freedom consists in perfect adjustments of human interests and human activities and human energies.
> . . . . . .
> I feel confident that if Jefferson were living in our day he would see what we see: that the individual is caught in a great confused nexus of all sorts of complicated circumstances, and that to let him alone is to leave him helpless as against the obstacles with which he has to contend; and that, therefore, law in our day must come to the assistance to see that he gets fair play; that is all, but that is much. Without the watchful interference, the resolute interference, of the government, there can be no fair play between individuals and such powerful institutions as trusts.[2]

This doctrine of freedom as the perfect adjustment of parts, guaranteed by the government, was the "faith of Jefferson writ large and vindicated by more than a century of successful application to a growing and changing people."[3] Indeed, so victorious did the Jeffersonian values

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[1]Croly, The Promise of American Life, p. 5.

[2]Quoted in Davis et al., Modern American Society, pp. 30-31.

[3]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 212.

seem that they provided the stereotypes of all political parties; and as late as 1918, it was a distinct advantage to a politician to invoke the myth of the garden by claiming farm origins.[1] In fact, the catholicity of the Jeffersonian ideal was itself a danger to the American dream.

> The philosophy of the free individual and the economic doctrine of laissez-faire were applicable to the so-called Robber Barons as well as to the Puritans, even though somewhere along the road certain basic values seemed to have become inverted. Assumptions which had been developed by an agrarian economy were forced to adjust in a few years to an industrial economy without sacrifice of ideals and habits--an obvious impossibility.[2]

The wind stood to reap the whirlwind.

On other levels, the American dream seemed challenged, also. "The celebrated disenchantment of the American 'twenties did not flower out of the soil of the war, but out of the bewildering and confusing times in the first decade of the twentieth century."[3] The trouble was economic as well as sociological. Members of what supposedly was the most stable segment of American society, the middle class, were disillusioned by the burden of a type of success defined as having to outdo one's parents and also by the bewildering changes effected by industrialism, urbanization, and immigration.[4] What of the new men, the rising class of managers who were replacing the old entrepreneurs?

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[1]Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 269; Adams, Epic of America, p. 137.

[2]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 139.

[3]Lynn, The Dream of Success, p. 122.

[4]Ibid., pp. 122-23.

> On the eve of the first World War men could still make money, but only under handicaps. Business critics blamed the trusts, the friends of the trusts blamed an unfriendly government. Quite apart from the question of blame, however, one fact stood out: the American self-help tradition had fallen upon evil days.[1]

Nevertheless, to the masses of Americans such tremors probably went unnoticed among the shakings of the dynamo. Herbert Croly was probably right in his 1909 belief that the majority of Americans believed that a better future for all would come automatically. Young Betty Blake of Rogers, Arkansas, in St. Louis for the World's Fair and for a renewal of acquaintance with Will Rogers, probably spoke for the multitudes when she saw St. Louis as the type of Progress. Besides, soon would come a war which would fan the Wilsonian zeal for reform to white heat in a crusade to make the world safe for democracy--and which would make for easy profits and thus refurbish the success dream.

The 'Twenties: Rumblings

If Wilsonian idealism grew cold during the decade, the rekindling of the success dream balanced the loss for the many, perhaps. Yet, there were subterranean rumblings among the intelligentsia and the literary artists; the business paradise shifted uneasily from them and from the overturn in patterns of living.

Among the thinkers of America, the doctrine of inevitable progress fell into disrepute. "The inescapable fact of World War I, a war that had not been included in the vision of Utopia, succeeded in finally undermining the castle in the air," wrote one student of the

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[1]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 167.

scene. "It did so at the price of a debilitating confusion on the part of those who held the true faith."[1] Perhaps the case of Frederick Jackson Turner is typical of what happened in intellectual circles after World War I.

> The First World War had shaken Turner's agrarian code of values as it destroyed so many other intellectual constructions of the nineteenth century. He continued to struggle with the grievous problems of the modern world, but his original theoretical weapons were no longer useful.[2]

The dream of progress and the Agrarian synthesis receded to mere vapors of the imagination for such men.

Among the serious writers of the decade, the growing disillusion found expression in fictional characters and through invective. True, writers worked in the good air of freedom, but "it was the freedom of iconoclasm rather than that of inspiration."[3] Coming to adulthood when peace, prosperity, and progress were taken for granted, many of these writers had rushed forth to set affairs right during the great war, only to suffer cultural shock when the war ended by discovering an America of war profits coupled with a sense of self-righteousness. "A second disillusionment then turned them against this insensitive country of theirs, and they took up, with all the enthusiasm they had put into the military crusade, a battle for literary and moral integrity both in America and in themselves."[4] Thus dreamers of dreams at heart,

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[1]Noble, "Dreiser and Veblen," Studies in American Culture, ed. Kwiat and Turpie, p. 146.

[2]Smith, Virgin Land, p. 303.

[3]Howard, Literature and the American Tradition, p. 265.

[4]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 245.

their inverted idealism produced the myths of "Bitter America" and of "the Lost Generation."

In 1920, F. Scott Fitzgerald's Amory Blaine struck at the heart of the dream: apparently overcoming the handicaps of a wealthy background, Blaine discovered, nevertheless, that his successes in athletics, friends, writing, and romance were simply preparation for his complete disillusionment.[1] Nor could the dream be realized by working from the opposite direction--from the world of the disadvantaged to that of the privileged: Fitzgerald's great Gatsby in 1925 was the American Adam denied his second chance by a "society's hard malice and shallow sophistication."[2] In 1922, Sinclair Lewis dealt with the illusions of the dream of success and showed it to be a nightmare.

> His portrait of Babbitt added a new word to the American dictionary because it created a symbol of the little man caught up in the success-worship, the materialism, of a city world in an industrial society. Compassion mingled with scorn to reveal the lost humanity in this pathetic victim of the illusions with which he was surrounded. Thereafter, each Lewis character discovered another hole in the mousetrap, usually by sticking his head into it.[3]

Also in 1922 came T.S. Eliot's Wasteland, with Sweeney, Burbank, and Prufrock, "representative, each in his way, of modern man's incompetence to deal directly with his condition."[4] In 1925 appeared Clyde Griffiths in a version of the rise of Ragged Dick that led to his fall, through no fault of his own, in An American Tragedy; here, Dreiser "succeeded

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[1]Ibid., pp. 258-59. [2]Lewis, The American Adam, pp. 198-99.

[3]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 223.

[4]Ibid., p. 282.

at last in making the experience he knew stand for the crisis of a society and an era."[1] Hart Crane, after having confidently launched forth to celebrate the great dream of progress through spiritualization of material gains in America, admitted failure and believed in 1926 that America no longer had the possibilities which Whitman had glimpsed.[2] In the impotent Jake Barnes of Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, the postwar times seemed to find a symbol of their own sterility; nihilism seemed complete.[3] To all of these writers and to others like them, the dream had become nightmare.

Other writers struck at cherished American values. In 1922 Harold Stearns published Civilization in the United States, a collection of essays treating almost every aspect of American life pessimistically. Henry L. Mencken, who had attracted attention through his iconoclasm even before the end of the war, cooperated with George Jean Nathan in 1920 to produce a biting commentary in The American Credo and rose to his crescendo, perhaps, in his damning Notes on Democracy in 1926. And, of course, he had the American Mercury, from whose pages he attacked Babbitry, political illiteracy, weak-kneed educators, fundamentalism, Communists, Socialists, Red-baiters, and Rotarians. "If he had in mind any other purpose in his diatribes than for the elite of mankind to laugh derisively at all lesser men, he concealed it well."[4] Thus

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[1]Ibid., p. 229.

[2]Willingham, "The Whitman Tradition," pp. 165, 167-68.

[3]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 271.

[4]John D. Hicks, Republican Ascendancy: 1921-1933 ("The New American Nation Series"; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 185. See also pp. 184-86.

the attacks seemed motivated not by hope for reform but rather by a Nietzschean scorn for less-than-supermen.

Popular art of the time was less certain of the failure of America to keep its promise. During the decade, Douglas Fairbanks and Mickey Mouse echoed to the people a message of activism, pluck, and ingenuity that they wanted to hear.[1] The cowboy on the silver screen shadowed forth a promise, the substance of which the intelligentsia felt had been denied. The cowboy symbolized freedom, individuality, and closeness to nature.[2] It is true that Paul Bunyan, moving from folk into popular literature, exhibited a certain nostalgia for a lost, golden, pre-industrial age, but his image as a shrewd manager could well have been uppermost in his readers' minds.[3] Further, publications such as American Magazine and Saturday Evening Post kept the doorknob to success polished. The shifting of basement rocks among the intelligentsia may well have seemed only faint tremors to the populace.

That Americans, however, had a sense of lost or frustrated mission is clear.

> Beginning with Theodore Roosevelt and culminating during Woodrow Wilson's first term, the reform spirit effected a series of domestic innovations that gladdened the hearts of forward-looking citizens; then, as a logical projection of the same spirit into international affairs, came the crusade "to make the world safe for democracy," which to many liberals meant also to make the whole world democratic. But immediately after the war the reaction set in, and the pendulum that had swung so far to the left headed backward toward the right.[4]

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[1]Fishwick, American Heroes, p. 229. See also p. 175: "Doug, Mickey, and our other celluloid idols tell us what we are."

[2]Ibid., p. 222. [3]Hoffman, Paul Bunyan, pp. 103-105.

[4]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 23.

So far had public opinion in the country swung away from the ideal of Wilson's New Freedom that the government virtually abdicated in favor of the business which it was supposed to keep in balance for the sake of fair play. Probably, most Americans approved: farmers the whole country over, for example, were urging Congress in 1921 to accept Henry Ford's proposal to purchase control of what one day would become the TVA--including a government loan at low interest to finance the payment, which itself was to have been only a small fraction of what the government had already invested. So low had the liberal tide sunk that it was all that Senator Norris could do to prevent the sale, much less move the government forward in the development of the region.[1] Andrew Mellon, becoming Secretary of the Treasury after resigning directorships in sixty corporations capitalized at $2,000,000,000, urged tax reduction for corporations and for incomes over $66,000: he elicited a charge from Senator LaFollette: "Wealth will not and cannot be made to bear its full share of taxation."[2] The dream of equality of economic opportunity would have seemed to be obviously challenged, but many Americans seemed unaware of it. The Harding administration was scandal-ridden and corrupt; heading the list was the Sinclair-Doheny scheme that would have taken a $200,000,000 profit from the government.

> But the obvious inference that similar but undisclosed transactions were probably a commonplace of big business worried only the liberal journals and other professional worriers. For the average American all this was taken for granted as just another aspect of "normalcy."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 63. [2] Ibid., p. 53.

[3] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

Events were to prove that the people of Coolidge's time wanted no changes and added no dimensions to the great dream's ideals, such as faith in the average man, civil liberty, equality of opportunity, and social justice.[1] By 1924, public opinion had veered so far away from any sense of international responsibility that an immigration act was passed which would reduce arrival of the world's wretched ones to a trickle. "The Statue of Liberty now lifted her lamp only for a favored few."[2] Then, in 1926, came the enactment of the Mellon tax, with the result that a much greater concentration of wealth was possible.

> A man with a million-dollar annual income now paid less than $200,000 in federal taxes, instead of over $600,000 as formerly; while for the larger incomes, which would include Mellon's, the savings were still more substantial. Concessions to the small taxpayer were held at a minimum.[3]

Jefferson may have tugged the heartstrings, but Hamilton held the purse strings. The American dream was being denied, and the people seemed unconscious that it was.

In the person of Calvin Coolidge they had a figure to catch their attention. The strands of the Coolidge legend were designed at once to connect him with the great dream and with the tenor of the times. On the one hand, he was the American Adam and the self-made man. "The average American," writes Gamaliel Bradford, "saw in Coolidge just the virtues that were supposed to constitute the American ideal and supposed to have made America." He continued,

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[1]Wecter, The Hero in America, p. 487.

[2]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 132.

[3]Ibid., p. 106.

> Coolidge incarnated thrift, self-denial, plain and simple living, straightforward, hard-headed honesty. The average American had heard that his fathers [sic] had these virtues and had made a great nation by means of them.[1]

On the other hand, the stories of Coolidge's silence (and therefore, of his wisdom), of his lack of flexible intellectuality, of his inaction, and of his cautiousness and shrewdness were all calculated to appeal to a following when maintenance of the status quo was uppermost. "The stage was set for the Coolidge legend," wrote one student of public opinion. "It was easy to star President Coolidge because he had to a considerable extent many of the characteristics ascribed to him."[2] "Silent Cal" was the right man for a people silent on the values of the American dream.[3] Coolidge's silence was such a trademark that in 1931, after a return from a world tour Will Rogers would play the wise innocent during an interview: "Oh, I landed in Cairo, yes--but didn't--didn't see the Spinx [sic]. I had already seen Mr. Coolidge."

So far, then, during the decade, as the first historian of the American dream has pointed out, "The battle cries of Roosevelt and Wilson in the struggle to realize the American dream had been changed into the small town Chamber of Commerce shouts for 'Coolidge pros-

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[1]Quoted in Albig, Modern Public Opinion, p. 147.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Yet, without wishing to equate the dream with any single political party, I should point out that the progressive LaFollette polled a respectable number of popular votes in the 1924 election; further, even the hard-headed businessmen's administration could, in the summer of 1928, perform the idealistic act of signing a treaty of peace with France and thirteen other nations which renounced war "as an instrument of national policy." See Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, pp. 101-105, 151.

perity.'"[1] For, in contrast with other categories of the great vision, the success dream and its worship had undergone a process of revitalization since its own ill-repute in the days just prior to the World War.[2] True, the country boy was no longer exclusively the hero, and emphasis upon "personality" replaced some of the other virtues. But the rags-to-riches theme was played everywhere from the great bull market to the great Florida land bubble (which seems somehow the epitome not only of what happened to real estate in other localities but also seems an emblem of the constant mergers, stock-splitting, and holding companies that were driving stock values to unprecedented heights). In Florida, writes Hicks,

> According to one estimate the number of lots platted and offered for sale reached 20 million. Prices, once low, rose to fantastic heights. A New Yorker who had bought a stretch of land in West Palm Beach for a reasonable price before the craze struck sold it in 1923 for $800,000. It was then turned into city lots which sold for $1.5 million. By 1925 it was valued at $4 million. Lots fronting on the sea were most in demand and might bring as much as $15,000 to $25,000 each. Prices grew more moderate farther inland, as well they might, for sometimes the plats extended into swamps and thickets ten, twenty, or even thirty miles from the shore. Throughout most of 1925 the boom continued unabated, but by January, 1926, it was apparent that something had gone wrong; the visitors were not coming in the numbers expected, installment collections were beginning to fall off, new purchasers grew harder and harder to find. It was all over before nature took a hand, but a vicious hurricane that struck the state on September 18, 1926, and turned the jerry-built developments into ruins, sobered up even the most ardent enthusiasts.[3]

One other modification in the success dream might be noted: the prejudice against speculation seemed, on the surface at least, to be

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[1]Adams, Epic of America, p. 398.

[2]Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 168.

[3]Republican Ascendancy, p. 118.

lessening.

Meanwhile, however, the "Coolidge prosperity" continued. On balance, the country was prosperous. But there were a few "soft spots." The share in the prosperity for the white-collar workers and professional classes was insufficient to keep step with the Joneses; labor's share was too small to keep up with the swarm of new essentials--so that in many such families, wives and children held jobs to supplement the income; the share for the unemployed, of course, was nothing; and for the farmer, the share was "disproportionately small."[1] By 1929, the share of the top five per cent of the population, however, had reached a height of one-third of all the personal income.[2] What was it that de Crèvecoeur had said so long ago about there being in America no "despotic prince, . . . rich abbot, or . . . mighty lord" to claim a part of the American's own fruits of his own labor?

The descendants of that American farmer had suffered enough to know that something was wrong. Letters to Secretary of Agriculture Wallace in 1921 testified to the plight of sharecropper and big commercial farmer alike.[3] A letter from a Montana farmer to his banker mixed pathos and humor.

> I got your letter about what I owe you. Now be patient. I ain't forgot you. Please wait . . . . If this was judgment and you were no more prepared to meet your Maker than I am to meet your account, you sure would have to go to Hell. Trusting you will do this, I remain, sincerely yours . . . .[4]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 127-28. [2]Ibid., p. 230.

[3]Gilbert C. Fite, George N. Peek and the Fight for Farm Parity (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 3.

[4]Quoted in ibid., p. 4.

Between 1920 and late 1921, wheat in Minneapolis dropped from $2.94 a bushel to $.92; good beef steers went from nearly 15¢ a pound to only 7¢; cotton and corn suffered similar declines; the value of all agricultural products plunged by a full third between 1920 and 1921.[1] The price drop, coupled with high costs of production, was catastrophic. Still, by the middle of the decade, farm prices were higher than in the period of good farm times prior to 1914; more tractors, trucks, stationary engines, and electricity were in use. Yet insufficient price rises, coupled with higher taxes and declining land values, meant that relative to the purchasing power of other major groups in the economy, the farmer was inferior, and he knew it.[2] Under the leadership of a farm equipment executive, George N. Peek, the American farmer fought for government legislation to provide farm prices that would give agriculturalists a degree of buying power on a "parity" with other groups in the economy.

Nevertheless, believes the historian of the movement, the underlying motive in the drive for passage of the McNary-Haugen bill was deeper than better living standards. "Basically, it was a conflict between agrarian and industrial capitalism," writes Fite. "In the 1920's farmers were making a last-ditch stand against industrial and commercial domination."[3] At bottom, of course, it was a reiteration of the Jeffersonian agrarianism. Peek, following a typical line of argument, would assert,

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[1] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[2] Ibid., pp. 120-22.

[3] Ibid., p. 122.

> Some of the countries of Europe made their choice, electing to become industrial rather than agricultural, thus relegating their agriculture to a system of peasantry. The political results speak for themselves.[1]

The fact was, of course, that agriculture had already become subordinated to industry. Just as the McNary-Haugen bill was a symbol, its successive defeats provided an emblem of the successful challenge to the agrarian dream.

Added to the rumbling of writers and to the faults in Coolidge prosperity, shifts in patterns of living made for a time of social turmoil. There was, first of all, that noble experiment, prohibition, which called forth a kind of affirmation of the dream of freedom. "People who wished to drink had no notion of being deprived of their liquor, whatever the Constitution might say on the subject; indeed, it became the smart thing to drink, and many who had been temperate in their habits before were now moved to imbibe freely as a protest against the legal invasion of their 'personal liberty.'"[2] Supplying the liquor for these freedom fighters became a big business, with plenty of competition among the aspiring free enterprisers. Al Capone, after a fantastic series of unpunished killings, emerged as the top entrepreneur, even becoming something of a national hero--an ikon of individualism and of the self-made man. Defying Federal enforcement and rival syndicates alike, he seemed alone, invincible, and admirable. He even expressed a sense of community responsibility, in the tradition of the success dream.

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[1] Ibid., p. 124. See pp. 124-25 for other examples from other farm spokesmen. In 1908, Theodore Roosevelt had written similar views.

[2] Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 178.

> Public service is my motto. Ninety-nine per cent of the people of Chicago drink. I've tried to serve them decent liquor and square games.[1]

An unmistakable sign of Capone's role as a distorted image of the success dream was the publication in 1930 of a full-length biography of Scarface Al.[2] "What's the matter with an age," Will Rogers would ask, "when our biggest gangster is our greatest national interest?"[3]

Seeming to refute any belief in the innate goodness of people, sensational murders and kidnappings, together with robberies and sex crimes, received tremendous attention. "The Hearst newspapers, still the largest chain in the country, exploited all such sensational news without restraint, and were joined in the enterprise by the new tabloids, which concentrated on sex and crime, and assisted nonreaders with gruesome illustrations."[4] On the other hand, possibly the younger generation was engaged in actively redefining natural goodness--if Freud's doctrines on sex made it natural and if anything natural was good. Whatever the reason, however, "the fact remained that many young adults not only talked about sex with an abandon that shocked their elders, but indulged their desires freely without benefit of clergy."[5]

To some observers, it may have seemed that the dream of freedom and equality had also fallen upon evil days. The Ku Klux Klan,

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[1]Quoted in Fishwick, American Heroes, pp. 197-98.

[2]Fred D. Pasley, Al Capone: The Biography of a Self-Made Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Company, 1930).

[3]Quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 289.

[4]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 180.

[5]Ibid., p. 181.

given the talents of promoter Edward Y. Clarke, grew steadily in influence from 1920 until 1925; not until 1928 was its power clearly on the wane. Utilizing the superordinate goal of hatred, it appealed to the intolerance of some Southerners against the Negro, to chauvinists who resented new immigrants, to certain prejudiced Protestants who revelled in righteous hatred of Jews and Catholics, to persons of fundamentalist-prone personalities who were convinced that all "wets" were Sons of Satan, and to reactionaries who wanted to "get" radicals or liberals of any persuasion. Un-American in its denial of the historic American dream, the Klan had its "legitimizer" to accompany its functions.

> Professing the deepest devotion to Americanism, the Klan often undertook to enforce its ideas by direct action. It burned fiery crosses at night to proclaim its presence; it administered whippings to Negroes, aliens, and sinners; it made its weight felt in elections. By the end of 1924 there were perhaps four or five million Klansmen in the United States, far too many voters for politicians to disregard with impunity.[1]

Coming along with or remaining after the Klan were other movements ostensibly protecting true Americanism. The Scopes trial, in 1925, signalled another attempt to enforce legislated virtue; fundamentalists wanted to stop talk on evolution in the schools and thus attempt to keep youth in a state of naive Adamism. Henry Ford attacked Jews as international conspirators seeking to subvert the Gentile world. Mayor William Thompson of Chicago founded his America First Foundation as watchdog over patriotism and schoolbooks. The Daughters of the American Revolution and the American Legion deplored textbook treatments that were deviations from the traditional in American history.[2] The election

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[1] Ibid., p. 95. See also pp. 94, 128.

[2] Ibid., pp. 182-84.

of 1928 demonstrated the ability of rum and Romanism to arouse individual voters to heights of intolerance on both sides of the fence, even though recent research indicates that the national result was uncorrelated with these issues.[1] It may not be too unfair to the spirit of tolerance in the 'twenties to speculate that John Humphrey Noyes, founder of Oneida Community, might have been permitted less time for his experiment than during his own period.

Notwithstanding governmental corruption and inaction, financial greed, crime, a revolution in morals, and a wave of intolerance, most Americans probably derived their enjoyment from Mah Jongg, crossword puzzles, radio, movies, and automobile trips--leading the life of "the big normal majority," as Will Rogers would phrase it. By 1929, somewhat fewer than 12,000,000 families had radios; 95,000,000 Americans a week were moviegoers; and 23,000,000 cars roamed the roads.[2] Further, American scholarship showed a "vigorous life," and many businessmen "took a genuine interest in the men they hired."[3] In their adulation of Lindbergh, the people showed both that they retained a considerable residue of idealistic tendencies and that needed an affirmation of the American dream.

> By singling out the fact that Lindbergh rode alone, and by naming him a pioneer of the frontier, the public projected

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[1]See Ruth C. Silva, Rum, Religion, and Votes (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), p. 50. "The lack of correlation between Smith's strength and the religious, prohibition, and metropolitan factors is evidence of a lack of relationship--causal or otherwise. All of this does not mean that these issues may not have influenced the electoral behavior of certain individual voters."

[2]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, pp. 114, 171, 173.

[3]Ibid., p. 191.

> its sense that the source of America's strength lay somewhere in the past and that Lindbergh somehow meant that America must look backward in time to rediscover some lost virtue. . . . But there was another aspect, one in which the public celebrated the machine and the highly organized society of which it was a product. The response to Lindbergh reveals that the American people were deeply torn between conflicting interpretations of their own experience.[1]

The masses of Americans during the 'twenties probably were happy with their pattern of living. Further, "although the prevailing mood was conservative, this did not mean that the people had lost faith in the idea of progress."[2] Nevertheless, as the Lindbergh adulation shows, they would welcome an embodiment of the American dream; the rumblings of the approaching earthquake could easily have caused moments of misgiving. After 1929, misgivings would deepen, perhaps, during the testing of the American dream.

To 1935: the American Earthquake[3]

At first the yawning cracks and chasms seemed far off. Through the worst five days of the panic of October, 1929, thousands of investors lost fortunes overnight. For the month taken together, stock values declined an average of over 35%.[4] Millions of Americans paused in their daily rounds, wondered what such events could do to them, and stirred uneasily. The answer was not many months in coming. By 1930, un-

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[1]John W. Ward, "The Meaning of Lindbergh's Flight," Studies in American Culture, ed. Kwiat and Turpie, pp. 35-36.

[2]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 167.

[3]I am, of course, obviously indebted to Edmund Wilson for the metaphor.

[4]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 224.

employment reached five million persons; it would stand at thirteen million in 1932.

> The horrors of these troubled times, unknown to later generations, were terribly real to those who lived through them. Savings disappeared; purchases made on installments had to be returned; substantial citizens lost their homes on mortgages; insurance companies had difficulty in meeting their obligations; stores closed for lack of customers; vandals or pranksters broke out the windows of vacant factory buildings; theatres went dark; university enrollments dropped abysmally, and faculty members lost their jobs or had their salaries cut; hospitals were short of patients; soup kitchens opened; bread lines began to form; local relief systems broke down; panhandlers roamed the streets; philanthropy dried up to a trickle; the jobless slept on park benches, in the doorways of public buildings, or on the ground; uncounted numbers knew the meaning of hunger and cold and fear.[1]

Depending upon the general attitude of the publisher or the writer, the extremes of America's "fundamental soundness" would be presented: The New York Times rotogravure section could picture one of the specially-decorated roadsters being purchased by a rich debutante as gifts for friends in a patriotic effort to keep money in circulation; Edmund Wilson could write about the garbage eaters.

While the youth of America, especially the unemployed and the students, were moving toward a disenchantment with all sets of values, oldsters who had lived through post-Civil War Panics found themselves in the worst state ever.[2] One octogenerian was to recall that the panic of 1873 had left him unemployed and that he had drifted West to work as railroad section hand and eventually become a modestly success-

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[1]Ibid., p. 229.

[2]Macdougall, Understanding Public Opinion, p. 145 and Dixon Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, Vol. XIII of A History of American Life Series, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger and Dixon Ryan Fox (13 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929-1948), p. 35.

ful grocer; when the panic of 1893 had stripped him again, he had migrated to California, borrowed a stake, and had become a successful rancher; now, he had lost everything again. He told why this was the worst blow.

> There isn't an acre of decent land to be had for homesteading. There isn't a railroad to be built anywhere. Years ago Horace Greeley made a statement, "Young man, go West and grow up with the country." Were he living today, he would make the statement, "Go West, young man, and drown yourself in the Pacific Ocean, like the lemmings do in Norway."[1]

The national administration became more involved in relief and recovery efforts than did any preceding one during a panic time. Working to relieve and revive industry through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, attempting to resuscitate agriculture through the Federal Farm Board, and making available to the Red Cross vast stores of government commodities, the administration still failed, partly and simply because of the magnitude of the task.[2] So far from recovery was industry in the summer of 1932 that "blue chip" stocks such as American Telephone and Telegraph stood at 72, after a pre-depression high of 304; General Motors was down from 73 to 8; United States Steel was at 22 after a high of 262; since 1929, market value of all stocks had dropped from nearly $90,000,000,000 to about $15,500,000,000.[3] Thirteen million in the laboring force were idle. On the farms, capital value had declined $79,000,000,000 in 1919 to $58,000,000,000 in 1929 to $38,000,000,000 in 1932; Department of Agriculture estimates set the average net income

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[1]Quoted in Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, p. 35.

[2]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, pp. 265, 271-74, and 218-39.

[3]Ibid., p. 224.

per farmer at $230.[1]

The result of all of it was that relief, much less recovery, seemed impossible. Although the Red Cross was in the process of distributing 85,000,000 bushels of wheat and 844,000 bales of cotton held by the Federal Farm Board, the hungry and naked suffered.[2] The American Association of Social Workers reported that the situation had passed beyond local experience and, therefore, local control: in New York City, families on relief were receiving an average of $2.39 per week; one-third of Pennsylvania's population was on relief; forty per cent of Chicago's work force was idle; and in Houston, Texas, destitute Mexican and Negro applicants for aid were being told to shift for themselves.[3]

It is little wonder that the words of Roger Babson sounded a bit thin to Americans as they read his predictions for that year.

> Hard work, hard thinking, efficiency and integrity are coming back into vogue. The surest signal of business recovery is the recovery that is already taking place in our ideals.[4]

Actually, the depression was dulling the American sense of enterprise and was tarnishing the success dream that had invited so much worship in the preceding decade.[5]

In the spring of 1932, veterans gathered in Washington to exert pressure for passage of the Patman bill, which would have paid immediately the remaining 50% of the soldiers' adjusted compensation,

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[1]Ibid., p. 264. [2]Ibid., p. 265. [3]Ibid., p. 270.

[4]Quoted in Wyllie, The Self-Made Man in America, p. 173.

[5]Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, p. 33.

or bonus. They took up quarters in unoccupied buildings and in a "Hooverville" shanty town on the Anacostia Flats. On June 17, the Senate killed the Patman bill. Hoover then set about dispersing the Bonus Expeditionary Force by offering to pay transportation home, then by sending out police, and, finally, by calling out tanks and cavalry after two Bonus soldiers had been killed by the police.

> Politically speaking, the President could hardly have made a more disastrous blunder. His contention that the bonus seekers were infiltrated by "Communists and persons with criminal records" carried little weight with the voters, too many of whom understood by that time all too well the motives of the unemployed veterans who had marched on Washington.[1]

It appeared that the government did not exist for the good of the people.

Then came Roosevelt. Whether his election signified little else than that the people had nowhere else to go but to the Democrats, or whether it shadowed forth a national desire for a return to the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian-Wilsonian dream of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," hope did arise shortly after the new President's election.[2] During the famous "100 Days" Will Rogers would comment,

> The whole country is with him. Even if what he does is wrong they are with him. Just so he does something. If he burned down the Capitol, we would cheer and say, "Well, we at least got a fire started anyhow."[3]

Later, with inflation of currency, introduction of low-cost loans for homes or home improvement, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the National Recovery Administration, together

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[1]Hicks, Republican Ascendancy, p. 276.

[2]Ibid., p. 280 and Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, pp. 57-59.

[3]Quoted in Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, p. 67.

with a multitude of other agencies, the government worked by many trials and a fair share of errors toward both relief and recovery.

Nevertheless, by the summer of 1935, when Will Rogers was to die, the N.R.A. was dead and the Social Security bill was in debate; demagogues like Huey Long and Father Coughlin were perverting the dream. Huey would make every man a King if every man would consent to making Huey a dictator and trust him to carry out a nebulous, confiscatory "Share-the-Wealth" program. One estimate of his strength indicated that he could poll three or four million votes.[1] Coughlin, who later would preach hatred of the Jews, had in 1934 organized his National Union for Social Justice, boasted of having nine million adherents, and pushed for nationalization of banks, credit, utilities, and natural resources.[2] On the other end of the political continuum, the American Liberty League, with an executive board of millionaires, was formed in 1934 to combat "the tyranny of autocratic power."[3] Coupled with such nostrums as Upton Sinclair's EPIC plan and the Townsend pension plan, the thunder from the left and right gave an impression of a country that was coming apart in great gaping sections.

Among the writers, pessimism was black and would lighten only with the passage of time. The same Theodore Dreiser who had earlier written of the failures of the Russian experiment in Dreiser Looks at Russia (1928) made what might appear as a complete turnabout in Tragic America (c. 1931), explains Lynn.

> In place of Alger, he hastily substituted Marx. "America needs a uniform, scientifically planned system which will

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[1]Ibid., p. 150. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 89.

> divide work and the means of life's enjoyment among the people." Would such a system destroy "the restless and creative individualism" of the American people? To back up his negative answer . . . Dreiser pointed to the Soviet Union: "I saw no lack of individualism in Russia; creative or otherwise." On the record of Dreiser Looks at Russia, this was either a deliberate lie or amnesia--or the hysteria of a man who was dead certain that the end of the only world he had ever known was "almost here and now."[1]

Thomas Wolfe was writing a series of novels that together would form the autobiography of a personal quest for an ideal, but it would not be until after his death in 1937 that posthumous publication would confirm his credo of the necessity for "man-alive" to believe in a dream of freedom, equality, progress, and the dignity of the individual.[2] Hemingway's faith in the ultimate will to live seemed to be glimmering, since his latest novel, in 1929, had seemed not only a farewell to arms but also "a farewell to everything."[3] Not until 1936 would appear Carl Sandburg's creation of Paul Bunyan in The People, Yes as a symbol of recovery of the ideal of human dignity from all the ravages of want and hopelessness.[4] It would not be until 1939 that John Steinbeck would express his faith in the powers of the mass of average humanity in Grapes of Wrath.[5] William Saroyan seemed out of sight, over the horizon: his Human Comedy, relating the necessity of a wise innocence in the hopes for equality and democracy, would not appear until 1943.[6] Among the

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[1]The Dream of Success, p. 72.

[2]Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, pp. 156-66.

[3]Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 272.

[4]Hoffman, Paul Bunyan, pp. 135-40.

[5]Carpenter, American Literature and the Dream, pp. 169-70.

[6]Ibid., pp. 180-82.

purveyors of humor, Constance Rourke found a decrease in the note of triumph as there came the realization "that the land is not altogether an Eden and that defeat is a common human portion."[1]

When one considers that unemployment, the biggest problem of the Depression, was still to be unsolved in 1938, he understands that Americans were questioning the patterns of American life more deeply than at any time since the Civil War. "Perhaps, after all, the promise of American life would turn out merely to be propaganda, the tyranny of words or the folklore of capitalism."[2]

The times from 1920 to 1935 first called, and then cried out, for affirmations of the American dream.

The Man Against the American Sky

By 1932, Will Rogers' magic mirror had given him the most grandiose reflection he had ever had. If we glance at it, too, we can see the esteem in which Americans held him. He told James M. Cox of an idea that he had for a scenario. As related by Cox,

> It was based upon an old country philosopher who had enough mind and assertion to pretty much run his whole part of the country. He became famous statewide. And then, as the fiction unfolded, he found himself by his quaint philosophy to be known in every household in the nation.
>
> The public opinion of the country became very turbulent and out of it came his election to the Presidency.[3]

If Will Rogers played himself on the movie screen, as many believe, one

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[1] American Humor, p. 298.

[2] Wecter, The Age of the Great Depression, p. 34.

[3] Quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 159. Will Rogers' good sense, however, also dictated that the country philosopher would produce grotesque developments in Washington. He resolutely turned down every real-life invitation to run for office.

might not be too presumptuous to assume some autobiographical elements in the scenario. He had undoubtedly heard that thousands had given him write-in votes for the Presidency in 1928.[1] The building of a national image that would encourage a belief in his reliability and trustworthiness had begun many years before and had continued through the years in the form of news items and of printed interviews and feature stories, together with simple encounters with countless people who would recount them to others.[2] Will Rogers became an ikon of the American dream, in one sense of the word, because public knowledge of his life corresponded with the major features of the great American god-of-many-faces. His "quaint philosophy" showed in the quality of life he led as revealed in printed and mouth-to-mouth publicity.

Readers of The New York Times of October 13, 1915, could peruse an interview-feature which managed in one way or another to present Will Rogers as the unspoiled American Adam, as a cowboy hero, and as a success hero. As such, it shows how feature stories could relate Rogers to several aspects of the dream at once; also it exhibits almost a paradigm for Will Rogers' biographical identifications with the great American dream. Later, we shall see the paradigm at length.

In the 1915 story, the hero of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual was present in the outline of Will's Adamism. "Rogers is unspoiled," the feature writer stated. "Ten years on the stage have failed to give him any of the side of the actor, and it is

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[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 233.

[2]In the next chapter we shall see how what Will Rogers said and wrote identified him with the great dream.

this simplicity, this genuineness, that wins his audiences and proves that Barnum was only partly right."[1] Rogers was the "natural man," too, in the artless creation of his material. After the interviewer asked if the Oklahoman wrote his own patter,

> "It ain't written," he replied. "I just get out there and trust to luck, after figuring out something I think will go. But half the time I don't know what I'm going to say or what I'm saying. Sometimes I get twisted and then again I spring something that makes 'em laugh and I remember it and use it again. But mostly I trust to luck and figure that something will happen."[2]

The "something" apparently did happen, for the interviewer characterized Will's humor in a way that was appropriate both to the newness of the American Adam and to the cowboy hero. Will's wit shone forth from a "sunny soul" and was "as refreshing and pungent as the ozone of his Golden West . . . ."[3] Simple, genuine, and intuitive, Will Rogers was bound to appeal to a generation of Americans descended from Emerson and Whitman.

In the story, Will Rogers was also the Western man that Emerson had so admired. The writer explained that Will was born on an Oklahoma ranch and that he owned the place at the time of writing, intending to return to it when and if the audiences stopped coming. Further, to add to the authenticity of Will's cowboyhood was the story told by Will of his steer-roping exploit in Madison Square Garden in 1905.

> I came to New York with a show and had the luck to rope a wild steer that broke away from the arena in Madison Square Garden and started to climb up among the audience. I broke on the

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[1]"Chewing Gum and Rope in the Temple," The New York Times, October 3, 1915, VI, p. 6.

[2]Quoted in ibid. [3]Ibid.

> first page with that, and when I tried my pony act out in vaudeville Willie Hammerstein saw me and put me on the Victoria roof.[1]

(That exploit of cowboy heroism would be told and re-told for the rest of Will's life. It did not hurt his public status.) Further, the feature writer for the paper had Will recall his cowboy odysseys, in which the "real" cowboy came through, as well as the questing wanderer who also wanted to be a self-made man.

> "I guess I thought the home ranch was pretty small," he began, . . . "for I used to go away and work on ones in Texas and the West. Then one day a pal and I got all the money we could scrape together and went to South America to go into the cattle business. We stayed there some time, but I didn't make a go of it, and when we had lost all our money, and I was ashamed to send home for more, we separated and I went to South Africa."[2]

At this point in the story, the success hero begins clearly to emerge. South Africa, of course, had provided the famous opportunity of working for Texas Jack, and the cowboy from Oklahoma had taken his first real step on the road to fortune. In addition, Will Rogers exhibited in the feature story a neat correspondence with that part of the success dream which inveighed against inherited wealth.

> I could have stayed with Jack, and probably, when he died a rich man a few years later, inherited his fortune, for he thought a lot of me and he had no relatives. But I was anxious to be on the move, so I quit the show and went up to Australia.[3]

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[1]Quoted in ibid.

[2]Quoted in ibid.

[3]Quoted in ibid. I should note in passing that I am not attempting to check for accuracy all these statements or to determine whether Will Rogers was accurately quoted. The point is that these and other biographical materials to follow represent what the American public was exposed to and suggest that they went far in determining what was known of Will's life that was identifiable with the American dream.

Also present here, of course, was the appeal of the free-as-air individual.

The basic message of this first full-scale portrait for public relations would be repeated and enlarged upon in the years to follow. In the remainder of the discussion, we shall see Will Rogers' public status as the American Adam who believed in the dignity and worth of the individual and in the essential equality of all individuals; we shall see a cowboy who was the free American Adam on horseback, embodiment of the dream of freedom; we shall see Will Rogers as the benefactor, signifying not only the free individual who accepts his responsibility to his community but also the successful, self-made man who is the good steward with his wealth and his talent; we shall see, finally, Will Rogers' public status as a hero of progress.[1]

Living the Dream of the Worth of the Individual

To the knowledge of Will Rogers' national audience, he was the American Adam. He was the eternal boy; he was the natural man; he was the optimistic Adam; he was the wise innocent; he was a true friend to comrades; he was a self-reliant, Emersonian jack-of-all-trades.

From what people read or heard about Will Rogers, he appeared to keep the joyous exuberance of boyhood. A 1930 article in a mass circulation magazine made the statement directly. "Will is only a

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[1]For the sake of exposition, I have planned this arrangement of items in Will Rogers' life, realizing that a distortion may result by suggesting that the identifications proceeded in an orderly and systematic fashion. Actually, of course, many identifications could occur in the same published account; further, many of my examples could accord with more than one category of the dream. My practice will be to point this out when possible and at all times to group such examples according to the dominant appeal which they make.

child himself. He would rather play with kids than sit around and talk with grown-ups. He never has become an adult--and in that lies much of his charm."[1] Stories of his joyous boyishness circulated freely. On one movie lot the incident was told of Will's roping a Great Dane, with which he was on the best of terms by virtue of their having worked together on a motion picture; the only trouble was that the dog learned to take cover from the lasso by hiding under a clothes line.

> Here was a problem, and Rogers worked towards its solution. After many trials he found that he could cast his rope over the line in such a manner that the loop swung down underneath and lassoed the dog. The dog was crestfallen but Rogers was jubilant.[2]

No roping problem could deter him. On a windy day, he spent three-quarters of an hour in lassoing, with a too-light rope in a high wind, a movie-lot statue of a horse. "Finally, by a supreme effort, he succeeded and was so delighted that he jumped in his car, which was standing near by, and circled the square several times, tooting his horn and insisting that everyone within hearing distance observe that he had roped the statue, much to the amusement of the director who was vainly trying to film the portion of the picture not requiring [Will's] personal attention."[3] Stories of Will's eternal boyishness probably circulated wherever he went.[4] Moreover, the breath of zest and

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[1]Jerome Beatty, "Betty Holds the Reins," American Magazine, October, 1930, p. 62.

[2]Charles W. Dwyer, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 74.

[3]Ibid., p. 77.

[4]For another type that was probably making the rounds, see the account of Will's being late to a performance because of a rope-and-talk session with a group of boys, in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 115. For his boyishness at home, see supra, p.

enthusiasm which he gave to all his pursuits would have been apparent to all who read or heard them and would have added depth to the image of the eternal boy.

If the public picture had stopped here, of course, Will Rogers would have simply seemed an example of arrested development. Adding to Will's Adamism was his role as the "natural" man. In many newspaper offices and cafes across the country, he dropped in to meet the "real bird" and to get the local slant on current events.[1] On such occasions, the appeal of Will Rogers lay in his "natural" Adamism. "It wasn't so much a matter of wise-cracking or cracker-box humor, although Rogers' remarks were full of amusing and pat allusions, as it was the perfect naturalness, simplicity and above all the genuine human kindliness of the man," wrote an observer of one such session.[2] Wherever Will went, he projected the impression of a man who simply did as he pleased, pleasing others--of course--by what he did. "He's an old oak, meant to grow in its own way, and any attempt to train it would spoil it," said one feature writer. "His entire success lies in the fact that he is just himself," he concluded.[3] The ways in which Rogers manifested this "self-ness" lay chiefly in his personal habits

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156. For a story of how he kept a governor waiting while he taught a boy to handle a rope, see Folks Say of Will Rogers, p. 120.

[1]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 195. As will be seen later, in the discussion of Will's biographical identifications with the dream, he often went out of his way to talk to the "little" folks.

[2]Robert W. Ruhl, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 188. For the account of another such session, see that of Charles Kramer, quoted in ibid., pp. 171-72.

[3]Beatty, American Magazine, October, 1930, p. 62.

(about which the public was and is apparently insatiably curious). He liked to wear old clothes; he generally needed a haircut: he "snorted" at conventions. "Clothes mean nothing to him," Mrs. Betty Rogers told readers in an interview. "If he heard that the Prince of Wales was across the street, even though Will might be in pajamas and slippers, he would jump up and run across the street and say, 'Hello, Prince. How are you?'"[1] In doing as he pleased, however, Will Rogers kept to the simple pleasures, in line not only with the rural part of his constituency, but also with the spirit of Thoreau. He rode, he roped, he talked with folks. On the national broadcast to honor the memory of Rogers in 1935, when George M. Cohan spoke of Will's naturalness, he was only echoing a picture that the Oklahoman's public already had of him.

> Rogers was a natural. I think that Will Rogers was the most natural man I ever met. He was a natural humorist, a natural actor, he was a natural success. I heard a great man of the theatre at a dinner one night--a dinner tendered to Will Rogers--say that he considered Will Rogers the most successful success he had ever known, and he qualified that statement by adding, that he had never met a member of the theatrical profession who envied Will Rogers' success.[2]

He was beloved because he did seem so natural; being the natural man had long been an American ideal.

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[1]Ibid., p. 113. For the account of another interview in which Will Rogers talked on clothes, see Day, A Biography, p. 111. Croy reports that in Will's young manhood, he was a flashy dresser: Our Will Rogers, p. 56.

[2]Re-broadcast on "Biography in Sound," part two. For other testimony to the natural quality of Will Rogers' public image, see Irvin Cobb, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 79. See also Otis Ferguson, "Two Show Figures," The New Republic, September 4, 1935, p. 104.

Interfused with the boyishness and the naturalness was Will Rogers' stance as the forward-looking, optimistic Adam (a representation as appropriate to the believer in progress as was the natural man appropriate to the American Adam). The mass American audience of The Literary Digest had access to an English review which was quoted in the American magazine. There, Will's forward-looking optimism showed in his energy and confidence. To the English critic, Will Rogers was "an incarnation of the artful, absurd, bubbling energy of the Middle West, quite sure of itself . . . ."[1] Another English writer had seen the forward-looking Adam in Will Rogers.

> The experimental zest which will not accept tradition, or what other people have done, the approachableness masquerading as antipathy to race or joy of mongrelism, that Frankness which only the stupid will mistake for bad manners, the charm which seeks to disguise itself under a show of impudence, the obvious sincerity of the belief in world salvation through "boost" and "pep"--I am not persuaded that this clever presentation of the whole American pose can be accomplished with less of the actor's art than goes to make up, say the canny camaraderies of Sir Harry Lauder . . . .[2]

How many Americans were also aware of this Adamic sense of triumph? They had, at least, magazine writers here who perceived it and wanted them to see it.[3]

As can be seen, Will Rogers had in his public status the appearance of the hopeful, innocent Adam. Those who presented his

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[1]Quoted from The Daily Herald in "Will Rogers in London," The Literary Digest, August 28, 1926, p. 22.

[2]Quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 191.

[3]See, for instance, the comment by Ferguson, The New Republic, September 4, 1935, p. 104, in which he points out Will's persona as one "moving toward a final triumph over everything that was new or fancy or politically not right."

image to the public made it clear that this was a "wise" innocence, one that was more than met the eye. "He gives the impression of being the crossroads general merchandise store talkers of a continent rolled into one," wrote an American critic in 1925. Actually, Will was "an expert satirist masquerading as a helpless, inoffensive zany," he concluded.[1] Many of the press releases for Will's lecture tour of 1926-1927 contained a paragraph making essentially the same point.

> Tall, gaunt, rather awkward in his movements, to see Will Rogers for the first time one might imagine him to be a farmer taking in the sights. Yet Rogers has seen life from all angles. He has known princes and paupers, he has been sought after by politicians with all sorts of offers to lend his wit to their cause. Rogers, however, prefers to stand on his own platform for truth as he sees it. Few Americans have caught the faith of the American people as he has.[2]

His posture as the "wise innocent" was one that was suitable to win the faith of the American people. In the sense that he was clearly wiser than he pretended, Will was the wisely-innocent Adam.[3] He appeared so to his public in another way, also: his mask of ignorance together with a seasoning of goodnaturedness allowed him to be appealing in spite of the satiric barbs which he cast. "He did lots of good by speaking the truth," Fred Stone, a fellow performer, would remember, "and it didn't offend because, no matter how the truth struck home, it was always said in such a humorous way that you laughed with him."[4]

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[1]John Crawford, quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 159.

[2]Miscellaneous Scrapbook #1, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[3]See also Ferguson, The New Republic, September 4, 1935, p. 104, who perceived Will's public role as "a man in suspenders and stocking feet, unpretending, kind, bashful, not knowing about all these here new fangled . . . ideas . . ." but nevertheless triumphing.

[4]Quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 150.

In this sense, perhaps, Will's wise foolishness was in the strain of many court jesters.

About Will's public biography clung the essence of an earthy goodness which added to the impression of a living American Adam. He was clearly a gentleman, kindly and gentle in his behavior, found one editorial writer.[1] In 1928, a single act of Will's which showed his goodness and his love of comrades was his cancelling of his own more-lucrative lecture contracts in order to substitute for the plane-injured Fred Stone and thus make possible the opening of a Stone Broadway musical. Newspaper writers did not skimp in their praise. One wrote,

> No, it isn't the money that means anything in this sacrifice. It is the prompting of one man's affection for another that is the big thing. It is the urge of Will Rogers' friendship for his injured pal that counts. It is his willingness to give up something that he'd rather do to save the Stone show that makes it an unusual event on Broadway. And so Rogers emerges again as a big man in show business and in fact, an impulsive, generous, clean-souled sentimentalist.[2]

Americans had knowledge through the press and through word-of-mouth of Will Rogers' devotion to friends; it was the quality that lent warmth to the larger benefactions which would--as we shall see--identify him both as the free individual meeting his responsibilities and as the steward of success.[3]

Finally, the public knew him as an emblem of Emerson's sturdy

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[1]"Rogers and Post," Commonweal, August 30, 1935, p. 416.

[2]Burns Mantle, quoted in Day, A Biography, p. 242. For a less admiring view of Rogers' deed, see his lecture manager's story in Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 192.

[3]For another story showing Will's goodness to comrades, see the account of his generosity to Col. Mulhall as described by Walter Harrison, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, pp. 136-37.

lad who tried all professions and always, like a cat, landed right-side-up. From the time of the first feature article in 1915, nearly every sizeable story included the outlines of Will's versatility: His ranching days, his travels, Wild West shows, vaudeville, and the rest. No neater picture of the new Adam as jack-of-all-trades was given, however, than that in a widely-read magazine in 1929.

> During his amazing career from cowboy to diplomat, Will Rogers has garnered many distinctive titles. He has been billed as a broncho-buster, lariat-twirler, circus rider, vaudeville actor, musical-comedy comedian, monolog artist, film star, journalist, lecturer, writer of advertisements, after-dinner speaker, mayor, presidential candidate, congressman-at-large, and unofficial ambassador.[1]

Will Rogers was the American Adam. Later, when we see his role in publicity as a free cowboy, it will be simply the amplication of the American Adam's liberation. When we see him presented as the embodiment of the benefactor, it will be mainly transposing of the individual's concern for others. When he emerges from newsprint as a hero of progress, it will be modulation to a major key on the theme of the new Adam's forward-looking.

Will Rogers also was known to live in a way that further identified him with the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual. The "Sage of Claremore" showed that he believed in the value and powers of the common man by the nature of his personal encounters on his many journeys. Governor Frank F. Merriam of California would in 1935 recall many such confrontations, in which he had watched Will and "the folks."

> As Will Rogers mingled with us in private and public life he was always happiest while exchanging cordial courtesies with

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[1]Carl Stearns Clancy, "Aviation's Patron Saint," Scientific American, October, 1929, p. 283.

> the common people whom he enjoyed so much and served so well. He constantly saw evidences of culture in people with whom he associated in work or play even though they might be far removed from the metropolitan centers of social refinement.[1]

By such behavior among the people whom he met, the man from Oologah showed them that he thought they were worthy of respect; since such regard relates to the dream of equality, we can see in a discussion of Will's equalitarianism further instances of his dedication to the common man.

Living the Dream of Equality and Freedom

Will's behavior which the public saw or heard about made him seem the ideal American democrat. Senator A.S. Monroney of Oklahoma tells of an incident that happened in 1927. At the time, Monroney was a reporter on an Oklahoma City newspaper and had the assignment of covering the Rogers arrival.

> Will Rogers' visits always showed his great love for the average man. I met him at the train in Oklahoma City on his nation-wide trip raising money for the Mississippi flood sufferers back in the 'twenties. The Mayor, the city commission, and all the leading citizens had gathered in their "Sunday best" to welcome Will in true and dignified fashion. As they waited outside the Pullman steps, Will, with his slouch hat askew, his hair sticking out from beneath the battered headpiece, said, "Howdy," as he walked down the steps.
>
> Then he spied a shabbily dressed cowhand, standing alone and unnoticed, in the rear.
>
> "By Gosh, men, there's McGinnity," Rogers exclaimed, "he was the best rough rider in Roosevelt's company. Meet my friend McGinnity!"
>
> The official welcoming party stood back, and Will and an old friend made the trip to the hotel, alone, for an old-time visit.[2]

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[1]Quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 192. For other examples of what the public saw of Will's versatility, see press releases for lecture tour of 1926-1927, Miscellaneous scrapbook #1, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[2]"Biography in Sound," part two.

People in Oklahoma City who saw that scene were sure that Will Rogers believed in the worth of the common man and that he was an equalitarian. Similar events occurred many other times, in many places. One of the more striking episodes took place during the Depression, on the day that Rogers arrived on location for a new movie--with the usual assortment of town officials and Chamber of Commerce handshakers to greet him.

> As he stepped off the train, he noticed off to one side a hundred disreputable tramps waiting to say hello . . . .
>
> With a hurried "Howdy do" to the official party, Will sauntered over to the group of "forgotten men." Half an hour later, when he left them, he had distributed $300 among them--all the cash he had. He had to borrow money from the supervisor to get him through the trip.[1]

The cowboy ambassador thus did affirm the American dream of the worth of the individual and the dream of equality in a way that no wreath-laying ambassador could have done. Such Will Rogers stories would be repeated with loving detail that in no way detracted from the spirit of the original occasion nor from the emerging image of the American democrat.

In his relations with his fellow workers, he exhibited the same equalitarianism that he did before his public. On movie lots, he did not want distinctions to be made between himself and other workers: he did not sit at the head of a table in the Fox dining room; he seemed not to grasp the "significant fact that he was the 'star' . . . ."[2]

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[1]Day, A Biography, pp. 335-36. For other examples of the "McGinnity Effect" see Keith, Boy's Life, p. 235, Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 30; Beatty, American Magazine, October, 1930, p. 113.

[2]Charles W. Dwyer, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, pp. 70-71.

The act most symbolic, perhaps, of his equalitarianism concerned one special prerogative of the Hollywood star, the reserved folding chair. Dwyer recalled it thus.

> Usually a little gold-lettered plaque, with the name of the person to whom the chair is assigned, is fastened to the arm of the chair. A picture started on location. Rogers approached one of the "stand by" carpenters and asked to borrow a hammer for a moment. The carpenter offered to do any little service for Rogers that he might desire. Will insisted upon borrowing the hammer, giving no reason for it. He put it in his pocket and nonchalantly wandered around for a few moments until attention was apparently distracted from his purpose, when he was seen using the hammer to remove his name from the chair. He desired nothing that was not available to every one else.[1]

The king had refused his throne, an act popular since at least the time of Julius Caesar. Accounts of such incidents went from mouth-to-mouth; even if such stories were apocryphal, they had--like many of the strands in the Lincoln legend--the "truth" resulting from a congruency to a legend.

Amon Carter believed of Rogers in 1933 that he was a lover of the people. "He makes no distinction between the great and the near great, the big and the little, the successful and the unsuccessful," he wrote.[2] The years leading up to 1933 had seemed to say that there was a difference between classes in America. To Will, Carter continued, people were "all human beings, . . . each possessed of a certain amount of good qualities, perhaps a few of the bad."[3] The times were appropriate in 1933 for an affirmation of faith in the people, little

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[1]Quoted in ibid., pp. 71-72.

[2]Quoted in David Milsten, An Appreciation of Will Rogers (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1935), p. xvi.

[3]Ibid.

and big. What picture did the little people have of Will Rogers? One of them remarked,

> I sure liked Will. He was common like the rest of us. I know he went to the White House, and talked to kings, and queens, and millionaires, but he talked our talk when he came here. He was our kind of folks and we were his folks.[1]

News stories had told in 1923 of Will's giving a speech in New York's Piping Rock Club as a welcome to the Prince of Wales; papers had announced that in 1926 Will had visited the Prince's apartment in London; they had told of Will's overnight stay with Coolidge at the White House in the fall of the same year; a society story in 1928 had described his luncheon and dinner with members of the Vanderbilt and Harriman dynasties at Newport.[2] A passage from a press release for a Rogers lecture tour summarized the spirit of many of the stories prepared for advance publicity.

> He has travelled all over the earth, has been wined, dined and feted by royalty and great ones, yet withal he has preserved that modesty and simplicity that made him a friend of and endeared him to all the "nesters" he rode the range with back in Oklahoma when he was a kid. He was Bill to them then and he is Bill to them now, and they love him for the same things that they loved him for then.[3]

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[1]Charles Harris, a cowhand, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 26.

[2]The New York Times, September 4, 1924, p. 1; May 15, 1926, p. 19; May 27, 1926, p. 27; October 2, 1926, p. 1; July 24, 1928, p. 12.

[3]Miscellaneous Scrapbook #1, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. This paragraph was prepared for publication for a tour in 1928-1929 which never occurred because of Will's substituting for Fred Stone in a Broadway musical, Three Cheers. It is reproduced here because it is short, yet quite similar in tone to stories that actually went out for publication in earlier tours. Apparently this story did not receive Will's personal attention: "nesters," as farmers were sometimes called, did not ride the range with Will when he was a boy.

That he could reach the seats of the mighty and remain the American democrat only sweetened his public identification with the dream of equality. As a magazine article proclaimed in 1930, Will Rogers was "the friend alike of presidents and peasants, of cattlemen and kings."[1]

Enjoyment of freedom was implied in Will's movement among all classes. In another way, however, he seemed to the public to be the embodiment of the free spirit. He was a cowboy hero. Since 1915, stories giving the main outlines of his life had appeared; always they covered the long jaunt around the world at about the turn of the century. The time and the deed may have seemed appealingly simple and uncomplicated to readers beset by the complexities of industrial America who no longer had new country to think about wandering to. At least one feature story, in 1932, emphasized Will's fiddle-footedness.

> By the time he was 17, Will was a full-fledged cow puncher and soon he owned a small herd of his own. When the wanderlust seized him he sold his cattle and went down to Argentina with another youth, who shortly afterward left him stranded in Buenos Aires. He punched cattle across the pampas for $4 a month and then worked his way to Cape Town, South Africa, on a cattle boat transporting mules to the British troops engaged in the Boer War. The fighting ceased the day after he arrived and Will, swallowing his disappointment, joined a travelling "Wild West" show. Billed as "The Cherokee Kid," he became the hit of the show, . . . playing the principal cities of South Africa and then moving to England. When young Mr. Rogers grew homesick, he returned to Oklahoma and joined another "Wild West" show touring the Southwest.[2]

Despite many inaccuracies, such as managing to send Will to England instead of to Australia and New Zealand as was the fact, the story was

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[1]Beatty, American Magazine, October, 1930, p. 61.

[2]The New York Times, September 4, 1932, IX, p. 4. For another story that effectively presents Will's wanderings see ibid., December 23, 1934, VIII, p. 2.

true in spirit to the image of the fancy-free, itchy-footed man on horseback. Moreover, it had in it elements embodying the dream of freedom in the Wild West show. In the reader's imagination, Will could gallop forth just as had Buffalo Bill on that memorable day in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair. In 1917, another feature story captured the aura of nostalgia that hung about the figure of the cowboy and spread that aura around the figure of Will Rogers. After pointing out that he was American "to the grass roots" because he was part Cherokee, the story reported, "He is a representative of that other typically American group, the cowboys of the plains, who, in no far distant future, will become a memory, as they are now only picturesque characters of fiction and the movies to the great public."[1]

Will also profited in the press by his connection with another prime role of the cowboy hero, that of a figure whose actions set affairs right, at the same time being free from complex moral choices. Will Rogers, believed the public, had saved many lives on one occasion in 1905 by roping a runaway steer in Madison Square Garden. As we have seen, Rogers, himself, told the story during interviews. As to the actual roping, informed opinion differs over the prominence given the story by New York papers and whether Will really was the savior of the crowd.[2] The important thing for our purposes,

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[1]Ibid., July 1, 1917, VIII, p. 6.

[2]See Croy, Our Will Rogers, pp. 97-99, for a view that makes Will only one of the steer's would-be captors; see also Day, A Biography, p. 54, for the idea that the original news story made Will the hero of the incident. I have been unable to locate in The New York Times the May 8, 1905, news story that Day quotes.

however, is to see that by the time of Rogers' death, the story had circulated widely and had lost little in the re-telling. A 1935 sample from an Oklahoma newspaper will illustrate.

> It was . . . [in a] show . . . at Madison Square Garden that Rogers crashed the gate of public notice.
>
> One day a steer, crazed with the heat, leaped over the barriers and charged roaring down on the shrieking audience. A weather-bitten cowpuncher leaped after the brute, swung a lariat, and dropped a loop over its horns and swung the rope's end about a pillar, doubtless saving a number of people from injury and even death. This weather-bitten cowpuncher was Rogers.
>
> The New York papers were full of the thrilling incident and public notice was centered on the hero, and his skill with the rope in his stage performances aroused admiration.[1]

The story had grown from the time of Will Rogers' own bare recounting. The fact is that news and editorial writers, for whatever reason, emphasized Will's heroism and the attention it drew to him.[2] No damage was apparent to his steadily-developing image. The cowboy writer, Will James, spoke not only for the American public but also for his own cowboy acquaintances.

> They knew and admired him the same way I did, as a cowboy. By that I don't mean anything that wears a big hat and boots, I mean one with the ideals, courage, sentiments, heart and guts that's needed in the making of a real cowboy.[3]

Being the American Adam gave Will Rogers a warmth and naturalness that made his belief in the little people and his equalitarianism ring true; being the cowboy hero enhanced the Adamic qualities of freedom and

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[1]Shawnee Morning News, quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 20.

[2]Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 99. For another version of the incident, see Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 124.

[3]Quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 202.

idealism. As we shall see next, his status as an open-handed benefactor reinforced the image of a free individual, freely revealing his love of simple humanity. Hardly less importantly, Will Rogers' public status as humanity's benefactor fitted him to identify with the dream of success in the same way as had philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

Living the Dream of Success

In 1926, the real-estate bubble in Florida broke, and a disastrous hurricane struck. Readers of The New York Times could see the heart-warming story of how the generous passengers aboard the Leviathan had subscribed over $40,000 for Florida disaster victims, with gifts ranging from $8,000 to the 25¢ contributed by an immigrant on the way to win his fortune in America. In the second paragraph of this paean to American idealism appeared the following tribute to the man from Oologah. "The raising of this large sum was mainly due to the zeal, energy, humor and personal magnetism of Will Rogers, American comedian and international story teller . . . ."[1] The Oklahoman, the story revealed, had talked Charles Evans Hughes into telling jokes in order to provide a strong attraction; Rogers had also contributed $1,000 himself. With such press notices, such distinguished company, and such a generous purse, Will Rogers would not long need an identifying phrase after his name.

In the spring of 1927, the mighty Mississippi went out of its banks and flooded its bordering southern states, ruining farms, homes, and means of livelihood for many thousands of Americans by engulfing

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[1]The New York Times, September 28, 1926, p. 29.

an estimated 10,000 square miles. The Red Cross went to work immediately, but additional funds were needed. Will Rogers, on the lecture circuit, went to New York for a one-night stand with the tenor John McCormack as a means of raising funds for flood relief. As a result, a news story in The New York Times reported that the Red Cross would receive nearly $18,000 from the benefit and also listed among the donors of gifts of over $1,000 the name of Will Rogers.[1] In a flood so devastating, however, that Coolidge would issue a call for an emergency Red Cross fund of $5,000,000, much remained to be done. Will Rogers went to New Orleans for another flood benefit. "The town was Will's from the minute he arrived this morning," announced a special dispatch to The New York Times.[2] He had actually been sworn in as Mayor pro tempore of New Orleans in gratitude for all that he had done for flood sufferers, including the show in New Orleans, with top seat prices of $500. The story made clear, however, that Will Rogers was not going to stop his efforts in behalf of the sufferers.

> Tomorrow the cowboy humorist will make a tour of the flooded sections of Louisiana and Mississippi, probably by airplane. He wants to get plenty of material, so he'll know what he's talking about when he asks people for relief fund contributions, he says.[3]

Those who did not read the story in the newspapers were to have a chance to see Will Rogers as the benefactor on the rest of his lecture

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[1] Ibid., May 3, 1927, p. 2.

[2] Ibid., June 2, 1927, p. 11.

[3] Ibid. Charles Warner, Will's lecture manager, held a somewhat disgruntled view of the benefits Will gave. See Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 192. A loss of income to booking agents generally is not welcome.

tour. Because of his experience with the flood, he would later appear before a Congressional committee to testify in behalf of proposed control measures by the Federal Government. For the time being, sufficiently gratifying to Will's public was the news story that revealed his selection for life membership in the Red Cross. In recognition of his services, John Barton Payne, Red Cross Chairman, wrote in a letter made public,

> You are unanimously elected a life member of the American Red Cross and entitled to all the joys and benefits which result from devotion and distinguished service.
>
> I want you to know how very grateful we all are for your splendid service in connection with the Mississippi flood disaster.[1]

Will Rogers' national audience was aware, also, of his helpful presence on the scene of another disaster that received national attention. In the spring of 1931, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and other states were parched from a long, dusty drouth, as well as starved by the Depression. A short time before, hundreds of desperate farmers had converged on England, Arkansas, to take by force the supplies they and their families required for survival. Newspapers announced on January 14 that Will Rogers would make a two-to-three week tour of the three stricken states, that all proceeds would go toward drouth relief, and that Will would fly with Captain Frank Hawks in order to increase the number of appearances by travelling fast.[2] A little over a week later, news stories revealed that the trip had begun, with Will and Hawks arriving in Arkansas; also newsworthy was the fact that the cowboy

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[1]The New York Times, June 28, 1927, p. 12.

[2]Ibid., January 14, 1931, p. 2.

philosopher would appear on a coast-to-coast broadcast with such notables as Al Smith and Calvin Coolidge.[1] For the next seventeen days, papers in the region would report the comings and goings of the flying cowboy as he covered 15,000 miles and gave an exhausting total of fifty-two benefit performances, netting almost a quarter of a million dollars for relief.[2] Like the cowboy of legend, Will Rogers took direct action to set affairs right.

By the time of the catastrophic earthquake in Nicaragua later that same year of 1931, the statement that "Will Rogers is coming" meant more than that a good time was in the offing. By this time, no doubt existed that Will Roger's disaster doings were national news. The Associated Press dispatch of April 8, 1931, told Will's public of its hero's doings.

> Will Rogers came to desolate Managua today and his coming, acted as a tonic of cheer to a stricken people.
>
> He arrived by Pan-American Airways plane from San Salvador to be met by an excited crowd of United States Marines and Nicaraguans. He was taken to the temporary quarters of the United States Legation and there was greeted by Minister Matthew Hanna and Marine Corps officers.
>
> Starting on a tour of the ruins from earthquake and fire, he made himself popular at once by his searching questions on the disaster and his humorous remarks. News of his presence spread like wildfire and he became the centre of a smiling crowd.
>
> Foreign Minister Irias, who was introduced to Mr. Rogers,

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[1] Ibid., January 22, 1931, p. 3.

[2] Facts on tour from the statement of Frank Hawkes as quoted in the National Broadcasting Company transcript of the Rogers Memorial Broadcast, p. 138. In the reference room of the Will Rogers Memorial is an elaborate scrapbook, number 16, compiled for Will by Walter M. Harrison, in which are gathered clippings from papers in the area which he toured. Frank Hawkes, in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 88, reveals that Will not only refused expense money but also contributed from $50 to $500 in every place where he appeared.

said of him:

"I know of him from two angles--that he is a famous humorist and a writer of philosophy as pleasing as an old shoe and that his presence on this earth has been beneficial to mankind."[1]

Americans agreed.

Such were some of the nationally-prominent causes in which Will Rogers enlisted. His philanthropies, of course, did not begin and end with them. It is reasonably certain that his national audience, however, was aware of his role in them; of his other giving of himself and his money one cannot be so sure.[2] In any case, his giving of himself and his wealth stood as an embodiment of the good steward of the success dream, as well as an Adamic lover of mankind.

In other ways, Will Rogers was the Horatio Alger, self-made-man hero.[3] Implicit in the story of his wanderings and of his development in show business was the story of the rise, of course. It became explicit when a writer would do a piece for a publication that treated the rags-to-riches theme as one of its dominant ones. The dollar signs in the following quotation are telltale clues to the success slant given to the following outlined version of Will Rogers' career.

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[1]The New York Times, April 9, 1931, p. 18. Rogers would later contribute $5,000 himself and raise much more through his newspaper appeals.

[2]In an interview, August 13, 1961, his niece Mrs. Paula M. Love, curator of the Will Rogers Memorial, told me that a full-length study of his benefactions is needed. For other stories of his generosity, see Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, pp. 57, 75, 104-105, 112. These, naturally, do not tell the whole story.

[3]On his own part, however, he denied the ability of any man to be self-made in any literal sense. See The New York Times, June 2, 1927, p. 11.

> Had a fortune teller predicted then [during courtship days] that Will Rogers, a Cherokee Indian, would become one of the highest-paid actors in motion pictures, he would have grunted and said to Betty, "See? What'd I tell you? They're nothing but fakes. Who'd pay money to see a Cherokee cow-hand?"
>
> Even the most farseeing astrologer, palm reader, or clairvoyant would not have been so daring as to suggest that a few years would bring into every home a magic contraption called radio and that this Cherokee cow-hand would be paid $12,500 to talk into a funny little dingus for fifteen minutes. Nor that magazines and newspapers would pay thousands of dollars for the privilege of printing sly comments such as he was delivering then of evenings around the stove in the Oologah general store just for the fun of it.[1]

Here is the rise from humble country circumstances to the peak of the big rock candy mountain where the money grows on trees. The story has plenty of pluck and luck. If any element of the success legend was missing, it was that of "work and win." But that was the writer's oversight and not Will's.

An earlier feature writer had not overlooked his industry: "Mr. Rogers is a tireless worker and is not content to rest on his laurels already acquired."[2] A 1934 feature story vividly pictured Will's dedication to work and his activism.

> Mr. Rogers, one of the busiest men in pictures, is also one of the busiest men in the world. During filming of the "Judge Priest" picture he managed to portray the leading role in the stage production of "Ah, Wilderness" at the El Capitan Theatre, get out a daily syndicated newspaper column, crowd in a few radio broadcasts and attend innumerable banquets

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[1]Beatty, American Magazine, October, 1930, p. 61. For another Rogers success story that emphasizes the triumphal return home of the country-boy-turned success, see The New York Times, September 4, 1932, IX, p. 4.

[2]The New York Times, July 1, 1917, VIII, p. 6. So well did Will fit the outlines of the success dream that Mrs. Rogers reported that it was commonly thought by the public that Will had risen from poverty, His Wife's Story, p. 58.

> wherever a Senator, Congressman, statesman or film executive appeared. During his leisure hours he personally supervised the renovation of his Beverly Hills home.[1]

That kind of busy-ness should have satisfied even those who felt that entertaining was not quite demanding enough of hard work.

Of the virtue needed to rise on the rungs of success, there is no doubt that Will's public image was replete with it. It remained, however, for Rogers observers to give it the almost-deific quality so important to the success dream. Amon Carter wrote in 1933 as follows: "Sturdy character, high principles, clean living, straight thinking, a genuine love for his fellow-man--these are all enshrouded in a nature to whom protective armor is apparent embarrassment."[2] Three days after Will Rogers' death, Ted Malone was extolling the virtues that had made the man from Oologah rich and was also stating the theology of success.

> Yesterday the papers carried a story that was a most interesting epilogue. It was an estimation of what we may call the worldly accumulations of a life of this philosophy. The estimate was five or six million dollars. That is a lot of money, and in this day of competitive business, we have been taught to believe that it requires close trading, sharp bargains, shrewd deals, cold-blooded decisions, hard-boiled business, to climb to the top. But strangely enough none of these characteristics were a part of this man's make-up.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Here is a man who loved all men and all men made him rich. Here is a man who has given to America a living proof that a man can make good without making enemies. Here is challenge to the cut-throat competition of world business today . . . . This man's life proved that one can be a man--a Man's Man--can live the philosophy of Christianity, can make it a part of his every-day life, his every-day work, and the world will shower him with its love and its wealth.[3]

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[1]The New York Times, October 14, 1934, X, p. 5.

[2]Quoted in Milsten, An Appreciation of Will Rogers, p. xvii.

[3]Quoted in Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, p. 194. I dated Malone's broadcast by its internal reference to the news estimate of the size of the fortune, carried August 17, 1935.

Will Rogers' life, as it was known by his national constituency, was an affirmation of the dream of success. Knowing the end to which he was to come, we may have a keen sense of dramatic irony as we observe the chief mode of his life's identification with the dream of progress.

Living the Dream of Progress

In his roles as the optimistic Adam, as the American democrat, and as the alleviator of suffering, Will Rogers stood out as a progress-figure. In addition, the well-known story of his frontiersman's amiable accommodation of twentieth-century marvels such as radio and "talkie" pictures probably conveyed a sense of progress to many Americans. His close association with the airplane, however, became the chief mode for his biographical identification with the dream of progress. The adulation given to Lindbergh had in large part been related to the great machine that had bridged continents.[1] Moreover, just as Lindbergh's worship stemmed also from a folk-picture of him as a frontiersman, Will Rogers' own well-known westernness, coupled with the appeal of a machine which freed earthbound man to soar, made him an ideal symbol of progress. If Lindbergh was the number-one pilot, Will Rogers was the number-one air passenger.

Many news stories told Americans of Will's air journeys. He was flying over the Mississippi flood area for inspection purposes; he was flying to Arkansas to kick off a flying tour for drouth relief; he was flying to Nicaragua to help in earthquake relief. After a 1934 newspaper interview on a recently-completed round-the-world trip, the

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[1]<u>Supra</u>, pp. 198-99.

writers told of Will's flying experiences across China and the Middle East, and newsreel cameras recorded the same event.[1] In 1929, a clear identification of Will Rogers with the progress dream took place in the widely-circulated popular Bible of technical advancement, Scientific American. His status as the number-one air passenger was clear in the article.

> Mr. Rogers' enthusiasm for aviation was born during his very first flight. This was made in an army plane in Washington in 1925 [sic]. Since then he has flown nearly twenty-five thousand miles in a network of lecture tour and journalistic hops over practically every state in the Union and across a dozen countries in Europe. He has ridden in planes and airships of every size and variety and nationality. Now, like Colonel Lindbergh, he never travels by train or motor-car if it is possible to get to his destination by air.[2]

Not only was Will's name mentioned in the same breath as Lindbergh's, but the Oklahoman also had performed an air "first" of his own. Late in 1927, the magazine related,

> Mr. Rogers unwittingly established a new record by making the first round-trip passenger flight in regular mail-planes from Los Angeles to New York and back within four days. This was not a stunt flight. Will had to go to New York on business and he wanted to be back as soon as possible.
>
> Although his air-tickets cost him eight hundred dollars, or twice the train and Pullman fare, the air route saved him a full week's time, and so more than justified its cost.[3]

Such a feat was what could be expected from a traveller of such personal daring as Will Rogers possessed. Just as a bronco-buster would get up

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[1]The New York Times, October 14, 1934, X, p. 5; portions of the newsreel text from "Will Rogers," produced by Project XX of the National Broadcasting Company, 1961.

[2]Clancy, Scientific American, October, 1929, p. 284. Mrs. Rogers says the first flight occurred earlier; see supra, p. 174.

[3]Scientific American, October, 1929, p. 284.

off "terra firma" and climb back on the mustang that had pitched him off, the Oklahoma cowboy would come back for more--only to go the "hoss-breaker" one better, as the magazine writer made clear.

> Not until . . . June 1928 did he ever experience a "mishap." Everything had gone smoothly until the mail plane in which he was traveling was about to land at Las Vegas, New Mexico, for a new supply of gasoline. Here, upon hitting the surface of the landing field, the plane's right wheel crushed and the machine turned a somersault and landed flat on its back with its pilot and passenger upside down. No one was injured, however . . . .
>
> That seemed to be Will's unlucky day, for at Cherokee, Wyoming, late in the afternoon, a section of the landing gear of another plane collapsed and spilled him out on his ear. After the second crash, Will remarked: "Once in a while I've had a horse throw me where I've been underneath him and him topmost, but I've never been thrown like I was today. They're getting easier, however. The first spill wasn't so bad, and the second was almost a pleasure."[1]

Will Rogers finished the trip by air.

He emerged in the same magazine feature as a crusader for air-mindedness and air progress. He had done a good deal of flying in Europe in the summer of 1926, and he had been impressed.

> While in Europe, Mr. Rogers saw so many fine municipal airports and rode over such a large number of scheduled airlines that he decided, upon his return to the United States, to tour the country on a lecture crusade to awaken Americans to their backwardness in commercial aviation. On this tour he ended the fears of local reception committees, after the last train had pulled in without bringing him with it, by a last minute arrival by plane.[2]

Will Rogers was going to continue to "boost" air travel, the feature writer announced; new projects under way included promotion of more

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid. It is most doubtful that the crusade for air progress was the major impetus for the lecture tour, which was a sequel to the successful tour of 1925.

municipal airports and more landing fields, particularly on golf courses. "Will's enthusiasm increases with the years," opened the final paragraph of the story. "He declares he is going to keep on flying until his beard gets caught in the propeller."[1]

He would not live that long. He had not quite six years.

Conclusion

Will Rogers' life, as it was portrayed in the mass media and as its events circulated by word of mouth, became identified with all the major categories of the great American dream. Because he seemed to be America in the flesh, he achieved from his audience a trust and confidence that gave him the entree to high government and social circles. He simply had too many "votes" to be ignored. In addition, as power begets power, evidences of his growing influence in high places sifted back to his admirers and added tremendously to his status as a shaper of opinion in America.

Newspapers gave the public the stories of Will's receiving two half-votes in the deadlocked 1924 Democratic National Convention; of his being recognized by the National Press Club as Congressman-at-large for the United States; of his endorsement for President by Rogers County Democrats in 1928; of his tying McAdoo for President in a straw vote at Princeton later in the same year; of recognition of his influence by the Senate in voting a government hospital to be located in Claremore; of support for him as a cabinet member; of his being asked to testify at Congressional hearings on flood control and on aviation;

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 286.

of his policy huddle with Secretary of State Stimson in 1931; of his being elected to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame; of his being boomed as a candidate for California's governorship early in 1934, among others.[1] Will Rogers was more than a crackerbox philosopher, a cowboy, a comedian, a benefactor, a journalist, a world traveller, an aviation pioneer, a lover of humanity, and an apostle of equality. He was all of these, and the sum of the whole was greater than the parts.

It may not have been too much a case of wishful thinking in 1930 when a magazine article announced its verdict on Will Rogers' public stature:

> If the President of the United States says a thing is so, the Democrats may doubt him. But if Will Rogers backs him up, even the Democrats believe. In Washington they say that the Senate fears Will Rogers more than all the editors in America, for Rogers, in a hundred words, can laugh away the effect of hours of oratory . . . .[2]

Such an enthusiastic paragraph helped to teach its readers how to estimate Will's place in the scheme of things. They may already have known. The fact is clear: he was tall in the saddle. He was consubstantial with the great American dream.

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[1]See The New York Times as follows: July 5, 1924, p. 3; August 28, 1927, p. 22; December 3, 1927, p. 3; December 4, 1927, IV, p. 1; December 5, 1927, p. 1; December 6, 1927, p. 9; December 10, 1927, p. 14; January 22, 1928, p. 26; March 24, 1928, p. 3; February 8, 1928, p. 27; May 27, 1928, III, p. 5; January 13, 1928, p. 12; October 11, 1934, p. 25; September 24, 1934, p. 15; January 10, 1934, p. 23. See also chap. i for other instances of the prominence of Will Rogers. Publicity for lecture tours did not overlook the events that had occurred by the time of writing. See Miscellaneous Scrapbook #1, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[2]Beatty, American Magazine, October, 1930, p. 61.

CHAPTER IV

THE VOICE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Introduction

When Will Rogers spoke, Americans listened. He possessed their confidence, in the first place, because he seemed to be the dream-alive as they scanned the lineaments of his public portrait. They believed in the dream; they believed in him. He was a trusted source. He would have been, however, only another beneficiary of favorable publicity had he not made his own, unique articulation of the great dream. Americans listened to him, in the second place, because his words harmonized with their hopes for fulfillment of the promise of America.

Sometimes his words spoke explicitly of the values of the great vision. In a time of national crisis in the fall of 1931, for instance, he expressed faith in the goodness of the common man when he made a radio plea for support of voluntary depression relief. "I don't know anything about America being fundamentally sound and all that after dinner 'Hooey,' but I do know that America is 'Fundamentally Generous,'" he asserted.[1]

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[1]"Unemployment," Radio Speech, October 18, 1931, N.B.C. and C.B.S., as contained in text found in Radio Speeches, binder .005, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma, pp. 3-4.

Sometimes his words carried the values of the American dream only implicitly, as when he spoke for the action corollaries of the great vision. Such is the case with his support of the economic underdog, in the same address just quoted.

> Now a miracle can't happen and all these people get a job overnight, it's going to take time, so they must be fed and cared for perhaps all winter. Every one of us that have anything got it by the aid of these very people. There is not an unemployed man in the country that hasn't contributed to the wealth of every millionaire in America.[1]

Often, to be honest, Rogers' words were only charming irrelevancies as far as the American dream was concerned. "Now don't get mad and start turning off the radio, I am not advertising anything, if the mouthwash you are using is the wrong kind, you will just have to keep on using it, and I don't know what cigarette will drag in your Adams apple . . . ."[2]

Overall, therefore, Will Rogers' identification with the hopeful vision seemed so casual as to be intuitive, in the best manner of the American Adam. A montage of his "one-or-two-liners," arranged chronologically, illustrates the way in which the dreams of freedom and equality, of the worth of the individual, of progress, and of success unfolded and re-appeared before the national audience in a

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 4.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 1. I shall not use *sic* to prove that Will Rogers used an illiterate style; most of his deviations from standard usage are sufficiently obvious that the reader may safely assume that the expressions occurred that way in the Rogers text. Thus, errors in punctuation, capitalization, case or references of pronoun, number or tense of verb, and the like, will not be marked. Instead, I shall mark infractions which could be suspected as possible errors of copying, such as *buscuit* for *biscuit*.

jumbling sequence, interlarded with squibs that dealt with action corollaries of the dreams or that simply rambled over "doings." Throughout, his manner was that of the man who was wiser than he wished to appear--the wise innocent.

> It is getting so that a Republican promise is not much more to be depended on than a Democratic one. And that has always been considered the lowest form of collateral in the world.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The American people are a very generous people and will forgive almost any weakness, with the possible exception of stupidity.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> [In the old days,] your looks meant nothing to them. It was what you did that counted.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The South is dry and will vote dry. That is, everybody that is sober enough to stagger to the polls will.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Box score for today: Died by gunshot and other natural Chicago causes, 13; wounded, 23. Bad weather kept outdoor shooting down to a minimum.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The Supreme Court of Tennessee down here has just ruled that you other States can come from whoever or whatever you want to, but they want it on record that they come from mud only.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Happiness and contentment is progress. In fact that's all progress is.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> By Golly I am living now. I am eating real biscuits and real ham and cream gravy. Oklahoma will show the world how to live yet.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I have heard so much at this [national] convention about "getting back to the old Jeffersonian principles" that being an amateur, I am in doubt as to why they <u>left them</u> in the first place.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If we dident have to stop and play politics any administration could almost make a Garden of Eden out of us.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Everybody is a-picking on that poor boy out there in California that run the wrong way with that football. . . . All I want is . . . to get this boy a medal for at least doing something different from one million other college boys. Even if it was wrong, his mind wasn't standardized.

. . . . . .

If every history or books on old things was thrown in the river and everybody had nothing to study but the future, we would be about 200 years ahead of what we are now.

. . . . . .

I believe the Lord split knowledge up among his subjects about equal after all. The so-called ignorant is happy. Maybe he is happy because he knows enough to be happy. The smart one knows he knows a lot and that makes him unhappy . . . . The more you know the more you realize you dont know.

. . . . . .

You got to sorter give and take in this old world. We can get mighty rich, but if we havent got any friends, we will find we are poorer than anybody.

. . . . . .

Us middle class over here never have to worry about having old furniture to point out to our friends. We buy it on payments and before it's paid for it's plenty antique.

. . . . . .

Yesterday a true democrat, not politically, but religiously, died. A New York priest, Father Duffy, by long odds the most beloved man in New York City. I am of his faith. You are of his faith, for his faith was humanity.

. . . . . .

The world is with the fellow coming up. Let the fellow that's already up look after himself. Every crowd wants to see a new champion crowned.

. . . . . .

The old dollar might be filthy lucre, but there is quite a bit of energy and spirit yet in earning one.

. . . . . .

There is no finer and more satisfying business in the world than the cow business when you get half a chance, but when the elements are agin' you, you are just like a candidate that runs second.

. . . . . .

Was you ever driving around in a car and not knowing or caring where you went? Well, that's what Wiley and I are doing. We are sure having a great time. If we hear of whales or polar bears in the Arctic, or a big herd of caribou or reindeer we fly over and see it . . . . Maybe Point Barrow today.[1]

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[1]The New York Times, July 22, 1923, VII, p. 2; November 18, 1923, IX, p. 2; February 24, 1924, VIII, p. 2; The Tulsa Daily World, December 21, 1924, IV, p. 4; The New York Times, October 29, 1926, p. 25; November 24, 1926, p. 25; January 18, 1927, p. 27; The Tulsa Daily World, April 10, 1927, V, p. 5; July 17, 1927, III, p. 4; The New York Times, June 29, 1928, p. 7; The Tulsa Daily World V, p. 4; The New York Times, January 4, 1929, p. 27; The Tulsa Daily World, January 13, 1929, V, p. 2; May 11, 1930, V, p. 1; June 1, 1930, V, p. 1; The New York Times, October 10, 1930, p. 25; June 27, 1932, p. 11; The Tulsa Daily World, September 3, 1933, IV, p. 4; December 30, 1934, IV, p. 6; The New York Times, July 11, 1934, p. 19; August 13, 1935, p. 19.

Thus gradually emerged the author of such words as a believer in the rights of all men and a respecter of those rights, as a believer in the worth and goodness of people, and as a lover of humanity; at the same time, he looked optimistically to the future, approved of the rise from low to high estate, and cast a welcoming eye toward the man who could turn a dollar. With all this thrust toward the rights, the rise, and the future of all men, Will Rogers had about him the aura of the new Adam. His sly glances at the maneuvers of politicians or at the self-deception of people kept his ideals from seeming merely naive; his ideals held his slyness this side of cynicism. His small-boy delight in good things to eat accorded well with his quester's delight in new places and new sights; he ate and drank freely of experience, untethered, liberated, free. He was the wise innocent in his public utterances. Those pronouncements did not seem to be such: their apparent carelessness and artlessness appealed to the audience as had disclaimers of rhetorical art since at least the golden days of ancient Greece.

At times, Rogers' comments also gained identificative strength by relating simultaneously to more than one category of the great American dream. His defense of the wrong-way football runner whose mind at least was not standardized was not only defense of the underdog, but was also approval of the uniqueness of the individual. When he spoke of the compensations for being either "ignorant" or "smart," he dealt not only with a species of spiritual equality, but also with the dream of the individual's self-fulfillment. His delectation with Alaskan sights accorded not only with the quest after Eden in the dream

of progress and the absence of restraint in the dream of freedom, but also with the pursuit of happiness in the individual's dream of self-fulfillment. Later, as I examine in more detail the body of Rogers' identifications with the great dream, I shall place them according to their predominant appeals, realizing that considerable crossing of categories would be possible, adding depth (and, perhaps, tedium) to the analysis.

Finally, it will become clear that Rogers' identifications with his national audience via the great dream were of more than one type. When he spoke explicitly of values in the American vision, such as when he expressed his belief in Americans being "fundamentally generous," he was engaging in what I shall call "direct material identification."[1] When he spoke in a way to show that he behaved according to the action corollaries of the dream, such as when he defended the underdog football player, he was engaging in what I shall later call "indirect material identification." Here, in distinction from direct material identification, the words refer not to a shared ideal or principle as much as to an agreed-upon bit of behavior that is appropriate to the realization of the great American dream.[2] In addition to these forms of identification, Will Rogers on occasion

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[1]"Two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common. . . ." Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950), p. 21. I use the word "material" as an antonym for the word "formal" as applied to the resources of language as language to invite assent or identification. (See ibid., pp. 57-59.) Thus, material identification is concerned with the referents of language; formal identification with the resources of language, itself.

[2]"In acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial." (Ibid., p. 21.)

used the resources of language, itself (such as catachresis and hyperbole), to shadow forth the American dream: this is "formal identification."[1]

Given the outlets of mass communication, and being disposed to be at one with the great American dream, Will Rogers could and did receive publicity that pictured him as the dream-alive. Most importantly, his own messages, amplified by the mass media until they were potentially available to almost every American ear or eye, merged him with the American dream. Over the years from 1922 until 1935, his discursive conversation with the American people on the American dream gave him a high degree of source credibility. For purposes of exposition, it is time to render that rambling discourse into a systematic analysis.[2]

Material and Formal Identification with the Dream of the Dignity and Worth of the Individual

Will Rogers was dedicated to the vision of man as being intrinsically worthy. Growing up as he had in a new country where no masses of humanity teemed and seemed to cheapen human life, living as

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[1]For illustration, Burke attends chiefly to such devices as antithesis and gradation, though he mentions others. (Ibid., pp. 57-69.) He also theorizes about the persuasive power of "form-in-the-large," pp. 69-78.

[2]I want to re-emphasize the fact that Will Rogers did not avail himself of expository organization. The reader of his speeches and newspaper writings will not find the Rogers thoughts on the American dream neatly bundled together in the categories at which I have arrived. I can only hope that the service to clarity performed by presenting Rogers in such a scheme outweighs any distortion of his method. Too, as stated in p. 238 supra, by no means was all that Rogers said relevant to the dream; significant as the relevant portion is, some of Will is left over.

the king of creatures in that new country, and being himself the unique product of the mixing of new and old world cultures, he could reasonably be expected to value the unique individual. If such a dedication to the worth of the individual might be called American innocence, Will Rogers often combined with it a sidelong, wise glance that made him the wise innocent. The result was comments such as his expressing belief in the generosity and goodness of the American people, who he believed would forgive anything--except stupidity; if he was innocent in not understanding the hullabaloo over a football player's running the wrong way, he was wise in seeing that what counted was the fact that the boy's mind wasn't "standardized." The overall effect, therefore, was that the saw of Will Rogers' words had teeth all the sharper because they were often "cross-set" in their wise innocence.

At times, the cowboy philosopher stated head-on a commitment to the powers of the common man and to the virtue of the common man. At other times, he revealed with his words that quality of his own living that made him a prototype of individualism, realizing the dream of self-fulfillment in his own experience while seeming always to be simply himself--the wise American innocent, the new Adam incarnate.[1]

On the Powers of the Common Man

"No man wants to admit that he is average," Will Rogers wrote,

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[1]I hope to develop Will's role as the new Adam in this section of the chapter; at the same time, I realize that a strain of the Adamic hero is present in all the heroes of the American dream. I hope that treating Will's wise innocence in the section on the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual will not seem too much an arbitrary categorizing.

perhaps aware that Americans dreamed of their limitless potentiality. "Did you see the picture and specifications of the average man they located last year? That took all the joy out of wanting to be average," he added.[1] It is clear in such a comment that being average meant being homogeneous; Rogers had little ever to say in praise of such a concept of the common man. "I never did go in much for this typical American stuff . . . ," he wrote.[2] He preferred, rather, to talk about what he liked to call the "big normal Majority"; the generality of "little" people, who could not be categorized except by their powers of common sense, of balanced reason.

> This American Animal that I thought I had roped here is nothing but the big honest Majority, that you might find in any Country. He is not a Politician. He is not a 100 per cent American. He is not any organization, either uplift or downfall. In fact I find he don't belong to anything. He is of no decided Political faith or Religion. I can't even find out what religious brand is on him. From his earmarks he has never made a speech, and announced that he was an American. He hasn't denounced anything. It looks to me like he is just an Animal that has been going along, believing in right, doing right, tending to his own business, letting the other fellows alone.
>
> He don't seem to be simple enough minded to believe that EVERYTHING is right and he don't appear Cuckoo enough to think that EVERYTHING is wrong. He don't seem to be a Prodigy, and he don't seem to be a Simp. In fact, all I can find out about him is that he is just NORMAL. After I let him up and get on my horse and ride away I look around and I see hundreds and hundreds of exactly the same marks and brands.[3]

In these people, whether small town residents, farmers, ranch-

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[1]The New York Times, August 13, 1928, p. 19.

[2]Ibid., November 7, 1931, p. 19.

[3]The Tulsa Daily World, February 22, 1925, V, p. 4. Much of this implies also an ideal of absence of prejudice and as such is appropriate also to the dream of freedom.

ers, or members of the nation's army of unemployed, Rogers apparently found great strength and powers. "We got some great people in this country," he wrote, "and they aint all on Wall Street, or at Luncheon Clubs, or in the Movies or in the Senate."[1] Many of these great, little people were small city, small town, or rural folk. In the fall of 1925, Will Rogers began the first of a series of annual solo tours which took him from one end of America to the other, "meeting the regular Bird." Later, he seemed impressed on two relevant levels by the little people's powers.

First, he expressed admiration for their acuity of judgment. "Read? Say, the audiences in the smaller towns make a monkey out of the big cities for knowing what is going on in the world. They know and read everything."[2] Further, these Americans retained their powers of independent thought, Rogers said.

> You can kid about the old rubes that sat around the cracker barrel, spit in the stove, and fixed the nation, but they were all doing their own thinking. They didn't have their minds made up by some propagandist speaker at the "Get Nowhere" Luncheon Club.[3]

Such sentiment accorded well with the dream of the garden with its sturdy yeoman as its hero and also, therefore, with the agrarian dream of freedom.

Second, Will Rogers expressed a belief in the little people because of their powers of stamina. During the years of the locust,

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[1]Ibid., June 17, 1928, V, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., May 9, 1926, V, p. 3.

[3]The New York Times, April 17, 1930, p. 29.

during the times of twenty-five cent wheat and nickle beef, of choking dust that drifted like snow along fence lines and on the lee side of barns and homes--during those times that in lusher farm areas would lead to market-glutting plenty and futile farm holidays, the man from Oologah kept in touch with the little people. "When you ever have any doubt as to what might happen in these United States," he wrote, "go to the country and talk with the people and you will come back reassured."[1] During the time of scourging in the cities, when the worst-off scavenged for garbaged vegetables and salvageable spoiled meat and when even the aided ones wore a look of dazedness, Will Rogers stated his perception of their powers of stamina.

> Many, Many people out of work, some even in actual want, yet carrying on in confidence, and in hope. When the little fellow, that is actually in want, can have faith in his government, by golly the big ones should certainly carry on, for they have never missed a meal so far.[2]

And again,

> Fear has never come from the fellow with no job or no food. He has stood it wonderful. I doubt if a parallell [sic] will be found where millions hung on with such continued hope and patience as in this country.[3]

Will Rogers had seen these qualities of judgment and stamina in the big normal majority years before, in the time of the fatted calf; he had seen that a time would come when crisis years would call forth all the greatness of the common man.

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[1]Ibid., May 18, 1934, p. 23.

[2]Ibid., September 16, 1933, p. 15.

[3]Ibid., December 25, 1933, p. 25.

> No element, no Party, not even Congress or the Senate can hurt this Country now; it's too big. There are too many men just like those Dog Team drivers and too many Women like that Nurse up in Nome [who by combined efforts prevented a diphtheria epidemic] for anything to ever stampede this old Continent of ours.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Even when our next War comes we will through our shortsightedness not be prepared, but that won't be anything fatal. The real energy and minds of the normal majority will step in and handle it and fight it through to a successful conclusion. A War didn't change it before. It's just the same as it was, and always will be, because it is founded on right and even if everybody in Public Life tried to ruin it they couldn't. This Country is not where it is today on account of any man. It is here on account of the real Common Sense of the big Normal Majority.[1]

One recalls Whitman's belief that the powers of the common man enabled him to derive "good uses, somehow, out of any sort of servant in office."[2] To be able to bring good out of evil is to be touched, at least, by deific power. Thus the Sage of Claremore spoke of the potential of the common man in America, appearing to be consubstantial with those who dreamed of the inherent greatness of the private citizen.

Rogers did not speak of the infinitude of man in the abstract. He placed the common man in the crucible of events and there tested his mettle. Rogers described the big normal majority as keeping its sense of balance amid the partisan uproar over the effects of prohibition; he said that he wanted the viewpoint of some unemployed men on some of the government depression commissions; he voiced approval of the levelheadedness of San Franciscans under the stress of the general strike of 1934.

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, February 22, 1925, V, p. 4. Such a statement, of course, reflected optimism for the future and as such was appropriate to the dream of progress.

[2]Supra, chap. ii, p. 49.

"There is lots of sense in this country yet."[1] Spoken or written in the context of events calling for affirmation of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual, emanating from a person whose career seemed to prove that greatness waited within the common man, and sharing principles honored by many Americans from their historical beginnings, these words of Will Rogers carried authority and gave him power. They helped to trace lines in the emerging image of Will as the dream-alive; they helped make his imaged smile at folk seem an admiring and approving one.

His words also helped him to be identified with the vision of the goodness of the common man in the dream of individual dignity.

On the Virtue of the Common Man

Will Rogers continues to have the reputation of being the puncturer of foibles, whether possessors of those foibles were Congressmen, Senators, big businessmen, preachers, celebrities, or the general public, itself. Yet he never vented any Swiftian savagery toward the yahoos; he was never so blackly pessimistic regarding the nobility and

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[1]For these and other instances in which Will Rogers identified with the belief in the powers of the common man, see radio speech entitled "Prohibition," June 8, 1930, as printed in Radio Talks, pp. 36-39; The New York Times, January 2, 1933, p. 25; July 20, 1934, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, October 24, 1925, V, p. 6; October 18, 1925, V, p. 7; September 18, 1932, IV, p. 6; October 30, 1932, IV, p. 8; The New York Times, November 2, 1932, p. 21. In addition, comments I have categorized elsewhere are also appropriate. See, for example, p. 261 infra in which Rogers states that the powers of the man of experience can be trusted. On the other side of the ledger, Rogers on occasion stated or implied a distrust of the intelligence of the human flea: The New York Times, February 19, 1927, p. 17; also June 19, 1935, p. 21. While such dispatches show that Will Rogers was not afraid to say what might be unpleasing, they are not nearly so numerous as those expressing belief in the powers of the common man.

goodness of man as had been Mark Twain. Instead, without being pollyanna-ish, Will Rogers gave attention to the handsome, rather than the deformed, leg of humanity. In his writings and talks, he expressed a belief in the goodness of the common man in two chief ways, through the concept of innate goodness and through his attention to instances of virtue.

First, in the tradition of Rousseau and his American followers, Will Rogers said that the man freed from the deteriorating influences of corrupt modern society is unspoiled, naturally good and happy.[1]

> I doubt very much if Civilization (so called) helped generosity. I bet the old cave man would divide his raw meat with you as quick as one of us will ask a down and out to go in have a meal with us. Those old boys or girls would rip off a wolf skin breech clout and give you half of it quicker than a Ph.D. would slip you his umbrella. Civilization hasent done much but make you wash your teeth, and in those days eating and gnawing on bones and meat made tooth paste unnecessary.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Now all this aint what I started to write about. I started to write about some woman writing me about paying for her divorce as she had a better offer, and I just drifted into this mess. But at that maby [sic] I wouldent be afraid to be confronted with it 20 or 30 years from now. Nothing would hurt me but my Conscience for living like a "Civilized Citizen."[2]

Will could also use irony in his praise of the goodness of the natural man. Writing a Sunday article on a stranded flier's rescue by Eskimos, he drifted--in the typical Rogers manner--toward larger considerations.

> So if you go to see the Esquimoes [sic] dont take gum drops, thats old stuff. Take zippers and rubber bands and

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[1]Such a view, of course, appears to contradict the dream of progress; any inconsistency on the part of Will Rogers in the values of civilization, however, simply mirrors similar tensions within the great dream itself.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, January 20, 1935, IV, p. 6.

> you can come back with all the white fox skins in the Bering Sea area. Their minds are just as simple as ours. You would think they would get civilized, and learn to sit all day working a cross word puzzle. Something ought to be done about these "Primitive" people who live in various parts of the world, and dont know a thing but to live off what nature provides. You would think they would get civilized, and learn to live off each other like us civilized folks do.[1]

The ambassador of good will could not only use irony but could also take advantage of current events to comment on the goodness of the natural, primitive, ideal man. Talking over the radio in 1930, he described the respect given Lindbergh on his good-will flight to Mexico in 1927. The plane had landed, after a flight complicated by poor visibility, to meet a naturally respectful welcome.

> These Mexicans, they didn't touch a thing. The thought never entered their heads to take the plane apart and carry it home at all. They are just ignorant that way, you know. They are awful primitive people. They haven't been educated up to progress at all.[2]

Thus, in public pronouncements, Will Rogers stated that man in his primitive estate is good.

The noble savage was also happy, not merely engaged in the pursuit of happiness. On the occasion of being asked by Will Durant for a statement of his "philosophy of living," Will pecked out on his typewriter his reply in a kind of open letter to Durant.

> There aint nothing to life but satisfaction. If you want to ship off fat beef cattle at the end of their existence, you got to have em satisfied on the range. Indians and primitive races were the highest civilized, because they were more satisfied, and they depended less on each other, and took less from each other. We couldn't live a day without depending on

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[1]Ibid., September 10, 1933, IV, p. 4.

[2]"Charles Lindbergh," Radio Talks, p. 6.

> everybody. So our civilization has given us no liberty or independence.[1]

Moreover, this happiness could be available to modern man. In a dispatch that combined the attractiveness of the good and happy savage with that of the quest, the fiddle-footed Rogers wrote,

> I am heading down into the wilds of old Mexico and will leave this and a couple more here, as I will be out of touch with what we humorously call civilization.
>
> They don't even have a daily lecture on pyorrhea, or know what cigarette will raise or lower your Adam's apple. They're so primitive they have never tasted wood alcohol or know the joys of buying on credit.
>
> They are evidently just a lot of heathens that are happy.[2]

Such statements on the goodness and the happiness of the natural man could appeal to the ambivalence with which Americans regarded their spiralling technology, naming as they did Lindbergh not only a master of that technology but also a pioneer of the frontier. Perhaps every American who had longed to go Huck-like down the Mississippi in those depression days agreed with Will Rogers when he wrote, "The more you see of civilization, the more you feel that those old cavemen about had the right dope."[3]

Strongly implied in Will's comparisons of the "primitive" and "so-called civilized" individuals was decadence in the latter from the primitive ideal. On the other hand, the ambassador of good will portrayed the goodness of his cultural contemporaries.

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, July 12, 1931, IV, p. 7. The dispatch appeals also to the dream of freedom and equality.

[2]The New York Times, October 2, 1931, p. 25.

[3]Ibid., February 24, 1930, p. 23.

The second way in which Will Rogers identified with the dream of the virtue of the common man was his publication of instances of Americans' concern for their fellow men, a goodness of the highest sort. Many times in his career Will Rogers was to speak or write words like the following, uttered in support of a community chest drive, as people all over the United States gathered in living rooms around millions of sets to hear him and Herbert Hoover on an all-network broadcast.

> I'll bet you that every town and city comes through. I have seen lots of audiences and heard lots of appeals, but I have yet to see one where the people knew the need, and the cause was there, that they didn't come through--even Europe who hates us and thinks we are arrogant, bad mannered and everything else, but they will tell you that we are liberal, doggone it, our folks are liberal.[1]

Dispatches for his string of newspapers also often attested to the virtue of the "big normal Majority."

> Right here in Memphis today over twenty-five policemen went to a hospital and volunteered to give blood transfusions to a kid that was near death. I know that I am out of order in speaking of the good things that cops do, but I am one of the old-fashioned people who believes if somebody pounced on me I could holler for one and he would come and help me out without me having to pay him anything.
>
> The poor fellows can't catch many criminals as our towns have them too busy marking cars that have been parked too long.[2]

On occasion, "the cowboy philosopher" would blend other categories of the great dream with that of the worth of the individual. For instance, in a daily column showing the goodness of some of the former delinquents whom police had once managed to catch, he stirred in a

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[1]"Unemployment," October 18, 1931, Radio Speeches, p. 3.

[2]The New York Times, March 1, 1928, p. 27.

strong flavor of the success dream.

> The most human thing I read in the papers today, or this month. The reform school in New Jersey gave a home coming and alumni meeting where over two hundred men who had been there as boys, lots of them now prominent, came back and told what they were doing. Some brought their wives and families with 'em. One told that he served five years there for larceny, and was now a big contractor installing burglar alarms in banks, and was bonded for $150,000.
>
> It didn't give their names, but it ought to, for I believe it would endear every one of their standing in their home communities. It would at least be a change from that old success formula, "I started as a newsboy."[1]

Or when he told of the big-heartedness of the "boys" on the Western Air Express, he was identifying with heroes of progress as well as with those who trusted the basic virtue of the common man.

> Here was the best story in the paper today, and there was many of fine charitable acts on Xmas.
>
> Away out on the Escalante Desert between Los Angeles and Salt Lake--I have flown over it many times--is one of the most desolate places you ever saw. One lonely ranch. The father died, and the mother and a whole house full of children live there.
>
> Well, the pilots of the Western air run took up a purse of $80 and got the children clothes and toys, and then flew low on Xmas day and dropped 'em.
>
> What a godsend the plane and the radio is to out-of-the way places![2]

Will Rogers did not use the language of Transcendentalism to state the dream of individual goodness; he wrote as though he had never heard of Rousseau or Whitman, and his flights to the wilderness were probably only coincidences with, and not echoes of, Thoreau's sacramental idylls. Nevertheless, he wrote and said much that made him

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[1] Ibid., February 13, 1929, p. 23.

[2] Ibid., December 27, 1932, p. 15. As will be seen later, Will Rogers spoke often of his love of comrades and also of the benefits of philanthropy. Many such comments are also appropriate to the dream of goodness in the common man.

consubstantial with those dreamers of the dream; his words on the goodness of the common man had about them the breath of experience with nature.[1] His faith, like that of Father Duffy's, seemed to be in "humanity." If Will Rogers satirized foibles of humankind, he apparently did not do so in despair of the basic worth and virtue of people.

If the common man had powers of judgment and stamina and possessed an innate goodness of nature, his self-fulfillment should follow if given the opportunity to do so. Thus spake the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual.

The Dream of Self-fulfillment

In addition, the ideal American should reject whatever of the past stifled the individual, should seek and trust experience on all its levels, and then realize to a degree his highest development as a man: one who possessed the wisdom born of wise innocence; one who kept a sense of irrepressible life for himself and who could also feel regard and devotion for others. Will Rogers used words that showed forth a commitment to this program of action. Thus he identified with the action corollaries of the dream of the dignity and worth of the

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[1]This, of course, is part of Will Rogers' persona as the new Adam and will unfold more completely later in this section. For other examples of Rogersian comments on the virtue of the common man, see The Tulsa Daily World, December 26, 1926, V, p. 3; The New York Times, April 27, 1927, p. 27; The Tulsa Daily World, May 8, 1927, V, p. 5; The New York Times, January 29, 1931, p. 25; January 31, 1931, p. 19; February 5, 1931, p. 21; June 11, 1931, p. 27; August 15, 1931, p. 15; The Tulsa Daily World, April 23, 1933, IV, p. 4.

individual.[1]

Rejection of the past.--"If every history or books on old things was thrown in the river . . . ." The word-twirling cowboy from Oklahoma seemed to his readers to turn away from the past, in the best manner of the American Adam seeking his own fulfillment.

The past, for many Americans from Henry James to Will Rogers, was bound up chiefly with Europe, with its layers and levels of custom, tradition, hierarchy, and achievement. On a trip to the Continent in 1926, Will visited France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland--besides spending a good bit of time in England and Ireland. His reactions to the past as present in Europe were reminiscent of those of other "Innocents Abroad." Works of art, for instance, were too often thought to be great simply because they were old.

> In the first place, I don't care anything about Oil Paintings. Ever since I struck a dry hole near the old home ranch in Rogers County, Oklahoma I have hated oil, in the raw, and all its subsiduaries [sic]. You can color it up, and it don't mean anything to me. I don't want to see a lot of old Pictures. If I wanted to see old Pictures I would get D.W. Griffith to revive the Birth of a Nation. That's the best old Picture there is. I wouldent mind seeing the Four Horsemen again. But this thinking that everything was good just because it was old is the Apple Sauce.[2]

Those venerable structures imaging forth past glories won little admira-

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[1]At this point, in the terminology of this study, Will's mode of material identification becomes "indirect," since he talks not about principles of the common man's worth but rather shows in words his practice of the action corollaries.

[2]"Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to His President," Saturday Evening Post, August 21, 1926, p. 10. Circulation of the Post at the time was about 2,500,000. Later, the "Letters" were collected and published in a single volume, thus giving considerable additional exposure to their views.

tion from the touring cowboy philosopher, although other Americans avidly haunted them.

> They get up early in the morning to start out to see more old Churches. Now a Church is all right, and they are the greatest things we have in our lives, but not for a steady diet. They figure the earlier they can get you out, the more Churches you can see that day. If you are not interested in old Churches, you can stop off and see Rome between trains.
>
> Then they go in great for old ruins. Now I know you [Coolidge] have lived up around those old farmhouses in New England long enough to feel about ruins just about like I do. A ruin don't just exactly spellbind me; I don't care how long it has been in the process of ruination. I kept trying to get 'em to show me something that hadent started to rue yet.[1]

With the works of Michelangelo, with the ruins of the Roman Forum, and with the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, it was rather the same reaction. Columbus' feat, after all, would have been more remarkable had North and South America been as small as Switzerland. "Being an Indian, I don't mind telling you personally," Will Rogers wrote of Columbus and his discovery, "I am sorry he ever found it."[2] With other figures from the European past, the American Adam from Beverly Hills was equally irreverent. The Tudors received cavalier treatment in a weekly article.

> This old Henry was just an old fat big-footed . . . Baby. He had an older brother named Arthur. Oldest brothers got everything in those days, a younger Brother was just a Democrat, he had to take what was left. This Arthur wasn't well and he didn't know much even when he felt good. England wasn't much of a country. It stood just about like the Red Sox in the American League.
>
> They wanted to marry this Prince Arthur off to somebody with a pedigree. They looked in the Stud book and found there had been a filly colt sired in Spain a few years ahead of Arthur, but that whose mating might add to the prestige of a fast slipping Organization, so they got ahold of Queen Isabella of Spain.

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[1]Ibid., p. 11. [2]The Tulsa Daily World, August 1, 1926, V. p. 4.

. . . . . .

> Well they had a daughter Catherine, so about the best they could do with her was an offer from England. That was kinder like slumming for it dident mean much to Spain who was the General Motors in those days. But they sent her over and married her to Arthur who I think was about 14 years old. They wanted to get him settled down before he had a chance to start running around too much. Well Arthur was disgusted with the whole proceedings and to get even with all of them, he just died.
>
> . . . So that was Henrys first good break early in life. He not only inherited the direct line to the King, but he took over all Prince Arthur's estate, including wife.[1]

As the American Adam, Will's general evaluation of Europe was inevitable, in view of such reactions. "I say there is nothing new there; we got everything over home, only bigger and better."[2] As a matter of fact, Europe had almost nothing to offer the Eden-seeking American Adam liberated from the desert of the past.

> No, sir, Europe has nothing to recommend it but its old age, and the Petrified forest in Arizona makes a Sucker out of it for old age. Why, that forest was there and doing business before Nero took his first Violin lesson.
>
> You take the Guides and the Grapes out of Europe and she is just a Sahara. It's great for you to see, if somebody is paying for it, or paying you to do it. But just as a pure educational proposition or pastime, it ain't there.[3]

To the mass American audience, such a rejection of the past as embodied in Europe was possibly more than simple chauvinism. Had the monarchy and the hierarchy welcomed the aspirations to self-fulfillment of the common man? Had not the great art works been patronized by a class of idle aristocrats? Was it not satisfying to be able to declare cultural independence? Certainly, there was the breath of excitement

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[1] Ibid., June 2, 1929, V, p. 1.

[2] Saturday Evening Post, August 21, 1926, p. 170.

[3] Ibid.

about the American Adam's casual dismissal of the European past: the act, itself, whether justifiable or possible in any real sense, stood as a token of the worth of the man who could so dismiss the Old World.

Further, the rejected past need not be limited to European shores. European Culture was suspect, wherever it might appear.

> This Carnegie Hall is where they have all the "Big" Concerts. If a foreign Fiddler comes here, as soon as he is fumigated they throw him down and get a musician's dress suit on him, and put him in Carnegie Hall for a "Recital." Foreign singers, as soon as they have lived long enough to learn enough songs for what they call an Evening's entertainment, go there and give a "Recital."[1]

Moreover, at times it seemed that almost anything in the past was fair game for the new Adam to treat irreverently. Only a few months before all time was to cease for him, Will Rogers revealed over network radio his own long-awaited plan for national recovery--a national lottery, based upon "sound" historical precedent.

> In 17--let's see--I think it was 1750--if I remember my dates--in 1750--stop me if I'm wrong--Yale, Yale University needed some money; now get this, you Yale guys--needed some money and a new stadium--and so they put on a lottery--not only--not only which is history but it was a success and they built a lot of new--new--new buildings in Yale, at Yale. In 1772 (if I remember, 'cause it was twenty-two--I remember the date 'cause it was twenty-two years later) in 1772--just twenty-two years later--Harvard heard what Yale had done and so you see in those days Harvard was only twenty-two years behind Yale--and, of course, they gradually lost ground from then on. But Harvard needed some new buildings and some new football players--and they pulled a lottery. They drew the buildings but they never drew any players. And--they--they never held any more lotteries and become so disgusted they took up the English language instead of the American language--and today, it's the only--it's the only college that is carried on in a foreign tongue.[2]

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[1] The Tulsa Daily World, May 9, 1926, V, p. 3.

[2] "Plan Day," May 5, 1935, C.B.S. Text from uncatalogued sound recordings, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

Paul Revere's ride, the stories of houses where Revolutionary heroes reputedly slept, the history of Philadelphia, and other chapters in American history received a light touch that was free with details and accorded with the character of the new Adam from Claremore who would be made uncomfortable if not stifled, by the past-worshipping Daughters of the American Revolution.[1]

Will Rogers as the American Adam seeking his own self-fulfillment projected an image of gay insouciance toward the past: his true identity was not to be found there. To the extent that books also represented that past and to the extent that a rejection of the past called for intuition in dealing with the present, the cowboy philosopher expressed a trust in the broadest possible direct experience with the present.

Trust of experience.--At the second stage of the search for self-fulfillment, then, life itself, not books, was the textbook for the American Adam.

America's "natural" philosopher made the point strongest, perhaps, in a weekly article discussing letters he had recently received.

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[1]For samples of Rogers' writings that show his jousting with the D.A.R., see The Tulsa Daily World, April 29, 1928, V, p. 4 and The New York Times, April 20, 1928, p. 25. For his comments on Paul Revere's ride, see The Tulsa Daily World, April 28, 1929, V, p. 1; for the comments on the "slept here" stories, see "Boston," June 15, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 41; for comment on Philadelphia history, see The Tulsa Daily World, May 19, 1929, V, p. 1. Many of Will Rogers' isolationist views were also appropriate to the American Adam's rejection of the past: see The New York Times, June 1, 1927, p. 29; November 28, 1927, p. 23; May 9, 1929, p. 31; July 26, 1929, p. 23; June 6, 1931, p. 27; June 25, 1932, p. 15; June 23, 1933, p. 19; and February 16, 1934, p. 21. My impression, however, is that most of Will Rogers' isolationist sentiments were based on a policy of anti-imperialism.

> An educated man just teaches the things that he has been taught, and its the same that everyone else has been taught that has read and studied the same books that he has. But if these old fellows [like cattlemen] know anything, it come direct to them by experience, and not by way of somebody else.[1]

The knowledge gained from such direct experience provided "a lesson of every day life in every little animal or Bird we have"; it would create confidence in those to whom it came second-hand, for "they would know that it come from a prairie and not from under a lamp."[2] Its possessor was the "old broad minded man of the world of experience," with whom the "Educated Guy" felt lost, "FOR THERE IS NOTHING AS STUPID AS AN EDUCATED MAN IF YOU GET HIM OFF THE THING HE WAS EDUCATED IN."[3]

If the method of attaining knowledge and self-fulfillment was thus empiricism in its broad sense, the American Adam would be also an intuitive searcher. In the context of the hastily-devised measures for relief and recovery from the Depression in the first Roosevelt years, the leading citizen of Beverly Hills spoke to his radio audience on the importance of intuition.

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, July 5, 1931, IV, p. 9. Such an attitude accords well not only with a romantic view of man's individuality, but also with that part of the success dream which traditionally rejected the college-educated candidate. I suspect that American academicians were not particularly charmed by such views. They could take cheer, though, from Will's steady refusal to accept honorary degrees on the ground that he had too much respect for those who had worked for degrees. The D.A. (Doctor of Applesauce) was the only degree he thought might be appropriate to himself. For some of his comments on honorary degrees, see The New York Times, June 4, 1931, p. 29 and June 25, 1931, p. 25.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, July 5, 1931, IV, p. 9.

[3]Ibid. For another ringing pronouncement on books versus "experience," see The New York Times, January 27, 1928, p. 23.

> Now--my plan--my plan is: don't plan. Whatever you do, don't do it purposely--you know--live haphazardly--just kinda go through life haphazardly--well, even more than we are now. There is nothing in the world as common as an idea--and there is nothing in the world as hard to carry out as an idea.[1]

When Will Rogers wrote about his use of language to convey the results of his own experience and intuition, he added to his image as the American Adam, the natural man. Words, like men, animals, and events, required firsthand experience.

> I got me a dictionary one time, but goodness it dident last long. It was like looking in a telephone book. I never called up anybody in my life if I had to look up their number. Nobody is worth looking through all those numbers for, and that's the way it was with my dictionary. I could write the article while I was trying to see what the word meant, and thats one good thing about language, there is always a short word for it. Course, the Greeks have a word for it, and the dictionary has a word for it, but I believe in using your very own for it.
>
> The minute you put in a word that everybody dont know, you have just muddled up that many readers. Running onto a word you cant read or understand is just like a detour in the road. You cuss it, and about a half dozen of em and you will take a different road next time. I love words but dont like strange ones. You dont understand them, and they dont understand you, old words is like old friends, you know em the minute you see em.[2]

Thus, relying upon experience and his own intuitive ability to assimilate it meaningfully, Will Rogers as the American Adam went forth each day (in the eyes of his public) as had Whitman's eidolon--to meet men and creatures, and to know the earth and the sun in order

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[1]"Planning in Nutshells," April 21, 1935, C.B.S., text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. A similar statement occurs in the C.B.S. broadcast of April 14, 1935.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, October 29, 1933, IV, p. 4. Will, of course, was writing in the vein of Aristotle's Rhetoric, with regard to favoring familiar words over foreign or strange ones.

to have the widest experience possible. The daily datelines told the story of the "child" going forth: from Nashville, Birmingham, and Atlanta in the South; from Tulsa, San Antonio, and Dallas in the Southwest; from Chicago, Cleveland, and Kalamazoo in the Midwest; from Pittsburgh, Wilkes-Barre, Utica, and New York City in the East; and from Denver, Butte, and Los Angeles in the West, came the daily telegrams telling of places seen, of people met, of food eaten, of sights, sounds, and affairs both ugly and beautiful. In a weekly piece done for the newspaper syndicate, Will Rogers summarized some of his "going forth."

> We havent got a state in our whole union, but what has some great advantages that no other state possesses.
>
> New England, the most beautiful place in the summer time, and for those that like their snow its fine all the year round. Up state New York is great. All the Middle West, with its rolling prairies and big grain farms. The Northwest, just anything in the way of scenery you want, any crops, any view. The whole Pacific Coast and its adjoining mountainous States. California, the Chamber of Commerce will take that up with you. But Nevada, there is a State that should be given a whole paragraph of its own . . . . Nevada has a freedom and independent spirit that is slowly reaching out all over our land. Utah is a great state and those Mormons are fine substantial citizens. Colorado is our grand stand seat to see our world from.
>
> Texas? . . . Texas has got everything that any other State has and then "Ma" and "Jim" besides. Oklahoma? A lack of vocabulary is all that stops me. I should have stayed in Oxford another year to really have done justice to Oklahoma . . . . Why there is Republicans who live so high up in them skyscrapers in Tulsa and Oklahoma City that they aint been down to the ground since November eight [sic].
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Old Missouri? Some mighty poor farms, but mighty good schools. You can learn something, but you cant raise much . . . .
>
> Arkansas? Scenery, vacation land, fertility, beautiful women . . . .
>
> Was you ever down in Long Valley? There is a wonderful, beautiful poetical valley along the length of our great Mississippi River. Cities, beautiful, prosperous ones, hanging moss from century old trees. Charming and delightful people in this valley. Its not called Long Valley on any of your maps, its labelled Louisiana . . . .

> Oh I wish I had time to go over all those old States. I been in all of em. Each as I said has got something different. Look at Mississippi, with Pat Harrison and the State Sales Tax. Why both of em should be adopted by every State in the Union.[1]

This is the kind of "untethered grazing" that Whitman had dreamed of. From "Manahatta" to California, from the land of the live oak to "Kanada," the part-Cherokee son of the Mississippi Valley went in the company of all kinds of the little people, Whitman's "en masse," absorbing and reporting the "lay of the land."[2]

Along with all this, he pecked out messages to his public which showed that he was achieving a degree of self-fulfillment, his highest possible development as a real man. In such a national role, he was the ikon of the dream of self-fulfillment.

Self-fulfillment: wisdom, joy, and friends.--In at least three ways, Will Rogers showed that he, as an American, was developing to their highest his powers and goodness. First, he was the wise innocent in his humor and his commentary. Second, he was the eternal boy in the sense that he seemingly retained a deep joy in life. Finally, he was

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, January 1, 1933, IV, p. 4. One might note in passing that the Rogers essay is an analogue to the "Promise of America" passage in Thomas Wolfe's You Can't Go Home Again, appearing several years later. In both, the reader travels all over the continent and in both he is invited to use the Rockies as a vantage point to survey the "pasture." In addition, the Rogers article may be read as a great "boost" for all the country, being in this sense appropriate not only to the dream of the worth of the individual, but also to the dream of progress.

[2]For other full-length accounts of Will's grazing, see The Tulsa Daily World, September 9, 1928, V, p. 4; August 31, 1930, V, p. 1; and September 18, 1932, IV, p. 6. Further, of course, many dispatches to be quoted as part of the quest in the dream of progress are also relevant to the American Adam's fulfilling himself through experience with nature in its large sense.

the good friend of all, considerate of creatures and his fellow man.

His posture as the wise innocent appeared to follow from a clear-eyed look at the past and from a breadth of experience. The result was a mixture of the sophisticated and the naive, of the sly and the open, of the worldly and the visionary. Many of Rogers' comments were those of the wise innocent.

He may have understood the necessity of a consciously-practiced wise innocence. With his role as a humorist, for instance, his strategy was to seem artfully unaware of the incongruity he was presenting. "You see the subtle thing about a joke is to make it look like it was not a joke," he wrote on an early occasion.[1] With his role as a commentator, he stated that a degree of innocence or naiveté would be wise policy for the communicator who would be understood. "It don't do a fellow much good to be too far ahead of his time," he asserted, "it's better that he be a little Dumber and stay along with the times."[2] Perhaps the strategy of the wise innocence is simply a modulation of the principle of the golden mean to a new key containing a mixture of extremes equally suited to the delight or to the edification of those who perceive the words of the new Adam. In the case of humor, the mixture produces the impression of a gay spirit that itself bespeaks a degree of satisfaction with life; in the case of commentary, the mixture produces a sense of balance so important to the appearance of wisdom.

In his humor, Will Rogers was clearly the wise innocent. His

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[1]Ibid., May 3, 1925, V, p. 6. His use of irony, already noted, is also a mode of the wise innocence, of course.

[2]Ibid., March 29, 1931, I, p. 6.

persona throughout his career was that of the country boy who only seemed to be taken in by the sights and wiles of the big town. Here is, for instance, the magazine article version of a joke that found its way into at least one movie and possibly into dozens of personal appearances. Will was trying to get a passport to Europe without being able to present legal evidence of his birth.

> "Well," I told her "Lady I Have no birth certificate; and as for someone here in New York that was present at my birth and can swear to it, I am afraid that will be rather difficult." "Havent you somebody here that was there?" she asked. You know the old-time Lady's of which I am a direct descendant. They were of a rather modest and retiring nature, and being born was rather a private affair, and not a public function.
>
> I have no one here in New York that witnessed that historical event, and I doubt very much if even in Oklahoma I could produce any great amount of witnesses. My Parents are dead, Our old Family Doctor, bless his old heart, is no more. So what would you advise that I do? Will it be necessary for me to be born again, and just what proceedure [sic] would you advise for me doing so? . . . You see, in the early days of the Indian Territory where I was born there was no such things as birth certificates. You being there was enough. We generally took it for granted if you were there you must have at some time been born.[1]

This, of course, is reduction to absurdity, a wise maneuver made to appear innocent by its seeming so good-naturedly unintentional. The subtle and wisely-innocent thing is that the perpetrator does not seem to know that he is making a joke. This is the same straight-faced pose of the innocence-wiser-than-it-seems as that practiced by the sharp Yankee; it has the exuberance of the tall-story backwoodsman subdued but not repressed; it bespeaks a gay and poised spirit that is finding fulfillment.

Will Rogers practiced the art, too, when speaking on topical

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[1] Saturday Evening Post, July 10, 1926, pp. 53-54.

matters. In a time when Florida and California Chambers of Commerce jousted ceaselessly over comparative advantages of their topography and climates, Will--as a California mayor--seemingly innocently and good-naturedly strafed Floridian publicists in his daily telegram.

> See by the Florida papers today that California had another earthquake yesterday. I rushed right down to the Miami News to see what details they had, for my family was all out there. In looking it up in the pressroom we couldn't find any details, but we found the story on the press of the earthquake that we are having today, and that will be in tomorrow's paper, so I am not going to get excited till next Friday's earthquake. That's when they report a big one.[1]

Often, the mask of naiveté would slip slightly, thus loosening restraints upon the exuberance. Such was the case with Will's highly individualized comment upon such a current event as the ruling of Hoover's Prohibition Director that purchase of pressed-grape bricks did not violate prohibition.

> "They will turn to wine if handled properly, but it's not illegal to buy 'em; we would have to prove that he was going to handle 'em properly." Well, that's fine, Mabel, and I hope you get the government loan. By the way, a few sample bricks would reach me at the above address, [Beverly Hills] only, mind you, for paving and heaving purposes. I got a cat on my back fence I want to throw 'em at. Of course, if they turn to wine before I hit him I will be disappointed and humiliated beyond words because the cat don't like wine.
>
> Send instructions what to do in case I make up with the cat.[2]

Such spirit was evidence that Will Rogers was enjoying life even to the extent that he could have fun with blue-nosed prohibition. "There ain't nothing to life but satisfaction," the man from Oologah had said. He seemed in his humor to be getting satisfaction from what he experienced

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[1]The New York Times, February 7, 1927, p. 21.

[2]Ibid., August 12, 1931, p. 21.

as he grazed all over the new Eden.[1] In humor, his strategy was the wise innocence.

When he came to straightforward news commentary, his manner was that of the wise innocence. Will pretended to be a little "dumber" than he was, by prefacing many of his comments with expressions such as "all I know is what I read in the papers," "I'm just a dumb comedian," "Now, this is just a rough idea of mine," and variants of each. At other times, he wasn't dissembling about his ignorance: on a "Back to Good Times" broadcast, sponsored by the Bank of America, he drawled his admission that he knew little or nothing about banking.

> I--honest, I don't know what I'm doin' here, I just heard an orchestra playin' and came in here with my friends--I--it was just like it was with the Democrats [at the national convention], there was a lull in the proceedings and they brought me on here. I have no more business here and don't know any more about bankin' than I do about Democrats. And--uh--nobody don't know anything (chuckle) about either one of 'em anyway.[2]

The effect of such disclaimers was at least twofold: they produced the effect of a modesty of judgment that was appropriate to wise practice of the golden mean, and they magnified the words of wisdom which followed by decreasing audience expectations relative to that wisdom.

Thus, Will Rogers maintained in his commentary the stance of the American innocent; when he combined with that posture the appli-

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[1]For other typical examples of Rogers having fun with the world, see his plan to visit the London Bridge in Saturday Evening Post, July 17, 1926, p. 162; his fun with things done in all seriousness at the 1928 Democratic Convention, The New York Times, June 27, 1928, p. 5; and his jocularity with the Piccard balloon flight for the purpose of studying cosmic rays, The Tulsa Daily World, October 28, 1934, IV, p. 6.

[2]From broadcast of July 16, 1932, uncatalogued recording in Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

cation of everyday principles to complex affairs, he seemed wise, indeed. When he transferred to the National Recovery Act the American delight in rule-of-the-thumb work methods, the result was as follows.

> I wrote a little gag at the time [of the beginning of the NRA] and said that the whole NRA plan should be written on a postcard. Nobody can work a man over a certain number of hours (without extra pay) and nobody can pay anyone under a certain sum (no matter what line of business it was), nobody can hire children. There was the whole NRA in those few words.[1]

To stop war, the wise American innocent would apply the everyday principle of outlawed debts.

> Every man ought to pay his own debts. The only way for him to outlaw em is to die. If they did that it sure would help to discourage war. If Countries knew that they were not going to be paid but just a few years and then no more, they would be mighty slow about going out to start something.[2]

To understand the behavior of nations, the Sage of Claremore implied, simply multiply the way individuals behave.

> Wars always start by somebody wanting somebody else to apologize for something, maby [sic] for something which the other dident even do. Then they alibi it with calling it a war of honor, maby neither one of them havent really got any more honor than a Rabbitt [sic].
>
> But the old Propaganda gets to working, and the big men let it be known that the country has been insulted, and that they must arise and make the other nation back water.
>
> The same old Bull is going on in the opponents camp, both sides trying to manufacture a national hate, that dont even exist.[3]

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, March 17, 1935, IV, p. 6. There is the flair of intuition in this statement, also--which makes it add to Rogers' image as the new Adam.

[2]Ibid., August 28, 1932, IV, p. 6. The idea is also similar to the notion of Jefferson and Paine that no generation should legislate for the succeeding one. It is possible that the general idea propounded by the two dreamers of the dream still was alive in some form in segments of Rogers' audience.

[3]Ibid., July 28, 1929, V, p. 1.

Finally, the experience of living, itself, fits us for the meeting of crises.

> Poor old "Brink". I dont know of anything we been on more of than we have it. We have tottered on the Brink so long and so much that I think the old Brink has got hand holts on it. I am beginning to believe we wouldent go over it on a bet.[1]

Such words, tied closely to the experience of the intuitive American Adam, seemed wise to their readers who were themselves dedicated to the proposition that through "the school of hard knocks" comes wisdom and, therefore, the highest possible development of the individual's possibilities.

Speaking wisely-innocent words in his humor and commentary, Will Rogers gradually etched his own public portrait as the American Adam, a new man starting from new beginnings and developing his own powers to their fullest.

In a second sense, he appeared through his words to be achieving self-fulfillment. In many of his messages, he conveyed a sense of irrepressible liveliness and zest for life.

His words had the ability to say, "By Golly I am living now," in many ways. As already suggested, the joy of his humor, by itself, testified to his joy in life. In addition, however, many times he wrote of the delights partaken of as the eternal boy. His delight in eating, for example, was young and Adamic in spirit.

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[1]Ibid., July 15, 1934, IV, p. 4. For other typical bits of Rogers' commentary on a variety of subjects, see also the issues of April 11, 1926, V, p. 4; December 1, 1929, V, p. 1; February 1, 1931, Tulsa World Magazine section, p. 2; July 12, 1931, IV, p. 7; January 31, 1932, V, p. 4; May 13, 1934, IV, p. 4; July 7, 1935, IV, p. 6. Of course, other passages of commentary will appear under other categories of the great dream.

> We always have such good things to eat at my Sister's in Chelsea. Beans, and what beans, kinder soupy navy beans cooked with plenty of real fat meat. Well when I cant knock off a whole bowl of those myself, why I am sick before I start. And then the ham; they cure their own ham. Tom McSpadden my Brother-in-Law, he is the prize ham curer of any I ever saw. Smokes em with the old hickory log fire, then salts em away for all this time. Then the cooking of all this has got a lot to do with it . . . . Sallie fixes it all up when I get home.
>
> Then the cream gravy. You know there is an awful lot of folks that dont know much about eating gravy. Why not to be raised on gravy would be like never going swimming in the creek . . . . Ham gravy is just about the last word in gravys. Course good beefsteak gravy is good . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Now then comes the corn bread. Not the corn bread like you mean. I mean pone, made with nothing but meal, and hot water and salt. My old Daddy always had that at every meal, said it was only the high toned folks that eat buscuits [sic], and lightbread or loaves like you all eat now. He called that "wasp nest", and thought that was just for the heathen. Well this corn pone is mighty hard to go hungry after.
>
> You see I am just telling you my dishes that they have when I come. I am not telling you of what they have cause they know I would rather have it than to go out and kill the fatted calf, or kill a turkey or some chickens.[1]

Again and again, the scent of a boyish delight with life clung to newspaper dispatches. With April came crocuses and the national pastime: "With the baseball season opened and Washington headed for another pennant, boy, Congress better be good from now on!" Will exclaimed.[2] At the conclusion of the 1932 Olympics, he told those who had not attended, "You have missed the greatest show from every angle that was ever held in America."[3] At Christmastime, his readers might see the

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, August 2, 1931, IV, p. 7.

[2]The New York Times, April 18, 1934, p. 21.

[3]Ibid., August 9, 1932, p. 19. Will's niece, Paula McSpadden Love, who was with the Rogerses at the time, has told me how Will had bought tickets for all the family and insisted they be used every day. Interview at Claremore, Oklahoma, July 19, 1963.

following picture of the eternal boy.

> I am too busy replacing presents to write today. I bought some mechanical and electrical things for the kids and wore 'em out playing with 'em myself. Don't forget to lay by a few presents today for those you didn't think would send you anything. You may not have to use 'em anyway.[1]

A dispatch on what was to be his last birthday testified to Will's continuing joy in living and spirit of boyhood.

> I am pretty sore today. Am looking for the ones that reminded me that 55 years ago today at Oologah, Indian Territory, on Nov. 4, 1879, a boy baby was born. Well, anyhow, I played a game of polo and roped calves all day, so there is life in the old nag yet.[2]

On a trip to Finland he was delighted not only by the food, but also by the new electric button device by which the members of parliament voted. When the Chicago World's Fair of 1933 was preparing to open, he sneaked a look at it to see whether it looked as big as had the one he had seen as a boy (and it did). Alone in Shanghai at Christmas in 1931, he was homesick for the family and the Christmas tree. He revelled in the fast action of the professional football teams, saying that colleges had the yelling perfected but that the professionals had the game. He pictured with high pleasure the thrills of a rollicking mule ride on his ranch in Santa Monica.[3] He was getting satisfaction from living, any reader could

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[1]The New York Times, December 24, 1926, p. 12.

[2]Ibid., November 5, 1934, p. 21.

[3]Ibid., September 6, 1934, p. 21; May 27, 1933, p. 15; December 27, 1931, p. 19; January 16, 1934, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, May 6, 1934, IV, p. 4. For other prime examples of Will's continuing delight in life, see The New York Times, July 17, 1931, p. 19; November 30, 1932, p. 21; and The Tulsa Daily World, February 25, 1934, IV, p. 4. Naturally, Will's zest for travel fits in with his joy of living, but its added dimension of the quest suits it for treatment under the dream of progress.

conclude.

In another way, Will Rogers' words showed him to be the eternal boy: he seemed always to have a dog or horse handy, and he wrote lovingly of them. One was "Sealingham," a gift of Lord Dewar in 1926. Five years later, the dog had met his death. Will wrote,

> We have petted him, complained at him, called him a nuisance, but when we buried him yesterday we couldn't think of a wrong thing he had ever done.
>
> His bravery was his undoing. He lost to a rattlesnake, but his face was towards him.[1]

On another occasion, a favorite family pony died, a friend of many years' standing. "I first saw him at a town in Connecticut, I think it was Westport," Will Rogers recalled, almost as if he were talking about a human acquaintance. "I liked him, and he come home with me, and I think he liked me."[2] Dopey had been intimately connected with the Rogerses.

> Dopey belonged to the family. Our children learned to ride at two, and during his lifetime he never did a wrong thing to throw one off, or do a wrong thing after they had fallen off. He couldent pick em up, but he would stand there and look at em with a disgusted look for being so clumsy as to fall off. He never kicked or stepped on one of them in his life, and he was a young horse when I first got him from Zack Miller . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In a private tan bark ring we had in our old Beverly Hills home, all the children learned trick riding on him, standing up on him running, vaulting, and would use him with Dodo to ride Roman, all allowed because I knew they were on gentle ponies. He has been set for four or five years, hasent had a bridle on him. Fat as a pig. When nineteen years of you and your children's life is linked so closely with a horse, you can sorter imagine our feelings.
>
> We still have quite a few old favorites left, but Dopey was different. He was one of the family. He raised our

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[1]The New York Times, March 25, 1931, p. 27.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, December 16, 1934, IV, p. 6.

> children. He learned em to ride. He never hurt one in his life. He did everything right. Thats a reputation that no human can die with.[1]

Love for animals was a part of experience that made Will Rogers seem to find self-fulfillment in life. Too, his love for animals gave an altruistic cast to his public image; he often exhibited a concern, as well as a love, for animals. Commenting on newspaper pictures of big game hunters, he wrote, "I wish the Humane Society would take up one thing--after killing a poor dumb animal, you are not allowed to sit on it to have your picture made." He added, "That's awful humiliating to a wild animal."[2]

In his public portrait, Will Rogers remained the eternal boy, but he did so without seeming to be an egocentric child, thoughtless of all but himself.

In a third way, Will's messages pictured a man who was finding self-fulfillment. His words revealed the consideration for others that was part of the American dream's program for self-fulfillment of the individual.

In his dispatches, the cowboy philosopher expressed a love for comrades from both humble and high stations in life. Many times would appear a squib such as the following.

> "Mexico, Mo.--Tom Bass, well-known Negro horseman, aged 75, died here today."
> Don't mean much to you does it? You have all seen society

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[1]Ibid.

[2]The New York Times, June 16, 1930, p. 23. For other examples of Rogers' concern for animals, see ibid., December 13, 1927, p. 31; April 6, 1931, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, November 5, 1933, IV, p. 4.

> folks perform on a beautiful three or five gaited saddle horse, and said, "My, what skill and patience they must have had to train that animal."
>
> Well, all they did was ride him in. All this Negro, Tom Bass, did was to train him. For over fifty years America's premier trainer, he trained thousands others were applauded on. A remarkable man, a remarkable character.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If old St. Peter is as wise as we give him credit for being, Tom, he will let you go in horseback and give those folks up there a great show, and you will get the blue ribbon yourself.[1]

Often the friend was well-known nationally or regionally, as was the case with the governor of Nevada.

> Well, there ain't many Republicans left and the good ones of them are dying off.
>
> Lost a good one, and a fine friend, yesterday--Fred Balzar, cowpuncher, railroader and miner, a real two-fisted Governor of the most independent State in our Union, Nevada.
>
> He drove out to see me when down here a few weeks ago and brought me a quirt. I knew it was his last trip, and he did, too, but he never flinched.[2]

Whether the friend was mail plane pilot or Speaker of the House of Representatives, Will Rogers evidenced in his words the same degree of warm feelings.[3] "If we havent got any friends," he had written, "we will

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[1]The New York Times, November 23, 1934, p. 21. Such a sentiment is appropriate also to the dream of freedom and equality: Rogers approved in this statement of Tom Bass not because of, or in spite of, his skin color, but because of what he did as a good horseman.

[2]Ibid., March 23, 1934, p. 25. The dispatch is also relevant to that prime American hero of the dream of freedom, the cowboy. Note also in the selection of appositives the motif of the rise to power and self-fulfillment of the common man.

[3]For other examples of Will's expressing his love for comrades, see The Tulsa Daily World, December 28, 1924, III, p. 8; The New York Times, October 20, 1928, p. 19; January 7, 1929, p. 31; April 11, 1931, p. 21; July 18, 1931, p. 15; April 16, 1932, p. 17; and December 13, 1934, p. 25. Often, such statements were also relevant to the dream of the individual's natural goodness.

find we are poorer than anybody." Rogers apparently was rich. "I am proud of the fact there is not a human being that I have got it in for. I never met a man I dident like," he would write and say.[1] For such a man, happiness seemed not to be a pursuit but rather a possession.

In his public pronouncements, Will Rogers also showed consideration for others' religions, perhaps the most personal of all matters. In a weekly article that had been written in response to questions from a Protestant minister, Will seemed almost to be Whitman's ideal American.

> I was raised predominately [sic] a Methodist, but I have traveled so much, mixed with so many people in all parts of the world, I dont know now just what I am. I know I have never been a nonbeliever. But I can honestly tell you that I dont think that any one religion is the religion.[2]

Not only would Will show consideration for others by not arguing about religion, but he could, at times, actively urge an ecumenical attitude for religionists, themselves.

> You hear or read a sermon nowadays, and the biggest part of it is taken up by knocking or trying to prove the falseness of some other denomination. They say that the Catholics are Damned, that the Jews' religion is all wrong, or that the Christian Scientists are a fake, or that the Protestants are all out of step.
>
> Now, just suppose for a change they preached to you about the Lord and not about the other fellow's Church, for every man's religion is good. There is none of it bad.[3]

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, January 8, 1933, IV, p. 4. The word "like," in common with the word "love," of course, admits of many degrees.

[2]Ibid.

[3]The New York Times, March 11, 1923, IX, p. 2. See also the text to a speech before the Catholic Actor's Guild, October 27, 1924, in uncatalogued file of speeches gathered by Donald Day, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; and The New York Times, January 27, 1934, p. 15. This sort of statement also related to the dream of freedom from prejudice and to spiritual equality, as well as to Rogers' expressed belief in the goodness of the common man.

In his messages, Will Rogers appeared to be considerate of others. Such an impression, paired with that of a man who is eagerly enjoying life itself, spoke relevantly of the dream of the common man's self-fulfillment.

In sum, Will Rogers identified himself materially with the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual by admiring the judgment and stamina of all the unique individuals who comprised "the big normal Majority," by expressing a belief in the natural goodness of man and in the altruism of his cultural contemporaries. He also merged himself with the dream by imaging forth his own, individual powers and goodness in the role of the new American Adam who first rejects the stifling past, then seeks broad first-hand experience, and finally, finds a degree of self-fulfillment in wisdom, joy in life, and consideration for friends.

Will Rogers identified with the dream of individualism in the way in which he used the language of gesture and word.[1]

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[1]Conventionalized gestures can be considered a language. "There is the deaf and dumb language; a Frenchman's shrug of the shoulders is a word; in fact, any kind of externally perceptible bodily movement may become a word, if social usage so ordains." Bertrand Russell, quoted in Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study of the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), p. 72. The criterial attribute of language is that it is conventionalized by social usage. This does not mean, I think, that a gesture may become a word only if significant proportions of a population use that gesture; by analogy, such a requirement would also rule out such utterable words as "epistemology." "Social usage," it seems to me, also includes the case of the speaker interacting with his audience, consistently using an individualized gesture in a context of uttered words, and thus conventionalizing his own gestural idiom. The co-occurring context of uttered words may be, but need not be, consistently limited to one set of meanings. For instance, the characteristic chopping gesture of former President John F. Kennedy, used in a variety of contexts of spoken words, may well have been for his audiences a gestural word naming its own category of "significance."

Formal Identification with the Dream of the Individual

The dream of the dignity and worth of the individual had about it, as we have seen, the sense of new beginnings: at its center was the common man, who could by exercising his potential powers and his own virtue achieve a fuller degree of self-fulfillment. Further, that self-fulfillment came after the common man's passage from the stifling part of the past to the wisdom gained from experience. That the ikon of the dream was the new Adam in his wise innocence and in his newness was natural. Will Rogers, both in his gestures and in his spoken or written language, took the form of the American Adam and thus identified with the dream of the individual's worth.

Rogers habitually used a gesture which gave him the appearance of the wise American innocent. As he would say words such as, "Course, that's just a rough idea of mine," or "Course, I'm just a dumb comedian," he would lower his head as though to look at the floor; instead, he would raise his eyebrows and quickly and repeatedly alternate his glance between the audience and the floor. Used repeatedly in the context of uttered words, the gesture could well have taken on a conventionalized significance (renderable in word symbols) of "wiser-than-I-look."[1] With such a symbolic function abstracted from the total stimulus, audiences could possibly associate the meaning and the gesture

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[1]Homer Croy describes the gesture and one of its early occurrences in Our Will Rogers, p. 41. Its use, as I recall, was also frequent in the Rogers movies, which unfortunately were not available to me in this study. However, the Will Rogers Memorial at Claremore, Oklahoma, is in the process of attempting to gather the feature films of Will Rogers and make them available for scholarly study.

so strongly that the expression could be said to look like the wise innocent (instead of, for example, an apologetic person). To the extent, of course, that the gesture really seemed to look like the wise innocence of the American Adam, it was an ikonic symbol and was a "formal" identification with the dream of the individual--in which the new Adam was a central character.

When Will Rogers used either written or spoken language, the form or "look" of the new Adam was only metaphorically such. But he did utilize the properties of written or spoken language to convey the sense of newness that was so much a part of the new Adam in the dream of the individual's worth. That sense of newness came about chiefly through Will's "bending" words toward new significations, first, by artistically misapplying a word so that it was made to bear a new sense, and, second, by using slang.[1]

Known to the ancients as abusio or catachresis, the misapplication of a word was considered a figure of speech and, therefore, distinctly dependent upon the characteristics of verbal language, itself.[2]

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[1]The idea here, of course, is that as a word used to name one category of experiences comes to be applied to another category of experiences by means of some common attribute abstracted from both categories, language grows and is enriched. Thus, the name for the category of hills called "foothills" may have been derived by such a process of carrying abstractions from one category to a relevant aspect of a new category. "Every new experience, or new idea about things, evokes first of all some metaphorical expression. As the idea becomes familiar, this expression 'fades' to a new literal use of the once metaphorical predicate." Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 125. It is precisely this formal property of language which images forth the new Adam in all his newness.

[2]Ancients considered the figure of speech to rely uniquely for its effect upon the resources of language, while the figure of thought did not. See Charles Sears Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic: To

As the man from Oologah applied the technique, the impression on his audiences may simply have been one of pleasing newness and of fresh use of language. In the guise of the past-rejecting Adam, he could remark that New England "is mangy with history"; in Genoa, he was going "church prowling," and the cardinal in Will's version of history made possible Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine when he "thought of the bright idea of saying that Prince Arthur and Catherine were never married, that it was two other fellows."[1] When he addressed himself to political matters as the wise innocent, he could report that Kansas had "sentenced" Charles Curtis to the Senate; he could hope, after the common man realized his own potential more fully, to see us "extinguish our office seekers every two years"; if the NRA were re-submitted to Congress after being declared unconstitutional, he would be sure that it went there under an "assumed name."[2] Republicans, apparently, were not human beings counted in numbers: "You'd be surprised at the amount of 'em that's showin' up, you know"; on the other hand, Senators who earlier had baited President Hoover had made an unfair demand that the President give them the whole "Menu" of a visit between the President

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1400 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), pp. 304-307. Further, they differentiated catachresis and metaphor among the figures of speech. Actually, it seems to me that a metaphorical function is involved in catachresis.

[1]"Boston," June 15, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 41; The Tulsa Daily World, August 1, 1926, V, p. 4; June 2, 1929, V, p. 1.

[2]"Vice-President Curtis," April 27, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 15; The New York Times, November 9, 1927, p. 27; "Visiting in Washington," March 31, 1935, C.B.S. Text of latter from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

and the English Prime Minister.[1] Commenting upon other international events, Will took note of the knee breeches worn by diplomats received by the English King and took satisfaction from the fact that America's "Charley [Dawes] was the only one that didn't wear rompers"; a few years before, he had professed astonishment over Mexican reaction to an earlier punitive expedition: "They dident appreciate the fact that they had been shot in the most cordial manner possible."[2] By means of catachresis, Will Rogers thus bent words toward new significances and achieved an effect of fresh newness from such use of language.

Also, the man from Oologah achieved the sense of the new Adam in his use of slang.[3]

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[1]"Tainted Government Money," April 7, 1935, C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; The Tulsa Daily World, July 20, 1930, V, p. 1.

[2]The New York Times, June 28, 1929, p. 25; "Letters of a Self-made Diplomat to His President," Saturday Evening Post, May 12, 1928, p. 4. The quotation on Dawes' clothes is relevant on a material level to the dream of freedom as well as to Adamic rejection of the past; the quotation on Mexico is relevant to the dream of freedom and equality in its defense of the underdog. For other examples of Will's use of catachresis, see "Prohibition," June 8, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 38; "Unemployment," October 18, 1931, Radio Speeches; "Civilization and Dust Bowls," April 14, 1935, C.B.S., text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; "Inflation," May 26, 1935, C.B.S., text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; The Tulsa Daily World, May 15, 1927, V, p. 5; November 26, 1933, IV, p. 4; May 9, 1926, V, p. 3; November 13, 1927, Tulsa World Magazine section, p. 4; August 2, 1931, IV, p. 7; January 1, 1933, IV, p. 4; June 4, 1933, IV, p. 4; July 29, 1934, IV, p. 4; The New York Times, May 12, 1935, p. 29; September 9, 1923, VIII, p. 2; November 30, 1926, p. 31; December 23, 1926, p. 14; December 9, 1931, p. 25; January 28, 1933, p. 15.

[3]Slang, at its best, like catachresis, has a metaphorical function that feeds vividness into language. "Slang is almost entirely far-fetched metaphor. Although much of it is conscious and humorous in intent, there is always a certain amount of peculiarly apt and expressive slang which is ultimately taken into the literary language as 'good

One source of slang for him was the transfer of specialized professional or occupational terms from their special vocabularies to a more general one; the effect was much like that of catachresis. For instance, from bookkeeping came the expression to describe the Ferguson couple in Texas, both of whom became governor: "America's only Double Entry Governors."[1] From Will's ranching experience came "round up" and "corralling beef" that he applied to corset making; a governor from Maryland had every "earmark" of a future President.[2] From show business he drew many expressions and applied them outside the field: nations had to "book" wars ahead; Moses' Biblical followers had been his "troupe"; our intervention in Nicaragua had been wrong because citizens of that nation had wanted to use only "home talent" in their civil war; present-day Nevada miners were "descendants of the original casts."[3] This was slang at its best: fresh, vivid, and Adamic.

Another source for Rogers' slang lay in his naturalization of foreign words: from the Navajo goghan, he got a favorite name for his home, "hogan"; from the Spanish remuda, he arrived at "remuther" as the name for a ready group of saddle horses; the front feet of cattle were "mongano"; the Spanish frijole kept its pronunciation but not its spelling:

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usage.'" Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 125. H.L. Mencken called American slang the single most distinguishing feature of the American language and described it as "a form of colloquial speech created in a spirit of defiance and aiming at freshness and novelty, . . ." quoted in Sanford, The Quest for Paradise, p. 263.

[1]The Tulsa Daily World, March 7, 1926, V, p. 3.

[2]Ibid., May 15, 1927, V, p. 5; The New York Times, December 11, 1926, p. 19.

[3]C.B.S. broadcast, April 14, 1935; "Prohibition," June 8, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 37; "Arms Conference," April 6, 1930, ibid., p. 5.

Will, as the eternal boy, loved to eat "free holey" beans out on the range.[1]

Besides using special terms in a more general sense and adapting foreign words, Rogers used shortened forms of words, onomatopoetic words, and coined words to achieve language fresh with the dew on it. A division into shares was a "divvy"; a reputation was a "rep"; diplomats wouldn't "dip," and the preferable ruins were those which hadn't yet started to "rue."[2] His Ford car had gone "flooey"; talk about brinks was all "hooey"; talking was also "yowling" and "yapping"; a risque foreign movie was admittedly "snorty" in spots.[3] A back belonging to a coward was a "Spine-a-Marino," and Oklahoma--with its frequent troubles with governors--was "IMPEACHerino."[4]

The Old Testament Adam "gave names to all cattle, and to the

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[1]"Death of the NRA," June 2, 1935, C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; The Tulsa Daily World, November 29, 1931, V, p. 5; November 14, 1926, V, p. 4.

[2]C.B.S. broadcast, April 14, 1935; "Mr. Toastmaster and Democrats," Saturday Evening Post, March 30, 1929, p. 161; May 12, 1928, p. 4; August 21, 1926, p. 10.

[3]"Henry Ford," June 1, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 33; C.B.S. broadcast, March 31, 1935; "Inheritance Taxes and Other Plans," April 28, 1935, C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; The Tulsa Daily World, July 16, 1933, IV, p. 4; January 2, 1927, V, p. 7.

[4]The Tulsa Daily World, April 4, 1926, V, p. 4 and April 14, 1929, V, p. 1. For other examples of Rogers' use of slang, see "H.R.H. The Prince of Wales," May 18, 1930, Radio Talks, pp. 25, 27-28; ibid., June 15, 1930, pp. 41, 43; C.B.S. broadcast, April 14, 1935; The Tulsa Daily World, October 31, 1926, V, p. 4; July 16, 1933, IV, p. 4; The New York Times, August 22, 1933, p. 19; July 30, 1934, p. 15. As in the case with the dream categories in other respects, the formal appeals are not discrete.

fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field . . . ."[1] Will Rogers, as a new Adam, used new names for old ones.

By speaking directly of the principles of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual, by using words to reveal his practice of the action corollaries of that dream, and by using the resources of language, itself, to suggest further the character of the new Adam, Will Rogers got himself identified with one great category of the American dream. He also stood forth in his national image as a champion of the dream of freedom and equality.

Material and Formal Identification with the Dream of Freedom and Equality

"We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others," Will Rogers wrote, early in his newspaper career. Learning to recognize the rights of others lay at the heart of Will Rogers' concept of freedom and equality and, therefore, provided the basis for his identification with those categories of the great American dream. He spoke directly of the principle of freedom when the American Liberty League, with an executive board of millionaires, came into existence in 1934 to fight "the tyranny of autocratic power." The Sage of Claremore took note of the real issue.

> The greatest aid that I know of that any man could give the world today would be a correct definition of "liberty."
>
> Everybody is running around in a circle announcing that somebody's pinched their "liberty."
>
> Now what one classes as "liberty" another might class as "poison." Course, I guess, absolute "liberty" couldn't mean anything but that anybody can do anything they want to, any time they want to.

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[1]Gen. 2:20

> Well, any half wit can tell that that wouldn't work. So, the question arises, "how much liberty can I get and get away with?"
>
> Well, you can get no more than you give. That's my definition, but you got perfect "liberty" to work out your own, so get in.[1]

Thus Will's definition of freedom implied also a state of equality: the free man could have an amount of liberty only equal to what he was willing to grant. That freedom and equality were interfused in Rogers' public pronouncements was also clear in his attack written some seven years earlier on those organizations which were unwilling to grant the degree of freedom which they assumed for themselves. He noted that they liked to call themselves such free-and-equal sounding names as "America for the Americans," "100 Percent Americanism," and the like. Then he commented ironically that such groups had awakened America from its erroneous ways of freedom and equality.

> It seems that before the war come along, we were really kinder lax in our duty toward declaring just what we were. The war come along and about all we could do was to muster up five or six million men of every breed and color that ever been invented. Now these poor fellows dident know whether they were "100 percent Americans" or "Better Citizens," or what they were, and we started them drilling so fast that they dident have time to go through a clinic and find out.
>
> You see up to then they dident know what all this meant. They thought that as long as they paid their taxes, tended to their own business, went to their own churches, kept kinder within the law, that that was all they were supposed to do. And it was like that in the old days. But you see we was a backwards nation and dident know it. What we had to learn was to be better Americans.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We all went in 50-50 in war time, but this is peace now and we got time to see who is who, and why.
>
> So these Societys commenced to be formed and they grabbed our little civilisation just when it was on the brink and hauled it back to normalcy.[2]

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[1] The New York Times, October 1, 1934, p. 19.

[2] The Tulsa Daily World, November 13, 1927, VII, p. 4.

The dream of freedom and equality had resulted from a "doctrinal error" early in the history of the country.

> You see in America there was originally just one Society (Well it was really two combined): it was the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. If you was here and belonged to that why you was all members of the same Club. You dident know whether you was a 2 and 3/4 percent, or what ratio you was. You dident know whether you was a good citizen or bad one. All you knew was that you belonged to this club called America, and all you had to do was work for it, fight for it and act like a gentleman, that was all the by-laws there was. As long as you did that, you could worship what you wanted to, talk any language you wanted to, in fact it looked like a pretty liberal layout. But after 150 or more years, it was immediately seen that this plan was no good, that the old boys that layed out the Constitution dident know much, that the country should be divided up in various Societys and Cliques. So that brings us down to this generation, who really are showing us just what to do to prove that we are not against the old Fatherland.[1]

Because he could see that the cliques of the present were moving in the right direction to destroy freedom and equality, Will Rogers had a "modest proposal" of his own that would make certain the denial of the dream.

> Now I have looked over all the clubs and none of them seem to have enough scope, or broad minded ideal. So that is why as I told you a few weeks ago that I wanted to get this Society going. "America First" is all right, but it allows somebody else to be second. Now sometimes a thing second can be almost as good as something that's first. So that's the thing my Society avoids. Its with the whole idea of there being no one else. In other words, I am just taking the spirit and foundation of other clubs and societys and making them broader.
>
> They are against something (They got to be against something or they wouldent be formed). Well, mine improves on any of theirs; its against everything. I can take my "America Only" idea and eliminate wars. The minute we extinguish all other nations there will be no more wars, unless its a Civil war among ourselves, and that of course we can take care of right here at home without a shipping board. I am getting a lot of applications already, real redblooded go-gettum Americans,

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[1] Ibid.

> that have seen this country trampled under foreign feet enough, and they are right out in the open. Why I figure the patriotism in my organization when I get it formed will run around 165 or 170 percent American. It will make a sucker out of these little 100 percent organizations. Its not too late to send your $20 yet. Remember when you belong to "America Only" you are the last word in organizations.[1]

Will Rogers believed in that freedom and equality which allowed the millions of all "breeds and colors," whatever their "ratio" of Americanism was, to belong as members in good standing to the club set up by the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, to go "50-50," and to be free in worship and in speech.[2] Over the years of his prominence in the public eye, his rambling conversation with his public expanded and refined his identification with the dream of freedom and equality.

In his comments through the 'twenties and 'thirties, he projected to his national audience a belief in a government serving the good of all citizens, rather than the good of specially privileged groups; he identified strongly with the freedom which provided for a laissez-faire of the spirit--allowing freedom of the press, of speech, and of religion. In his writings, the advocacy of a moral freedom (manifesting itself in absence of prejudice against minority groups)

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[1]Ibid.

[2]For other comments in a vein similar to those quoted, see Saturday Evening Post, July 10, 1926, p. 54, and July 17, 1927, p. 6; The New York Times, November 2, 1927, p. 29; November 3, 1927, p. 29; October 10, 1934, p. 23. Since Rogers was directing his fire against the far right, it is easy to view him as being more liberal than he really was. A good touchstone for his moderate public stand is his not taking the part of the principals in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. His public comments deplored the years of suspense and their toll upon the defendants, but he upheld the motives of Governor Fuller in making the final decision. See The New York Times, May 13, 1927, p. 25, and August 8, 1927, p. 19.

fused with an expression of belief in spiritual equality. Will Rogers' public statements also accorded with the dreams of social, economic, and political equality--with each being interfused with the dream of freedom. Social, economic, and political equality would follow logically from spiritual equality: men who were thus equal were also free.

On the Dream of Freedom

Like the Jeffersonians who came to trust a strong central government after they had power over it, Will Rogers said in many ways that the cause of freedom was served by a government willing to work for the good of all the people. If the individual was intrinsically worthy and dignified, he was in that sense equal to all others and also deserved freedom. Often, when Will Rogers spoke of the dream of freedom, therefore, his remarks were also appropriate to the dream of the individual in the overall vision of paradise to be regained.

For instance, one of the unalienable rights of free men was that to life. He wrote early, long before the days of the great depression, on the right of children to life and on the role of government in helping to guarantee it; he used property rights to help make his point.

> You wire the State or Federal Government that your Cow or Hog is sick and they will send out experts from Washington and appropriate money to eradicate the cause. You wire them that your Baby has the Diptheria [sic] or Scarlet Fever and see what they do. All you will do is hire your own Doctor, if you are able, and there will be a flag put up on your front Gate.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I heard Dr. Copeland, now Senator from New York, say that there was more Money spent on Hogs' sickness by State and Federal Governments than there is on Children, when one child's life is worth all the Hogs and Cows that ever had a Disease. If you want the Government to help you, don't tell them it is

> any Human sickness. Tell them it is Boll Weevil or Chinch Bugs, and they will come a running. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Why can't we get the Government to at least do for a Child's protection what they do for a Cow or a Hog?[1]

Like Jefferson, Rogers expressed a higher value on human rights than on property rights. The human rights to life and happiness for old people also concerned him.

> You know, we are the last civilized, (chuckle) if you can call it that, to do anything for old people--all we do is just let 'em--we just watch 'em get older, is all we do--we give 'em--uh--but we should give 'em enough that will get them out of poor farms and let 'em live where they want to.[2]

The government had the obligation, also, of serving the good of the mass of Americans who were neither children nor old people: they had the right, as intrinsically worthy and free men, to life, too. Fourteen months after the great crash on Wall Street, with a federal administration apparently more willing to work for the good of the Hamiltonian elite than for the good of King Demos, Will spoke out again on the role of the government in relation to the human right of life.

> If you live under a Government and it dont provide some means of you getting work when you really want it and will do it, why then there is something wrong. You cant just let the people starve, so if you dont give em work, and you dont give em food, or money to buy it, why what are they to do? What is the matter with our Country anyhow?
>
> With all our brains in high positions, and all our boasted organizations, thousands of our folks are starving, or on the verge of it. Millions of bushels of wheat are in Granaries at the lowest price in twenty years. Why cant there be some means of at least giving everybody all the bread they wanted anyhow?[3]

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[1] Ibid., May 11, 1924, IX, p. 2.

[2] C.B.S. broadcast, April 21, 1935.

[3] The Tulsa Daily World, January 18, 1931, IV, p. 7.

Such sentiments as these, appropriate as they were to the dream of freedom through a government which served all, may have seemed to most Americans to be promulgated in Heaven, as had the Declaration of Independence eight generations before.[1] Such statements came regularly enough from Will's lips and typewriter that his audience could identify him with the dream of freedom from want, at least.[2] He had said that the government should serve the good of all people even before the American earthquake, and that cataclysm gave his later words timeliness.

The other side to the coin of the dream of a government serving the good of all was that America should be free from domination by special interests. Since at least the days of Bryan, agrarians had inveighed against "the interests." Will Rogers wrote and spoke in that tradition, which was relevant to the American dream.[3] Noting the rise of stock market values immediately after the election of Coolidge in 1924, he doubted that the rise was related in any real way to production

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[1]Will voiced similar sentiments to those of the newspaper dispatch when he spoke with Hoover on a national, all-network broadcast, October 18, 1931. He was deluged with requests for the text of his talk: see The New York Times, October 22, 1931, p. 23.

[2]See, for example, The Tulsa Daily World, July 13, 1930, V, p. 1; November 27, 1932, IV, p. 8; July 30, 1933, IV, p. 4; July 21, 1935, IV, p. 4; The New York Times, May 10, 1928, p. 29; January 16, 1931, p. 3; December 18, 1933, p. 21. As will be seen later, much of what Will said on the topic of economic equality and in defense of the underdog is also relevant to the dream of a government existing for the good of all the people. An economist has recently called the freedom from want a mere rhetorical device (Peoria Journal Star, October 9, 1963, p. A-18). In passing one might note also that the accusation of using rhetorical devices is itself one of the oldest rhetorical techniques.

[3]For the relationship between the American dream and agrarianism see Adams, Epic of America and Parkes, The American Experience.

and consumption of goods and, therefore, asserted that the producer or consumer should be unaffected by speculation on the part of special interests.

> It's all right to let Wall Street bet each other millions of dollars every day but why make these bets effect [sic] the fellow who is plowing a field out in Claremore, Oklahoma?
>
> You are interfering with personal rights. Then another class of men bet thousands of dollars every day on race horses, yet they don't interfere with the horse raiser in Texas.[1]

In 1928, Will had high praise for the younger La Follette who had addressed the Republican National Convention. "He speaks in favor of the people," Rogers wrote, "he was listened to, but his amendments were not adopted. They kept in the Wall Street ones."[2] Most of the time, when writing against domination of special interests, the national Congressman-at-large avoided characterizing either party as a tool for the "interests," commenting, rather, on individuals. But during depression times he did categorize parties on occasion. The Republicans, he said, served special interests.

> Now with a Republican there is just something about his make-up, that the richer the man, the less he should be watched, the bigger the industry the wider open it should be run. Its just against their principles to stop a guy from making a big killing, even if he is robbing a bank. They claim you are "Hamstringing big Business."[3]

Given the context of the times in which he communicated, Will Rogers was perhaps not greatly overstating his case about the domination of

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, November 23, 1924, IV, p. 4.

[2]The New York Times, June 15, 1928, p. 27.

[3]The Tulsa Daily World, July 30, 1933, IV, p. 4. Will may not have liked the party, but he loved many of its men, like House-Speaker Nicholas Longworth and Dwight H. Morrow (who was not only a Republican but was also a banker with J.P. Morgan).

the country by financial power.[1] In urging the case against such domination, he was becoming consubstantial with the dream of freedom from special interests.[2]

Will Rogers also identified himself with the dream of freedom by defending, in his commentary, the freedoms of press, speech, and religion.

"We got lots of fleas on us," the national Congressman-at-large wrote, "and everybody is scratching to get 'em off, but there is one insect that bothers most of the world that we are at least free from, and that is a newspaper press that is not free."[3] During the years of his national prominence, Will Rogers--as a working newspaper man--stood for a free press. One target for his irony was censorship of books. Perhaps the best test of the limits to which Will would go to oppose censorship and uphold a free press was his response to the activities of organizations that attempted censorship ostensibly for reasons of patriotism and Americanism. For instance, in 1927, Mayor William Thompson, of "America First" notoriety, was seeking to root out what he considered to be unwholesome foreign influences in the book stacks of his city. Will Rogers threw his typewriter at him.

> It seems that the Chicago Library has been subsidized by the King of England. He had been sticking a lot of Dick Turpin

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[1]See <u>supra</u>, chap. iii, pp. 189-90.

[2]For other comments relevant to this category of the dream, see <u>Saturday Evening Post</u>, March 30, 1929, p. 161; <u>The New York Times</u>, March 2, 1928, p. 27; and <u>The Tulsa Daily World</u>, January 20, 1935, IV, p. 6.

[3]<u>The New York Times</u>, April 18, 1933, p. 17.

> novels in there and replacing the lives of Hinky Dink and Bath House John. Bill wants to prove to voters that America is first, even if it was discovered last. Chicago become famous over one fire and Bill wants to personally conduct another. He wants to strike the flint that will light the torch of Liberty as they burn to a cinder every page containing reference, hint, suspicion, heresay [sic], or even inference between lines of the British Empire, King George or any of his forebears, or offsprings. Even to any picture depicting the eating of roast beef, Plum Duff, Yorkshire Buck, or the drinking of Lime Juice. All such periodicals will be burned at the stake on the filled-in Beach, just before the next election.[1]

On another occasion, Will noted that though one's mind naturally turned to "higher things" when in Boston, during the week that he had been there, An American Tragedy could not be "sold over the bar," and, further, that "the Committee was then reading Pilgrims Progress, to see if there wasent some underlying meaning in it."[2]

Yet the cowboy philosopher delineated the freedom of the press as stopping well short of anarchy, just as he had spoken of practical limits to the abstract idea of "liberty." The abuse of freedom of press arose from the necessity of reader interest. "Over here you can write whatever you want to," Will observed, but "the only trouble is getting somebody that will read it."[3] Because of that problem, the press--in Rogers' view--not only abused its freedom by sensationalizing crime stories, but (and more to the point of the dream of freedom) at times it also invaded the individual's right to privacy.

> The last right of a citizen has been taken away from 'em. You can't even commit suicide in private any more. The press

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, November 6, 1927, VII, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., May 12, 1929, V, p. 1.

[3]The New York Times, April 18, 1933, p. 17.

digs up the body, and the public instead of the coroner holds the investigation. "What's the big idea killing yourself around here and not notifying the press?"

"What's the idea leaving a note that nobody but your wife can understand?" "Don't you know this is a free country and the public has got as much right to know everything as your family?" "Who did you love, and when, and why?" "Have you got any old love letters, or birthmarks on you that we haven't seen? We'll teach you to try and sneak off and die and not let us in on all the reasons. Now get up and pose for the photographers, and give us the whole confession, and don't let it happen any more."[1]

It may be significant that when Will thus attacked an abuse of the freedom of press, he did so on grounds that were relevant to the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual. Overall, however, he rejoiced in the part the press played in making America an open society. "Every day just shows us what a lucky country we are," he wrote in the lead paragraph to a dispatch on the benefits of the free press.[2]

The man from Oologah also expressed a devotion to free speech in an open society. In a weekly article, he stated his belief that the American people would not be misled by Communist speakers, and he summarized events surrounding an earlier meeting of "these Reds, or Bolsheviki, or whatever they call themselves" in Madison Square Garden. He would grant them the opportunity to be heard, though he was sure they wouldn't be listened to.

Now some say that a thing like that should not be allowed. Why sure it should be allowed!

. . . . . .

It's just like an exhaust on an Automobile. No matter how high priced the Car, you have to have an exit for its bad Air,

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, September 13, 1932, p. 1.

[2]The New York Times, April 18, 1933, p. 17. For another typical squib that hits opponents of the free press, see ibid., October 15, 1926, p. 25.

> and Gasses [sic]. They have got to come out. It don't do any particular harm, unless you just stand around behind smelling of it all the time, but who would want to follow a Car to smell of its exhaust when you could just as well be in the car riding.[1]

Will Rogers also held to the ideal of free speech, even for Communists, a few years later, when world and national events had provided a more menacing aspect to Communist agitation. A year and a half after the crash heard 'round the world, Communists seemed to be on the march; they had what may have seemed to be plausible, enticing explanations for the bewildering economic chaos; they, therefore, seemed to many Americans, perhaps, a greater threat than they had appeared to be five years before. Will Rogers, however, still applauded efforts to give the Comrades a hearing, thus identifying with the dream of free speech in an open society.

> Yesterday when thousands of police from the White House to Claremore were fighting the Reds to keep them from marching, Mayor Rolph [of San Francisco] helped 'em form in line, had his men show them where the city hall was, fixed a stand for 'em to speak on, thanked 'em for coming to see him, and a good time was had by all, except the women who were unable to get arrested. But ain't it funny, only one man in public office in America that had sense of humor enough to kid 'em along.[2]

At other times, the good-will Ambassador would contrast the American dream with the lack of freedom of speech for Communists in their own country. Speaking from London to an American radio network, he summarized some impressions of his recent trip through Russia.

> One of your--one of our Communists over home, they couldn't be in Russia in a hundred years. It's the poorest place in

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, February 22, 1925, V, p. 4.

[2]The New York Times, March 8, 1930, p. 19. Of course, by his analogy of gaseous exhaust or his implication that the Communists were clowns, Will made it clear that he was not a sympathizer.

> the world for Communists, Russia is. If they started criticizin' the government over there, you'll receive--you'll receive a long train journey and look out some morning on the north tip of Siberia with nothin' starin' you in the face but the Arctic Ocean. The--uh--Soviet Government, it--it may be run wrong, but no man is gonna stand up on a box either publicly or privately and announce the fact.[1]

The closed society thus became the foil by which the dream of free speech in an open society glittered for the jewel that it was; further, Will Rogers managed his identification with that ideal of freedom without sympathizing with the Communist movement that was seeking to claim freedom of expression.[2]

The cowboy philosopher identified with the dream of freedom of speech in other ways, too. During the spring of 1934, a certain Wirt accused a circle of high administration officials, including Rexford Tugwell, of plotting a Communist takeover of the government and of revealing the plot at a Washington dinner party at which Wirt was present. The accusation was sensational, but the investigation which followed turned up no evidence that the accusation was true. Will Rogers, as usual, had a pungent comment.

> What difference does it make what was said at a dinner anyhow? If it's a real dinner and everybody is going good, there won't be anything sensible said anyhow.

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[1]"From London," September 16, 1934, N.B.C.; text from uncatalogued sound recording at Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. The text is part of a phonographic recording dated June 17, 1934; but internal evidence indicates that the quoted section is part of a later broadcast.

[2]For other examples in which Will Rogers spoke in favor of free speech for Communists, see The New York Times, February 28, 1930, p. 25; September 11, 1934, p. 23; May 12, 1935, p. 29. To see how he avoided identification with Communists, see ibid., May 3, 1929, p. 27, in which he hits hard the Communist celebration of May Day.

> You know there is two places where what a person says should not be held against 'em in a court of law. One is at a dinner and the other on the witness stand of a Washington investigation. Both affairs are purely social and should be covered only by the society editor.[1]

In the last year of his life, the eternal boy from the Indian Territory applied concretely to freedom of speech his principle that one can have only as much freedom as he is willing to give.

> The only trouble about this suggesting that somebody or something ought to be investigated is that they are liable to suggest that you ought to be investigated. And from the record of all our previous investigations it just looks like nobody can emerge with their nose entirely clean.
>
> I don't care who you are, you just can't reach middle life without having done and said a whole lot of foolish things.
>
> If I saw an investigating committee headed my way, I would just plead guilty and throw myself on the mercy of the court.[2]

This, of course, was the wise innocent speaking; his words could have gathered weight with his audience not only because they were congruent with the great American dream, but also because muffled noises from purges elsewhere lent urgency to the ideal of free speech in a free America. Will Rogers, a critic had once said, had early claimed "a license of free speech"; as the wisely-innocent New Adam of the mass media, he also claimed it for all Americans.[3] (And between times, he might solemnly inform his audience that he had just addressed a state legislature in order to "inject some seriousness" into the proceedings.)

No less important in the dream of freedom was the ideal of

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[1]Ibid., April 19, 1934, p. 27.

[2]Ibid., December 29, 1934, p. 17.

[3]For other examples of Rogers' identification with the ideal of free speech, see ibid., December 1, 1930, p. 21 and March 14, 1931, p. 19.

liberty of conscience. When Will Rogers, in the character of the wise new Adam, remarked after mixing with so many people all over the world, "I can honestly tell you that I dont think that any one religion is the religion," he was also stating his commitment to the dream of religious freedom. Every time he "argued not about religion," he identified not only with the action corollaries of the dream of the individual's dignity and worth, but also with one category of the dream of freedom. In the case of religious freedom--as he had done with the vision of free speech--he sometimes used Russia as a foil to make the ideal glow.

> I can't understand by what reckoning they think everybody connected with running the Country should be a nonbeliever. Just what quality does that add to Government? I don't care what you believe in, but you certainly got a right to that belief, and you shouldent have to give it up to take part in the Government of your Native Land. If the Bolsheviks say that religion was holding the people back from progress, why, let it hold them back. Progress ain't selling that high. If it is, it ain't worth it. Do anything in this world but monkey with somebody else's religion. What reasoning or conceit makes anyone think theirs is right?[1]

Perhaps more importantly, when the Scopes trial attracted national attention, Will Rogers chose to relate intellectual freedom to religious liberty and to defend them during Fundamentalism's last great stand. Rogers expressed a strong disapproval of William Jennings Bryan's conduct of the prosecution case, first, on the ground that it violated intellectual freedom.

> You can't stop a man thinking; neither do I believe Bryan could start a serious man thinking. These fellows who honestly believe that their great, great grandfathers were as proficient with their toes as with their fingers, they have that right just as much as Bryan has the right to seriously believe he is a second messiah and that Nebraska was the modern manger.

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[1]Saturday Evening Post, December 4, 1926, p. 230.

. . . . . .

> There is a terrible lot of us who don't think that we came from a monkey, but if there are some people who think that they do, why, it's not our business to rob them of what little pleasure they may get out of imagining it. Most people are proud of their ancestry and it is a touchy thing for even a Bryan to cast reflections on any man's forefathers, even if he did arrive here on all fours. What good will it do at this late date to argue over how or who we come from?
>
> Why don't Bryan and a lot of other people let the world alone? What has been the matter with it up to now? I can show you millions of people that think it is great, and are not worrying even if we arrived here from a tadpole.[1]

Rogers disapproved the prosecution of the case, in the second place, on the ground of Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom. He softened his attack, first, however.

> Now personally, I like Bill, in fact I am very fond of him. He is a nice congenial old gentleman, and I can recall many happy chats with him. But when he says that he will make this his life's issue and take it up through all the various courts and finally endeavor to get it into the Constitution of the United States and make a political and presidential issue out of it, he is wrong. More wrong than he has ever been before. These other things he was wrong on didn't do much harm, but now he is going to try and drag something that pertains to the Bible into a political campaign. He can't ever do that. He might make Tennessee the side show of America, but he can't make a street carnival of the whole United States.
>
> As for changing the Constitution that has been done every day. They have juggled it around until it looks like a moving picture of a popular book (it's so different from the original). But when those old boys who blue-printed the first Constitution decided that a man can believe what he likes in regard to religion, that's one line that is going to stay put.[2]

At least three variables gave credibility to such a defense of freedom of conscience: Rogers "liked" his adversary, but that did not prevent him from disagreeing with Bryan; Will, himself, disclaimed belief in evolution but defended the freedom to accept it, thus gaining the

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, July 19, 1925, V, p. 3.

[2]Ibid.

believability accorded the "reluctant witness"; and the Sage of Claremore identified his stand on the issue with the face of freedom on the great American god-of-many-faces. That he had chosen a moment of high attention to the question also helped assure him a hearing through his mass newspaper medium. It was not the only time, however, that he spoke up for freedom of religion.[1]

By expressing support for a government serving all the people rather than any privileged few, by urging freedom of press and speech, and by defending liberty of conscience, Will Rogers had made himself one with the great American dream of freedom.

In his religious ecumenicity, he had implied a spiritual equality of mankind. In other public statements, he identified himself explicitly with the dream of equality.

On the Dream of Equality

"I believe the Lord split knowledge up among his subjects about equal after all," Rogers once wrote; and in the saying of it he related himself to the dream of equality. At great length, in his speeches and newspaper articles, the part-Indian "Cherokee Kid" merged his image with the dreams of spiritual, social, economic, and political equality.[2]

His chief mode of identification with the dream of spiritual equality was to defend minority groups in America. Not many years after

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[1]For other instances of Rogers' identification with the dream of freedom of religion, see "Enna Jettick Broadcasting," undated text for radio broadcast in uncatalogued file of speeches collected by Donald Day, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; and The Tulsa Daily World, January 15, 1928, Tulsa World Magazine Section, p. 11.

[2]Will received Cherokee blood from both his father and mother; he probably was slightly less than a quarter-blood.

he had clearly become a national institution, Will gave a slap to all minority-baiters in general, but to United States Senator Thomas Heflin in particular. The Rogers dateline for his nationally syndicated dispatch was Montgomery, Alabama.

> Senator Heflin of Alabama held up all Senate business yesterday for five hours. That's a record for narrow views.
>
> Tonight in his home capital I am pleading with Alabama to please not exterminate all Catholics, Republicans, Jews, negroes, Jim Reed, Al Smith, Wadsworth, Mellon and Coolidge and the Pope.[1]

A favorite approach for Rogers in his defense of minorities was this kind of reduction to absurdity. He applied it most consistently in his rebuttal to the anti-Catholics; in more straightforward terms, he also revealed a sympathy for Jewish, Negro, and American Indian minorities.

Anti-Catholic prejudice naturally received Will's attention during the time of Al Smith's national political prominence. In 1927, the eternal boy from the garden of the West applauded a policy statement by the son of New York's sidewalks. Commenting on Smith's statement, Will wrote,

> He explained that if [he were] elected President all Protestants would not be exterminated; that even a few of the present Senators would be retained, including Tom Heflin; that the Knights of Columbus would not replace the Boy Scouts and Kiwanis; that mass would not replace golf on Sunday morning, and that those that were fortunate enough to have meat could eat it on Friday.
>
> It's no compliment to a nation's intelligence when these things have to be explained.[2]

Perhaps the best example of Will's anti-anti-Catholic rhetoric was another dispatch with Heflin as its target: the "dumb comedian" made

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[1]The New York Times, February 19, 1927, p. 17.

[2]Ibid., April 19, 1927, p. 29.

absurd the senator's crusade against possible papal subversion.

> Heflin found a cross on one of the flags used in the navy. He wants to make it null and void to have anything to do with any flag that Betsy Ross was not the architect of. He had traced the hemstitching on this one right to the Vatican.
>
> Tom will be wanting to abolish boulevards that make direct right angle crossings (claiming that it was some sort of papal sign), and make 'em cross each other slantwise.[1]

Finally, Rogers held that if the Catholics should require regular denouncing, other groups should be given equal treatment. Describing himself as "a Senator in waiting," he promised to denounce Catholics on Monday, Baptists on Tuesday, Methodists (both North and South) on Wednesday. Thursday would be for Presbyterians, and Friday would be society day, reserved for Episcopalians. Saturday he would save for summing up and for hitting any denominations that he had overlooked during the week. Then Rogers dropped his mask: "Not that I have it in for any of these, but if religion must be the butt of our legislative amusement, I would at least stick to the Constitution and be unbiased."[2] Will had said that everyone's religion was good. If that were true, men were also spiritually equal.

Members of the Jewish minority also received Rogers' good will.[3] "There is a Jewish fellow running," the cowboy philosopher wrote of the 1928 gubernatorial race in New York, "and if he gets it

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[1] Ibid., February 7, 1929, p. 27.

[2] Ibid., January 25, 1928, p. 25.

[3] Eddie Cantor and George Jessel have written and spoken generously of Will, too. See Folks Say of Will Rogers, ed. Payne and Lyons, pp. 55-58, 64, 65. Besides Will's other benefits for Jewish Benevolence groups, he once contributed his entire proceeds from a highly successful New York City appearance. Such actions, of course, also identified him as a benefactor in the dream of success.

and makes a good Governor for four years, why, the religious issue won't come up again for President till 1936."[1] When the trouble between Henry Ford and the Jewish minority was at its height, Will Rogers implied that the root of the trouble was Ford's need of a profit. "I am in Detroit in connection with trouble between Henry Ford and Jewish people," Will advised his readers. "Think if every one of them will agree to buy one of those things at cost plus 10 per cent. trouble will be patched up all around."[2] Thus the Sage of Claremore turned the stereotype of Jews as money grabbers against the Gentiles. Later, when the feud was settled as far as public profession was concerned, Will Rogers was serious in both his praise of Ford and in being aware that Ford had been wrong. Over the breakfast table in millions of American homes, Will's words reached his audience: "I certainly was glad to read Mr. Henry Ford's statement in regard to the Jewish people. It was a fine thing for a big man to do. It takes big men to admit a fault publicly . . . ."[3] Rogers died before Hitler's Germany began active persecution of the Jewish minority: mass arrests did not occur until 1937, after the Nazi-planned assassination of the German Ambassador in Paris. Will Rogers lived long enough, however, to be aware of Hitler's persuasive techniques, which cast the Jews as the national scapegoat. In 1933, Rogers filed a wire from Washington, D.C., that punched at the

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[1]The New York Times, November 9, 1928, p. 27.

[2]Ibid., December 18, 1926, p. 19. Rogers did not lose Ford's friendship, however. It was on this same visit that he got the promise of the first stock model "A" as a gift.

[3]Ibid., July 9, 1927, p. 15.

myth of Aryan superiority. "That fellow Hitler kinder prides himself on his oratory," Will wrote. "Say, if he could have heard Rabbi Wise of New York at a great Jewish convention here today Hitler would have been speechless. Wise had everything."[1] Was it not damaging to the Aryan myth to hold up a Jew as being superior to the Fuhrer, himself? Will Rogers' public image had no swastika on it anywhere.

The American Negro was spiritually equal to other Americans, too, in what Will Rogers had to say about him in the available mass media channels. He wrote of Negroes on their merits as men; he neither approved nor disapproved of them simply because of their skin color.[2] A fine Negro cowboy had taught him to ride and to rope; he had written admiringly of Negro cowboys and their riding and roping. Perhaps, however, the moment of greatest clarity in his identification with the spiritual equality of the American Negro came during the great Mississippi flood of 1927. The disaster had reduced an estimated 10,000 square miles to barren mud flats, with buildings, fences, crops, and livestock destroyed; Will Rogers had travelled to New Orleans for a special appearance and had flown over the area of desolation to find that white and Negro had suffered equally. He wrote of the Negroes as

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[1]Ibid., May 22, 1933, p. 17.

[2]This is not to say, however, that Rogers would be accepted today as a champion of the Negro. He used words like "coon" and "senegambian" to name the Negro, and his account of a football game at Tuskeegee in 1925 would likely be highly offensive to black Americans of 1964. (The Tulsa Daily World, November 22, 1925, V, p. 6.) We need only remember, however, that a great benefactor of his own race, Booker T. Washington, might well suffer in 1964 because in his famous speech at the Atlanta Exposition (and on other occasions) he advocated the separate-but-equal doctrine.

being equal in the eye of their creator.

> When you talk about poor people that have been hit by this flood, look at the thousands and thousands of negroes that never did have much, but now its washed away. You don't want to forget that water is just as high up on them as it is if they were white. The Lord so constituted everybody that no matter what color you are you require about the same amount of nourishment.[1]

Rogers knew that Americans in their natural goodness would respond to the call if they knew the need of their brothers, but he was worried that the sensational murder trial of Mrs. Snyder and her corset-salesman lover would monopolize news space. "Never mind what is going to become of Old Lady Snyder and Corsets," he admonished newspapermen and readers alike, "One little coon saved down on the Mississippi is worth more to America than both of them if they had lived 100 years."[2] Will had again chosen a moment of high national attention to transmit a portion of the American dream. "They are all folks," Will had remembered his sister Maude saying of Negroes, before her death in 1925. "That's the real South's real feelings for its real friends," Will seconded.[3] The Negro revolution for freedom from Jim Crow was thirty years away, but in 1925, the Rogers family had integrated the memorial services in Oklahoma for their beloved Maude. When Will told the nation, he possibly was not a favorite with the Ku Klux Klan, but he was, in what would be Sandburg's later description, embodying "the best of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."

If the man from Oologah could thus assert the spiritual equality

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, May 8, 1927, V, p. 5.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., May 24, 1925, V, p. 4.

with all Americans of Catholic, Jewish, and Negro minorities, he could reasonably be expected to speak up also for his own people, the American Indians. Just a little less than three months before he was to die, the "Cherokee Kid," under the impression that a national women's organization was about to pass over a qualified candidate for the national presidency, wrote in a way that must have, by that time, been predictable by his audience. He deplored prejudice that denies the American dream of equality.

> Was reading today where the Federation of Women's Clubs was going to have a hot election. The woman in line for the presidency (she is now first vice president) they all admit has every qualification. Worked up for thirty years in the club. High class, talented, cultured lady--but she is an Indian.
>
> You would expect intolerance from some organizations, but not from the most civilized one we have. Even one of the two great uncivilized tribes (the Republicans) elected dear old Charley Curtis.
>
> So I don't believe these ladies are going to get bias. Of course, there is some of 'em that would love to meet around the convention campfire and shout: "Well, sisters, we scalped another Indian. We have to keep this club 100 per cent American." They can't afford to do that.[1]

Will apparently felt strongly that "they couldn't afford to do that"; less than a week later, he issued a similar pronouncement in his weekly radio broadcast.[2]

Thus, over the years and in a variety of contexts, Will Rogers asserted the spiritual equality of mankind; his stand was consistent

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[1]The New York Times, May 25, 1935, p. 17.

[2]"Death of the Blue Eagle," June 2, 1935, C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. As will be seen in the section on action corollaries, Will often defended the rights of Indians, without referring explicitly to prejudice or intolerance.

with his view that no single religion had a monopoly on revelation.[1] "Pretty near everybody is almost alike," Will had written a few years before.[2] They were alike in that they were "all folks," equal in the sight of the creator.

The cowboy from Claremore also identified directly in a material way with the dream of social equality. What he had written about the powers and goodness of the common man carried implicit values not only of spiritual but of social equality, since each individual's unlimited potentiality, by definition, included a state of equality. On the other hand, Rogers never wrote of a "seamless" society composed of a gray sameness of station for all. Instead, he inveighed against social privilege by birth or wealth, themselves. He made himself one with the dream of a man's being accepted for what he was rather than for who he was. Repeatedly, he asserted the ideal directly; perhaps the best opportunity he had to do so was to comment upon the publication in 1930 of the annual Social Register. He addressed his national audience through the columns of his syndicated weekly article.

> Well, all I know is just what little I read in the papers. Somebody just sent me a clipping I see here and it says who has been left off and who has been added to the Social Register. Now that is a laugh, ain't it? (I would be dropped if I ever got on for saying "ain't".) Of all the undemocratic things you can think of just off hand that is the prize "Hooey," a book to tell you who is a good Parlor Hound and who is a sort of mongrel

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[1]For other Rogers' statements relevant to prejudice, see The New York Times, April 20, 1927, p. 27; April 16, 1928, p. 21; November 2, 1928, p. 27; September 3, 1929, p. 29; August 18, 1930, p. 19; January 10, 1931, p. 17; July 18, 1932, p. 15; August 16, 1932, p. 19; "Mother's Day," May 12, 1935, C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[2]The New York Times, January 7, 1929, p. 31.

around the tea table.

. . . . . .

Now . . . "What is Society?" Society is any band of folks that kinder throw in with each other, and mess around together for each others discomfort. Any little or big group of folks that sorter flock together are "Society" in some form or other.

The ones with the more money have more to eat and drink at their affairs, and their clothes cost more, and so thats called "High Society." Now the morals or personal behaviour of its members have nothing to do with it. The oftener they can crash the front page the solider they are in their fraternity. And its sorter heriditary [sic]. No matter who you raise up in your family zoo why they naturally inherit your space in the "Social Register." Your personal accomplishments have nothing to do with it . . . .

Rear Admiral Byrd is among the missing [from the Social Register]. Guess he had been running around these poles when he should have been at home taking care of his duties in the drawing room. But can you imagine leaving Byrd out, when his family have more record of breeding and tradition than half the book put together?

Then here is a fellow that I bet it just broke him right square up when he opened the book and found he was out on his ear. Thats Henry Ford. Transportationally he is a Giant, but socially he is a Gnat. I can just imagine his embarrassment when he found that out . . . .

So for downright amusement in reading matter that Register will compete with the Congressional Record and College Humor.[1]

On other occasions, Will championed groups which based acceptance on what, rather than who, one was. He applauded the Boy Scouts: "It's the only purely democratic thing I know of, no accident of birth, no pull, no nothing but just merit and manhood."[2] He approved of 4-H and Future Farmer organizations that emphasized achievement rather than other criteria for acceptance: "These clubs to encourage boys to raise live stock beat all the fraternity pins you can collect in a washtub."[3] He exulted over the defeat of the Eastern "Society" polo team

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, August 10, 1930, V, p. 1.

[2]The New York Times, February 9, 1935, p. 17.

[3]Ibid., December 2, 1929, p. 24.

by the Western "hick" team:

> The West always thought you had to have a birth certificate to play it. Now every cowpuncher is herding in the heifers with a corn-plaster saddle and even the "hay-heavers" have changed a pitchfork into a polo mallet.[1]

He praised Tommy Hitchcock for taking "polo out of the drawing room" by making truly democratic the selection of an American team for international competition.

> The selection of our team does away with the old idea that you had to be a rich man to play. Two fine boys on our team don't even own a horse, and the three next-best players in America to the four chosen are all poor fellows. Two old Texas cowboys back there shooting goals ain't even in the telephone directory.[2]

Will's impatience with a squabble over protocol in Washington stemmed from his social equalitarianism.

> We used to brag on the fact that, unlike England, we had no different classes or ratings in this country, and here Secretary Stimson is called on to referee a bout in Washington's table etiquette. Washington can't go out to dinner till they decide who shall sit next to who and at the diplomatic dinners. They ought to feed 'em Los Angeles style, slip everybody a plate and if they can't find the grub, why, he wouldn't be much of a diplomat.[3]

His comments from time to time on the proper dress for an American in the presence of royalty also revealed his identification with the dream of equality; to read them was rather like remembering that in the royal French court, Benjamin Franklin had appeared dressed in his plain garb, the personification of the American democrat. On the occasion of a royal reception at the court of St. James, the Ambassador of Good Will

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[1] Ibid., August 22, 1933, p. 19.

[2] Ibid., September 6, 1930, p. 17.

[3] Ibid., April 4, 1929, p. 29.

had high praise for the American Ambassador, Charles Dawes.

> Viva Democracy! Viva Charley Dawes! Among all the diplomats gathered at King George's imperial court, Charley was the only one that didn't wear rompers. He would not bare his Chicago shins to the crowned heads of the British Empire. Among all the satin step-ins of the other males, his long and uncreased pants stood out like a diadem. It was not only a victory for modesty, but it was a godsend for the people who sell material by the yard . . . . Long live Charles Dawes and longer live his long breeches.[1]

Thus, on these and numerous other occasions, Will Rogers' public image coalesced with the dream of social equality. By consistently speaking directly to the ideal that a man be accepted for what he was rather than for his origins, or for a useless conformity, he stood in his public statements as a champion of equal opportunity for social acceptance.[2] His--and America's--dream was of an open society.

In his words which served to unite him with the dream of economic equality, Will Rogers espoused no communal vision of depressing sameness of economic state. Instead, as he had done with social equality, he stood for as nearly-equal opportunity for financial gain as could be possible, and for fairness to all in distribution of the nation's wealth.

In a dispatch in 1927, Will made clear the grounds for providing a degree of equal financial opportunity for all: wealth arose from the efforts of the entire community; therefore, no segment of the community should be permitted an eternal monopoly upon it. Specifi-

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[1]Ibid., June 28, 1929, p. 25.

[2]For other Rogers comments relevant to the dream of social equality, see ibid., November 15, 1926, p. 29; July 24, 1928, p. 23; March 14, 1929, p. 29; January 17, 1930, p. 25; April 22, 1931, p. 27; November 20, 1933, p. 17; July 2, 1934, p. 21.

cally, he was referring to the proposed inheritance tax relief proposed in the "Mellon" tax bill, and he treated ironically the "suffering" of the country's wealthy beneficiaries.

> They claim that sometimes there has been cases known when they had to sell one of the Yachts to pay the Government the Inheritance Tax and in one extreme case I remember reading where a Son had to give up his membership in over half of his Golf Clubs.
>
> Well, just such catastrophes as these (related to the Proletariat Senators) made them realize that something must be done for the "Younger Rich Set." That if the Father died with a hundred million that he had wormed out of our country, that the spoils all belonged to the Children and no part of all to the Community that had made it possible for him to accumulate this heavy jack. In other words they claim his Descendants were more responsible for him making it than the state he made it out of.[1]

In other telegrams and speeches, the cowboy philosopher spoke directly of the need of equal economic opportunity. True to the Jeffersonian Agrarian tradition, he placed the financial aspirations of the worker or farmer on a par with those of the Hamiltonian elite. Just before the turn of the year in 1930, he addressed himself to the dream, opening--as he so often did--with irony.

> You just got two more days now, patriots, to sell your stock and charge it off on your income tax and then buy it back Friday. Too bad the old farmer or salaried man hasn't got any out like that.
>
> We ought to have a Stock Exchange for land and houses and lots, so we could run 'em up and down (for no reason at all), like you can wheat and corn and everything else, get up in the morning, look at the paper, see what your vacant lot is worth, sell it and charge it off, then buy it back.[2]

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, February 28, 1926, V, p. 3. Rogers' words are also appropriate to that part of the success dream which envisioned the circle from shirtsleeves-to-shirtsleeves in three generations.

[2]The New York Times, December 30, 1930, p. 23. An interval of thirty days is now necessary for the two steps of the transaction.

The idea that Roosevelt's administration was attempting to give economic opportunity to "the little man" as well as to "the big man" formed the basis of Rogers' approval in a nationwide radio speech in 1933.

> The President told me of . . . one capitalist. He told this capitalist, "Why, in your coal fields you have people living in coke ovens." "Yes, that is right, Mr. President; I am very sorry for that, but I have an obligation to my stockholders." And the President told him, "Yes, but your stockholders are not living in coke ovens, and the right of a man to work is more important than the right of a man to dividends." And then the President said to me, "Some of these men cannot realize conditions have changed since the times when their fortunes were made. It's hard to show them (not all of them, thank God) that by spending $2,000,000 now they can get $50,000,000 back." I tell you folks, I came away from Washington last week with the idea that the little fellow had got somebody in his corner in Washington. I don't mean the administration is against big business. There are hundreds and thousands of big ones entering into this thing with enthusiasm, and with their money and their whole hearts; but for the first time in years, the big man comes to Washington the same as the little man. If this administration ever goes under, it should have written on its tombstone: "Perished through trying to give the little fellow a square deal."[1]

The national Congressman-at-Large undoubtedly gave weight to his voicing of the dream of economic equality by his timely attention to it. The years of the locust required an affirmation of the American dream in general and of the dream of equal economic opportunity in particular.

Earlier, in his famous "Unemployment" speech of October, 1931, Will Rogers held that the overriding question of the day for America was the provision not only of moderately equal economic opportunity for all, but also for a fair distribution of the nation's wealth.

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[1]"For the Blue Eagle," N.B.C. and C.B.S., August 27, 1933, Radio Speeches. The statement is also relevant to the dream of government for the good of all and freedom from domination by special interests.

> Now here we are worrying and reading in the papers about a hundred different problems that they got us all excited and making us believe they amount to something. This country has just got one problem, it's not balancing of Mr. Mellon's budget, (that's his worry, not ours), it's not the League of Nations, that you read a lot about, it's not the silver question--not a one of these problems mean a thing in the world to us, as long as we have seven million of our own out of work, that's our only problem, and to arrange the affairs of this prosperous country, (yes, prosperous right now) to so arrange it so that a man that wants work can get work, and give him a more equal division of the wealth that the country produces.[1]

The Sage of Claremore, like the Democrats of Wilson's New Freedom, saw the federal government as being the instrument of striking the proper balance in fair distribution of wealth. While Roosevelt the candidate was still being tutored in the economics of relief and recovery by Tugwell and Moley, Will Rogers spoke for the dream of economic equality in his own weekly column. "This is becoming the richest, and the poorest Country in the world," Will pecked out on his typewriter. "Why? Why, on account of an unequal distribution of the money."[2] The central government could correct the imbalance, Rogers wrote.

> How can you equalize it? By putting a higher surtax on large incomes, and that money goes to provide some public work, at a livable wage. I dont mean a wage that is maintained in other lines. I mean a wage is provided for the unemployed. That is if you could in no way find a job, you could go to some State or National, or City or County Public work, that would give you say four hours a day work, instead of the usual eight.
> . . . . . .
> There is nothing that makes a man feel better than to know that no matter how bad things break he has something to fall back on, that he can make a living out of . . . .
> Now that we got that settled all we have to do is get by Congress and see if the Republicans will vote a higher income tax on the rich babies. It might not be a great plan, but it will DAM sure beat the one we got now.[3]

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[1]Radio Speeches, p. 2.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, January 18, 1931, IV, p. 7. [3]Ibid.

Not only was the central government the agency to make a fair redistribution of wealth, but federal largesse should be divided evenly among the citizenry. Having remarked that the financial interests had been the first to "go on the dole" through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Will wondered whether the principle of economic equality should apply nationwide.

> Every man, every industry in the United States was hit by depression. Before you start dealing out public funds to help, you should have first found out, have we enough money to give aid to everyone, every industry? If not, I am not going to give part of them a sandwich and leave the rest to go hungry.
>
> But no, they didn't do that; they just started right in by helping the bankers. So every man, woman and child in the United States thinks, and rightfully so, that they have got as much right to get some sort of government aid as the bankers.[1]

The persuasive force behind such a statement (in addition, naturally, to the fact that it appealed to the need of survival) was that it was congruent with the American dream of economic equality. Rogers could use the same premises of survival and of economic equality to appeal to the more fortunate segments of his national audience, those who remained employed. Only a few months before his last flight he praised Roosevelt's defense of the dream: "He has done a lot in his attitude to offset a communistic feeling, for if he did happen to lean to the more conservative element, there would be some justification of hollering for a more equal division, but with his doing all he can and still keeping within the bounds of fairness to all why he offsets the old red."[2] Will did not state the dream of communistic equality; he did

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[1]Ibid., February 22, 1933, p. 1.

[2]Ibid., January 13, 1934, IV, p. 6.

express hopes for reasonably equal economic opportunities for all and for a fair distribution of the nation's wealth.[1] "This panic has been a great equalizer," Will wrote, tongue-in-cheek. "It's done away entirely with the smart man."[2] In another sense, too, it had been an equalizer: it had called forth his more direct expressions of the dream of economic equality.

By resisting super-patriots whose attempts to save freedom might destroy it; by championing a government that would serve the good of all; by speaking clearly for the open society with freedoms of speech, press, and religion; and by identifying with the principles of spiritual, social, and economic equality, the cowboy philosopher etched into his public image those lines appropriate to the dreamer of freedom and equality.[3]

Will Rogers' public image, as we have seen, was that of the American Adam; he was also the American democrat.

In his own behavior, he also identified in an indirect material way with the twin visions of freedom and equality.

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[1]For other comments relevant to the dream of economic equality, see The New York Times, October 4, 1929, p. 29; June 27, 1933, p. 19; April 7, 1934, p. 17; June 24, 1935, p. 19; August 2, 1935, p. 19; The Tulsa Daily World, May 13, 1928, V, p. 4; August 16, 1931, IV, p. 9; September 20, 1931, V, p. 5; September 22, 1932, p. 1; and January 14, 1934, IV, p. 4; also C.B.S. broadcast, June 2, 1935.

[2]The New York Times, October 5, 1932, p. 23.

[3]For other dispatches relevant to the dream of equality, see ibid., March 9, 1927, p. 7; April 23, 1928, p. 25; April 24, 1928, p. 27; April 7, 1930, p. 25; April 11, 1930, p. 29; The Tulsa Daily World, November 27, 1927, VII, p. 6.

On the Action Corollaries of Freedom and Equality

"If we dident have to stop and play politics any administration could almost make a Garden of Eden out of us," the man from Oologah wrote. In making such a statement, he was not only referring directly to the great dream of paradise to be regained, but he was also performing the freedom vision's action corollary of being independent of political parties. He also gave forth signs over the years of carrying out other action corollaries of being a practitioner of fair play and a defender of the underdog. In so doing, of course, he was being the responsibly free American. On another level of the American dream, he showed his equalitarianism by his unabashedness in the presence of the mighty, by his mingling with people of all estates, and by his championing of manners that were civilized without being foppish. He thus became a hero of the dream of freedom and equality.

Being above party.--"The floating, uncommitted electors, clerks, mechanics, the masters of parties--watching aloof, inclining victory this side or that side--such are the ones most needed, present and future," Walt Whitman had written in his plan for Americans to conserve freedom by being interested in politics but above parties. Will Rogers, through his public statements, seemed to do just that. "I am as independent as any one writing," he told a reader in an open letter. He further asserted his autonomy.

> I have as many Republican as Democratic papers, as many readers that cant read as can. The editorial policies of these great dailies mean nothing to me, I am going to call em like I see em.
>
> I think I have complimented many a worthy thing in my time, and I have taken a shot at a lot of "Hooey."[1]

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[1]Ibid., January 8, 1933, IV, p. 4.

A "worthy thing" that Will consistently praised was the politician who could put the interests of the country ahead of his party loyalty. During one of Rogers' tours, he found himself in Pocatello, Idaho; the time was right to speak in appreciation of what appeared to him to be an independent-minded politician.

> I go to Borah's home town tomorrow. I want to see this place before it is made a shrine for honoring the only man in public life in his time with independent thought, when everybody else's ideas are as standardized as Ford parts.
>
> What's best for the political machine is best for the politician. What's best for America is best for Borah. Ask Mr. Coolidge how far wrong I am.[1]

On another occasion, Will--in the guise of a party speaker at a Democratic gathering after the defeat of 1928--"addressed" the nation in an article called, "Mr. Toastmaster and Democrats." He had the answer for rebuilding lost political fortunes.

> When something accidentaly [sic] comes up that is good for the Country, why, put it over. In other words, get in there and act like you was working for the taxpayer instead of exclusively for the Democratic Party. Vote "YES" on something besides widening the Chatahoochie. Cut out that balloting on things in private. If you haven't got the nerve to let the people know how you stand on anything, have a sick friend, and go home and sit up with him on the day of the vote. But try and be nonpartisan; you would be surprised how quick the people of all Political denominations will find it out. If the Senate wants to take a secret vote, let it be known that Democrats were against it to a man. In other words, you got to shame the Republicans into decency . . . . It wouldn't take a Party any longer to show that it was Progressive than it would an individual. Borah, just for Campaign purposes, was listed as a Republican. But look how quick he lived it down. Now, you would be surprised at the amount of people that think he is working for the people.[2]

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[1]The New York Times, March 19, 1927, p. 19. Will was consistent through the years in his praise of Borah: see ibid., July 6, 1934, p. 19. Such comments are also appropriate to the dream of the individual.

[2]Saturday Evening Post, March 30, 1929, p. 161.

Thus, the national-Congressman-at-Large took an interest in politics, but he remained independent of parties in his praise of Borah and in his advice to politicians.

Much of the "hooey" at which Will Rogers took a shot was blind party loyalty. When Prohibition was a momentous issue and Republican "wets" were endorsing Republican "drys" while Democratic "drys" found themselves supporting Democratic "wets," he wrote, "All of which shows that when the votes are counted this Fall that every party man will be about where he generally is. No matter how bad any candidate, he can't possibly be as bad as the opposing party."[1] To counteract the endorsements of party men for one another, Will came out for himself (at the suggestion of Robert Sherwood and the old Life magazine) for President in 1928. As the "Bunkless Candidate," he "campaigned" not only in the pages of Life, but also through the vast resources of his national newspaper syndicate. He was a "politician" free from "party hooey."

> McAdoo finally came out for Smith, and to offset that Democratic gain, why Coolidge came out for Hoover.
>
> So that leaves only myself in the open.
>
> I have been studying the two parties and here is the difference: Hoover wants all the drys, and as many wets as possible. Smith wants all the wets and as many drys as he can get.
>
> Hoover says he will relieve the farmer, even if he has to call congress. Smith says he will relieve the farmer even if he has to appoint a commission.
>
> Hoover says the tariff will be kept up. Smith highly indorses prosperity.
>
> Hoover wants no votes merely on account of religion. Smith wants no votes solely on religious grounds. Both would accept the mohammedan vote if offered.
>
> Hoover would like to live in the white house. Smith is

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[1]The New York Times, August 16, 1928, p. 23.

> not averse to living in the white house. And in order to get in there either one will promise the voters anything from perpetual motion, to eternal salvation.
>
> So I am out openly for myself.
>
> If I have had any religion I have at least not advertised the fact. If I want the constitution changed, or if I want it left as it is, I know that is the people's business and not mine.
>
> I have never spent twenty years abroad, nor have I spent twenty years in the shade of Brooklyn Bridge.
>
> I have never lived off of tax payers, or corporations.
>
> If I was born of poor parents, either in city or farm, I have kept that a personal affair.
>
> I am not the greatest "Administrator of all time" neither am I "The greatest executive a state ever had."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I have promised nothing, and am the only one of the three that can made good on the promises, so to offset Coolidge and McAdoo I come out for myself.[1]

In his 1928 role of politician without party, Will Rogers performed an action corollary of the dream of freedom and equality. Such an identification was probably at least partly responsible for the report in Nation that headquarters for the "Anti-Bunk" party were besieged by large numbers of persons "desirous of voting for Rogers and anxious to find out how to do it."[2] One Rogers biographer believes that Will was the unofficial President of the United States from 1928 to 1935.[3] In that role, he continued to appear as an American deeply interested in politics but not bound by party loyalty.[4]

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[1]Ibid., November 5, 1928, p. 25; May 31, 1928, p. 7.

[2]Dorothy Van Doren, "Will Rogers," Nation, October 3, 1928, p. 314.

[3]Day, A Biography, p. 236.

[4]For more examples of the "unofficial President's" attack on party hooey, see The New York Times, August 21, 1928, p. 25; March 13, 1929, p. 33; April 7, 1931, p. 19; July 16, 1932, p. 13; November 2, 1932, p. 21; September 26, 1932, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, February 26, 1933, IV, p. 4. Will has the reputation, of course, of being a

Practicing fair play and supporting the underdog.--Another action corollary of the dream of freedom and equality was to practice fair play and defend the underdog. In 1924, Will Rogers addressed his readers in a way that showed him to be not only free from party domination but also to be writing with a sense of fair play. He gave reasons for his jousting with any political party that might be in ascendancy.

> I generally give the Party in power, whether Republican or Democratic, the more digs because they are generally doing the Country the most damage, and besides I don't think it is fair to jump too much on the fellow who is down. He is not working, he is only living in hopes of getting back in on the graft in another four years, while the Party in power is drawing a Salary to be knocked.[1]

Will described a method for fair play at a time when political fever fired the land, from East to West and from North to South. "You must never disagree with a man while you are facing him," he wrote, applying the Indian principle of looking back over the shoulder in order to keep from getting lost on the return trip. "Go around behind him and look the same way they do when you are facing him. Look over his shoulder and get his viewpoint, then go back and face him and you will have a different idea."[2] As the American democrat, the responsibly free individual, Will Rogers practiced fair play for "big dog and

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Democrat and on occasion referred to "us Democrats." The reader of all his statements, however, is impressed with the degree of impartiality that he practiced. Referring to the Federal government, he wrote once, "The Democrats take the whole thing as a joke and the Republicans take it serious, but run it like a joke."

[1]The Tulsa Daily World, November 9, 1924, IV, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., October 30, 1932, IV, p. 8.

little dog" as he rambled over the continent and the affairs of men.

Even politicians received fair treatment from the "Bunkless" spokesman. When Herbert Hoover had taken his beating in 1932, Will Rogers treated him with consideration on a national radio broadcast. He spoke to Hoover directly, with the rest of the country listening in.

> You were very unfortunate. You certainly had a tough break. You just happened to be the man that was left watching the dam when the dam busted, and we expected that you would put the water back. Not a soul in America will ever crow to you. They will moan with you, but they won't exult over you.[1]

Such a statement went well beyond the words of political courtesy. Rogers was practicing fair play in the best sense of the word. In later years, he evidently felt the need to treat Hoover's conqueror with the same fairness. With the New Deal honeymoon over and the romance between Roosevelt and the people apparently in dissolution, the "unofficial President" did his best to be fair to the official President.

> I am like everybody else. I could sit down by the hour and tell of plans that has been tried in the last couple of years that haven't worked, that have maybe not only looked foolish, but were foolish, but darn it all that criticism wouldn't do any good. It would just add to the yell of the pack. It would just be another howl in the wilderness. I could sit down from now till morning and tell you what he [Roosevelt] should not have done, but if you give me five minutes continuous time, I couldent tell you what he should have done, and neither can any of the rest of 'em.[2]

Republican and Democrat alike received Will's fair play when critics' attacks were strong.

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[1]Text from The New York Times, November 15, 1932, p. 2.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, April 21, 1935, IV, p. 6.

The cowboy philosopher showed in his writing a real attempt to be fair in economic matters, as well as in political ones. He sympathized with veterans who in 1927 were finding difficult the redemption at banks of their bonus certificates; on the other hand, Rogers held that all depression ills couldn't be blamed on bankers.[1] The farmer had a right to a profit, "but the guy that's not eating deserves a meal more."[2] Relief and recovery measures were the only fair way to meet the depression, he explained, showing fair play for the disadvantaged.

> We are awful apt in saving the country to save ourselves first. Our solution is that as we are all in the river over our heads the only way out is to swim. We may say that because we can swim, but there may be as many more that cant, so the "Swim out" remedy dident work, only with us.[3]

When the San Francisco general strike occurred in 1934, Will Rogers was on the scene and took the role in his column of the fair-minded, responsibly free individual who could see the issue openmindedly.

> Back from the strike. There is no doubt the "Reds" run away with the fair, conservative leaders in the union. The thing was not, as some try to make you believe, 100 per cent one-sided. They had some just kicks, and plenty of fair-minded people of San Francisco were in sympathy with 'em. They lost lots of that by calling the general strike. When you interfere with everybody's business, you can't get away with it.
>
> Now, here is something that you don't read about, but there is a lot of 'em, and for lack of a name we might call 'em "Greens." That is, their whole system becomes green when the very idea of a union, or a strike, or anything pertaining to the betterment of labor is mentioned. He is the one that tells who should be took out and shot, if he makes any move to better his condition. So we got radicals on both sides, "Reds" on the one and "Greens" on the other. Both of 'em ought to be run out, and

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[1]The New York Times, January 7, 1927, p. 21; June 9, 1932, p. 23.

[2]Ibid., September 25, 1933, p. 17.

[3]The Tulsa Daily World, July 21, 1935, IV, p. 4.

> leave it to men that know and feel that there is such a thing as a fair union and a fair employer.[1]

By means of such public pronouncements, the man from Oologah projected a degree of fairness that went far toward creating an aura of freedom and equality about his public image. In matters more nearly sociological, he also wrote justly. He could recognize and understand the differences between the younger generation and the older one. "We cant help but look back; they cant help but look forward. But we are both standing on the same ground," he argued, "and their feet is there as firmly as ours."[2] By all these and by other acts of fairness, Will Rogers embodied the American democrat giving Americans a "square deal."[3]

Such a public role helped him to identify with the dream of freedom and equality. If all Americans would treat each other equitably, that strategy would hasten the realization of the twin hopes in the American dream. Will Rogers gained the confidence of his audience by being able to see both sides of political, economic, and social controversies.

The other side of the coin of fair play was defense of the underdog. The Sage of Claremore stood up for the fellow at the bottom of the heap, whether nation or individual.

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[1]The New York Times, July 19, 1934, p. 19.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, December 9, 1934, IV, p. 8.

[3]For other dispatches that are examples of Will's practice of fair play, see ibid., March 20, 1927, V, p. 5; April 17, 1927, V, p. 5; The New York Times, February 13, 1928, p. 21; May 1, 1928, p. 31; March 5, 1930, p. 25; March 31, 1931, p. 29; March 27, 1934, p. 23; October 17, 1934, p. 25.

During the time of his ascendancy, Will Rogers spoke often and clearly for the self-determination of nations, in a way that was both in the spirit of fair play and in a mood of indignation over the "big dogs" keeping the "little dogs" down. "Why don't nations let People alone, and quit trying to hold what they call a protectorate over them?" he asked. "Let people do their own way and have their own form of government."[1] The American intervention in Nicaragua, ostensibly to provide political stability and keep safe the site for a possible future canal, provided the American democrat a specific case for his plea for self-determination. At times, his dispatches would hit at American inconsistency and lack of fair play. For instance, he jabbed at the official reason for American intervention in Nicaragua: while America supposedly was protecting democratic elections there, at home, charges of fraudulent elections occupied the Senate.

> You want to know why we are so funny to the rest of the world? Here we are sending warships to tell Nicaragua who to seat after their election and we haven't got a Senator that was elected here last Fall that will be allowed to sit down. I wish I was as funny as that is. My opposition is getting unusually keen in Washington just in the last few days . . . .
>
> P.S.--What did you do, father, in the great war of Nicaragua?[2]

On other occasions, he attacked the unevenness of the contest, using telling irony to champion the underdog.

> I see where our bombing planes down in Nicaragua bagged fifty natives yesterday.
>
> The natives put up a pretty good fight. They threw rocks and knives at the planes, but our forces were too cunning for them. They wouldn't fly low enough to be hit.

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, December 14, 1927, IV, p. 2.

[2]The New York Times, January 10, 1927, p. 25.

> Strategy has won many a war and it may pull us through this one.[1]

Thus, even though he was taking sides against American actions, Will Rogers still was identifying in an indirect material way with the dream of freedom and equality. He spoke consistently for a policy of fair play for the underdog in Latin America, for "fairer treatment to our sister republics, then we won't have to hold conferences."[2] He advocated abandonment of "big stick" diplomacy: "the best thing to do with these countries is to get out, let 'em alone and then sell things cheaper and better than the other nations."[3] True, South American countries such as Cuba might be run "cockeyed," but "what country ain't?"[4] The use of marines and battleships to make sure that weaker republics elected the "right" President was not only wrong in itself, but seemed worse because of the overmatching of the fight. He observed that Americans certainly would not want to read headlines that told of the English King's ships being in New York harbor to be sure that the "right" man was elected.

> But that couldn't happen, for they are both big nations, and that would mean war. But when one nation is big and one is little, why the little nation's port is just like a public regatta. Everybody can come in that's got a boat.[5]

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[1] Ibid., July 19, 1927, p. 25. Will later found out that the natives were firing bullets, not stones.

[2] Ibid., February 9, 1928, p. 27.

[3] Ibid., April 14, 1931, p. 29.

[4] Ibid., August 10, 1933, p. 19.

[5] Ibid., September 11, 1933, p. 19.

Thus, the cowboy philosopher practiced fair play and defense of the underdog in the instance of South America.

In Asia, another problem area for the twentieth century, he also spoke up for the underdog nations. "Let's all come home and let every nation ride its own surfboard, play its own eukaleles and commit devilment on their own race," he wrote. "I never have seen any reason why us, or any other nation should hold under subjection of any kind any island or country outside of our own."[1] In so saying, Will Rogers was the isolated Adam, but he was also the American democrat giving as much freedom, by practicing fair play, as he expected for himself. Specifically, he stood up for non-imperialistic treatment for China and the Philippines. Irony was often his vehicle.

> All we ask of the Chinese is that they settle down and let us and England keep on collecting and running their customs for them. I don't see why they should refuse a little thing like that.
>
> China owes us four million and we take over their customs revenue. France owes us four billion and we are afraid to send them a bill for it. What a great difference in diplomatic relations an army and navy make.[2]

Signing himself as "yours for memory," the democrat from Oologah commented on the news in 1927 that the federal government had blocked a proposed Filipino referendum on independence. "What was that slogan the whole country was shouting just exactly ten years ago today?" he asked. "Does this sound like it. 'Self determination of small nations.'"[3] In another dispatch, he made a meaningful distinction be-

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[1]*Ibid.*, May 2, 1932, p. 19.

[2]*Ibid.*, March 14, 1927, p. 4.

[3]*Ibid.*, April 8, 1927, p. 25.

tween fair play and imperialism: "Give the Philippines their freedom and take that godfather clause out of our Cuban treaty, and first thing you know we would be called 'brother' and not 'big brother.'"[1] Thus, Will Rogers time and again supported self determination and freedom for all nations, but for colonies and protectorates in particular.[2] His was an isolationism based largely upon anti-imperialism; his fair treatment and defense of underdog nations identified him with the American dream of freedom and equality. He could refer directly to that dream in advocating fair play for smaller nations.

> We fought for our Liberty when we was enjoying at the time a lot more of it than these Nations are. What if England had asked us if we was ready for a free Government? Why, we wasent ready for anything, and because we finally did struggle through and starved and fought among ourselves and finally got away with it, now we think no one else could possibly be as smart or as deserving as us. Let 'em go their own way, run their Country any way they want.[3]

That statement will stand as a summary of all that Will Rogers said in support of underdog nations.

As the American democrat, Will also defended individuals who were underdogs. "I can applaud a winner as loud as anybody, but somehow," he wrote, "a loser appeals to me."[4] So it was that he started a

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[1]Ibid., January 23, 1934, p. 21. "Big Brother," of course, adumbrates Orwell's 1984.

[2]For other relevant comments, see The New York Times, December 2, 1926, p. 29; December 29, 1926, p. 23; January 3, 1927, p. 21; February 5, 1927, p. 2; March 4, 1927, p. 23; March 23, 1927, p. 2; December 22, 1931, p. 23; December 19, 1932, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, April 10, 1927, V, p. 5; December 7, 1930, IV, p. 9; September 27, 1931, V, p. 5.

[3]"Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to Senator Borah," Saturday Evening Post, March 12, 1932, pp. 97, 100.

[4]The New York Times, October 10, 1934, p. 25.

successful drive for a trophy fund for the "world's most cheerful loser," Sir Thomas Lipton, who had failed in several challenges for the America's cup, symbol of yachting supremacy; he wanted to give a wrong-way football runner a medal for avoiding a standardized mind; he wanted to tell all the 1932 Olympics losers, "Never mind what boy or girl, what State or what country, come and was defeated, 'we loves you.'"[1] Individuals outside organized sports, in addition, received his support because of their underdog role. They might be as internationally prominent as a leader of a peaceable revolt who was struggling against great odds.

> They got Gandhi in jail in India. He preached "liberty without violence." He swore all his followers "to truth and constant poverty." He wanted nothing for himself not even the ordinary comforts. He believed in "prayer and renunciation."
>
> Well, naturally a man that's holy couldn't run at large these days. They figured that a crazy man like that was liable to get other people to wanting those fanatical things. The whole thing just gives you a pretty fair idea of what would happen to our Saviour if He would come on earth today.[2]

The individual underdog might be as little-known as a single bootlegger among the many thousands during national prohibition.

> For her fourth offense in selling liquor the great State of Michigan may send the mother of ten children to the penitentiary for life. I guess that will just about blot out the liquor business in the State. I suppose she was the last one selling. Any woman that tries to raise ten orphan kids in that cold State not only ought to be allowed to sell booze, but the State should furnish it to her to sell, and guarantee that it was pure. That would make her the greatest life saver in Michigan.
>
> It certainly ought to be a lesson to people with ten children to never move to Michigan.[3]

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, September 19, 1930, p. 1; The New York Times, January 4, 1929, p. 27; August 16, 1932, p. 19.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, May 6, 1930, p. 1.

[3]The New York Times, December 13, 1928, p. 29.

Prominent or unknown, the underdog could expect the cowboy philosopher's support.[1] When he gave that support, his audience could recognize him for a defender of the American dream, also.

So far, then, the dream of freedom and equality received support from the American who remained interested in politics but independent of parties and who became the responsibly free individual by practicing fair play and defending the underdog. Will Rogers did these deeds.

As the American democrat, he also served the vision of equality by remaining unabashed in the presence of the mighty, by mingling with people of all estates, and by championing manners that were civilized without being foppish.

Going freely and easily among all people.--"Take off your hat," Walt Whitman had counselled, "to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men." The innate dignity and worth of an individual made him equal to all other individuals; the man who could stand unabashed in the presence of the mighty identified himself not only with the vision of individualism but also with the dream of equality. Will Rogers managed a merging of his own image with that particular action corollary of the dream of equality which called for Americans to hold high their heads in all company.

Rogers' audacity and irreverence toward bigwigs was almost

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[1]For other relevant comments, see ibid., December 30, 1923, V, p. 2; July 22, 1923, VII, p. 2; January 12, 1929, p. 19; May 8, 1930, p. 29; October 25, 1930, p. 19; January 8, 1931, p. 23; February 23, 1931, p. 19; July 21, 1931, p. 21; September 16, 1931, p. 25; May 28, 1932, p. 17; July 30, 1932, p. 15; C.B.S. broadcast of May 26, 1935; see also "The Great Rogers Plan," June 9, 1935, C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

legendary. He provided, one must agree, ample material for legend-making. The best touchstone for his unabashedness exists in his actions toward powerful figures in government and business. He attracted nation-wide attention, for instance, when during the early years of network broadcasting, he presumed to "introduce" President Coolidge on a show sponsored by an automobile manufacturer; then he imitated the President's voice in a "State of the Union" message.

> It gives me great pleasure to appear before you through the courtesy of Dodge Brothers and report on the state of the nation as a whole. You know the nation is in a hole, but I think that the nation is perfectly all right.
>
> Well, we are going to bury the Nicaragua matter, and as far as the farmers are concerned we're not going to bother about a McNary-Haugen bill. We are simply going to pray for rain and better crops.[1]

Later, with Coolidge out of the White House, Will parodied in a speech some of the messages the former President was writing for newspaper publication. The Coolidge columns apparently were not particularly newsworthy. "Tomorrow is Friday," Will "predicted." "Friday follows very closely on Thursday. Our days and our weeks are very beneficial to our way of reckoning time."[2] Herbert Hoover also received Will's levelling treatment on the occasion of the famous network broadcast on unemployment in 1931, in which the man from the Santa Monica ranch house appeared on the same program as the man from the White House.

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[1]Text from The New York Times, January 5, 1928, p. 1. The newspaper later criticized Rogers for his act, whereupon Rogers produced a letter from the President exonerating the Oklahoma Cowboy. Will had used the routine many times on his lecture tours. The criticism, in my opinion, however, really bothered Will Rogers.

[2]Text as reported in The New York Times, April 24, 1931, p. 16.

> Well, Mr. [Owen D.] Young called me up and asked me to talk on this program, I told him I was very particular who I appeared with, and who would be the other speaker, he said would Mr. Hoover be all right. I told him I would think it over, so I did--I looked everything up about him, and inquired, and found that after discounting about two thirds that the Democrats said about him, found I had nothing much to lose by appearing with him, so I took the chance. So if we do all right today, there's liable to be a new team on the radio.[1]

Rogers was non-partisan in his treatment of political giants, and he got the chance to prove it when he was chosen to introduce Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Los Angeles Coliseum in September of 1932. Speaking to many thousands of persons present, with radio microphones ranged before him, he "proved" that politics belonged in the Coliseum because that edifice was dedicated to "amusement"; he joked about F.D.R.'s perpetual rising to nominate Al Smith (even at the Follies), and he paid tribute to Roosevelt, "the neighbor from the other side of our mountains." Then came the crack of the whip, the stinger, the final leveller. Chewing his gum prodigiously, Will declined to offer Roosevelt any apology for the irreverent introduction.

> This introduction may have lacked enthusiasm and floweriness, but you must remember you are only a candidate yet. Come back as President and I will do right by you. I am wasting no oratory on a prospect.[2]

The audience and the American people liked that sally; Roosevelt appeared to appreciate it, himself. Equalitarianism ran high.

At Will's deft hands, giants of business and industry had any speck of sawdust stuffing their shirts let out. In an after-dinner

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[1]"Unemployment," October 18, 1931, Radio Speeches.

[2]Text from uncatalogued file of speeches collected by Donald Day, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

speech to a bankers' association, which was later available to the general public in a recorded version, Will changed from irreverence to genial insults.

> Loan sharks, and interest hounds: I have addressed every form of organized graft in the United States, excepting Congress, so it is naturally a pleasure to me to appear before the biggest.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I had an account in a bank once, and the banker, he asked me to withdraw it, said I used up more red ink than the account was worth.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I see where your convention was opened by a prayer. You had to send outside your ranks to get somebody that knew how to pray. You should have had one creditor there. He could have shown you how to pray.
>
> I noticed in the prayer the clergyman announced to the Almighty that the bankers were here. Well, it wasn't exactly an announcement, it was more in the nature of a warning.[1]

No doubt, in the original speaking situation, Will had sprinkled his "sure-fire" material such as this with charming jokes on himself or with compliments. Even then, however, his friendly acidity probably made clear the fact that he was taking off his hat to no man. In addition, he occasionally used his newspaper outlet to show his audacity. The target for levelling might be as well-respected as the United States Chamber of Commerce, itself.

> See where the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are gathered in Washington again. It's the caviar of big business.
>
> Last time they met I happened to be in Washington and was the guest of Jesse Jones (head of the Reconstruction Finance) at their dinner.
>
> Now the whole constitution, by-laws and secret ritual of the Orchid Club is to "keep the government out of business."
>
> Well, that's all right for every organization must have a purpose, but here was the joke:

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[1]"Talks to Bankers," text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. The original talk was probably made in the early 1920's.

> They introduced all the big financiers--the head of this, that and the other. As each stood up Jesse would write on the back of the menu card just what he had loaned him from the R.F.C. (I got that menu card yet.)
>
> Yet, they say "keep the government out of business."[1]

When Rogers levelled by letting the sawdust out in this fashion, he also implied the ideal of fair play and related himself to another action corollary of the dream of freedom and equality: moving freely among all classes of people. Sitting with a high Federal official like Jesse Jones was hobnobbing with the great. The feat probably has had a strong fascination for a national audience which after the time of Jackson had dreamed of mobility from "the humble abode" to the "seats of the mighty."

When Will Rogers wrote of his doings among prominent people of his time, he was speaking the language of behavior which categorized him as a doer of the dream of equality. An early report to his public indicates that he was not unaware of the equalitarian implications of his social activity. He had been an overnight guest at the White House.

> Now there was the President of a Country a third as big as Russia and more than half as big as China. He and the Leading Lady of our land, waiting dinner on a Lowbrow Comedian. Now if any Nation can offer any more of a demonstration of democracy than that, I would like to hear of it. It only shows that with all of our going Cuckoo over anything from abroad that is branded with an affliction of Royalty, why, we still have one home in America that is able to retain its democracy.[2]

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[1] The New York Times, May 3, 1934, p. 21. For other comments showing Will Rogers' unabashedness, see ibid., April 16, 1928, p. 21; April 24, 1931, p. 16; July 24, 1933, p. 17; July 25, 1933, p. 21.

[2] "A Letter from a Self-Made Diplomat to His Constituents," Saturday Evening Post, January 8, 1927, pp. 6-7. This kind of commendation, of course, would probably go far toward easing any hurt Coolidge might have felt when Will imitated him on the radio.

But "Will of the People" did not let his democracy restrain him from hobnobbing with the highest of European royalty. Having met the Prince of Wales in 1923, Will wrote of the encounter and pictured the Prince as "a regular guy."[1] By 1926, the acquaintanceship had ripened sufficiently for the future King of England to invite Rogers to the royal apartment for a friendly chat. Will told the millions who read Saturday Evening Post of an adventure that seemed to fulfill the dream of equality.

> One thing that I want you to know that will establish his Character better than anything else and show you that he has a real sense of humor is when I first come in I said, "Hello, old-timer! How are you falling these days?" and he replied as quick as a flash, "All over the place. I got my shoulder broke since I saw you last."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We just talked like a couple of old Hill Billies about neighbors and friends, and I don't think that he will consider this any breach of confidence by me reporting it to you. I told him that I was surprised to find him at his York House; that I thought he lived at some other place.
>
> He said, "No, I have lived here now for several years."
>
> I asked him, "But dident some of your folks that died leave you some other place?"
>
> He laughed and said, "Yes, Marlborough House; but it's not ready yet."
>
> I said, "Ready? What's the idea? Haven't they moved a bed in there yet, or are you waiting for a cookstove? A Canadian Rancher ought not to kick on being shy a few luxuries . . . . I said, "This ain't a bad joint you have got here."
>
> "No, we have plenty of room," he admitted.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I never felt any more at home in a place in my life. Although I dident have any room just exactly like this in my house, I did have a fireplace, and a mantel with Pictures; just as good pictures as he had. Not royalty perhaps, but to me they were, just as much as they were to him. Of course, we had to talk some Polo.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I told him, "Well, boy, the old latchstring will sho be hanging out for you anywhere you want to light in America.

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[1]The New York Times, September 14, 1923, IX, p. 2.

> If at any time you feel that yon are not appreciated over here, why, come on over." . . . I felt that in remembering me he had remembered ordinary America.[1]

The Oklahoma cowboy thus talked to a "Canadian Rancher" on equal terms and identified himself to the public as a true equalitarian. Will Rogers also told his national audience of his visits with such notables As John D. Rockefeller; the President of Mexico; U.S. Ambassador Dwight Morrow--who was to take Lindbergh as a son-in-law; former Navy Secretary, Josephus Daniels; Bernard Baruch; Senators Borah, Harrison, Capper, and Long; House Speaker Longworth and Vice-Presidents Curtis and Garner; and President Hoover, among many others.[2] Near the end of his career, Will Rogers got entry to the private quarters of President Roosevelt, with whom Will had a mild disagreement regarding the President's disability from poliomyelitis.

> . . . I pretty near had an argument with the President while he was changing from his tuxedo (which he had worn at dinner) to his dress suit which of course he would have to wear at the big Reception. He had asked me into his room to show me all the things he has in there. I asked him if he dident sit down during the time the people were passing by. (It takes about an hour and a half.) Well he said no that he stood.
>
> Well then I blew up. I told him he ought to sit down. That was one time I was telling the President of the U.S. what to do. I have done it a lot of times but not so they could hear it, but this time I was laying the law down.
>
> Well anyhow, I dident get away with it. He went right down and stood up all that time. I dident win but I still think I am

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[1]July 24, 1926, pp. 129-130. See also the text of Will's radio speech on the Prince of Wales, May 18, 1930, Radio Talks, pp. 25-28.

[2]The New York Times, February 4, 1927, p. 21; December 6, 1927, p. 31; December 7, 1927, p. 31; December 15, 1927, p. 1; March 17, 1928, p. 17; March 22, 1928, p. 27; June 26, 1928, p. 4; February 11, 1930, p. 29; February 12, 1932, p. 21; May 4, 1933, p. 19; October 23, 1933, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, April 14, 1929, V, p. 1; December 10, 1933, IV, p. 4; C.B.S. broadcast, March 31, 1935.

> right . . . .
>
> Having dinner in the White House is more fun and laughs than any place I know, and it has just about as much formality as dining with a neighbor.[1]

Hobnobbing with important people in the way Will did seemed to prove America's dream of equality through social mobility.

Yet he never lost touch with other levels of American society. In the first place, even when he attended an important affair, he usually managed in his report of it to maintain the character of the "country" boy.

> I was down in Washington, D.C. a couple of weeks ago relating facts to the lawmakers and the next night I was off, it being Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Ned McLean was giving a big Dinner and they was not only kind enough, but Democratic enough, to ask the Mrs. and I to be there . . . .
>
> My wife got the old wedding dress out and turned under the top, and basted up a couple of feet of the bottom, took the belt out of it and let hang kinder "at ease," and want to tell you the old thing dident look bad at all . . . . I got the old Blue serge double breasted that has done such valient [sic] service in the pinches over in Europe, and my one piece shirt.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Vice Presidents, and Cabinet members and Senators and Ambassadors and foreign Princesses and Congressmen. I guess I was about the only plain voter there.[2]

Will thus made it plain that he was not "putting on airs" when he met prominent people. That helped him to keep in touch with other classes in equality-hopeful America. In the second place, the cowboy philosopher could write as delightedly of his encounters with plain people as of those with powerful folk. As we have seen, he loved to write about his returns to Oklahoma and his family and friends. He liked to rub shoulders with ranch people and cowhands, too. He liked to talk to

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, February 18, 1934, IV, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., January 2, 1927, V, p. 7.

the "regular bird," to get his "angle," and he would urge Americans of all stations to talk to people outside their milieu.[1] Often, his own encounters were casual and delightful, as was the case when he and his mail pilot were forced down near a prairie lighthouse erected to guide night fliers.

> Well, there is where I met my first lighthouse keeper, a real honest-to-goodness one that works for Uncle Sam and stays there twenty-five miles from the nearest post office three hundred and sixty-five days a year, just to keep the tower light burning to guide wayfarers on their route, the same as if he was out on a lonely island.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Well, here lives the keeper and his wife in a tiny box house, partitioned into three little rooms. They have no neighbors, but they know all the pilots on the run . . . . I found this lighthouse keeper's wife a mighty cheerful and wholesome middle-aged woman. She wasn't interested much in a permanent wave, or reducing, but she did bake some of the best bread and make some of the best coffee I have had in years. They have two sons in college and are two of the finest folks I ever met.[2]

Thus, moving freely among all kinds of people, Will Rogers lived the life of equality. As the American democrat, he was making the American dream of equality come true in his own life, just as he had made happiness and self-fulfillment his as the American Adam.

The cement, one might say, which held Will Rogers in a cohesive relationship with all those he met, was his poise, his natural manners. Whitman had written, "It is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals . . . with <u>applaub</u>--and not culture or any knowledge or intellect whatever." The famed

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., June 17, 1928, V, p. 4.

[2]<u>Scientific American</u>, October, 1929, pp. 285-86. <u>The Tulsa Daily World</u>, June 17, 1928, V, p. 4 contains a similar article.

Lady Astor was to remark of Will Rogers, "His naturalness and charm fitted him for all kinds of company, and we keep all kinds of company." She would recall a vivid picture of Rogers in that company.

> I can see him now at a dinner of politicians, peers, and poets, holding the table spellbound with his wit and wisdom. Occasionally he would look down at Shaw and Barrie with an almost pitying kindness. Because Barrie is a very tiny, rather serious-looking man who seldom laughed. But I never heard him laugh as I heard him that night.[1]

It was a long way from Oklahoma to London, and it was a long way back.

Will Rogers was not "admirably schooled in every grace." But he had the natural quality of aplomb that gave him civilization without foppish manners. He stated the Whitmanian ideal, himself, early in 1927, after the impending arrival of Rumania's Queen Marie had caused official American welcoming parties to practice bowing and dressing properly. After remarking that two weeks had been required to "train them from acting like Americans," Will added, "You know, when you have to be told what to say when you meet anyone, you are not the one to meet them."[2] He satirized such arrangements as those made by Mayor James Walker of New York.

> The clothes were to consist, so his instructions said, of heavy striped pants, held up by suspenders, and cutaway coat. (For fear of mistakes they sent diagram to show which end was to be cut-away.) All tags, either size or price, were to be carefully removed . . . . Pearl gray four-in-hand necktie. (All diamond horseshoe stickpins are to be left regretfully at home); check vests are barred . . . . High Silk hats (and please have them fit good enough so they won't blow off on the Tug going down the bay, as it is very windy, and we will only have a few

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[1]Text from N.B.C. transcript of Will Rogers' Memorial Broadcast, November 19, 1935, p. 127, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[2]Saturday Evening Post, January 8, 1927, p. 230.

> extra ones.) Practice wearing this hat a few days before the event . . . . You can procure these hats from any juggler on the stage, or magician. Be sure all Rabbits are removed. Curry this hat with the fur down, otherwise it will look like an inverted muff on the head.
>
> Have white gloves and don't dispose of them or throw them away after as you can never tell when there will be a political funeral. Don't remove gloves to shake hands with Queen as Queens, for sanitary sake, have to be careful. Make bow when introduced, depth of bow to be judged by size of trousers. Black Patent leather shoes, (not dancing pumps). It's bad enough to have to meet you without her having to dance with you. Wear white "Spats"; if none are rentable just bandage your ankles and it will answer just as well. Have tip of handkerchief sticking out of upper lefthand pocket. (Let clean end stick out.) . . . Monocles all in right eye. Have it tied to cord (black).[1]

Then Will, as an acquaintance of the future King of England, remarked of his encounters with royalty, "I have met a few of them in my time, but I have never yet ever dressed or trained for it." Such words about what he had done marked him as the American democrat, practicing the action corollaries of the dream of freedom and equality.

Rogers did not limit his comments on manners, however, to meetings with royalty. Adopting the pose of the innocent who is wiser than he seems, Will reviewed a book on etiquette by Emily Post and found that there was considerably more etiquette than he had ever supposed--seven hundred pages, in fact; he predicted that books on etiquette would fall "on fertile soil." He managed the appearance of unintentionally making the rules sound undemocratic.

> Now take, for instance, being introduced, or introducing someone; that is the first thing in the book. I didn't know up to then that inflection of the voice was such a big factor in introductions.
>
> She says that the prominence of the party being introduced

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, October 31, 1926, V, p. 4.

> determines the sound of the voice, as she says for instance, "Are you there?" and then on finding out you are there she says, "Is it raining?"
>
> Now the inflection that you use on asking any one if they are there is the same inflection that you are to use on introducing Mr. Gothis, if he is the more prominent of the two. Then for the other person, who Mr. Gothis probably got his from, why, you use the, "Is it raining?" inflection.[1]

By the time Will Rogers finished that "book review," the formal structure of etiquette was in a genial shambles. He had tried to use the proper inflections, himself, but had had trouble deciding which was the more prominent party; and besides, when the family dogs and cats rushed through the door as a guest was admitted, he found that nothing in the book told how to remove the dogs and cats and remain "non challant." On other occasions, Will--as the American democrat--was less good-natured on the matter of foppishness. "Sophistication," he wrote, "means talking all day about nothing. You are both bored but you have to do something till somebody mixes another cocktail."[2] He had known people who in spite of "manners" were still not really civilized, and others who were courteous in spite of lack of "advantages."

> I know Englishmen that have had the same well-bred Butler all their lives and they are just as rude as they ever were. Why, do you know, one of the most cultured men I ever saw come from Texas, and where he learned it the Lord only knows. It's just one of those freaks of Nature like a Rose among Prickly pears.[3]

In what he wrote about what he did, Will Rogers projected the image of the American democrat who managed to be civilized without being fop-

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[1]The New York Times, September 9, 1923, VIII, p. 2.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, May 17, 1931, IV, p. 9.

[3]Saturday Evening Post, August 21, 1926, p. 10.

pish.[1] His actions, as symbolized in his words, made him a hero of the dream of equality. His equalitarian behavior gave him the aura of being free of prejudice and, therefore, free in the larger sense dreamed of by Thoreau and Whitman--the freedom of spirit. In another hero-character, Rogers made stronger his impression of freedom of spirit.

Being the cowboy hero.--He reinforced his identification with the dream of freedom by being the cowboy hero: mobile in space, free of a complex mind-life, and generous of nature.[2] Of course, in nearly everything Will Wrote, the flavor of the cowboy was present in the background, as it had been in his conversation in 1926 with the Duke of Wales and as it was in his "philosophy" which held that satisfaction "on the range" was necessary for "fat beef cattle at the end of their existence." In addition, however, Will's persona as the cowboy was often in the forefront of his messages.

"There is no finer and more satisfying business in the world than the cow business . . . ," Will often said. He associated himself with the life of a cowboy in two ways: he continued to show an interest in it throughout his life, and he told of his own experiences as a cowboy in the Texas Panhandle before the turn of the century.

His dispatches on his latter-day pilgrimages to ranches were redolent with the cowboy's sense of freedom. "Been away up above the

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[1]For other comments relevant to this action corollary, see ibid., November 6, 1926, p. 4 and The New York Times, May 20, 1932, p. 21.

[2]See chap. ii, supra, pp. 96-98.

timber line for the last few days on Jim Minnick's horse ranch, so can't tell you what I have read in the papers for I haven't had any and I am just plumb in ignorance as to who murdered who, who robbed who, who married who, who divorced who and why, . . ." he might write, giving a picture of a life free of the complexities of modern society.[1] Even when he took an international trip, part of his commentary was often related to the life of the cowboy. From Argentina, for instance, came this story of a day's fun.

> Well, I had a great day today. Saw the real Argentine gauchos do their stuff right on one of the big estancias.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Those bolos that you hear about 'em throwing they use for ostriches. We chased ostriches all afternoon. They are the fastest thing I ever saw run.[2]

Thus, the appeal of the man-on-horseback could combine with the lure of the faraway to emphasize the free mobility of the cowboy. Will's character as the cowboy remained clear, even if--with characteristic cowboy modesty--he often made fun of himself in his account of a pilgrimage. From a legendary place-name like Muleshoe, Texas, might come a typical account.

> Down here at the Halsell ranch branding thousands of calves. I have been roping at 'em all day and they just look around and say go on comedian and do your stuff on stage, but don't try a real cowboy's racket.
>
> I'll catch one of the little rascals yet if I have to bribe him.[3]

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[1]The New York Times, October 26, 1929, p. 31.

[2]Ibid., October 21, 1932, p. 23. His collection of saddles from all over the world testifies to his interest in men-on-horseback wherever he went.

[3]Ibid., July 9, 1932, p. 18.

Riding, roping, rambling, and laughing at himself, Will Rogers seemed to embody the freedom of the cowboy in his own life.

On occasion, his stories grew nostalgic about the purple distances and golden glories of a day forever gone: in such comments he aroused all the associations surrounding the cowboy as a symbol of man's freedom in his natural state. For instance, Will told his national audience of a sentimental journey to Texas in the summer of 1934.

> We was driving over a Country where 36 years before as a boy 18 years old I had helped drive a bunch of cattle from that very place to Western Kansas, and there wasent a house or a chicken in the whole country. That plains was the prettiest country I ever saw in my life, as flat as a beauty contest winners stomach, and prairie lakes scattered all over it. And mirages! You could see anything in the world--just ahead of you. I eat out of a chuck wagon, and slept on the ground all that spring and summer of 98. (Lot of folks went to the Klondike, but I couldent get any farther away from my home in the Indian Territory than Texas.) . . .
>
> Well here I was 36 years later driving out to a ranch, to eat at another "Chuck Wagon" and do a little roping. A good deal had happened to everybody in 36 years. No more happens to one person than to another. Some look bigger, but they are no bigger than the things that look little that happens to the other fellow.
>
> No greater, no happier life in the world than the cattle man.[1]

It was this kind of youthful exploit that had qualified Will Rogers to be honored, together with many others, as an "old trail driver," in 1926. The "round-up" had occurred in San Antonio. "It sho was fine," the erstwhile "Cherokee Kid" commented. "I am a mighty young man to be allowed to mingle with those old fellows." Their names and deeds evoked the past for the eternal boy from the Indian Territory.

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, July 29, 1934, IV, p. 4.

> Their names were to me like you look on Presidents. I had heard all my life of such families as the Pierces, the Slaughters, the Pryors, Wagners [sic], Burnetts, "Windy" Scotts, Russells, McFadden, Saunders, Blockers, Mavericks. . . . These men that I have named above handled thousands and thousands of cattle, from one State to another before the days of convenient railroads. Johnny Blocker sent eighty-two thousand Steers up the trail in one year in '85. He was one of the greatest Ropers that Texas ever produced. . . . He was originator of the "Blocker loop." That's a big loop, and you go upside of the steer and turn it over as you throw it, and it goes down over the steer's shoulder and picks up both front feet . . . . He was judge of the first roping contest I ever was in in Texas in San Antonio in 1901. I was just an old Cuckoo kid and had a little Pony and got it jerked down so many times they wanted me to tie the horse's feet instead of the Steer's.[1]

The generous principle of accepting a man for what he was, rather than for who he was, applied in that gathering of old trail drivers.

> Some of them Millionaires today, and own thousands of acres and hundreds of oil wells, while others are poorer than when they worked, on the trail for wages. But in that group together they are all the same. Johnny Blocker, . . . why "Lady Luck" hasn't dealt any too kind with him . . . . But when he is with these boys he is just as welcome as Ike Pryor or Dan Waggonner [sic].[2]

Will's peroration pictured the cowboy as defender of right, a criterial attribute of the hero of freedom.

> It's getting kinder late in the afternoon for a lot of these old Boys, and they will be drifting them in some nice high, dry divide, to bed 'em down for the night. They will be a catching their night horses for the last time. They will be rolling their old "Tarp" out and crawling into their old "Sougans" and "Parka's," and when they are waked up with a kick to go on guard by a Golden Slipper, instead of a shop-made boot, why they will roll out of there and face their new Range Boss, and when he asks them "Boys are you ready to go with me?" They will look him right in the face and never bat an eye and say, "We are ready to go with anybody that is right."[3]

Will Rogers, by deed and by association, appeared as one of these western heroes to his national audience. He was a hero of the dream of

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[1]Ibid., November 14, 1926, V, p. 4. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

freedom partly by virtue of what he wrote about what he did as a cowboy.[1]

To sum up, in his writings, besides speaking directly for freedom and equality, Will Rogers also identified himself materially as a hero of freedom and equality by being interested in politics but above party, by practicing fair play for the underdog, by "going freely" among all classes of people, by being poised without being foppish, and by being the American cowboy. He also made himself consubstantial with the vision of freedom and equality by formal appeals.

Formal Identification with the Twin Visions

In his language of gesture and word, the man from Oologah took on the form of the American democrat in addition to that of the American Adam. If the American Adam's essential formal quality was an aura of newness and freshness, the American democrat's was one of breezy casualness and "just plain folks."

Much about Will's appearance, posture, and gestures gave him the image of the breezily free individual and the equalitarian. To begin with, speaking styles of his period (to a degree) followed traditions of the golden age in American oratory, with a certain amount of grandiloquence: William Jennings Bryan was still active on the lecture circuit; Russell Conwell's famous "Acres of Diamonds" was

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[1]For other comments relevant to Will's cowboyhood, see The New York Times, October 28, 1926, p. 27; June 19, 1928, p. 29; July 2, 1928, p. 21; October 6, 1931, p. 27; November 6, 1931, p. 23; July 10, 1934, p. 19; November 5, 1934, p. 21; July 4, 1935, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, March 7, 1926, V, p. 3; November 14, 1926, V, p. 4; November 29, 1931, V, p. 5; July 16, 1933, IV, p. 4.

relatively fresh on the ears of millions of Americans; and Chauncey Depew, himself, once stood after a Rogers introduction and announced, with an obvious reference to the rope-twirler from Oklahoma, "I've been making speeches for over fifty years, but I've never found it necessary to use a rope to hold an audience."[1] In such a context of speaking conventions, Will Rogers' own stage presence took on the aspect of casualness that was freedom and the aspect of approachability that was equality. Early in his vaudeville career, he had begun chewing gum in order to reduce nervousness; the habit became a trademark, and he would casually violate conventions of speechmaking by happily working his jaws, during pauses, on the cud of gum.[2] Occasionally, he would "park" the gum on the proscenium--to the delight of the audience. Further, in a carry-over from the days during which he wore his small cowboy hat as part of his "cowboy philosopher's" costume, Will sometimes spoke with his hat on--a literal image of the man who takes off his hat to no one.[3] "He disobeyed all rules of lecturing," Croy, one of Rogers' contemporaries, observed.[4] In disobeying those rules, he

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[1]Rogers, His Wife's Story, p. 135. I certainly do not wish to imply that the grandiloquence of the golden age of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun is extinct even today: witness the efforts of speakers like General Douglas Macarthur, Senator Everett S. Dirksen, and Governor Frank Clement of Tennessee.

[2]For the story of Will's start with the chewing gum, see Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 106.

[3]Millions of American movie goers, for instance, saw him in the newsreels of his famous "Unemployment" speech in October of 1931, standing before the microphones with his hat on--and his cud of chewing gum.

[4]Our Will Rogers, p. 196.

showed his freedom and his personal warmth. His posture was not the one with weight evenly distributed and balanced on the balls of the feet, with hips straight and shoulders squared. Instead, he lolled first on one foot and then another, the idle leg thrust slightly forward and away as he rested on the other; he jammed his hands into his coat pockets, and made an acute angle with his shoulder line. Thus placed, he looked the part of the convention-free, friendly, at-ease speaker. When he could not stand still any longer, Will would walk back and forth on the platform, or he would take a piano stool and sit on it, or he would lean on a piano or anything at hand. Sometimes, if a talk went well, he would go to the edge of the platform and sit down, dangling his crossed legs over the apron. Here he would finish his speech, having won his audience completely with his folksiness as well as his wit. At this point, Homer Croy remarked, Rogers "could have hopped across the stage on one foot and the audience would have liked it."[1] Violating all speaking conventions except the one requiring directness and communion with the audience, and occurring countless times in the context of witty words that "smiled as they said it," such details of appearance and bodily action in the speaking behavior of Will Rogers could have become sufficiently conventionalized for his audience that the actions gave him an ikonic quality as the American democrat.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] This would be a case of what Suzanne Langer calls a presentational symbol; the man and his appearance, posture, and bodily movement becomes a symbol. I call his gestural language an ikonic symbol because the conventionalized bits of behavior could, after the process of symbolic transformation, be said to "look like" the thing symbolized --in this case, the American democrat.

In his written and spoken language, Will also used formal devices to identify with the dream of freedom and equality. Hyperbole, or what Latin theorists called superlatio, suggested by means of its overstatement a breeziness that was free. When the Sage of Claremore coupled the figure of speech with thoughts appropriate to the dream of freedom the effect was to intensify his invitation to assent. Will was using hyperbole when he remarked, as we have seen, that Mayor Thompson's campaign to rid Chicago of Anglicizing influences extended so far that it included "any picture depicting the eating of roast beef, Plum Duff, Yorkshire Buck, or the drinking of Lime juice." He used hyperbole, also, to heighten the effect of his awareness of Communist reactionary behavior that denied freedom for the reactionary, himself. "I was surprised," he told a national radio audience upon his return from a trip to Russia, "they didn't walk on their hands instead of their feet, just to be different from capitalistic nations."[1] On the other hand, the Ambassador of Good Will used hyperbole to state that even Communists should enjoy free speech; they "should have a place where they can get up and denounce anything from Washington's wig to Hoover's fish bait," he wrote.[2] Thus, coupling the free-wheeling quality of hyperbole to ideas appropriate to the dream of freedom, Will Rogers added to his effectiveness.

The formal appeal of hyperbole also aided him in his coalescence with the dream of equality. By applying the heightening inherent in

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[1]"Russia," October 14, 1934, Radio Speeches.

[2]The New York Times, February 28, 1930, p. 25.

hyperbole, Rogers could level distinctions and thus image forth the dream of equality. In a statement that not only showed Rogers as a political independent, but which also levelled party distinctions, the role of hyperbole is clear. Regarding national repeal of prohibition, he wrote, "Both sides are going to do exactly the same thing, they are going to straddle the thing, if they have to split their carcasses clear up to their neck to do it."[1] Of a Senate that could give itself airs over its legislative power, he could remark tellingly, "Confucious prespired [sic] out more knowledge than the U.S. Senate has vocalized out in the last 50 years."[2] By means of hyperbole, Will Rogers could also level distinctions between a visiting Balkan Queen and Oklahoma. (From Ponca City, Oklahoma, came the telegram for the daily syndicate.)

> Am at Miller Brothers' One Hundred and One Ranch just ahead of the Queen's visit here. She will love it. It's just the size of Rumania, only more conveniences. There is a bathroom here to every revolution there. Cowboys sleep in silk pajamas, round-up in Rolls-Royces and dress for dinner.[3]

In examples such as these, Will Rogers used hyperbole to level distinctions and thus identify with the dream of equality.

On other occasions, he wished to exaggerate those distinctions in order to make clearer the disparity between the American dream and reality. He used hyperbole, for instance, to say dramatically that

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[1]Ibid., April 7, 1931, p. 19.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, July 5, 1931, IV, p. 9.

[3]The New York Times, October 26, 1926, p. 29. Such a statement, of course, can also be construed as "boosting" the famous 101 ranch, and as such would be an action corollary of the dream of progress.

unequal distribution of wealth in the country was denying the American dream. "You are either at a banquet in this country," he wrote in 1932, "or you are at a hot dog stand."[1] Showing how wealth "trickles up" to the specially-privileged Hamiltonian elite, he wrote, "You can drop a bag of gold in Death Valley, which is below sea level, and before Saturday it will be home to Papa J.P."[2] Thus, Will Rogers could use the formal resources of hyperbole to image forth equality in two ways: by its use, he could lower the high and mighty or raise the lowly so that their equality as human beings stood forth; by its use, he could make clear the disparities between the American dream and the realities.[3]

By means of his gum chewing, his casual posture, and his leaning, lolling, or sitting, Will Rogers took on the appearance of the free individual who was a "real human man," a person who was "just folks." When he spoke or wrote, he used the heightening that is inherent in the form of hyperbole to level class distinctions or to magnify them. In either case, he was making himself relevant to the dream of equality by formal as well as by material means.

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, April 17, 1932, V, p. 2.

[2]Ibid., February 2, 1933, p. 1.

[3]For more instances of hyperbole used to identify with the dream of freedom and equality, see "Vice President Curtis," April 27, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 14; "Prohibition," June 8, 1930, ibid., p. 36; C.B.S. broadcast of June 2, 1935; "So Long 'till Fall," C.B.S.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma; The Tulsa Daily World, July 19, 1925, V, p. 3; December 5, 1926, V, p. 4; September 4, 1932, IV, p. 6; March 11, 1934, IV, p. 4; The New York Times, April 29, 1927, p. 27; December 2, 1929, p. 24; Saturday Evening Post, March 30, 1929, p. 4. On occasion, Will used metaphor to level classes and thus identify with the dream of equality: the knightly title of "Sir" was only the "Ford" of titles. (See "H.R.H. The Prince of Wales," May 18, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 26.)

As we have seen earlier, by his words and the way he used them, Will Rogers projected the image of the new Adam: dedicated to the powers of the common man, trusting the goodness of the common man, and finding personal self-fulfillment by rejecting the stifling part of the past, seeking first-hand experience of the broadest possible sort, and coming at last to wisdom, to joy of life, and to love of nature and man. About him shone the aura of newness of life that was so vital to the character of the new Adam. Concurrently with the Adamic image-making, by his words and the way he used them, Will Rogers created the persona of the American democrat. He identified with the dream of freedom and equality in a direct material way by speaking for all Americans' right to belong to the free-and-equal "club" set up by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; by urging a government for the good of all the people; by advocating freedom of press, speech, and religion; by asserting spiritual equality, with a consequent commitment to social, economic, and political equality. He merged himself with the twin visions in an indirect material way by being the politically interested person without being the party man, by practicing fair play for all and defending the underdog, by his "not taking off his hat to any man," by his free mingling with people in all stations of life, by his "naturally" civilized manners, and by his being a cowboy hero. When Americans saw him, his appearance and gestures were appropriate to the appearance of the American democrat: free and equal. He did not put himself upon a pedestal. When Americans simply heard or read his words, he invited their assent by the formal properties of language.

He was an attractive figure for Americans. He made himself even more attractive by blending with his Adamic-democratic image that of the self-made man. Will Rogers appeared to the national audience as one who had made the success dream come true. Simultaneously as the American Adam, the American democrat, and the self-made man, Will Rogers seemed to be well on his way to the paradise to be regained.

Material and Formal Identification with the Dream of Success

"The old dollar might be filthy lucre, but there is quite a bit of energy and spirit yet in earning one," Rogers once remarked about the American drive for financial gain.[1] The vision of success in the great American dream was a re-rendering of the hopes for the individual's self-fulfillment, freedom, and equality. The rise of the self-made man was a testament to the powers of the common man; his financial rewards were Puritan proofs of the common man's virtues of industry and honesty; the opportunity for all to rise on the basis of such powers and character was the hallmark of equality and freedom. Because the success dream was shot through with such themes of the other visions, what Will Rogers said often was relevant not only to them but also to the hope of success as well.

For instance, when Will wrote of the powers of the "old broad minded man of the world of experience," he was not only speaking as the American Adam searching after wisdom for the sake of self-fulfillment, but he was also identifying himself with the dogma of the success dream that dictated against the college-educated man, since that individual

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, December 30, 1934, IV, p. 6.

seemed to threaten the "self-made" part of the dream.[1] As long as an everyday man had the possibility of success, the dream of his powers appeared valid. Again, when Rogers reported one day that the most "human" thing he had seen in the papers was the return to their reform school "alma mater" of successful, honest businessmen, he was not only testifying to his belief in the essential goodness of mankind but also -- was relating himself to the view of success as virtue rewarded. Relevant not only to the dream of social equality but also to the success vision's principle of virtue rewarded was Rogers' annoyance with the social register over what he understood to be its admission by inheritance of members whose "morals or personal behaviour" had nothing to do with their acceptance, together with its denial of membership to Henry Ford, king of all self-made men. When the man from Oologah entered the lists in favor of a meaningful inheritance tax for sons of rich men, he was not only speaking to the dream of economic equality but also to the "shirtsleeves-to-shirtsleeves" tradition of the success vision. He would see to it that rich men who endangered their descendants' virtue by leaving fortunes intact would have their "error" corrected by legislation, if need be. Because the success dream was a re-rendering in another key of the dreams of freedom, equality, and the dignity and worth of the individual, Will's identifications with the latter also often related to the former.[2]

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[1]In saying this, I do not mean to imply in any way that Rogers was guilty of equivocation. Both values (and possibly others, as well) are associated with the statement, and Will Rogers quite possibly could honestly have adhered to both.

[2]For three other instances of this sort of mingling of categories in the dream, see <u>supra</u>, pp. 238, 246, 319. Will extolls the

Further, since the essence and substance of the success dream were virtually the same, its principles and its action corollaries were interfused. Thus, to prepare for success by Spartan discipline (amid rural origins, if possible), to practice frugality and hard work, to learn virtue at the knee of a saintly mother, to win riches without speculation, to be a good liege-lord with employees, and to find self-fulfillment through philanthropy all were at once the principles and the action corollaries of the success vision. The result was that Will Rogers identified mainly in two modes with the dream of success: he illumined the success dogma in the actions of success heroes (many of whom he counted as his friends), and in his own behavior he took the role of the successful man. Combined with what he said which related simultaneously to success and other categories of the great dream, he thus acquired the face of success on the great god-of-many-faces.

On Speaking as Horatio Alger

The creator of Ragged Dick has become synonymous with the dream of success, even though he is famous for writing novels rather than success manuals. Neither did Will Rogers write any success guide, but he did use the mass media of radio and widely-circulated newspapers

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virtue of rural origins and thus identifies not only with the individual's dream of the common man's powers and the agrarian dream of freedom, but also with the success vision's doctrine that country origins helped prepare one for advancement. See too, his comment on keeping to himself the matter whether he had been born of poor parents--itself a requirement in the Horatio Alger tradition. Finally, note that Will's comment in behalf of the economic underdog not only reflects the behavior of the free, responsible American democrat, but also conforms to the rule of the success game that the self-made man was liege lord for those who depended upon him.

and magazines in order to share with his audience the living, rhetorical examples provided by American success heroes. "America is a land of opportunity and don't ever forget it," the nation's unofficial President told his national audience in 1931.[1]

As though to prove it, the erstwhile cowboy would tell of his friends and acquaintances who had become self-made men. In an early such article, he made clear his intention.

> Ever since I been trying to write (to keep from manual labor) I always did want to write one of those "success" Articles. They have always appealed to me as being the most interesting reading, for we all want to know just how our rich and our well-known people got that way.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I wanted to just be one of these fellows that wrote about some man that had got somewhere by "hard work, perseverance, and taking advantage of his opportunities."[2]

Spartan discipline, rural origins, and thrift.--Bantering as his tone may have been, Will was serious in his praise of the feats of the hero of his article, an Oklahoma farm boy who had won a coast-to-coast foot race. The significant ingredient in the boy's success had been his spartan origins--in a tradition true to the success dream.

> Do you want to know the real reson [sic] he won? Well, they are one of the only families that dident own a automobile. He used to run to school. So the moral of the story is, Dont own a car. If each one of our Athaletes [sic] in the races that went to the Olympics had never owned a car, we would have won every race there.[3]

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[1]The New York Times, July 2, 1931, p. 27. He was praising the rise of a woman educator to the presidency of a nationwide professional organization.

[2]"The Hoofing Kid from Claremore," American Magazine, April, 1929, p. 34.

[3]Ibid., p. 175.

The rural origins and habits of frugality and industry that the success dream extolled played a significant part in the character of another farm boy who made good, Calvin Coolidge. Writing in one of the "success" magazines, Will Rogers told of the reasons purportedly given for Coolidge's success by a mutual friend, Dwight Morrow.

> Now, you take the way he has been raised. His great-grandfather had a Farm, and skimped and saved, and after a life-time of work left it unemcumbered, and a little nest egg of a couple of thousand dollars. Then his son took it, and worked and saved, and left Coolidge's father perhaps eight or ten thousand. Then he works hard, saves and adds to that, and leaves Coolidge perhaps twenty-five or thirty thousand in addition to the farm. Now, that was progressive success. Each one took what he had, added to it, and left more than he started with.[1]

Thus Will Rogers used his rhetorical example to make the point that success came partly as a result of rural or small-town beginnings. "Take every small-town-raised big man out of business and you would have nobody left running it but vice presidents," the small-town boy from Oologah commented on one occasion.[2] In other "success" stories, Will Rogers amplified other aspects of the doctrine of success.

Inspiration from mother.--In his feature on Sir Thomas Lipton, for instance, the Sage of Claremore dwelt upon the theme of the rise to eminence--even to the point of entertaining royalty--of the poor, half-orphaned, mother-loving, industrious lad of all trades who remained virtuously modest after his great rise. Will allowed Sir Thomas to speak directly in the feature and managed, before proceeding

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[1]"Coolidge," American Magazine, June, 1929, p. 88. The Coolidge fortunes, of course, were hardly large enough to call into play the "shirtsleeves-to-shirtsleeves" rule.

[2]The New York Times, April 17, 1930, p. 29.

to exemplify the success formula, to give America a share of the tea tycoon's success.

> Did you know [Sir Thomas said] that I landed at Castle Garden as a boy, an immigrant, right here in your own country? Oh, I know your country better than you know it . . . .
>
> I worked at everything under the sun, all over this great Country of yours. I was down in Virginia, around Charleston, into Tennessee a great deal; then to New Orleans.[1]

Sir Thomas' devotion to his mother had been Ragged-Dickian in its faithfulness.

> I used to bring me Mother home the half Crown and tell her some day I will have more horses and carriages for you to use than you will know what to do with, and she lived to have 'em too, plenty of 'em . . . .
>
> And at my big celebration at Glasgow for me, I told 'em that any Boy could get up in the World if he only used his Mother as his guiding spirit. She has been my inspiration all my life, and there has never been a night that I layed down that you wont find the picture of her the nearest thing to my pillow.[2]

This once-poor boy had entertained, later, every king and queen and "high potentate" of his time; he had received the keys to more Cities than "any other human"; he had even outdone an American tycoon in a duel of business tactics, but he had retained his modesty, in the best tradition of the success dream. "'Famous Lipton'--I am an immigrant and will always be an immigrant. 'Famous' me eye," Will Rogers reported him as saying.[3] Then Rogers drove home the point of his example. "He is a great old man; he should be a lesson to the World.

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[1]"The World's Best Loser," American Magazine, September, 1930, pp. 30, 131. Rogers did not use quotation marks in the article.

[2]Ibid., pp. 131-32. Fruedian students might place another interpretation upon Lipton's devotion to his mother.

[3]Ibid., p. 132.

Here is a man that does business in every corner of the World, and they all love him and he gets along with all of them."[1]

(Earlier in the article, Will had told of his years of acquaintance with Lipton and had described the setting of their latest meeting. "I had a whole evening with him not long ago . . ." and "it was a lovely dinner and we just sit there and made a whole evening of it, as Sir Thomas was going great."[2] Will Rogers appeared to his audience, "to be going great," too. He was closely associated with a great success hero and with the dream that made him a hero.)

Success: honest value and good liege-lordship.--The success demigod with whom the cowboy philosopher was most clearly identified, however, was the king of all of them, Henry Ford. Will Rogers had spoken on "Uncle Henry" even during the days of his banquet speeches in the early 1920's in New York City; he told, of course, his share of the famous Ford jokes that did so much to create the "Henry B" discerned by Marshall Fishwick; on several occasions, he was Ford's guest.

Over the years of his public ascendancy, Will spoke and wrote words which held up Ford as the ideal success figure. "Folks, I hate to brag," Rogers wrote in the lead paragraph of a story on Ford for a mass-circulation success magazine. "But it just looks like I have scored what Newspaper men call a 'Beat' on all these other folks that make a success writing about people that have made a success."[3] The point was that Will had found the successful man who was "champion" of

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[1]Ibid., p. 133. [2]Ibid., p. 30.

[3]"The Grand Champion," American Magazine, December, 1929, p. 34.

them all. Ford was really the self-made man who made his money by giving value received, not by speculation on Wall Street.

> Measured by the ordinary financial standards, he is not much shakes. I doubt if he knows what hour Wall Street opens, or closes. He thinks Margins are the things you leave around the edge of anything. He knows what calling Hogs is; but Call Money would be Greek to him. He never did merge two or more Companies together and sell stock. He has had to make what little he has out of just what little he had to work with.[1]

(Not only did Ford give full value received for his product, but he was also the ideal success hero in being the common man who exercised his powers of judgment. In a radio speech, Will Rogers gave a version of a statement which he would repeat in his columns: "Ford's success," Will drawled, "is due to the fact that he uses common sense in his business instead of a board of directors.")[2]

Further, in Rogers' statements, Ford was the conscientious liege-lord with his employees. When coal miners were struggling to win a living wage in 1928, the man from Oologah visited Pittsburgh and reported, "Henry Ford is paying $8 a day and having no trouble in his mines. Ain't it funny when it looks like a business can't be run right, he bobs up and shows that it can."[3] Earlier, Will had developed the same theme of Ford's good stewardship with his men and had mixed in an element of the folk humor which surrounded the genial "Henry B." On this occasion, the cowboy philosopher of success talked about Ford's operation of a railroad.

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[1]Ibid., p. 35.

[2]"Henry Ford," June 1, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 35.

[3]The New York Times, March 28, 1928, p. 29.

> He has only had the railroad a short time and the workmen are allowed to buy stock in it, and the stock is paying them 15 per cent already, and he won't let the thing run on Sunday. On Saturday night at 12 o'clock, no matter where a train is, they stop, the passengers get off go and hunt up a farmer's house and take out board and lodging for the rest of the week-end. On Sunday night exactly at twelve, the Engineer blows his whistle and they come running in and all get on and go till the next Saturday night catches them . . . .
>
> His men work only eight hours. But he goes on the rule that means do something that eight hours. It's rather an unusual rule in modern industry when an Engineer and Conductor and all the crew stop, they are supposed to start doing something, generally rubbing and polishing. You can tell a railroad man that works for Mr. Ford. He carries a piece of this cleaning in his hand instead of a Cigarette. While the Passengers are getting on the Engineer is scrubbing the wheels of the Engine, and while the train is going the Conductor is washing the windows and the Brakeman is painting the inside of the cars. Even running, there is no wasted energy. The throttle is in one hand and a dust rag in the other.[1]

Henry thus not only was the good steward over his hirelings by providing them with the satisfaction and human dignity of being miniature capitalists, but he was also doing his best to give them the industry of character so necessary for success. By writing about Ford, Will Rogers was identifying himself with the success dream, too: he was one of those "folks that make a success writing about people that have made a success."

Success: philanthropy.--Another article in the success disciple's credo was his finding self-fulfillment through wise use of his wealth. Will Rogers articulated the principle as part of an article on Henry Ford.

> A rich man has either got to make his name on what he did with his money or what he did for people in the way he was

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, October 25, 1925, V, p. 5.

> making it. If they feel he give 'em a run for their money, and really helped out his fellow man while alive, and tried to do something to make life a little more easy for him, why, then he is readily distinguishable from the herd.[1]

On other occasions, the Sage of Claremore was more pointed in his expression of the need for philanthropical stewardship on the part of self-made men. "All of our disgustingly rich men are at a loss to know what to do with their money," he wrote during the years of the fatted calf. "Funny none of them ever thought of giving it back to the people they got it from."[2]

When wearers of the silk crown of success did use their wealth in enlightened philanthropy, Will was prompt to praise them. For instance, he managed to laud banker A.P. Gianini's altruism at the same time that he had some fun with the financier.

> You have all heard of the tremendous success of a bank called the Bank of Italy. Well, in yesterday's papers was a very unique statement by its founder, Mr. Gianini. He said he was making no personal fortune from it, didn't want to, that he only wanted to help other people, and wanted to die poor. Well, when I read that I went right down to his main bank to see how he would help other people. I put in a bid for a loan, to try and do all I could to make him die poor, and the funny part about it is that this fellow is on the level with it, he really is practicing it. I got the loan; so hurry up and get in, everybody, before he turns banker.[3]

Rogers also had kind words for such good stewards of their wealth as Harry Chandler and the former Senator Phelan. But the rich benefactor who attracted Will's highest accolades was John D. Rockefeller, Sr. Rockefeller, faithful to the success dream's dictum that the rich man

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[1]American Magazine, December, 1929, p. 34.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, January 4, 1925, II, p. 12.

[3]The New York Times, December 29, 1927, p. 25.

practice discerning philanthropy, provided aid aimed at self-help; Rogers saw him as a model for rich men.

> The best news in the paper today was no joke. The Rockefeller foundation, for the health and betterment of people of all parts of the world, spent $22,000,000 last year [1928] and $144,000,000 since its organization in 1913. And it's been worth $1,000,000 as an inspiration to other tremendous rich men to do fine things.
>
> The whole viewpoint of the people in regard to our rich men has been changed in the last few years. Now we judge a man's greatness on how he has spent his money . . . . Just to be rich and nothing else, is practically a disgrace nowadays.[1]

(From time to time, the cowboy philosopher of success repeated his praise of Rockefeller's stewardship of wealth and also made clear his own association with the Standard Oil tycoon. Telling of his meeting Rockefeller in Florida durung his three solo tours, Rogers wrote, "I always had a few local jokes about him, and would go down off the 'Rostrum' and shake hands with him and he would quietly ask me to come to his home on the following morning and have breakfast with him, at eight o'clock."[2] Will Rogers, dining and exchanging dimes with the elder Rockefeller, not only appeared to his public as the American democrat hobnobbing with all classes of men, but he also identified himself with a hero of the success dream. Through Rockefeller, Rogers, himself, therefore, became consubstantial with the vision of success, as he had done by his messages on other success figures of his acquaintance, such as Coolidge, Lipton, and Ford.)

To conclude, with them as illustrations, he managed to vivify the ideas that success awaited the man who disciplined himself through

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[1]Ibid., June 12, 1929, p. 31.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, July 20, 1930, V, p. 1.

obscure beginnings, who formed his character under the inspiration of a saintly mother, and who worked hard and won success by giving honest value for wealth received. Satisfaction with life and self-fulfillment awaited the rich man as benefactor who provided well for his underlings and who practiced philanthropy. By embodying such rules in those articles on such men as Lipton, Ford, and Rockefeller, Will did produce a success manual in somewhat the same way that Alger had done with his novels starring Ragged Dick.[1] Thus, the country boy from Oologah managed one mode of his material identification with the success avenue leading to the paradise to be regained.

Further, in the second place, Will was himself the success hero. Significant, perhaps, were the titles he gave to his odysseys into foreign affairs for the Saturday Evening Post: he was the "Self-Made Diplomat" who wrote to President Coolidge and to Senator Borah. Appearing in a magazine which under the editorship of George Horace Lorimer became a leading success organ, Will Rogers had an audience ready-made for an identification as a self-made man. In other ways perhaps more significant, the Sage of Claremore projected the picture

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[1]For other messages relevant to the gospel of success as revealed in its disciples, see The New York Times, January 15, 1929, p. 31; July 22, 1929, p. 21; July 31, 1929, p. 23; December 10, 1929, p. 31; August 18, 1930, p. 19; May 26, 1933, p. 21; March 28, 1934, p. 25; April 11, 1934, p. 23; October 3, 1934, p. 23; May 15, 1935, p. 23; July 9, 1935, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, October 11, 1925, V, p. 5; November 22, 1925, V, p. 5; February 20, 1927, V, p. 3; June 4, 1933, IV, p. 4. For a series of dispatches that identify both with the Jeffersonian distrust of centralized financial power and the success dream's dictum against speculation, see The New York Times, November 25, 1927, p. 23; May 23, 1928, p. 27; January 26, 1929, p. 19; August 13, 1929, p. 27; September 25, 1930, p. 29; The Tulsa Daily World, April 12, 1932, p. 1.

of himself as a successful man to his newspaper readers and radio listeners.

On Being the Self-made Man

Will Rogers never let his national audience forget his rural origins. "I am just an old country boy," he would write, "I have been eating pretty regular and the reason I have is, I have stayed an old country boy."[1]

He revered his mother, and remarked that whatever sense of humor he possessed had come from her.[2]

He and formal education parted company well before he could be exposed to college. "In 1898 Kemper Military School was not being run in accordance with the standards that I thought befitting a growing intellect," Will told his audience in a weekly article, making the story all the better by pretending to have been only in the fourth grade. "So I not only left them flat during a dark night, but quit the entire school business for life."[3]

He reviewed his career for his readers from time to time, telling of his humble beginnings. "The limit of my 'Pay Dirt' was I think 30 dollars a month," he wrote of his first cowpunching job.[4]

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[1]The New York Times, August 31, 1924, VIII, p. 2; see also The Tulsa Daily World, January 3, 1926, V, p. 6.

[2]Quoted in Day, A Biography, pp. 18-19.

[3]The Tulsa Daily World, March 7, 1926, V, p. 3. Actually, Rogers had an education roughly equivalent at least to completion of high school. In making the comment, of course, he was not only being relevant to the success dream but also to the character of the American Adam.

[4]Ibid., July 29, 1934, IV, p. 4.

Another time, in a way appropriate to the theme of success, he might summarize his first trip around the world.

> You know I never did do much along that line for just pleasure. I was always pretty busy. Done a lot of traveling but it was always working my way. In the early days it was working my way on a boat to try to get home.[1]

In his weekly columns, he would tell of his early days in the Wild West shows, of his experiences in vaudeville, the Ziegfeld Follies, and the early movie years; as an established star of the new medium of talking movies, he would also on occasion give a behind-the-scenes look at the glamorous business of movie-making.[2] Coupled with his stories of his mingling with the powerful and the rich, such articles made Will's rise to riches and success clear.

Yet, with it all, he maintained an air of modesty, which kept him approachable. Luck, he said, had been on his side. For instance, when he wrote in 1925 of his thrill at the reception the "home folks" at Tulsa had given him on his solo tour, he actually went so far as to deny the success formula.

> I am no believer in this "hard work, perseverance, and taking advantage of your opportunities" that these magazines are so fond of writing some fellow up in. The successful don't work any harder than the failures. They get what is called in baseball the breaks.[3]

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[1]Ibid., March 24, 1935, IV, p. 6.

[2]See, for example, ibid., April 19, 1925, V, p. 5; January 10, 1932, V, p. 5; July 17, 1932, V, p. 2; July 8, 1934, IV, p. 4; February 24, 1935, IV, p. 6; June 2, 1935, IV, p. 6; June 16, 1935, IV, p. 6.

[3]Ibid., November 15, 1925, V, p. 5. Betty Rogers wrote of her husband, "He strove for perfection in whatever he tried . . . . And he was keenly alert when a new opportunity presented itself," His Wife's Story, pp. 23-24.

Even in the face of such a denial of the success formula, Will Rogers' own rise was clear and satisfying to his audience. Many members of his public so identified him with the paradigm of success that they believed him to have struggled to riches from Oklahoma rags, when in fact he had been denied almost nothing.[1]

Further, he was a success because as the American Adam he found self-fulfillment. "All there is to success is satisfaction," he wrote on one occasion.[2] His own life was full of friends, fun, travel, and earthly rewards. He may have also included in his definition of "satisfaction" the self-fulfillment that comes from the successful man's benefactions. Certainly, his message in behalf of good causes provided for his public the "good steward" dimension that completed the image of the dreamed-of self-made man.

Through the years, Will Rogers used his mass-media channels to support causes as various as year-'round Christmas charities, the March of Dimes, Helen Keller's work for the blind, and hurricane relief for Puerto Rico. His public character as benefactor, however, probably developed most clearly for his audience at those moments of acute, widespread crisis, when he often was on the scene of trouble and backed up his appeals for help with his own ready purse.

In 1927 occurred the worst Mississippi flood in history: muddy waters brushed aside buildings and washed out crops for thousands of square miles; more than a half-million Americans were left homeless.

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[1]Ibid., p. 29.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, July 29, 1928, V, p. 4.

Will Rogers interrupted his own profitable lecture tour and went East, where the "money" was, to put on a benefit. His daily wire told the nation of his plan.

> Most of the people need help, even when there is no flood, but they have always been too proud to ask for it. Mr. Ziegfeld has generously given me his wonderful new theatre in New York City, and I am going to put on my little one-man dogfight for this great cause next Sunday night. So even if you don't like cowboy gum chewers on the stage, come anyway and help out a real cause.
>
> They will get every cent that comes in, if there is nobody there but my wife--who will have to pay to get in.[1]

After the performance, in which tenor John McCormack had joined Rogers, The New York Times listed the cowboy philosopher as a donor of $1,000. In Will's next wire on the subject, he started a long series of appeals for flood relief. In his dispatch printed May 3, 1927, he utilized the "bandwagon" appeal and managed by word play to associate high society doings with donations for flood relief.

> Well, our benefit turned out fine. We got $17,950, and more checks still coming in. Want to try to thank everybody from all over the country that helped out.
>
> Now don't slack on this stuff because New Orleans is out of danger. That doesn't alter the need of those hundreds of thousands of others who will have to be supported till a crop is raised. My old friend Ring Lardner, along with a contribution, sent the following suggestion as to how to stop the flood:
>
> "Send out all the levees in New York."[2]

In another wire, he tied his appeal for flood relief to a timely occasion, on which all the self-made men in America could pay homage to women important in their lives.

> Every edition tells of more levees breaking and more people in danger.
>
> This Sunday is Mother's Day--a beautiful thought, who-

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[1]The New York Times, April 26, 1927, p. 29. [2]Ibid.

> ever started it. Now what could please your mother more, either living or dead, than to mail one dollar to your nearest Red Cross for the flood sufferers?
>
> Even if you have given, give again, just because it's in memory of your mother. Spend one more dollar on our own unfortunates. And if your mother is living write her and tell her what you have done and that you have enclosed a dollar for her.[1]

In another message, Will "visualized the idea" of distributing the millions of dollars for flood relief in order to make the officially-sought sum of $5,000,000 seem paltry.

> Five million dollars won't start to give all these people any kind of relief. There is 120 million people in America. We will say there are 10 million children that are too little and 10 million physically large enough, but conscientiously too small to give. Now I think we ought to spread this to about a quarter each (25 cents). Or if everybody cant spare a quarter why 20 cents would give them 20 million.
>
> Now, if we sorter feel they dident get hardly wet enough for a couple of thin dimes per head, why let's kinder spread our generosity a little anyway and give a dime each and that will give them ten million. That's about ten dollars a head for the ones that suffered loss. Now you will hear lots of people say, "What do they do with all this money? Here people are giving millions?"
>
> Well, take for instance ten dollars a head in case my suggestion is acted on and everyone of the 100 million will give 10 cents. That will give the sufferers $10 a head. Now I know that is a pretty lump sum to go and squander on a fellow that hasn't lost anything but his house and barn and stock and all his seed that he had planted already. It is liable to bring on an era of squandering.[2]

For weeks, Rogers kept up his appeals for voluntary flood relief, varying them in form, exhorting, praising, cajoling, and on occasion, resorting to searing irony. Addressing himself to a people capable of compassion for suffering overseas but lagging in concern for Americans, he wrote on behalf of the flood victims, "Come on, let's help them,

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[1]Ibid., May 6, 1927, p. 25.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, May 8, 1927, V, p. 5.

even if they are not Armenians. They can't help it because of their nationality."[1] He started his flood crusade at the last of April, 1927; not until the middle of June did he stop writing appeals for help, and during that time he had told his audience of his own visit to New Orleans and to the stricken areas.[2] He was the successful man because he was being the good steward with his time, talent, and money. (Of course, he was also the American Adam showing concern for others and the responsibly-free American democrat.) That Will didn't utilize the success dream's formula for philanthropy aimed at self-improvement may have mattered little to Will's public.

He did, however, make use of the audience-held value of self-help in his messages on behalf of drouth and depression relief during his famous tour of Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma in 1931. The march of hungry farmers in England, Arkansas, in order to take by force needed food had aroused the attention of the nation and of Will Rogers. "Paul Revere just woke up Concord. These birds woke up America," he wrote in a dispatch labelling hunger as the real national problem rather than balanced budgets, "income taxes or Wall Street values."[3] A couple of weeks later, Rogers was on the scene, making a flying drouth relief tour with the famous Frank Hawkes as his pilot. Will's daily wires

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[1]The New York Times, May 28, 1927, p. 19.

[2]For more dispatches on the flood, see ibid., April 27, 1927, p. 27; April 29, 1927, p. 23; May 2, 1927, p. 23; May 4, 1927, p. 27; May 14, 1927, p. 21; May 25, 1927, p. 25; May 26, 1927, p. 27; June 2, 1927, p. 27; June 3, 1927, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, June 19, 1927, Tulsa World Magazine Section, p. 4.

[3]The New York Times, January 7, 1931, p. 27.

kept the nation informed and utilized the persuasive appeal of needy people trying to help themselves.

> The city of Little Rock is fine. It's not cities; it's poor share croppers on cotton that's hurt worst.
>
> But, here is the great thing about this State where they have been hit hardest. They are going to make their Red Cross quota, and help to help themselves. If they can do it, no other State or city can possibly have an alibi.[1]

Appearing with Coolidge, with national Red Cross executives, and with Mary Pickford, Will addressed the nation coast-to-coast by radio from Arkansas. He had a good time with Prohibition, and then he came to his own plea for relief, making clear the desire of the needy to be able to help themselves.

> These people just don't want help, they would like to have employment. It is a terribly serious situation. I could make an appeal to others for need, but we have lots of men richer than ever and more people poorer. The need is tremendous, and I hope the next time we talk to each other over the radio we will be feeling better. Congress may help us, but you won't live long enough to see it.[2]

The others on that broadcast made their appeals and stopped their voices. Will Rogers went on to do more than fifty benefit performances in a little more than two weeks. It was an exhausting schedule, but in his daily telegrams that dealt with the tour, the aura of the eternal boy shone, together with the spirit of self-help that permeated the drouth philanthropy.

> These people in the drouth stricken country ain't waiting for the government to relieve 'em. Their well to do are helping their less fortunate than themselves. At a matinee today in Wichita Falls, we played to $9,100. At Fort Worth tonight, the cowman's paradise, we played to $18,000, at my breakfast

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[1] Ibid., January 23, 1931, p. 25.

[2] Text from ibid., January 23, 1931, p. 17.

> matinee yesterday morning at Abilene at 10 o'clock, got $6,500, and every cent of that is net.
>
> People in America have got the money and will give if they know the need is there, and these people know it.
>
> Say, we got a real show. Frank Hawkes is our monologist. National Broadcasting loaned me the "Revellers," the greatest singing quartette in America; Jimmy Rodgers, the Victor artist yodler, and Chester Byers, world's champion roper.
>
> But quit wiring for dates, we are all filled.[1]

He did three shows a day in three different cities, day after day. But his wires to his public showed no flagging of interest nor energy. Again, he tasted the sweetness of being the prophet accepted in his own country at Tulsa, a suburb of Claremore.

> Say, that Tulsa is a bear! We played there last night to exactly $30,000 at one single performance, making $100,000 the State of Oklahoma paid in one week.
>
> It wasn't the attraction, it was the cause. These people down in these States know that there is folks that are hungry and they are going to feed 'em as long as they are able.
>
> And, say, they got a great gag down here. They don't just open up a soup kitchen and feed a lot of professional bums. They make 'em work, and then give 'em the money to buy some food.
>
> Played my wife's town, Rogers, Ark., today and Fort Smith tonight.[2]

It "wasn't the attraction" that had drawn the crowd, the Oologah success hero wrote. His modesty was becoming. Actually, his audiences came to him because he was not only the wise American Adam and the free-and-equal American democrat, but he was also the self-made man with heart.[3] On other occasions, he reinforced the benefactor's aspect of his image.[4]

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[1]Ibid., January 31, 1931, p. 19.

[2]Ibid., February 1, 1931, p. 23.

[3]For other dispatches relevant to drouth relief see ibid., January 19, 1931, p. 19; January 21, 1931, p. 21; January 24, 1931, p. 19; January 29, 1931, p. 25; February 5, 1931, p. 21; February 16, 1931, p. 19; February 17, 1931, p. 25; February 27, 1931, p. 21.

[4]See ibid., September 21, 1928, p. 31; September 29, 1928, p. 21;

By illustrating the strategy and principles of the success dream in the lives of self-made men whom he knew personally, and by revealing himself as a country boy who rose to fame and became an openhanded benefactor, Will Rogers made himself one with the dream of success. His role as the success hero unfolded concomitantly with the others which made him an ikon of the dreams of freedom, equality, and the worth of the individual. He was good company for Americans. Part of his attractiveness may have arisen from his formal identification with the success vision.

Formal Identification with Success

The new Adam, by virtue of his experiential self-fulfillment, was a self-made man. Accordingly, the Adamic sense of newness and wise innocence conveyed by Rogers' use of catachresis, slang, and his "wiser-than-I-look" facial gesture were appropriate also to the look of the self-made man who rises to the ranks of the new rich by practicing the wise innocence of being intelligently good. The ideal democrat, through his freedom from convention, was captain of his own soul. Accordingly, as the American democrat imaging forth his freedom by unconventional platform behavior, Rogers the democrat coalesced with Rogers the self-made man. His loose, relaxed posture, together with his leaning and sitting and gum chewing, was appropriate not only to the intuitive Adam and the free democrat but also to the appearance of a man who was self-taught and self-made in the art of speaking. In other respects, Will

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December 26, 1928, p. 19; April 9, 1931, p. 18; April 10, 1931, p.27; April 16, 1931, p. 27; March 23, 1932, p. 23; October 27, 1932, p. 21; January 28, 1935, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, October 10, 1926, V, p. 4; December 23, 1934, IV, p. 6; January 6, 1935, IV, p. 6.

Rogers had more particularly the form or the "look" of the self-made man. In the first place, and perhaps most obviously, his standard form of stage dress after his vaudeville and Follies years was the business suit. So fixed was he in this habit of dress during the years of his greatest prominence that the only concession which he made to formal occasions was to wear a navy blue business suit with a bow tie.[1] He succeeded, however, in keeping some visual reminder to his public of his country origins, which were so germane not only to agrarian freedom but also to the nineteenth-century success vision. Without resorting to chewing a cud of tobacco or gnawing on a haystraw, he avoided formal identification with the "city slicker" who wore his hair Valentino-style. Will simply combed his forelock over his forehead and let his hat rest far enough back to show the hair. A former newspaper reporter, seeking to evoke Rogers for a radio broadcast in 1955, seized upon the image of Will alighting from a train, "with his slouch hat askew, his hair sticking out from beneath the battered headpiece."[2] Between the "uptown" look of the double-breasted business suit and the "out-in-the-country" look of his hair, Will Rogers had the appearance of the success hero, whether from the country or the big town.

In a more metaphorical sense, his use of language also gave

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[1]In this connection, it is interesting to remember that in his young adulthood, Will Rogers was something of a dandy in his dress. See Croy, Our Will Rogers, p. 56.

[2]Supra, chap. iii, p. 218. For pictures illustrating the effect see Love, The Will Rogers Book, pp. 80-81, 130-132. Will had not always combed his hair so. See picture of him as a young gallant, ibid., pp. 45-46.

him the form of the self-made man. Through his ungrammatical approach to language and his unadorned prose, he gave the senses not only of the intuitive Adam and the free democrat remaining "just plain folks," but also of the success hero risen to eminence without advantages of birth or cultural breeding.

Given the dais of his newspaper columns, magazine space, or radio microphone, Rogers clearly had the aura of success that accompanied "breaking into print" or being the voice on high that manifested itself in the burning bush of the radio tube. In the context of that eminence, his violations of grammatical propriety had the effect of imaging forth the rise to success by a graduate of the "hard knocks" school. At times, he made his formal identification by use of redundancy, such as his description of Hoover's own Ragged-Dickian childhood: "Mr. Hoover, he was left an orphan when he was a little boy, at a very early age, and he went to live for a while with an uncle."[1] Occasionally, he used the sentence fragment, as when he theorized that contributions for an eastern flood would come in faster than for a Mississippi flood: "Makes a lot of difference where a thing happens." From drouth-stricken Arkansas, he told his readers of his own impending inspection tour: "Going out among it tomorrow."[2] A related form was the run-on sentence. Urging a plan for self-help relief units of a city block each, he wrote, "That's one trouble with our charities, we are always saving somebody away off, when the fellow next to us aint

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[1]"President Hoover," April 20, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 8.

[2]The New York Times, May 4, 1927, p. 27; January 23, 1931, p. 25.

eating."[1] He used "ain't" so frequently that Carl Sandburg once remarked that Will almost made the word respectable. He gave a light dash of misspellings to his writing: reason might become "reson"; athletes, "athaletes"; kind of, "kinder"; most frequently, perhaps, was his misspelling of contracted verbs: "wouldent," "dident," and "couldent," were common.[2]

The heart of the sentence, the predicate, most often got Will's ungrammatical treatment. Besides misspelling, he frequently omitted auxiliary forms or used the wrong number or tense of the verb. Examples of the first and last occurred in his sentences on the success of Woolworth.

> Now he has a tower in New York where for twenty-five cents you can go and see what he done for a dime . . . . Here is a Guy that was smart enough in his youth to see that just about everybody he come in contact with just had a nickle [sic] or a dime . . . ."[3]

Perhaps Will established some kind of record when he used the wrong number of verb three times in only twenty words after commenting on Ford's success. "I attribute his success to selling motor cars exclusively and not selling stock. He don't dread inflation and he don't fear it if it comes. In fact, he don't seem to fear anything."[4]

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[1]Ibid., March 23, 1932, p. 23.

[2]American Magazine, April, 1929, p. 175; The New York Times, July 22, 1929, p. 21; a glance through the excerpts in the chapter will illustrate the frequency of the misspelled verb form. The New York Times, however, consistently edited them out. His syndicate faithfully reproduced his errors, however. See Love, The Will Rogers Book, p. 23.

[3]American Magazine, April, 1929, p. 34.

[4]The New York Times, October 3, 1934, p. 23.

Such rough-and-ready use of verbs appears to constitute most of Will's assault on grammar.[1] His niece has testified that he knew much better English usage than he practiced.[2]

In another way Will Rogers used language to identify formally with the dream of success. His paucity of adjectives and adverbs was true to the principle of simplification which H.L. Mencken found in the practice of the American language.[3] Adamic in its effect, this vigorous, plain language was also appropriate to the no-nonsense quality of the self-made man. No better indicator, perhaps, may exist than the plain prose which Will Rogers employed in moments of high drama. One such dispatch from earthquake-ravaged Nicaragua in 1931 illustrates how Will used a minimum of descriptive words to make an appeal for help.

> Well, here we are at Managua. They tell you pictures don't lie, but the ones you saw of this earthquake did, for they didn't tell that eight days after it happened there is from one to three hundred bodies still under the ruins.
>
> Sitting here in a marine tent writing this and am going to sleep here. The doctor is coming around to shoot me for typhoid and then I am going to learn to cuss and will be a real marine.
>
> Naturally what they need is money. The government, or the people, haven't got a cent. The Red Cross, combined with the relief organization here, has done great work as usual and still is doing it. They are feeding about 8,000.
>
> . . . If through the Red Cross and public donations

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[1]For other examples of Rogers' usage, see ibid., January 14, 1927, p. 21; April 26, 1927, p. 29; April 11, 1934, p. 23; July 9, 1935, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, May 8, 1927, V, p. 5; July 20, 1930, V, p. 1; June 4, 1933, IV, p. 4; American Magazine, June, 1929, p. 20; December, 1929, p. 36.

[2]Love, The Will Rogers Book, p. 137.

[3]Cited in Sanford, The Quest for Paradise, p. 263.

> from up home they could get $250,000 it would relieve the situation as to food and get some roofs to cover these people.
>
> Now, what they are afraid of is the rainy season which starts in just a few weeks. Lord help you, if you have no cover when it starts.
>
> Goodness knows, you generous folks have been asked till you are ragged, but honest if you saw it you would dig again. I have finally found somebody poorer than a Southern cotton renter farmer . . . .
>
> If you saw, as I did this morning, 2,500 mothers with babies in their arms go by and get their ration of milk you would say there was some poor devil that needed it worse than you do.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Send your donations to Managua, Nicaragua, to the American Red Cross, in care of American Minister Hanna. It's worth all that just to get our boys back home. Two were saved today by a parachute jump while patrolling a terrible country.
>
> Let's help put 'em on their feet, call it a day and all go home and tend to our own business.[1]

Rogers used the same plain prose when describing the noblesse oblige practiced by Lady Astor with wounded men in World War I, and when--in the role of benefactor--picturing the devastation of the Mississippi flood or asking for help for families of Oklahoma coal miners killed in a mine disaster.[2]

Thus, through the formal devices of his appearance, his violation of grammar rules, and his unadorned prose, Will Rogers

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[1]The New York Times, April 9, 1931, p. 18. Nicaragua later honored Will by issuing a commemorative Will Rogers stamp. One wonders how many Americans have recently been so recognized by Latin American governments.

[2]"Mother's Day," May 11, 1930, Radio Talks, pp. 22-24; The Tulsa Daily World, May 8, 1927, V, p. 5; December 20, 1929, p. 1. For other examples, see ibid., March 7, 1926, V, p. 3; September 18, 1932, IV, p. 6. Rogers could become somewhat purple, as when he wrote in an open letter to Mrs. Coolidge, "Your husband's head rests today not alone on his Vermont soil but pillowed on the sincere tributes of the millions he served." (The New York Times, January 9, 1933, p. 21.) My impression is that this happened considerably fewer times then did the plain prose in dramatic situations.

identified with the success vision. With his material identification reinforced thus, Will Rogers stood forth as a success hero. During the days of the locust, he once wrote of the tarnishing of the dream of success.

> By the way, this depression and the fall of the big man has kinder knocked the props out of all those success storys we used to get fed up on. This is just an age of being a good Democrat and holding an office. Thats all there is to success now.[1]

True as the words many have been, Will Rogers remained as an embodiment of the best of the success dream in a time when it had too often become a nightmare. He was good company for Americans in a time when they needed it. To his public, he also stood for progress.

Material and Formal Identification with the Dream of Progress

Like Emerson, Will Rogers at times expressed doubt about whether mankind's changes were really advances. The cowboy philosopher revealed his doubts, as noted earlier, when he wrote in the tradition of Rousseau: "Civilization hasent done much but make you wash your teeth, and in those days eating and gnawing on bones and meat made tooth paste unnecessary."[2] On other occasions, the doubt of progress implied in the dream of man's natural goodness came out directly, as when Will wrote, while answering Will Durant's inquiries in an open letter, "Any man that thinks Civilization has advanced is an egotist."[3] In 1926, he wondered whether the "progress" brought by the automobile

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, January 21, 1934, IV, p. 4.

[2]Supra, p. 250.

[3]The Tulsa Daily World, July 5, 1931, IV, p. 9.

was worth the many thousands of deaths it caused each year.[1] A few years later, in the context of a deepening economic crisis, he expressed doubt that technological change was progress. "Well, we been twenty years honoring and celebrating the inventor who could save a dollar by knocking somebody out of work, now we are paying for it."[2] On other occasions, too, he seemed to wonder whether the American interest in progress was dream or delusion.[3]

Yet, like Emerson, Rogers also identified with the ideal of progress. In his final statement on the matter, after remarking that society had changed from destroying its cripples to rehabilitating them, he wrote that "even though we don't think so sometimes, civilization has advanced."[4]

Not only did he thus merge himself with the dream of progress, but he also did so in conjunction with comments on other facets of the great dream. On one occasion, for example, when he extolled the goodness of life as the natural man, he wrote, "Happiness and contentment is progress. In fact, that's all progress is."[5] Several avenues existed for arriving at that happiness and contentment. When Rogers

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[1]Ibid., April 4, 1926, V, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., September 6, 1931, V, p. 5.

[3]Ibid., April 10, 1927, V, p. 5; December 14, 1930, IV, p. 15; and "Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to Senator Borah," Saturday Evening Post, March 5, 1932, p. 88. Since the three series of "letters" carried the same title for each article in a given series, dates of articles assume increased importance in documentation.

[4]The New York Times, April 19, 1933, p. 19.

[5]The Tulsa Daily World, April 10, 1927, V, p. 5.

stated a belief that all Americans, of whatever "breed or color" had a right to belong the "club" set up by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, he was not only addressing himself to the dream of freedom and equality, but he was also identifying with the ideal of progress toward a more perfect union. The same was true for his idea that government should serve the good of all, rather than the interests of any privileged group.[1] Progress also was interfused with the doctrine of the rise from rags to riches of the self-made man, as when Rogers told of the successes of figures like Lipton and Ford. Moreover, the dream of change for the better was tied to the success dictum that the steward of wealth should practice discerning philanthropy. "The Rockefeller foundation, for the health and betterment of people of all parts of the world, spent $22,000,000 last year, . . ." Rogers wrote in 1929.[2] Thus, at times when he addressed himself to other aspects of the great god-of-many-faces, Will Rogers concomitantly spoke to features of the dream of progress.[3]

Further, he frequently approved of the advances in living produced by the spiralling technology of the twentieth century. Additionally, during his years of ascendancy, he followed a progress-strategy when he "boosted" all kinds of "improvements," and when he quested for the better life just over the horizon, generally with a great deal of buoyancy and optimism. All, this, combined with his

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[1]Supra, pp. 290-92.

[2]Supra, pp. 354-62.

[3]See, also, for example, Saturday Evening Post, August 21, 1926, p. 11, and The New York Times, December 27, 1932, p. 15.

association with certain progress heroes, most likely overshadowed any of his stated doubts about the reality of progress. When as the American Adam he turned his back upon much of the past, he correspondingly looked to the future and became an American Prometheus, forward-looker, bringer of fire, and teacher of useful arts. In such a role, he seemed relevant to the grand dream of paradise to be regained.

Spiralling Technology and Progress

The former cowboy, who had become a flying "unofficial President," sometimes appeared to equate material with moral progress. The material dimension of "bigger" could carry with it the moral dimension of "better." At times, Rogers seemed to say just that. In 1934, when the chasms of the American earthquake still yawned, he wrote, "We are so big, and move along with such momentium [sic], that we are able to live through everything. As cockeyed as we are, we are better than all the rest put together."[1]

The chief way, however, in which Will related material and moral progress was his wholehearted approval of certain aspects of the spiralling American technology. In his notion that bigger mechanical and technical improvements produced a better way of life, he identified with the prime dogma of the dream of progress in America. He made the statement explicitly when he wrote, for example. "What a godsend the plane and radio is to out-of-the-way places!"[2] In more detail, he

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, June 17, 1934, IV, p. 4.

[2]The New York Times, December 27, 1932, p. 15.

praised modern, rapid systems of communication and refinements--both real and possible--in aircraft.

To Will Rogers--the busy self-made man, the cowboy free in space, and the American Adam seeking a breadth of direct experience--modern systems of instantaneous communication were welcome miracles. For instance, on one occasion, he shared with his readers the thrill of calling his family in Beverly Hills, all the way from London.

> Got a real kick today. Picked up a telephone at 3 o'clock this afternoon and woke up the family at 7 o'clock in the morning in Beverly Hills, Cal. And got the call through in exactly eight minutes. No prearrangements at all. Clear as life.[1]

During a radio broadcast, he called the wireless "the greatest invention of our lifetime."[2] In a daily telegram, he elaborated somewhat.

> I imagine it's been said before, and I don't claim this as an entirely new observation, but radio is a great thing. I believe it's our greatest invention, far greater than the automobile, for it don't kill anybody. It don't cost us millions for roads. When we are too lazy, or too old to do anything else, we can listen in.[3]

The combination of rapid communication and speedy transit could call forth Rogers' admiration, too. A telegram containing such praise originated aboard an international airliner; Rogers felt that the wonder of his subject really called for the dramatizing talents of another popular commentator.

> Brisbane ought to be here now and write about progress in a regular passenger plane on a regular daily run with big three-motored Fords with American pilots.

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[1] Ibid., January 21, 1930, p. 27.

[2] "How Do You Want Your Radio?" July 8, 1934, N.B.C.; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[3] The New York Times, February 24, 1930, p. 23.

. . . . . .

> I hand this to the radio operator on board. He radios to the nearest telegraph office. They send it to New York and the whole thing will be done before we land in the little country of San Salvador, where we will spend the night.[1]

The spark that jumped with or without wires for thousands of miles in a flicker of time was truly a Promethean marvel, making life fuller and better. Will Rogers made himself one with the material progress promised by the technological revolution.

Technological refinements in aviation attracted his praise as well as did rapid communication. "Aviation is the greatest advancement in our times, . . ." he wrote only a little more than a year before his death.[2] For years, the real and the possible developments in aircraft had appealed to the flying cowboy. In 1927, for example, before Lindbergh's flight, an aircraft stayed aloft for over two days, proving the dependability of aero machinery. Will's hat went sailing into the air in praise.

> Hurrah for our aviators that broke the continuous flight record. Fifty-one hours! That breaks the Arizona Senator's continuous air record in the last Senate filibuster. That was not [sic] contribution to science like this was. Theirs was just a tribute to poor Senate rules.[3]

Later in the same year, Will shared with his audience one of the conversations he had carried on with Henry Ford during a trip to Detroit to get a peek at the new Ford car. Rogers reported that from Ford, a self-made man who was also an American Prometheus, came startling glimpses

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[1]Ibid., April 8, 1931, p. 25.

[2]Ibid., June 29, 1934, p. 21.

[3]Ibid., April 15, 1927, p. 23.

into the future of air travel, as compared with commercial flying at the time.

> We talked airplanes. He is all wrapped up in their progress . . . . He thinks the future will see a plane that will have 10 or 20 engines and carry 100 people strong enough to buck all the winds and storms. I went back to Chicago the next day in one of his three-motored ships. Thirteen of us made the trip.[1]

Thus, Rogers' comments on the advancement of aviation were generally of two types: he praised technological developments which at first glance may have seemed only curiosities (as in the case of the endurance fliers) and he reported actual or future improvements in commercial aviation (as in the storm-safe plane in Ford's future).

Will was quick to point out the possible future applications of scientific breakthroughs in aviation. Appearing to be the messenger from the fire-bringers, for example, he commented to his national audience on the implications of an announced air development.

> Next to the discovery of a cancer cure there couldn't possibly be anything of any more value than the claim in the papers today that Mr. John Hays Hammond Jr, had discovered television that would penetrate fog, and that an aeroplane pilot could look at his television and see exactly what was through the fog.
>
> If they got that, why that's all they been needing--finding a way to elmininate fog. The next big discovery is to find a way to get prohibition out of politics.[2]

With the rest of the country, Will naturally joined in the jubilation over Lindbergh's triumph; later when the nation seemed less aware of the implications of the Post-Gatty flight around the world in only eight days, the Sage of Claremore gave the journey's significance in

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, December 11, 1927, I, p. 12.

[2]The New York Times, May 29, 1930, p. 25.

a homely simile. "No news today as big as this Post and Gatty that are making this world of ours look like the size of a watermelon," he told millions of Americans over the breakfast table.[1] A few years later, from California, Rogers informed the nation of the world's first attempt to utilize the thin atmosphere of the stratosphere for speedier air travel.

> Wiley Post is leaving here any morning now on the most hazardous flight yet, the most beneficial to aviation of any since Lindbergh's. He is pioneering a new world, flying a long course at 35,000 feet. Never attempted before. Eight hours on oxygen is new. He drops his landing gear on leaving. He has to come in on (pardon the expression, but it's all he has to land on) his "belly." His propeller spins lower down than the bottom of the plane. He has to stop it and get it exactly crossways before landing or it will hit first and turn him a somersault.
>
> It's a real scientific flight. If it works everybody will fly up there. It's an old-style ship, five years old. He has flown it around the world twice.
>
> So a prayer, or at least a good wish, for Wiley.[2]

In such comments, the man from Cologah made clear the implications of technical change and merged himself with the vision of progress.

When he reported changes toward better air travel, he also made technical refinement synonymous with progress. In one of his syndicated messages, he not only managed to reveal his own important doings, but he also told his national audience of progress in passenger-carrying aviation.

> Now this aviation is getting somewhere. I am traveling east to do a broadcast, on a Democratic President on President's Day evening. I am on one of the new Boeing ships, two-motored (not three), ten-passenger. And it really has speed for a big ship, cruises 180.

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[1] Ibid., June 30, 1931, p. 27.

[2] Ibid., February 16, 1935, p. 15.

> You see, all our advancement in speed has been made with small single-motored ships. But now they are all out to cut down the flying time at least a third.[1]

Another time, he reported the opinion of Frank Hawkes, the great speed flier, on future improvement of commercial travel. As was a fairly common practice with him, Will quoted Hawkes in the first person.

> You can't get any worse hurt flying at two or three hundred miles an hour than you can flying at ninety, so what we have to do is develop planes that will fly at what we now call a tremendous rate of speed. I see the day coming in the not far distant [sic] when you will leave New York at noon, fly across the country at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, and reach Los Angeles at noon. That sounds crazy, but it's not; the sun travels at the rate of one thousand miles an hour; well, if the plane travels that fast you are keeping up with the sun, so you leave at noon and arrive at noon.[2]

Even when the improvement in flying was as down-to-earth as providing planes with reclining seats for sleeping, the eternal boy from Indian Territory saw progress. "There is your success of passenger aviation. Fix it so everybody can lay down and have a good sleep. The air is much better at night."[3] During the years of his greatest popularity, Will Rogers often identified himself with progress in a direct material way by picturing technological refinements as change for the better.[4] Their material improvement was moral advancement: the bigger and the faster, the better.

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[1]Ibid., April 29, 1933, p. 15. The dispatch is also relevant to Will's own status as a success hero.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, March 1, 1931, IV, p. 5.

[3]The New York Times, October 23, 1933, p. 17.

[4]For other comments relevant to progress by spiralling technology, see The New York Times, November 16, 1927, p. 27; December 30, 1927, p. 21; January 8, 1929, p. 33; October 2, 1930, p. 27; March 9, 1935, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, April 19, 1931, I, p. 4.

On the Action Corollaries of Progress

When he thus wrote of the progressive achievements in communication and transportation, Will Rogers seemed to be the messenger from the priests of progress. When he identified with the dream of betterment by performing its action corollaries, he seemed more Promethean, himself. Like the demigod of foresight, he looked to the future with optimism. He "boosted" improvements of many sorts; in such a role he was the teacher of useful arts. Finally, he quested for the good life. In all these ways he identified in an indirect material way with the dream of progress, and through it, with the dream of paradise to be regained.

Showing optimism for the future.--"If every history or books on old things was thrown in the river," Will Rogers had once begun as the past-rejecting American Adam, "and, everybody had nothing to do but study the future, we would be about 200 years ahead of what we are now."[1] His conclusion of the sentence cast him in the role of the forward-looking American Prometheus. Will Rogers did look forward more than backward; his comments on future technological developments have illustrated that stance. Moreover, he seemed to agree with the progress dreamer's dedication to the future. "What spoiled China," he remarked in a "letter" to Senator Borah (and to the American people), "was somebody saving their history." Starting from this Adamic premise, the forward-looking Will explained the difference between East and West by telling how the Chinese viewed the world.

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[1]Supra, p. 240.

> They are standing still, looking backwards And if that is what we do, we will be more lost than he is, for he can see something back there; his whole life has been spent looking over his shoulder. But we can't see nothing but our shadow when we look back. That's the biggest difference between the two races, Oriental and Occidental. We are a foresight people, and they are a hindsight people.[1]

So Will Rogers looked to the future, too, often optimistically. The tone was clear, for instance, in a prediction about Lindbergh.

> Round June 22, 1950, here is what will be headlined in the Planet Mars morning papers:
>
> "A young man from a place called Earth flew in here yesterday. He had been in the air continuously for two months. He had some letters of introduction from the Chamber of Commerce in a place called Englewood, New Jersey. He asked to have his ship refueled as he is taking off for Venus in the morning."[2]

The cost of such an effort in space either did not occur to him, or he did not worry about it. In either case, for Rogers, no cloud marred the approaching sunrise of the space age.

Given everything else that lent trustworthiness to his character as national commentator, Will's expressions of optimism had the sound of a welcome voice in the long night that followed the American earthquake. With the breaches of that event still open wide at the start of 1934, the cowboy philosopher forecast that when economists began writing history, they would record 1933 as the year of the "big switch" from worse to better. "So, so long '33!" Will pecked out optimistically. "Panics come every twenty years, so we will be seeing you in '53."[3]

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[1]"Letters of a Self-Made Diplomat to Senator Borah," Saturday Evening Post, April 2, 1932, pp. 21, 52.

[2]The New York Times, June 24, 1930, p. 27. Naturally, all that Will said as the past-rejecting American Adam was also appropriate to the forward-looking American Prometheus.

[3]Ibid., January 1, 1934, p. 25.

Later, he reported the encouraging results of his own private poll.

> From what I can gather from everyone I talk with, things are definitely picking up. If they just get more folks to working which they are doing now too, there is no way of stopping this Country. Just quit listening to the politicians. They have to make a noise the nearer it comes to next year . . . . The Constitution will remain as is. The Russians are not going to take us. Everywhere I have been on this trip there is a fine feeling. Let folks quit argueing [sic] over who did it, or dident do it. Just join in it.[1]

When he visited San Francisco for the last time, Will reported a happy "orgy" of bridge building as a sign of better times. San Franciscans didn't dare leave a bucket or two of water out overnight, Rogers happily exaggerated, or else they would find a bridge over it the next morning.[2] The Sage of Claremore did not sound the note of optimism so often that it grew thin; but during the time of his national prominence, he appeared as the forward-looking American Prometheus.[3]

"Boosting" improvements.--Almost coalescent in the progress dream with the strategy of hopefully looking to the future was the action corollary of "boosting" improvements in order to assist the future to fruition. On at least one occasion, Will even gave boosting a boost, in the form of an object lesson about a place that had progressed from town to city.

> It took just about all the town could raise, but every business man dug up all he could. They loaded the Baggage

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, July 14, 1935, IV, p. 4.

[2]The New York Times, August 6, 1935, p. 19.

[3]For other relevant Rogers comments, see ibid., June 2, 1930, p. 21; January 25, 1935, p. 19; The Tulsa Daily World, February 22, 1925, V, p. 4; November 4, 1928, V, p. 4; April 21, 1935, IV, p. 6; also the C.B.S. broadcast of June 9, 1935, text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

> car with things their county would raise. The reason I remember this case so well was because I had the good fortune to be invited to go along, and it was one of the first cases of me and my little Rope making a Public appearance.
>
> Well, it was a joke--a hundred men getting off a train, marching with a Band, a boosting a place nobody had ever heard of. But business men in the places we paraded commenced to realize that there must be something in our Town or we couldn't do all this.
>
> Now, if you are anxious to know whatever became of this Tank town, it's Tulsa, Oklahoma, which would have been a real town, even if its people weren't greasy rich with Oil, for it is founded on the spirit of its people.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It's the Towns, big and small, that don't do or try to do anything at all that are funny to me.[1]

Approving as he thus seemingly did of helping the future come true, Will Rogers boosted for bigger and better cities, more populous states, and for booming growth in aviation.

His beloved Tulsa, for instance, received a boost that was Adamic in its rejection of the past and Promethean in its love of the new. In 1932, from faraway China, the wandering Will commented on Peking.

> But this is a great old Town, if you like old Towns. Personally, I like new Towns. Tulsa, twenty years ago, was my idea of a real City. 'Course, it's aged now, kinder like Peking. But when she was new and had no Tradition, she was a hummer.[2]

This was a boost with a difference: it had the aura of the wisely-innocent American Adam about it, so that superlatives may have been superfluous. Will's "plugs" for American cities often succeeded without chamber-of-commerce jargon. One midwestern city, for instance, probably did not mind in the least the irreverent boost such as the one

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[1]The New York Times, July 22, 1923, VII, p. 2.

[2]Saturday Evening Post, April 2, 1932, p. 82.

Rogers typed out while on his last coast-to-coast solo tour.

> This town of Akron is responsible for the most aggravating invention that ever was let loose on modern civilization. It's spoiled more perfect days than rain and bad weather. There is 110,000 people in some part of the world every minute of every day just fixing punctures in Akron tires, part of 'em rubber.[1]

Or when Will advertised the gifts of South Bend to America's better way of life, he managed to invoke the image of the American frontier as well.

> I always wanted to see this town. I was born in a Studebaker wagon, awakened every morning by a Big Ben clock, grew up walking between the handles of an Oliver chilled plow, wore home made shirts made by Singer sewing machines and read all my life of Notre Dame, whose scholastic standing is one touchdown and a field goal higher than any other modern educational hindrance.[2]

Only a few months later, after an ambitious, up-and-coming community had utilized the promotional talents of one of its residents by making him Mayor, that dignitary addressed his national constituency in behalf of Beverly Hills. "Reviewed my Police and Fire Department this morning," Will advertised. "Boy, we got a town! We are putting an immigration quota on millionaires now, they [sic] getting too thick."[3] And when another enterprising city conferred an honor on the man from Oologah, it received a handsome boost replete with the fragrance of progress.

> I sure used to envy General Grant and Jesse James when they had smokeless cigars named after 'em, but here I am sitting in the brand new, most up-to-date hotel in the South-

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[1]The New York Times, March 30, 1928, p. 27.

[2]Ibid., November 30, 1926, p. 31. Also present is Will's persona as the sturdy yeoman from the garden of the West--a figure long-approved by Americans. I recall no account of his actually having walked behind a plow.

[3]Ibid., March 7, 1927, p. 21.

> west, the Will Rogers Hotel in Claremore. It's six stories high. That's higher than any hotel in London, and it's got more baths in one room than Buckingham Palace, where the King lives, has all put together. Got more elevators than the Rice Hotel in Houston had during the Democratic convention, and these run cracked ice and White Rock in each room. That's standard equipment. Here is the town that you take those wonderful baths that cure of you of everything but being a Democrat.
>
> I know now how proud Christopher Columbus must have felt when he heard they had named Columbus, Ohio, after him.[1]

By mixing in the character of the wise innocent, by avoiding colorless chamber-of-commerce superlatives, by sometimes seeming irreverent, by managing to keep his honors without seeming pompous, Will Rogers offered boosts to up-and-coming cities. Occasionally, he plugged a place because it kept something of the pristine past, as with that symbol of American exuberance and expansionism, Virginia City, or with the non-standardized, highly-individualistic San Antonio. More often, however, he praised, in his own individual way, such places as paper-producing Camden, Arkansas; cereal-processing Battle Creek, Michigan; health-giving Prescott, Arizona; and Chicago, with its World's Fair of progress.[2] He was boosting Americans toward a bigger and better life for all.

That dream was clear, also, in the boosts which Rogers gave to states. Over the years, he ranged from West to East telling his national audience of the roads to paradise. In a dispatch from California, for

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[1] Ibid., February 17, 1930, p. 23.

[2] Ibid., March 17, 1927, p. 25; November 5, 1931, p. 25; February 29, 1928, p. 27; April 4, 1928, p. 31; July 5, 1933, p. 21; May 29, 1933, p. 15. For other examples, see ibid., August 12, 1927, p. 19; May 13, 1931, p. 27; May 11, 1933, p. 19; April 28, 1934, p. 17; May 1, 1934, p. 23; April 3, 1935, p. 25.

example, the boost took the form of allusion to an old paradise and reference to a new one by means of man's ingenuity.

> We have a few unique spots in our country, and this Imperial Valley is one of them. It's below the sea level and the most fertile spot outside the Valley of the Nile, and that's only good for burial purposes. But this raises real alfalfa and cotton and grape fruit. No time to monkey with old King Tut here.[1]

For Texas, the American Prometheus acted much like a native. Everything in "Big T" was bigger and better.

> Texas is having a big centennial next year and while you are sorter planning your vacation ahead, you want to come to our biggest State.
>
> You ought to read a list of what this State produces, and her modern up-to-date cities, and size and distances.
>
> Plenty of ranches here as big as Germany or France. Horse pastures as big as England. Your Belgiums or Switzerlands would get lost in some farmer's cotton patch in Texas. And oil! They are the only State that can serve you oil hot or cold.
>
> Sam Houston, the most colorful man in all American history, made this his area.
>
> Yes, sir, brother, this is a State.[2]

In this case, Will had used rather straightforward superlatives in his boosting of a state or region. On some other occasions, if he used extravagant praise for a state, it was more with the Crockett-like tone of the old rip-roaring frontiersman. For his native state, for example, he wrote, "If Oklahoma does in the next twenty-two years what we have in the last, why New York will be our parking space, Chicago our arsenal, New Orleans our amusement centre and Los Angeles segregated for Elk and Shrine conventions."[3] Such boosting from a native son was full of the

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[1] Ibid., November 26, 1929, p. 31. The wire is redolent with Adamic rejection of the past, also.

[2] Ibid., January 24, 1935, p. 21.

[3] Ibid., September 19, 1929, p. 33.

progress dreamer's optimism for the future. The man from Oklahoma could well have been an adopted son of nearly all the states.[1] Their natives could be expected to feel warmly toward one who praised their industries, their energy, and their geography. In addition to audience gratification in those localities, even Americans outside those environs may have approved of Will Rogers' boosting, simply because he was performing an action corollary of the dream of progress.

Thus, by spreading the news of cities and states which were progressing, Will Rogers projected the impression of the teacher of useful arts. That aspect of his public character was clearest, perhaps, in his continual efforts to further the cause of aviation. A persuasive teacher is the doer. Will Rogers taught the values of aviation by flying and then sharing his experiences with his readers. One of his lessons came to the readers of his weekly syndicate in the days when the flying cowboy was doing one-night stands all over the country.

> Well, all I know is just what I read in the papers and what I see as I soar over these old United States.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We laugh our heads off at some old joke about seeing people living down in Arkansas that never rode on a train in their lives. Why havent they been on one? It's because they havent seen them. But here is the whole of America bigger Rubes than they are, for all of you have seen planes, see 'em every day and read every day of the wonderful trips and feats they do but the furtherest they can get you off the ground is on some summer roof garden, and you won't venture up there till the orchestra is playing . . . .

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[1]For other examples of advertising states, see ibid., January 19, 1927, p. 25; February 23, 1927, p. 25; January 23, 1928, p. 23; March 5, 1928, p. 25; August 25, 1932, p. 21; September 10, 1932, p. 17; October 7, 1932, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, March 13, 1927, V, p. 5; "Florida Versus California," Saturday Evening Post, May 29, 1926, pp. 10-11, 70, 72.

> A couple of weeks ago I had to cover pretty much the whole State of Montana and it's some State, third in size. I found a fine flyer with his own plane and just kept him with me all week and we flew everywhere. Would stay all night in the town I had just played, have a nice breakfast and then we could leave just whenever we wanted to . . . . Fly over the beautiful mountain tops, and in two or three hours catch up with the train that had left the night before . . . . You know how the Country yokels rush to go on top of Woolworths Tower in New York to get the view. Well, every minute you are in a plane you are getting just that kind of view only better for you are not standing looking at the same thing all the time.[1]

Will Rogers presented himself as the living example of one who had benefited from the speed, safety, and pleasures of flying. Possibly the clearest transmission of this message occurred in the autumn of 1927, when the flying cowboy set a record of only four days' time, coast-to-coast, in regularly-scheduled mail planes, while on a business trip to New York City. His daily telegrams kept his readers informed of his progress. From Salt Lake City came the first wire, partly composed at least, during the flight, itself.

> While you are talking about progressing aviation, don't overlook this company, the Western Air Express.
>
> One year and a half ago they started with only twenty pounds of mail. Today, in here packed around me, is 550 pounds. We are coming into Salt Lake. Only been six hours from Los Angeles.
>
> They have flown 650,000 miles, with only four forced landings and no one hurt.
>
> Brigham Young might have seen more women than I have, but I have seen more of Utah today than he ever saw. Who said this country was all settled up? Tonight we will see how it feels to fly at night.[2]

The next day's squib emphasized the speed with which he was spanning the continent. The dateline was Lewistown, Pennsylvania. "Breakfast

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, April 17, 1927, V, p. 5.

[2]The New York Times, October 19, 1927, p. 29.

at home in Beverly yesterday (Tuesday) and dinner in New York tonight (Wednesday). Only one bad feature on whole trip. Got lost in pistol smoke over Chicago."[1] The next telegram from Will to his public originated from Cleveland, on the way home. Besides stressing the efficiency with which he was travelling, he ended with a "pitch" at America's business sense. "So, if your time is worth anything, travel by air," wrote the first air commuter. "If not, you might just as well walk."[2] Besides being fast, safe, and economical, air travel offered thrills to its users. The last telegram on the trip underlined the joys of flying for all those Americans who had journeyed vicariously with Will. "Had the greatest kick flying this morning I ever had," the flying cowboy reported. "All the way across Wyoming we chased wolves and antelopes."[3] A few months later, Rogers told his story through the mass medium of a national magazine, rehearsing again the theme of his own experience with the speed, safety, and economy of riding the mail planes. His closing paragraphs of the two-article series made clear his own identification with air travel as progress. On the final leg of the trip, so went the story, Rogers and his pilot had overtaken a train that had departed much sooner from the East than had Rogers.

> The train was just at that time passing an old wagon that some old mover was going from one part of the Country to another in. It was covered.
>
> Now I got pretty good hearing when the wind is blowing right. There was a bunch of fellows sitting out on the Observation, fanning themselves and wiping the cinders to keep cool while they were crossing the desert. As they passed the old fellow in a Wagon, they all looked at him. One spoke. But they

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[1] Ibid., October 20, 1927, p. 31. [2] Ibid., October 21, 1927, p. 25.

[3] Ibid., October 22, 1927, p. 19.

all had the same thought, even if he hadent spoke it for them:

"Well, that's a pretty tough way to travel. Just think how the old-timers had to get from one place to another, and to think that poor devil is doing it still."

"Well, it's his own fault. Why don't he sell that old outfit and get on a train? It's his own fault."

"Well, some people just don't take to progress even when it's brought right to em," said another of the group. "Just think, that fellow mebbe left Salt Lake before we left New York City, and this is all the further he is."

Another spoke up: "Well, the only way you can account for it is that he just don't know any better. It's people like him that can't see things that's holding this country out here back. They need some Eastern Pep and life and Go-getem, and wake-up-and-move-around spirit out here."[1]

Will Rogers made his appeal for progress effective not only by using a symbolic narrative and casting the characters in the dramatic irony resulting from their own ignorance, but also by speaking from first-hand experience as a doer of the dream of progress. During the years of his greatest prominence, he continued his teaching in behalf of air travel so that he was dubbed "Aviation's Patron Saint."[2] By helping the future come true through boosting bigger and better cities, more populous states, and growing aviation, Will identified with the dream of progress. He was an American Prometheus, teaching the useful arts.

Knowing progress heroes.--At times, when Rogers told of his flying experiences, he associated himself with the progress vision in still another way. In 1930, for example, he told his national radio

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[1]"Flying and Eating My Way from Coast-to-Coast," Saturday Evening Post, January 28, 1928, pp. 38, 40.

[2]Scientific American, October, 1929, p. 283. For other relevant examples, see The New York Times, May 2, 1927, p. 23; March 22, 1928, p. 27; April 10, 1928, p. 31; May 2, 1928, p. 27; August 7, 1928, p. 23; October 31, 1929, p. 27; June 7, 1930, p. 17; July 17, 1933, p. 15; October 22, 1934, p. 17; The Tulsa Daily World, June 5, 1927, Tulsa World Magazine Section, p. 6; April 28, 1935, IV, p. 6.

audience of a flight with Lindbergh.

> First time I rode with him was coming out of Long Beach. We was flying up to Los Angeles in a big, three-motored Ford plane and was going to land in a field near Englewood, and there wasn't no sock blowing to show which way the wind was blowing. I was sitting in the seat by him, and I said, "Colonel, how can you tell how to land when you can't tell what way the wind is blowing?"
>
> He said, "Didn't you see the way those clothes was blowing on that line back there a while ago?" Didn't I see the way some washing was blowing down around Hoya somewhere? I didn't even notice to see what kind of clothes was on the line at all. So I thought I would pull one of my Smart Alec remarks, so I said, "Well, what would you do if it wasn't Monday?"
>
> And he said--to show you this guy has a good sense of humor, he came right back at me and he said, "I wouldn't fly over such a dirty place."[1]

This was an "inside-story" on a pioneer of the air age. Will was on good terms with him. As he had done in the case of the success dream, the Sage of Claremore identified with another facet of the great American dream by associating himself with heroes of the dream of progress. When Edison, the most highly-regarded of all Promethean heroes, re-enacted a drama symbolic of the American dream, Will Rogers was present to report it.

> Got there on Monday morning the day of the big doings. Was first taken to the Hotel and then the Guests were sent to Dearborn. Mr. Hoover came in by train from Washington and he and his party were Transferred to an old time wood burner Engine train on the Port Huron railroad. It was the same one Mr. Edison used to work on. He was what was called a News Butch, that is he sold everything, papers, candy and all that.
>
> Well, he even as a young boy was of an inventive mind. He used to keep his junk in the baggage car, and along with it a lot of chemicals and tools that he would experiment with. Well one of the first things he invented was setting a train on fire from the baggage car while it was in motion . . . .
>
> Well Sir, do you know this man Ford had reproduced that whole thing, the train, the little depot where he was fired. They put on everything but the fire and would have done that

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[1]"Charles Lindbergh," April 13, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 7.

> if Mr. Edison had just had some matches. Mr. Hoover and Party were on the train. Mr. Edison was in his old role of Candy Butch. He went through the cars crying his wares.[1]

Thus, not only was the man from Oologah a progress hero, but he rubbed elbows with others on the slopes of the American Olympus.[2]

Questing.--The crowning mode of Will Rogers' indirect material identification with progress was his questing, which he shared with his audience via the mass media at his disposal. In a sense, he came full circle from Prometheus to Adam: the man of "experience" seeking self-fulfillment by saturating himself with living was also on a quest. Therefore, when Rogers, as the American Adam, told his readers of the paradise within the borders of all "those old states," he was writing not only about what the hero of individualism would do, but also about what a demigod of progress would do.

By the time, however, that Will stood against the American sky, the westering spirit of a restless people had come up against the Pacific Ocean and the reality which denied the dream of the garden and its safety-valve theory. Perhaps one reason for Americans' fascination with Rogers was his ability to overleap the boundaries of the old dream and go forth to quest for God's country all over the world. Periodically he launched out on odysseys to Latin America, to the orient, or on around the world. "Just flew over and looked right down in crater of Popocaterpillar," he might write from Mexico. "It's easier to fly over

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, November 3, 1929, V, p. 1.

[2]For other examples, see The New York Times, December 17, 1927, p. 21; October 21, 1929, p. 29; October 22, 1929, p. 31; The Tulsa Daily World, July 26, 1931, IV, p. 7; January 31, 1932, V, p. 4.

than it is to pronounce."[1] Peering into a vent-pipe for the earth's molten interior or flying over tropical paradise, the flying cowboy was making the world his pasture as he quested.

> You have read of the San Blas Indians (not Sam Dash, but San Blas). Well, all morning we flew low over their beautiful coral island. You can leave and visit them but you must get away before night. The old chief won't let you stop after dark. Due to his foresight they are the only 100 per cent pure Indians.
>
> The coast to Columbia is beautiful. I am nearing Venezuela. Will stop for the night at Maracaibo . . . .[2]

Faraway places and exotic-sounding names constituted one kind of paradise.

On a trip so far west that he would meet the East, Will might call the Hawaiian Islands "the Garden of Eden" and tell of his own idea of a cowman's paradise.

> This is written out here on the world's famous Parker Ranch. There are marvelous cattle ranches on these islands, and these native cowboys are plenty salty with those rawhide riatas. There are 30,000 head of high-grade Herefords on this Parker Ranch of over half a million acres. They have the best horses I ever saw on any ranch anywhere, and over six hundred here just in the saddle-horse string.[3]

The same quest would carry him to the orient, through Japan, Korea, and across the breadth of Manchuria on the Chinese Eastern Railway. In Siberia, he found an Eden which deserved his descriptive attention. "This is the heart of Eastern Siberia. All a beautiful prairie, not a tree, just grass up to your stirrups."[4] On an earlier odyssey, he had

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[1]The New York Times, December 14, 1927, p. 31.

[2]Ibid., April 17, 1931, p. 25.

[3]Ibid., July 28, 1934, p. 15; July 30, 1934, p. 15.

[4]Ibid., August 24, 1934, p. 17.

described the Edenic qualities of western Russia.

> It's a beautiful country to look at. And grass? Oh, Boy, I just thought if some of my old ranchmen could see all that big fine grass going to waste--millions of acres and very little stock on it, with plenty of water.[1]

On to Finland, Sweden, and then to Norway, where he explored fjords for hours in a small seaplane and chased herds of reindeer, Rogers was the embodiment of the questing hero.

And on one occasion, of which Will told his audience more than once, the Adamic Prometheus came full circle to the general area of the original "home." In the short, dark days of early January, 1932, Americans read their daily personal note from their travelling friend.

> You Bible students, stockmen and hunters better note this: Flew low all morning between the Euphrates and the Tigris. It's all level prairie and uncultivated.
>
> Most animals I ever saw were there, thousands of cattle, donkeys, camels, water buffalo, deer and wild boar.[2]

A few years later, he expanded his description and made the object of the quest explicit.

> Was in a very big long valley, hundreds of miles, and I thought looking down on it from the plane coming from China to Europe that I had found me a real new cow country, and I thought, my goodness, why dont folks settle here. I bet they dont know where it is . . . .
>
> I said to the pilot, a Holland Dutchman, too bad people dont know about his place, it sure looks fertile. Pretty soon he circles the plane, and pointed down and said, "There is the Garden of Eden." Not a thing there but tall grass, not a soul in miles, not a tree, just plains. It was right above the

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[1]"Letters of a Self-Made Man Diplomat to His President," Saturday Evening Post, October 23, 1926, p. 164.

[2]The New York Times, January 18, 1932, p. 17.

mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.[1]

The heavier-than-air aircraft, Promethean marvel of ingenuity, had carried man forward by returning him to the scene of his state of perfection.

Will Rogers was an American Prometheus. He identified materially with the vision of progress by extolling significant features of America's spiralling technology, by looking to the future resolutely and optimistically, by boosting improvements and growth, and by questing--via a product of technology--for Eden, itself. In the way in which he used language, too, he made himself consubstantial with the progress dream.

The Shape of Progress: Formal Identification

Among other qualities of the typical American noted by James Muirhead were those which accorded with the dream of progress. "The American note includes a sense of illimitable expansion and possibility, an almost childlike confidence in human ability and fearlessness of both the present and the future, . . . and a positive predilection for innovation . . . ."[2] Just as he had used catachresis and slang in

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, March 24, 1935, IV, p. 6. For other examples of Rogers' questing, see The New York Times, November 7, 1927, p. 25; October 2, 1931, p. 25; May 1, 1931, p. 29; December 9, 1931, p. 25; January 14, 1932, p. 23; October 18, 1932, p. 21; November 7, 1932, p. 19; May 8, 1934, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, December 9, 1928, V, p. 2; November 15, 1931, V, p. 5; January 3, 1932, V, p. 5; October 7, 1934, IV, p. 4; October 14, 1934, IV, p. 6; N.B.C. broadcast, July 8, 1934, text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[2]Quoted in Croly, The Promise of American Life, p. 18.

giving the aura of Adamic newness, Will Rogers used the formal resources of language to give the sense of Promethean forward-looking and questing.

Not only did the formal appeal of hyperbole image forth equalizing of disparities by means of the heightening or lowering inherent within it, but that figure of speech also served Rogers in producing the breezy optimism so important to the dream of progress. Hyperbole, for instance, provided the mode for the boost of Florida's climate, where the "mule-slipper heaver can do more with a horseshoe than a manicurist can with a drunk."[1] When the subject was the technological revolution, Will might write, "Well sir, there is not a man, woman or Golf Player in the World that hasn't seen a Ford Car, no matter what country it is in."[2] When writing of a hero of that technological revolution, Rogers exaggerated joyously: ". . . well, this Gatty, just give him a compass and one peek at the Giant Dipper and he can tell you where you are even if you ain't there."[3] His optimism for the future, too, seemed joyous and unlimited in 1925, because of a simile partaking of exaggeration: "To stop this Country now would be like Spitting on a railroad track to stop a train."[4] Again, the formal appeal of hyperbole operated when he prophesied that Oklahoma would progress to the point that New York would be her parking space, Chicago, her arsenal;

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[1]The New York Times, February 8, 1927, p. 25.

[2]The Tulsa Daily World, October 25, 1925, V, p. 5.

[3]The New York Times, June 30, 1931, p. 27.

[4]The Tulsa Daily World, February 22, 1925, V, p. 4.

New Orleans, her amusement center; and Los Angeles, the spot segregated for Elk and Shrine conventions. Another time, when Will boosted his native state with hyperbole, he sounded almost like one of the old backwoods roarers, as well as a champion of progress.

> Corn? When you speak of corn you are talking right up our alley. Why, the way that Florida got that little patch that sold for $10,000,000 was by Oklahoma's corn growing so high that some of the stalks fell over into Florida. We gather our corn in airplanes. Why, our corn last year in Oklahoma ran over 200 gallons to the acre.[1]

Whether praising technology and progress heroes, expressing optimism for the future, or boosting for the bigger and the better, the flying cowboy could use hyperbole to identify formally with the dream of progress.[2]

Just as Will's quests had been a prime means of merging himself with the dream of progress, the shape of his sentences could reinforce that sense of the search. Frequently, he rambled in his sentences just as he rambled in his physical travels. When, for instance, he told his readers of the flight over Eden, he used a long compound-complex sentence. "Was in a very big long valley, hundreds of miles, and I thought looking down on it from the plane coming from China to Europe that I had found me a real new cow country, and I thought, my goodness, why dont folks settle here." The flying cowboy often rambled in his spoken sentences. In a radio broadcast describing his plans for the summer of 1934, Will

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[1]Saturday Evening Post, May 29, 1926, p. 72.

[2]For other examples, see The New York Times, February 18, 1930, p. 27; October 7, 1932, p. 23; November 6, 1931, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, December 28, 1924, III, p. 8; Saturday Evening Post, August 21, 1926, p. 170; American Magazine, April, 1929, p. 34.

announced, for example, "Reason I'm goin' to travel so much in Russia and try to go all over Russia, down the Black Sea and all around, see those big experimental farms that the farmers are supposed to be workin' on over there and all that--the reason I'm--you know, Russia today is--they're supposed to have the greatest experiment in the world--outside of us."[1] Skeptical of that experiment as he was and as he remained, Will as the American Prometheus had to see for himself. To be sure, the loosely-constructed sentence occurred many times when its user was not talking of travels to foreign lands--as in the case of his joking about Republicans coming out of hiding in 1935.

> Been ridin' 'way off round up in the hills back of the San Monica mountains, ridin' up in there, and I run on to a kind of a peculiar thing--I--uh--I--just prowlin' around up on the trails back in the hills there--and--uh--I saw about--uh--well, I think I saw about four deer. 'Bout four deer and--uh--but--about five Republicans showed up.[2]

By such hesitations and digressions, Will Rogers imaged forth the rambling nature of a quest, even if the subject matter was not that of the search for paradise beyond American shores.[3]

In addition to sentences shaped appropriately, Rogers' communications also imaged forth the quest in their form-in-the-large. Just as the search for the Holy Grail, for instance, provided all kinds of

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[1]N.B.C. broadcast, July 8, 1934; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[2]C.B.S. broadcast, April 7, 1935; text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

[3]For other examples of meandering sentences, see The New York Times, December 22, 1931, p. 23; The Tulsa Daily World, April 17, 1927, V, p. 5; April 14, 1929, V, p. 1; "Chicago," June 22, 1930, Radio Talks, p. 46; and N.B.C. broadcast, July 8, 1934, text from uncatalogued sound recording, Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma.

side excursions, digressions, and adventures, the topics contained in a longer Rogers' message often wandered along in a free-associational unity at best. For example, in the weekly article in which he told of his flight over Eden, the topics receiving attention were the following: (1) the pleasure cruise of Mrs. Rogers and daughter, Betty; (2) Will's early travels, in which he left home going first class and came back riding third; (3) his flight over Eden and the Middle East; (4) meeting with Fred Stone, Broadway musical star, and driving over Arizona; (5) the West's need for cars with more road clearance, rather than smooth boulevards to nowhere; (6) recent guests at the Rogers place in Santa Monica, including humorist Irvin S. Cobb and actor Leo Carillo. Such rambling in main topics gave Rogers' works the aura of the quest itself. A weekly article illustrates how the rambling form-in-the-large combined with loose sentences to produce the form of the quest.

> Well, all I know is just what I read in the papers and what I see here and yonder. Do you like to just be in a car prowling around? I know you do, everybody does. I would much rather be in a plane, but if you havent got one, and I havent, more folks ask me about my plane. They think because I do a lot of traveling that way I must have my own plane. Why I havent got any more plane than Alabama has Republicans. I have always just used a regular organized line, walk up and pay your fare get in and go where you want to . . . . But all this has nothing to do with planes. I am the greatest guy to start in on telling something and then switch over to something that has nothing to do with it at all. I get that from working in the movies. You notice it in our movie stories.
>
> Well, I was up in a town called Bishop making a movie, and we got through with our outdoor shots . . . . So I jumped in my car that very evening and went over a range of Mountains about 130 miles to Tonopah, Nevada, that's the old silver town. It's not a ghost town by any means because it has a couple or three thousand people living there yet and is a very interesting town. Used to be along in 1907 and 8 a big rushing thriving place of perhaps 10 thousand or more.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Well up early the next morning and down to Goldfield. Now

> dont that name and place bring back memories. One of the well advertised towns of the West. In 1906 on Labor Day, was the biggest and best advertised and best prize fight ever held. That was the famous Gans-Nelson fight of 43 rounds that was promoted by the famous Tex Rickard. It was the first big purse at that time $30,000 . . . . It was just exactly 26 years to a day when I was there. I had known two of three principals, Nelson and Rickard.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It's Gold town, and they are working some of the mines by small leases. The Government is investigating it as they think there is big pay stuff there yet. Now here was an experience. The papers had been full of a new strike at a place called Clarkdale, for a fellow named Clark found it. So off I went to it, a newspaper man and mining man went with me, and sure enough away out there in the hills on those desert flats was dozens of camps all around a hole in the ground. Lots of 'em had leased from the original striker, and the others had staked near around there. Well they say there was some real gold there.
>
> . . .
>
> Nevada is a great old State to prowl around in . . . . Just get in your car and drive around some time no matter where you live, you will be surprised the old interesting things there is to visit. But don't miss Nevada.[1]

This was not the quest for the Holy Grail, but the search for the Golden Eldorado of the past was present to provide a well-travelled road from which Rogers could talk about the value of air travel, the thrill of a fight of long-ago, the excitement of a modern gold rush, the joys of rambling, and other matters. On many occasions, the flying cowboy made use of a rambling form-in-the-large to shadow forth the quest and identify with the dream of progress toward the greatest bonanza of all, the paradise-to-be-regained.[2]

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, September 18, 1932, IV, p. 6.

[2]For other examples, see The New York Times, April 1, 1927, p. 25; September 16, 1930, p. 29; April 3, 1935, p. 25; June 3, 1927, p. 23; June 8, 1928, p. 27; August 25, 1928, p. 17; July 18, 1933, p. 19; The Tulsa Daily World, April 25, 1926, V, p. 3; September 2, 1928, V, p. 4; December 9, 1928, V, p. 2. Will could also write rather tightly unified pieces, too: see ibid., February 22, 1925, V, p. 4; November 13, 1927, VII, p. 4; June 23, 1929, V, p. 1.

In his use of breezy hyperbole, rambling sentences, and wandering form-in-the-large, Will Rogers identified himself formally with the dream of progress.

Conclusion

By August of 1935, Rogers' national image as an embodiment of the great American dream was complete. Through his words he had traced every line of his public portrait until he was at once the American Adam, standing for the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual; the American democrat and "Mr. Cowboy," symbolizing the dream of equality and freedom; the self-made man, who, by his rise from rags to riches, personified the dream of success; and the American Prometheus, who, with his looking forward and teaching of the useful arts, was the ikon of the progress dream. Rogers, himself, like the great American dream, was a god-of-many-faces.

One quest remained.

On June 9, he had ended his radio series, telling his audience that he would see them in the fall. Newspaper stories told of his starting on a long journey with the great air pioneer, Wiley Post. The hearts of many Americans went with them to Alaska, the last frontier and the most recent of all the American Eldorados.

On August 8, the hundreds of papers in the syndicate carried a dispatch from Juneau.

> Well, that was some trip. Thousand-mile hop from Seattle to Juneau. Was going to stop at Ketchikan for lunch, but mist and rain came up and we just breezed through, never over 100 feet off the water.
>
> And talk about navigating. There is millions of channels and islands and bays and all look alike (to me) but this old

> boy Wiley Post turns up the right alley all the time.
>
> Nothing that I have ever seen is more beautiful than this inland passage, by either boat or plane, to Alaska. You know, I just been thinking about things at home. You know who I bet would like to be on this trip, Mr. Roosevelt.[1]

The next day, the telegram hitched the trip to the pioneers: "We are going to Skagway now and see the famous Chilkoot Pass. We will do it in ten minutes and it took the pioneers two and three months."[2] And so it went, day after day, the telegrams coming from that distant place with unreal-seeming qualities. "Old Wiley had to duck his head to keep from bumping it as we flew under the Arctic Circle. What, no night? It's all day up here."[3] On that fateful August 15 appeared the account of a flight almost symbolic: "In a Lockheed Electra we scaled Mount McKinley, the highest one on the American Continent. Bright, sunny day, and the most beautiful sight I ever saw."[4]

Even, perhaps, as some readers went over that message, the red monoplane's engine stalled, the craft went out of control, and the two questers plunged into the shallow water from which they had just taken off.

Then was silence, except for wavelets lapping against the hull of the airplane and for shouts of an Eskimo who had seen the crash.

When the news reached the "lower forty-eight" by Army radio, a nation mourned: in the Senate and House, debate stopped and eulogies

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[1] The New York Times, August 8, 1935, p. 19.

[2] Ibid., August 9, 1935, p. 19.

[3] Ibid., August 12, 1935, p. 17.

[4] Ibid., August 15, 1935, p. 21.

began; from their camps, the hoboes of America declared a thirty-day mourning period; in homes, restaurants, and stores, Americans in the "big, normal Majority" waited for more news after the first shock. From foreign papers came comments on the national loss. American papers gave the story top prominence for days, until at last the funeral ended, with squadrons of government planes flying over the chapel as a last salute to Will Rogers, the American Prometheus felled by the technological miracle he had so strongly advocated.

A nation mourned. The voice of the American dream was silent.

CHAPTER V

PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

By that June day in 1939 when the Rogers family, their friends, and high government officials gathered in the Capitol Rotunda to place the cowboy philosopher's statue with those of others in the national Hall of Fame, diviners of Rogers' meaning for the American people were speaking.

Oklahoma Governor, Leon C. Phillips, saw in the Sage of Claremore the embodiment of the dream of the dignity and worth of the individual.

> One cannot penetrate the mysteries of life to allocate the causes of personal distinction, but of this we may be certain: Will Rogers was born with the elements of greatness in him. He is one more irrefutable example of the fact to which we as citizens of a democracy unwaveringly adhere, that out of the humblest heritage and the simplest circumstances can come great characters who will revive our faith, enlighten our thinking, and fire our souls to action.[1]

Not only was the man from Oologah proof of the innate and unlimited powers of the individual, but--in the words of Phillips--he was "typical also of that belief in individual worth, that tolerance and sympathy

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[1]U.S., Congress, House, Joint Committee on Printing, Acceptance of the Statue of Will Rogers: Presented by the State of Oklahoma, House Document No. 471, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1939, pp. 23-24.

that has marked the American character from the days of the colonial frontier. . . ."[1]

Other speakers noticed and remarked upon other dimensions of the ikon of the great American dream. Luther Harrison, asserting that Will Rogers joined George Washington in being a unanimous choice of all America for membership in the Hall of Fame, saw in the Oklahoman the embodiment of the dream of freedom and equality.

> He was the true democrat also. He stood in the presence of kings, on terms of perfect equality, because he knew that to be an American is to be the equal of a king.[2]

Senator Alben Barkley amplified this line of thought. Speaking of Rogers, he said,

> Not only was he an intimate and a confidant of Kings and of Presidents and of Governors and of Senators and of Members of the House of Representatives, members of the legislatures; not only was he the friend and the confidant of the rich and the powerful and the mighty, but greater than all of these, he was the friend and confidant of the humbler men and women, not only of our own country but of the world.[3]

Will Rogers, thus, was both the American Adam and the American democrat.

A few years earlier, the junior Senator from Oklahoma, Josh Lee, had seen another appealing facet of Will Rogers' public portrait. At the Oklahoma memorial services in August of 1935, Lee had told of his own hero-worship of the man from Oologah.

> Will Rogers was my hero. He was the big brother of the world, whose wholesome humor always boosted the fellow who needed a lift.
>
> He was a self-made man. He blazed his own trail over the mountain to fame. He never waited for opportunities; he made them. While others slept, he was poring over the daily news, digging the fun out of it.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

Will "of the people" had risen by himself to fame, and in the best tradition of the success dream, had been a "brother" to the world.

In the remarks of Senator Barkley, spoken while officially accepting the statue, the fallen flier was also a hero of the dream of progress. "He gave of his wealth, he gave of his time, he gave of his talents, he gave of his great heart to make America a better place in which to live . . . ," the Kentuckian said.[1] Thus, to Rogers' roles as the American Adam, the American democrat, and the self-made man was added that of the American Prometheus.

The comments of such interpreters and shapers of public opinion undoubtedly have had their part in moulding the latter-day image of Will Rogers. But first, of course, had been the words of the cowboy philosopher, himself. How had Will's expression of the dream been appropriate and effective? Where does he stand now, a quarter of a century since entering the national Hall of Fame?

Appropriateness of Rogers' Identification with the American Dream

Will Rogers' engagement with the American people came, for the most part, during times when the great American dream required affirmation. During the 1920's, the Sage of Claremore spoke to a nation tired of idealistic slogans from World War I, apparently engrossed in a nostalgic quest for the "normalcy" of pre-war days, and conscious not only that the frontier was gone but also that country had given way to city. The 1920's were the years that saw Americans look both to the past and to the future in their adulation of Lindbergh as both the

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

lonely pioneer and the symbol of technological triumph. During the 1930's, Will Rogers addressed a nation undergoing an earthquake--a time not only of suffering but also of bewildering change, often for the worse, seemingly. The cowboy philosopher had to manage, throughout his ascendancy, to affirm the great dream in a way that would be acceptable in the circumstances. Obviously, his commentary had to be fitting to himself. Further, his articulation of the great vision had to be appropriate to his audience. He succeeded on both counts.

Appropriateness to Himself

For Will Rogers apparently, the roles as Adam, democrat, self-made man, and Prometheus were easy. To a large extent, he seems actually to have possessed the qualities he projected.

He really was a man of the American West, that historical-psychological entity which stripped men of the encumbrances of tradition and at the same time gave them an elemental rusticity so important in appealing to audiences of a complex twentieth-century. He seems actually to have possessed an ever-strong zest for living, being boyishly joyous in the simple, rural pleasures of riding, roping, and "just visiting." Such qualities, coupled with apparent genuineness, intuition, and trueness to friends, gave him the total character of the "natural" man. Moreover, Rogers seemingly did really trust in the goodness of the average man; he seemed always ready to believe the best about most people.

Further, he loved to mingle with them--in groups of all kinds and station, low and high. He seemingly could be as impressed by the

character of a lowly commoner as well as by that of a royal blue-blood. A member of a persecuted minority, he probably had a broad sympathy for other minority groups and was dedicated to the proposition of their equality with other Americans and to their freedom for the pursuit of happiness. Congruent with his nature as an equalitarian was the fact that he actually was one among those free knights of the range, the American cowboys. Even though it may be true that he enjoyed the thrills of rodeo work more than the everyday cowboy skills exercised on a ranch, Rogers was a practicing cowboy before the turn of the century. Perhaps more importantly, he seems to have adopted the cowboy's code of judging a man by what he does, of doing one's best--as a responsibly free man--to set affairs right, and of combining courage, ideals, and sentiment as motivation for such deeds.

Probably, too, a fire of activism burned within him, spurring him to a variety and intensity of enterprising pursuits. If his combination of acting, broadcasting, journalizing, and travelling is any indication, he was dedicated to the gospel of hard work. His private fires may have been stoked by the "work and win" dogma of the success dream. He apparently did have the urge to upward mobility so necessary to the visioned rise to riches. Moreover, he probably was as virtuous and as generous as the success dream and his own legend required him to be.

Little doubt can exist that he was driven to a life-long search, of sorts, all over the face of the globe. That drive, coupled with ambivalent love and fear of the heavier-than-air craft which deified Lindbergh, produced in him, probably, the forward-looking thrust of the

devotee of progress. Finally, in coming full-circle to the boyish delight of the natural man, he found thrills in man's ingenious devices which conquered time and space--such as the radio, the telephone, and the promise of television just over the horizon.

All this, of course, is only speculation as to the real nature of the man. The reader of the biographies is impressed by the outside-in point of view which they adopt. The reader sees an anecdotal record of events which prepare the boy for his later success and which record that rise, keeping the boyishness and generous nature intact. But Homer Croy writes of a great, unseen side of Will's nature; Betty Rogers writes of a husband who had perhaps only herself as a confidant; Donald Day likewise rather severely limits his own interpretations about the inner motivation of Will Rogers. The result for the student of the cowboy philosopher is that he sees specific bits of behavior in his subject and is left to supply his own systematic interpretation of them. Two bases for the lack of an inside-out approach to Rogers' character are clear: apparently he left little in the way of private letters or diaries in which he expressed his own private thoughts, and most of his known attitudes and beliefs are framed in his public utterances--in which the desire to adjust his ideas to people must necessarily be considered a kind of refracting variable.[1]

One can be certain that Will Rogers had a public mask. Homer

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[1]I say that Rogers apparently left little in the way of private thoughts; perhaps a more accurate statement would be that I have seen little. Some letters to members of the family exist, but I have not had access to them, and I gather that they are not numerous. I am sure that some material is in California, but I am unaware of its nature.

Croy, who knew him both as a working associate and as a friend, noticed the change in Rogers from private to public relationships. Will Rogers, therefore, had a rhetoric. How can judgments of his motives be based upon his public statements, and how can biographers affirm that Will succeeded in public simply by being himself? The answer seems to be simply that what everyone knew (and still knows) of Will's private nature fitted rather well with his roles assumed in public. His messages were appropriate to him. They also were suitable for his national constituency.

Appropriateness to his Audience

In two chief ways, Will Rogers' comments were fitting for his audience, which in a time of accelerated change needed an affirmation of the old values in new dress. By means of his rural, sturdy-yeoman flavor, his remarks shone with the mellow light of the agrarian past, even as the application of his ideals to significant current events gave his words the immediacy of the up-to-date. Perhaps more importantly, his was a strategy of wise innocence in making his identification with the values of the great dream.

To invoke Rogers' appeal to "the good old days," one has but to recall Will's rhapsodies on country eating, his admiration of the "old rubes" that did their own thinking, his faith in the country people, his constant references to beauties of farm and ranch, his talk of horses, his memories of ranch life, and his use of "folks," "ain't," and "doggone." At times he reminded his audience that he was just "an old country boy," and when he reported big doings in social circles at

Washington or when he told of a long talk with a future king of England, he made sure to give forth the signs of the "old country boy." Cumulatively, the effect was to render nostalgically rural the once-flashy dresser who had loved to visit Kansas City and bring back all the latest "uptown" songs. The same person, on the other hand, chose to assert the values of the great American dream not in the abstract, but as related to current news events attracting national attention. He spoke of the "fundamentally generous" nature of the common man while millions listened to him and Herbert Hoover on a broadcast which was a major event; while the "Liberty League" was in the news, he defined liberty as an amount of freedom to be enjoyed to the degree that an equal amount was granted to others; he spoke for freedom of conscience and intellect at the moment that the Scopes trial occupied the nation's attention; he addressed himself to the dream of economic equality in a radio speech at the moment when the national government was marshalling its opinion leaders to win support for the history-making NRA; he spoke for the success ideal of benefaction when the nation watched the devastation wrought by the great flood of 1927, the drouth disaster of 1931, and the Nicaraguan earthquake later in the same year; he "plugged" for air progress when Post and Gatty attracted nationwide attention with their record-breaking flight around the world. The result was that in such contexts, the values of the great dream had a timeliness which rendered them not only relevant, but which also gave the impression of being "modern as tomorrow."[1] Will Rogers' rural flavor, coupled with

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[1]Other timely identifications included his advocacy of freedom and equality when William Thompson's "America First" group was busy

the timeliness of his identifications with values of the great dream, enabled him to be appropriate to an audience that was only one generation removed from the frontier and that was living in a society so interested in the "up-to-date" that the adjective "modern" was applied to houses with running water and electricity.

Yet, Rogers' appropriateness would not have been complete without the wisely innocent approach which he brought to his identification with the American dream. That strategy permitted him to appear as one who was both worldly and visionary, sly and open, sophisticated and simple. The method had several specific techniques.

In order to appear both worldly and visionary in his articulation of the great dream's values, Will often modified his affirmation with a bit of skepticism or shrewd calculation. Speaking for the goodness of the common man, for example, he commented, "I don't know anything about America being fundamentally sound and all that after dinner 'Hooey,' but I do know that America is 'Fundamentally generous.'" Regarding the dream of freedom he preceded his ideal of liberty according to the Golden Rule with the shrewdly calculating statement, "So, the question arises 'how much liberty can I get and get away with it?'" When he committed himself to the belief that American clubwomen would not exercise racial discrimination against an American Indian aspirant for high office, he had his eyes open to other possibilities of human

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with its super patriotism, his identification with social equality when Queen Marie of Rumania was attracting national attention in the fall and winter of 1926, and his appeal for fair play and tolerance of opposing views when the nation was at an election year fever pitch in late October, 1932.

behavior.

> So I don't believe these ladies are going to get bias. Of course, there is some of 'em that would love to meet around the convention campfire and shout: "Well, sisters, we scalped another Indian. We have to keep this club 100 per cent American." They can't afford to do that.

Charles Dawes' long trousers at the court of St. James represented a victory not only for democracy, but also for the people who sold material by the yard. Yes, the Constitution had been changed so often that it looked like a movie version of a great book; but the line about freedom of religion was going to stay put. The success dream could be affirmed with a wise, sidelong glance, too: "The old dollar might be filthy lucre, but there is quite a bit of energy and spirit yet in earning one." An affirmation of the dream of progress had its qualifier: "Even though we don't think so sometimes, civilization has advanced." Will's frequent use of the method permitted him to seem both realistic and idealistic.[1] In that sense, he was the wise innocent.

Another technique of that strategy was his use of the ironist's mask, being so apparently open on the surface, and yet being sly in the

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[1]Other comments of this sort include his idea of the willingness of the American people to forgive any weakness except stupidity; his belief that any administration could make an Eden of America if we didn't have to stop to play politics; his belief that the Creator made men equal: the "dumb" ones nevertheless are happy, and the "smart" ones are nevertheless made miserable by what they don't know; his praise of the freedom of Nevada and the grandeur of Colorado, coupled with good-natured fun-poking at Texas and Oklahoma. His technique of mixing his reactions also often occurred in contexts other than those relevant to the great dream. In a speech to Mexican diplomats and government officials during his mission as unofficial ambassador in 1927, for example, after praising Mexican hospitality and a country that was perfect except for having too many verb endings, he reportedly said, "I dident come here to tell you that we look on you as Brothers. That would be a lot of bunk. We look on you as a lot of Bandits and you look on us as one Big Bandit," Saturday Evening Post, June 9, 1928, p. 40.

sense of not meaning what he actually said. Speaking, for example, of the goodness of the noble savage, he seemed to be saying the opposite.

> Somthing ought to be done about these "Primitive" people who live in various parts of the world, and dont know a thing but to live off what nature provides. You would think they would get civilized, and learn to live off each other like us civilized folks do.

Rogers "agreed" with the jailing of the non-violent, liberty-seeking Gandhi, for "naturally a man that's holy couldn't run at large these days." He "felt sorry" for the sons of the rich who had to sell a yacht or even resign from a golf club in order to pay an inheritance tax intended to produce a degree of economic equality. He "warned" possible benefactors of Mississippi flood victims that a donation of ten dollars to each sufferer was likely to bring on an era of squandering. Applying his irony to the dream of freedom and equality, he readily "admitted" that during the great war, Americans had been lax in deciding who were proper candidates to be Americans; that the "America Firsters" and their kind had saved the country when it was on the "brink" by showing that the plan for freedom and equality in the Declaration and the Constitution was "no good"; and he offered his own "improvement" in the form of his "America Only" society.

His ironic "improvement," of course, had the effect of rendering "America Only" absurd. Will often identified himself with the American dream by reducing opposing values to absurdity, a form of irony in the sense that he did not really mean what he said literally, and yet--to a degree--he did, too. Newspapers so violated the dignity of the individual and the right to privacy that they made suicides stand up, re-enact the crime, pose for pictures, and promise not to repeat the

act of killing themselves without calling the papers first. Boston book censors, abridging the freedom of the press, were at one point engaged in reading between the lines of Pilgrim's Progress to see if the book didn't have some "hidden meaning." In Alabama, after one of that state's national Senators had delivered himself of an intolerant speech, Rogers reported that he was asking Alabama's citizens "to please not exterminate all Catholics, Republicans, Jews, negroes, Jim Reed, Al Smith, Wadsworth, Mellon and Coolidge and the Pope." The absurdity of violating Constitutional freedom of religion by denouncing Catholicism in Congress became clear when the "senator in waiting" offered to treat everyone equally by allotting a day of the week for attacking each major denomination--with Sunday reserved for summing up and for slandering denominations not disparaged during the week. Through his use of irony in these and in other situations, Will Rogers gave a double edge to his apparently frank and straightforward statements.[1] In that sense, he was the wise innocent.

Rogers also managed to give the impression of being both simple and sophisticated in his voicing of the great dream. One technique was to pretend to an ignorance belied by his comments and thus to be sophisticatedly-simple by giving the clear impression of being wiser

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[1]One will also recall that Will used irony in his prediction after American bombers flew too high for Nicaraguan rocks, that strategy had won many a war for us and would pull us through the latest one; his reduction to absurdity of Mayor James Walker's instructions to Americans welcoming a Balkan Queen was replete with irony also, as was his advice to the "patriots" of the stock market who at that time apparently could sell, charge off, and re-purchase their financial holdings. The piece on Mayor Thompson's efforts to "purify" the Chicago library is another notable example of the kind of irony resulting from reduction to absurdity.

than he seemed. "I have heard so much at this [national] convention about 'getting back to the old Jeffersonian principles' that being an amateur, I am in doubt as to why they left them in the first place." No reader, of course, would believe that Rogers was as much in doubt as he seemed about the relationship of political oratory to the values of the American dream. Again, when he was standing for freedom of small nations, he asked, "What was that slogan the whole country was shouting just exactly ten years ago today? Does this sound like it. 'Self determination of small nations.'" Probably the most consistent device, however, for posing as being ignorant consisted of his standard opening for the weekly articles. In a variety of ways he would say that all he knew was what he read in the papers. "Well, all I know is just what I see as I am combing this entire country in search of an honest politician," he wrote in 1925; he was still using the technique regularly in 1932: "All I know is just what I read in the papers or what I run into as I prowl like a coyote . . . looking back over my shoulders to see whats going on behind me"; six days after his death, appeared a weekly article that opened in the same general way: "Well, all I know is just what little I see behind the old Lockheed's wings."[1] Obviously, of course, he knew a great deal more, as his comments relevant to the dream proved; his disclaimers of knowledge helped him to appear sophisticatedly simple. On other occasions, his pose of ignorance could produce both hilarity and the quality of a joyous spirit finding

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[1]The Tulsa Daily World, October 25, 1925, V, p. 5; October 30, 1932, IV, p. 8; August 21, 1935, p. 5. Of course, not every weekly article began with that sort of opening, but my impression is that the majority of them did.

happiness in the vagaries of life--as in the case of his not understanding the necessity of a certificate to prove one's birth. His pretence of innocence of knowledge acted as a foil for his wisdom.[1] He was the wise innocent in the sense that he was sophisticatedly simple.

Will's practice of reducing complexities of the great dream to simple terms was also part of his wise-innocent strategy. By means of analogy or application of everyday or rule-of-the-thumb principles, he appeared to deal with matters directly and simply: to be, in other words, simply sophisticated. The pursuit of happiness in some respects was analogous to keeping cattle satisfied on the range; free speech for Communists was as necessary as an exhaust for an automobile; international naval interference in the politics of one small country was like a public regatta--anyone could come in who had a boat. The National Recovery Act, ostensibly for the dream of economic equality, should have been written on a postcard, using the rule-of-thumb method of saying simply that no man could be worked for a certain number of hours without overtime pay, that no pay be under a certain minimum, and that no children be hired. The dream of economic equality could be served by a better distribution of the nation's wealth through providing tax-supported public works, which nevertheless would not compete with private industry wage-wise. The question of social precedence at great dinners could be solved in a true spirit of equality by serving everybody "Los Angeles" style--give everybody a

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[1]See also his pose of ignorance about Floridian reports of California earthquakes, his pretense of not knowing Hoover well enough to be sure than an appearance with the President would be advisable, his review of a book of etiquette, and his disclaimer before a boost for radio.

plate and tell him to find the "grub." The complex matter of spiritual equality could be illuminated by the observation that water was as high on Negro flood victims as on whites and that the Lord so constituted everyone that all required about the same amount of nourishment. The secret of air progress was to fix it so that everybody could "lay down and have a good sleep." The complex differences between East and West boiled down to the one that Chinese were a "hindsight" people and Americans were a "foresight" people. In these and other instances, Will Rogers was the wise innocent by being simply sophisticated.[1]

By blending the golden glow of America's rural past and the sparkle of timeliness in his affirmation of the American dream, the cowboy philosopher of Beverly Hills achieved appropriateness. By using words which allowed him to be both worldly and visionary, both sly and open, both sophisticated and simple, Will Rogers exercised the strategy of being the wise innocent in his affirmation of the great dream. His were words for the times.

In a real sense, of course, the appropriateness of Rogers' articulation was synonymous with the reasons for its potential effectiveness. In addition, other qualities of his identification with the great vision quite possibly could have added to the impact which he had on his national audience.

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[1]See also his idea that war would end if its debts could be outlawed; his urging that as the government was concerned for the health of hogs, it should also be concerned for the health of children; his idea that farmers should have a market where they, like Wall Streeters, could run values of land and holdings up and down for no reason; his dubbing of the depression recovery scheme of every-man-for-himself as the "swim-out" plan; and his simplification of high society to show its silliness.

Effectiveness of Rogers' Identification with the American Dream

Will Rogers seemed to offer something for everyone: cowboys like Will James were admirers; tycoons like Henry Ford and the elder John D. Rockefeller were more than acquaintances; Presidents made him their guests; airplane pilots considered him almost as one of them; intellectuals like Reinhold Niebuhr respected his Adamic thrusts at sham; he was fascinating for the "big normal Majority." The catholicity of his appeal was related, perhaps, to the comprehensiveness of his identification with the American dream. That comprehensiveness, in turn, had at least three aspects: its breadth, in the sense that Rogers' identifications covered all four major categories of the great vision; its adhesiveness, in the sense that not uncommonly Will related simultaneously to more than one aspect of the great god-of-many-faces; and its depth, in the sense that the cowboy philosopher merged himself with more than one level of each category.

Comprehensiveness through Breadth

In considering possible reasons for the effectiveness of Will Rogers' expression of the dream of paradise to be regained, one must not discount the obvious. Among all the gallery of American heroes, fictional, legendary, and real, only a few, perhaps--Lincoln, certainly--stood as ikons of all the major categories of the American dream.

Among heroes contemporary with Rogers, Damon Runyon, champion of the underdog, perhaps symbolized the dreams of individualism and of freedom and equality; Ford was the personification of success; Lindbergh and Edison, of progress. If these figures appear not to be retaining

as much hero appeal as Will Rogers, a partial cause may be that they were heroes of the dream in a narrower sense than the man from Oklahoma.

Will Rogers, in his individual adaptation of the values of the great vision, joined himself with audience beliefs in the powers of the common man, in the goodness of the common man, and in the potential, triumphant self-fulfillment of the common man through his trust in, and search for, wisdom-giving experience. In addition, the Sage of Claremore coalesced in his public portrait with that dream of freedom and equality which pictured a government serving the good of all citizens, which envisioned relative absence of restraint upon freedoms of press, speech, and religion, and which included a society where men were socially, politically, and economically equal because they were spiritually equal. As Will Rogers rose from Wild West shows to radio appearances with Presidents, he aligned himself with the success dream, which portrayed the rise from rural origins of the man with a non-intellectual background, perseverance, industry, honor, and good stewardship of ability and money. The cowboy who traded his cow pony for a mechanical Pegasus identified himself with the predominant strain of the American dream of progress, that of a gleaming new paradise by means of the shiny machines of the spiralling technology. His was breadth of identification with the great American dream.

That breadth could possibly have operated to produce a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Will Rogers drew his audience appeal not only from the fact that he attached himself to separate categories of the great vision which might attract those Americans chiefly inter-

ested in them. Additionally, for those Americans who saw him as the embodiment of more than one category of the American dream, his identification with each in turn was strengthened by appearing congruent with the overall vision. The principle is one that social psychologists have stated thus: "The properties of an item in a perceptual structure are determined not only by the properties it has when studied by itself but also by its relation to other parts."[1] In other words, Will Rogers' alignment with the dream of success, for example, could be made clearer and stronger simply because his alignments with other dreams in the overall vision helped to draw the success identifications into the paradigm of the whole. The cumulative effect of the paradigm of the great dream upon each category within it could have made Will's total identification greater than simply the sum of his separate ones.

Comprehensiveness through Adhesiveness

Aiding the audience to be aware of Rogers as the ikon of more than one division of the great dream was that his statements not infrequently were simultaneously relevant to more than one aspect of the hopeful vision. Will was not only Adam, the ikon of the individual's dream, but he was also the apostle of progress when he simultaneously rejected the past and boosted the future in his rejection of Europe. "I say there is nothing new there; we got everything over home, only bigger and better." He tied the dream of self-fulfillment to that of progress when he wrote, "Happiness and contentment is progress. In

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[1]Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, An Outline of Social Psychology (2d ed. rev.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 53.

fact, that's all progress is." When he expressed a belief that the real powers of the "big, normal Majority" would pull us through even the "next war," he was also looking to the future optimistically as a devotee of the progress vision. His trust of the knowledge gained by "the old broadminded man of experience" was relevant not only to the powers of the common man but also to that part of the success dream which envisioned the rise of the non-academic candidate. His apparent self-fulfillment through an expressed love of comrades was not only ancillary to the dream of man's goodness but was also part and parcel of the dream of brotherhood through equality. When he wrote that the government should be as interested in the health of children as in that of hogs, he served not only freedom's dream of a government for the good of all but also the principle that the individual is worthy. He combined his plea for free speech--even for Communists--with his trust in the powers of the average man to detect falsity of Communist appeals. In all that he communicated on the equality of minority groups with other Americans, he implied the need to judge the individual by his own dignity and worth rather than by membership in a particular group. When he railed at what he considered to be "high" society's admission of members by birth only, pointing out the exclusion of self-made man Henry Ford, he combined not only the dreams of social equality and success but also that of the dignity and worth of the individual who--like Ford--could make good use of his own great powers. When the cowboy philosopher praised the benefactions of Rockefeller, he not only aligned himself with a significant feature of the success dream, but he underlined his identification with a belief in the goodness of

people on the one hand and with the dream of the betterment of mankind's condition on the other. When he wrote of the joys of travelling through all "those great old States" of the Union, he not only was relevant to the dream of the individual's self-fulfillment through experience, but also to the vision of progress through his boosting of all the states of the forty-eight. By means of such interrelating of several facets of the great dream, Will Rogers achieved a kind of comprehensiveness in his making himself consubstantial with the American dream.

This sort of adhesiveness applied also to his formal identification with the great god-of-many faces. His use of catachresis and slang in giving the sense of the American Adam was appropriate also to the aura of newness in the self-made man among the ranks of the newly rich. His rambling sentences and form-in-the-large which shadowed forth the quest in the dream of progress were suitable also for giving the impression of freedom and, further, fitted the nature of the experience-seeking Adam. His assault on grammatical convention not only fitted the persona of the self-made man, but accorded well also with the American Adam, freed from convention. When Will used his "wiser-than-I-look," sidewise glance, when he chewed his gum, rammed his hands into his pockets, and combed his hair over his forehead, he was not only the free democrat or the self-made man, but he was also the wisely-innocent American Adam. The efficaciousness of such crossing of categories, both materially and formally, lay possibily in making organically one the several members of the body in the great American dream. In that sense, Will Rogers was comprehensive in joining

himself to the vision of paradise to be regained.

Comprehensiveness through Depth

So far, the contribution to comprehensiveness of Will's crossing the dream categories is clear. Further, however, his encompassing of the great dream consisted of identifications on several levels within each division itself. The result was a kind of shotgun effect: if a statement at one level of the dream missed its mark, perhaps one on another level would reach it. For example, the cowboy philosopher spoke on the direct material level of the dream of freedom and equality when he responded ironically to the activities of the America Firsters, and when he advocated freedoms of press, speech, and religion. For whatever reason, some members of his audience may not have been attracted to such pronouncements. These same people, perhaps, could have been drawn to him by the language of his behavior which accorded with the vision of freedom and equality. He moved with aplomb among princes, heads of states, and celebrities; he also enjoyed meeting "the regular bird." He practiced an independence from blind party loyalty. His heart belonged to the underdog, and he practiced fair play in his columns and speeches. This kind of identification in depth provided "something-for-everybody" in another sense of the term, then. Rogers could thus be engaging for members in the audience who admired only segments of his identification within a category of the great dream; for those Americans who accepted all the levels of his alignment, he was irresistible. His "vertical" comprehensiveness complemented his "horizontal" inclusiveness of consubstantiality with

the American dream.

Because of the appropriateness and efficaciousness of his expression of the great vision, Will Rogers achieved a deep sense of recognition in members of his audience. By the transmission of his message through the mass media of newspapers and radio, he was a daily, trusted companion. Americans may have felt that he, the most American of them all, had gone with them through all the sunlight and shadows of their private lives. He was a man for the times.

Will Rogers and the Shattered Image

The sudden final breaking of the ties between Rogers and his Americans made clear to them the extent to which they had grown toward oneness with the cowboy philosopher. Will Rogers, seven years before his last quest, had understood the effect of sudden partings of heroes from their worshippers. "This thing of being a hero, about the main thing to it is to know when to die. Prolonged life has ruined more men than it ever made."[1] He did not have to worry. He died suddenly, a few months short of his fifty-sixth birthday, at the height of his popularity. His death, in the mists of a faraway sky, at the edge of a cold sea, had about it something of the quality of the legendary Arthur's charismatic journey to Avalon. King Will was gone. The image of the American dream was shattered.

It remains fragmented today, for no one else has appeared to combine all the appeals of the dream which Will made. Bits of that comprehensiveness appear in many figures. Herb Shriner, nasally

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[1]The New York Times, July 18, 1928, p. 23.

intoning wry, rural Indiana comments, is perhaps the best representation of the wise innocent, although Red Skelton is in the mold of the Adam with irrepressibly high spirits. Danny Kaye bears the look of the versatile jack-of-all-trades and lover of humanity. Jack Benny, with his standard routines based upon his miserliness, is a distorted mirror image of the self-made man. Bob Hope, snapping the whip at both political parties and travelling incessantly, has about him the cast of the individualistic quester.[1] Of all the figures mentioned so far, perhaps Arthur Godfrey, during the middle 'fifties, came closest to approximating the posture of Will Rogers. Godfrey--with his "friends," his farm, his flying, his occasional comments on "the American Way," and his hobnobbing with high political and military men--had for a time some of the same believability about him that the Sage of Claremore had possessed.

The image, however, remains shattered. What of Will Rogers and the American public since that day in 1939 when he entered the national Hall of Fame?

Available indications are that he is holding up remarkably well as a national hero. A decade and a World War after the unveiling of his bronze image in Statuary Hall, a writer for a national magazine observed that the nation regarded the cowboy philosopher as almost a legend.

> William Penn Adair Rogers has been dead a short time as history goes, but already he is enshrined as one of the great folk heroes of the U.S. Three western states--Oklahoma, Cali-

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[1]Hope was chosen to narrate the N.B.C. hour-long television production covering Rogers' life and career.

> fornia and Colorado--have elaborate Will Rogers memorials which register the names of one million visitors each year. Other Will Rogers monuments and statues are scattered across the continent from Point Barrow, Alaska to Fort Worth, Texas . . . . Nov. 4 is an official statewide holiday in Oklahoma, and last year the federal government joined the observance by issuing a Will Rogers 3¢ stamp--the first time that such an honor has been conferred on a comedian.[1]

At about the same time, an English student of the American scene took a measure of the hero-worship of Will Rogers, bracketing him with two other American heroes of legendary stature.

> A national memorial week was lately proclaimed for a man whose plane crashed in Alaska fourteen years ago, but there's no doubt that if he'd lived, the 4th of November 1949 would have seen a national day of thanksgiving unlike anything that can be imagined outside the resurrection of Mark Twain or Abraham Lincoln. On the 4th of November, we should have had the seventieth birthday of possibly the most endearing American of his time: Will Rogers.[2]

The passage of another decade-and-a-half since such observations has apparently little-dimmed Rogers' memory. The early 'fifties saw the production of a successful motion picture of his life. He continues to be immortalized in television biographies. An hour-long presentation by the National Broadcasting Company has appeared annually since 1961. A half-hour version in a syndicated television series called "Biography" places Will in the company, among others, of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Winston Churchill, and Babe Ruth.

In 1955, Senator A.S. Monroney of Oklahoma, speaking as a former Oklahoma newspaper reporter, remarked, "Today after many years,

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[1]Roger Butterfield, "The Legend of Will Rogers," Life, July 18, 1949, p. 78.

[2]Alistair Cook, One Man's America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), pp. 173-74.

the memory of Oklahomans of Will Rogers is as fresh and great as his was for them during his lifetime."[1] In 1963, the memory was apparently strong for many other Americans: to the Claremore Memorial, annual visitors are reported still to number around a half-million, from all states of the union; similar attendance figures appeared in the 1949 magazine story which described Will as one of the great American folk heroes.[2] People continue to come to the shrine: children--held quiet by parents who were themselves children or teen-agers when Rogers died--and old people. Into the curator and manager's office they come to tell what Will Rogers means to them, and the comment often is, "If Will Rogers were here, he could help us. He could help us through this difficult period that our country seems to be going into."[3] Visitors see his saddles, his famous ropes, the battered typewriter from the crash, a diorama of his career, and photographic slides of his life; they listen to recorded excerpts from his radio talks.

On the south exterior of the building, facing the tomb, they read memorial plaques which tell his place in the American dream. On the plaque dedicated by the Cherokee Nation, Will Rogers is remembered as the American Adam and democrat.

> WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF OKLAHOMA'S BELOVED NATIVE SON. A MODEST, UNSPOILED CHILD OF THE PLAINS, COWBOY, ACTOR, HUMORIST AND WORLD TRAVELER WHOSE HOMELY PHILOSOPHY AND SUPERIOR GIFTS BROUGHT LAUGHTER AND TEARS TO PRINCE AND COMMONER ALIKE. HIS

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[1]"Biography in Sound," part two.

[2]Interview with Paula Love, July 22, 1963; Life, July 18, 1949, p. 79.

[3]Interview with Paula Love, July 22, 1963

AVERSION TO SHAM AND DECEIT, HIS LOVE OF CANDOR AND SINCERITY, COUPLED WITH ABOUNDING WIT AND AFFABLE REPARTEE, WON FOR HIM UNIVERSAL HOMAGE AND AN APPROPRIATE TITLE, "AMBASSADOR OF GOOD WILL."

The memorial from Variety Clubs International, with representations of Will in Wild West shows, vaudeville, and the Ziegfeld Follies, makes clear Rogers' success: it reads,

TO THE MEMORY OF
WILL ROGERS
THE WORLD'S MOST BELOVED SHOWMAN
A GREAT HUMANITARIAN

And almost in a due line with the tomb is the plaque placed by the Air Transport Association, representing the scheduled airlines of the United States. On it, Will is the American Prometheus.

TO THE MEMORY OF
WILL ROGERS

1879 1935

HE SAW IN AIR TRANSPORTATION A NEW PAGE IN THE CHAPTER OF ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES[.] THROUGH HIS VISION COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE THE CAUSE OF AIR TRANSPORT RECEIVED PHYSICAL ENCOURAGEMENT, MORAL ASSISTANCE AND GUIDING GENIUS AT A TIME WHEN SUCH SUPPORT WAS MOST NEEDED.

At the end of Huckleberry Finn, that All-American boy is planning to flee to the Edenic fastnesses of the Indian Territory. He entered, and came out as Will Rogers, the All-American man, who disappeared into the wilderness of Alaska. He was, and is, an embodiment of the great American dream.

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