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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE NOVELS OF NATHANAEL WEST

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

CARROLL ROBERT SCHOENEWOLF

Norman, Oklahoma

1973

THE NOVELS OF NATHANAEL WEST

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THE NOVELS OF NATHANAEL WEST

I. INTRODUCTION

"YOU ONLY HAVE TIME TO EXPLODE"

Nathanael West did not write much criticism, certainly not enough to earn the title of critic. But the few critical remarks he did make are quite important because they can, without leading into the snares of the intentional fallacy, illuminate the method and the meaning of his novels.[1] Some of his comments apply mainly to particular novels of his, but others are general statements with a consistency and an applicability that make them a highly viable approach through which to understand his writing in general. Moreover, since such an approach explains away some of the "faults" critics have charged him with, it also becomes a way more readily to appreciate him.

In 1933, the year that Miss Lonelyhearts appeared, he theorized about the novel as a genre:

> Lyric novels can be written according to Poe's definition of a lyric poem. The short novel is a distinct form especially fitted for use in this country. France, Spain, Italy have

> a literature as well as the Scandinavian countries. For a hasty people we are too patient with the Bucks, Dreisers and Lewises. Thank God we are not all Scandinavians.
>
> Forget the epic, the master work. In America fortunes do not accumulate, the soil does not grow, families have no history. Leave slow growth to the book reviewers, you only have time to explode. Remember William Carlos Williams' description of the pioneer women who shot their children against the wilderness like cannonballs. Do the same with your novels.
>
> Psychology has nothing to do with reality nor should it be used as motivation. The novelist is no longer a psychologist. Psychology can become something much more important. The great body of case histories can be used in the way the ancient writers used their myths. Freud is your Bulfinch; you can not learn from him.[2]

A year earlier in "Some Notes on Violence" he had expressed opinions which amplify what he said in the passage above. American newspapers demonstrate, he asserted, that violence is "idiomatic" in America to the extent that "to make the front page a murderer has to use his imagination. . . ." West again compares the American to the European writer: "For a European writer to make violence real, he has to

do a great deal of careful psychology and sociology. He often needs three hundred pages to motivate one little murder. But not so the American writer. His audience has been prepared and is neither surprised nor shocked if he omits artistic excuses for familiar events."[3]

The key statements in these passages compose a literary theory that both defends the kind of novel that West had already written and formulates the kind he was to write. To summarize: he is saying that the American novel of the Thirties should be short, highly compressed. Violence should be not only the subject but also the method; that is, the acts and the images should be violent, and they should be presented bald--without psychological or sociological explanation. This means that the writer must distill his materials from case histories compiled by such writers as Freud.

Accordingly, West's plots consist basically of series of violent events which increase in intensity until they climax in some degree of destruction. These events, individually or as a progression, get little or no explanation from the author, and need none. Beyond telling us that Miss Lonelyhearts has the seed of fanatical religion in his psyche, West does not have to explain his protagonist's progress toward his hysterical conversion because William James already has. Horatio Alger likewise has made unnecessary West's going into detail about both the irony and the inevitability of Lemuel's gradual

dismantlement, and Sigmund Freud already has explained Balso's search for identity. Only in The Day of the Locust, for which West has done his own case studies, does he include any notable amount of explaining, and that fact helps make clear why, with 162 pages, his last novel is his longest.[4]

A characteristic of West's plots which increases their compression is that they always have a dual movement or direction. They move toward disintegration on the one hand, but toward an integrating victory on the other hand. Miss Lonelyhearts grows more and more sick and finally meets a violent death, but he dies having achieved the inner peace and harmony he has been needing and looking for.

Though Lemuel Pitkin is assassinated, the fascistic Americans he has been fighting for unite and triumph. In the other two novels the destruction itself turns out to be at least partly creative, for one of the contrapuntal movements reaches a constructive result. The false Balso falls away as the real Balso emerges. And while Tod Hackett is experiencing a fracture of both his leg and his mind, he is also mentally finishing the painting which represents the artistic achievement he has been growing toward.

West's plotting makes a good contrast to that of Shakespeare. Though both writers borrowed their plot from written sources, they did so very differently. Shakespeare

often started with a relatively bare series of happenings, such as those in Plutarch's Lives, and added a great deal of psychology. West went to sources that contained a lot of psychology and limited his borrowings mainly to the actions explained by the psychology.

As a result of this, he drew characters that, at least as they appear in his writings, are relatively flat. But they gain some depth through West's written sources or, rather, through the knowledge the reader has of those sources or of the psychology in them. Many people know a good bit of Freudian or Jamesian psychology who have never read any of those authors' books. Their psychology is general and generally known because it describes what exists in society. Their function, in fact, is to collect particular histories and, explicitly or implicitly, generalize from them. Rather than inventing a particular individual, West borrows the general type, the classic case, and uses him as a vehicle through which to make a statement, usually about America.

Thus his characterization is usually confined to description of a distinctive gesture or other perceived significant detail. The detail has the function of identifying the character with the general type distilled from the source. Every time a particular character appears, he displays the same characteristic, or cluster of characteristics. Thus West repeatedly points to the nervous hands of Homer Simpson, the cynically derisive tone and

words of Shrike, the blindly optimistic frailty of Betty Frail. Every thing these characters do, all their actions and dialogue, is summarized by one or more significant detail associated with them. In this regard, West is not unlike such writers as Charles Dickens and Nathaniel Hawthorne, who present characters with meaningfully red eyes, or with prominent bumps on their foreheads.

Because of the relatively close relation between the different statements he makes in his various novels, as well as because of his economy as a writer, West employs many of the same character types more than once. The frequent similarity of both the characteristic detail and the name indicates that West was very conscious of what he was doing in this regard. The Betty in Miss Lonelyhearts as well as the Betty in A Cool Million is disgustingly naive; George B. Simpson in Miss Lonelyhearts and Homer Simpson in Locust have in common their morbidity and sterility; Fay Doyle and Faye Greener, though unlike in some ways, are both castrating bitches. Other characters are alike also, though their names are different. Janey Davenport, equally as innocent as Betty of Miss Lonely-hearts, ends up equally pregnant and unmarried, and Balso Snell, Shrike, and Claude Estee are all capable of devas-tating cynicism.

West's method of handling character and plot have made him the target of some unfair criticism. Critics

have charged that his novels are weak because they contain no fully developed characters. Also, every one of his novels has been said, by one critic or another, to be formless. When the critics talk about his formlessness, they usually mean that the novels have no tightly dramatic plots. In short, they are denigrating him for not writing like Shakespeare or like Henry James. Unfairly, they are unwilling or unable to grant West his donnée.

As for the accusation of formlessness, even if West does not create tight cause and effect structures, he does give enough coherence to his novels to make them more than merely episodic. For one thing, even though the elaborate passages of psychological probings are absent, the psychological cause and effect relationship is still there. We find out in the first chapter that Miss Lonelyhearts has both the propensity and the need for the religious conversion that takes place in the last chapter. We learn in the first chapter that Tod Hackett is a victim of the dream that almost destroys him in the riot of the last chapter. In between the first and last chapters of each novel West provides a bridge of symbolic characters and events which clarify his main character type and progress steadily and inexorably to the final effect.

His novels gain considerable coherence from other elements of his high craftsmanship, including his treatment of point of view and tone. An omniscient author narrates

all four novels, but the tone of each is different because the point of view character is. The satirizing voice that is a minor part of Miss Lonelyhearts and Locust is the prevalent one in Balso Snell, in which the title character is also the central intelligence. A Cool Million is totally different from the other novels because in it West tells a mock-Alger tale with a mock-Alger voice. Miss Lonelyhearts and Locust are most alike in this as in other respects, both having point of view characters with complex attitudes, the primary one being a painful kind of compassion. The main point is that all, A Cool Million having the only notable slips, have a consistency of narration that lends coherence to them. And coherence is a vital necessity in a novel in which not only unity but also compression is desired.

Complicating his focal characters in his two most successful novels is one way West adds richness to his narrative compression. Both Miss Lonelyhearts and Tod Hackett (and Balso Snell, in a literary sense) are young men "with a whole set of personalities, one inside the other like a nest of Chinese boxes."[5] Besides compassion, the two feel the cynicism that Shrike and Claude represent. Moreover, even though they perceptively see through the delusions that trap the people they are involved with, they both fall victim to the same traps. And they both suffer. Especially they suffer the time-bomb nervousness

that nearly all of West's characters do. Tod's particular complexity even includes the ability to see into the future. He is a Jeremiah, and so is West himself as the omniscient author of all his novels. The effect he achieves with a narrational intelligence so complicated, involved, and omniscient is much the same as that Eliot obtained through Tiresias in The Waste Land.[6]

West is also similar to Eliot in his use of imagery. Like Eliot's, West's images are startlingly unusual and are also sharply concrete. In Locust he shows us quail feathers with tiny drops of blood trembling on their tips, a realistic reproduction of a dead horse with belly distended and mouth set in an agonized grin, and performers who are driven by a staring audience "to spin crazily and leap into the air with twisted backs like hooked trout."[7] Such visual images reveal the artist's eye that West developed in his drawing, perhaps, but his equally effective tactile, auditory, and olfactory images suggest a broader talent.

Eliot's images generally function two ways, often two ways at once. They evoke particular sensations or emotions, and they deliver symbolical meanings. West's images also accomplish both things. The blood-tipped quail feather evokes the feeling of sadness, and it also symbolizes death, disaster, victimization, and other things. The feather, the horse with its agonized grin, and the

hooked trout all have associations with violence, and for that reason are especially characteristic of West. Images which are at the same time emotive, meaningful, and violent are one of the primary means through which West achieves his concentration and his tension. When he uses images recurringly, as he does in each novel, they lend unity. The excremental images in Balso Snell, for example, or the mechanical images in Locust help unify those books.[8]

The symbolism of West's images makes it possible to see him in the movement that traced a path from Poe to such French symbolists as Baudelaire and Laforgue and then to Eliot. He read them all. But he could have picked up everything he wanted of the symbolist technique from his extensive knowledge of Eliot, Pound, and Yeats.[9] The possibility that he got his use of emotive symbolism there gains support from the fact that his way of making written sources so basic to his work must also have derived to some extent from those same modern poets and from James Joyce, whom he also knew well.[10]

There is another path which, in America at least, also begins with Poe and comes through Hawthorne to West, a path of hypnogogical writing. West's haunted mind creates a nightmarish half-world with the constant threat of violence in its atmosphere. Many of the people of his half-world are physical grotesques: a seven-foot hunchback girl, a hydrocephalic dwarf, a scalped, one-eyed,

wooden-legged teenager. Nearly all of the characters, like Sherwood Anderson's, are mental or emotional grotesques: the blindly optimistic Bettys and the deeply suffering Miss Lonelyhearts with a Christ complex. These people are perpetrators and victims of perverted sex, desperate delusions, and raw violence. The characteristic laughter of this world is horrible and hysterical, typified by Harry Greener, who laughs in movie scenes shot in insane asylums or haunted castles. It is the kind of desperate, frightened laughter found in Poe, a phony, useless laughter that fails to destroy humbugs, a laughing at one's own bitter laugh. West's particular kind of joking infects his reader with an uneasy laugh, making it easy to understand how the bases of West's present popularity could include his being a progenitor of the black humor of the 60's.[11] The overall effect of West's hypnogogical world is surrealistic, but he denied being a surrealistic writer.[12]

In his prose style West most closely resembles Hemingway, whose work he admired with few reservations.[13] Not that one derived from the other. As Josephine Herbst points out, many serious young writers of the time employed "athletic prose."[14] West apparently believed the same thing about his sentences that he did about his novels and even his chapters--that they should be short and compact. Thus his sentences are aphoristic in their precision and pithiness. Indeed, a characteristic of his style is the

inclusion of old sayings, usually modified satirically. His head was full of them. It was also full of metaphors and similies, which he preferred to adjectives. And like Hemingway, he typically used action verbs. Here is a representative passage from Miss Lonelyhearts:

> Why laugh at myself . . . when Shrike was waiting at the speakeasy to do a much better job? "Miss Lonelyhearts, my friend, I advise you to give your readers stones. When they ask for bread don't give them crackers as does the Church, and don't, like the State, tell them to eat cake. Explain that man cannot live by bread alone and give them stones. Teach them to pray each morning: 'Give us this day our daily stones.'"
>
> He had given his readers many stones; so many, in fact, that he had only one left--the stone that had formed in his gut.
>
> Suddenly tired, he sat down on a bench. If he could only throw the stone. He searched the sky for a target. But the gray sky looked as if it had been rubbed with a soiled eraser. It held no angels, flaming crosses, olive-bearing doves, wheels within wheels. Only a newspaper struggled in the air like a kite with a broken spine. He got up and started again for the speakeasy.[15]

Not just his style but virtually all the elements of West's method, which his style so effectively integrates, stand revealed in that passage. They are all there: the imminent violence, the black humor, the concrete and startling images, the symbolism, the nightmarish atmosphere, the playing with well-worn sayings. The whole passage is a plot action naked of any explained psychology, and as a characterization of Miss Lonelyhearts it helps identify him with a certain group of case histories in the writings of William James.

West borrows from James, Freud, Alger, and others, and his fictional technique has aspects in common with such writers as Poe, Hawthorne, Eliot, Joyce, and Hemingway. But he remains unique because his method is not a mechanical piecing together but an organic assimilation. His heart, and therefore his fiction, is a lyre which certain melodies cause to vibrate, but the song ultimately produced is its own. And it is a song about America sung by a distinctively American voice. West turns out to be an American Homer who sets down certain myths derived from studies of the collective conscious and unconscious of the American race. He embodies his myths in four brief novels which, like the thirty-seven years of his life, are highly concentrated and explosive.

NOTES

[1]T. S. Eliot is relevant here in his repeatedly expressed belief that the poet, either consciously or unconsciously, used his critical writings "to defend the kind of poetry he is writing, or to formulate the kind that he wants to write," On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 17. West was not a poet, at least not in the traditional sense, but Eliot could just as validly have made his generalization about novelists.

[2]"Some Notes on Miss Lonelyhearts," Contempo, III, No. 9 (May 15, 1933), 1-2.

[3]Contact, I, No. 3 (1932), 132-133.

[4]This is the length of the novel in The Complete Works of Nathanael West (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), pp. 259-421. Since all four novels are printed with the same format in this volume, it offers the most accurate comparison. The shortest novel in this edition is Balso Snell with 58 pages.

[5]Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust in The Complete Works, p. 260.

[6]According to Jay Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 60, West's familiarity with Tiresias goes back to his college days, when he first read Eliot and Jesse Weston.

[7]The Day of the Locust, pp. 264, 274, 330.

[8]Some types of images appear in all four books; for example, animal images, which receive analysis by Robert J. Flavin, "Animal Imagery in the Work of Nathanael West," Thoth, V (Spring, 1965), 25-30.

[9]Martin, pp. 68-70.

[10]Martin, p. 112.

[11]Jay Martin, "Introduction," Nathanael West, ed. Martin, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Clifts, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 10.

[12]Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life, p. 338.

[13]Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life, p. 224.

[14]"Nathanael West," Kenyon Review, XXIII (1961), 611.

[15]Miss Lonelyhearts in The Complete Works, p. 71.

II. THE DREAM LIFE OF BALSO SNELL

"WHERE LITERATURE ENDS AND I BEGIN"

Though scholars have been quick to notice Joycean influences upon The Dream Life of Balso Snell (1931), they have failed to recognize the thematic similarity: Joyce through Dedalus, and West through Balso, are involved in the same quest.[1] They are both seeking artistic self-identification. To find the real artistic self or, rather, to free that self, they are both throwing off certain influences. For Joyce the influences are family, church, and state; for West the influences are mainly literary. Probably the most important single passage in Balso Snell, because it relates most directly to this theme, is a speech by the character Beagle Darwin: "You once said to me that I talk like a man in a book. I not only talk, but think and feel like one. I have spent my life in books; literature has deeply dyed my brain its own color. This literary coloring is a protective one--like the brown of the rabbit or the checks of the quail--making it impossible for me to tell where literature ends and I begin."[2] In Balso Snell West very deliberately draws the line between literature and himself, or between what he has read and what he is

going to write.

While West's theme is most immediately Joycean, his method is most nearly Freudian. Freud is a Bulfinch for West in all his novels, but in none so fundamentally as in his first novel. To be specific, The Dream Life of Balso Snell derives its structure and effect and much of its imagery from Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams. Next to the novel itself, no book is more vital to the understanding of Balso Snell.

It is not surprising that Joyce and Freud should play such primary roles in West's first book. Jay Martin makes it clear that between the time West began the book in 1923 and the time he published it in 1931 he became very familiar with the writings of both men.[3] Anyone who knew Freud knew his work on dreams, since from the time of A. A. Brill's 1913 translation, that book received more attention than any of Freud's works.[4] West's apparent attitude toward the literary use of Freud was not unique, of course. A writer in Little Review suggested as early as 1916 that "the Freudian searching into motives is the accredited material of the novelist; the use of dream symbols the very stuff of the poet."[5] The writers of Transition--some of whom West met while in Paris in 1926-1927--believed that "the study of the dream . . . is a poetic-esthetic liberation."[6]

Certain biographical facts about West reveal why he was so receptive to both Joyce and Freud, for these

facts document the notion that West was experiencing an identity crisis coincident with the first few years he worked on Balso Snell. Jay Martin sees trouble in the fact that West's Jewish parents, upon emigration from Russia, shed too quickly and completely the traditions, histories, and recollections which their children needed as the roots of their identities.[7] Whatever the cause, West manifested his identity problem several ways. One of these is his repeatedly changing his name. Born Nathan Weinstein, he began signing his name Nathaniel von Wallenstein while at Brown University (1922-1924), and finally changed it legally in August of 1926 to Nathanael West. Another way he revealed his preoccupation with identity was through his compulsive role playing. As a youth "he related fantasy stories to his cousins as convincingly as if they had been his own true experiences, even when the listeners would know them to be untrue."[8] Even his voracious reading suggested his search for identity: "In the strange combinations of his reading both in the moderns and in traditional literature, from the Church Fathers and the mystics to Flaubert, West was instinctively working his way to a secular absolutism of self and art."[9]

Balso Snell is a literary expression of that working toward absolutism of self and art. While he was writing that novel, West apparently believed along with Albert Mordell that "a literary work stands in the same

relation to the author as the dream to the patient."[10] West makes his novel an extended dream, one which accomplishes what Freud claimed all dreams, except anxiety dreams, accomplish--wish fulfillment. It is possible to understand the novel as a literary working out of the wish to find the artistic self without having read Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams, but the father of psychoanalysis makes that understanding both easy to achieve and hard to refute.

But as a preface to a demonstration of that assertion, I want to make clear that, as it implies, West does not entirely forsake the traditional devices of literary expression for those devices peculiar to the Freudian dream. Since dreams and fictions both originate in the unconscious, a natural overlapping of modes takes place. That is what makes the dream structure so readily adaptable to literature. But Freud especially associated certain characteristics with dreams which West makes particular use of, so that the Freudian approach to dreams provides for West his most important literary techniques in Balso Snell.

Probably two of the most significant dream characteristics in the novel are that it is completely egoistical and that every character in it is part of the same ego. Freud could have been talking about this novel when he said about dreams,

> It has been my experience--and to this I have found no exception--that every dream treats of one's own person. Dreams are absolutely egotistical. In cases where not my ego, but only a strange person occurs in the dream content, I may safely assume that my ego is concealed behind that person by means of identification. I am permitted to supplement my ego. On other occasions when my ego appears in the dreams, I am given to understand by the situation in which it is placed that another person is concealing himself behind the ego. In this case the dream is intended to give me notice that in the interpretation I must transfer something which is connected with this person--the hidden common feature--to myself. There are also dreams in which my ego occurs along with other persons which the resolution of the identification again shows to be my ego."[11]

It is certainly not difficult to see all the characters in Balso Snell as the composite literary ego of West the writer. The most important "hidden common feature" becomes revealed when, about halfway into the story, Balso realizes that the Trojan horse inside which his journey is taking place is "inhabited solely by writers in search of an

audience" (37). Since the plot structure of the novel consists of Balso meeting a succession of characters who are parts of his composite ego, it seems apparent that the structure itself could derive from the ego splitting.

Another clue that each of the characters is part of the composite ego is the fact that each represents at least one of the literary works or writers which strongly influenced West. Even a highly simplified summary of the plot demonstrates this. The first figure Balso meets is a man with "Tours" embroidered on his cap who represents mythology primarily. Borrowing from Poe and Swift, West stages an updated battle of the ancients and moderns, with the Tours man defending "The Grandeur that was Greece and the Glory that was Rome" against "the inventors and perfectors of the automatic water-closet" (6). After their tempers cool, the Tours man tells Balso an old-world fable about the sage Apollonius.

The second character Balso meets is a Catholic mystic named Maloney the Areopægite who is writing a biography of Saint Puce, a flea that lived "beneath the arm of our Lord" and died when the crucifiction cut off his source of food. From Jay Martin we learn facts about Maloney and Saint Puce. We learn that West was deeply interested in and knowledgeable about the Catholic church, especially in its mysticism, and that he attended High Mass with, among other people, a friend named Mahoney. The Saint Puce story was originally part of a speech West wrote for a

friend to present while they were both still at Brown in June 1924.[12]

After hearing the end of Maloney's hagiography, Balso wanders on until he finds a diary hidden in the hollow of a tree. The diary is really a crime journal written by John Raskolnikov Gilson describing his pathological murder of an idiotic dishwasher. Obviously this character represents the influence of Dostoevsky. The shape and color of the idiot's throat, his laugh, and the fact that he does not wear a collar are the motives Gilson gives for his crime. This character also suggests considerable Freudianism. He rationalizes his murder by "thinking of the torture I would have to go through if I frustrated my desire to commit murder" (20), and he commits the crime while naked and sexually aroused. Freud and Dostoevsky strongly colored West's brain.

Before Balso can get away, Gilson forces him to buy one of his pamphlets. Though the pamphlet contains some names of writers and also some allusions--to Wordsworth, for example, in Gilson's search for yesterday's emotions--it has mainly to do with role playing. Gilson describes his relations with a girl named Saniette, relations which were "those of performer and audience." In order to keep Saniette interested, Gilson assumes a "sequence of theatrical poses," each more extreme than the last: "I found it necessary to shorten my long outpourings; to make them, by straining my imagination,

spectacular. Oh, how much work goes into the search for the odd, the escape from the same" (27)! It is hard to read that description of the entertainment that is odd, spectacular, and short, without thinking of West's novels. And the matter of poses suggests a man trying out different identities in order to find the right one for him. The role shifting of Beagle Darwin, two episodes later, is especially reminiscent of West himself. Just as West changed his name, so Beagle Darwin, labeling each new role, goes to B. Hamlet Darwin, and finally to Beagle Dionysius Hamlet Darwin.[13]

Shortly after reading Gilson's pamphlet, Balso meets Miss McGeeney, Gilson's school teacher. She admits to being a writer as well as a teacher, and her work in progress is a biography of Samuel Perkins, who is the biographer of E. F. Fitzgerald, who is the biographer of D. B. Hobson, who is the biographer of Boswell--"each one in his or her turn a tin can on the tail of Doctor Johnson" (33). Miss McGeeney, of course, symbolizes the influences of academia on West. Randall Reid makes a good case for the claim that, especially in her preoccupation with her subject's talented nose--a nose which "had built from the odors of his wife's body an architecture and an esthetic, a music and a mathematic"--she is also very typical of Huysmans, another favorite of West.[14]

At this point the plot of the novel becomes relatively complicated.[15] Balso leaves Miss McGeeney and goes

to a cafe, where he falls asleep and has a dream--so we have actually a dream within a dream. In his dream Balso meets Janey Davenport, a "beautiful hunchback" whom he tries to seduce. Before she will surrender herself to him, he must kill for her a man named Beagle Darwin, two letters of whose Janey gives Balso to read. The letters take up most of this section of the novel and contain at least two more major influences: in the satanic character of Beagle that of Aldous Huxley's Antic Hay; and in the playlet that the second letter turns into, the playlet in Antic Hay and James Joyce's Ulysses.[16] Finishing the letters, Balso is awakened by Miss McGeeney, who tells him that the letters are part of a novel she is writing in the Richardson manner.

The few remaining pages of the novel deal with Balso's successful seduction of Miss McGeeney who, a real dream character, first appears nude in a Freudian fountain, then turns into a middle-aged mannish woman wearing horn-rimmed glasses and at last becomes Balso's sexy old sweetheart, Mary, with her legs open behind a very Freudian bush. The series of seduction speeches with which Balso prefaces the sex act are a compendium of such speeches ranging from de Sadean rationalizations to carpe diem arguments, and Mary's initial noes and ultimate yeses range from sentimental innocence to Molly Bloom. The climax of the novel is Balso's sexual climax, making the whole thing a wet dream.

In order to demonstrate my assertion that the characters of Balso Snell constitute the composite ego of West himself I have reduced the story to its basic plot and to the influences which seem to get the most emphasis. But West was a busy reader, and this novel gives the impression of containing something of almost everything he read. In a work of fewer than sixty pages, West refers by name to over thirty writers and thinkers, including painters and philosophers such as Cezanne, Picasso, and Nietzsche.[17] Names being labels that provide identity, West helps highlight his identity theme with all these references. Occasional clusters of invented names seem designed to underline the theme in the same way, as when he lists as possible names for Jewish girls Hernia Hornstein, Paresis Pearlberg, and Paranoia Puntz. The couplings of types of sickness with Jewish last names, incidentally, reveals the same attitude that prompted West to drop the Jewishness from his name. West alludes to even more writers than he names. Less directly than the names, the allusions have to do with identity, but their more important function is to show a brain deeply dyed by literature.

Just as all the egos are actually one ego, so the episodes are the same one repeated again and again. Freud again affords an explanation in his book on dreams: "As far as I can see, the partition of a dream into two unequal portions does not always signify a causal relation

between the thoughts of the two portions. It often appears as though the same material were being presented in the two dreams from different points of view."[18] In later editions, Freud added pertinence by appending parenthetically, "(This is certainly the case where a series of dreams during one night end in an emission or orgasm--a series in which the somatic need finds its way to progressively clearer expression.)"[19] The pattern expressed in Freud's words emerges in the novel. In all the episodes Balso meets audience-seeking writers who irritate him and cause him to flee. Or, to word it thematically, in each episode West introduces and tries to throw off his influences. The conflict consists of the presence of literary influences working against the somatic need for separation of the self from them. Hyman is wrong twice, I think, when he charges that "the book has no form" and that it is "terminated rather than resolved by the orgasm."[20] The book has form because it is a progressive series of encounters taking place on a dream journey up the alimentary canal of a wooden horse and having the same central character experiencing similar situations. The novel's last paragraphs make undeniable that the self has finally achieved its independence:

> His body broke free of the bard. It took on a life of its own; a life that knew nothing of the poet Balso. Only to death can this

release be likened--to the mechanics of decay. After death the body takes command; it performs the manual of disintegration with a marvelous certainty. So now, his body performed the evolutions of love with a like sureness.

. . . . . .

His body screamed and shouted as it marched and uncoiled; then, with one heaving shout of triumph, it fell back quiet.

The army that a moment before had been thundering in his body retreated slowly--victorious, relieved. (61-62)

Those last paragraphs, significantly, are the only ones in the book of which it is not true that, in Light's words, "West satirizes his influences while he reflects them."[21] Light seems to regard the reflections, if not also the satire, as the weakness of a book written not by a grown man but by a "precocious boy." Light does not understand that one method West's quest for reformation of the self takes is ridicule of the false self, the unnatural self of literature.

The complex and subtle way West ridicules his influences is hardly the work of a precocious boy. He is very clever in his caricatures of styles--for example, T. S. Eliot's: "Sir! Stamping her tiny foot--imperative, irate. Sir, how dare you, sir! Do you presume? Down, Rover, I

say down! The prying thumbs of insolent chauffeurs. The queen chooses. Elizabeth of England, Catherine of Russia, Faustina of Rome" (60). He also cleverly caricatures ideas, for example Emerson's theory of natural compensation: Samuel Perkins is deaf and almost blind and dumb but he has a nose "able to translate the sensations, sound, sight, taste, and touch, into that of smell"; Janey Davenport is a sore-covered hunchback, but she has "one hundred and forty-four exquisite teeth in rows of four" (34-35, 38). West also extends his abilities at caricaturing to genres (literary criticism on 57) and to traditional themes (ubi sunt on 54), and nearly all his characters are exaggerations.

His caricatures are exaggerations that achieve absurdity, but some of his absurdities are not caricatures. Probably most absurd of all is the fact that Balso's glorious quest begins in the "Anus Mirabilis" of, and continues in the corridor-like intestines West has invented for, the Trojan horse. Even the absurdities which are not caricatures are ridiculed. Freud gives support here: "Thus the dream is made absurd if there occurs as one of the elements in the dream thoughts the judgment 'That is nonsense,' and in general if disdain and criticism are the motives for one of the trains of unconscious thought."[22] One way to destroy the power of literary influences over oneself is to laugh them away, or at least into subordination.

The scatology initiated by the opening mention of the anus of the horse and pervasive throughout the novel is a way of both ridiculing and showing disgust. And often it is hard to tell whether West is amused or repulsed, as when he invents a pseudo-mythological race of men known as the Phoenix Excrementi, who "eat themselves, digest themselves, and give birth to themselves by evacuating their bowels" (5). Or when he has Gilson talk about the pretentiously sophisticated bourgeois audience--the kind for which West is not searching--for whom Gilson plans someday to write a play in which the cast will suddenly turn to the audience and shout Chekov's advice that "it would be more profitable for the farmer to raise rats for the granary than for the bourgeois to nourish the artist, who must always be occupied with undermining institutions." Having suggested that the artist constantly shits on them figuratively, Gilson would then make literal the act by having the ceiling of the theater open and release tons of loose excrement on them (30-31). The excremental imagery may even include the title. At least it seems to me that Reid's guess that "Balso Snell" is a variant of "asshole smell" is as good a guess as any other that has been offered.[23] And West even carried the scatology as far as his favorite inscription for the book--"from one horse's ass to another"--thereby perhaps hinting subtly at "asshole smell" as well as at a particular identification with his main character.[24]

Besides amusement and disgust, the excremental references and the setting of the horse's alimentary canal also indicate the idea of elimination. West may have had in mind the notion that unpleasant matter can be eliminated through the bowels, a notion that Freud mentions in The Interpretation of Dreams.[25]

One of Freud's biggest assertions in his book is that "the majority of the dreams of adults treat of sexual material and give expression to erotic wishes."[26] Balso Snell certainly contains enough sexual material to qualify for that majority, and much of the material is unmistakenly Freudian. Two of the characters, Maloney the Areopægite and Mary McGeeney, are nude when he meets them. According to Freud, "dreams of nakedness . . . are exhibition dreams."[27] Since all of West's characters are writers, he might be saying something about writing being a form of exposing oneself indecently. Freud also claims that the snake is the most important of all the symbols of the male organ, which means that the Tours man's "old-world fable" concerning a snake entering "the lower part of a man's body" is considerably more sexual than excremental. The most important part of the sexual pattern is the sexual climax which forms the book's climax, making "climax" a pun West surely must have intended. Balso's having intercourse with a woman who has come to stand for a great many, perhaps all, literary influences may be West's way of saying to them, "screw you"! or, perhaps more accurately,

of coming to terms with them. At any rate, the release afforded by the sexual act works along with ridicule and elimination to get rid of the unreal selves.

The sexual and excremental patterns seem tied to a collateral pattern of anxiety and unrest. Each episode contains some form of painful irritation: the physically painful thumb tack in the skin of Maloney the Areopægite; the criminal neuroses of John Rasknolnikov Gilson; the mental anguish of the pregnant but unmarried Janey Davenport. Several passages are clear symbolic expressions of the pervading irritation, such as the one in which Gilson, dropping the role of Raskolnikov and taking on that of de Sade, explains why he beats his friend Saniette: "This evening I am very nervous. I have a sty on my eye, a cold sore on my lip, a pimple in the corner of my mouth, and a drop of salt snot on the end of my nose. Because I rub them continually my nostrils are inflamed, sore and angry" (28).

Not satisfied with that explanation, Gilson delivers in way of further clarification what perhaps is the most striking and effective symbol of the book, and the most Freudian:

> "When you think of me, Saniette," I said, "think of two men--myself and the chauffeur within me. This chauffeur is very large and dressed in ugly ready-made clothing. His

> shoes, soiled from walking about the streets of a great city, are covered with animal ordure and chewing gum. His hands are covered with coarse woolen gloves. On his head is a derby hat.
>
> "The name of this chauffeur is The Desire to Procreate.
>
> "He sits within me like a man in an automobile. His heels are in my bowels, his knees on my heart, his face in my brain. His gloved hands hold me firmly by the tongue; his hands, covered with wool, refuse me speech for the emotions aroused by the face in my brain" (29).

This symbol is effective partly because it is imaginative, but mostly because it brings together so many of the motifs. The internal chauffeur wears irritating wool gloves and has excrement on his shoes. He is sexual because he is the desire to procreate. He stifles expression, apparently because he is alien and even antagonistic to the real self--"myself and the chauffeur within me."

The complexity of the chauffeur symbol is typical of the complexity and richness of the novel in general. Another example of this richness is the merging of the sexual and excremental patterns with a circle pattern. One place West brings the three together is at the beginning of the dream in Balso's song:

Round as the Anus
Of a Bronze horse
Or the tender buttons
Used by Horses for Ani
. . . . . .
Full Ringing Round
As the Belly of Silenus
Giotto Painter of Perfect Circles
Goes . . . One Motion Round

Round and Full
Round and Full as
A Brimming Goblet
The Dew-Loaded Navel
of Mary . . . .

The chief significance of the circle imagery is its connection with the search for the Real. The Tours man indicates this connection in a pseudo-philosophic argument addressed to Balso: "If reality is singular then there are no feet in nature, if plural, a great many. If the world is one . . . then nothing either begins or ends. Feet are attached to ends, by definition. Moreover, if everything is one, and has neither ends nor beginnings, then everything is a circle. A circle has neither a beginning nor an end. A circle has no feet" (9). Later John Gilson associates the Real and the circle in a speech that pictures the difficulty of pinning down the Real:

"Reality! Reality! If I could only discover the Real. A Real that I could know with my senses. A Real that would wait for me to inspect it as a dog inspects a dead rabbit. But, alas! when searching for the Real I throw a stone into a pool whose ripples become of advancing less importance until they are too large for connection with, or even memory of, the stone agent" (14).

Such passages have to do not so much with the search for the artistic self as with the search for the artistic subject. A writer has to have something to write about. Of course, what he writes about helps identify him. But West's occupation with the subject of art has led most scholars away from the identity theme. Light, for instance, asserts that the novel "undoubtedly deals with one of the central themes of literature: the conflict between idealism and materialism."[28] Comerchero believes that "the theme of literary falseness vs. the truth of reality shares center stage with the following problem, simply stated: the world of books is an unreal world which paradoxically heightens man's awareness of the real world around him."[29] Reid holds that the novel is a satire directed "at certain forms of pseudo-art--at the derivative, the pretentious, the fashionable."[30] Except in their emphasis these writers are all correct and are all saying basically the same thing--that important in Balso Snell is the attempt to discover Reality or Truth. The merging of

the circle image with those of the asshole and navel indicates that in trying to determine a secular absolutism of art, as in working his way to an absolutism of self, West uses the method of expunging everything that is not a legitimate part of himself or his art.

Whether Joyce writes it or West, the search for the artist within oneself is a universal theme. Every writer has to find himself. But getting to that self is different for each individual. For Joyce it meant breaking with traditions he grew up in, traditions associated with family, church, and state. Having less deeply felt ties to such traditions, West concerned himself more with breaking away from literary influences which permeated his brain.

The fictional expression of the quest is also an individual matter. Joyce uses Bulfinch as his Bulfinch; West uses Freud. Bringing to the surface the literature dyeing and therefore agitating his brain and then expunging it with ridicule, disgust, excrement, and finally sexual release is for West psychoanalytic therapy. He is not only the writer of the book, but also the dreamer of the dream. For just as a novel presupposes a writer, a dream assumes a dreamer. Given the complexity and richness and effectiveness of West's dream book, it is no wonder that so many critics have been able to say so many different things about it and, in that way and in direct statement, have

revealed an increasing respect for it. It is not as great a piece of art as Miss Lonelyhearts or as The Day of the Locust, but neither is it the work of a "precocious boy."

NOTES

[1]One of the first to remark the Joycean influences was James F. Light, Nathanael West: An Interpretative Study (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1961), who at one point mentions the confused, surrealistic form of both Balso Snell and Ulysses and reveals at the same time that West's friend I. J. Kapstein called Joyce's Walpurgisnacht scene "the major influence on The Dream Life" (41). Elsewhere Light notes that the prayer spoken by Stephen Dedalus at the end of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man recurs when Balso, just setting out on his journey, utters a satiric version: "O Beer! O Meyerbeer! O Bach! O Offenbach! Stand me now as ever in good stead" (55-56).

Some scholars have made comments that suggest various degrees of recognition of the identity theme. Alan Ross writes that Balso Snell analyzes "only the disintegration of the Self" in his introduction to The Complete Works of Nathanael West (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. xi. A. M. Tibbets believes that "West's main theme . . . is centered on the fractured personality, a person who cut off from humanity and whose world is without

sanity or meaning," in "Nathanael West's The Dream Life of Balso Snell," Studies in Short Fiction, II (Winter, 1965), 105. Jay Martin comes closest of all: "The central theme of Balso Snell is that in contemporary life art has become merely a way by which each man seeks to define his individual ego. . . ." in Nathanael West: The Art of His Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 129.

[2]The Dream Life of Balso Snell in The Complete Works of Nathanael West (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 47. Within this chapter, future references to this work will be indicated with parenthetical page numbers.

[3]Martin, pp. 112, 131-132.

[4]Frederick Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1945), p. 48.

[5]Florence Kiper Frank, "Psycho-analysis: Some Random Thoughts Thereon," Little Review, III (1916), p. 16.

[6]Eugene Jolas, "The Dream," Transition, XIX-XX (1930), p. 47.

[7]Martin documents the identity problem of West extensively in chapters two through five of his biography.

[8]Martin, p. 32.

[9]Martin, p. 50.

[10]Quoted by Hoffman, p. 96.

[11]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. A. A. Brill (London: G. Allen and Co., 1913), pp. 299-300.

[12]Martin, pp. 58, 73.

[13]The name Beagle Dionysius Hamlet Darwin is rich in possibilities. Dionysius is the hardest of the components to deal with because there were several important men by that name. Since most of them were deeply religious, one even a pope and a saint, the name probably carries religious connotations. So that name may suggest the search for religious truth, Hamlet for philosophical truth, Darwin for scientific truth, and Beagle for the more tangible--collectively they reinforce the quest motif. Another possibility is that the last three names represent the addition to a basically sensuous nature of religious, literary, and scholarly aspects.

[14]Randall Reid, The Fiction of Nathanael West (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 30-32.

[15]Though I can find no biographical evidence that West read Conrad, the multiple points of view which complicate Balso Snell certainly indicate a possible influence.

[16]The Huxley influence is pointed out by Reid, p. 34.

[17]The fact that West includes a relatively high number of painters, compared with the fact that he thought of himself as an artist, is another sign that the novel has personal applications. Moreover, it may be relevant to this novel that as a young aspirant in art he attempted "to find his own style in trying out the styles of others" (Martin, p. 65).

[18]Freud, p. 293.

[19]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1953), p. 301.

[20]Stanley Edgar Hyman, Nathanael West (University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 21, 1962), p. 15. Victor Comerchero, Nathanael West: The Ironic Prophet (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1964), p. 53, talks about the "boisterous formlessness of the novel." On the other hand, a defender of the book's form is Thomas M. Lorch, "The Inverted Structure of Balso Snell," Studies in Short Fiction IV (1966), pp. 33-41.

[21]Light, p. 54.

[22]Freud (Brill), p. 341.

[23]Guesses about the name Balso Snell take two directions. Some explicators, like Reid associate the name with excrement. Others, such as Light--who opts for "balls of Snell," relate the name to the concluding orgasm. West possibly had both those meanings in mind, and maybe a few others too.

[24]Martin, p. 127.

[25]Freud (Brill), p. 96.

[26]Freud (Brill), p. 240.

[27]Freud (Brill), p. 207. Interestingly, Alan Ross calls the novel "a piece of extreme exhibitionism" in his introduction to The Complete Works of Nathanael West, p. xii.

[28]Light, p. 44. The same author also says that "the most important influence is Dada's anti-intellectualism, for more than anything else Balso is a hysterical, obscure shriek against the intellect" (59). That statement is another example of the focus on subject, but it also reveals that West's choice of the dream form leads some to incorrectly place Balso Snell in the pigeonhole of Dadaism.

[29]Comerchero, p. 52.

[30]Reid, p. 40.

III. *MISS LONELYHEARTS*

"PORTRAIT OF A PRIEST OF OUR TIME"

Having exorcised the ghosts of all the writers haunting him, West is able in his second novel to settle into a mode comfortably his own. His basic method remains essentially the same--in *Miss Lonelyhearts*, as in *Balso Snell*, West is a master of compressive writing--and that fact bears witness that he had less need to exorcise his influences than he must have thought, or felt. As his primary means of achieving the compression of his second book, he takes as his Bulfinch not only Freud (and perhaps Dostoevsky again) but, most importantly, William James.

West himself pointedly emphasizes his debt to the religious psychology of James in some notes about the novel:

> *Miss Lonelyhearts* became the portrait of a priest of our time who has a religious experience. His case is classical and is built on all the cases in James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*. The psychology is theirs not mine. The imagery is mine. Chapt. I--

> malajustment. Chapt. III--the need for taking symbols literally is described through a dream in which a symbol is actually flashed. Chapt. IV--deadness and disorder; see Lives of Bunyan and Tolstoy. Chapt. VI--self-torture by conscious sinning: see life of any saint. And so on.[1]

Without, I trust, falling victim to the intentional fallacy, I will use those words of West as the basis of my approach to the novel. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that Miss Lonelyhearts is a "portrait of a priest of our time who has a religious experience" that is meaningless as far as his suffering parishioners are concerned, and also evil.

Before West's notes will serve properly as an approach, however, they need two immediate qualifications. One is that the chapter listings, which in context seem designed to illustrate the author's exclusive use of James and E. D. Starbuck, go beyond these two sources to include hagiographies, which West himself indicates as source material for Chapter VI, and Freud who, at least as far as West is concerned, probably deserves credit for the idea that symbols need to be taken literally. The other qualification is that though West gives James and Starbuck equal recognition, James so completely assimilates Starbuck that he appears in the novel only as filtered through

James. Accordingly, I will treat James' book as West's primary source.

Further justifying my heavy dependence on James' work is the fact that, as the chapter outline of West's suggests, a significant relationship exists between the classical case of James and the structure of West's novel.[2] West borrowed not just a psychology from James, but a psychological structure as well.

West's protagonist experiences a type of classical case in which the first psychological necessity is a strong propensity toward religious conversion. Looking backward from the mystical climax of the conversion experience, James writes that "whenever we meet with a phenomenon of automatism, be it motor impulses, or obsessive idea, or unaccountable caprice, or delusion, or hallucination, we are bound first of all to make search whether it be not an explosion into the fields of ordinary consciousness, of ideas elaborated outside of those fields in subliminal regions of the mind."[3] During the climax of the novel Miss Lonelyhearts experiences virtually all the automatisms listed, and West prepares for that climax by carefully qualifying his protagonist subliminally. Early in the novel the author tells us that as a boy in his father's Baptist church, Miss Lonelyhearts "had discovered that something stirred in him when he shouted the name of Christ, something secret and enormously powerful. He

had played with this thing, but had never allowed it to come alive."[4] As an adult he came to recognize this suppressed something as religious hysteria. It is his finally allowing, in the final chapter of the novel, this hysteria to come alive that brings forth the automatisms.

In the series of steps, or psychological states, that brings the subliminal hysteria to the surface, the first step is an acute awareness of evil. In Miss Lonelyhearts' case, his column in the newspaper forces the awareness. He had taken the job to get away from doing leg work on the paper and work his way up to a gossip column. Like the rest of the staff, he considered the job a joke, but eventually "he sees that the majority of the letters are profoundly humble pleas for moral and spiritual advice, that they are inarticulate expressions of genuine suffering. He also discovers that his correspondents take him seriously" (106). The fact that West tells us in the second paragraph of the story that "the letters were no longer funny" signals that his modern priest is at this precise stage--awareness of evil--at the beginning of the novel. The protagonist's subliminal peculiarity West reveals in a later expository passage.

The author indicates in his chapter outline that the nature of the evil is dual--deadness and disorder, and that Tolstoy and Bunyan are James' primary examples. For Tolstoy, writes James, "life had been enchanting, it

was now flat and sober, more than sober, dead. Things were meaningless whose meaning had always been self-evident. The questions 'Why?' and 'What next?' began to beset him more and more frequently."[5] Similarly, when the seriousness of the letters forces Miss Lonelyhearts for the first time in his life "to examine the values by which he lives," he finds himself the victim and not the perpetrator of whatever joke his job might be (106).

West underscores the deadness within Miss Lonelyhearts quite obviously through his imagery which, despite the implication of his claim, is not altogether original. He uses the traditional association of darkness with death: Miss Lonelyhearts "lived by himself in a room that was as full of shadows as an old steel engraving" (74-75). He probably was conscious of the old expression about doornails when he had Miss Lonelyhearts see the dead world as "a world of doorknobs" (75). Surely he reminds the reader of Eliot in symbolizing spiritual deadness with a stone and in picturing the little park Miss Lonelyhearts frequents in waste land images: "As far as he could discover, there were no signs of spring. The decay that covered the surface of the mottled ground was not the kind in which life generates. Last year, he remembered, May had failed to quicken these soiled fields. It had taken all the brutality of July to torture a few green spikes through the exhausted dirt" (70). That last line attests, of course, to

the life-giving quality of heat, but it also foreshadows the violence through which Miss Lonelyhearts repeatedly tries to come alive and finally does.

Not just imagery, but character is a means of articulating deadness. It is a special function of the character William Shrike, the jeering feature editor over Miss Lonelyhearts, to represent a particular kind of deadness, and it is the main function of the second chapter of the novel--"Miss Lonelyhearts and the dead pan"--to make the association clear. A man with "features huddled together in a dead, gray triangle" (which at one point he symbolically buries like the blade of a hatchet in the neck of a girlfriend). Shrike is a crooked-billed bird who impales his victims on the thorn of mockery. The novel opens with Miss Lonelyhearts finding on his desk an example of the kind of sacrilegious jest about suffering and its alleviation that Shrike is constantly shrieking at him:

> Soul of Miss L, glorify me.
> Body of Miss L, nourish me.
> Blood of Miss L, intoxicate me.
> Tears of Miss L, wash me.
> Oh good Miss L, excuse my plea,
> And hide me in your heart,
> And defend me from mine enemies.
> Help me, Miss L, help me, help me. . . (65-66).

When Shrike accuses his disciple Goldsmith of being "the

nasty product of this unbelieving age," he is accurately describing himself as well, and Shrike and all his imitators, as "machines for making jokes," are at the same time dead (as any machine is) and murderous. As West put it in an early draft of part of his novel, "the joke of suffering and the joke of comforting killed this world."[6]

Not that West needed a source for such a universal type as the mocking skeptic, but it is possible that James served as one in the case of Shrike and his disciples. James illustrates what he calls, in a phrase from Ecclesiastes, the "all is vanity" state of mind by quoting a passage from Renan, part of which reads, "good-humor is a philosophic state of mind; it seems to say to Nature that we take her no more seriously than she takes us. I maintain that one should always talk of philosophy with a smile. We owe it to the Eternal to be virtuous; but we have the right to add to this tribute our irony as a sort of personal reprisal. In this way we return to the right quarter jest for jest; we play the trick that has been played on us."[7] Shrike does not believe that he owes God any virtuousness nor does he merely smile; in fact, he not only refuses to take Nature or philosophy seriously, but uses his cynical laugh to torture anyone--like Miss Lonelyhearts--who does.

The other basic type of evil--disorder--brings us back to the letters. The letters of Miss Lonelyhearts' correspondents are pleas for help from physical and environmental disorder beyond remedy: from a paralyzed boy

who wants to play the violin, from a woman married to a "religious" Catholic and gradually being killed through child-bearing, from a girl born without a nose, from a fifteen-year-old boy afraid to tell his mother that his deaf and dumb younger sister has been raped and is probably pregnant. As if to be absolutely sure that the reader is saturated with tales of hopeless suffering, West devotes a great deal of space to his letters. He presents five of them--one almost 2,000 words long--over the shoulder of Miss Lonelyhearts in their entirety, has Shrike read several out loud at a party, and has Fay Doyle and Mary Shrike deliver what amount to oral letters. The credibility of these letters is such that William Carlos Williams believed them authentic samples and was moved to ask, "Should such lives as these letters reveal never have been brought to light? Should such people, like the worst of our war wounded, best be kept in hiding?"[8] West, at least for the purposes of his novel, thought such agony should be revealed, if not to convince the reader of its existence, then at least to make credible its effect on his protagonist.

The disordered lives of the letters represent a kind of evil which West outlines for his first chapter with the word mal-adjustment. According to James, for some people evil means "a mal-adjustment with things, a wrong correspondence of one's life with the environment"

which is curable through modification of either the self or the things or both; but for others evil is a wrongness in their essential nature which is incurable by any alteration of the environment or any superficial rearrangement of the inner self, "and which requires a supernatural remedy."[9] In the opening chapter of the novel after reading three of the letters, Miss Lonelyhearts thinks to himself that Christ is "the answer."

Christ is the answer not only for the people writing the letters, but for Miss Lonelyhearts as well, for he suffers an inner maladjustment. His particular kind of disorder, a kind to which James gives a separate chapter, is the divided self or heterogeneous personality, consisting of a disunified moral and intellectual constitution. Miss Lonelyhearts has an abnormally strong urge to put in order the lives of the letter writers, but he comes to realize that before he can do that he must order his own life. Both internal and external order are something man must struggle against Nature to achieve. In a pertinent passage West has his protagonist reason that "man has a tropism for order. Keys in one pocket, change in another. Mandolins are tuned G D A E. The physical world has a tropism for disorder, entrophy. Man against Nature . . . the battle of the centuries. Keys yearn to mix with change. Mandolins strive to get out of tune" (104).

For Miss Lonelyhearts the battle of Man against Nature consists of his futilely going from role to role

in an attempt to keep from surrendering to his true, subliminal self. West's use of the word vocation in relation to "that something that stirred" within Miss Lonelyhearts points to a passage in which James summarizes the similar problem of Tolstoy: "His crisis was the getting of his soul in order, the discovery of its genuine habitat and vocation, the escape from falsehoods into what for him were ways of truth. It was a case of heterogeneous personality tardily and slowly finding its unity and level."[10] For Miss Lonelyhearts it is less a discovering of his genuine vocation than a succumbing to it. He knows early in the story that "this thing was--hysteria" (75).

His job itself is one of the roles he plays, one of the falsehoods he attempts to escape to. The fact that he is a man masquerading as a woman indicates the fraudulence of the pose. Equally fraudulent is his attempt to be what his job in effect makes him--a secular priest for a secular society. As Shrike observes, "The Susan Chesters, the Beatrice Fairfaxes and the Miss Lonelyhearts are the priests of twentieth-century America" (69). His correspondents look to him for guidance and hope, just as parishioners look to their priests for guidance and hope. At one point West draws a confessional scene when, as the crippled Mr. Doyle pours out his soul in person, "like a priest" Miss Lonelyhearts "turned his face slightly away" (24). Actually, Miss Lonelyhearts imagines

himself more than a priest. He smiles at Shrike "as the saints are supposed to have smiled" (122). To Betty he admits having a Christ complex. Priest, saint, and Christ are merely different degrees of the same role, of course. In a chapter of The Brothers Karamazov devoted to Father Zossima, Miss Lonelyhearts reads some important priestly advice: "Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day" (75). Miss Lonelyhearts reflects that the advice is excellent and that if he followed it he would be a big success. But he also knows that there is "little use in his fooling himself. His vocation was of a different sort." His feeble attempts at being a newspaper priest West symbolizes with a newspaper struggling in the air like a kite with a broken spine.

It is the fraudulence of Miss Lonelyhearts' priesthood that West intended to convey in the chapter titled "Miss Lonelyhearts and the lamb," the chapter in which, according to the chapter outline, "the need for taking symbols literally is described through a dream in which a symbol is actually flashed."[11] Really, the chapter

is full of symbols, but the central symbol consists of the failure, in two separate dream sequences, of Miss Lonelyhearts to carry out priestly functions successfully. In the first sequence he manages to fulfill his wish temporarily by bringing doornobs to life while performing as a magician-priest but then is unable to lead his audience-congregation in any prayer except the sacrilegious one Shrike taught him: "Oh Lord, we are not of those who wash in wine, water, urine, vinegar, fire, oil, bay rum, milk, brandy, or boric acid. Oh, Lord, we are of those who wash solely in the Blood of the Lamb" (76). That last phrase touches off the second dream sequence, in which Miss Lonelyhearts bungles an attempt to sacrifice a lamb. The literal truth of the two-part symbolic dream is that Miss Lonelyhearts is no priest.[12]

Nor does he succeed in becoming any of the other escape characters he tries to be. He is unable, for example, to be the domestic man Betty wants him to be. Periodically he lapses into thinking that marriage represents a viable escape, and during one of those periods of self-deception he proposes to her. Marriage offers the comfortable security of the conjugal routine: "his job and her gingham apron, his slippers beside the fireplace and her ability to cook" (80). Moreover, Betty seems to have the ability to impose order on a chaotic world, a chaos his job makes him peculiarly conscious of. Betty "had

often made him feel that when she straightened his tie, she straightened much more" (79). His craving for order brings him back to her repeatedly, but in his saner moments he knows Betty can impose order only on an arbitrarily limited world--one which necessarily excludes the suffering humanity he cannot forget. And so he avoids her for months at a time.

Betty tries also to turn him into a nature-loving innocent. The chapter "Miss Lonelyhearts in the country" has him half-heartedly trying to accept this role by joining Betty on a trip to her aunt's farm in Connecticut. Once she gets him there, she makes him labor with his hands all day long, feeds him healthful meals, listens with him to the sounds of the woods, and gives him her virginity. But even in the country evil is present: "in the deep shade there was nothing but death" (114). When they return to the city he "knew that Betty had failed to cure him and that he had been right when he had said that he could never forget the letters" (115). He cannot lose his awareness of an evil that is inherent in nature itself.

The dichotomy between Miss Lonelyhearts and Betty, to a large degree, has its source in James.[13] In Jamesian terms, Betty is attempting to convert a "sick soul" to the religion of "healthy-mindedness," the labels representing temperaments each given a separate chapter by James. A good summary description of Betty comes from the chapter

on healthy-mindedness: "It is to be hoped that we all have some friend, perhaps more often feminine than masculine, and young than old, whose soul is of this sky-blue tint, whose affinities are rather with flowers and birds and all enchanting innocencies than with dark human passions, who can think no ill of man or God, and in whom religious gladness, being in possession from the outset, needs no deliverance from any antecedent burden." [14] James also points out that in the Romish Church such characters find a more congenial soil in which to grow than in Protestantism, which might explain why West twice mentions that the farm is near Monkstown. Of course, Betty has in common with monks the trick of living in an arbitrarily limited world. Though James looks on the healthy-minded favorably, to the sick soul healthy-mindedness seems unspeakably blind and shallow. Miss Lonelyhearts reacts to Betty's blissful ignorance first awkwardly and then hatefully in the chapter "Miss Lonelyhearts and the fat thumb," finally reducing her to tears through shouting at her and violently tugging at one of her breasts. It is as if, by being consciously malicious, he is trying to force Betty, who either cannot or will not see it on her own, to recognize the existence of evil.[15]

The violence at the end of the chapter called "Miss Lonelyhearts and the clean old man" has a quite different motivation. Here Miss Lonelyhearts strikes out

against evil itself, against that force which is slowly driving him to take refuge in religious hysteria. At the end of the chapter as he is about to break the arm of the screaming old man, he imagines himself "twisting the arm of all the sick and miserable, broken and betrayed, inarticulate and impotent" (88). The catalyst for the violence is the inability of Miss Lonelyhearts, sadistically playing the part of Havelock Ellis to his drinking buddy's Krafft-Ebing, to get "the bastard's life story." The old man's story would no doubt be one to match those of people who write in to his column. A fastidious, effeminate man whom the two pseudo-scientists find in the park comfort station sitting on a turned-down toilet cover, he is really a "dirty old man" who is obviously a lonely, wretched pervert.

As a pervert who receives physical abuse at the hands of Miss Lonelyhearts, the old man has much in common with Fay Doyle. She is also perverted, in a different way, and suffers more physical damage than either Betty or the old man. She receives repeated blows in the face from Miss Lonelyhearts when she tries to force him to continue one more role he knows he has utterly failed in, the role of lover.

But before he becomes Fay's lover, he tries to be the lover of his boss's wife, Mary Shrike. Again he plays his role unconvincingly. In a cab with Mary, he fails to

arouse her because there is "too much method in his caresses" (95). As with all his escape attempts, he embarks upon this one knowing the futility of it. He laughs at himself "remembering that at college all his friends had believed intercourse capable of steadying the nerves, relaxing the muscles and clearing the blood" (89). He knows it is "not his line" but persists in it because he is desperate to get any relief he can from the strain he is under. The drawing of two disembodied genitals upon which he fastens his eyes later when calling Fay Doyle symbolizes not only how little he is putting into this role, but also how separate it is from his real self.

Even if he were able to be a whole-hearted lover, he would have a hard time with both his choices as partners. Mary Shrike comes out explicity as the castrating female when her own husband--showing pain on a face that throughout the rest of the novel remains an emotionless dead pan--remarks that "sleeping with her is like sleeping with a knife in one's groin" (92). In practice, her castration tactics against Miss Lonelyhearts consist of her continually teasing him with speeches against her husband and with kisses, but refusing to sleep with him. She robs him of his masculinity by not allowing his proof of it. Probably her most powerful attraction is her breasts: "One of her tricks was to wear a medal low down on her chest. Whenever he asked to see it, instead of drawing it out she

leaned over for him to look" (90). Her corruptness comes through symbolically in the parallel West draws between Mary's bending over a table to taunt him and Mary's mother leaning over a table to lessen the pain of the breast cancer killing her.[16]

Fay Doyle has a different way of perverting the boy-girl relationship: she usurps the masculine role.[17] She is built like a man, having legs like Indian clubs and arms like thighs; she uses the language of a man--"That got me riled and I lit into the bastard and gave him a piece of my mind" (103); she even fights like a man: when her husband hits her on the cheek she socks him back because she can "let no man get away with that" (103). Like Mary, Mrs. Doyle particularly emasculates her own husband. She not only refuses to sleep with him, but even forces him to pimp for her. In one bizarre scene, rather obviously symbolic, she not only robs him of any masculinity but even reduces him to a lower species: "Mrs. Doyle was furious. She rolled a newspaper into a club and struck her husband on the mouth with it. He surprised her by playing the fool. He growled like a dog and caught the paper in his teeth. When she let go of her end, he dropped to his hands and knees and continued the imitation on the floor" (128). She treats Miss Lonelyhearts more respectfully than she does her husband, but even in her relationship with him she plays the man's part by

initiating the affair, stealing the kisses, and generally being the pursuer.

To draw his protagonist's desperate hope for help from his affair with Fay, West creates one of his most original images. Anticipating his sexual encounter with her, "he thought of Mrs. Doyle as a tent, hair-covered and veined, and of himself as the skeleton in a water closet, the skull and cross-bones on a scholar's bookplate. When he made the skeleton enter the flesh tent, it flowered at every joint" (99). Though this example may owe something to Freud, it is the type of image that West must have had in mind when he attributed the psychology of the novel to James but the imagery to himself. This image is especially rich because it is a significant part of a pattern of organic images. It relates to the waste land passage quoted earlier, with its description of a park practically void of plants, it taking "all the brutality of July to torture a few green spikes through the exhausted dirt." He looks to sex for relief from the tension he suffers, but also because "like a dead man, only friction could make him warm or violence make him mobile" (90). He is a spiritual dead man looking for rebirth, and the skeleton-flower images aptly symbolizes that. When he finally surrenders to his true vocation of religious hysteria, roses bloom in his heart and head, a grace as clean as the inner petals of a "newly forced rosebud" fills the room, and his nerves

ripple "like small blue flowers in a pasture" (139). Betty's nipples are roses, and he comes closest to spiritual health with her; Mary Shrike's teasing falseness shows in her wearing synthetic flower scent. West links Fay with the beginning of life: when she undresses she makes "sea sounds," her call to him is a "sea-moan," and when he is in bed with her she heaves, "tidal, moon-driven" (101). Contrasting with the organic images are rock images, which underscore the theme of deadness. Miss Lonelyhearts' inner deadness is a rock, "the rock was a solidification of his feeling, his conscience, his sense of reality, his self-knowledge" (138). Being spiritually dead, he gives his petitioners not daily bread but daily stones. His killing the sacrificial lamb with a stone demonstrates his failure as a priest. But his deadness is not unique. The forced rock of their skyscrapers is a clue that "Americans have dissipated their radical energy in an orgy of stone breaking" (100).

Fay Doyle exhausts Miss Lonelyhearts' sexual attempt with hams like "two enormous grindstones." He becomes physically ill soon after, and partly because of his sexual bout with her, and the several days he spends in bed immediately thereafter constitute another stage in his religious conversion. As James puts it, we get "so exhausted with the struggle that we have to stop,--so we drop down, give up, and <u>don't</u> care any longer. Our

emotional brain-centres strike work, and we lapse into a temporary apathy. Now there is documentary proof that this state of temporary exhaustion not infrequently forms part of the conversion crisis."[18]

In the case of Miss Lonelyhearts, the temporary (but deep) apathy results specifically from his finally admitting to himself the futility of trying to find either a sane solution to or an escape from the burden of suffering on his back. Having failed to bring order to the disorder of Nature, Miss Lonelyhearts drops into a miry slough of despond or, to put it in the words of West's chapter title, "Miss Lonelyhearts in the dismal swamp." But even in the dismal swamp, Miss Lonelyhearts still daydreams of bringing order. In his dream he finds himself in the window of a pawnshop containing such "paraphernalia of suffering" as fur coats, diamond rings, watches, shotguns, fishing tackle, mandolins. These things fail to adhere to order: the mandolin will not stay in tune. "All order is doomed, yet the battle is worth while," so he sets about trying to achieve it:

> First he formed a phallus of old watches and rubber boots, then a heart of umbrellas and trout flies, then a diamond of musical instruments and derby hats, after these a circle, triangle, square, swastika. But nothing proved definitive and he began to make a gigantic cross. When the cross became too large

> for the pawnshop, he moved it to the shore of the ocean. There every wave added to his stock faster than he could lengthen its arms. His labors were enormous. He staggered from the last wave line to his work, loaded down with marine refuse--bottles, shells, chunks of corks, fish heads, pieces of net. (104-105)

None of the traditional answers--sex, love, wealth, philosophy, politics--can bring lasting order to the chaos of the world. Not even religion can do the job. Shrike takes up most of the chapter with a monologue in which the phallus, heart, diamond, triangle become roughly equivalent to dream lives--lives of hedonism, of the South Seas, of art, of the soil. After destroying each with a devastating caricature, he concludes by portraying the church as "our only hope" and composing a mock-serious letter to Miss Lonelyhearts of Miss Lonelyhearts.

The derision of the Shrikes of the world is not the only thing that has killed the traditional means of escape. Miss Lonelyhearts, seeing a man near death going to see a movie called Blonde Beauty and a woman with a goiter pick a love story magazine from a garbage can, generalizes that the worst betrayal of all is that the once powerful dreams with which men used to fight their misery have been made puerile by the movies, radio, and newspapers. The only difference between Hollywoodian versions

of the dreams and Shrike's caricatures is that Shrike perceives the romantic childishness and the producers of the various media do not seem to. Change the mocking tone to one of serious ignorance (or ignorant seriousness), and the following line from the South Seas vignette of Shrike becomes typical of Hollywood: "In the evening, on the blue lagoon, under the silvery moon, to your love you croon in the soft sylabelew and vocabelew of her langorour tongour" (180).

Despite both Hollywood and Shrike, Miss Lonelyhearts is still capable of one dream--the Christ dream. Nothing can get rid of the thing that stirs within him. So, having arrived at a deep awareness of evil and subsequently sunk into a pathological depression, he is ready for the next conversion stage--a surrender to the Christ dream. In words of Starbuck that James quotes, the person "must fall back on the larger Power that makes for righteousness, which has been welling up in his own being, and let it finish in its own way the work it has begun . . . . The act of yielding . . . is giving one's self over to the new life, making it the centre of a new personality. . . ."[19] Once having thus yielded, the person shortly experiences conversion, which often includes such ecstatic feelings and hallucinations as Miss Lonelyhearts experiences in the final chapter of the novel. In this mystical vision, the deadness finally comes to life:

He fastened his eyes on the Christ that hung on the wall opposite his bed. As he stared at it, it became a bright fly, spinning with quick grace on a background of blood velvet sprinkled with nerve stars.

Everything else in the room was dead--chairs, table, pencils, clothes, books. He thought of this black world of things as a fish. And he was right, for it suddenly rose to the bright bait on the wall. It rose with a splash of music and he saw its shining silver belly.

Christ is life and light.

His painfully disordered personality finally achieves a happy unity:

He was conscious of two rhythms that were slowly becoming one. When they became one, his identification with God was complete. His heart was the one heart, the heart of God. And his brain was likewise God's.

God said, "Will you accept it, now?"

And he replied, "I accept, I accept."

He immediately began to plan a new life and his future conduct as Miss Lonelyhearts. He submitted drafts of his column to God and God approved them. God approved his every thought.

And so, momentarily at least, Miss Lonelyhearts achieves release from the evils of deadness and disorder that have been dragging him down.

West's title for his final chapter, "Miss Lonelyhearts has a religious experience," is not ironical. What happens to the protagonist, previous to and during that chapter, constitutes a bona fide religious experience. West has clearly been careful to duplicate the classical case. But it is important, I believe, to see Miss Lonelyhearts also as a case of growing psychoneurosis.[20] Doing so helps explain the six chapters between Miss Lonelyhearts' dismal swamp of depression and his final conversion. In these chapters the gradual mental deterioration of Miss Lonelyhearts manifests itself in several ways. He suddenly becomes extremely humble: when he accepts Goldsmith's offer to go out for a drink he is so humble that he almost frightens Goldsmith into suggesting a doctor. He also becomes a victim of masochism, reading a long painful letter from a reader not in order to answer it but "for the same reason that an animal tears at a wounded foot: to hurt the pain" (116). He suddenly displays homosexual feelings toward Mr. Doyle, holding hands with him under a speakeasy table.[21] He experiences a paralysis of emotion, so that he is no longer moved by Shrike's gibes, nor by the laughter or tears of Betty. As a climax to all this, he succumbs to a hysteria involving hallucinatory

phenomena. James himself freely admits that such climactic ecstasies signify, to the medical mind, "suggested and imitated hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstition, and a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria."[22]

Along with the medical view of what happens to Miss Lonelyhearts, the reader needs to consider two departures or, at the least, shifts in emphasis in West's adaptation of James. The first of these has to do with the nature of evil. The two forms, deadness and disorder, that West deals with are, as I have shown, clearly based on James, though the novelist has developed them in his own manner. But he has largely ignored a third form of evil James delineates, and that form is what we most commonly call sin. Unlike John Bunyan and Martin Luther--two of James' sufferers from this kind of evil--Miss Lonelyhearts never experiences an acute awareness of personal sin, is never obsessed with his own moral and spiritual unworthiness per se.[23] He admits his vanity and his distorted values, and he feels self-contempt. But these admissions and feelings are significant only in relation to his inability to help the suffering masses who petition him.

The second departure concerns the final step in the religious experience. Whereas James goes past the conversion to its fruits, West has his protagonist killed at the height of conversion ecstasy. By doing so, West omits the last step of the classic case and, to a large degree, the purpose of the religious experience itself.

Probably the main thesis of the pragmatical James in The Varieties of Religious Experience is that the real value of the religious experience lies in its practical fruits. These fruits, which he discusses under the label of "saintliness" and lists as including purity and charity, "are the best things that history has to show."[24] West kills his character before he has a chance to do any good, a chance to use his saintly power to help those who ask him for help. Moreover, Miss Lonelyhearts meets his death ironically at the hands of the cripple who stands to be the first person to benefit from the conversion.

But his death is not really what prevents Miss Lonelyhearts from alleviating suffering in the world. His death is a way of emphasizing that he has no saintly power to extend to others. West's main point in the novel is that religious conversion, at least for the twentieth-century Christian in America--whether he be the once-born healthy-minded or the twice-born sick soul, is of no benefit to the person who would like to help the suffering masses. James writes, "When the outward battle is lost, and the outer world disowns him, it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste."[25] Such private enlivenment is exactly and only what conversion brings Miss Lonelyhearts, and the price he pays includes the psychopathic delusion that it is much more. His self-deception--that God has sent him a cripple to make whole through miracles (a cripple who has actually

come to murder him, and does)--is evidence of both the delusion and uselessness of his religious experience. The healthy-minded Betty, who has been unable to help her lover before, is equally useless in the end. In fact, by inadvertently blocking off Doyle's escape, she contributes to the murder. Both Betty and Miss Lonelyhearts fulfill the prophecy of a minor character early in the novel about Miss Lonelyhearts: "Even if he were to have a genuine religious experience, it would be personal and so meaningless, except to a psychologist" (83). Whatever meaning a psychologist might give to it, West, by characterizing it as religious hysteria and having it be an accessory to homicide, is apparently saying that religious conversion can be evil. West's imagery again affords support here, for he employs animal images most tellingly. That subliminal thing within Miss Lonelyhearts West calls a snake, and when the protagonist finally allows it to uncoil he sees the dead object of his room turn into a fish which rises to the bright, ensnaring bait of Christ.[26]

The psychology of James and Freud, images, and symbols West shapes with his precise and economic style to create a great novel about the ineffectiveness of religion as a cure for social and even personal ills. Considering the wide range of the source West principally adapts--James' healthy-mindedness, for example, encompassing both Buddhistic and Roman Catholic religions--and the universal nature of the misery his protagonist tries to deal with,

one can believe that West's statement applies to virtually all religions in all times. But mainly he is talking about American religions in twentieth-century America. Foreign influences notwithstanding, Nathanael West is unmistakably an American author writing about his own country. If Miss Lonelyhearts does not prove that, his next novel, A Cool Million does.

NOTES

[1]Nathanael West, "Some Notes on Miss Lonelyhearts," Contempo, III (May 15, 1933), 2. West's words have sent others to James besides me and, though I disagree with each on various points and explore West's use of James to a much fuller extent than they, I am indebted to them. They are Daniel Aaron, "Late Thoughts on Nathanael West," Massachusetts Review, VI (Winter-Spring, 1965), 310-312; Randall Reid, The Fiction of Nathanael West (Chicago, 1967), pp. 44-50; Marcus Smith, "Religious Experience in Miss Lonelyhearts," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature (Spring, 1968), pp. 173-184.

[2]Reid denies any structural relationship; Aaron and Smith assert that it exists but do not follow through with a demonstration.

[3]William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1925), p. 235. This is the revised first edition of 1902 reprinted during the time West is most likely to have become familiar with the work.

[4]Miss Lonelyhearts in The Complete Works of Nathanael West (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957),

p. 74. Subsequent references to this work will be indicated with page numbers in the text of the chapter.

[5]James, pp. 152-153.

[6]The earlier draft, titled "Miss Lonelyhearts and the Dead Pan," was first published in Contact in 1932 and was reprinted in Years of Protest: A Collection of American Writings of the 1930's, ed. Jack Salzman with Barry Wallenstein (New York: Western Publishing Co., 1967), p. 410.

[7]James, p. 37.

[8]"Sordid? Good God!" Contempo, III (July 25, 1933), 5. Williams did not know that the conception of the book and even the letters included in it derived from real letters written to the Susan Chester column of the Brooklyn Eagle. How West came to see these letters is detailed by Jay Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 109-110.

[9]James, p. 134.

[10]James, p. 186.

[11]Literal symbolism as manifested in dreams no doubt is Freudian, but even here James offers a possible source. He quotes Tolstoy telling an oriental fable to describe his own predicament and ending it with "This is no fable, but the literal incontestable truth which everyone may understand" (154-155).

[12]West repeatedly indicates his protagonist's staginess in relation to the priest role. When Miss Lonelyhearts tells Betty he has a Christ complex, he does so with gestures that are "too appropriate, like those of an old-fashioned actor" (81). He gives Shrike the smile that the saints are "supposed" to have smiled. When he tries to reconcile the Doyles, he climaxes his "message" to them by hysterically screaming the words "Christ is love," knowing all the time that "it was a stage scream" (129).

[13]For extended discussions of the Jamesian dichotomy found in Betty and Miss Lonelyhearts, see Reid, pp. 47-49 and Smith, pp. 174-177.

[14]James, p. 80.

[15]The same explanation may be appropriate for West's having Betty witness the homicide which ends the novel.

[16]I am indebted here to Bob Brown, "Go West, Young Writer," Contempo, III (July 25, 1933), 4. Worth mentioning, perhaps, is the possibility that Mary Shrike is a parallel to the mother of Christ and that West is denying, at least for Miss Lonelyhearts, the Virgin's ability to give succor. Breast imagery is important also in relation to the two other main female characters: Fay Doyle's breasts are "enormous balloons" which she tries to force Miss Lonelyhearts' head between, indicating her smothering

effect on him; Betty's nipples are like roses, signifying her link with nature.

[17]A clear pattern of this kind of role perverting appears in the mannish women that pop up throughout the novel. Another example is Shrike's girlfriend, Miss Farkis, who has a "man's haircut" and a "masculine handshake" (72).

[18]James, p. 212.

[19]James, p. 210.

[20]It is possible to construe the masochism as asceticism, the homosexuality as brotherly love, and the emotional paralysis as hardening of faith or of concentration on otherworldliness, but this is not a satisfactory reading because it reverses the order of the classical case by putting saintliness before conversion. Moreover, as I explain later, I believe that West purposely omitted the stage of saintliness from his case.

[21]The issue of homosexuality in the novel is probably the source of some of the most confused thinking related to the book. Reid reveals several clear misreadings by Stanley Edgar Hyman (Nathanael West, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers; No. 21, 1962), but then goes too far by denying the existence of homosexuality altogether. Mr. Doyle and Miss Lonelyhearts do

hold hands under a table and do feel love for each other, and Mr. Doyle does claw at Miss Lonelyhearts' fly.

[22]James, p. 413.

[23]He tries to feel sinful when he first contemplates committing adultery with Fay, but he cannot (99).

[24]James, p. 259.

[25]James, p. 48.

[26]Not just the theme, but the characters gain clarity from the animal imagery. Shrike, the predatory bird of cynicism, reduces the Trinity to Father, Son, and Wirehaired Fox Terrier, is a sexual pig in relation to his wife, and turns into a screaming, clumsy gull when he tries to lay an egg on the smooth surface of his main victim's hardened heart. Mr. Doyle walks like a partially destroyed insect when approaching Miss Lonelyhearts; he becomes a newspaper-beaten dog around his wife. The lecherous Mrs. Doyle wears a rabbitskin jacket; the childish and vulnerable Betty is a kitten. Betty preaches the curative powers of animals and takes Miss Lonelyhearts to a farm where he hears owls, crickets, and loons. Miss Lonelyhearts has a laugh that is like a bark while antagonizing Betty, is a gay dog while attempting to seduce Mary, and turns into an adulterous skunk in the eyes of the man he cuckolded.

IV. A COOL MILLION

"ONLY FOOLS LAUGH AT HORATIO ALGER"

Recent evaluations of West's third novel, A Cool Million, range from that of Leslie Fiedler, who considers it in the race for the most "neglected book" because it presents with "precision and ferocity the terror" of the Thirties, to that of W. H. Auden, who asserts that it must be "judged a failure."[1] The typical attitude, somewhere between Fiedler and Auden, is that expressed by Victor Comerchero: "Though a failure, the novel is an interesting one."[2]

On the average, therefore, opinion relevant to the book has shifted little since it was published. Shortly after it came out in 1934, John Chamberlain in the New York Times wrote that West's "type of satire is wry, piercing, painful," but that the prose is "not the burnished, epigrammatic sort of prose" of Miss Lonelyhearts.[3] Another contemporary reviewer said that as parody the book is almost perfect and that as satire "it is a keen, lively and biting little volume" but that it is not as "brilliant and original as Miss Lonelyhearts."[4] The review that West must have hated, if he read it, was that of George Stevens

in the Saturday Review of Literature: "The opening chapter of this novel is mildly amusing; the rest seems superfluous. It is difficult to be very uproarious in a burlesque of something which nobody takes seriously anyhow; and the idea of putting Horatio Alger in reverse is not exactly fraught with subtlety."[5]

These criticisms, early and late, not only agree in their assessment of A Cool Million but also make the same mistake. They either do not recognize West's donnée, or fail to grant it. Thus, though their general conclusion is correct--the book is not as artistically successful as Miss Lonelyhearts--their reasons are incorrect. West's particular use of others' books as source material for his first two novels should have steered them straight, as should his calling Horatio Alger the "Bulfinch of American fable."[6] More than merely parodying Horatio Alger, West uses his writings much as he used William James' writings in Miss Lonelyhearts. From The Varieties of Religious Experience he derived the classical case for his portrait of the modern religious experience; from Alger's books he distilled the classical case of the rags-to-riches experience.[7] More than that, he found in Alger all the attitudes and symbols necessary to describe what America, by 1934, had become. He is not merely "putting Horatio Alger in reverse," or satirizing him and other propagandists of material success, or capitalism, or the success dream;

he is not trying to duplicate the prose of Miss Lonelyhearts or to see the world through that character. He uses Alger as the language with which to characterize the history and nature of Depression America.

Alger's success propaganda was probably as responsible for the shaping of the America of the Thirties as any other. One reason is that he was widely read over a long period of time. From his initial success with Ragged Dick in 1868 to his last posthumous book in 1908, Alger wrote 106 novels, all in the wildly successful poor-boy-makes-good mold, and conservative estimates are that his total sales were 16 to 17 million copies.[8] These figures include the dime paperbacks published after Alger died in 1899. But sales figures do not accurately reflect the number of people who read an author, especially in the case of Alger. His books passed from boy to boy and from generation to generation. West himself read them as a child.

Horatio Alger was a powerful influence also for the same reason he was such a ready-made vehicle for West: his writings were a compilation and formulization of the folklore and folkways of his people. West recognized this when he wrote, "Only fools laugh at Horatio Alger, and his poor boys who made good. The wiser man who thinks twice about that sterling author will realize that Alger is to America what Homer was to the Greeks."[9] What Alger codified in fiction began with the settlers who optimistically set out for the new world and received development

and amplification from writers such as Franklin, Emerson, and Whitman and politicians such as Andrew Jackson and Calvin Coolidge. It came to be referred to as the American Dream and was personified by such diverse men as Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Carnegie. The Dream goes something like this: America is a place where anyone, no matter what his origins, no matter how poor and obscure he is, can become rich and famous if he works hard and remains virtuous. West saw that Americans believed this dream even in the face of harsh contradictory facts, that they believed it because they desperately wanted the dream to be reality.[10]

The discrepancy between the dream and the reality West indicated very obviously in his plot. The backbone of his plot is the series of events typical of an Alger story. A teen-aged boy, Lemuel Pitkin, learns from his widowed mother that Squire Slemp, the mercenary man who holds a mortgage on their home, in three months is going to foreclose unless they can come up with $1500. With this situation acting as impetus, Lem sets out for New York seeking fame and fortune. Other episodes drawn directly from Alger are Lem's encounter with a pickpocket on the train to New York, his twice coming to the defense of young, innocent Betty Prail against villainous bullies, his rescuing an old gentleman and his pretty daughter from a runaway horse, and his going out West to improve his chances for success.

Though the situations are all pure Alger, the outcomes are pure burlesques which justify West's subtitle, "The Dismantling of Lemuel Pitkin." Instead of outsmarting the pickpocket, Lem himself ends up in prison, where the warden has all his teeth pulled because "teeth are a source of infection." Instead of heroically saving Betty from her assailants, the first time he ends up unconscious while she is raped and the second time he loses a leg to a bear trap, as she is raped again. Instead of being rewarded by the gentleman he saves from the horse, he loses an eye; and instead of finding gold out West he loses his scalp. The climax of the plot has Lem not achieving wealth and position and paying off his mother's mortgage, but being the stooge of a vaudeville team named Riley and Robbins. Their act consists of putting him between them on the stage of the Bijou Theater and beating him with rolled up newspapers at the end of each joke they tell. For their final joke, "they brought out an enormous wooden mallet labeled 'The Works' and with it completely demolished our hero. His toupee flew off, his eye and teeth popped out, and his wooden leg was knocked into the audience."[11] Obviously, the act is a summary of his life.

The cumulative nature of Lem's dismemberment is one of the features of the book that argue against Stanley Edgar Hyman's assertion that A Cool Million in a true sense "is formless, an inorganic stringing together of comic

set-pieces . . . ."[12] And the fact that West gives his plot the progress and unity of the classical case distilled from Horatio Alger also tightens the form of the novel. It is hardly accurate, at any rate, to label it mechanical or merely episodic.

Critics have charged the novel's "failure" less to its "formlessness," however, than to its style. Walter Allen, for example, claims that West's other novels overshadow A Cool Million because "by writing it in a heavily mock-heroic style, West had necessarily to sacrifice his extraordinarily economic and nervous prose . . . ."[13] In his third novel, West took not only the plot but the style of his source. Like Alger, West uses diction that is both sentimental and inflated; for example, Lem's home is a "humble dwelling" which is "situated on an eminence." Also he uses passive voice--"a knock was heard"--and speech tags which unmistakably label the characters: "said Lem modestly," "said Baxter coarsely." West not only imitates Alger closely but actually incorporates passages from Alger into his novel in only slightly modified form.[14] Whether the wooden, melodramatic prose is a flaw of West's novel is debatable.

West's style in A Cool Million is really a necessary consequence of his point of view. He uses Alger's style, and sometimes his very words, because he is narrating the story as Horatio Alger would. He is not seeing

the events through the consciousness of Miss Lonelyhearts or Tod Hackett, but through the consciousness of the typical narrator of Alger's stories. Alger's narrator happens to be the same healthy-minded sort as Betty in Miss Lonelyhearts: his vision is limited to an arbitrary world; he cannot or will not realize or accept the incongruities between the assumptions of the Alger myth and the facts that deny it. The danger of the particular kind of innocence and optimism of such a vision is one of the things that West exposes in Miss Lonelyhearts and in A Cool Million. Comerchero completely misses the point when he complains that the authorial intrusions do not enhance the work, that "generally, they merely allow West to tie together the loose strands of his narrative."[15] Those intrusions are an appropriate part of the naivety of both Alger's vision and technique. Thus--"It might interest the reader to know," or "It is with reluctance, that I leave Miss Prail in the lecherous embrace of Tom Baxter"--are not really authorial intrusions but part of the narrational mask. And the flaws are the real intrusions of Nathanael West into his mock-Alger narration. In the "symbolic horse" speech of Sylvanus Snodgrasse, for instance, West clearly reverts to Balso Snell: "Every nation has its symbolic horses. . . . Alas, only we are without. Do not point to General Sherman's horse or I will be angry, for that craven hack, that crowbait, is nothing. I repeat,

nothing" (183-184). Typical Westian set pieces are the descriptions of brothel keeper Wu Fong's offerings:

> Mary Judkins from Jugtown Hill, Arkansas. Her walls were lined with oak puncheons chinked with mud. Her mattress was stuffed with field corn and covered by a buffalo robe. There was real dirt on her floors. She was dressed in homespun, butternut stained, and wore a pair of men's boots.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Princes Roan Fawn from Two Forks, Oklahoma Indian Reservation, Oklahoma. Her walls were papered with birch bark to make it look like a wigwam and she did business on the floor. Except for a necklace of wolf's teeth, she was naked under her bull's-eye blanket. (203, 204)

Naturally such passages, being indigenous to West rather than Alger, display a great precision and economy of style, but because they do not sound like Alger, they are out of place in this novel.

The major weakness of the novel, then, is West's inconsistently departing occasionally from the method he chose to use in A Cool Million.

He strays unjustifiably from Alger's style and point of view but, perhaps most seriously of all, he departs from Alger in his characterization. All of his major

and nearly all of his minor characters are direct borrowings. Wu Fong, Chief Satinpenny, Sylvanus Snodgrasse, and Tom Baxter all belong in A Cool Million because Chinamen, Indians, effete poets, and town bullies exist in Alger's tales. Of course, West modifies the prototypes in various ways in order to clarify or to give them their symbolic meanings. The one character who clearly does not appear in Alger is the "elaborate fat man" who wears "a magnificent bowler hat" (114). Secret Agent 6384XM for the International Jewish Bankers and Comrade Z for the Bolshevik labor unions (with headquarters in Moscow), it is this double agent who finally assassinates Lem. He is a tremendous fault in the novel because he gives concrete existence to what West otherwise seems to portray as non-existent forces--forces which Shagpoke Whipple uses as scapegoats. Surely when West has Whipple blame the failure of his bank on Wall Street and on "lying rumors" circulated by "the Communists . . . in Doc Slack's barber shop," he means to say that bad investments and local impatience with his poor management and usuriuosness, not Jewish bankers and Communists, are what really did Whipple in. Moreover, by having the fat double agent instead of, let us say, a Western outlaw or Southern lynch mob or New York street-cleaning machine kill Lem, West garbles the statement he seems to be making in the novel that American fascism is self-destructive.

The three main characters of the novel not only are right out of Alger but have in common the incurable optimism that allows momentum to America's self-destructiveness. The heroine, Betty Prail, is exactly as naively optimistic, or "healthy-minded," as Betty in Miss Lonelyhearts. When Lem, after losing his teeth and one eye and having served two stretches in jail, temporarily lapses enough from his own usual optimism to complain to her that he feels a failure, Betty indignantly reminds him of the Dream: "I read only the other day about a man who lost both of his eyes yet accumulated a fortune. I forget how, but he did. Then, too, think of Henry Ford. He was dead broke at forty and borrowed a thousand dollars from James Couzens; when he paid him back it had become thirty-eight million dollars. You're only seventeen and say you're a failure. Lem Pitkin, I'm surprised at you" (214-215). As he does with his earlier Betty, West repeatedly pounds Betty Prail's hard shell of optimism with the steel ball of evil. The evil takes the form, in A Cool Million, of recurring rapes, so that her ideals are violated even more frequently than her body. Leslie Fiedler aptly labels her "an American Justine" in so far as she is an innocent victimized by sadistic sex.[16] But the fact that West so often has her unconscious while being raped symbolizes an obliviousness to evil, even while suffering from it, that de Sade's character is not guilty of--an obliviousness

that, especially as colored by Alger's pathological prudery, makes her "a real American girl" (168).

Lemuel Pitkin, the "American Boy," is as philosophically frail as Betty.[17] As his name suggests, he is no less gullible than Gulliver and constantly ending up in the pit. In his very first appearance in the novel Mr. Slemp pushes him off his porch into the cellar. That action also represents West's first departure from pure Alger, for an Alger hero would never allow himself to be knocked into a cellar. The optimism of an Alger hero is warranted because he is shrewd and because the America Alger creates for him is one in which the American Dream typically comes true. But the optimism of West's hero is unwarranted because he is gullible and because the America West creates for him betrays his confidence. It is a country in which the firemen loot and rape, policemen strike with their clubs first and ask questions later, and ministers hypocritically practice flagellation on the bare bottoms of fourteen-year-old girls. Even an ex-President, Shagpoke Whipple, is a man who glorifies the flag on his flagpoke one minute and victimizes his own protégé with usury the next.

Like Betty and Lem, Shagpoke Whipple derives from a stock Alger character--the kindly benefactor. Alger's benefactors are always shrewd businessmen, and Whipple is only a slight exaggeration in regarding it no usury but

good business and even charity to charge a needy Lem twelve percent interest (paid in advance) for a thirty-dollar loan on a cow worth more than a hundred. He also believes it the American citizens' "inalienable birthright . . . to sell their labor and their children's labor without restrictions as to either price or hours" (186). These are principles he believes in, and he is a man of principles and certain virtues. He is extremely loyal to his friends and his country. He is well-intentioned and sincere.

But in his own way, he is just as blind as Betty and Lem. He does not see what monstrosities capitalism has led America to. Chief Satinpenny, graduate of Yale and student of Spengler and Valéry, points out some of the evils: a land "flooded with toilet paper, painted boxes to keep pins in, key rings, watch fobs, leatherette satchels"; a civilization of "syphilis and the radio, tuberculosis and the cinema" (232). Whipple does not see that capitalism has caused or allowed to exist a large body of poor people who have a legitimate complaint against the system. Thus he accuses those who strive "to set brother against brother, those who have not against those who have" of being enemies who are undermining American institutions and freedoms (244). He does not see the feet of clay of the captains of industry: "Let me warn you that you will find in the world a certain few scoffers who will laugh at you and attempt to do you injury. They will tell you that

John D. Rockefeller was a thief and the Henry Ford and other great men are also thieves. Do not believe them. The story of Rockefeller and of Ford is the story of every great American . . ." (150). He does not see that the virtues he excludes from Americanism are honesty, compassion, justice.

Whipple gives the same speech at the end of the novel that he did at the beginning, but his actions in between teach the readers equivocal meanings which Lem never comes to comprehend. When Whipple tells Lem that America "takes care of the honest and industrious and never fails them as long as they are both," he means that the industry must be directed toward effective exploitation of material and human resources and that the honesty must be limited so as not to obstruct that exploitation. The difference between Lem and Shagpoke is the difference between what Alger's characters say and what they do. They say that hard work, meaning conscientious shining of shoes or hawking of peanuts on the street corner, and virtuous living, meaning avoidance of alcohol, game rooms, and tobacco, will inevitably lead to wealth and happiness. They actually get ahead, however, by being lucky and shrewd.[18] In Alger's Andy Grant's Pluck, it is not Andy's hard work and virtues that bring his success as much as it is his luckily meeting a series of wealthy benefactors and shrewdly buying land in Tacoma, Washington, that, through "advices from a friend in Washington," he knows in advance

will soon greatly increase its value.[19] Whipple who, as James Light first pointed out, is modeled after Calvin Collidge, demonstrates in his own life that the success formula--as he understands it--works. Lem demonstrates that non-exploitative industry and true honesty lead to failure and destruction. West's intended parallel between Lem's assassination on the stage of the Bijou Theater and "honest Abe" Lincoln's assassination in Ford Theater is a poignant one.

The violence that kills Lem, and the violence in A Cool Million in general, is significantly different from that in West's other novels. In his other novels the violence is mainly an eruption of frustration caused by disappointment, repression, and failure. Such violence exists also in A Cool Million, poetentially at least, in the starving men that Whipple addresses from his soap box in front of the Salvation Army headquarters in lower Manhattan. But primarily the violence in this novel is fascistic violence used to control. When Whipple's America begins to disintegrate, he uses force to hold it together. Just as Hitler and his Black Shirts used violence to make Germany what they thought, for its own good, it should be, so Whipple and his Leathershirts use force to make America what they think, for its own good, it should be. What it should be, Whipple believes, is a place where White Protestants in pursuit of riches and pleasure may, without mutiny, exploit women, children, Negroes, Jews, and

immigrants. Thus Shagpoke preaches against the Jewish international bankers, the Bolshevik labor unions, the peoples of England, Japan, Russia, Rome, and Jerusalem. The "really American town" in which he initiates his ultimately successful drive to take over and save the country is Beulah in the Deep South, where Mr. Jefferson, the man who introduces him, says, "you have been called here to listen to the words of Shagpoke Whipple, one of the few Yanks whom we of the South can trust and respect. He ain't no nigger lover, he don't give a damn for Jewish culture, and he knows the fine Italian hand of the Pope when he sees it" (244).

The South is solidly behind Whipple's takeover early, and so is the West. And the author portrays the West as no less fascistic than the South. He does this through a character that he found in Alger's Joe's Luck, or Always Wide Awake, a character known in both books only as a stranger from Pike County, Missouri. He is a poker-playing, whiskey-drinking, rugged individualist who became a cliché in the Western tall tales of such writers as Bret Harte and Mark Twain.[20] He brags that he can whip his weight in wildcats. When he thinks he has been insulted, he responds, "You'd better not rile me stranger. . . . You don't know me, you don't. I'm a riptail roarer and a ring-tail squealer, I am. I always kills the man what riles me" (224). The violence inherent in that speech is

typical of the violence of the writings of Western local colorists and also of the real Americans, many of them outlaws, who settled the West.

The fascism growing from such vigilantism and outlawry is what helps Whipple, over Lem's dead body, become dictator and, in his own eyes, restore America to Americans. The fascism, the optimism, the materialism, the naivety, the discrepancies between philosophies and realities--all make up, West seems to say, the nature of America and could, through a catalyst such as the Depression, have frightening consequences. To warn us of the possibility of a Nazi America, to show us an accurate reflection of the ominous aspects of Depression America, and to reveal the degree of dishonesty in the American Dream, West rewrote Alger. Alger not only was the most successful propagandist of the American Dream, but also produced tales that contained, either explicityly or implicitly, all the characteristics that West saw in America. That all the necessary materials were in Alger makes the glaring weakness of A Cool Million the jarring and unnecessary departures of West from his chosen Bulfinch. The double agent in the bowler hat, the bawdy house vignettes, and the blatantly Westian prose and attitudes which periodically intrude into the narrative grate disturbingly against the basic Alger characters, objects, prose, and attitudes. The result of all this is that West produced a third novel that is extremely perceptive in its

analysis of the nature and causes of 1934 America but artistically disappointing.

NOTES

[1]Fiedler's evaluation is in American Scholar, XXV (Autumn, 1956), 478; and Auden's is in The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (New York: Random House, Inc., 1962), p. 241.

[2]Victor Comerchero, Nathanael West: The Ironic Prophet (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1964), p. 118.

[3]"Books of the Times," (June 19, 1934), p. 17.

[4]Fred T. Marsh, "A Cool Million and Other Recent Works of Fiction," New York Times Book Review, XXXIX (July 1, 1934), 6.

[5]"The New Books," X (June 30, 1934), 784. Stevens' hard words about A Cool Million lose much of their authority because of his statement in the same review that Miss Lonelyhearts deserved only a fraction of the admiration it received.

[6]Jay Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 218.

[7]West's main Alger sources were Andy Grant's Pluck and Joe's Luck, or Always Wide Awake. Other Alger

books he is known to have read while working on A Cool Million are Tom Temple's Career and Erie Train Boy.

[8]John Tebbel, From Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger, Jr., and The American Dream (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1963), pp. 10-11.

[9]Martin, p. 219.

[10]Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 231, writes that capitalistic doctrines "reached their widest audience through the hundred-odd stories by Horatio Alger of poor boys who made good, each one preaching the same moral in language so simple that even the most immature mind could not fail to grasp it: opportunities lie all about you; success is material and is the reward of virtue and of work."

[11]Nathanael West, A Cool Million in The Complete Works of Nathanael West (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 250. Subsequent references to the novel will be indicated with page numbers in the text.

[12]Nathanael West (University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 21, 1962), p. 29.

[13]The Modern Novel in Britain and the United States (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 167.

[14]Douglas H. Shepard demonstrates the close similarity of passages in A Cool Million to passages in

Andy Grant's Pluck and Joe's Luck, or Always Wide Awake in "Nathanael West Rewrites Horatio Alger, Jr.," Satire Newsletter, III (Fall, 1965), 13-28.

[15]Comerchero, p. 105.

[16]Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed., (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 327. Many critics have compared West's book to Voltaire's Candide, and Betty is as much like Cunegonde as like Justine.

[17]Of course, Prail also evokes the sexual association of "frail" as well as "tail." The only time Lem comes close to that kind of frailty is when the Maharajah of Kanurani almost cans his anus.

[18]Tebbel states that "beneath the stilted prose, the ponderous moralizing and the melodramatic plotting of Horatio Alger's books lurks the astonishing implication that the author himself did not believe in the American Dream and distrusted his own formula." He points out that Alger "constantly preached that success was to be won through virtue and hard work, but his stories tell us just as constantly that success is actually the result of fortuitous circumstance. . . . It is almost always an incident which brings [Alger's heroes] to the attention of a successful businessman, who gives them the job which makes the difference between mere struggle and opportunity" (pp. 12, 14).

[19](New York: Hurst & Co., n.d.), p. 181.

[20]In the raftsman passage of Life on the Mississippi Twain parodies this cliché character. Just to illustrate the frequent closeness of West to his sources, here is the equivalent passage from Joe's Luck as quoted by Shepard: "You'd better not rile me, stranger . . . . You don't know me, you don't. I'm a riptail roarer, I am. I always kill a man who insults me" (21-22).

[21]Martin lists many of the real fascist groups of the time, including Pelley's Silver Shirts, the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, the Friends of the New Germany, Father Coxey's Blue Shirts, and others.

V. THE DAY OF THE LOCUST

"FEW THINGS ARE SADDER THAN THE TRULY MONSTROUS"

In The Day of the Locust (1939), Nathanael West departs from the method of his first three novels in at least one significant way: he takes no single book or writer as his Bulfinch. No book has the elemental relation to Locust that The Interpretation of Dreams has to The Dream Life of Balso Snell, The Varieties of Religious Experience has to Miss Lonelyhearts, Horatio Alger's books have to A Cool Million.

But that is not to say that no influences and claims to influence exist. Carvel Collins writes that West "seems specifically indebted" to William Faulkner's Sanctuary for several elements in Locust.[1] These elements mainly relate to West's drugstore cowboy, Earle Shoop. Collins says that Earle's mechanical face derives from that of Popeye, that Earle's using tin shears to cut up quail parallels Popeye's killing two lovebirds with scissors, and that "Earle's girl, Faye, makes love with Earle's Mexican companion in a situation slightly similar to that of Popeye and Red and Temple Drake in Sanctuary." Collins also compares Tod Hackett to Horace Benbow, Miss Jennings to

Miss Reba, Adore to Little Bud, and even Claude Estee to Judge Drake. Collins, I believe, stretches the comparison beyond the point it will legitimately go.[2]

Less far-fetched is Randall Reid's maintaining that Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio is a source.[3] Reid finds grotesques "whose sole distinctive characteristic is an extreme deformity of movement of posture" omnipresent in both novels. He believes that in "both Anderson and West . . . eternal dreams are warped by a peculiarly American combination of cynicism and naivete." And Reid notes that Homer's hands resemble those of Wing Biddlebaum and that the town Homer comes from, Wayneville, Iowa, sounds much like Winesburg, Ohio.

Without actually claiming F. Scott Fitzgerald's Tender Is the Night to be a source, Robert S. Phillips points out several parallels between it and Locust.[4] He finds patterns of sexual perversion and violence in both novels, similar masquerade imagery, and comparable emasculations of Diver by Nicole and Tod by Faye. Both novels, he indicates, contain movie set microcosms. From Fitzgerald he quotes, "The bizarre debris of some recent picture, a decayed street scene in India, a great cardboard whale, a monstrous tree bearing cherries large as basketballs . . . . There were a quicklunch shack and two barnlike stages and everywhere about the lot, groups of waiting, hopeful, painted faces . . . ." From West: a "papier

mache sphinx," a "lawn of fibre," "celluloid swans," people "eating cardboard food in front of a cellophane water fall," and a likeness of the god Eros, lying "face downward in a pile of old newspapers and bottles."

A book that no one has even compared to Locust, except perhaps Budd Schulberg in an implicit manner, but that probably could have come closest to furnishing West a case history for his Hollywood novel is Cedric Belfrage's Promised Land. His subtitle, "Notes for a History," is appropriate for a book which begins with the Hollywood of 1857, and the historic information is the kind that West would have been interested in for his work. As Schulberg says in a 1940 review of eight novels, including Locust, Promised Land includes a picture of the people "who came to Hollywood with a vision of God and Gold, only to find themselves deserted by both at the critical hour."[5] In the Thirties, he continues, "the frustrated, bitter, little people who have been lured out by false hopes . . . form a characteristic and grotesque element in Hollywood life. They are the hungry, restless ones who are ready to march off in all directions at once. They worship Aimee Semple McPherson . . . . They wait for hours at Openings for a wave of their idol's hand."

These and other writings may have had some part in the evolution of The Day of the Locust, but no book or writer can really be called a major or dominant source.

The real Hollywood, the Hollywood that West himself observed as a screenwriter there during the last five years of his life, provided him a setting, a group of characters, and a psychology for his novel. His own relation to Hollywood furnished most of the rest. This raw material West, himself a Bulfinch now, ordered into a symbolic picture of a momentous spiritual area of Hollywood and of America.

West's biographers make clear that he himself observed virtually all the phenomena that he has his central character, Tod Hackett, experience.[6] West lived for a while at The Pa-Va-Sed apartment hotel, a shabby place full of bit players, stunt men, seedy comics, and midgets. Once while he was sick he received care from one of the midgets and a blonde female who was a bit player and part-time prostitute. He went to illegal cockfights at Pismo Beach, attended premieres at Grauman's Chinese Theater, and visited the gaudy religious temple of Aimee McPherson. Working for such movie studios as Republic and Columbia, he became familiar with the inner workings of the industry and spent much time walking through the back lots of the studios. Everywhere he went he closely noted the lives and languages of tarts, madams, racehorse addicts, movie extras, and other inhabitants of Hollywood.

When he came to put the place into his novel, he remained very true to it. His descriptions of the canyons and streets draw an accurate map.[7] Allan Seager, a reliable witness, remarks the close correlation between the

reality and the fiction: "Having known something of the Hollywood West saw at the time he was seeing it, I am of the opinion that Locust was not fantasy imagined, but fantasy seen. All he had to do was recognize it and know when to stop."[8]

West sees the fantastic reality through the eyes or, more accurately, the mind of Tod Hackett. Actually, West's use of point of view turns out, upon analysis, to be a little unusual. He narrates the story in third person as an omniscient author whose sensibilities are those of the central character. But the central character is not always on the scene and sometimes could not possibly know the things being narrated, especially in regard to the character Homer Simpson. Yet, there is no "clumsiness," as Light claims, in handling of point of view, for West does not really shift "from the eyes of Tod Hackett to those of Homer Simpson."[9] Though he isolates Homer for a while (Chapters 7-10) to elucidate that character's thinking and background, he presents the information as though filtered through the mind of Tod.

If the novel includes a slip in point of view, it comes in the first few paragraphs of Chapter 5. Those paragraphs describe the person and brothel of Audrey Jenning, who was based on a real madam of the time, Lee Francis, about whose "industrial packaging" West made some investigations.[10] The language of the description strongly

suggests a kind of irony and humor more indigenous to Claude Estee than to Tod. A successful silent screen actress put out of operation by sound, Mrs. Jenning had "shown excellent business sense" by opening a callhouse, and "she ran her business just as other women run lending libraries, shrewdly and with taste."[11] The language here may be justified by the fact that it is Claude's description of Mrs. Jenning being relayed by the omniscient author. Such a small slip in consistency, if it really is one, is hardly deleterious to the novel at all.

Of course, it takes more than consistency to make a point of view work. It needs also to be the most suitable vantage point; that is, it needs to bring to bear on the characters and events observed the right attitudes. The description of Mrs. Jenning may reflect the wrong attitude, the attitude of Claude, because it is a part of an early draft of the novel that West tried narrating in first person through the eyes of Claude.[12] Claude is no more suitable a narrator of Locust than Shrike would be of Miss Lonelyhearts. Neither, in any serious way, is a victim of the delusions spotlighted in the respective novels and, therefore, both stand back and laugh at the delusion and the victim.[13] But Tod cannot laugh because, like Miss Lonelyhearts, he himself is a victim of the delusion and knows it. When he does manage to laugh at himself, he recognizes that "it wasn't a real laugh and nothing was

destroyed by it" (271). As for making fun of other victims, he is too compassionate and perceptive for that. Upon observing the comic architectural imitations in Hollywood--"a miniature Rhine castle with tarpaper turrets pierced for archers," or "a highly colored shack with domes and minarets out of the Arabian Nights"--he only sighs, because "it is hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance, no matter how tasteless, even horrible, the results of that need are. But it is easy to sigh. Few things are sadder than the truly monstrous" (262). Looking with his artist's eye at those who lack beauty and romance, Tod finds neither ridicule nor sadness suitable. Mostly he is respectful of the resulting latent destructiveness: "He would not satirize them as Hogarth or Daumier might, nor would he pity them. He would paint their fury with respect, appreciating its awful, anarchic power and aware that they had it in them to destroy civilization" (365-366). It is Tod's artistic vision that enables him successfully to play his chosen role of Jeremiah, to predict the violence which ends the novel.

The role of Jeremiah is one that West saw himself playing in both his last two novels.[14] And not just Tod's role, but his worldview is very close to that of West's own. That is one reason West was able to avoid such out-of-character intrusions as appear in A Cool Million. It was easy for West to keep his point of view consistent in Locust because it was his own.

And his style remains consistent for the same reason. Since in this novel he is not mocking someone else's style, as he did Alger's in his previous novel, he is able to write comfortably and consistently with the economy and tension that are native to him. Of course, the speech of some of the characters is strictly their own and displays West's ear for picking up various dialects; Abe Kusich, for example: "No quiff can give Abe Kusich the fingeroo and get away with it. . . . Not when I can get her leg broke for twenty bucks and I got twenty" (266). It is noteworthy that he uses more artist's terms in Locust to increase the credibility of his point of view character. He sees the "soft wash of dusk," the "rubbed features" of Claude, and a blue and lavender night "when the luminous color seems to have been blown over the scene with an air brush." Homer is "like one of Picasso's great sterile athletes," and Earle has "a two-dimensional face that a talented child might have drawn with a ruler and a compass." Such a way of seeing things came easy to West, since he himself was something of an artist.

As much as the artist's language, the plot, at least in its general structure, reminds one of the biographical West. He came to Hollywood to work in a studio, gradually met its people and became familiar with its places and events, and finally moulded his experiences into an art work in which the mob is an important element. Tod

also comes to Hollywood to work in a movie studio. Though he gets paid to do set and costume designing, his main interest is his art and his artistic subject is the people who "come to California to die." While he constantly observes these people around him, he also meets a series of individuals like Abe Kusich, the Greeners, and Homer Simpson, and he goes to such events as a cockfight and a premiere. By the end of the story he has used these things in a symbolic painting called "The Burning of Los Angeles." Tod progresses from experience to vision to art. That progression is parallel to and derived from that of West himself.

But the plot has a second movement that has no apparent relation to West's Hollywood experience. It also moves from despair to frenzy to disintegration, and Tod contains this element as well as the other.[15] He ends up with a painting, but also with a broken leg and an unhinged mind. These opposite results develop from simultaneous artistic growth and increasing entrapment by the Hollywood dream.

While he gives his plot a dual movement, West fits the people of his story into two basic categories. He introduces both in the first chapter when he has Tod notice two distinct groups making up an evening crowd. One group is wearing mail-order clothes which are somber and poorly cut. This category consists of those who came to California

to die. They loiter on street corners and stare, often with hatred, at the other group--the "masqueraders." The masqueraders wear clothing which is wild and deceptive: "The fat lady in the yachting cap was going shopping, not boating; the man in the Norfolk jacket and Tyrolean hat was returning, not from a mountain, but an insurance office; and the girl in slacks and sneaks with a bandanna around her head had just left a switchboard, not a tennis court" (261).

Having introduced the two kinds of people as groups--the starers and the masqueraders--in the first chapter, West has Tod meet specific representatives of the groups in the next several chapters, beginning in Chapter Two with "Honest Abe Kusich." A masquerader who wears a Tyrolean hat, Abe is not exactly honest. He is a dwarf, short as the real Abe was tall, and his occupation apparently is show business. But he spends a lot of time at the race track, and in both of his appearances in the novel he unsuccessfully puts on a big man act for a woman. The first time the woman is a prostitute who throws him bodily out of her apartment in an incident much like one West witnessed in a seedy apartment building he was living in.[16] The second time it is Faye, who condescendingly tweaks his nose.

It is the dwarf who, by bullying Tod into looking at the San Bernardino Arms, is responsible for his meeting Faye Greener, to whom West devotes Chapter Three. With her long "platinum" hair, she is still another masquerader.

Her deceptiveness lies mainly in her flirting, in her seeming invitation to sexual pleasure. In a passage containing some of the most stunning images he ever wrote, West has Tod think of her in the following terms: "Her invitation wasn't to pleasure, but to struggle, hard and sharp, closer to murder than to love. If you threw yourself on her, it would be like throwing yourself from the parapet of a skyscraper. You would do it with a scream. You couldn't expect to rise again. Your teeth would be driven into your skull like nails into a pine board and your back would be broken. You wouldn't even have time to sweat or close your eyes" (271). She is another one of West's castrators. As her "swordlike legs" hint, she is even more of a knife in the groin than Mary Shrike. Leslie Fiedler calls her "the most memorable and terrible woman in an American novel of the 30's."[17]

Faye's father, Harry Greener, manifests his particular deceptiveness through clowning. He has been a failure on the vaudeville stage for forty years, and when Tod meets him he has been using his clowning skills to sell a silver polish manufactured in his own bathroom. He dresses like a cheap, imitation banker in a greasy derby hat, shiny double-breasted jacket, and gray-striped trousers. He describes his life as a lightning series of "high-gruesomes" and "flying-W's" done to escape a barrage of "exploding stoves," which are catastrophes such as angry policemen.

Harry, Faye, and Abe execute extreme antics because they are not just masqueraders but also performers. Tod has done a set of lithographs of them on which "they changed with each plate, but the group of uneasy people who formed their audience remained the same. They stood staring at the performers in just the way that they stared at the masqueraders on Vine Street. It was their stare that drove Abe and the others to spin crazily and leap into the air with twisted backs like hooked trout" (264).[18]

As frantic performers for the uneasy starers, the three provide Tod with more than figures for lithographs. The grotesque antics of the dwarf "excited him and in that way made him feel certain of his need to paint" (264).[19] Harry's wild clowning "was a clue to the people who stared (a painter's clue, that is--a clue in the form of a symbol), just as Faye's dreams were another" (267).

Except to Tod and, of course, his creator, what those symbolic clues point to is not certain. One strong possibility is that the two clues point to the same thing: the Hollywood dream betrays the people who stare because it is mere machinery. Both the performances of Harry and the dreams of Faye are mechanical. When Harry suddenly becomes ill at Homer's house, West describes his breakdown in mechanical terms: "Suddenly, like a mechanical toy that had been overwound, something snapped inside of him and he began to spin through his entire repertoire. . . .

He jigged, juggled his hat, made believe he had been kicked, tripped, and shook hands with himself. He went through it all in one dizzy spasm, then reeled to the couch and collapsed" (301). Faye's dream routine consists of her getting some music on the radio, lying down on her bed, and then picking out a dream from an assortment of fantastic stories she has dreamed up in the past. She admits to Tod that "her method was too mechanical for the best results and that it was better to slip into a dream naturally . . ."(316-317). Not just her dreams are mechanically produced. Her most characteristic gesture, that of smiling in a secret way while running her tongue over her lips--seeming to promise "all sorts of undefined intimacies"--is actually "as simple and automatic as the word thanks" (385).

The clues point to the fact that Faye's sexual gesture and Harry's comedy are as devoid of meaning or commitment as Faye's canned dreams. Dreams of quick wealth, gayety, and glorious sex such as Abe, Harry, and Faye seem to promise once may have been meaningful, but Hollywood, by reproducing them in a manner similar to Faye's, has made them puerile.[20] Even so, the people who came to California to die were lured there by their belief in the dreams. But the dreams, the Hollywood dream, proves a giant deception, at least for the starers, and therefore breaks down. When it does, those who were duped by it feel cheated and become violent. West symbolizes all of this, and at the

same time foreshadows his riotous ending, with the mock riot at the callhouse of Mrs. Jenning. The mock riot consists of the party of people Tod is with stamping their feet, whistling, and yelling "Fake!" and "Cheat!" at the projectionist because his projector breaks down in the middle of the pornographic movie being shown (280).

The falsity of Hollywood is an extremely important theme in Locust, and the machine pattern is only one way to express it.[21] All around town Tod runs into various manifestations of the deception. Already mentioned are the dress of the locals and the architecture of their houses. West develops the phoniness of the houses in Chapter 7 by describing in detail the inside of Homer's house. Typical are plants made of rubber and cork, a spool bed of iron grained to look like wood, and a dresser painted to look like unpainted pine. In supermarkets he finds colored spotlights exaggerating the color of the foods: the oranges are bathed in red, the lemons in yellow, the fish in pale green, the steaks in rose (296). On the movie lots, besides celluoid swans and cardboard food, Tod sees a wooden Trojan horse, a very obvious symbol of deception.[22]

Even the sexes of the people Tod meets are often suspect. When he first sees Abe, the dwarf is rolled up in a woman's flannel bathrobe, which compares to Romola Martin's wearing a man's black silk dressing gown. In a Hollywood church where he looks for models for his art,

Tod sees a woman in male clothing preaching the "Crusade Against Salt." Smut-loving, square-shouldered Joan Schwartzen is another one of West's mannish women. The epitome of all this role distortion is the female impersonator Tod sees in a night club with Homer and Faye. Just as Harry Greener confuses his real and his phoney actions to the point that he himself cannot tell one from the other, the young man who impersonates a woman also confuses the reality and the appearance. After his act he tries to revert back to his "real" sex by swinging his shoulders and striding off the stage, but "his imitation of a man was awkward and obscene" (370).

The sexual distortion points to and merges with sexual perversion. Romola Martin is a prostitute, and Faye Greener, to pay her father's funeral expenses, joins her friend Mary Dove for a stint in the callhouse of Mrs. Jenning. Adore Loomis, an eight-year-old child actor, sings a song about sexual sin in such a way as to suggest falsely that he knows what the words mean. The phoney love stemming from such sexuality is bound to be meaningless, mechanical. Claude Estee satirically compares such love to being serviced by a vending machine: "You insert a coin and press home the lever. There's some mechanical activity inside the bowels of the device. You receive a small sweet, frown at yourself in the dirty mirror, adjust your hat, take a firm grip on your umbrella and walk away, trying to look as though nothing had happened" (276).

Both the sexual and the mechanical images help to define the particular character of Homer Simpson, which is not a simple character to define. It does not fit cleanly into either the category of masquerader-performer or the category of those who stare. It is possible to say that he definitely is not a performer: he neither entertains nor deceives. In fact, he may be the only character in the book who is completely honest. Since Tod works for a studio, a producer of lies, he cannot be called entirely honest. Homer also is not one of the starers, really, though Tod first believes he is: ". . . at first glance this man seemed an exact model for the kind of person who comes to California to die, perfect in every detail down to fever eyes and unruly hands" (285). When Tod notices Homer's shyness, however, he knows "that he was mistaken. Homer Simpson was only physically the type. The men he meant were not shy" (285). Later Tod discovers that though Homer like the starers come from the Middle-West, he came not for pleasure but for the sake of his health.

The answer to Homer is apparently that he is not one of those who came to California to die, but he is a symbol of them. He is another clue for Tod for he is a grotesque in whom are in exaggerated form those traits which characterize the starers. For one thing, he is extremely feeble and apathetic. His battle against sleep, which includes his fear of the dark, indicates this. He does not

like to go to sleep because it is hard for him to wake up. When he does wake he slowly gets out of bed in sections, "like a poorly made automaton." Though he has large muscles and a full chest, "he looked neither strong nor fertile" (290).

Another thing, Homer by nature is a victim. He rents the second house the real estate agent shows him "because he was tired and because the agent was a bully" (286). Beggars spot Homer as an easy mark. When he indulges in his favorite pastime of watching the lizard in his back yard chase flies, he identifies with the flies. Women especially victimize Homer. Romola Martin entices him into paying her hotel bill for her. Faye Greener takes him not only for room and board but for new clothes and a Buick runabout. In return she gives him constant persecution. She even talks him into allowing Earle, Miguel, and all the fighting cocks into his garage, and ultimately has sex with Miguel in Homer's own house.

Women so easily victimize Homer because he has an acute sexual problem. Sex is to him what Christ is to Miss Lonelyhearts: it is the only thing that can make him come alive. After first meeting Faye "he felt more alive than he had at any time since Romola Martin" (314). But if he surrenders himself to sex he is doomed. Just as Miss Lonelyhearts must suppress his strong urge to succumb, so Homer's "only defense was chastity," which he dare not shed

"even in thought. If he did he would be destroyed" for "it would be like dropping a spark into a barn full of hay" (313). This devastating sexual urge West symbolizes with Homer's hands. While he is talking to Faye during their first meeting, "his hands began to bother him. He rubbed them against the edge of the table to relieve their itch, but it only stimulated them. When he clasped them behind his back, the strain became intolerable. They were hot and swollen. Using the dishes as an excuse, he held them under the cold water tap of the sink" (310). He also sits on them.

These basic features of Homer's personality are also basic to the people who stare. Tod notes "the contrast between their drained-out, feeble bodies and their wild, disordered minds" (365). They are victimized by all the phoney promises of Hollywood, and they barely manage to suppress a terrible destructiveness that, like the locusts of the Bible, is able to destroy civilization. When they do erupt in the huge riot which closes the novel, Homer appropriately is the one who precipatates it. Moreover, performer Adore Loomis drives him to the violence.

That Tod is also in the premiere crowd, and that he gets involved in it because he is looking out for Homer indicate that Homer has a function besides that of symbolizing the people who stare. He is also a Conradian double for Tod. Tod tries to help Homer not just because

he sympathizes, but because he empathizes with him. So by feeling sympathy for Homer, Tod really feels sympathy for himself; and by getting to know Homer he learns something about himself. Tod, like other characters in the novel, fits into both the categories.[23] He is both a masquerader and a starer, and Homer is the link that connects him to the starers. Tod's apathy reveals itself the same way that Homer's does--in his appearance. With his "large, sprawling body, his slow blue eyes and sloppy grin," he seems "almost doltish" (260). On his way to self-knowledge, "he began to wonder if he himself didn't suffer from the ingrained, morbid apathy he liked to draw in others" (365).

Faye victimizes Tod as well as Homer. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they each trap themselves through their lust for her. And their lusts are equally dangerous. Dropping a spark into a barn full of hay is no more fatal than throwing oneself from the parapet of a skyscraper. Both men make fools of themselves over her. Homer not only brings her breakfast in bed each morning, but takes a housekeeping magazine so that he can fix the tray like the pictures in it. Tod runs after her in an attempt to pull her down to the ground and rape her but enables her to escape when he falls flat on his face. Though he does not include himself in a preliminary drawing of a mob chasing a nude, strangely half-smiling Faye, Tod has a rightful place there.

But it is not only the lust-provoking Faye that both men are hooked on. Another quality in her also attracts the two, a quality that is the opposite of their sloppy apathy. Homer expresses this quality indirectly by noting that "Faye is awfully pretty." Tod sees it more clearly than Homer. Looking at her in "a new flower print dress," Tod thinks to himself that "she was more than pretty. . . . She looked just born, everything moist and fresh, volatile and perfumed. Tod suddenly became very conscious of his dull, insensitive feet bound in dead skin and of his hands, sticky and thick, holding a heavy, rough felt hat" (364). Behind Faye's deceptive mask, her empty sexual gestures, is something real and natural--the quality that makes her appeal viable.[24] The naturalness and aliveness of Faye, somehow not subject to contamination or destruction, gives her a certain self-sufficiency: ". . . her beauty was structural like a tree's, not a quality of her mind or heart. Perhaps even whoring couldn't damage it for that reason . . ." (346). Maybe because he himself is so dull and dependant upon her for even a spark of life, "her egglike self-sufficiency . . . made him want to crush her" (320). So it is not just the sex urge but the life urge that compels Tod to pursue such a catastrophic bitch: "Maybe he could only be galvanized into sensibility and that was why he was chasing Faye" (365).

The only other character in the novel who seems to be as natural and alive as Faye is Miguel. Before

moving into Homer's garage, Miguel, with Earle, lives in a camp on the outskirts of the city. The camp and its approach get what is perhaps the most colorful and positive description in the book. All around the path to the camp are purple, blue, yellow, and orange flowers growing in canyon walls which are turquoise, mauve, chocolate, and lavender. "The air itself was vibrant pink," and "gaudy birds burst the colored air into a thousand glittering particles like metal confetti" (328). The camp is a green valley thick with trees. Miguel, a toffee-colored man with large Armenian eyes, spends his time caring for and fighting game cocks, the best one of which, Jujutla, has green, bronze, and copper plummage, a lemon beak, and orange legs. These colors are natural and real, in contrast to the unnatural, unreal colors of the supermarket.

That Faye and Miguel are both natural and alive brings them into a kind of exclusive harmony. West symbolizes this harmony through music.[25] During the scene at the camp, the two sing together so that "their voices touched in the thin, still air to form a minor chord and it was as though their bodies had touched" (332). Then they start dancing with the same sort of exclusive intimacy. Earle, wanting to become part of the dance, jumps up and does a crude hoedown, whooping and leaping into the air. But he cannot become a part of their dance: "Its rhythm was like a smooth glass wall between him and the dancers" (333). Earle finally reacts to the glass wall in the same

way that Tod thinks about reacting to Faye's eggshell self-sufficiency--with violence. He strikes Miguel over the head with a stick, a phallic symbol if there ever was one. But the disturbance of the natural harmony is only temporary, for later West shows Faye and Miguel in bed together doing literally what they have been doing figuratively at the camp.

The camp scene, with its violent climax, points to the three big episodes which end the novel. Except for a short chapter in which Tod learns that Faye, Earle, and Miguel have disappeared, probably separately, and fantasizes once more about raping Faye, the last forty-five pages of the book are made up of three very dramatic and symbolic scenes which closely mirror each other and therefore have a tripling effect. These episodes have in common a division of the characters into victims and victimizers, a person who instigates or intensifies conflict, and finally a destructive violence. The tension is higher and the violence more destructive in the second scene than in the first, and still more in the third than in the second, so that the scenes fit into each other like a nest of Chinese boxes, just like the personalities of Tod, who is the only character present in all three scenes.

The first is the cockfight, one of the most exciting encounters in a book full of them. At the beginning of the scene, it appears that the cockfight will not

take place because the man who was to bring birds to pit against Miguel's does not show up. Claude Estee, who has come along with Tod, saves the situation by buying one of Miguel's birds to match against his champion, Jujutla. The cock Miguel picks for Claude is an obvious loser. He has a hairline crack in the top of his beak, which breaks off during the fight. More important, the bigness and apathy of Hermano--as he is called--make him a "brother" to Tod, who is in his corner, and to Homer and the starers he symbolizes. Another victim, Abe Kusich, clearly intuits his brotherhood with Hermano when the two look into each other's eyes for a second. Abe ends up "handling" the cock for Claude, and he groans with anguish when Jujutla finishes Hermano by driving a gaff through his eye into his brain. Tod's response is to pass the whiskey. Miguel, being in Jujutla's corner with Earle, laughs.

The second episode begins when Homer, starting at the dead chicken he sees, comes out to the garage and invites the men into the house for a drink. The idea is Faye's, who greets them at the door wearing green silk pajamas with the top three buttons of the jacket open. The cocks this time are the men and their goal is the only available hen, Faye. Once more instigating the competition, or at least intensifying it, is Claude, who expresses the yearning all of them feel for Faye. He praises virtually everything she does or says and is the first to dance with

her. The only other men who dance with her are Earle and Miguel, just as, except for the anonymous men Faye sleeps with to pay her father's funeral, they are the only men who ever manage to get into bed with her. The "small round heads" of the two "glistened prettily" like Jujutla's and, like Jujutla, they are the winners.

While Earle and Miguel steadily fight their way closer to their goal, Tod and Homer leave the ring to go outside and sit dejectedly on the curb. There they demonstrate their brotherhood by referring to each other as Toddie and Homie and by holding hands. Tod fights such "signals of affection" because homosexuality disgusts him but, symbolically, also because he does not want to admit, even to himself, that he is a brother of such an obvious loser as Homer. When he returns to the house Tod finds his other brother, Abe, trying to cut in on Earle. At this point the competition for Faye bursts into violence. When Earle knocks Abe on his back with a kick in the stomach, the dwarf charges and, fittingly, gets a strangle-hold on Earle's genitals. Miguel rescues his partner by gripping Abe's ankles and dashing his head against the wall. Abe, in turn, gets help from his fellow victim Tod, and from Claude. The violence brings the party to an end, but not the competition, for Earle and Miguel fight later when Earle catches Miguel in bed with Faye. The aftermath of all this is that Faye, Earle, and Miguel go their separate

ways and Homer decides to go back to Wayneville. By bringing these characters together at Homer's house and then having them violently splinter, West emphasizes his disintegration theme.

The third scene takes place the following evening in front of Kahn's Persian Palace (Grauman's Chinese) Theater. Thousands of people, virtually all of them starers, are there to see their heroes and heroines arrive for the premiere of a new movie. West stops the action of his final chapter long enough to sum up the case history of these people. They are people who saved the pennies they earned at "some kind of dull, heavy labor" in order to retire in "the land of sunshine and oranges." Once in California only a short while, however, they get tired of sunshine and oranges, which do not thrill like the "lynchings, murder, sex crimes, explosions, wrecks, love nests, fires, miracles, revolutions, wars" that the newspapers and movies feed them. "This daily diet made sophisticates of them. The sun is a joke. Oranges can't titillate their jaded palates. Nothing can ever be violent enough to make taut their slack minds and bodies. They have been cheated and betrayed" (412). The Cheated, the title under which Random House accepted the novel for publication, emphasizes their betrayal. The novel's final biblical title suggests that West came to regard their most important characteristic to be their potential destructiveness. After haunting premieres, he theorized that "the people who supposedly

worshipped the glamorous stars, really wanted to kill them, murder them . . . they were jealous of them."[26]

Into this explosive mass of victims of the Hollywood Dream come walking Homer, half dazed from the preceding night's events and on his way to catch the train for Wayneville, and Tod, on his way to Homer's house. Also present are a radio announcer and Adore Loomis, who both function as instigators of the eventual riot.[27] Into his portable microphone the announcer screams with a "rapid, hysterical voice . . . like that of a revivalist preacher whipping his congregation toward the ecstasy of fits" (409). While his voice infects the mass with hysteria, his words put dangerous ideas into their heads: "It's a bedlam, folks. A veritable bedlam! What excitement! Of all the premieres I've attended, this is the most . . . the most . . . stupendous, folks. Can the police hold them? Can they? It doesn't look so, folks . . ." (410). While that is going on at one edge of the crowd, Adore is taunting Homer, who is resting on a bench near another edge of the crowd. First he tries to trick Homer into thinking he has found some money. Adore does this by placing an empty purse in front of Homer's bench, a purse with uncertain flies hovering over it--the flies reminding us of the earlier scene in which Homer identifies with victim flies. If Homer tries to pick up the purse, Adore will yank it away with a string he has attached to it. But

Homer does not bite, so Adore walks up to him and makes faces and insulting gestures. Getting more and more extreme in his antics to raise Homer out of his apathy, Adore finally hits him in the face with a stone. This act arouses Homer to the extent that he catches Adore and jumps up and down on his back, probably killing him.[28] While he is doing that, Tod is hitting him again and again in an attempt to make him stop. Suddenly the crowd charges and the day of the locust is at hand. What follows is one of the most terrifying riot scenes ever described. Homer apparently gets killed, young girls get their clothes torn off and their bodies abused, Tod gets his leg broken. He painfully manages to work his way back to the periphery of the crushing, tearing crowd where the police are able to help him into a squad car. But the experience has affected his mind: "The siren began to scream and at first he thought he was making the noise himself. He felt his lips with his hands. They were clamped tight. He knew then it was the siren. For some reason this made him laugh and he began to imitate the siren as loud as he could" (421).

The symbolism of the encounter of Homer and Adore summarizes the relationship between the performers and the starers, the victimizers and the victims. Adore, the performer, tries the same sort of extreme antics that Tod describes in his lithographs of Faye, Harry, and Abe, but the starer, Homer, remains apathetic. As is true of the

starers he symbolizes, only violence--the stone in the face--can galvanize him into sensibility. Like Miss Lonelyhearts, Homer dies only moments after he comes to life.

The ultimate point in Tod's path toward disintegration is the broken leg he suffers because linked with the other victims, and the hysteria he suffers because of the shock this experience is to his artistic temperament. But his disintegration does not happen before he completes, at least in his mind, his great symbolic painting. While still in the mob but managing to cling desperately to an iron rail, Tod remembers the painting as he has blocked it out on his canvas in rough charcoal strokes. Across the top he has drawn "the burning city, a great bonfire of architectural styles, ranging from Egyptian to Cape Cod colonial. Through the center, winding from left to right, was a long hill street and down it, spilling into the middle foreground, came the mob carrying baseball bats and torches. . . . the people who come to California to die . . . all those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and then only to violence" (420). Fleeing wildly from the mob are men and women, among whom are "Faye, Harry, Homer, Claude, and himself. Faye ran proudly, throwing her knees high. Harry stumbled along behind her, holding on to his beloved derby hat with both hands. Homer seemed to be falling out of the canvas, his face half-asleep, his big hands clawing the air in anguished pantomine. Claude turned his head as he ran to thumb his

nose at his pursuers. Tod himself picked up a small stone to throw before continuing his flight" (420). Tod not only has accurately captured the essence of each character, but also has been enough of a Jeremiah to predict the riot he is caught in. As he is reaching the ultimate point of his disintegration, he is also at the ultimate point of achieving his artistic vision.

Tod's final artistic vision reveals growth. Before coming to Hollywood he had been painting "fat red barns," and his masters were Winslow Homer and Thomas Ryder. As he observes and experiences the city of manufactured dreams and the phony and victimized people in it, he turns from Winslow Homer's sunlit optimism to the satire of Daumier and the shadowy pessimism of Goya. He borrows from such lesser known "painters of Decay and Mystery" as Salvator Rosa, Francesco Guardi, and Monsu Desiderio. What he learns from these artists and from his personal experience as a victim and performer enables Tod to paint the world that symbolizes so well a particular part of the soul not just of Hollywood but of America.

The painting, of course, is a pictorial equivalent of the novel. The world that Tod has put on canvas with paint is the same that West has put on paper with words. That it is not a whole world West himself recognized: "If I put into <u>The Day of the Locust</u> any of the sincere, honest people who work here and are making such a great progressive

fight, the chapters couldn't be written satirically and the whole fabric of the peculiar half-world which I attempted to create would be badly torn by them."[29] West did not intend to write a typical Hollywood novel and so did not pretend to include the sane people or the successful stars. He simply used that dream dump--"there wasn't a dream afloat somewhere which wouldn't sooner or later turn up on it"--and the cheated and cheating people who were made mad by it--the "cream" of "America's madmen"--to delineate the sad and dangerous delusion and frustration infecting the American psyche.

George Milburn in a contemporary review was too good a Jeremiah in predicting that "comparatively few readers will greet this novel by the author of Miss Lonelyhearts with the enthusiasm it deserves."[30] Yet the critical reception of The Day of the Locust then and recently has been mostly favorable. The consensus ranks it just below Miss Lonelyhearts and definitely above Balso Snell and A Cool Million. The contemporary review in Time said that West's intended tragedy turns into screwball grotesque," but Robert Van Gelder writing in the New York Times Book Review called it "an effective grotesque."[31] Edmund Wilson, who wrote probably the most important review, said that "Mr. West has caught the emptiness of Hollywood; and he is, as far as I know, the first writer to make this emptiness horrible," but also that the book has "less concentration than

fight, the chapters couldn't be written satirically and the whole fabric of the peculiar half-world which I attempted to create would be badly torn by them."[29] West did not intend to write a typical Hollywood novel and so did not pretend to include the sane people or the successful stars. He simply used that dream dump--"there wasn't a dream afloat somewhere which wouldn't sooner or later turn up on it"--and the cheated and cheating people who were made mad by it--the "cream" of "America's madmen"--to delineate the sad and dangerous delusion and frustration infecting the American psyche.

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Miss Lonelyhearts."[32] More recently Stanley Edgar Hyman asserts that the novel "ultimately fails as a novel" while William Carlos Williams writes that it "is as brilliantly written a short novel as I have ever read."[33] All in all, as these writers indicate, _The Day of the Locust_ was a novel that West could have been proud to end his career with.

NOTES

[1]"Nathanael West's The Day of the Locust and Sanctuary," Faulkner Studies, 2, No. 3 (1953), 23-24.

[2]The similarities, for example, between the impotent Popeye bringing Red to Temple's bed and drooling over then, and Miguel sneaking into Faye's bed against the wishes and without the knowledge of virile Earle are so tenuous as not to be worth mentioning. West more likely derived Earle from the movie cowpunchers he saw sitting by the hour on the hitching racks in front of a saddle shop across from the old KNK radio station on Sunset, according to Allan Seager as quoted by James F. Light, Nathanael West: An Interpretative Study, 2nd ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 168.

[3]Randall Reid, The Fiction of Nathanael West (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 139-149. He probably goes too far in saying that echoes of Anderson in Locust "are so explicit that he must have intended his readers to notice them, perhaps even to regard them as a variation upon--almost a sequel to--the themes of Winesburg, Ohio" (140).

[4]"Fitzgerald and The Day of the Locust," Fitzgerald Newsletter, No. 15 (Fall, 1961), pp. 2-3.

[5]"The Hollywood Novel," Films, I (Spring, 1940), 68-78. In this review of eight novels, Schulberg includes both Promised Land and Locust but makes no comparison.

[6]The biographical information in this paragraph comes from Light, 151-154, and from Jay Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), pp. 266, 305-306.

[7]Martin, p. 305.

[8]From a letter quoted by Light, p. 168.

[9]Light, p. 192. Stanley Edgar Hyman makes essentially the same charge in Nathanael West (University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 21, 1962), p. 45.

[10]Martin, p. 305.

[11]Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust in The Complete Works of Nathanael West (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 277. Subsequent references to the novel will be indicated with page numbers in the text.

[12]Light, p. 186.

[13]Perhaps a little qualification is necessary here. Both men are victims to some degree--Shrike receives abuse from his wife and Claude is dupe enough to live in a fake plantation with an inflated horse in his pool--but neither is really hurt by these things compared to Miss Lonelyhearts or Tod. Moreover, their being victims is precluded to some extent by the fact that they serve as externalizations of the mostly submerged but present satirical vision of Miss Lonelyhearts and Tod.

[14]Martin, p. 323.

[15]I am indebted here to Martin, p. 317.

[16]Martin, p. 306, quotes a friend of West recounting his story: "He said he was coming home about three or four in the morning, walking down the dim corridor leading to his apartment, when he heard screaming and yelling and cursing in a woman's voice. Suddenly the door opposite opened and one of the prostitutes whom he happened to know, and knew was a prostitute, said something like 'You goddamn son of a bitch, get out of here,' and kicked something out of the door that looked like a dirty bundle of laundry. It started rolling down the hall and suddenly it got up and walked off."

[17]Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed., (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 326. Kingsley Widmer

sees Faye as "the glossy bitch" who fascinates so many writers of Hollywood novels, in "The Hollywood Image," Coastlines, V (Autumn, 1961), 23.

[18]The image of a hooked fish appears also at the end of Miss Lonelyhearts, where the deceptive performer with his false promise is Christ.

[19]George M. Pisk, "The Graveyard of Dreams: A Study of Nathanael West's Last Novel, The Day of the Locust," South Central Bulletin, IV, No. 27 (1967), 68, may be right in explaining both the clue intended here and Tod's statement to Homer, "You could learn from him," in pointing out that Abe's "vitality contrasts so sharply with the almost universal apathy of the others."

[20]That Hollywood has made once meaningful dreams trivial is an idea that he expresses in Miss Lonelyhearts and amplifies in Locust.

[21]The perception that "Hollywood ain't for real" forms a theme common to Hollywood novels, according to Widmer, p. 19.

[22]The Trojan horse relates to earlier images of deceptive horses, one a race horse with the Greek name of Tragopan, meaning pheasant, and the other the rubber, life-size, "realistic reproduction" of a horse lying on the bottom of Claude Estee's pool.

[23]Some of the other characters also do some role shifting. Abe, no less than Tod, is a starer in relation to Faye. And Faye is still another role shifter, according to Light, 173.

[24]This residue of the real mixed with the phony appears in other places in the novel; for example, the ocean liner of painted canvas which Tod sees on the set has "real life boats hanging from its davits" (351).

[25]Reid, 124-130, makes clear how extensive and important the dance and song images are in the book.

26Martin, 304.

[27]As the next sentence indicates, the preachers who whip up their congregations into religious fits are also instigators of violence. And Joan Schwartzen, who begins the mini-riot at Mrs. Jenning's place, is another. West thus emphasizes the role of the person who throws the match into the barn full of hay.

[28]Hyman, 37, astutely observes that West slips by not having Homer do the killing with his feverish hands.

[29]Light, p. 173.

[30]"The Hollywood Nobody Knows," Saturday Review of Literature, XX (May 20, 1939), 14.

[31]"Truly Monstrous," Time, XXXIII (June 19, 1939), 84; "A Tragic Chorus," New York Times Book Review, XLIV (May 21, 1939), 6.

[32]"Hollywood Dance of Death," New Republic, LXXXXIX (July 26, 1939), 339.

[33]Hyman, p. 45; "The Day of the Locust," Tomorrow, X (November, 1950), 58.

VI. CONCLUSION

"THE END OF . . . A CERTAIN KIND OF WRITING"

At the time of his death on December 22, 1940, Nathanael West probably was happier than he had been in a long time. He was making $600 a week as a film writer in Hollywood; he was joyfully married to Eileen McKenney, model for her sister's My Sister Eileen; and he was eagerly blocking out a new novel. He very possibly could have carried out the plan he wrote Bennett Cerf about on June 13, 1939: "One thing I have lately begun to feel . . . is that I have come to the end of my interests in a certain kind of writing. I have a new book planned which I intend to keep extremely simple and full of the milk of human kindness, and I am not joking, I really mean it."[1] How far he actually could have gotten away from the kind of book he had been writing is hard to determine. But it is not hard to see that, as West implies, his first four books are of a kind. And he does seem to be at the end of, have finished with, that "certain kind of writing" in several significant ways.

In technique, for instance, his novels form a completed unit. The Day of the Locust gives the impression

of being pivotal in its method, in fact. Though it is similar to the first three novels in technique, it clearly points to a new direction. It is less starkly compressed than the other novels, less allusive and elliptical. To continue that trend would be, in comparison, "to keep extremely simple." Moreover, the fact that West, after borrowing his plots, symbols, and characters from written sources in his first three novels, used himself as his Bulfinch in Locust suggests that he had exhausted that approach in his own writing.

Thematically his novels seem to form a completed unit, too. West's four novels make different statements, of course, but the psychological structure of all of them consists of the same basic elements: anxiety, disease or disfigurement, sex, illusion, and violence. The complicated and explosive relation West draws between these elements is always the same. The people in his fiction do not feel just the anxiety that Freud defined as normal and that receives repose through such natural functions as eating, copulating, or falling in love; his people are grotesques with exaggerated anxieties, anxieties pitched at a painful level. They are physical cripples repeatedly frustrated by an environment hostile to cripples--no one wants to make love to a dwarf or to a girl born without a nose. Or they are emotional cripples like Miss Lonelyhearts and Tod Hackett, who are trapped and further crippled by perverted sex and failure. Since they cannot

fulfill their wishes for love and happiness in the real world, West's grotesques resort to dream worlds. They identify themselves with the people of the illusionary worlds popularized by the movies and by love story magazines, vicariously attaining love, wealth, and laughter that way. But even while desperately believing the puerile lie that people can live happily ever after, they discover ultimately that wish fulfillment in dream only is not enough. The dream betrays the dreamer and his life becomes increasingly more of a nightmare. The increased tension which results has no way to relieve itself except through violent explosion, which is what takes place at the end of every one of the novels. What more could West have done with this basic pattern? James F. Light affords good support here. He saw not only that Balso Snell provided a "storehouse of materials . . . for West in his later novels," including especially the ideas, but that he "effectively and thoroughly dramatized" those materials in his novels.[2]

Even the historical perspective seems to dictate that West was at the end of what he had been doing. If any man in his writing ever reflected the time in which he lived, West did. One of his strongest points, in fact, is his extraordinary sense of his age. His first novel having been published in 1931 and his last in 1939, his age was clearly that of the Depression Thirties, a time when the collective anxiety was especially high, and when the need

for and betrayal by dreams was perhaps as great as it has ever been for Americans. His grotesque people make authentic symbols of depression America because he took them directly from the American landscape or from types he found in writers such as William James and Horatio Alger who had already generalized them for him. He used them to describe a particularly powerful region of the American psyche and to warn us about the disastrous direction it seemed to be taking us. Norman Podhoretz is right when he claims that West "succeeded in generalizing the horrors of the depression into a universal image of human suffering."[3] What was true of America in the Thirties is true to some degree of all peoples in all times. But by intent and effect, West was most directly talking about his country. And the period of history made up by the feverish Thirties and ending with the explosion of World War II forms a pattern that is curiously parallel to that of his novels, both individually and collectively.

The preeminent reason he had such a remarkable sense of his age is that it was in such close harmony with his own nature. His friend Robert M. Coates said about him: "I think the key to his character was his immense, sorrowful, sympathetic but all pervasive pessimism. He was about the most thoroughly pessimistic person I have ever known."[4] Other friends saw other character traits: softness, vulnerability, discontent, restlessness, intellectual brutalism, compassion.[5] All these aspects of his

personality emerge in his writings, many in the complex personalities of the protagonists of his two best novels. But the dominant mood of his books is pessimistic. He includes no real winners. He recognized this fact about his work and, in way of explaining and justifying it to himself as well as his critics, had several answers. He said, "I believe that there is a place for the fellow who yells fire and indicates where some of the smoke is coming from without actually dragging the hose to the spot," and he compared himself to Balzac, who "wrote with great truth and no wishfulfillment. The superior truth alone in Balzac was sufficient to reveal the structure of middle class society and its defects and even show how it would ultimately be destroyed."[6] He also said that including the sincere, hopeful people who "are making such a great, progressive fight" in the "peculiar half world" of his fiction would tear it apart, that it "would be the mixing of two styles in such a manner that neither set of characters would be any good."[7] But he got to the core of the matter in a letter to Malcolm Cowley where he admitted that displaying hopefulness in his writing was simply against his nature.[8] When he sat down at his typewriter the dominant truth was that, as Josephine Herbst put it, "the horror of his age was in West's nerves, in his blood."[9]

Yet, as a man, he was not without hope and faith. Those qualities revealed themselves, even while he was

writing those pessimistic novels, in his participation in various progressive movements of his time--his serving on committees to help the migratory workers in California, for example.[10] Perhaps this part of him, now that the Depression Thirties were over, now that he was happily married and stable financially, was ready to surface in his writing. Perhaps he had worked enough of the pessimism out of his system in his first four novels to put what was left in repose. T. S. Eliot in his writings made the transition from despair to hope. West very well could have been on his way to books "full of the milk of human kindness."

But what he would have done had he lived is of minor importance compared to what he did before he died. Leslie Fiedler has said that West, when he died at thirty-seven, had his best writing still before him, that "his greatness lies like a promise just beyond his last novel. . . ."[11] And it is true that during his lifetime West sold few copies of his books, earning a total of only $1,280 from them.[12] He complained, ". . . there is nothing to root for in my books, and what is even worse, no rooters."[13] But he was wrong. A considerable number of rooters have found plenty to root for, especially since the publication of The Complete Works in 1957, and they are still at it. By consensus they have already decreed that his greatness lay not beyond his last novel but in his two masterpieces, Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust. And they are all

helping to establish the recognition and readership that such greatness deserves.

NOTES

[1]Quoted by Jay Martin, Nathanael West: The Art of His Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 392.

[2]James F. Light, Nathanael West: An Interpretative Study, 2nd ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 56-57.

[3]"A Particular Kind of Joking," New Yorker, May 18, 1957, p. 157.

[4]Quoted by Light, p. 138.

[5]Jay Martin in his introduction to Nathanael West, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 3.

[6]In a letter to Jack Conroy as quoted by Martin, p. 336.

[7]In the same letter to Conroy in Martin, p. 336.

[8]Martin, p. 336.

[9]"Nathanael West," Kenyon Review, 23 (1961), p. 612.

[10]West's political activities get detailed coverage in Martin, pp. 342-353.

[11]*Love and Death in the American Novel*, rev. ed., (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 489.

[12]Martin, p. 341.

[13]In a letter to Edmund Wilson as quoted by Martin, p. 334.

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