

21 Jan. '00

Dear Dick--

I come, Stetson in hand, seeking advice. About your Harvard days and the East, of all things!

I have my next novel underway, and not to lumber you with too much detail, let me just say it's set mostly in the mid-1920's--in Helena, New York City, and the same old Two Medicine country--and one of the principal characters is a Williamson, scion of the Double W own-everything-in-sight family I've had in both *English Creek* and *Dancing at the Rascal Fair*. Here, Dick, in the world premiere of this prose, is his first appearance in the manuscript:

"He arrived on the wings of that commanding smile. *The very model of a modern genteel Major*, a line of hers teased somewhere back in that diary. Behind Wes, men would have charged Hell; in fact, men had. Even his way of standing, the weight taken on his left leg to spare the right knee peppered by shrapnel at St. Mihiel, proclaimed the reliance that the world had wanted to place on him. Brave and wounded at the same time: the story of Wesley Williamson's life, as she was plentifully aware, on more than one kind of battlefield."

There are a number of things I want to get at with this character Wes Williamson: a view, from the inside out, of a western baron, because I don't think anybody has done it in a non-cliched way in fiction; a kind of Shakespearean rivalry of princes within the family, between Wes--the soldier (WWI hero), businessman, and politician of the clan--and his brother who runs the Double W; and a sense of noblesse oblige in Wes that complicates the lives of the other main characters. For the purposes of what I'm asking you, let me say he's a foe of Anaconda Copper; a Bull Moose Republican; progressive. In essence, I'm creating him as a fictional reflection of Joseph Dixon, who beat Burton K. Wheeler in the 1920 governor's race in Montana. But my man Wes was blackmailed out of that race, and I suppose is trying to find atonement in the events that propel the book's plot.

So, Dick, if I'm to create a good sound class-traitor and place him in the Western landscape, do I raise him and school him in the West (California) or the East? For plot purposes, Wes has a fancy New York residence, a la William Clark of the Copper Kings, and he's married to an Eastern woman who generally doesn't deign to come to Montana. If I bring him East to go to Harvard, in the first decade of the 20th Century (hey, I realize the Richard Maxwell Brown years there were a lot later than this, honest), what would shape him there, do you think? His feelings as an outsider, a westerner; or the pull of the Harvard brainpower? Or if I have him Western-educated--Stanford? some exposure to Josiah Royce?--are there some possible advantageous influences that you see, say, from your Reed or U. of Oregon experience? I want this guy to be thoughtful, aware of how hampered Montana had been by Anaconda and the other miners not having to pay any taxes that amounted to anything (\$13,559 in 1922 on twenty million dollars in revenues,

according to Malone & Lang), a champion of the common man *if* the common man takes the advice of someone like him, born to be in charge. Any sources to recommend, from your Civil War of Incorporation depths of thought? Any outright pieces of advice, for that matter? I should say, too, that Wes is a foe, political and visceral, of the Ku Klux Klan (he's Catholic), and if you have any recommended reading on the Klan in the West in the '20's, I'd love to hear it.

Well, that's what I wanted to bend your ear about. Feel free to pick up the phone and call me collect, if you have any brainstorm. There's no rush on any of this--I'm just getting underway on the background for the book, and will be doing the first main swatch of research in Montana in April, when Carol and I go to Big Sky and I give a speech to English teachers.

How are the Browns in this brave new millennium? We survived Y2K okay, but had a power outage from the windstorm last Sunday; I suppose that puts things into perspective. On New Year's Eve, we were about to yawn and adjourn to the tv to watch the Seattle Center fireworks when skyrockets aplenty began going off just up the block from us. We theorize that that neighbor must have had Bill Gates's leftovers--the fireworks show went on and on, with us happily lazing in front of our living-room window, taking it all in along with a little champagne.

Can't think of any real news. I do have the added detail about Mike Malone that he apparently went out of life at full tilt, as we figured he was choosing to risk in the pace of the Montana State presidency--he had just come in on a plane at 1:30 a.m. when the heart attack hit him there in the Bozeman airport. Lang, who was in grad school at WSU with Mike, made it to Bozeman for the memorial service, but coming as it did in the chockablock holidays, a lot of us, including Mary Blew and me, couldn't manage it.

All for now. Bear in mind that this house has a guest room, and could launch you into Canada sometime when you start to feel that northward tug again.

All best to Dee, too.

EXAMPLE OF
COMPUTERS FAILURE
TO PRINT SPACE BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS

1
OF
13 PAGES

Please forgive word-processing mistakes in this letter. I must now stop "editing" it and print it up to mail to you.

1850 E. 27th Ave., Eugene, OR 97403

Monday, March 27, 2000

Dear Ivan:

I am embarrassed that it has taken me so long to write to you about Wesley Williamson at Harvard. I have excuses but no good excuses. I have been stewing about this to no good purpose. If I had written this letter a month or two ago it would not be much different than it is now.

I fear this may be too late to be of much help to you, because, organized and formidable worker that you are, you've probably done your own work on Harvard and have written the section of the book or, at least, no how you are going to write it. Still, I am going ahead with this, because if what I have written (below) is any help to you for even one sentence in your Harvard section I will be pleased.

First, however, an update: As you can see from the enclosed one-page itinerary, Dee and I are soon to leave, if everything goes according to schedule, on a nearly one-month trip to Europe. Right now Dee is and has been working like the dickens on her garden and getting ready for her trip, but she has what may be a case of the tonsillitis. She went to see the doctor this morning (I went with her) and looks okay pending the successful outcome of the overnight test to see if Dee has something that would delay us. I'll drop you a line if we do or do not get the green light for our trip.

In answer to your question about the KKK in the West, quite a bit has been written on that subject. There has been a debate going on about the Klan in the West with some seeing it as being essentially a grassroots protest movement against establishment power and others hewing to the more traditional view stressing the bigotry of the Klan against, especially, Catholics and Jews. With a relatively small black population in the 1920s West it was Catholics and Jews who bore the brunt of Klan prejudice. As for books, I would say begin with the following: Shawn Lay, ed., The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s (U. Ill. Press, 1992) -- this book will get you into the debate that I mentioned.

Two state studies of the 1920s Klan are by Robert A. Goldberg on Colorado (1981) and by Larry Gerlach on Utah (1982) -- both of these are scholarly books. A new local study is by David A. Horowitz (History Dept., Portland State U. -- David would be a good one for you to about recent scholarship on the Klan in the West): Horowitz, Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s (So. Ill. U. Press, 1999), a book based on the minutes of the Klan chapter in La Grande, Oregon. I haven't yet seen this book, but see if David thinks that the Democratic-Party progressive governor of Oregon in the 1920s, Walter M. Pierce, belonged to the La Grande Klan.

Some scholars think he ~~was~~^{was}, but the hard-core documentary evidence had been missing. Pierce was, no doubt about it, elected governor by the votes of the Klan and its supporters. He was a one-term governor, but in the 1930s he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from eastern Oregon. During the 1930s he was the strongest and most successful New Deal Democrat and supporter of FDR in Oregon; by this time he was an unambiguous hard-core progressive, having put his Klan-tinged past behind him. In effect, Pierce was an Oregon version of Hugo Black -- a strong New Deal senator from Alabama in the 1920s had belonged to a local Klan in Alabama in the 1920s. Only Black's powerful national radio speech, strongly apologizing for and repudiating the Klan, saved

his nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court (where he was a progressive) by FDR in the late 1930s.

? Turning to your new novel. I certainly like your concept of it as outlined in your letter to me. Your opening description of Wesley Williamson that you quoted to me is a gem. (Hereinafter I'll refer to him as WW.) I am assuming that Williamson family money stemming from Montana cattle paid WW's way through Harvard. You asked what I thought would shape him at Harvard. I do think his feeling as an outsider might have been very important, but I can't help but think that in the personal realm WW was a natural insider. As a Westerner he certainly would notice how different Boston was from the rest of the USA. Very obvious to me (and to Dee, too) back in the 1950s was that in the Boston area there was a caste system unlike anything outside of the South, only the divisions in Boston were internal to the white community: a lot of it as late as the 1950s was still Anglos (Protestants) vs. Irish Catholics. (The Kennedys had become "lace-curtain Irish" by the 1920s.) As a Catholic from the West, I don't think WW would have found he had much in common with the Irish Catholics (very lower class and, in their own way, quite bigoted). I see WW as hewing more to the faction of Abp. Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota. Among leading Catholic prelates of the late-19th and early-20th century, Ireland was said to be the most politically liberal and that, indeed, his faction of the Catholic Church had more in common with the Jansenist tradition in European Catholicism than it had with the urbanized Catholics of the Eastern states. Of course, Ireland was Irish Catholic himself, but, apparently, of a vastly different social and cultural character than reigned among Catholics in the East. In short, I think WW would have felt more at home in Ireland's wing of the Church than the Eastern wing of the Church that he would encounter in the Boston area. ↓

SPACE → Still, when you ask what at Harvard helped him to find his way to a reform career in politics, I think anti-Catholicism encountered by him at Harvard would have been a factor, although I doubt that WW with his winning personality would have personally experienced much open prejudice.

Yet, to use your phrase, "the pull of Harvard brainpower" -- I think that would have been the main factor in shaping WW toward a career of political reform. And not just the brainpower of the faculty but of WW's fellow students: reform-minded students like Walter Lippman who certainly had brainpower and also students like John Reed who, although without Lippman's intellect, was bright and animated.

The sketch I have written below, Wesley Williamson at Harvard, is certainly not intended to tell you in any way how you would handle WW at Harvard. I would be the last person to tell you how to write a novel, but I think you well understand that. What I have tried to do is to deal generally with Harvard in 1900-1910, a period I have always been interested in because it was the decade that two of my heroes were Harvard undergrads: FDR, my political hero, and the historian, Samuel Eliot Morison, who was (as I note below) one of my mentors as a grad student at Harvard and, although he was not perfect, Morison has always been one of my academic heroes. I loved all of his books, and he was very nice to me.

In the following piece I speculate about some of the people WW might have known at Harvard. I know, of course, that it is not your way to introduce noted historical personages in your novels, but I can't help but think in terms of those at Harvard that WW might have known.

(I know, of course, that you might send WW to college at Stanford, but for the purposes of this letter I am assuming Harvard as WW's college.)

Further thinking along the lines of real people that WW might have known or encountered in his life, I can't help but wonder if he might have met on the Western Front Warren Grimm -- Grimm was, of course, a young member of the establishment in Centralia, Washington, in 1919 whom the Wobblies killed when the Armistic Day parade of 1919 turned into a riot. Grimm had been an authentic football hero at the U. of Washington in the 1910s (he is listed as a prominent player at Washington in Dr. Baker's authoritative history of American football). Grimm was an officer (lieutenant probably, captain maybe -- I can't remember without checking) in the AEF. A novelist could arrange such a meeting, but, as I have said, you have never done that in your fiction (caveat: you DID do it with Bob Marshall in Mountain Time).

Wesley Williamson at Harvard by Dick Brown

WW = Wesley Williamson.

WW attends his freshman and sophomore years at Helena High School (or did Great Falls have a decent high school then?)/ His parents, however, want him to go back east to one of the top colleges or universities -- ideally, one of the "Big Three" of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.

WESLEY WILLIAMSON AT PREP

Selection of a prep school was crucial not only in academically preparing WW for successful admission to Harvard but also as a necessary background for social success at Harvard in regard to clubs etc. (see below). Andover and Exeter would have been fine for the academic preparation, but they would not have been the entre to the best clubs at Harvard. That would take going to one of the elite "St. Grottlesex" schools for boys that I discuss below. "St. Grottlesex" was a term that was in use by the 1940s and perhaps earlier.

Whatever school WW went to he would have done well in it after going through bouts of homesickness and loneliness and getting used to the academic rigor. WW's personality and character would have carried him through the initial rough going and would have won him popularity, even with many of the real snobs.

WW would have been of interest to his schoolmates because, among other things, of having grown up on a Western ranch in the Montana ranching country not so awfully from where Theodore Roosevelt had had his spread over in North Dakota. TR's Western background had been made known by his, TR's, boon on ranch life in the Dakota-Montana country, and the image of TR as an adoptive Westerner was strengthened by the Rough Rider detachment he heroically headed in the Spanish-American War. (Had WW's father met TR in TR's ranching days? -- it is possible, since TR had been a member of the Montana stockgrower's association in which Granville Stuart had been such a bigwig. Or WW's father might have met TR on one of his trips to the West during the 1890s and *MAYBE LATER.* While in prep school (and at Harvard, too), many of WW's acquaintances and friends would have read Wister's Virginian (published about 1901 and dedicated to TR) that was not only a bestseller but that had virtual cult-status among members of the Eastern elite that were interested in things Western (as many were). My speculation is that WW knew the real West well-enough firsthand that he wasn't interested in reading about it in Wister's novel. He had resisted reading it, but he got so many questions about it at prep school and

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at Harvard ("What do you think of The Virginian?") that he finally gave up and read it in prep school or college so he could answer all the questions (at length or only dismissively -- which!). Well, what did WW think of The Virginian? Well, what did WW think of The Virginian?

One of WW's favorite books that he read in prep school was one that his classmates pretty much all read, and he did, too. It was an autobiographical novel by a St. Paul boy who went to Harvard and wrote about his freshman year there: Charles Macomb Flandrau, Diary of a Freshman. Everyone loved this charming, appealing book, and WW was no exception. It certainly made him want to go to Harvard (although when he got to Harvard WW would find out that in a great many important ways the Harvard of Flandrau's book was nowhere to be seen). It is so old and forgotten that we don't have Flandrau's book in the UO Library, but Flandrau graduated from Harvard in 1895, and I think he published Diary of Freshman before 1900. IF the book was published before WW went to prep school (or while he was in prep school), it is almost certain that he would have read it in prep school -- if so, it would be worth your getting on interlibrary loan in case, UW -- like UO, does not have it in the library. Flandrau's book was widely read and created a mystique for the period of Harvard that concerns you.

[I came across Flandrau's book when I was in Moberidge High School, and I loved it. But I never thought of going to Harvard, because it seemed (and was) beyond reach to someone like myself growing up in a small town in a reader's family. By the time I got out of the army in 1948 -- having gone straight from high school to the army -- Harvard was no longer beyond my reach, but I still wasn't interested in going there because I read another book in high school -- Alexander Woolcott's autobiography, a book that made small-college life such as Woolcott experienced in upstate New York at Hamilton College -- that got me interested in going to a good small college. That is what I did, of course, in going to Reed. I think I also sensed that if I ever went to Harvard, the time to do it would be in graduate school and not as an undergrad. --Dick (excuse the reminiscence)]

WESLEY WILLIAMSON AT HARVARD

With a mixture of trepidation and eager enthusiasm, WW, accepted as a member of the Class of 1909, entered his freshman dormitory in Harvard Yard in the fall of 1905.

The president of Harvard for some 25 years, Charles W. Eliot, was one of the best-known Americans of the 1890s and early 1900s. In his personality, character, and intellect Eliot was a living prototype of the best of Harvard: his cultured, broad-A accent (without the least taint of snobbery in it) bespoke the finest qualities of the "Brahmin" aristocracy of Boston from which he sprang. Unself-consciously aristocratic and actually charming in his personal bearing, Eliot was, however, a democrat in his social and political values.

Eliot's web of social values was one reason WW was at Harvard, for the academic tone set by Eliot meant that Harvard was more likely than Yale or Princeton to admit promising applicants from the West than were Yale or Princeton. WW applied to both Harvard and Yale, but Yale turned him down -- that was okay with him since Harvard was his first choice by a mile, but it also nettled WW that Yale turned him down (most people don't like to be rejected, and WW was no exception).

Some issues that WW faced as a Harvard undergrad:

"GOLD COASTER" vs. "GREASY GRIND." The "Gold Coasters" were the Harvardians who succumbed fully to a life of snobbery, debutante balls, and parties among the Boston elite; this was well-bred hedonism, represented academically by the "gentleman C." The term "Gold Coaster" came from the string of sumptuous apartment houses that stretched for

a several blocks along Mt. Auburn Street. Mt. Auburn St. was a block or two east from Harvard Yard and on the other side (the east side) faced the Charles River, a fairly wide stream that was within tidal limits. Because these buildings contained very expensive rooms, suites, and apartments and because they faced the water, this district was known as the "Gold Coast."

The "greasy grind" was the Harvard undergrad who, although able to get through Harvard financially (although for some it was very difficult), was not well-off enough for residence on the Gold Coast. The idea was that the "greasy grind" was too poor to do anything much but study and study they did. "Greasy grind" was the term of derision imposed on these "poor" but studious Harvardians. The essence of the snobbish viewpoint was captured by Owen Wister in a short story (obviously autobiographical) entitled something like "Philosophy 5." Although he seems to have fitted in well enough within in the ultra-democratic ethos of the frontier West that he fully experienced in Wyoming, Wister was a deep-dyed snob.

WW lived on the Gold Coast for at least for a year or two after his freshman dormitory. Does WW fully adapt to Gold Coast life or does it eventually repel him? Thus, he could have been a Gold Coaster (at least for a while). On the other hand, WW could never have been a "greasy grind" in the literal meaning of the term. Today the term, "nerd," is close to what the "greasy grind" was. But WW was not poor enough to be a greasy grind, nor did he have the personality for it.

THE "GENTLEMAN C." The great academic reform of President Eliot was to install the "free-elective" system in place of the rigid structure and system of course requirements that by its intellectual oppressiveness was stifling Harvard when Eliot became president. Eliot completely did away with the old system with the result that under the new system of "free electives" the undergraduate could take any courses he wanted to as long as graduation requirements were met: i.e. enough courses to earn the required credits for graduation and to graduate in a good academic standing. This was truly a huge blast of fresh air in American higher education, but by 1900 the downside of the free-elective system at Harvard was visible to all: savvy undergrads who were much more inclined to social life than to genuine learning figured out that they could get through Harvard with little work at all so long as they took easy courses (and there were many of those -- some were good courses in content, but the grading was easy) and got the passing grade of "C" in them. Thus, many a Gold Coaster slid through Harvard with virtually all C grades taken in a great miscellany of courses that were far from a pattern of coherent higher education.

I see WW as being both too independent and too genuinely intellectually curious to lock himself into the pattern of the Gentleman C. WW was too independent to be vulnerable to the peer pressure that had a lot to do with the reign of the Gentleman C among well-heeled Harvard undergrads. To Gold Coasters the term "gentleman" was mainly defined in socialite terms, and it "just wasn't done" for a "gentleman" to get better or worse grades than "C." (Of course, gentleman-C types sometimes got B's or A's; that was acceptable to one's peers as long as it did not happen very often.) As noted, in the first sentence, WW was so genuinely interested in learning that he could not help but get a smattering of B's and A's. Also, WW was so innately competitive that he did not like to be outdone by the other students in the courses he took.

Both the issues of Gold Coast vs. greasy grind and of the gentleman C were related to the issue of to-be or not-to-be a clubman.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE A CLUBMAN. The issue here was the system of undergraduate clubs that reached its essence in the ten "final clubs." There is a good chapter on the final

clubs of Harvard in Cleveland Amory's classic of popular social history, The Proper Bostonians. (These clubs still exist at Harvard and, as one might expect, they are still an issue.) In the social hierarchy of the Gold Coaster, there were two preliminary clubs, as it were, that served as stepping stones to the final clubs. First, one had to be elected to the Hasty Pudding, and to be elected to "the Pudding" one had to be well-to-do, socially prominent at least to a degree, and to have gone to an acceptable prep school. Assuming one was eligible in these three ways, it was necessary to be popular enough to be elected. Once elected to Hasty Pudding, the next step (almost a concurrent one if one made it) was to be elected to the second preliminary club, the "Institute of 1770." The requirements for the Institute were stiffer than for the Pudding in regard to wealth, social standing, prep school, and popularity. But not all who made it into the Pudding and the Institute were elected to the elite of the elite -- the final clubs. But even within the elite of the elite, there were significant gradations from the most elite of all and about the only one that was well known -- indeed a byword -- beyond Harvard itself: the Porcellian Club. Next came, according to Amory, the A.D. club and so on down to the lowest ranked of the final clubs.

In regard to proper prep-school status for admission to the club system and, ultimately, one of the final clubs: by the time Amory wrote Proper Bostonians there was a two-stage hierarchy in which the most exclusive and prestigious schools were the "Saint Grottlesex" schools named by Amory in his book. Andover and Exeter and other such schools in the northeast, especially New England, were a good bit below the Saint Grottlesex schools in social standing. "Saint Grottlesex" is a neologism combining parts of the names of the five most exclusive boy's boarding schools in New England: Groton (pronounced Grott-un) St. Mark's, St. Paul's, St. George's, and Middlesex. All these schools were/are in New England.

Could WW, a Catholic, have been admitted to a Saint Grottlesex school? I expect there were some Catholic boys in these schools but not many.

(What about the top prep schools of the Midwest and West? Would they be beyond the pale of clubbability? -- not entirely, I think. There were some good boys schools in Minnesota: Shattuck and Blake [and I think there was/is Pillsbury] were, I think, in existence by 1900.)

It could be that the greatest barrier to social success for WW at Harvard would have been the fact that he was a Catholic (the best clubs were strongly Protestant). My guess is that WW's traits of personality and character would have made up a lot for his Catholic status.

Not all members of the final clubs were deep-dyed snobs, but most of them were. The wounds inflicted on an undergrad psyche by not making his first choice of final clubs could be deep and last a lifetime even for those who ultimately achieved real success and distinction in their careers. The huge example is, of course, Franklin D. Roosevelt. At Harvard, FDR was a Gold Coaster, one whose grades were mostly gentleman C's, and a club man. FDR aspired to be a member of the Porcellian Club, but unlike his cousin, Theodore Roosevelt (whom FDR always much admired), FDR did not make "the Porc" but had to settle for a lesser club. The slight apparently still rankled FDR even after he gained the great success and worldwide fame of his U.S. presidency. It seems, that of the two branches of the Roosevelt family -- the Hyde Park branch (FDR's) and the Oyster-Bay branch (TR's) -- the Hyde-Park Roosevelts were deemed socially inferior to the Oyster-Bay Roosevelts.

I see several possibilities for WW: (1) He makes Hasty Pudding, only. (2) He makes both the Pudding and the Institute of 1770, but is allowed to go no further in the club system. ((3) He makes a lower-tier club. (3) He makes a good final club but not the Porcellian.

(5) He decides to forego the club system and does not even put himself up for Hasty Pudding.

I reiterate, however, that I think WW's status as an honest-to-goodness Westerner would have helped him socially (even among the elite of the elite) at Harvard. Harvard has always had a fondness for the West -- at least it still did when I was a grad student there in the 1950s. Frederick Merk's course on Westward expansion -- the same one that Turner taught although Merk very much put his own stamp on it -- was very popular among the undergrads when I took it for grad-student credit in the 1950s.

Merk, by the way, was one of my mentors at Harvard. The other three were Frank Freidel (I was his T.A. -- a great person; learned a lot from him), Samuel Eliot Morison (see below), and my dissertation director, Bud Bailyn. All four of these men were (Bailyn still is) remarkable individuals as well being truly distinguished scholars.

The appeal of the West to Easterners has always been great. In the early 1960s I was the first to teach frontier/Western history at Rutgers, and it was immediately a popular course with the undergrads.

WHAT COURSES WOULD WW TAKE AT HARVARD? The decade of 1900-1909/10 was a golden-age of great teaching by great professors at Harvard. WW would have wanted to take courses from some of the luminaries who by reputation were great teachers; here are some of them (in no particular order):

--Nathaniel Southgate Shaler in geology.

--George Lyman (Kitty) Kittredge -- Shakespeare.

--Charles Townsend (Copey) Copeland -- literature and writing. Famous for his public readings of poetry and his late-evening soirees with his undergrad proteges -- one of whom was Dos Passos (D. P. was there, I think, after 1910). I don't somehow see WW as being so literary as to be one of Copey's devotees.

--Charles H. Haskins and A.B. Hart in history (Turner wasn't there until after 1910).

--A. Lawrence Lowell in Government -- pol. sci. has always been called "Government" at Harvard. Lowell was a most important figure at this time, not just for his teaching and scholarship but because during the 1900-1910 period he became the dominant figure among the faculty. Lowell spearheaded the reform movement during that decade to make the Harvard undergrad education more rigorous, mainly by introducing a structure of much-needed, sound requirements significantly to reform the free-elective system. Also, by the latter part of the decade, it was obvious to almost all that Lowell would succeed Eliot as president of Harvard. Eliot didn't want to retire, but he had reached that age and Lowell did become president in 1909. There was an interesting contrast between Eliot and Lowell, who were among the greatest university presidents in the history of U.S. higher education. (Lowell had faults, but all things considered he was a great university president.) Eliot, as noted above, was in his social and political values a democrat but in his personality he was an aristocrat to the core (although a benign one). Lowell was one of THE LOWELLS and, like Eliot, a Brahmin to the nth degree but Lowell was the reverse of Eliot: Lowell was a democrat in his personality but an aristocrat to the core in his social and educational values.

I think there is a good possibility that WW would have taken a course from Lowell.

--Although they may not have been scintillating teachers (I'm not sure), two important faculty in economics were Wm. Z. Ripley -- an authority on railroad regulation, something that would have been of interest to a big Montana rancher and, of course, to WW as, later, a Progressive Republican politico and businessman. The other economist was Frank Taussig.

--The famous and important "philosophical four" of the philosophy dept.: Royce, G. H. Palmer, William James, and Santayana. Palmer had empathy with undergrads -- actually, all four of them did, each in his own way. William James liked Westerners if they were bright and interesting -- like Gertrude Stein* to whom he gave an A on general principles. James happened to have been at Stanford when the great S.F. earthquake of 1906 hit -- it got him out of bed; it was really shaking and he was so swept up in the excitement and emotion of it that he spontaneously cheered on the quake -- in German. Royce was a good teacher; he had a wife, incidentally, who was incisive to put it mildly -- many stories were told about her. Later I will write a bit about Santayana. I would be almost certain that WW took at least one course from among the Philosophical Four -- and, I wouldn't be surprised if he took more than one.

--A great influence was the greatly revered and loved dean of Harvard College -- Le Baron Russell Briggs. WW would have had some contact with him, since almost all undergrads did.

UNDERGRADS AT HARVARD IN WW'S TIME (class of 1909 or anytime in the 1900-1910 period) THAT HE MIGHT HAVE MET. Two-digit number of graduating class is given for most of them. In no particular order:

Maxwell Perkins, the editor of Thomas Wolfe et al., '07.
Samuel Eliot Morison and Van Wyck Brooks, both '08.

The class of 1910 had many who would later be luminaries: John Reed, Walter Lippman, the poets T.S. Eliot and Alan Seeger, and the 1920sff columnist Heywood Brown.

FDR graduated in 1904, so if WW graduated in, say, 1909, he would have not been an undergrad contemporary of FDR since the latter got his A.B. in, as I said, 1904.

Of course, this barely scratches the surface of Harvard undergrad's in WW's period who went on to become nationally significant.

Below I will make a few comments on some of the above undergrads.

FOOTBALL WAS VERY BIG IN W.W.'s HARVARD. I will not go into this in much detail, but it affected almost all Harvard undergrads one way or another. It was in 1903 that the Harvard football stadium was built -- the first "big-time" stadium as we know it and the prototype for the great stadiums built in subsequent decades all over the USA. Bethel, Harvard Observed, pp. 28-31, is good on all this. When I was a grad student, Harvard had about 5-8 great football fight songs or hymns that were very tuneful. Most all of these Harvard songs were written in the 1900-1910 period. One of them, "Score," (a very good song) was written by John Reed, although someone else wrote the music. All of these songs were, of course, written for the Harvard band to play and the students to sing.

HARVARD UNDERGRADS WHO COULD HAVE BEEN IN THE CLUB SYSTEM BUT CHOSE TO STAY OUT OF IT. One was my old mentor, Samuel Eliot Morison. Morison had impeccable Brahmin credentials -- President Eliot was kin and Morison went to a St. Grottlesex school, St. Paul's, but as a Harvard frosh he was weak (later became robust), younger than his class, and didn't easily fit in. Even so, he could have become a

clubman had he really tried, but he did not because as his biographer, Pfitzer, says, Morison was too independent to abide the clubs' "insistence on conformity." Instead, Morison concentrated on his studies and reveled in the great teaching, including Santayana's course on the philosophy of history.

Another who ignored the club system was A. Lawrence Lowell. As a deep-dyed blueblood Lowell could have been a great club man, but like Morison he was genuinely interested in the intellectual life and he, too, concentrated on his studies. Also, Lowell, although he verged on hard-core reactionary in politics, was not at all a snob but, as I said earlier a natural democrat, who was not suited to club life and its pervasive snobberies. (Of course, some club men got through the club system okay. Letting the snobberies wash over them, they went on to make great contributions to democracy -- FDR is the great example, as is TR. But they were exceptions, the great majority of club men went into business or finance and made snobbish careers on State Street in Boston or on Wall Street.

BROOKS ADAMS. This intrigues me, but it is no doubt much too far-fetched. I don't think it will be useful to you, but I might as well mention it. The three intellectually-famous Adams brothers -- Henry, Brooks, and Charles Francis Adams (CFA) -- all had a great interest in the American West. CFA (former president of the Union Pacific) sunk a great deal of Adams-family money in ill-considered speculative real-estate investments in the West, including Spokane and various other places. As a result the family almost went broke. Henry Adams has been much famous for his intellectual contribution than his younger brother, Brooks, but some think (I am ambivalent) that on the basis, mainly, of his book, The Law of Civilization and Decay, Brooks was a more original thinker than Henry and that Henry got his best ideas from Brooks. Henry was, of course, able to cast his ideas into literary classics.

In the 1900-1910 period Brooks Adams (who had a law degree) was teaching for a time at the Boston University law school and was having a huge, but abortive, impact on legal education at B.U. During the same decade Brooks handled a big law case against the Jim Hill railroads for freight rates that discriminated against Spokane shippers and importers. The case was tried in Spokane, and Adams -- an eccentric with flair -- created something of a sensation, but he was a damn good legal thinker and actually won the case against all the highly-paid Jim Hill lawyers. All of this and much more (including the unsavory part of Brooks Adams' writing and thinking) is in a very good intellectual biography of Brooks Adams: Arthur F. Beringause, Brooks Adams: A Biography (1955).

Could WW have met Brooks Adams? Yes, because Adams was quite a frequent public speaker in the Boston area and such a meeting could have happened. Brooks Adams went to Harvard a generation earlier than WW. Could WW and Brooks Adams have developed a personal relationship? -- that's a real stretch, but it could have happened and Adams could have put a bee in WW's bonnet about railroad regulation that would have come in handy for WW's political career in Montana.

As you can see, I would have WW and Adams meet, but I'm not writing the novel -- you are. I could never write a novel -- my imagination stops way short of what a novelist needs.

Would Brooks Adams have been so cantankerous that he would rebuff a young WW? -- Brooks was very choleric and cantankerous, but I don't think he would have rebuffed the young man.

The brothers, Henry and Brooks Adams (and also their older brother, Charles Francis Adams), are all profiled in Paul C. Nagel, Descent from Glory: Four Generations of the

Adams Family (1983). Brooks, Henry, and CFA were all of the fourth generation. Nagel also did an article in the (1983). Brooks, Henry, and CFA were all of the fourth generation. Nagel also did an article in the 1980s in the Western Historical Quarterly on the Adams family and the American West; it goes into the matter of the Adamses real-estate investments in the West -- apparently some of them eventually paid off.

ABOUT TWO WHO WENT TO HARVARD IN WESLEY WILLIAMSON'S DECADE -- John Reed and Samuel Eliot Morison.

There is abundant biographical treatment of John Reed. All Reed biographers bring out that Reed had great social ambitions at Harvard. He was part of a coterie of Westerners at Harvard, and he had one friend in particular who was his alter ego. Yet, it's well known that even though he tried Reed never made the real grade at Harvard socially. He only got into the Hasty Pudding Club, so it is said, because the club needed someone to write or help write their annual theatrical production and Reed was a writer. In regard to social success at Harvard of this time, I see it as okay to have been a Westerner but being part of a Western coterie could put one behind the pale. Of course, Reed's social disadvantages were mainly lack of enough money in his family and lack of social background: no social-registerite, he; I think Reed to school in Portland.

Samuel Eliot Morison. I have always felt that knowing Morison as I did as a first-year grad student at Harvard put me close, in a small way to Harvard in 1900-1910. As I said, Morison was class of 1908. During my first year of grad work in history in 1954-55 I took Morison's seminar (it was great) and did much of my work with him. Morison retired at the end of the year; I knew he would, but I still wanted to take his seminar and it was great. I did well in Morison's seminar. He worked the daylights out of us, but I greatly enjoyed all of it. I came through for Morison in the seminar and he liked me and was kind to me. In the seminar, among other things, Morison took us to Plymouth, through the innards of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and to Nahant -- a town on the North Shore of Massachusetts that was as a summer resort was the epitome, Morison said, of "cold, roast Boston." In the marvellous memoir of his Boston boyhood, One Boy's Boston, Morison had a great anecdote about Nahant.

Morison would occasionally tell stories about his undergrad days (1904-08) at Harvard -- I can only remember one or two. He said that he lived at home in the family mansion on Beacon Hill (to which Morison invited us). Morison was a Harvard undergrad in about the last decade in which the automobile had not completely taken over. He would ride his horse across the Charles River bridge and over to Harvard Yard where there were still hitching posts to which he could tether his nag. He told this story to illustrate how different the whole ambience of Harvard was, 1900-1910, compared to the decade, the 1950s, in which we were taking his seminar.

In my mind's eye, I can see WW in Harvard Yard one day in 1905-06 ^{AND} seeing this undergrad whom WW had never met suddenly arrive in the Yard on his horse, dismount, tie up the horse, and turn around to the watching Westerner, WW, to whom horses were second nature and WW and Morison striking up a friendly conversation about horses and about Montana. Yet, I can see that it might or might not have blossomed into a fictive friendship. The essence of "cold, roast Boston" was, however, restraint. So it is possible that those two boys, WW and Sam Morison, never even saw each other again. (There is an old story about the aloofness of "cold, roast Boston." As the story goes Harvard was playing Yale in football -- "the game" for Harvard and Yale -- sometime in the 1920s, and Harvard wasn't doing well and time was running out, so the captain of the Harvard team decided that desperate measures were in order if Harvard was to win: so in the huddle to create a bond for the final effort against Yale, he started introducing the members of the team to each other.)

Another thing I've never forgotten is Morison telling about President Eliot's accent -- it was the height of the cultured Brahmin accent with the broad A. Morison himself had a mild Brahmin broad-A accent, but apparently it was nothing compared to Eliot's accent that was literally unforgettable in its beauty, gentility, understated intellectuality, and charm. Morison didn't try to imitate it, probably because it was so distinctive that he couldn't.

I could go on and on, but I will finish with one old joke about Harvard and Yale. I read it when I was a grad student about 1954 or 1955 -- it was in the Crimson in an issue published before the annual Harvard-Yale football game and the theme of the issue was the differences between Harvard and Yale -- no surprise that the Crimson almost always found the comparison to the advantage of Harvard. Anyway, the joke was this: When a Yale man came in sick, it was assumed that he was drunk. When a Harvard man came in drunk, it was assumed that he was sick. From the Harvard viewpoint, this story says that the typical Yale undergrad was a drunken hell-raiser. From the Yale viewpoint, this story says that the typical Harvard undergrad was too effete and sissy to get drunk. Even so, there definitely was a difference between the Harvard and Yale undergraduate student bodies as late as the 1950s, and the old joke that I just related touches on it.

Yet, after I read through that entire Harvard-Yale issue of the Crimson (with some of the articles very perceptive, even brilliant), the editors of the issue summed it all up by saying: yes, there were all those difference between Harvard and Yale, but when all was said and done there no two universities that were more like each other than Harvard and Yale. That was certainly true.

Here are some books that I think are good on Harvard, especially for the 1900-1910 period. This list is probably too late to do you any good -- you've probably hunted most of these books down yourself. In no particular order:

Richard Norton Smith, The Harvard Century: The Making of a University in a Nation (1986). Chapters 1-2 deal with 1900-1910.

Rollo Walter Brown, Harvard Yard in the Golden Age (1948). A book about some of the great teachers that I mentioned above; 1900-1910 was squarely in the middle of the Golden Age that Brown writes about.

John T. Bethell, Harvard Observed: An Illustrated History of the University in the Twentieth Century (1998). This is a coffee-table book, but I don't knock it. Bethell really knows Harvard history, and the illustrations and their captions are good. Chapter 1 is about 1898-1914 -- broadly, WW's period.

Samuel Eliot Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936 (1936), is still the classic overview although by now it is missing a huge and important chunk of Harvard's history -- the last two-thirds of the twentieth century.

On Morison himself, there is a fine intellectual biography: Gregory Pfitzer, Samuel Eliot Morison's Historical World (1991). As I recall it, Pfitzer has the story about Morison riding his horse to Harvard Yard, but I heard it first from Morison myself.

Biographies about the famed who went to Harvard, 1900-1910, are important, because they almost all have a chapter on Harvard. I mentioned the John Reed biographies. There is a good biography of Walter Lippman by Ronald Steel. I forgot to mention that as an undergrad Lippman founded the Socialist Club at Harvard. It was open to anyone who turned up for the meetings, member or not. Of course, Reed was sometimes in attendance. I picture WW dropping in for at least one or two meetings -- maybe more -- just for the intellectual vigor of the meetings.

SPACE →

Not to be forgotten is Frank Freidel's chapter on Harvard in Freidel's Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Apprenticeship (1952). All of these Harvard chapters in biographies of notable men tell pretty much the same story about the club system, the Gold Coast, etc.

Cleveland Amory, The Proper Bostonians (1947) is the classic treatment of the Brahmin aristocracy by a popular writer. As I noted above, Amory has a chapter on the Harvard system of clubs.

SPACE → One of the most perceptive books ever written about Harvard that held good, I think, for at least through the 1940s was: George Santayana, The Last Puritan: A Memoir in the Form of a Novel (1936) -- a big book of some 600 pages. What I took away from it and still retain after I read it way back in the 1950s was Santayana's thesis that the besetting flaw of the Harvard tradition going back to the colonial period represented -- speaking here of the Harvard community of students and alumni, not necessarily including the faculty -- was the triumph of FORM over CONTENT -- in other words that in terms of the tradition of puritanism as it was and as it evolved the essence of proper Harvard behavior was form, both, socially and intellectually. In social and cultural terms this was "cold, roast Boston," yet Santayana was writing a serious book. I think that Santayana touched on something that was very important in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century of Harvard history. Would WW have liked "cold, roast Boston?" -- I doubt it. Thomas Wolfe has a wonderful lampoon of "cold, roast Boston" in his autobiographical novel in which he treats his, Wolfe's, year as a Harvard grad student in which he was in George Pierce Baker's famed workshop on writing plays.

Ivan, I wrote you last summer that I would write to you at length about Mountain Time, but too many things happened between then and now and I never have. (I will abbreviate the title as MT.) Now is not the time to write at length about MT, but I haven't changed my opinion that I wrote you in the postcard last summer: that it is a terrific book. After I heard you read the excerpt last spring at the Corvallis conference, I thought at the time -- and said so to you, I think -- that I thought it would be a terrific book. I am not going to get into the game of ranking your books -- I wouldn't be good at it, because to me they are all great -- but I think MT is one of your best.

Not only do you still have your inimitable way with words, but I think MT is a brilliant book about contemporary Seattle and Montana and the baby-boom generation. One of the things in it that really hit home to me was the plight of Lexa -- her worries over having children and getting married. That hit home to me as being so authentic, because it exactly stated the plight of our daughter, Laura (born 1963 -- younger than Lexa, I think, but not that much younger). Except that both are good looking, Lexa and Laura could not be more different except in regard to what I am writing about now. Laura has been living in Marin County, Calif., for about ten years and in the S.F. Bay area ever since finishing college at U. Mass. Boston back in the late 1980s. The problem of marrying and having children has become an agonizing one for Laura in recent years (just as it is for Lexa in MT). When I read MT last summer Laura was not pregnant, but now she is -- she is due in June of this year. Laura and her companion have settled down in a nice house they bought near San Rafael, and they are expecting their child. Dee and I hope it all comes out okay.

In any case, the point of the previous paragraph is, Ivan, that you really got it right in MT. I was in South Dakota last summer when Bruce Barcott's review came out. We always get the Sun. NYT, but not that time because I was away and Dee was too busy taking care of her terminally-ill mother to get the paper in my absence. I never caught up with Barcott's review until last fall. The review both pleased me and displeased me. I thought it was fine until the last paragraph in which Barcott was completely wrong.

As for the "vernacular," you are Mr. Vernacular and let the Bruce Barcotts of the world never forget it. I found your capture of Western speech and writing as vivid and incomparable as ever.

I got to wondering about Bruce Barcott, a name not known to me. So I looked him up in the UO on-line library catalog and found him in there for one thing: his anthology of Pacific Northwest writing. I looked up the anthology in the stacks, and it explained to me the last paragraph of his review. What I learned from Barcott's anthology was (1) he left you out of his anthology and (2) Barcott was then on the staff of an alternative weekly newspaper in Seattle. I naturally concluded that: (1) He foolishly excluded you from his anthology (unless you denied him permission to publish) and in some crazy psychological way he is mad at you instead of himself for that editorial debacle -- in his case, a sort of blame-the-victim syndrome. (2) He did not take kindly to the depiction of the Seattle weekly in MT.

I thought your treatment of the Seattle weekly was great, as I did many other things in the book, including the World War II South-Pacific episode.

SPACE → I must stop now. I hope this gets to you before you and Carol leave on your April to Montana.

Our best to Carol,

As ever,



Ivan Doig, 17277 15th Ave. N.W., Seattle, WA 98177

one-page version of itinerary

Itinerary of Richard M. and Dee Brown
TRIP TO CALIFORNIA AND EUROPE (AND RETURN), MAR 27-APR 26, 2000

Mar 27 or 28-Mar 31st -- visiting our daughter, Laura, in Calif. PH: 415-927-3765.

Sat, Apr 1st-2nd -- day flight, San Francisco-New York; overnight flight, NY-Rome.

TAUCK TOURS, "A WEEK IN ITALY TOUR, April 2-9.

Apr 2nd -- Go from Rome to Orvieto and Todi in Umbria.

Apr 3rd -- Assisi, noted, of course, as the home of St. Francis of Assisi.

Apr 4th -- Siena in a.m.; Florence in afternoon and evening.

Apr 5th -- Florence. We are greatly looking forward to seeing the medieval and Renaissance painting, sculpture, and architecture of Florence.

Apr 6th -- Train from Florence to Rome with an afternoon tour of Rome.

Apr 7-8 -- Rome and the Vatican City.

Apr 9 -- Fly from Rome to Madrid.

TRAFALGAR TOURS, "BEST OF SPAIN" TOUR, April 9-23. This two-week tour consists of great circle tour of Spain, starting and finishing at Madrid. In several cities we will stay two nights, and in the remainder it will be one night each.

Apr 9-10 -- Madrid.

Apr 11 -- Santander.

Apr 12 -- Pamplona.

Apr 13-14 -- Barcelona.

Apr 15 -- Valencia.

Apr 16 -- Granada.

Apr 17-18 -- Torremolinos on the Sun Coast of southeast Spain.

Apr 19 -- Gibraltar.

Apr 19-20 -- Seville.

Apr 21 -- Cordoba.

Apr 22 -- Madrid.

Apr 23 (Easter Sunday) -- Fly from Madrid to Rome.

AMERICAN EXPRESS Tour of Naples, Pompei, & Sorrento, conducted by VAS Tours:

Apr 24 -- Tour of Naples, Pompei, and Sorrento.

Apr 25 -- More sightseeing in Rome.

Wed, Apr 26 -- two daytime flights: Rome-New York and New York-San Francisco.

Apr 27 -- will stay with Laura in California.

Apr 28 or 29: drive back to Eugene.

Of course, it is unlikely that something would come that would be so serious that you would need to get in touch with us; it would be difficult, but it could be done. In order to do that it would be necessary for you to call our son, Brooks (his wife, Jessica, might answer the phone), in Portland, Oregon, at: 503-736-3096.

3 May 2000

Dear Dick--

Talk about above and beyond the call: your portrait of Wes Williamson at Harvard is nearly a novella in itself. I thank you immensely, Dick, for putting together all that lore for me. "Cold, roast Boston" is beyond price in itself. Your material arrived in plenty of time, as I'm still feeling my way, character by character, and Wes emerges bit by bit in the book, gradually more involved with the other two characters whom his good(?) intentions have him puppeteering at the start. I'll be breathing life into Wes, and the rest of them, for probably the next couple of years.

While you and Dee were on your Grand Tour of Europe, Carol and I were retracing some of the Montana paths that you two traveled with us. A few updates--

Choteau: David Letterman has discovered the place (alas). He's bought a ranch southwest of town, on the road to Pishkun Reservoir. (Mostly famous in Dick Hugo's poem of that title, which is about fishing there with A.B. Guthrie. I can't recall if Guthrie told us his favorite Pishkun & Dick story when the four of us visited him that time, but I love it so much, as so typically Hugo, that I'll tell it again. Here come Dick and wife Ripley up to Ripley's family cabin along the Rockies there at the start of fishing season, and as always, go over and visit the Guthries. Dick immediately wants to go wet a line; even though he was a pink marshmallow guy instead of a dry-fly guy, he took his fishing very seriously. Bud Guthrie thinks this sounds like a hell of a good idea, and he and Carol start scrounging together Bud's fishing gear. It takes a ransacking of the house to find Bud's pole, time passing, Dick fidgeting. Then a search of the shed for Bud's waders. Then Bud and Carol discover--horrors!--they are out of those fishing necessities, beer and bologna. Away they go to the neighbors to borrow those. Come back, start looking around for Bud's fishing creel and his tackle box--by now it was heading toward mid-day, and they realized Dick was no longer on the premises. Mystified, they couldn't figure out what had happened to him, until they eventually went down to the mailbox for the mail and found a note, in that petulant handwriting that only Dick could achieve: "It's too hot.")

Letterman is of course building a big house--actually the locals say he's building a big house for his caretaker, which will then become the headquarters for the construction of a *bigger* house. So far, he (by way of his staff) has tried to make nice, by leading a fund drive when the little local meat-packing plant burned down; but when he eats downtown (not even at the tin-shed Circle N where the Doigs and Browns fended, but at a place I wouldn't take us in!), the high-school-kid waitresses find him "cold," I believe the word was. (Not "chill," which would be favorable.)

--A really very nice new Best Western motel, on the north end of town, has replaced the colorfully declining 287 Motel where we all stayed. The 287 went dead for a while, and now has been resuscitated--new coat of paint--to resume declining, it looks like.

--Drought. We made this trip in mid-April, and on the road between Augusta and Choteau, pothole lakes that we don't remember drying up even in the '87 drought were already white alkali dust. Maybe this spate of damp weather that we've been having will transfer enough moisture into Montana to ease the situation, as it did last spring, but the state really looks parched already.

Helena, where I put in a couple of days of research at the Montana Historical Society and Carol had the medium thrill of celebrating our 35th wedding anniversary by

putting on white cotton archival gloves and photocopying historic pics for me. Among my pillagings were:

--A newly acquired set of KKK membership records from Harlowton, which you may remember was an hour or so east of Ringling on the Milwaukee Railroad. Am enclosing a copy of a sample membership; Dave Walter of the Historical Society figured out for me that the 66 2/3's in the dues columns are cents, adding up to \$2 every 3 months --I don't know, was 6666 some kind of Klan symbol? Dave has researched the Klan in Montana considerably, and written magazine pieces about it, and he's identified 40+ chapters in the state, almost 5,200 dues-paying members in 1924 (I'd have to check, but I think that's at least 10% of the population). There was at least one incident of the Klan fomenting the killing of a black man, but given the paucity of blacks in Montana, the Klaverns look mostly anti-Catholic and nativist. The Harlowton example plainly shows the Klan spreading through railroad workers, but that Klavern also included the sheriff, the chief of police, the county treasurer... The enclosed membership was the only one from Ringling, by the way, so I didn't come up with any evidence for the treasured old story that the fire that burned Ringling was from a cross burning that got out of control.

I didn't remember until later your mention of White Caps in *No Duty...*, but Dave's research also included a newspaper reference to a White Cap incident around Great Falls, I think about 1905--it seems to have been a local incident, guys putting on white headgear of some kind and roughing up somebody for fooling with somebody else's wife.

--I found a delicious World War I diary to use for details in Wes Williamson's WWI career--sadly delicious, because the Montana National Guard captain who did the diarying was killed at the Battle of the Marne in August, 1918. I hope you'll see some of the war-in-the-trenches details in my novel, but I must pass along to you, as a veteran delver into archives, my tale of coming up with this diary. Probably thirty years ago now, I pulled into the Montana Historical Society in search of something or other, maybe early research toward *This House of Sky*, and lo, the new archivist was a guy I had gone to grade school with in White Sulphur Springs, John Coleman. I was astounded, because the last I knew John was running the family ranch, and had no professional historical or archival training that I was aware of; he apparently had landed the post through political pull. But there he was, and we chimed nicely, spending a lot of our time together cussing the memory of Wellington D. Rankin (Jeannette's cattle-baron brother), who had recently died but not before doing away with all his papers. Before I left John's bailiwick, he proudly gave me a little mimeographed inventory of the Society's holdings that he'd started compiling. His career at the Historical Society almost instantly ended--he turned to construction work, I think--and the mention of his name only makes old-timers there roll their eyes. When I started on this book I dug into my files and there was that old inventory and among its sparse listings was this WWI diary. I called ahead to the Historical Society to alert them to this and other requests I'd be pestering them with, and when we got there, I noticed the librarian and the archival staff giving me funny sideways looks when they brought out the diary and a wonderfully useful transcription of it. Finally Brian Shovers, the research librarian, cleared his throat and asked me how I knew about this diary--none of the staff was familiar with it, it had passed into the obscurity of their "Small Collections" listings and while it was perfectly findable if you knew about it, it was goddamn near unfindable if you didn't know about it (shades of the U. of Wyoming system under that supreme packrat, Gene Gressley). I hooted and told Brian I owed it all to that archival magician, John Coleman, and his trusty mimeo machine.

Other than those adventures, we spent our time at the Big Sky resort with 500 high school English teachers, caught up with Jim Welch and Mary Clearman Blew (a new book this fall from each of them), and so on. Now we're at home for the summer except for a mid-July speaking gig at Stanford, and wondering if the traveling Browns will pass through here. We need a report on Europe, one way or another.

All best to you both,

Phil Sherman, each chorus girl blonder than the last--"Surely you remember your Mendeleev, Wes. ~~Chorine~~ Chorine is the element I've added to the Periodic Table."

--"ra coneuter"

Harvard Club section of bookshelves w/ faculty books: it did not unduly announce itself, but (the shelves of birdseye maple) held:

Copeland on OO.... etc.

Santayana. Royce. Kittredge on... Frederick Jackson Turner(?)

(check Dick Brown's letter)

Wes tapped Susan's folded letter against the fingertips of his opposite

hand... He wondered if any of these (faculty), in their immensities of knowledge and their hairsplittings and... (had ever experienced) a woman

[they could not have because of] unspittable faith in a faith.

Collected

--other books in Hyrd Club library: classy edition of Shakespeare,

(illuminated?) edition of Dante (or some classy translation of Inferno)

--Wes was one of the rare members who took them down and read them.

--Wes in banter w/ Phil, fending him off on B'way show investing:

(opera), Carnegie Hall. The Armistice Day do. You and Vandiver tap me like a keg for that one, it'd be cheaper to give back my medal...

*been held away from life-filling
a woman by
I did not show
up in the lectures
or books.*

Descent from Bery: 4 generations 7. John Adams family
- Nagel, Paul C.

SUZ SIX
OD SIX

CS 71. A2 1983

SUZ 4

p. 377 - Brooks died 13 Feb 1927,
after cancer

- no children

- lived @ Quincy

Dick: Harvard mss collection?

Houghton Lib

RB & MS, not Widener

Widener in Titanic

1st 1920

—
Randa - LY C among Anders



JOSIAH ROYCE'S CALIFORNIA

FORREST G. ROBINSON

Josiah Royce is a precious regional treasure. He is precious in part because he was a raw provincial from Grass Valley, California, whose prodigious intellect carried him to a prominent place at Harvard University during the “golden age” of American philosophy. Royce was first and foremost a philosopher and will undoubtedly continue to be revered for his contributions to that field of inquiry. But in a regional perspective he is precious in perhaps even greater part because of his bold and principled resistance to the triumphalist strain in American historiography. His *California: From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco* (1886) anticipates by almost a cen-

William Hahn. *RANCH SCENE, MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA*. 1875. Oil on canvas. 27" x 38". Oakland Museum of California, Kahn Collection. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney L. Schwartz to honor Dr. and Mrs. John J. Sampson and in memory of Mr. and Mrs. William E. Gump.

tury the current tendency among students of the West to stress the violence and injustice that came with rapid expansion. *The Feud of Oakfield Creek* (1887), Royce's fictional treatment of kindred historical materials, dramatizes the state's early development in the closely observed lives of representative characters. It is a story of ambition and moral evasion which sweeps all the principals toward a tragic denouement. In what follows, I want to elaborate briefly on Royce's resistance to the regnant historical paradigm of his day and, in rather more detail, to illustrate lines of continuity between his historical and philosophical ideas as they take expression in his novel. My goal here is to offer an enhanced understanding of the depth and coherence of Royce's critique of the American "conquest" of California and to illustrate the historical value and contemporary relevance of *The Feud of Oakfield Creek*. Taken together, the philosophy, the history, and the novel provide eloquent testimony to a tradition of moral dissent that goes back several generations and that at once illuminates and affirms our continuing attempt to arrive at a just understanding of the regional past.



Drawing on his mother's *A Frontier Lady, Recollections of the Gold Rush and Early California* and on his own childhood experiences in Grass Valley and San Francisco, Josiah Royce was suspicious of such notions as progress and manifest destiny. To his darkly discerning eye, these glittering abstractions were hardly on display in Gold Rush California. Rather, his glance settled on the failures of the mining frontier—on Fremont's dangerous folly and the hypocrisy of the Bear Flag Revolt; on the crime of lynch law; on pervasive racial injustice; on the mistreatment of women; and on the triumph of grasping individualism over the claims of family and community. In virtually all of this, Royce looked forward to the New Western Historians, who clearly echo his call to a candid reckoning with our fond illusions about the past. "Whoever wants merely a eulogistic story of the glories of the pioneer life of California must not look for it in history," he warns; "and whoever is too tender-souled to see any moral beauty or significance in events that involve much foolishness, drunkenness, brutality, and lust must find his innocent interests satisfied elsewhere" (*California* 175).¹

This is not to suggest that Royce despaired for the future of his home state. He readily acknowledged that the unique circumstances and rapid pace of development in California were partly to blame for the moral and political derelictions of the early years. Nor were the early settlers without compensating virtues. "As a body," Royce con-

cedes, “our pioneer community in California was persistently cheerful, energetic, courageous, and teachable. In a few years it had repented of its graver faults, it had endured with charming good humor their severest penalties, and it was ready to begin with fresh devotion the work whose true importance it had now at length learned—the work of building a well-organized, permanent, and progressive state on the Pacific coast” (4). The redemptive theme is nonetheless clouded in Royce’s ongoing sense of things by an awareness that human striving is inherently imperfect and incomplete. Thus in the midst of many “remarkable changes” since the 1850s, he draws attention in 1886 to an enduring pattern of success and failure, a persistence over time of “certain early trials, blunders, sins, penalties, virtues, and triumphs” (4).

The example of California well illustrates for the historian that human progress is at best halting and never guaranteed. Royce’s home state is hardly unique in this regard, however, for it figures in his eyes as a microcosm of the “national character” (3). He is equally clear that the study of history is centrally an inquiry into what he describes as “a process of divinely moral significance” (394). Thus he is concerned above all else in *California* to arrive at assessments of value. Royce trains his eye on what he regards as the pervasive struggle in California—and more largely in America—between the claims of the individual and the claims of the group. Insisting throughout that individualism has been the root of virtually all that is evil in California, he concludes that the lesson of history

is an old and simple one. It is the State, the Social Order, that is divine. We are all but dust, save as this social order gives us life. When we think it our instrument, our plaything, and make our private fortunes the one object, then this social order rapidly becomes vile to us. . . . But if we turn again and serve the social order, and not merely ourselves, we soon find that what we are serving is simply our own highest spiritual destiny in bodily form. (394)

I have argued elsewhere that Royce’s *California* boldly and clearly anticipates the paradigm shift often attributed to Patricia Limerick and the other so-called New Western Historians.² Royce’s assault on the alleged romance and heroism of the founding decade offered inspiration to Carey McWilliams—another neglected precursor of the “new” historiography—whose *Southern California Country* (1946) sets forth a detailed, persuasive deconstruction of “the elaborate myth which has been so diligently cultivated in California about the Mission system”

and about ongoing racial conflict in the region (*Southern California Country* 37).³ In elaborating his sharply iconoclastic position, Royce dissented from the romanticism which dominated the historical writing of his time. As David Levin observed in *History as Romantic Art* (1959), the leading American historians of the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century—George Bancroft, William Prescott, John Lothrop Motley, and Francis Parkman—took human progress for granted and found it everywhere manifest in the national character as it embraced ever purer religious and political ideas. Royce's *California* offers scant support for such notions, telling as it does a story of greed, deception, perversity, missed opportunities, and a godless descent into social disorder. While he was deeply grateful to Hubert Howe Bancroft for the "free use of his immense collection of original documents of the early history," there is nothing of his San Francisco benefactor's romantic nationalism in Royce's narrative (viii). Nor, finally, is he to be numbered among such eastern writers as James Fenimore Cooper, Richard Henry Dana, and Washington Irving—or, somewhat later, Theodore Roosevelt—whose works were staples of the romantic mythology of the West. Royce wrote as an insider who had witnessed firsthand the darker realities of frontier life and who refused—principled maverick that he was—to compromise his troubled vision of the past.



When he had finished *California*, Royce took another detour from philosophy, this time into fiction. His first and only novel, *The Feud of Oakfield Creek*, was published in 1887. In constructing his plot, Royce drew on a number of historical episodes, most notably perhaps the Sacramento squatters riots of 1850 (treated at length in *California*) and various land quarrels elsewhere in the state, perhaps including the 1880 Mussel Slough incident (later dramatized in Frank Norris's *The Octopus* [1901]).⁴ The novel rewards study for many reasons, not the least of them the fact that it may be read as a fictional variation on the major themes of *California*, which preceded it by just one year. Royce wrote in partial jest to his editor that there were "two bloody fights, three heroes, two heroines, several villains, and almost no morals in the book" (*Letters* 202). But he knew better. The central issue in *The Feud of Oakfield Creek*, as Kevin Starr has observed, "is the burden of the California past" (165). As in the history book that preceded it into print, the novel represents this burden as the struggle of largely benighted individuals toward the recognition that surrender to the imperatives of the larger social order is a moral necessity.



Albus Del Orient Browere. *VIEW OF STOCKTON*. 1854. Oil on canvas. 16" x 28". Oakland Museum of California, Kahn Collection.

The Feud of Oakfield Creek centrally involves the conflict between two old friends and rivals, Alonzo Eldon and Alf Escott. Veterans of service under Fremont, of Indian wars in Washoe, and of the vigilante movements of the 1850s, the pair embodies many of the qualities, both positive and negative, that Royce perceived as characteristic of early California. In the three decades and more since statehood, Eldon has morally compromised himself in ruthlessly amassing a great fortune while Escott has remained pure in principle but relatively poor in the things of the world. Driven by an impulse to submerge his guilt in benevolence, Eldon plans to endow a vast museum and research center as a gift to the city of San Francisco. But his efforts to purchase atonement come to naught when he crosses swords with Escott in a land dispute. Eldon is willing to relinquish his control of the contested property and to overlook the dubious claims of the men who have settled it, whose cause Escott has made his own. But confusion and short tempers, exacerbated by old enmities, derail negotiations and bring the novel to a violent and tragic conclusion.

The conflict between the novel's leading antagonists is made more bitter when Alonzo Eldon's irresponsible son, Tom, forsakes Alf Escott's daughter, Ellen, and marries the wealthy widow, Margaret Dover. Ellen loses her mind and dies, a pitiable development which divides the fam-

ilies and alienates Tom from his new wife, who views his behavior as contemptible. Tom seeks to redeem himself by enlisting his wife's support in bringing his father to accept the demands of the settlers and by persuading his friend William Harold to intervene diplomatically with Alf Escott. But careful planning and good intentions are not enough to avert calamity. Thoroughly disenchanted with Tom, Margaret falls in love with William Harold. Learning of their relationship from an unscrupulous journalist, the enraged Alonzo abandons compromise and organizes a posse to retake the land by force. Escott selflessly adopts the role of peacemaker, offering to sacrifice himself to Eldon's demands in return for land concessions to the settlers. But it is too little too late, and all hope for reconciliation expires in a bloody shootout, which takes many lives on both sides. Tom Eldon and Alf Escott are among the dead. William Harold seeks exile in Europe, while an enfeebled Margaret retreats to the consolations of motherhood, which "make her forget at moments the desolation that fills the rest of her world" (483). Finally, Eldon abandons all claim to the Oakfield Creek property, but he abandons his philanthropic schemes at the same time. Embittered and in failing health, he retreats altogether from public life.

As this brief summary must clearly suggest, Royce's fictional canvas is a dark one. Hope is vanquished in a catastrophe that engulfs all the principal characters. As John Clendenning quite rightly observes, *The Feud of Oakfield Creek* is "not a novel of social reform, but a tragedy which depends on our seeing the gap between the ideal and the actual" (*Life and Thought* 159). Something of that gap is visible to us in the opposition of the individual and the community that figures so prominently in *California*. But for the purposes of elaborating and refining this generally accepted view of the novel, it will be useful to pause at least briefly over Royce's treatise *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. Published in 1885, this important book was cut from the same intellectual cloth as the history and the novel that closely followed it, and it provides illuminating background to both.



At the heart of Royce's enterprise in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* is the determination to dispel skepticism by anchoring ethics in Absolute thought or will. He succeeds in this by advancing an argument on the nature of error so ingenious and forceful that William James conceded in his 1885 review, "I can't see my way to refuting it" (qtd. in Clendenning, *Life and Thought* 139). Upon the rock of the Absolute, Royce erected his ethical system. "In so far as there is any

objective truth in moral conceptions," he writes, it is "eternally known to this all-embracing thought. If there be moral or immoral acts, they are forever known and judged in and by this all-embracing conscious thought." Individuals are in turn summoned to recognize, and then to embrace, the majestic truth that informs human existence. "You are a part of the universal life. Your thoughts are parts of the whole. Your acts form an element in the universe that the great Judge knows. . . . If there be any virtue, this virtue is known to the infinite thought of the Universe. If there be any vice, that vice is estimated, in all its infinite baseness, by the infinite consciousness" (381).

Assent to the Absolute yields spiritual comfort to those who subordinate their petty desires to its imperatives. Individual happiness is a hollow ideal and must be abandoned. In its place, Royce demands surrender to "the ideal state of humanity," a condition in which "separate men will not know or care whether they separately are happy; for they shall have no longer individual wills, but the Universal Will shall work in and through them, as the one will of two lovers finds itself in the united life of these twain" (212, 211–12). When individuals achieve love of the absolute unity of life, their good deeds will arise out of selfless devotion to the whole and not from a craving for personal recognition. Royce comes back to this point again and again, insisting that "[g]ood acts done for pay are selfish acts" and that in the ideal state "[t]he world of life would be as one will, working through all and in all, seeking the ends of no one individual" (219, 214).

But the obstacles to the achievement of the ideal state are many and include the subtle, pervasive human craving for the recognition of virtuous deeds. For example, Royce is wary of human sympathy because it so often conceals selfish pride behind a veil of altruism. Indeed, we may generalize that Royce's suspicion of much that passes for virtue is rooted in the conviction that such goodness is motivated not by a generous impulse toward others but rather by a selfish desire to feel and appear virtuous. Paradoxically, then, individual benevolence is the reflex manifestation of individual selfishness; the craving for moral credit amounts to an admission of moral debt. Royce insists that true virtue—the surrender of the individual will to the Absolute—will flourish only when moral vanity and pride have been exposed and ridiculed and banished from the world. We are thus admonished to "set about the work of contending with blind self-confidence and self-absorption wherever it may appear"; to "ridicule all pretentious mediocrity that is unconscious of its stupidities"; and to "feel not a selfish but a righteous joy whenever pride has a fall, whenever the man who thinks

that he is something discovers of a truth that he is nothing" (181). We are called to this harsh business, Royce insists, because "when [a man] is at work doing good he ought to hate self-satisfaction, which hinders the moral insight, which exalts his will above the universal will, which takes the half-done task for the whole task, and altogether glorifies the vanity of vanities. If now my critic rids me of such self-satisfaction, he may hurt me keenly, but he is my best friend" (182).

Read in this light, Royce's sharp, unremitting criticism of Fremont and his followers in *California* is immediately recognizable as the work of a dutiful moralist, striking out against pride wherever it may appear. The "gallant Captain Fremont," in Royce's estimation, is a selfish opportunist who resorted to devious means to provoke conflict in California, who justified his crimes as a service to the nation, and who reaped enormous personal benefits from a largely self-created myth of personal heroism (*California* 25). The righteous masquerade worked, both because it seemed to serve the expansive national interest and because it gave the appearance of dazzling virtue to selfish aggression. Meanwhile, as the historian observed in correspondence and interviews with his subject, the gallant warrior was a firm believer in the myth of his own greatness. "[B]oth he and himself and the public," Royce comments, "ever afterwards considered his methods of procedure to have been as noble and unaggressive as they were fearless and decisive; while all concerned thought our national energy and kindness finely represented by the acts of this party of armed surveyors and trappers, who disturbed the peace of a quiet land and practiced violence against inoffensive and helpless rancheros" (122).

In pointing the moral to his tale, Royce emphasizes that evil is most dangerous when it conceals its true, selfish motives under a mantle of seeming virtue. He allows himself the hope that the egregious Bear Flag episode will be remembered "so that when our nation is another time about to serve the devil, it will do so with more frankness and will deceive itself less by half-conscious cant" (123). Indeed, he goes further in this line to argue that Fremont's example perfectly illustrates the leading characteristic of the expansionist American, who aims

to persuade not only the world but himself that he is doing God's service in a peaceable spirit, even when he violently takes what he is determined to get. . . . Other peoples, more used to shedding civilized blood, would have swallowed the interests of the people of twenty such Californias as that of 1846 without a gasp. . . . But our national plans had to be formed

so as to offend our squeamish natures as little as possible. Our national conscience, however, was not only squeamish, but also, in those days, not a little hypocritical. It disliked, moreover, to have the left hand know what the right hand was doing when both were doing mischief. And so, because of its very virtues, it involved itself in disastrously complex plots. (119)⁵



All of which brings us back to *The Feud of Oakfield Creek*. For if the historical narrative illustrates that the disastrously complex plot of conquest and its sequel arose out of deluded selfishness masquerading as benevolence, then the novel illustrates precisely the same process, as it unfolds in precisely the same place, but in more specific terms. In both narratives, tragedy issues from the confusion produced when people are blinded to their selfishness by the need to think well of themselves. Fremont is the arch perpetrator of this tragic delusion in *California* and serves at the same time as the historical embodiment of an America enthralled with the righteous glory of its manifest destiny. The leading characters in *Feud* are driven by similar moral forces. In a lecture titled "What Constitutes Good Fiction," which he wrote in the late 1870s, Royce argues that novels take their strength from the successful study of character. "In properly studying character," he observes, the novel achieves "the end of idealizing human life. For in the evolution and in the interaction of individuals consists the great active whole we call Life. To understand the individual lives is the stepping stone to the understanding of Humanity" (qtd. in Clendenning, "Introduction" xiii). Such notions are clearly on display in *Feud*, which dramatizes in the lives of its principal characters those leading moral and philosophical ideas developed abstractly in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* and played out more generally in the broad historical narrative of *California*.

The disastrously complex plot which produces the final catastrophe in Royce's novel issues out of a congeries of vague assumptions and contested agreements bearing on a "sobrante," or parcel of "surplus land," owned by Alonzo Eldon, and "surrounding an ill-defined Spanish grant" (33). Arising as it does out of what Royce regards as a morally compromised war of conquest, the legal issue, in the words of Eldon's son, Tom, "is sadly mixed" (33). The situation grows increasingly confused and dangerous as events develop. Anxious to increase the value of his holding, Eldon invites settlers onto the land, promising them very attractive terms for purchase once title has been cleared and railroad connections completed. But economic depression and failed nego-

tiations with the railroad leave all parties feeling more sinned against than sinning. The settlers demand reduced terms while Eldon insists on increased profits for himself. Recognizing the volatility of the situation, Alf Escott intervenes on the side of the settlers but fails in his attempt to avert disaster.

By the terms of Royce's moral system, the character most responsible for the tragic feud is Alonzo Eldon. He has grown wealthy on the ill-gotten fruits of conquest, and while he half-acknowledges that this is so, he insists at the same time on casting himself as a great public benefactor. Eldon's philanthropic ambitions center on plans for the vast Eldon Museum, inspired by the ideas of Henry George and dedicated to the systematic, rational propagation of "the doctrines of the higher socialism" (358). It is the measure of Eldon's self-delusion that he sees no contradiction in his plan to "confess to the public that he had been a socialist all along, and had only accumulated his vast fortune because the public, to whom it belonged, knew not just yet how to use it, save by giving it to him, temporarily, as trustee. He meant to give it all back, or at least so much of it as Tom would not need" (358).

Eldon's hypocrisy is not lost on those around him. "I know father," Tom Eldon declares; "he likes to do good, but he wants it to look picturesque" (44). Escott is much less diplomatic in stating the case, as Eldon complains in a long, self-justifying conversation with his daughter-in-law, Margaret. Escott's scorn for his friend's sharp business practices is matched by contempt for the vanity that drives his philanthropic schemes. "'See here, Eldon,'" he declares, "'can you honestly swear that for no cent of your money some poor widow or orphan, who might have had it but for your merciless use of arbitrary power, is weeping off there in the dark? If there is any such person . . . for God's sake make the endowment in that widow's or orphan's name, not in your own'" (248). Escott goes on to accuse Eldon of selfishly milking the state, "like a cow," and then of proposing "to make a gift of a little of the butter and cheese to the public who owned the cow" in order "to get glory for [his] generosity" (249). Such open ridicule does not sit well with Eldon, who traces all of his "public troubles" with his friend to "this private bitterness" (251). But Escott is relentless, as Royce says we must be whenever selfish pride rears its head. "'Give your gifts in secret,'" he urges his friend; "'do your good so that no man will know of it'" (250). But this is advice that Eldon, awash in pride and guilt, cannot abide.

Margaret Eldon takes a similarly critical view of her father-in-law's character. Indeed, so fully does she share Royce's impatience with selfish-

ness masquerading as benevolence, with “good acts done for pay,” that she appears at points to speak more or less directly for him (Royce, *Religious Aspect* 219). Unlike most of the men in *Feud*, Margaret’s balanced contentment and good sense are closely geared to her freedom “from all sentimental notions and from all foolish ambitions” (165). In this, of course, she contrasts dramatically with Eldon, whose restless instability is driven by self-deluded vanity. When Tom encourages his father to take a “finely magnanimous” view of Escott’s land claims (44), Margaret approves, but at the same time punctures her husband’s evident complacency by suggesting that he “come back to real life. . . . I beg you to see,” she continues,

“that there’s nothing heroic, no, nor even anything ‘picturesque’ about your proposed action, or your father’s. The matter is one of the simplest possible sort. It’s just plain duty. You have both of you wronged a man bitterly, and he has a just claim, meanwhile, to a bit of land which you men have somehow been trying to get away from him for years. . . . Now, at last, however, as he’s very weak, and poor, and old, it happens to occur to you that it’s a little mean to keep kicking on him while he lies there helpless, so you (you and your father together, I mean, of course) are to offer him your manly regrets and a kindly present of his indisputable rights.” (45–46)

Not surprisingly, Tom’s inflated self-regard is shaken by his wife’s “withering manner” (46). But Margaret—as if taking a cue directly from *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*—is relentless and evidently relishes the pursuit and exposure of foolish pride. “Men have a monopoly of the really noble deeds,” she observes, with evident irony; “I’m overjoyed at this chance to be a spectator of even the least approach to one of them” (47). But then, with accelerating contempt, she agrees to take a part in producing “the moral show for father’s reformation. . . . What’s needed to give diversity, and to keep us all from yawning our heads off, is another member of the stock company of this dime museum, a second assistant showman and scene-shifter.” William Harold will meet their needs perfectly, she suggests. “He’ll represent Escott, I’ll represent eternal justice” (50). And so the assault continues, bringing Tom’s smug piety and his father’s self-serving schemes crashing to earth. Margaret is indeed a formidable Roycean!

But she is Roycean as well in her human imperfections. The philosopher is a secular Calvinist who takes a skeptical view of human nature, both in life and in fiction. In our individual selves, we are nothing, we

are dust, we are worms; thus we do best in this life to transfer our devotion from ourselves to the divine and Absolute. But our weakness is manifest precisely in our failure to be free of it. Little wonder, then, that Royce does not deal in fictional paragons and that Margaret's moral perspicuity produces a swell of pride in its wake. She despises her husband and doubts that she ever loved him. Still, "[s]he spoke gently to him, and hated him; and he, accordingly, was fascinated with her, and kept more or less of his foolish hope that she might some day be won back. Meanwhile, as she knew, he was as proud as herself" (280). Life on such terms, she admits, might someday "become very dull; but for a proud woman, rejoicing in her beauty and in her power, it was, meanwhile, tolerable, because she had simply made up her mind that it should be tolerable!" (281).

William Harold, though a man of good intentions, is equally flawed and, like Margaret, he betrays an awareness of his condition. When Escott declares that Eldon "has been doomed to pass his life in illusions," Harold is quick to reply, "Like all of us" (428). Harold falls prey to a variety of what Royce in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* describes as the "Nobler Selfishness," in which the sentimental individual retreats from an uncaring world and dedicates himself to "a culture of the beautiful soul, and to a separation of this soul from all other life" (204). Following Royce's lead, Margaret finds such demure behavior ridiculous. Harold, she observes, "[l]ives alone; keeps an owl, three parrots, seven cats, and a big inlaid chess-board, with great ivory chessmen; smokes all day long; lives in general in a mystical cloud of contemplation; is esteemed a sage, in fact is one; has charming blue-gray eyes, much old china, numerous books on the black art, and an altar with three candles burning before his [dead] wife's picture" (49). Though in the later sections of the novel Harold is finally roused to action, his head is never fully cleared of such sentimental self-images, and we last see him retreating into solitary exile.

Alf Escott comes closer than any other character to meeting Royce's high moral standards. "The man is reckless, and a genuine hero to boot," Tom insists. "If his friends were in any sort of danger, he would cross all the seas and lands, if need be, to stand beside them. I never knew a more faithful nature" (42). Escott's life has been a long journey of moral discovery. As a young man, he recoiled from a fallen world into cynical isolation and thereby made his daughter vulnerable to calamity and himself to despair. But even as he succumbs to error, Escott glimpses the Roycean road to recovery. In an eloquent speech to

an armed mob of Union and Confederate antagonists, he appeals successfully to the men's higher moral aspirations. "The important thing" about the speech, it is later reported, "was that it made every man so oppressed with the bigness of the issues of that hour, with the awful dangers of the future for the country, and with the great work good citizens would have to do to keep the country's peace . . . that . . . we simply *buried* all our petty squabbling in something very much deeper" (218). That transcendent "something" to which Escott wins his auditors' assent is, clearly enough, Royce's divine social order. These men are on the right track, and Alf Escott puts them there.

Still, Escott's final moral stature is somewhat compromised. True, by novel's end he offers to sacrifice himself—his small wealth and his life—to the welfare of the community. "I shall speak for your good, not for mine," he tells his followers; "I shall be the only sufferer" (454, 458). Inwardly he recognizes the need "to offer himself in every sense as a personal sacrifice to [the] cause" (460). And in all of this, it seems clear, he is sincere. Yet there is a hint of desperation in his heroism. "The world is the home of brave men," he declares, "and the prison of cowards. That's all I can see in it. Apart from that chance to be a brave fellow, in a good cause, and for one's friends, what is there, after all?" (438). For Royce, of course, there is much more than this to the examined life. Where Escott hurls himself with fatalistic gusto into the bloody fray, the philosopher, we suspect, would have us ascend rather more soberly toward the Absolute. Indeed, Alf is what Royce describes in *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* as the Promethean or Titanic individualist, whose "admirable character is what it is by reason of his conflicts with his fellows, and by reason of the respect that he excites in others. Stop talking about him, cease admiring him, do not even fight with him, ignore him utterly; and with these external supports see his inner heroism vanish" (210). Such is the case with Escott, who sacrifices himself to a good cause not entirely for its own sake, but also because he is weary of the ceaseless struggle to which his life has been devoted and by which his heroism has been defined. "I wanted freedom," he says, "and I got it, and here I am. And I'm not so much of a wretch as I might be, after all. In any case, I should n't object to going at any time, for good cause" (438). The good cause, it appears, is ultimately no more than the occasion for what Escott really craves, heroic conflict ending in death.

Escott's Titanic, deeply self-destructive need for struggle is ominously mirrored in the headlong behavior of his son, Sam. The boy's honesty

and courage are undoubted, but so is his craving for trouble. Sam approaches the final shootout with heedless gusto. "He loved this exciting moment, with its suggestions of warfare. He hoped that it would not all end in mere talk. He longed for a chance to stand under fire, and to shoot some one. As for the consequences of resisting the law, Sam had no special concern about them" (461). The son is an exaggerated reflection of the father, heroic and impetuous, inspiring to others, but driven toward destruction by his Titanic individualism.



The Feud of Oakfield Creek is sometimes compared with Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901), in good part no doubt because both novels draw upon historical land feuds in their fictional representations of the ills that afflict California. Life in both novels is represented as a kind of wandering in the moral wilderness. Humans are small, selfish, and almost completely blind to ultimate principles of order. True, a couple of Royce's leading characters—Margaret and Alf—catch a glimpse of the deeper folly of human striving, but their yearnings toward a better life are under-illuminated and desultory. Royce, it seems clear, could not imagine it otherwise. His fictional characters, like the real life actors in *California*, are mired in human folly and can do little more than grope toward the remote splendor of the philosophical ideal.

Norris's characters are equally blind and helpless, though the framework of their lives and the terms of their predicament have little in common with the world of Royce's novel. Nostalgia in *The Octopus* for the heroic innocence of the early days in California contrasts with the headlong frontier greed and violence on display in *Feud*. Royce deplored as destructive the myth of Anglo-Saxon supremacy featured in Norris's narrative. While *The Octopus* radiates with optimism about the transforming power of romantic love, *Feud* dwells almost exclusively on the selfishness at the heart of human relationships. Most significantly of all, perhaps, while Norris traces the troubles in California to the "vast power, huge [and] terrible" of the railroad monopoly, Royce places the blame squarely on the shoulders of individuals who are too blindly selfish to recognize larger social imperatives (51). The novelists are at one, however, in the failure to imagine a successful resolution to the grave social problems set forth in their narratives. *Feud* winds down on a note of unrelieved gloom, while *The Octopus* terminates in catastrophe. True, Norris's narrator concludes with the Olympian assurance that "all things, surely, inevitably, resistlessly work together for good," but this is

only after the novel's main actors have been engulfed in death and destruction (652).

Royce's diagnosis of the ills besetting mid-century California is rather closer in its details to the analysis emergent from María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* (1885). The work of a prominent Californiana, the novel is a fictional counter-history of the conquest in which a dignified and felicitous Mexican rancho culture falls victim to the invasion of ruthless Americans. Ruiz de Burton shares Royce's contempt for the rapacity, racism, and indifference to law often displayed by the conquerors. She joins him as well in pointing to the selfish hypocrisy of American legal practices, most especially as they apply to land title. Both writers recoil from the spectacle of greed precipitated by the Gold Rush and its aftermath. Quite ironically, however, Ruiz de Burton displays some of the very flaws that she criticizes in her antagonists. For example, she is quite as prone to stereotypes of stupid, greedy White squatters as the Americans are to stereotypes of lazy, treacherous Californios. Few of her characters on either side rise above the lure of profit, and in no case is land title above suspicion. Americans and Californios in *The Squatter and the Don* are alike indifferent to the plight of Indians, and in neither community does respect for women run very deep. Most strikingly of all, the novel excoriates American colonialism but turns an utterly blind eye to the Mexican and Spanish colonialism which immediately preceded it.

As José F. Aranda has observed, Ruiz de Burton was a member and advocate of "a group of elite individuals who resisted their social and class demotion after 1848 but nevertheless had more in common with their conquerors than they were willing to acknowledge" (555). But if the Californios were indeed straining to have things both ways, their example would not have surprised Royce, had he taken the time to examine it. He knew perfectly well that the Americans in California were equally disinclined to let their left hands know what their right hands were doing. They were colonists, after all, anxious to put the best face possible on violent conquest. But for Royce the American conquerors were also simply human in their failure—a failure immemorially human—to properly subordinate their individual desires to the larger social good. The lesson of California was for Royce the lesson of life writ large: "the sacredness of a true public spirit, and the great law that the people who forget the divine order of things have to learn thereof anew some day, in anxiety and pain" (*California* 366).



NOTES

1. Sarah Royce's account of the overland journey has been published as *A Frontier Lady, Recollections of the Gold Rush and Early California*, ed. Ralph Henry Gabriel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932). My reflections on Royce have been influenced by the work of several scholars, notable among them Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850–1915*; Earl Pomeroy, "Josiah Royce, Historian in Quest of Community," *Pacific Historical Review* 40.1 (Feb. 1971): 1–20; Robert V. Hine, *Josiah Royce: From Grass Valley to Harvard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); and John Clendenning, *The Life and Thought of Josiah Royce*.

2. See my "Clio Bereft of Calliope," in *The New Western History: The Territory Ahead*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 78–82.

3. For an overview of McWilliams's extraordinary contributions to the anti-triumphalist strain in California history, see my "Remembering Carey McWilliams," *Western American Literature* 34.4 (Winter 2000): 411–33.

4. For rather different accounts of the novel's historical provenance, see Starr 164; Clendenning, *Life and Thought* 159; and Robert V. Hine, "Josiah Royce: The West as Community," in *Writing Western History*, ed. Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 24–25. For Royce's treatment of the Sacramento squatters riots, see *California* 369–77.

5. I take support in this phase of my argument from Vincent Buranelli's observation that "nothing is more objectionable to a moralist than inverted moralism" (36). He goes on to elaborate this point with several illustrations.

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