YADDO: A CREATIVE HISTORY

By

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Abstract

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by

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The following pages reveal what is, in most regards, an untold story. The focus of this story is a four-hundred acre estate located in Saratoga Springs, New York. Since the mid-1880s this estate has been known as "Yaddo." Since 1926, Yaddo has functioned as an artists' community. In the words of John Cheever, "The forty [sic] or so acres on which the studios and principle buildings of Yaddo stand have seen more distinguished activity in the arts than any other piece of ground in the English-speaking community." Between 1926 and 1950, the historical focus of my study of Yaddo as a creative institution, Yaddo welcomed, among others, Newton Arvin, Leonard Bernstein, Truman Capote, John Cheever, Aaron Copland, Malcolm Cowley, Carson McCullers, Katherine Anne Porter, and Clyfford Still.

My interest in Yaddo's history, however, reaches further back in time than its development as a creative institution. Any discussion of Yaddo's past needs to begin with the lives of its founders, New York banker and philanthropist Spencer Trask, and his wife Katrina. I therefore begin with an analysis of their lives at Yaddo.

My study of the Trasks argues that during the 1880s and 1890s their shared interest in challenging Victorian restraint combined with unimaginable personal tragedy as well as more general fin de siecle anxieties and, ultimately, resulted in a dramatic worldview that gave shape to an astonishing posthumous gift. In 1900, the Trasks determined to bequeath their entire estate as well as their collective legacies to transforming Yaddo into a center of creative activity.

The lives of the Trasks, therefore, provide important context for my consideration of Yaddo's history as a creative institution. I give close attention to how the Trasks' vision interacted with, and was influenced by, larger historical pressures, especially the Depression, World War Two, and, finally, The Cold War. Within this historical framework, however, I have worked to incorporate the compelling succession of creative struggle, personal intrigue, as well as high jinx of every imaginable variety, which inevitably must remain at the center of any conversation about Yaddo.

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Archiving Modernism, University of Alberta, July 2003; The Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, August 2003; The James T. Farrell Centenary Conference, The American University of Paris, July 2004; The International Congress on Archives, Vienna, August 2004; Communities in Crisis, University of South Carolina, April 2005; as well as The American Modernist Association, Chicago, November 2005.

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I am not certain how to thank my wife, Peggy. In many regards this project documents the end of a journey she began with me almost ten years ago. Without her continued support and dedication I would most certainly never have gotten this far. Her commitment defines selflessness.

Finally, for my daughter: "Finis?" "Yes Molly, daddy's finished."

Contents

Forward

> And the presence of artists breeds art. The role of the bistro and the café in European culture, and of the agora in Hellenic thought, is known to all. But as I unpacked that first evening, set aside my jeans for the serious morning and laid out my manuscript on the larger desk (how thoughtful of them to provide two) and go down for dinner, I have no idea of the similar role Yaddo plays in this country, or of the company it keeps, and has offered down the decades, as a place where young meet old, the celebrated meet the unknown, and one kind of art may encounter the other.[1]
>
> – Hortense Calisher

The following pages reveal what is essentially an untold history. The focus of this history is a four hundred acre estate located in Saratoga Springs, New York, and which comprises what is arguably the most influential creative community in America over the last one hundred years. I have chosen as the chronological focus of this study the years 1880 to 1950. These dates are not, by any means, arbitrary. My intention is to divide my discussion between an analysis of the historical pressures that shaped the formation of Yaddo's culture during the Trasks' lifetimes, and, then, to consider its progression across the first half of the twentieth century. I have decided to conclude my analysis in approximately 1950 because, as I will show, Yaddo's environment changes dramatically after 1949. It was in that year that Robert Lowell alleged that Yaddo was being used to accommodate known communist interests. Because his allegations almost destroyed Yaddo they initiated a process of administrative review that fundamentally altered its environment. In my epilogue I consider how these imposed alterations combined with the more general influence of Yaddo's growing importance with the result that, by the mid-1950s, Yaddo had become a changed environment. Finally, while my aim is to reveal the compelling succession of personal intrigue and creative struggle,

[1] Calisher et al., 44.

which inevitably, remains the focus of any discussion of Yaddo, my larger purpose is to demonstrate how the Trasks' vision for Yaddo altered over time as it interacted with larger historical influences.

Despite its chronological approach, such discussion requires a more sophisticated organization than may at first be realized. The reason is simple. A transcript of Yaddo's history would fail to reveal its most defining, and compelling, characteristics. Especially during its first sixty years, Yaddo was defined by a way of thinking. It was a culture that was carefully cultivated by the Trasks and which had at its center, a tense combination of anxieties that were emblematic of late nineteenth-century America. When further shaped by the experience of personal tragedy, this environment began to coalesce around a creative practice that bore obvious resemblance to a European salon. The Trasks' posthumous gift is a result of these historical influences and interactions.

Whenever possible, I have tried to allow this history to be told by the characters who participated in its drama - that is to say, by Cheever's estimable list of "lushes . . . nervous breakdowns, thieves, geniuses, cranky noblemen, and poets who ate their peas with a knife." I have worked therefore to incorporate these voices as they are preserved in available primary source materials. In so doing, I humbly acknowledge that in some instances I have attempted to give voice to a cast of dramatis personae whose flair for the theatrical and skill with language far exceed my own. Furthermore, since Yaddo first opened its doors in 1926 it has welcomed more than 2,500 guests. This is a large crowed to try and cover. In determining which characters from Yaddo's past to give greatest voice to, I have been forced to be selective. At times, this selection proved a bit painful. While my basis for inclusion was often a figure's general importance to American

intellectual and creative history, ultimately my choices had to remain focused on which personalities exerted the greatest influence on the evolution of the Trasks' vision. My selections then should not be viewed as exclusionary.

Finally, as I began nearing the completion of this project, I felt increasingly certain that an exploration of Yaddo's past required prefatory consideration. While drafting my final pages, I repeatedly asked myself what I now realize to be a deceptively simple question: What is an artists' community (or colony, or retreat)? The question provides the substance for a worthy book topic (or perhaps someone else's dissertation). It occurs to me, however, that consideration of this question provides important context for my discussion of Yaddo. For the purposes at hand, I feel the question is best approached by considering the values that have given shape to the community under discussion.

"Especially as a meeting place of ideas will Yaddo grow more uniquely valuable," wrote Elizabeth Ames in 1936. "Men tend to be increasingly impatient with the ideas of others, with their opinions. Yet at Yaddo there is time, and there is more patience, more of a spirit of indulgent criticism. The need of this is quite desperate."[2] Ames' words call attention to the most obvious feature of any artistic retreat. Yaddo is separate. It defines an environment wholly removed from ordinary concern.

Yaddo has always been a place of withdrawal. Its wooded grounds are presided over by an imposing nineteenth-century mansion, comparable to any of the most opulent residences of Newport, Rhode Island, which was, in the late 1880s, the preeminent home

[2] The New York Public Library, Manuscripts Division, *The Yaddo Records*, Box 345, Folder 5. References to *The Yaddo Records* will hereafter be cited parenthetically as *YR* followed by the Box number, a period, and the Folder number – for example, (*YR* 345.5).

of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the eastern United States. It is distinguished by a defining posture of isolation. "I had not imagined anything so severely cloistered and delineated," (YR 276.14) wrote Katherine Anne Porter during her first visit. Such a posture was meticulously contrived. Under the Trasks' precise planning, Yaddo's independence was assured by an ethic of carefully contrived self-sufficiency. During the Trasks' lifetime, the estate produced its own meat and foodstuffs, and was even supported by its own water supply. The result, according to Malcolm Cowley, was that Yaddo resembled in both form and function "a medieval manor." As Yaddo's role evolved from private estate to creative institution, its posture of detached isolation remained. Even today, when one enters Yaddo's secluded grounds, one feels a gradual distinction from what Elizabeth Ames would routinely refer to as "the outside world."

Ames made certain that such physical and psychological separation remained central to life at Yaddo. She wrote in her invitation to Truman Capote that a guest at Yaddo may "have as much seclusion and privacy as he wishes and where all that is asked of him is to observe the social amenities of civilized living" (YR 234.4). While in residence, guests at Yaddo are required to observe established "quiet hours" from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (essentially working hours). Visits with artists are strictly by invitation only. One is expected to respect an atmosphere of quiet and uninterrupted contemplation. Further, since Yaddo first began accepting guests in 1926, its tradition of withdrawal has been carefully maintained by its artists' complete accommodation. To this day all meals are provided. Breakfast and dinner are designed to be social, with dinner being the most formal event of the day. Lunch is made available in a portable (box) form that assures

opportunity for uninterrupted concentration during working hours. When aligned with Yaddo's physical posture, such accommodation suspends consideration from the kinds of mundane concerns, such as finances, that often inhibit the creative process. "It's so much easier here; so peaceful, not only physically but psychologically; even politically," thinks Alison Lurie's protagonist:

> The fretful trivia of domestic life, and the outer world of telegrams and anger, have receded to insignificance down a long avenue of pine trees, beyond the iron gates of the estate. There's no radio in the Mansion except in the servant's wing, no television. The newspapers are laid out every morning on the hall table; but we discuss the bad news of the day as if it were already history (Lurie, 26).

In a diary entry from 1931, the future Pulitzer Prize winning poet Marya Zaturenska wrote "It feels as if I had been suddenly lifted from a long death to a glorious resurrection, for I am at beloved, beautiful Yaddo again." Zaturenska recalled that her husband, Horace Gregory "feels the same way; he became inarticulate with emotion on seeing the massive entrance to the mansion" (Zaturenska, 140). Such opportunity for reclusive concentration has proven, repeatedly, to be important to creative development. "I am getting on fine in my cave, or island, or whatever is the best symbol for silence and isolation," wrote Katherine Anne Porter "but not lonely, just in a state of concentration, going straight to the end" (YR 276.14). In short, Yaddo has always been predicated on a kind of escapism that combines solitude with release from worldly concern. Yaddo brings into creative alignment the experience of thinking within an environment of detached refuge with immersion in an environment of creative sympathy.

Outside of established "quiet hours," Yaddo's atmosphere transforms from ascetic concentration to a group dynamic designed to facilitate intellectual exchange. "Although the solitary working period . . . is, or should be, the main event of the artist's Yaddo day,"

wrote Gail Godwin "art is not an activity hermetically sealed off from life, and the 'house party' ambience Katrina [Trask] foresaw becomes woven into the routine of work, and may even become part of the work" (Calisher, et al., 53). Artists representing diverse creative interests share an intimate experience. Dinner is the most structured event of the day (during Yaddo's early years dinner required formal attire). Its importance as an opportunity for intellectual exchange is rooted in traditions established by the Trasks. "Dinner was a ceremony," Katrina Trask recalled "the long evening was always more or less formal; hours of music, of song, of reading aloud, of conversation in the library or on the terrace, mellow in the moonlight." (Trask, 98).

The creative benefit of combining leisured contemplation with intimate immersion in diverse creative cross currents has proved to be profound. "It was stirring," wrote Alfred Kazin "every morning and evening, to be able to talk with Newton Arvin, Michael Seide, David Diamond, Weldon Kees, and to hear news of Katherine Anne Porter, who was invisible somewhere in the vicinity of Yaddo, beginning the long hard pull on Ship of Fools that was not published until 1962, and in its working stages was still known as No Safe Harbor" (Calisher, et al., 33). Yaddo's creative diversity is one of its most distinguishing features. It is a tradition rooted in its historical fabric. Carson McCullers completed her manuscript of *The Ballad of the Sad Café* only after receiving important criticism from composer David Diamond, literary critic Newton Arvin, and, finally, Elizabeth Ames. It was Ames, in fact, who assured McCullers that her manuscript was complete.

Any community is defined by its exclusivity. At Yaddo, the selection of guests serves multiple purposes. "But it would take me a repeat visit to understand that there was yet a third kind of company offered here," recalled Hortense Calisher:

> This has little to do with the hierarchy of those present. Each voice heard in the halls has a part. Any non-artist who has studied in a library, watched a rehearsal in a theater, joined a devoted class in sewing or Yoga, or even seen the floor of the Stock Exchange, has witnessed the life support created by doing what everybody near you considers highly important – and is doing it too. For artists, who in the main work so much alone, such a milieu is rarer, or must be sought more self-consciously. Here, whatever the current company, and even if you seldom speak to any at length, there comes a subtle reinforcement. Respect has already been paid, if indirectly, to what you are spending your own life at – for side by side, others are working on their own at something of the same. The very existence of such a habitat is in itself a tribute to the arts – and a solace to the artist (Calisher, et al., 45).

Guests are invited to Yaddo only after their work has been reviewed by a committee composed of their peers, who in general have an established relationship with Yaddo and, therefore, a vested interest in its maintenance. The invitation, then, serves a dual purpose. It both acts as a validation of one's artistry and defines an important form of guardianship over Yaddo. In this way Yaddo's selectivity has always aligned neatly with its tradition of detachment.

John Cheever shrewdly perceived that at Yaddo, the importance of exclusivity, separation, and intimacy combine. For Cheever, an invitation to Yaddo implied one's participation in a creative continuum,

> To find a room in which you can count on being undisturbed until four in the afternoon and count, then on sympathetic company, a swim and a good dinner is extremely difficult. It sometimes helps if the room you work in still bears the impress of someone you esteem, but it doesn't much matter if your predecessor has been a broken - down novelist or - like myself – a blocked short-story writer. They will have contributed to the fertility of a climate that encourages serious work (Calisher, et al., 11).

At Yaddo, such experience is routine. In 1952, composer Marc Blitzstein spent several weeks in West House. After Blitzstein left, Leonard Bernstein occupied the same room where he worked fruitfully on his one act opera, Trouble in Tahiti. To arrive at Yaddo is to continue an unbroken tradition of creative energy.

What then is an artists' colony (or community or retreat)? In her Report of Yaddo's First Season, Elizabeth Ames stressed the importance of "avoiding such terms as community and colony," and maintained that Yaddo was "non institutional in every sense." According to Ames, "Yaddo is Yaddo and nothing more." For the purposes at hand I feel that it is sufficient to consider that, at its most fundamental level, Yaddo is defined by an exclusive participation in a particular kind of creative energy. It is an energy that is at once personal, and that includes ascetic contemplation, but that also results from a collaborative exchange of creative values. Of equal importance, Yaddo's creative energy is deeply rooted in an almost palpable history. Revealing this history is my purpose.

Introduction

> The forty or so acres on which the studios and principle buildings of Yaddo stand have seen more distinguished activity in the arts than any other piece of ground in the English-speaking community or perhaps in the entire world. As we all know, more than twelve hundred guests have stayed at Yaddo. The diversity, quantity and excellence of the work done here is staggering. There has never been anything like it. Many of the men and women responsible for the vitality in American art have done their major work in these rooms. Every sort of school of painting, music and literature has been represented and in some cases initiated here.[3]
>
> – John Cheever

In 1941, Kenneth Fearing published *Dagger of the Mind*, a mystery set amid the gothic landscape of a secluded artists' retreat. Fearing chose for his protagonist, Christopher Bartel, an illustrator of some notoriety who had a fetish, when he was drunk, for painting mermaids. Bartel describes the estate's imposing mansion as a "rambling architectural accident housing the kitchen and dining room, the lounge, reading room and library, a game room, writing room, chapel, music room, two reception rooms, a canteen, and the director's office and private living quarters" (Fearing, 6) The isolated grounds also comprise a variety of outlying studios which the estate's mercurial director, P.C. Cooke, kept reserved for musicians "so that the rest of us wouldn't be disturbed by the racket they constantly made." Cooke's intrusive insistence on decorum assures Bartel that "very little took place without his knowing nearly everything there was to know about it," (Fearing, 6) and even leads to rumors among other guests of his clairvoyance. Fearing was a guest at Yaddo during the 1930s, making the real source of his fictional setting unmistakable. The allusions to the estate's seemingly pervasive director, as well as many of its eccentric inhabitants are also obvious. Amid a backdrop that bears

[3] YR 235.11

obvious reference to Yaddo, Fearing unfolds a drama that is rooted in romantic betrayal, ego, vice, and decadence.

Fearing, was not the only guest to find Yaddo an irresistible spur to his imagination. In 1969, Alison Lurie published *Real People*, a fictitious account of interpersonal intrigue and creative struggle set in a luxurious and secluded artists' colony. Lurie, herself a seasoned Yaddo guest, introduces her narrative with an inescapable reference.

> Imagine a deserted estate in northern New England. Five hundred rolling acres, mainly forested with hemlock and white pine. Imposing stone gateposts; long sloping velvet lawns brocaded with the moving shadows of clouds; a thirty-five-room stone mansion in Victorian-baronial style; picturesque old stables and outbuildings; two Italian marble fountains, one indoors; three large artificial ponds stocked with fish and water lilies; and a once famous rose garden (Lurie, 3).

Within the estate's secluded grounds, residents abide by an inflexible daily routine designed to foster creative development, but which, according to Lurie, also lends to inevitable distraction.

> The guests . . . are all solitary, and seem either idle or worse. At ten A.M. each is shut in his room alone, either in the main house or in isolated cottages about the grounds. Two of them are staring out of their windows. Two others are pacing about restlessly. One writes a letter, and signs it with a false name, while another reads (without permission) somebody else's private correspondence. One is methodically bending a pile of his hosts' coat hangers out of shape; one is picking out discords on a grand piano; and one, apparently, is making love to himself (Lurie, 4).

It is fitting that Yaddo has repeatedly lent to such creative invention. "Not only the writers but whoever could put pen to paper was determined to write a novel about it," (Trilling, 176) recalled Diana Trilling. Gail Godwin remembered feeling as if she were "entering the realm of a tale: the heroine rounds the curve and sees the House, where she

might intercept her future, confront her devils, test her freedom" (Calisher et al., 52). Yaddo, however, is poignantly distinct from the works of Fearing and Lurie in the most fundamental regard that, to date, its story remains untold.

Yaddo was, and remains, an extraordinary experiment in communal living. Yaddo's history combines tragedy, romantic intrigue, despair, collusion, and comic relief, as well as revelry of every imaginable sort, and is set against the leisured backdrop of a secluded estate. Such a compelling composition is detectable in the estate's eclectic appearance. Yaddo's mansion conjures up images of robber barons, of leisure of a quintessential Victorian variety, of bygone social mores, and of an unmistakable fascination with medievalism, which, to the sensitive interpreter, suggests an anxious combination of modern and anti-modern sentimentality emblematic of the late nineteenth century. The most striking feature of the mansion is its imposing tower, the prominence of which makes it impossible to escape its symbolic importance to a family fascinated by medieval life. What makes Yaddo's story truly intriguing, however, is that, in the words of John Cheever, it counts among its cast of characters an estimable list of "lushes down on their luck, men and women at the top of their powers, nervous breakdowns, thieves, geniuses, cranky noblemen, and poets who ate their peas with a knife." Within Yaddo's baronial halls, this quixotic cast has nurtured an atmosphere of creative sympathy that is rooted in a fascinating history.

Yaddo's foundation in 1900 was predicated on a tragic series of events that gave unfortunate shape to the lives of its principal founders, Spencer and Katrina Trask. There is something almost Shakespearian about the stoicism they evinced when faced with the unimaginable tragedy of the successive deaths of their four children. For the Trasks,

Yaddo became indispensable to their convalescence. They withdrew into their estate's secluded grounds and established traditions, which, while shaped by the Trasks' dramatic and bereaved sensibilities, became representative of a tense collection of values that gave uneasy form to late nineteenth-century American society. The blend of seclusion and emblematic expression established a fascinating continuum of cloistered cultural reflection that has defined Yaddo since.

Such was the Trasks' investment in Yaddo that in 1900 they painstakingly arranged to dedicate their estate, collective legacies, and, most important, the culture they had carefully nurtured to future generations of artists and intellectuals. The result was a posthumous gift that has left an indelible impression on creative thought in America. Yaddo's history is, therefore, defined by a continuum of creative energy. To sit in Yaddo's library is to immerse oneself in Yaddo's history. Its shelves preserve an impressive breadth and depth of writing, all of which can claim roots at Yaddo. Merely a cursory examination at a first edition of *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* reveals the inscription:

> Dear Mrs. Ames,
> For the opportunity to have completed this book I am indebted to you and to Yaddo – I hope it may have some merits in order to justify that indebtedness.
> Sincerely, James T. Farrell.

Historically, such "indebtedness" has proven routine. "So much of my real work forward in writing is associated with Yaddo," wrote Alfred Kazin in 1948 "that I have come to be almost superstitious about it, and like to put a little of its earth inside each book" (YR 258.12). While struggling through early drafts of *The Bride of My Brother*, Carson McCullers wrote to Ames, "I want with my whole heart to come to Yaddo this summer. I

know that I can work there better than I can work here or anywhere else. The peace and atmosphere of Yaddo is not like that of any place I have ever been" (YR 268.1). It is an energy rooted in traditions established by the Trasks, but which, especially during Yaddo's early years, were carefully and ingeniously preserved.

Following their deaths, the Trasks' posthumous vision became invested in the sensitivities and administrative proficiencies of a young widow from Minneapolis. During the first three decades of her administration, Elizabeth Ames perceived her role as Executive Director of Yaddo to be a form of guardianship of the Trasks' intentions. The convergence of the Trasks' beneficence and Ames' guardianship proved profound. "The combination in tandem of Mrs. Trask's generosity and Elizabeth's profoundly intuitive grasp of what one needed seems providential," wrote John Cheever:

> When Elizabeth undertook to open and manage Yaddo there was no precedent. She invented an administration so intelligent and comprehensive that at times – when one found seven writers of vastly different temperaments and interests working happily under the same roof – it seemed magical. It wasn't magic at all, of course. It was commonsense, hard work and giftedness (YR 235.11).

At Yaddo, the Trasks' commanded an almost palpable presence. Portraits of their children were hung in the mansion's great hall, windows depicted scenes of chivalry and romance lifted from legends devised by the Trasks' to explain the origins of the customs they reared. The Trasks' sensibilities were also evident in Yaddo's architecture and landscape. Especially during Yaddo's first decades, such tangible evidence helped to assure the continuance of their sensibilities.

Yaddo's institutional history is comparable in its drama to the traditions the Trasks celebrated. Even during their lifetimes, Yaddo was defined by social rituals that were at once detached from, but also poignantly reflective of, broader historical

pressures. Throughout the 1930s, while violent worker protest and revolutionary political action captured headlines across the country, Yaddo helped to nurture compositions that have come to define the proletarian movement in American art. In February of 1949, one month before Senator Joseph McCarthy publicly claimed that the United States government had been infiltrated by communists, Robert Lowell, in collusion with fellow guests Elizabeth Hardwick, Edward Maisel, and Flannery O'Connor, accused Yaddo of harboring communist sympathizers. Their accusations almost ruined Yaddo and proved an eerie portent of the political trials that would threaten academic and creative interests across America during the 1950s.

What makes Yaddo's story so compelling is that dating from the time of the Trasks, its history has been further shaped by remarkable interpersonal intrigue and drama. As may be imagined, gathering a group of eclectic creative temperaments under one baronial roof, and removing them from the mundane responsibilities of work and family obligations, provided for high-jinx and carousal of every imaginable sort. "When several dozen writers, painters, sculptors and composers live together week after week, swim together, have cocktails every night and dine together," wrote Gail Godwin "there are bound to be creative crosscurrents as well as the expected social dynamics. Ideas are exchanged, opinions challenged, memorable conversations held; friendships are formed, some of them for life; animosities and aversions can also bloom to disproportionate size in the hothouse of enforced intimacy" (Calisher et al., 53). Cheever, who was especially famous for orchestrating elaborate mischief, maintained that Ames' notorious insistence on decorum was exaggerated. "She brought a great deal of patience," he wrote "to the fact that generations of us have put a cigarette in Niobe's fingers stolen cookies from the

kitchen and installed a length of lead pipe among the dinner chimes" (Calisher et al., 53). In general, Ames appreciated the futility of trying to contain creative energy, even when it was not specifically channeled toward aesthetic ends. As long as one's commitment to work remained paramount, Ames remained tolerant. Cheever took full advantage of such understanding. "Among the ornaments in the hall are a pair of painted sleighs given to Mrs. Trask by the Queen of the Netherlands," he wrote. "One night we dragged one of these to the top of the grand staircase and installed Mary Heaton Vorse in the driver's seat and gave her a shove. 'Hooves of fire,' shouted Mary, waving an imaginary lasso as the sleigh bumped down the red lifts" (Calisher, et al., 53).

During a recent interview, novelist Allan Gurganus stated that "the only way to truly appreciate Yaddo's significance would be to consider its absence." Between 1926 and 1950 Yaddo welcomed, among many others, Newton Arvin, Leonard Bernstein, Truman Capote, John Cheever, Aaron Copland, Malcolm Cowley, Langston Hughes, Jacob Lawrence, Robert Lowell, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Katherine Anne Porter, and Clyfford Still. A list of works completed wholly or in part at Yaddo is no less impressive. *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, *Exile's Return*, *Mills of the Kavanaughs*, *On Native Grounds*, *Other Voices Other Rooms*, *Piano Variations*, *Ship of Fools*, *Studs Lonigan*, *Union Square*, and *The Wapshot Chronicle*, all have roots at Yaddo. I hope that, across the following pages, the experiences of these artists and the remarkable compositions they fostered will be set against the backdrop of Yaddo's history in a way that is at once instructive and entertaining.

Chapter One

Beginnings

> How could there remain such primitive simplicity, such ravishing unspoiled beauty within a mile-and-a-half of Saratoga town? Had Destiny kept the place for us?[4] - Katrina Trask

In 1881, established New York banker and philanthropist Spencer Trask arranged to lease "for two years with the privilege of purchasing" a one hundred acre estate located two miles outside of Saratoga Springs, New York. The Trasks' saw the property as more than a place to escape the oppressive environment of New York City during the summer months. Spencer was certain that the secluded grounds would provide emotional solace for his wife, Katrina, and young daughter, Christina. Both were struggling to cope with the recent death of their first child, Alanson. "We were in deep grief," Katrina recalled "and were thankful for the protection and isolation that the deserted place gave us" (Trask, 9). The tragic origins of the Trasks' attachment to this estate established an important precedent. From its beginnings, Yaddo has been a place of refuge and withdrawal; a place where worldly concern was suspended.

For the Trasks, withdrawal meant more than physical separation and isolation. Within their estate's secluded grounds they cultivated a set of dynamic sensibilities that were shaped by the principles of quietism and isolation, and which combined transcendental values common to the mid-nineteenth century with an interest in medievalism strikingly emblematic of more contemporary anxieties. In short, the customs the Trasks celebrated at Yaddo became a dramatic microcosm of the tense alignment of modern and anti-modern sensibilities that gave uneasy shape to American

[4] Trask,

society, especially in the Northeast, at the end of the nineteenth century. So complete was the Trasks' investiture in their estate that they contrived a history, replete with mythical legends, to explain its origins. Over time, the Trasks' attachment to their estate became almost fanatical.

During the 1880s the values the Trasks nurtured were further shaped by unimaginable personal tragedy. Katrina's reaction was a kind of further withdrawal, this time into her own creative imagination. The result was that by the 1890s Yaddo, for the Trasks, had become a place of spiritual and emotional withdrawal and convalescence, but also, for Katrina, a place to nurture her nascent ambitions as an artist. It was the association of Katrina's artistry with Yaddo's traditions that provided the foundation for the Trasks' posthumous gift.

At the time of its purchase, the Trasks' estate was referred to locally as the "Childs' estate." Childs was the name of the property's previous owner. The grounds comprised a compelling combination of natural lakes, fields, and woods that were presided over by a rustic Victorian Queen Anne style mansion. The estate also included the visible remains of an intriguing history that dated back to the close of the American Revolution. Near the estate's highest elevation, not far removed from its original mansion, are gathered several small headstones bearing the name "Barhyte."

In 1766 Jacobus Barhyte, of Southern German ancestry, settled with his family on a farm near Troy, New York. During the Revolutionary War, Barhyte enlisted in the Continental Army and in 1777 served under General Gates at the Battle of Bemis Heights, part of the Saratoga campaign. When hostilities ceased in 1784, Barhyte purchased approximately two hundred acres of land outside of Saratoga, the most

prominent feature of which was a hill offering a clear view of Bemis Heights. Barhyte was among the vanguard of early settlers in the region. For most of the previous century exploration of land north of Albany had been limited by continuous fighting between the French and the British and their respective Indian allies. Algonquin and Huron tribes allied with the French while the Iroquois fought on behalf of British interests.

During the early nineteenth century Saratoga's population gradually expanded. Despite its encroachment, Barhyte's property remained secluded and provided its owner with the reclusive life-style he preferred. Further, the abundance of natural resources allowed for a modest form of self-sufficiency. "Herr Barhyte is an old Dutch settler, who, till the mineral springs of Saratoga were discovered some four miles from his door, was buried in the depth of a forest unknown to all but the prowling Indian," noted an early visitor to the region.

> The sky is supported above him (or looks to be) by a wilderness of straight columnar pine-shafts, gigantic in girth, and with no foliage except at the top, where they branch out like round tables spread for a banquet in the clouds. A small ear-shaped lake, sunk as deep into the earth as the firs shoot above it, and clear and unbroken as a mirror, save the pearl-spots of the thousand lotuses holding up their cups to the blue eyes of heaven, sleeps beneath his window; and around him in the forest, lies still unbroken the elastic and brown carpet of the faded pine-tassels, deposited in yearly layers since the continent first rose from the Flood, and rotted a foot beneath the surface to a rich mould that would fatten the Simplegades to a flower garden. With his black tarn well-stocked with trout, his bit of a farm in the clearing near-by, and an old Dutch Bible, Herr Barhydt lived a life of Dutch Mussing, talked Dutch to his geese and chickens, sung Dutch Psalms to the echoes of the mighty forest, and except on his far-between visits to Albany, which grew rarer and rarer as the old Dutch inhabitants dropped faster away, saw never a white human face from one maple blossoming to another (Waite, 7).

Even at the time of the Trasks' purchase, the property retained its posture of detached seclusion. "I looked about the dreary hall, with the frightful paper on the walls, opening

up to an unsightly cupola, a grotesque staircase winding down an unlighted way," wrote Katrina almost one hundred and fifty years after Barhyte's death,

> but I saw none of these things: I saw only - through the ugly and unwindowed walls - the immemorial pines, tall and stately, which circled the house, the chain of lakes surrounded by the unspoiled woods, the wide meadowland stretching miles and miles to the East: and, in the distance, the wonderful colour changing mountains! I saw the delicious tangle, the maze of wild flowers and of wild beauty which lay on every side. How intensely Spencer and I had grown to love this deserted, enchanted place! Already it was home: I feel that I had never been so much at home, as in these beautiful wild haunts, overgrown and hidden from every passerby (Trask, 9-10).

Despite encroaching business interests, which by the time of the Trasks' arrival had transformed Saratoga into a thriving resort, Yaddo, under the Trasks' control, retained an aura of independence that would have been familiar to Yaddo's original settler.

Sometime during the late 1780s Jacobus built a log-house near the summit of his property and married Christiana Abel, the daughter of a neighboring farmer. Saratoga's gradual development inevitably began to infringe upon Jacobus' reclusive lifestyle. "It contained seven thousand inhabitants before Herr Barhyte, living in forest seclusion only four miles off, became aware of its existence!" noted one visitor. "A pair of loons philandering about the forest on horse-back, popped in upon him one June morning, and henceforth there was no rest for the Dutchmen" (Waite, 7). Barhyte quickly developed the reputation of an accommodating host who served trout dinners of distinctive quality, and whose grounds were noted for their natural splendor. "Everybody rode down to eat his trout and make love in the dark shades of his mirrored lagoon; and at last, in self-defense he added a room or two to his shanty, enclosed his cabbage-garden, and set a price on his trout dinners," recalled one of Barhyte's early guests. "The traveler now-a-days, who has not dined at Barhydt's, with his own champagne, cold from the tarn and

the white headed old settler 'gargling' Dutch about the house in his manifold vocation of cook, hostler, and waiter, may as well not have seen Niagara" (Waite, 7). To accommodate the increasing number of visitors, both of the celebrated and ordinary variety, Barhyte reconstructed his simple log cabin so that it assumed the dimension and function of an inn. The structure was still standing when the Trasks purchased the estate in 1881. In *Thirty Years in North America*, James Stewart described a visit to Barhyte's rustic estate.

> There is also a fishing pond conveniently situated, only two miles from the springs, the proprietor of which, Mr. Barhyte, of German Extraction, makes strangers very welcome. Although he has considerable property, not of trifling value, we found him, the first time we called in the evening to see the place, at work with the necessary implements mending his shoes. I positively took him for a shoemaker, but he received us so hospitably that I soon was convinced of the mistake I had so nearly committed . . . Mr. Barhydt set down cider and peach brandy, and forced us to partake before he would show us the grounds. The pond is not of great extent, but the scenery about it, though on a small scale, is sweet. It pleased Joseph Bonaparte (Ex-King of Spain) so much that Mr. Barhydt told us he would have been very glad to acquire it as a retired situation for himself on his annual visit to the Springs, but Mr. Barhydt was not inclined to sell (Waite, 8).

During his visit in 1825, Bonaparte is rumored to have offered $20,000 for Barhyte's property, an offer to which Barhyte is reported to have refused by replying, "well, if it's worth that much to you it's worth that much to me" (Waite, 9).

Joseph Bonaparte was not the only notable guest to partake of Barhyte's hospitality. It has been rumored that Jerome Napoleon frequently brought his wife Catherine to fish for trout in Barhyte's renowned lakes. "Weather warm, as has been the case since we left Deerfield," Elihu Hoyt wrote in his journal during a visit to Saratoga Springs in 1827.

> The first of every day's work is to take freely of the Congress [Spring] water, then to walk among the multitudes until the breakfast bell summons us to our repast, after which, this day we chartered a barouche and too, a ride to Barhyte's, a Dutch farmer's, about two miles east of the springs. Here we can generally obtain a repast of fresh trout, but this day the good lady was engaged in preparing a trout dinner for a party of high blooded Jacksonians, at the head of whom was Martin van Buren, a senator in the congress of the United States from the State of New York, celebrated for his decided opposition to the present administration of the United States, and considered by some as the head of the opposition, in point of zeal, if not title (Swanner, 116).

It has also been rumored that in 1842 Barhyte's property was visited by Edgar Allan Poe. Supposedly, Jacobus' grandson, James Barhyte, was exploring his grandfather's property when he heard the word "nevermore" reverberating through Yaddo's woods. According to James, the strange incantation was Poe struggling to craft the final rhythm for "The Raven."

The veracity of the Poe legend relies heavily on an article written in 1924 by a Schenectady minister, Dr. William Griffins, for *The New York Times Book Review*. In his article, *Behind the Mystery of Poe's "Raven" - The True "Philosophy of Its Style" and the Secret of its Growth and Method*. "Among the throng of gaily dressed visitors was one who in garb, 'looked like a prairie cowboy," wrote Griffins,

> though in manners he showed himself a kindly gentleman who captivated the heart of Barhydt's grandson and won the regard of his elders. In the lad's eye the general effect of the stranger's appearance was "Mexican." He wore his black hair rather long, covered his hair with a wide-brimmed black slouch hat, and seemed of a lonely, gloomy, disposition. Rarely mingling with the gay throng, he loved to ramble in the deep woods, muttering, humming, and talking to himself (*The New York Times*, January 20, 1924).

According to Griffins, Barhyte's grandson and Poe developed a rapport that influenced Poe's composition.

> On one day, never to be forgotten, the little fellow had been out fishing for trout on the pond down in the direction of the old gristmill. Having caught his pail full,

> he was rowing back towards the house, oblivious of visitors and suspecting no one near, when suddenly the silence was broken by the deep echo of "Nevermore!" As he neared the house the sonorous polysyllable rolled over the pond and came back at echo at regular intervals . . . . he began to hear whole lines and to catch a regular cadence of sound . . . . There was Poe in something of a fine frenzy, pacing up and down the space cleared among the trees, reciting to himself the poem, the refrain of which had so frightened the lad at a distance – the semi-croak the demi-thunder of "Nevermore" (*The New York Times*, January 20, 1924).

The article further alleges that it was only upon James' observation that "nevermore" was a strange name for a bird that Poe was able to complete the final stanza of his masterpiece. Griffin further maintains that Jacobus' wife, herself an aspiring poet, provided essential criticism and played an important role in editing the poem while in manuscript form. "The lady conscientiously undertook the task of criticism, giving considerable time and thought to it," Griffins described. "She suggested several changes and made some corrections, which Poe regarded as improvements." Griffins maintained that his argument was corroborated by "facts recently obtained from unimpeachable witnesses." Griffins is most likely referring to a conversation with Acosta Nichols, youngest brother of Katrina Trask, who claimed to have learned of Poe's visit from Jacobus' grandson. Despite such assumed authority, Griffins' article is, at best, uncertain. His claim, however, identifies an interesting continuum of intrigue, willed recollection, and cultural exchange emerging from Yaddo's grounds even before the arrival of the Trasks. For Katrina, such historical precedent would help confirm Yaddo's importance as a place of refuge and indispensable creative energy.

Over the more than 50 years Jacobus occupied his secluded grounds, he firmly established himself in Saratoga society. Amid his rustic accommodations he had, perhaps

unwittingly, devised a destination that preceded Saratoga's emergence as a resort. Barhyte's death in 1840 prompted an extended notice:

> The visitors at Saratoga of the past generation and those of the present will miss a character at their next visit to the health springs. Old Mr. Barhyte is dead. Thousands will miss the old Dutchman. He was a soldier of the Revolution. Upon the close of the contest he settled upon the farm upon which he ever after lived and upon which he recently died. The situation is secluded in the deep pine forest about two miles south of the Village of Saratoga Springs. The ancient Dutch farm-house in which he lived stands upon the knoll facing to the east. Deep in the ravine just north of the house is a little lake or pond the waters of which are clear as the waters of Helicon, and being overshadowed by the dark umbrage of the tall trees, the limbs of which are interlaced above, the temperature of the water is always of a delicious freshness and coolness. In a word it is just such a pond as forms paradise for trout, and if the Naiads dwell in the groves of Saratoga, Barhyte's lake is beyond doubt their favorite bathing place. The situation is indeed beautifully romantic; and it is here that the epicurean visitors of the springs have been accustomed to quaff their choicest wines over their dinners of trout for almost half a century (Waite, 9).

In September of 1849, Jacobus' sons Richard and John Barhyte sold their father's property to John R. Peters, Andrew Watrous, and George Huddlestone. Huddlestone appears to have been interested in the property in part so that he could extract much of its finest lumber. In 1854 the partnership of the three investors dissolved, and fortunately so did their interest in the estate's abundant natural resources. The land was quickly sold and divided among the heirs of each investor. The largest parcel of land was purchased by Edward Childs and his son Dr. Richard Childs. During the early 1850s Dr. Richard Childs arranged to have the surviving Barhyte residence moved, and on its foundation constructed a large Italianate mansion. During the 1870s the Childs were financially ruined and their estate was foreclosed and sold at auction in 1871 to a party with seemingly little interest in its maintenance.

For almost a decade the "Childs' estate" was largely ignored until Spencer Trask arranged for its purchase in 1880. Ironically, it was precisely the estate's neglected condition that attracted the Trasks. "What joy, what unconfined joy, to take the wilderness and make it blossom as the rose!" wrote Katrina "to have space enough to create a home just as we wanted it, to create an atmosphere original and unique, to be the artists, the architects of our own future." Within Yaddo's secluded grounds the Trasks devised a set of traditions that would come to dominate their thinking. These traditions both conformed to, and reacted against, newly devised social mores that were exerting important influence on the world immediately beyond Yaddo's gates.

Chapter Two

"The Queen of Spas"

I really think that for part of the time I was in a state of mental intoxication[5]
- Washington Irving

Yaddo has always been a retreat within a retreat. Especially during the later half of the nineteenth century, the history of Saratoga Springs is strikingly characteristic of a profound shift in social values that characterized ante-bellum society throughout the Northeast. Yaddo's customs were fostered within a society that was notorious for testing conventional Victorian mores, and which was designed to provide a kind of psychological escapism.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Saratoga emerged as one of America's first resort communities. It both catered to and profited from the interests of wealthy northeasterners, as well as a growing middle class whose lifestyles rested on a new spirit of capitalistic enterprise. In so doing, Saratoga not only accepted, but actually encouraged, new kinds of social interaction and exchange. The Trasks immersion in these values left a formative impression on the traditions they established within their estate's grounds. Just as George Foster Peabody and Elizabeth Ames were important to the formation of Yaddo's environment, so too were the Trasks' interactions with Saratoga's social milieu.

When Spencer arranged to lease the Childs estate Katrina was recovering from the devastating loss of the Trasks' first child, Alanson, who had died in April of 1880. It is without question that Spencer's selection of Saratoga was closely related to its reputation

[5] Sterngass, 38

as a place of physical and emotional convalescence. Spencer also perceived a more practical benefit. Saratoga allowed the Trasks to circulate among a social environment to which they were well accustomed. Spencer wisely reasoned that the combination of convalescence and social distraction would benefit his wife's emotional health. While Saratoga was sufficiently distanced from New York, its society remained familiar.

On December 9, 1887, *The London Times* published an article titled "The American Spa." The article included a description of Saratoga Springs.

> Everybody who is anybody comes to Saratoga, because here can be found an aggregation of people of a character to be met nowhere else.
>
> The throng is essentially cosmopolitan, and comes from all parts of the country, besides many who cross the Atlantic. It embraces all kinds of people, and generally includes the leaders of every set. Not only the representatives of wealth are here, millionaires of every degree, and the most opulent of the money kings, great merchants, bankers, and railway princes, but also the grand dames of society, the heiresses, and the gilded youth of the land (Swanner, 136).

In the Grand Hotel, the Grand Union Hotel and the United States Hotel, Saratoga boasted three of the largest and most opulent hotels in the world. By 1870 these renowned facilities could accommodate five thousand visitors a night among them. A list of their distinguished guests reads like a "who's who" of ante-bellum society. James Buchanan, DeWitt Clinton, James Fenimore Cooper, Stephen Douglas, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Dean Howells, Washington Irving, William James, Martin Van Buren, Edgar Allan Poe, and Daniel Webster all are known to have spent time at either the United States Hotel or the Grand Union Hotel while taking the waters at Saratoga. Irving wrote that he had, "never seen a watering place on either sid[e] of the Atlantic, where things were on a better footing and better arranged than in this" (Sterngass, 24).

In his thorough study of early American resort communities entitled *First Resorts,* Jon Sterngass describes that Saratoga was not the first town in America to profit from its natural springs. The role of springs as coveted points of destination has roots in the medieval practice of making pilgrimages to holy waters. When the Reformation threatened to put an end to the lucrative business of pilgrimages, communities in England, such as Bath and Buxton, reinvented a purpose for their springs to fit more secular ideologies. Quite simply, they attributed a curative value to their natural spring waters that was in keeping with Enlightenment thinking. Patients were quick to prefer the medicinal content of spring water to the common practices of bloodletting and purgation. Soon, the recovery and maintenance of one's health began to be used as a justification for travel. The Romantics in particular would make a practice of associating invalidism with leisure and escapism. Understandably, communities were quick to promote the health benefits of hydrotherapy and began to promote themselves as "spas." The business proved lucrative. By the nineteenth century Saratoga was advertising that its springs offered cures for everything from common gastronomic pain to rheumatism and even obesity.

While still under British rule, many communities within the American colonies were quick to borrow from the example of Bath and Buxton. Southern gentry routinely traveled to springs in Virginia. For their part Boston merchants traveled to Stafford Springs, Connecticut, while their Philadelphia counterparts often took the waters at Yellow Springs and Bristol. Entrepreneurs in Saratoga certainly learned from the examples of these early predecessors. Nevertheless, because Saratoga was comparatively late to begin promoting its springs (when the Declaration of Independence was signed,

the village of Saratoga had not yet been incorporated) its development conformed to newer social customs centered in cities throughout the northeast. From an economic standpoint Saratoga proved ideal. It is equidistant from Boston, New York, and Montreal. Saratoga was also sufficiently distanced from these urban environments that visitors felt safe to experiment with new social behaviors.

By the late-nineteenth century Saratoga Springs had become the defining example of a new industry that was predicated on leisure. Interestingly, the Trasks maintained a curiously ambivalent relationship with Saratoga, selectively embracing and resisting its values. While the Trasks' fortune firmly established them within the society of the Gilded Age elite who frequented the verandas of Saratoga's "big three" hotels, the Trasks chose to detach themselves from many of the social customs which epitomized the late-nineteenth century leisured class. Further, they remained vehemently antagonistic towards the pursuit of more decadent pleasures, especially gambling, that became important to Saratoga's economy. Such resistance informed the Trasks' thinking and profoundly influenced the environment they nurtured at Yaddo.

In her historical study of Saratoga entitled *Saratoga Queen of Spas*, Grace Swanner explains that Saratoga rests on land that was once inhabited by the Mohawk Indian tribe. The town derives its name from the Mohawk word "Se-rach-ta-gue" meaning, "hillside country of the great river." This area of land at the foothills of the Adirondacks was a bountiful hunting ground. The Mohawks developed an especially deep spiritual attachment to this land and believed that its natural springs were both physically and spiritually restorative. They also believed that the springs were responsible for the abundant game found throughout the region. Apparently the first

record of a non-native American to benefit from Saratoga's springs dates from 1642, when a French Jesuit priest, Pere Isaac Jogues, was taken captive by the Mohawks and introduced to several springs near Saratoga. During the American Revolution, the restorative benefits of the natural springs surrounding Saratoga was noted by the commanders of the Continental Army, and especially by General Washington, who attempted unsuccessfully to purchase one of Saratoga's most renowned sources, High Rock Spring. In 1784, Colonel Otho H. Williams described a visit to Saratoga for George Washington:

> Dear Sir: After I had the pleasure of seeing you in Philadelphia, I made an excursion to New York and from there up the North River as far as Saratoga. One motive for extending my tour so far on that course was to visit springs in the vicinity of Saratoga which I recollect you once recommended to me as a remedy for the rheumatism. They are now frequented by the uncivilized people of the back country; but very few others resort to them, as there is but one small lodging house within several miles of the place. Corporal Armstrong and myself spent one week there which was equal to a little campaign for the accommodations were very wretched and provisions exceedingly scarce. The country about the springs being uncultivated, we were forced to send to the border of the Hudson for what was necessary for subsistence (Swanner, 106).

Despite a growing awareness of the area's resources Saratoga was not seriously settled until the late-eighteenth century. In 1783, Philip Schuyler cut a primitive road from his estate on the banks of the Hudson to High Rock Spring. The road allowed for rudimentary access to Saratoga. In 1789, Valentine Seaman composed *A Dissertation on the Mineral Waters of Saratoga*. "As long as the pamperings of luxury and the love of ease shall prevail over simplicity in diet," he wrote, "so long will the springs be resorted to by a train of individuals" (Swanner, 247). Seaman's' account proved portentous.

During the first decade of the nineteenth-century Gideon Putnam constructed a tavern adjacent to several of Saratoga's springs. Locals referred to the tavern as

"Putnam's folly." Their criticism was not unfounded. At the time Saratoga was a frontier town with a population of less than one thousand, and as described by Colonel Williams it offered little in the way of amenities. Putnam's instincts however were shrewdly prescient. He was among the forefront of entrepreneurs who realized that he could profit by promoting the medicinal value of Saratoga's natural resource. To this end Putnam coordinated the construction of his hotel with a shockingly grand plan for a village. Streets would be laid out to assure that visitors would be lured to Saratoga's abundant public fountains. More strikingly, a grand thoroughfare was designed that was to measure an ambitious 120 feet wide.

By 1827, the year of its incorporation, Saratoga had a population of more than two thousand and comprised approximately three hundred dwellings. Almost all of Saratoga's buildings clustered around its springs. Of equal importance, Saratoga began to reflect the values of a resort. When not visiting the springs visitors were entertained by new forms of social interaction and display. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, a visit to Saratoga had become as much a social as a healthful experience. "Putnam's Folly," which would become the Grand Union Hotel (among the most celebrated in the world), had been joined by the Pavilion Hotel in 1819 and the United States Hotel in 1823. In 1826, Almira Reid, a visitor from Massachusetts, described her visit to Saratoga.

> Today has been excessively warm and the continual passing of the stages and carriages raised one constant cloud of dust which renders it unpleasant; but I must think Saratoga a pretty place. The main street is tolerably level and very broad. A number of elegant boarding houses such as the United States, Columbian Hotel, Montgomery Hall, Union Hall, Pavilion and Congress Halls, besides many private genteel houses.

> Back of this room and in full view of window are the Green Mountains of Vermont, and the surrounding country look very elegant (Swanner, 115).

The growth of Saratoga's reputation quickly gave rise to allied industries catering to the entertainment of America's growing leisured class. "Out of the hundreds in this village," wrote Reid in a subsequent letter, "but few are disposed to pass an hour in divine service. The pleasure parties and balls every evening in this village engross the attention of the old and young, sick and well, and this village place I fear will prepare more souls for destruction than these efficacious waters will ever heal infirm bodies" (Swanner, 116). While recuperation would continue to be the prime justification for a visit, visitors quickly began to abandon proscribed regimes, which often included five cold baths a day, in preference for other entertainments. Dance halls, billiard rooms, and bowling alleys began to compete for visitors' interest. When Elihu Hoyt visited Saratoga in 1827 he noted that "many of the visitors come here probably in good sound health for amusement, & for the sake of spending a week or two among the fashionable to see & be seen." Hoyt also observed,

> no end to the balls, concerts and other exhibitions which are continually brought forward here to amuse and to pick your pockets. In the evening we stepped into Congress Hall to witness the brilliancy of the evening ball. Here was a full display of nearly all the flowers of beauty and elegance now assembled at the Springs; their dress was fashionable, and the ball, I presume, was managed in the bonton style (Swanner, 124).

Part of the reason for the expansion of entertainment offerings can be explained by simple competition. By the middle of the nineteenth-century Saratoga was competing with several regional communities, most notably Ballston Spa, that were similarly advertising the medicinal value of their natural resources. When not consuming material goods, visitors to Saratoga could choose from a variety of distractions including several

panoramas, a carefully planned Indian encampment, and even a visit to a precise reconstruction of the home of a wealthy nobleman excavated at Pompeii. During one of his several visits, William Dean Howells described the many diversions waiting to occupy his party's attention: "a turn on the circular railway or the switchback; or we could take them to the Punch and Judy drama, or get their fortunes told in the seeress' tent, or let them fire in the shooting gallery, or buy some sweet-grass baskets of the Indians" (Sterngass, 178).

Advancements in transportation also played in important role in Saratoga's growth. The appearance of Robert Fulton's steam ships and the expansion of the railroad to the Adirondack region in the 1830s allowed Saratoga to attract unprecedented numbers of visitors. These innovations also allowed Saratoga to attract members of an expanding middle class. By 1870, Saratoga boasted a population of nine thousand. More important, Saratoga could, and generally did, accommodate three times that number during the summer season. While the United States Hotel could house 1,200 guests a night, its piazzas measured an unprecedented one mile in length. Such venues played the role of elaborate stages upon which New York's Gilded Age society presented itself in ever increasing decadence. In particular, the north veranda of the United States Hotel attracted an especially exclusive crowd and was dubbed, "Millionaire's Piazza." Cornelius Vanderbilt was a frequent visitor. Stores that had established reputations for selling luxury items in Brooklyn and Manhattan were quick to open smaller shops in Saratoga. By the 1880s Saratoga's Broadway had become an extension of Manhattan's fifth avenue. A reporter for the *New York Herald* reported with confidence that, "every luxury that is necessary to have outside heaven, can be bought at Saratoga." Above all

visitors made the journey north to indulge Saratoga's renowned celebration of personal display and liberal social interaction.

Following the outbreak of the Civil War, resort communities found it difficult to attract guests. Investors quickly sought new, and ever more decadent, diversions to lure visitors. The result was a distancing from a historical reliance on convalescence, and a growing association with self-indulgence. Unlike many of its competitors, Saratoga continued to thrive during the twentieth century precisely because it shrewdly maintained its image of a leisured society attracted to the medicinal benefits of its springs, but which enticed its wealthiest visitors with more decadent pursuits. One solution to Saratoga's slumping wartime economy was the establishment of gaming.

Sterngass provides a poignant introduction to Saratoga's association with gambling. In 1862, he describes, John Morrissey established Saratoga's first gambling house. Morrissey had recently migrated north after a three-year stint in the world of Tammany Hall. Prior to his life as a politician he was a professional boxer, who had claimed the title of heavyweight champion of the world in 1853. He was also an amateur criminal whose résumé included burglary, battery, and assault. Morrissey wisely positioned his casino within easy walking distance of Saratoga's "Big Three" hotels. The venture was a complete success. Similar forms of recreation followed.

In August 1863, less than a month after the Battle of Gettysburg, Saratoga hosted its first horse race. The field consisted entirely of horses that had escaped the notice, or been rejected by, the Union cavalry. Despite what must have been an obvious lack of quality, the event proved attractive to visitors. Morrissey was quick to perceive the profitable relationship between gambling and horse racing. In 1864 he orchestrated the

purchase of 125 acres immediately across Union Avenue from the site of Saratoga's first races (today the land abuts Yaddo property) and invested heavily in the construction of a racetrack appropriate for Saratoga's discerning clientele. It was not long before horse racing became the focus of Saratoga's summer economy. The passion of racing enthusiasts increased the demands on Morrissey's casino. He responded by constructing a more elaborate casino along fashionable Congress Street for which he spared no expense. Construction costs ran upwards of $190,000. Everything about Morrissey's casino was lavish and intended to attract the most extravagant gamblers. When it was completed, the casino was reputed to be the finest gambling house in the United States and was visited by successive generations of patrons bearing names such as Vanderbilt and Bellmont. While Saratoga had witnessed previous attempts to infuse gambling and racing into its economy, Morrissey was the first to understand that America's growing prosperity allowed for its indulgence on a previously unrealized scale.

By the final decades of the nineteenth-century, Saratoga was the unrivaled destination of New York society. It had also begun to attract unprecedented numbers from an increasingly prosperous middle class. As racing and gambling began to replace convalescence as Saratoga's raison d'etre, city officials grew worrisome about Saratoga's reputation. Their concerns were well founded. Saratoga's transformation appalled more staid sensibilities. *The New York Times* described a season at Saratoga as "a too prominent dazzle and dissipation, a weary round of heartless show, a fierce rivalry of dress and display, a succession of headaches and heartaches, and a *finale* of disgust and depletion. . . . It is hard to know how anyone comes here for relaxation" (Sterngass, 151). Objections to gambling were especially strong among town statesmen. In general

Morrissey silenced his critics by contributing handsomely to local charities and by sponsoring various municipal events including, famously, Fourth of July fireworks. He also made certain that, at least on the surface, his business interests reflected entrenched Victorian values concerning moral probity, especially as they applied to women. Women were not allowed in the gaming rooms of Morrissey's casino. Ever the shrewd businessman Morrissey insisted that women be allowed to visit his salon provided they were accompanied by a male chaperone. For many, such an odd combination of acceptance and rejection of morality failed to impress. By 1871 Morrissey felt compelled to state emphatically his acceptance of moral propriety. "I have lived in Saratoga nine years," he stated in an open letter, "and no lady has ever gambled, nor will ever gamble in my house. By request, ladies have been admitted to look at the house and furniture, but the comment it has occasioned both far and near prompts me to decline any further visits from them" (*Saratogian*, 17 June 1871). Nonetheless, Saratoga's association with decadence remained firm. Even Morrissey's most outspoken antagonists conceded that from a purely economic standpoint, Morrissey was good for Saratoga.

Not surprisingly, Saratoga's reputation for tolerance and relaxed moral standards attracted the notice of the New York literati who found Saratoga an interesting, and geographically convenient, alternative to Europe. By the end of the nineteenth-century, Saratoga had begun to serve as a summer retreat for many denizens of New York's intellectual and creative society. During the 1830s, Washington Irving was a committed visitor, as was James Fenimore Cooper, who used Saratoga as a base while researching *The Last of the Mohicans*. Even before the arrival of the Trasks, Saratoga nurtured an important relationship with the creative temperament.

Like other members of their class, the Trasks owned properties in addition to Yaddo. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Trasks could count among their residences two properties at Lake George as well as a sizable retreat at Tuxedo Park. In general these additional properties served as places of quiet refuge. It was only at Yaddo, however, under the influence of their divided relationship with Saratoga's cultural values, that their dramatic sensibilities became fully manifest. The Trasks were attracted to Saratoga's liberal sensibilities, but were also committed in their opposition to Morrissey and the corrupt business practices he represented. Further, Yaddo's grounds provided the kind of cloistered, delineated, reflection that would become essential to Katrina's artistry.

For Katrina, creative development relied on a highly individualized practice of reflection that had at its center her spiritual contemplation of Yaddo's grounds. Katrina developed a philosophical attachment to Yaddo's very earth that was informed by her revaluation of an Emersonian practice of transcendental reflection. Despite the passage of more than four decades and the experience of Civil War, Katrina remained invested in transcendentalist values, but carefully shaped her attachment to mid-century philosophy so that it conformed to fin-de-siecle anxieties.

Such a philosophical posture was not without inconsistency. In a curious way, Yaddo provided the ideal environment for Katrina to indulge a contradictory set of philosophical values. As a student of transcendentalism she nurtured an opposition to the celebration of capitalistic values. While her life-style of quintessential Victorian leisure rested entirely on Spencer's shrewd investments in industries that epitomized American capitalism, Katrina routinely turned to her personal writing to question the legitimacy of her wealth. "What right have I to an income that enables me to live a life of ease and

luxury" she wrote, "whilst my fellow-men can wrest by their toil only the merest pittance?" (Trask, 93). While such questions were rooted in transcendental teachings, they gave simultaneous voice to heightening anxieties that characterized the final decades of the nineteenth-century. By the 1880s, such revaluation of economic disparity had become as much a ground for questioning modernity as for practicing transcendental philosophy. Yaddo provided the ideal environment for Katrina to combine such influences. By the time she began to fully indulge her artistry Saratoga had come to epitomize the capitalist ethos that was giving shape to modern America. Yaddo's posture of detached independence provided the ideal combination of proximity to, and insulation from, these values. Though she frequented the verandas of Saratoga's most prestigious hotels, Katrina also found important refuge in Yaddo's protective seclusion. Within the recess of Yaddo's woods she could immerse herself in the contemplation of an anti-modern sentiment. While such sentiment helped to shape Katrina's writing, it also allowed for more dramatic expression.

Beginning in 1882, at Yaddo the Trasks literally recreated a medieval court replete with courtiers and costumes, which had at its center the celebration of Katrina's coronation as Queen of Yaddo. For the Trasks, such chivalric fantasy quickly exceeded the limitations of pageantry. "When I had been crowned and sat with my Ring on my finger, my sword beside me, and my Scepter in my hand," Katrina recalled, " I knew that my investiture had been more real and more potent than many a formal crowning of an hereditary sovereign" (Trask, 150). The Trasks' enthusiasm for such pageantry was emblematic of a more general post Civil War impulse. Like others of their class, the Trasks used Yaddo to withdraw from the anxieties of an age characterized by uncertainty.

While Katrina's fanatical attachment to Yaddo's woods suggests a kind of escapism, she found her greatest comfort in an imaginative withdrawal into the values of an age that was popularly perceived to be childlike in its innocence and simplicity. The Trasks' investiture in such ritual was further informed by Saratoga's divided association with both convalescence *and* self-indulgence.

As described, when the Trasks arranged to lease the Childs' estate Saratoga was a deeply divided society. City officials struggled to reconcile the success of Morrissey's various enterprises with more general opposition by moralists. In an odd way, this tense mixture of virtue and vice helped to facilitate the celebration of medieval chivalry that the Trasks later nurtured at Yaddo. Spencer assumed a deeply personal responsibility for ridding Saratoga of gambling. Such was his opposition that Spencer embarked on a fifty-thousand dollar campaign to rid Saratoga of gaming. He, quite simply, extended the boundaries of his court. He purchased a newspaper, *The Saratoga Union*, to give voice to his disdain. According to Katrina, his efforts were tireless: "he went to the legislature; he employed secret agents; he did everything to finish the work he had begun." During one especially bold gesture of defiance, Spencer disguised himself, and under the cover of darkness, traveled around Saratoga posting anti-gambling notices. "With the penetration which is a sixth sense," Katrina recalled, "I saw that here was something very real and that, although it might be play and pageant, there was a momentous meaning underneath the play and pageantry" (Trask, 147). In the minds of the Trasks, the distinction between reality and courtly reenactment had become blurred.

In the midst of the Trasks' efforts to reclaim Saratoga's reputation as a center of convalescence, routine street maintenance led to the accidental discovery that many of

Saratoga's springs contained unadulterated carbonic acid. Several companies immediately began extracting gas from Saratoga's renowned springs. Water levels quickly dropped to unprecedented levels. Such unchecked exploitation intensified the town's deeply divided sense of itself. If left unchallenged, continued depletion of Saratoga's springs would effectively end Saratoga's association with the resource that had brought it international fame, and for all intents and purposes, commit its future to racing and gambling. Powerful advocates opposed the gas companies. On February 10, 1908, Governor Charles Evans Hughes signed the Anti-Pumping Act of 1908. The act declared unlawful:

> [p]umping or otherwise drawing by artificial appliance from any well made by boring or drilling into the rock, that class of mineral waters holding in solution natural mineral salts and excess of carbonic acid gas, or pumping, or by any artificial contrivance whatsoever in any manner producing an unnatural flow of carbonic acid gas issuing free or contained in any well made by boring or drilling into the rock, for the purpose of extracting, collecting, compressing, liquefying or vending such gas as a commodity otherwise than in connection with the mineral water and the other mineral ingredients with which it was associated (Swanner, 155).

Despite such a mandate, companies realized they could continue to extract a profit from Saratoga's springs by continuing to mine a resource while they engaged in endless delays and appeals. By 1909, Saratoga's future as a health spa was very much in doubt. Spencer was determined to maintain Saratoga's propriety. Emboldened by his regal persona, Spencer set out to enforce what the Governor and State Legislature could not. He was instrumental in establishing the Saratoga Preservation Commission, the purpose of which was to bring Saratoga's renowned spas under state supervision; this would effectively protect them from private interests. Furthermore, Spencer shrewdly realized

that the establishment of a preservation commission would achieve the added benefit of isolating the town's gambling interests.

By the early twentieth century such was the Trasks' investment in both Yaddo and Saratoga that they had achieved a kind of mutual dependence: Saratoga needed the Trasks as much as the Trasks needed Saratoga. What had begun as mere attraction had grown into deeply personal investment. At a most fundamental level, such attachment relied on very basic infrastructure. By 1881 Western Union was advertising in the *Saratoga Sentinel*, "There are six quadruple wires in the Western Union telegraph office this summer. Four of them are for the use of bankers who do business over private wires with New York, and the remaining two are required for the regular summer work of the Western Union office." Such technology allowed Spencer to maintain important business connections without the inconvenience of having to return to New York. In Saratoga Spencer could devote his complete attention to the development of his estate.

Chapter Three

The Trasks

> The Trasks were both quite complicated people, working within a perfectly conventional moral and religious and social code; they were each one a remarkable blend of practicable good sense, generous impulses, natural human vanity in their own beauty and good fortune, extraordinary sense of the dramatic, a feeling for ritual in living that was almost medieval, combined with the very best of the liberal and social-humanitarian ideas of the middle and late nineteenth century – both apparently had more than a streak of real mysticism, and both were as wildly romantic as any two Babes in the Woods you could ever expect to find. Well, Yaddo came out of this blend, and anything less would have resulted in less, I feel certain.[6] - Katherine Anne Porter

In 1888, Katrina Trask began drafting *Yaddo*. This volume gives narrative coherence to a collection of historical accounts compiled by the Trasks, documenting their lives at Yaddo. It reads like dramatic memoir.

> The life of Yaddo has been extraordinary: I think, perhaps, there is no other modern home which has held the romance and fascination which Yaddo has held. As I have read the stories of old Provence, of the days of chivalry, I have felt that Yaddo had something of that romantic and unusual charm without a particle of pretense or exaggeration: perfectly simple, entirely homelike and yet altogether different and apart from the life of the world.
>
> This is not just my feeling which my love and enthusiasm for Yaddo might make me feel, but all the people who have shared this life have borne testimony to its uniqueness.
>
> It has been the custom to say that people are different at Yaddo which means simply there is a different atmosphere which brings out their qualities and makes their special characteristics shine forth, and which reveals the hidden and unexpected in them; the worldly people become simple and natural and simple and natural people become exalted (Trask, viii).

The fact that Katrina felt compelled to record Yaddo's history suggests the depth of the Trasks' investment in the environment they so carefully fostered. What on the surface might appear to be a culture rooted in highly individualized expression, actually

[6] YR 276.14

coordinates with more general historical discussion. For the Trasks Yaddo, doubtless served as a secluded stage upon which they acted out a highly sentimentalized performance. Nonetheless, the social customs they followed at Yaddo expressed the undercurrent of spiritual and psychological tension and anxiety that gave uneasy shape to American society at the end of the nineteenth century.

"A century ago, the stout midriff was a sign of mature success in life," writes T. J. Jackson Lears in *No Place of Grace*.

> Affluent Americans devoured heavy meals at huge banquets. They accepted the congratulations of after dinner orators. The speaker announced the marriage of material and spiritual progress. His audience nodded approval. There was no limit to American abundance. There was no impediment to the partnership of Protestantism and science. The audience applauded. They rose stiffly to leave. It was an age of confidence (Lears, 4)

For Spencer, such banquets were routine, and such accolades, commonplace. By age thirty, Spencer was the very model of the Gilded Age man of conscientious means. He could readily count himself a member of the various social clubs and philanthropic interests that were expected of a man of his stature. Lears also notes that "towards the end of the nineteenth-century, many beneficiaries of modern culture began to feel they were its secret victims" (Lears, xv). A profound anxiety circulated just below a polished veneer of optimism that was the official posture of the Gilded Age elite. Members of the Trasks' class began to grapple with an undercurrent of doubt concerning the values of the capitalist society they epitomized. Respected members of society increasingly succumbed to a depression rooted in a new kind of uncertainty. By the final decades of the nineteenth-century, this nervous response had become common enough that it formed the core symptom of a clinical diagnosis: "neurasthenia." This condition was especially

prevalent among wealthy classes throughout the industrialized cities of the Northeast, that is to say, by members of the Trasks' immediate society.

For members of New York's Gilded Age, confrontation with moral injustice was unavoidable. The psychological and physical toll of the Civil War was apparent in the expressionless faces and maimed bodies of the impoverished veterans who aimlessly wandered New York's streets. Images of unwanted and starving children confirmed the sense of capitalism's inherent injustice. While for members of the Trasks' immediate society such images were the source of uneasiness, for the Trasks resulting anxieties were accelerated by their tragic encounters with the very arbitrariness of life.

Between 1880 and 1889 the Trasks lost all four of their children. Amid a social environment that was beginning to show the physical symptoms of unprecedented anxiety, the Trasks were left to reconcile inexplicable tragedy. Katrina became almost obsessed with a kind of romantic escapism. She withdrew into Yaddo's celebration of courtly romance, and found further escape in an imaginative departure into her own creativity. For Katrina, the distinction between reality, dramatic reenactment, and fiction became oddly conflated. The principles she fostered at Yaddo, and as its Queen embodied, became virtually indistinguishable from the romanticized visions of medieval chivalry that appear throughout her creative work. Spencer remained committed to Katrina's need for withdrawal and respectful of her attachment to Yaddo. As a result, his life became a fascinating combination of acceptance and revolt. He was simultaneously making shrewd and very lucrative investments in Thomas Alva Edison's experiments with electricity while also engaging in a courtly reenactment that epitomized anti-modern skepticism.

Spencer Trask was born September 18, 1844 in Brooklyn, New York, within an established lineage. Spencer could trace his paternal ancestry back to Captain William Traske of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While Spencer's maternal relatives had achieved economic comfort, it was Spencer's father, Alanson, who established the Trasks financially by selling munitions, principally shoes, to the Union Army during the Civil War.

Spencer was educated in accordance with the expectations of his family's wealth and social prominence. He attended Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute before entering Princeton University. In 1862, Spencer was briefly expelled from Princeton for his active participation in "Horn Spree," a tradition in which freshmen rudely awaken, and otherwise haze, their professors on the eve of final examinations. Despite such youthful indiscretion, Spencer paid close attention to his academic responsibilities. He graduated in 1866, with a 92.9 grade point average, so impressive that he was given the honor of delivering a commencement speech, which he entitled "Onward."

Shortly after graduation, Spencer joined the Wall Street banking firm of his maternal uncle, Henry Marquand. He quickly distinguished himself. In February 1868, Spencer entered into a partnership with James Francis and George Stone, co-founding his own brokerage house, Trask & Stone. The press recognized Spencer's emerging reputation.

> Mr. Spencer Trask, long a member of the New York Stock Exchange and favorably known on Wall Street, has associated himself with Mr. George T. Stone, for the transaction of a commission business in stocks, bonds, and golds etc. Their business offices are at 7 Broad Street. The new firm has every facility for their business, including an ample amount of capital (YR Vol. 3).

The venture was a success. In 1870, Spencer purchased a seat on the New York Stock Exchange for $4,000.

In 1873, Spencer was introduced to Katrina Nichols by her father, George Little Nichols. Like Spencer, Katrina came from an established Brooklyn family. According to Katrina, it was at their first meeting that Spencer privately announced, "I will have that girl for my wife" (Trask, 26). Katrina was accustomed to the security of wealth. At the time of their first meeting, Spencer, at 31, had established himself as a man of wealth, and promise. Their romance was not without complication. Within months of her introduction to Spencer, Katrina met George Foster Peabody. Spencer and Peabody knew each other well. They had first met at the Reformed Church of Brooklyn Heights where both men were active in the church's many philanthropic activities. They were also drawn together by business interests. For a short time the two prospective partners were romantic rivals. In 1874, Spencer and Katrina became engaged. Despite his gracious acceptance of Katrina's wishes, Peabody was unable to conceal his continuing love for her. "Spencer, I'm in love with your wife," he famously confessed. "I don't blame you, Foster;" Spencer responded, "I am in love with her myself." Such acceptance provided the foundation for an intense companionship. Over the next forty years, Spencer, Katrina, and Peabody shared a friendship characterized by unusual emotional intimacy.

On November 13, 1874, Spencer and Katrina were married. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported on a ceremony that included all the pomp expected of such a fashionable wedding.

> The Church was densely crowded, and many favored with cards were compelled to depart without witnessing the ceremony. The organist of the church made exquisite melody while the guests marched in, and when the wedding party entered the aisle the paean of welcome was a glorious one. Spencer Trask, Esq., a well known broker in New Street, New York, whose residence is in Brooklyn, led to the hymeneal altar Miss Nichols, daughter of Mr. Nichols, of the firm of Woodruff, Robinson & Co (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 14, 1874).

The article also made note of the Trasks' interest in confronting accepted mores, and, more specifically, their commitment to challenging gender roles.

> The performance was a little out of the common, the bridesmaids, six in number, being unaccompanied by groomsmen. These ladies were charmingly attired in white silk, and caused quite a ripple of pleasurable excitement as, two abreast, they slowly preceded the bride to the altar. This arrangement was new and it was unique, but after the novelty had worn off a little there was a general feeling of disappointment. Two handsome women may be to the opposite sex more of a treat than a gentleman and lady; but to the ladies the black broadcloth and patent leathers are indispensable. "It would have been so much nicer to have had a groomsman," said one of the feminine guests, "I'll bet I wouldn't stand up with my own sister if I couldn't have a gentleman."
>
> Irrespective of this infringement upon custom, everything went on as usual. The groom, with his prospective mother-in-law, marched slowly to the altar, then the six bridesmaids, and after these the intended bride, looking very sweet and interesting, leaning on the paternal arm (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 14, 1874).

The ceremony set an important precedent. For Katrina, such testing of convention offered a contrast to her experience as a "sad victim of the fashionable schools of the last of the sixties and the first of the seventies" (Trask, 14). Over the next thirty years the Trasks developed a curiously divided regard for late-nineteenth century cultural values, and selectively defended Victorian morality while continually testing its constraints.

After their marriage, the Trasks took up residence at 112 Willow Street in fashionable Brooklyn Heights. Katrina dedicated herself to the responsibilities of managing a household staff, while Spencer committed himself to his expanding business enterprise. While Katrina certainly indulged in the lavish lifestyle Spencer provided (and

to which she was accustomed), she confided that inwardly she was never fully comfortable with the excesses of the Trasks' wealth. "The wretched inequality of life staggers me," she wrote: "It is all wrong. The time will come when the distribution of wealth will be very different" (Trask, 93). Katrina was, of course, not alone in giving voice to her concern for social injustice. Especially among members of her social standing in the industrialized cities of the northeast, by the 1880s such sentiment was more the precedent than an aberration. Nevertheless, Spencer remained morally certain about the Trasks' financial circumstances, and he justified his life-style with quintessential gestures of Victorian beneficence and munificence. "He, himself, has had every environment of culture and family," Katrina wrote, "but his fortune he had [sic] made unaided and alone, by the hardest work of the head: and that was his pride and, he felt, it was the title to his possessions. His obligation, he felt, was to keep his Banking House of the high honor and of untarnished reputation: and to spend his wealth helpfully to others" (Trask, 94). Despite Katrina's moral reservations, the Trasks thoroughly engaged the social opportunities their wealth afforded, which included summer trips to Saratoga Springs where they circulated among both spa and racing societies.

On the morning of May 2, 1881, Spencer Trask and George Foster Peabody established a partnership. Spencer was nine years older than Peabody and his record of financial success must have made an important impression on Peabody. "The firm of Trask & Francis has changed its style to Spencer Trask & Co." the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* reported on May 7. "The firm has been conspicuous for a long time past for its great enterprise and the present house has large capital and increased facilities for doing an extensive business" (*Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, May 7, 1881).

The firm was headquartered in lower Manhattan, but grew to have satellite offices in Boston, London, Philadelphia, Providence, and eventually, Saratoga Springs.

In general, Spencer Trask & Company followed accepted practices of late nineteenth-century investment banking. Primarily, Trask and Peabody were concerned with financing and rejuvenating older businesses. Such investments required shrewd analysis and foresight. On both counts, the combined business sense of Spencer and Peabody proved formidable. The firm was quick to capitalize on opportunities to improve the nation's transportation infrastructure following the Civil War, especially in the West. While the firm made profitable investments in railroads throughout the West and the Southwest (which included subsidiary investments in related mining interests in both the western United States and Mexico), their most remarkable investments subsidized an ambitious project to standardize the gauge for the Rio Grande Western Railway. The project allowed for modern railroad equipment to gain access to the vast natural resources scattered along the railway's main line stretching from Ogden, Utah, across the Colorado state line. In 1901, Spencer Trask & Co. sold its controlling interest in the Rio Grande for $15,246,666. The check was reported to have been the second largest ever to have been handled by the New York Clearing House. Trask and Peabody arranged for a year's salary to be paid as a bonus to each of their employees.

During the late nineteenth century, public utilities, like railways, emerged as a lucrative investment market. Once again the combined business sense of Spencer and Peabody proved lucrative. Spencer Trask & Company made profitable investments in both the Edison Electric Company, which manufactured materials used in the construction of early lamps, and the Edison Electric Illuminating Company, which was

responsible for distributing required current. Spencer was fascinated by the technology. Spencer Trask & Company was one of the first firms to use electricity to illuminate their offices. Spencer was also elected President of Edison Electric Illuminating Company in December 1884. Peabody became a director and was later named vice-president (in 1889, while the Trasks were touring Europe, J. Pierpont Morgan insisted that he be appointed president pro tem). Spencer later served as a trustee of the newly incorporated General Electric Company. By 1892, arc lamps were gradually being installed along Fifth Avenue from Washington Square to Fifty-Ninth Street. They confirmed the prescience of Spencer's foresight. In less than ten years, the value of Spencer Trask & Co.'s investment increased several fold.

Despite their estimable stature, by the mid-1890s, both Trask and Peabody were looking to expand the breadth of their interests. In 1895, Spencer Trask & Co. organized the Broadway Realty Company which was responsible for constructing what was at the time the largest building south of City Hall Park, at 11 Broadway. One year later, Spencer was instrumental in organizing and underwriting *The New York Times*. His efforts coordinated with the interests of the Chattanooga publisher, Adolph Ochs. Ochs became the paper's publisher. Trask served as the *Times* first president, from 1897 to 1906.

With their financial success, both Spencer and Katrina adhered rigorously to Gilded Age expectations regarding the obligations of wealth. While many of Spencer's affluent colleagues gave generously to social causes, the Trasks' beneficence is noteworthy both because of the size of their largesse, and because the values that guided their judgments placed them among the vanguard of the progressive reform movement.

In general, the Trasks' philanthropy focused on institutions promoting health, education, and creativity. Spencer served as board member for Teacher's College at Columbia University (he was a founding member), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Municipal Arts Society, as well as president of the National Arts Club. Spencer's deep commitment to the latter provided important opportunity to nurture creative values that would finally manifest in the Trasks' vision for Yaddo.

When they had committed to Saratoga the Trasks quickly purchased an additional estate surrounded by twelve acres. The mansion and surrounding grounds were converted into St. Christina's Home, which was named for Katrina's mother and served as a summer hospital for children from New York City. Spencer was also an active member of social clubs that reflected his stature as well as his commitment to charity and the promotion of creative endeavor. By 1900, Spencer was an active member of the Union League, the Metropolitan Lawyers Club, the City Club, the Reform Club, the National Arts Club, the Tuxedo Club, the Princeton Alumni Association, the National Sculpture Society, the Municipal Arts Society, the American Geographical Society, and the New England Historical and Genealogical Society. In the minds of the Trasks, education, health, and creative expression were deeply and, for Katrina especially, spiritually intertwined. By the early years of the twentieth century, such thinking had helped to shape a frame of mind that would inform the Trasks' posthumous vision. Writing only a few years before her death, Katrina described Yaddo as "an opportunity . . . to cultivate any practical, domestic, mechanical, industrial, artistic or musical tendency . . . and the continual opportunity for general self-development and self-expression is the very atmosphere they breathe" (Trask, 97).

On December 19, 1875, one year after her marriage, Katrina gave birth to the Trasks' first child, Alanson. Two years later, the Trasks' second child Christina, was born. In what became a tragically familiar experience for the young parents, in April 1880 Alanson died suddenly at the Trasks' Brooklyn home. The Trasks carefully withheld the circumstances surrounding his death. Nonetheless, its suddenness was emotionally overwhelming. Spencer arranged to lease the foreclosed Childs' estate in Saratoga Springs.

As noted, Spencer's preference for Saratoga Springs was not coincidental. Its long association with convalescence was certainly attractive. Further, Spencer realized that the Childs' estate provided an ideal combination of seclusion from, and proximity to, accustomed society. The estate's posture of independence was also in keeping with the Trasks' interest in both celebrating and resisting Victorian mores. By the late nineteenth century, Saratoga's Union Avenue and North Broadway were lined with conspicuous mansions that reflected the town's prestige. While the Trasks were every bit a part of the society that took up residence in Saratoga's mansions they shared a distinct worldview. According to Katrina, at Yaddo the Trasks turned the testing of social convention into a kind of celebration.

> When we bought Yaddo we were considered by all, who were familiar enough to express their opinion, as having taken leave of our senses. Spencer, at the time, was slowly recovering from the financial crisis of '73 which had seriously affected him; he was but beginning to build up once more. We had our winter home, simple but lovely, and he could spend but a trifle for a summer place.
>
> "For that amount," said one of our elders, "you could buy a little house where everyone is building."
>
> "That is precisely what we wish to avoid," I said, "people frighten away the fairies." "Nonsense," scoffed our elder; and Spencer smiled at me. "For that," said another, "you could buy a small but comfortable cottage on North Broadway." "We can spend only so much," I said, "if we put it all into a

> comfortable cottage, there would be no grounds; think of a summer home without grounds! Where could one hide?" "From whom do you wish to hide?" asked our elder. We were too polite to say "From you" (Trask, 14).

What the Trasks' "elders" were unable to comprehend was the extent to which the Trasks' emotional convalescence became entangled in their more general withdrawal from fin-de-siecle anxieties. For the Trasks, the combined practice of convalescence and withdrawal resulted in an almost fanatical attachment to Yaddo's very earth. While Katrina's insistence that it was, "much more interesting and clever to make a locality fashionable than it is to take a fashionable locality" (Trask, 14), underscores her commitment to maintaining a distance from society's conventions, it just as importantly confirms her enthusiasm for indulging Yaddo's detachment in order to promote a distinct set of social rituals.

The mansion that awaited the Trasks when they arrived for the summer of 1881 was of the then popular Italian Villa style. While the mansion's infrastructure proved inconvenient, its surrounding grounds were deeply attractive to Katrina.

> The house - ? It mattered not at all that there were no comforts, not even running water; that broken locks, open doors and every possible inconvenience tried our patience - if we allowed ourselves to think about them: all that was but as the dust of a high mountain road, when the vision of a new earth has burst upon one's sight.
>
> The trees, the lakes, the woods, the lovely secret places and the vast vistas - I thought only of these (Trask, 10).

The Trasks' attachment was immediate. Katrina saw the estate's seclusion as an opportunity to "create an atmosphere original and unique." In the fall of 1881, Spencer returned to New York. Shortly thereafter Katrina received a telegram that read, simply, "Mrs. Spencer Trask, Saratoga Springs. All Hail, Mistress of Yaddo. Spencer." The Trasks had committed to their estate. Further, the wording of Spencer's telegram

anticipated that over the preceding decades the Trasks would develop a passionate attachment to their estate that had at its center the ethos of a medieval court.

In June 1882, Spencer arranged for an office of Spencer Trask & Co. to open in Saratoga's prestigious Grand Union Hotel. The *Saratoga Weekly Journal* reported that Spencer would "remain with his family in his residence on Union Avenue until the close of the season." Like Katrina, he had become attached to Yaddo. Now assured of its possession, he assumed personal responsibility for its transformation. In 1884, a wing was added to the mansion that doubled its size. Katrina described that by 1885 the original mansion had undergone complete renovation: "the cupola was removed and a tower was built. . . . [I]t became a rambling, comfortable but simply perfect house" (Trask, 17). The result was a Queen-Anne style residence. The tower became Katrina's private recluse. Surrounded by what she described as "my books and its sweet mystery," she established a literary salon. "I opened my tower to the Yaddo circle for five o'clock tea," she recalled, "after which it is our custom to have an hour with the poets" (Trask, 66). As early as the Trasks' first full season in Saratoga, Katrina had begun to promote an atmosphere of imaginative exchange.

Exhaustive efforts were also made to expand and renovate their estate's grounds. By the mid-1880s, the estate had assumed new proportions. "Spencer alone, spurred on by my enthusiasm and suggestions," wrote Katrina, "made broad roads, curving them in and out to save large trees, caught the springs, opened lovely glades, made wandering paths, planted hedges and new trees and turned some of the wild tangle into old-fashioned gardens" (Trask, 16). An extensive garden and dairy farm was added, dams were built, and trout hatcheries erected. An elaborate network of pipes connected

Yaddo's lakes to the mansion. Katrina lauded the purity of Yaddo's water: "if there be anything I give thanks for at Yaddo - it is our water and our ice; such ice, so clear, so crystal" (Trask, 73). During the winter ice was cut from Yaddo's lakes and stored in a newly constructed icehouse. (Ice from Yaddo's lakes would continue to provide refrigeration during the summer months until the 1930s.) All the work was planned and administered by the Trasks. Katrina pointed out that "no landscape architect, no consulting engineer, no clever person with a big diploma, interfered with the working out of our plan" (Trask, 16). By 1886, the Trasks' intentions were clear. Not only had the estate's posture of independence been wholly enforced, the estate was now, essentially, self-sufficient. "In the days of its glory it had been almost a medieval manor," wrote Malcolm Cowley, "largely self-sufficient, producing its own meat and milk, its fruits and vegetables, with foodstuffs preserved over the winter in room-sized refrigerators cooled with ice cut from the Yaddo lakes. The manor had its own water supply, its own root cellars," and even "its own large greenhouse." Within these secluded grounds, Spencer played the role of country squire, guiding his "coach-and-six" over an extensive system of macadam roads to "one of three ornate iron fences" that, in Cowley's words, "guarded it from the outside world" (Calisher, et al., 13).

In the company of their children, Christina and Spencer Jr., the Trasks surrounded themselves with family and intimate friends, and enjoyed lives of quintessential Victorian leisure. Ground was leveled for the playing of croquet, and elaborate lawn tennis tournaments were organized. Katrina dedicated herself to her children, and assumed the role of their intellectual mentor. "No book was ever read without my consent," she insisted, "for though I approve, as many do not, of taking a child beyond her depth if she

chooses and longs to go, I must be quite sure that it is in pure water, and that I have sounded the depths (Trask, 61). Their education was a decided departure from the finishing schools that had shaped Katrina's own intellectual development. When it came to her children, Katrina encouraged what she referred to as "mental bohemianism." While Christina's education was rooted in subjects expected of a young nineteenth-century woman of means, and concentrated on the study of European languages and customs, Katrina encouraged her daughter to indulge in imaginative escape as well. By age eight, Christina was well versed in works by Longfellow, Tennyson, and Wordsworth. Katrina even allowed for Christina to participate in her salon. "She often asked to come and hear us read," Katrina noted. "Sometime, when I thought it best, I allowed it, to the disapprobation of my conservative friends who thought I fed her on too stimulating food, not realizing that I was as careful as any one could be." Katrina delighted in her daughter's intellectual fervor:

> One day we were reading Tennyson's Holy Grail, and she begged to stay. I warned her that it was not as interesting as the other Idylls, or as the Vision of Sir Launfal which she loved; but she might stay if she chose, if she would go when she was bored. Bored, indeed! How her cheeks glowed and her eyes shone with their liquid light while she drank from every word. That she followed every line was put to the test by a member of the party who lost the thread several times and asked a question. Before I could answer, she, in her flashing, succinct way, explained the context (Trask, 68).

Christina's preference for Tennyson's *Idylls* brings together the physical and imaginative withdrawal Yaddo symbolized in the minds of the Trasks. For Spencer and Katrina, by the mid-1880s Yaddo's isolation and self-sufficiency had begun to encourage an imaginative escape into the values of an era that were perceived to be characterized by

innocence and chivalry. In 1882, Spencer determined that the continued cultivation of these values required a formal investiture.

On the morning of Halloween in 1882, Spencer entreated his wife to indulge in a unique request. "Spencer came into my room," as Katrina described the scene, "bringing with him, as he always did, a tonical atmosphere of fresh air and of wide spaces: in his joyous ringing voice he said, 'Kate, you must not go out of your room *all day* - you must be a prisoner. We are going to keep you shut up; you may not even go to luncheon'" (Trask, 142). Spencer was orchestrating an elaborate ceremony, the purpose of which was carefully withheld from Katrina. "I sat and wondered what the gay young people were going to do that was so solemn," she recalled, "and what form of expression their play and their homage would take that night" (Trask, 143). Spencer had decided to bestow upon his wife the title of Queen of Yaddo. By any standards, the scale of the resulting ceremony was impressive. Family members were recruited to play the roles of dukes and duchesses, while servants assumed the parts of extended court members. At seven o'clock Katrina's maid helped her into formal attire. As she descended the mansion's main staircase, she discerned a rising incantation, "Hail to Thee! Hail to Thee! Queen of Yaddo," while Spencer's elaborate preparations came into view:

> Oh, that I could take the colours [sic] from that autumnal glory to paint the picture that I saw as I turned a picture that stamped itself forever on my mind! He whom I saw first I will leave, in the telling, for the last: what I saw next was the hall ablaze with autumnal beauty. On one side was grouped the house-party - old and young, glad and gay, merry and mature, each dressed in a beautiful costume of olden time, with the knight of love shining in their upturned eyes as they sang. On the other side were massed the employees of the house and of the farm, with reverence and devotion in their eyes (Trask, 145).

"Back of the living-room was a large room that was then used as a bed-room (it was afterwards made into a library); it opened off the living-room with double doors which were always kept closed and curtained," recalled Katrina:

> I thought that I had stepped onto the magic carpet of the Arabian Nights, and had been transported into some new and wonderful place as the procession moved forward. The double doors leading into the bedroom were wide open. The room had been emptied and entirely hung with tapestries. There was nothing else in the room but the soft-toned tapestries and the decorations from the autumnal fields, and many stands holding candelabras; the room was ablaze with light.
>
> One large chair stood on a raised dais which was covered with a soft-toned rug: a tapestry hung behind it, a canopy hung over it: to this chair Spencer led me, taking his place to the left of the dais, and all the company closed into semicircular lines on either side.
>
> Then Spencer handed me a book; each person had a similar book; I opened mine and with quickened heartbeats I read -
>
> Ceremonies to be Observed at
> The Coronation of Her Most Gracious Majesty
> Katrina, Queen of Yaddo (Trask, 148).

A formal coronation completed the ceremony.

> The Crown, he placed upon my head; the Ring, he placed upon my finger; the Sword, he stood by my side; and the Scepter, he placed in my hand. . . . On the unornamented part of the Scepter, between the Eros and the Crown, was engraved "Katrina" - and after it "Regina" (Trask, 150).

Courtiers pledged their loyalty to their newly crowned Queen. "Then each man and maid came and knelt before me," she recalled "and took the oath of allegiance, the chorus sang, the great bells rang, the trumpets sounded, the pretty ceremony was over and - the play was ended? - no; it had just begun" (Trask, 150). Within Yaddo's grounds Katrina's sensibilities held undisputed authority. "Katrina's spirit brooded over the mansion," recalled Cowley. While Katrina's "spirit" was undoubtedly the most prescient influence on Yaddo's atmosphere, it was a spirit shaken by doubt.

The Trasks' fascination with medieval life was not uncommon for its time. Like others of their class, the Trasks were reacting to a spiritual and psychological turmoil that characterized the final decades of the nineteenth-century. The financial panic of 1893 further intensified such feelings. Especially throughout the Northeast, members of the Trasks' immediate society searched for moral authority outside a set of cultural values they perceived to be corrupt and misplaced. For the Trasks, this search led backwards to a reenactment of medieval society. By recreating a medieval court, the Trasks exercised a kind of imaginative escape into a set of social values that they perceived to be more certain, just, and, ultimately, better intentioned than the values that shaped their worldview in New York. For the Trasks, there was something undeniably comforting in retreating into a set of mores over which they held complete authority, and which at Yaddo, they could nurture amid an environment well insulated from broader influences.

For the Trasks, however, there was an additional impulse that encouraged their withdrawal. By the 1880s, Katrina had become especially adept at challenging Victorian conventions. For her, the celebration of medieval life provided more than escapism. "For the late-Victorian bourgeoisie, intense experience – whether physical or emotional – seemed a lost possibility," writes Lears:

> There was no longer the opportunity for bodily testing provided by rural life, no longer the swift alternation of despair and exhilaration which characterized the old-style Protestant conversion. There was only the diffuse fatigue produced by a day of office work or social calls. Bourgeois existence seemed a narrow path; with no erratic emotional detours (Lears, 48).

The Trasks' recreation of a medieval court allowed for a dramatic departure from such banal routine. "No wonder," Lears continues, "that Victorians began to feel that they had been cut off from 'reality,' that they experienced life in all its dimensions as second hand,

in books rather than action. The impatient impulse to smash the veneer of Victorian convention, the frustrated desire to lash out at a moral void – those emotions pervaded the cultural criticism of the late nineteenth century" (Lears, 48). While others almost certainly found an alternative to reality in sentimentalized fiction, at Yaddo the Trasks recreated an alternate society. "Pale innocent, fierce conviction, physical and emotional vitality, playfulness and spontaneity, an ability to cultivate fantastic or dreamlike states of awareness, an intense otherworldly asceticism: those were medieval traits perceived by late Victorians and embodied in a variety of dramatis personae" (Lears, 48). At Yaddo, the Trasks *became* such personae. Further, they created a society that observed a hierarchy that was infinitely more just than the inequality endemic to capitalism.

For Spencer especially, investment in such ritual presents as something of a paradox. By any assessment, Yaddo embodied all of the excesses of capitalism that the Trasks' dramatic recreations seemed to question. The phenomenon of neurasthenia also involved an undeniable component of ant-rationalism that may help to explain Spencer's behavior. Any evaluation of late nineteenth century society had to consider that scientific rationality was cause for as much reservation as optimism. There was an unquestioned conviction that, "nineteenth-century science had not explained the universe" (Lears, 143). For all the triumphs of industrialism, there was the undeniable fact of the unprecedented carnage of the Civil War. As Lear observes, such a compounded reaction to scientific reason fit neatly into the more general feeling of uncertainty common to the age: "To feel drawn toward medieval mentalities was to participate in the recovery of primal irrationality, to share the primitivist impulse of the late nineteenth century" (Lears, 143). The prominence of such sentiment makes the Trasks' fascination with medievalism

especially intriguing. Here was a family whose wealth was founded on scientific rationality. By any measure, Spencer was a shrewd investor when it came to technological innovation. Despite their financial investment in technical invention, at Yaddo the Trasks maintained a steadfast commitment to imaginative withdrawal from its moral and social consequences. It was a commitment that quickly began to alter their world view.

For Katrina, her coronation "carried with it the promise of a new life." "Immediately, with that penetration which is a sixth sense, I saw that here was something very real," she wrote, "although it might be play and pageant, there was a momentous meaning underneath the play and pageantry" (Trask, 147). After all, according to Katrina, Spencer's enthusiasm revealed "the same qualities into the planning for this festival that he put into his financial affairs and into his civic work" (Trask, 147). For Katrina, Spencer's indulgence had transformed their fantastic vision into "a growing reality." New additions to the Yaddo household were given such titles as knight and lady, and were formally introduced at court. So complete was the Trasks' commitment to the enactment of their court, that in 1918 Katrina could state with confidence that Yaddo embodied "a drama which has been a continuing reality from 1882 to this very hour." Louis Adamic, who was a guest at Yaddo twice during the 1930s, described the tremendous reach of the Trasks' fantastic vision.

> This regal business went so far that Queen Victoria commissioned a prominent man in near-by Canada as Ambassador to run down to Saratoga and pay her "Sovereign Sister" her Royal respects, and that cables from members of the English Parliament were addressed to "The Queen of Yaddo, New York State." When Katrina was invited in formal terms of court language to meet a house party in Canada, her "Sovereign Sister's Representative, Lord Landsdown, and his

> Lady," she was "horrified! and thrilled! . . . . I hated it - and loved it!" (*Esquire Magazine*, July, 1938).

Sundays concluded with Spencer surrounded by his court, reading from scripture in the stone tower. "Spencer was superb," wrote Katrina, "as he stood in that medieval Tower, his family and his household around him, and he read the services as I have never heard it read elsewhere" (Trask, 53). When Spencer felt that Saratoga's moral probity was threatened, he took it upon himself to rid his community of impropriety.

Throughout the 1880s, Spencer's disdain for Saratoga's gambling interests intensified. According to Katrina, Spencer found Saratoga "asleep and unthinking, bartering its heritage for one month's harvest of unclean money, risking the dower of its sons for the lust of its visitors" (Trask, 130). Spencer "longed to make Saratoga - with its wonderful dry air, its health giving waters, its beautiful drives, its wide vistas, where the far off purple mountains loomed on the horizon - all that it was ordained to be," (Trask, 130) wrote Katrina. To further his efforts, Spencer founded his own newspaper, *The Saratoga Union*, which, according to Katrina, he used as a "weapon" to give public voice to his disdain for what he considered to be impure business practices. Spencer's commitment attracted intense ire. "Threatening letters came to him: men followed him at night." As Katrina would later describe the situation, "especially going to and from the midnight train, the coachman always carried a revolver" (Trask, 132). According to Katrina, Spencer "became the would-be savior of the community," and in her eyes assumed the role of Ibsen's Dr. Thomas Stockmann, "that public spirited man who insisted upon bringing into his town the clear, clean water to clean it from its filth" (Trask, 130).

In 1888, Spencer acted out an elaborate plan that epitomized the vague distinction between courtly pageantry and real world obligation that had come to inform his thinking. "An old cap was pulled far over his forehead concealing his face," wrote Katrina, "a silk handkerchief was tied around his neck," and under the cover of darkness Spencer commandeered one of Yaddo's market wagons. His purpose was to circulate copies of an anti-gambling manifesto throughout Saratoga:

> Who would notice an old unlighted market-wagon? Who, of that flaming, flaunting, giddy throng, would pay any attention to shabbily-dressed farmers, concerned with - who cared what? And so we rode forth that midnight, strangers to ourselves, and left our leaflets at every farmhouse from here to Saratoga Lake, and on the doorsteps of the houses on the outskirts of town (Trask, 134).

"When the inhabitants awoke," she continued "they would find this plain statement, on the threshold of their morning work, and they would have opportunity to ponder and to consider it without prejudice or interruption" (Trask, 134).

Amid such dramatic pageantry, Christina invented a neologism: Yaddo. To her young imagination the word sounded poetic. Katrina described her daughter's word-play. "'Call it Yaddo, Mamma, for it makes poetry; it sounds like shadow but it will not be shadow' (Trask, 19). According to Katrina, Christina devised the word after hearing the Trasks describe that their lives had been "shadowed" by the death of their first child, Alanson: "She had heard us say our life was shadowed; she felt that the word belonged to us; and yet, instinctively, she shrank from the association (Trask, 19). "Yaddo" was accepted as a synonym for light, and it was adopted as the name of the Trasks' estate. But the shadows, sadly, returned.

In January 1885, Katrina's mother died suddenly. While the unexpected loss proved difficult, far greater tragedy followed. In Katrina's words, "In the spring of 1888,

the blow fell" (Trask, 17). In April, tragic misjudgment resulted in the deaths of both Christina and her younger brother Spencer, when a doctor permitted both children to visit their mother, who was suffering from diphtheria but believed to be no longer contagious. Both children contracted the disease and died within three days of one another, four-year-old Spencer, Jr, on April 15, and his older sister, on April 18. Katrina recovered. "Like Dante - 'I did not die, yet I alive remained not," she later wrote. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* described the Trasks' extreme bereavement:

> To-day is announced the death of Christina Nichols Trask, young daughter and only child of Spencer Trask and Kate Nichols Trask, in Willow Street, on the Heights. But a day or two ago was announced the death of Spencer Trask, Jr., a young son of the doubly and terribly afflicted parents. Preceding the loss of all their children, Mrs. Trask herself was brought to the very gates of death, to come back only to find her darlings a-dying. The disease in these cases was diphtheria. Preceding Mrs. Trask's prostration, her sister, Miss Marie Nichols, daughter of George M. Nichols, Esq., 36 Pierpont Street, was stricken down by the same disease, and with difficulty recovered (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 18, 1888).

The following year the shadows returned again. The Trasks' last child, Katrina, died only three days after her birth. Again, Spencer considered that withdrawal promised the most immediate relief to his wife's suffering. The Trasks spent nearly nine months in Europe. Peabody arranged to meet them in France, where, reportedly, he was relieved to find Katrina well.

Spencer realized that Katrina's emotional health was inextricably linked to Yaddo. More important, he understood that her creativity was emotionally restorative, and so he encouraged his wife to express her literary interest. The result was a volume, printed privately in 1888, in which Katrina recalled her relationship with Christina. The preface includes an observation by Spencer: "Prostrated from the effects of her own illness," he wrote, "and bearing the burden of our great loss, it seemed impossible for

Mrs. Trask to write such a chronicle, but at last, at my most earnest request, she consented to attempt it, and though broken in body and heart, she wrote." The volume is deeply personal and proved profoundly therapeutic. Katrina was encouraged by the result. Of greater importance to Yaddo's future, its composition added an important creative component to the atmosphere of withdrawal that Yaddo came to embody. The volume therefore marks a turning point in Yaddo's history. For Katrina, the traditions that the Trasks' had so carefully devised was becoming intimately associated with her own imagination. In her later historical accounts of Yaddo, Katrina gives the same copious attention to her artistry that she had previously reserved for her children.

Despite their best efforts at escapism, the Trasks' would continue to be visited by shadows. The financial panic of the early 1890s placed many of the Spencer's most lucrative investments under considerable stress. Perhaps as a result, his health suffered. During the spring of 1891, Spencer contracted a nearly fatal case of pneumonia. While he was lying near death in the Trasks' Brooklyn home, word was received that the mansion in Saratoga had been completely destroyed by fire. After considerable debate, arising out of the fear that the news of the fire might prove emotionally overwhelming, Katrina, in consultation with George Foster Peabody, decided to inform Spencer:

> I went into the darkened room where he lay, hovering between life and death: I knelt beside him and told him: he made a quick exclamation - little more than an in drawn breath: I waited: had I made the mistake to risk the terrible shock? O God! He was so weak! What would he do? What would he say? (Trask, 18).

Spencer's response was emphatic:

> At last, in a faint and feeble voice, he whispered: "Telegraph at once for the photographer to go out to Yaddo and take plenty of photographs. I want to see the ruins: we shall need many pictures of the foundations when we make the plans for the new house and I shall not be able to travel for some time (Trask, 19).

To the Trasks, the symbolism inherent in reconstructing a second mansion, literally, on the ashes of the first, was obvious. Less than four months after the fire, a formal ceremony attended the laying of a corner stone for the new mansion. The stone bears the inscription, "The glory of this later House shall be greater than of the former, and in this place will I give Peace." William Halsey Wood was hired as the architect for the new mansion. Shortly before he was hired by the Trasks, Wood had narrowly missed winning the commission to design the cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York.

The opportunity to design a new home allowed the Trasks to give greater visual representation to the traditions they celebrated at Yaddo. Images of the Trasks' adopted insignia would appear throughout the mansion. Ornate windows would depict the myths and legends the Trasks had invented to explain Yaddo's origins. No visitor would be able to doubt the sincerity of the Trasks' investment in their estate. Louis Comfort Tiffany was hired to design a mosaic for the fireplace in the mansion's great hall. It depicts a phoenix rising from its own ashes and bears the inscription, "Flammis Invecta Per Ignem / Yaddo, Resurgo Ad Pacem:" "unconquered by flame, I Yaddo, am reborn for peace." The inscription is material confirmation that, for the Trasks, Yaddo was defined by a way of thinking that was wholly resistant to material destruction. In Katrina's words "the burning of Yaddo was a mere incident" (Trask, 19). Further, Spencer made certain that this affirmation was permanently cast in the mansion's great hearth, the symbolic center of the estate. Katrina described the ceremonial lighting of the first fire.

> In the spring of 1893, we lighted the first fire in the new house. All the members of the household stood around us singing the Doxology. My heart thrilled that day with the romance and wonder of life (Trask, 25).

She also claimed that, "the deep sorrow of Yaddo had grown to be a spiritual inspiration and our full life was taken up once more" (Trask, 25).

In the absence of her children, Katrina retreated deeper and deeper into Yaddo's protective seclusion. Spencer had made certain that the mansion's design took into account Katrina's imagination. The most obvious feature of the mansion is its tower, the prominence of which makes it impossible to escape its symbolic importance to a family so committed to recreating a medieval court. Katrina pushed the tower's symbolism to its logical, and indeed its architectural, extreme. The uppermost room of the tower became her private sanctuary and would allow, in Katrina's words, for "the fulfillment of my dreams, the accomplishment of my desires." From the height of her private recluse, Katrina contemplated Yaddo's grounds and dedicated herself to writing:

> My high tower was a consummation O room of rooms, where my mountains and the spurs of three ranges may be seen; the glorious colours of the sunrise flush at Dawn, and at Even the vivid splendor of the sunset . . . Although the Tower is a shrine to friendship, it is also a room for work! And I worked there! Ah, how I worked! (Trask, 27).

While Yaddo's tower may have witnessed many of Katrina's compositions, their inspiration would remain firmly rooted in her attachment to Yaddo's earth.

By the early 1890s, Katrina's connection to Yaddo's grounds was unwavering. "What mystery, what subtle charm those deep green bowers and those high cathedral pines ever held for me!" she wrote. "I always feel I am on the verge of some great discovery when I am in my woods." For Katrina, such "discovery" became synonymous with creativity. While Yaddo's "wandering curves of the pine-arched paths" provided important refuge, they were also essential to her creativity: "What a place, those magic woods, to read when the house-parties had gone off to town." For Katrina "it was so easy

to think clearly there, and to see the inner meaning of the books one read; and poetry! - is there any place on the beautiful earth so equal to the forest for poetry?" Over time, Katrina's affection for Yaddo's grounds became almost fanatical and it began to shape her artistry. "The trees, with their murmuring mysteries, sing me their songs," she claimed, "and the lapping water of the lake beneath whispers Nature's confidences to me: and, in the heart of the woods, I sometimes catch faint, far off glimpses of the Muse and hear faint, for off echoes of Apollo's lyre."

Quite naturally, Katrina's fascination with Yaddo's woods lead to her reinvention of transcendental values common to the 1850s. In *The Chronicles of Yaddo* Katrina described a scene that reads like a page out of *Walden*.

> "Why do you moon off here in your woods?" said a witty man to me one day. . . . "Why don't you behave as though you were a normal human being, and come to the hotels and sit around - like a rational creature, in irrational cloths - when the band plays and lie - and be lied to - to music?" . . . . "You have found me," I said. "It is only by chance," he snapped, "I should have found you much more easily on the piazza of the United States Hotel." "I was there yesterday and the day before," I said, "but I did not find what I was looking for, so I came out here this morning in search of it." "What is that, may I ask?"
>
> "I was looking for 'reason and faith: Emerson tells me that one finds reason and faith in the woods." "You have found them because I am come," he continued, "and I came from the United States Hotel! Why, in the name of Fate, don't you act like a sensible woman - and come down to the hotels every morning?" (Trask, 59).

When her spiritual reflections were disturbed by society's corrupt values Katrina found refuge, predictably, in the teachings of Emerson.

It would be wrong, however, to interpret Katrina's revival of a set of philosophical values associated with the middle of the nineteenth century, as at odds with her continued celebration of medieval life. For Katrina, her concurrent reenactment of a medieval court and her celebration of transcendental meditation was by no means

problematic. Indeed, they were oddly symbiotic. Both provided temporary escape from the anti-modern doubt that was representative of late-nineteenth century America and the more immediate tragedies that had affected her life. While her enactment of courtly life provided a release from fin-de-siecle anxiety, Katrina's fascination with mid-century thinking provided a kind of philosophical map that helped to direct her artistic activity. While the former provided the subject for much of her writing, the latter, increasingly, helped to facilitate its production; in the end both were indispensable sources of refuge.

While Yaddo's tower was carefully designed to facilitate Katrina's imagination, Spencer also made certain that the new mansion would further encourage the celebration of Yaddo's social rituals. By the late 1890s, "Yaddo" Katrina maintained, "had grown to be what it is now, a fitting background in which to reproduce the ancient ceremonies." In 1897, Spencer arranged for a masque to be performed in honor of his wife. It was entitled, appropriately, "Yaddo - An Autumn Masque in Honour of Katrina Trask." The opening lines confirm both the Trasks' commitment to Yaddo's detached posture and, also the depth of Katrina's attachment to Yaddo's grounds,

> What maze of sweet enchantments have I found?
> A garden? - yet a house, a home, with zest
> Of happiness rife, where we vain wandering cease
> And from its life's wealth draw unmeasured peace!
> A place so wrought with more than earthly art
> The generous landscape seems of it a part;
> And yet so grandly natural of mien,
> That born of nature's self it might have been.
>
> The distant hills of beauty and of fame
> Are lured to us within its magic frame:
> Thro' casements and clear, open-hearted doors
> Dance winds and silent light and noiseless floors:
> And morn in the East, and ember'd sunset West
> Give greeting to their kindred hearth-fire blast.

> Bright fantasies and fruits of varied clime
> Meet here to match like fair words wound in rhyme:
> All noble thoughts of gladness or of grief
> Give future, form and colour and relief
> To what were else mere vision - and make the whole
> The mansion of a pure and spacious soul (Trask, 169).

Beginning in 1898, elaborate Twelfth Night Pageants where enacted, for which, according to Katrina, "everything was given up to the creation of environment, of atmosphere and of enthusiasm" (Trask, 111). Like earlier pageants, the festivities included all of Yaddo's employees. "Once a week the household would be joined by the stable men and others from the farm," Katrina wrote "an instructor came from the town and the Christmas carols - those songs which for generations have been the hope and comfort of numberless hearts - echoed through the halls of Yaddo" (Trask, 111). The celebrations also reached broadly into the Trasks' adopted society.

> The following week came the various feasts, on the several nights - the St. Christina School, when there was the tree for them: the St. Faith School, when there was the tree for them: the reception and the great Christmas tree for the Yaddo workingmen and their families - about two hundred and fifty in all: and at each separate *fete* the Chimes rang out and the Christmas carols echoed through the halls (Trask, 114).

Each evening of the celebration, eventide services were held in the chapel (the original ice-house), and the festivities ended on Twelfth Night (January 6) with a celebratory pageant held in the mansion's baronial hall. Spencer, "dressed in an English knight's costume of black velvet with black satin at the cuffs of the long coat, surrounded by guests and employees, dressed as heralds, shepherds, courtiers, silently awaited the arrival of the Queen of the festival, Mrs. Trask," who was presented with full royal pretense:

> Gathered at one end, we wait the arrival of the queen, who, with her stately grace, dressed in rose-coloured velvet, crowned and garlanded with roses and heralded by trumpeters, comes like an apparition of the goddess to Aeneas,
>
> "vera incessu patuit regina"
>
> mistress and queen of Yaddo, and of the hosts of all Yaddonians, who bow to her with the reverence of real love (Trask, 119).

Katrina prefaced an invitation for her gathered court to partake in the drinking of wassail by promising a kind of magical transformation, " – in which the old reality, with its possibilities of coarse and drunken revel, is idealized into the refined and gracious pledging in the true loving cup." The Queen then read aloud a ceremonial toast:

> Ye welcome Guests, and ye Retainers all,
> Gathered this Twelfth-Night in fair Yaddo's hall;
> I greet, and wassail you, with loving heart.
> Come share with me this cup of magic art.
> No lurking poison in its dregs doth lie
> To dull the brain and cloud the sparkling eye;
> In him who drinketh new life will arise
> From this rare Wassail, brewed in wondrous wise;
> For Nature's choicest gifts were yielded up
> To be the potion in this Christmas cup (Trask, 121).

A great Yule log was presented, "stretched on a sled, decked with evergreens and holly, surmounted by a little child dressed in pure white, dragged by six little scarlet gnomes and with a train of other children in the rear," while frankincense was poured over hot coals. After dancing and singing, courtiers searched for a ring in elaborately decorated Twelfth Night cakes. The evening ended with the ceremonial crowing of Spencer and Katrina as King and Queen of Yaddo.

Such pageantry shaped Katrina's writing. She developed an intense imaginative attachment to the experiences of ninth-century Kings and Queens, maidens and warrior-knights. A play entitled *King Alfred's Jewel* is set in an environment that bears inescapable reference to the Trasks' reenactments:

> A large room hung with tapestries; in one corner, a wide bed curtained with rich hangings; various tables and seats stand about the room. There is a door to the right, one to the left, and one directly in the center of the wall. The Queen is seated before a low table, filled with the numerous toilet-articles used by a Saxon lady of rank in the ninth century. The Queen wears a long, loose robe, and her beautiful hair falls over her shoulders; Numanera is combing it and, drawing it through her fingers, holds it up to the light admiringly (Trask, 114).

Under King Constantine, a heroic poem, takes place amid a similar historical backdrop.

> The great King Constantine is at the hunt;
> The brilliant cavalcade of knights and dames,
> On palfreys and on charges trapped in gold
> And silver and purple, ride in mirth
> Along the winding way, by hill and tarn
> And violet-sprinkled dell. Impatient hounds
> Sniff the keen morning air, and startled birds
> Rustle the foliage redolent with spring (Trask, 7).

The New York Times considered *Under King Constantine* as an important achievement:

> There have been but few women poets. When we have mentioned a creature, perhaps a myth named Sappho, a reality named Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and a greater wonder, George Eliot, we have nearly exhausted the subject. There is no female Shakespeare, or Milton, or Byron, no woman Dryden, or Pope, or Goldsmith. Women have written beautiful verse, it is true; the newspaper columns are full of it; the booksellers' counters groan under prettily-bound volumes; but the great woman poet and dramatist has not yet been born.
>
> A pretty little white volume, called, "Under King Constantine," which lay, all unheralded and unannounced, on a booksellers' counter, revealed, on opening it, such a surprise that one has said: "Has she come at last!" For here was the grand, heroic measure, the firm grasp of the great chords, the splendid sweep of the poet (The *New York Times*, February 18, 1892).

The volume sold well. A second edition appeared in 1893. Katrina was encouraged. As the nineteenth century came to a close, and while writers like Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser were pushing the boundaries of American Realism with their unglossed depictions of urban plight, Katrina's writing was becoming deeply ingrained in the celebration of Yaddo's traditions. Only a few hours removed from the images and conditions that became the stock tools of the realist, the Trasks were cultivating an

alternative. "The commonplace of the world receded," wrote Katrina, "the ideal beauty was the real - and we were part of the magic romance that we had woven (Trask, 115).

Increasingly, throughout the 1890s, the Trasks' celebration of Yaddo's customs became a shared ritual, and they began to emphasize a leisured exchange of intellectual interests. Katrina's need for imaginative withdrawal did not mean that she was a social pariah. Far from it. Katrina simply preferred entertaining at Yaddo to engaging society on its terms. "Then came the countless host of Yaddo friends, who have left their impress upon Yaddo life," wrote Katrina:

> Pleasant, honest, homey, simple-hearted men and women - clever, brilliant, scintillating men and women - distinguished persons and inconspicuous persons, noted and unheralded, famous and unknown: humble, affectionate hearts who surrounded me with love: geniuses who have added to the treasure-store and whose inspiration has kept the bright fires burning in Yaddo: great men who have left their mark upon their day and generation: beautiful and able women who have stirred the world by their loveliness (Trask, 87).

At Yaddo, the Trasks entertained, among others, Henry Van Dyke, Eastman Johnson, Lord Kelvin (who supervised the completion of the first trans-Atlantic cable), Senator Plum (Speaker of the Canadian Senate), Edward M. Shepard (Editor of *Harper's Magazine*), Louis Comfort Tiffany, Booker T. Washington, and the soon-to-be King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel. By the mid-1890s Yaddo was defined by a community designed to encourage a relaxed discourse:

> The whole spirit of Yaddo has been of utmost freedom - practically, spiritually, and mentally, - freedom to think, to believe, to disbelieve, freedom to express one's creed and one's thought: and perfect freedom in the practical round of daily life: freedom to come, to go, to work, to play, to write, to drive, to rest, to relax. . . . The one exception to this informality was dinner. From eight until midnight were the only formal hours of the day (Trask, 98).

Dinner became a ritual which included special preparation. "When we dressed for dinner we also quickened our minds to contribute to the general good," Katrina wrote. The evening meal included a ceremonial toast:

> May our minds, ever, be as clear,
> May your heart, ever, be as fresh,
> May your soul, ever, be as pure,
> As this water (Trask, 73).

While Yaddo's hearth would remain the symbolic center of the Trasks' estate, the celebration of cultural production and exchange which Yaddo now embraced were most obviously represented in the mansion's great library, and, of course, in Katrina's tower. "There is no need to mention any rooms in the new Yaddo, except my Tower and the library," Katrina insisted. For Katrina it was in the library that "the Yaddo life which has become historic and world-renowned" was most fully lived.

> The rich and the poor, the prince and the pauper, the great financier and the day-labourer, the English statesman and the American politician, the foreign servant and the public school superintendent, the eager scholar and the bashful schoolboy - each came to this room in his turn: here the artist sang, the *virtuosi* played: the *literati* read their manuscripts and here composers sang their songs (Trask, 76).

It was in Katrina's tower sanctuary that "the essence of the Yaddo life expressed itself." In its windows Henry van Dyke (the "Poet of Yaddo") etched a tributary message to Yaddo's Queen:

> This is the window's message.
> In silence to the Queen
> 'Thou hast a double kingdom
> And I am set between:
> Look out and see the glory
> On hill and plain and sky:
> Look in and see the light of love
> That nevermore shall die.

Katrina understood Van Dyke's message to be a form of "investiture." By the 1890s, the enactment of Yaddo's customs had become important to her imagination.

> Back to my mind, to my heart, constantly comes the question - what is this Something at Yaddo, this strange dynamic power, which makes it easy for men and women to work here, which inspires and exalts the creative mind? What is this Something, called by Thomas Mott Osborne "The Sacred Fire" - Called by Henry M. Alden "The Fountain of Hippocrene" - called by many, whether in play, in fancy or in belief - "The Invisible Presence?" What is it? (Trask, 56).

Later she wrote, "There is a special power of inspiration which we have often discussed and about which we have often wondered." The noted prison reformer Thomas Mott Osborne gave poetic voice to Katrina's premonitions:

THE SACRED FIRE

Dear Yaddo! Mansion of a rare delight –
Where Art and Nature graciously unite –
Thy outward garb is lovely: - thou hast there
The lake, the dell, the lawn and gardens fair,
The forest wild, the sparkling fountains, and the dark green shrine
Where thy pure knight, white Christalan, points heavenward – all
are thine.

But all these, Yaddo, are but fleeting shows;
The marble shatters, and soon dies the rose:
New taste, new manners, may thy treasures take –
Destroy thy forest, and transform thy lake, -
Make waste thy lawns and gardens, and hew down that mighty
Pine –
And then, fair Yaddo, where would be the glory that is thine?

Thy glory? Thy lights, burning in thy hall,
Are not of earth – their flames celestial
Can never die. Each guest his lamp in turn
Kindles with fire which must for ever burn:
For thus, from each to each, from lamp to lamp, have ever passed
The lights of Truth, of Peace, of Love – to triumph at the Last.

For Katrina, Yaddo was an indispensable source of imaginative insight. "One feels these cosmic currents at Yaddo," she observed, "not because of what *is* but because of what is *not* at Yaddo." What was absent from Yaddo was, importantly, worldly concern.

> Daily deeds of apparently trifling import, household happenings, hearthfire cracklings – these are momentous for they tend to fruitful growth, helpful, beautiful: but the petty things, the unpleasant things, the unsavory things, the sordid things, the grossly material things must be shut out from daily conversation, from daily reading, from daily life, if we would see the vision, if we would hear the music of the spheres (Trask, 186).

Such thinking would remain at the center of the Trasks' vision.

Despite the gradual shift in Yaddo's environment, the Trasks remained undecided about the future of their estate. By 1895, Spencer and Katrina had agreed that it would not be left to members of their extended family. Instead, Katrina insisted, it would become invested in some "special purpose." According to Katrina, Yaddo's future was more revealed than decided:

> It was a beautiful afternoon in the summer of 1899: the trees were new-washed and fragrant from refreshing showers, the wild-flowers were nodding their little crystal-crowned heads in the light wind, the broken clouds were sailing swiftly over the azure sky. Spencer and Katrina were walking, as it was their daily custom to do, walking gaily over the glad earth, flaming with beauty on every side.
>
> As we walked, our talk sped from one subject to another - I have forgotten just what we were discussing - I know, however, that it had nothing to do with what followed. In our walk we had come to the place on the edge of the woods where the roads meet, that road from Ooweekin (the present Park Drive) and the road to the Stone Tower in the woods - the place where so many have felt the strange power of which I have told. We were happy, laughing, and full of merriment, in the usual mood of that hour when Spencer left his work and I left my books.
>
> Suddenly! - an unseen hand seemed laid upon me, an unheard voice seemed calling to me! I stopped short - I felt as if Something which I could not see, stood in my path: I believe my hands rose before me, outstretched, as if in appeal to that Something which was to vast for me to define.
>
> "What is it Katrina?" Spencer's voice was anxious, "What is it?"

> And then I spoke: it was as though some spirit other than my own were speaking through me: "At last, I know, at last I understand" I said, "The thing men say they feel at Yaddo is not what is - it is what is to be! The vision of the future is clear to me. Yaddo is not to be an institution, a school, a charity. It is to be always a place of inspiration, a delightful, hospitable home where guests may come and find welcome. Here will be a perpetual series of house parties - of literary men, literary women, and other artists. Those who are city weary, who are thirsting for the country and for beauty, who are hemmed in by circumstances and have no opportunity to make for themselves an harmonious enviornment, shall seek it here. At Yaddo they will find the Sacred Fire, and light there torches at its flame. Look Spencer! They are walking in the woods, wandering in the garden, sitting under the pine trees - men and women - creating, creating, creating!"
>
> Spencer was silent, an unusual thing for him - his eager mind always ready to break into quick speech - I turned and looked at him; he was pale and deeply moved; finally he said in a strange tone:
>
> "I, too, see what you see. I, too, hear what you hear" (Trask, 98).

"We stood in the summer sunshine, our swift walk checked like creatures who had been suspended in action," she continued. "Pale and awestruck we stood and began a strange antiphonal: and, as we stood motionless, the *entire plan* of Pine Garde took shape in our antiphonal speech. The very name of "Pine Garde" was spoken - Oh, fitting name!" Pine Garde, that "beautiful dream which has been hidden in our hearts for so long," was selected as the secret name for the Trasks' posthumous intentions. In accordance with the Trasks' wishes, the name would be changed to "the Corporation of Yaddo, when Yaddo comes into its larger life." The Trasks had committed to bequeathing their collective legacies to preserving the atmosphere that now defined Yaddo to future generations of imaginative men and women.

For the Trasks, investment in Yaddo's future provided important distance from the tragedies that haunted their past. "The whole place, suddenly, seemed alive with a larger meaning," recalled Katrina, "a loftier joy and an unfolding hope which Yaddo had not known since our children were taken." According to Katrina, Spencer committed

himself to Yaddo's future with an enthusiasm that recalled his initial attachment to the Childs' estate. "Now we will make the rose garden!" exclaimed Spencer:

> Now we can do things. I could not do them when I thought Yaddo was to pass into indifferent hands. And when we had no definite plan for the future, how could there be the live interest in the work? Now we can work with delight: we must make it beautiful for the artists. We will begin the garden immediately (Trask, 194).

In February 1900, the Trasks articulated their vision in a "Joint Testamentary Agreement." In this document they carefully described the environment they had nurtured and made emphatic their commitment to its preservation:

> In order to insure for Yaddo a larger influence and a more sure and permanent continuance of the aims and ideals which we have held for it and in the hope that it may continue as a practical force in the world for all time, we desire to found here a permanent home to which may come from time to time for rest and refreshment authors, painters, sculptors, musicians, and other artists, both men and women few in number and chosen for creative gifts and besides and not for less for the power and the [will] and the purpose to make these gifts useful to the world (YR 197.2).

The agreement describes the Trasks understanding that Yaddo was a source of important creative insight:

> Yaddo, we are glad to believe has come to be a source of fruitful help and inspiration to many, and especially to those whose gifted with creative powers and who have had the impulse to use it for their fellow men.
>
> This feeling has been not only the reflex of our enthusiasm who love the place but the almost universal verdict of all who have come within its gates - Poets, Artists, Sculptors, Musicians have said they could work here as no where else than found at Yaddo, the inspiration for some of their best work. They have woven around Yaddo legend and romance so that it has become far more than an estate and in its varied power upon men and women, far more than a home (YR 197.2).

In its most succinct form, the Trasks' vision was rooted in the physical dimensions of their estate. Yaddo, they hoped, would remain fundamentally distinct from the world beyond its gates. Such a posture of separation would be further maintained by the artists'

complete accommodation. Accordingly, Yaddo would remain an environment defined by physical and psychological separation. Most important, the Trasks hoped that Yaddo would continue to be defined by the almost palpable energy they had come to believe was rooted in the very earth of their estate. While life at Yaddo would no longer have at its center the reenactment of a medieval court, it would, the Trasks hoped, continue to encourage the kind of inventive energy that had allowed for such expression.

The "Testamentary Agreement" was addressed to the trustees of the Corporation of Pine Garde. These trustees were carefully selected by the Trasks and included George Foster Peabody, Allena Pardee, Edward Morse Shepard (a Brooklyn lawyer and, apart from Peabody, the Trasks' closest confidant), Henry van Dyke. The Trasks entrusted this body with the responsibility of providing for the legal and financial inception of their vision. On March 22, 1900, the members of the Corporation of Pine Garde met at Peabody's home at Tuxedo Park. By-laws were drafted, setting the legal precedent for the Trasks' intentions. Article two reads: "The object of the corporation shall be to maintain a residence and retreat for persons actually and usefully engaged in artistic and creative work."

Concurrent with their efforts to provide for Yaddo's legal establishment, the Trasks looked to test the practical design of their vision. Spencer found such opportunity at the National Arts Club. Founded in 1893 by Charles de Kay, the Club was conceived of as a gathering of diverse imaginative interests that would allow artists to foster a decided American aesthetic. Spencer had been a founding member. The Club was designed to facilitate a leisured exchange of creative values. Members met as much to

socialize as to work. From its foundation, the Club had been required to include women artists among its members. In 1903, Spencer was elected president. Three years later he was instrumental in orchestrating the relocation of the Club from Herald Square to its current location at 15 Gramercy Park South. Spencer's enthusiasm for the Club's relocation was in decided alignment with his intentions for Yaddo. By the early years of the twentieth century, the area around 34th street and 6th avenue was becoming increasingly dominated by business interest. For Spencer, such interests were antithetical to creativity. Gramercy Park provided an ideal cross-town solution. It was a gesture predicated on an impulse of withdrawal that shaped the Trasks' vision for Yaddo. In short, under Spencer's careful orchestration, the National Arts Club became a kind of urban Yaddo.

The connection between Spencer's commitment to the National Arts Club and his intentions for Yaddo was obvious to those aware of the Trasks' vision for Yaddo. In 1908, the Club held a dinner to honor Spencer's work as president. Poor health made it impossible for Peabody to attend. In his absence, he arranged for a letter to be read, in which he drew an important comparison with Yaddo:

> You know much, but more surely than you, enthusiastic friends though you are, can I make record of the public spirit, and the private sympathy, of the quick response to need, and of that rare combination of creative energy, of artistic enthusiasm and of rapid accomplishment which characterize Spencer Trask.
>
> These are notable qualities from which your club to have had the benefit of from its beginnings; and you well may make this the occasion for much congratulation.
>
> May I venture to express the hope that your enthusiasm will so embody itself in earnestness, that you will all go forward to make vital and far-reaching, the exalted ideals which I have heard your President so often discuss in his home, where the dominance of the ideal has made 'Yaddo' a word of inspiration and exaltation far and wide. And then will you do that high and noble public service

> which can be discovered, by rightly estimating the breadth, and height, and solidarity which is meant by the National Arts Club (YR 7.1).

While Spencer was helping to nurture a creative environment in New York, Katrina was helping to foster a similar environment in the Adirondacks.

In 1903, on the shores of Lake George, Mary Wiltsie Fuller handed Katrina Trask a bouquet of flowers and one dollar. The exchange marked the Trasks' formal gift of a secluded property that encompassed several acres on the shores of Lake George. The land became known as Wiawaka, an Indian name that means, "The Great Spirit of Women." Wiawaka was designed as a summer retreat for female factory and textile workers from nearby Troy, New York. Originally, the grounds housed an Adirondack lodge. The lodge was meticulously designed by the Trasks and was, essentially, Yaddo in its earliest conception. Pupils from the National Arts Club as well as other artists retreated to Lake George during the summer months, where in intimate company, they were free to concentrate their energies without distraction. Katrina's transfer of the property to Miss Fuller altered its purpose slightly. Its defining principles remained intact. Wiawaka had been planned to provide inescapable psychological and physical withdrawal. Further, it would also provide artists the opportunity for leisured reflection while immersed in a setting of creative sympathy.

Informed by their efforts on behalf of the National Arts Club and Wiawaka, Spencer and Katrina again turned their attention to transforming Yaddo, this time into a secluded haven for artists. For Katrina, these efforts provided a "hope which Yaddo had not known since our children were taken." A spirit of revived optimism prevailed:

> Then began a new era for Yaddo - a new life for Spencer and for Katrina. Hitherto, after our children were taken, we looked upon Yaddo as a place that had

> failed of its ultimate destiny: but now, the wonderful Yaddo life, with its mysterious power to which scores of men and women have borne testimony, was not to end with our death; it was to gain in fullness, in beauty, in inspiration (Trask, 178).

Spencer and Katrina were confident that their efforts would provide final distance from the tragedies that had scarred their lives. "Every tree we planted, every addition we built thenceforth, had a far reaching interest," wrote Katrina. "Hope gleamed like a bright star."

Despite their exhaustive efforts, the Trasks' intentions where again challenged by misfortune. On June 23, 1908, Spencer was injured in an automobile accident in Boston. As a result, he lost all sight in his right eye. During this same period, Katrina's physicians feared that her heart ailment might result in her loss of sight as well. While such obstacles presented unanticipated hindrances, it was on December 31, 1909, that, according to Katrina, "the wavering thread was snapped." Amid New Year's Eve celebrations at Yaddo, Spencer was called to New York for business on behalf of the Saratoga Preservation Committee. "Against the Doctor's orders," recalled Katrina, "in spite of supreme discomfort, in spite of intense cold, he took a journey to New York, in the interest of the town." Near Croton-on-Hudson, an express freight train collided with Spencer's New York-bound train. Spencer's private Pullman car, the last car attached to the train, was crushed. Spencer was the only fatality. On the following day *The New York Tribune* described the accident:

> Spencer Trask, prominent as a financier, a philanthropist and a patron of the arts, was killed in a train collision on the New York Central at Croton, N.Y. yesterday morning. A fast freight, rushing to New York with silks from the Pacific ports, ran into the Montreal Express, which had stopped at a block signal. Mr. Trask was the only passenger killed (*The New York Tribune*, January 1, 1910).

A local paper reported the depth of Spencer's commitment to Saratoga.

> Spencer Trask had planned to spend the remaining years of his life as a Saratogian, working with the object of making Saratoga the greatest health resort in the world. Of the truth of this statement there is not the slightest doubt. It is, to Saratogians, the cause of the most profound regret that this noble ideal of service should have been cut short by the tragic event of Friday morning last.
> No other living man was well equipped as Mr. Trask for this special service to Saratoga Springs, to the State, and to humanity. He had a profound and comprehensive knowledge of the mineral spring question. He had repeatedly visited all the mineral spring resorts of Europe. He had studied their conditions, development, management, and especially their methods of financial success. He had investigated their medical and sanitary regulations, their attractions and amusements, their social accessories, their parks and architecture, and possessed much valuable data on these subjects (YR. Vol. 3).

Funeral ceremonies were held at Bethesda Episcopal Church in Saratoga. "During the hours of the funeral the business houses were closed, the public and parochial schools dismissed, and flags were placed at half-mast," reported *The New York Times*. Students from St. Christina's School were present. Katrina was too overcome with grief to attend. Spencer's coffin was carried by eight of his longest-serving employees from Yaddo. Later, they would accompany Spencer's body to Troy, where he was cremated, and then to Brooklyn, where his remains were interred near those of his children in Greenwood Cemetery. In Saratoga, the renowned artist Daniel Chester French was commissioned to design a tributary statue that was eventually installed in Congress Park. It bears a tributary message from Charles Evans Hughes, then the Governor of New York: "His chief aim was to do good and to serve his fellow men."

> A formal inquest into Spencer's death revealed potential negligence:
>
> Eugene Flanagan, the engineer of the freight which ran into the Montreal express, testified that he received from Supt. F.T. Slack at Poughkeepsie this telegram: You have made a very poor run with the train you have considering its size and importance [the train was reported to be carrying $1,000,000 worth of silk] What

> has been the cause of this poor time? Want you to try and do better, as your train is wanted in New York just as soon as possible (YR Vol. 3).

Despite repeated requests from her counsel to bring suit against the New York Central Railroad, Katrina preferred to avoid litigation. Instead, she accepted a comparatively small settlement of $60,000. She dedicated her entire share, $32,000 (the balance was divided among Spencer's remaining family members), to various philanthropic interests in Saratoga Springs. In a statement published in *The New York Times*, Katrina defended her decision. "The most fitting dedication," to Spencer's legacy she maintained, was to donate her portion of the settlement "to the town to which Spencer Trask dedicated many years of zealous service, and for which, in the end, he sacrificed his life." "I therefore have directed my lawyers," she continued "to hand to the Rev. Dr. Carey $7,500 to complete my husband's gift, the Bethesda Church parish house, for I believe that such a house will contribute largely to the common good of the village. And I have directed them to place the remaining $24,500 with my bankers in trust, to be used for the Village of Saratoga Springs."

Following Spencer's death, Katrina's departure into Yaddo's protective isolation became absolute. She found strength and solace in Peabody, and, especially, in Spencer's hope for Yaddo's future. "At last my strength came slowly back to me," she recalled, "I had to evolve, alone, the details which Spencer and I had anticipated such joy in evolving, together." While Spencer's loss cast a permanent shadow over the remaining years of her life, her commitment to Yaddo's future was unwavering.

Immediately after Spencer's death, several practical challenges appeared. The Trasks' intentions were made public after Spencer's will was filed at Saratoga on January

21. Rumors quickly spread. Katrina, in close consultation with both Peabody, decided that a formal acknowledgement of the Trasks' intentions was appropriate. A ceremony was held in Yaddo's library. At Katrina's request, Bishop Doane of Albany described the Trasks' intentions for Yaddo.

> And now comes a secret of very real importance, one which I have been privileged to know and which I have counseled Mrs. Trask to now make known to you. It is a crown of the life, together, of Spencer Trask and Katrina Trask – the mutual agreement by which this house is dedicated, in the future, to literary artists and other artistic purposes, in which the town of Saratoga Springs will always have a share.
>
> Mrs. Trask has not as yet spoken of the ultimate destiny of the house, and the exact scheme is not to be defined for the present, but Mrs. Trask has granted me the privilege of telling you, to-day, that by the combined will of Spencer and Katrina Trask, the grounds and gardens of Yaddo are intended always to be open to the people of Saratoga, and the plan for this house is to have a perpetual association with Saratoga and the people of Saratoga Springs (Trask, 204).

Other, more practical considerations also arose. Yaddo's endowment suffered. Katrina handled this financial setback with extreme practicality. "The hospitality of Yaddo should be for the summer only, instead of for the whole year as we had intended," she reasoned. Further, she wrote, "Yaddo should be closed in winter, thus giving the money time to accumulate. Also, I planned that the number of guests entertained should be greatly reduced and that the life should be on a much smaller and simpler scale" (Trask, 206).

In order to economize, Katrina ordered the mansion closed in 1916 (during the winter it required one ton of anthracite a day to heat). "Then I decided to leave my home! I closed our beloved Yaddo, took this little old farm-house, reconstructed it, and came here to live, that I might conserve what was left of the endowment." The original caretaker's house, today named West House, was remodeled. Katrina lived the

remaining years of her life within its, comparatively, humble walls. Her stoicism and faith, however, remained deeply rooted in her attachment to Yaddo's grounds and her faith in her vision for Yaddo's future.

> The move to this little farm-house has been an illustration of the way that it will come to pass with Pine Garde. What matter the walls? Nature is here, flowering beauty is here. What matter the practical restrictions? The spiritual significance is here – the opportunity is here. Even were the house burned to the ground and were tents pitched beneath the pine trees – Pine Garde might still fulfill our real dream, in inward if not in outward ways (Trask, 207).

Katrina's efforts to provide for Yaddo's future relied heavily on the unwavering support of George Foster Peabody, whom she referred to as "The Wise Counselor." In 1911, Peabody moved to Saratoga, where he purchased a large house on Circular Street. From this close proximity he dedicated himself to overseeing the practical inception of the Trasks' vision for Yaddo. "There is no part of Yaddo in which he has not shared in the making," Katrina later wrote. "He has added material beauty by his lavish gifts: every room in Yaddo bears some evidence of his princely generosity." Peabody's dedication to Spencer was absolute. "Spencer loved and trusted him as he loved and trusted no other man on earth," recalled Katrina.

> Many times he told me that if the time ever came when he should know that he was to leave me alone in the world, he would feel perfectly safe about me as long as Foster was near me: he made him his Executor and his Trustee and left all of his affairs in Foster's hands, as in mine.
>
> The utmost that could be said of Foster - or of anyone - is, that in the very difficult days of the last eight years, he has more than fulfilled Spencer's trust - more than realized Spencer's high ideal (Trask, 50).

With Peabody's significant support, the State Preservation Committee successfully assumed responsibility for managing Saratoga's threatened springs, and, in so doing, successfully isolated Saratoga's gambling interests.

On February 5, 1921, George Foster Peabody and Katrina Trask were married in Katrina's study (the "rose room") at West House. "Mrs. Katrina Trask, widow of Spencer Trask, the banker was quietly married here this morning to George Foster Peabody, philanthropist and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the New York Federal Reserve Bank," reported *The New York Times*, which continued: "While the announcement may arouse some public surprise, it will be received by those who know the circumstances, as a happy culmination of a life-long friendship in which romance and chivalry have had a large part" (*The New York Times*, February 5, 1921). Katrina's health was deteriorating rapidly. It seems likely that the marriage was decided upon to assure that, following her death, the Trasks' intentions for Yaddo would be legally vested in Peabody. While the timing of their marriage certainly suggests such practical considerations, it is without question that Peabody and Katrina shared a genuine love. Despite inevitable gossip, their marriage added closure to the truly intimate union Spencer, Katrina, and Peabody shared.

The marriage lasted less than one year. On January 7, 1922, Katrina died at Yaddo. According to her wishes, she was buried at the highest point of elevation on the estate's grounds. A private ceremony was held at Yaddo amid a heavy snowfall. While at the time of her death Katrina could be reasonably certain that her vision for Yaddo was secure, it would require the continued dedication of Peabody, and, especially, the tireless efforts of a young widow from Minneapolis to bring to fruition.

Chapter Four

Foundations

> For more than 50 years [sic], until she was well into her eighties, Elizabeth Ames served as executive director of Yaddo. Yaddo became her life and called on all her administrative talent. Financial knowledge, which she lacked, was supplied at first by Mr. Peabody and later by the active partners in Spencer Trask & Company. In her directional policy, she was guided by the spirit of Katrina Trask, which still, as I said, brooded over the mansion. Elizabeth was not a hostess by instinct, as Katrina had been; she was gracious but shy, and her increasing deafness made her uncomfortable in large gatherings. Still, she treated the guests as her own guests and was attentive to their needs. She kept in close touch with everything that happened at Yaddo through reports from her assistants. Tolerant as she was of personal derelictions – such as leaving empty gin bottles in the wastebaskets during prohibition days, or patronizing the crap tables in Saratoga (which was a wide-open city until Governor Tom Dewey closed it tight as a drum), or, on a famous occasion, coasting down the grand staircase in a painted Dutch sled – she was nevertheless impatient with trouble makers and tried to avoid anything that might interfere with the smooth operation of Yaddo as a working community. Her admonitions to guests were typed on little slips of light-blue paper that became famous. Many of them had to do with one artist's visiting the studio of another before four o'clock in the afternoon, or at any time without being invited. Absolute privacy for artists during their working hours was her central commandment.[7] – Malcolm Cowley

Following Katrina's death, George Foster Peabody assumed the responsibility for overseeing the legal and financial establishment of the Trasks' posthumous vision for their estate. He also faced the more daunting challenge of overseeing its practical realization. For Peabody, the Trasks remained an almost tangible presence at Yaddo. Their sensibilities were apparent throughout the mansion and also in the carefully planned grounds. Peabody's personal investment in the society they had nurtured helped to assure its transmission as Yaddo evolved towards its intended purpose. "The year

[7] Calisher et al., 15.

1926 has, of course, been a notable one in the history of Yaddo's realization of the plan of the Founders, Spencer and Katrina Trask," he wrote at the conclusion of Yaddo's first season. He continued: "formed in 1900, for wide use of the beautiful Estate in which they in exceptional fashion had succeeded in imbedding their personality in home-feeling and art expression. The consciousness of their spiritual ideals in the renewed life of Yaddo, has been felt by the Secretary and the President who had shared so much of the life in the noble Mansion and Park (YR 339.2)." Under Peabody's close supervision, The Corporation of Yaddo was legally established in the spring of 1922. Peabody served as its first president, with Allena Pardee as secretary. The remainder of Yaddo's administrative board was comprised of the Trasks' close associates along with legal advisors and included both Daniel Chester French as well as Dr. Henry Van Dyke. While Peabody's business experience provided an important basis of judgment for administering the necessary legal and financial arrangements, assuring the implementation of the Trasks' unprecedented vision proved more formidable. Like other moments in its history, Yaddo's future was shaped by a fortuitous combination of chance and intuition.

By 1923 Marjory Knappen Waite was living at Yaddo and working as a research assistant to Peabody. Waite was 18 years old and from Minnesota. While the details of her introduction to Peabody remain vague, her influence was formidable. On May 4, 1926, Peabody, then 75, legally adopted his assistant, then 21-year-old. Such practice had precedent during the nineteenth century and was in general used to conceal indiscreet

relationships. Despite the questionable context surrounding Waite's adoption, the precise nature of her relationship with Peabody remains unknown.

Also in 1923, Waite's sister, Elizabeth Ames, arrived at Yaddo. Ames' invitation was preceded by an appointment to catalog the contents of the Yaddo mansion. Even to close friends Ames remained notoriously reserved about her life before Yaddo. "Even for those of us who knew her very well, her beginnings in Minneapolis remained vague," (Calisher, et al., 10) recalled Cheever. She had been married in Minnesota, but the circumstances surrounding that marriage, as well as her husband's death during the First World War are unclear. At Yaddo, Ames engaged Peabody in protracted discussions of American art. Her insights impressed him, and in 1924 he determined that Ames was well qualified to oversee the Trasks' intentions. She was given the title of Executive Director of Yaddo. "A director was needed for the project," recalled Malcolm Cowley, but,

> Mr. Peabody, who trusted in Providence, said, "We must wait. When it is time, the right person will appear." Elizabeth Ames, a war widow, arrived from Minneapolis to visit her sister Marjory . . . He had long conversations with Elizabeth and found that she was deeply interested in the future of American art and writing. After one conversation, he said, "This is the person that Yaddo was hoping to find" (Calisher et al., 14).

"One can almost imagine the whole scene," wrote Cheever,

> the chill in the countless rooms, the dry fountain in the atrium, the baptismal fonts and the throne chairs covered with sheets. When a beam of light caught Mrs. Ames's lovely face Mr. Peabody decided that it was she who had been chosen to administer a curious last will and testament that named "creative men and women" the heirs to this kingdom (Calisher et al., 9).

Peabody would later confess that it was "Providence which guided the Directors to the selection of this rare leader" (YR 339.6). According to Cheever, Peabody "presented

Ames with 'The Trask Pearls.' This was a fat cable of small beads with an enormous diamond saddle buckle, and a pair of diamond tassels. The beads were to signify his choice, and her acceptance of the job" (Calisher et al., 9). For more than forty years Ames exerted a defining influence over Yaddo, and demonstrated a sympathy for the creative temperament that helped to shape important compositions. So complete was Ames commitment to maintaining Yaddo's values, that shortly before her retirement in 1968 Cheever wrote, "I had a note from Elizabeth Ames and I believe she is, at the moment, blind, but determined to recover. The power she wields over that place has not lessened with her illness and I have a feeling that when she goes she will take it all with her – the fir trees, the lakes and the mansion. Poof" (Cheever, ed., 260).

During the summer of 1924 Peabody spent many hours describing for Ames the lives of the Trasks. As a result she developed a deeply personal regard for the Trasks and their vision for Yaddo. Especially during Yaddo's early days, many guests would come to regard Ames' authority as a form of guardianship of the Trasks' interests. By the early 1930s, Ames was referring to Yaddo as a "kingdom," and the language of her administrative reports suggests Katrina's idealized sensibilities. In 1934, Ames articulated Yaddo's most sacrosanct ideals as "the perpetuating and enlargement of the beauty of this estate," "the contribution to American Arts and Letters in our time," and finally, the "decent but happy living for those employed here and living mostly at Yaddo." Regarding the latter Ames described:

> We feel this ideal gives an added meaning to their lives and a dignity to their labor. It is a relationship of fellowship and cooperation and common interests rather than a relation of the employer and the employed. A relation in which each feels himself definitely contributing (YR. 339.3).

The description recalls Katrina's cultivation of "an esprit de corps." "Yaddo is home and opportunity to all those who live and serve here," wrote Katrina. "Every woman-servant is treated like and expected to be a gentlewoman: and every man-servant is treated like and expected to be a gentleman. . . . The servants are a part of Yaddo; it is their home; their pride is here, their interest and their joy" (Trask, 95). Assuring for the maintenance of the environment the Trasks' had so carefully devised was a responsibility for which Ames confessed her deepest commitment. According to Ames, the obligation "to inform and invest each guest in casual and indirect ways with what is and must remain the spirit of Yaddo and his responsibilities to it is and should remain the Executive Director's supreme task over and above all the complications of management and administration" (YR. 339.3).

It is impossible to escape the importance of Peabody's selection of a woman to the continuation of the Trasks' interests. More than any one else, Peabody was intimately aware of the combination of influences that had shaped Yaddo. Foremost among these was Spencer's unquestioned belief that Katrina was the psychological center of its culture. Her coronation marked a physical investiture of Yaddo's society. By the time of Katrina's death Peabody had become intimately aware of how committed she had become to its extension. In searching for a director, Peabody was also looking for someone to assume Katrina's role as matriarch of Yaddo. It was natural that he appointed a woman. Cowley also understood this importance. His observation that Katrina's spirit "brooded" over the entire mansion results from the same understanding of Yaddo's history as his later recognition that Elizabeth Ames "was Yaddo."

Between 1924 and 1926, Ames prepared Yaddo for the arrival of the first group of guests to benefit from the Trasks legacy. While overseeing the preparation of the mansion and its surrounding grounds proved to be demanding, and included the renovation and conversion of outlying buildings to serve as studios, Ames confronted the far more daunting challenge of establishing an administration for an institution for which, according to Cheever, "there was no precedent." This challenge was made exceptional by Ames' insistent regard for the traditions the Trasks' had established. Foremost among these was maintaining Yaddo's autonomy.

Under Ames' administrative control, Yaddo's integration into the broader creative intellectual milieu was intentionally furtive. In order to maintain Yaddo's tradition of independence, Ames rigorously avoided public advertising. She was keenly aware that an environment that was to encourage an intimate exchange of values and provide the opportunity for sustained concentration required a unique kind of admissions process, one that considered prospective candidates' creativity, but which emphasized their acceptance of Yaddo's tradition of combining social decorum with artistic energy. To meet both challenges, Ames shrewdly devised an admissions process by which prospective candidates were invited to apply based on a confidential recommendation provided by someone whom Ames trusted to judge a candidate's artistry and character. Ames initiated this process by crafting a letter which introduced Yaddo to academics, editors, publishers, and members of related cultural institutions, and in which she requested their assistance recommending guests.

> Several persons who are interested in the work being done at Yaddo have urged me to tell you more of our plans and to ask for your cooperation in bringing Yaddo the creative workers who deserve to have residence here.
>
> Under the terms of the agreement made by Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Trask during their lifetime, Yaddo with its spacious residence, parks and gardens, was opened in the summer of 1926 for creative workers. This term "creative workers" includes those working in the plastic arts, those engaged in scholarship, in musical composition as well as workers in imaginative prose and poetry.
>
> No more than twelve or thirteen persons are in residence at one time. One has no social responsibilities. He may be as solitary and reclusive as he wishes. The length of each person's stay depends on his particular circumstances. Some come for the whole season or twenty weeks, others for only a portion of that time. The very nominal sum of one dollar a day is the only living expense[8] (YR 311.4).

Most of Ames early contacts were in New York. Her letter attracted the attention of many of New York's most established intellectuals. "I have an individual I want to recommend," wrote Mark Van Doren in January 1933. "He is Lionel Trilling, a very gifted young man who was at Columbia for several years with me and who has been in the West for a year. He is now back and I am sure would relish the opportunity which Yaddo offers for the summer" (YR 221.32). During the summer of 1931, Trilling completed substantial portions of his study of Matthew Arnold at Yaddo. In February of 1927, Lewis Mumford, whom Carl Van Doren recommended for admission in 1926, himself recommended several candidates:

> Dear Mrs. Ames:
>
> Thank you for your letter. I have been thinking about Yaddo and its affairs; but nothing more concrete has arisen out of it than a list of people who might be invited - to the interest of Yaddo and themselves. As for craftsmen, I know of none who is not tied to his bench; there may be others, but I don't happen to know them. The nearest approach to such a person is Mrs. Tennessee Mitchel Anderson; she now has a show of her sculpture at the Whitney Studio Club, 12 West 8 street, New York. Her work is full of humorous observation and she could well use such opportunities as Yaddo offers. Next on my list are: Babette Deutsch (Mrs. Avrahm Yarmolinsky) and Avrahm Yarmolinsky, the author of Turgenev. They live at 3950 Packard Street, Sunnyside Gardens, Long Island

[8] The "living expense" was suspended in 1930.

> City. Need I introduce them further? Still another is Miss Eva Goldbeck, 47 Charles St., New York. She is a girl of great promise; but she needs time to complete the novel she is working on; and in the meantime must grub for bread. Mencken thinks well of her; and I can certify to her potentialities. If you invite her, the invitation should be for at least six weeks, I think. Still another possibility is Isidor Schneider, in care of Boni & Liveright, New York. He is the author of Dr. Transit, and has written a stunning long poem for the American Caravan. Finally, there is Alfred Kreymborg, 46 Bank St., New York; he could profit from such an opportunity. The only painter I know is Agnes Tait, who exhibits with the Whitney Studio Club. Henry McBride shares my high opinion of her work; I do not know her address at the moment; but will get it, should you care to send an invitation through me.
>
> This is a selected list; I know all these people personally, and vouch for them (YR 270.32).

If she felt uncertain about a recommendation, Ames would defer judgment to a more experienced opinion. For example, she asked for Carl Van Doren's opinion of Babette Deutsch. Van Doren was less than enthusiastic: "Babette Deutsch and her husband are both gifted and worthy persons," he wrote, "though to speak candidly, I think that Miss Deutsch is no great help to any party. However, she has agreeable intentions and does not mean to be irritating" (YR 311.5). Despite Van Doren's caution, Ames offered invitations to both Deutsch and Kreymborg. Though neither was able to accept, her invitations provided the basis for future visits, by Kreymborg in 1928, and Deutsch in 1936. Such interpersonal evaluation of prospective guests quickly became precedent. "You have been so exceedingly helpful and interested in the two preceding seasons at Yaddo," Ames wrote Mumford in 1927, "I feel I should hardly know how to go about our third year without asking your cooperation" (YR. 270.32).

After receiving a recommendation Ames would write and inform the prospective candidate of Yaddo's purpose and invite them to inquire about terms of residency.

"Several persons have asked that you be considered for the guest list this coming season at Yaddo," Ames wrote to Delmore Schwarz in 1938.

> Undoubtedly you know of the unusual opportunities Yaddo offers for creative work. If, though, you desire further information, I shall be glad to refer you to several persons who have successfully worked here. If you are interested in coming I should hear from you in the very near future since our plans are rapidly taking shape and always more persons desire the privileges of Yaddo than we can consider or accommodate (YR 283.21).

If a candidate chose to apply, samples of their creative work were reviewed by a group of "confidential advisors" who in general were selected by Ames based on her regard for earlier recommendations they had provided. In a 1926 memorandum entitled "Proposed Outline for Selection of Guests for the Season 1926," Ames articulated Yaddo's nascent admissions process.

> The Executive Director will compile an extensive list of candidates together with data concerning them. These lists will be handed to advisors separately. It is hoped that members of the Corporation will send the Executive Director additional names before January first.
>
> The advisors will be asked to endorse or reject the names on these lists, and, if possible, give reasons for so doing. They will also be requested to list names of endorsed candidates in the order of their desirability.
>
> As new names come in, they will be sent to advisors to be passed on and to be placed on the original list of eligible persons. A study of the separate lists will show the Executive Director who are to be invited and in what order to issue an invitation.
>
> Invitations will not be issued for more than two months. When wise, time may be extended later. With a four month season we might entertain in all about 12 or 14 creative workers.
>
> We shall choose advisors to serve us through the season of 1926 only. It is suggested that the honorarium for each person be $100.00. The members of the Corporation should keep secret the names of the advisors. The advisors will be requested to keep their membership secret also (YR 311.2).

In subsequent memoranda, Ames described her "ever-increasing and more far-reaching plans for acquiring names of persons worthy of consideration and of extending my

acquaintance among persons and associations who can give us such help" (YR. 339.5). By the early 1930s, Ames had surrounded herself with a select group of "confidential advisors" whom she had carefully chosen from an emerging generation of artists and critics.

Lewis Mumford provided Ames with several important introductions. In April 1928, he brought to Ames' attention a young professor from Smith College.

> Dear Mrs. Ames:
>
> Are the gates to Yaddo closed for the summer? If not I should like to recommend to you Mr. Newton Arvin. He is a very able young critic and scholar, one of the best in the country. He is finishing a biography of Hawthorne and Yaddo – I discussed last week with [sic] in Northampton, when I lectured at Smith, where he teaches – would mean a great deal to him. Could you possibly squeeze him in? I have always respected and admired Arvin's work: but I didn't call your attention to him before because I had never met him personally and knew nothing of his needs (YR 270.32).

"You are most kind always to be keeping your eyes open in behalf of Yaddo," Ames responded:

> Mr. Arvin sounds interesting and worthwhile. My schedule is at the moment in a state of flux. Very possibly some one will decline an invitation and leave a few weeks at my disposal. Will you be good enough to ask Mr. Arvin to write me, letting me know whether June and July would be agreeable to him? Will you ask him to write me immediately? (YR 270.32).

Within a week Arvin was in correspondence with Ames.

> My dear Mrs. Ames:
>
> Mr. Lewis Mumford has very kindly written me to say that there may be a possibility of my being admitted to Yaddo for a few weeks during the summer and has suggested that I write to you and explain when I could plan to be there. As college activities continue until well into June, I imagine I should have to expect not to be away from here until July, but either that month or the following month would be a free month for me. I gather from Mr. Mumford that a month is the longest period one could stay at Yaddo.
>
> In any event I am very grateful to both Mr. Mumford and you; and should be most happy to hear that I might be admitted.

Yours very sincerely,
Newton Arvin (YR 225.1)

Ames replied with an invitation: "Will it be convenient for you to come to Yaddo July 20th and remain until August 20th?" (YR. 225.1). Arvin arrived on June 20, 1928, planning "the completion of a book on Hawthorne" (YR. 225.1). Ames developed an almost immediate personal rapport with him as well as a deep confidence in his critical judgment. "The hour cometh and now is when recommendations for our next summer's guest list are in order," she wrote to Arvin in 1930. "Who have you in your excellent mind?" Ames asked, adding, "I hear more and more good things about your Hawthorne. I hope you will take the satisfaction in your achievement that you ought to" (YR. 225.1). Arvin brought to Ames' attention another young professor from Smith College, Granville Hicks. By 1932 Ames' confidence in Arvin's opinion was giving important shape to Yaddo's guest list. "Since writing you yesterday I have a letter from Josephine Herbst in which she gives me a long and careful outline of the novel on which she is working," Ames wrote Arvin:

> She is very eager to come to Yaddo and asks if she can know quite soon whether we will have her. Since she is under pressure and is doing a long novel, I think we should cooperate by sending her an early invitation.
>
> Do you know of any reason why she shouldn't enter the kingdom? I have enjoyed her other novels very much and I have great respect for her work and her promise (YR 225.1).

Despite having only met Herbst "for a brief moment," Arvin assured Ames that, "my impression of her was a very pleasant one, and I personally hope she will come" YR. 225.1). Herbst arrived at Yaddo in June 1932 and remained through August.

Also in 1928, Irita Van Doren recommended a struggling young intellectual and aspiring critic, who had recently returned from Paris. "I haven't any candidates right off the bat, except one man, Malcolm Cowley, for whom Yaddo would be perfect," she wrote. "He is a good poet of infrequent but distinctive verse, an excellent translator from the French (he did that remarkable translation of Valery's "Variete"), and is now working on an account of the dramatic episodes which took place in the early years of slavers and slave running for Harcourt Brace" (YR 293.31). Cowley's growing reputation and appointment as literary editor at *The New Republic* earned Ames' confidence. "I know Mr. Cowley's work and have recognized in it the distinction you mention," she replied. At Ames' request, in 1930 Peabody invited Cowley to serve as a Confidential Advisor.

> My Dear Mr. Cowley
>
> On behalf of [the] Corporation of Yaddo I have the honor to express to you the hope that it may be your pleasure and convenience to serve for this coming year as a member of one of our Advisory Committees again.
>
> Our practice has been to receive nominations from artists and writers respecting those whom they think have or give promise of having the creative faculty, to further which this Foundation was established by Spencer and Katrina Trask as a retreat during some or all of the summer months during which the mansion is opened.
>
> These nominations are therefore submitted to the members of our Advisory Committee for recommendations as to preference which might be given in extending the invitations. For the current year the Directors have suspended the hereto nominal charge of one dollar per day, so that those who are invited for 1930 will be completely the guests of Yaddo.
>
> The Executive Director, Mrs. John Carroll Ames, receives the nominations, and in due course will submit to you names of such writers as her inquires may find justified to present for your discussion and recommendation. We are inviting as the other members of the Committee on Writers Mr. Lewis Mumford, and Mr. Sidney Cox of Dartmouth College.
>
> Our Board appropriates the sum of one hundred dollars as the Honorarium for each of these committees who may be good enough to thus cooperate in our endeavor to serve the cause of Art in the United States (YR 238.2).

"My dear Mr. Peabody," replied Cowley. "I feel very much honored by your invitation to serve on one of the advisory committees of the Corporation of Yaddo, and I shall be glad to act in the capacity, with Lewis Mumford, whom I respect highly, and Sidney Cox, whom I know only by name" (YR 238.2). Ames quickly began to request Cowley's assistance. "I am sending you a packet of information about several persons asking for the privileges of Yaddo. Will you please give me your frank and explicit opinion in each case, and return the material as soon as you have had time to finish it?" (YR 238.2). She also offered Cowley an invitation, assuring him that, "we will reserve whatever time is suitable for you" (YR 238.2). Finally in 1928, Alfred Kreymborg provided Ames with a recommendation that would quickly align Yaddo's reputation as a center for literary development with its emergence as a center for musical composition. At Kreymborg's suggestion, Ames offered an invitation to Yaddo to a young composer studying at Harvard.

> Dear Mr. Copland:
>
> Mr. Alfred Kreymborg writes me that you are interested in Yaddo and that you would like to spend June and July here. Our routine requires that every person have two or three proposers. Will you therefore please send me another name or two of persons who are competent to pass judgment on your work and who know you personally? Since our calendar is rapidly filling, it would be well if I might hear from you almost immediately (YR 208.39).

Despite Ames' emphatic invitation, "We shall be very glad to have you come to Yaddo on the opening day, Monday June fourth, and remain until August first," (YR. 237.5) Copland was unable to accept. "I most unexpectedly received an invitation from the Hollywood Bowl Association to play my Concerto at their summer concerts," he replied, "and will take this opportunity of seeing the West" (237.5). Copland did accept an

invitation the following year. He spent July of 1930 working in *Stone Tower* (the original ice-house) which he described as, "the perfect setting for an outdoor performance of the Tower Scene in Pelleas." He assured Ames that he worked "extraordinarily well." Copland later recalled that his grand accommodation witnessed the unorthodox completion of *Piano Variations*.

> It was not composed in the consecutive order of its finished state. I am told that this is at odds with what I have written about the piece – that each variation is meant to develop organically from the previous one and all contribute to a carefully constructed whole. While this is so, it is also true that I worked on the variations individually, not knowing exactly where or how they would eventually fit together. I cannot explain this contradiction. One fine day when the time was right, the order of the variations fell into place. That time was not to come until after we left Bedford Village for Yaddo . . . it was there I derived, from sixty-two pages of sketches I had carried with me to Yaddo, the seventeen-page score of the *Piano Variations* (Copland and Perlis, 177).

Like Arvin and Cowley, Copland developed an immediate rapport with Ames. "Have you one or more persons to propose for our guest list?" Ames wrote Copland in February. "If you have I shall be glad to refer their names to our confidential advisors who make selections" (YR. 237.5). "Dear Mrs. Ames," Copland replied.

> I have two composers to propose for your guest list. One is Marc Blitzstein and the other Walter Piston.
>
> Blitzstein tells me that he has already written you. He is among the most talented of our younger composers and has already composed an opera, chamber opera, ballet, chamber music, songs, etc. He is extraordinarily musical in a general way – musical almost to a fault, by which I mean that at times the music seems to flow almost too easily. As a person, you will find him very social, with an engaging personality. I feel sure that he can fit into the life at Yaddo and that you will enjoy having him as a guest.
>
> Walter Piston is another composer whom I can recommend. He is about 35 and teaches music at Harvard . . . His work is extremely competent though not as original as Blitzstein's. It has been played by the Boston Symphony on several occasions. In character he is quiet and reserved and immediately gives one the impression of absolute sincerity. I haven't seen him this winter (tho I expect to

> see him in Boston about March 20) so that I haven't had the opportunity of telling him about Yaddo (YR 237.5).

By 1933, Newton Arvin, Aaron Copland, Malcolm Cowley, Granville Hicks, and Lewis Mumford had all served as confidential advisors. As Ames' confidence in their evaluations deepened, so to did their influence. "I have recently worked out a plan for building up around me a group of persons whom I call Yaddo associates," Ames wrote Arvin in February of 1933. "You received a copy of the formal letter sent to all of them. I hope it binds you to Yaddo for the far future" (YR 225.1).

An especially strong recommendation from one of Ames' advisors often resulted in an invitation independent of more general evaluation. "Malcolm Cowley suggested that there might be a possibility of my being one of your guests for a short while this summer," wrote John Cheever in April of 1933, "so that I could continue, under more comfortable circumstances the work that I have in hand."

> Other than Malcolm's word and a few published stories, I have little to recommend me. I am planning to be a writer and have been working for the last year on apprenticeship prose. At present I am trying to write a handful of good short stories.
>
> It is necessary to say that, after eight months in the city a short time in the country (and it is splendid country I understand) would be pleasant (YR 235.11).

"Malcolm Cowley has already written me interestingly of your work and experiences," replied Ames. "Our plans for the early part of the summer are now made. I shall keep you in mind for any possible vacancies coming later in the summer or fall" (YR 235.11). "Evidently Yaddo is full right now," Cheever explained to Cowley. Undeterred, Cheever wrote Ames the following year, again stressed his relationship with Cowley, and provided a more personal context to his emerging artistry.

> Dear Mrs. Ames,
>
> Last year at about this time I wrote you, at Malcolm Cowley's suggestion asking about coming to Yaddo. The letter was pretty late in the season and there was no room, and Mr. Cowley suggested that I write again this year.
>
> He wrote you, I think, about my work. What, or how much he said I don't know. The facts in the case are simple enough. I am twenty two years old and have been writing for a number of years although I haven't published anything since 1932. I can vouch for the quantity if not the quality and promise of the work I would do if there were a vacancy at Yaddo.
>
> Everyone is, I imagine, reluctant to refer to the work in hand. I have lived all of my life within view of, and nearly everyday of the last two years within Boston. The city is old, out of step with the century but age only seems to have quickened its elements. The Communists are clubbed in front of a staid, Georgian façade. Relics from the past continually pierce the present. Some dream of love survives the sandstone apartment houses. A paranoid ruins the Public Library. And within half and hour's ride is the New England country where occasionally an abandoned house or a view surviving the hoardings and the hot-dog stands gives the memory an unexpected twist. The work in hand I think would deal with the horror and glory of this particular brick horizon.
>
> The idea of leaving the city for a short while, after two uninterrupted years has never been so distant or so desirable.
>
> Sincerely yours,
>
> John Cheever (235.11)

Cowley also wrote to Ames on Cheever's behalf.

> Recently, I received a letter from my young friend Jon [sic] Cheever, who doesn't seem such a young friend any longer because I have now known him for four years, ever since we published his first piece in *The New Republic*. During the last year he hasn't appeared so frequently in print, but he hasn't ceased to develop, and I feel sure now that he will fulfill the remarkable promise that was held out by his first sketches. Newton Arvin knows him and I think will back up what I say about him. I know that it's very much too late now to write about asking guests to Yaddo. Still, from time to time there is someone who finds himself unable to come, and if such a vacancy should occur it might be very nice to have Jon Cheever come. I think you would like him (YR 238.2).

Cheever was admitted. "I am putting Jon [sic] Cheever on my list for perhaps an invitation the latter part of the summer," Ames assured Cowley (YR 235.11).

Cheever's acceptance set an important precedent of influence. "Eleanor Clark telephoned me the other day and told me she was crazy to get away somewhere and finish

her novel, on which she has about two weeks work remaining, Cowley wrote Ames in 1936. "I advised her to write you. If you remember, I spoke to you about her and John Cheever can tell you more. She is a nice girl, a friend of Muriel Rukeyser, and very able" (YR. 238.2). Like Cheever, Clark was admitted independent of a more general review. Further, Ames' regard for Cowley's opinion identifies a guardianship of Yaddo's interests that emerged during the 1930s, and which coalesced around Ames' developing intimacy with her advisors. "Newton Arvin and Granville Hicks are coming over here for the weekend," Ames wrote Cowley in 1940, "so that we can all sit down around a table and plow through the list" (YR. 238.2).

By 1938, a young Leonard Bernstein could confidently rely on Aaron Copland's influence at Yaddo. "I should like very, very much to be invited as a guest to Yaddo for any period at all this summer," he wrote Ames. "I am a composer studying music at Harvard, and I shall be free from about the tenth of June. I can furnish letters of recommendation from Walter Piston, Aaron Copland, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Edward Burlington Hill, and others" (YR. 237.5). Similarly, Alfred Kazin relied on Newton Arvin's influence when he wrote Ames in 1942.

> Newton Arvin has already told you, I believe, of my desire to come to Yaddo for a short period in June. I don't know how much he has told you about myself or about the work I am doing; but I hope this letter may serve as an application.
>
> I shall be twenty-seven years old in June. For several years now I have been working at a long critical study of modern American prose, 1890-1940, for which I have received a Guggenheim Fellowship (1940-41) and which is to be published in the fall by Reynal and Hitchcock. Excerpts from this work have already been published in The Saturday Review, The Antioch Review, The Sewanee Review. I am a lecturer at The New School for Social Research and teach in the evenings at The City College.

> The work I am doing represents one of the first attempts yet made to cover the modern movement in American literature with any sort of fullness. I began it several years ago because I felt that all my work as a critic up till then had been a preparation for it, and partly because it seemed to me that such work would be a study in that whole welter of modern American experience which it has been so easy to describe, yet never to see in historical perspective. I can't begin to tell you how much a chance to work at Yaddo would mean to me now, for I am working on the last stages of the book, and after a difficult and rather painful year of having to save moments from teaching, moments for devotion to a task that has called out all the devotion I possess, nothing would spur me on so much as a chance to finish the book at Yaddo (YR 258.12).

Kazin arrived at Yaddo on June 12. Over the following two weeks he completed *On Native Grounds*.

By the early 1930s a strong recommendation from one Ames' advisors could result in an invitation, or at least its implication, without a prospective guest having any knowledge of Yaddo and its purpose. In February of 1933, Horace Gregory, whom Cowley had brought to Ames' attention the preceding year, wrote to Ames in order to recommend a promising young novelist from Chicago, "James T. Farrell, The Vanguard Press, New York City" (YR 250.14). The following month Ames wrote directly to Farrell.

> As you probably know, several of your warm friends and admirers have urged that you be considered for the guest list at Yaddo this summer.
>
> No decisions have been made, and no invitations will be issued until about the middle of next month. It would be helpful though if you could let me know what would be the best time for you to come to Yaddo. Would it be possible for you to come in May? July and August are always in great demand because persons in editorial positions and on college faculties have their vacations in those months (YR 244.18).

Farrell received Ames' letter enthusiastically. Within weeks Ames wrote to confirm the details of Farrell's invitation.

> We shall be glad to have you as one of our guests from the first of August to the corresponding date in September. It is our custom to issue invitations for no more than a month with the understanding that this invitation will be extended if it is possible and seems justifiable to do so. It is barely possible that I shall be able to set the date of your arrival in July, but about that I cannot know until June. You will be glad to know, I think that there are certain traditions here having to do with every person's right to privacy and solitude while living in a group and to work with the assurance that he will not suffer interruption. About these traditions we shall give you specific information. Our guests are asked to observe them without exception (YR 244.18).

By 1940, Ames had consolidated important authority over Yaddo by shrewdly positioning herself at the center of an admissions process that remained subject to her discretion. The establishment of a furtive and interpersonal admissions process was only one of Ames' strategies for safeguarding the Trasks' interests.

Especially during its first two decades, life at Yaddo conformed to Ames' regard for established traditions, and especially to her unwavering insistence that social decorum could be brought into positive alignment with creative energy. During the 1930s invitations generally included the explanation that Yaddo's traditions, "are such that it is sought by those creative workers who value the privilege of working without interruption in an atmosphere of industry and serious intention. Its traditions are such, also, that there is an observance of the amenities of living, and freedom to be as social or as reclusive as one likes. Yaddo is known as a meeting place of ideas as well as a place for the recreation and rest necessary to create work of a high order" (YR 312.18). For Ames, insistence on privacy and seclusion were essential to maintaining Yaddo's practice of providing separation from worldly concern. "I do not know how much you know about Yaddo," Ames wrote Truman Capote in 1946,

> . . . so it may be well for me to say, for your better understanding, that it is not an institution but a spacious country home to which one is invited as a guest, where he will have as much seclusion and privacy as he wishes and where all that is asked of him is to observe the social amenities of civilized living.
> At the time of your arrival, there may be twelve or fourteen persons here and, to the extent that you care for their society, you will, I know, find many of them pleasant and interesting people. Well in advance of May the first, you will receive more special information about Yaddo. Will you please acknowledge this letter at once? (YR 234.4).

During working hours visits to another guests' studio required written invitation. Spouses were invited only if they could demonstrate sufficient creative talent. In 1939, the newly married Delmore Schwartz kept his young bride deftly concealed from Ames' watchful eye. Writer Jerre Mangione recalled, "after the evening meal when, as a Yaddo ritual, the guests gathered in the great living room of the mansion for coffee and conversation with Mrs. Ames and her sister Marjorie . . . I could just catch a glimpse of the girl, who, Ophelia like, would furtively peer through the big glass wall at one end of the room" (Mangione, 254). Ames eventually relented and allowed Schwartz's wife to join the other guests.

Regarding the observance of "the social amenities of civilized living," Ames' sense of propriety was law. Irving Stone spent several weeks at Yaddo during the summer of 1930 working on his biographical novel *Vincent Van Gogh, Lust for Life*. "Mrs. Ames ran a very taut ship," he recalled.

> Among the rules was that there could be no visiting between the artists, either working in the main house or in the cabins, until four in the afternoon. By the same token no one could go in to Saratoga, regardless of his needs, before four in the afternoon. There were a good many other rules and my fellow guests were forever breaking one rule or another after which they got a rather terse and severe note from Mrs. Ames which was left on the angled desk on the second floor, in the library, where the daily mail was placed. After a time, the other people were

> so frightened at the idea that they were afraid to go to the desk to pick up their mail.

Ames would come to refer to Yaddo's social ethos as "a kind of private hospitality" in which "a spirit of goodwill and amenity is expected as one of the conditions of a visit" (YR. 339.10). She also remained adamant that the "strictly private and personal quality of the hospitality that Yaddo offers," not be disturbed. Many guests would come to regard Ames enforcement as intrusively imperious. According to Diana Trilling, there was "reason to suppose that the housemaids had the auxiliary function of spying for Mrs. Ames" (Trilling, 178). How else Trilling reasoned, "could she have known that Lionel and I slept in only one of our twin beds?" Within a few days of their arrival Lionel Trilling received a note, "asking if we intended to use our second bed; if not, the maid could be spared the necessity of making it up" (Trilling, 178). By 1933, Ames could proudly claim that, "it is also to be noted that all through these years a quiet instance on a certain rule of living has finally made the rule of living an honored and accepted tradition." Yaddo, Ames maintained,

> is for those who value an ordered and civilized mode of life, for those who are serious creative workers either in achievement or promise and who, therefore, are grateful for this ordered life for rest or for work and play as their problems dictate. This ordered quiet, this observance of certain amenities, as for example, the observance of the studio day and at all times of one's right to privacy in his studio and at certain places in the Mansion, everyone at Yaddo now observes, including Resident Directors, guests, and working staff (YR. 344.1)).

Upon their arrival guests often received a typed addendum to their invitation which read as a form of contract, and which stated the terms of their residency.

Please read the following with care.

> Through seven years at Yaddo certain customs have been so encouraged and enjoyed by a large majority of our guests that they have become now traditions.
>
> These traditions have to do with the right of each person to enjoy solitude and privacy while living in a large group, and his right to work protected and therefore without fear of interruption. These traditions have been encouraged by the observance of the following points. You are asked to observe them without exception.
>
> 1. Breakfast is an informal meal which many prefer to eat in silence. Please respect their right to do so.
>
> 2. The working day is in general from nine to four o'clock. During these hours there is no studio visiting. Those who are not working during these hours are requested not to frequent the grounds near outside studios, and to observe quiet in the Mansion and near it.
>
> 3. There should be no studio visiting before four o'clock except by explicit invitation.
>
> 4. Lunches may be eaten in studios, dining room, or in remote places on the grounds. Two or more persons lunching together should be careful not to disturb anyone at work in his studio.
>
> 5. Silence is always observed in second floor reading rooms and the adjoining balcony. After four o'clock each day the social rooms on the first floor are for conversation and music (YR. 344.3).

Indiscretions resulted in typed reprimands written on infamous light-blue typing paper. These notes frequently appeared in the lunch box of unsuspecting guests, or if the offense warranted, they were left in more public view.

> Several periodicals have disappeared from the reading table. The daily papers are also occasionally missing. Please observe our request not to remove these from the reading room (YR 344.6).

Or similarly,

> Will everyone take precautions against unnecessary talking in the rear of the mansion during the morning?
>
> We have to assure our guests working in studios that they will not be disturbed.

> Thank you all for the cooperation I know you so gladly give (YR 344.6).

Even the most seemingly pedestrian indiscretions attracted Ames' notice. In a 1933 memorandum addressed to "Old Timers at Yaddo," Ames complained of the "disagreeable matter of some persons taking milk when they have not asked for it or taking more than their share" (YR 344.5). When her address failed to achieve compliance, Ames posted a more prominent notice.

> Notice
>
> I am sorry that I am compelled to mention again the prosaic business of bed-time milk. It has been said many times this summer that only one glass for a person can be provided because of the necessity of economy in our budget. It is extremely discouraging to discover that one or more persons are so thoughtless as either to take the milk without registering for it or to drink more than one glass.
>
> If everyone will not be courteous and cooperative, we shall have to give up milk unless certain of our guests will be willing to dispense it at an appointed time. Will any one wishing milk whose name does not appear on the list below please sign up today without fail.
>
> Mrs. Reisman
> Mrs. Metcalfe
> Mr. Reisman
> Mr. Metcalfe
> Mr. Byer
> Mr. Davis
> Mr. Gregory
> Mrs. Gregory
> Mr. Slochower
> Mrs. Stillman
> Mr. Neugass.
> (YR. 344.5)

It was not uncommon for shorter notices to be attached to various infrastructures and which mandated such observances as: "Please do not go to another person's studio unless you are invited to do so"; "There should be no visiting in studios when someone is working in an adjoining studio"; "Please turn off unnecessary lights"; and, "Yaddo has

little fire protection. Please dispose carefully of smoking material in the house and on the grounds." Failure to comply was certain to attract Ames' immediate displeasure.

Ames enforced her expectations with famous rigidity. Lionel Trilling's wife was temporarily expelled from Yaddo in 1931 after visiting another studio before 4:00. Despite Trilling's explanation that, "he had asked me to come to his room before that hour so that he could take my picture in proper light," the following day she discovered a light-blue note in her lunch box which detailed the exact terms of her expulsion. "My husband was to remain but I was to depart," she recalled, adding that the note, "mentioned the date and even the train on which I would leave without lunch." During the summer of 1946, Truman Capote described a less severe reprimand to his editor Mary Louise Aswell.

> Well, I knew it was too good to last: I'm in trouble, and it's all Leo's fault. According to Mrs. Ames, Howard Doughty and I are "insistently persecuting" him. See, Leo has a real aberration about snakes: he makes me escort him every day from the mansion to his studio; but he has dramatized the whole thing to such a ridiculous extent that everybody here thought he was half-way joking. So yesterday Howard came to my studio for lunch. When he left he stepped on a snake in my yard, and picked it up. Leo, who was standing in his doorway across the road, saw it, and began to scream: "You're mean, you're cruel!" then slammed his door, pulled down all his shades, and curled up under his desk, and stayed there the whole afternoon, in a real fit of terror: no one, of course, had any intention of frightening him. But two workmen who were putting firewood in our studios saw the whole thing and reported it to Mrs. A., who promptly sent a little "blue note" (all communication is carried on through these blue notes) saying that Mr. Lerman had been made ill by our (Howard's and mine) insistent persecution. I suppose it will blow over, but it's all too absurd for words. Leo, of course, feels very badly that he got us in so much trouble. Howard wrote a wonderful reply explaining everything (we felt like naughty schoolboys, which annoyed Howard, for he is a professor at Harvard, and is 42 years old) (Clark, 102).

When Cheever learned that Dorothy Parker had been invited to Yaddo he anticipated (rightly) her being the frequent recipient of, "little notes such as: Please do not put your

banana peels in the waste-basket. E.A. Please try and return your lunch-box more punctually. E.A. Please do not practice the Jewsharp before four-thirty. There are other studios nearby. E.A." (Cheever, ed., 214).

Despite her apparent severity, Ames' imperious eye often proved more fastidious when it came to more playful infractions. Ames remained lenient when Cheever discovered a stash of aged brandy in the dark recesses of the mansion which had turned clear from age. Under Ames' watchful eye (and despite a prohibition era sign insisting "Please save Yaddo from embarrassment by avoiding social drinking"), Cheever took to liberally filling his water glass at dinner. Carson McCullers' fetish for liberally borrowing from Truman Capote's wardrobe was similarly dismissed as youthful indiscretion. Ames' reputed moral severity also proved surprisingly lax when it came to romantic escapades.

While Ames' watchful eye was frequently regarded with mistrust, her commitment to providing guests every opportunity for creative development was unquestioned. After spending July of 1928 at Yaddo developing his manuscript of Dr. *Johnson and Mr. Boswell*, Harry Salpeter described the creative environment Ames had devised.

> To be away from home, and yet to be at home; to be on vacation and yet to feel, and to be able to obey, the compulsion to do one's own work; to be one of a number of guests and never to be intruded upon; to be under deep obligation and never made to be made to feel the slightest sense of obligation; to be cut off from the world and yet to enjoy a sense of communal self-sufficiency; to meet a diversity of fellow-mortals and feel no sense of conflict or difference; to find that rules exist to minister to one's ease and comfort . . . to live in another man's house as if it were one's own without the responsibility of governing it and with friendly fellow guests . . . these are the things that Yaddo has given at least to one of its visitors during the present summer (*The World*, August 14, 1928).

Guests who accepted Ames' proprieties and demonstrated their enthusiasm for Yaddo's creative environment often became recipients of her beneficence. James Farrell quickly adapted to life at Yaddo. Within weeks of his arrival, Ames not only agreed to prolong Farrell's residency, but even suspended one of her most sacrosanct rules and allowed Farrell's wife, Dorothy, to live at Yaddo. Over the following years the likes of John Cheever, Carson McCullers, and Katherine Anne Porter would attract Ames' similar beneficence. Such accommodation allowed for the completion of *Falconer*, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, and substantive portions of *Ship of Fools*.

By 1940, Ames had proven definitively the value (or providence) of Peabody's appointment. Peabody himself described, "the great good fortune which has come to us in learning of Mrs. Ames, and securing her cooperation in developing this unique work for the furtherance of the great effort to enable democracy in America to find itself" (YR. 345.10). Ames had overseen the practical establishment of the Trasks' vision, and was presiding over an effective administration that allowed her to maintain a shrewd authority. Despite such accomplishment Yaddo's future as a center of formative composition was finally determined by Ames' careful cultivation of formative relationships with her closest advisors.

Chapter Five

Intimacy

> On my first brief visit to Yaddo, and then on longer visits that followed, I was somewhat overawed not only by the splendors of the mansion – with its 55 rooms, as someone had counted them – but also by the planned richness of the estate. Besides the rose garden and the rock garden, where I loved to wander, there was the huge concrete garage, there was a stable with a herd of cows, there was a carriage house full of relics, there were views across the Hudson Valley to Mt. Equinox, in Vermont. At a distance from the estate was Triuna Island in Lake George, where John Cheever had charge of the motorboat one summer when he might otherwise have starved. Two or three debutantes whose families summered on Lake George were hopefully in love with John.[9]
>
> – Malcolm Cowley

On June 7 1926, Yaddo welcomed its first creative guests. "On the twenty-fifth of May those who had addressed themselves to arraying the mansion for its new life, looked upon their completed task and felt that it was a success," Ames recalled, adding, "Necessary decoration had been done, necessary supplies purchased, certain rooms rearranged and new used. After its years of no occupancy and of waiting fulfillment, the beloved house had the appearance of a stage setting ready for the actors to come and the play to begin." In October 1929, the crash of the stock market signaled the beginning of a series of national and world events that would influence Yaddo's creative environment. The Depression, World War Two, and eventually, the Cold War each identifies a moment of historical influence which, collectively, established distance between the Trasks' vision for Yaddo and its development as an institution. For three years, however, from 1926 to 1929, Ames presided over a community that was in almost complete alignment with the traditions the Trasks' had bequeathed.

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[9] Calisher et al., 15

In total, Yaddo hosted 20 guests during its first season, including, according to Ames, "two composers, two painters, six poets, two novelists" while "the remainder were prose workers of various kinds." In keeping with the values Spencer instilled at the National Arts Club, gender equality was carefully maintained. "There were almost always equal numbers of men and women," reported Ames. In her "Report of Yaddo's First Season," completed during the fall of 1926, Ames described Yaddo's working environment as an extension of the community the Trasks' had nurtured:

> If I were asked to define briefly the prevailing spirit, I should say that it derived from good will and serious purpose and an almost reverent appreciation for the opportunities for work and inspiration. Throughout the day the silence reigning in the house bespoke of work and sustained effort. Before and after dinner unconstrained conversation, laughter and irrepressible good spirits told of friendliness and relaxation.
>
> With the exception of perhaps two persons badly in need of rest, I should say that almost everyone worked as a rule through the morning. Many stayed in their studios until our four o'clock tea hour or even later. From tea time until our six-thirty dinner there were tennis, walking, croquet, swimming at Saratoga Lake. After dinner there were occasional dancing on the terrace, occasional riding in our utility car, a great deal of reading in the upstairs hall. On cool nights there were happy hours around the fire, and best of all there were frequent evenings of music in the Memorial Room, for our musical guests were generous with their gifts, both of voice and piano. These musical events were shared always with our faithful household workers. I fancy that in the years to come the long uninterrupted hours of work, the evenings around the fire and in the Memorial Room will become to our former guests symbols of the life at Yaddo. One departing guest voiced this when he said in his inimitable French manner: "I shall remember always our delightful gatherings by the fire and our evenings of music and, Madame, I have met nowhere such opportunities for work" (YR 139.3).

Ames' reference to the artistic house party Katrina envisioned is unmistakable. Under her precise administration Yaddo played host to a group of imaginative interests whose creative activity developed against a backdrop of a leisured exchange of cultural values. So complete was Ames' commitment to the Trasks' vision that she went so far as to

assure members of the corporation that necessary changes to Yaddo's infrastructure would "destroy or dim nothing of the older order and beauty" (YR 139.3). While the Trasks' sensibilities remained at the center of Yaddo's culture, Ames quickly began to develop formative relationships. When combined with Ames' seemingly innate ability to identify and foster nascent artistry, these relationships established important precedents of influence that give defining shape to Yaddo's development.

Like Arvin and Cowley before him John Cheever quickly earned Ames' confidence. His impish behavior and dedication to his work attracted Ames' early notice. In addition to assuring Cheever that his residency could be extended into October of 1934, "assuming, of course, that you are still in harmony with our mode of life at Yaddo and that you find Yaddo good for work," Ames suggested that an additional visit could be arranged if Cheever agreed to work for the opportunity.

> Dear John,
>
> With the final making of my plans it now seems best to set your departure for Monday, October 8th. Perhaps after a month or so it will be possible to make some arrangements for you to come back either by contributing something for your board or perhaps doing some outdoor labor of which there is always plenty to do here at Yaddo.
>
> I can't at the moment make any definitive statement but I'd like to keep it in mind if the idea seems attractive and practical to you (YR 235.11).

Facing the certainty of economic hardship, Cheever's reaction was predictably enthusiastic: "There seems to be a lot to do, everything to do in my case," he wrote, "and I would be very grateful for a chance to write during the summer and I know that there is no better place. If it would make it more possible I would be glad to work for the chance. I can drive, swim well enough to be intrusted [sic] with a boat, handle an axe; nothing spectacular but generally useful. And a job could probably be fitted in with working

hours (YR 235.11). Ames agreed. "My father keeps telling me, and asking me not to forget, that one whistle means a starboard passing, two, a port passing, three a salute and four means astern," Cheever later assured Ames, adding, "I've also been studying Marine engine instruction books." For guests at Triuna Island, afternoon boating excursions were a favorite pastime. Among other responsibilities Cheever was entrusted with operating the motor boat at Lake George. Cheever remained deeply appreciative.

> I have a lot of things to thank you for and I am sincerely grateful. It was one of the best summers, in every way, I have ever known. And the work of my own that I did do is so much better than anything else I have ever done, that I feel fine about it. And I am also grateful for the payment you generously made me and for the chance of doing manual work (YR 235.11).

Ames' accommodation provided for an important creative result: "A young writer who[m] Yaddo has fostered through two years makes his debut in writing with a story which was published in the March number of the *Atlantic Monthly*," Ames wrote in 1936; "His name is John Cheever, and the story is called *In Passing, An American Chronicle*. It is well worth reading" (YR 345.14).

At the same time, Ames informed Cheever that her largess would not continue if he did not find additional means of support. Cheever's response was conciliatory but included a confessional quality that identifies his growing regard for Ames.

> Dear Mrs. Ames,
>
> It was good to hear from you. I'm still in the country. It's a good place to work. I cut the wood and shellac the floors and prune the orchards and plant the garden and knock off the book. But I've got to go back soon.
>
> I was very glad to hear your advice about putting in time at some other occupation besides writing. I have thought about it a lot and worried about it a lot. And also your remarks about the expenditure of energy in protraction instead of adjustment. I can't help but view the thing in an intensely personal light. I have thought about it continually during the past winter and during the time I have been in Massachusetts. The problem is not, I think, the evasion of occupation and

> adjustment but the inability to find occupation and the enforced lack of adjustment. It is not a problem peculiar to writers but the problem of an entire generation of younger men.
>
> From the time when I took a job as stock-boy in an abandoned subway tube when I was about fifteen, I have almost always worked. I have held the average run of jobs, driving a truck, working on a small newspaper etc. But about two years ago the possibility of holding these jobs stopped. I have no trade, no degree, no special training. Straightforward application for any kind of work from a bus-boy to an advertising copy-writer has been completely ineffectual. During the winter of '33 I held a part time job. In the winter of '34 I held a political job. I have supported myself this winter by writing synopses for M-G-M, not because I like to but because I can't find work as a loom-fixer or anything else. By pulling every possible wire I may be able to get a job in a ship building plant this fall. I would much prefer it to any other opening; an editorial position.
>
> The matter of adjustment seems to be a matter of personal courage and talent. Some people can have a great many lovers and take airplanes and trains from state to state and country to country and still remain cowards and children. Other people remain in one town and remain faithful to one wife and grow into mature convincing men. There is a small number of scholars and artists, who, through the illusion of research and work, fail to make any but the earliest adjustments and who you find at the age of thirty and forty, sitting in the same rooms, weighing the same, unimportant decisions with their correspondence unmailed and the dust settling on their youths. But financial and emotional independence seems to make such a condition impossible. When you have no money you live, at least, in continual anxiety.
>
> I've gone into this at length, I'm afraid, more to ease my own conscience than anything else, and I hope it hasn't been too confusing or dull. I hope to hear from you soon (YR 235.11).

By 1936, "Mrs. Ames" had become "Elizabeth," and Cheever's letters begin to express a more casual friendliness. In May he wrote Ames from his home in Quincy, Massachusetts:

> Dear Elizabeth,
>
> We drove directly from Saratoga to here and I've been here ever since, living with my parents, finishing the novel, drinking, bowling and seeing people I used to know and it's been very good. It's a town of about sixty thousand, settled in the early seventeenth century. It grew wealthy on leather and granite and has since grown very poor on leather and granite. Henry Adams used to spend his summers in a house down the street. Everyone has an antique name. . . . It's the town I know best and although I wouldn't want to live here, its always good to come back.

> My plans are still up in the air and dependent entirely upon money. The only definite thing is that I will be in Bolton on June first, and I look forward to it. The novel is finished and in the mail. I celebrated by driving down to Orleans and eating a whole chicken and drinking a bottle of Burgundy on the beach. We also went swimming and wrestled. I had not been on the Cape for a couple of years and it was a good experience. Crossing the canal at Sagamore or Bourne is like coming into another world and always will be for me. Even the clap-boarding on the gas-stations is different and the timber is different and the marshes around Barnstable are different and the dunes looked good and familiar and the sea was running high, white, mighty, cold, and smelling strong. If I don't get to New York I won't feel any great loss. Simon and Schuster won't have read the novel by this time and to talk with them is my only real reason for going there.
>
> And I'll see you in Bolton.
>
> As ever (YR 235.11)

Cheever kept Ames appraised of his struggles throughout the Depression, and especially about his experience of the W.P.A. "The boarding house we live in is a little alcoholic as boarding houses go," he wrote in 1937; "[F]or the table mates we have two secretaries from the Russian embassy, two librarians, a man from the tariff commission, a government clerk and another man from my office. There is also an old lady who sits at the head of the table and says all W.P.A. workers are lazy and good-for-nothing and she's finding it harder and harder to get me to pass her the lima beans" (Cheever ed., 45). As best she could Ames provided Cheever with financial assistance. "I neglected to send you any money on my debt last pay day because of another increase on my obligations," Cheever explained; "I'm buying my father a set of teeth. The inexhaustible man went swimming a month ago. A wave picked him up, knocked him down, lifted out his teeth and swept them off into the bowels of the Atlantic" (Cheever ed., 45). For Ames, such gestures were rare. While she would later offer both Carson McCullers and Katherine Anne Porter brief financial support, Ames reserved such offers for the most dedicated artists, people she knew would make genuine sacrifices for their art.

During the winter of 1938 Peabody's health failed. Ames and her sister traveled to Georgia to be with him during, what would be, his final illness. During her absence, Ames arranged for Cheever to remain at Yaddo in her own residence at Pine Garde, and even entrusted him with the care of her spaniel, Brownie. "Life at your house goes on" Cheever assured Ames, "Mrs. Wilson feeds us well and I take Brownie out for a constitutional after lunch as well giving her a work-out with the pig. She refuses to take more than one walk a day, however. If Leonard takes her out she won't go with me and if I take her, she won't budge for Leonard. She's 'notional' as Mrs. Wilson says. But she seems happier and less nervous than she seemed last winter" (YR 235.11). Throughout the 1930s Ames' relationship with Cheever developed amid a larger network of growing confidences that coalesced around her authority over Yaddo's creative environment.

In January 1928, Irita Van Doren included in her recommendation for Malcolm Cowley the fact that, since his return from Europe in 1923, Cowley had been struggling to establish himself, and his young (and problematic) wife, by means of his own literary talent. Cowley, Van Doren wrote,

> is poor as a church mouse with no visible means of support, except occasional advances from publishers. He is in frail health, and is, I am afraid, destined to a long continuation of these circumstances on account of his wife.
>
> She, frankly, is the stumbling block in his career. He married her out of the studios of Greenwich Village, and he seems not only determined to take care of her but to be very fond of her. She drinks like a fish, and is what Carl inelegantly calls a "slut". They live in a hopeless tenement on the East River in an atmosphere which makes it quite impossible for him to work. He is a Harvard man, personally very charming, and would, I think, fit in very well at Yaddo if only he can be persuaded to leave her for the summer or part of it. The life you can offer him there would be his salvation both physically and mentally. How does the idea strike you?

Trusting in Van Doren's assessment, Ames reasoned that Yaddo could offer Cowley an ideal opportunity to escape his economic and domestic complications, provided that his invitation require separation from his wife. "I should think an extended visit at Yaddo would be a life saver for him in more ways than one," Ames replied:

> We would do our best to return him better physically equipped for enduring the lady or perhaps we could do something even better than that, who knows. Asking her of course would be out of the question. She probably would interfere with him, have nothing to contribute to others, and possibly be a problem to him. Yaddo provides neither a bar nor a gold cure for its guests. The living fee at Yaddo now is only a dollar a day. If he is not equal to that, I might think of some other arrangement. I will put him on the list for official approval. Meanwhile work on him, if you will, and let me know what happens (YR 293.21).

Van Doren's recommendation identifies an important convergence between Yaddo's nascent culture and Cowley's struggle to establish his literary reputation. Their union would prove formative to both Cowley and Yaddo. "I have been requested to send you some information about Yaddo," Ames wrote Cowley in February, "whether you are interested for yourself or another my correspondent did not state" (YR. 238.2). Cowley's commitments in New York made it impossible for him to consider a trip north. Nevertheless, Cowley's relationship with Ames, as well as his appreciation for Yaddo, deepened during the early years of the Depression. As early as 1930, Cowley was serving as one of Ames' "confidential advisors" and was beginning to exert important influence over Yaddo's guest list.

> Dear Mr. Cowley,
>
> Thank you for your good and informing letter. You can make any kind of research that you wish and have time to make. We call you a Confidential Advisor more for your protection than ours.
>
> I am enclosing data about several more persons who are asking for the privileges of Yaddo. Miss Hughes is very highly recommended by Newton

> Arvin, and Mr. Kapustin highly endorsed by his publishers Harcourt Brace. I am including as well material about Miss Berenice Van Slyke and Maurice Parmelee.
>
> Do you know anything about Mr. and Mrs. Corning White, suggested by Gorham Munson? He is the author of a recent Broadway play The Virgin. Do you yourself wish to propose any one for Yaddo? I do hope that you will find time to come for rest and work (YR. 238.2).

As Ames' confidence in Cowley deepened, so too did her insistence that he visit Yaddo: "Isn't it possible for you to come to Yaddo for your promised visit the last of this month or the last of August? And will you let me hear from you at once." Cowley suggested an August visit: "As for my coming to Yaddo. . . . I should indeed like to talk matters over with you, but the absence of other editors on their vacations makes it impossible for me to leave the office for any extended period. I thought, however, that if there was room for us, Mrs. Cowley and I might drive to Saratoga next weekend (that of August 9), arriving Friday night or Saturday morning and leaving Sunday evening. Could you let me know whether this would be possible?" Ames received Cowley's letter enthusiastically and (surprisingly) agreed to accommodate Cowley's wife, "I do hope you and Mrs. Cowley will come the weekend of the ninth as I am eager for you to see Yaddo" (YR 238.2).

On the morning of August 8, 1931, Cowley and his wife left their apartment on West 21st Street in Manhattan and began the seven hour drive to Saratoga. With the city heat quickly receding as they drove north Cowley looked forward to a weekend free of economic concern and welcomed a brief respite from his responsibilities at *The New Republic*. Whatever his expectations may have been, Cowley was wholly unprepared for the Victorian grandeur which came into gradual view as he carefully steered his car along the macadam road that led from Union Avenue, past the Yaddo lakes, and finally, to the

Yaddo mansion. In the midst of such economic despair the opulence of this creative oasis was overwhelming. "I was somewhat overawed not only by the splendors of the mansion," Cowley later recalled, "with its 55 rooms, as someone had counted them – but also by the planned richness of the estate. Besides the rose garden and the rock garden, where I loved to wander, there was the huge concrete garage, there was a stable with a herd of cows, there was a carriage house full of relics, there were the towering white pines, my favorite trees, and everywhere were views across the Hudson Valley to Mt. Equinox, in Vermont" (Calisher et al., 15). According to Cowley, guests lived "as if they had been for the summer to a Newport 'cottage' owned by robber barons." If guests chose not to appear at breakfast, "a tray was discreetly placed outside their doors." Lunch was "served in the huge dining room, with an array of crystal and silver," while "at four o'clock a table in the big downstairs hall shone with fine china and the Trask silver besides platters of confiseries prepared by a Bohemian cook, who must have been trained in Paris" (Calisher et al., 13). Cowley found the expanse and variety of the estate's grounds to be equally overwhelming.

Ames had carefully prepared for Cowley's visit. When he was shown to his room, Cowley found a note left by Ames.

> Dear Mr. Cowley,
>
> I am going to treat you and Mrs. Cowley like our usual guests at Yaddo which means you will not be entertained, horrible thought, but left mostly to yourselves. You will find posted on the closet door a schedule of how our daily life is planned. Your breakfast trays will be brought up to you at eight fifteen. Perhaps by half past eleven or twelve tomorrow you will meet me downstairs, Mrs. Cowley too if she feels like going out, and let me show you around the grounds.

> At lunchtime Saturday you will meet most of our guests and all of them will be at dinner. They are looking forward with pleasure to having you here as I do too (YR. 238.2).

At Yaddo, Cowley and Ames established the foundation for a lasting friendship. "It has long been on my mind to tell you what a nice time I had at Yaddo," Cowley wrote Ames from his office at *The New Republic*, "and what a favorable impression of the life there I got from my visit. Even on 21st Street I can still smell the pine trees in that grove of yours, one which is hardly to be equaled anywhere in the East." Such was Cowley's enthusiasm that he proposed to Ames that Yaddo host a conference that would focus on an intellectual or creative topic. "I have talked to several people about the idea of holding a conference in individualism at Yaddo," he wrote; "some of them are quite favorable to the notion, but as yet I have nothing too definite to report" (YR 238.2). In early March, Cowley again wrote Ames from his office and enthusiastically accepted Ames' invitation to serve for a second year as a confidential advisor, "It was very kind of you and the Directors to invite me to serve for another year as a member of one of your advisory committees. This time I hope I can be of more service to you, and I am beginning to look around for writers whom I can safely recommend." Cowley suggested a topic for the proposed conference:

> The proposal for a conference at Yaddo has taken different shape since I wrote to you last. In the first place, the idea of having a symposium on the future of individualism was laid aside by the editors of the New Republic, under pressure of events in the political world. Next, Mr. Matthew Josephson came forward with an exciting idea, that of writing a cooperative volume of literary memoirs in order to illuminate the intellectual and social background of the present generation of writers. Here is a product which would allow several people to unite in producing what could hardly fail to be a very interesting book. If arrangements could be made, we thought of gathering five or six of the contributors to the volume and of visiting Yaddo the first week it opens, before the regular guests arrive. Would

> this idea be feasible? Matthew Josephson, Kenneth Burke, Robert M. Coates and myself could come, and we should like to invite two others, but not more – for, with more than six people present, it would be harder to preserve an atmosphere of work (YR 238.2).

Ames received Cowley's suggestion enthusiastically. From her perspective, such a conference would provide for the kind of cautious exposure she preferred. "Now about the conference," she wrote Cowley, "what you say is most interesting":

> I think the best way to go about arranging for the time is this: Will you consult with the others and find out definitely whether Wednesday May 15 would be the right day for them to come to Yaddo to remain until the 22nd? Of course if a day or two later is more convenient I can fix it for that. But once the dates are set I can not move them along because invitations will be going out to other guests.
>
> When you have let me know the dates for the conference and persons attending with their addresses I shall send them personal invitations (YR 238.2).

"As for the matter of the conference at Yaddo, May 15 is a date that seems to suit everybody," Cowley responded; continuing:

> Invitations should go out to Kenneth Burke, to Matthew Josephson (4 Minetta Place, New York City), Robert M. Coates (67 West 11 Street) and to John Brooks Wheelwright (Harvard Club, Boston, Mass.) I have spoken to all of these except Wheelwright, to whom I am writing today. One more person should be invited, but we haven't yet decided who it shall be – perhaps Morris Werner, or Isidor Schneider, or E.E. Cummings, if he is back in this country. The possibilities are limited on account of the nature of the project (YR 238.2).

The final guest list included Cowley, as well as fellow expatriates Kenneth Burke, Matthew Josephson, Evan Shipman, and John Wheelwright.

Participants began arriving at Yaddo the afternoon of Friday, May 15, 1932, and immediately immersed themselves in discussion of the previous decade. "We've been living in the atmosphere of eight or ten years ago," Cowley wrote Ames "aided by the letters and diaries we brought with us." He added:

> In the mornings, we've been writing memories. Sunday we took a literary vacation and revised the burlesque Ode I wrote eight years ago on the fisticuffs between Josephson and Munson, in the forgotten days when one was editing *Broom* and the other *Succession*. I'd like to show it to you – you might enjoy it. For the rest, we've been enjoying ourselves hugely (Josephson in particular, since he has just finished a biography of Rousseau on which he spent the last two years) (YR 238.2).

For all but Cowley, the conference proved to be more an opportunity for social engagement than literary production. For his part Cowley remained focused on organizing his recollections of his life in Paris.

> In May, 1932, Matthew Josephson and I assembled a little conclave in the mansion during the week before it was opened for other guests. Our group was composed of writers who had lived in Montparnasse during the 1920s and our purpose was to write a joint volume of recollections. Most of the group did no writing; instead they laughed and argued in the upstairs hall or visited the Saratoga horserooms under the guidance of Evan Shipman, the modernist poet and old-fashioned expert on trotting horses. I was the lonely exception and worked away every morning on the memories of Paris that were to grow into a book, *Exile's Return* (Calisher et al., 16).

For Cowley the conference served a second, more personal purpose. While it provided important opportunity to revisit his experiences in Paris, it also allowed for further discussion with Ames. When he returned to New York, Cowley wrote to Ames and acknowledged his regard for her proficient administration of Yaddo.

> Dear Mrs. Ames:
>
> This week I'm staying home from the office to continue working on my memories of the year 1923, on which I made such a good beginning at Yaddo. I wrote a paragraph which suddenly reminded me of your difficult task. "In the midst of the most unified civilization existing in the world today," I said, "American writers are, by reaction, ferocious individualists. They fear collective action of any sort: it reminds them of the Y.M.C.A., the Elks, the Shriners, the Rotarians; they will neither lead nor follow, and 'the only club I belong to,' they often say, 'is the ancient society of Non-Joiners.' . . . They are bent on preserving the anarchy of their individual lives," etc., etc. It's all true, and it reminded me of the astounding success you have had in imposing order on these essential

> anarchists – not too much of it, but enough so that a dozen of them can live together in the collectivity of one household, and work there.
>
> We all had a glorious time at Yaddo, and a fruitful one, too: I think enough has been done to guarantee that a book will come of it eventually – I hope next spring. It was inexcusable of me not to write you sooner. As a matter of fact, I've been hoping that, if there were any vacancies during that period, I could spend a week or two at Yaddo; I'm anxious to finish my book of essays, and I've found that the Saratoga air helps me to get things written. Well, there's still doubt about my vacation; it will be either July 15 – August 15 or August 1 – September 1, probably the former. The first two weeks of August will be free in either case; if Yaddo is full to overflowing during those two weeks, I'll let you know whether my other free weeks will come in August or late in July (YR 238.2).

Ames had developed a similar fond regard for Cowley. She made immediate arrangements for his third visit: "I shall be delighted to have you at Yaddo from the first until the fourteenth," she wrote, "if you will let me know definitely later in which two weeks the rest of your vacation is to lie I can perhaps manage the other two for you" (YR 238.2). When Cowley arranged for additional vacation at the end of July, Ames was further accommodating. "I can see my way now to asking you to come to Yaddo July twenty-fifth to stay until August fourteenth," she assured him, adding, "I shall perhaps have to shift you from one bedroom to another but I fancy so short a journey will not prove troublesome. I shan't have to shift you from one studio to another though, which is sometimes more serious (YR 238.2). At Yaddo Cowley continued to develop *Exile's Return*. The opportunity for concerted work while immersed in the environment which had inspired his original manuscript proved indispensable. Following a fourth visit Cowley wrote Ames, "At present I can only say that I had a better time at Yaddo this October than ever before – which is saying a very great deal" (YR 238.2). He even confided that Ames' continued accommodation, "just about saved my life."

By the time Cowley began submitting his manuscript he had developed a deep respect for both Ames and Yaddo. "It seems to me that you have been doing especially fine work at Yaddo this year," he wrote:

> There are now dozens of books – and good books – which have been rendered possible only by your help.
>
> I know that Yaddo will continue its good work during the next year. If funds run short, my suggestion would always be that you make the guests live on plainer fare and then do their rooms if necessary, but keep them at Yaddo at any price (YR 238.2).

By the mid-1930s such assurance had become routine. "From time to time I see, or hear from, one of the people who have been to Yaddo this summer," Cowley wrote in 1934. "They all say they have enjoyed themselves and worked hard and hearing about it all again gives me a little feeling of nostalgia. It certainly would be nice to see you." Like Cheever, for Cowley, "Mrs. Ames" quickly became "Elizabeth." While Ames' growing intimacy with her advisors exerted important influence on Yaddo's guest list, and allowed for the kind of furtive integration into the intellectual and creative community Ames preferred, it also provided for a remarkable network of intellectual associations. "The presence there of Newton Arvin and Granville Hicks . . . and others made the week an opportunity for the sort of intelligent conversation that one never has time for in New York," wrote Cowley. "Is Malcolm Cowley coming again?" asked Arvin in 1932 "I like him, somehow, very much, yet find him singularly difficult to talk with, and hence would enjoy knowing him better" (YR 225.1).

In *The Scarlet Professor* Barry Werth describes that during the summer of 1928, the normally reclusive Newton Arvin found himself in an unaccustomed position at the center of Yaddo's intellectual and social life. When Louis Kronenberger fell down the

mansion's staircase, Arvin was there to offer a reassuring hand. Such gestures helped to offset Arvin's intimidating intellect. At Yaddo, safely shielded from the anxieties of academic politics, Arvin's erudition seemed to relax. Kronenberger qualified his observation that, "To say that Newton never spoke a slipshod sentence sounds priggish in him and fatiguing to his listener" by adding, "Actually it was inherent in him and fascinating to his listener" (Werth, 44). Yaddo offered Arvin the ideal combination of detachment from a world that often proved offensive, and immersion in the company of young liberally minded intellectuals who were sympathetic to his life's work and who revered the sheer breadth of his scholarship. In short, Arvin thrived at Yaddo. Furthermore, his obvious enthusiasm for the environment over which Ames presided provided the foundation for a truly intimate relationship.

During Yaddo's first seasons Ames opposed extending invitations for return visits. Her reasoning was simple. She realized that her preference for Yaddo's gradual exposure required her accommodation of a small but entirely new group of guests each season. For Arvin Ames made an exception. "The Directors of the Corporation of Yaddo have authorized the President and Secretary in their discretion to suspend for the current year the rule respecting the entertainment of a guest during one season only, in the case of such an artist as they may think it desirable to be again in the company which will occupy the Yaddo mansion," Peabody wrote Arvin in February 1930; "I have the pleasure, therefore, to advise you that Miss [Allena] Pardee joins with me, following our conference with Mrs. Ames, Executive Director, in extending to you an invitation to be of the company of guests for such period during the season of 1930 as you and Mrs.

Ames may find it convenient to arrange" (YR 225.1). Arvin was a guest at Yaddo from July 1 to September 8. His visit, unfortunately, was unsettling.

During the summer of 1930 Arvin's emotional anxiety resulted in physical symptoms. "I feel that you feel that I have regrets about the summer because I idiotically wasted so much time hypochondriacally," he wrote Ames from Northampton; "[O]f course I do regret that – not only for my own sake. But you must believe that I am wholly sincere in saying that nowhere else than at Yaddo could the summer have meant so little less to me: my honest and private 'sense' (as James would say) is of having, despite the devil, come out with a heavy balance on the profit side" (YR 225.1). As she would, repeatedly, Ames offered Arvin emotional solace. As a result, their relationship became unmistakably personal. "I agree with you and T.S. Eliot that April is a cruel month but it would be less cruel if you should spend a weekend here at Yaddo," Ames wrote Arvin in February. "I mean less cruel for me. I shall have to be home all that month because of the prosaic business of getting the mansion opened, so as far as I know any weekend would be alright" (YR 225.1). By the fall of 1931 Arvin was back at Yaddo. In an incomplete letter written in October, Arvin described the intellectual energy gathering around Ames, and called unmistakable attention to their growing intimacy:

> Dear Elizabeth,
>
> I had hardly realized how short the weekend would be until I actually started away yesterday morning. It was simply rotten luck for me not to be able to stay on another day at least and then perhaps I should have had a chance for a talk with you. In the midst of so many people this seemed not very feasible and Sunday afternoon (when I thought, perhaps you would have been free) I found myself carried off by Cowley for a walk and a talk with him which of course I wanted. I felt too, particularly inadequate and dull while I was there: I can't think

> why and I certainly didn't anticipate it. I caught myself hoping you wouldn't think I had lost for good all my wits and flexibility. Perhaps it was the sudden shift from meeting college classes to the company of so many unacademic people.
>
> But enough of this. With this one exception I was delighted to be there and I am more grateful to you than ever for letting me come. It was just what I needed at this point – a little talk with the kind of people I so rarely see a little renewal of the sense of belonging (a bit) to something else besides a faculty: really it does me more good than you would believe. I was particularly glad to see the Gregory's and Louis Adamic and Lorowick: all of them I enjoyed seeing so much that I would have resorted to almost any subterfuge in order to stay on another day. With Horace Gregory I had, as it was, a fine talk; but I could easily have gone on with him, and certainly with Mrs. Gregory; and with Adamic I had only begun to get some – (YR 225.1).

For Arvin, Yaddo, and by close extension Ames, served as a place of intellectual and emotional convalescence, a cloistered haven that allowed him opportunity for concentrated thought free of accustomed anxiety. More than any other of her advisors, Yaddo for Arvin became a place of withdrawal. His attraction to Yaddo was, in many ways, consistent with Katrina's. Ames was deeply appreciative of Yaddo's importance to Arvin, and realized that Arvin's intellectual and emotional investment in Yaddo was not only sincere but necessary. By March 1932, Arvin was thanking Ames for arranging an unprecedented third visit, "I am extremely grateful to you for even considering me for another season" and advised that he expected to focus his critical attention on "Mark Twain, Howells, and Henry James." In May, Ames wrote, "I assume your coming over one of the May weekends is out of the question. It would be nice to have a glimpse of you," concluding, "I hope the end of the year does not find you too spent and harried" (YR 225.1).

Like many gay men of his generation, Arvin was especially well practiced at concealment. During the fall of 1930, Arvin began a secret love affair with a Harvard

professor, Howard Doughty. The affair left Arvin almost paralyzed with guilt and fear. He was certain that the affair would become known to Smith's administrative body. Though it was impossible for them to maintain a sexual relationship, Arvin and Doughty remained deeply committed to one another emotionally. In January 1932 Arvin began making arrangements for Doughty to visit Yaddo. "Shall I tell Howard Doughty to take the initiative in writing to you?" he wrote Ames, adding, "[i]f I were to be there, I confess I should enjoy having him there too: this it would be an affectation not to say" (YR 225.1). Ames invited Doughty to spend August at Yaddo. When he arrived Arvin had already been in residence for nearly two weeks. They shared what must have been an emotionally awkward twelve days.

When Arvin arrived at Yaddo on July 19, 1932, he was already engaged to Mary Jordan Garrison. Werth writes that Garrison came from an established West Hartford family (she grew up on the same street as Katherine Hepburn). Her father was a prominent insurance executive. As a senior at Smith College, Garrison had enrolled in one of Arvin's classes. Arvin's intellect was both inspiring and daunting to the young and impressionable undergraduate. As a result, their relationship was troubled by her feelings of insecurity. In addition to being her intellectual mentor Arvin was also nine years her senior. After her graduation, Garrison remained in Northampton. Arvin's commitment to Garrison was, at best, deceitful.

Werth continues that even though Arvin assured Garrison that he was sympathetic to her feelings of unease: "I'm terribly aware of the tender string on which our being together as passionate friends inevitably lives," (Werth, 58) he wrote on one occasion;

inwardly he continued to repress his sexuality, which he privately referred to as one of "nature's mistakes" (Werth, 58). An entry from Arvin's diary which reads "what ever shuts up the spirit in the dungeon" suggests that Garrison provided Arvin little more than distraction from his deeply conflicted sexuality. As a form of furtive confession, and more probably in order to alleviate his mounting guilt, Arvin timidly gave Garrison a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. He recommended that she read "When I Heard at the Close of the Day," because, as he wrote, "[i]t *suggests* something that means something to me" (Werth, 58). Despite his inner struggle, by June Arvin and Garrison were engaged.

In July, Arvin headed to Yaddo where he discussed his engagement with Ames. So adept was Arvin at concealing his homosexuality that Edward Newhouse later confessed, "I had known Newton for years, and the notion that he might be [a homosexual] had not crossed my mind" (Carr, 158). Ames was similarly duped. She even recommended that the marriage take place at Yaddo. Arvin was enthusiastic about the prospect of a private ceremony. Yaddo's cloistered grounds allowed for the kind of sheltered ceremony he most certainly preferred. On August 8, Garrison's father wrote to Ames:

> Dear Mrs. Ames,
>
> My daughter, Mary, informs me that you suggested that she and Newton be married at Yaddo and also that you have made arrangements for the wedding. I want to thank you very much for your interest and kindness and shall of course reimburse you or defray the expenses incurred. I regret that I can not inform you as to the number of guests at this time but Mary will do so Wednesday. Again thanking you. I am
>
> Yours sincerely,
>
> F.S. Garrison (YR 225.1)

"The expense is very negligible," Ames responded; "any thought or planning which I am putting into this happy event is done because of the high esteem in which Yaddo holds Mr. Arvin and my personal friendship and devotion to him" (YR 225.1). The wedding ceremony took place on August 12 in Ames' residence at Pine Garde. Granville Hicks and Howard Doughty (himself married) attended, as did several of Garrison's close friends. "When Mary and I have thought together about everything you have done for us," Arvin later wrote to Ames, "we have simply stared helplessly at each other and wondered vainly how we could ever express our obligation. You literally made our marriage possible at the right time and in the perfect way – and the tongue falters in attempting to say 'thanks,'" (YR 225.1). "We both felt that everything on the big day itself – the sunlight in your garden." He continued, "and the delicious tea, and beautiful cake (which Mary groaned over having left behind) – that all these things were a gift from you that no other gift can compare with." Ames even arranged for Arvin and Garrison to spend two nights of their honeymoon at Triuna Island. "I wonder if you can guess how much those days meant to us," Arvin wrote Ames. "Both days were suspiciously fine and on Monday evening we had the experience of watching the moon (the full moon) rise beyond the mountains. It is hard not to be superstitious about such a honey moon" (YR 225.1). Ames was deeply committed to Arvin.

Not surprisingly, by the mid-1930s Arvin was exerting important influence at Yaddo; "I do hope to see you very much not only for a good old time talk but also for your advice about many matters concerning Yaddo," (YR 225.1) Ames wrote Arvin in 1934. For her part, Ames continued to provide Arvin the emotional support he often

required. His need for her support became especially acute during the demise of his marriage. By 1937 Arvin and Garrison were estranged. Arvin cloistered himself in his study where he worked tirelessly on his manuscript for *Whitman*. His subject could not have been more inopportune. So complete was Arvin's absorption in his topic, and so detached had he become from his wife's emotional needs, that, as Werth explains, Garrison took to sliding notes under his door when she needed to ask even the most mundane of questions. By 1938 the two had arranged for an informal separation. Mary spent most of the summer with friends on Cape Cod. Arvin relished the opportunity to complete his manuscript without her interference. In the fall he arranged for his own apartment.

Despite his enthusiasm for their separation, the disintegration of his marriage left Arvin isolated, and forced him to confront his true sexual identity. By October Arvin was recording his emotional collapse in his journal.

> Oct. 7: A beautiful day outwardly, but terrible inwardly. Fatigue, apprehension and tenseness. Spent the afternoon in Oskar's room. Dan here between five and six, very considerate. In the evening had an X-Ray treatment at Dr. Cooney. In spite of everything, read 100 pages of Henry Adams' stories.
>
> Oct. 13: A bad night, owing to my loathsome affliction. Down to Cooney's office at 4:30 to see him . . . The rest of the day idle, followed by a worse night.
>
> Oct. 14: A bad day again, after a trying night.
>
> Oct. 27: Dr. Hobbs here in the morning. Agreed to let me have some morphine for the night (Werth, 83).

So severe was Arvin's anxiety that it began to manifest itself in physical ailments, this time genuine. "I have been losing sleep – and losing time in general," Arvin confided to Ames, "on account of a very undignified but very nerve wracking skin aliment which was no doubt the *result* of bad nerves to begin with and was certainly the *cause* of more as it

hung on." He continued: "It was really clear that I would have to go to someone who could do something drastic about it, and hence I have put myself in the hands of Dr. Ives Hendrick, a Boston psychiatrist." Arvin's tone then becomes deeply personal,

> [I]t is too bad that I had to act up this way at all, but since I did, everything is working out as favorably as one could wish. I am at least (and at last) doing something about all that – and doing it, really, in good season. From now on, I shall have these things much more under control. So, dear Elizabeth, you need not be seriously troubled about me for a moment: when I next see you (soon I hope), I shall be better company than for many months – and *won't* you and Leonard plan to drive over to Northampton some Saturday after I get back home? Meanwhile, give my best love to him, and believe how much the thought of both of you cheers (and fortifies) me! (YR 225.1).

Arvin was in desperate need of Ames. "This is my Christmas card - and Christmas greeting in general!" he wrote in December. "You know how deeply affectionate it is, and how little could be added to it even if I sent you an emerald of the rarest cut" (YR 225.1). His anxiety did not subside. In the spring he committed himself to a private sanitarium in White Plains, New York. He occupied his time with such ordinary activities as basket making. "Finished the basket today with great sense of achievement," he caustically recorded in his journal. Not surprisingly, Arvin quickly devised more literary distractions. "Some more of my very amateurish type-setting!" he wrote Ames in April, "I may say that I wasn't given a chance to read proof on either of these, or to arrange the Donne poem on the page: perhaps if I had been, I could have (DONNE!) a little better" (YR 225.1). In May he wrote, "I do hope you can get down next week and that it will be really easy for you to come out to White Plains" (YR 225.1). Ames agreed and the two spent an afternoon together in Manhattan. "You are a better physician than any "real" physician – as I have long known," Arvin assured Ames, "and it was ever so

lucky for me that I could have a day with you in the city. We must repeat the dose again some good day" (YR 225.1). Upon his release, Ames arranged for Arvin to spend ten days convalescing at Yaddo, perhaps the only place where, by the early 1940s, Arvin was certain to find the comfort he required. More than any other institution, Yaddo provided Arvin the assurance of quietude he desperately needed. Ames' devotion to Arvin was obvious. In 1941, Katherine Anne Porter wrote Ames that Arvin, "*should* love you, he knows well enough what you are."

Like his literary counterparts Aaron Copland developed an immediate closeness with Ames. During his visit in 1930, Copland accompanied Ames on long walks around Yaddo's grounds. During one of their walks the two discussed the prospect of Yaddo hosting a conference dedicated to the promotion of contemporary American music. Copland's conception was based in large part on the success of similar conferences in Europe. "I've been thinking of writing you for the past few weeks," Copland wrote Ames from Berlin.

> My ideas for the Musical Conference at Yaddo have become clearer and I wanted to tell you about them.
>
> After much thought, I have come to the conclusion that a Musical Conference must include music. That is to say, musicians are not literary people and would not understand a coming together merely for the sake of talking about music. A certain amount of music-making therefore seems to be necessary – it will supply the point of reference from which discussions might ensue.
>
> With this idea in mind I conceived the following plan. The conference would take place about the first week in May and last a week. A dozen composers and five or six interpreters would be invited to take part. The conference would open with three concerts to be given for an invited audience of about 100 people, to include music lovers and possibly a few music critics from New York. For this reason the conference should begin on a Saturday. The listeners could arrive in Saratoga on Friday night, the first concert could take place on Saturday morning at 11, the second Saturday evening at 9, the third Sunday afternoon at 4. With these three concerts as a starting point the

> composers who were guests at Yaddo would have plenty to talk about for the rest of the week.
>
> I will undertake to arrange the program and to supply interpreters of quality who will give their services without charge. One of my principle objects in having this little Music Festival is to stimulate composers to write works especially for a first presentation at Yaddo. If this were an annual event Yaddo might become an important influence in the encouragement of American Music (YR 237.5).

Ames was enthusiastic. "I am most glad to have your letter both for the sake of hearing from you and to know that your mind is at work on the conference for next spring," she responded. "I am very much in accord with all you say about a musical conference including music as I am also in accord with your plans for invitations and for the number of persons to take part (YR 237.5). The normally reserved Ames could not conceal her verve. "I can't tell you how enthusiastic I am about the prospect which your plan opens up," she wrote, "nor how much I appreciate your great and generous interest in this project which I am sure will grow into something very significant." Copland's anticipation was more cautionary. "The present status of American Music is such as to make the choosing of satisfactory programs a very difficult task," he warned. "There is neither an abundance of composers, nor an abundance of first-rate work from which to make choices" (YR 237.5). Nonetheless, Ames realized an important opportunity. The success of Cowley's literary conference assured her that a similar music festival would provide important, but equally controlled exposure. Over the preceding months, Ames and Copland formulated a design for what became the first Festival of Contemporary American Music. Their collaborative efforts provided the foundation for a lasting friendship.

In October Copland assured Ames, "Everyone to whom I have mentioned the music conference has been very enthusiastic about the idea. We must make it a real event in American musical life" (YR 237.5). In February Copland met Ames at the Women's University Club in New York where they further discussed the festival. "As I go over your plans I am more and more impressed with the thought and work you have already put into our project" (YR 237.5), Ames later wrote. By March Ames and Copland were carrying on an almost daily correspondence which continued through the opening of the festival on April 30. "You are a miracle of courage and diplomacy to be putting over things as you are," Ames wrote Copland the week before the conference, "I send you my admiration" (YR 237.5). "I was glad to get your letter," Copland responded, "It seems to me another proof of how well we understand each other" (YR 237.5).

In an interview with a Saratoga newspaper, Ames described her expectations for the festival: "Yaddo will try not only to present what is best and representative in authentic modern music, it will also try to create a public which will understand the what and why of modern music as well as having knowledge of it in a broader sense." *The New York Times* reported that "the programs will afford a coast-to-coast cross-section of the activities of present-day American composers in the field of chamber music and at the same time introduce new and promising talents." Six of the nineteen pieces performed at the inaugural festival were written specifically for the event and included George Antheil's *Sonatina for Piano*, Marc Blitzstein's *Serenade for String Quartet*, and Paul Bowles' *Six Songs*. Despite positive reception by the invited "evaluators," public

reaction was mixed. "Strange tunes in which harsh discords rasped out above brooding harmonies, filled the memorial chapel of the Trask mansion," reported *The New York Times*. When *The New York Times* carried an additional Associated Press dispatch which read, "The long-standing feud between composers and critics flared into the open at a conference in Yaddo, the Spencer Trask mansion." Copland responded with an open letter:

> It would be naive to imagine that a conference between critics and composers was arranged at the First Festival of Contemporary Music at Yaddo for the childish purpose of giving composers an opportunity to tell the critics where 'to get off at' as the saying goes. On the contrary, our purpose was the thoroughly serious one of considering the relation between the American composer and the music critics of the daily press and to discover what might be done to make that relationship more vital and important than it now is. . . . Far from being a 'menace' to the composer, he is an absolute necessity (YR 237.5).

The New York Times article notwithstanding, Ames considered the festival a complete success. "Yaddo is coming more and more into prominence," she wrote Copland in October; "lately I have had very breathtaking evidence of what is being thought and discussed about it" (YR 237.5). From Ames' perspective the festival epitomized the kind of intellectual exchange set against the backdrop of a Victorian house party that the Trasks envisioned.

The success of the music festival confirmed for Ames that, despite economic limitations, the festival had to remain a priority. Copland agreed. "I am sorry to hear that Yaddo must sacrifice other things in order to have a festival this year," he wrote Ames. "From the standpoint of the development of American music I do think it is important that we continue without interruption, so that at this early stage of the festivals a sense of continuity and permanence may be established." Copland even assured Ames of

"numerous indications that this year's festival will be followed with much greater interest than that of last year."

By 1933, Copland and Ames were devising strategies to extend the reach of the Festival's influence. "Representatives" were established in cities across the United States. Their purpose was to identify appropriate compositions for review by a central committee, of which Copland served as chair. *The New York Times* reported the growing importance of the festival,

> A plan has been devised which, it is hoped, will make this and future festivals take on national scope and importance. This plan provides for a central music committee consisting of five composers, who will select the works to make up the programs. The committee is to be assisted by a number of regional representatives covering all the larger music centers of this country and Europe. The sponsors of the festival hope in this way to keep informed of whatever the American composer is creating either here or abroad.
>
> The central committee appointed by the Corporation of Yaddo for 1933 consists of Aaron Copland, chairman; George Antheil, Richard Donovan, Wallingford Riegger and Randall Thompson. A partial list of composers who have agreed to act as regional representatives follows: Boston, Walter Piston; Chicago, Wesley La Violette; Cleveland, Herbert Elwell; Los Angeles, Roy Harris; San Francisco, Henry Cowell; Seattle, George F. McKay; Washington [D.C.], Carl Engel; France, Virgil Thompson; and Mexico, Carlos Chavez.

Copland withdrew from his administrative responsibilities following the second festival. According to David Diamond, despite the success of the first two festivals, Ames saw Copland's withdrawal as an opportunity to further expand Yaddo's influence. Ames, Diamond recalled, "said that Aaron was concentrating too much on one specific kind of music, and that his coterie was only the League of Composers gang."

Though they were discontinued after 1952, the Music Festivals firmly established Yaddo's reputation as a center for musical composition. Collectively the festivals left a permanent impression on American music. A review of the final music festival appeared

in *The New Republic* on September 29, 1952. "The history of American music has for some twenty-five years, been intimately connected with that of Yaddo," the review begins:

> In the nine music periods to date, Yaddo has performed the work of over 130 composers. Some of these people have died, some have lapsed into obscurity (or, indeed, never left it), but a good many of the composers have attained considerable celebrity; in most cases, their reputations were established after their first Yaddo performance. The Yaddo committees have shown an uncanny knack for recognizing talent earlier than the rest of the world, and can claim at least partial credit for the launching of several brilliant careers (*The New Republic*, September 29, 1952).

Such accolades are largely predicated on Ames' ingenious management. By the mid-1930s she had established a directorial authority that allowed for, at the same time, a rigid defense of Yaddo's most established traditions and a simultaneous, controlled integration into the broader intellectual and creative community.

From a historical perspective, Ames' administration suggests an extension of Katrina's influence at Yaddo. Between 1924 and 1930 Ames shrewdly invited within Yaddo's cloistered grounds artists and intellectuals whom she trusted to safeguard Yaddo's traditions. Especially during Yaddo's early years their influence was carefully mediated through Ames' authority. Ames remained Yaddo's defining influence. Furthermore, despite the importance of Ames' advisors in shaping Yaddo's guest list, Ames shrewdly retained additional authorities that remained, unquestionably, her own. Life at Yaddo conformed to Ames' regard for the atmosphere the Trasks' had so carefully nurtured and which she had come to *know* through Peabody and *feel* through the almost palpable history that permeated Yaddo. By the close of Yaddo's first season it was

obvious that Peabody's faith in "providence" was well placed. Ames' commitment to Yaddo, and more important to the Trasks was absolute.

Beginning in 1929 Ames found herself defending the Trasks' interests against a backdrop of economical turmoil and political unrest. Throughout the 1930s radical political sympathies exerted important influence at Yaddo. As it was during the Trasks' lifetime, Yaddo became a microcosm of more general anxieties felt throughout the United States. At Yaddo, leftist and proletarian compositions were common. In general, such works shared harmonious company with less politically determined art. James Farrell worked tirelessly to complete *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* while he was in residence with Clifford Still, who would later recall that Yaddo provided the "opportunity to complete my first series of oils." Aaron Copland composed *Piano Variations*. Despite such apparent, creative accord, the Trasks' vision for Yaddo would, for the first time, be forced to react to cultural pressures that Ames, increasingly, was unable to control.

Chapter Six

Depression and Revolution:
The 1930s

> However, since the art world in the '30s, in many parts of the U.S. as in Western Europe, was convulsed by varieties of left wing rhetoric and even conviction, numerically through the decade very heavily weighted toward plain Stalinism of the blind party line variety, it would have been a very odd guest list that didn't include a number of such fellow travelers and a few even more dogmatic party liners.[10] - Eleanor Clark

At Yaddo, the effects of the Depression were felt immediately. "At the height of this emergency," Ames wrote in 1934, "with no way out yet in prospect, the artist, never secure at best, often accepting poverty as did the medieval religionist and as do some modern saints, finds himself in the most extreme distress." By the mid-1930s, Arvin was referring to the "heavy pressure" on Yaddo's gates. While invitations to Yaddo had been deeply appreciated by Yaddo's first guests, during years of extreme want acceptances were regarded in providential terms. "The bank holiday has filled everyone with gloom and fear," Marya Zaturenska, winner of The Pulitzer Prize for poetry, wrote in her diary in March of 1931; she added:

> One feels as if the end of the world has come. We are paralyzed at the insecurity of everything. Is it worth while to save desperately for one's children, one's old age, to provide insurance against disaster if in any one day they can all be wiped out through no fault of one's own? We were left with one dollar in our pocket in cash.

Four months later, and based largely on a strong recommendation from Malcolm Cowley, Zaturenska arrived at Yaddo with her husband, Horace Gregory. "It feels as if I had been suddenly lifted from a long death to a glorious resurrection, for I am at beloved, beautiful Yaddo again," wrote Zaturenska, adding; "I have Mrs. Trask's room on the very top

[10] Calisher et al., 23

floor. … It's a beautiful room in white, and old; rather fanciful with a medieval balcony spired like a Gothic cathedral." Diana Trilling recalled that in 1931, "a stay at Yaddo was for most of us an unprecedented experience of luxury. In addition to a handsome bedroom, each of us had our own workroom or studio. Both the house and the grounds were fully staffed and the food was consistently the best I have ever eaten" (Trilling, 177). Not surprisingly, amid such depravity, many found Yaddo's opulence disorienting. "After two years of tiny, one-windowed hall-bedrooms, I felt strange and out of place amid all this comfort," recalled Louis Adamic. "It took several days for the feeling to wear off."

From a cultural perspective, the Depression helped to enforce Yaddo's tradition of providing an environment of convalescence and withdrawal. In the midst of economic deprivation Yaddo was an edenic refuge. Its promise of escape, however, went far beyond providing economic sanctuary. In ways strikingly similar to the final decades of the nineteenth century, Yaddo provided the creative temperament opportunity for physical and psychological convalescence. Such perception identifies an intriguing continuum dating from the time of the Trasks. Furthermore, it was a tradition that would be continued, albeit because of a very different set of historical pressures during the Second World War.

Ames remained adamant that economic deprivation would not alter Yaddo's purpose. She insisted to her advisors that during "this time of unparalleled emergency and insecurity," only the most "gifted and outstanding deserve the help that Yaddo can give." Ames' foresight, sadly, proved more limited when it came to predicting the power

of political contention. The Depression would teach Ames that Yaddo's creative environment was not absolute. It was in fact reactionary. As the economic despair of the Depression deepened and continued to expand across social boundaries, resulting political and ideological fermentation would leave a lasting impression on Yaddo.

Most immediately the Depression presented Ames with daunting practical challenges. While planning for the second Music Festival, in 1932, Ames wrote a cautionary letter to Aaron Copland: "At the very moment our financial situation like everyone else's is very bad," she explained, adding:

> Mr. Peabody thinks it better to make no plans at all for our next season until after the first of the year. Then we hope to know how much of our reduced income for 1932 can be salvaged for 1933. It is not only possible but probable that Yaddo will be run on an entirely different basis in 1933, a kind of emergency plan. We are hoping though that we shall not have to give up the Festival. If we do have to then let us trust we can go forward with even more ambitious plans in 1934 (YR 237.5).

The following year Ames began her Executive Director's Report by stating similar concern:

> Looking back over our records and searching my memory, I find that by 1929 we thought we had worked out a physical system for Yaddo and a plan for life for the mansion that might stand through many years. Then the Depression came, remained, and deepened and made us aware that, for our time, life must become more and more insecure for the creative worker and would, for long to come, be for many of them nothing less than a desperate and even tragic struggle (YR 344.6).

Previous luxuries were either reduced or eliminated. A butler was let go and dinner became a far less formal affair. More dramatically, Yaddo's dairy herd was sold because, as Ames explained, "Yaddo could no longer justify to itself the luxury of a private dairy." Despite its necessity, Ames was shrewdly aware that her decision marked the beginning

of a series of administrative actions that would, gradually, begin to erode Yaddo's posture of independence. "For those who watched that departure," she wrote, "an epoch in our history that seemed almost to epitomize a national epoch was ending and another unfolding" (YR 344.6). Other economies were also devised. "A buffet breakfast, which saved labor in the pantry and released labor for tasks elsewhere, was served. The amount of laundry was cut down, and the amount of service in the bedrooms reduced. Our guests were invoked to do their share in keeping order in the house. Some bedrooms were used also for studios" (YR 344.6). Unfortunately, Ames' prudence did not relieve economic stress. As late as 1938 Ames wrote to Arvin, "the income is so uncertain in this calamitous year that I cannot be sure just how long our season may be and how many we shall have." Such uncertainty necessitated the suspension of the Music Festival in 1934. Furthermore, Yaddo's grandeur attracted the unwelcome attention of city authorities who used the economic uncertainty of the Depression as grounds for questioning Yaddo's tax exemption. City attorney Carlton King charged, "[H]ere we have a million-dollar corporation which is organized and does nothing more than invite artists, painters and musicians and writers to come to Yaddo three or four months of the year. Yaddo renders an infinitesimal amount of questionable good to a selected few." Yaddo maintained its tax exempt status.

Ames' economy did more than sustain Yaddo's operation. By the early 1930s she was determined to expand Yaddo's guest list as well as to extend its season. While preparing for Yaddo's opening in 1926, Ames had overseen the renovation and conversion of many outlaying buildings into studios of various kinds. By the mid-1930s

she was looking to finance more involved renovations. In 1932, she devised a plan to repair the North Farm House, an additional property owned by the Corporation of Yaddo and located across Union Avenue. Her reasoning was shrewd. "I went one day to the North Farm House to see what I could visualize there," she wrote. "The house was badly run down and dirty, but I began at once to see visions of peace, order and seclusion. Here many could work, many could sleep, many could care for themselves with only a little help from Yaddo, and many could be kept though the long winters. Here was Yaddo's chance now for an all-year service" (YR 343.5). Accommodations at North Farm were basic: "The heating and water systems were rebuilt, electric lights installed and sufficient redecorating done to make the two apartments wholesome and livable," Ames described. "What could not be supplied in furnishings from Yaddo was brought at auctions of used furniture and at the 5 and 10" (YR 343.5). To James Farrell, Ames described North Farm as "far more like a summer cabin than a real house" (YR 244.18). Even in the midst of the Depression, Ames could afford to heat North Farm, and, therefore provide year-round accommodation. In 1933, Ames proudly reported North Farm's occupancy:

> Now, on this wintry morning, six are living there, three painters and three writers, working and accomplishing to their satisfaction. Not having known the peace and beauty of country life in winter before, they are ecstatic about snow on the mountains and snow on our pines, and they are thankful for a few months in which to put away their worries and live in our lovely country-side (YR 344.5).

Ames' efforts were well recognized. "As for the idea of keeping the Farm House open," wrote Cowley, "I think that is a decided step toward making Yaddo play an even larger part in the intellectual life of the country" (YR 238.2). By the following year Ames had so intelligently economized Yaddo's resources that she could claim with confidence,

"Triuna Island is henceforth to be conducted under the same auspices and with the same plans as Yaddo." Ames described that "from the latter part of June to the middle of August, about twelve will live there and for three weeks further we shall have a period of music reading, when a chamber orchestra will study the works of contemporary composers, with composers invited, probably, to attend" (YR 344.10). Because of its more limited season, Triuna would offer the same luxurious amenities as Yaddo. In addition to its breathtaking scenery, Ames reported that the cook who had "made Pine Glade, the winter home of Mr. Peabody and Mrs. Waite, famous at Warm Springs as well as the Little White House, will come north next week to give a Southern air to Triuna" (YR 344.10).

While Ames' shrewd economy shielded Yaddo from economic disaster, she was unable to insulate Yaddo from emerging ideological pressures. Despite Yaddo's posture of independence and self-sufficiency, throughout the early years of the Depression the influence of political dissent gradually permeated its cloistered grounds. Throughout the 1930s discussion of radical politics was common within intellectual communities throughout America. Yaddo's isolation encouraged open, and focused discussion of leftist politics. Furthermore, Yaddo's association with leftist ideology can be explained by the fact that especially during the early 1930s its guest list was largely shaped by recommendations provided by Ames' closest advisors, most of whom were young and becoming politically radicalized by their experiences of the Depression.

Werth writes that in the wake of Black Tuesday, Newton Arvin insisted to Granville Hicks that they consider carefully communism's message. Hicks was unsure

and recalled for Arvin that in the past the communists with whom they had associated were in general "a pretty unpleasant bunch, single-minded and loud mouthed and not to be depended on in the ordinary affairs of life." Arvin remained insistent that radical ideology was made necessary by the extreme conditions at hand. He responded to Hicks' concerns with an inspired discussion that reads as a kind of carefully worded manifesto.

> It is a bad world in which we live, and so even the revolutionary movement is anything but what (poetically and even philosophically speaking) it "ought" to be: God knows, I realize this, as you do, and God knows it makes my heart sick at times: from one angle it seems nothing but grime and stink and sweat and obscene noises and the language of the beasts. But surely this is what *history* is. It is not just made by gentlemen and scholars . . . Lenin must have been (from a conceivable point of view) a dreadful man; so must John Brown, and to Cromwell, and Stenka Razin, and Mahomet, and all the others who have destroyed and built up. So will our contemporaries in the American movement be. . . . I believe we can spare ourselves a great deal of pain and disappointment and even worse treachery to ourselves if we discipline ourselves to accept proletarian and revolutionary leaders and even theorists for what they are and must be: grim fighters in about the most dreadful and desperate struggle (perhaps) in all of history – not reasonable and "critically minded" and forbearing and infinitely far-seeing men. My fundamental conviction about the whole thing, at this stage, is that everything gives way before the terrible social conflict itself: that the power of imperialism must be fought at every turn at every moment with any weapon and without quarter: that the consciousness of the proletariat – its sense of power and anger – must be built up by every device: and that meanwhile, the kinds of questions we are interested in must take their places where they belong, out of the thickest dust along the rim of the arena. Let's salvage as much as we can of the rather abstract things we care for, but let's realize that there are far more basic and primitive things that have to be taken care of first (as long as men are starving and exploited), and do absolutely nothing, at any moment, to impede the work of the men who are fighting what is really our battle for us. Obviously you believe this too (Werth, 55).

Arvin's convictions certainly helped to nudge Hicks to the left. In the September 1932 issue of *The New Masses*, Hicks joined fellow writers Sherwood Anderson, Clifton Fadiman, Michael Gold, Waldo Frank, and Edmund Wilson in openly describing their leftist leanings or even allegiance to the Communist party. Hicks acknowledged that his

Harvard education had left him "a fairly typical liberal with a mild interest in socialism, a strong faith in pacifism, and the usual conviction that the desired changes in the social order could be brought about by the dissemination of ideas." Furthermore, he admitted that the Sacco-Vanzetti case had "crushed my faith in liberalism" and revealed to him the "myth of prosperity." Both Hicks and Arvin also agreed to contribute towards a volume of essays to be published in *The New Masses* and in which they planed to use their new found Marxist dialect to criticize American society. Though the project never fully materialized, Hicks was one of only two contributors to have his submission approved. By the 1932 presidential election, both Arvin and Hicks publicly supported the Communist Party candidate, William Z. Foster.

Though Cowley shared Arvin's and Hicks' interests in communism, he proved more cautious with his enthusiasm. In a letter written to Ames in 1932, Cowley wrote, "I'll be in the office all this week, but next week I am expecting to go down to Harlan, Kentucky, to help deliver some food to the striking miners there" (YR 238.2). The experience of visiting miners' dilapidated communities, and meeting people with little food and less hope, provided final confirmation of capitalism's inherent injustice. Cowley's first hand observations provided poignant contrast to the familiar images of Soviet workers captured in government publications like *USSR in Construction*. His intellectual convictions notwithstanding Cowley's commitment remained pragmatic. In a letter to Kenneth Burke he explained his caution:

> You remember the story told, I think it was by your mother, about the first time we met – I was three and you were four; I walked around your parlor touching things, and you walked after me saying, Don't touch. Mustn't. Anyone looking at us today or reading your letters to me would think that the same situation was

> being repeated, that I was plunging into Communism while you were saying, Don't touch, be careful, mustn't. But that's only an appearance. I suspect that you're not really a hell of a lot concerned over my adventures with our comrades of the Left – except in so far as they seem to reflect on your own beliefs. If you are concerned, you've got no right to be: I'm not plunging blindly ahead into anything, I'm sort of feeling my way and trying to fit things into a system that will make it possible for me to define my own attitude toward the world and guess what's coming next. And the truth is that I'm deeply concerned and disturbed about you, that really I'm the one who's saying, Don't touch (Jay ed., 201).

His temperate tone notwithstanding, throughout the Depression Cowley's politics would gesture toward communism. "I would never be more than a fellow traveler, and yet, I was an ardent one at the time," he wrote in *The Dream of the Golden Mountain*, "full of humility, the desire to serve, and immense hopes for the future. Because any disaster seemed possible in that strange year [1932], so did any triumph. Suddenly the range of possibilities had widened and deepened, as had the picture of our relation to history." Such sentiment represented larger generational concerns. Before the Depression was even three years old, the political sympathies of Arvin, Cowley, and Hicks were evident in the works of such writers as Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, Lionel Trilling, and Edmund Wilson. By 1932, V.F. Calverton could assume with confidence that the "radicalization of writers" was not a temporary trend but rather a "deeply rooted thing." Faced with a nation that was glaringly corrupt from both a financial and a moral standpoint such writers developed a new fond faith in the "masses."

For Cowley the world of the Depression no longer allowed for the romantic dichotomies that previously detached the artist from his subject. In *Exile's Return*, Cowley elegantly argued for a social purpose for art and provided a blueprint for the process of political conversion common to his generation. According to Cowley,

standing amid the "splendor and decay of capitalism and the growing self-awareness of the proletariat" the writer of the 1930s was obligated to use for the materials of his art, the despair and oppression at hand. Such sympathy for the proletarian struggle would put an end to the "desperate feeling of solitude and uniqueness that has been oppressing artists for the last two centuries," or as James T. Farrell phrased it, the "bohemian isolation of creative effort on a celestial island of pure subjective moodiness." In an open letter to *The New Republic* in April 1930, Cowley charged that such separation was of little importance to, "the mill hands of New Bedford and Gastonia, for the beet-toppers of Colorado, for the men who tighten a single screw in the automobiles that march along Mr. Ford's assembly belt" (*The New Republic*, April 9, 1930). Granville Hicks was even more direct. According to Hicks, the author, "should be, or try to make himself, a member of the proletariat" (*The New Masses*, February 1933).

Ames remained sympathetic to the concerns of her advisors. "I have been very interested in the expeditions to Kentucky in which Frank and Cowley and others have taken part," she wrote Arvin. "I think what they did and what some of the others have done before very fine and courageous" (YR 225.1). Ames, however, was quick to distinguish personal sympathy from administrative responsibility. From an administrative standpoint, she clearly perceived the threat inherent in allowing Yaddo's guest list to be formed by a group of advisors whose politics were in such decided agreement. Her concern was well founded. While it is evident that none of Ames' advisors sought to use Yaddo as a forum for furthering their own political agendas, their influence as advisors, regular guests, and critics of emerging importance, exerted

important influence. "Do you know anything about Leon Denner – one of the leftists?" Arvin asked Ames in 1932. "[Lorowi] can doubtless speak for him. I thought him very promising personally when I met him down at the *New Masses* during the holidays. Potamkin is another person who might do. But, then, I am more and more biased in favor of the Reds now-a-days" (YR 225.1). The following year Arvin recommended even more committed sympathizers.

> Shall I also try to get in touch with Grace Lumpkin ("To Make My Bread"), with Robert Cantwell (also married and a father!), Erskine Caldwell, Gerald Sykes, Albert Halper (who I know has been there before, but who has just written – or published – a fine book), or anyone of the sort? (YR 225.1).

Not surprisingly, when Louis Adamic arrived at Yaddo for a second visit in 1933 he found himself immersed in the intimate company of committed fellow-travelers.

> The others who came and stayed during the nine weeks that I was there were Albert Halper, whose *Union Square,* had been a recent Literary Guild selection; Ruth Suckow and Ferner Nuhn, of Iowa; Philip Reisman and his wife, both artists; Carl Calmer, Charles Yale Harrison, Grace Lumpkin and Tess Slesinger; Lewis Corey, the Communist economist, and two or three other extreme Leftists (*Esquire*, July 1938).

The result, according to Malcolm Cowley, was a political temperament of decided proletarian sympathy.

> The literary world was changing in those early Depression years. Once it had seemed to be the province of those who copied the ways of moneyed people and more or less accepted the Genteel Tradition. Of course there was also – there had long been – a bohemian underworld of footloose rebels, and those had become numerous after the Great War, at a time when they were being ridiculed in the press as Greenwich Village or idle expatriates. I noted that most of the rebels had middle-class backgrounds and that the conventions they rebelled against were those of their own class. The change after 1930 was that many of the gifted new writers were proud of coming from a background of hand-to-mouth living in tenements or on the road. I remember one young man of talent who wrote about his nights with small time gamblers in Brownsville and another who limped from an injury suffered when he was thrown off a moving freight train by a Southern

> Pacific bull. These and others liked to think of themselves as proletarians and revolutionaries (Calisher et al., 16).

For many the charged political environment proved fertile.

In 1933 Horace Gregory recommended for Yaddo a young writer from Chicago, whose political interests were in alignment with Yaddo's leftward moving guests.

> Dear Mrs. Ames:
>
> Here is my list of people for Yaddo. I've reduced it to three names, but I am certain all three would be able to make intelligent use of what Yaddo has to offer and all three have definite work planned for the summer months. The first of these is
>
> James T. Farrell, The Vanguard Press, New York City. Farrell is twenty-nine, has written two published novels and a number of short stories. His contribution, a short story "Soap" in "Americans Abroad" is the most effective piece of writing in that anthology – "Gas House McGinty" his second novel, published by Vanguard this spring is a considerable advance over the first which I praised highly in "The Nation". He is now at work on a third book which he hopes to finish this summer.
>
> Farrell is an interesting personality. He comes from a terribly poor family, the shanty American-Irish of the Middle West and he was educated in one of the many Roman Catholic schools that are scattered throughout that region. Since I have a brother who married into such a family, I know the handicaps F. has had to overcome, and at the age of twenty five had to unlearn all the rot that had been poured into him from the day he was born. After leaving the University of Chicago, this process of re-educating set in – he has a remarkably quick, active mind – and a capacity for learning and readjustment that is limitless. He works continuously – writing reviews, the new book and short stories – and at night, reading philosophy – everything from Whithead to Marx. By the time he's forty he will have buttressed his natural talent with an excellent background in modern critical philosophy (YR 211.60).

During the summer of 1934, Farrell made significant progress toward the completion of his manuscript for *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, a novel that for many would come to define the proletarian movement in America between the wars. Horace Gregory recalled Farrell's "tremendous industry at turning out several thousands of words a day set him well apart from the other guests," adding that he "had made of his many hours of

writing, a way of life: wherever he could find room to shelter a brass bed, a chair, a table to hold a cup of coffee and a typewriter – the last with a quire of paper – he was at the center of his universe." Other artists found Yaddo's environment to be in agreement with their creativity. By 1931 Marc Blitzstein had already turned towards the left and at Yaddo was working on his revolutionary opera, *The Cradle Will Rock*. "In the evenings he played excerpts from it for the rest of the guests, singing all the roles in his curiously harsh, cracked voice," recalled Diana Trilling (Trilling, 183). It was Farrell, though, who attracted Ames' notice. By 1933 Farrell's wife, Dorothy, was living on the estate and working as secretary to Ames. "The East house furnishes a comfortable home . . . for my secretary and competent and valued assistant Mrs. Farrell," wrote Ames, adding, "Incidentally it also helps to further the career of her gifted novelist husband" (YR 344.10).

Those less accepting of, or as yet uncommitted to, radical ideology often felt hostile to the environment they found at Yaddo. George Novack, a young executive from the New York publishing world, met Farrell at Yaddo during the summer of 1934 and recalled being "the lone oppositionist amidst thirteen Communist members or sympathizers." Novack was not alone in feeling politically isolated at Yaddo. In July of 1938 Louis Adamic published an article in *Esquire* titled "Ingrates at Yaddo" in which he recalled his experience of Yaddo during the summer of 1933. According to Adamic discussion of revolutionary politics was unavoidable.

> We had a full house … and from the very beginning Yaddo seemed to me far less agreeable than it had been the first time. There were two or three very objectionable persons. Cliques formed. There was no end of nonsensical and excited talk about The Revolution, Soviet Russia and Soviet China, and related

> subjects. Working from twelve to fourteen hours a day, I carefully kept out of it. I associated mostly with Alec Harper and Alec Byer, who had the same policy. But it was impossible to escape the atmosphere. By-and-by it got so I was afraid to take a walk, lest I meet a couple of "revolutionaries" who might stop me and demand where I stood on the questions agitating their minds (*Esquire*, July 1938).

The communist fervor was palpable:

> One evening at dinner, two of the guests who considered themselves Communists talked revolution, as was their wont, and tried to draw the rest of us into the discussion. Evelyn Scott a very sensible woman but momentarily ill and overworked, said, "If I hear the word 'revolution' once more at this table, I shall leave the dining room." This of course immediately revealed her to the Communists as an evil, pampered bourgeois person who ought to be liquidated, and one of them promptly hissed at her, "Revolution, revolution!" Evelyn laid down her fork, rose from the table, and left the dining room (*Esquire*, July 1938).

Reaction to Adamic's article was immediate. "Someone in the office who knows nothing about Yaddo mentioned the *Esquire* piece to me before I'd read it," Cheever wrote to Ames, adding:

> You know how I feel about people writing about houses they've stayed in and I was sore about it long before I got my hands on the article. The article made me feel much worse.
>
> I don't know what to say. I don't see why Adamic wrote it. And Yaddo's record is enough to make his remarks look insignificant. What annoyed me most was his description of a change in your attitude. After having enjoyed a long, natural, candid, and cheerful friendship with you all I can say is that Adamic can go to hell (YR 235.11).

Cheever's defense of both Ames and Yaddo notwithstanding, Adamic's article called attention to the undeniable influence of historical circumstances on the Trasks' vision.

Despite Ames' rigorous defense of the Trasks' interest, Yaddo's opening in 1926 exposed its environment to inevitable interaction with broader pressures. Adamic's article is among the earliest published exposures of a community that had, heretofore, remained largely unknown. Ames' intention had clearly been for Yaddo to exist as a

kind of nebulous mystery in the minds of those not invited to live there. Adamic, however, pointed to additional influence. In Ames' own words Yaddo was designed to be a "meeting place of ideas." The atmosphere of political dissention Adamic described was clearly antithetical to such a conception. Ames was left to reconcile her concern for Yaddo's tradition of free and open discussion with her obvious fear that political debate might interfere with creative production.

Throughout the Depression Ames remained committed to administering Yaddo according to the principles the Trasks established. She was determined that, officially, Yaddo would not be associated with a political ideology. "It seems well to tell our guests that Yaddo supports exclusively no social or artistic philosophy, and that Yaddo is therefore a meeting place of ideas – a place for free discussion rather than propaganda," she wrote her advisors, adding that "it is primarily for work." Ames wrote to Copland: "[W]e have to stress more and more that [Yaddo] favors no school of thought in politics, philosophy, or art, but that it is unceasingly seeking for what is proved and authentic in all of them" (YR 237.5). To Newton Arvin she wrote: "I hope you are bearing in mind that my words the day you were here on a certain person's tenderness to radicalism and communism are strictly confidential," adding, "it has become a very touchy matter and is becoming even more so" (YR 225.1). As early as 1933, Ames expressed similar concern to her other advisors.

> We of course have to take into consideration that Yaddo accepts all shades of opinion. I think it has been bruited about a good deal that Yaddo is a gathering place for extreme radicals. It is therefore better to have it known that it does not belong to them officially, but that we invite all shades of opinion and representatives of all schools provided one's work qualifies (YR 344.12).

It was Arvin though who caused Ames the greatest concern. "The more I see of it," she wrote, "the more I think we need to be careful in weeding out what I call those band-wagon communists or radicals. There are as many of the hangers-on now as there were in the Village days when everyone was clamoring to practice and to believe in free love and the new freedom, whatever that was" (YR 225.1). Ames' concern was well accepted. "I tried to accomplish something on the Right and Center as well as on Left," Arvin wrote to Ames while he was recommending guests in 1934; but admitted, "with little or no success."

Despite her unease Ames remained fiercely protective of Yaddo's traditions. When Farrell expressed concern about receiving his subscription to *The Daily Worker,* Ames assured him that his concern was unfounded.

> There is no danger of any public opinion or fear of any public opinion that would cause us trouble from your subscription to *The Daily Worker*. Moreover, we never would tolerate any interference with or incrimination of anyone's intellectual interests while a guest at Yaddo. This is a very basic thing in our philosophy. All that we take care of is that Yaddo be guarded from being involved in legal matters about taxation.
>
> Since, of course, it is part of our ideology that Yaddo is a place of civilized and decent living we do not have to consider what the outside world thinks.
>
> It was very kind of you to be considerate of Yaddo in this matter and I appreciate it. If you think that anyone else at Yaddo is misinformed on this point I would appreciate it if you would set him right (YR 244.18).

Such regard for tradition helped to assure that, despite political conflict, throughout the 1930s, Yaddo continued to encourage the cultivation of art in a politically neutral fashion.

It would be wrong to assume that Yaddo's creative environment succumbed to ideological pressures brought on by the Depression. Yaddo accommodated the new

radicalism while maintaining a cautionary and even a reactionary stance. The fact that artists such as Aaron Copland and Clyfford Still found Yaddo's environment conducive to nonpolitical art is certainly testament to Ames' defense of its traditions. Yaddo's resilience also proved that the Trasks had designed an environment that could accommodate a variety of interests, even if they were carried to an extreme. It was an environment designed for resistance because it encouraged individual expression and maintained its commitment to seclusion and private contemplation. Especially during years of political protest, Ames' insistence on decorum helped to assure that, as she herself put it, "one may be as reclusive as he or she prefers." Such assurance allowed eclectic and diverse interests to thrive in relative tolerance.

Inevitably, the political convictions of Ames' advisors reflected their sense of a world heading towards apparent destruction. "What is my own position?" Cowley lamented to Edmund Wilson in 1938:

> Generally pro-Russian, pro-Communist, but with important reservations. I think that the Communists have done marvelous work for the American labor unions, but sometimes they spoilt it by getting their union mixed up in international politics. I think that Russia is still the great hope for socialism. If it is attacked by Germany and Japan, and beaten with the financial help from England, there won't be socialism in our time. But I don't like a lot of things that are happening in Russia, for example in the arts (YR 238.2)

If such uncertainty needed further confirmation, the signing of the Nonaggression Pact between Russia and Germany in August 1939 shook the foundations of even the most committed sympathizers. Arvin was at Yaddo when word of the agreement was received. Such news was received in eerie silence as guests gathered around a large radio on the mansion's second floor. The signing sent shock waves through the group of liberal

minded intellectuals who had turned to communism in the early days of the Depression. Arvin felt especially abandoned and was certain that the world was about to plunge irretrievably into chaos.

Hicks was at his farm in Grafton, New York, when the accord between Hitler and Stalin was announced. He immediately drove to Saratoga. At Yaddo, he conferred with Arvin and tried to devise a logical reaction. In the end, both renounced their party membership, as did Malcolm Cowley. Political allegiances were beginning to sway as the world advanced towards darkness. As it did during the Depression, Yaddo, under Ames' administration, continued to serve its purpose and, perhaps more than at any other time, provided insulation from the confusions and uncertainties that plagued the world beyond its gates.

Chapter Seven

War, Refuge, and "A Dance of Bees":
The 1940s

> Carson McCullers, part way through *A Member of the Wedding*, lies on her stomach on the ground, beating her fists on it calling "Mother! Mother!" At least so she reported and it was probably true after a fashion. It was a hard book to do and might have been harder anywhere else. She was lucky to be doing her suffering just then at Yaddo, even if Katherine Anne Porter, by far the elder, was rather uppity toward her, in fact frankly disliked her. Actually Carson tended to be herself the queen bee, not the suppliant, and it was odd to see her hoping for the favor of recognition from the superstar in that line.[11] – Eleanor Clark

During the eary-1940s the New York intellectual community welcomed among its ranks a growing number of European refugees. Accents became increasingly common at cocktail parties as an ever increasing number of writers and intellectuals fled Nazi oppression. These new émigrés mingled with the usual cohort of artists and intellectuals, who often abandoned the political convictions that had shaped their outlook during the Depression. Dinner conversation no longer divided Stalinists and Trotskyites. New arrivals also added a welcome vitality to a society which, by the late 1930s, many had begun to feel was gradually replacing Paris as the artistic capital of the West.

Yaddo fully embraced these energies and emotions. As early as 1939, Ames was making arrangements to welcome "six refugee workers all of whom were well known in Austria and Germany, but now outcast and almost penniless either because of their anti-Nazi activities or because of the accident of race" (YR 346.30). Among others who arrived for the 1939 season were novelist Hermann Broch, former editor of the Berliner Staats-Zeitung Dr. Richard Berman, and the Austrian artist Rudolph von Ripper. The

[11] Calisher et al., 28

personal experiences of such guests enforced the horror of Nazi ideology. Ames observed with trepidation that Yaddo's fifteenth season "opened while the most catastrophic events in modern history were unfolding." As it did during the lives of the Trasks, and again during the Depression, Yaddo became a place of withdrawal.

Throughout the early 1940s, exiled European intellectuals mingled with a new generation of artists, many of them Southern, while Yaddo's established guard provided important stability against a backdrop of catastrophic world events. Newton Arvin recalled Carson McCullers listening with rapt attention to the harrowing tales of exile and escape of refugees, and that she developed a fascination, which many recalled as a romantic attraction, for Alfred Kantorowicz. Kantorowicz, was forty-three years old and Jewish. He left Germany with the reputation of a writer and literary critic of some importance. He dazzled McCullers with tales of his flight from Germany ahead of Nazi authorities, his subsequent internment by the Vichy government, and, finally, his terrifying escape from the Gestapo and eventual asylum in the United States.

Ames' experience administering Yaddo through the economic crisis of the 1930s prepared her to negotiate inevitable war-time shortages and rationing. In 1941, Ames warned Yaddo's board of directors: "The matter of how large and how long a season we should plan for this year, with the country at war, has been almost a matter of prayer and fasting with your Executive Director and her advisors" (YR 346.10). From an ideological standpoint, the hatred spreading across Europe deepened Ames' commitment to safeguarding the Trasks' intentions. Ames had seen first hand the danger of Nazi ideology. She had spent several weeks in Germany in 1934, shortly after Hitler assumed

the position of chancellor, and was appalled by her experience. During the early years of the war Ames watched helplessly as the intellectual and creative values she held most sacred fell to Nazi oppression. For Ames, Yaddo embodied the cultural principles upon which artistic achievement, freedom of expression and tolerance rested. Her response to Nazi atrocities was to insist that, despite wartime shortages and uncertainties, Yaddo continue to nurture scholarly and artistic thought. "This war is being fought in great part that the life of the mind and fruits of civilization may endure," she wrote in 1940. The following year she went on to explain that the current world situation "makes it obligatory and natural for Yaddo to carry on, if possible, as usual; and so we shall, simplifying and economizing as never before" (YR 346.8). The Music Festival for 1941 was arranged according to a "modified plan." Yaddo's guest list was also reduced. "We shall not have more than twelve persons on our guest list this summer," Ames wrote her advisors in 1943. By 1944, only the names Eleanor Clark, Helen Fisher, Carson McCullers, Katherine Anne Porter, and Agnes Smedley appeared on Yaddo's guest list.

For most of the war, Yaddo's season was reduced to eight weeks and ran from the beginning of July to the end of August. Additional economies were also enforced. In 1946, Ames included in her invitation to Clara Stillman an unprecedented request: "Will you also please bring us two pounds of sugar, without fail? Yaddo has no allowances as restaurants have, and, therefore, we do have to ask everyone to make us this allotment" (YR 220.33). By 1946 the quota had increased. Ames wrote to Thomas Doremus, "Your quota of sugar, which you should also bring with you is two and one-half pounds, but if you use an excessive amount in your coffee and cereal, please try and bring more" (YR

241.27). More dramatically, Triuna Island was sold for $20,000. Ames justified her decision as "another retrenchment added to the many already made whereby we strive to cut our pattern according to the cloth these uncertain times afford." In January the furnishings were dragged across the ice of Lake George and moved to Yaddo, where Ames wrote that they were "distributed to replenish and refurbish furnishings in studios and dwellings on Yaddo grounds and North Farm."

From a cultural perspective the war reinforced Yaddo's tradition of providing physical and psychological shelter. More than at any time since Katrina's final, and complete, immersion in Yaddo's protective seclusion following Spencer's death, Yaddo during the Depression and then the Second World War, provided important sanctuary from historical turbulence. While the presence of European refugees was a constant reminder of the hatred spreading across Europe, Yaddo's detachment functioned as a kind of psychological escapism. Guests were able to suspend, albeit temporarily, anxieties that were unavoidable in places like New York City. It was an environment that was formed by a reaction to a historical uncertainty that was strangely reminiscent of the Trasks' response to the apprehensions that characterized the final decades of the nineteenth century. The difference was that during the Second World War, Yaddo's delineation was enforced by administrative necessity.

From an administrative standpoint, the war had the odd consequence of reaffirming one of Yaddo's customs. Confronted with wartime shortages, Ames worked to reestablish Yaddo's tradition of self-sufficiency. "In place of the flowers that once bloomed, one will find this year many varieties of vegetables for immediate use and for

canning," Ames reported to Yaddo board members. "In the meadow beyond the waterfall which has lain fallow for some years, we hope to raise 500 bushels of potatoes. The rabbit industry for meat is being started, and the pigeons which heretofore we have tried to exterminate we are now fattening for dressing" (YR 346.15). Wartime uncertainty required Yaddo administrators to develop prudent protocols for handling now, unprecedented situations. During the summer of 1942, Newton Arvin was appointed "fire warden." Should the Luftwaffe have planned a sudden attack on Saratoga, it was Arvin's responsibility to inform guests of emergency procedures. Alfred Kazin recalled that Arvin's diminutive stature did little to instill confidence: "With his small fragile figure, his beautiful voice, his considered diffidence in the face of anything that might be conceivably labeled a threat to these beautiful surroundings," Kazin wrote, "Newton Arvin was the last person you would have chosen to enforce blackout regulations and the like." Arvin's services were, of course, never required.

Throughout the war Ames relied on her network of advisors to ensure that what limited hospitality and refuge she could offer was well placed. Recommendations provided by Arvin, Cowley, and Copland carried even greater authority than they did during the Depression. Other suggestions came from more immediate sources. In the spring of 1941, Ames received a letter from her sister regarding a young writer from Columbus, Georgia, to whom she had recently been introduced, "Please meet this shy, sweet girl from Columbus who wants so badly to come to work at Yaddo, but who wouldn't dream of asking anyone to let her come" (Carr, 140). In her wonderful biography of McCullers, Virginia Spencer Carr described their awkward introduction.

Ames arranged to meet her sister's acquaintance at the Hotel Commodore in New York. When her appointment failed to arrive at her room, Ames went downstairs, surveyed the lobby, and approached a forlorn looking figure. "You are Carson McCullers, aren't you?" asked Ames. McCullers, visibly intimidated, replied, "Oh, please forgive me, Mrs. Ames. I have been so frightened at meeting you that I have lost my voice" (Carr, 142). McCullers' anxiety was the result of her passionate desire to visit Yaddo. Though she had worked at both Bread Loaf and, more infamously, at 7 Middagh Street in Brooklyn Heights, McCullers was convinced that Yaddo's more diverse and decorous atmosphere would help to focus her creative energy. "Here, and at Yaddo, I am not constantly deflected by a multiplicity of facile emotions," she later wrote Ames from her home, adding: "[T]he things I feel I feel deeply. In the city I was tormented by the feeling of transience and improvisation that life seems to have" (YR 268.1).

In May 1941, McCullers had accompanied her husband Reeves to a party at Muriel Rukeyser's apartment. Rukeyser was a veteran of Yaddo, which she referred to as "the Magic Mountain with a vengeance." As Carr explains, that evening McCullers was introduced to Rukeyser's husband, composer David Diamond. Like McCullers, Diamond, a protégé of Aaron Copland, had established a reputation that far exceeded his years. At twenty-five Diamond had already been the recipient of Guggenheim and Julliard awards. In addition he was a seasoned veteran of Yaddo. His *Concerto for Small Orchestra* was composed largely at Yaddo and had been enthusiastically received at the 1940 music festival. His personal history at Yaddo was, in a word, dramatic. During the summer of 1939, Diamond met composer Marc Blitzstein there. Blitzstein was in

residence in Katrina's Tower Room where he was completing *No for an Answer*. The two had much to share. Both were Jewish, serious composers, and openly gay. It was not long before they were making forays to Congress Street where the more tolerant atmosphere allowed them to dance with each other. In the fall, Diamond shared North Farm with the poet Delmore Schwartz. The arrangement was not entirely happy. Diamond's homosexuality and command of French proved disturbing to Schwartz who was struggling to complete a translation of Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer*, with what he admitted to be a high school command of French.

When Diamond learned that McCullers was interested in Yaddo, he quickly assured her that working there would be far more stimulating than working at Bread Loaf, which catered only to writers. Diamond rightly assumed that the opportunity for McCullers to work amid the more diverse interests of writers, composers, and visual artists would prove inspiring to a writer so captivated by musical composition and painting. Diamond also recalled for McCullers Sunday evening gatherings in the mansion's library. He described a group of dedicated artists listening to records, or even live performances, of guests' work. After listening to Diamond extol Yaddo's virtues, McCullers was determined to be invited. In the lobby of the Hotel Commodore, McCullers gradually regained her composure. Ames was impressed with the young writer and made arrangements for her to arrive at Yaddo in June.

Throughout the afternoon of June 14, 1941, McCullers looked out the window of a Greyhound bus as it traveled northward from New York City. As the bus began entering the lower Adirondacks north of Albany, the view from her window seemed

inspiring. During the long ride she calmed her nerves with an occasional sip of sherry. McCullers' nervousness was not entirely the result of her anticipation of a new environment. She was considering the development of *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* the manuscript of which was carefully packed in her suitcase. Her text was a source of both intense optimism and keen despair. The publication of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* had made McCullers an overnight sensation, the latest, and by far youngest, celebrity in New York's literary society. Now she was faced with the daunting challenge of completing a second book worthy of her reputation. As if her novel was not a sufficient source of anxiety, McCullers was also deeply concerned about her troubled marriage to Reeves McCullers. She was convinced that she needed Yaddo to finish her Ballad. Like Arvin, Yaddo, and by close association, Ames, quickly became a refuge, a place of indispensable emotional and creative solace. "Carson McCullers in those days would have been totally bereft without Yaddo and the protectiveness Elizabeth Ames gave her" (Calisher et al., 36) wrote Kazin.

McCullers' first impression of Saratoga Springs was less than inspiring. The bus depot also served as a parking lot for a diner on the edge of town. There, McCullers was ushered into an aging station wagon. Among other duties during the busy summer season, the station wagon served as a constant shuttle between Yaddo and either the bus terminal or train depot. That afternoon the ride to Yaddo would have been unusually crowded. Ames had chosen June 14 to open Yaddo's season. As the old car rattled through Saratoga, McCullers was in the close company of several other guests who had been invited to arrive on the first day of the summer season.

Yaddo was not an entirely new experience for McCullers. In addition to Bread Loaf, McCullers was a seasoned veteran of 7 Middagh Street. For one brief year, Middagh Street served as a kind of urban Yaddo where the likes of W.H. Auden, George Davis, Gypsy Rose Lee, Louis MacNeice, and Benjamin Britten engaged in feverish discussion of art, politics and, of course, creative struggle. When McCullers moved in during October of 1940, she entered a world of collaborative creative energy that would have been familiar to residents of Yaddo. "I did indeed visit Carson at Middagh Street," recalled Louis Untermeyer, "I do remember an evening there . . . a gay (in both senses of the word) occasion at which Auden and Gypsy Lee Rose were present. (Gypsy did not strip, but Auden did plenty of teasing.) Carson was more voluble and euphoric than usual" (Carr, 119). Amid such company McCullers thrived. The most notable difference between 7 Middagh Street and Yaddo was that residents in Brooklyn contributed towards rent and shared domestic duties. At Yaddo, McCullers would be free of such mundane concerns. She could devote her entire attention to her fiction. "The Guggenheim offers the means and Yaddo the actuality," (YR 268.1) McCullers would later describe to Ames.

If McCullers' experience living at 7 Middagh Street had prepared her for immersion in the eclectic company that awaited her in Saratoga, its confining quarters and city environment provided an overwhelming contrast to Yaddo's expansive grandeur. Even the descriptions provided by David Diamond did not do justice to the estate's natural splendor. The young writer felt as though she had entered another world, a bucolic sanctuary dedicated to creativity.

McCullers was not the only Southern writer in residence during the summer of 1941. At dinner she was introduced to Katherine Anne Porter who had been living at Yaddo since July 1940. At the time of her arrival Porter's literary success and elegant persona had preceded her. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* had been published to widespread critical acclaim in 1939. Like McCullers, Porter had been struggling with the failure of her marriage. She had left Albert Erskine earlier in the spring. Porter was further troubled by her uncertain financial situation. Like McCullers, Porter was also in need of both Yaddo and Ames. Porter hoped that Yaddo would shelter her from the emotional turmoil and economic uncertainly that had been distracting her from her work. Its cloistered atmosphere proved ideal. "This is a real monastery," she wrote approvingly. "I had not imagined anything so severely cloistered and delimited" (Bayley, 179). Diamond had described Porter to McCullers as the "Queen" of Yaddo. Porter's elegance and literary reputation preceded her. Seated in Porter's company that evening, McCullers began to develop an intense attraction to the established author, who, even at 55, looked every bit the Southern belle.

At Yaddo, Porter was writing an introduction to a new edition of *Flowering Judas and Other Stories* when the news of France's collapse was received over the radio. During the summer of 1941 Yaddo provided Porter important refuge and she dedicated herself to work. Porter's energy quickly earned Ames' confidence. Their rapport lead to the gradual extension of her residency. By September, Porter was addressing her correspondence to "Dearest Elizabeth," and was even acknowledging Ames' financial

support, "you really did save me from the most miserable situation in the world, immediate pennilessness" (YR 276.14).

Ames' influence extended well beyond practical support. Frustrated with the progress of several short stories, Porter turned to Ames for critical advice: "If you have time to read them, could I send you copies when they are ready?" Porter wrote; adding, "I have finished absolutely *The Leaning Tower* and the magazine is having it copied now, when the original gets back I'll send it on to you. It's yours" (YR 276.14). She later assured Ames that *Season of Fear* "is even more your story than *The Leaning Tower*, because the landscape in it is the landscape around the farmhouse when I began writing it" (YR 276.14). Such productivity was rooted in the respite Porter found at Yaddo. "I feel as if there were great reserve stores of strength for me to draw upon that I know were not there when I first came to Yaddo," she confided; "[I] f I hadn't been there the stories might never have been written," adding "never did I begin three at once before, and they are all coming through well" (YR 276.14). Such commitment earned Ames' deepest confidence. Despite the mounting pressures of increased wartime rationing, Ames agreed to prolong Porter's residence. "Elizabeth, you have been so good and so friendly to me," wrote Porter. She continued: "the time I have spent here has been so fruitful and so pleasant. . . . I had no expectations of being invited for so long, and what I have had is much more than I ever hoped for" (YR 276.14). In December Porter thanked Ames for "the very happiest Christmas I ever had," and assured her that "your party was the first real Christmas party I have gone to in many years: everybody seemed serenely gay and the faces were quietly happy. The music and the candle light and the lovely food and

drink and the fire on the hearth, everything was perfect" (YR 276.14). Porter remained at Yaddo through 1941; this was at the time a period of residency of unprecedented length.

By the time McCullers arrived at Yaddo, Porter was beginning what Alfred Kazin would later refer to as "the long hard pull towards *Ship of Fools*" (Calisher et al., 33). She had been impressed by Porter since the previous summer when she attended a lecture given by Porter at Bread Loaf. At the time McCullers' timidity had gotten the better of her, and she had not attempted an introduction. Amid Yaddo's intimate setting, however, and no doubt bolstered by her own recent literary recognition, no such inhibitions persisted.

Within days of her arrival McCullers confessed to Porter her unabashed infatuation. As was often the case, such fascination resulted in awkward gestures. Alfred Kazin remembered her that summer as "devilish in her humor, circuitous in her dealings, charming beyond words," adding that she "fastened on many people as she did on me – for affection, encouragement, consolation and whatever else there was (it was a lot) that she required from friends." Despite Porter's obvious aversion, McCullers brazenly attached herself to the elder writer's shadow. While Porter's ego was certainly challenged by the success of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, which Porter herself had confessed "had the mark of genius," her sense of moral propriety was exasperated by McCullers' bisexuality and habit of dressing in men's clothes. During the summer of 1941, her preferred attire was usually dungarees and a man's dress shirt.

When her simple persistence failed to attract Porter's attention, McCullers' tactics became more aggressive. Standing outside Porter's door the fawning writer pleaded "Please, Katherine Anne, let me come in and talk with you – I do love you so very much." At first, Porter adopted a mature response to such advances. "This isn't a quarrel or anything like it," she assured Ames "it is merely an unfortunate situation, and if I can simply avoid the occasions of embarrassment, it is bound to die of inanition sooner or later" (YR 276.14). It quickly became apparent that McCullers' obsession showed no signs of abating. Porter responded by adopting Eudora Welty as her protégé. Welty had arrived at Yaddo the day after McCullers and was planning to develop a short story she later called *First Love*. Porter had met Welty in Baton Rouge and had encouraged her to complete her first collection of short stories. While she was working to organize *Ship of Fools*, Porter was also trying to complete a 3,300 word introduction to Welty's collection, which she had assured friends would add $10,000 to the book's sales. Porter reasoned that her attachment to Welty would help to repel McCullers' advances. She was wrong.

McCullers and Welty knew one another. They had met the previous summer at Bread Loaf. McCullers countered Porter's alignment with Welty by adopting more obsequious strategies to attract attention. On her way to dinner one evening, Porter opened her door to find famed author of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* lying prostrate at her feet. Not wanting to risk Ames' displeasure if she arrived to dinner late, Porter merely stepped over McCullers.

Ever the decorous house matron, Ames intervened. She arranged for Porter's quiet move to North Farm, where she lived with David Diamond. In December, Porter wrote Ames from her new accommodations: "Christmas day was perfect. . . . [I]n the afternoon we went to the studio and David played the songs he had dedicated to me, and then prosaically enough we went to the [New] Worden [Hotel] and had roast beef dinner" (Bayley, 184). Unwittingly, Ames' attempt to separate the two women only added further emotional confusion to what was already a tense situation. Diamond had been captivated by McCullers since their first meeting. "I have met Carson McCullers and I shake as I write," he confided in his diary. Amazingly, as Carr describes, Diamond's infatuation took the place of his previous fascination with Porter.

> [Katherine Anne Porter] was for me at our meeting last summer the fulfillment of a strange love which I carried about in my heart in Paris when I first read "Flowerig Judas." Now I have met *this* love – this lovable child-woman – whose loneliness hit me the moment I entered Muriel Rukeyser's apartment. I cannot write here more of Carson. I gave her my ring, which she asked about (Carr, 147).

McCullers found herself awkwardly distanced from two artists whom she both regarded fondly and was drawn towards with intense compulsion. By August, Porter was still having to resist McCullers' advances. "Your arrangements about dinner for me makes me feel I should do better in at least one human relation," she wrote Ames from North Farm,

> but darling, I cannot face what is bound to happen on the first day that girl gets a few drinks and sees me at the same time. She seems to be under some sort of compulsion, and it is nothing I can control with the best will in the world. There is nothing anyone can do, and you are wonderfully right not to take sides because there isn't any side to take (YR 276.14).

Alfred Kazin recalled "playing poker with Carson and Katherine Anne Porter; an amateurish shuffling of cards by Carson mysteriously drove Katherine Anne mad with fury and ended with Katherine Anne and me walking down Union Avenue on a lovely Sunday afternoon" (Calisher et al., 37). Diamond found himself in the uncomfortable position of working through his own divided emotional interests while trying to reconcile McCullers' intense infatuation with Porter's stubborn resistance. Not surprisingly for Diamond the summer proved emotionally exhausting. "It is an episode well worth putting out of my mind," he wrote to Ames after returning to Rochester. He added: "One day I hope to understand it all better. As far as KAP is involved, it was only my feelings for C that upset her and you know how KAP feels about C. . . . It is quite an all-round mix-up and I shall have to learn how not to be sucked up in everyone's miseries" (YR 241.10).

Such emotional intrigue served as a dramatic backdrop to what was by any account a productive period at Yaddo. At more than any other time during her tenure, Ames managed to devote simultaneous attention to the emotional and creative needs of both McCullers and Porter highlights her tremendous ability to foster the creative energy. "I am most happy," Porter wrote Ames from North Farm "and seeming to gather momentum as time goes" (YR 276.14). For her part, McCullers remained committed to her developing novel. "Nothing could keep Carson from her desk at half-past nine in the morning," Ames remembered, adding, "she stayed there throughout the day. She was very, very disciplined. She could turn against or grow cold toward anyone who was ever thoughtless enough to try and break in on her" (Carr, 159). Such commitment was rooted

in McCullers' intuitive regard for Yaddo's schedule. "Every day I get up before dawn, work quietly and steadily until afternoon," she wrote Ames from her home "then read and practice on my piano in the afternoon. . . . It is by no means a normal life, I know, but the work gets done" (YR 268.1). Despite what Edward Newhouse remembered as McCullers' "childlike" antics, Ames realized that McCullers' work habits and Yaddo's traditions were compatible.

Amazingly, both McCullers and Porter also found Ames to be an indispensable source of emotional support. "I have never felt so free, so full of energy, and so contented as I did there" (YR 268.1) McCullers assured Ames after her visit in 1941. Her love for Yaddo quickly became indistinguishable from her emotional attachment to Ames. "If ever you want me, and for anything, I can be with you in a few hours" McCullers promised, adding "you are close to me always in my heart" (YR 268.1). "You know how close you are to me, and how deeply I cherish your love," she wrote on another occasion; adding: "Our friendship is one of those endurable things; amid all the confusion and improvisation of life it is love and friendship such as ours that give one the courage to struggle and live." She even assured Ames that "whatever there is in me is yours whenever you want it" (YR 268.1). McCullers also confided, "You know already what it means to me to have your love and your faith in my work" (YR 268.1).

Ames' relationship with Porter was similarly intense. By September 1941, Porter was referring to Ames' habit of "placing and replacing me, here and there at strategic Yaddo spots, never quite knowing what to do with me next, like a China white elephant – you know, one of those mantel ornaments" (YR 276.14). Indeed, it was Porter who

finally suggested that she leave Yaddo. "By October first" she wrote, "I will have finished all that I planned and hoped to do when I first knew I was going really to stay on here" (YR 276.14). At the same time Porter made certain that Ames was aware of how deeply appreciative she was of her attention.

> It has been absolutely the best and most fruitful and in many ways the most growing time of my life. I have been able to use all the opportunities you gave me here, no help was ever more timely or more needed, as I see now a great deal more clearly than I could possibly have seen when I first came here. For me these fifteen months have no alternative in my mind. I am unable to imagine where else I could have spent them, what I would have done, and not for one moment has it ever occurred to me that here was not the best possible place in the world for me (YR 276.14).

Such understanding allowed for both emotional intimacy and creative influence. "I love you devotedly," Porter confessed, "and once in a while I would like to tell you so, for it seems to me that good words about our feelings are the living waters of friendship: and in this time when you are so occupied and so surrounded and hemmed in with duties, I miss you. But still we will be near each other for the rest of our lives, and there are always going to be comparatively free and quiet winters for us" (YR 276.14). She later assured Ames, "I feel a great community of interest with you. As if now the work I have done in this year and three months as it will be, is a kind of partnership affair" (YR 276.14).

Despite Ames' simultaneous accommodation of both McCullers and Porter, amid Yaddo's intimate company, their emotional tension spread. By the middle of the 1941 season camps had formed. At breakfast Porter and Welty sat at one end of the dining room, while at the opposing end McCullers presided over the "Table of Sensitives," which included Newton Arvin, Edward Newhouse, and Colin McPhee. Newly arriving guests quickly realized that their choice of company implied an emotional allegiance. If

there was a bright side to such contention, it was, oddly, that such emotional opposition provided the foundation for important associations.

As Carr explains, in addition to serving as McCullers companion in arms, Newhouse also served as her literary liaison to *The New Yorker*. He was impressed enough by her short story "The Jockey" that he asked to show it to Gus Lobrano, fiction editor at *The New Yorker*. McCullers had composed the work at Yaddo and had chosen for her setting the familiar surroundings of Saratoga's New Worden Hotel. Lobrano was impressed with what he saw. When Newhouse returned to Yaddo he presented McCullers with a check for almost four hundred dollars. If McCullers' ego needed reassurance while she struggled with her manuscript for *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, the sale of her work certainly helped to bolster her confidence.

With Arvin, McCullers established the kind of intense friendship for which she was famous. Their idiosyncratic personalities proved compatible, and their sexualities benignly complementary. Both struggled with waves of depression that left them teetering on the brink of catastrophe. During such moments of despair both preferred to retreat into Yaddo's protection and in general found solace in Ames. During the summer of 1941, however, Ames found herself removed from their emotional needs. Arvin and McCullers found something deeply reassuring in each other's company. The established man of letters provided McCullers with indispensable support as she struggled through her second novel. Arvin found in McCullers' youthful exuberance a welcome escape from his staid life of reclusive concentration. Arvin, still recovering from the failure of his marriage, offered McCullers advice about her troubled marriage. McCullers even

admitted to Arvin that Reeves had forged her signature on her royalty check for "The Jockey." Arvin eventually counseled her to seek a divorce.

In August, McCullers accompanied Arvin, Granville Hicks and Hicks' wife, Dorothy, to Quebec. Werth provides a fascinating description of what must have been an almost comedic trip. Fortified by a substantial supply of liquor, Arvin and McCullers engaged in what Arvin later referred to as "one sustained conversation with moving scenery" (Werth, 93) in the backseat of Hicks' car as they made their way northward from Saratoga. In Quebec, Arvin registered at the hotel under the name "Mr. and Mrs. Newton Arvin" (Werth, 93). Though there is no evidence to suggest that they tried to have sex, the night was apparently awkward: the following morning, Arvin requested a separate room.

Despite having described her enthusiasm for visiting Quebec during the long car ride, McCullers remained detached throughout her visit. Her preference was to abide by a Yaddo-like regime. Regardless of the insistence of both Hicks and Arvin that McCullers accompany them around the city, she remained in her room sipping sherry, writing letters, and, most likely, contemplating the further development of *The Ballad of the Sad Café*. Several days later, Hicks dropped Arvin and McCullers off in Northampton, Massachusetts, and from there McCullers returned to New York while Arvin made plans to return to Yaddo.

Under intense pressure from Ames, the Yaddo to which Arvin would return was beginning to further embrace the liberal ideologies of its founders. When Ames was in Europe in 1934 she traveled to Vienna during what she referred to as "the abortive

revolution." "I wish I had the time to tell you just my initial impressions of the horror, the mad-house that Germany is," she wrote to Arvin. "Getting back to the peace and constancy of Yaddo, it does, at the moment, seem nothing less than a night-mare" (YR 225.1). As Nazism took hold in Germany and began its devastating expansion across Europe, Ames became more determined than ever to make certain that Yaddo would be even more accepting of the Trasks interests.

Throughout the 1930s, the issue of inviting black artists to Yaddo had deeply divided Yaddo's board. Newton Arvin threatened to resign in protest when other board members opposed the idea: "I find that I cannot argue myself into an indifferentist attitude toward the neo-confederates and their pro-slavery apologetics" Arvin wrote to Ames, adding, "the only honest thing for me to do is to resign from the literary committee" (YR 225.1). Against the backdrop of a world being torn violently apart by ideologies of hatred, Ames shrewdly perceived an opportunity to gain the board's approval to invite black artists to Yaddo. In her annual report for 1941, she announced that "The vote of the Directors to admit Negroes, properly qualified, to Yaddo puts Yaddo in the good society of those who are fighting against racial discrimination" (YR 346.14). Ames made immediate preparations to welcome Yaddo's first black guests. "I am delighted to have the opportunity of coming to Yaddo," (YR 255.29). Langston Hughes wrote Ames in June of 1942.

On the afternoon of August 2, 1942, Hughes traveled from New York to Saratoga. He arrived at Yaddo with portions of *Shakespeare in Harlem* and *The Sun Do Move* in

hand. Hughes adjusted quickly to life at Yaddo. "This really is a delightful place to work," he wrote to the poet and novelist Arna Bontemps, noting that Yaddo comprised,

> 700 acres, with rose gardens, rock gardens, fountains, lakes for boating, tennis courts, croquet, a game room, a Mansion House where most sleep and all eat, and a couple of dozen studios scattered about in the woods where nobody can bother you all day long. Mine is so far back in the woods I can't see a thing inside except by electric light. They must have known I like to work at night and so were trying to supply me with the correct atmosphere even in the day time (Charles, ed., 98).

Hughes was not the only black artist at Yaddo. The composer Nathaniel Dett had been in residence since mid-July. While both men appreciated Yaddo's atmosphere they found the town of Saratoga to be less than tolerant. "Replying to yours of the 15th, I do not object to Langston Hughes, the colored writer coming in our bar as long as he is in the company of someone else from Yaddo," (YR 255.29) Edward Sweeny, proprietor of the posh New Worden Hotel, wrote to Ames. Especially during the 1930s and 1940s, drinking in Saratoga was a decidedly class-conscious affair. Emporia catered to the tastes of either the spa clientele and horse racing enthusiasts or to the underclass of domestic help that found summer employment catering to the needs of the wealthy. Following his visit to Yaddo during the summer of 1942, Weldon Kees recalled the clear distinctions among Saratoga's bars:

> Two blocks of Commercial Street, in the downtown district, are lined with whorehouses; since people develop thirsts along with erections, there are bars sprinkled among them. Then [Nathan] Ashes and David Diamond and Al Fisher and I went to the Hilltop, one of the most lively bars, one night and drank beer and played the jukebox, which was of the automatic hostess type, untouched it would seem, by the Effort. All the whores on Commercial Street are negresses, and they wander in and out between assignations for a quick drink. David knew the place and its lore forward and back (Knoll, ed., 120).

According to Kees, such ambience contrasted with what one could expect to find at places like the New Worden.

> In the bar of the Worden Hotel, where Cheever, it was said, practically lived for a time, and where one might run into Frank Sullivan, which was all right, or Monty Woolley, which was anything but right, the tone was much different. The smot [sic] Saratoga set, the men who play the horses, the corpulent ladies from Bensonhurst and Manhattan – mothers of wealthy Saratoga physicians, most of them, the people taking the cure, students from Skidmore College - those were the clientele (Knoll, ed., 121).

Yaddo guests often found themselves divided by the kind of bar they preferred. At first, Hughes found an eager escort to the New Worden in Carson McCullers. Nonetheless, the pair quickly developed a partiality for the less respectable bars located along Commercial Street and Congress Streets. In the back rooms of such places as "Jimmy's," McCullers and Hughes spent long hours playing craps, and as Hughes described for Bontemps, observing the less polished side of Saratoga.

> Jimmy, the bar owner who had Carson and [me] to dinner, had a quarrel with his girlfriend the other night, got mad, and left his bar with her sitting thereat. She thought she saw him coming back, and threw a beer bottle with marvelous aim. But it wasn't him at all. Merely a luckless customer who got it dead over the left eye, and was knocked prone (Charles, ed., 89).

While such distraction had always provided Yaddo guests with an important release of creative energy, especially during World War Two, evenings spent in the bars along Congress Street provided escape from concern for world events.

Throughout the early 1940s conversation at Yaddo often centered on the latest news from Europe. During the evenings, guests gathered around Yaddo's radio and listened to the latest news bulletins. While European refugees provided terrifying, first-hand accounts of the brutality of Nazism, for Ames, who had lost her husband during the

First World War, reports from Cheever, training at camp Gordon in Georgia, made the war uncomfortably personal. “The garrison, in which I spend most of my time, looks like nothing but an army garrison; all army garrisons look alike and remind you of nothing but themselves,” Cheever wrote, adding “we spend a good deal of our time pursuing an imaginary force of Germans around the neighborhood” (YR 235.11).

Mercifully, by June 1944, guests were hearing the optimistic news of allied advances towards Berlin, and, finally, Tokyo. With the effects of rationing gradually subsiding, Ames was eager to expand Yaddo’s guest list, and, reenergize a population that showed the effects of wartime anxiety. As Ames finalized the guest list for the summer of 1946, she felt nervous hope that the liveliness of seasons past could be reclaimed. She could not possibly have imagined that the source for much of this energy would spring from an impish young writer from New York with a Southern charm.

During the winter of 1945, Carson McCullers recommended to Truman Capote that he apply for admission to Yaddo. At the time Capote was working to develop his first novel, *Other Voices Other Rooms*. McCullers had recently helped to introduce Capote to Robert Linscott, senior editor at Random House, who was impressed by Capote’s short story, “Miriam” which appeared in the June 1945 issue of *Mademoiselle*, and quickly signed the young talent to a contract for his novel. McCullers had already described Yaddo for Capote and even promised that her influence on both Arvin and Ames all but assured his acceptance. At her insistence, Capote wrote directly to Ames in January 1945.

Dear Mrs. Ames,

> I am interested to know the possibilities of spending some time at Yaddo this summer, as I am working on a book, a first novel, which I hope to finish in the fall; the book is to be published by Random House: Robert N. Linscott is my editor. My stories have appeared in Harper's Bazaar, Mademoiselle, Story, Prarie Schooner, and other small reviews. I am twenty-one, from the South, now living in New York. For a short period I worked at *The New Yorker*, then read manuscripts for a motion picture office, finally put together a monthly collection of rather tired anecdotes for a digest magazine. Now, at last, with the assistance of a publisher, I am able to go ahead with my writing.
>
> Several friends who have been there tell me I would like Yaddo very much. Thank you, Mrs. Ames, for the consideration you may give this letter (YR 234.4).

At the time he applied, Capote was sharing a small apartment with his mother and stepfather in Manhattan. Not only were the living arrangements constrained, but his mother's worsening alcoholism made the opportunity for sustained work impossible. Capote needed Yaddo. As Ames wrote him a letter of acceptance she could not have realized the extent to which Yaddo needed Capote. His flamboyance would quickly animate an environment eager to put the uncertainty and malaise of the war years behind. In the words of John Brinnin, such was Capote's influence that, for a brief period during the summer of 1946, Yaddo was transformed into a "dance of bees," a creative house party that would have satisfied even the Trasks' pretenses.

On the afternoon of May 1, 1946, Truman Capote traveled by train from New York City to Saratoga. Standing outside the train depot Capote's stature suggested more an aspiring jockey than an emerging literary celebrity. Like McCullers, who was awaiting his arrival, Capote appeared on the Yaddo stage as a recognized talent of rising importance. Capote brought with him a nearly complete manuscript of *Other Voices Other Rooms* that he was determined to finish at Yaddo.

Capote's biographer Gerald Clark describes that Capote's effect on Yaddo was immediate. Most guests had never seen anything like him. "He walked as if every step were choreographed to some music that he alone heard," recalled Marguerite Young. "You would see him – or just the tail of that white shirt – for an instant and then he would be gone. I remember him as being absolutely enthralling that summer, high-spirited, generous, loving, we all thought he was a genius" (Clark, 101). John Malcolm Brinnin recorded his impressions in his diary.

> Spontaneous when others are cautious, he has a child's directness, a child's indifference to propriety, and so gets to the heart of matters with an audacity strangers find outrageous, then delightful. Yet nothing he says or does accounts for the magnet somewhere in his makeup that exerts itself like a force beyond logic. . . . His slightest movements throughout the mansion, about the grounds, or in the side streets of Saratoga are charted and signaled by sentries visible only to one another (Clark, 101).

At Yaddo Capote also met established academics Newton Arvin and Howard Doughty, as well as Katherine Anne Porter, still regarded by most as the "Queen of the Colony." Capote's persona was transformative. Generational divides and emotional and creative differences all gave way to his puckish persona. "Schemes to share his table at dinner are laid at breakfast," recalled Brinnin, "sometimes by single plotters, sometimes by teams united in shamelessness. There's always laughter at his table, echoing across the moat of silence in which the tables around it are sunk" (Clark, 101).

Capote was assigned Katrina's Tower Room. Cloistered in the original queen's private sanctuary, with views of the Green Mountains in the distance, he committed himself to the completion of his novel. Between the hours of nine and four Capote welcomed the opportunity for sustained concentration. His dedication was such that even

Ames, who he described as "silent and sinister like Mrs. Danvers from *Rebecca*," (Clark, 100) remained tolerant of his quixotic behavior, which surfaced during evening cocktails and beyond.

Capote remained the undeniable center of Yaddo. During the four weeks he was there, many Yaddo staff members were the unhappy objects of elaborate high jinx he orchestrated with McCullers. McCullers took to rummaging through Capote's clothes and borrowing at will. It was not uncommon for her to wear two or three of his shirts in a single day and she was often seen walking around the grounds in Capote's shoes. Spontaneous dancing was a regular occurrence, and Capote managed to serve as partner for both McCullers and Porter. When she asked Ames, "From where did he come, dear?" Ames famously responded, "From Harper's Bazaar" (Werth, 101). Apart from being shocked by Capote's exuberance, Porter found his kinship with McCullers grounds for resentment. Three years after sharing an awkward dance with Capote at Yaddo, Porter wrote to Ames from Stanford:

> The guest list is very superior, no Capotes, for one thing. The other day in class I was discussing the peculiar kind of rottenness of certain writers, taking as text a mss. handed me by a student, and I remarked to the class, "If you don't look out, at this rate you'll be Truman Capote" and they all laughed outright, which I took for a fine healthy sign and you know, I believe that art comes from the health of the soul and mind and not its diseases; great art, at any rate. And though I am sure I have no geniuses in my class, some of them have talent, and good gifts, and it is a good sign when they vomit up such little T.C. (YR 276.14).

For his part, Capote was less than smitten by Porter, whom he privately referred to as "St. Katherine Anne P." "She tries to act like a Southern belle of sixteen or so," he wrote Aswell; adding: "She is so unserious it is hard to believe she can write at all. She thinks I

am a wonderful dancer, and makes me dance with her all the time: it is simply awful, because she hasn't the faintest notion of how to do the simplest steps" (Clark, 102).

McCullers, however, was far from the center of Capote's attention. "Of all the people here I like Howard Doughty the best," Capote confided to Aswell. Doughty was writing a biography of the nineteenth century historian Francis Perkman. Publicly he maintained a façade of heterosexuality. At Yaddo, however, Doughty always felt more relaxed about his concealed sexuality. During May 1946 he quickly became enamored of the young Capote. Despite Capote's later admission that "He was very attractive, but I wasn't in love with him" the two began an intense, though short-lived, romance.

Doughty's affair with Capote was not without complications. In early June, Newton Arvin arrived at Yaddo. For years Doughty had shared an intense romance with Arvin. Indeed, if the two had been born a generation later they would most likely have remained life-long partners. Confronted with cultural intolerance and the very real threat that both could be dismissed from their academic appointments if their association were made public, they had to settle for a more furtive relationship. Yaddo provided an ideal cover, and the two had been looking forward to spending several weeks together. "I am still, after all these years, incredulous that I should have come upon you," Arvin wrote Doughty from Northampton. "Is a completer mutual sympathy conceivable between fallible human beings? I should certainly hope not?" By the time Doughty received Arvin's letter he was most likely involved with Capote. On June 12, he wrote to Arvin from Yaddo.

> Have you happened to run across any of Truman Capote's stories? The child really has an uncanny talent – almost frightening. He seems to have had

> practically no education except the back-files of the little magazines and is almost entirely unencumbered with ideas except on the practice of his art, but a mediumistic voice speaks through him in the most impeccable of accents. It's a long time since I've read anybody with such a specific gift for writing – like a musician's for music (Werth, 101).

Like Doughty, Arvin was immediately smitten by Capote's charm. Arvin had been assigned Katrina's *boudoir* (for many the most desirable room at Yaddo) located directly beneath Capote's tower sanctuary. It was not long before the two were arranging secret appointments. Arvin turned to his writing to express his feelings for Capote. "It would not be possible, it seems to me, for me to cherish you more tenderly, with more of myself, than I already do," he assured Capote, adding "if it were possible, the reading of your stories would have that effect. Where did you come from, Truman? And how did I find myself moving toward the point where you were? It's the agency of some beneficent geniuses, I can only imagine" (Clark, 106).

To the casual observer, they could not have made a less likely pair. Arvin, frail, timid, and notoriously reticent, appeared to be the quintessence of the New England Professor. Such qualities could not have provided a more poignant contrast to Capote's youthful indiscretions, and, most strikingly, his comfort with his unabashed homosexuality. Each, though, found something ideal in the other. Capote's acceptance of his sexuality was a welcome relief for Arvin, who continued to refer privately to his suppressed desires as an "accident." Capote, running away from his parents, uninterested in college, but empathically committed to literature and writing, found in Arvin's intellect an important confirmation of his emerging artistry. "I have read three of your stories, dearest T.C., 'A Tree of Night,' 'Miriam,' and 'Jug of Silver.' They are very lovely and

frightening and pure and tender, and they have given me a strange, beautiful experience." wrote Arvin. He continued,

> I respect you so much for having written them. They will gleam out in my mind from time to time for many days, and indeed much longer, like something seen suddenly and magically by snowfall or in some watery light: I have not found the right way of saying how real and yet how fantastically poetic they seem to me. A famous man once said "that there is no true beauty but has some mark of strangeness on it," and he was very right, and all good writers have always known it: *you* know it too, dear Truman, and no one can take the knowledge from you. It will deepen and enrich and amplify itself with every day you live, and there *need* be no end to what you can express for all of us of what it is to be human and afraid and in love and intensely happy. So many things! It's all before you, and *you* won't make the mistake of not boarding the train that is drawing out to your destination (Clark, 106).

Throughout the summer Arvin confirmed his love for Capote. "But you know dearest T.C." he wrote,

> that if I ever really began a 'letter' to you it could have no imaginable end – or even beginning – for it would just have to circle forever and ever, like a great wheel, about the one central fact, and you know what that fact is, and there are either millions of ways of telling it or only one way. I love you dearly, and if you wish, I will write that over and over again until this page is filled up, and many more pages, like a bad boy kept in after school, whose teacher (in some perverse way) wishes to make him happy instead of wretched. Only I am not bad, and neither are you; we are very good indeed, and we shall be better and better as time wears on – for we are at the source of good, and we are drinking the water of truth, and what we are making between us is purely beautiful. Is it possible to be better than that? (Werth, 103).

Arvin remained fearful that he would hurt Doughty. Their clandestine commitment to one another was an indispensable source of constancy in Arvin's otherwise emotionally turbulent life. In a gesture of apparent acquiescence, Doughty returned to Cambridge where he immediately wrote to assuage Arvin's concerns.

> You dope – how can you think for a moment that a *rapprochement* (to use a very feeble word for what I surmise to be the circumstances) between you and T.C. would cause me the least iota of anxiety or confusion – would be the source to me

> of any emotion but the warmest delight? I have never in my life known in anyone, man, or woman, or child, such delicacy and purity of feeling as is the native *habitus* of T.C.'s psyche, nor can I think of anyone on the wide earth except you, my dear, more capable of responding to these feelings as they should be responded to or with a more abundant store of wisdom and experience to enrich and deepen them. God's benison on you both (Clark, 107).

Arvin was relieved. "You are very understanding and imaginative, as I secretly knew you would be about T.C. and me," he responded. "I only dislike so intensely that thought of giving you a moment's pain that I ran out ahead of the unreal danger as if that would avert it! Now that I both intuit and 'know' how unreal it is, nothing is left – absolutely nothing, as it seems to me – to jar or discolor the unbelievable perfectness of this experience" (Clark, 107). Despite his "benison," Doughty's acceptance was a greater self-sacrifice than he let on. "Much of the day spent with Howard," Arvin wrote in his diary following Doughty's return in July. "Early in the morning at his studio, lunch there, and then the evening here in my studio. Much converse about little T.C. naturally" (Clark, 109).

Capote left Yaddo on July 17. His absence was palpable. "Suddenly the tower room was empty, the cabals of the breakfast table dispersed," recalled Brinnin. "Adrift, those of us left at Yaddo began to look for partners at Ping-Pong, Chinese checkers, croquet. Relieved of the nightly jostle for position, old friends met in an atmosphere of affectionate contempt. Truman was everywhere. To speak of him would have certified his absence. No one did" (Clark, 109). Arvin was, of course, most affected by Capote's absence. His concern for Doughty makes it likely that while he attended to his friend's emotional needs, he was careful not to share that he and Capote had made plans to continue their romance beyond Yaddo. By fall Capote was traveling twice a week by

train from New York to Northampton. The influence of the established man of letters was profound. "Newton was my Harvard," Capote would famously claim.

Sadly, the energy Yaddo reclaimed during the years immediately following World War Two was short lived. Yaddo, by the end of the 1940s, found itself unwittingly exposed to an emerging cultural hysteria that found its most violent expression in the ravings of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Despite her proficient handling of previous ideological tensions brought on by the Depression and World War, Cold War anxiety would prove insidious. Sadly, interactions between such anxieties and the Trasks' intentions would prove irreconcilable.

Chapter Eight

Crisis: The Lowell Affair

> I shall compare the institution to a body and the present executive director to a diseased organ, chronically poisoning the whole system, sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes almost imperceptibly, sometimes, as now, almost fatally. – Robert Lowell

On the morning of February 26, 1949, Robert Lowell, together with fellow Yaddo guests Elizabeth Hardwick, Flannery O'Connor, and Edward Maisel, presented to Yaddo's board of directors allegations that in Lowell's words involved, "the entire of the institution of Yaddo and perhaps its survival." Lowell maintained that Elizabeth Ames was "somehow deeply and mysteriously involved" in politically subversive activities. According to Lowell, Ames had used Yaddo to provide refuge for known communist sympathizers. He demanded Ames' immediate termination, insisting that such action be "absolute, final and prompt." Lowell's accusations preceded by less than one year Senator Joseph McCarthy's public claim that the United States government had been infiltrated by communists. Amid a society becoming increasingly anxious about the threat of international communism, Lowell's accusations almost ruined Yaddo.

Less than one month after he made his accusations, Allan Tate described Lowell's mental condition as, "very nearly psychotic." In April, Lowell was arrested in Bloomington, Indiana after stealing a roll of tickets from a theater and later assaulting a police officer. He was subsequently committed to Baldpate, a private hospital in Georgetown, Massachusetts. "I had an attack of pathological enthusiasm," Lowell recalled, adding that,

> The night before I was locked up I ran about the streets of Bloomington Indiana crying out against devils and homosexuals. I believed I could stop cars and paralyze their forces by merely standing in the middle of the highway with my arms outspread. Each car carried a long rod above its tail-light, and the rods were adorned by diabolic Indian and Voodoo signs. Bloomington stood for Joyce's hero in Christian regeneration. Indiana stood for the evil, unexorcised, aboriginal Indians. I suspected I was a reincarnation of the Holy Ghost, and had become homicidally hallucinated (Hamilton, 157).

Clearly, Lowell's accusations were entangled in a growing personal and emotional imbalance. Nonetheless, his allegations threatened to expose Yaddo's association with communist sympathies and call attention to the radical associations of Ames' most trusted advisors, many of whom sat on Yaddo's board that February morning. Under Lowell's influence, for several weeks Yaddo's board was left to reconcile a political suspicion that would define the early years of the cold war in America. "In the end nothing was done, nothing could be done," Malcolm Cowley wrote three weeks after Lowell presented his accusations. "The guests departed, vowing to blacken the name of Yaddo in all literary circles and call a mass meeting of protest. . . . I left too, feeling as if I had been at a meeting of the Russian Writers' Union during a big purge. Elizabeth went to a nursing home. Her secretary resigned. Yaddo was left like a stricken battlefield" (Hamilton, 148).

"The Lowell Affair" as it came to be known, is an especially defining moment in Yaddo's history. The roots of Lowell's accusations reached back into Yaddo's history and were deeply embedded in its most sacrosanct traditions. Despite her proficient guardianship during the Depression and global conflict, Ames could not protect the Trasks' interests from the anxieties Lowell's accusations represented. With the possible

exception of Ames' retirement, "The Lowell Affair" more than any other event in Yaddo's history reshaped the Trasks' vision for their beloved estate.

Lowell's accusations resulted from an FBI investigation into Yaddo's lingering association with radical politics. The source of much of the FBI's interest was Ames' protracted accommodation of one of the defining influences in the feminist and revolutionary movements across the middle decades of the twentieth century. In the spring of 1943, Malcolm Cowley urged Agnes Smedley to apply to Yaddo. Smedley had begun establishing her literary reputation with the publication of *Daughter of Earth*, a grim developmental novel with clear autobiographical references. Its subject is the psychological trauma of a young woman from a working class family whose experiences of exploitation led to her embracing radical politics. Her *China's Red Army Marches* was published in 1934 and depicts, in the author's words, "the truth – millions of Chinese toilers lifting their heads from serfdom and slavery and waging the greatest, the most tragic and yet one of the most inspiring liberation struggles in human history." Cowley believed that Smedley's ardent support of the Chinese communists was extreme. His perspective is not surprising. By the early 1940s, Cowley's connection to communism had already begun to distant. Smedley's convictions meanwhile remained ardent. "Agnes Smedley is fanatical" he would later write in *Dream of the Golden Mountain*. For Cowley, Smedley would continue to be a revolutionary in the truest sense of the word. He was not alone in his assessment. In the words of Smedley's biographer Ruth Price, "She was a virago who challenged the world."

In her biography of Smedley entitled, *The Lives of Agnes Smedley* Price explains that a basic chronology of Smedley's life would gain the respect of even the most ardent revolutionist. She was born in 1892 to an impoverished family from Missouri. Her coming of age was shaped by her experience of the labor wars in the mining communities of Colorado that preceded the Ludlow Massacre. Her observations of economic exploitation and racial injustice were formative. By the 1910s, Smedley was a committed activist. Her disdain for imperialism lead to her ardent support for India's independence. Later, she moved to Greenwich Village where she joined Margaret Sanger in fighting for women's rights to safe and effective birth control. During the 1930s, Smedley was one of the first Western journalists to report on the plight of the Chinese communists following their abandonment by Chiang Kai-shek.

According to Price Smedley's activism gave shape to an important literary talent of a decidedly political nature. Often epic in their scope, Smedley's writings championed the efforts of the oppressed as they revolted against tyranny and imperialist influence. Cowley reviewed Smedley's *China's Red Army Marches* for *The New Republic*. "There are a good many tricks of narration that [Smedley] could easily learn if she had leisure for study," he wrote, "and there are other tricks that she seems to have learned from writing Sunday feature stories and ought to abandon." The review continues:

> But she has an extraordinary subject here, and she has something else besides – an attitude of reverence for her subject, a faith that calls to mind the medieval chroniclers and bards. Mind you, she is dealing with historical facts. They are obviously simplified, worked smooth by retelling, yet they are facts none the less, such as can be checked by official records. Reading this book, with its heroes and villains (and no shade of characters between them, only the brave Reds and cowardly Whites), one can't help thinking of Roland against the Paynim, of

> Richard Lionheart against the Saracens, of the saints and martyrs that crowd the Golden Legend (*The New Republic*, September, 1944).

It was Smedley's literary potential that had persuaded Cowley to recommend her for Yaddo.

Like Ames' other advisors, Cowley had exercised important restraint during the 1930s when Yaddo's reputation as a center of political radicalism at its highest. By 1943 the political climate had changed. Smedley's activism would surely not call attention to Yaddo, especially in the midst of on-going world conflict. From Cowley's perspective, such reasoning seemed sound. What he did not anticipate, and perhaps could not, was that at Yaddo, Smedley would develop an emotionally intimate relationship with Ames that would result in an unprecedented residency of more than six years. More dangerous yet, Smedley would come to use Yaddo as a place of refuge. For Smedley, Yaddo became a retreat that provided important insulation from the intense scrutiny that generally followed her during her frequent lecture tours. Her prolonged accommodation placed Yaddo's association with radical politics within dangerous proximity of Cold War anxiety.

Smedley arrived at Yaddo on the afternoon of July 7, 1943. "It's unspeakably beautiful here" she wrote to her close friend Aino Taylor; adding,

> There is a big lake on this estate, with beautiful shadows caused by overhanging forests; and there's a huge fountain before the mansion in the shadow of a gigantic Norwegian spruce tree. … The architecture is a strange mixture, but the main part of the building is the same as a royal palace in Rumania. … We each have a room in the mansion, and some have studios in the mansion attached to their bedrooms. There are a number of wooden shacks amongst the pines, in isolated spots, and some of us have these. I have one (MacKinnon, 265).

When she arrived, Yaddo's guest list reflected the growing pressure of wartime rationing. Carson McCullers and Jean Stafford were there, as was the poet Margaret Walker. Also in residence were her old friends Langston Hughes and the Danish novelist, Karin Michaelis. For Smedley, the intimate company was an ideal combination of creative sympathy and political conviction. As Price explains Smedley had composed much of *Daughter of the Earth* while living in Michaelis' home in Denmark. Michaelis' writing was deeply psychological and focused on the lives of women. A formative friendship followed. "This was a friendship before any words had been said," Michaelis recalled of her first meeting Smedley in 1923. Ten years later she wrote:

> Agnes is one of the most uncompromising people I have ever met – and one of the most loving and self-sacrificing . . . a woman no one who has ever met her forgets. . . . Though young in years, she has renounced everything: fame, personal happiness, comfort, safety, for one thing: complete dedication to a great cause. She would never consider becoming a member of any political party which laid down rules for her. She lives her life, and she fights her fight, as she finds fair and just.
>
> And yet – with this obstinate defiance peculiar to her, which no one and nothing can make her give up – she is nevertheless the tenderest and most loving being (Price, 113).

Smedley had met Langston Hughes in both China and Russia. Price writes that Hughes had even sent Smedley a copy of *Not Without Laughter* after a reviewer had suggested parallels with *Daughter of the Earth*. Smedley had memorized most of Hughes's *Weary Blues*. She was impressed with *Not Without Laughter* and wrote to him that she was "astounded by the similarity" (Price, 210) between their novels. Nonetheless, for Smedley Hughes' work fell short of achieving the kind of dramatic depiction of class consciousness and exploitation she preferred. Smedley insisted that it was a fault for him not to include depictions of "Negro proletarians, or very poor farmers, on whose backs

fall the full burden of class and race hatred and subjection, men who work" and who are "defeated until they organize and fight on a revolutionary basis" (Price, 211). Such assessment notwithstanding, Smedley was deeply interested in Hughes' perspective on race in America. She had developed a deep sympathy for anyone who suffered as a result of racial intolerance. Price writes that Smedley often accompanied Hughes to the local black church where they would distribute vegetables from the Yaddo garden.

Smedley was also attracted to Hughes' politics. She especially admired his capacity for at once disassociating political rhetoric from creativity, while also infusing his characters with a charged political sympathy. "With all his talent, Hughes is the most American creature I've ever met" she wrote to Taylor. "He's bedrock practical, yet you feel in him that horizonless being that absorbs and considers all things. I feel hidebound compared with him. Only certain things penetrate my hard soul. I have standards and principles and prejudices and weaknesses. Hughes looks on and listens and absorbs everything – that makes him an artist" (MacKinnon, 266). Privately, Smedley believed that, compared with Hughes, her work would never progress beyond "throwing facts together." "I have no leisure in which to coordinate my thoughts," Smedley wrote, "least of all to express them in any form other than the harshness of daily life. . . . I am not theoretical enough to take these things historically and to watch a great historical struggle from a distance" (Price, 211).

When she arrived at Yaddo, in early July Smedley was anxiously awaiting the publication of *Battle Hymn of China*. Its release date was scheduled for the following September. While she waited for its appearance, Smedley attempted to write a play. Her

subject, a Chinese general wrestling with his conscience, would allow for the kind of exposure of peasant exploitation she preferred. Writing a drama, however, was not easy for Smedley. "I always think I am not a writer," she wrote, "I have a feeling of guilt about my writing – as if I am an imposter who pretends to be a writer but is something else." She later complained to Cowley, "There are two me's inside of me. . . . One that seems compelled to diddle on a typewriter and paper without which my life would not be worth another day of living; the other me sits back and watches in disgust, sometimes with contempt, sometimes with despair" (MacKinnon, 319). Fortunately, Yaddo's tradition of combining creative energy with social exchange provided important distractions during Smedley's imaginative struggles. "I'm drinking too much up here!" she wrote Taylor.

> These people drink a lot. Sometimes they give parties, with wine. Last night, before dinner, I took my turn and gave a cocktail party. We had dry Martinis. And were we drunk! I [haven't] been so thoroughly tight for ages. I think my vulgar nature came out. The party was a really bawdy one. Since it came at 5:30, and since we had only a light lunch in the middle of the day, even a little was enough to set people on their ears (MacKinnon, 266).

Due to increased rationing during the summer of 1944 Yaddo's guest list was further restricted. Smedley found herself in the company of Carson McCullers and Katherine Anne Porter. Though her demeanor could have been more different, Smedley like Capote, was one of the few guests to establish a rapport with both Southern writers. Porter and Smedley realized that they had encountered similar influences living in Greenwich Village during the 1920s. They established a rapport that quickly advanced to a more personal friendship. For her part, McCullers was enthralled by Smedley's stories of Chinese peasants and the brutality of Russia's movement towards collectivization. For

McCullers, Smedley's tales of revolution and first hand adventure filled a void left by the gradual disappearance of eastern European exiles from Yaddo's guest list.

Greater intimacy followed. In 1943 Ames' sister suffered a severe stroke that had resulted in both physical paralysis and dementia. Smedley, who was coping with her own sister's terminal cancer, offered to help nurse Ames' sister. The shared experience of caring for their terminally ill sisters provided the foundation for emotional intimacy. Smedley also identified Ames' devout Quakerism as the faith of her forefathers. For her part, Ames clearly saw that Smedley's commitment to confronting social injustice recalled values important to the Trasks. How could Smedley not feel innately comfortable living within a set of values that held as one of their central tenets Katrina's claims, "The Wretched inequality of life staggers me," "The time will come when the distribution of wealth will be very different," and "What right have I to an income that enables me to live a life of ease and luxury, whilst my fellow-men can wrest by their toil only the merest pittance?" (Trask, 93). For Ames, Smedley and Yaddo were a perfect fit. "She is a lonely bird of tremendous wingspan, a bird that will never build a nest," wrote Karin Michaelis. She had not anticipated Smedley finding a social atmosphere so in tune with her values, and so accommodating of her need for refuge. Ames used her administrative authority to accommodate Smedley more than any other guest.

Ames invited Smedley to spend Christmas of 1943 at Yaddo. By the following summer, Smedley had come to rely on both Yaddo and Ames. "Yaddo is a perfect place for working and writing, and I'm so dammed poor that it is life for me," she wrote Taylor. "Apart from that, I have a dear friend here, the woman who manages the place,

and this is a precious acquisition that gives me peace and quiet and which should enable me to write" (MacKinnon, 266). Smedley's emotional investment in Yaddo went beyond Ames. "Mrs. Caroline Slade, who has written a number of novels based on the lives of girls (Mrs. Slade was a social worker for twenty years) has told me about her many girl cases," Smedley wrote Taylor. Caroline Slade was the wife of John Slade, President of the Corporation of Yaddo. "It is a depressing story," Smedley continued "Many, many poor girls who work as servants in middle-class homes are either seduced or raped by the head of the family and set on the road to 'delinquency.' . . . Caroline Slade and I argue all the time about the origin of delinquency, its cure, etc" (MacKinnon, 277). Throughout the summer and fall of 1944, Smedley persuaded Caroline Slade to help raise funds for the China Aid Council of the United China Relief. As Smedley's relationship with both Ames and Yaddo deepened, the terms of her residency became increasingly vague.

In January of 1944, Smedley began a lecture tour that included a trip to Louisiana. While she was characteristically shrewd about catering her political rhetoric to fit regional temperaments (in the South she tempered her condemnations of racism and moderated her praise for the Chinese Communists), her experience of Southern racism outraged her. In December she wrote an impassioned letter to Taylor describing her experiences:

> The treatment of Negroes in the South has humiliated and shamed me so deeply that my blood runs cold in my veins. Traveling by bus, with the rain pouring, the driver ordered a dozen Negroes to step back and let two handsome white women board first. They came on, then the driver saw they had Negro blood in their veins – perhaps their hair showed it. The driver slapped his leg and bawled with laughter and said to the white passengers: "Now ain't that a joke! I

> thought they was white and they are Niggers." The faces of the two women and of all the colored passengers were frozen. Mine froze too. Some of the white passengers broke into a laugh at the *joke*. … I saw a northern white soldier ask a colored soldier to sit down by him and the latter did so; then the bus driver stopped the bus and said: "Stand up, Nigger!" The colored soldier stood up. The white soldier said: "Aw hell!" and stood up also. But had that white soldier not been in uniform, I don't know what would have happened.
>
> Now, when I heard this, I should have stood up and killed the driver. But I sat there petrified, sat there like a traitor to the human race (MacKinnon, 273).

When she returned north, Smedley submitted scathing accounts of her experiences to several newspapers. Her outspoken repulsion to Southern racism attracted attention that would ultimately lead to Yaddo. In August, Representative John S. Gibson of Georgia entered a complaint against Smedley in the Congressional Record in which he bolstered his accusations by maintaining Smedley's connection to international communism.

> I brought to the attention of the House a very ugly attack on the South by an Agnes Smedley. … She is the author of many books which portray the glory of the Communist Party and its great cause. … She was the author of *China's Red Army Marches* in which she described in glowing language how the Reds with people other than whites had overcome whites in revolution. She pictures the great benefits received from the Communist revolutions (MacKinnon, 274).

The FBI agreed to Gibson's request for an investigation into Smedley's activities, which they began to monitor from their Albany office. In September, Mary Townsend, secretary to Elizabeth Ames, was enlisted as an informant. She was asked to advise on Smedley's movements and to provide copies of lecture notes as well as any correspondence she was asked to reproduce. Townsend agreed. She would later confess her involvement to Yaddo's board. "I have ever since I have been here, when ever I have heard people talking very brilliantly red, I have written down their name and address and dropped it off at a certain place in Saratoga for forwarding to the FBI" (YR 385.2). Her assistance revealed not only Smedley's activities, but, more generally, the environment of

tolerance and collaborative energy found at Yaddo. It was the first time in its history that Yaddo was exposed to such scrutiny. Indeed, the gradual exposure Townsend initiated, and which Lowell would aggressively pursue, allowed for the violent collision between Yaddo's most sacrosanct traditions and the values of a society under the increasing influence of growing political intolerance.

On October 22, 1945, Smedley published an article on China in the left-wing New York newspaper *PM*, in which she advocated the release of Chinese Communist troops by the Goumindang so that they could be enlisted to fight Japan. She also accused the Goumindang of sending representatives to the United States to discredit public criticism of the Goumindang as "Red-inspired." On October 24, J. Edgar Hoover sent a memo to the F.B.I. office in Albany.

> It is respectfully requested that Agnes Smedley, of Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York be placed on the regular Censorship Watch List, and submissions of all communications to, from, or regarding her be forwarded to the Bureau.
>
> *Purpose*: Agnes Smedley is recognized as one of the principal propagandists for the Soviets writing in the English language. Agnes Smedley is considered an authority on Communist activity in the Far East, and as the operations of the United States Army and Navy come closer to the Asiatic Mainland and the Japanese home islands, Communist activity in those areas will be of increasing importance to the Bureau (MacKinnon, 285).

The FBI investigation of Smedley intensified. With Townsend's assistance, the FBI was able to scrutinize Smedley's activities at Yaddo with increasing detail. Agents were especially intrigued by her prolonged affiliation with an institution which, to them, appeared vague in purpose. From their perspective, Yaddo was helping to facilitate Smedley's revolutionary writings. Of greater importance to the FBI, Yaddo was shielding the activities of a known revolutionary with ties to Communist interests.

Amid a cultural environment dominated by political suspicion, Ames' personal investment in the Trasks' vision had the odd effect of further exposing Yaddo to FBI inquiry. While the admissions process Ames devised was effective at preserving Yaddo's traditions, allowing Yaddo's guest list to be shaped by such a select group of advisors had the unforeseen consequence that, throughout the Depression, the general mood at Yaddo began to reflect the radical political interests of Ames' most trusted advisors. "The literary world was changing in those early Depression years," recalled Cowley:

> Once it had seemed to be the province of those who copied the ways of moneyed people and more or less accepted the Genteel Tradition. Of course there was also – there had long been – a bohemian underworld of footloose rebels, and those had become numerous after the Great War, at a time when they were being ridiculed in the press as Greenwich Village or idle expatriates. I noted that most of the rebels had middle-class backgrounds and that the conventions they rebelled against were those of their own class. The change after 1930 was that many of the gifted new writers were proud of coming from a background of hand-to-mouth living in tenements or on the road. I remember one young man of talent who wrote about his nights with small time gamblers in Brownsville and another who limped from an injury suffered when he was thrown off a moving freight train by a Southern Pacific bull. These and others liked to think of themselves as proletarians and revolutionaries (Calisher et al., 16).

As early as 1933, Ames had perceived the threat of Yaddo's environment becoming dominated by politics. She cautioned her advisors that allowing political interests to influence recommendations could prove dangerous. "We of course have to take into consideration that Yaddo accepts all shades of opinion," she wrote, "I think it has been bruited about a good deal that Yaddo is a gathering place for extreme radicals. It is therefore better to have it known that it does not belong to them officially, but that we invite all shades of opinion and representatives of all schools provided one's work

qualifies" (YR 344.8). While such concerns were both shrewd and eerily portentous, Ames remained blind to the danger of such convictions becoming entangled with her own administrative authority. During previous moments of interaction between Yaddo's customs and broader historical influences, Ames astutely used her power to preserve the Trasks' vision. During years of extreme economic depravity she rigorously defended her privilege of determining the length and terms of guests' residencies. Surprisingly, Ames did not recognize the threat of Yaddo's association with communism becoming entwined with this same authority. In the end, sadly, it was in fact their entanglement that allowed for government scrutiny of Yaddo.

Paradoxically, it was precisely when the FBI's suspicion of Smedley drew their attention to Yaddo, that her relationship with Ames began to fray. In December 1944, Ames' sister died. For Smedley, Ames' emotional despair manifested awkwardly. "I don't know how I can drag my roots out of Yaddo," she complained to Taylor. "The woman who runs it is deeply attached to me. I've sort of taken the place of her sister, who was paralyzed and unable to speak for two years and who died last summer [sic]. So I'm bound in some obscure way because Elizabeth needs someone near her. She's a strange, reserved woman, disliked by most people. She insists that I make Yaddo my home. I do – but I've a hankering for Ojai, [California]" (Mackinnon, 292).

Smedley's ambiguous relationship with Ames was not the only obstacle to her happiness at Yaddo. During the war, Yaddo's guest list always included intellectual refugees from Europe whose politics, in general, were similar to Smedley's. Political debate was common. Following Japan's surrender, guests began to refocus their attention

on creative activity. Political radicalism was identified with an age most guests were eager to distance themselves from. Smedley felt increasingly isolated. With few other options she resolved to remain at Yaddo. What Ames did not realize was that Smedley's continued presence was placing Yaddo's association with radicalism within precarious reach of McCarthyism.

On February 14, 1947, Allen Tate wrote Ames in order to recommend Robert Lowell for Yaddo's guest list. "I am sure I do not need to explain the importance in American poetry of Robert Lowell," he wrote Ames. "Mr. Lowell is not only a very serious artist; he is a charming young man, and he would not only derive great benefit from a stay at Yaddo, he would be a distinct addition to the summer community" (YR 265.6). In March, Ames offered Lowell residency at Yaddo.

The spring of 1947 was especially good to Lowell. In April, he won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, a Guggenheim fellowship of $2,500, and an award of $1,000 from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In June, he was offered the position of Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. Because the appointment would not begin until October, he decided to spend the summer at Yaddo. He arrived on June 9 with arrangements to remain until August. According to Lowell's biographer, Ian Hamilton, he adjusted easily to life at Yaddo.

> Yaddo, he found, was "a marvelous place to work," but much of the fun was in observing his co-workers: mostly "goons," but "friendly and harmless." There was Theodore Roethke: "a ponderous, coarse, fattish, fortyish man – well read, likes the same things I do, and is quite a competent poet"; there was Mary McCarthy and her husband, Bowden Broadwater; and there was Marguerite Young – "really rather crucifyingly odd and garrulous" (Hamilton, 126).

Lowell later described that the summer was "thoroughly satisfactory," and even recommended several literary associates for residency. He also recalled that his relationship with Ames was "cordial." For her part, Ames was impressed by Lowell's acceptance of Yaddo's traditions. In what in hindsight can only be considered a deeply ironic gesture, she agreed to prolong his residency. Two years later Lowell would demand Ames' termination by highlighting to Yaddo's board that Smedley's prolonged residency relied on identical administrative latitudes.

It is certain that Lowell's residency at Yaddo, overlapped with Smedley's. Her frequent obligations away from Saratoga makes it difficult to determine how much interaction they shared. Further, despite her presence, there is no evidence to suggest that the environment Lowell encountered was politically charged. Indeed, all evidence suggests otherwise. Three months after Lowell left Yaddo, Smedley wrote to Cowley and complained that, since the end of the war, guests were no longer interested in politics. Guests were concerned only with "Joyce, Kafka, Sartre, etc," she wrote Cowley, adding that they spend "endless evenings splitting hairs about writing and writers, tossing lesser mortals into the burning pit." She continued: "Kafka and Sartre bore me to tears, Joyce merely amuses me, in spots. . . . You see, I lack the proper approach to writing. Instead of a perfectly balanced sentence with or without commas or periods, I see armies of barefoot peasants in China and other parts of the world reaching for the stars of humanity but being shot to death for their endeavors" (MacKinnon, 319). By the mid-1940s, Smedley felt increasingly estranged from the interests of other guests. Her isolation

became complete when her public activism created tensions with Saratoga that ended her relationship with both Yaddo and Ames.

In February 1948, Skidmore College hosted a public radio debate between Countess Tolstoy, a White Russian refugee, and Harold Klein, an organizer for the Communist Party from Schenectady. Following the event, Smedley arranged for a reception at North Farm. While the gathering allowed for unwelcome speculation about Yaddo's continued association with communism, the presence of several students from Skidmore proved an embarrassment. Anxious parents voiced their concern to Skidmore administrators, who lodged complaints with members of Yaddo's board of directors. Ames had no choice but to confront Smedley. The two engaged in heated debate.

Following their confrontation, Ames wrote a carefully worded letter to Smedley in which she articulated her concern about Yaddo's association with her radicalism. A copy of the letter was also sent to Yaddo's President, John Slade.

> Dear Agnes,
>
> For some time, I have known that I must bring to your attention certain matters involving you and Yaddo. I have put off doing so since you have not been well; I have been rather burdened down with certain matters putting heavy responsibility on my shoulders. Later on, we should have some quiet talk about this; now it seems best to put it in writing so everything will be stated for reference and consideration. For some time back, information has been coming to me from sources which I trust indicating that because of your radical activities of influence at Skidmore, some people are beginning to think of Yaddo as a source, or even a promoter, of such interests and activities; and you are being considered as primarily interested in such activities rather than in writing a book. In the immediate present, it has been brought to my attention that the rumor is about that certain Skidmore girls joining, or considering joining, the Communist party have been strongly influenced by you. I am also told that when the Tolstoy-Klein debate took place, you held here at Yaddo some kind of meeting, party or rally for Skidmore girls and him (YR 286.9).

From Ames' perspective, Smedley had taken advantage of Yaddo's tradition of intellectual tolerance. "The time has now come when you will have to decide whether you will make the closely defined use of Yaddo, which is that it is a retreat for getting writing and artistic work done, or whether, feeling that you must continue with political activities, you will decide to live elsewhere," Ames demanded; adding, "Yaddo cannot be all things. It stands by its achievements as sponsor of all that is democratic, humane and decent. It must not be associated with specific political activities" (YR 286.9). Ames' actions came, sadly, too late. Her personal regard for Smedley had interfered with her earlier judgment. The close of her letter contains an unmistakable tone of concern and, indeed, regret for allowing her guardianship of Yaddo's customs to be compromised by personal empathy.

> Let me repeat:
>
> I am writing this to make clear Yaddo's position, and to protect it from attack.
>
> You are being asked nothing but to make a decision as to whether it is more important to try to finish your book without other activities, or whether you must combine both; and having made your decision, to remain here until next fall when you say your book must be finished, or to go elsewhere (YR 286.9).

The following day Smedley composed an equally thorough response in which she refuted Ames' concerns. "I have your letter in which you inform me of rumors about my alleged Communist, or other radical activities at Skidmore, and your demand, politely put, that I stop all political activities if I continue at Yaddo to work on my book." She continued "Though I do not believe facts stated by me would alter the situation in the least, nevertheless I am recording such facts as a matter of course" (YR 286.9).

Smedley maintained that Ames' accusations were fundamentally unfounded and even refuted them with her own list of carefully articulated rebuttals.

> 1. My public activities are far less than they were in the first weeks I spent at Yaddo. In fact, except for an occasional trip to New York on the China issue, or such meetings which I attended in Schenectady when Wallace spoke, I have withdrawn from almost all public activities. I believe this must be known to you and your informants (YR 286.9).

Regarding her involvement with students from Skidmore, Smedley was succinct.

> 2. It is news to me that there is a group of girls at Skidmore who have joined or are thinking of joining the Communist Party. Who they are I do not know. I have no contact with them at all, I have not influenced them in that direction, and I have never in my life attended even one of their sessions. I can think of one such possible girl that I have met two or three times socially; but she has not been influenced by me.
>
> 3. Yes, I had Mr. Klein and his wife out here after the Tolstoy-Klein debate. It was not a meeting of any kind nor for any purpose. After the debate some of the girls questioning him asked me to go with them for a beer. I told them to come out here instead. Our invitation extended to Mr. Klein and two or three other Skidmore people standing there also. The extent of our political activities was a glass of beer and social talk, helter-skelter. The girls and all the others left early because there are curfew hours at Skidmore. The occasion was social. Had the Countess Tolstoy remained for the discussion after the debate, I would have invited her to come along. As it was I invited only the contaminated man in whom I was mildly interested but with whom I disagreed on many points of his debate (YR 286.9).

She even went so far as to claim that her political interests were limited to supporting the presidential aspirations of Henry Wallace, a seemingly moderate stance.

Smedley's rejection of the allegations levied against her was infused with undeniable references to Ames' complicacy with the kind of insidious suspicion Yaddo had been designed to resist. She referred to Ames' "informants," and caustically claimed that her accusations were, "strangely like the loyalty investigations in Washington when employees were questioned about their associations" (YR 286.9). Smedley's intention

was to cast doubt about Ames' commitment to the liberal values she professed to hold most dear. For Smedley, it was a tragic comment on the power of an emerging paranoia if Yaddo were forced to abandon its commitment to promoting freedom of individual expression. In fact, sadly, it was Smedley who had challenged these traditions. Her rebuttals of Ames' accusations are, at best, duplicitous. Even at the time of her arrival, she had perfected a particular kind of political subterfuge.

Smedley made immediate plans to leave Yaddo. Ames avoided a second altercation. Her final correspondence with Smedley was oblique.

> Dear Agnes,
>
> I am not sure from your telegram, received this morning, whether you are returning to Yaddo in order to pack up and go permanently or whether you have other plans. In any case, I think it will be physically impossible for me to see you either tonight, Monday, or tomorrow. I am experiencing again symptoms of the eye hemorrhage I had two weeks ago which is a potentially serious thing. If you have decided to leave for good, there is nothing more I can say. I have done my best to show you friendship, and still wish you good things.
>
> Will you leave word with Mary on Tuesday what your plans are, and let her assist you in any way possible?
>
> With the same solicitude (YR 286.9).

On March 9, Smedley left Yaddo. Her dismissal made clear the extent to which the vague terms of her residency had been entangled in her emotional involvement with Ames. More important, Smedley's long-standing and very public support of Chinese Communism had exposed Yaddo, and, by close association the politics of Ames' closest advisors to dangerous scrutiny.

Compared with Smedley, the political activities of Arvin, Cowley, and Hicks were benign. During the early days of the Depression, while Arvin and Hicks were merely engaging in intellectual debate about communist teaching, Smedley was reporting

on the plight of China's peasant armies for *The New Masses*, *New Republic*, *Modern Review*, and even in the *Moscow News* and *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Later, while Arvin and Hicks were supporting William Z. Foster for president of the United States and while Cowley was distributing food to striking miners in Kentucky, Smedley was risking her own life alongside Chinese soldiers during the Sino-Japanese War. Compared to Smedley, Arvin, Hicks and Cowley were merely transient radicals who, by the 1940s, considered their allegiance to Moscow to be naive and misplaced. Smedley's continued loyalty extended the reach of Yaddo's association with leftist politics into the late 1940s, and placed it within reach of McCarthyism. By 1949, all that was needed for Yaddo to become the subject of a McCarthyite inquiry was the right catalyst.

On September 22, 1948, Robert Lowell arrived for his second residency at Yaddo. His intention was to remain through the winter. Unbeknownst to Ames, many of Lowell's closest friends were concerned that he was mentally and emotionally agitated, and that he had begun drinking excessively. In January, Jean Stafford wrote to Lowell at Yaddo, "Is it true that you are drinking too much and going to pieces and that that ungainly bird [T.S.] Eliot is worried to death about you?" (Hamilton, 138). As Hamilton illustrates Lowell's own correspondence provides conflicting evidence about his emotional state. In a letter to Caroline Tate in December Lowell suggests that he was enjoying Yaddo and appreciated the respite:

> I don't know how my soul is – pretty uncombed I guess. But my spirits are fine. I have a small back room to sleep in (fine, but last night, the mattress suddenly dropped through the frame) and a largish light room to work in – five windows, four tables, three chairs, two lamps and one work-bed.

> I liked Washington, but what a delight to be done with it; and back to work. With what I've saved from the library and Yaddo and my Guggenheim, I can easily last two years before I have to think of teaching (Hamilton, 138).

A letter to Robie Macauley even recalls the kinds of observances that marked Lowell's correspondence from his first, "thoroughly satisfactory" visit.

> Yaddo is a little dim. O, no, a man writing a history of Harvard, who almost swallows himself when he misses a ping-pong shot, who spent the first three dinners telling us long set-pieces on Harvard (leaving out crucial anecdotal facts, then recovering them). At the 4th dinner he said he wished he could afford to belong to the Harvard Club; at the 8th dinner a discussion on smoking "Have you ever tried Harvard Club tobacco?"; who has a six foot five son, and who finally, out of a blue sky, said: "Is there anything as perfect as an acorn?" (Holding one) (Hamilton, 139).

As Hamilton relates, such controlled writing stands in stark contrast with a confused letter sent to T.S. Eliot in January, in which Lowell maintained that he was feeling stagnant, and that Yaddo's cloistered environment led to feelings of profound isolation:

> After Washington, I had a tough two weeks of writing rubbish and knew it; then by rather sweating blood I got back. The poem[12] is going to be long and long in doing. I have one book (?) between 600 and 800 lines coming into shape; I hope to have it all together in a couple of months. I am not sure how long the whole will be; maybe some 3000 lines – I don't want to hurry – rather brood over it like a mother bear, till the form flashes (another fine mixed figure).
>
> This is becoming chatter. … I guess everyone here feels like Timon's guests, and has to blow off steam at times.
>
> I would like to get the judgment of Eliot the poet on my poems – off the record. Not so much judgment as the pointing out of things that are good or on their way to being good, that I might usefully explore further. The limiting negative kind of criticism I think I know something about (I always appreciate that too) but the other is limitless.
>
> For "Eliot the editor" I've been trying to think of impossible typographical suggestions. But I don't give a damn really as long as you don't split stanzas.
>
> Ah, yes, Europe! I'd like to go. This is perfect, though barbarous and isolated. If I could travel a little, then settle down and write day in and day out, till my poem is over – with a little good company and joy.
>
> FORGIVE ALL THIS CHATTER

[12] Lowell is most likely referring to the origins of *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*.

> This is sort of a monk's life, so you bend some one's ear off when you have a chance.
>
> Monk isn't right, of course. This letter is about as organized as one of Merrill's; God help me. *By the way, I do not drink here the way I did in Washington*. I begin to think Burgundy's about perfect for the long run (Hamilton, 140).

If, as his letter suggests, Lowell was feeling emotionally agitated, the roots of his disturbance are easy to trace.

Lowell spent much of his time at Yaddo struggling with early attempts at "The Mills of the Kavanaughs." According to Hamilton, however, his second visit intersected with a period of relative creative sterility. Though he had published "Falling Asleep over the Aeneid" and "Mother Marie Therese" in 1948, Lowell's next magazine publication would not appear for almost three years. In a letter composed after Lowell presented his charges, Allen Tate described that Lowell's creative difficulties exacerbated his weakening emotional state. "As I see Cal over the past twelve years, and no one I think knows him better, three things held him together: the Church, his marriage and his poetry," he wrote. "He gave up the Church; he gave up Jean; and some months ago he virtually gave up poetry. He had been pushed forward too rapidly as a poet and he had attempted a work beyond his present powers; he couldn't finish it" (Hamilton, 141). Elizabeth Hardwick recalled that the origins of Lowell's eventual collapse were in fact apparent at Yaddo:

> I met him up at Yaddo. I'd been there in the summer – I was about to leave when he arrived – but we were both there for a couple of days and we talked quite a bit, and he said, "Why don't you come back?" We were all quite young then and living in furnished rooms and things like that. So I did go back after Christmas for a couple of months. And I suppose he had the beginning of his breakdown there. But I didn't know him well enough to know. It takes a lot of experience.

> And he was a very gripping sort of character. Anyway, I don't think I did know and everything got terribly wound up there (Hamilton, 140).

It is almost certain that political concerns accelerated Lowell's emotional weakening. During the fall of 1948, Lowell, along with Conrad Aiken, Louise Bogan, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Robert Penn Warren, and Karl Shapiro, had served on the Library of Congress committee responsible for awarding the Prize for Poetry. Hamilton writes that after considerable debate the committee decided to grant the award to Ezra Pound for his *Pisan Cantos*. Anticipating that their decision would elicit strong reaction, the judges defended their selection with a statement that reads as a kind of manifesto in defense of the emerging New Criticism: "To permit other considerations than that of poetic achievement to sway the decision would destroy the significance of the award and would in principle deny the validity of that objective perception of value on which civilized society must rest." Reaction was indeed extreme and reawakened debates concerning the relationship between poetry and politics common to the 1930s. In general, those who opposed the award grounded their opposition as much on pro-communist as on anti-fascist sympathies. While Lowell managed to remain detached from the most contentious debate, the experience left an impression. Amid a political climate of increasing tension (McCarthy's allegations were only one year away) it is safe to assume that Lowell arrived at Yaddo in the fall of 1948 heavily influenced by the anti-communist stance of the New Critics. It can be further assumed that Lowell viewed international communism as a threat to America, and that he was keenly aware that such ideology was antithetical to the intellectual and creative interests Yaddo fostered.

Yaddo could not have provided a more ideal environment or opportune moment for Lowell's emotional agitation to become fully manifest. During February 1949, Yaddo was host to a small group of guests. In addition to Robert Lowell, only Elizabeth Hardwick, Edward Maisel, Flannery O'Connor, and James Ross were in residence (Ross left Yaddo the day before Lowell presented his demands to Yaddo's board of directors). At first, according to Ames, the guests lived "in great apparent harmony and good will toward me" (YR 385.2). Ames was unaware that Arvin had even asked Lowell if he was interested in becoming a member of Yaddo's board. "At that time I wrote him that I would like to be a candidate for membership if he felt I could effectively perform the duties," Lowell later stated. Such congeniality ended abruptly on the morning of February 11 when the front page of *The New York Times* included the headline, "Tokyo War Secrets Stolen by Soviet Spy Ring in 1941." In the article that followed, General Douglas MacArthur named Agnes Smedley as a principle conspirator in a communist spy ring:

> Washington, Feb 10 – The Army made public today a 32,000 word report on a Soviet spy ring in the Far East that was credited with a major development in diplomatic history and with having aided materially in the defeat by the Soviet Union of the Nazi armies invading Russian soil.
>
> Prepared more than a year ago by Gen. Douglas MacArthur's intelligence staff, the document not only told of a story of espionage, intrigue, passion and betrayal but warned that undetected fragments of the "most successful and complete" spy operation in Japanese history might now be continuing its work in other world capitals.
>
> Headed by a Russian-born German, Dr. Richard Sorge, the ring was found to have been responsible for information leading first to the "famous and disastrous" Soviet-Nazi pact of August 1939, and then, as the diplomatic wheel went full circle to the eventual destruction by the Soviet Army of the Nazi troops pressing toward Moscow, the report said.

> No spy ring has been more daring or successful than this relatively small group working in the big Far Eastern cities, first Shanghai, then Tokyo, according to the Army report (*The New York Times*, February 11, 1949).

The report implicated Smedley specifically, maintained her significant involvement in the spy ring, and further alleged her covert allegiance to the Soviet government.

> Working with Sorge was a clever, well-informed group of agents of several nationalities and a variety of protective colorations. High among them, according to the report, was Agnes Smedley, a United States writer on the Far East who now lives in Palisades N.Y.
>
> "Miss Smedley," stated the report "has been one of the most energetic workers for the Soviet's cause in China, for the past twenty-odd years." The report stated that she had "worked closely with Dr. Sorge as a member of his ring from late 1930 until he left China," and that "presumably" in the past she had been a Comintern agent.
>
> Although the "harm" of her work as an influence has been done, concluded the report on Miss Smedley, "perhaps it could be mitigated if she is now exposed for what she is, a spy and agent of the Soviet Government" (*The New York Times*, February 11, 1949).

Smedley, the report concluded, was a threat to American foreign policy. "Guenther Stelin and Agnes Smedley," the report warned "are still at large, posing as objective analysts of Chinese affairs and still affecting the formation of American policy by the skill of their writing." By any account, Ames' accommodation of Smedley placed Yaddo in a dangerous position. Its tradition of detached seclusion was under threat. Resulting anxieties quickly accelerated beyond Ames' control.

By 1949, Smedley had perfected an ingenious tactic for fending of right wing aggression. As Ruth Price has elegantly shown, Smedley had used her association with the American Civil Liberties Union and even with Margaret Sanger to hide her most revolutionary involvements. Throughout the 1940s, Yaddo served as Smedley's cover.

Smedley did in fact engage in espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. MacArthur's staff had it right. It was Ames who had been deluded.

In 1929, Smedley moved to Shanghai, the birthplace of the Chinese Communist Party. Price explains that the success of communism in Shanghai was no accident. By the early twentieth century, Shanghai had a reputation for the kinds of industrial exploitation Marx considered a prerequisite for revolution. Most important for Smedley she could enter Shanghai without a passport. She quickly developed a network of covert associations that brought her into intimate contact with many of Shanghai's most notorious revolutionary interests, including, in 1930, Richard Sorge.

Sorge was the Russian-born son of a German father and Russian mother. According to Price, Sorge's political allegiances remained vested in Russia. By the time he arrived in Shanghai during the winter of 1929-1930, Sorge had already been working for the Russian Comintern for close to five years. Using the cover of special correspondent for the German *Soziologische Magazin*, Sorge intended to collect information on China's communist party that he passed directly on to a subdivision of the USSR's Central Committee. Within weeks of his arrival in Shanghai, Sorge recruited Smedley to assist him in gathering intelligence which he passed directly to Russian authorities. For three years Smedley acted as mail drop, hosted meetings at her home, and even compiled reports which, Sorge later admitted under interrogation, included, "the increasing importance of America's role in China and new investments in Shanghai." Smedley's political involvement with Sorge was entangled in their romantic involvement. "I'm married, child, so to speak," she wrote to her friend Florence Lennon in May 1930

"just sort of married, you know; but it's a real he-man also and it's 50-50 all along the line and he helping me and I him and we are working together in every way. . . . I do not know how long it will last; that does not depend on us. I fear not long. But these days will be the best in my life. Never have I known such good days, never have I known such a healthy life, mentally, physically. I consider this completion, and when it is ended, I'll be lonelier than all the love in the magazines could never make me" (Price, 200). As their romantic involvement intensified, Smedley's efforts on behalf of Sorge moved unambiguously away form her general advocacy of world revolution, and towards the support of aggressive military operations of Stalin's government. Though her political motivations remained vague, that fact that Smedley was engaged in covert work on behalf of a foreign government means she was indeed a spy.

By the late 1940s it was obvious that Chiang Kai-shek's government was doomed. From the perspective of the United States, the triumph of Chinese communism was viewed as the result of aggressive Soviet expansion that was certain to threaten America's interests throughout the Pacific Rim. Such expansion increased an emerging anti-communist hysteria in America. The United States Government felt pressured to explain the loss of China. Sorge, and by close association, Smedley, were primary targets of investigation. MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters began exchanging previously confidential information about Sorge and Smedley with FBI officials in Washington. As early as 1947, MacArthur's chief of intelligence, General Charles A. Willoughby, had sent a report detailing Smedley's activities to Washington. By 1949, information was

being leaked to conservative tabloids anxious to profit from a public that was becoming increasingly anxious about the spread of communism. The *Journal-American* reported,

> The Army warned today that remnants of a fabulous Russian spy ring . . . may be at work in world capitals "at this very moment."
>
> There is that fleeting hint at a present day menace in the story of an espionage network so bold it slipped from the Japanese cabinet and German embassy in Tokyo secrets that helped change the course of the war . . .
>
> The now-it-can-be-told parts of the report unfold an amazing tale centering around: Agnes Smedley, authoress, of Palisades, New York, accused of still being a communist spy . . .
>
> The report says [Sorge and Ozaki] were spies . . . in China before shifting to Tokyo. It says Miss Smedley brought them together in Shanghai in 1930.
>
> It says she "is a spy and agent for the Soviet government" . . . [in] An earlier and probably bigger ring . . . in China . . .
>
> After occupation forces moved in, many of the minor figures in the ring were released as political prisoners. The new report indicates that wouldn't happen if the Americans had to do it over again.
>
> At that time . . . few people had the idea that a Soviet spy who worked against the Japanese might later work against the United States.
>
> Apparently the Army report was intended to warn this country to be on the lookout for spying here.
>
> Beware, it says, of United States employees who even show sympathy with the Communist Party. It says that "party sympathy is enough to develop a high class agent and spy" . . .
>
> It is a thriller of blinking lights, codes, hidden radios never set up in the same spot twice. It involves fake passports, microforms passed in cigarette packs, money changing hands between shadowy figures in dark theatres . . .
>
> It was a network with "perfect sources" and almost got away with the "perfect crime."
>
> By comparison, the Army sizes up the wartime Soviet spy network in Canada as an "amateur show" (*Journal-American*, February 10, 1949).

Smedley vehemently denied the Army's accusations. On February 11 *The New York Times* included her emphatic response to MacArthur's allegations under the headline, "Spy Charge Denied by Miss Smedley." The article reads in part:

> Miss Agnes Smedley angrily denied yesterday that she had been "a spy and agent for the Soviet Government," as charged in the Army's report on the ring led by Dr. Richard Sorge.
>
> In a statement issued through her lawyer, the Missouri-born author and lecturer termed the allegations "a despicable lie."
>
> Miss Smedley, best known for her several books about China's civil strife in which she frankly supported the Communist side, said:
>
> "I am not and never have been a Soviet spy or an agent for any country" (*The New York Times*, February 11, 1949).

Smedley's denial was false.

Ames remained blinded by her previous intimacy with Smedley, and, more certainly, by her commitment to help foster Smedley's creative activity according to Yaddo's traditions. Katherine Anne Porter learned to view Smedley's behaviors with greater clarity. She would later describe Smedley as,

> a lamentable dupe of the kind our generation and place produced in extraordinary numbers. . . . Agnes had a painful childhood and a generally bad experience of life from the beginning – but given her beginnings where else could she have moved so freely, and have done better? It is true she had been censured a little here, but she must know that in every country she adores so, she would have been sent to a labor camp or put to death if a man corresponding in power to General Douglas Macarthur had accused her of treason" (Price, 404).

Nonetheless, so adept was Smedley at refuting charges of espionage that the Army began to distance itself from its original accusations. On February 12, the Army issued a statement maintaining that it did not "necessarily agree with all of the MacArthur Report." By February 18, *The New York Times* was reporting that the Army completely rejected MacArthur's accusations.

> The army acknowledges publicly tonight that it had made a "faux pas" in releasing a "philosophical" report of Communist spying in Japan and China, and said it had no proof to back the charges that Miss Smedley, U.S. author, had been a member of the alleged spy ring. [Colonel Eyster] stated firmly that it was not the Army's policy to issue statements making accusations against persons such as Miss Smedley "when the proof is not in our hands." He emphasized he was not

> saying there was no proof concerning Miss Smedley, but merely that "it was not in our hands at the time the report was issued." Colonel Eyster said it was not the policy of the U.S. government to "tar and feather people without proof" (*The New York Times*, February 18, 1949).

Despite such a public retraction, Smedley's name became a politically sensitive topic. More important, her long-standing and largely undefined relationship with Yaddo drew unwelcome scrutiny.

On Monday, February 14, 1949, FBI agents appeared at Yaddo and questioned Elizabeth Hardwick and Edward Maisel. Yaddo's independence had been violated. Ames was quick to realize that how the "outside" world viewed Yaddo had suddenly become a matter of grave concern. Now she was in need of the kind of emotional assurance she had so often provided others. She called Arvin and frantically described the FBI's visit. The threat of an FBI investigation disturbed Arvin. "Down into the pit," (Werth, 115) he wrote in his journal. Sadly, Arvin was most likely referring to his concern that his own past political associations might become the subject of FBI inquiry.

Following their questioning, Hardwick and Maisel described the FBI's interest to Lowell, O'Connor, and Ross. The guests gave nervous consideration to the implications of the FBI's surveillance. The following day, Lowell, Hardwick, and Maisel informed Ames of the FBI's visit. "We expressed our opinion to Mrs. Ames that this was a grave matter, that Yaddo was now being investigated as a 'Communist smear', and apparently had been under observation for at least two years" Lowell later told Yaddo's board; he added:

> We felt uncertain of Mrs. Ames' attitude and said that we did not want to go into specific questions which the FBI has asked – there were some about her but I believe the FBI did not tell Miss Hardwick and Mr. Maisel they could not. Some

> of Mrs. Ames' statements at this meeting were puzzling. She said "first they called them Communists, then spies," and said that as she was saying to Mr. Slade the other day "I am sometimes afraid to say what I think." When leaving we requested that political matters not be discussed at the table, and that we wanted to get back to our work (YR 385.2).

Lowell immediately wrote to Arvin and explained that he could not, in good conscience, pursue his interest in becoming a member of Yaddo's governing body "unless it was drastically overhauled." Arvin confided in Lowell that he shared his concerns. He also confirmed that Lowell's apprehension was not only well-founded but, in fact, common. Yaddo was confronting a very grave and imminent threat. As a poet of international recognition, it was his responsibility to save Yaddo. In short order, Lowell's emotional agitation had found its focus.

Following Ames' oblique response, Lowell, Hardwick, O'Connor, and Maisel, arranged to meet with Yaddo board members Newton Arvin and Granville Hicks in Troy, New York. The guests spent close to three hours discussing their concerns, and specifically, according to Lowell, "our belief that the seriousness of the situation was very insufficiently emphasized" (YR 385.2). Smedley's relationship with both Ames and Yaddo was carefully discussed. Later that afternoon, Maisel phoned another board member, Everett V. Stonequist, at his home in Saratoga and requested an additional, confidential meeting that would include Hardwick, Lowell, and O'Connor. The meeting was arranged for that same night, February 20.

With Stonequist, the guests again expressed their misgivings about the FBI's investigation, and their concern that political interests were influencing Ames' administration. The guests then recommended a third meeting to include additional

board members, though they specifically asked that John Slade not be notified "on the ground that he was so closely a friend of Mrs. Ames that they felt he might not be willing to hear the case in full." Stonequist agreed.

On the morning of February 21, Lowell and his entourage arrived at Stonequists' home in Saratoga and were met by additional directors, Newton Arvin, Granville Hicks, Thomas F. Luther, and Kathryn Starbuck. For approximately two hours the group gave further, nervous consideration to the implications of the FBI's surveillance. The collective concerns of Lowell, O'Connor, Hardwick, and Maisel convinced board members that the matter required the attention of John Slade. That afternoon, Luther and Stonequist notified Slade of the developing crisis. At 8:00 that evening Yaddo's president arrived at Stonequist's home and was apprised of the guests' concerns, and the FBI's interest in Yaddo.

The following morning, Slade drove to Yaddo and spent two hours with Lowell and the other guests gathering his own impressions of their concerns. According to Lowell, "we found Mr. Slade friendly and he listened to us with patience." After their discussion with Slade, Ames met with the guests and tried to assuage their concerns. Lowell's recollection of this discussion is infused with hostility:

> At two o'clock Mrs. Ames came to us and spoke to us of loyalty and begged us to remain at Yaddo in its hour of need because our departure might dissuade other guests from coming. She said we should not be worried about the FBI that she had successfully combated them, and said that she answered them with fullness and sobriety. I was not myself impressed that this was the FBI's attitude toward Mrs. Ames. I believe they found her evasive, shrewd, contradictory in her attitude. We thought it a futile emotional ordeal to go through charges with her before this meeting where she will have every opportunity for defense and rebuttal. At one point she said, "Why not stay on, we can re-organize in any way

> you like." Mrs. Ames said we were hysterical because of the FBI, and that I showed alarming lack of objectivity (YR 385.2).

Slade viewed the accusations levied by someone with Lowell's fame to be a threat to Yaddo. That evening he decided that the situation required the formal attention of Yaddo's full board. He called a meeting in order to allow Lowell, Hardwick, Maisel, and O'Connor to present their concerns. In hindsight, Slade's strategy seems sound. He reasoned that by allowing Lowell the opportunity to vent his concerns, he would help to ease tensions. More important, Slade hoped such discussion might help to disentangle Lowell's concern with Ames from any larger dissatisfaction with Yaddo that he might make public. Unbeknown to Slade, Lowell, Hardwick, Maisel, and O'Connor again met with Stonequist the following morning, this time to agree on a format for the upcoming meeting. From Lowell's perspective, he was firmly in control of the situation. Such confidence allowed his convictions to manifest themselves with particular vitriol.

On the morning of Saturday, February 26, 1949, members of Yaddo's board convened at Yaddo. Those in attendance included John Slade, Carl Everett Bacon, R. Inslee Clark, Malcolm Cowley, Richard Donovan, Thomas F. Luther, Kathryn Starbuck, and Everett V. Stonequist. Though he had participated in prefatory meetings only days before, Arvin left word that he was ill. Arvin's illness was undoubtedly psychological. He knew that without Ames' repeated emotional succor he might well have collapsed into a helpless depression years before. In addition, his academic reputation was rooted in critical studies that might have remained still-born had he lacked Yaddo's continued support. Nonetheless, Arvin had developed grave concerns about Ames' administrative practices. In addition, his confidential suggestion that Lowell apply for membership to

Yaddo's board placed him in an especially awkward position. There existed, however, a more immediate danger. Arvin saw the emerging threat many board members were beginning to perceive. If Ames, pronounced pacifist and dedicated Quaker, could be the subject of a communist inquiry, then clearly so, too, could most of the intellectuals who comprised Yaddo's board, and whose past associations with radical politics were well known.

Such anxieties were well placed, and eerily prescient. Amid a gathering anti-communist sentiment, many artists and intellectuals were beginning to feel increasingly vulnerable. Within a year, Harvard professor F.O. Matthiessen would violently take his own life leaving behind a note in which he wrote "as a Christian and a socialist believing in international peace, I find myself terribly oppressed by present tensions." Novelist Howard Fast wrote, "Professor Matthiessen is as surely a victim of the cold war and the Truman-Acheson foreign policy as those who face jail, blacklists, and academic witch-hunts" (Werth, 122). There was growing concern among Yaddo's board that if Lowell's accusations resonated, Yaddo itself could become a causality of political suspicion.

Before Lowell was allowed to make his accusations, Yaddo's board met privately. Stonequist provided a summary of events. For Stonequist, the FBI's interest in Yaddo was emblematic of "the excitement, hysteria, perhaps, which seems to be part of the post-war period in American history." Nevertheless, their investigation posed a grave threat. It was also revealed that their inquiry was ongoing. "The FBI have been investigating Yaddo, at least beginning in 1942, if not before," Thomas Luther stated, adding that it "has been continuous since and continues now" (YR 385.2). Several members of

Yaddo's board had in fact been the subject of their inquiry. Granville Hicks confirmed that the FBI had interviewed him the previous Wednesday, two days after Maisel and Hardwick. It was obvious that there was a dangerous, and very nebulous, distinction between the FBI's interest in guests who had visited Yaddo and their interest in the estate's operation. "You cannot separate their field of inquiry from the whole management and control of Yaddo," Hicks stated "because that has a bearing upon it in their minds" (YR 385.2). Bacon added that the FBI, "have been looking into the operation on the basis of what is the nature of the situation that might make it possible for things like that [communist activities] to go on, so it does tie in that they are looking into the operation of Yaddo, as well as individuals who have been here as guests" (YR 385.2). Ultimately, debate about Lowell's accusations would divide board members between those who viewed Lowell's accusations as tenable, and others who were more concerned with the administrative procedures that allowed for their materialization.

Before stating his accusations, Lowell assured the board that "this is the most important meeting in its history," adding that its outcome "involves its welfare and perhaps its existence." His allegations were succinct:

> It is our impression that Mrs. Ames is somehow deeply and mysteriously involved in Miss Smedley's political activities. That Mrs. Ames's personality is such that she is totally unfitted for the position of executive director (YR 385.2).

According to Lowell, "the second charge would be supported by a tremendous majority of the more objective Yaddo guests." His demands were emphatic.

> We petition the Board that Mrs. Elizabeth Ames, the executive director, be fired; that this action be absolute, final and prompt; that pending a decision she be immediately suspended from all administrative functions (YR 385.2).

Despite his insistence that "I made every effort to avoid invective and emotional rhetoric," Lowell's presentation made effective use of his poetic imagination. "I shall compare the institution to a body," he stated "and the present executive director to a diseased organ, chronically poisoning the whole system, sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes almost imperceptibly, sometimes, as now, almost fatally" (YR 385.2). In case such imagery failed to impress, he prefaced his argument with what can only be considered intellectual blackmail.

> I want to say that we have not taken this matter up lightly, nor do we intend to drop it lightly. It is only fair to present to the attention of the Board that no matter what decision is taken by the Board, the present guests intend to leave in a body on Tuesday, March first.
>
> If action is not taken by the Board that we consider adequate, I intend to confer with certain people in New York, among them, Trilling, Rahv, Hook, and Haggin, and immediately to call a large meeting of the more important former Yaddo guests; at this meeting we will again present our case at great length.
>
> I think it only fair to tell the Board that I have myself influential friends in the world of culture, nine-tenths of whom in the course of my ordinary correspondence and conversation will be informed of this affair within three months. I want to give their names – I think it quite relevant: Santayana, Frost, Eliot, Williams, Ransom, Moore (In case you think I'm bluffing, I only know Miss Moore slightly) but think she would agree, Bishop, Tate, Blackmur, Warren, Auden, Adams, Bogan, Empson. Of my own generation, Robert Fitzgerald, Farrell, Bishop, Schwartz, Shapiro, Taylor, Powers, Stafford and Berryman. We shall also take steps to see that the important people in the world of music and painting are fully informed. I should say, most of my friends are writers, but I have connections in Washington and I shall take steps to see that the matter is aired there, too (YR 385.2).

Despite his emotional imbalance, Lowell shaped his argument with cunning strategy. He maintained that his accusations were the result of administrative procedures in place at Yaddo. After all, it was Ames' seemingly fickle control of guests' accommodation that had allowed for Smedley to draw the FBI's attention in the first place. Lowell insisted that such seemingly indiscriminate favoritism had resulted in substantive tensions in the

past. "I want to speak of my own personal relations with Yaddo prior to the Smedley affair," Lowell maintained, adding, "I lived in New York City off and on, where most of Yaddo's guests come from. My former wife was here in 1943, and from many other people, and I say the bulk of them are not inconsequential or neurotic people, who would testify almost uniformly of rather bitter personal relations with the Director, and they would use such words as 'capricious,' 'erratic,' particularly the wives" (YR 385.2). To his credit, Lowell rightly identified that Ames' control of guests' residencies had in fact resulted in considerable derision.

Lowell proceeded to present his case in the form of interviews with Maisel, Hardwick, and O'Connor. Allowing the testimony of other guests to shape his presentation impressed upon board members that his accusations were not the result of a set of erratic perceptions. Lowell tried to make clear that the reality of the threat against Yaddo was perceived by all but Ames. Under Lowell's examination, Maisel stated that the FBI had questioned him "about the visit of a Soviet spy to Yaddo," adding that "there was an exchange of information concerning infiltration in connection with the armed forces, carried on while she was at Yaddo, written letters, etc" (YR 385.2). When asked about his "impressions of the FBI's attitude towards Mrs. Ames" Maisel replied that the FBI was "very much interested in her." Maisel continued: "The impression that was conveyed was that she was extremely evasive and vague, purposefully vague, as it was called, a shrewd operator. There was even stronger language" (YR 385.2). Regarding her association with students from Skidmore, Maisel confirmed that "Skidmore students continued to be invited to tea with Mrs. Ames and cocktails with Mrs. Smedley. Such

contacts did not wholly center about social or literary matters." As an example, Maisel recalled Smedley inviting students to the reception in honor of Harold Kline. According to Maisel, Kline was "a person completely innocent of any literary assumptions." Such conduct, Maisel observed, was predicated entirely on Smedley's emotional involvement with Ames.

> I can only speak of my own impressions. Mrs. Smedley's status was unique, privileged. I do not think anyone else, any of the other guests felt privileged in the way Mrs. Smedley was, and her status was quite different. I believe the impression prevailed at first that she was a co-directress (YR 385.2).

Hardwick corroborated Maisel's assessments but also made the association between Ames' control of such privileged residencies and Yaddo's accommodation of radical political interests. "I know on the literary level there has been great dissatisfaction with Yaddo," she claimed "people have felt that persons like Kantorowicz and Agnes Smedley should not have been here in the first place, and these charges, and any of these charges and whatever news of it may get out in New York will be received with extreme interest, and I feel that most people would be inclined to take our side, but it is a very serious matter" (YR 385.2). Hardwick's testimony added important historical precedent to Lowell's claims. His emotional imbalance notwithstanding, Lowell had thought the matter through with surprising accuracy. Yaddo's history of accommodating radical political interests was undeniable. From the perspective of Lowell, Hardwick, Maisel, and O'Connor, Ames' favoritism focused on the accommodation of leftist leaning artists with surprising regularity. Of even graver importance, the question of Smedley's and Kantorowicz's legitimacy raised fundamental questions about Yaddo's purpose. Extending the residency of James Farrell while he struggled to compose an iconic work

of proletarian literature was one thing. The writings of Smedley and Kantorowicz were undeniably different in their intention. It was clear to most board members that the Trasks' intentions, and by extension Ames' guardianship of them, needed immediate review.

Ames remained silent for much of the meeting. Though she must have realized that Lowell's accusations revealed the truth about her administrative practices, she found such accusations untenable for the simple reason that she knew that her judgments had nothing to do with politics, and everything to do with guarding Yaddo's most basic principles. Ames reacted to Lowell's vitriol with characteristic decorum. Her response remained emphatically factual:

> About immediate events: These are just factual statements. There were five (one man [James Ross] left yesterday; he did not want to be mixed up in this). Here have been these five people for several months, living in great apparent harmony and good will toward me. … [W]hen I have stayed away from dinner, asking why I did not come; every one of them asking for more time … some invited for the first time pressing for a chance to stay longer; Mr. Lowell asked to stay until August; Miss O'Connor wanting to stay until July, and come back next year. Mr. Lowell has written three or four of his friends whom he wishes to get here this summer, he started correspondence between me and them; he writes these letters telling about the ideal state of Yaddo; no reservations at all. They frequently came to my house for music or cocktails, a harmonious life, with now and then little affectionate notes. … [T]hen all of this changed with the morning of Tuesday, when they appeared at my door, looking extremely grave and upset, three of them. I asked them, and they stated that the FBI had questioned them the day before. I was very much upset and disturbed … it was quite a shock to me to hear that. When situations arise and people are disturbed I try to hold the line and seek for calm (YR 385.2).

Ames also described her experience with the FBI:

> They stayed with me for two and a half hours, and when they left, thanked me for my cooperation, shook hands with me, and said if anything else comes up, may we come back, and I said yes. That was on Thursday and to me it is a very unsettling thing to go through, anything like that.

> The next day, I did feel very tired out. As you know, I have not yet completely recovered from a serious operation ten months ago. On Friday, I came over for dinner, feeling very tired and very depressed and that night they say my attitude began to change. That is completely false.
>
> What I want to stress is that they, after living here harmoniously, pressing for more extensions of time, recommending their friends to come here … I can show letters they have written me … then like that, the whole thing changes … I can attribute it to nothing but fear and hysteria. They are young people, in their 30s; I can understand it, faced with a world such as we have. Miss Hardwick had some experiences with Communism in her early years; she is disillusioned and bitter. That is the story (YR 385.2).

Ames was too committed to her own principles to engage in an emotional rebuttal of charges that, for her, lacked merit.

Nonetheless, Lowell demanded immediate and definitive action. His experience as a member of the committee that awarded the Bollingen Prize to Pound and his close association with the New Critics assured him that communism posed a grave threat to artistic interests. "I think that the board cannot evade its moral responsibility because of any sentimental attachments or fear of any kind," Lowell insisted. "I think of the Trasks and I think it showed a touching innocent faith in the arts that they should have endowed Yaddo, and this faith has suffered hideous perversion, and I think the institution is faced with ruin" (YR 385.2).

From the perspective of most board members, it was obvious that Lowell's accusations relied heavily on conjecture. "When the charges against Elizabeth were presented, they dissolved into gossip and hearsay," Cowley wrote. Nonetheless, the potential for their exposure, in combination with the FBI's obvious interests, was cause for real concern. In addition, as overblown as his accusations may have been, they included unquestionable truths about Ames' administration. By any account, Smedley's

residency was privileged. Though his interpretation of Ames' intentions could not have been more wrong, it was also undeniable that she had committed administrative indiscretions which had exposed Yaddo to potentially devastating inquiry. For board members, such incongruous facts were difficult to reconcile. Judgment, it was decided, would be deferred until a strategic response could be formulated. A final meeting was scheduled for March 26, to be held in the Executive Board room of Spencer Trask & Co. in New York. In the interim, news of Lowell's accusations spread.

According to Cowley, during the three weeks leading up to the director's meeting, Yaddo became "the favorite topic to discuss while holding a martini. New York was full of slanders, rumors, accusations and counter-accusations" (Hamilton, 151). Cowley was concerned that public exposure would prove detrimental to Yaddo. He successfully worked to keep news of the event out of the New York papers. He promised *The Herald Tribune* an exclusive if they waited to release the story until after the second director's meeting. His tactic worked. A seemingly benign article appeared in the paper's Sunday edition. "Now I know how to have a story played down" he wrote Hicks; "[G]ive it to one morning newspaper as an exclusive to be published on Sunday; then the other papers won't bother with it on Monday, unless it's very big. If it had come out on a weekday, the World Telegram, Sun and Journal American would have had follow-ups" (Hamilton, 152).

Among members of the Yaddo community, word of Lowell's behavior was met with shock and disbelief. Long time Yaddo residents rushed to Ames' support. Harvey

Breit, John Cheever, Alfred Kazin, and Kappo Phelan composed a letter in defense of Ames which they circulated among previous Yaddo guests.

> What we are concerned with, and most urgently, is the very grave political accusations that were arrived at overnight, and hurled at Mrs. Ames in an atmosphere strangely comparable to that of a purge trial. We wish to insist on the gravity of the charge. It was of the deliberate complicity of Mrs. Ames in a communist plot of a kind detrimental to national security, and for which over a long period she was said to have used the facilities at Yaddo. However, during the hours of questioning at the meeting no shred of substantive evidence was produced to support this charge, which had been arrived at, in Miss Hardwick's words, by "intuition." The material mentioned in support of it included the names of Stalinists who at some time had been guests at Yaddo; a story of a group of guests having once served a drink referred to as a Molotov cocktail; names of two or three political suspects with whom no one present was acquainted, but who had been mentioned by the FBI as having been connected with Agnes Smedley years earlier. Mainly the case was made to rest on vague personality factors; Mrs. Ames was said to have been "evasive" at one moment, "nervous" at another, and so on.
>
> No mention was made of the fact that many prominent anti-Stalinists have also been guests at Yaddo, as well as a very large number of artists of no political persuasion. In the minds of the prosecutors it was of no importance that 1) the Army had withdrawn its charges against Miss Smedley; 2) Mrs. Ames was on record as not having sympathized with many of Miss Smedley's agitational activities in Saratoga; 3) Mrs. Ames had finally asked Miss Smedley to leave Yaddo.
>
> On the basis of the record, we consider the whole procedure to have been a perfect example of the use of innuendo and personal disparagement in lieu of evidence. Those responsible for it have made it clear, and have stated privately, that they do not care what happens to Yaddo in the future. Their sole appetite and concern seems to be to create a tabloid case. We regard their action as a thoroughly foolish and nasty performance, dangerous to the extent that it weakens any sober fight against communism (YR 385.2).

On March 21 seventy-five copies of the letter were mailed to previous guests. Within five days, fifty-one endorsements had been returned. Lowell was shocked. Not only was he "deeply wounded," recalled Robert Fitzgerald, "but incredulous at the kind of prose employed against him by people he had considered his friends" (Hamilton, 152). Lowell was especially distraught that both Katherine Anne Porter and Delmore Schwartz had

allied themselves with Ames. He had counted both among his close literary confidants. For friends like Fitzgerald, it was obvious that Lowell's position was becoming increasingly tenuous.

> In the midst of what was becoming an ugly comedy, Lowell behaved gently but with increasing excitement. He had understandable difficulty in sleeping. He needed the reassurance of company. He and his friends made no attempt to counteract the circular letter with one of their own but they visited and remonstrated with one or two of those who had sent it (Hamilton, 152).

Bolstered by the responses they received, Breit, Cheever, Kazin, and Phelan composed a similar letter that was sent directly to Yaddo's board of directors.

Statement to the Board of Directors of Yaddo

> We, the undersigned former guests of Yaddo, wish to express to the Board of Directors our appreciation of Yaddo as we have known it under the administration of Elizabeth Ames. During recent years the world of arts and letters has been subject to extraordinary political pressures, which have threatened the very existence of many philanthropic organizations. We consider it a rare achievement on the part of the Foundation and its Executive Director that Yaddo has been spared such dissensions; and that at no time has there been any political partisanship in the selection and treatment of guests.
>
> Specifically, we reject as preposterous the political charge now being brought against Elizabeth Ames. We reject any insinuation that at any time she deliberately used the facilities of Yaddo for any other purpose than the furthering of the arts in America. Above all, it is a violation of elementary justice that such a charge and such insinuations should be deliberately confused with grievances of a purely personal nature, which cannot fairly be dealt with in an atmosphere of political tension.
>
> All of us have often gone on record as opposing the Communist Party. All of us have at one time or another, some of us for long periods, benefited from Elizabeth Ames' administration of Yaddo. We are anti-Stalinists.
>
> We feel that the charge currently being brought arises from a frame of mind that represents a grave danger to both the civil liberties and the freedom necessary for the arts. We feel this charge involves a cynical assault not only on Elizabeth Ames' personal integrity, but also on the whole future of Yaddo.
>
> We have lived at Yaddo; we have worked there; we want others to have the same opportunity. We are outraged, first, to see that opportunity jeopardized; and secondly, to see the human and political values we hold being debased

> through the use of a smear-technique that has so far not been honored in this country (YR 385.2).

Breit, Cheever, Kazin and Phelan were correct in their defense of Ames. Additionally, Lowell's accusations were presented with the same kind of intolerant fanaticism suggestive of the kinds of purges Lowell himself associated with communist ideology. For most board members such a gesture of support further highlighted how precarious the situation was. Such obvious contradictions did not deny the danger to Yaddo or the fact that Ames exercised what could only be interpreted as excessive personal control.

Other appeals were sent directly to members of Yaddo's administrative body. President John Slade received a barrage of letters in support of Ames. Catherine Anne Porter wrote:

> Dear Mr. Slade,
>
> Since some of the freest and happiest moments of my life have been spent at Yaddo, I am astonished to learn that four people have categorically decided that my very real experience at Yaddo, and with the personal administration of Mrs. Ames, has been an illusion, bordering on the criminal. I learn that while I had the democratic good fortune to reside at Yaddo, I was actually living in a feudal state. I learn that a minimum of supervision for the sake of all concerned is not an adult necessity, but tyranny, pure and simple. It had also been forcibly brought to my attention that I am no less than an utter fool if I do not realize that every human act today represents a struggle for power, that the suppression of civil liberties, and the expression of political intolerance, is now the fashion, that, in short, I must conform to this iron heel of a 'new look' which is transparently designed for the aggrandizement of a self-selected few, and the further trampling down of the as-always poor stupid many. Last, and most incredible of all, I understand that if Mrs. Ames does not resign quietly, her accusers will broadcast their charges against her, will compel her to quit the field with the whole world a gleeful witness to it.
>
> Well if I am not mistaken, this sounds like blackmail. It seems that Mrs. Ames must be "purged" – or else. For the sake of whom precisely? I, for one, am genuinely puzzled. What is this <u>personal</u> animosity her accusers suddenly feel towards Mrs. Ames? Why has it taken this nasty form of by-passing their quondam best-friend so insultingly, of dictating terms to a board of directors? Why is it they have been frank enough to say that directors of their own choosing

> would serve their purpose better? What is this 'inner circle' of their own they long to create? Are they, then, conspiring to form a literary dictatorship? Or a new 'republic' from which they would ruthlessly exclude anyone who would disagree with them in the smallest particular, who would dare to oppose any of their opinions about art and life?
>
> In all fairness, it does not seem to me that the character of each accuser should be examined more closely. Simply to do that will, I believe, prove what wonders Mrs. Ames has accomplished in her enormously difficult position as executive director of Yaddo. There is no computing the amount of tact, discretion, sympathy, and understanding it must require to manage it so that such people should live at peace with each other (YR 385.2).

Other board members received correspondence that was similarly impassioned. "This is in haste – to ask if you know anything about the current mess at Yaddo, of which I have heard rumors in the last couple of days?" Eleanor Clark asked Cowley. "If what I have heard is true (maybe it isn't) it sounds pretty stinking, the gist as I've gotten it being that a couple of psychopathic individuals have set in motion a great case against Elizabeth Ames, because of Agnes Smedley." She continued,

> It is my opinion that Elizabeth has steered with extraordinary tact and generosity thru all the political violences of these years, which could easily have wrecked Yaddo long ago, and would have if anyone else I can think of had been in charge. It is obvious that if she had been the kind of manipulator I hear they are trying to make out, the place wouldn't have been available as it was to me, and to a good many others like me whose political opinions were certainly not Agnes's. I have always felt that it was a rather rare human triumph on Elizabeth's part that no exclusion became necessary on such grounds and that through the most fanatical moments we were all able to work there together (YR 385.2).

Carson McCullers wrote directly to Ames. "I am sickened and furious by the fantastic charges brought against you and my beloved Yaddo." She added,

> What can I do? Tell me immediately. I am here in Macon visiting my cousins for the next two weeks. Should I go back to N.Y. – to be on the scene for battle?
>
> I am so shocked that my senses fail me for the moment. Am writing Newton and Alfred.

> Dear Friend, you must know that I will do all in my power to discredit the slander hurled at you so ignominiously. If you are unable to write – ask Caroline or some other friend to keep me au courant (YR 385.2).

As the March 26 meeting approached, Lowell's position became increasingly isolated. His accusations, it was realized, were clearly informed by larger cultural unease. Suspicion was also gathering that Lowell's emotional imbalance was distorting his perceptions. While preparing for their final meeting in New York members of Yaddo's board found themselves in the unenviable position of having to reconcile three distinct facts. First, as agitated as he might be, Lowell's fame put him in a position of authority with dubious aims. He could publicly claim that Yaddo was dangerously sympathetic to communist interests, and in so doing, severely scar Yaddo's reputation. Second, as untenable as his claims might be from a legal standpoint, they pointed to undeniable indiscretions which brought into question Ames' authority and, ultimately, Yaddo's purpose. Finally, and for most board members of greatest personal concern, it was undeniable that, in the words of Malcolm Cowley, "Elizabeth Ames *was* Yaddo [emphasis added]."

As a last effort to reach an equitable resolution, on Friday, March 25, a member of Lowell's contingent met with Cheever, Clark, and Kazin in New York. Little was accomplished. The following morning, the directors of the Corporation of Yaddo convened in the executive boardroom of Spencer Trask & Company. Newton Arvin privately referred to the meeting as "The Day of Wrath." In his lucid biography of Arvin, Barry Werth describes that at the meeting debate quickly divided the board into three groups. Lawyers and prominent businessmen argued to accept the charges and advocated

Ames' dismissal. Those familiar with Ames' aptitude for encouraging the artistic temperament and her remarkable record of fostering creative achievement voted to dismiss the allegations altogether on the grounds of their impertinence and hysteria. Arvin and Hicks formulated a more moderate response. They argued that while the communist accusations were cause for concern, more serious were the administrative indiscretions that had exposed Yaddo to FBI inquiry. "The communist issue was negligible," Hicks later wrote; but added his concern that "there had been serious laxness in the administration of Yaddo." In the end, the middle ground largely prevailed. Lowell, it was finally agreed, would be censured and his accusations dismissed. Ames was allowed to retain her position. Her administrative practices, however, would be thoroughly reviewed.

Nonetheless, Price writes that while Yaddo's board was deliberating, Lowell was questioning the likes of Agnes Smedley at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace. The conference was being held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Its purpose was to promote a more conciliatory posture towards the Soviet Union. Smedley was part of a panel on writing and publishing that Lowell attended. By all accounts, Lowell remained composed. His emotional turmoil though, was about to manifest itself. One week later, Lowell was in Chicago visiting Allan Tate while on his way to Indiana University. Tate reported to Malcolm Cowley that in Chicago Lowell's agitation was alarming.

> Saturday evening he made a scene in a restaurant, from which we extracted him with great difficulty. When we got him home, he raised the window and began to shout profanity and obscenity. This went on about 30 minutes. A crowed gathered and then five policemen appeared. It took four of them ten minutes to

> subdue and handcuff him. . . . I finally, with the help of Jim Cunningham, talked the police out of taking him to the station, and instead got them to take him to the University psychiatrist, who diagnosed his case as "Psychotic reaction, paranoid type." He thought Cal should be taken into custody, but I persuaded him and the police to turn him over to me for the night. We quieted him by three in the morning, and he slept a little. At breakfast, he was agitated, and announced that he had done something wonderful for us all. He then said he was going to Peter Taylor at Bloomington, Indiana. I saw no way to stop him short of calling the police and committing him. We put him on the train in great apprehension (Hamilton, 155).

Lowell's final collapse occurred less than three days later. Unfortunately for Ames and Yaddo he had managed to restrain his imbalance long enough to identify for Yaddo's board the intersection between Ames' administration, and the political suspicions that shaped post-war America. Yaddo would never be the same.

In May 1949, Malcolm Cowley wrote a lengthy letter to Ernest Hemingway in which he described "The Lowell Affair." "I got involved in a hell of a troublesome situation that kept me busy for a long time," Cowley wrote:

> It was about Yaddo, an old Robber Baron estate in Saratoga Springs endowed as a foundation to give free board and lodging to writers, artists, and composers. I'm on the board of directors, worse luck. One of the writers who spent a long time at Yaddo, more than four years, was Agnes Smedley. She is and has always been an enthusiastic supporter of the Chinese Communists. A year ago it began to look as if her political activities would make trouble for Yaddo, and Mrs. Elizabeth Ames, who runs the place, asked Agnes either to moderate those activities or else to leave. She left. On February 10 of this year General MacArthur's headquarters issued a big statement that accused Smedley of being a Russian spy. She isn't, of course, and Smedley forced the Army to apologize. But meanwhile the effbiyai had descended on Yaddo to ask questions of Mrs. Ames and the writer guests. Does this sound complicated? It's only the beginning of a story that belongs in the history books. The guests, as it happened, were all of the type now described as "passionate anti-Stalinists." They became so disturbed at being questioned by the effbiyai [sic] that they got together, added two and two, squared the result, multiplied by pi squared, and reached the conclusion that Mrs. Ames was, in their words, "somehow deeply and mysteriously involved" in subversive activities. A meeting of the directors was called in Saratoga, and it turned out to be one of the grisliest days through which I have ever lived. All sorts of suspicions, dislikes,

> malice came to the surface. Charges were made, evidence was offered, and in the course of seven or eight hours the evidence slowly dissolved into nothing but unfounded gossip. The meeting was adjourned for a month to allow the directors to make further investigations. The end was, as you might say, happy for these times. At a second meeting in New York Mrs. Ames was formally cleared of the charges. But then the guest who had been most active in bringing the charges, – Robert Lowell – who is incidentally a very fine poet – suddenly went out of his head, not at the meeting, but a few days later in Chicago, and had to be put into handcuffs by four sweating policemen who carried him off for treatment. Paranoid psychosis was the doctor's verdict. What we had been living through and sitting in grave judgment over was paranoia that had been passed from mind to mind like measles running through a school (Faulkner, 408).

Also in May, Robert Fitzgerald circulated an open letter to, among others, T.S. Eliot, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, William Carlos Williams, J.F. Powers, Randall Jarrell, Peter Taylor, Katherine Anne Porter, Louise Bogan, Leonie Adams, Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne Moore, John Berryman, R.P. Blackmur, and George Santayana. In his letter Fitzgerald tried to explain Lowell's behavior. Prior to February, he wrote, Lowell had sensed "something unpleasant in the atmosphere" at Yaddo. The appearance of the FBI confirmed for Lowell that his early premonitions were "the result of long permeation by moods or influences that were politically or morally committed to communism … This impression grew on Lowell that the outwardly benevolent institution had been given over to scandalous and sinister forces." Fitzgerald insisted that Lowell's explosive reaction to the FBI's investigation was rooted in his creative imagination. "Impressions of this kind come easily to the poetic imagination," he wrote, "and are easily enforced by it."

Hindsight enables us to understand that "The Lowell Affair" resulted from a combination of influences that bring together the immediate assessments of both Cowley and Fitzgerald. Smedley was not a spy, per se, but she had engaged in undeniable

espionage. Further, she had deftly concealed her involvement in such activities from Ames, and Yaddo. Lowell's perspective on Smedley's activities had been gathered from newspaper accounts and previous guests of Yaddo. As such, it was not without a historical understanding that, in many ways, was better informed than Ames'. Lowell's interpretation of, and reaction to, Smedley's prolonged residence was, however, more the result of his emotional imbalance than his "poetic imagination." Furthermore, during the spring of 1949, Yaddo's administrative body was far more concerned with assuring Yaddo's safety than with any historical accounting. Sadly, Yaddo would be required to conform to new administrative values that would forever alter its creative atmosphere.

The administrative licenses Ames had assumed were well intentioned. "She had not been disloyal in her actions or beliefs," Cowley wrote. "She was a Quaker by faith and pacifistic by temperament, but those were not crimes against the State. She might have been charged with showing partiality to some guests, extending or renewing their visits to Yaddo, but that was because she admired their personal qualities, including talent; apparently she paid little attention to their political convictions." In short, Cowley maintained that "The errors she had made . . . were errors of the heart and not the head" (YR 385.2). Katherine Anne Porter agreed. Following Smedley's departure, she wrote to Eleanor Clark, "If this act of Elizabeth's seems a little belated in the face of Agnes' long residence at Yaddo . . . it is very important to remember that Elizabeth's prime article of faith on which she based her whole directorship of Yaddo, was that no one should be discriminated against because of race, color, religious or political beliefs" (Bayley, 368).

Porter and Cowley had it exactly right. Ames' intention was always to safeguard Yaddo's established principles. She had done so with great effect when confronted with the Depression, and, later, global conflict. By the middle of the twentieth century she faced a more subversive and formidable threat. In many regards, her extended accommodation of Smedley differed little from her past loyalty to Newton Arvin, John Cheever, Carson McCullers, and Katherine Anne Porter, and even, Robert Lowell. The difference of course was Smedley's outspoken radicalism and support of Chinese communism. Amid a country convinced that the threat of international communism was real, "The Lowell Affair" required that Ames' administration be carefully assessed. From the 1880s through the 1940s the Trasks' vision for Yaddo had been carefully guarded by the evaluations of Ames and her most trusted advisors. Indeed, such cloistered guardianship had helped to assure the continuance of the Trasks' interests. It was obvious that such assurance was no longer tenable when confronted with the Cold War.

"The Lowell Affair" sent Ames into a profound personal despair. Following the second director's meeting, she checked into a nursing home for two weeks. Many of the board members who were critical of her administration had, in the past, benefited from Ames' power to extend invitations and prolong residencies. Her sense of betrayal was exacerbated by the fact that several of these board members appeared more concerned with the prospect of their own politics being investigated than with the obvious injustice towards her. Newton Arvin found himself in an especially awkward position. "I had a letter from Mr. Arvin," Lowell had stated before Ames and Yaddo's board, "in which I

think I am free to say that he said he felt worried about the way things were at Yaddo and that he would like to talk with me and that I should spend a weekend" (YR 385.2). Ames, naturally, felt abandoned. Her past commitments to Arvin could not have been more genuine or absolute.

From an institutional standpoint it was obvious that the danger inherent in Lowell's accusations entailed permanent consequences for Yaddo. Ames' administrative authority would be severely restricted. The admissions process would become standardized and remain subject to board scrutiny. Ames would no longer be allowed to extend invitations without board approval, nor was she allowed to prolong terms of residency. In short, the final result of "The Lowell Affair" was an irreversible distancing of the Trasks' intentions from Ames' guardianship. Their separation effectively ended an administration which - despite the Depression, World War, inevitable interpersonal and creative conflict - had, remarkably, kept the Trasks' vision almost wholly intact. As Ames retreated to a nursing home for a two week stay, the future of the Trasks' vision remained uncertain.

Epilogue

"Elizabeth Ames was Yaddo." – Malcolm Cowley

"The Lowell Affair" divides Yaddo's history into two parts. It identifies a moment of irrecoverable historical separation between the Trasks' vision and Yaddo's practical administration. For more than twenty-five years, Elizabeth Ames carefully guarded the Trasks' interests. When she arrived at Yaddo, the Trasks were an almost tangible presence. The mansion and its surrounding grounds were physical extensions of the society they had nurtured. Whatever aspects of their lives Ames didn't intuit, she most certainly learned though discussion with George Foster Peabody. The result was a deeply personal investment in their interests.

From an institutional perspective, Ames' investment in the Trasks meant that as late as 1949, guests at Yaddo entered a creative environment that would have been familiar to Yaddo's founders. Not only had Ames preserved the cultural values of an institution designed to be reclusive, but by 1949 she had established Yaddo as a center of intellectual and creative energy. Beginning in 1950, however, Ames' discretion was no longer the defining influence it had been before Lowell's accusations. Her investment in the Trasks would, from then forward, be subject to the evaluations of a formalized administration. Ames had effectively guided the Trasks' vision through its interaction with the Depression and World War Two. Sadly, the danger inherent in Lowell's assertions were a more powerful threat.

At the meeting of Yaddo's Board of Directors on March 26, Granville Hicks sponsored a resolution. It reads: "In view of the fact that the Corporation of Yaddo has now passed the 25th year [sic] of its existence, resolved that the directors at this time make a thorough study of the basic principles and objectives of the corporation and a re-evaluation of the administration thereof." The resolution passed unanimously. Ames' authority was subject to immediate review. A second resolution also passed unanimously. It called for a "meeting of the directors be held on April 30 at 25 Broad Street, New York City to consider a list of proposed guests for 1949; that prior to that meeting, and not later than April 15, the Executive Director circulate to all Directors the tentative list of proposed guests with comments in regard to the artistic standing and other relevant data about each proposed guest; that the Directors at the April 30th meeting decide on the grounds to be invited for the 1949 Summer Season."

The long-term consequences of Ames' loss of administrative authority were significant. Yaddo's culture was removed from the guardianship of an Executive Director who was intimately connected with its history and values. While such infringement on Ames' authority could not of course diminish the importance of the formative relationships she had already established, beginning in 1950, Ames' opportunity to encourage artistic energy was limited. The intimacies Ames shared with the likes of Newton Arvin, John Cheever, Malcolm Cowley, Carson McCullers, and Katherine Anne Porter, belong to period of Yaddo's history that ended on that morning in February 1949. As Yaddo looked forward to its second quarter century, it was obvious to

Directors like Arvin, Cowley, and Hicks that Yaddo was in many ways reinventing its culture.

Such internal pressures were amplified by a larger influence. During the early 1950s, Yaddo's reach was expanding. During the 1930s and 1940s, the guest list was often limited in size. In part this was due to economic exigencies. More broadly the guest list reflected the reclusive network of interpersonal association that shaped both Yaddo's admissions process and its environment more generally. Beginning in the mid-1950s the guest list both expanded in size and began to draw from a breadth of applicants previously unknown. As Yaddo entered its third decade, its reputation was such that it began attracting unprecedented numbers of applications. Many of these applicants had been made aware of Yaddo simply because, by 1950, Yaddo had become regarded as a prestigious opportunity. As a result, and by necessity, Yaddo's admissions, and entire administration more generally, became standardized. The days of Ames presiding over a cloistered group of advisors were over. While the continued presence of Arvin, Cowley, and Cheever provided important stability as Yaddo underwent significant alterations, increasingly such veteran guests found themselves immersed in a larger company of artists who, in general, arrived at Yaddo by means other than the established (albeit informally) custom of a confidential recommendation and insular review. In many respects, "The Lowell Affair" only accelerated a process of change that seems inevitable.

It would be wrong to assume that such alterations made Yaddo's atmosphere less conducive to artistic activity. Yaddo's record of fostering creativity transcends adjustments to its administration. Nonetheless, artists who spent time at Yaddo during

the 1930s and 1940s recognized the implications of such changes on the atmosphere they later found. This not to say that the Trasks' vision was by any means neglected. In fact, the opposite is true. At a most fundamental level, Yaddo continued to combine ascetic concentration with a leisured exchange of creative values and perhaps most important, it maintained its posture of detached seclusion. During the early 1950s, the Trasks' intentions were merely expanded to accommodate Yaddo's changing relationship with broader artistic interests and historical influences.

It may be recalled that at the beginning of her tenure, Ames wrote that "Yaddo is Yaddo and nothing more." Her intention was, of course, to call attention to Yaddo's individuality and to shield it from association with another artistic "colony" or "retreat." As Yaddo entered the second half of the twentieth century, despite its more formalized administration and expansion of its influence, Ames' assessment remained empathically true. Yaddo remained, and remains, Yaddo.

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