INHERITORS OF PROGRESS:

GLASPELL, THE UNIVERSITY, AND LIBERAL CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Advisor: Professor Edmund Epstein

This dissertation illuminates the ethics of a liberal culture in the United States as reflected in the plays and fiction of Susan Glaspell (1876 - 1948). Liberal culture flourishes in colleges and universities, and it also has a social geography associated with places such as New York and Massachusetts as well as Chicago and Iowa.

Through a close reading of Glaspell's 1921 drama *Inheritors*, this dissertation builds a deeper understanding of the ethics of liberal culture -- ways of thinking and behaving that encourage sexual freedom, that value ethnic diversity, that practice peace, that resist the degradations of free market capitalism, and that confront the legacies of European colonialism. My analysis of Glaspell's work demonstrates the resonance of these values with classical liberal political philosophy.

This study also explores ideas that emerged with these ethics, but did not gain the cultural traction of other liberal values: a biological and religious concept of progress. Glaspell's voice sounds in a chorus of reformist voices from the Progressive Era: John Dewey, Margaret Sanger, Alice Paul, Upton Sinclair, Walter Lippman and Herbert Croly. Glaspell, to a greater degree than her contemporaries, associated progress with a kind

natural religion. My study of Glaspell's work finds new ways to trace the instabilities that made this concept of progress untenable at the time, and unearths some aspects of this progress that might still be viable.

My purpose is to bring into relief the situation of liberal culture -- that it has a coherent set of ethics around which groups of people already congregate, but that such groups remain, in a sense, dispirited.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I turn to the Glaspell's work as it reflects on the idea of a university. The purpose of this conclusion is to trouble our contemporary notion of disciplinarity. Glaspell wrote about the university as the moral compass of society, but her plays and fiction were unpalatable to the twentieth-century critics who established the disciplinary boundaries of literary study. Ironically, the ethics of which Glaspell wrote are inscribed everywhere in the humanities, underlying much of our contemporary scholarship.

Acknowledgments

The beauty of acknowledgment pages is that they show the ways that the work of a dissertation, with its thousands of mostly private hours, has already been part of the shared experience of a group of people.

That shared experience began in the cramped second floor theatre office of the Metropolitan Playhouse, where, as I understand it, Michael Bloom suggested to Alex Roe that *Inheritors* be added to their 2005/6 season, the theme of which was "outsiders." I am thankful to everyone involved in the production, including director Yvonne Conybeare, the complete crew, and especially the cast -- Sue Glausen-Smith, Matthew Trumbull, David Fraioli, Tod Mason, Jeff Pagliano, Sean Dill, Samantha Needles, David Lally, Peter Judd, and Margaret Robinson.

This dissertation bears a special dedication to Margaret, with whom I have shared so much. This dissertation would have been impossible without her in many ways, including her love and support over many years. She knew Madeline Morton more intimately than I ever could. The copy of Glaspell's *Plays* that I have worked with for these five years belongs to her. She also helped me arrange staged readings of *The Verge* (in addition to readings of *Inheritors*) that were very helpful to my understanding of that difficult play. She accompanied me on the pilgrimage to Glaspell's house at 564 Commercial Street in Provincetown one night in July of 2006, before I had decided to make my study of Glaspell into a doctoral dissertation.

We were welcomed there by the Trager family, to whom I am also very grateful. Their warmth and their kindness had its part in inspiring this dissertation.

I taught *Inheritors* in this early phase before I decided it was a dissertation topic. I am grateful to my students in American Literature at Yeshiva College. Thanks are also due to Dr. Joanne Jacobson for helping to promote a reading of *Inheritors* on the Yeshiva College campus.

Dr. Nikhil Bilwakesh, now at the University of Alabama, my friend and colleague at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, took an interest in Glaspell at this early time. He saw in *Inheritors* some of what I saw and saw some other things in the play that I didn't. Nikhil shares the credit for at least one or two of the discoveries about the play presented herein. He helped me to see the importance of the work I was doing when he brought me to present to his class at the Fashion Institute of Technology, SUNY. Nikhil would later bring me into the dissertation writing group begun by Dr. Frank Crocco, now at BMCC. Many thanks to Frank and to the other members of the group, who read many drafts and provided thoughtful, constructive criticism, including Dr. Brooks Hefner now at James Madison University, James Hoff, Anton Borst, and Nicholas Marino.

I began to bring my work on Glaspell to the faculty at the Graduate Center in the Spring of 2006 and by the Fall was proposing this work as a doctoral dissertation. I am extremely grateful to my dissertation committee, Edmund Epstein, Joan Richardson, and Rachel Brownstein. I thank Dr. Epstein for always believing in my work, and for always giving it his immediate and careful attention. I thank Dr. Brownstein for reading *Fidelity* when I leant her my copy, and for always challenging me to sharpen and to clarify. I thank Dr. Richardson, whose work was an inspiration for this project, whose brilliance has always staggered me, and who contributed much to my own understanding of what I

have here undertaken. Throughout the process, this committee shaped this "outsider" project into meaningful doctoral research. I am also grateful to everyone on the faculty who listened, helped and, critiqued this project, including Dr. Jacqueline Di Salvo, Dr. David Savran, Dr. Wayne Koestenbaum, and Dr. Steven Kruger. I would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Josh Wilner for all his guidance over the years.

I am hugely indebted to the Susan Glaspell Society. It was so gratifying after a year or more of working in this vein to meet other people who had read as much of Susan Glaspell's work as I had. The society has given me many opportunities to present my research and to try out some of my other talents. Thanks are due to all of the members of the society, including Dr. Cheryl Black, Dr. Drew Eisenhauer and Dr. Noelia Hernando Real. I must thank Dr. Marcia Noe, Dr. Linda Ben-Zvi, and Dr. Barbara Ozieblo for their biographies on Glaspell as well as their collegiality. Special thanks are due to Dr. Martha Carpentier of Seton Hall University, Dr. Mary Papke of the University of Tennessee, and Dr. J. Ellen Gainor of Cornell. They answered emails from me with questions, took my phone calls, met with me to discuss my research, read whatever pages I sent them, and provided some much appreciated professional mentoring.

Dr. Todd Barnes, now at Ramapo College of New Jersey, has been a colleague and a devoted friend. This project has benefited from his powerful gifts as a scholar and teacher, as well his rigorous training in rhetoric and post-structural theory. The greatness of his intellect is matched only by the valor of his heart.

My deep love and gratitude go to Susan and Leonard Feinstein. It is an honor to think of this dissertation as a small piece of the legacy of their patronage of culture, the arts and sciences. To my parents, Hank Winetsky and Dr. Carol S. Winetsky, I can only

begin to express my gratitude and love. This dissertation is also dedicated to them. They taught me many of the values that become the subjects of this study -- especially the value of education. They helped in any way they could and they continually egged me on towards completion. I also acknowledge my brother, Daniel Winetsky, who remains an inspiration.

There are many others who have shared in the process of putting together this research and who deserve mention here. I thank W. B. Robinson and Dr. Sharon Robinson of Russell Sage College for their love and support. I thank Kheir Fakhreldin, Kate McConnell, Beth Carvey of the Hauberg Museum at Black Hawk State Historic Site, Dianne Schinnerer and Dr. Brenda Murphy of the Eugene O'Neill Society, Dr. DeAnna Toten Beard of Baylor University, Dr. Carolyn Roark, Dr. Domnica Radulescu at Washington and Lee University, Dr. David Roessell and Tom Papademetriou of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey Interdisciplinary Center for Hellenic Studies, and Dr. Michael Bennett of the Radical Caucus of the MLA. I would also like to thank the following people at CUNY for their support: Dr. Mark Noonan, Dr. James Wilson, Dr. Mikhail Gersovich, Suzanne Epstein, and Dr. Catherine Lavender. Thank you to the faculty in the English Department at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Last but not least, I thank Leigh Bowman for her true love and and for putting up with me in the sharpest straits of the completion of this work.

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Introduction

> The largeness of nature of the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen.
> - Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

> God damn us if we sit here rich and fat and forget man's in the makin'.
> - Silas Morton in *Inheritors*

I was first exposed to the work of Susan Glaspell in November of 2005, when the Metropolitan Playhouse in New York City revived her 1921 drama *Inheritors*. I soon discovered that Glaspell's contribution to American arts and letters was prodigious, but had been forgotten. In the 1920s and 30s, Glaspell was known as one of the most significant dramatists in the United States, having won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1931. She served as the Midwest Bureau Director of Federal Theatre Project of the Works Progress Administration. She was also a bestselling novelist. She wrote nine novels between 1909 and 1945. These were widely reviewed and discussed. One was adapted into a film by Paramount Pictures.[1] Scholarly interest in Glaspell was budding in 2005, but the field was still wide open. Almost nothing had been written about her between her death in 1948 and the early 1980s when feminist scholars began a recuperation of her work.

Whenever we encounter a writer whom literary scholarship had so conspicuously forgotten, we are forced to confront questions about the nature of literature and its study in the academy. This is all the more true of Glaspell for whom the university was a favorite subject, and whose work often contains theorizing of literature. In Glaspell's early writing, literature is seen as a means of moral uplift; even popular literature serves this function. The university is seen as the place where different ways of knowing come

together to serve as the spiritual and moral compass of society. In her late writing, this vision has withered: popular literature still provides its readers with some spiritual contemplation, but the university and intellectual discourse fails at this task. This pattern of belief and disillusionment is seen in its most intense form in *Inheritors*, which is forms central pivot of Glaspell's career. This dissertation examines that pattern, with *Inheritors* at the center, putting into play the question of whether literature and the university provide moral leadership.

The play's suggestion that the university has a role to play as the moral compass of society was especially appealing in 2005, when moral outrage at the United States and its conduct of the "War on Terror" ran high in universities -- and not only in universities.

This moral outrage about an American war was the salient theme, more than that of the university, for audiences of the Metropolitan Playhouse production. Reviews of the performance invariably began with reference to contemporary events.[2] Audiences heard a blunt reverberation of the jingoism of the Iraq War in the play's depiction of the "Americanism" of the First World War. The political repression and xenophobia in the play were eerily familiar. The reference in *Inheritors* to the Espionage Act of 1917 did not need explanation to an audience familiar with the Patriot Act of 2001.

Inheritors is a heroic drama. At the end, the heroine, 21-year-old undergraduate, Madeline Morton, accepts imprisonment under the Espionage Act rather than renounce her principles. She makes a stand for the belief that conscientious objectors to the war should be protected not imprisoned and for the belief that foreign students should not only be welcome in the United States but also be entitled to demonstrate for freedom in

their homelands. *Inheritors* spoke to the moral outrage of the audience in 2005 as in 1921, and it reminded us that belief in democratic principles was its source.

Exploring the ways that *Inheritors* links ethics to democratic principles is another part of the work of this dissertation. These ethics are shared by downtown theatre audiences in New York City, both in Glaspell's time and in our own. They are commonly shared in colleges and universities. These are the ethics of a liberal culture. The practice of liberal culture takes the form of many ways of thinking and behaving. I identify five broad categories of thought in liberal culture, ways of thinking and behaving (1) that encourage sexual freedom, (2) that value ethnic diversity, (3) that confront the legacies of the colonialism, (4) that resist the dehumanizing effects of unbridled capitalism, and (5) that practice peace.

This word "liberal" is a curious one. If we can imagine liberals as a cultural group, it is has only become possible to do so in the last ten or twenty years -- if not more recently. I can foresee the objections that such a label is presentist, especially as regards the history of Glaspell's time. I can also foresee the objection that "liberal" is traditionally associated with free-market ideology, whereas the term "left" would be more appropriate for Marxist ideas. (These objections are taken up more throughly in Chapter 2.) However, in the contemporary culture of the United States, such distinctions are seldom recognized. Even though these contemporary and colloquial uses of liberal inform my study, I use the term with full historical sensitivity. The liberal thought of John Dewey forms an interesting contemporary point of comparison for Glaspell. I trace the heritage of my five ethics in the classical liberal political theory of Locke, Smith, Rousseau, Jefferson, Mill and Thoreau. Equally, I am interested in the oldest definitions of the

"liberal," which date back to the universities of the late middle-ages. In this case, the liberal arts were the pursuits worthy of free men. It was this definition, along with the conventional meaning of "generosity," that gave rise to the use of the word as label for certain political opinions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The oldest uses of the word still resonate with the contemporary cultural sense of liberal in the United States, in which the academy, and especially disciplines in the liberal arts, is strongly associated with liberal culture.

The idea of a liberal culture forms backdrop of this study. At the center of this study are these ethics, as exemplified in Glaspell's work. This dissertation also studies two intimately related aspects of the liberal culture of the Progressive era that no longer hold firm in the liberal culture of today: belief in nationalism, and the belief in natural progress.

When watching *Inheritors* at the Metropolitan Playhouse, I was struck by the play's faith in progress and its crucial reference to Darwin as part of a discussion in the first act about the founding of a college. This reference to Darwin was part of a complete vision of evolutionary social change, much of it having little to do with the ideas of Charles Darwin himself. Evolutionary ideas were everywhere in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, suggesting that social progress was part of a larger biological mandate. Human history, in this way of thinking, operates within natural history and is governed by its same laws. For Glaspell, these ideas of evolution had a religious significance, and we see in *Inheritors* some suggestion of the idea of a natural religion. Glaspell's take on these developments was unique, but she was by no means alone in considering these developments in natural science as a possible new religion. For

example, Henry Adams described a set of ideas on which Glaspell also drew when he wrote of "the great word Evolution [making] a new religion of history."[3] This progressive concept of history is common among many of Glaspell's contemporaries, including John Dewey, Margaret Sanger, Alice Paul, among others. I will also explore the wider intellectual history of these ideas from Jean Baptiste Lamarck to Henri Bergson.

However, just as *Inheritors* is the pinnacle of Glaspell's belief in the university as a moral compass for society, it is also the pinnacle of her faith in a natural religion of progress. In *Inheritors* and the play Glaspell wrote immediately afterwards, *The Verge* (1921), we see that she begins to discover some of the conceptual problems with biologically mandated progress. This dissertation examines Glaspell's idea of progress as natural religion very closely, with the aim of finding some aspects of it that might be salvaged. The fact that faith in progress has been destabilized means that today's liberal culture is dispirited.

We are the inheritors of this idea of progress, even if it is not intact. The political theorist Wendy Brown has written about how an attachment to the idea of progress lingers in the United States, even while the original ground upon which it was built has fallen away.[4] In her 2001 book *Politics Out of History*, Brown writes, "The consequence of living these attachments [to ideas of of progress and to ideas of universal subject] as ungrievable losses -- ungrievable because they are not fully avowed as attachments and hence are unable to be claimed as losses -- is theoretical impotence as well as a reproachful political moralism." Brown considers this political moralism to be the "characteristic political discourse of our time," and she considers it to be the opposite of

real morality (21). Moralism, she writes, is "a remnant of a discourse whose heritage and legitimacy it claims while in fact inverting that discourse's sense and sensibility." This recalls Orwell's description in "Politics and the English Language" of what he calls the "meaningless words" of political rhetoric. For example, the way the word "freedom" was frequently invoked to defend the invasion of Iraq claims the legitimacy of classical liberal principles to mask imperialism. Alternately, a description of President George W. Bush as a "fascist" -- something heard occasionally in New York in 2005 -- equally exemplifies the meaningless words of today's moralistic political discourse. Brown's insight is that both of these forms of moralism are the result of the same collapse of the ideas of progress upon which liberal democracy was founded.

The fissures in U.S. society that result from differing reactions to the collapse of the ideas of natural progress have made it possible to discuss the features of a liberal culture. Within liberal culture, there is a coherent system of descriptive ethics that derive from classical liberalism; paradoxically, there is also a deep mistrust anything approaching a codifying system or a principle of allegiance. There is another American culture in which allegiance and normative ethics are valued. Liberal culture is quick to critique the larger culture of the United States with its monstrous excesses of consumption -- a critique framed quite poignantly in Glaspell's work. Outside of liberal culture, the word liberal is a almost pejorative term for a person exhibiting cultural elitism. This use of the word seeks portray liberal culture as not only elitist but also weak and foreign, while portraying the the more foundationalist set of values as populist and more authentically American.[5] The problem with this new meaning is that it discards history and the importance of liberal principles in shaping American democracy. Rather

than resisting this new colloquial meaning, it should be the responsibility of higher education to reclaim the legitimacy of the discourse.

Some scholars have been attempting to do just this, most notably the late Richard Rorty. In his 1998 book *Achieving Our Countr*y, Rorty writes about the "cultural Left" (76). Rorty identifies John Dewey and William James as proponents of a kind of "American civic religion," and he believes that higher education has a unique role to play in the maintenance of such a faith. Rorty's concept of the cultural left has built into it a critique of the culture of the academy. He writes, "the academic Left has no projects to propose to America, no vision of a country to be achieved... The American civic religion seems to them a narrow-minded and obsolete nationalism" (15). Rorty is in search of a literature for his American civic religion, but, beyond the philosophers Dewey and James, the poet Walt Whitman, and the novelist James Baldwin, he does not have too many sources to draw upon. Although not following Rorty to the extreme of many of his critiques of the "cultural Left," this study is broadly sympathetic with his aims, and adds Glaspell's plays and fiction to this literature.

Whatever we think of Rorty's critiques, we cannot fault him for trying to speak to the culture of the university. In 2005, just a few months before *Inheritors* opened, a study titled "Politics and Professional Advancement among College Faculty" was published in the political science journal *The Forum*.[6] The study claimed to measure "ideological homogeneity" in American higher education with a survey of faculty from colleges and universities across the United States. It found that most college professors self-identify as politically "liberal," and that they usually vote for Democrats. Analysis of the data gathered suggested that women and practicing Christians were underrepresented in

faculties at top schools. The authors conclude that hiring discrimination was possible and needed further study. I do not support the conclusions of this study, and I am not concerned here with quantitative study of the contemporary American professoriate. However, I think the existence of this study indicates a failure of discourses in the humanities to address their own cultural and ethical dimension. It is also important to see the claim that Christians are underrepresented in higher education as part of a tradition of critique of higher education that dates back to 1951 when William F. Buckley published *God and Man at Yale*.

This dissertation on Glaspell addresses this situation in several ways. *Inheritors*, with its story of the founding of an American college in 1879 and its many references to Matthew Arnold, reminds us of a time when there was little question about the function of literature to instruct in ethics and to build up a national culture.[7] Glaspell's investment in the religious possibilities of science offers a curious kind of critique of -- or perhaps even a kind of counter-history to -- the ascendency of secular-scientific discourse over religion within the academy.[8] The full picture of Glaspell's career gives us a unique perspective on the emergence of secularity: her early work had imagined a more fully heterodox university would replace a Christian one, and that the broader American culture would follow suit. She had the sense that matters of faith would continue to be open to discussion in American society -- and not only Christian faith but a faith informed by Christianity, science, and the world's other religions. Her later work, on the other hand, mourns that faith has become such a private matter, one largely ignored by liberal discourse. This idea of a whole human subject will sometimes be referred to in this dissertation as "humanism." We cannot see the full pivot of her thinking on humanism in

Inheritors alone, although *Inheritors* again is pivotal. *Inheritors* when read in comparison to her second play of 1921, *The Verge*, reveals much about the history of these ideas.

In order to bring into relief this full picture of her career, this dissertation is organized into four chapters and a conclusion. I will begin with a short chapter giving the history of Glaspell's early career and placing it in the context of the Progressive Era. This first chapter, entitled "From Davenport to Greenwich Village," describes Glaspell's increasing investment in the possibilities for social and cultural change. It tells the story of why the writer was ready to confront the reality of these social possibilities directly in her two plays of 1921. Then, I will proceed with close readings of the plays. These close readings are undertaken in three chapters: Chapter 2 examines a spectrum of ethical ideas in *Inheritors* that are typical of liberal culture in the United States. Chapter 3 discusses the idea of "aspiration" that Glaspell develops in *Inheritors* with its implicit faith in a natural religion of progress. The idea aspiration culminates Glaspell's long-standing interest in a religious interpretation of scientific ideas, and it takes on the significance of many of the social possibilities she felt herself a part of. Working out these ideas so completely in *Inheritors*, she would turn away from them with some violence in *The Verge*. This turning away from aspiration the subject of Chapter 4, "The Climactic Verge and the Exhaustion with Change." Finally, in the conclusion, I back up to show how the two plays of 1921 fit into Glaspell's entire career, and raise the question of Glaspell's theory of literature and changing relationship to the university.

That the year 1921 should be so crucial to Glaspell's thinking on these matters is not surprising. The collapse of ideals that coincided with the end of the First World War is a widely written about cultural phenomenon. Floyd Dell, a close friend of Glaspell's, associates the collapse ideals with Armistice, writing in 1926 that "The 'peace' has been indeed, even more than the war, a disillusionment" (*Intellectual Vagabondage*, 240). The historian Arthur Wertheim dates the end of what he calls the New York Little Renaissance, which includes Glaspell and her associates, to the end of 1917 (224). Michael North describes the cataclysm in more epistemological terms in his book *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern,* which contains no mention of Glaspell. In his discussion of Ludwig Wittgenstein, North describes an epistemological inversion that he believes is typical of literary modernism, saying "These writers... were part of a great project that had turned itself inside out. The project of universal understanding, universal comprehension ... gave birth to its opposite, a sense of contextual particularity so strong it would seem to make intersubjective understanding into a kind of miracle" (62). The project of universal understanding and its inversion are greatly implicated in both Glaspell's observation of a liberal tradition in the United States, and her "religious feeling" for natural science.[9] The tension of Glaspell's writing, tending towards human universals and at the same time encountering the problems with the universally human, becomes most fraught at this time.

Some scholars have already recognized this significance of Glaspell's career. Kristina Hinz-Bode in an essay entitled "Susan Glaspell and the Epistemological Crisis of Modernity," reckons "Glaspell's own view of the connection between life and art and her

lifelong affirmation of the validity of the human search for truth" (90). Hinz-Bode identifies Glaspell's changing strategies for dealing with the epistemological crisis of modernity between her early and her late novels. My dissertation supports Hinz-Bode's interpretation of Glaspell's career with "the epistemological crisis of modernity" as a defining feature. What is offered here is a much more sustained and engaged study of Glaspell's relationship to this epistemological crisis -- one that presents her two major works from 1921 as central to this understanding of Glaspell, and that suggests a much wider significance for Glaspell in our understanding of the role of higher education in American culture.

This dissertation also follows closely on the work of another Glaspell scholar, Mary Papke, who has begun to trace the intellectual currents of both liberal and evolutionary ideas in Glaspell's work, including *Inheritors* and *The Verge*. Papke has yet to offer the kind of deep and definitive treatment that these subjects demand. This study follows Papke to the end of her path, and then forges forward from there.

One of the reason for the singular focus on Glaspell and on *Inheritors* in particular this dissertation is to recognize Glaspell as a major writer -- a recognition that had some acceptance in her own time, until about the middle of her career in the early 1930s. While on the one hand there were critics such as Ludwig Lewisohn who praised Glaspell's plays as "the first American plays that belonged to dramatic literature and not to the false and tawdry artifice of the uncreative theatre," there was, on the other hand, the opinion most vociferously put forth by Brooks Atkinson, that Glaspell was less of a playwright than a writer of women's fiction.[10] An unfavorable view of Glaspell's work took hold in

intellectual circles of the 1930s, and by the time she died in July of 1948, her work was not very seriously regarded. Indeed, although *The New York Times* obituary ran with the headline, "Noted Playwright," the article leads with the detail that Glaspell "was credited with giving Eugene O'Neill his start in the theatre." It was this accomplishment -- really none of her own -- for which she would be remembered, if she was remembered at all, for the next forty to fifty years. Between 1948 and 1980, there was only one scholarly book published about Susan Glaspell, Waterman's *Susan Glaspell*, part of the Twayne's United States Author series. This book assessed Glaspell as a "minor writer."[11]

Recent scholars of Glaspell have done much to explain this unfavorable view of Glaspell. In short, "gender-biased marginalization," as Martha Carpentier has argued, is perhaps the most significant factor (2). Veronica Makowsky points out "Glaspell's work was facilitated by two nineteenth century American literary traditions that were not prized by the pessimistic and elitist modernists, namely, transcendentalism and domestic fiction" (7).[12]

For the same reasons that Glaspell herself came to see the limitations of the ideals that had animated her early work, the standards of literary criticism that succeeded the period of her greatest productivity could not see Glaspell's work as relevant. This sense of loss is reflected in the stories of the title characters of her late novels, *Norma Ashe* (1942) and *Judd Rankin's Daughter* (1945). Norma Ashe gave up a graduate education for marriage, and Frances Mitchell negotiates between the conflicting literary productions of her father who is an author, and her husband who is a critic.

Since 1980, Glaspell has gained ground. Marcia Noe wrote the first critical biography of Glaspell, published in 1983. Christopher Bigsby, a leading theatre historian,

noted in 1987 that Glaspell "chanced more than most of her contemporaries and achieved more than many of them" and that she wrote "some of the most original plays ever to have come out of America" (30). Veronica Makowsky, in 1993, positions Glaspell as a voice for a century of American women, an assessment of Glaspell's significance that was underscored more recently when, in 2009, Elaine Showalter named her comprehensive study of American Women Writers after Glaspell's short-story, "A Jury of Her Peers." In the interim between Makowky's book and Showalter's, scholarly interest in Glaspell mushroomed significantly.

These studies tell us a great deal about Glaspell. J. Ellen Gainor has thoroughly studied the context of all of Glaspell's plays. Martha Carpentier has recuperated Glaspell's major novels, arguing that such works as *Fidelity* and *Fugitive's Return* (1929) are worthy of any study of the modern novel. In addition to Noe's, two additional, remarkably thorough biographies of Glaspell have been released, one by Barbara Ozieblo and one by Linda Ben-Zvi. Articles on Glaspell's plays and fiction appear regularly in scholarly journals in the fields of Modern Literature, Women's Studies, Theatre Studies, and even Legal Studies. On this body of knowledge, much of the present study is built.

The feminist orientation of much of Glaspell scholarship has resulted in the frequent inclusion in Literature curricula of a pair of works, the short-story "A Jury of Her Peers" and the one-act play *Trifles*. Both of these are based on the Hossack Murder Trial of 1901, which Glaspell witnessed on reported on for *The Des Moines Daily News*, and which are about a woman accused of killing her husband. These are excellent works and worthy of study.

However, by the claims of Glaspell's own work, she clearly had a concept of "Literature" with a capital-L. (This is discussed in more detail in the Conclusion.) Without supporting the claims of legitimacy of a Great Works curriculum, I nonetheless feel that the sustained treatment of *Inheritors* presented in this study demonstrates implicitly that it is a great work of literature, both formally and in terms of the way that so much of what matters in the traditions of Western culture are explored, weighed, and evaluated in the drama.

Finally, before I commence with the study, I offer a word or two on the chosen method. The close readings at the center of this dissertation are intended for readers who are not familiar with plays at issue. Thus, Chapters 2 and 4 begin with synopses of *Inheritors* and *The Verge*, respectively. These readings proceed with great attention to plot and character. The attention paid to character in particular has a very specific purpose, in terms of the aims of this study to illuminate an ethics. Wayne Booth, in his defense of ethical criticism, *The Company We Keep* (1988), points out the interrelation between ethos, ethics, and character.[13] Glaspell, as a moral writer, has a deep investment in character as the locus of ideas.

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[1] The film was titled *Right to Love* (Internet Movie Database.)

[2] See Victor Gluck, "Inheritors" (*Backstage.com,* November 22, 2005) and Martin Denton, "Inheritors" (*NYTheatre.com,* November 19, 2005).

[3] The precise words from *The Education of Henry Adams* are "The great word Evolution had not yet, in 1860, made a new religion of history..." (91). Although it is difficult to determine just how much irony or overstatement, which are both constant feature of Adams' prose, play into Adams' description of a "new religion," he nonetheless attests to the fervor with which such ideas were discussed in this period.

[4] For Brown's description of the foundational collapse of ideas of progress see pages 6-7.

[5] My attention was drawn to this problem by Thomas Frank's 2004 book *What's the Matter with Kansas?*. In that Frank's book about the loss of certain kind of Midwestern populism, *Inheritors* with its midwestern setting spoke directly to this problem.

[6] Stanley Rothman, et al, *The Forum* 3:2 March 2005. This study was only one small volley in a larger conflict over the politics of the academy at the time. David Horowitz had begun a campaign against "political bias" in academia the previous year -- a campaign that would culminate in his 2006 book *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America*. On the other side, professors such as Michael Bérubé published *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts?: Classroom Politics and "Bias" in Higher Education*.

[7] *Inheritors* is, I believe, the only play in the history of American drama to quote Matthew Arnold three times.

[8] The shift from from a religious discourse to a secular-scientific discourse, although occurring slowly over a period of several hundred years, was cemented in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, as documented by George S. Marsden in *The Soul of the University.*

[9] "Religious feeling" is Glaspell's own phrase; it comes from her novel *The Visioning* (1911). When the heroine, Katherine Wayneworth Jones, learns of Darwin's theory of evolution, the theory is said to have "brought her the first purely religious feeling she had ever known" (239). My sense is that some version of this feeling must have been known to Glaspell.

[10] This passage from Lewisohn's *Expression in America* (1932) is quoted in Bigsby's Introduction to Glaspell's *Plays* (28). Atkinson's piece was titled "Pulitzer Laurels: Alison's House as the Most Unsatisfactory Dramatic Award Made During the Past Few Years." *New York Times* 10 May 1931.

[11] Arthur E. Waterman, *Susan Glaspell* (1966). Waterman's assessment of Glaspell is thoroughly refuted by Carpentier (*Major Novels*, 4).

[12] It was these aspects of Glaspell's work that were most noticeable to taste-makers such as Edmund Wilson, who was personally acquainted with Glaspell and even rented her house for a few summers on Commercial Street in Provincetown (Ben-Zvi, 322-3). Had Wilson focused on *Inheritors* and *The Verge*, he might have seen Glaspell as an important figure based on his standard, articulated in *Axel's Castle*, that "The literary history of our time is to a great extent that of the development of Symbolism [as in *The Verge*] and its fusion or conflict with Naturalism [as in *Inheritors*]" (25). However, by 1930, the time of *Axel's Castle*, Glaspell's play *Allison's House* was playing at the Civic Repertory theatre; this play, with its setting on the last day of the nineteenth century and its plot based on the story of the family's posthumous unearthing of Emily Dickinson poetry, most embodies a kind of nostalgia for transcendentalism and a cult of domesticity.

[13] Booth is quoted more extensively in the context of the close reading of *Inheritors*. (see Chapter 2 note 4).

Chapter 1

From Davenport to Greenwich Village

> Just a little way back -- anything may have been. What happened?
> - Madeline Morton in *Inheritors*

Susan Glaspell was born in Davenport, Iowa in 1876. Being born in this place at this time into a family of Protestant New England heritage, Glaspell found herself in a world of enormous possibility. This sense of possibility would become Glaspell's great subject -- a theme she would write about again and again in her plays, short stories, and novels. One of the defining features of possibility is its illusiveness, its lack of resolution. To a young Glaspell, full of idealism, the possibilities for reforming American culture seemed limitless, and her own power to influence this reform palpable. The sheer number of social institutions and the varieties of specialized knowledge that emerged as Glaspell came of age is evidence of the breadth of possibility and the reality of change in the Progressive era. However, the possibilities for a new culture were not limitless. Although far reaching and complex, the changes in ideas had a definite character. Glaspell came to write of these changes with power and insight. Her writing also registers an acute sense of loss in realizing the limits of possibility.

To a great extent, the cultural possibilities Glaspell would speak for were the possibilities of the Midwest. While living and writing in Chicago and Davenport, Glaspell found ways to write about a new American culture as it was taking shape. When she moved East in 1913, she brought this sense of possibility with her, and found it reflected everywhere in Greenwich Village and in Provincetown, Massachusetts. These places gave Glaspell an opportunity to make real the sense of possibility she had always

felt. If Glaspell's sense of limitless possibility grew out of the Midwest, it was on a stage on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village that she discovered its limits.[1] This movement is tracked by the two different settings of her plays from 1921 -- *Inheritors* being set in the Midwest, and *The Verge* being set in New England. In order to understand the full meaning of Glaspell's works of 1921, we must understand the social, cultural, and philosophical pressures that brought the writer to the theatre and that then brought her to abandon it.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Sections I, II, III, and V depict the cultural environment in which Glaspell lived and in which she began to write. Sections IV and VI focus on Glaspell's work and the social pressures that shaped it.

I. Early Life in Davenport

Glaspell's world in Davenport in the 1880s and 90s was genteel. Davenport was thriving. Although her parents struggled financially, Glaspell came from a privileged class. As a child, she accompanied her mother and grandmother to worship at the First Christian Church where her great-grandfather had been in the vestry.[2]

Upon coming of age, Glaspell found opportunities to begin to put her talent and intelligence to work. When she graduated from high school, she landed a position at a local paper, the *Davenport Weekly Outlook*, published on Saturdays. Glaspell was the society editor. With this post, Glaspell began to critique social customs in a modest way that was acceptable to the paper's polite readers. She got an income by it. At eighteen years old, prior to her college education, young Susan Glaspell began to carve a niche for

herself in society by showing it in a way as to change it. She was a voice of new ideas in a culture hungry for reform.

Ben-Zvi provides a thorough description of Glaspell's weekly contributions to the *Outlook*. This description not only reveal something of how Glaspell positioned herself as both a social insider and a social critic, but they also bring into relief the origins of Glaspell's own project for cultural reform. Ben-Zvi describes the "odd, two-part structure" of the articles:

> The first section was a series of ... vignettes on a wide range of issues... such as the debate over euthanasia or the introduction of private kindergarten, to the socialist agenda, or even the philosophy of Emerson... More often they described a specific concern of what Susan called Davenport's "upper ten" [i.e., prominent denizens]. The tone is usually sarcastic, taking obvious joy in disclosing the silly customs she observes around her, positioning herself outside the circle of Davenport "high society"... Immediately following these general topics, she was called upon to report on what this same Davenport society actually busied itself with during the past week. A column about parties... a description of the Library Ball... (30)

Euthanasia, private kindergarten, the socialist agenda, the philosophy of Emerson -- these topics reflect the kinds of interest in ethics, applied science, education, politics, and deeper spiritual questions that were typical of the time and place. Although resistant to change in ways that Glaspell would later discover, the genteel society of Davenport was in some ways socially conscious. Causes were in style. In this atmosphere, Glaspell's vision of a new culture took shape. For Glaspell, cultural reinvention meant helping a society to live up to its potential. The land of the American Middle West was *terra nova*. Glaspell's great-grandfather, the one who had been in the vestry of her church, had been among the first people of European descent to inhabit the area. The legend of pioneer life

loomed over Davenport society, and, if this society was trying to improve itself, the improvement was a continuation of the cultural habits and practices that built an American society where before there had been none.

One of the consistent themes of Glaspell's work is not only the cultural possibilities of American life, but also a sense of debt to the nations that were lost in the project of the New World. This latter sense may also have emerged out of the social consciousness of the local gentry -- not in Davenport, but in neighboring Rock Island, Illinois. One of the central squares in Rock Island was being renovated in 1892, part of a larger wave of park construction that swept across the United States at the time. The new Spencer Square would prominently display a statue of Black Hawk, the Chief of the Sauk and Fox tribes, who had led his forces against the U.S. Army in the War of 1832.[3] Glaspell, too, would look to Black Hawk in *Inheritors*, as she wrestled the rest of her life with the meaning of the dispossession of the American Indian. The erection of this statue is evidence of the pressure this culture felt to live up to what Herbert Croly would later call "the promise of American life."

It was a time when people believed in their power to make improvements such the renovation of Spencer Square, but this belief was made all the more necessary by a deep reservoir of doubt beneath the surface. Lears describes this predicament well in *No Place of Grace*, "Despite the Promethean optimism of the official culture, a sense of human finitude persisted among the more comfortably situated... An entire range of experience lay beyond the boundaries of official optimism" (4). It was this range of experience that Glaspell would discover in her writing.

By the time she moved East in 1913, Glaspell came to see that so many new ideas would not take hold in Davenport. She continued to feel the sense of promise of the West, while the bases of that promise were increasingly called into question, and while the responsibility of that promise grew increasingly burdensome.

II. Iowa Progressivism

The term "progressive," in its broadest sense, might describe any attitude or action that questions existing institutional practices and that looks to new ideas as a means of reforming institutions. There could be any number of progressivisms, as many as there would be cultures eager to transform themselves.

The wave of progressivism that spread across the United States in Glaspell's time is often associated with legal and political reforms, such as trust-busting, the Pure Food and Drug Act, and the wave of constitutional amendments that were passed during Woodrow Wilson's presidency. Or, this progressivism is associated with the birth of social work and the applied social sciences. If women are placed at the center of this story, it is such figures as Jane Addams or Margaret Sanger who brought their education and their privilege into contact with the problems of urban poverty, and tried to devise rational solutions.

However, the particular climate of progressivism that Glaspell encountered in Iowa was as much about moral reform as about any political or social reform. It was driven largely by the clergy and the professoriate at colleges with religious affiliations.

These are the "teachers and preachers" to whom Glaspell will refer pointedly in *The Verge* and repeatedly throughout her oeuvre.

To describe the scene of Glaspell's early productivity, Crunden's definition of progressivism is germane. Crunden writes:

> [P]rogressivism was a climate of creativity within which writers, artists, politicians, and thinkers functioned. Progressives shared no platform, nor were they members of a single movement. In general they shared moral values and agreed that America needed a spiritual reformation to fulfill God's plan for democracy in the New World. (*ix*)

By Crunden's definition, Glaspell might well be considered a "progressive," even though she ends in critiquing Progressive ideas. In this climate of creativity, Glaspell early on saw her writing as involved in a spiritual, moral, and cultural reformation.

As a description not only of Glaspell's work but also of most conventional definitions of progressivism, Crunden's phrase "God's plan for democracy in the New World" must be understood loosely. The phrase makes sense in the context of Crunden's argument about this particular time and place. Crunden argues that "religion provided the central motivating force for adventurous thinking, but the subsequent secularization of modern culture has obscured the importance of religion in forming the minds of even the most secular thinkers" (40). By the time the progressivism that began in the 1880s had exhausted itself, say, around 1921, it had wrought changes that obscured its origins. In many ways, the history of the American Progressive Era of 1880 to 1920 is a story of the emergence of a new secularity in knowledge and in morals.

However, in the 1880s and 90s and especially in Iowa, many writers and thinkers saw themselves as working for exactly that goal of God's plan for democracy. The social

gospel movement flourished in Iowa at this time, bringing together religion and politics. Among the most notable figures of the movement was George D. Herron, a Congregationalist minister and a Professor of Applied Christianity at Iowa College (now Grinnell). Herron preached that capitalism with its principle of self-interest was inimical to true Christianity, and that self-sacrifice in the imitation of Christ ought to be the moral compass of American life. Although widely viewed as radical, Herron's message became more broadly appealing at a time, especially after the Panic of 1893, when people were angry at the greedy excesses of bankers and railroad tycoons and were turning increasingly to the Populist Party.[4] Where Glaspell stood in these politics is hardly relevant. We can find no direct reference to Herron in her writings. However, the influence of Herron's kind of Christianity is everywhere in Glaspell's work, particularly the moral imperative of self-sacrifice. In Glaspell's work, the relation of this morality to Christ is being constantly re-negotiated and re-figured.

Although the social gospel movement shaped Glaspell's thinking, Herron is probably not the teacher and preacher that Glaspell would imagine when later making reference to such figures in her novels and plays. Rather, Glaspell probably had in mind a significantly less radical figure, George Thomas Carpenter. Carpenter was a minister in the Church of Christ, and one of the founders and intellectual leaders of Drake University, where Glaspell would enroll in 1897.[5]

III. Drake University Before 1900

One of the pivotal questions of Glaspell's entire career as playwright and fiction writer is whether the institutions of higher education can provide the larger body of

society with an ethical compass. No doubt Glaspell's time at Drake University in the eighteen-nineties informs her thinking on this matter.

Glaspell was interested in addressing the challenges that empirical science posed to Christian belief. Latent in this attempt was the realization was of a kind of cultural and epistemological pluralism. Yet, this would not come out until the Provincetown Players years. She encountered this attempt at Drake.

A look at the figure of George Thomas Carpenter shows how these ideas would dominate the intellectual atmosphere at Drake. Although Carpenter left few published papers, a picture of him emerges from various sources from different historical periods with varying agendas. A church leader, Carpenter is praised in *Iowa Pulpit of the Church of Christ* (1884) as a "a successful proclaimer of the Word" (63). His leadership of the seminary at Drake is noted in *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (1911). According to the article in this encyclopedia, Carpenter shaped the seminary at Drake as one that "strives to reconstruct the old lines of thought with the purpose of eliminating error and incorporating new truth" (Haggard, 355). This "new truth" meant the kind that was empirically derived. In a history of the college written by one of its professors, Ritchey chronicles a long history of reverence for Locke in the Church of Christ (17).

Ritchey, writing in 1956, wrote that Carpenter in the 1880s was "stirred by the first phases of American pragmatism" (67). Ritchey does not support the claim with much evidence, or provide any philosophical analysis. For instance, he has no account of Carpenter's making mention of C.S. Pierce's "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." Ritchey only adds that Carpenter did not go as far as John Dewey in creating a curriculum that

was based on individual learning (68). The Dewey reference may seem obvious, given the renown of Dewey at the time Ritchey was writing, Unsupported, the reference may also seem inexact. However, we should not so quickly dismiss it. What these accounts suggest is that Carpenter wanted to embrace all of the emerging sciences and to have them co-exist in the university with a education in the Church of Christ. The environment at Drake shaped Glaspell's interest in reconciling scientific, classical, Christian, and non-western ways of knowing. .

Moreover, Carpenter, like many educated people trying to strike a balance between empirical science and Protestant theology, would have been interested in neo-Hegelian philosophy such as that of Thomas Hill Green and George Sylvester Morris. The latter was John Dewey's professor at Johns Hopkins University. Although there is no evidence that Glaspell read Green or Morris while at Drake, this kind of neo-Hegelian thinking comes through unreconstructed in Glaspell's first novel, *The Glory of the Conquered* (1909).

It could be easily said that Glaspell encountered these ideas later, when she was at the University of Chicago in 1902, or at the meetings of the Monist Society of Davenport that she would in attend in 1907. However, given the lengthy treatment of Darwin that Glaspell incorporates into the story of the founding of a Midwestern college in *Inheritors* (the subject of Chapter 3 of this dissertation), it seems very likely that the intellectual climate of Drake was the origin of these concerns of her work.

The history of Drake University is obliquely paralleled in the fictional history of Morton College that Glaspell invents for her 1921 drama. Drake is founded in 1881.

Glaspell's fictional Morton College is founded in 1879. Prior to founding Drake, Carpenter had been the leader of a college at Oskaloosa that was plagued with funding problems. He was able to found Drake when his brother-in-law, Francis Marion Drake agrees to endow a college in Des Moines (Haggard, 355). In *Inheritors*, Morton College includes two founding families with in-law relations. While F. M. Drake was the President of the Board of Trustees of the University that bore his name, he was also the President of the Centreville National Bank (Hamersly, 163). In, *Inheritors*, the President of the Board of Trustees of Morton College is also the President of a local bank.

As a student at the college Glaspell would have contact with neither figure, but the history of the college would have been very present. Carpenter had died in 1893, four years before Glaspell enrolled, yet the faculty was still in the habit of making an annual pilgrimage to Carpenter's grave (Ritchey, 67). Drake, by then, was governor of the state. If these details seem incidental, they seem less so when we consider that Glaspell re-imagined this college history not only as Morton College in *Inheritors* but also as Pioneer College in her penultimate novel *Norma Ashe* (1942).

The real significance of Glaspell's time at Drake has largely been overlooked by scholars of Glaspell work. One reason for this omission is that Glaspell's newspaper reporting for the *Des Moines Daily News* has attracted a lot of critical attention. It was at this job that she observed and reported on the Hossack murder trial, which she would later re-imagine in her works, *Trifles* and "A Jury of Her Peers" -- her best known works today. When biographers have looked at her involvement in life at the college, they have tended to look at the courses she took, her friendships there, her contributions to the

literary magazine. They discuss what it meant to her and her family to leave Davenport for Des Moines.[6] What is seldom noted is that Drake University was affiliated with the United Church of Christ, the same church she attended as a child.

Ben-Zvi strikes upon something of the influence of the Christianity at Drake on Glaspell in reviewing Glaspell's contributions to the *Delphic*, the Drake literary magazine of the time. One of Glaspell's pieces is a kind of elegy for a young woman in the campus community, in which Glaspell describes the soul of the woman ascending "reverently up to God." Ben-Zvi astutely notes that this is "one of the only times in her writing that Susan invokes a deity as such." However, Ben-Zvi's argument that Glaspell's "religious beliefs [at the time] still bore the marks of her family's conservative influence" is less satisfying (37). As I am more concerned with intellectual history than biography, I am not so much concerned with characterizing Glaspell's belief. Nonetheless, to merely attribute these Christian motifs to her family's conservative influence is to sweep aside Glaspell's profound thinking on the spiritual problems of her day.

IV. Chicago and Davenport: In Search of A Reformist Fiction, 1901 - 1915

In April of 1901, Drake diploma in hand, Glaspell quit her job at the *Des Moines Daily News* (Ben-Zvi. 49). Having published several short stories by this time, Glaspell was ready to transition to a career in fiction writing. At first returning to her parents' home in Davenport, she was able to spend increasing amounts of time in Chicago. Glaspell would be based in these two cities, Davenport and Chicago, for the next twelve years while she honed her craft at fiction writing and developed her own voice for

cultural reform. Although many places showed up imaginatively in her fiction, her work was about these two cities.

Her fiction writing was motivated by a desire to improve culture. Each piece of fiction she wrote during this time, either implicitly posited a theory of how such literary activity could be involved in cultural improvement, or explicitly worked to reshape American culture.

"For the Love of the Hills" (1905) is one example. This story is remembered often for the extraordinary $500 cash prize it received along with publication in *Black Cat Magazine*. Its theme is literary activity as moral uplift. "For the Love of the Hills" tells of an encounter between two anonymous women, perfect strangers, in the reading room of a public library in Chicago. They meet as the one woman hands off to the other a newspaper from Denver. Then, older woman tells the younger woman of her travails. The older woman admits she is looking for something in the paper that cannot be found in there. She is losing her eyesight (a device Glaspell will use again in her first novel). She saved all her money to come to Chicago to seek a medical treatment, but there is no hope. Lacking the money to return home to Denver, she stays with relatives in Chicago on whom she fears becoming an increasing burden. Her real sense of despair, however, results from the fact that she will not get to see the mountains around Denver again. She tells the young woman she misses most the hills:

> It ain't just the things them tourists sees to talk about. But the mountains has always been like a comfortin' friend to me. John and Sarah is buried there -- John and Sarah is my two children that died of fever... And the mountains was a comfort to me in all those times of trouble. They're like an

> old friend. Seems like the they're the best friend I've got on Earth (6).

Of course, the younger woman is deeply affected by the older woman's story, and for a moment feels powerless to help. Then, she gets an idea: "She picked up a pencil and began to write" (9). The younger woman circulates "a petition" among the people in the reading room of the library, appealing to the sympathies of all the Chicagoans nostalgic for their hometowns, raising funds to send the woman home. The scene then changes to the offices of the editor of a Denver newspaper. An old woman wants her own story printed about how she got to see the mountains around Denver so that the people in the reading room of the Chicago library who read the Denver paper will see the fruition of their efforts.

"For the Love of the Hills" is about storytelling, about communication, and about the power of the text to bring about spiritual satisfaction for a whole community. It is fiction as moral uplift. It places tremendous hope in popular literacy and the popular presses as a means of improving people's lives in small but significant ways. Mass communication can alleviate the sense of dislocation and alienation that are increasing facts of urban life. Chicago was the site of this new urban life.

If there were ever a time when Chicago most embodied the hopes for a new American culture, those first years around the turn of the twentieth century must have been that time. That the city had been built from nothing in less than a hundred years was staggering fact that forced one to confront the radical transformation of society that was underway. Glaspell arrived in time to see the city with a kind of double-vision. The city was alienating and brutal, but it was irresistible, exciting, and full of promise. Unbridled

capitalism had built this new metropolis. The question for Glaspell as for many writers was: out of this experience of rapid industrialization and urbanization, would Americans learn new and better ways to live?

Glaspell, trying to shape her voice for reform, responded very differently to to this environment than a writer such as Upton Sinclair who is more frequently noted for his reformist fiction. The question that Glaspell sough to answer about Chicago in her first novel was whether this place famous for hog butchery could also be the a capital of "civilization."

The founding of the University of Chicago in 1892 and the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 both attempted to answer this question affirmatively. When Glaspell wrote her novel *The Glory of the Conquered*, she chose the city of the university and of the Columbian Exhibition to write about-- and not the stockyards. She sets the novel mostly at the University of Chicago. Several important scenes also take place at the Art Institute, in the building that was part of the Columbian Exhibition site. Further, Glaspell pays homage to the Beaux Arts style of the exhibition by titling her book after a Beaux Arts sculpture, *Gloria Victis* by Antonin Mercié.

The University in particular is the site of hope that higher learning in general and science in particular will improve the conditions of life for all humanity. The potential cure for cancer, which the central character of the novel, Dr. Karl Hubers, has in his reach, is representative of this kind of improvement.

In this first book, Glaspell takes a more benign view of capitalism, more in line with the traditional liberalism than with socialism, and looks to the institutions of higher education to redeem its excesses. We can see Glaspell negotiating the relationship

between the commercial heart of he city and the research university in a revery of the novel's heroine, the painter Ernestine Stanley. Ernestine is walking across the University of Chicago campus to visit her husband, Karl, in his laboratory:

> She looked from one red roof to another, and each building seemed to her a separate channel through which men were working ahead toward the light. It was a place for research, for striving for new knowledge, for clearing the way. She turned her face for the moment to the north [sic]; there was great Chicago, where men fought for wealth and power.... This [campus] seemed far away from the Board of Trade, from State Street, and Michigan Avenue. But was not the spirit of it all one? This, too, was Chicago, the Chicago which had fought its way through criticism, indifference, and jeers to a place in the world of scholarship. People who knew what they were talking about did not laugh at the University of Chicago any more... (61)

I want to emphasize Ernestine's concern with each way of knowing as involved in the same attempt to improve humanity. "[E]ach building" represents "a separate channel" for "working ahead toward the light." Intimately connected to the idea of a kind of epistemological pluralism is the idea of the coming of age of the city and the university. Glaspell's book itself is bound up in both ideas. To Glaspell, education in general, and the University of Chicago, in particular, was a means of cultivating a new and better civilization. In essence, the reformist attempt of *the Glory of the Conquered* is to envision a new relationship between the sciences and the arts, represented by the professions of the novel's two main characters, but it also strives to envision and new, more whole society.

Glory opened new problems which she would not deal with until later in her work. In trying to feel the meaning of the city of Chicago, there were hints of the larger contradiction that Glaspell would find in the project of the American West. Namely, "settlement" was to bring about a new and better civilization but it also reeked of greed

and usurpation. In addition, higher education was supposed to create a newly democratic culture in which new ways of knowing would provide the organizing principles and spiritual satisfactions that once were provided by religion. However, this was a promise that education could not fulfill. She would move away from the University in her next two novels, and not take up the problems of higher education again in her work until her 1921 drama, *Inheritors*.

Both the social holism and the epistemological pluralism that characterize Glaspell's conviction that education is a means for social improvement are equally features of the educational philosophies of such noted Progressive era figures as Jane Addams and John Dewey.[7] Indeed, when Glaspell took courses at the University of Chicago in 1902, John Dewey was among its most famous professors.[8] However, as Glaspell was a fiction writer, she is not often compared with these figures.

She is seen more often as a part of the class of professional journalists and writers who suddenly converged on Chicago at the turn of the century, drawn by the economic pull of the publishing business and the curiosity that surrounded the city. Like Glaspell, these writers mostly came from small towns in the Midwest. Her immediate circle in Chicago was made up of writers who, by and large, earned their keep by writing and editing for periodicals. As H.L. Mencken would put it, in a 1917 article in the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*:

> Find me a writer who is indubitably American and who has something new and interesting to say, and who says it with an air, and nine times out of ten... he has some sort of connection with the abattoir by the lake -- that he was bred there, or got his start there, or passed through there during the days when he was tender.[9]

Comparing Glaspell to the more well known literary figures in her milieu reveals as many contrasts as similarities. Two illuminating examples from the Chicago years are Theodore Dreiser, the novelist, and Margaret Anderson, the founding editor of *The Little Review.* Like Glaspell, both were midwesterners. Both would move East by 1915.

In her autobiography *My Thirty Years' War*, Margaret Anderson recalls meeting Glaspell at the home of Floyd Dell, who was then the editor of the Friday Literary Review Section of the *Chicago Evening Post*. Anderson comments that "Dell was surrounded by a literary group that gave promise of being the only one of interest in Chicago" (37). The motto of Anderson's *Little Review*, of course, was "making no compromise with the public taste." It would be easy enough to associate Glaspell with this kind of avant-garde modernism, because her experimental play *The Verge* is the most often remembered of Glaspell's works. This easy association would even misunderstand what was at stake for Glaspell in *The Verge*. Rather, in contrast to the rebellion against genteel tastes that is the hallmark of Margaret Anderson's contribution to modern American Literature, Glaspell's work, especially in her Chicago years, was invested in the hope that the popular presses could be a site of literary merit and at the same time a medium for social improvement.

Glaspell's connection to Dreiser would appear even closer. Their association began in Chicago but continued in New York. They were both regulars at Polly's, a MacDougal Street restaurant (Ben-Zvi, 123). And, of course, Dreiser's play *The Hand of the Potter* was staged by the Provincetown Players in 1922, at the very of end of Glaspell's involvement with the collaborative. However, as playwrights and, more significantly, as fiction writers, Glaspell and Dreiser have little in common.[10] Glaspell

may have admired Dreiser's novels.[11] However, unlike Dreiser, Glaspell's fiction is idealistic. It looks to shape the culture of the future. Even when Glaspell experiments with the techniques of naturalism in her second novel, *The Visioning* (1911), she tells a story that, in contrast to those of Dreiser, projects hope in human agency.

There was a small group of writers among whom Glaspell fits rather neatly. Glaspell was increasingly part of a trio of writers -- herself, Floyd Dell (1887 - 1969), and George Cram Cook (1873 - 1924).[12] These were the Davenport writers. What they had in common, besides their continued connection to the same Iowa town, was not a school of writing -- no particular subjects or techniques that they would collectively agree upon and then individually employ -- but a particular cultural problem they collectively felt. They believed that art expressed the spirit of the people, but they did not think that the spirit of the American people had been expressed. Moreover, what constituted spirit in an age of science and industry was fundamentally unclear. They felt this reflected in a variety ways, mainly temporal and spatial.

To a great extent, the temporal aspect of this cultural problem that they felt was not theirs alone, but was part of the larger problem of international modernism. The old forms of literature and art simply no longer made sense. As idealists, the Davenport writers were drawn to Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, but felt too acutely the material and economic differences between their own time and the time of what F. O. Matthiessen would later call the "American Renaissance." Even though they knew that Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau were involved in an idealist project of creating an American consciousness, the Davenport writers felt that these earlier idealists could not speak to the

mass culture of which the Davenport writers felt themselves to be a part.[13] This is the significance of the remarkable image that Glaspell creates in *The Glory of the Conquered*, when Georgia McCormick imagines that a copy of *Walden* is a typewriter, as she jokingly pretends to write a society column about the marriage of the novel's protagonists (41). The Davenport writers felt that the idealist literature of their immediate past, of which *Walden* is a perfect example, set a precedent for a kind of cultural activity, but that the new form of this cultural activity would have to be reinvented for the new technologies and the new scale of American life.

The spatial aspect of the problem was perhaps more insidious -- that there were simply no forms of literature and art that were native to the place they knew. They had been inculcated in English and European forms of verse and prose fiction, but they were in the process of discovering the extent to which these could and could not express the spirit of the American middle-West. The reaction of the Davenport writers to this phenomenon is quite different from that of the more noted figures of American literary modernism such as Pound and Eliot. The Davenport writers did not expatriate -- at least not immediately. And, when Cook and Glaspell did expatriate, it was not to the metropolitan capitals of Europe such as Paris and London, but to to Europe's most provincial and historic site -- Delphi, Greece.

Floyd Dell, in *Intellectual Vagabondage*, would later describe the problem this way:

> We were of the present. And, though we did not realize it, what we wanted was an interpretation of our own time -- an interpretation which would make us feel its significance, and the significance of our own part in it. ...
>
> We had no memories and doubts with which to criticize the spectacle of this modern world, and instinctively we looked forward into it with

> confidence and belief. We felt that it was good. But we wanted to know why it was good.
>
> And to this question of ours, the literature of the nineteenth century furnished no reply... (107-108)[14]

What is most significant about Dell's description of this problem is his assertion that he and his fellow writers were unaware of this need they felt for a literature of their own. In this sense, the spatial aspect of their cultural problem was something the Davenport writers were in the process of discovering. As we can also see from Dell's description, what is reckoned in their concept of "literature" is not merely an aesthetics but an entire world-view.

Writing in 1927, Glaspell would recollect a conversation from the Chicago days between Dell and Cook.[15] At a restaurant, they discussed the role of geography in producing a literary culture. It begins with a conjecture that, "perhaps English writers are better than American because they have a London." (222). Dell and Cook then proceed to imagine the geography of the future literary life of the United States. Only Chicago and New York are mentioned by name, but other cities are referenced nonspecifically. Using Europe as a guiding analogy, they map out models of nations, placing the salt-cellar and sugar cubes on the table to represent capital and provincial cities. After this conversation, Cook wrote "An American Renaissance of the Twentieth Century [sic] is not the task of ninety million people, but of one hundred... I call upon the vital writers of America to attain a finer culture... It is for us to prove that the finest culture is a possibility of democracy" (224-25). Clearly, such concepts as "literature" and "writers" here stand in for much larger cultural ideas. "Democracy" was thought to be the guiding principle of American life, and what distinguished the mass culture of the United States from the aristocratic culture of Europe.

The Davenport writers were trying to see something in Chicago that they could not fully see -- a map of the nation's liberal culture with its centers in New York and Massachusetts as well as Chicago and Iowa. Glaspell, by the end of her career, saw this map more clearly. She also felt a cleft in the nation between liberal culture and the culture that it left behind. Idealist writers always feel the pinch as their prescience adjusts to the narrow facts of their particular historical moment.

In search of her reformist voice, Glaspell would write two more novels about the Midwest. In *The Visioning* (1911) and *Fidelity* (1915), Glaspell aimed her reforms at the culture of her home town.

The Visioning is a not so successful mix of the idealist theory of fiction that Glaspell had developed in *The Glory of the Conquered* and the positivist orientation of literary naturalism. The story, which is set at the Rock Island Arsenal, is one of heroic personal growth. The heroines suffer from and then confront narrow religious dogma. The hero changes his career from the military to the forest service. *The Visioning* was not successful as a reformist novel to the extent that its characters' ethical journeys seem contrived to meet the author's ideals and were too eccentric to model behavior for readers.

In *Fidelity*, on the other hand, Glaspell's strikes at a single ethical dilemma that was of particular importance to the New Woman of the era. *Fidelity* is set in the town of Freeport, but, its protagonist, Ruth Holland, discovers this new ethic only by turning her back on Freeport for good. Before the novel begins, Ruth Holland had scandalized Freeport years before when she ran away with Stuart Williams, a married man who was

prominent in the local business community. In the course of the novel, the death of a parent calls Ruth back to Freeport from where she has been living with Stuart Williams in Colorado. As she gradually comes to accept what her exile has meant, she realizes, without regret, that she can no longer stay with Stuart. She leaves him, and decides to move to New York. In the final moment of the novel, Ruth is on an eastbound train, thinking she is heading towards something "so completely new," (*Fidelity* 354). Makowsky has connected this to Ann Ardis's description of the novels of the New Women "rethink[ing] the Orthodox opposition beteween the 'pure' and the 'fallen' woman" (Makowsky 55). However, Glaspell actually goes a step further than this with the character of Ruth Holland, who makes choices about her love-relationships based on her own needs, not those of society or those of her beloved. With this ethic, Glaspell not only speaks for the New Woman of her era, but for a culture that is only nascent with this New Woman and would still be many years in development.

By the time she wrote *Fidelity*, Glaspell had already moved East.

V. Greenwich Village Before The Players

Moving East meant that Glaspell was free from the cultural pressures of the place she had grown up in. If Glaspell was, like Ruth Holland in *Fidelity,* going East to something "so completely new," then it was, ironically, a repetition of her ancestors' journey West. Without a doubt, Greenwich Village did present a new world to Glaspell. In the Village, she found people who were trying out the new ethics in various ways. It was a place of action. It inspired Glaspell to alter the dimension of her work, as she

increasingly wrote for the stage, collaborated with other artists, and even took to the stage herself as an actor in the company. In this environment Glaspell would illuminate a whole spectrum of ethics for a new American culture, and she would also discover for herself and for us its limitations. This new world quickly revealed itself as not so new. Glaspell saw the whole project of a new and better culture as rooted in the earliest New England colonies -- in the very puritanism that her ideas of reform were supposed to escape. If there had been a reinvention of culture, what had it been worth? It called into question the very standards by which it might have been evaluated.

When Glaspell arrived in Greenwich Village sometime in 1913, she was immediately caught up in its flurry of activity. She joined the Liberal Club and the Heterodoxy Club, and attended evenings at Mabel Dodge's salon. Through Dell, she became acquainted with Max and Crystal Eastman, John Reed, Louise Bryant, Big Bill Haywood, and Emma Goldman. Indeed, if Glaspell was in the right place at the right time when she went to Chicago, she again found herself at the site of tremendous political, social and cultural creativity. She witnessed the earliest activities of the birth control movement and the introduction of Freudian psychoanalysis to New York.

Amid the hubbub, one word stands as perhaps the most important context for understanding Glaspell's work at this time. It is the one-word answer that Margaret Sanger gave when the clerk in the Queens County Penitentiary asked after her religion, "Humanity"(Sanger, 240).[16] We have no record of Glaspell being asked about her religion at this time, but she might have employed a similar answer. Glaspell will use the word with a slightly different resonance in *Inheritors* when she has the character of Professor

Holden described as a "a particularly human human being" (119). The resonance may be different, but the philosophy is the same.

In the time before she would write *Inheritors*, Glaspell glimpsed in moments of possibility the formation of a religion of humanity. That is, there seemed a universal human subject that was the object of competing epistemologies. The culture of ancient Greece suggested this possibility, because historically it had been first to humanize Christianity beginning in the European universities of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries. People of Glaspell and Sanger's generation had been taught the narrative of Western history as one that had a very clear plot: classical antiquity was the origin of Western Civilization; then, the Christian had come, then the neoclassical, and finally, the scientific age had come at last. They knew a little of Eastern cultures and that there had been Eastern civilizations. It was easy to assume an analogy between these cultures, and harder to see why an analogy between these cultures would not hold up epistemologically. Although this "humanity" supposes that the epistemology of skepticism and demonstrable evidence is the most advanced way of knowing, it holds that *belief* in this way of knowing bears some essential analogy to religious belief.

By 1922, Glaspell began to see the epistemological problems with this religion of humanity. It would take another fifty to seventy-five years for a more appropriately complex narrative of cultural history to emerge. However, Glaspell, as well as Sanger and others in New York at the time, was part of redefinition of the epistemology of "culture" that continued to intensify after Glaspell's moment had passed. Hegeman has described this epistemological moment as one of "moral relativism," and she has linked it to changing definitions of culture within the discipline of anthropology, as well as to the

phenomenon of American cultural geography that I describe as “liberal.” Hegeman carefully distinguishes between the epistemology of modern humanistic relativism and the antifoundational epistemology that succeeded it: “relativism at this moment [circa 1920] often went hand in hand with a kind of foundational belief in scientific rationality and the commonality of humankind, and served... as a largely ethical gesture which refuted the value of intercultural assessments of human worth” (7). In other words, it was possible to understand one’s own culture as scientific in much the same way that other cultures were religious. Although another culture might not have the advantage of science, the advantage of science did not constitute an *a priori* assumption of innate superiority. The assumption of that innate superiority would take years to dismantle. This was a cultural reform in which Glaspell clearly participated.

Within the service of humanity, scientific ideas could easily be translated into political ideas, into artistic ideas, into religious ones. As a category, “humanity” is much more useful to describe Glaspell’s work than the various political creeds that were everywhere in the Village.

Her new social circle in Greenwich Village did inspire Glaspell to invest more in the anarchist and socialist ideas.

Perhaps her most significant activity in her first year in the Village was her participation in the Patterson Strike Pageant at Madison Square Garden. The pageant was a reenactment of the the strike by silk workers in Patterson, New Jersey that had been organized by the International Workers of the World. The strike had been broken up the police, resulting in one person’s death. The reenactment was a peaceful commemoration

of what had been a dispiriting violence, rallying the workers' spirits. It showed her a medium in which participants became involved in common endeavor en masse. She witnessed the power of performance. The pageant was a sign of things to come for Glaspell. Another two years intervened before Glaspell would begin to write plays, but the suggestion of transforming her work from two to three dimensions was implanted almost as soon as she arrived in New York.[17]

Yet it would be wrong to say that Glaspell was a Wobbly. This was the extent of her involvement with the I.W.W. and the extent of her direct action more generally. This is not because Glaspell felt she could not address the problems of capitalism. Rather, she would do so by combining political philosophies in her work. In this way, she was not totally unlike Floyd Dell, with whom Glaspell had been discussing Socialist ideas since her Davenport days. Dell was a Socialist in philosophy, but in practice he was less interested in bringing about a Socialist state.[18]

Dell did not contribute articles intended to rally or indoctrinate to the magazine *The Masses*, which he edited along with Max Eastman. *The Masses* did publish Reed's piece on the silk strike, which might be read to be the declaration of a a class war (Wertheim, 54). Later, *The Masses* would have its distribution interrupted by the Postmaster General for publishing articles critical of the war effort (Menand, 426). Although known for its radicalism, its pages were as full of poetry and drawings as of reporting and opinion pieces. What is important about *The Masses* is less the politics of its editors and more their conviction -- shared by the editors of *The Seven Arts* and *The New Republic* -- that America needed new freedom of expression, and new engines of cultural generation. These three publications stood for freedom of expression, a rebellion

against the commercially dictated content of more the mainstream magazines that printed Glaspell's fiction.

The differing politics of *The Masses* and *The New Republic* illustrates an important point that reflects on Glaspell's politics, should they need to be identified. *The Masses* was founded in 1912, and the *The New Republic* in 1914. Originally, the two publications had a very similar mission. Within a few short years, the Russian Revolution and. moreover, U.S. involvement in World War I would drive the editors of the two magazines into public disputes. Glaspell was not involved in these disputes at all. *Inheritors* suggests that Glaspell was opposed the U.S. involvement in the War. However, whereas she never published any work in *The Masses*. she would publish in *The New Republic* in early 1923 a dispatch from Greece. The theme of Glaspell's article in *The New Republic*, "Dwellers on Parnassos," is meaningful labor, and it suggests that Glaspell was more philosophically aligned on the Socialist question with Herbert Croly or John Dewey than she was with her closer friends, such as John Reed or Bill Haywood.

Glaspell, as well as Cook and Dell, felt a tension between their educated ideas for a new culture that would suit the masses, and the masses themselves whose concerns were more immediate and removed from their ideals. The theatre subtly suggested to them a way around this problem -- at least for a short while.

VI. Glaspell and The Provincetown Players

The Provincetown Players emerged out of the need of Greenwich Village writers and artists for a communal activity. In fact, its antecedents were the productions of plays at the Henry Street Settlement House on the far Lower East Side, the theatre that would become The Neighborhood Playhouse. The productions on at the settlement house inspired a few members of the Liberal Club to put on plays as an adjunct to the social activities there. These members, including Phillip Moeller, Helen Westley, and even Sherwood Anderson, formed the Washington Square Players in 1914.[19] The Washington Square Players was such a success that inspired many members to write plays, including Cook and Glaspell.

Glaspell attended the first production with Cook. She recalls that a speech was made before the opening curtain, in which Liberal Club member Edward Goodman described the inspiring production he had seen at the Henry Street Settlement House:

> Full of strong inherited religious feeling beyond the command of any commercial manager, danced the Jewish youths and maidens of that neighborhood, much of it taken from the Hebrew ritual, the tribal feeling of the ancient Jews still a living thing to some of the Jews of Henry Street. (*Road,* 249)

Whether there was any accuracy to Goodman's description of the performance he saw had seen as "taken from the Hebrew ritual," is less important than the fact that he was drawn to this performance as a for its "religious feeling" and "tribal feeling." Although he is obviously taken with the exoticism of what he has seen, Goodman was also inspired by the sense of community that this performance built, by its seeming authenticity.

This authenticity would become one of the most important characteristics of the Provincetown Players for Glaspell. But it would hard to see this in the beginning of the project.

For Glaspell, the Provincetown Players began as a diversion. Indeed, as a playwright Glaspell began as a parodist. Her first play, co-authored with Cook, was a send-up of the fad for psychoanalysis in Greenwich Village. She described the process this way: "We thought it [the fad for psychoanalysis] would be amusing in a play ... we had a good time writing 'Suppressed Desires'... [W]e tossed the lines back and forth at one another, and wondered if anyone else would have as much fun with it as we were having" (*Road*, 250). That it was fun was crucial. Having in a spoken in a plain way for a particular reform in *Fidelity*, Glaspell felt free for the first time of the need find an expression that would be become part of the wave of reform. In fact, as everyone in the Village was reform minded, Glaspell could not, in this environment, be as serious about the new ideas as she had been in the Midwest.

Suppressed Desires was rejected by the Washington Square Players. In fact, by 1915, the Washington Square Players had many more submissions than they could stage. That summer in Provincetown, Cook, Glaspell, Neith Boyce, Hutchins Hapgood and a few other friends, decided to stage the play themselves in the Boyce and Hapgood's living room, along with Boyce's own play *Constancy*, which had also been rejected by the Washington Square Players (Ben-Zvi, 160). These amateur productions quickly became a popular social activity, and an old fishing wharf was converted into a makeshift theatre. The next summer, the activity was repeated; the scale increased. Plays by Reed and by Eugene O'Neill were also staged. The group formalized. Twenty-nine members

signed the constitution of the Provincetown Players (Wertheim, 156). Of these, only a few had careers in the theatre arts; most were journalists, fiction writers, and visual artists. The idea was to bring the plays to New York, support the writing of American plays, and create a theatre that would not be subject the commercial demands of the Broadway houses.

Glaspell's contributions to the players fall into three categories. Plays such as *Suppressed Desires* (1915), *The People* (1917), *Close the Book* (1917), and *Chains of Dew* (1922) satirize life in Greenwich Village. Plays such as *Trifles* (1916) and *Inheritors* (1921) are naturalistic plays that depict life in Iowa. Finally, *The Outside* (1917) and *The Verge* (1921) employ experimental techniques to try represent epistemological and ontological ideas. These three different types of plays represent tension between needing to speak to Greenwich Village reformers and radicals and the resurgent tension to express the life the Midwest.

The Provincetown Players became increasingly invested with a sense of an authentic communication, one that could bring together people with different levels of education, social class, cultural and philosophical difference. Mostly, it was the Village cultural elite speaking to one another, but there was this other hope behind it. It was in some sense the manifestation of the holism she had been searching for in her work all along. She writes of the group that "the spectators were part of the Players" and that Life was all of a piece, work not separated from play" (*Road,* 254 ; 256). The theatre, especially for Glaspell and Cook, was invested with the notion of the drama of ancient Greece and of the descriptions of the theatre at the Settlement Houses. It was a medium

more immediate than print, and infused with all the meaning of ritual and group behavior. It was theatre as folk art. This sense of the folk permeates the diction of Glaspell's characters in her naturalistic plays, especially *Inheritors*.

Recent critics have done much to re-examine the rebellion of modern artists from mass culture. For example, Rainey writes:

> Modernism, poised at the cusp of that transformation of the public sphere, responded with a tactical retreat into a divided world of patronage, collecting, speculation, and investment, a retreat that entailed the construction of an institutional counter-space securing a momentary respite from a public realm increasingly degraded, even as it entailed a fatal compromise with precisely that degradation. (5)

Rainey is focused mostly on the canonical literary modernists, such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce. He does not consider modern drama, nor does he explore the possibility that the institutional counter-space of the Provincetown Players was so quickly and effectively absorbed into the larger New York theatre. (Plays originating with the players would move to Broadway and to London's West End.)

Glaspell's involvement with the Players was a relatively short incident in her life, but for that time, it was all-consuming. In the year before she left the group, she and Cook took a sabbatical from direct involvement with the theatre. It was in this sabbatical year that she wrote *Inheritors* and *The Verge*.

---

[1] It is fair to say that the liberal humanism of Susan Glaspell bears the stamp of a westward migration that originates in England, reaches its extent in the American west, and then returns eastward. I do not have the space in this dissertation to pursue questions about regionalism in American literature, and the way in which Glaspell's career registers a fissure in the cultural geography of the United States between the liberal urban and the conservative heartland cultures. In a larger study, I would like to address these questions.

[2] Ozieblo uncovered Glaspell's family history with the First Christian Church. This sect, which formed in the 1790s, was "made up of dissatisfied Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians (11,8). Ben-Zvi reports that Glaspell sat at services between her mother and grandmother (15).

[3] The statue was sculpted by David Richards, and commissioned by O.J. Dimick of Rock Island and Chicago. I have yet to find any record of Dimick's thoughts on the subject of Black Hawk or of Native American remembrance. I see this as a direction for further research.

[4] Although Herron was at Grinnell, a very similar political and moral climate would be found in the faculty and administration of Drake University in Des Moines. When a populist uprising led by General Kelley, which was marching across the United States, camped outside Des Moines, the President of the Drake University at the time, Barton O. Aylesworth, is said to have met with Kelley and then given a talk on campus about the social conditions that led to the revolt (Ritchey, 71).

[5] Glaspell placed as a junior her first year at Drake, and at took a bachelor of philosophy degree in two years (Ben-Zvi, 35)

[6] Ssee Ben-Zvi 35-38 and Ozieblo 12-13.

[7] This claim will be developed further in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[8] Glaspell did not study with Dewey. In fact, both courses she took at the University of Chicago were with Oscar Lovell Triggs, who was a scholar of the arts and crafts movement and editor of a volume of Walt Whitman's writings. (For more on the influence of Triggs on Glaspell, see Ben-Zvi, 54)

[9] qtd. in Duncan, *The Rise of Literary Chicago, p. viii.*

[10] For a comparison of how Dreiser of Glaspell similarly but distinctly understand evolutionary theory see Chapter 3, note 58 of this dissertation.

[11] Wertheim writes that Floyd Dell "tended to venerate [Dreiser] as the father of American realism" (191).

[12] Cook and Glaspell would marry in New Jersey in 1913, at the time of their relocation East.

[13] For more on how the Davenport writers read Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, see Dell, *Intellectual Vagabondage*, p. 113-118.

[14] As Dell continues, he frames this dilemma in more specifically Pragmatist terms:

> We wanted, though we did not realize it, a literature of our own -- books produced by, for and out of an age in which we lived. But there were, quite literally, no such books. The truth was, of course, that in the time when we were growing up, the human imagination was a chaos, filled with the wreckage of a century-long conflict of which we were unaware, between Utopian ideals and machine-made facts... [T]hat... collision in the realm of thought between theological optimism and scientific pessimism, had left the world of imagination in a state of confusion in which it was impossible for a while to do anything except pick up the pieces. And that is what the writers of our youth were doing -- picking up little pieces of theological optimism and little pieces of scientific pessimism. We were living in the debris of an age that had gone spiritually to smash. (108)

Machine-made facts and Utopian ideals recalls William James's description of the tough-minded and tender-minded temperaments in the philosophy of the age (see *Pragmatism*, p. 12-18).

[15] There are always methodological problems in identifying individual speakers in *Road to the Temple*. Glaspell wrote this biography of Cook in the years after his death. Her method was to use his papers, and fill in the narrative with her own recollections and with what she had heard from his friends and relatives. Voices are interspersed; quotation marks usually indicate where she borrowed from his papers. Also, she very carefully writes herself out of the picture so that he is the subject. Thus, it is not easy to determine whether she witnessed this conversation between Dell and Cook, participated in it, or heard of it second-hand.

[16] This is not to say that Glaspell was a crusader for birth control. In fact, the cause of birth control is almost a parodic element in her play *Chains of Dew* (1922), in which the character of Nora Powers, Secretary of the Birth Control League in New York, enlists Midwestern bourgeois housewife Diantha Standish, a.k.a. "Dotty Dimple,." in the crusade.

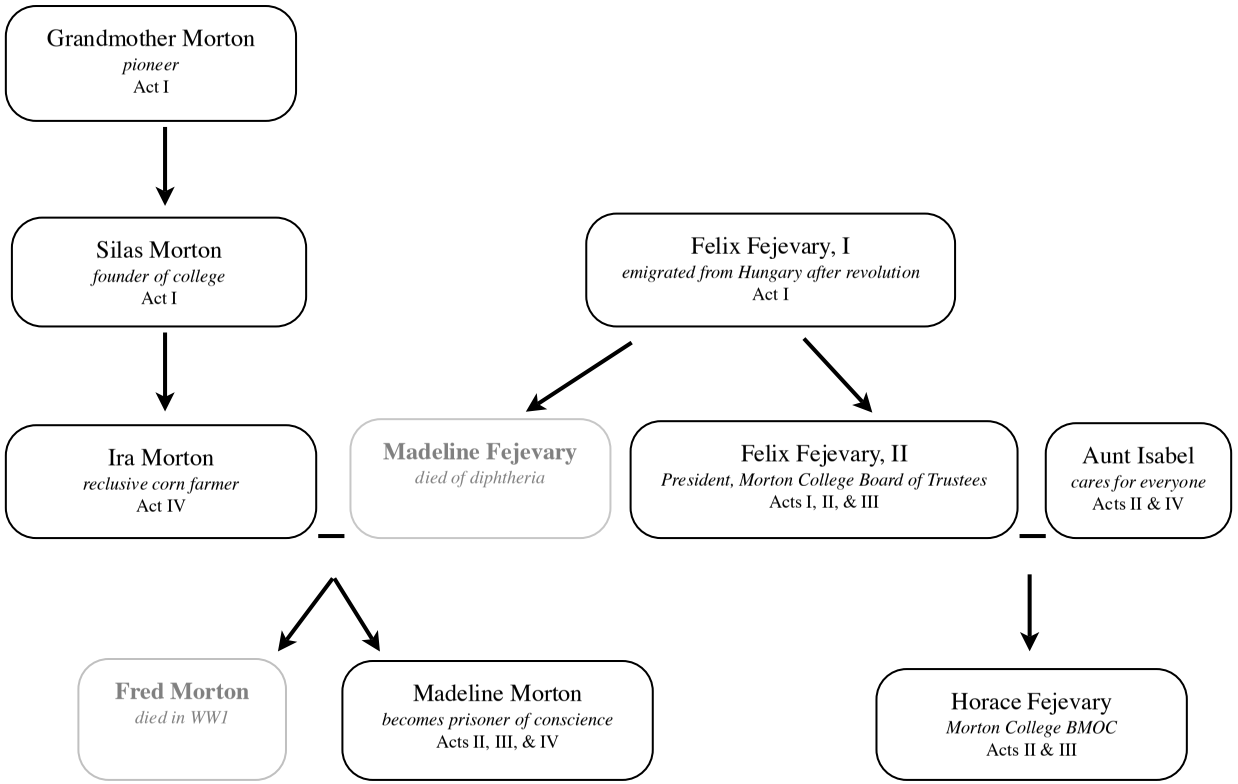
[17] For more on Glaspell's activities in the village, see Ben-Zvi 122-131.

[18] See *Intellectual Vagabondage* 150;160.

[19] Wertheim, 155; Ben-Zvi, 153

Figure 1

Characters in *Inheritors*[*]
Morton and Fejevary Families



[*]gray text indicates expositional characters

Chapter 2

Inheritors and Liberal Ethics

> Oh! Lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
> -Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind"

The four-act play *Inheritors* tells the story of the Morton family and Morton College (see figure 1). The first act, set in 1879, depicts the hour in which Silas Morton, a midwestern farmer and homesteader, resolves to donate a hill, part of the land he obtained from the government, for the foundation of a college. Morton enlists the help of his neighbor and friend, Felix Fejevary Sr., a Hungarian immigrant who had been educated in universities in Europe. Both of these characters are figures only of the first act.

The second and third acts take place in the library of Morton College, atop of College Hill, on its fortieth anniversary "Founders' Day" in 1920. Silas Morton and Felix Fejevary, Sr. are long dead. Felix Fejevary, Jr., a young man in Act I, is now the president of the Board of Trustees of Morton College. Horace Fejevary and Madeline Morton, grandchildren of the founders, are students at the college. Two unplanned events on Founders' Day -- intrusions of the real political struggles of Glaspell's time -- color the interpretation of the founders' legacy. First, Senator Lewis, a state senator, tells Fejevary of his committee's willingness to appropriate funds for the college but suggests Fejevary "let go" Professor Holden, whose actions on behalf of a conscientious objector have been publicized in the newspapers. Then a campus demonstration by Hindu students seeking freedom from colonial rule for India is broken up by the police, and Madeline Morton is arrested after she strikes a police officer with her tennis racket. Madeline may be charged

under the Espionage Act, which means she would face up to twenty years in prison. The play does not depict her trial or her imprisonment.

In the fourth and final act, Madeline Morton, emerging as heroine of the drama, resolves to stay true to her belief, though it means she must leave the college and break with her family. A modern drama, the action of the play consists in characters' private resolutions -- Silas Morton's determination to found a college, and Madeline's Morton's determination to leave it. Formally, the play is held together by the themes and metaphors in which Madeline is shown as inheritor of her grandfather's vision.

Inheritors has yet to receive the critical interpretation it demands, one that exposes its rich thematics of liberalism. To see its many facets, I will examine themes of liberalism in the play from different angles: the two different ethical ways the play understands democracy, its engagement with issues of nationalism and liberalism, the political suspicion the play casts on the liberal arts, its idealist visions of freedom, its contemplations of the dilemma of the prisoner of conscience, its embrace of change. I argue that this play, with its intense political engagement, is the culmination of Glaspell's early attempts to find a unified expression for the general climate of social change in the era in which she herself came of age.

The critical category of "liberalism" that I use in this chapter is informed as much by the meanings of that word today as its meaning in Glaspell's time. I suggest we read and teach and perform *Inheritors* as a play for our time, as it presents persistent features of the political culture of the United States. Today, "liberalism" in its colloquial

significance refers to a loosely shared set of concerns, including assumptions about ethnicity and gender, skepticism about consumer capitalism, and "anti-war" sentiment. In what we hear in common parlance, "liberals" are almost a cultural group.[1] In Glaspell's era, "the liberal" had no such meaning. The word more narrowly evoked a political doctrine of advocating democracy. Radical socialists and anarchists were antagonistic towards liberals, whom they saw as putting faith in a system that failed to deliver economic equality and its promised freedoms to all groups. This separation between a doctrine of liberalism and other sociopolitical philosophies has been maintained by historians -- even while they acknowledged overlapping tendencies -- by seeking to anatomize such political movements as liberalism, socialism, anarchism, and anti-militarism. The discourse of academic philosophy also enforces such a false separation, eschewing the political opinions and traditions that are popularly labeled as "liberal" -- such as peace activism and multiculturalism -- to hold "liberalism" as body of philosophy understood strictly as social-contract theory and rights discourse.

As a holist, however, Glaspell preferred to combine these ideas. She embroidered her play with ideas from conflicting doctrines, stitching together John Dewey's educational theory, for example, with an anarchist vision of a world without private property, to provide a voice for one midwestern farmer.[2] With its combination of political doctrines, *Inheritors* forecasts the multivalence which, years after the play was written, "liberal" has taken on in the United States. At the core, the commitment to freedom of conscience preserves an ethical field in which the competing claims of such separate doctrines are negotiated.

I. Empathy as Democratic Ethic

Liberalism, in the sense of advocacy of democracy, extends beyond strictly political definitions to pervade the sphere of interpersonal relationships. An ethos of democracy -- not so much a kind of government, as the feeling of social equality -- is embodied in empathy. In the form of a way of behaving that makes greater social equality possible, Glaspell can present liberalism as a matter of character.[3]

Glaspell carefully inscribes an ethos of democracy into Silas Morton's decision to donate his land for the foundation of a college. On the surface, Silas simply believes that education makes us better able to understand others. Though his own education was elementary -- he attended school for only "two winters" -- Silas admires those qualities of his neighbor Felix Fejevary, Sr. that he believes were shaped by Fejevary's education in European universities (110). Silas reveals these thoughts to his mother ("Grandmother Morton") and to Fejevary, before announcing his decision to donate his land:

> SILAS: ... I mean school -- the way Mr Fejevary went to school. He went to universities... All the things that men have found out, the wisest and finest things men have thought since they first began to think -- all that was put before him.
> FEJEVARY: (*with a gentle smile*) I fear I left a good deal of it untouched.
> SILAS: You took a plenty. Tell in your eyes you've thought lots about what's been thought... It makes something of men -- learning. A house that's full of books makes a different kind of people. Oh, of course if the books aren't there just to show off ... (*trying hard to see it*) It's not the learning itself -- it's the life that grows up from learning. Learning's like soil. Like -- fertilizer. Get richer. See more. Feel more. You believe that?
> FEJEVARY: Culture should do it.
> SILAS: Does in your house. You somehow know how it is for the other fellow more'n we do. (111)

Silas admires the quality of empathy in particular -- that Fejevary "know[s] how it is for the other fellow." Silas assumes that Fejevary's empathy derives from his education, and Silas Morton's notions of education are based mainly on his acquaintance with the character of his educated friend.

Although Silas Morton's remarks may seem sentimental, an ethos of democracy underlies them. The tendency towards democracy of Silas Morton's ideas becomes clearer in light of John Dewey's work *Democracy and Education* (1915).[4] Although Dewey's subject is mainly the education of children, an important aspect of his argument is that all levels of education are concerned with the development of the habits of individuals and that philosophical learning is not altogether different from learning to tie a bow or ride a bicycle. The aim of *Democracy and Education* is to re-theorize the educational practices which, having been codified in the dynastic societies of the Middle Ages, remain in American institutions, and to re-orient those practices for the needs of American democracy. Dewey argues that a democratic government depends upon the character of its people, and that character is formed by education. Dewey writes:

> The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest [a government, a particular cause, or enterprise] so that each has to refer to his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of

> others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.... [I]t is a matter of deliberate effort [through education] to sustain and extend ... a broader community of interest. (87)

A democratic government empowers the people, but the people must be educated in order to execute their authority best. Dewey regards this fact as mere common knowledge, but looks "deeper" at democracy as "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." In this thinking, democracy scarcely means popular government. Instead, the ethos of democracy is that individuals regard one another as equally involved in a social group. Dewey argues that the more we conceive of ourselves as involved together in the same "interest," the more inclusive of others our idea of ourselves must become. This is the ethos of democracy that gives form to a program of education -- John Dewey's actual one as well as Silas Morton's fictional one.

With Silas Morton's hope that education will help us to "understand the other fellow," he has in mind a group of particular others who were excluded from the American idea of "national territory." As Silas sees it, that exclusion had, in Dewey's words, "kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity." Specifically, Silas Morton regrets terribly the dispossession of Native-American peoples. As one of the original "settlers" of the Western territory, Silas Morton recalls from childhood having met the famous Sauk warrior Black Hawk well before the War of 1832, which resulted in the dispossession of the Sauk and Fox tribes.[5] Silas and his mother recollect how Black Hawk (written in the play as "Blackhawk") "talked [before the war] how the white man and the red man could live together" (104). While Silas realizes he cannot undo the

consequences of the Black Hawk War, he nonetheless feels that to donate his land for the foundation of the college is, in some sense, to "give it back -- their hill" (118). That is to say, he feels that the college will bring about a better way for people to "live together."

As Silas continues to reveal how he reveres education to Fejevary and Grandmother Morton, Silas associates the empathy created by education -- which allows a person to "See more. Feel more." -- with the dispossession of the "Indians":

> SILAS: [T]here's another kind o' honesty, seems to me, goes with that more seein' kind of kindness. Our honesty with the Indians was little to brag on... A seeing how 'tis for the other person -- *a bein'* that other person... 'Twould have done something for us to have *been* Indians a little more. (111)

What Silas calls "that more seein' kind of kindness," we may call empathy, or, in Dewey's words, "conjoint communicated experience." When Silas says, "'twould have done something for us to have *been* Indians a little more," he may mean that the war could have been averted or that American culture would have been improved by better integration. With these sentiments, Silas Morton envisions greater possible democracy.

Later in the play when Madeline's behavior reveals the same ethos, the politics of this ethos is more clearly emphasized. However, Madeline Morton does not defend the endangered Hindu students because of a particular fervor for the specific cause of Hindu nationalism. Rather, her defense is based on an interest in the "other person." Moreover, her own self-respect and her national pride, which are inflected with a similar democratic ethos, motivate her to act on the Hindu students' behalf. The audience learns of her motivation in her arguments with her uncle, the junior Felix Fejevary, a few hours after Madeline's involvement in the melee on campus (in Act III). Fejevary has let Madeline

sit in jail for the interval, and now, having used his "years of influence" to get her out, he tries to convince her to repent for the sake of the reputation of the college. This is the only dialogue between uncle and niece in the play. The tension between them escalates sharply when Fejevary suggests that he believes the Hindu students will not have the money for a legal battle against their deportation, and Madeline volunteers to give over her trust fund for the Hindus' legal expenses. In order to convey the complicated interplay between her empathetic and altruistic impulses, her self-respect, and her notions of democracy, I must quote at length:

> FEJEVARY: May I ask why you have appointed yourself guardian of these strangers?
> MADELINE: Perhaps because they are strangers.
> FEJEVARY: Well, they're the wrong kind of strangers.
> ...
> MADELINE: Is it true that the Hindu [student] who was here last year is to be deported? Is America going to turn him over to the government he fought?
> FEJEVARY: I have an idea they will all be deported. I'm not so sorry this thing happened. It will get them into the courts -- and I don't think they have the money to fight.
> ...
> MADELINE: (*simply*) They can have my money.
> FEJEVARY: Are you crazy? What *are* these people to you?
> MADELINE: They're people from the other side of the world who came here believing in us, drawn from the far side of the world by the things we say about ourselves. Well, I'm going to pretend -- just for fun -- that the things we say about ourselves are true. So if you'll arrange so I can get it [the trust fund], Uncle Felix, as soon as it's mine.
> FEJEVARY: And this is what you say to me at the close of my years of trusteeship! ... (*breaking off in anger*)... So you are going to use Silas Morton's money to knife his college. ... If Silas Morton's granddaughter casts in her lot with revolutionists, Morton College will get no money from the state. ... (*trying a different tack, laughing*) Oh, you're a romantic girl, Madeline... Rather nice, at that. But the thing is perfectly fantastic from every standpoint. You speak as if you had millions. And if you did, it wouldn't matter, not really. You are going against the spirit of this country; with or without money, that can't be done...

> MADELINE: (*in a smouldering way*) I thought America was a democracy.
> FEJEVARY: We have just fought a great war for democracy.
> MADELINE: Well, is that any reason for not having it?
> FEJEVARY: I should think you would have a little emotion about the war -- about America -- when you consider where your brother is.
> MADELINE: Fred had -- all kinds of reason for going to France. He wanted a trip... Why, he *said* so. Heavens, Fred didn't make speeches about himself. Wanted to see Paris -- poor kid, he never did see Paris. Wanted to be with a lot of fellows -- knock the Kaiser's block off -- end war, get a French girl. It was all mixed up -- the way things are. But Fred was a pretty decent sort... He had such kind, honest eyes. One thing I do know! Fred never went over the top and out to back up the argument you're making now!
> (139-40)

It is not coincidental that the conversation changes so quickly from Madeline's defense of the Hindus to her view of her brother's enlistment. Both topics are inflected with her characteristic empathy. Madeline embodies the quality that her grandfather reveres of "seeing how 'tis for the other person -- *a bein'* that other person." This aspect of her character manifests itself for those who are close to her, such as her brother, as well as in her association with "strangers."[6] Her decision to give her money for the Hindu's defense recalls her grandfather's eagerness to donate his land.

More than a passive regard for the ethnic-other, the empathy that Madeline and Silas have towards "strangers" (as well as the altruism of them both) is in fact an active way of behaving, an ethic, that makes possible greater social equality.

II. Ethos of Democracy: Authority of the People

Besides social equality, there is another aspect of the ethos of democracy which *Inheritors* carefully engages -- that of "voluntary disposition." Dewey calls this a "substitute" for "the principle of external authority."[7] Democracy regards each citizen as

an equal authority. That the authority of the government is derived from the people is, of course, one of the tenets of classical liberalism. Governments exist in order to protect and secure the interests of individuals. Individuals are primary; together they form a state, but their will is not exerted from without or above. One of the assumptions of democracy is that individuals will be interested enough in their own affairs to maintain those affairs prior to any government involvement in them.

A significant source for the play's engagement with this idea is Thoreau's essay on "Civil Disobedience."[8] Before mounting his attack on majority-rule as mere brute force without the authority of a real conscience, Thoreau raises the specter of democracy with praise of its priority on the people rather than the government. Of American government, Thoreau writes:

> It is excellent, we must allow; yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. *It* does not keep the country free. *It* does not settle the West. *It* does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished... (226-227)

If we recall that the government derives its authority from the people, then, Thoreau says, what seems to have been accomplished by the government as representative of the American nation, shows itself to have been accomplished in fact by the people themselves. Thoreau uses the word "inherent" to distinguish "the people" from "the government of the people." The passage would have had particular meaning for Glaspell as it deals with education, freedom, and with the settlement of the West -- her favorite themes. This passage and Thoreau's essay are so close to the thematic heart of *Inheritors*

that it is conceivable that the title of the play derives in part from the homonymy between "inherit" and the "inherent" of this passage in "Civil Disobedience."

For Glaspell, the settlement of the West is the perfect example of this principle of participation in a nation, and no one is more fit to embody this principle than the character of Grandmother Morton. The play opens with a conversation between Grandmother Morton and a man named Smith who has come to try to persuade Silas to sell the hill for "the development of the town." Smith tries to learn what he can about Silas from Silas's mother (which also serves the function of giving the audience some exposition about the Morton family). Of their involvement with the land, Grandmother Morton tells Smith:

> We worked. Country doesn't make itself. When the sun was up, we was up, when the sun went down we didn't. (*Plays*, 106)

Grandmother Morton's remark indicates that her efforts in establishing her homestead were not only motivated by her own private concerns, but also by a civic-minded desire to participate in a nation. The use of the reflexive pronoun "itself" in Grandmother Morton's "the country doesn't make itself," echoes Thoreau's remark that the "government never of itself furthered any enterprise," which is emphasized by his repeated and forceful use of the pronoun "it" in Thoreau's ensuing litany of the accomplishments of the American people. Like Thoreau, Grandmother Morton is arguing against losing sight of the accomplishments inherent in a people in the view a nation and its government. She sees her participation as a primary component of a national project.

Grandmother Morton is not, however, an advocate of Thoreauvian free-conscience. It is her great-granddaughter Madeline who more closely embodies that ideal.

Grandmother Morton may demand acknowledgment for her own work in having created the nation, but she is willing to take comfort in resigning her individual moral authority to the government when the nation undertakes actions that she herself would not have authorized -- the War of 1832 and its consequences. As does Silas, she recalls a time of coexistence with Native-Americans "before other white folks had roiled them up" (105). However, unlike Silas, she tries not feel too much for their dispossession. She councils Silas that he should not feel personally responsible for that crime:

> GRANDMOTHER: You fret more about the Indians than anybody else does.
> SILAS: To look out at that hill sometimes makes me ashamed.
> GRANDMOTHER: Land sakes, you didn't do it. It was the government. And what a government does is nothing for a person to be ashamed of. (111)

Grandmother Morton's advice recalls Thoreau's famous question -- "Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator?" (Thoreau, 227). This question is one that all the characters in the final acts of the play must face in one way or another. By introducing Grandmother Morton's sense of participation first, Glaspell brings out the truth of the inherence of this participatory authority to *all people*, even those who readily resign their conscience to the government. Though Grandmother Morton cannot accept freedom of conscience for herself, her sense of herself as an inherent part of the nation's accomplishment delineates the structure of free conscience that her great-granddaughter Madeline inherits.

III. American Nationalism: Restrictive and Liberal

With the ethos of inherent authority felt by all and the ethic of empathy understood by few, the later generation finds itself embroiled in a vicious conflict about what it means to be an American.[9] When depicting this generation in the second act of *Inheritors*, Glaspell brings the political struggles her own time onto the stage. The First World War made American national identity a rallying cry. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia brought out a fear that radical elements might seek to overthrow the American government. These events contributed to the polarization of national sentiment in the United States. *Inheritors* depicts this polarized atmosphere. Some of the characters in *Inheritors* -- Senator Lewis, Felix Fejevary and his son Horace -- interpret the American national character to mean support for the existing power structure. Anything perceived as questioning or contradicting the existing power structure cannot be tolerated. On the other side, Madeline Morton and Professor Holden try to interpret the American character to mean protection for the weak from a tyrannous majority. Both sides of the conflict are motivated by pride in their American national identity, and use shame to persuade the opposition. In its presentation of opposing claims about the nation character, the play itself engages in a negotiation about what means to be an American that is a part of the democratic process.[10]

On its Founder's Day, Morton College is visited by State Senator Lewis. The second act opens as the state senator's tour of campus with the president of the Board of Trustees stops to admire a portrait of Silas Morton in the library. In their official capacities, the two men flatter one another -- each trying to win the other to his cause. Fejevary wants money from the state for the college. Lewis, who turns the conversation

about pride in the college quickly into pride in the United States having won "the war," wants Fejevary to end the college's employment of a particular professor.[11] Senator Lewis attacks Professor Holden, saying "I've read things that make me question his Americanism" and a moment later "We can get scholars enough. What we want is Americans." (119). Holden's nationality, in the sense of where he was born, is not really at issue. In Senator Lewis's definition, "an American" supports the war effort without qualification. Professor Holden, having made public statements in support of a conscientious objector (CO), does not conform to the Senator's standard.

Senator Lewis never justifies or explains what for him constitutes adequate "Americanism." The only argument Lewis does offer in the way of explanation is that "we don't every minute have literally what we have theoretically because we're fighting to keep the thing we have" (120). "Fighting to keep the thing we have" expresses the logic behind Senator Lewis's attack on Professor Holden, especially as the word 'thing' remains vague. The senator believes he must fight for what he knows to be the national character and fend off anything that contradicts it even in appearance. It cannot be that Professor Holden's support of conscientious objectors actually undermines the war effort -- the war has already been won. Lewis's feeling about Holden is, as historian Richard Hoftstadter might say, "paranoid."[12] Senator Lewis is one of Glaspell's least sympathetic creations, typifying the reactionary politics of the era.[13] He speaks for the spirit of the Espionage and Sedition Acts.

Glaspell puts Lewis on stage only in the second act, and in that act takes care to represent also the majority support for Senator Lewis's intolerance. In Fejevary, Glaspell

creates a sympathetic character who is more moderate than Senator Lewis, and yet he shares the senator's condemnation of conscientious objection to the war. Fejevary values fairness and wants what is best for the college. He defends the professor while trying to placate the senator. (Fejevary will try to silence Holden, but does not consider dismissing him.)[14] In the course of this defense, we learn a bit about Holden's actions and the history of the particular CO in question:

> FEJEVARY: I'm going to have a talk with Professor Holden.
> SENATOR: Tell him it's for his own good. The idea of a college professor standing up for conscientious objectors!
> FEJEVARY: That doesn't quite state the case. Fred Jordan was one of Holden's students -- a student he valued. He felt Jordan was perfectly sincere in his objections.
> SENATOR: Sincere in his objections! The nerve of him thinking it was his business to be sincere!
> FEJEVARY: He was expelled from the college -- you may remember; that was how we felt about it.... Holden fought that, but within the college. What brought his name into the papers was his protest against the way the boy was treated in prison.
> SENATOR: What's the difference how he's treated? You know how I'd treat him? (*a movement as though pulling a trigger*) If I didn't know you for the American you are, I wouldn't understand your speaking so calmly.
> FEJEVARY: I'm simply trying to see all sides around.
> SENATOR: Makes me see red. (120-21)

Senator Lewis can barely tolerate even Fejevary's discussion of the conditions of Fred Jordan's imprisonment, suggesting that Fejevary's "calm" discussion of such a matter brings into question Fejevary's status as an "American." By putting a cautious faith in Fejevary's character -- "if I didn't know you for the American" -- Lewis appeals to Fejevary's pride in national identity to enlist him to condemn Holden. When Fejevary's response is to invoke fairness, Lewis tries shame; he uses the epithet "red." A pun portrays the blindness of Lewis's anger, suggesting he compares with a bull that "see[s]

red." The use of "red" here is divorced from its more precise (if equally demonizing) signification of a communist-sympathizer, just as Lewis's use of "American" has nothing to do with national origin. Lewis seems to live in world of inflexible conformity: either one agrees with his opinion and is therefore "American," or one's "Americanism" is in question. Fejevary, here, sees nuance which allows him to accept Professor Holden's position.

However, Fejevary allows some of his vitriol to show when the dissent is something that draws closer to his own interest. Fejevary is a banker and a business-man; he loathes labor unrest. He boasts to Senator Lewis about his son's accomplishments in suppressing such unrest:

> FEJEVARY: ... It was [my son] who organized our boys for the steel strike -- went right in himself and took a striker's job. He came home with a black eye one night, presented to him by a picket who started something by calling him a scab. But Horace wasn't thinking about his eye. According to him, it was not in a class with the striker's upper lip. 'Father,' he said, 'I gave him more *red* than he could swallow. The blood just --' well, I'll spare you -- but Horace's muscle is *one hundred per cent American*. (123; emphasis added)

Fejevary, in repeating his son's words, endorses the notion that labor-strikes are "red" and therefore not "American." His pride in his son's "one hundred percent American" muscle is intended to elicit the sympathy of Senator Lewis, but it also works to claim the meaning of "American" for his own pro-business agenda. Glaspell renders Fejevary as concerned with fairness and more moderate than Senator Lewis, but shows that Fejevary also limits the national character to definitions that suit his own concerns.

Adding numbers to this majority, Horace Fejevary appears as chauvinistic as his father has indicated. In exact opposition to Horace's first cousin Madeline Morton,

Horace dislikes the Hindu students, saying, “This foreign element gets my goat,” and he does not appreciate their cause of ending the Raj, as he declares, “Why, England’s our ally!” (122;123). Just as he stepped in to break up a steel strike, Horace will not tolerate a demonstration of foreign students who want to undermine the interests of a nation that fought on the side of the United States of America. Father and son agree about foreign students. Telling Professor Holden later that he intends to expel the Hindu students, Felix Fejevary says, “This college is for Americans” (134).

Horace and his father merely express the status quo in their intolerance for difference and dissent. Even though Fejevary later disclaims Senator Lewis “as not my senator [but] the state’s,” Senator Lewis does seem to act with the consent of the governed (133).

Senator Lewis’s tour of campus, his presence on stage, and the second act terminate abruptly when Horace rushes into the library to tell his father about Madeline’s involvement in the melee between police and the Hindu students. Madeline’s struggle with the police is not staged.

In the third act, set in the same place later that same day, Felix Fejevary, Jr. tries to persuade first the professor and then his niece to capitulate. From them, he hears notions of what it means to be an American that are opposite those he has shared with Senator Lewis. Madeline Morton and Professor Holden want the American nation to protect the very people who are not tolerated by the majority. Professor Holden sounds defiant in his conversation with Fejevary. Moreover, Madeline Morton is undeterred by his enjoinders not to protect the Hindus. The third act would seem to belong to liberal nationalism.

Particularly over the issue of the college, Madeline Morton represents a very different concept of what it means to be an American. Madeline believes that her actions on behalf of the Hindu students are a fulfillment of her national identity. We should recall that Madeline's answer to her uncle's question of why she values the Hindu students has less to do with them than with her sense of herself and her national identity:

> They're people from the other side of the world who came here believing in us, drawn from the far side of the world by the things we say about ourselves. Well, I'm going to pretend -- just for fun -- that the things we say about ourselves are true...

She is initially facetious, saying she is going "to pretend -- just for fun -- that the things we say about ourselves are true." However, once she is provoked by her uncle's accusation that she is "going against the spirit of this country," she reveals that in fact she regards her national identity and its imperatives very seriously, saying "(*in a smouldering way*) I thought America was a democracy" (140). For Madeline, protection of the Hindu students is patriotic, because American national identity is the foundation for her own democratic values. To Madeline, her uncle's idea is senseless that a college that "is for Americans" should exclude the Hindus.

At the end of their conversation, Madeline and Fejevary overhear the commotion of Horace and his "gang" confronting the Hindu students outside the library. A police whistle is also heard. Fejevary wants to keep Madeline inside, to prevent his niece from again becoming involved in disturbances on campus. In the most intense staged confrontation in the drama, Madeline manages to open a window, prevailing in a physical struggle with her uncle. From the window she shouts at the offstage policeman:

MADELINE:... Here -- Officer -- *You* -- Let that boy alone!

> ...
> VOICE: [offstage] Didn't I see you at the station?
> MADELINE: Sure you saw me at the station. And you'll see me there again, if you come bullying around here. You're not what this place is for! ... My grandfather gave this hill to Morton College -- a place where anybody -- from any land -- can come and say what he believes to be true! Why, you poor simp -- this is America! (142)

Here Madeline shouts her clearest equation of the idea of America with freedom of speech. She expresses great pride in America and its national ethos in her admonition to the police officer. However, her pride is tempered by morality. If she believed that true character of America was the oppressive "Americanism" of Senator Lewis, she would not feel proud. In this same confrontation, she and Fejevary trade exhortations:

> FEJEVARY:... You could get twenty years in prison for things you'll say if you rush out there now ... Do you know that in America today there are women in our prisons for saying no more than you've said here to me!
> MADELINE: Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!
> FEJEVARY: I? Ashamed of myself?
> MADELINE: Yes! Aren't you an American? (141-2)

Rather than accept Fejevary's "America" for herself, Madeline resorts to imploring her uncle to make a moral judgement about the meaning of that idea of "America." This foray exhibits the same rhetoric of calling into question the national identity of a person in order to persuade him used by Senator Lewis. The shame that Madeline directs at her uncle is aimed at inducing him to bring America more in line with its ideals, as she perceives them.

Professor Holden invokes the national character for similar ends, in *his* conversation with Fejevary. Holden and Fejevary feel themselves to be of the same group. Each must claim to speak for the values of the college, and the college and the nation are concentric locations for that national identity. Together they recite from the

school's mission statement (133). Holden practically completes one of Fejevary's sentences, when Fejevary says figuratively:

> FEJEVARY: ... We are in the woods now. It's going to take our combined brains to get us out. I don't just mean Morton College.
> HOLDEN: No -- America. As to getting out, I think you are all wrong. (133)

Holden thinks that Fejevary is wrong as to how to get America out of the woods, because Fejevary's solution is to accept Lewis's view of America in order to get money for Morton College. Rather than support the actions of the nation without qualification, as Lewis would demand, Holden criticizes the nation in the hopes that it will rise to its own ideals. He says to Fejevary:

> ... I think a society which permits things to go on which I can prove go on in our federal prisons had better stop and take a fresh look at itself. To stand for that and then talk of democracy and idealism -- oh, it shows no mentality for one thing... It's a disgrace to America that two years after the war closes [Fred Jordan] should be kept there -- much of the time in solitary confinement -- because he couldn't believe in war. (133;136)

Holden reminds Fejevary of the ideals that the nation fought for in its "war for democracy," as he resents the betrayal of these principles. He feels the imprisonment of conscientious objectors is a national "disgrace," and he objects, moreover, to the draconian treatment of prisoners as much as the fact of their imprisonment. The "disgrace" he feels, the "fresh look" he demands, show his attempt to claim what America should be.

Two opposing views of what it means to be an American -- an restrictive view and a liberal view -- shape the main conflict of the drama. On the one side, Senator Lewis

along with Felix and Horace Fejevary have little or no tolerance for those who do not feel as they do, judging their own positions as properly American. These persons are already in a position of power. As Senator Lewis says, they fight to "keep" what they "have." The threats that they perceive from foreign nationals, striking laborers, and war resisters are threats from the less powerful. The Senator, in urging his plan for Holden, is not acting as a mere private citizen; he exercises the power of the government to allocate resources to quash dissent. The demonization of strikers by the Fejevarys is not a government oppression of civil liberties in the same way as Senator Lewis's pursuit of Holden's dismissal, and yet their reaction to the steel strike nonetheless amounts to oppression of the pecuniarily weak by the financially strong. The exclusion of the Hindu students from the category of "Americans" excuses any disregard for their interests. On the other side, Madeline Morton and Professor Holden have a liberal vision of what the nation should be. Professor Holden and Madeline Morton are not themselves the subjects of persecution until they -- in the hope that the majority will do the same -- defend the people who are under attack from the majority.

This is the predicament of liberalism. Jose Ortega y Gasset, the philosopher and Spanish Republican, has written:

> *El liberalismo es el principio de derecho político segun el cual el Poder público, no obstante ser omnipotente, se limita a sí mismo y procura, aun a su costa, dejar hueco en el Estado que él impera para que puedan vivir los que ni piensan ni sientan come él, es decir, come los más fuertas, como la mayoría. El liberalismo ... es la suprema generosidad... Proclama la decisión de convivir con el enmigo, más aún, con el enemigo débil. Era inverosímil que la especie humana hubese llegado a una cosa tan bonita, tan paradójica, tan elegante, tan acrobatica, tan antinatural. Por eso, no debe soprender que prontamente parezca esa misma especie reseulta a*

> *abandonarla. Es un ejercicio demasiado dificil y complicado para que se consolide en la tierra.*(101)
>
> Liberalism is that principle of political right according to which the public Power, in spite of being omnipotent, limits itself and procures at its own expense a little room in the State order for them to live in that can neither think nor feel like as it does, as the stronger do, as the majority does. Liberalism ... is the supreme generosity; it proclaims the decision to coexist with the enemy, what's more, with an enemy who is weaker. It is unlikely that human species will ever bring forth anything as beautiful, as paradoxical, as elegant, as acrobatic, as against its natural instincts. And so, it should not be surprising that this same species promptly decides to abandon it. It is an exercise too difficult and complicated for it to be firmly established on the earth. (my translation)

Ortega y Gasset, although writing some years later and in Spain not the United States, is describing a similar historical situation as depicted in *Inheritors* -- rising nationalism. He calls liberalism a politics of "generosity." Ortega y Gasset does not, as Silas Morton does, have much hope that we may be able "to understand the other fellow." Rather, Gasset believes that liberalism will never be "firmly established," that it exists conditionally, when a majority tolerates what is different from it. Madeline Morton and Professor Holden push for a liberal majority, becoming themselves a minority in need of protection.

The restrictive "Americanism" of the majority, in rejecting what is ostensibly different from it, unites three otherwise unrelated ideas -- foreign nationality, organized labor, and objection to the war. In the play, the persecutions of the majority result in the adoption of new causes by the liberals. Once a defender only of Fred Jordan, Professor Holden after his conversation with Fejevary, defiantly declares that he will also "fight the deportation" of the Hindu students (136). As we learn in the final act of the play, Madeline Morton has her friend Fred Jordan in mind, more than the Hindus, as she decides to become a prisoner of conscience.

IV. Labor, Liberal Education, and Social Class

Madeline Morton and Professor Holden do not belong to the groups that they defend. If the restrictive nationalists persecute those with less power, the liberal nationalists in the play fight that persecution from a similarly privileged position. Perhaps freedom from material necessity is the pre-condition for their concern over the freedom of others. The privilege of their position evokes the oldest meanings of "liberal." Liberalism as a name for a political theory emerged in the early nineteenth century (out of a schism within the Whig party in England). For centuries before this, "liberal" was used to describe those pursuits that are "worthy of a free man," originally in the context of the liberal arts (OED). In this usage, the word helped to elevate certain studies as forms of labor suitable for an elite, and it implied the derogation of certain forms of serviceable knowledge.[15] In Glaspell's era, education was to bestow its privilege on a wider segment of the population, and the pursuits that were worthy of free people entered into the broader view of a society of workers.[16] In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I examined how Glaspell was inspired by these changes and believed that education would build a more equitable society. Glaspell seems to write *Inheritors* as much to question as to affirm her faith in the potential of higher education to transform the class structure. If Glaspell hoped, as Silas Morton does, that education will engender an empathy that tends towards greater social equality, she was also paradoxically aware that it will breed a leisure class.

Madeline Morton's tennis racket, the weapon she wields to defend the Hindus, symbolizes the leisure that attends her class. Her family's social significance helps frame the dramatic tension of the fourth act, as the possibility that Madeline could avoid prison

renders her choice to stand on principle the more affecting. While the audience imagines she will partially forfeit her position and fully forfeit her leisure by going to prison -- her friend Emil teases her, "There's not much tennis played there" -- it is difficult to imagine that she would fully forfeit the privileges bestowed on her by family, wealth, and especially by education (145).

As a professor of economics, Holden's liberty is manifest in his work. In the beginning of the scene in which Fejevary has his "talk with professor Holden," Fejevary discovers Holden in the library reading the poetry of Whitman and Emerson. Fejevary comments that he seems "very serene up here." Holden says: "I wanted to be -- serene for a little while... I wanted to forget economics for a time" (130). He is free "to forget economics," to engage in the liberal art of reading poetry. Holden has sought the poetry of Emerson and Whitman "to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Morton College" and to re-establish for himself the meaning of his work and his passion for it. He says:

> I'm more and more disappointed in our students. They're empty -- flippant. No sensitive moment opens them to beauty. No exaltation makes them -- what they hadn't known they were. I concluded some of the fault must be mine. The only students I reach are the Hindus. Perhaps Madeline Morton -- I can't quite make her out. I too must have gone into the dead stratum. But I can get back. Here alone this afternoon [with the books of Emerson and Whitman] -- (*softly*) I was back. (134).

Professor Holden's work depends upon his deeply personal involvement in it, and what interests him are such niceties "worthy of a free man" as beauty and exaltation. For Holden's liberty, Fejevary envies and patronizes him --"I'd like to indulge myself in an exalted mood... [But] I can't afford it. Not now" -- and Senator Lewis misunderstands

and despises him: “Teacher? That would be a perpetual vacation to me” (133; 120). They evaluate his liberty in the language of the market.[17]

The same socioeconomic pressures that impel a kind of market evaluation of professorial liberty also inspire a new commensuration between liberal arts and servile occupations. When Silas Morton dreams of the “life that grows up from learning,” he does not envision it as a “perpetual vacation.” His understanding of it more closely resembles what Holden himself was trying to achieve -- meaningful labor. Silas says that the words of his educated friend Fejevary Sr. “woke things in me and I thought about them as I ploughed. And that made me know there had to be a college there -- wake things in mind -- so ploughing’s more than ploughing” (113). Silas Morton does not imagine that the college will alter the kinds of labor that people are willing to do. Someone will always need to plough the soil. Education will ennoble that necessary labor. Silas declares, “Thought is not outside the business of life,” interweaving work and contemplation (118).[18] By accepting labor on the farm as compatible with philosophic leisure, Silas receives for the agrarian laborer a liberty that has its historical source in the dynastic caste system of Europe. This source is emphasized in the play by the detail, related by Grandmother Morton to Smith, that Felix Fejevary, Sr. was born into the aristocratic title of “count” (106). By founding a college, Morton assures that this liberty will take firmer hold in future generations.

Silas Morton’s concept that education ennobles labor was explored in both the educational and political philosophies of John Dewey. Dewey worked to renovate the old liberalism so that it would no longer derogate some labors as “servile.” A passage in *Democracy and Education* reveals the clear implications of political economy in this

thinking:

> If the mass of mankind which has usually found in its industrial occupations nothing but the evil which had to be endured for the sake of maintaining existence, the fault is not in the occupations, but in the conditions under which they are carried on. The continually increasing importance of economic factors in contemporary life makes it the more needed that education should reveal their scientific content and their social value. (200)

Dewey suggests that education will give the laborer more of a sense of the meaning of his work. It is important to note that, although Dewey was discussing educational theory here and not labor politics, his education theory clearly melds into political economy, and attends to many of the same concerns as an outright socialism.[19] He acknowledges that he is motivated by the "increasing importance of economic factors," to see the need to revise "the conditions" of "industrial occupations." Dewey argues that the distinction between technical and liberal education is a vestige of the antiquated class structures. He rejects "the idea [that] still prevails that a truly cultural or liberal education cannot have anything in common ... with industrial affairs," saying that "only superstition makes us believe that the two are necessarily hostile so that a subject is illiberal because it is useful and cultural because it is useless" (257 ; 258). In this sense, Dewey's educational philosophy provides an important context for understanding Silas Morton's notion of "a ploughing that's more than ploughing."

What is left out of Dewey's theory reveals the unresolved problems with Silas Morton's thought. Dewey remains mute in *Democracy and Education* about how one who is at liberty to choose will choose "industrial occupations." What about that individual factory worker? Will knowing the scientific content and social value of his labor sustain him in a way worthy of his inherent freedom? "Any individual," Dewey

says, “has missed his calling, farmer, physician, teacher, student, who does not find that the accomplishments of the results of value to others is an accompaniment of a process of experience inherently worth while” (122). Any form of labor is done best by people who believe in what they are doing. Dewey realizes that members of a society cooperate to achieve its function, that all labors serve society. The phrase “value to others” must include a pecuniary sense -- that *value* that others express in *pay*. The circumlocution may reveal an attempt to disguise the tensions between cultural values and market values. Dewey’s remarks imply that the result of education is freedom of choice in the labor market, but they also seem to assume that individuals will choose all manner of occupations, including farmer.

Silas Morton fails to imagine that the college-educated might want to give up their ploughs for more traditionally liberal or more simply remunerative occupations. This probably should be interpreted more as stubbornness than as lack of foresight on his part. Silas is aware in 1879 of the ongoing shift away from an agrarian economy, predicting that a “city will rise from these cornfields” (113). However, he does not anticipate that the college he will found on the prairie will ever select a leisure class. This is especially naive given that he realizes that Harvard serves that function. Felix Fejevary Jr., not yet a banker or a trustee of anything, is an undergraduate just home from Harvard College in the first act.[20] Silas asks young Felix what he thinks about starting a college “so [that] ploughing’s more than ploughing:”

> FELIX: It’s -- it’s a big idea Uncle Silas. I love the way you put it. It’s only that I’m wondering --
> SILAS: Wondering how it can ever be a Harvard College? Well it can’t. And it needn’t be (*stubbornly*) It’s a college in the cornfields -- where the Indian maize once grew. And it’s for the boys of the

> cornfields -- and the girls. There's few that can go to Harvard College -- but more can climb that hill. (113)

On the defensive, Silas Morton interrupts Felix. Contrasting the select "few" of Harvard with the "more" of Morton College, he expresses a populism that inflects the Morton nomenclature. His populist vision of "a college in the cornfields" is predicated on the notion that such a province will not mint an elite.

Glaspell depicts Silas's idealism, but the author shows herself more aware than he that social class is materially determined. While Silas's educational ideal may tend towards the ennobling of all labor (even lacing it with hints of a classless society[21]), Silas's reality remains dictated by the extant class-structure. In this class structure, labor is not glamorous and education is implicated in the privileging of the leisure-class. Silas's defensiveness, subtle enough about the "college in the cornfields," resembles the defensiveness his mother expresses over his own lack of education. Grandmother Morton interrupts the discussion of that empathy that is the hallmark of Fejevary's liberal education with a litany of servile labors:

> SILAS: Learning's like soil. Like -- like fertilizer. Get richer. See more. Feel more. You believe that?
> FEJEVARY: Culture should do it.
> SILAS: Does in your house. You somehow know how it is for the other fellow more'n we do.
> GRANDMOTHER: Well, Silas Morton, when you've got your wood to chop an' your water to carry, when you kill your own cattle and hogs, tend your own horses and hens, make your butter, soap, and cook for whoever the Lord sends -- there's none too many hours left to be polite in.
> SILAS: You're right, mother. It had to be that way. But now that we buy our soap we don't want to say what soap-making has made us. (111)

Silas may be a little embarrassed by his mother's litany of labors. He would prefer not "to say what soap-making has made" his family. What soap-making has made them, we might also call "culture" in the sense of "pioneer culture" or similarly "working-class culture," but Fejevary's statement that "culture should do it" implies the sense of "culture" associated with liberal education. Silas's words "get richer," like Dewey's "value to others," includes the pecuniary sense within a broader social significance.[22] While Silas himself is a farmer, he is not wholly exempt from the derogation of labor. Pioneer history revealed starkly to Glaspell how labor drives social class, as the material differences between generations of settlers on the prairie were so acute.

Indeed by 1920, many of the inheritors of "the college in the cornfields" are members of a leisure class, showing in part the failure of Morton's vision. Horace Fejevary, son of the president of the Board of Trustees, encounters a pair of coeds, Fussie and Doris, in the library of Morton College. Horace catches Doris and Fussie in the act of placing a love-note inside of a library book. The book turns out to be a volume of Matthew Arnold. The love-note turns out to be a hoax -- part of a cruel joke that the girls are playing on a Morton College student. Doris and Fussie want to have a good laugh at their victim's reaction to verses adoring of him, though they say they find him unattractive. Horace does not seem to think much of the joke, but he is sympathetic to their choice of a target:

> FUSSIE: Now, listen, Horace, and don't you *tell*. You know Eben Weeks. He's the homeliest man in school.
> HORACE: Awful jay. Like to get some of the jays out of here.
> DORIS: But listen. Of course, no girl would *look* at him. So we've thought up the most *killing* joke. Now, he hasn't handed in his Matthew Arnold dope. I heard old Mac hold him up for it -- and

> what'd you think he said? That he'd been *ploughing*. Said he was trying to run a farm and go to college at the same time! Isn't that a *scream*?
> ...
> HORACE: Too bad that class of people come here. I think I'll go to Harvard next year. Haven't broken it to my parents -- but I've about made up my mind. ... Morton's all right. Fine for the -- (*kindly*) people who would naturally come here. But one gets an acquaintance at Harvard. (125)

Fussie and Doris attempt to raise their own class-status by ridiculing Eben Weeks. Doris's assertion that "no girl would *look* at him" perversely elevates her position at his expense, as it registers that she *has looked* at him enough to make that judgement. In describing him as "the homeliest man," Fussie too derides his appearance, choosing perhaps the one word that, by suggesting he is unsophisticated, judges attractiveness mostly in terms of social breeding. At the root of their ridicule is that Eben Weeks must labor. It is Eben Weeks' want of social breeding -- and probably that of Doris and Fussie as well -- that inspires Horace's offhanded intention to transfer to Harvard. At Harvard College there would be fewer students, Horace assumes, engaged in the preposterous act of running of a farm. Glaspell provides an almost exact reversal of Silas Morton's vision of a college in these thoughtless undergraduates who ridicule ploughing, desire an "acquaintance," and show a complete lack of empathy.

To what extent are the "kind of people" whom Silas Morton imagines in his phrase "a house that's full of books makes a different kind of people" merely a more bourgeois kind of people? Will a college in the cornfields make a people better able "to understand the other fellow," or will it only create a class of people that enjoys more leisure at the expense of another class? Glaspell had a lot at stake in these question, and

resisted any attempt to answer them conclusively. However, Madeline renounces Morton College in the final act of *Inheritors*, calling it "that runt on a high hill," and declaring "Yes, I'm leaving grandfather's college" (156). Madeline's declaration expresses the author's disillusionment with the institutions of higher education to liberalize society.

V. The Visionary Inheritance

Madeline Morton may renounce her "grandfather's college," but she is the only inheritor of his vision.[23] "Vision" allows Madeline to align with the forward direction of her grandfather's idealism even while her action tends towards the undoing of what he has done. The visionary inheritance is a way of relating to history similar to the way of the biblical prophets but seen in Glaspell's writing as reflected through the Romantic movement. Glaspell uses the themes and motifs of visionary writing to structure a formal unity in the play. Both granddaughter and grandfather tell of visionary encounters with figures who are supposedly deceased -- a stroke of the supernatural within an otherwise naturalist drama. The apparitions herald expansions of freedom envisioned by Madeline and Silas that would shatter the cultural and legal structures holding freedom in its present place. Silas envisions a world in which the land is no longer portioned out into private property, and Madeline sees a world guided by love rather than law.

It is Silas who uses the word "vision." He tells the story of night, ten years earlier, when it first occurred to him that the hill should be the site of a college. He had been at Fejevary's farm to help with one of the horses that had fallen ill. Silas reminds his neighbor of that night:

> SILAS: Well, there we sat -- you an' me -- middle of a starry night, out beside your barn. And I guess it came over you kind of funny you should be there with me -- way off the Mississippi, tryin' to save a sick horse. Seemed to -- bring you to life again. You told me what you studied in that fine old university you loved -- the Vienna, -- and why you became a revolutionist. The old dreams took hold o' you and you talked -- way you used to, I suppose... Your face as you went on about the vision -- you called it, the vision of what life could be. I knew that night there was things I never got wind of. When I went away -- knew I ought to go home and go to bed -- hayin' at daybreak. 'Go to bed?' I said to myself. 'Strike this dead when you've never had it before, may never have it again?' I climbed the hill. Blackhawk was there.
> GRANDMOTHER: Why. he was *dead*.
> SILAS: He was there -- on his own old hill, with me and the stars. And I said to him --
> GRANDMOTHER: Silas!
> SILAS: Says I to him, 'Yes -- that's true; it's more yours than mine, you had it first and loved it best. But it's neither yours nor mine -- though both yours and mine. Not my hill, not your hill, but -- hill of vision,' said I to him. 'Here shall come visions of a better world than was ever seen by you or me, old Indian chief.' Oh, I was drunk, plum drunk. (114-115)

Silas seems to have learned the word "vision" from Fejevary (though Fejevary never uses it on stage). Silas dubs the hill a "hill of vision," meaning a place of possibility, a locus of the future, of "what life could be." This story, which depicts Silas as conversing with Fejevary then climbing the hill, is as much as Silas says of how the idea for the college came to him. However, the idea to found a college is not the only content of Silas's vision of "a better world" ; a nimbus of unforeseen possibilities also surrounds that idea. Clearly, "vision" refers as well to Silas Morton's hallucinatory encounter with Blackhawk. "Vision" comprises the encounter with the deceased figure, the possibilities for the future that are imagined at present, as well as the indefinite possibilities suggested

in the act of imagining the future. When Madeline relates her visionary experience in Act IV, the same characteristics will apply.

Silas says to Blackhawk the hill is "neither yours nor mine -- though both yours and mine." Their sequential possession of the hill suggests a visionary continuity in which their ownerships are equally valid and invalid. Unresolved between collective ownership or no ownership, Silas's vision encompasses both socialist and anarchist ideals.[24] Emma Goldman, the famous anarchist and friend of Glaspell, denounced "property" as "the dominion of man's needs, the denial of the right to satisfy those needs." Goldman declared that end of private property would be brought about by the "spirit of Anarchism," which she describes as "the great, surging, living truth that is reconstructing the world, and that will usher in the Dawn" (*Anarchism,* 59; 73). The ghostly visitation from Blackhawk figures as a kind of "spirit of Anarchism," a symbolic "dawn" of possibility, heralding the arrival of Silas's imagined "better world." While we can see dawn and dusk only from a temporary vantage point, we can know that it is always both dawn and dusk somewhere on earth. The apocalyptic vision of the dead returned, like dawn, signifies renewal by indicating the eternal in the temporal. It is no wonder that Silas's skepticism about private property, which is induced by his experience of the War of 1832, has a morbid character. His great ethical quandary, he feels, will follow him in his grave. Among Silas's last words in the play are: "Don't you see it? I see that college rising as from the soil itself... I see it -- but I want to know it's real before I stop knowing. Then maybe I can lay under the same sod with the red boys and not be ashamed" (118). Madeline will echo this line in the last moments of the play.

Silas's ideals are anarchist, but his practical actions are well within his legal freedoms as envisioned by classical liberalism. As a land-owner, Silas resembles the free individual who is the subject of the political theory of John Locke. In the famous words of the "Second Treatise on Civil Government," Locke describes the state that "all men are naturally in [as] a state of perfect freedom... to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit" (ch. 2 ¶4). In the concept of freedom developed by classical liberalism, the right of property is regarded as natural.[25] Though Silas may in his imagination believe in a state of nature without property, Silas takes advantage of the freedom of contract to dispose of his possessions when he donates the hill. While it seems a radical idea to envision a world without property, perhaps Silas -- a veteran also of the Civil War -- merely extends the logic of emancipation. Just as the earlier liberalism had wrongly accommodated the ownership of persons, so it had thought the land could be owned.

In his troubled relationship with ownership of the land, and as his ideals extend beyond his present reality, Silas Morton should be considered "a poet" in the Emersonian sense of the word. Though Silas Morton wrote no poetry, Felix Fejevary, Jr. remembers his uncle as a poet, describing the college Founder to Senator Lewis as "a poet, really..."(123). Perhaps his tale of encountering Blackhawk one night on the hill, which young Felix heard in 1879, would be considered poetry for its metaphoric intensity. Silas's relationship with the land is different than a regular contractual ownership because, though he has a title for the hill, he says, "I never have the feeling that I own it" (112). Silas Morton's skepticism about ownership arises in part out of an Emersonian

feeling of spiritual kinship with the land. In conversation with Felix Fejevary, Sr., Silas says:

> SILAS: ... But after you've walked a long time over the earth -- and you all alone, didn't you ever feel something coming up from it that's like thought?
> FEJEVARY: I'm afraid I never did. But -- I wish I had.
> SILAS: I love land -- this land. I suppose that's why I never had the feeling that I own it. (112)

"Feel[ing] something coming up from the land that's like thought" is a brilliant formulation of what Paul de Man has called "the Romantic image." Such formulations, de Man says, "uncover a fundamentally new kind of relationship between nature and consciousness" (14). The Romantic image presents a "possibility for consciousness to exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world, without being moved by an intent aimed at a part of this world" (16). Silas's idea that "the land has got a mind" imagines the possibility for consciousness exists entirely in itself (*Plays,* 155). This is true equally of Wordsworth's "cerulean ether," and of Whitman's "spear of summer grass." Silas's feeling for the land recalls what Emerson identifies in *Nature* as "the best part of men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deed gives no title" (9). For Emerson, it is the special province of the poet to have this regard for nature. The characterization of Silas Morton as "a poet" deepens the tradition in which we see the Morton visionary inheritance.

As it functions in the play, this inheritance takes on greater immediacy when Madeline carries it forward into the present of 1920. She is in the same room in the Morton home where her grandfather told the story of his night on the hill. Madeline's visionary experience is also told about -- it would seem the nature of such encounters that

they be recollected (rather than staged) -- but, when she tells of her vision, it has just happened to her and the audience has witnessed it. Madeline's visionary encounter interrupts a conversation between Madeline and Professor Holden in the play's final act. Holden is no longer a defiant character. He now strikes a tone of mature caution. He has come to the Morton home to try to convince Madeline Morton to see the consequences of going to prison:

> HOLDEN: ...You do this thing and you'll find yourself with people who in many ways you don't care for at all; find yourself apart from people who in most ways are your own people. You're many-sided, Madeline... I hate to see you, so young, close the door on so much of life. I'm being just as honest with you as I know how. I myself am making compromises to stay within. I don't like it, but there are -- reasons for doing it... It's not a clean-cut case -- the side of the world or the side of the angels. I hate to see you lose the -- fullness of life.
> MADELINE: (*a slight start, as she realizes the pause. As one recalled from far*) I'm sorry. I was listening to what you were saying -- but all the time -- something else was happening. Grandfather Morton, big and -- oh, terrible. He was here. And we went to that walled-up hole in the ground ... where they keep Fred Jordan on bread and water because he couldn't be a part of nations of men killing each other -- and Silas Morton -- only he was all that was back of us, tore open that cell -- it was his voice tore it open -- his voice as he cried, 'God damn you, this is America!' (*sitting down as if rallying from a tremendous experience*) I'm sorry -- it should have happened while you were speaking. Won't you -- go on?
> HOLDEN: That's a pretty hard thing to go on against. (*after a moment*) I can't go on. (152)

Here, instead of an apparition of Blackhawk, the visionary figure is Silas Morton himself. Not a mute presence to be addressed as Blackhawk was in Silas's own vision, Silas now speaks through Madeline. However, Madeline interprets the visionary figure of grandfather not so much as a representation of the man himself or his words alone but as

"all that was back of us." The meaning of this phrase is complex enough that I will have to treat it as a part of the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation. What must be observed here is its resemblance to the openness of Silas's feelings about the hill. Just as the hill belongs to neither Silas nor Blackhawk but rather to the future, so the figure of Silas represents not an individual within history but rather a collective comprising the weight of history. Just as Silas's vision of Blackhawk expressed the Goldmanesque theme of rejecting the institution of private property, so Madeline's vision of Silas implies destroying the institution of the prison, which Goldman called "a social crime and a failure," suggesting we "question its right to exist" (115; 119).

Professor Holden sets up the vision of Silas Morton as an angelic visitation by suggesting that Madeline not view "the side of the world and the side of the angels" as such "a clean-cut case." This visionary episode and Holden's reaction to it -- "I can't go on" -- recall the angel's revelation to Daniel in the Old Testament, as he describes "And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were near me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves" (10:7). Holden's repeated hesitation in the scene suggests that, unlike Madeline, he lacks the strength of his convictions, although he feels as Madeline does about Fred Jordan's confinement. He is dumbstruck by her vision because he comprehends it, not because of its inexplicability. Neither Holden nor Madeline is much puzzled by the supernatural event that she has experienced and he has witnessed, nor do they attempt to interpret it. They both seem content to forget it. The audience accepts this departure from the naturalist style, because,

submerged in ordinary conversation, it contributes to the heroic dimensions of Madeline's decision.

The vision gains meaning from the more natural conversation that surrounds it. Madeline hears Holden say that he is "making compromises to stay within," and that he does not "like it, but there are -- reasons for doing it." When Holden has crept away into hiding after Madeline's visionary encounter, she reminds him of what he was saying:

> MADELINE: You were thinking of leaving the college, and then -- decided to stay? (*he nods*) And you feel there's more fullness of life for you inside the college than outside?
> HOLDEN: No -- not exactly... (*something in him forcing him to say it*) I'm staying for financial reasons.
> ...
> MADELINE: There must be something pretty rotten about Morton College if you have to sell your soul to stay in it.
> HOLDEN: You don't 'sell your soul.' You persuade yourself to wait.
> MADELINE: (*unable to look at him, as if feeling shame*) You have had a talk with Uncle Felix since that day [Founder's day] in the library you stepped aside to let me pass.
> HOLDEN: Yes; and with my wife's physician. If you sell your soul -- it's to love you sell it.
> MADELINE: (*low*) That's strange. It's love that -- brings life along and then it's love -- holds life back.
> (152-53)

Holden cannot afford to continue his principled stands and risk losing his position because his wife is ill and needs the medical care that a professor supposedly can afford. Madeline's rumination that love "brings life along and holds life back" adds significance to her vision that the figure of Silas Morton is "all that is back of us," positing love as a force of history. Madeline's decision to leave her family and the college, she hopes, will "bring life along" rather than "hold life back."

VI. Nonviolence as Formal Liberalism: Madeline's Imaginary Confinement

It is interesting that the subject of Madeline's vision is not the Hindu students but Fred Jordan, the imprisoned Conscientious Objector. As the fourth act opens, Madeline has just received a letter from him. This letter brings her attention, as well as the attention of the audience, to Fred Jordan's situation as a prisoner of conscience. Madeline's decision join with him, to become herself a prisoner of conscience, constitutes the action of the play's final act. As Madeline contemplates imprisonment, Glaspell finds effective ways to convey those contemplations to the audience as visceral and intellectual representations of her confinement.

Her renderings of Madeline's contemplations of prison are deeply engaged with the theory and practice of the nonviolent method for social change. Nonviolent methods mushroomed considerably at the time of *Inheritors*: not only did these methods further the causes of Indian independence and resistance to World War I, but of course nonviolent methods were instrumental in the achievement in 1920 of women's suffrage in the United States. The imprisonment of Alice Paul and Gandhi's Satyagraha campaigns were in the news, and Glaspell was paying attention. *Inheritors*, in depicting the contemplation of confinement as the culmination of a young woman's actions on behalf of Hindu nationalists *and* war resisters, represents the cultural fluency of the idea of nonviolence in this historical moment. The depiction of Madeline's imaginary confinement, as rendered in the medium of the theatre, accurately captures the performative aspects of nonviolent techniques. Her contemplations also reveal some of

the ways that nonviolence -- that is, a commitment to peace -- extends the philosophy of classical liberalism.

The use of nonviolent techniques in the movement for Indian independence is certainly part of the context for *Inheritors*. The Hindu students in *Inheritors* do not themselves resort to violence, although their cause is not be exclusively associated with pacifism. There were members of radical movements for Indian Independence in the United States who were interested in employing violent means. Gainor points to the Ghadar movement as one such group.[26] She mentions the rising influence of Gandhi in Hindu nationalist circle in the wake of the Amritsar massacres of April 1919, but she does not much investigate the thematic resonance of *Inheritors* with Gandhi's activities.

On May 30, 1920, as Glaspell was writing *Inheritors*,[27] *The New York Times* printed an article summarizing a report by the special commission appointed by the Indian National Congress to investigate the Amritsar massacre. The *Times* cites "M. K. Gandhi" as one of signatories of the report, and refers to a passage of the report that details what the paper can only describe as "the Civil Disobedience Movement of Mr. Gandhi." The *Times* quotes the report:

> [This movement, or, more properly, this technique] if properly practiced, would render government by force an impossibility, and that an effective enforcement of laws disliked by the people would be difficult... Neither the Satygraha (sic) nor the Hartal (general strike) had anything to do with mob excesses... We do not in any shape or form desire to minimize or defend the murder of Englishmen or incendiarism. We believe that they are indefensible, but, no deeds, however dastardly, of an enraged mob can warrant a slaughter of innocent people.

This passage is full of significance for an interpretation of *Inheritors*, beyond merely the similar causes of Indian independence. The Indian National Congress commission report articulates how the inherent authority of "the people" may be exercised to oppose to the "laws" of the government. *Inheritors* explores this very same ownership of the nation by the people prior to government, first, as Grandmother Morton's feeling, and then as a way of acting when Madeline is willing to go to jail for her beliefs. If the people choose to disobey laws and prefer prison to obedience, "government by force" becomes an impossibility. Prison is the paradigmatic instrument of social control. The symbolism of Madeline's vision depicting the destruction of Fred Jordan's prison cell by Silas Morton's voice, is sustained by Gandhi's idea "to render government by force an impossibility," all the more so as a "voice," signifying truth, shatters the prison. Satyagraha refuses social violence, believing in the eventual revelation of peace. As it disclaims both the "mob excesses" and the violence perpetrated by the British soldiers, Satyagraha might be described in the same way as Fred Jordan, as refusing to "be a part of nations of men killing each other" (*Plays*, 152). This technique, it should be noted, will work generally against any "laws disliked by the people." This is the nature of what comes to be called "nonviolence" ; it is not one cause. It is the doctrine that no cause justifies violence.

In his historical examination of the use of nonviolence by pacifists in the United States, Bennett unearths the feminist origins of the War Resister's League. He quotes an address given by Jane Addams at the Organization Conference of the Woman's Peace Party in January of 1915 in which she claims that "the sensitiveness for human life is stronger in women than in men" (8-9). Glaspell expresses a similarly gynocentric

pacifism when she has Grandmother Morton reflect ironically on the special bond felt by veterans: "Seems nothing draws men together like killing other men" (106). Remarks such as these, threaded throughout *Inheritors*, provide a thematic support for Fred Jordan who "couldn't believe in war" (136). Although similar in philosophy, feminist-pacifists and Conscientious Objectors did not necessarily unite as consistent movement (Bennett, 21). While the feminist-pacifists faced persecution for their activities, they were not as consistently imprisoned as the Conscientious Objectors.

Many anti-war feminists had also been suffragettes, and the nonviolent tactics employed by this movement offer particularly useful context and comparison for *Inheritors*. Famous among these protesters is Alice Paul. Alice Paul was imprisoned for picketing the White House, but, like both Fred Jordan and Madeline, the conditions of prison life became themselves one of the causes for disobedience which in Paul's case took the form of a hunger strike. Not only was Alice Paul's initial imprisonment covered in the newspapers, but *The New York Times* also printed stories about her hunger strike and consequent force-feeding. One of these pieces the *Times* published had for its source a "smuggled note," similar to the letter that Fred Jordan sends Madeline.[28] Alice Paul describes how the windows in her cell were nailed shut except for one which is "nailed shut at the bottom, so that the only air I have now is from the top of one window." Perhaps this detail may have worked its way into *Inheritors* as, reading from Fred Jordan's letter, Madeline describes "one window too high up to see out."

The depiction of imprisonment in *Inheritors* forms the basis for the inclusion of this play as part of the tradition of nonviolence. The relevance to nonviolence of the play's depiction of prison deepens as the play progresses towards its conclusion, tracking Madeline's growth from a figure of comic violence to a figure of heroic responsibility. When Madeline, to use Horace's words, "hauled off and pasted the policeman a fierce one with her tennis racket," she is hardly an effective agent of social change (129). By accepting imprisonment rather than compromising her principles, Madeline hopes to become an effective agent of change. When Thoreau wrote about his night in a Concord jail, imprisonment was one aspect of a disobedience that significantly focused on tax-refusal. It was Thoreau's depiction of jail in particular, as well as its theoretical implications, that influenced *Inheritors*. In practice, nonviolent change has almost always had some component, such as demonstrations, strikes and boycotts, that results in imprisonment. Yet imprisonment is finally the most effective aspect of such campaigns, one that cuts to the theoretical heart of liberal thought.

Between the second and third acts, Madeline is supposed to have been jailed for striking the police officer. However, this is only the local jail -- different from the federal prison she contemplates at the end of the play. She recollects this first experience in jail somewhat flippantly in her conversation with her uncle Felix in Act III. Her uncle has accused her of betraying the college; Madeline mentions her time in jail in the context of a pledge of her love for the College, which she calls by the affectionate metonym "the Hill." Madeline says:

> Why, Uncle Felix... I love the Hill. I was thinking about it in jail. I got all fuddled on direction in there, so I asked the woman who hung

> around which way was College Hill. 'Right through there,' she said. A blank wall. I sat and looked through that wall -- long time. (*she looks front, again looking through that blank wall*) It was all -- kind of funny. .... (138-39)

Though the tone is different, Madeline's contemplation of the wall serves a rhetorical function which is also used in Thoreau's narration of his experience in jail. Thoreau tells the Lyceum audience:

> .... I stood considering the walls of solid stone... The rooms were whitewashed once a month and this one, at least, was the whitest. (238-39)

Madeline's "blank wall" echoes Thoreau's "whitest" wall. The whiteness and blankness they describe has a semiotic significance. It signals an erasure, a purge of the perceptions, and it serves to replicate the experience of a more sustained confinement. The sign is necessary to enact a narrative of transformation.

In both Glaspell's play and Thoreau's essay, the narrative of transformation is enacted in spite of the rhetorical necessity to diminish the influence of prison on the prisoner. Thoreau attacks "the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up" (238). But when he emerges from jail he does observe a subtle change:

> ... a change had to my eyes come over the scene, -- the town, and State, and country... I saw to what extent the people among whom I lived could be trusted as good neighbors and friends... that they did not greatly purpose to do right... they ran no risks, not even to their property; that, they were not so noble but they treated the thief as he had treated them... for I believe that most of them are not aware that they have such an institution as the jail in their village. (240)

Just as Thoreau finds the institution foolish as a way of proving his imperviousness to what is often imagined as a shameful -- or, at the very minimum, a

corrective -- experience, Madeline at first resists her uncle's suggestion that her experience in jail should have "chastened" her. However, just as Thoreau's perceptions of society are altered by the experience, Madeline does admit that "chastened" might describe her reaction to how the property owners of the town "run no risk" and seem "not aware." Madeline says:

> Chastened, was that the idea? Well, if you think keeping a person where she doesn't want to be chastens her! I never felt less 'chastened' than when I came out of that slimy spot and looked across the street at your nice bank. (137)

The experience in jail changes the way Madeline perceives the institutions and the people around her. It is the social aspect of imprisonment that effects this change: society isolates the prisoner not by getting the prisoner away from itself, but by concealing the prisoner within the walls of one its institutions. The prisoner consequently sees society differently. For Madeline, this an important awakening, as she readies herself to take her place within society in anticipation of her twenty-first birthday,

By the time of her birthday, the setting of Act IV, Madeline has realized that prison *is* her place within such a society. Her birthday is also the day she is to appear in court. She receives a visit at the Morton home from a friend, named Emil Johnson, who works at the courthouse. He warns Madeline that the judge who is to preside over her case (ironically named Lenon, i.e. 'Lenin') is "one fiend for Americanism," and suggests that she seek the protection of her uncle. Madeline explains that she will not compromise her principles:

> EMIL: Well, look-a-here. Madeline,... you're a girl who liked to be out... How'd you like to be where you couldn't even see out.
> MADELINE: ...There oughtn't to be such places.

> EMIL: Oh, well -- Jesus, if you going to talk about that -- ! You can't change the way things are.
> MADELINE: (*quietly*) Why can't I?
> EMIL: Well, say, who do you think you are?
> MADELINE: I think I'm an American. And for that reason I think I have something to say about America.
> EMIL: Huh! America'll lock you up for your pains.
> MADELINE: All right. If it's come to that, maybe I'd rather be a locked-up American than a free American. (145)

Just prior to this conversation, Madeline has been contemplating the conditions of Fred Jordan's confinement that are relayed to her in his letter. Feeling the injustice of Jordan's imprisonment, she will demand that it be changed. She cannot participate in a society that perpetrates that injustice. As it happens in this case, society has a place for such persons. Thoreau explored this logic as well. In "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau writes:

> Under such a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already been put themselves out by their principles. (235)

There is social holism to this thinking, a view of society and its injustices as inescapable. There is no place in society for those who, as Holden does, "persuade" themselves "to wait." Martin Luther King, Jr. in his "Letter from A Birmingham Jail," will describe this as "the moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws," which King views as part of the same moral responsibility to obey the laws that are just.[29] King expresses the holism of this thinking, when he declares:

> I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states... Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are all caught in an escapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.[30]

Madeline's idea of "an American," informed by her great-grandmother's sense of her involvement in a nation, has this feeling that she is intimately connected with the destiny of that nation, so she says she "has something to say about America." Informed by her grandfather's ethic of empathy, Madeline cannot feel the injustice of Fred's imprisonment and go on about the ordinary business of society. She realizes that she must continue her disobedience and go to prison.

When the state usurps the authority to confine dissenters, only the imagination remains free for dissent. The performance of protest then mandates imagining or seeking confinement by the state.

A play is a performed work of art; nonviolent protest is a performed political activity. As such, the imagination of prison in Madeline's contemplations truly approaches the nature of nonviolent protest.

As the lights come up on Act IV, Madeline sits at the Morton farmhouse, clutching "a torn, wrinkled piece of brown paper" -- the letter from Fred Jordan, written on scrap. The letter describes the conditions of his confinement. Madeline explains that her friend "is in what they call 'the hold'":

> -- a punishment cell... It's two and a half feet at one end, three feet at the other, and six feet long. He'd been there ten days when he wrote this. He gets two slices of bread a day; he gets water; that's all he gets. This because he balled [sic.] the deputy warden out for chaining another prisoner up by the wrists. (143)

This description alone would be compelling, but Madeline goes further. She measures out the dimensions of the cell, chalking its perimeter on the floor of the Morton's sitting-room. Glaspell directs Madeline's action on the stage:

> MADELINE: ... (*...Rises, goes to that corner closet, the same one from which* SILAS MORTON *took the deed to the hill. She gets a yard stick, looks in a box and finds a piece of chalk. On the floor she marks off* FRED JORDAN*'s cell. Slowly, at the end left unchalked, as for a door, she goes in. Her hands go up as against a wall; looks at her other hand, sees it out too far, brings it in, giving herself the width of a cell. Walks its length, halts, looks up.*) And one window too high up to see out. ¶ (*In the moment she stands there, she is in that cell; she is all the people who are in those cells..*) (144)

In Madeline's action, her grandfather's sentimental notion of "a *bein'* that other person" is now replete with political significance. She discovers in actual space "the room," as Ortega y Gasset would say, that the "state allows for those who do not think as it does."

The nonviolent actor engaged in political change must also discover this space, seeking to cast her message into the public sphere and most often finding only a cell. Madeline's cell is not real, but the simulation has actual dimensions in time and space. For that "moment she stands there," the fictional premise of the play is laid bare. The action of the character mirrors the performance of the actor. The audience sees a person imagining, in space and time, herself imprisoned. Phenomenologically speaking, the actor's intent constitutes what I call "performative liberalism." Nonviolent protest is also a form of performative liberalism. It enacts the tension between the intents of individuals and the enforcement of the social order.

The political efficacy of Glaspell's drama lies in the relationship between the performer and the audience. Madeline as a character, equally with the performer who

plays her, cannot in truth feel what is to be imprisoned or restrained by the state.[31] This is why the imagination of it is important -- to subvert the very nature of prison to atomize and to conceal what is unacceptable in society. The actor's performance of empathy with the imprisoned has its counterpart in the audience's empathic reaction to witnessing her so confined. In *Bodied Spaces*, a phenomenological study of twentieth century drama that does not include *Inheritors*, the drama theorist and scholar Stanton B. Garner writes:

> On the one hand, the field of performance is a scenic space given as a spectacle to be processed and consumed by the perceiving eye, objectified as a field of vision for a spectator who aspires to the detachment inherent in the perceptual act. On the other hand, this field is environment space [sic.], "subjectified" (and intersubjectified) by the physical actors who body forth the space they inhabit. From this perspective, theatrical space is phenomenal space, governed by the body and its spatial concerns, a non-Cartesian field of habitation which undermines the stance of objectivity and in which the categories of subject and object give way to a relationship of mutual implication. (3-4)

Garner shows the two ways an audience interacts with the performance: either a "scenic space" with a spectator who is trying merely to "watch" the performance, or (and these are not mutually exclusive) what he calls "environment space" in which the audience experiences a kinetic awareness of the people in the performance and also the relative stillness of the audience. Garner argues that it is the latter awareness that has the potential to compromise "the categories of subject and object." Madeline's performance of confinement invites the audience to share in its empathetic attempt. The fact is that the audience is confined, in a manner, to its prescribed role of observer. No one will get up, shout, take the stage, or try to stop the performance. This confinement builds the phenomenal walls out of the chalk outline. The "moment" Madeline "stands there" draws

attention to this fact of confinement, everyone in the theatre being relatively still for its duration. As the audience is willfully patient through this moment, that willful patience is implicated in Garner's discussion of the "detachment inherent in the perceptive act." That is, members of the audience do not experience their own confinement as imprisonment, nor do they, as Madeline and her performer do, imagine themselves as personally confined. The knowledge of their own real freedom, that the play will eventually end and they will go about their business, makes their temporary confinement bearable, detaching them from Madeline's imagination of imprisonment. As the play continues, it seeks to destabilize that detachment further.

As Madeline continues to try to empathize with her friend's predicament, she is able to reach an even more visceral imagination of it than she does when she first "stands there." This more visceral moment occurs as she reacts to the arguments of Professor Holden. She suddenly feels acutely what it is to be confined:

> HOLDEN: ... I'd like to see you give yourself a little more chance for detachment. You need a better intellectual equipment if you're going to fight the world you find yourself in. I think you will count for more if you wait, and when you strike, strike more maturely.
> MADELINE: Detachment. (*pause*) This is one thing they do at this place... Chain them up to the bars -- just like this (*...[S]he raises her clasped hands as high as they will go*) Eight hours a day -- day after day. Just hold your arms up like this one hour then sit down and think about -- (*as if tortured by all who have been so tortured, her body begins to give with sobs, arms drop, the last word is a sob*) detachment. (153)

This is the first moment that the script indicates Madeline should cry. She does not cry for her own pain -- she is not enchained -- but rather, her crying is an empathic reaction for those who are so enchained. Neither does she cry over concern for herself -- that this

will be her pain *when* she goes to prison. Rather, the knowledge that another is so enchained *at present* inspires outrage and the *desire to take* the burden of such pain for herself. The idea of "Detachment" effects this outrage because of the paradoxical truth of such confinement in a democratic society: the detachment of members of a democratic society such as Holden allows for the imprisonment of the conscientious, while the conscientious experience that detachment from society as detachment from themselves as they are corporeally restrained. Madeline's tears break through such walls of detachment, and, if they are met with tears in the audience, these tears open a channel across the social rigidity of that detachment.

What is essentially liberal about nonviolence is its conviction that the authority of the people exists prior to law. While liberalism is usually conceived of as a movement representing certain particular causes, its constantly evolving content reveals that liberalism is to thought what nonviolence is to action. The nonviolent technique for social change has the potential to prove the truth of liberalism, even in societies that are not democratically structured. Even in democratically structured societies, it does not possible to use nonviolence to bring about oppression.

Nonviolence and war are both techniques for achieving social changes, and their relationship to history is comparable. *Inheritors* refers always to "the war," even though there are several wars this may refer to -- World War I, the Civil War, the Black Hawk War. That the language which gives wars their individual features remains the same, while those features themselves are mutable gives an eerie sense of the way wars are

constructed by social forces. Grandmother Morton says in the first minute of the play, "That's the worst of a war -- you have to go on hearing about it for so long. Here it is -- 1879 -- and we haven't taken Gettysburg yet. Well, it was the same way with the War of 1832" (104).

To comprehend how liberalism and nonviolence relate to history, it helps to turn to Dewey's remarks on the historical relativity built into the concept of liberalism. If instead of an immutable truth of nature, the concept of liberty is a contingent and socially constructed idea, then we have to re-evaluate what liberty means for each new era. To this end, Dewey illuminates the troubled relation of the constructed idea of "liberalism" to historically particularized liberties. He says in his Page-Barbour Lectures on "Liberalism and Social Action":

> Liberty in the concrete signifies release from the impact of *particular* oppressive forces; emancipation from something once taken as a normal part of human life but now experienced as bondage. ... During the the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries it meant liberation from despotic dynastic rule. A century later it meant release of industrialists from inherited legal customs that hampered the rise of of new forces of production. Today [in 1935], it signifies liberation from material insecurity and from the coercions and repressions that prevent multitudes from participation in the vast cultural resources that are at hand [i.e., freedom from poverty and deprivation]. The direct impact of liberty always has to do with some class or group that is suffering in a special way from some form of constraint exercised by the distribution of powers that exist in contemporary society. Should a classless society ever come into being the formal *concept* of liberty would lose its significance, because the *fact* for which it stands would have become an integral part of the established relations of human beings to one another. (48)

When Dewey imagines a "classless society," he is not speaking of the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Rather, he realizes the mutability of what will come to define "some class or group" in the future.

The framing of a subjunctive -- "Should a classless society ever come into being" -- is a curious gesture, suggesting to the reader the enormous question of "Could it ever?" However, this suggestion illustrates the beguiling nature of liberalism. Dewey draws our attention with italics to a paradox in the situation of "formal *concept"* and "*fact*." Liberty takes its shape as formal concept from the *absence* of a fact. When we have the facts, we don't need the concept. We need the concept *only because* we do not have the facts. With this rhetoric, Dewey reframes the long-standing conflict in liberal thought by casting it as a historical temporality. No longer have we the conflict of individual and social control that had defined the liberalism of John Stuart Mill. We have only material circumstances that occasionally in history necessitate first an idea of liberation and then an action.

When a stage image is constructed of a figure enchained, the phenomenal presence of the liberal subject corresponds to its real historicity. That is to say, when you see Madeline imagining herself in chains you see the idea of liberalism. Audience and player participate in an imagination of the dilemma of the prisoner of conscience. Outside the theater, there is no fact of liberalism. There is only the facts of oppression. For liberalism to function, we must imagine the struggle against oppressive circumstance.

VII. Winds of Cultural Change

Liberalism is, at heart, a philosophy of change. The emphasis at the end of *Inheritors* is not Madeline's imprisonment, but her departure from the college, from her family, and from the home of her grandfather. The stage direction that precedes "Curtain" pointedly says "she leaves that house" (157). [32] The gesture is more one of artistic modernism than realpolitik. It repeats the modern motif of the break with past that Glaspell uses at the end of *Fidelity.*[33] Glaspell persuades us that Madeline's decision to break with her family and go to prison means freedom and change -- and not, say, the failure of the Morton clan[34] -- by weaving the trope of wind into the language in which Madeline articulates her decision. This wind not only represents freedom and change, but has the specific implication of a kind of xenophilia which casts "change" in light of ethnic and national identity.

The trope of the wind is introduced actually by Madeline's father, Ira Morton -- the son of Silas Morton. *Inheritors* presents this fairly significant character only in the fourth act. The audience has been warned before they meet him that Ira is an emotionally troubled character. "Ira is not a social being," Felix Fejevary Jr., says of him as a way of explaining to Senator Lewis why Silas Morton's son is not as involved as himself, who is only the son-in-law in the college's affairs. Instead of socializing with people, Ira Morton is obsessed with experimentally breeding a superior corn crop on the Morton farm. Fejevary speculates as to the causes of Ira's condition: "Fred's death [that is, Fred Morton, Madeline's brother who died in the war] about finished him. He had been -- strange for years, ever since my sister died --when the children were little. It was ... under pretty terrible circumstances" (121). Before Madeline leaves home, she demands of

her father to know these circumstances (she only barely remembers her mother). Madeline and the audience learn that her mother, who was also named Madeline, died of diphtheria, which she contracted while trying to help a neighboring Swedish family who were infected. Consequently, Ira likes to indulge in xenophobic tirades against Swedes. Because his son died in fighting World War I, he resents the war and patriotism. Ira's corn crop, it is suggested, sustained him in his losses, and receives the attention he might have given his family. Perhaps not surprisingly, his crop, his family, and society are all conflated in his mind.

As Madeline contemplates leaving home, she expresses great concern for how her father might react to her departure. Ira at first seems to be beg her to stay, pathetically invoking all that he has lost. However, through his rants about his corn crop, he seems to resign himself to her departure and to grant her permission to go. He meanwhile explains to her how he controls the breeding of his crop and how his efforts are frustrated by what is now called "pollen drift:"

> IRA: ... Oh, I told your brother all that -- the night I tried to keep him. Told him about his mother -- to show what comes of running to folks. And he said -- standing right there -- ... 'Golly, I think that's great! [that she risked her own life to help the Swedes]' And then *he* -- walked out of this house. (*Fear takes hold of him*.) Madeline! ... Don't you leave me -- all alone in this house -- where so many was once. What's Hindus -- along side your own father -- and him needing you? It won' be long. After a little I'll be dead -- or crazy -- or something. But not alone here where so many was once.
> MADELINE: Oh -- father. I don't know what to do.
> IRA: Nothing stays at home. Not even the corn stays at home. If only the wind wouldn't blow! Why can't I have my field to myself. Why can't I keep what's mine?" All these years I've worked to make it better... I've made the corn more! ... And how'd I get it? ... Plant this corn by that corn, and the pollen

> blows from corn to corn -- the golden dust it blows, in the sunshine, and of nights -- blows from corn to corn like a -- (*the word hurts*) gift. No, you don't understand it, but ... corn don't stay what it is! You can make it anything -- according to what you do, 'cording to the corn it's alongside. (*changing*) But that's it. I want it to stay in my own field. It goes away. The prevailin' wind takes it on to the Johnsons -- them Swedes that took my Madeline! I hear it! Oh, nights when I can't help myself -- and in the sunshine I *see* it -- pollen -- soft golden dust to make new life -- goin' on to *them* -- and them too ignorant to know what's makin' their corn better! I want my field to myself! ... The wind shall stand still! I'll make it. Let me alone and I -- I'll think it out. (155)

Madeline listens very carefully to this speech, and she takes inspiration from it, especially the ideas suggested to her by the agency of the wind in the pollination of corn.

It is Madeline who suggests that her father's obsession expresses the isolationism and xenophobia of the time. She says, after she has heard his speech, "The world is all a -- moving field. Nothing is to itself. If American thinks so -- America is like father." This is the culmination of her judgement about the restrictive nationalists that surround her -- that their rejection of its mutability will cripple the nation. Madeline's "America" is, to borrow Whitman's words, "not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations" (5). Linda Ben-Zvi, a Glaspell critic and biographer, has described "the central theme of *Inheritors* [as] the loss of pioneering values in the second generation, the spirit for movement and change replaced by acquisition and fixity" (226). Migration is a significant part of this spirit for movement and change, but the emphasis is not as much the internal migration we might associated with "pioneering values" as much as immigration -- the migration across national boundaries that results in contact with other cultures. In her conversation with Professor Holden, Madeline reflects on this problem:

> MADELINE: ... Just a little way back -- anything might have been. What happened?
> HOLDEN: (*speaking with difficulty*) It got -- set too soon.
> MADELINE: Any why did it? Prosperous, I suppose. That seems to set things -- set them in fear. Silas Morton wasn't afraid of Felix Fejevary, the Hungarian Revolutionist. He laid this country at that refugee's feet... Now -- the Hindu revolutionists --! (151)

Madeline is particularly outraged by the xenophobia around her. After all, it is the Hungarian refugee's own grandson, Horace Fejevary, who declared, "this foreign element gets my goat" (122). Madeline wants to stir up the human population, and she finds inspiration in learning that the wind naturally mixes the corn population.

Madeline does not realize that this thinking about wind and plant reproduction has its precedent in her grandfather's initial explanations of his interactions with Felix Fejevary, Sr.. Silas says:

> Thank God they drove you out o' Hungary! And it's all so dog-gone *queer*. Ain't it queer how things blow from mind to mind -- like seeds. Lord A'mighty -- you don't know where they'll take hold (115) They did something pretty nice for the corn belt when they drove you out of Hungary. Funny -- how things don't end they way they begin. I mean, what begins don't end. It's another thing ends. Set out to do something for your own country -- and maybe you don't quite do the thing you set out to do ... But do something for another country a long way off. (110)

Madeline's decision to leave her family home, although she first presumably goes to jail, may ultimately result in changes she cannot anticipate.

Silas's discussion of "seeds" refers more to ideas, whereas in the context of Madeline's discussion with her father about "pollen," the more operative concept is ethnicity. These two ideas fold together in the holistic view of culture that Glaspell

evaluates by writing *Inheritors.* At the end of the play, Madeline articulates this holistic view when she says, "I have to be -- the most I can be. I want the wind to have something to carry" (155). The evaluation of this holistic view of culture, especially through botanical models, is the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation. Not too long after writing *Inheritors*, Glaspell herself migrated across a national boundary, when she and Cook went to live in Greece.

VIII. Conclusion: Wind in Prison

As her thoughts are taken with the idea of the wind at the end of the play, Madeline's speech becomes somewhat abstract. There is an expressionistic touch in the final moments of the play, dissolving a long, naturalistic, "deeply conventional" drama (Bigsby, 16). Madeline Morton declares, "I want to be a long time where the wind blows." Her language is abstract enough that the other characters on the stage have a hard time understanding her, and her Aunt Isabel (the wife of Felix Fejevary Jr.) interprets Madeline's remark somewhat literally, replying, "It won't blow in prison, dear." On a basic representational level, prison and wind would seem opposite. Madeline responds, saying that prison "[m]ight be the only place [the wind] would blow," (156). Madeline imagines the liberal subject as wind in prison, an image depicting the conflict that has long defined the doctrine of classical liberalism. As Madeline's invocation of "wind" is an image of nature, the metaphor of "wind in prison" recalls the famous problem with which Rousseau begins *The Social Contract* -- "*L'homme est né libre, et partout il est*

dans les fers." Glaspell's drama not only engages with the history of this theme, which is at the crux of Western culture, but also renovates it for her own time. In so doing, she presciently ties in many of the concerns that become features of the politics of the United States for the next century to come. The heroic struggle that Glaspell dramatizes for empathy, generosity, and individual conscience against blind and bellicose nationalism, protectionist xenophobia, and conformity are as relevant to our time as they were in 1921.

In the next chapter, I will keep focus on the metaphor of the wind in *Inheritors* but will pull back enough to reveal the whole development of Glaspell's use of botanical metaphors for social change, which reaches feverish intensity in her next play of 1921, *The Verge*. In the ensuing discussion, *Inheritors* will be regarded less as a masterful political drama -- as I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter --, and more as part of the artist's reckoning with social change. This reckoning is an attempt to sort out in drama the relation between the truths of politics and those of history, science, and religion.

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[1] Although contemporary discourse is not a subject of this particular chapter, I do intend to return the question of liberals as a cultural group when I discuss the regionalist tensions in Glaspell's late novels between the Eastern liberal bastions of Provincetown, Massachusetts and New York City and her more conservative Mid-Western audiences.

[2] This blending of doctrines was not unique to Glaspell, but was shared by many in Glaspell's social milieu, most notably Floyd Dell and Max Eastman. Historian Leslie Fishbein writes of this milieu in *Rebels in Bohemia*, arguing that "the prewar rebellion was more a matter of temperament than of theory, and it fostered more conviviality than commitment among its exponents.... ideas... might be readily extracted from entire systems of belief and thus selectively adopted." (4-5)

[3] Here, "ethos" and "ethic" are regarded as interrelated. Wayne Booth writes, "From ancient Greece to the present, the word "ethos" has meant something like "character" or "collection of habitual characteristics": whatever in a person or a society could be counted on to persist from situation to situation. I express my ethos, my character, by my habits of choice in every domain of my life, and a society expresses its ethos by what it chooses to be. Ethical criticism attempts to describe the encounters of a story-teller's ethos with that of the reader or listener. Ethical critics need not begin with the intent to evaluate, but their descriptions will always entail appraisals of the value of what is described: there are no neutral ethical terms, and a fully responsible ethical criticism will make explicit those appraisals that are implicit whenever a reader or listener reports on stories about human beings in action." (8-9).

[4] A fuller development of the deep similarities between Dewey's educational theory and Glaspell's ideas will be the subject of chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[5] "Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Sparrow Hawk... is best known for the war that bears his name. The Black Hawk War of 1832 was the last Indian war fought east of the Mississippi. The Indians' defeat spelled the end of 200 years of armed resistance to European-American encroachment on Indian lands." From "Black Hawk" pamphlet, printed by Citizens to Preserve Black Hawk Park Foundation, Rock Island, Illinois. See also Donald Jackson, ed. Black Hawk: an Autobiography (University of Illinois Press, 1955) ; on Glaspell's interest in Black Hawk, see Gainor, pp. 117-118

[6] Silas Morton's sympathy for "the Indians" (meaning Native Americans) has its counterpart in Madeline's sympathy with the Hindus. Although nowhere in the play are the Hindus referred to as "Indians," the parallel is difficult to ignore -- especially as contemporary audiences and readers may find this feature of *Inheritors* offensive. Critical discussion of this parallel has tended to focus on its significance for a formal evaluation of the play. I suggest that this device is very subtly involved already in the subsequent re-thinking of the American-English nomenclature of "Indians."

[7] When Dewey claims that this voluntary disposition and interest must be "created only by education," he means education in the broadest sense, meaning especially those habits that are enforced by specific instruction in schools, as well as those habits that are more generally conveyed within culture.

[8] As Glaspell drew on the essay to serve her own purposes, I feel I can largely dispense with the endless debates about what positions Thoreau was taking or not taking, what "-isms" the essay invokes or does not invoke. Of course "Civil Disobedience" was widely read in Glaspell's day. I do not argue that Glaspell's interpretation of this essay is based on deep understanding of Thoreau or that it is of value to criticism of Thoreau.

[9] The idea of authority inhering in the people is implicated in the emergence of nationalism. By 1920, the setting for the later acts of the play, nationalism has erupted into a major cultural force. Involvement in The First World War is justified in the United States as a "war for democracy," as the Kaiser represents the old dynastic system that assumes the authority over a nation resides with its rulers, not with its people. The Hindu students in *Inheritors* use the same justification for their cause. To articulate a way that this particular ethos of democracy serves their nationalist cause, they quote from Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address: "This country with its institutions belong to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it" (As the Hindu students never appear on stage, the passage is read by Horace Fejevary, an antagonist of the Hindus, who charges into the college library to check the accuracy of their quotation.) (123-4). Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, his authoritative book on nationalism, is careful to include the emergence of liberal-democracy in his definitive list of feature of nationalism. He writes that a nation "is imagined to be sovereign because the concept of [the nation] was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.... [N]ations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state." (7)

[10] Richard Rorty, the philosopher *cum* literary critic, writes, "Those who hope to persuade a nation to exert itself need to remind their country what it can take pride in as well as what it should be ashamed of. They must tell inspiring stories about episodes and figures in the nation's past -- episodes and figures to which the country should remain true. Nations rely on artists and intellectuals to create images of, and to tell stories about, the national past. Competition for political leadership is in part a competition between differing stories about a nation's self-identity, and between differing symbols of its greatness" (*Achieving Our Country*, 3-4). Rorty does not seem to have been aware of *Inheritors*.

[11] J. Ellen Gainor has carefully illuminated the historical context for Senator Lewis's politics. As background for Senator Lewis's attempt to remove Professor Holden, Gainor observes among others the Cattell case at Columbia (*SG in Context,* 125). However, Gainor does not mention the AAUP or John Dewey. Further context for *Inheritors* is found in Louis Menand's "story of ideas in America," which shows the American Association of University Professors emerging from these same events (*Metaphysical Club*, 412-420).

[12] " ...[T]here is a vital difference between the paranoid spokesman in politics and the clinical paranoiac: although they both tend to be overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoid sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically *against him*; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style [in politics] finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others. Insofar as he does not see himself singled out as the individual victim of a personal conspiracy, he is somewhat more rational and much more disinterested. His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and moral indignation" (*Paranoid Style*, 4). Hofstadter does not specifically mention the imprisonment of COs in World War I as part of the "paranoid style," nor does he mention, in all his treatment over the post-war Red Scare, this earlier anti-communist crusading. Nonetheless, Senator Lewis's use of the adjective "red" to demonize dissenters, regardless of the content of their dissent, exemplifies his paranoia, as in Hofstadter's thesis.

[13] The impact on Glaspell and her milieu of World War I and the reactionary politics within the United States has been much written about. For an overview, see Wertheim (215 - 225). On the specific context for *Inheritors*, see Gainor (112 - 116). For details on the prosecution under the Sedition Act of Glaspell's close friend Floyd Dell and his co-editor of *The Masses*, Max Eastman, see Fishbein, (24-29).

[14] Glaspell renders Fejevary's exact position with great complexity. He and Holden have long held friendly relations, and Fejevary is aware that Holden's wife is ill. Moreover, there is an issue of authority. Fejevary tries makes clear to Senator Lewis, "You haven't met our president yet... I'm merely the president of the board of trustees" (127). When Fejevary does make his appeal to Holden, the worst that he threatens is, "If you do these things [continue to make a political stands], I can no longer fight for you" (136). As a powerful trustee, Fejevary might exert pressure on the president to removed Holden, as Jane Stanford influenced David Starr Jordan to remove Edward A. Ross from Stanford University in 1900; however it is unlikely Fejevary could not have removed Holden himself (Menand, 112).

[15] Surprisingly, this connotation is entirely overlooked in Michael Bérubé's recent book, *What's Liberal About the Liberal Arts?*

[16] In 1900, there were 238,000 students enrolled in institutions of higher education. In 1920, there were 598,000. (National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d97/d97t003.asp). At the same time, the population of the United States increased at a slower rate, from 76 million in 1900 to 105.7 million in 1920 (Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoops, "Demographic Trends in the Twentieth Century." U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002. http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf, p 11).

[17] Lewis and Holden use the words of "the man of affairs." (120)

[18] The full implication of this remark is a holistic theory of mind -- which is shared by Glaspell and Dewey -- that undergirds this thinking about labor and leisure. Affirming his sense that a college is exactly the right project for his vision of a more free society, Silas says:

> ...If it's true that we created ourselves out of the thoughts that came, then thought is not something *outside* the business of life. Thought -- (*with his gift of wonder*) why, thought's our *chance*. I know now. Why I can't forget the Indians. We killed their joy before we killed them. We made them less. I got to give it back -- their hill. I give it back to the joy -- a better joy -- joy o'aspiration. (*Plays,* 118)

Dewey writes:

> Just as the organs of the organism are a continuous part of the very world in which food materials exist, so the capacities of seeing, hearing, loving, imagining, are intrinsically connected with the subject matter of the world. They are more truly ways in which the environment enters into experience and functions there than they are independent acts brought to bear upon things. (*Democracy and Education,* 167)

Some of the context for Glaspell's and Dewey's anti-dualistic thinking will be the subject of the first chapter of this dissertation. Chapter 3 will develop the Darwinian influence on their educational organicism.

[19] When Dewey does discuss politics, he reveals the intersection of his political and educational philosophies in a way that illuminates how the socializing of liberalism eventually worked to change the definition of the liberal. In the World War I era, advocacy of free-markets was the economic idea most associated with "liberalism" (a connotation the word retains today in many places outside the United States). It wasn't until after Roosevelt's New Deal that liberalism began to take on its present connotations. In 1935, the same year as the Wagner Act recognized the rights of some workers to organize, John Dewey delivered the Page-Barbour Lectures at the University of Virginia, which were later published as *Liberalism and Social Action*. Dewey spoke about what he saw as an "an inner split in liberalism":

> There are still those who call themselves liberals who define liberalism in terms of the old opposition between the province of organized social action and the province of purely individual initiative and effort. In the name of liberalism they are jealous of of every extension of governmental activity. (26) ...
> But the majority who call themselves liberals today are committed to the principle that organized society must use its powers to establish the conditions under which the mass of individuals can possess actual as distinct from merely legal liberty. (27)

Dewey finds the definitions of liberty that are already constructed by free-market capitalism antithetical to the definition of liberty wanted by his democratic ethic. Implicit in the words "actual as distinct from merely legal" is an awareness that the liberty of the wealthy is often purchased at the expense of liberty of the poor and that the legal autonomy of individuals often does not liberate a person from the limitations of his circumstances. Dewey says that "the first object of renascent liberalism is education" (61). His project for a liberalism with education as its object resembles what he had stated in his educational theory. He writes: "liberalism is committed to an end that is once enduring and flexible: the liberation of individuals so that the realization of their capacities may be the law of their life" (*Liberalism and Social Action*, 56).

[20] Productions of *Inheritors* usually cast the same actor to play young Felix as Horace -- the Harvard student of 1879 and the Morton student of 1920. One actor also creates the two persons of the Hungarian immigrant in Act I as well as his son, forty years later, the banker.

[21] As is discussed in the subsequent section, Silas Morton's vision of the college is accompanied by a skepticism about private property. Thorstein Veblen, one of the leading economist of Glaspell's day, wrote in his famous 1899 book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*: "the emergence of a leisure class coincides with the beginning of ownership... [T]hese two institutions result from the same set of economic forces. In the inchoate phase of their development they are but different aspects of the same general facts of social structure" (22). Though Silas Morton does not discuss social class, it follows that if vision of a college is inspired in part by his distrust of the institution of private property that his silence on the subject of social class is part of a rejection of class stratification.

[22] This broader social significance is the subject of Chapter 3: "Aspiration in *Inheritors*."

[23] In speaking of Silas and Madeline's shared "vision," I do intend a meaningful, if tangential, engagement with the role this word has played in criticism of the Romantic poets. Joseph Wittreich has defined this "visionary tradition" as

> more exactly the tradition of prophecy. Prophecy is a way of seeing and a way of writing; that is, it is a system of aesthetics. But prophecy is also a way of relating: it postulates a theory of influence and provides a paradigm for intrapoetic relationships that is mapped out by various commentators on the Book of Revelation... (xv)

I leave it to another study to show Glaspell's direct connection with the traditions of Romantic poetry. It is, however, significant at this juncture to show the affiliation of the visionary as it appears in *Inheritors* with liberalism as well as a wider visionary tradition.

[24] Socialists, particularly in the Western region of the United States, advocated unsuccessfully for a policy platform of collective ownership of the land for the Socialist Party during the Debs years (Howe, 11n). It is a remarkable coincidence that the language in which Silas expresses his skepticism about the institution of private property so closely resembles the most famous lyrics to come out of American socialism -- Woody Guthrie's "this land is your land, this land is my land."

[25] There are some contradictions in Locke's use of the word "nature" as it relates to property (chapter 5). Locke believes that property is naturally acquired by labor, but once acquired it is perhaps less natural. With one stroke, Locke seems to say a state of nature exists prior to ownership, when he asks rhetorically, "Though the water in the fountain be every one's, yet who can doubt, but that in the pitcher is his only who drew it out? His labour hath taken it out of the state of nature" (¶29). However, with the next stroke Locke assures us the institution of property is itself natural, as when he argues: "The measure of property nature has well set by the extent of men's labour and the conveniences of life: no man could subdue, or appropriate all; nor could his enjoyment consume more than a small part... And the same measure may be allowed still without prejudice, as full as the world seems." (¶ 36).

[26] Gainor observes that most of the adherents of the Ghadar movement were not ethnic Hindus but Sikhs (129). However, one of the leaders of the group, Har Dayal, was Hindu. Dayal had been a student at UC Berkeley in 1911, a campus radical such as *Inheritors* depicts (Puri, 56).

[27] According to Ben-Zvi, Glaspell began writing *Inheritors* in early 1920 (222). It is unclear when in the composition process, the choice of Hindu nationalist students was made.

[28] "Miss Paul Removed to Prison Hospital." New York Times 19 November 1917

[29] "Letter from A Birmingham Jail." http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf, p. 4

[30] ibid. 1-2.

[31] As Wittgenstein argued:

> In what sense are my sensations private?-- Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it. --In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense... It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean-- except perhaps that I am in pain?¶ Other people cannot be said to learn of my sensations only from my behavior,--for I cannot be said to learn of them. I have them... (*Philosophical Investigations,* 89)

Glaspell, seeming to be fully aware of this epistemological boundary, seeks to transgress it, as it divides the suffering from those who either enforce or have the power to alleviate the suffering of the prisoner of conscience.

[32] The production of *Inheritors* at the Metropolitan Playhouse in 2005 chose to have Madeline return to her chalked cell at the close of the play, rather than Glaspell's direction for Madeline to exit. This was a powerful choice on the part of the director, Yvonne Connybeare, to emphasize the contemporary relevance of the play, which suggests instead a lack of progress and a continued to need to relearn the lessons of earlier moments in American culture.

[33] See discussion in Ch. 1

[34] When I taught *Inheritors* as part of a survey course in American Literature at Yeshiva College in New York City, I found that many students interpreted the ending of the play as the failure of the Morton family. Her departure was anything besides heroic. It was, I think, not only religious orthodoxy that inspired a resistance to the idea of change that the play embraces, but also, it is what social psychologists such as Uichol Kim might call the "collectivism" of the culture of Modern Orthodoxy.

Chapter 3

Aspiration in *Inheritors*: Progress as Natural Religion

> I grew in those seasons like corn in the night.
> -Thoreau, *Walden*

Whereas in the previous chapter of this dissertation *Inheritors* is shown to illuminate a set of ethics that have flourished in contemporary American life, this chapter will examine the concept of progress *Inheritors* and its intercalation with psychological and social extensions of evolutionary theory as religious ideas. My way of approaching the play is quite different in this chapter: I do not take a synthetic view of the play, but rather I see the play as itself a progression. Specifically, the end of *Inheritors* revises ideas put forth in the beginning. This kind of thesis and (almost) antithesis positioned Glaspell for a new kind of thinking for her next play, *The Verge*. If there were one word that encapsulates this thesis is would be "aspiration." When characters in *Inheritors* talk about "aspiration," they describe the human spirit as an evolutionary force that drives society progressively forward.

It is this idea that is evaluated in *Inheritors*, and the meaning of aspiration can be seen to change in the course of the drama. Only in *The Verge* does Glaspell arrive at a more complete antithesis, to be discussed in the next chapter. The method for tracking these philosophical changes in this and in the next chapter will be to trace the development of the botanical theme in *Inheritors* and *The Verge*. Botanical ideas become increasingly significant as *Inheritors* progresses from its historical first act to its contemporary conclusion. This trend only continues in *The Verge* in which botany is not only an element of theme, as in *Inheritors*, but it is also the central element of the plot.

Botanical metaphors provided Glaspell a prism in which to see differently refracted glimpses of biological facts corresponding to varying social processes.

Glaspell did not invent whole-cloth or in a cultural vacuum these various meanings with which she is able to imbue her metaphors from botany. Rather, what is interesting about Glaspell's use of botanical metaphors is how it reflects changing cultural values as well as changes in science, and even a point of termination for certain kinds of thinking about social progress. Thinkers whose ideas are reflected in Glaspell's use of botanical metaphor include among others, Ernst Haeckel and Herbert Spencer as well as William James and John Dewey. However, perhaps the most beguiling name associated with these ideas is that of Charles Darwin.

Darwin's name has always been associated with evolutionary ideas beyond the scope of his actual thought. The common misattribution that appears in *Inheritors*, taking Spencer's description of evolution as "survival of the fittest" to be the words of Darwin, is typical of the associative confusion in the general reception of Darwin's ideas. The fact that Darwin's theory of natural selection has since been accepted as the fundamental theory of modern biology, while other evolutionary theories such as Spencer's have been largely rejected, often serves to obfuscate the extent to which thinking about evolution had always been intertwined with concerns that are outside the boundaries of the life sciences. Darwin's theory emerged out of a culture of evolutionary thinking. It was during the early twentieth century that many of these evolutionary ideas were sifted out and Darwin's ideas isolated, as biologists found what they could verify, and psychologists and social scientists revised and discarded evolutionary ideas that were too closely

conceived with their biological cousins. Glaspell's working of botanical ideas as well as allusions to the figure of Darwin in her novels and plays are a part of the cultural history of that sifting.

In placing Glaspell in the context of that cultural history, I have relied in particular on one version of that history, Robert J. Richards's *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior*. This reliance is based on my broad sympathy with the aims of Richards's project. Richards attends to Darwin's ethics and the ethics of other evolutionists in order to revise the commonly held view that the discovery of natural selection *per se* undermined any attempt to ground ethical theories in natural law and that the Darwinian revolution left us in a materialist universe with only a relativist ethics. Richards demonstrates, on the contrary, that Darwin, his predecessors, and his disciples all attempted to account for human ethics within an evolutionary framework. This demonstration for Richards is the first step toward a revival of evolutionary ethics. My study of Glaspell in this chapter follows much the same pattern: I follow Glaspell's path through the wilderness of evolutionary ideas; I show how Glaspell could only emerge from this wilderness with her ethics intact by abandoning evolutionary ideas. This turn away from scientism was necessary within the historical moment of the early 1920s. Indeed some of the evolutionary ideas that Glaspell explored belong in the dustbin, but others do not. Some of the questions she raises in these plays have been settled, but more remain unresolved. The process of intellectual evaluation that Glaspell went through in her time, I believe, is instructive to us in ours.

I. An Evolutionary Thesis: "Aspiration" and Pragmatism

Glaspell wrote her most sustained engagement with evolutionary theory in the first act of *Inheritors*. Writing probably during the winter of 1920, only a few years before the Scopes trial, Glaspell carefully depicted the cultural conflict between science and religion awakened by Darwin's discovery.[1] She wanted to find ways that the perceived opposition of the two sides may be shown to be an actual agreement. However, her interest in evolution went even deeper than this attempt. What surfaced in this scene was an expression of many years of thinking about evolution and was something like a hypothesis that she will then try out in the rest of the play.

To put it simply, Glaspell identifies a possible correlation between evolutionary change and human progress under the name of "aspiration." It is this concept of "aspiration" that Glaspell utilizes, under the rubric of philosophical Pragmatism, to stage a reconciliation in this scene between science and religion.

The discussion of evolution in the first act of *Inheritors* is considerable in its complexity, and it can run over ten minutes long when the play is produced without abridgment. It touches upon a full spectrum of evolutionary ideas and makes several gestures towards historical accuracy. Presenting this scene, I have spliced it two different ways. First, I attempt to distill the complexity of Glaspell's thinking into a central idea, trying not to flatten Glaspell's naturalistic dialogue. I will then return to this scene and present its evolutionary ideas in historical context.

It is Felix Fejevary Jr., home on summer holiday from Harvard College and eager to show off what he has learned, who first introduces the topic of Darwin into the discussion:

FELIX: ... [Darwin] shows the growth of life from forms that were hardly alive, the lowest animal forms -- jellyfish -- up to man.
SILAS: Oh yes, that's the things the churches was so upset about -- that we come from monkeys.
FELIX: One family of ape is the direct ancestor of man.
GRANDMOTHER: You'd better read your bible, Felix.
SILAS: Do people believe this?
GRANDMOTHER: ...[W]hat's the use of believing a thing that's so discouraging?
FEJEVARY: But is it that? It almost seems to me we have to accept it because it is so encouraging. (*holding out his hand*) Why have we hands?
GRANDMOTHER: Cause God gave them to us, I s'pose.
FEJEVARY: But that's rather general, and there isn't much in it to give us self-confidence. But when you think we have hands because ages back -- before life had taken form as man, there was an impulse to do what had never been done -- when you think that we have hands today because from the first of life there had been ... those of best brain and courage who wanted to be more than life had been, and that from aspiration has come doing, and doing has shaped the thing with which to do -- it gives our hand a history which should make us want to use it well.
SILAS: (*breathed from deep*) Well, by God! And you've known this all this while! Dog-gone you -- why didn't you tell me?
FEJEVARY: I've been thinking about it. I haven't known what to believe. This hurts -- beliefs of earlier years.
FELIX: The things it hurts will have to go,
FEJEVARY: I don't know about that, Felix. Perhaps in time we'll find truth in them.
FELIX: Oh, if you feel that way, father.
FEJEVARY: Don't be kind to me, my boy, I'm not that old.
SILAS: But think what it is you've said! If it's true that we *made* ourselves -- made ourselves out of the wanting to be more -- created ourselves you might say, by our own courage -- our -- what is it? -- aspiration. ... Then we are what we are because through all that time there've been them that wanted to be more than life had been... -- why, then we are finished yet! ... (SILAS *gets up, opens the closet door.*)
GRANDMOTHER: Silas, what're you doing?
SILAS: (*who has taken out a box*) I'm lookin' for the deed to the hill.
GRANDMOTHER: What're you going to do with it?
SILAS: I'm going to get it out of my hands. (116 - 117)

In this scene, Glaspell offers an essentially religious interpretation of evolutionary science -- one that extends the claims of science into the realm of ethics.[2] I say this is an ethical interpretation of evolutionary ideas as it shows belief motivating action. Heavy ideas become dynamic. The concept of aspiration inspires Silas to stand up and search for the deed, raising the stakes of his action of giving away the hill. He justifies this act on the idea that human nature has been shaped by an innate desire of animal life to improve itself. Perhaps he even believes that the inculcation of morals furthered by his college will have an impact on the evolution of the species.

What might serve as an evolutionary hypothesis in this scene is Felix Fejevary Sr.'s natural history of the hand. "Aspiration" is Fejevary's word, part of his speech rendered in colloquial style, and spoken, we might imagine, with a Hungarian accent. His grammar adheres as closely as possible to demonstrating his concept. When Fejevary describes evolution as "an impulse to do what had never been done... and that from aspiration has come doing, and doing has shaped the thing with which to do," the continued re-inflection of the verb "to do" as both active and passive, subject and object, gerund and infinitive mimics the action of the evolving species, as he imagines it. The attempt to use language in this way will be picked up by Silas when he uses the trope of "the seed" of an idea to describe Fejevary's influence on him. Joan Richardson has identified this "language game" as a definitive feature of American Pragmatism.[3]

Fejevary's statements follow William James's prescriptions for Pragmatism to the letter.[4] The philosophy of Pragmatism seeks to ground metaphysical discussions with reference to the empirically available, physical world. James defines Pragmatism as "primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes. ... The pragmatic method in such

cases is to try to interpret each notion by its practical consequences" (28). Fejevary is faced with a dispute about the origin of the hand, and, he prefers a Darwinian explanation because it offers better practical consequences. Darwin, says Fejevary, "gives our hand a history which should make us want to use it well." Indeed, this statement is at the core of Glaspell's interest in evolutionary theory. Fejevary's critique of Grandmother Morton's explanation that "God gave 'em to us," as "general and there's little in it..." is appropriate to the extent that Grandmother Morton, in so explaining, would seem to want to quickly resolve the question and dispense with further inquiry. Fejevary has what James calls "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles,... supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences..." (32).

In another way true to the Pragmatist mold, Fejevary argues against his son's suggestion that the truth of the Darwinian explanation means that the older explanations need be discarded, saying "perhaps in time we'll find truth in them." This aspect of Fejevary's argument, I think, is connected to what Richard Poirier, in his study of *Poetry and Pragmatism*, sometimes refers to as the "conservative" or even, in a puzzling phrase, the "radically conservative," aspect of American Pragmatism, that, in Poirier's words, "new ideas, to be accepted as such, must in their articulation, pay deference to old beliefs or 'previous truths;' and that *any* belief should be tolerated as part of ... '*the universal impulse to belief*'" (37 ; 41).[5] Such previous truths as the protestant ethic of "good works" as well as the notion of creation as a purposeful act cannot be carelessly jettisoned if the theory of evolution is to be widely accepted, but rather such previous truths must be retained and re-imagined to follow the new information that scientists have empirically discovered. As a Pragmatist, Fejevary is not concerned to label the belief in evolution true

and the belief in God false, but rather he recognizes that we must have some belief and then begins to negotiate the practical applications of the alternatives.

This direct application of Pragmatism to the conflict over religion and science, setting aside for a moment the distortions to which it subjects Darwinian evolution, goes a long way towards pointing up an ethical value of that which is too often regarded as morally enervating. Indeed, if one were eager to see these too-often conflicting positions reconciled, the Pragmatist reconciliation that Glaspell offers in *Inheritors* would be indeed a tempting one.

However, the concept of "aspiration" that is woven into evolution here would seem to imply some sort of *telos* to evolutionary processes. It does not comprehend much of the randomness that is an important factor in Darwin's theory. Glaspell will in fact comprehend the randomness of natural selection, and will attempt to comprehend the ethical implications of this as well. She will do this in the last act of *Inheritors* and further in *The Verge*, but only after she has explored the full implications of some of her earlier ideas, working them out in the early acts of *Inheritors*.

II. Contexts for the Evolutionary Thesis: Social Darwinism as Red Herring

The idea of aspiration is really an idea of progress, and its heritage is largely a late- Nineteenth Century heritage. The historical setting of 1879 is significant in understanding the discussion of "aspiration," with its Darwinian associations. In choosing 1879 to introduce the discussion of Darwin into her play, Glaspell chose a year in which

evolutionary theories were flourishing in all areas of the sciences, and in which sociological and psychological applications were various and multiple.[6]

"Social Darwinism" names the most infamous set of ideas to emerge from this period, referring to any number of notions that view evolution as a struggle pitting humans against one another. Social Darwinism is often associated (somewhat incorrectly) with Herbert Spencer's pithy summation of natural selection as "survival of the fittest," as it is *Inheritors*. In fact, it is a social Darwinian idea that initiates the conversation about evolution in Act One of *Inheritors*. When young Felix Fejevary, Jr. introduces the name of Darwin into discussion, he is attempting to mollify Silas Morton's pangs of remorse over the dispossession of the Native Americans:

> FELIX: You haven't read Darwin, have you. Uncle Silas?
> SILAS: Who?
> FELIX: Darwin, the great new man -- and his theory of the survival of the fittest?
> SILAS: No, No, I don't know things like that, Felix.
> FELIX: I think he might make you feel better about the Indians. In the struggle for existence many must go down. The fittest survive. This -- had to be.
> SILAS: Us and the Indians? Guess I don't know what you mean -- fittest.
> FELIX: He calls it that. Best fitted to the place in which one finds one's self, having the qualities that can best cope with conditions -- do things. From the beginning of life it's been like that. He shows the growth of life from forms that were hardly alive, the lowest animal forms -- jellyfish -- up to man.
> SILAS: Oh yes, that's the things the churches was so upset about -- that we come from monkeys.
> FELIX: Yes. One family of ape is the direct ancestor of man.
> GRANDMOTHER: You'd better read your bible, Felix.
> SILAS: Do people believe this?
> FELIX: The whole intellectual world is at war about it. The best scientists accept it. Teachers are losing their positions for believing it. Of course, ministers can't believe it.

> GRANDMOTHER: I should think not. Anyway, what's the use of believing a thing that's so discouraging? (116-17)

We can see how closely these separate aspects of the popular reception of evolutionary ideas are entwined in Glaspell's history. The conversation quickly gives way from social Darwinism to the cultural conflicts surrounding the theory. It will then turn fluidly to Fejevary's idea of aspiration, which will play right into Silas Morton's action. When Silas Morton puts the aspiration idea into action, he makes "aspiration," the primary evolutionary emphasis, subsuming all other ideas within it. Ideas of a social-Darwinian stripe are retained and evaluated under the rubric of aspiration, but as far as explicit conversation is concerned, social Darwinism is forgotten. Also, Darwin's name is not mentioned again in the play.

However, the presence of social Darwinism in this scene is not so easily forgotten by today's critics of Glaspell and remains a red herring, obscuring other evolutionary ideas present in the scene and contributing to the general neglect of the subject of Glaspell's Darwinism.

Gainor is a perfect example of a critic who nearly comprehends the significance of this scene, calling it "one of the most interesting, but also troubling, in the play." She rightly considers the discussion in light of "Glaspell's placement within the Progressive era," and Gainor also astutely observes the connection between this discussion of Darwin and the motif of "plant genetics" that appears later in the play (123-4). Yet the presence of social Darwinism in this scene is a cause of confusion for Gainor. She writes, "given Glaspell's sensitivity to racial discrimination in *Inheritors*, that she would invoke this line

of argument and have Silas accept it seems perplexing."[7] Wrestling with what we know to be the ethical danger of social Darwinism but convinced of Glaspell's good intentions, Gainor parries "we must ... remember that concepts of what is racist have changed over time." Gainor is a consummate new Historicist, but these arguments neglect the new Historicist *propositio maxima* that everything happens in context. In fact, social Darwinism was part of the nineteenth-century effusion of evolutionary ideas. In forgetting the rule of context in thinking of social Darwinism, Gainor follows the larger pattern of academic discourse.[8] A kind of forgetting was necessary in order to isolate doctrines that had ceased to serve the ends of either the biological or the social sciences. Evolutionary ideas which today's intellectual world now knows how to sort through were not so clearly defined in 1921, even less so in 1879.

If we recollect that Glaspell's attempt in this scene is to depict a convergence of evolutionary ideas, then we are saved from that other problem that Gainor finds perplexing -- as she puts it, "why does [Glaspell] have the educated characters demonstrate such scientific confusion, when she is so historically accurate elsewhere in the play?" Commenting on "the history of the hand" that Fejevary improvises in this scene, Gainor writes:

> Here Lamarckian theory is conflated with the Darwinian and Spencerian discourse to suggest that man's past achievements can be passed along genetically from generation to generation, making the need for man to use his attributes well all the more compelling, given the impressiveness of the process through which those traits were acquired. (123)

Gainor's view would seem to be that it is a kind of inaccuracy on Glaspell's part to "conflate" various evolutionary doctrine. On the contrary, such conflation might be

considered as notes of historical accuracy, as these particular strands were considerably intertwined within the scientific discourse during the period that is the setting for the first act. In fact, Spencer himself was a Lamarckian.[9] Gainor is right to point to both these evolutionists, Herbert Spencer and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, for understanding Glaspell's interest in evolutionary ideas, but not to regard either as a direct influence or a doctrinal master. Rather, the influence of these figures is filtered through their popular interpretations and misinterpretations.

III. The Influence of Spencer and Lamarck

By sorting out the influences of Spencer and Lamarck, we can better understand Glaspell's concept of aspiration.

Jean Baptiste Lamarck, the French naturalist and professor of zoology, had been dead approximately half a century before 1879, unlike Darwin, Spencer, or Haeckel, who were all alive and working at the time. Yet, Lamarck's ideas were still very much discussed. There are two ideas associated with Lamarck's name that are relevant here: the inheritability of acquired characteristics, and, a related idea, that the human will is involved in evolution. The former, called the Lamarckian mechanism, is an explanation of species change that predates Darwin's explanation of natural selection. The idea that an animal can acquire traits in its environment and then pass those traits on to its offspring gave rise to a popular misinterpretation: for example, that a person who acquired a large muscle mass through weightlifting might have stronger offspring. As a result, often people mistakenly identify as "lamarckism" any suggestion that the human will would be involved in evolution.[10]

This popular misinterpretation of Lamarck bears on the idea of "aspiration." Clearly, Fejevary's notion of "an impulse to do what has never been done" would suggest that the human will is bound up in evolutionary change. This idea, as Glaspell receives it, imbues evolution with something of the Christian comfort of a purpose to life, which, in its emphasis on "using our hands well," rings with the Protestant ethic of good works.

Glaspell's Darwinism would seem to also be informed by the other Lamarckism -- inheritability of acquired traits (or, from the point of view of scientific accuracy, her evolutionary is *mis*informed by Lamarckism). However, to understand Glaspell's Darwinism as simply a question of inheritance as Gainor does when refers to "past achievements [that] can be passed along genetically from generation to generation," is to take too narrow a view of Glaspell's idea.[11] This overlooks the breadth with which Glaspell had hoped evolutionary ideas might describe human experience. Aspiration is not so much passed along genetically from parent to child and within the genetic family group, as it is something that is passed along from person to person within spheres of communication. As such, the ideas of John Dewey will prove as essential to understanding Glaspell's evolutionary thesis as those ideas arising out of a popular misconception of Lamarck.

More than that of Lamarck, Herbert Spencer's thought had the most influence on the cultural reception of the theory of evolution. Throughout the later nineteenth century, it was Spencer's work on evolution that was perhaps best known, especially in the United States.

When there was a controversy at Yale over the teaching evolution at this time -- that "intellectual world at war" that Felix describes -- it was texts by Herbert Spencer (not Darwin) that were at issue.[12] To trace the influence of Spencer only to social Darwinism is to ignore his wider influence as well to mistake Spencer's precise legacy.[13] That is, Spencer's synthetic philosophy provides the grounds for the kind of generalizing view of evolutionary theory that was prevalent in the Progressive era.[14] He suggested the broadest application of the theory of evolution, and, as a figure, he represents the imbrication of evolution with ideas of social progress. Spencer's extensions of evolutionary ideas into the social realm are crucial to understanding the idea of aspiration as it figures into *Inheritors*, as it was very much Spencer's ideas that Glaspell was evaluating in her two plays of 1921.

For Spencer, evolution not only explains biological phenomena, but might in fact explain all phenomena. Typical of Spencer's thought is this passage from the conclusion of *First Principles:*

> [I]f it be agreed that the phenomena going on everywhere are parts of the general process of evolution save where there are parts of the reverse process of dissolution, then we may infer all phenomena receive their complete interpretation only when recognized as parts of these processes. Whence it follows that the limit towards which knowledge is advancing must be reached when the formulae of these processes are so applied as to yield a total and specific interpretation of each phenomenon in its entirety as well of phenomena in general. (479)

In passages such as these, Spencer seems to believe evolution is an essential unit of knowledge within a completely knowable universe. Spencer saw biological evolution as part of "that grand progression which is now bearing Humanity onwards towards perfection."[15] This thinking plays into Silas's notion that founding a college might be the

latest manifestation of "the dreams of a million years" (118). Higher learning is itself an evolved activity that then reveals more and more of the processes by which the universe changes -- a kind of universal becoming, which in Spencer's thought is rational and material.

For Glaspell, unlike Spencer this sense of universal becoming could hardly be purely rational and material. There was always, if not outright theism behind it, then, at the very least religious feeling. Glaspell's concept of aspiration in *Inheritors* is remarkable for its consistency with an internally contradicting world view, comprising both a positivistic materialism and an idealistic view of human history. It was Glaspell's attempt in *Inheritors* to mollify the hard dualism of the material and the spiritual by demonstrating the compatibility of positivist philosophy with religious feeling.

IV. "From Mind to Mind Like Seeds:" The Naturalism of the Botanical Metaphor.

Silas Morton believes that a college will draw upon an evolutionary impulse and will channel the human will into increasingly ethical and sophisticated social forms. Struggling to put his ideas into words, he reaches for the language of plants. When Silas is first extolling the virtues of education, he exclaims, "learning's like soil, like fertilizer." And later, when describing the influence that Fejevary has had on him, he says, " Ain't it queer how things blow from mind to mind -- like seeds. Lord Amighty, you don't know where they'll take hold" (111 ; 115). Soil, fertilizer, seed -- Silas's language is imprecise, and the imprecision itself follows the model of aspiration. His attempt to articulate the idea follows an evolutionary model: he creates an excess of forms in the hope that one will actually describe the true nature of mind. A precise hermeneutics of these botanical

metaphors takes us back to Romanticism before it brings us to evolutionary theories of mind that were contemporary to Glaspell.

The naturalism of these botanical metaphor is something Glaspell probably learned from reading Emerson. The attempt is to use language in a way so as to bring words as closely possible to their significance in nature. In *Nature,* Emerson lays out three axioms: "1. Words are signs of natural facts. 2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts. 3. Nature is the symbol of the spirit" (20). According to Emerson, words derive from nature but their naturalness becomes obscured by common use. The derivation from nature occurred, in most instances, long ago, "in the remote time when language was framed" (20). However, it is possible to use language in a way as to cut through the common use and restore to words their natural significance. This function is usually reserved, in Emerson's thought, for the poet. For this reason, perhaps, is Silas identified by his nephew as "a poet" (*Plays*, 123) The botanical metaphors that Silas uses are not merely figurative. They reveal what Emerson calls "the spiritual fact" of the signified. Indeed, Emerson mentions that our word for the "spirit," which is at the root of the word "aspiration," derives from our understanding of the wind.

It is often said that Emerson argues for transcendental philosophy, but this is not necessarily true -- and it is not true of Glaspell's reading of him. In a knowable universe, language is natural. In a natural language, the naming of the flower follows from the facts of its existence. With a natural language, there is no need of metaphysics. The physical universe is the origin of religious insight and the true location of the spirit. If the science of the plant actually does describe the plant, then in some sense the transcendent way that

language accesses the thing is always immanent. There is no transcendence in the proper sense, only a subjectively transcendent moment of an objective natural discovery.

It would be accurate, then, to understand Silas's use of botanical metaphors -- for example, his idea "the land has got a mind" (consistent with "learning's like soil") -- as a brilliant formulation of what Paul de Man would call "the Romantic image," comparable to Wordsworth's "cerulean ether," or Whitman's "spear of summer grass." Such formulations, de Man says, "uncover a fundamentally new kind of relationship between nature and consciousness" (14). With an evolutionary theory of mind, however, this relationship between nature and consciousness should not be understood as a transcendent communion with the natural object. Rather, humans have access to this communion with a natural object as a part of their interaction with their environment.

If the material form of the seed evolved out of the struggle of living things with environmental conditions, so did the human mind, and so the invisible paths of thought may be revealed by reference to the visible ways of plant reproduction. With its empirical descriptions of the ways of plants, botany has arrived at some of the essential patterns of life. Under this rubric, Fejevary's description of how "from aspiration has coming doing and doing has shaped the thing with which to do" becomes a meaningful portrait of the spirit acting to shape to the flesh. If concept of "aspiration" has reference to an empirical fact of evolution, then the word becomes meaningful as denoting a material model -- one that is natural and not metaphysical -- for the human spirit. The spirit, imbued with an evolutionary impulse, has fostered a will, and this will, in turn shaped the living organism, which in time took a human form. This, anyway, is the hypothesis posed in the first act of *Inheritors* in the idea of aspiration.

V. Social Growth and Progress

Questions then arise about how that original living impulse evolved into a human form and how that human form then developed the complex social and technological environment in which the animal now finds itself. To answer these questions, characters look to the idea of the growth of an organism. Here, the aspiration hypothesis undergoes a significant trial.

The idea of aspiration, introduced in Fejevary's history of the hand, inspires Silas with the hope that a college, tapping into that long history of the striving of all animal life, will "make life more," that is, will be conducive to the growth of life. Human history, continuous with evolutionary history in this way of thinking, has a direction which is revealed in the organic growth of plants. Growth means that society improves as it moves forward, propelled by the force of history and the efforts of its citizens.

Two generations later, Madeline's view of growth is different: the forward movement of society might be pernicious and improvements are made only when exceptional citizens work to redirect or even counteract that movement. Madeline invokes some of the same botanical metaphors as her grandfather, and remains true in a way to his ethical vision. Both grandfather and granddaughter ground their ethical arguments in evolutionary theory. However, the granddaughter's interpretation of evolutionary ideas emphasizes evolutionary change instead of evolutionary progress. This re-interpretation, as we will see, represents a more direct encounter with the contradictions latent in her grandfather's view. Madeline Morton's decisive break with

the college and her family, represents Glaspell's turn away from a benevolent view of social progress.

To understand the concept of growth as it is evaluated in *Inheritors* it helps to understand how the concept of growth operates in John Dewey's educational philosophy. Silas's similes, "Learning's like soil. Like -- fertilizer," and "Ain't it queer how things blow from mind to mind -- like seeds," recall a significant analogy for Dewey in *Democracy and Education*. Dewey writes, "what nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life" (9). Continuity between social growth and biological growth is a significant and consistent feature of Dewey's thought.

Dewey's idea is that societies grow just as individuals grow.[16] Theorizing on this social growth, Dewey writes:

> In directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future in determining that of the young. Since the young at a given time will at some later date compose the society of that period, the latter's nature will largely turn upon the direction children's activities were given at an earlier period. This cumulative movement of action toward a later result is what is meant by growth. (41)

Each successive generation builds upon what was provided by the previous, and this is nature of society. The key word in this explanation is "cumulative." For Dewey this cumulative growth of society is bound up in evolution; he writes that as "education is growth, it must progressively realize present possibilities, and thus make individuals *better fitted to cope* with later requirements. Growing... is a continuous leading into the future" (56; italics added). By definition, Dewey conceives of society as kind of living

thing; he says that society "exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life." (3). Societies grow by transmitting their habits, customs, and ideas.

Social growth is as natural as the growth of plants. Education, too, is a refined form of natural growth. Dewey writes:

> As the social group grows more complex, involving a greater number of acquired skills which are dependent, either in fact or in the belief of the group, upon the standard ideas deposited from past experience, the content of social life gets more definitely formulated for purposes of instruction. (181)

Dewey's description of how "the content of social life get more definitely formulated" shows the operation of progress. As we develop increasingly sophisticated forms of knowing, we need more formalized methods to educate people. Dewey's passive construction reveals his assumption that process is natural. Education, as the name given to a formalized program of learning, has sometimes seemed divorced from nature. However, Dewey's educational philosophy sets its basic purpose against any such separation. Dewey acknowledges the challenge:"To avoid a split," he writes, "between what men consciously know ... by a specific job of learning, and what they unconsciously know ... by intercourse with others, becomes an increasingly difficult task with every development of special schooling" (9). Dewey reminds us that all forms of learning evolved naturally out of the animal needs of people to understand their immediate environment.

Dewey, with the progressive view of growth, disputes the account of Rousseau, who feels that education for social life necessarily takes people away from nature. Contending what he takes to be Rousseau's conclusion about the unnatural quality of

social institutions, Dewey first concedes what is accurate in Rousseau and then tries to modify Rousseau's conclusion. Dewey writes:

> That evil institutions and customs work almost automatically to give wrong education which the most careful schooling cannot offset is true enough; but the conclusion is not to education [sic] apart from the environment, but to provide an environment in which native powers will be put to better uses (118).

Dewey, in this passage, exhibits a tremendous faith the human ability to understand and control and direct itself. Progress means ever learning, if often from error, to better cope with conditions. The only direction to which growth tends is more growth.

Essentially, this idea of education as natural growth is evident in many of Silas Morton's rhapsodies about education. When Silas Morton declares in the very last moments of Act One of *Inheritors*, "I see that college rising as if from the soil itself, as if it is what comes at the last from that thinking that breathes from the earth," he evokes Dewey's concept of formal education as the product of a long history of a cumulative and intensifying web of communications which had their origins in primitive necessity (118). Just as Silas grows corn for his nutrition, he will grow a college for his spirit so that life is more meaningful and more whole, so that in his view we can fulfill our biological mandate to keep creating ourselves.

However, even as Silas Morton professes the articles of his naturalistic faith, his speeches reveal some doubt about its doctrine that knowledge *of* nature brings us closer *to* nature. These doubts suggest that Glaspell does not follow Dewey's certain move away from Rousseau's contention that advancing knowledge has often resulted in dangerous

departures from nature. It is this idea, latent in Silas's embrace of progress, that will come to more or less settle the question of social growth in *The Verge* and after.

VI. Debate about "The Nature of Growth."

Throughout *Inheritors, a* debate is structured about "the nature of growth," and about whether the college, by directing its growth, can improve the quality of social life. This informal debate has three rounds: First, Silas argues in favor of the college as a means of ensuring the best social growth, contesting those who would prefer private enterprise. Next, the question becomes how must the college conduct its own growth; Holden and Fejevary argue for differing views. In the third and final phase of the debate, Madeline will argue with herself if growth has any positive social direction, or if, rather, growth is unhealthy for social life.

The alignment of the two sides across the rounds of this debate point to a striking fissure in two different modern senses of the word "development," which in common parlance is often a synonym for growth. At present, psychological development and economic development evoke very separate meanings. However, it was during the period that *Inheritors* covers that the word began to take on each of these significances, and in each case deriving from the same scientific vocabulary.[17]

The economic sense of development, having a direct application for the use of land, is a pervasive theme in *Inheritors*. From the very first moment of the play, the use of the land is exactly at issue. As the play opens the young business man Smith comes to visit the Morton farm in 1879 to discuss the hill that Silas then will donate for the

founding of Morton College. Smith is what we would now call a real-estate developer. He works for a company that wants to buy the hill, build homes on it, and sell the homes. In conversing with Grandmother Morton before Silas enters, Smith uses the word "development" in its economic modern sense:

> SMITH: If we could have the hill at a fair price... [T]he development of the town demands its use.
> GRANDMOTHER: (*smiling*)You the development of the town?
> SMITH: I represent it. This town has been growing so fast --
> GRANDMOTHER: This town began to grow the day I got here. (105)

In this conversation, as in common parlance today, the terms "growth" and "development" are used to signify similar economic ideas. Economic growth signifies an increase in the value of a particular set of exchanges. The term "development" is used today not only to describe any conversion of the purpose of a given plot, but also to describe whole the level of economic activity in a regions and countries. This sense, containing a latent notion of progress, almost always contains an ethical priority on intensifying economic activity. Smith and Grandmother are not yet deeply engaged in the debate about the nature of growth. They more or less agree that their own economic activity causes the place to grow. Grandmother only wants her due credit. By law and custom, she leaves decisions about the land to her son. The debate about the nature of growth begins when Silas enters the stage and -- against his mother's advice -- refuses to sell.

It must be noted that the very terms in which Silas negotiates with Smith resonate with the more individual sense of development, i.e., the psychological development of the

child into the adult. Even before we learn what Silas's intention is for the hill, we are made aware of his concern for youth. Grandmother Morton suggests that Smith's youth might help him secure a deal for the hill, saying "Silas'd help a young one if he could" (105). Taking Grandmother's hint, Smith raises the issue of future generations in his attempts to persuade Silas to sell. (Smith, we must remember, remains unaware of Silas's idea to found a college.)

> SILAS:... The hill is not for sale. ...
> SMITH: Do you feel you have the right -- the moral right to hold it?
> SILAS: It's not for myself I'm holding it.
> SMITH: Oh, for the children?
> SILAS: Yes, the children...
> SMITH: But... there are other people's children to consider.
> SILAS: Yes, I know it. That's it. ...
> SMITH: We could make you a rich man, Mr Morton. Do you think what you have in mind will make you so much richer?
> SILAS: Much richer. (109)

Silas must secure space for the growth of the college with its liberal humanist dream of spiritual growth by fighting off the growth of the town driven by the accumulation of wealth. Silas may see himself as trying, in Dewey's words, to direct the activities of the young. He wants to direct those activities away from the private enjoyment of the land and towards something "richer."

Silas is not completely naive. He is, in fact, a shrewd observer of the world. If he misses his chance to become a rich man, it is not because he does not see the economic changes that are going on around him. In response to Fejevary's observation that "they've bought ground for a new steel works," Silas predicts, "Yes, a city will rise from these cornfields -- a big rich place -- that's bound to be. It's written in the lay o' the land and

the way the river flows" (113). Silas knows the economic development is on its way. Silas sees himself contending with evolutionary forces to direct the best growth. The landscape, as with seeing the college rise from the soil itself, is the basis for his prediction of economic growth almost as an evolutionary necessity. The steel works, as a piece of technology, is an adaptation that allows the population to better cope with conditions and thrive in its particular environment. The steel works is both the result of past growth and the basis for future growth, as is registered in the careful threading of the steel works motif throughout *Inheritors*.

At the end Act One, when Silas is exhorting his family and friends to join him, he invokes advancing progress and the need to protect it from a pure profit motive:

> Look at the land we just walked in and took! Was there ever such a chance to make life more? Why, the buffalo before us was more than we if we do nothing but prosper! God damn us if we sit here rich and fat and forget man's in the makin'. (117)

Silas Morton's words in this passage contain an awful warning for American culture and its capacity for growth.

Using the motif of the steel works, Glaspell carefully paints the growth of the college and the town in reference to one another. As the debate about the nature of growth *Inheritors* progresses from the first round to the second, and as the play progresses from its historical to contemporary settings, the economic growth of the town has progressed considerably. Private enterprise encroaches on the others aspects of communal life of the area. This can be seen plainly from a window in the library of Morton College, and it is

remarked upon by Felix Fejevary, the President of the Board of Trustees on the tour he directs for Senator Lewis:

> FEJEVARY: You can see the old Morton place off on that first little hill....
> SENATOR: The long low house?
> FEJEVARY: That's it. You see, the town for the most part swung around the other side of the hill, so the Morton place is still a farm.
> SENATOR: But you're growing all the while. The town'll take the cornfield yet.
> FEJEVARY: Yes, our steel works is making us a city. (123)

Fejevary, who is also a banker, hardly regards conflicts between economic growth and spiritual growth. Fejevary's job is to secure capital to ensure the continued financial health of Morton College. The word "development" resonates here very well, as the word has become the title of the fundraising offices of almost every major college and university in the United States.

Fejevary's argument with Professor Holden then becomes an argument about the growth of the college. In stark terms, Fejevary is the spokesperson for economic growth, and Holden for spiritual growth:

> FEJEVARY: The time for being a little college has passed. We must take our place as one of the important colleges ... of the Middle West. But we have to enlarge before we can grow. ... It was a nice thing to open the anniversary with fifty thousand dollars from the steel works -- but fifty thousand dollars -- nowadays -- to an institution. ...[T]here's this chance for an appropriation from the state. I find that the legislature, the members who count, are very friendly to Morton College. ... You are one of the big reasons for my wanting to put this over. Your salary makes me blush. It's all wrong that a man like you should have these petty worries... (131)
> HOLDEN: ...You say enlarge that we may grow. That's false. It isn't it in the nature of growth. Why not do it the way of Silas

> Morton and Walt Whitman -- each man being his purest and intensest [sic.] self. I was full of this fervour when when you came in. I'm more and more disappointed in our students. They're empty -- flippant. No sensitive moment awakens them to beauty. No exaltation makes them -- what they hadn't known they were. I concluded some of the fault must be mine. The only students I reach are the Hindus. Perhaps Madeline Morton -- I don't quite make her out. I too must have gone into the dead stratum. But I can get back. Here alone this afternoon -- (*softly*) I was back. (134)

Professor Holden's voice in this argument, I think, is an enormously important one for Glaspell, not only for understanding the debate that Holden frames as one about "the nature of growth," but also for understanding the larger liberal humanist themes in Glaspell's career that will be taken up in the conclusion. Holden offers a cohesive view of the growth of American nation, one in which a naturally progressive spiritual growth triumphs over the economic growth that threatens it. As a teacher, Holden is aware of how this growth might be accomplished on an individual level. He has an idea of what he means by a "purest and intensest self."[18] However, in his explanation, we see that he is frustrated by the difficulty of accomplishing this goal. He complains that his students do not awaken to beauty, nor do they become "what they hadn't known they were." Clearly, these are developmental ideas that are structured by a temporality of progress.

The argument between the Professor and the President of the Board of Trustees shows that the stakes for individuals in how a society grows are intensely personal, suggesting the twin senses of the idea of development. As a teacher, Professor Holden is invested in the individual growth of his students. Fejevary is just as intent on delivering the appropriation for the college so that his work of stewardship over its future is successful and satisfying for him. Both men feel they have given over countless hours of

labor to Morton College, and so each man shows a keen awareness of other potentials, other directions his labor might have taken. Towards the end of this scene, Fejevary is wounded by Holden's regard for the appropriation as a lesser form of work, and the banker is suddenly humanized by his aching retort: "How do you know what I've had? You have no way of knowing what's in me -- what other thing I might have been" (136). As persons develop their individual capacities to further the growth of social institutions, they are naturally concerned that their best talents are put to good use. Fejevary knows that the advanced development of certain of his capacities has meant that some of his other capacities would remain underdeveloped. Both Fejevary and Holden have given their lives to the institution of Morton College, and their debate about the nature of the growth of their institution is underwritten by their deep sense of this personal economy. Recalling his first years at Morton College apropos of the anniversary, Holden recites how Silas had entreated him to join the faculty and what he knew to be at stake: "He said, 'Young man... give us this great thing you've got!' And so I stayed, for I felt that *here was soil in which I could grow*, and that one's whole life was not too much to give to a place *with roots* like that" (133; my italics). The growth of the individual and the growth of the institution are intertwined.

Holden, to his regret, will discover the limits on the growth that institution will permit him, and finds that he too must, in Fejevary's words, "make sacrifices." In the fourth act, Holden will caution Madeline against imprisonment. As Madeline quickly points out, Holden's warnings are *de facto* arguments against the pursuit of personal and social growth. Holden position's is not unjustified, of course. Medical expenses for his

wife, who suffers from an unnamed illness, are his "financial reason" for staying at Morton College, He tells Madeline "If you sell your soul -- it's to love you sell it."[19] Given that he did after all spend at least thirty years of his life at Morton College, perhaps it is for love not only of his wife that he stays.

In the third and final phase, the debate about the nature of growth changes its terms. Madeline may go further than any of the preceding generations in seeing economic growth as completely inimical to social growth. However, what is more important is that Madeline digs up the foundation of both concepts, questioning the assumption of forward movement in progressive theories of history. Instead of her grandfather's sense that we should "plant a college," Madeline has the sense that we should "throw it to the winds" (113;156). Madeline takes up the same evolutionary explanation of mind that lies behind the concepts of growth as used earlier in the play, and in Dewey's educational philosophy.

It is only by reference to this evolutionary notion of growth and development with its continuity between the natural and social function that can we understand the exact sense of Madeline parting exhortation to Professor Holden as well as to the aunt who has cared for her:

> What you are -- that doesn't stay with you. Then... be the most you can be so that life will be more because you were. Oh, do that! ... Professor Holden, his beautiful trained mind; Aunt Isabel -- her beautiful love, love that would save the world if only you'd -- throw it to the winds... (*moving nearer to* HOLDEN*, hands out to him*) Why do -- (*seeing it is not to be she turns away. Low with sorrow for that great beauty lost*) Oh,

> have we brought mind, have we brought heart, up to this place
> -- only to turn them against mind and heart? (156)

As the special functions of the various organs, mind and heart, are seen as the results of evolutionary processes, so the organization of humanity into separate specialization of minds and of hearts is a terminal result of that same progress. For Madeline, that very specialization betrays the process that brought it into being.

Madeline contests the progressive thesis, but she does not completely renounce its ideas of order. A more complete renunciation will come for Glaspell only in *The Verge.* Madeline does make an important move in that direction, when she re-interprets her grandfather's evolutionary theory of history:

> I took a walk yesterday afternoon. Night came, and for some reason I thought of how many nights have come -- nights the earth has known long before we knew the earth. The moon came up and I thought of how moonlight made this country beautiful before any man knew it was beautiful. It gave me a feeling of coming from something a long way back. Moving toward -- what will be here when I'm not. Moving. We seem here, now, in America, to have forgotten we're moving. (151)

The dash after "moving toward" indicates the unknowable future, or its ineffability. At this moment, Madeline is still looking to natural history for a key to human history. Here however, rather than finding that key in the progression of natural history, Madeline finds the key in the very process of change, in this case from the pre-human to the human. In Act One, the story of the prehistory of life in inanimate nature is interpreted to justify progress towards an ever increasing humanity. In Madeline's interpretation, the history of life in inanimate material merely reminds us of the instability of human habitation.

Both Madeline and Silas ponder pollination as a model of the communication of ideas, but the granddaughter is less interested in "where they'll take hold" and more interested in the fact of their dispersal. The heroism of Madeline and her speech about the wind represents the triumph of the idea of social change over the idea of social progress. In *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, Dewey writes "the influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life of the principle of transition, and thereby freed the new logic for the application to mind and morals and life" (8-9).

VII. "How We Must be More Than Them:" Social Darwinism Returns

There is one other aspect of the aspiration hypothesis that is put to trial in the debate about the nature of growth, and it is evaluated along with the idea and institution of the college. That is, the concept of social growth often supposes that civilized societies are developed versions of primitive societies. Again, the word "develop" is crucial. The word has now come to provide an economic explanation what used to be explained more anthropologically. The concept of developed and developing worlds sometimes serves to reinforce the same ideas of cultural hegemony that were once understood in terms of historical time, as "primitive" and "civilized."

As Glaspell began to question these suppositions, she began to unearth the contradiction latent in her long-held belief. The dispossession of the Native-Americans, in her thinking, was the result of the exploitative character of the colonialist relationship to the land, with its temporalized assumptions of the civilized European's progress over the primitive native. A solution that is based on further civilizing American culture

through education seems to offer an improved ethical awareness, but it also relies the same assumptions about "progress" that in part justified the original crime.

Silas Morton's regard of Blackhawk, laden as it is a with a kind of "noble savage" primitivism, is an opening of doubt in in the idea of progress, which at the time was often bound up in social Darwinist assumptions. In his recollection of Blackhawk, Silas describes him as "Noble. Noble like the forests and the Mississippi -- and the stars." His speculations about the land having a mind also touches on primitivist themes. He says: "Sometimes I feel that the land itself has got a mind[,] that the land would rather have had the Indians" (111). His words express an environmental ethic to the extent that they imply that the transformation of the landscape he foresees might be a progress away from nature rather than a progress in harmony with nature.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey often explains his ideas by references to primitive cultures. For example, as he seeks to explain "the Nature of Subject Matter," he draws a comparison between what is taught in primitive cultures with what he sees as our advanced learning. This example is an important one because while it evinces certain assumed associations between science and civilization, it also admits a certain moral relativism that regards science as a product of culture that has no inherent or absolute value outside of a scheme of customs or behaviors that are socially constructed.[20] In fact, the reason he must address the nature of subject matter is because of the widespread misconception that advanced learning is divorced from more quotidian functions. To remind us, he offers a history which will root advanced knowledge in primitive customs.

Dewey paints a picture of primitive life in which the distinction between functional knowledge and social custom already begins to take shape:

> [T]he stories, traditions, songs, and liturgies... of a primitive social group... represent the stock of meanings which have precipitated out of previous experience, which are so prized by the group as to be identified with their conception of their own collective life. Not being obviously part of the skill exhibited in the daily occupations of eating, hunting, making war and peace, constructing rugs, pottery, and baskets, etc., they [the stories, songs, and liturgies] are consciously impressed upon the young ... with intense emotional fervor. Even more pains are consciously taken to perpetuate the myths, legends, and sacred verbal formulae of the group than to transmit the directly useful customs of the group, just because they cannot be picked up, as the latter can be in the ordinary processes of association.
>
> As the social group grows more complex, involving a greater number of acquired skills which are dependent, either in fact or in the belief of the group, upon the standard ideas deposited from past experience, the content of social life gets more definitely formulated for purposes of instruction. (181)

Dewey tries to show how formal instruction is a manifestation of the advancement of society, its accomplished growth. The more significant an idea or a practice becomes to the social group, the larger the body of knowing on that idea or practice will become, and the greater the necessity for some sort of formal program to maintain it. Dewey's assumption is that the passing of time results in the accumulation of more and more knowledge, and so the direction of the growth of social groups is towards greater complexity.

In one particular passage that speaks very directly to the concerns raised in *Inheritors*, in his chapter on "Education as Growth," Dewey writes:

> A savage tribe manages to live on a desert plain. It adapts itself. But its adaptation involves a maximum of accepting, tolerating, putting up with things as they are, a maximum of passive acquiescence, a minimum of active control, of subjection to use. A civilized people enters upon the scene. It also adapts

> itself. It introduces irrigation; it searches the world for plants and animals that will flourish under such conditions; it improves, by careful selection, those which are growing there. As a consequence, the wilderness blossoms as a rose. The savage is merely habituated; the civilized man has habits which transform the environment. (47-48)

In Dewey's educational philosophy, progress, learning, and the consequent advancements of technology suggest the further evolution of a people. Both savage and civilized groups "adapt" to an environment, but the adaptation of the civilized group is more transformative. This passage might be read to very closely describe the same cultural situation that is the subject of Glaspell's *Inheritors* -- namely, the "settlement" of the West. *Inheritors* simultaneously takes on the twin aspects of American progress as each was altering Glaspell's midwestern homeland: simply put, she felt herself an inheritor of dispossession and a witness of industrialization.

Glaspell questions whether the transformation of the environment really amounts to a blossoming of the wilderness. In particular, the issue of the transformation of the environment accomplished by science takes on a menacing aspect at the end of *Inheritors*, just as Madeline is shifting from a progress paradigm to a change paradigm.

Madeline is not the only re-interpreter of the aspiration hypothesis and of what it meant to Silas. In fact, Madeline develops her own view, in part through dialogue with her father. Ira Morton offers his interpretation of what his father meant by "making life more than it had been." In this passage, Ira discusses how he has improved his corn crop:

> IRA: ... All these years I've worked to make it better. I wanted it to be -- the most it could be. My father used to talk about the Indians -- how our land was their land, and how we must be more than them. He had his own ideas about bein' more -- well,

> what's that come to. The Indians lived happier than we -- wars, strikes, prisons. But I've made the corn more! This land that was once Indian maize now grows corn -- I'd like to have the Indians see my corn! I'd like to see them side by side! -- their Indian maize, my corn. And how'd I get it? Ah, by thinkin' -- always tryin' , changin' , carin'... (155)

Ira offers the ugliest possible interpretation of his father's idealism. Having lost sight of the pain his father felt over dispossession and the ideal of cross-cultural understanding that inspired the founding of the college, Ira sees his father's goal of progress as essentially a competition.[21] The specter of that social-Darwinian concept of evolution, under which Darwin's name was introduced into the drama to begin with, returns here. Burying it, for Glaspell, will mean burying the very notion of a natural progress.

VIII. The Cult of Agriculture and Higher Education in the U.S.

In choosing the corn as Ira's sole boast of progress since his father's time, Glaspell chooses a motif with great cultural resonance. A kind of cult of agriculture, steeped in patriotism, was just reaching its maturity in the years leading up to *Inheritors*. In some sense, the story of *Inheritors* parallels the story of a transformation in American agriculture.

The cult of agriculture had been a driving force in American education since the middle of the 19th Century. Many of the state universities in the U.S. sprung out of an agricultural-education movement. Before this movement could found major state universities, it produced the State Fairs. The State Fair celebrates agriculture as an expression of pride in state identity, with annual competitions for best crops and livestock

and a carnival atmosphere.[22] Heralded in the mid- twentieth century in several popular films, the tradition of the State Fair began in 1849 with the first event in Michigan.[23] Other midwestern states began fairs soon after. It is presumably at just such a State Fair that Ira Morton's corn has, as Fejevary boasts to Senator Lewis, "several years taken the prize -- best in the state" (121). The same organizations that created State Fairs began to found agricultural colleges a few years later. Again Michigan took the lead, founding the Michigan Agriculture College, now MSU, in 1855, and again the other Midwestern states following closely after.[24] By 1862, an Act of Congress named for Senator Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont gave national recognition and funding to this project of creating agriculture schools. The Morrill Act was specifically designed to allocate land, and so these schools came to be known as land-grant colleges, including Cornell University, Purdue University, as well as portions of the University of California and Rutgers University, to name a few.

At the end of the Nineteenth Century, the federal laws that brought forth these universities also provided for the establishment of agriculture experiment stations.[25] Two scientists working at these stations, George Harrison Shull and Edward Murray East, were experimenting with the selective breeding of the maize plant, when, in 1908, they described heterosis, an important early discovery in the field of genetics. Shull and East were building on corn hybridization work of William J. Beal, a significant figure in the 19th Century movement, a professor at Michigan Agricultural College.[26] Describing heterosis meant offering a genetic explanation for what is commonly called hybrid vigor. Hybrid corn is the offspring of parents from separate genetic lines that have been inbred

for successive generations, allowing the scientist to isolate certain traits. Although it unclear whether Ira Morton himself is hybridizing his corn, he describes the techniques of selective breeding in his speech about how he has made the corn more. In 1921, the first agricultural-grade double-cross hybrid corn became commercially available.[27]

These developments were subjects of popular fascination. In 1911, *The New York Times* printed a feature under the headline, "What Science Has Done For the American Farmer: Every Branch of Agriculture Brought Up to New Standards and Crops Vastly Increased by the Application of the Best Methods and Educational Measures." This article makes a firm push for identifying agronomic accomplishments as quintessentially American. The author claims, "The first thing that should be taught an American is that the United States leads the world as an agricultural country." The graphics of this full page spread focus particularly on the selective breeding of corn crop, the very method that Ira Morton describes at the end of *Inheritors*. Perhaps Glaspell had seen these comparative images, showing selected and non-selected corn, and she has Ira try to call them up, ranting to Madeline about selected and non-selected that, "I'd like to see them side by side!" (155). In one of these images (Figure 2) displaying two piles of corn, the caption identifies the smaller pile as "Ears on the right selected by farmers whose agricultural education has been neglected." The salient idea in the article is not only national pride in agriculture, but also the power of scientific education to augment American superiority.

Ira Morton's experiments with corn should be understood in the context of this history. However, that does not mean that Ira Morton should be confused for a professor,

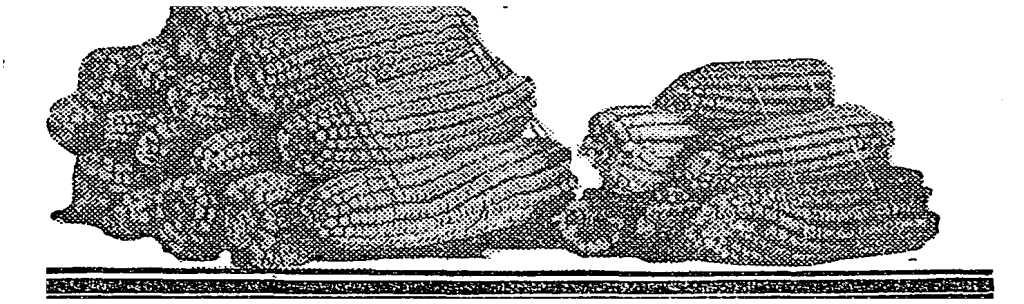
or that Morton College should be mistaken for a land-grant institution. (Morton College is a private liberal arts college, more in the model of Drake University in Des Moines -- Glaspell's own alma mater.) More significantly, Ira Morton is the one member of the Morton family who has nothing to do with Morton College. His hermitage is a rejection of public life.

It is important to note that Ira Morton appears in the Fourth Act of *Inheritors* as a rebuke on his father's attempts to create institutions that would harness the power of nature in the service of human progress. In the plainest sense, this critique amounted to the simple realization that technological progress did not entail ethical progress. This is a disappointment that is registered not only in the final act of *Inheritors* but again in the beginning of *The Verge*, when Claire Archer expresses her disappointment with the invention of the airplane:

> CLAIRE: Such a guileless soul that I thought flying would do something to a man. But it didn't take us out. We just took it in. ...man flew, and returned to earth the man who left it. (69)

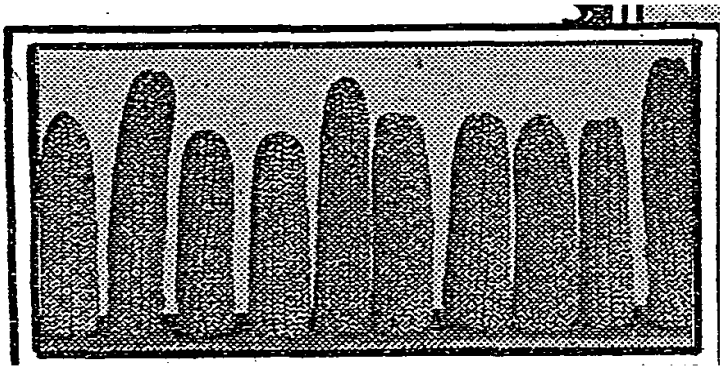
Claire had hoped that a technological change might entail a cultural improvement, but she is disappointed to find that flying was not transformative of the human character. *The Verge* will go even further in comprehending that even species change does follow some universal progress.

Figures 2 & 3 - Images from "What Science Has Done for the American Farmer." *New York Times* July 30, 1911

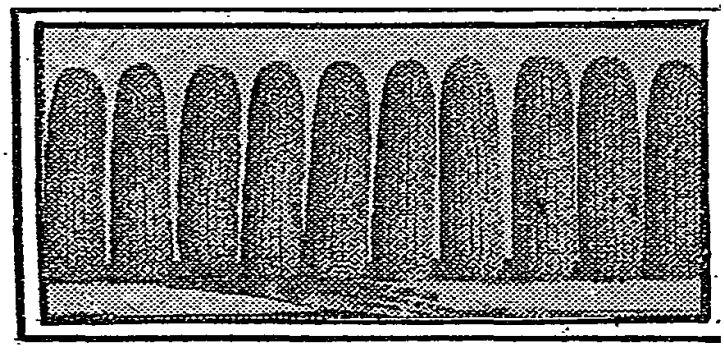


Samples of Corn Selected by Farmers for Seed. Ears on the Right Selected by Farmers Whose Agricultural Education Had Been Neglected.

Figure 2



White Corn from a Field for Which the Seed was Not Selected.



White Corn from the Same Field, the Seed Having Been Selected.

Figure 3
Ira: I'd like to see them side by side!

IX. Xenophobia and the End of Public-Spiritedness

It is Ira Morton who most directly inflects of metaphors of wind and seeds with racial or cultural meaning, but he does so without much agency or intention. For Ira, his experiments have nothing to do with race or culture. Rather, his obsession with corn offers him an alternative emotional investment to redirect his attention from his family life which has been marred by repeated loss. Ira dislikes the "Swedes," because his wife, also named Madeline, died trying to help the neighboring Swedish family.[28] When Ira grieves for the loss of his son in the war, he is stung by the foreignness of his death, that his son may be "buried on some Frenchman's farm" (154). When Ira first begs Madeline not to leave, he cannot see Madeline's cause beyond the foreign culture of the people she defends. He demands, "What's Hindus alongside your own father? (155). Ira's not very concerned with the Hindu students, except that Madeline's interest in them might take her away from him.

Finally, Ira is able to let Madeline go, only because he can then completely invest himself in his experiments. When he gives Madeline permission to go, his xenophobia, his sense of loss, and his project to improve the corn all come together:

> IRA: Nothing stays at home. Not even the corn stays at home. If only the wind wouldn't blow! Why can't I have my field to myself. Why can't I keep what's mine? All these years I've worked to make it better... I've made the corn more! ... And how'd I get it? ... Plant this corn by that corn, and the pollen blows from corn to corn -- the golden dust it blows, in the sunshine, and of nights -- blows from corn to corn like a -- (*the word hurts*) gift. No, you don't understand it, but ... corn don't stay what it is! You can make it anything -- according to what you do, 'cording to the corn it's alongside. (*changing*) But that's it. I want it to stay in my own field. It goes away. The prevailin' wind takes it on to the Johnsons -- them Swedes that

> took my Madeline! I hear it! Oh, nights when I can't help myself -- and in the sunshine I *see* it -- pollen -- soft golden dust to make new life -- goin' on to *them* -- and them too ignorant to know what's makin' their corn better! I want my field to myself! ... The wind shall stand still! I'll make it. Let me alone and I -- I'll think it out. (155)

He can let go of Madeline only by explaining to her what improvements he will able to make in his crop. He reveals a certain racism to the extent that he may associate the inferior knowledge of agriculture of his neighbors with their foreignness.

On the level of analogy, however, there is the suggestion of a deeper kind of racism to the extent that Ira's method of improving his crop corresponds to his social behavior. In selectively breeding his corn for certain traits, Ira seeks to isolate genetic groups from one another. Read with this analogy in mind, Ira's rhetorical question -- "What's Hindus alongside your own father?" -- is also an ethical one, which, without his explicit awareness, has a genetic dimension. Ira's implied answer to this question suggests an ethic that prizes genetic proximity and shuns genetic difference.

Madeline picks up on this analogy, when she interprets her father's speech about the agency of the wind in corn pollination, reversing his xenophobia into xenophilia. Madeline adapts his word "gift," which for Ira directly means a gift of genetic material, to describe the cultural contact of her own immigrant ancestor when she calls Felix Fejevary, Sr. a "gift from a field far off" (156).

What is implied in Ira Morton's thinking, had some explicit champions in the scientific community. This thinking involved some version of this: our superior corn is the result of our superior science, and the robustness of the crop will is associated with

the robustness of the body politic. An influx of foreigners, like weaker crop, dilute the body politic.

Indeed, Edward M. East, one of the pioneers of hybrid corn, would later write a book on Eugenic topics, *Mankind at The Crossroads* (1924). East asserts for humanity that "proper direction of evolution is a worthy objective, a high ideal which no one should censure" (vi).[29] East has not the full-throated alarmism about racial panic that existed in some quarters of the eugenic movement, notably Madison Grant or Lothrop Stoddard. In fact, East meticulously sets up his chapter on race in *Mankind at The Crossroads* as an argument against Stoddard's conclusions in the *The Rising Tide of Color*, that steps needed to be taken to prevent the overpopulation of the world by yellow, black, and brown races. East, professor at Harvard's Bussey Institution, argues instead for the long term sustainability of the white race. As he inveighs against the imprecision of Stoddard's racial categories, he offers a fairly concise example of scientific racism:

> The nations of to-day are mixtures of relatively distinct types, complex hybrids in which there is little uniformity. At the same time, three primary race-stocks still survive in in more or less purity, called for convenience the white, the yellow, and the black.
>
> No one denies that these race types are decidedly unlike in appearance, that they differ in numerous well-defined hereditary characters. Similarly, no student of heredity would deny that these stocks differ through heredity in that great complex equipment which makes for mentality. But, it must be admitted, cogent proof of this fact could not be cited until recently. To-day psychological and genetic tests place the matter beyond doubt as far as the white and black race are concerned. Adequate comparative studies have not been made between members of the yellow race and the other two. (126)

Ira's xenophobia operates under similar assumptions, but in a more private sphere. Public-spirited xenophobia and its harmful effects are represented in *Inheritors* by

Senator Lewis. The pressure that Senator Lewis applies on Fejevary results in Fejevary's decision to dismiss the Hindu students from Morton College. The narrowness of Ira's concerns, the rejection of his father's idealism, his intense privacy, are withering defects of his character. Madeline says he is "like something touched by an early frost" (152). These represent Glaspell's own commentary on a social milieu in which national pride in agriculture was essentially public-spirited, and in which the public spirit was often patently racist. Against these racist assumptions, Glaspell creates her champion in Madeline. Madeline declares, "The world is all -- a moving field. Nothing is to itself. If America thinks so -- America is like father" (156). Madeline rejects the notion of the hoarding of genetic or cultural material as unnatural and monstrous.

With the chauvinism of the war years bringing into relief the xenophobia of the popular public-spiritedness of the Progressive era, Glaspell first attacked that xenophobia by creating Ira Morton and contrasting him with Madeline. Ira appears only at the end of *Inheritors*, in Act IV. He is really secondary to the action that is driven by Madeline in Act IV and that connects Madeline to her grandfather. In this way, Ira represents a dawning rejection of the public-spiritedness, within the context of a play that does not entirely reject it. It is only in *The Verge* that Glaspell will more completely reject that Progressive public-spirited attitude.

X. Transition

The clearest evidence of transition between *Inheritors* and *The Verge* is the common theme of experimental horticulture. Both Ira Morton and Claire Archer conduct

experiments in crossbreeding. Although the exact of their experiments is very different, they have a single common resonance. In both cases, Glaspell weaves a tapestry of meaning out of the double senses of their breeding (work with plants) and breeding (heritage and upbringing). Noting this, we must acknowledge that Glaspell's interest in the cult of botany was multifaceted. It was an extension of her interest in Darwin, who experimented with Orchids. Also, by taking on this particular trend in American culture, she was not only confronting ideas of progress, but also was exploring the boundaries between the communicated inheritance of a culture and the biological inheritance of a race.[30] In creating these two characters, Glaspell explored the extent to which racist assumptions were often built into ideas about high or achieved culture, fueling her ambivalence about the possibilities that social progress was naturally determined. Ira's intense privacy is the dawning of new way of thinking, which is continued in the privacy of Claire's concerns. These shall be taken up in the next chapter.

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[1] For the history of the composition of *Inheritors*, I follow the account offered by Linda Ben-Zvi (224).

[2] Glaspell herself uses the word "religious," in her second novel, to describe an interpretation of evolutionary theory. In describing the impact of evolution on that novel's heroine, Katherine Wayneworth Jones, the narrator explains that Darwin's "story of life brought the first purely religious feeling she had ever known." (*The Visioning*, 239)

[3] In the Preface to her book *A Natural History of Pragmatism*, Joan Richardson argues that the "American language game that comes to be known as Pragmatism... is grounded in the premise that both thinking and language are life forms, subject to the same laws as other life forms" (ix).

[4] Glaspell had almost certainly read *Pragmatism, A New Names for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907). However, I can only find one mention of William James in Glaspell's entire body of work, in *The Road to the Temple*. Here, James is suggested as a point of comparison (whether by Cook himself or by Glaspell is unclear) for a character in play in Cook's play written at and about the ancient temple at Delphi (393).

[5] Poirier borrows the words, "*universal impulse to believe,*" from Emerson, and he italicizes them in part to emphasize the similarity in phrase between Emerson and William James.

[6] Glaspell chooses a year in the reaction to Darwin took a decidedly ethical turn. One of the important inroads made against a more is the year that William James published "Are We Automata?" In it, William James poses the question, "Of what use to nervous systems is a superadded consciousness?" (Richards, 366-7). The philosophy of Pragmatism was in its infancy, being a few months after the publication of Pierce's "How To Make Our Ideas Clear"

[7] I dispute the notion that Silas accepts social Darwinism. Instead, I would argue that Pragmatism is Glaspell's as well as Silas's *de facto* method for negotiating the variety of evolutionary ideas that converge in this discussion, including social Darwinism. No one in the scene attempts to "interpret ... the practical consequences" of young Felix's assertion that Darwin might "make [Silas] feel better about the Indians." Might not the mollification of Silas's guilt and the very fact of American nationhood be practical consequences that affirm a biologically determined explanation of Native-American dispossession and genocide? Conversely, we might reject social Darwinism on Pragmatist grounds if we consider that a consequence of such an explanation is more war and genocide. There is nothing in the Pragmatist razor to decide such questions conclusively, and there is no firm rejection of social Darwinism on ethical grounds in this scene. Glaspell's Pragmatism, I think, continues to hold open the question of social Darwinism even after this discussion of "Darwin" has turned away from a direct encounter with the idea.

[8] Richards describes how both historians of science and biologists themselves "have been washed in the high tide of Darwinism, but are ever wary of the undertow of social Darwinism, or anything that reminds them of that despised doctrine" (287).

[9] Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" to describe natural selection, Darwin's evolutionary mechanism. Natural selection differs from inheritability of acquired characteristics, Lamarck's mechanism. For Spencer, however, both mechanisms were necessary to explain such human adaptations as higher brain function (Richards, 294).

[10] Indeed, it was often thought that Lamarck himself argued that the human will might be an evolutionary force, that species can change themselves by willing to change. Both Darwin and Spencer misinterpreted Lamarck's work, thinking it suggested that the will was a force for evolutionary change -- a doctrine they both rejected (Richards, 51n).

[11] Gainor's use of the word "genetically" is probably anachronistic.

[12] The controversy involved William Graham Sumner, who resigned rather than be overruled in his teaching of Spencer's texts. His resignation never went into effect. For more on this controversy, see Marsden's Prologue III (22-27).

[13] Spencer himself would not have associated the phrase "survival of the fittest" with ideas of social Darwinism, but rather as description of Darwin's theory of natural selection. As a phrase for his evolutionary mechanism, "survival of the fittest," in fact had Darwin's sanction. Social Darwinism, on the other hand, may be less a specific doctrine of Spencer's philosophy than a popular extrapolation of some of Spencer's political views, notably his objection to the English Poor Laws, which were inflected by -- but not definitive of -- his evolutionary ethics (Richards, 254 ; 302-3)

[14] Consider for example, a passage in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie:*

> Among the forces which sweep and play throughout the universe, untutored man is but a wisp in the wind. Our civilization is still in a middle stage-- scarcely beast, in that is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason... We can have the consolation of knowing that evolution is ever in action, that the ideal is a light that cannot fail. When this jangle of free will and instinct have been adjusted, when perfect understanding has given the former the power to replace the latter entirely, man will no longer vary. The needle of understanding will point steadfast and unwavering to the distant pole of truth. (73)

For Dreiser, Spenserian evolutionary theory supports a deterministic worldview. By comparison, Glaspell's evolutionary thinking emphasizes the role of individual will.

[15] qtd. in Richards, 287.

[16] Although, the movement of time from the past to the future is the dimension in which social growth occurs, this growth is not completely determined, in Dewey's thinking, by history or some extra-historical *telos*. It is possible for growth to be slowed or even ceased, if the conditions are not right. Indeed, a significant purpose of Dewey's argument is to attack the concept of a fixed maturity, in which growth and education are seen as no longer necessary. Dewey's educational philosophy rejects the notion that the young should be brought up to resembled the mature, and replaces this notion with the idea that the young possess as of yet unknown potentials which must nourished as ends in themselves. He writes, "Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself" (53). In this, he distinguishes his own thought from that of Hegel's (60).

[17] The Oxford English Dictionary records earliest uses of "development" in the economic sense, as emerging in the late 19th Century from the same definition as the biological use of the term (vol. D, p. 280-81; suppl. p. 786). At the same time, early psychologists, such as G. Stanley Hall, were theorizing a developmental psychology. They adopted the term "development," as it had been used in the recapitulationist speculations of Ernst Haeckel.

[18] Perhaps Holden has in mind a passage from the proem of *Leaves of Grass* in which Whitman cautions that "The largeness of nature of the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen." Whitman declares that "the pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture ... to enjoy the breed of fullsized men or one fullsized man unconquerable and simple" (6). Clearly, Holden is taking up the banner for a concept of history and nationhood that he would like to believe Whitman also held.

[19] Madeline's response to Holden here introduces a whole new topic into the discussion. She says, "That's strange. It's love that -- brings life along, and then it's love -- holds life back" (153). When she says, "love brings life along," she implies that the sexual reproduction the human species is one of the manifestations of evolutionary progress. With this response, Madeline signals the new direction that Glaspell's evolutionary concerns were taking, concerns that deepen in *The Verge*.

[20] Either as a gesture towards accuracy or towards cross-cultural understanding, Dewey introduces this picture of primitive life with a remark on "necessity of a social environment to give meaning to habits formed" (181). For more on this kind of "moral relativism," see *Patterns for America*, p. 7

[21] Ira also echoes some of his father's noble-savage primitivism, saying that "the Indians lived happier than we." This is a particularly interesting continuation of Silas's positive feelings about the Native-Americans, given that Silas's confession, "We killed their joy before we killed them. We made them less... I got to give it back --- their hill. I give it back to joy -- ... joy o' aspiration" (118). One way to read this continuity between father and son would be interpret the son's words as harbinger of cultural extinction, a widespread fear at the time. However this continuity is read, it must indicate the failure of Silas's project

[22] These events, of course, are still held annually and are still popular. The Iowa State Fair in recent years has attracted over a million visitors. http://www.iowastatefair.com/about/historical1.php

[23] There are least three film versions of *State Fair*. The original Will Rogers movie (1933) was then the basis for the musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein (1945), that was then re-made (1962).

[24] The Michigan State Agricultural Society created both the State Fair and the Michigan Agricultural College. For relevant legislation on the college see Act 180 of 1849 ; www.legislature.mi.gov ; http://www.michigan.gov/mistatefair/0,1607,7-109--12804--,00.html

[25] The Hatch Act of 1887 created Agriculture Experiment Stations.

[26] Beal founded the Botanical Garden on campus (which still operates and is still named for him) and who served de facto as the college historian at MSU. William J. Beal, *History of Michigan Agricultural College, And Biographical Sketches of Trustees and Professors.* East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Agricultural College, 1915.

[27] Now hybrid corn is planted on 95% of U.S. corn acreage. "Improving Corn." Agricultural Research Service. United States Department of Agriculture. http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/timeline/corn.htm

[28] Madeline's mother is the link between the Fejevary and Morton families; she is the daughter of Felix Fejevary, Sr. the sister of Felix Fejavary, Jr. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to her as Madeline Fejevary to distinguish from her daughter, Madeline Morton. Ira Morton and Madeline Fejevary appear, in the exposition in Act I, as children playing together. They are scolded by Grandmother Morton.

[29] Richards situates East among a group of prominent scientists, including Thomas Hunt Morgan and Raymond Pearl among others. He writes: "During the first few decades of this century that movement came to represent the new scientific approach to evolution of human mind and behavior Later, however, as its promise calcified into reactionary ideology, its distorted grimace reminded professionals and laymen alike of the dangers of applying evolutionary theory to account for the human state." (512).

[30] Little distinction is made in *Inheritors* between race, religion, nationality, and ethnicity. Labels such as "Hindu," "Swede," "immigrant," are all thought to have some equivalence.

Chapter 4

The Climactic *Verge* and the Exhaustion with Change

> On what wings dare he aspire?
> What the hand dare seize the fire?
> -Blake, "The Tyger"

The story of *The Verge* centers on the quest of an experimental horticulturist, Claire Archer, to create a new self-reproducing species of plant -- an attempt which she herself characterizes as "mad" (82). The action of this three-act play takes place roughly within the span of twenty-four hours as Claire waits to learn the results of her most recent experiment, a plant called "Breath of Life." The first act is a farce in which Claire's husband, Harry, tries to prepare breakfast in Claire's laboratory for himself and her two paramours. The second act is an expressionistic *pas de deux* between Claire and the more restless of the paramours, Tom. Blank verse and stylized movements attempt to express the inexpressible bond between them. The third act is brief and tragic. Although Claire's experiment succeeds -- the Breath of Life blossoms and is pronounced a new species -- its creation has also pushed Claire over the verge; she strangles Tom with her bare hands, telling him "You are too much! You are not enough" (99). In the final moment, her crime is revealed to the others while Claire sings a hymn and the curtain is brought down. All the elements of the drama resist precise interpretation. The only critical consensus on the play is its oft-remarked daring experimentalism, for which, of course, Claire's botanical experiment is stand-in.

In the plainest sense, the shift from *Inheritors* to *The Verge* is a shift from Progressive Era naturalism to High Modernist expressionism. The later play has none of the references to specific dates and places that situate the earlier play in a social milieu.

Instead of the reasoned debates that are staged in *Inheritors*, the characters of *The Verge* struggle hopelessly against the inadequacies of language. The wave of public spirit that carries *Inheritors* to its naturalistic conclusion has crested and crashed, and in *The Verge* it recedes in modernist concerns over the artist and what it means for her to create. That the two plays show such a strong stylistic contrast and seem to straddle two epochs in literary history is often considered evidence of Glaspell's experimenting with different techniques. This is the sense behind the remark of theatre-historian Christopher Bigsby comparing the "relative conventionalities of *Inheritors*" to the "startlingly original work" of *The Verge* (19). However, if instead of regarding the plays as isolated experiments, we regard them as thematically continuous, then their stylistic contrast becomes more meaningful. The stylistic contrast between the play then represents a transition in the author's thinking and is implicated in a larger moment of transition in the history of ideas.

The Verge represents an unravelling of the faith, articulated in *Inheritors,* in a natural religion and its ethic of progress. *Inheritors* ends with Madeline's heroic stance, her attempt to dedicate her life to improving society's ethics, largely through her own self-sacrifice. The subject of *The Verge* is the randomness and meaninglessness of changes in the social order and the high personal cost paid by individuals who attempt to alter it. The conviction of *Inheritors,* that nature is the origin of religious feeling, cracks open, releasing an exhalation in *The Verge* that points up, out of nature, towards something larger and inexplicable. Given that the attempt of Glaspell's religious Darwinism was to renovate the old form of religious feeling, the reassertion of Christian

forms at the end of *The Verge* sounds a note of disillusionment, failure, or exhaustion.

I. Breeding/Sex and Work/Sex

The character of Ira Morton and the details of his experiments in plants emerge at the end of *Inheritors*. This kind of experimentation becomes an important element of the plot of *The Verge.* Claire's work represents a conclusion of certain inquiries begun with Silas's aspiration hypothesis and left open in *Inheritors.*

To try to create a new species of plant that will reproduce itself, a horticulturist of Claire's day might have used a combination of techniques including grafting and crossbreeding. To perform a graft, Claire would introduce a piece of the root or the pollen of one plant species into a corresponding element of another species. This kind of grafting, when successful, creates what is known as a chimaera, one living organism that has some combination of genetic tissues from two species. Crossbreeding involves first selectively breeding different genetic groups apart, isolating certain traits that are desired, and then mating the individuals with the desired traits back again. The act of isolating traits involves inbreeding the plants, mating them only with other plants that exhibit the same traits. This is what Silas Morton had done with his corn.

It is possible new species could be created this way only by completely removing a population into new conditions and completely isolating that population from its close cousins for countless successive generations. The population would be considered a new species when two populations could no longer interbreed. This is not what Claire wants

to do. Claire is trying to force plants, as she puts it to "explode their species." Neither of these techniques, not of themselves nor in combination, is likely to succeed in generating a new self-reproducing species. *The Verge*, depicting the success of Breath of Life, is science-fiction. Nonetheless, it is the kind of science-fiction that is carefully based on the suggestion of the current science of 1921. A common point of reference for the aim of Claire's experiments is a now largely discredited evolutionary theory known as "saltation," or rapid species change. However, a more germane area of science has largely escaped notice. In 1918, the horticulturist Liberty Hyde Bailey coined the term "cultigen" to describe a plant species that has been transformed by domestication. Agricultural corn is one such species. There is no longer such a thing as wild corn. Although the term is not used in the play, its suggestion of a species remade by human influence is probably basis for Claire's experimental aims. Her success at creating a self-reproducing species would be an advanced form of cultigen.

The members of Claire's family try to understand her experiments from a perspective in line with the popular cult of agriculture (discussed in the last chapter), as if her experiments had the same aim as Ira Morton's. They expect that her new plants will be advancements in science that functionally improve society, and, as such, a credit to their cultural group. Claire corrects their misapprehension. She says of her plants, "They may be new. I don't give a damn whether they're better" (76). Part of the meaning of Claire's rejection of of the idea of "a better" species is to renounce any association of inherent value with genetic type. This rejection of "better," in part, shows Glaspell reacting against the burgeoning of eugenic philosophies.

It is Claire's daughter Elizabeth who, in the first act of *The Verge*, most represents the popular association of scientific advancement with cultural or racial type. When Glaspell includes in Elizabeth's lines the words "this impulse" -- an exact echo of words in Fejevary's aspiration-hypothesis speech -- she renders in a sardonic mood words that had been spoken as a confession of faith:

> CLAIRE: I am not doing any useful beautiful thing.
> ELIZABETH: Oh, but you are, mother. Of course you are. Miss Lane says so. She says it is your splendid heritage gives you this impulse to do a beautiful thing for the race. She says you are doing in your way what the great teachers and preachers are doing in theirs. (75)

This passage draws together much of the theory of aspiration, now without any Pragmatic sophistication, uttered as the mindless cant of a spoiled elitist.[1] The reference to the "great teachers and preachers" comprehends Glaspell's earlier cultural holism, in which she saw different ways of knowing as united in their purpose.[2] Only now what unites them in purpose is their service to one particular group. Claire's quest, according to her daughter, follows an impulse to do something "for the race."

Concepts of "race" and "breeding" combine cultural communication with biological reproduction. After all, in the plainest sense, breeding *is* sex.

Ironically, the cultural assumptions of what constituted "good breeding" at this time -- although it implied having been sex selected by the right ancestors -- actually implied a deliberate rejection of the sex impulse -- especially among women. Claire not only fights against the notion that her experiments are attempts to improve plant species, she also fights against this concept of "breeding." Claire is supposed to be "the flower of New England," the pinnacle of American cultural refinement. Claire feels imprisoned by

this heritage, and fights against all that it entails, especially its puritanical sexual repression.[3] In Act One, she combats this puritanism with wild flirting and blatant sexual innuendo, which she carries on with her lover, Richard Demming, in the presence of her husband. For example, when her husband complains to her of some failure of social graces towards Demming, Claire retorts "Was I a fascinating hostess last night, Dick?" (62). In response to one of these sexually suggestive exchanges, Harry, Claire's husband, rebukes Claire with conventional notions of cultural refinement:

> CLAIRE: (*gaily*) Careful, Dick, Aren't you indiscreet? Harry will be suspecting that I am your latest strumpet.
> HARRY: Claire! What language you use! A person knowing you only by certain moments could never know you are a refined woman.... It would be a good deal of a lark to let [this person] listen in at times -- then tell them that here is the flower of New England... (*going on with his own entertainment*) Explain to them that this is what came of the men who made the laws of New England, that there is the flower of those gentlemen of culture who --
> DICK: Moulded the American mind!
> CLAIRE: Oh! (*it is pain*) ... I want to get away from them. (64)

Claire's choice of the word "strumpet" could not be better selected for invoking the class-based prejudice against the female libido. This phrase, "the flower of New England," implies an odd mix of breeding and heredity; it implies an elitism of place and also time, suggesting that Claire's social status -- even her personality -- is the product of successive generations living a particularly select way of life.

The sexual significance of the botanical metaphor, muted in *Inheritors*, comes to the forefront in *The Verge.* When Madeline, drawing on Ira Morton's descriptions of corn, suggests that we should draw a lesson for human behavior from the way the corn "gives itself away all the time," she is neither considering polyandry nor suggesting she is promiscuous. She is thinking rather of some sort of cultural or ethical interpenetration.

Nonetheless, since the whole function of the botanical metaphor is to explore the extent of the relationship between biological models and social and psychological ones, we should not be surprised at the fluidity of these concepts of breeding and sexuality as social and hereditary.

If we look at these complex conceptual mixtures of human sexuality, plant reproduction, culture, and social status from a slightly different angle, we see yet another way in which the social value of work of the plant scientists colors the whole mosaic. Before Glaspell created either Claire Archer or Ira Morton in *Inheritors*, she wrote a short story called "Pollen" that appeared in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in March of 1919, in which a kind of prototype of Ira Morton exists called Ira Mead.

The story of "Pollen" is not wholly unlike the story that is later fixed in the American popular imagination by the "Hero at the Beach" cartoon of the Charles Atlas advertising. Ira Mead, a shy and awkward young farmer, wants to offer a ride home the girl next door at a county fair. However, a rival with a better horse is more confident and asks her first. The rival marries the girl, and the couple settles at the farm adjacent to Ira's. Ira becomes a hermit. In his seclusion, Ira Mead puts all his care and attention into his corn crop. His corn benefits from this attention, increasing in size and yield. It is eventually "pronounced a new variety and called Mead corn," and it is the means of his vindication: "the corn proved Ira Mead's supremacy over ... the other people around there." Winning the envy of other men for his "big corn," Ira Mead, in the end, is confident enough to approach a different young lady in the neighborhood, Mary Balch (see Figure 3, p. 142).

Eroticism is essential to the technique of the story, as well as any thematic interpretation. Besides the phallic symbolism of Ira's corn, there is the voice of Mary Balch. Ira thinks of "little way she had of saying his name, a soft sliding from one thing to another." [4] It is this semiotic saying of Ira's name with which the story closes. The suggestion that a man's crop is an extension of his sexual potency has an undercurrent of social Darwinism, viewing mating concerns such as attraction and material wealth within the framework of the "fittest." The theme of isolation from one's neighbors resonates with the explicit xenophobia of *Inheritors*. However, in "Pollen," there are no foreigners or ethnic-others. This story is not deeply involved in the evaluation and critique of social Darwinism that is undertaken in *Inheritors* and *The Verge*. Rather, "Pollen" is a comedic story about the triumph of sexuality as a natural force. The sublimation of Ira Mead's sex drive into his experiments is untenable. His experiments reveal their sexual motivation, just as what Whitman would call his "procreative urge" shatters his hermitage.

The arc of a transition that "Pollen," Inheritors, and *The* Verge describe has been observed by recent Glaspell-scholar Mary Papke. In an essay entitled "Susan Glaspell's Naturalist Scenarios of Determinism and Blind Faith," Papke notes that in "Pollen," the experiments of the Ira character, although initially isolating, will eventually "move him away from isolation towards community." She compares this to the plant-experimenting characters in *Inheritors* and *The Verge,* and observes that in these works "no such positive move is possible." This essay is perhaps the only critical assessment of Glaspell's work to observe the intertextual continuity between Ira Mead in "Pollen," Ira Morton in *Inheritors*, and Claire Archer in the *The Verge* and to recognize the importance of evolutionary ideas in this transition. (27)

More important, Papke draws on the ideas of Henri Bergson to aid in the interpretation of eroticism in *The Verge*. Papke writes, "Bergsonian reading of *The Verge* illuminates the tragedy of Claire's situation -- her entrapment in a social world so mechanical that her men are cardboard figures and her daughter advertising copy for the perfect young girl, a world ... bereft of meaningful experience" (32). In taking up this reading, I intend to underscore just how much *The Verge* reveals about the larger the cultural reception of evolutionary ideas.

II. Creative and Destructive Sexual Impulses: Influence of Bergson and Freud

In *Creative Evolution*, Henri Bergson works out an elaborate ontology, in which he suggests that both sexual impulses as well as the creative impulses that are *pain quotidien* of artists are involved in the continued evolutionary development of the species and have their heritage in the primal impulse from which life took shape out of inanimate matter. A similar concept is at work in *The Verge*, in which the sexual impulse is an agent of change, and the social life that follows from it is a kind of falling away from that change. The larger social order cannot fully recognize something as vital and fluctuating as the sexual impulse. The sexual impulse remains within the human animal, potentially shaking the social order and renovating the species. We can see this in Claire's relationship with men, but it is distilled in the discussions of her aim to create a new plant.

Explaining her experimental aim of creating new species of plant, Claire says:

> CLAIRE: Out there -- (*giving it with her hands*) lies all that's not been touched -- lies life that waits. Back here -- the old pattern, done again, again and again. So long done it doesn't even know itself for a pattern -- in immensity. But this [(*referring to an experimental plant*)] -- has invaded. Crept a little way into -- what wasn't. Strange lines in life unused. And when you make a pattern new you know a pattern's made with life. And then you know that anything may be. (77)

Species type is associated with "the old pattern, done again, again, and again." The reproduction of species across generations is a fading from the vitality that brings about species change. When a new species is forcibly created, it validates, in Claire's theory, the whole process of reproduction by indicating how it tends towards an unknowable future. Her experiments take up the change paradigm that is Madeline's interpretation of evolution at the end of *Inheritors*, and push if further away from ideas of progress and towards ideas of randomness.

The association in *The Verge* between the act of creation the act of destruction is also crucial to understanding Claire's work:

> CLAIRE: I'm not sure -- that I do. But it *can* be done! We need not be held in forms moulded for us. There is outness -- and otherness.... I want to break it up! I tell you, I want to break it up! If it were all in pieces, we'd be (*a little laugh*) shocked to aliveness. (*to* DICK) -- wouldn't we? There would be strange new comings together -- mad new comings together, and we would know what it is to be born, and then we might know -- that we are. (64)

In one crucially destructive moment, Claire rolls an egg off the table in her laboratory just for the sheer delight of destroying something. Yet, this act also toys the idea of design in nature. The smashing of the egg represents a resistance to ideas of design. The egg is suggests design in nature, representing both formal perfection in the texture and shape of

the shell, the enclosed spheric form of the yolk -- and progressive functionality in the fact that the egg becomes the chicken. Claire's destruction of the egg represents a truly new form in the sense the destruction is an embrace of chaos. No two eggs rolled off a table will ever break the same way.

The idea that a sex drive was a healthy natural impulse emerged with some violence from repressed Victorian society. Glaspell's "Suppressed Desires," the one-act play she wrote with Cook in 1915, was an early parody of Freud's ideas and their influence on the social life in Greenwich Village. One of the results of this early Freudianism was to imply sexual motives for many activities that previously seemed devoid of sexual significance, for example, working.

When Glaspell was writing *The Verge* six years later, Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* had been published in German, but an English translation would not be available until 1922. Translated as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, this work is probably the most evolutionary argument that Freud will frame in his career. Its reception of evolutionary ideas rather closely parallels Glaspell's final interpretation of evolution in *The Verge*. Freud's theory of a death instinct as a drive that co-evolved with the libido would seem an obvious point of reference for the closely conceived seduction and murder that characterizes Claire's relationship with Tom.

III. Mad New Comings Together: Sex, Imminence, Ineffability, and Problems of New Form

The Verge directly interrogates the nature of sexuality, love relationships, and the institution of marriage. Sexual freedom was, of course, a popular topic in Glaspell's social circles, and the institution of marriage was as much a subject for reform as any other social institution of the time. Just as easily as *Inheritors* could be thought to advocate freedom of conscience and action against unjust laws, *The Verge* might be considered to advocate equality for women and the liberation of female sexual desire from the shackles of Victorian shame. Just as Claire tries to create a new species of plant, she tries to create a new type of human relationship, one based on a more perfect love. But the question of what could be done in human relationships is not an easy question, nor one that *The Verge* tries to resolve in any easy way.

The significance that this issue takes on in *The Verge* is much weightier than this weighty issue alone. The issue of the new type of love relationship is given the added weight in *The Verge* of an analogy to all kinds of social reform. Figured in the form of a new species of plant, this one kind of reform comes to embody the very idea of reform. The new form of love relationship, like one of Claire's experimental plants, struggles into existence and then may or not revert to the extant types -- the friendship, the marriage, the sexual liaison. Perhaps more than any other, the failure of a new type of relationship represents for Glaspell the final verdict on social progress as directionless, personally costly, and historically arbitrary.

If friendship, sexual liaison, and marriage represent the three categories of relationship that the new type should defy, Claire has a man for each of the three -- Tom, Dick, and Harry. Their names, drawing on the well known idiom, suggest genera. Claire's relationships with Dick and with Harry remain relatively easy to define: Harry Archer is Claire's husband, while Dick Demming is her lover. It is Claire's relationship with Tom that resists easy categorization and that is subject to experiments.[5]

In this sense, Tom is closely aligned with Claire's experiments with plants, especially her ultimate experiment, the Breath of Life. Both the relationship with Tom and the Breath of Life experiment form the core of Claire's action in *The Verge*, especially in the second and third acts. Waiting for the result of her experiment, she negotiates the closeness of her relationship with Tom. Before Claire knows the outcome her experiment, she tries to seduce Tom and fails. After her experiment proves a success, she also succeeds with Tom, in a sense -- not in seducing him, but in killing him.

The theme of Claire's relationship with Tom is the ineffable, and it succeeds in being a new type of relationship to the extent that it cannot be categorized. In an important moment in the first act, when Elizabeth and Harry are trying to understand the aim of Claire's experiment, Tom is the one person of the play who urges her to keep silent:

> ELIZABETH: But what's the use of making [the plants] different if they aren't better?
> HARRY: A good square question, Claire. Why don't you answer it?
> CLAIRE: I don't have to answer.
> HARRY: Since [Elizabeth] is interested, why not tell her what it is you're doing? .

> CLAIRE: Why do you ask me that? This is my own thing... Anything else. Not-- this is -- Not this. ...
> HARRY: It'll do Claire good to take someone in. To get down to brass tacks and actually say what she's are driving at.
> CLAIRE: Oh -- *Harry*. But yes -- I will try. (*does try but no words come*) When you come to say it it's not -- One would rather not nail it to a cross of words -- (*laughs again*) with brass tacks... These plants -- (*beginning founderingly*) Perhaps they are less beautiful -- less sound -- than the plants from which they diverged. But they have found -- otherness. (*laughs a little shrilly*) If you know -- what I mean.
> TOM: Claire -- stop this! (*To* HARRY) This is wrong. (76)

Claire resists explaining her experiments, especially as explaining them might seem to put them in the service of developing an intimacy between mother and daughter. Harry wants Claire's project to be comprehensible, but Tom, who better understands Claire and her creation, feels that to make Claire's project comprehensible is to do some kind of violence to it. He defends the indeterminacy of Claire's quest.

Associating indeterminacy with immanence, Tom decides to exile himself to India, thinking this way he can "have" Claire as he wants to have her. He tells Dick that going away is "my only way of keeping her" (72). The deeper intimacy possible between them Tom and Claire relies upon a kind of intuited immanence, existing beyond what can be objectively described or consummated. Although they find it puzzling, both Dick and Harry must acknowledge this deeper way that Tom connects with Claire. Harry acknowledges as much when he says to Tom, "Trouble with you is, it makes little difference whether you're here or away. Just the fact of your existence does encourage Claire in this -- this way she's going" (71). The intimacy between Claire and Tom is not based on the time they spend together, but merely on the fact of Tom's existence.

As a defender of the ineffable, Tom offers Claire a relationship that itself cannot be described. Beginning her seduction of Tom in the second act, Claire wrestles with the ineffability of their relationship:

> CLAIRE: ... I want to talk with you. (*but she does not -- laughs*) Absurd that I should feel bashful with you. Why am I so awkward with words when I talk to you?
> TOM: The words know they're not needed.
> CLAIRE: No, they're not needed. There's something underneath -- an open way -- down below where the words can go. (*rather desperately*) It is there, isn't it?
> TOM: Oh, yes, it is there.
> CLAIRE: Then why do we never -- go it?
> TOM: If we went it, it would not be there. ...
> CLAIRE: I want to go it, Tom... You don't know how I could love you.
> TOM: Don't, Claire; that isn't -- how it is -- between you and me.
> CLAIRE: But why can't it be -- every way -- between you and me? ... [Y]ou are the only one I want. The only one all of me wants. (85)

The attempt to talk with Tom is an attempt to feel the intimacy between them, an intimacy that can be further established through sex. Yet, if it this intimacy cannot be put into words, its existence somehow seems in question, as Claire seeks to confirm, "It is there, isn't it?" Tom confirms the existence of the intimacy, but resists sex along with language as equally inadequate means of discovering the intimacy between them.

In this scene, we can witness the shift of that Romantic attempt to approach the ontological priority of natural objects away from words and towards some pre-lingual impulse.

> CLAIRE:
> My love, you're going away --

Let me tell you how it is with me...
I want to be;
Do not want to make a rose or a poem --
Want to lie upon the earth and know.
Stop doing that! -- words going into patterns;...
Thoughts take pattern and then the pattern is the thing. ...
I want to lie upon the earth and know.
But - scratch a little dirt and make a flower;
Scratch a bit of brain -- something like a poem.
Stop *doing* that. Help me stop doing that.
TOM: (*and from the place where she had carried him*)
Don't talk at all. Lie still and know --
And know that I am knowing. (88)

Claire's idea resembles Silas's earlier idea that language approaches "the ontological primacy of the the natural object," but now, instead of the communicative tendency of language to comprehend its object, language is something that follows from a more vital sense of being and quickly calcifies into posing an obstacle to the comprehension of the vital.[6] Now, the transcription is not perfect; now, the brain intermediates between language and object. The word *scratch* especially evokes randomness and damage, instead of purpose and order; the patch of dirt that will flower is the one that has been scratched. Similarly, the brain that makes a poem, renovating language to its natural condition, is the one that has been distressed or disturbed. Tom's response -- that she should not "talk" but "know" -- suggests that Claire's attempts to somehow share the immanent in language is futile, and that the immanence of their intimacy can only be intuited. The stage direction indicates that Tom would not have this capacity for a secure reliance upon intuitive knowing but that he is carried to this place by Claire and her ability to push against the boundary of the possible. Claire has "carried him" there. It is only because of Claire's questing that Tom can play immanence to her transcendence.

Claire's frustration with "words going into patterns" is a frustration with the act of creation. It may be helpful to recognize a kind of modernist aesthetics at work. Describing the aesthetic project of Baudelaire, whose work is called to mind by Claire's comparison of word and flower, Matei Calinescu writes of the importance of "the present in its 'presentness,' in its purely instantaneous quality" (50). The act of creation by the poet accesses some vital quality which does not survive with the poem, but of which the poem offers some sort of record. The poem then enters the world in an imitable form, subject to use and abuse, containing none of the 'life' that brought it into existence.

The attempt to create new kinds of love relationship follows the same structure and the same the same frustrations. The sexual impulse is spontaneous and vital, and yet the act binds two individuals with the memory of shared intimacy that feels very different from the original impulse. Claire demonstrates the vital sense of this impulse, when she enacts a symbolic sex act between herself and Tom by speaking this verse:

> CLAIRE:....
>
> But I must -- put my hands on you,
> Do something about infinity.
> Oh, let what will flow into us,
> And fill us full -- and leave us still.
> Wring us dry.
> And let me fill again with life more pure.

Her words evoke a variety of sex acts. Claire's "fill us full" and "wring us dry" might suggest the actions of male and female genitalia, respectively, upon one another in sexual intercourse. This same description of "fill us full -- and leave us still. Wring us dry, and fill again with life more purse," might also suggest a whole pregnancy or a single

menstruation. The "flowing into us" suggests the erotic rush of blood to the genitals, and it also conveys some metaphysical sense of the countless generations of persons or the infinite formlessness of life flowing into the finite forms of individuals persons.

However, it is crucial that this symbolic sex act remain symbolic. Not wanting the vital impulse of attraction between them to become the deadening conventionality of a sexual relationship, Tom resists Claire's seduction: "TOM:(*drenched in her passion, but fighting*)... not into this -- back into into this -- by me -- lover of your apartness " (89). In order to be a new kind of relationship, theirs must have the passion of a sexual relationship. However, sexual consummation would actually render it ordinary, not distinct enough from what Claire has with Dick.

Tom's use of the word "back" in the phrase "back into this" reveals the continuity between the attempt to forge a new type of relationship with Claire's botanical experiments. Reversion, in evolutionary science, describes a process in which a species, in a sense, evolves backwards, becoming more like an ancestor. In horticulture, the term is used as well. Chimaeras are especially subject to reversion, not stably presenting the characteristics of either one of its two parents. This is what happens to The Edgevine. Claire says of her failed experiment, the Edgevine, "it's running... back," right before she destroys it (77).

This word also reveals the place of Claire and Tom's relationship within the whole gestalt of Glaspell's evolutionary thinking. "Back" describes time in the aspiration-hypothesis scene in *Inheritors*, as Silas Morton expresses his concern that "if we don't be more than life has been, we *go back* on all that life behind us," (117 ; emphasis added). In

the beginning of *Inheritors*, "back" meant progress that, having already been completed, threatens nonetheless to overtake the present, and thus obliges the present to aim towards the future. It meant a past that was something less than the present. In *The Verge*, the present, too, has joined league with the past. Claire can never be content with what *is*, only with what *could be*, in her relationships as in her plants.

In practice, of course, the success of her experiment "The Breath of Life," in act III is horribly disappointing to her. Once she has created the new type, it exists. It is subject to all the mundane facts of existence. When Claire's creation is complete, the anticlimax is palpable. It elicits congratulations from from the men in her retinue, but their reactions are all too banal. Harry imagines her success in the court of public opinion -- "people like something new" ; Dick offers an informed-sounding art criticism such as might anticipate the the critical response to *The Verge* -- "It's quite new in form. It -- says something about form" (96). Her project to do the create an entirely new form, once done, becomes all too intelligible. Claire glides again into verse, chanting an apostrophe to the Breath of Life, before she sends the retinue away:

> CLAIRE:
> Out?
> You have been brought in.
> A thousand years from now, when you are but a form too long repeated
> Perhaps the madness that gave you birth will burst again,
> And from the prison that is you will leap pent quernesses [sic]
> To make a form that has not been --
> To make a person new.
> And this we call creation.
> Go away! (96)

Even Tom's reaction is all too banal -- and dangerous. He is drawn to her because of her success with the plant. He says, "As you stood there, looking into the womb you breathed to life, you were beautiful to me beyond any other beauty. You were life in its reach and its anguish. I can't go away from you." Just as her will has brought a new plant into being, she has persuaded Tom not to go to India. Tom explains to her, "It shall be -- as you wish. I can go with you where I could never go alone" (97).

Wringing Tom's neck is another symbolic sex act, with his neck as the phallus and her hands as the labia. Her use of the hands suggests a connection between this consummation of their relationship and her work of creation. The murder itself is a new form. After Claire strangles Tom, she then fires off a pistol only to alert everyone of her crime, playing with the formal dictum, attributed to Chekhov, that a gun appearing in the first act must be fired in the final act.

In one way, the murder succeeds where the plant fails. The murder remains an inscrutable act. Glaspell had already explored the subjectivity of such acts of murder in *Trifles* and "A Jury of Her Peers," in which she focuses on the variations by gender in understandings of a killing. In *The Verge*, Claire's act of murder cannot be understood by any of the other characters, and is fairly puzzling to audiences as well. Her words as she kills him are of little help. Here, she expresses only a wonderful paradox, telling Tom "You are too much! You are not enough." (99).

IV. "Nearer My God to Thee:" Exhaustion with Change.

Claire sings the same hymn twice in *The Verge.* The first time Claire sings, "Nearer My God to Thee," she sings it in order to comment on her daughter's conventionality.

> ELIZABETH: But of course, the object of doing it all is to make them better plants. Otherwise, what would be the sense of doing it? ... You know, something tells me this is wrong.
> CLAIRE: The hymn-singing ancestors are tuning up.
> ELIZABETh: I don't know what you mean by that mother.
> CLAIRE: But we will now sing 'Nearer, my God, to thee: Nearer to --
> ELIZABETH: (*laughingly breaking in*) Well, I don't care. Of course you can make fun at [sic] me. (77)

In this argument, Elizabeth is the advocate of the progressive view. Claire, knowing more about biology than her daughter, associates the moral view of evolution that Elizabeth takes with a kind the antiquated moralism of the Puritan ancestors. For Claire, the nature of life follows "patterns" but these patterns are incomprehensible.

In the final moments of the play, after she has killed Tom, she sings this hymn again, now without any particular humor. Like the murder, this is singing is an indecipherable gesture. It is unclear whether she herself has reverted to type, or is actually saying that her crime has brought her closer to god.

One way of reading this mad scientist's tale is as a critique of science. Science is an overreaching that tends towards violence. This violence is in some sense a disciplinary violence, and the play registers it as such if we accept that the scientist rejects the isolation experiment from its social and ethical implications. In the Act One, Claire is trying to preserve the isolation of her laboratory, and trying to control its temperature. By

the end, however, her human relationships have become themselves subject to the rules of her experiments.

> CLAIRE: ...one -- two -- three. You-love-me. But why do you bring it out here?
> ANTHONY: (*who has resumed work*) It is not what this place is for.
> CLAIRE: No, this place is for the destruction that can get through. (95)

Destruction is part of the result of the love-triangle. Harry is trying to shoot Dick at this particular moment, because of sexual jealousy or some sort of code of honor. However, Claire is the one who finally murders someone in the laboratory. The assumption that Claire's laboratory is not the right scene for the drama of the love triangle (or perhaps love pyramid or love-tree is more appropriate to this situation) problematizes the very notion of the isolation of science from the human needs of scientists.

The whole Tom, Dick, and Harry trichotomy would seem to represent a repudiation of Glaspell's previous Pragmatist challenge to dualism. Not only do we have the duality of Tom and Dick, representing the spiritual and the material, but further we have Harry who represents the social and the practical, including labor in the professional sphere, which, in the modern sense is seen as spiritually deadening. Glaspell has come far in *The Verge* from Karl Hubers and Ernestine and their spiritual marriage of science and art.

Claire's victory is a pyrrhic victory. The frustration with old forms is also the frustration with the inadequacy of new forms. Her singing at the end is particularly haunting. The act of singing a hymn in particular is to repeat a previous form. Although

the success of Breath of Life shows that new forms are possible, her act of singing suggests the final reassertion of the old.

Everything about Claire's story suggests a schism in Glaspell's thinking about ethics and evolution, suggesting in particular a renunciation of some aspects of her own Progressive Era ideals. Claire is the pinnacle of Glaspell's interest in science, the greatest of scientist characters. After *The Verge*, she will not again place a scientist at the center of a major work.[7]

Inheritors, in keeping with the genre of naturalism, has almost no metaphysics, because its spiritual inspiration is physical. The visionary encounters of Silas with Blackhawk and Madeline with Silas and Fred Jordan wear the guise of drunkenness and distraction. It is an attempt to find religious truth without recourse to a transcendent world beyond being. The one mention of Jesus is humanistic. The meaning of "God" is never evaluated. *The Verge* confronts the word "God," but, in the end, the play, more than fulfilling Fejevary's prediction that "in time time we'll find truth" in the old ideas, demands that the category be meaningful, even while it insists that its meaning lies in its utter incomprehensibility. This kind of agnosticism was not something Glaspell found particularly useful or acceptable, and this is why the *The Verge* is so comic, even while it is a tragedy.

Glaspell's creative power was intensified by her sense of her own intimate involvement in the profound political and social changes of the time. Glaspell understood culture holistically. The enfranchisement of women, the struggle for birth control, the

attempt to restructure the social institution of marriage, the new measures of public health, the rise of labor -- these developments were not separate from her work giving birth to an American theater. However, by 1921, the wave of reform was spent.

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[1] In order to understand Elizabeth -- whom Claire physically attacks at the end of Act I, it helps to keep in mind Ben-Zvi's description as "less a character than a cipher" for the politically disengaged "new woman" of the 1920s. (Ben-Zvi, 242-243).

[2] This holistic concept of culture dominates Glaspell early thinking about Darwin. For example, in Glaspell's first novel, *The Glory of the Conquered*, the mention of Darwin is part of a discussion between husband and wife, the two central characters the novel, Karl Hubers and Ernestine Stanley. Dr. Hubers, a research physician at the University of Chicago, inquires of his wife, a painter, "Do you ever think much about the *oneness* of the world?" and then goes on to reflect, "I often think about the different ways Goethe and Darwin got at evolution. Goethe had the poetic conception of it all right; Darwin worked it out step by step" (57). These statements do not go very far to describe the place for evolutionary ideas in the unity of science and religion that Glaspell imagines, but they do indicate a holistic concept of culture. In this view, science and art (and religion by implication) are seen as engines of culture, as separate aspects of a human impulse towards the discovery of a unified truth. After all, science and religion both explain the phenomenal world in which we live.

[3] Claire's rebellion against the Puritan strain in American culture, especially in sexual morals, is associated with culture critiques of Van Wyck Brooks or H.L. Mencken with their assaults on what they saw as the excessive Puritanism of American life. For a more thorough account of how these critiques operated in Glaspell's immediate milieu see Wertheim, p. 7-12

[4] All passages from "Pollen," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, p. 449.

[5] J. Ellen Gainor's description of the men as "husband, Harry, lover Dick, and confidante Tom" was greatly helpful to me in characterizing these relationships (*SG in Context*, 143). However, the term "confidante" for seems inadequate to the intimacy and intensity of their relationship. I tend to rely on the term "soul-mate" to refer to Tom, but even this belies the fact that what characterizes their relationship is its tendency to resist definition. Finally, referring to him as her victim has at least the benefit of technical accuracy.

[6] de Man, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," 7.

[7] Indeed, Claire may be the last scientist that Glaspell creates, although she does subsequently have a character who is a mathematician -- Eric Helge in *Brook Evans* (1928). Helge does resemble in some ways Karl Hubers, the research physician in *Glory of the Conquered*.

Conclusion

Susan Glaspell and the American College

> [T]he gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men,
> that he might be more helpful to himself; just as the
> hand was divided into fingers, to better answer its end.
> - Emerson, "The American Scholar"

> The literature on Romanticism is larger than Romanticism itself.
> - Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*

Since we have closely examined the central works of that career in the preceding chapters, we should now step back and say what these works meant in the context of Glaspell's fifty-year writing career, and what that career meant for literature and what it meant for the academic study of literature. Since we know that the academic study of literature owes much to Romantic thinking, this concluding chapter presents an overview of the pattern of Romantic allusion in Glaspell's work with and juxtaposes it with a view of her changing relationship to the institutions of higher education over the course of her career.

The title of this concluding chapter is a humorous reference to Irving Babbitt's book *Literature and The American College* (1908). Babbitt would have despised scholarship of Glaspell's popular novels could he have foreseen it, and he made himself the enemy of all "Rousseauist[s]" with whom Glaspell would readily keep company (120). But it is the nature of discourse that Glaspell, writing contemporarily with Babbitt about colleges and universities would find herself using some the same language and addressing some of the same problems. They both critique the worship of athleticism in the culture of the American college. They are both caught up in the same structure of

feeling for the ancient Greeks, which underscores for both of them the necessity of a generalist discourse. This dissertation is also a defense of a kind of generalist discourse.

Amid the cultural hierarchies of modern American literature, Glaspell is in a unique position: her plays for the Provincetown Players are often considered part of the high modern rebellion from the commercial theatre. Christopher Bigsby is an example of a critic who has evaluated Glaspell's plays according to this criteria. On the other hand, Glaspell's fiction, although seldom mentioned in the discourse on "the middlebrow," bears its distinct characteristics. The unique doubleness has often left us with more questions than answers. For instance, J. Ellen Gainor once mused: "how high is Glaspell's brow?" [1] I argue that Glaspell, with her unique position, shows us modern cultural hierarchies in the United States that are pervasive but have received little attention in all the discourse that has sprung up since Huyssen's 1986 study *After the Great Divide*, including the privileging of certain regions over others and the privileging of an aesthetic discourse over an ethical one. The pattern of allusion to Romantic texts and figures provides a quick study of these hierarchies.

German, British, and American Romanticism are all frequently referenced in Glaspell's work. These references take many forms including direct quotation, allusive echo, use of Romantic tropes, and -- perhaps most importantly for my purpose -- reference to the figures of the Romantic writers themselves.[2] (For the sake of simplicity, my scope in this essay is limited Glaspell's allusions to British and American Romantic authors.) Glaspell regards Percy Shelley and Walt Whitman in much the same way as she would regard William Wordsworth or Ralph Waldo Emerson. These references constitute

some version of what Jerome McGann has called a "Romantic ideology." These references signify the "literature" of a higher purpose. For Glaspell, this higher purpose was usually aligned with philosophical idealism. Literature was a prophecy of the ethical ideas of the future.

We know that Romantic ideology was essential to the creation of our modern disciplines of literary studies, as well its canons of "Literature." Terry Eagleton reminds us, "it was, in fact, only with what we now call the 'Romantic period' that our own definitions of literature began to develop" (16). Jerome McGann showed us that through most of the twentieth century, " the scholarship and criticism of Romanticism and its works are dominated by a Romantic ideology, by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations" (1). To Glaspell, as much as to her contemporary critics who were instituting "modernism" in literature, Romantic ideology offered the standard for what constituted imaginative literature. Since 1983, when Jerome McGann published *Romantic Ideology* and Terry Eagleton published *Literary Theory*, the rise of cultural studies and the increasing reception of the ideas of Bordieu into literary studies have made us rethink what constitutes literature worth studying. Glaspell's oeuvre gives us an opportunity to peer inside Romantic ideology and to understand in a new way what was at stake for a modern author actively negotiating her own place in literature. The new materialist critiques have tried look beyond the exaltation of literature. However, in the process they have overlooked the place of religion in the structures of cultural capital. Romanticism, as M. H. Abrams observed meant "the secularization of inherited theological ideas and ways of thinking." This is particularly true of Glaspell whose relationship not only to literature and culture but also to faith and secularity are

negotiated through Romantic tropes. By peering into Glaspell's Romantic ideology, we can also get a glimpse of the complete reevaluation in the first half of the twentieth century of ideas of faith within the cultural hierarchies of the period.

Romanticism haunted the coterie of high modernist, even while they sought to escape it. Edmund Wilson described this reaction in *Axel's Castle*, when he wrote that modernism "thrives in [the] teeth" of Romanticism, that the later school is shaped by its rebellion against the earlier (10-11). Indeed, Glaspell's references to Romantic texts may have contributed to her exclusion from the list of writers who for Wilson, and for so many after him, constituted significant modernists. However, like them, Glaspell was reacting to the claims for the imaginative artist that were established in the Romantic period.

Modern writers such as Glaspell could not escape the seriousness of these claims even while they rejected them materially antiquated and its epistemologically suspect. Floyd Dell, in his spiritual autobiography, entitled *Intellectual Vagabondage*:

> From the stormy mouthings of Byron to the sanctimonious solemnities of Tennyson, they were a bore... We wanted a literature of our own --- books produced by, for and out of the age in which we lived. But there were, quite literally, no such books... It is true that the kind of Freedom which Thoreau and Emerson wrote about was a freedom far surpassing the Emancipation Proclamation. But we did not know these things, and there was none to tell us... We had heard so much about the Civil War in those early years that we thought we never wanted to hear anything connected with it again. The fact that this part of American literature had something to do with Slavery was enough to scare us away from it... (106;108;116)

This passage reveals the doubleness of the the modern writer's relationship to Romanticism. On the one hand, we can note the modern writer's antipathy to the past.

Dell could not appreciate Emerson on Thoreau, when he was younger, because American Romantics were too bound up in the history of the civil war. We recall here the famous line from Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which Stephen Dedalus aphorizes that "history... is a nightmare from which [he] is trying to awake," or Ezra Pound's famous injunction to "make it new" (Joyce, 28). On the other hand, when Dell writes that Emerson and Thoreau "wrote about a freedom far surpassing the Emancipation Proclamation," he is suggesting that Emerson and Thoreau had a kind of prophetic vision, that the American Romantics were, in Shelley's words, "unacknowledged legislators of the world" (508). Emerson cultivates this notion of the poet, writing such words as "the birth of a poet is the principle event in chronology." Or, Emerson writes that Shakespeare "cast the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into Chaos" -- 'chaos' here referring to the future. The idea is that the poet envisions the kinds of new ways of thinking and the kinds of ethical standards that then over the period of many years take on a wider cultural appreciation. The philosophical idealism of the Romantic writers was appealing to Dell as well as Glaspell and it informed their concept of what literature should do. The modern writers such as Dell, Glaspell, and others were drawn to this idea literature and its social role and they took it very seriously. However, at the same time, they also knew that the time they lived in was very different and the media in which they wrote was very different. Romantic writing must, to successfully signify "non-alienated labour," predate the mass market in which they found themselves operating (Eagleton 17).

For this reason, Romantic ideology is often figured in modern American writing comedically. For example, Wallace Stevens' "Comedian as the Letter C," transposes a

Byronic hero of the sea, such as Childe Harold, with the hero of bourgeois domesticity that is Crispin with his “Nice Shady Home... And Daughters with Curls” (Stevens, 32 ; 35).[3] Seriously as these modern American writers might take the idea of the literary artist as visionary, they were living in a fully industrialized economy. Romantic literature was removed from the world they lived in, and the writing of visionary ideals seemed ironic in this material world: materialism was supposed to shut down the possibility of visionary idealism, but, contrary to expectation, this idealism was achievable precisely through accepting materialism as the precondition to the ideal. It is a funny, tenuous kind of acceptance.

Glaspell’s first novel, *The Glory of the Conquered* (1909) is full of this humor, which reveals, even as it seeks to disguise, the seriousness of her vision. This novel tells the story of a married couple: Karl Hubers and Ernestine Stanley. Karl and Ernestine themselves are idealized figures. Karl is a medical researcher at the University of Chicago who is expected to cure cancer; Ernestine is a promising painter who has just had her first successful showing of a painting in a Paris salonThe novel’s title chapter features the couple setting up house. The couple is, to borrow a phrase from Walter Benjamin, “unpacking the library.” They are joined by some friends, Dr. Parkman, a physician, and Georgia McCormick, a newspaper-writer. We see in this scene an irreverence and a sense of play in how she regards Romantic texts. At the same time, the scene clearly shows that Glaspell regarded her fiction, which was aimed at a mass market audience, as part of “Literature,” as it were, with a capital-L:

> "Now here," said Dr. Hubers, picking up a thick, green book, "is *Walt Whitman and that means trouble*. No one is going to know whether he is prose or poetry."...

> "When art weds science," observed Georgia, "the resulting library is difficult to manage. Mr. Haeckel and Mr. Maeterlinck may not like being bumped up here together..."
>
> "I think Browning and Keats are over there under the Encyclopedia Britannica," said Ernestine....
>
> "This function," [Georgia] began [referring to the social gathering in the new home], "will make a nice little item for our society girl. Usually she disdains people who do not live on the Lake Shore Drive, but she will have to admit there is snap in this 'Dr. and Mrs. Karl Ludwig Hubers,'"--*pounding it out on a copy of Walden as typewriter*-- "'but newly returned from foreign shores, entertained last night at a book dusting party. Those present were Dr. Murray Parkman, eminent surgeon, and Miss Georgia McCormick, well and unfavorably known in some parts of the city. Rug beating and other athletic games were indulged in. The hostess wore a beautifully ruffled apron of white and kindly presented her guest with a kitchen apron of blue. Beer was served freely during the evening.'"...
>
> "Is that last as close as your paper comes to the truth?" asked Ernestine, *piling up Emerson that he might not be walked upon*. (39-41, emphasis added)

In this scene, the joke is that the physicality of the book should take on something of its meaning. The characters are playing with the books, experimenting with which ones go together. I think we can easily see Glaspell, in her debut novel, shelving her first book among these works that, by the critical standards of her day, commanded more respect. The image of Georgia McCormick pretending that a copy of *Walden* is a typewriter is a particularly significant. The image recognizes that the production of literature is governed by material forces; at the same time, it suggests the opportunity to reinvent the idealism of Thoreau in a form suited to the age of mechanical reproduction. On the one hand, the characters cannot escape the cultural hierarchy of high Literature and lowly society column. Ernestine must make sure that Emerson is not walked up. On the other hand, this cultural hierarchy is undermined by the patent acceptance of Glaspell's own novel in its mass market commodification expressed in the transposition of *Walden* and the society

column.[4] This scene projects the hope that Glaspell will be able to create a mass market fiction that embodies the hopes of Romantic idealism. The ideal of the *The Glory of the Conquered* is a more whole culture; it envisions a unity of science and art. The University of Chicago embodies this ideal, as it suggested the possibility of a new era in American culture -- one in which the Midwest will be its own significant engine of cultural production. Ernestine and Karl set up as heroes to the readers, passionately engaged in that work.

That hope is characteristic of Glaspell's early work, these humorous Romantic echoes continue to reverberate in Glaspell's writing, and remain humorous through her years with Provincetown Players, the glory years of high modernism, roughly 1915 - 1922. In the drama *Chains of Dew,* Glaspell's invokes Shelley, and makes a joke very similar to that of *Glory of The Conquered*. The play centers on Seymour Standish, a poet, who is also the president of a bank in a small Midwestern town. (Glaspell will re-use this plot for her 1931 novel *Ambrose Holt and Family.*) We can readily see how his character embodies the dichotomy of art and commerce that is central to Romantic ideology. In addition, his character represents a newly emerging cultural hierarchy that Glaspell was in a unique position to comment on -- the elevation of the urban center above the small town, and of New York above the Midwest. In the opening act of *Chains of Dew*, Seymour Standish is a topic conversation between Leon Whittaker, editor of *The New Nation* (an obvious pastiche of *The Nation* and *The New Republic*) and Nora Powers, Secretary of The Birth Control League. Whittaker reads from one of Standish's poems:

> LEON:We're using one of his poems in this number. I have it here. Listen, Nora. (reading) "To Shelley." 'We need you, Shelley. / You whose vision had the power of light, / seeing that gave sight...'

(The mimeograph machine emits a loud squawk.) [5]

Again we see the tropes of Romantic ideology such as vision and light, interrupted here by the sounds of the crude printing machine that Nora Powers is using to crank out her magazine. Here, mechanical reproduction is not in the service of the mass market, as it was in *Glory*, but of a political ideology. This was the very realpolitik that was opposed to highbrow literature. In fact, many of the practitioners of the burgeoning discipline of literary studies thought that the study of literature could mitigate the effects of realpolitik. The joke about needing Shelley then negotiates a complex web of competing claims to cultural hegemony. It negotiates conflicts within the values of Greenwich Village. It is expresses sympathy with the anti-commercialism of the highbrow literary establishment, represented here by *The Nation*, while it also indicts the political escapism and formal conservatism of this establishment.[6]

At the same time, the joke Glaspell turns towards a larger cultural problem. Standish's poem is exactly not modern. Whittaker likes it because he feels it is a "passionate cry for freedom," the kind of freedom that is envisioned in Greenwich Village but not practiced at large in the United States. When Standish is asked what his poetry lacks that keeps him from being a great poet, he replies, "perhaps America is the matter with me." The plot of *Chains of Dew* is driven by Powers' idea to liberate Standish from his midwestern domestic life by visiting him there and creating a scandal for him by revealing his Greenwich Village values. Standish resists this encroachment, trying to protect his wife and his mother from the liberated village values. *Chains of Dew* parodies the ways the intellectual elite of Greenwich Village establishes itself as superior to the

culture of the Midwestern heartland.[7] Glaspell critiques this cultural hierarchy, but expressions of it, that are less critical, can be found in the work of many her contemporaries. As Theodore Dreiser wrote in 1915, "What'll we do with the the Middle West?" (240). This subject will become an increasing preoccupation of her work and will darken the comic cast of her Romantic reference, giving it an increasingly tragic aspect.

This increasingly-tragic yet-still-comic aspect begins to take shape almost immediately after *Chains of Dew* in *Inheritors*. The comic aspect begins when Horace Fejevary and some of his fellow undergraduates make fun of Matthew Arnold, saying, "old bones could sure spill the English." However, the seriousness with which Glaspell regards culture is conveyed by the fact that she chooses Arnold's most famous line, "the best that has been thought and said in the world," to cue the entrance of Madeline Morton, who is described by her fellow undergraduates as "a highbrow in disguise" (125-6). Madeline steps into the place of cultural heroine, embodying Arnoldian ideals of the value of national character.

The newly grave aspect of the Romantic reference in *Inheritors* picks up where the reference to Shelley in *Chains of Dew* left off. We have a character, in this case Professor Holden, looking to Romantic texts for some salutary benefit. Romanticism represents freedom, as it did in *Chains of Dew* and also takes on some of the significance of the unitary view of culture that it expressed in *Glory of the Conquered*. Professor Holden has made public statements in support of a student who refused to fight in the Great War, and who was consequently expelled from Morton College and imprisoned by the federal government. Sadly, this has put him at odds with the President of the Board of

Trustees of the college, Felix Fejevary, II, who is trying to score an appropriation from the State to expand the college. In this scene, Fejevary finds Holden in the library. Holden is hiding out from the ceremonies of the college's fortieth anniversary founder's day. On the table in front of Holden, Fejevary finds two books:

> FEJEVARY: (*looking at the books*) Emerson. Whitman. (*with a smile*) Have they anything new to say on economics?
>
> HOLDEN: Perhaps not; but I wanted to forget economics for a time. I came up here by myself to try and celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of Morton College. (*answering the other man's look*) Yes, I confess I've been disappointed in the anniversary. As I left Memorial Hall after the exercises this morning, Emerson's words came into my mind—"Give me truth, / For I am tired of surfaces / And die of inanition." Well, then I went home—(*stops, troubled*) (130).

Holden is discouraged, and he reads Emerson and Whitman to try to recall the idealism that brought him to profession. There is perhaps some inaccuracy in Holden's quotation; either Holden, or, more likely, Glaspell was quoting from memory. Emerson's poem, "Blight," reads: "Give me truths / For I am weary of the surfaces / And die of inanition" (139). This quotation from Emerson, and reference to Whitman, along with the reference to Matthew Arnold, are part of a serious confrontation in *Inheritors* with Romantic idealism. When Holden compares the play's fictional character of Silas Morton to Walt Whitman later in this same dialogue, it is neither ridiculous nor tragic. It is plausible not as an accurate reading of Whitman, but to the extent Whitman serves as an emblem of the very Romantic ideology that is confronted in Silas Morton's project of founding a college.

However, it is not at all plausible when Glaspell repeats this move some twenty-five years later in the novel *Judd Rankin's Daughter*, having Judson compare to Walt

Whitman his grandfather's book of short stories depicting life in a small Midwestern town, called *The Swamp-neck Jenkses.* This comparison would seem absurd, but it is not as absurd as the curious reference to Wordsworth that Judson makes just a bit earlier in the novel. Judson is a soldier home from World War II, and he assaults one of his childhood friends, now a local fisherman. The story is a very strange one. The soldier pushes the fisherman off a great height when they are up in an old willow tree, cutting the tree down after it was damaged by a storm. Even more strange about the attack, the solider cries out lines from William Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*. However absurd, neither of these references are exactly comic. The novel centers on the life of Frances Mitchell, who is the title character. Her father is the author of *The Swamp-Neck Jenkses*. Her husband is a literary critic, based in Provincetown and New York, who is at work on a book on Modern Poetry. Frances is alienated by her husband's intellectual circle, and she does not feel any greater sense of belonging in her father's world. She wishes both of them would take more interest in the condition of her son, Judson, who has returned from combat in World War II with a new personality. As she is trying to enlist her father's help, she relates the story of her son's unusual recitation of Wordsworth:

> "Well, daughter, what are you talking about?"
>
> "Judson. He went crazy. There's no other word you can use. When I came running out of the house there was Judson, high in the tree, arms out as if he were-- *charging*, I thought he'd fall, and he was screaming lines from Wordsworth's ode on Intimations of Immortality, at *that* time screaming / *And by the vision splendid* / *Is on his way attended*. / ... I'll never forget it... Johnny lying there -- Judson up high, waving his arms, and all the time -- over and over again -- those *horrible* words."
>
> [Judd Rankin] left his chair, pulled up a smaller one to sit near her. "Now there's some explanation for all this," he said quietly. Something that

> makes it not as crazy as it seems... Those words themselves aren't horrible. They're a little highfalutin but I always kind of liked them." (206-7)

Rankin is correct. The explanation turns out to be that Judson witnessed the violent death of a friend and fellow soldier who was killed while reciting the *Intimations Ode*. Why the *Intimations Ode*? Is this supposed to be the prayer of a dying solider, whose early death meant that he was never separated by age and experience from an eternal divine? The words the soldier would next have spoke were, "At length the man perceives it [his vision] die away, / And fade into the light of common day" (Wordsworth, 359). The stanza that the soldier was reciting is this one:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath elsewhere had its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
> But shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
> And by the vision spledid
> Is on his way attended ;
> At length the man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

Is it Glaspell herself addressing the loss of her hope in the visionary?

The heroines of Glaspell's late novels offer stark contrast to the heroines of Glaspell's earlier work who are directly involved in the arts, in politics, and in the

sciences. Like Norma Ashe, the eponymous central character of Glaspell's 1942 novel, who gave up on graduate study at the University of Chicago in order to get married, Frances is a woman just outside the work of cultural production.

The reason for Glaspell's loss of hope in the visionary has much to do with the possibility for cultural holism which Glaspell associated with the university. Glaspell's clearest articulation of her ideals for the university come in the voice of Professor Holden in *Inheritors*, who is described quite crucially by Fejevary as a "particularly human human-being." This idea of the human is associated his generosity of spirit, but also with his humanism. Holden declares:

> HOLDEN: I couldn't teach anything if I didn't feel free to go wherever that thing took me. Thirty years ago I was asked to come to this college precisely because my science was not in isolation, because of my vivid feeling of us as a moment in a long sweep, because of my faith in the greater beauty our further living may unfold. (135)

Freedom of thought, science not in isolation, a deep sense of history, faith in the human capacity to make a more beautiful world -- Holden professes a kind of liberal humanism. His words are a defense of his own involvement in higher learning. This moment in *Inheritors* is the very pinnacle of Glaspell's own investment in this kind of thinking. Glaspell's writing had long been inclined towards humanism. However, as she increasingly senses that the university moves instead towards greater specialization, her relationship to the university changes.

The Glory of the Conquered is a practical experiment in this humanism. Karl and Ernestine's marriage is not merely a union between individuals, but a kind of representative union of science and art that is supposed that is the vision of the work When Georgia McCormick, in the library scene, announces, "When art weds science ... the resulting library is difficult to manage," she does not say an artist and a scientist, but uses the nouns that refer to the ways of understanding the world-- "when art weds science," she says, as if their marriage were some sort of interdisciplinary study. Indeed, it becomes just this. When Karl blinds himself in a laboratory accident, Ernestine secretly trains to become his eyes in the laboratory, drawing on their deep personal intimacy and her own significant talent. She realizes such an undertaking means she will sacrifice no small portion of her productivity for her own work. However, to cure cancer, she will deprive the world of her paintings. Karl dies before Ernestine can begin their work together; so, after a long depression, Ernestine brings forth her first serious masterpiece, the subject of which is the great beauty of Karl's spirit. The analogy seems rather obvious between this masterpiece and the novel itself as a picture of a beautiful spirit of progress and understanding.

The novel is titled after chapter of the novel, "Gloria Victis" a Beaux Arts sculpture, by Antonin Mercié, Ernestine unpacks a bronze copy of the sculpture and puts it on the mantel. An image of the sculpture also appears on the title page of the first edition (see Figure 4, below). The characters then offer various criticisms of the sculpture, and translations of its title, including *The Glory of the Conquered*. The defeated hero of the novel is Karl, struck down in the battle for truth. Ernestine is the winged victory, bearing the fallen soldier aloft. Dr. Parkman, another friend of the couple,

critiques the sculpture, calling it "so Christian... I can see submission and renunciation and other objectionable virtues in every line of it." The Christianity of the theme is important, but what is more important is the Beaux Arts neoclassicism that incorporates the Christian with the classic with the modern (Mercié's sculpture commemorates fallen soldiers in the Franco Prussian wars), and the concept of beauty that is built into this neoclassicism. To borrow a phrase from Wallace Stevens, this concept of beauty is based on "ideas of order."

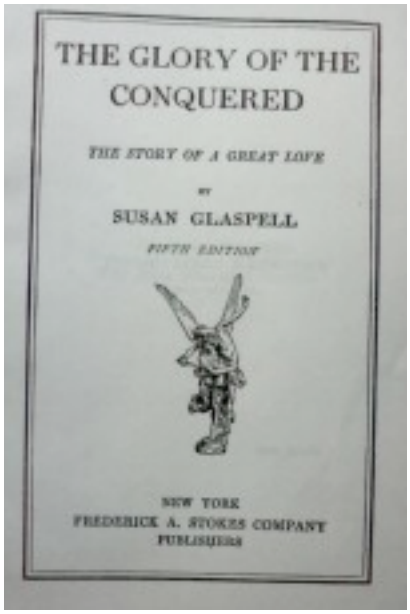

Figure 4.
Facsimile title page of *The Glory of the Conquered* featuring an etching of "Gloria Victis"

This ordered conception of beauty pervades the novel, and implies a whole epistemology. Ernestine is training in secret to help Karl with his work, and she begins to see for him first outside of the laboratory. There is a chapter called "Eyes for Two," in which the couple takes a walk down to Lake Michigan on a beautiful spring day. The narrator describes:

> In so many ways she told how the lake seemed to her -- how it seemed to her eyes and how it seemed to her heart and how it seemed to her soul, how it looked, what it said, what it meant; what the clouds thought of it, and what the sunlight thought of it, what the wind thought of it, what the dear babies on the shore thought of it, and what it thought of itself. She could not have talked that way to any one [sic]else, but it was so easy for her heart to talk to Karl's heart. One pair of eyes could do just as well as two when hearts were tuned like this! (283)

Although Karl has become completely blind and cannot see the beauty of the day, he is not entirely deprived of sight. He says, "There's no reason why I should be shut out from the world, Ernestine... when you have eyes for two." Here we have a picture of a world that is comprehensible and communicable. The lake scene reveals itself to Ernestine, and Ernestine is able to communicate to Karl what she understands about what she sees. Even considering that a uniquely intimate marital bond is the precondition for this kind of imagined pure communication, *The Glory of the Conquered* -- typical of Glaspell's early work, seems invested in it as a possibility.

The Verge re-evaluates that possibility. In contrast to the intimacy of Karl and Ernestine, *The Verge* presents ineffability as the basis for the intense intimacy between and Claire and Tom. Like *Glory of the Conquered*, however, this play draws intimacy, knowledge, and artistic vision into the same epistemological inquiry. One expressionistic staging of this problem occurs in the first act when Tom Edgeworthy is locked out of the greenhouse and trying to get in, while Harry Archer and Dick Demming, oblivious to his near presence, talk about him. Dick says that Tom "might have some idea that we can't very well reach each other." Harry finds this notion preposterous:

> HARRY: Damn nonsense. What have we got intelligence for?
> DICK: To let each other alone, I suppose. Only we haven't enough to do it.
> (TOM *is now knocking on the door with a revolver...*)

> HARRY:... Can't reach each other! Then we're fools. If I'm here and you're there, why can't we reach each other?
> DICK: Because I am I and you are you.
> HARRY: No wonder you're drawing's queer. A man who can't reach another man--
> (TOM *here reaches them by pointing the revolver into the air and firing*.) (67)

The symbolism of this moment has always struck me as rather obvious: violence is the result of this inherent difficulty in human communication. Harry's assumption that we have intelligence in order to communicate and his association of Dick's "queer drawing" with Dick's rejection of this paradigm represent the late-nineteenth century attitude of liberal humanism against which modern art defined itself. Perhaps Harry would rather an artist's work conform to Beaux Arts principles.

There was a simultaneous collapse of two of the tenets of the humanist doctrine. Just as the basis of the beauty of the great love between Ernestine and Karl is their deep understanding and intimacy, so the notion of an intimacy between science and art, or between classical polytheism and Christian monotheism, is also dependent on the notion that different ways of seeing the world bear some fundamental equivalence -- a common humanity. If, on the other hand, as Glaspell comes to see in *The Verge* there is no clear translation between individuals, that the human subject is not universal, then perhaps science IS isolation and beauty is not a grounds for faith. This epistemological problem of humanism recalls, again, Michael North's description of the project of universal understanding that turns itself inside out. This project of universal understanding, in Glaspell's words, is the issue of whether "we can reach one another."

In a late novel, *The Morning is Near Us* (1939), Glaspell uses this phrase from *The Verge* again of "whether we can reach one another." The book tells the story of Lydia

Chippman, a long-estranged daughter who returns to her parents' home in the Midwestern U.S. after many years of living abroad, mostly in Europe. The novel depicts her journey of discovery about her parentage and the causes of her estrangement and why she felt her parents -- her mother in particular -- had never loved her. At one point late in the novel, Lydia learns that her father is not dead as she had previously thought, but is serving a penal sentence for murder in a mental hospital some miles from her house. Clandestinely, she drives out to visit him there and discovers her father sitting on a bench across a lawn, staring blankly into space. She becomes paralyzed with something like fear. Her thoughts are described by the narrator in an indirect discourse:

> She could no more reach him than she could reach her mother in her grave... something was dying in her: a faith in which she had always lived; the faith that we could reach one another -- that dear faith that out of the loneliness that is each one of us we can reach the loneliness of another. We *touch* there -- in our common loneliness she would have thought, and that my be our closest touch. That was something given us in grace. (217-18)

The Christian vocabulary of this passage distinguishes it somewhat from the two earlier texts. Although both *Glory of the Conquered* and *The Verge* show Christian influence, it is in this late novel that the issue of whether we can reach one another is described in Christian vocabulary as a "faith... given us in grace."

If Christianity reasserts itself in Glaspell's late writing, it must be understood in relation to her changing ideas of higher education and its institutions, driven by the failure of humanist ideas.[8]

There is something conclusive in the way that she regards institutions of higher learning as settings for her work. The University of Chicago is the setting for her first novel. In *Inheritors*, she invents Morton College. In her penultimate novel, *Norma Ashe* (1942), Glaspell includes both the University of Chicago and a Midwestern liberal arts

college of her own invention -- in this book, Pioneer College in North Dakota.[9] The way the campuses are regarded by the characters shows a strong contrast in how not only the institutions but their social functions are perceived.

In *The Glory of the Conquered*, the University of Chicago is the site of hope for the cultivation of an ideal future. Ernestine visits Karl one day in his laboratory. As she is walking on the campus, she reflects admirably on all the "men and women working their way toward truth":

> [S]he felt all about her the ideas here in embryo. How would they develop? Where would they strike? What things now slumbering here would step, robust and mighty, into the next generation" (61).

In the use of the word "embryo" here, we see an understood equivalence between the ontogeny of the fetus with cultural development.[10] Cultural development is referred to here as a "spirit," driving growth of the city and the university alike. Yet, a special place is given to education in this cultural development -- the place of ideals. This resonates with Holden's statement about "the beauty our further living will unfold."

Ernestine's revery about the campus contrasts sharply with how the place is portrayed in *Norma Ashe*. This novel is set mostly in Iowa, North Dakota and Texas, but, in a plot twist towards the novel's end, the University of Chicago appears. A stranger has wandered onto the campus, an old woman dressed in a shabby coat. We see undergraduates making jokes about her clothes, about what such a person could be doing in such a place (220-221). She reads aloud some words inscribed on a wall: "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," and she remarks "That's not true." (221-222).[11] This same woman later disrupts a lecture that is open to the public, and is removed from the hall by security. This stranger is, of course, the title character of

the novel. It is easy to see how in the early novel the campus itself is the site of inclusion and promise, whereas in the late novel the campus represents exclusion and betrayal. The story of *Norma Ashe* deepens our sense of what was involved in the betrayal.

It is a strange story, really. Norma Ashe had been a student at Pioneer College in North Dakota and had been groomed by her favorite professor for the graduate school at the University of Chicago. The very summer after graduating, Norma jettisoned her plans for further education when she met an entrepreneur who courted her aggressively, married her, and enlisted her to be the maker of his home in Texas, where he speculated in oil. However, most of the novel takes place years afterwards. Norma, now called Mrs. Utterbach, is a widow and the keeper of a boarding house. She receives an unexpected visit from a long-lost friend from Pioneer College. Reminded of all she had left behind, reawakened, Norma begins to track down all of the pupils of her beloved professor and finds that each one has perverted, in her eyes, his teachings. One pupil, Austen Wurthen, has interpreted them to justify some amelioration between labor and capital. (It is Wurthen's lecture at the University of Chicago that Norma disrupts.) Another, her best friend Rosie, attributes their teacher's influence to her devotion to "so-called new thinking." Norma reflects that this "hodge-podge of a philosophy: smattering of Oriental mysticism, a dabbling in German idealism, ... added up to the idea that we could make life very agreeable if we only saw what we wanted to see" (170).

Norma's journey towards greater confrontation with the memory of her college experience reveals a very strange tale of what occurred with their professor -- a character referred to mostly as "teacher." He concentrated on this particular group of students, because he knew he was dying. As Norma later learns, the teacher convinced a student in

their social circle to aid in his own euthanasia. Prior to his death, however, he engendered, at least in Norma, an epiphanic event sometimes referred to as "the miracle," in which "it had been as if veils parted, she had felt she saw what waits" (349). Later on, recollecting this miracle, Norma is determined to have it happen again: "One time more her lips formed the words. 'This time I will see *all the way*." However, the exact outcome of her vision now is unclear. The novel ends with this mysterious paragraph:

> Her head went down, in among recorded thoughts, tracings of the hope and vision and courage of youth.... And it was not herself, after an hour, raised her head from the place where it had come to rest. (349).

Although Norma disputes the motto inscribed on the wall, she is in fact personally set free by her own encounter with the truth. However, in contrast with what Ernestine's concern over the public good of men and women working their way towards truth, Norma's epiphanic moments are for herself alone. What *Norma Ashe* represents is the reassertion of the Romantic ideology of the visionary, even after its public potential as a doctrine has fallen apart.

A set of secular principles did not come to organize the culture in the way that American Protestantism had. In the face of this, Glaspell continued to write about how ontological, even theistic, questions informed the lives of her characters and their ethics, but noticeably these very questions began to shift their focus from public and social to private considerations.

On the other hand, liberal ideas would form, not a doctrinal religion, but a loosely organized cultural group with no name and few precise allegiances. The ethical ideas that unite this cultural group -- empathy, environmentalism, cross-cultural understanding,

peace activism, remorse over the dispossession and genocide of Native-Americans, a skeptical attitude about consumer capitalism, do not amount to a political doctrine, but a set of cultural attitudes. Glaspell's prescient ethics fit so well into our present discourse, revealing something about the moral underpinnings of today's humanities.

The influence of philosophical idealism on Glaspell, which she learned in no small part through the study of Emerson and the Romantics, suggests that her writing was involved in some kind visionary attempt. It is not my intention to say that Glaspell is the originator of a liberal tradition, but to portray her as, to invoke Shelley's famous phrase, a kind of "unacknowledged legislator of the world." She gives voice to a nascent law the force of which plays out on a larger historical spectrum. Although her sense of her own work as involved in any kind of visionary attempt wanes over the course of her fifty year writing career, the world that she envisioned has taken shape in ways she was never able to anticipate.

I see in Glaspell's story of idealistic projects that succeeded and that did not succeed a larger historical irony, especially as concerns her relationship with the academy. In this regard, it also a story of loss and redemption. Glaspell had hoped that the institutions of higher education would be the sites of these types of ethical reforms. On this score, she felt most deceived or even betrayed. These institutions seemed increasingly elitist to Glaspell as she grew older. However, sixty years after her death it is these very institutions that most closely embody the ethics that Glaspell was interested in. Literary critics neglected her for a long time, but now, and for many good reasons, her work is receiving the attention it richly deserves.

Humanistic knowledge avoids its ethics at its own peril. My intention in studying Susan Glaspell at this point is to satisfy some hunger in secular discourse for unifying principles, especially in higher education. There remains a role for higher education, not in instructing what ethics to believe, but in instructing how to formulate the basis for belief.

The division of knowledge into disciplines has its utility, as does specialization -- especially in the sciences. However, the literature of Susan Glaspell reminds us that the division of knowledge into disciplines and excessive specialization in the humanities are the trees for which the forest of the real utility of higher education is not seen. With a more generalist perspective, the university might hope to mend the divisions in American culture.

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[1] The title of Gainor's unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education Conference in 2004 is, "How High Is Glaspell's Brow?: Avant-Garde Drama, Popular Culture, and Twentieth-Century American Taste." (The talk is cited in Demastes and Fischer, Interrogating America Through Theatre, 118).

[2] "Allusive Echo" might include direct quotation, but it also refers to a kind looser quotation that might be accidental. It describes a mode of intertextuality in which authors incorporate words and phrases from other authors in ways that appear accidental or incomplete. (See John Hollander, The Figure of Echo, especially Chapter 3 on "metaphoric echo." pp 60-62).

[3] The "Comedian as the Letter C" is not always interpreted this way. Yet, clearly its relatioship to Romantic ideology fits my description: "These bland excusions into time to come / Related in romance to backward flights... Contained in their afflatus the reproach / That first drove Crispin to his wandering. / .... So Crispin hasped on the surviving form, / For him, of shall or ought to be in is" (31-32). The prolepsis of Romantic vision already "backward" glancing. However, the Romantic notion of art cannot be completely abandoned, and remains in "surviving forms," but now instead of the visionary future we have the material present -- "shall or ought to be in is."

[4] Walden is a particularly savvy choice of books, reflecting the book's own materialistic idealism.

[5] Chains of Dew has a complicated publication history. Glaspell wrote it sometime around 1917, and it was performed by the Players in 1922. However, it was not published until McFarland brought out The Complete Plays of Susan Glaspell edited by Linda Ben-Zvi and J. Ellen Gainor in 2005. My quotations from the play, however, are from the unpublished typescript in the Library of Congress.

[6] For more on this conflict, see Wertheim, The New York Little Renaissance, (3-5).

[7] This hierarchy has been written about by Susan Hegeman, who establishes the connection between social geography of the United States and the evolution of what she calls "the culture concept" in her book Patterns for America. Hegeman does not mention Glaspell, but she might have. Her discussion of the connection between the Middle West and the Middlebrow would probably seem less labored if she had had reference to Glaspell (134-146).

[8] It is also important to recall the difference in audience for these late novels as compared with the Greenwich Village audience for the Provincetown Players.

[9] Schools called Morton College and Pioneer College do exist in fact. There is a Morton College in Cicero, Illinois and several schools bearing the name "Pioneer," including Northland Pioneer College, a community college with campuses spread across Arizona, and Pioneer Pacific College, a private institution with several campuses in Oregon. All of these institutions were founded well after Glaspell invented schools by these names, and there is no direct connection between Glaspell's work and the schools' foundings.

[10] It is interesting to note that a similar use of the word "embryo" occurs in one of the most staggering paragraphs of Emerson's "Experience," in which he discusses the history of the ancients, the ontogeny of Everard Home (a British physician), and the settlement of the West (484-5).

[11] These words, from the gospel of John, are inscribed on the exterior wall of Bond's Chapel at the University of Chicago, as well on walls at the Main Building of the University of Texas Austin and the Knight Library at the University of Oregon. All of these structures were erected between in the 1920s and 30s.

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