In 1971, my book *A Literary History of Iowa* closed on an optimistic note for the future of literature set in Iowa by writers who had either been born or lived in Iowa, or else used the state as a setting. As the book predicted, more literary works with Iowa themes, settings and characters have appeared in the years since.

Like that text, this essay defines an Iowa author as a novelist, playwright, or poet whose major work(s) fit the above criteria, whether or not the author ever lived in Iowa. Other historians have defined an Iowa author as one born in the state or who lived here for an arbitrary period of time. For such recorders, Hamlin Garland, whose *Boy Life on the Prairie* (1899) is set on the nineteenth century Iowa prairie, is not an Iowa author, because he was born just east of the Mississippi near LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and left Iowa when he was a young man. But Martin Yoseloff, who set his early novels in Iowa, and his brother Thomas, whose books are set elsewhere, are Iowa authors because they were born in Iowa, even though they have spent most of their careers outside of Iowa.

By 1972, regional materials and subjects seemed to be losing their appeal to authors, publishers and readers; the farm novel, in particular, had all but ceased to be. That year, Gerald A. Nemanic’s *Bibliographic Guide to Midwestern Literature* (1972), published by The University of Iowa Press, appeared; it included lists of books by twenty-eight Iowa authors. In 1989, Patricia Dawson’s and David Hudson’s *Iowa History and Culture* (published by the State Historical Society of Iowa) listed almost 200 books and essays by or about Iowa authors and their
publications, including even Gerhard Bach’s German-language *Susan Glaspell und die Provincetown Players* (1979). Another source is *Iowa and Some Iowans* (Third Edition, 1988) by Betty Jo Buckingham and published by the Iowa Department of Education. This bibliography describes both imaginative and scholarly publications, and has a list of “Iowa Authors.”

This writer must first note several unintentional omissions from his 1972 *Literary History of Iowa*. In 1931, Paul Engle and Harold Cooper had edited an anthology of Iowa verse, *West of the Great Water*, which included poems by Thomas Duncan, Raymond Kresensky and Professor Lewis Worthington Smith among others. The Reverend W.A. Dostal of Cedar Rapids set *The Hand of God* (1934) in the picturesque town of Spillville, where composer Antonin Dvorak had lived for a time. The novel focused on the marital problems of a religious woman and her atheistic husband. Margaret (Currier) Boylan’s bitter-sweet *The Marble Orchard* (1957) is set in “New Hoosic,” Iowa, a town not unlike Shenandoah, Iowa, where Mrs. Boylan (1921-1967), a native of Bozeman, Montana, spent her formative years. Her heroine is fifteen-year-old Lovey Claypool, blinded in an accident, who, to escape conflicts with her parents and grandmother, sets up light housekeeping among the tombstones on Cemetery Hill. There she meets the son of a gravedigger, who is not the half-wit the townspeople believe him to be, and also recovers her sight, although she keeps this fact a secret from those around her. Critics thought that this novel, like some other novels written about young people at this time, echoed J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* a bit too much. Mrs. Boylan was a graduate of Grinnell College.

Also overlooked were two novels by Louise (Garland) Braden, *Day of Escape* (1937) and *Two to Make a Wife* (1941). The first is set in “Chevalier”, Iowa, on the Mississippi, the second in an unnamed town. (Mrs. Braden’s biography identifies her with Mason City and Greene, both in north central Iowa.) Only the latter novel (in which an Iowa man brings a bride from Russia to his home town) was reviewed nationally, and reviews were less than enthusiastic.

http://ir.uiowa.edu/bai/vol56/iss1
TIME LIKE A FURROW

Essays by James Hearst

GREEN EARTH

A NOVEL BY FREDERICK MANFRED

FATAL OBSESSION

Stephen Greenleaf

http://ir.uiowa.edu/bai/vol56/iss1
A more serious omission was any reference to Burlington native Ethel Powelson Hueston, the author of two score of books, many of them set in a Mississippi River town like Burlington. Several of them utilized her background as a Methodist minister’s daughter, including five novels focusing on a young woman named Prudence, and three on a young woman named Ginger. (Three of the Prudence series were subsequently collected in one volume.) *Birds Fly South* (1930) tells of an Iowa girl living in New York City. Several novels were serialized in newspapers, including the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, and three were published in Spanish-language editions. Hueston’s 1941 *Preacher’s Wife*, a biography of her mother, also related personal experiences.

Also overlooked was Mason Citian Robert Parrish’s *My Uncle and Miss Elizabeth* (1948), a Chicago-based novel set within a Mason City frame. The Iowa sections are based on Parrish’s own youth. Parrish graduated from the Mason City High School in 1935. He and fellow graduate, Iowa author Martin Yoseloff, were predicted by their high school yearbook, the *Masonian*, to be the graduates with the best chances for future success.

There have also been a number of books published since 1971. Julie Jensen McDonald’s *Petra* (1978) and *The Sailing Out* (1982) continue the *roman à clef* tradition of her earlier *Amalie’s Story* (1970 and four later editions), the three books constituting a trilogy focusing on female members of three generations of a Danish family growing up in western Iowa—the area where Mrs. McDonald, herself of Danish extraction, had grown up. Her 1988 *Reaching* is, like the others, a first person narrative, this one a “rites of passage” novel of a young woman in her first year of college. Some recent fictions have been set outside Iowa, but her 1991 *Young Rakes* is set in LeMars. It tells of the young English noblemen who formed a colony there in the nineteenth century. For *The Sailing Out*, she was awarded the Johnson Brigham Award by the Iowa Library Association. She
has also received the Friends of American Writers Media Award in the Arts and an honorary Doctor of Letters award from St. Ambrose University.

Frederick Manfred (once Feike Feikema) has added five more books to his output: Green Earth (1977), Milk of Wolves (1976), The Manly-Hearted Woman (1975), The Wind Blows Free (1979), Dinkytown (1984), and Sons of Adam (1980). The first-named, 717 pages in length, is to some extent auto-biographical in its narrative of three generations of two inter-related families in Manfred’s “Siouxland.” The emphasis is on Ada Engelking Alfredson and her son, Free.

Manfred has continued to receive critical attention in theses and books such as Conversations with Frederick Manfred and Joseph Flora’s Frederick Manfred, both published in 1974. There is also Rodney J. Mulder and John Timmerman’s Frederick Manfred: A Bibliography and Publishing History (1981). His work has received national reviews and other forms of criticism. Wallace Stegner once said of Manfred: “The inside of [his] head is like the fairgrounds on the Fourth of July. Everybody is there, wide awake and alive.” In Green Earth, Manfred seems determined to get the whole fairgrounds in his book. The Wind Blows Free is subtitled “a reminiscence by Frederick Manfred.” But this narrative of a young man named “Free”, hitch-hiking in 1934 from northwest Iowa across the dustbowl of the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana, is so loaded with details and dialogue that one doubts Manfred’s ability to recall totally so much and suspects that some part of it must be fiction. Robert Boston’s A Thorn for the Flesh (1973) is the tale of three men—Grandpa, an Iowa farmer, Lute, his son, and Lute and Nate, his grandsons. Lute leaves the farm to enter business; Nate remains on the farm.

David Rhodes’ The Easter House (1974) is a macabre tale of Ansel Easter, who brings to his mansion, in the center of a junk yard in “Ontarion”, a small Iowa town, a freak he has rescued from a carnival. Ansel’s wife and children immediately leave him. Then Ansel is found murdered, and terror spreads from the house, terror which involves his children and the town’s
banker. The *Saturday Review* said the novel was "an impressive and wildly imaginative first novel about an [Iowa] family trapped in a realized metaphor of a Middle America nightmare," and *Kirkus Reviews* said the book was a "metaphor of Mid-America."

Stephen Greenleaf, a native of Centerville, has set one of his several crime novels, *Fatal Obsession* (1983) in "Chaldea," a mythical Iowa farm town which Greenleaf says bears "certain physical and historical resemblances" to Centerville. John Marshall Tanner, a detective-character in four of Greenleaf's novels, returns home to Chaldea to find his nephew, Billy, hanged. Because Billy, a Viet Nam veteran, had stirred up trouble in Chaldea after his return home, Chaldeans would just as soon forget him. But Marshall is convinced that Billy was murdered and sets out to learn who did it and why.


Nan Heacock's *Crinoline to Calico* (1977) is historical fiction (complete with footnotes), based on her maternal grandparents' settlement near Anita in southwest Iowa's Cass County in 1860 and on their subsequent history, and on the author's research in historical documents.

Stephen Bowman's *Morning Ran Red* (1986) is based on the June 10, 1912, Villisca axe murders of six children and two adults. In the novel, Villisca is "Twin Forks," a fictional name based on the junction of the West and East forks of the Nodaway River southwest of Villisca. Bowman was born in 1948 on a farm near Red Oak ("Koader" in the novel), twelve miles from Villisca. A December 9, 1986, *Des Moines Register* review of the book was not enthusiastic.

In the late 1970's, a somewhat middle-aged writer of stories about Canadian Indians came to The University of Iowa
campus to enroll in the famed Iowa Writers’ Workshop—which is not a workshop for Iowa writers as such, but a writers’ workshop located in Iowa. Rejected by the Workshop at first because his short stories were “antiquated”, he enrolled in a magazine writing course in the School of Journalism. There he began writing a novel about an Iowa farmer who heard voices in his cornfield outside of Iowa City. The novel was Shoeless Joe (1982), and it won the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award. In 1989 the book was filmed as Field of Dreams, a film that contains (to Iowans, at least), the immortal dialogue: “Is this Heaven?” “No, it’s Iowa.” W.P. Kinsella, who had finally gotten into the Workshop, then wrote The Iowa Baseball Confederacy (1986), a fantasy about an Iowa baseball league in 1908. So far it has not been filmed.

Dr. Clint Berryhill’s The Wild Life (1984), set in northeast Iowa near his home town of Fayette, was locally published. He was also the author of several other volumes published in 1983 and 1984, including Take a Chance on Me, set in Iowa City. None of his books attracted major reviewers.

Other novels set in Iowa include Margaret Crary’s The Calico Ball (1961, frontier Sioux City); May A. Heath’s Iowa Hannah (1961, Iowa in the 1850’s); Clara Bernice Miller’s Katie (1966) and To All Generations (1977), both focusing on Iowa’s Amish; Robert W. Murphy’s A Certain Island (1967, an Iowan goes to Laysan Island); Guy Daniels’ Progress U.S.A. (1968, growing up in Iowa in the 1920′s and 1930′s); Edith Wasson McElroy’s Years of Valor (1969); Lynn Hall’s books for younger readers, including Gently Touch the Milkweed (1970, 19th century Iowa) and Too Near the Sun (1970, Icaria); Kenneth Walter Sollitt’s Remember the Days (1971, Sibley, Iowa) and The Rough New Land (1985); Ralph W. Longley’s Cabin on the Second Ridge (1976, Grinnell); Muriel Byers Kooi’s Path of Delft (1977, Pella); John Tigges’ The Legend of John Marie Cardinal (1976); Ann Irwin and Bernice Reed’s Until We Reach the Valley (1978, Mormons); Hadley Irwin’s pseudonymous We Are Mesquakie, We Are One (1961, Mesquakie are forced to move to Kansas); Violet Olsen’s The Growing Season (1982, northwest Iowa); R. Clark Mallam’s The Curator...
(1983); Freeman Evans' *Covered Wagons* (1984, Iowa City area in 1840); Maureen McCoy’s *Walking After Midnight* (1985, Cedar Rapids setting); and Peter Rogate’s *Edes Polimil* (1979), with an Iowa setting, was published in the Hungarian language. However, none of these books or their authors have received the critical acclaim or attention that earlier Iowa authors from Hamlin Garland to MacKinlay Kantor and Phil Stong received for theirs.

The period since 1972 has seen reprints of many fine novels by earlier Iowa authors including Ruth Suckow’s *Country People* (1977), *Some Others and Myself* (1982), *The Folks* (1992), and two anthologies of shorter stories. The University of Iowa Press has reissued Herbert Quick’s *Vandemark’s Folly* and Carl Van Vechten’s *The Tattooed Countess*. Other reprints of Iowa authors include Josephine Herbst’s *Money for Love and Nothing is Sacred* (both 1972); Bess Streeter Aldrich’s *Rim of the Prairie, A White Bird Flying, Song of Years, Miss Bishop, The Man Who Caught the Weather and Other Stories, Mother Mason, and The Cutters*.

Interest in Ruth Suckow has been stirred by the Ruth Suckow Memorial Association, a group of Iowans, including Leedice Ann McAnnelly Kissane, the author of a 1969 Twayne volume on Suckow. This interest is focused on Earlville, Suckow’s Iowa home for many summers, and the location of her apiary which financed her early writing. The Association meets at least once a year, and is presently planning to celebrate the centenary of Suckow’s birth in 1992. The Earlville town library is “The Ruth Suckow Memorial Library”; its home is in a new building completed in 1990. Recent Suckow studies are Ferner Nuhn’s “The Orchard Apiary: Ruth Suckow in Earlville,” in *The Iowan* (Summer, 1972) and Margaret S. Omircanin’s *Ruth Suckow: A Critical Study of Her Fiction* (1972). Presently Matts Vasta, a Swedish scholar, is at work on a study of Suckow’s fiction. The University of Iowa Press has published a collection of Suckow’s stories in *A Ruth Suckow Omnibus* (1989) and reprinted *The Folks* in 1992. Frank Paluka’s bibliographical essay listing Suckow letters at The University of Iowa appeared in the first two numbers of *Books at Iowa* (October, 1964 and April, 1965).
In 1970 Dubuque playwright David Rabe's The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel, a non-Iowa play, won an "Obie" Award on Broadway. His 1971 Sticks and Bones, dramatizing the return of a wounded Viet Nam veteran to his home in Dubuque, won even more acclaim and a "Tony" Award for the best Broadway play that year. Rabe has described his experiences with these two plays in the preface to a 1973 Viking Press volume containing the plays.

In the fall of 1976, playwright Susan Glaspell was the subject of a seminar in Davenport focusing critical and historical attention on her career. Among the scholars present were Professors Gerhard Bach from Germany and Arthur Waterman, author of a Twayne study of Glaspell's career. A younger scholar present, Marcia Noe, later wrote A Critical Biography of Susan Glaspell (1976) as her doctoral dissertation at The University of Iowa.

In 1975, Gary and Judith Gildner edited Out of This World: Poems From the Hawkeye State, an anthology which defines "poetry" in much broader terms than earlier generations were accustomed to. Some of the material was the work of writers who had attended The University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. Among Iowa poets were Joseph Langland, Raymond Roseliep, Paul Engle, James Hearst and Hamlin Garland. David Allan Evans set many of the verses in Train Windows (1976) in his home town of Sioux City. Hadley Read's Morning Chores and Other Times Remembered (1977) is autobiography in verse focusing on a boy's youth on an Iowa farm during the Depression.

Poet Jay Sigmund is the subject of a thesis, Grant Wood Meets Jay G. Sigmund, an essay "Jay Sigmund and Grant Wood" in Books at Iowa (42, April, 1985), and a booklet, Jay Sigmund's Wapsipinicon Valley (1987), all by Ed Ferreter of Marion, Iowa. However, the thesis errs in its discussion of the authorship of several Sigmund poems which were printed by Sherwood Anderson in his newspaper. Several writers, including Anderson's first wife in her Miss Elizabeth: A Memoir (1969, p. 184), have attributed these poems to Anderson, but letters in the Jay
Sigmund Papers at The University of Iowa make it clear that the poems were written by Sigmund.

In 1964, Harry Oster, a University of Iowa English professor, recorded folk songs by residents of the southeast Iowa village of Selma in Selma Jam. This was followed in 1984 by a recording Folk Voices of Iowa, oral interviews with a number of folk artists. The package, produced by The University of Iowa Press, also included a booklet containing the script.

James Hearst, grandson of a pioneer Iowa farmer near Cedar Falls, has to be Iowa’s best poet to date. Certainly he has published far more poetry of high quality than any other Iowa writers of verse: Music for Seven Poems (1958), Shaken by Leaf-Fall (1976), Proved by Trial (1977), Snake in the Strawberries (1979), and Landmarks and Other Poems (1979). Earlier work is discussed in Paluka’s Iowa Authors (1967). He has two other books: My Shadow Below Me (1981), an autobiography, and Time Like a Furrow (1981), essays which complement the first-named book. The Iowan in March, 1979, published Bill Witt’s “A Conversation with James Hearst.” Hearst died in 1986. In their wills, Hearst and his second wife, Meryl Norton Hearst, bequeathed their home near the University of Northern Iowa campus to the Cedar Falls Art Association for use as a gallery. The home, much enlarged and remodeled, was dedicated in the late summer of 1988. John Judson’s Voyages to the Inland Sea: Essays and Poems (1971) includes material about Hearst.

Other writers who have died since 1970 include MacKinlay Kantor (1977), Richard Bissell (1977), John Towner Frederick (1975), Thomas Duncan (1987), Winifred Mayne Van Etten (1983), and Paul Engle (1991). With the deaths of Hearst and Engle there are no major poets writing in Iowa, although some, among them Mary Swander, are attracting attention outside of Iowa.

Milton M. Reigelman’s The Midland: a Venture in Literary Regionalism (1975) is a fine study of John Towner Frederick’s career as the publisher of his literary magazine from 1915 to 1933. Included are lists of contributors and book reviews. It was

http://ir.uiowa.edu/bai/vol56/iss1

Since 1964, The University of Iowa Library's semi-annual Books at Iowa has published articles about Iowa authors and their work. Among the authors are Ellis Parker Butler, Louis Dodge, Harry Hansen, Arthur Davison Ficke, Meridel Le Sueur, Frederick Manfred, George Cram Cook, Carl Van Vechten, Herbert Quick, John Towner Frederick, Paul Corey, Alice French, Jay Sigmund, MacKinlay Kantor, and Phil Stong.

In the November 1991 issue of Books at Iowa, Earl Rogers annotated ninety-seven titles of books with an Iowa City setting. Many were by writers who had been at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and who used their years at the University as the setting for their novels. Iowa authors include Mildred Wirt, Robert Weverka, Wallace Stegner, Philip Roth, Sasha Newborn, John Leggett, Laurence D. Lefore, Paul Corey, Max Allan Collins, R.V. Cassill, Carmelita Calderwood (Hearst) and James Hearst, and Clint Berryhill. The Hearst novel is Bonesetter's Brawl (1979), set at The University of Iowa Hospital where Hearst, a patient, met Calderwood, a nurse.

The April 1986 issue of Books at Iowa had William Roba's article on Floyd Dell in Iowa in the years from 1903 to 1928. Dell was sixteen when he came to Davenport, twenty-one when he left. Those were significant years for Dell, who, despite his youth, managed to impress Marilla Freeman, a local librarian who encouraged him to write. Others who were impressed included Harry Hansen, Susan Glaspell, Charles E. Banks and George Cram Cook, all destined to become writers with national reputations.

Stephen Wilbers' The Iowa Writers' Workshop: Origins, Emergence & Growth (1980) economically traces the Workshop's history from the days of Wilbur Schramm to the coming of Paul Engle, its longtime Director, and on to the crisis of 1965 which led to several Workshop teachers' departures from the University.

Through the years, Iowa authors have received recognition for single short stories or poems. For instance, Edward J.
O’Brien’s *Best Short Stories of 1931* and *Yearbook of the American Short Story* contained short stories by Mildred Fowler Field, Jay Sigmund, Raymond Kresensky, Josephine Herbst, William Patrick Morrissey, James Stevens, and Leo Ward. In the *Boston Transcript* of October 18, 1930, O’Brien, referring to the work of midwestern short story writers, suggested that the literary capitol of the United States be moved from New York City to Iowa City, a suggestion echoed by John Chamberlain in 1931 in *The New Republic*.

On October 12, 1991, the Des Moines Public Library celebrated its 125th anniversary of service to Des Moines by assembling a group of “Iowa authors” for the day—the first such gathering since 1914. At least twenty-eight “Iowa authors” attended and each read a short passage from his or her work. Not all of these were authors of fiction or verse. No one of them has attracted attention outside of Iowa as previous Iowa authors have—MacKinlay Kantor, Hamlin Garland, Paul Engle, Herbert Quick, Ruth Suckow, Bess Streeter Aldrich, Floyd Dell, Susan Glaspell, Alice French, Frederick Manfred, Wallace Stegner or Phil Stong.

In conclusion, while authors continue to use the Iowa scene for verse, drama and fiction, only David Rabe and Frederick Manfred among living Iowa writers have achieved any national status. Although Paul Engle’s energies came to be devoted to the Iowa Writers’ Workshop and (with his wife) the International Writing Program, his reputation as an “Iowa poet” lingered on, even overshadowing the reputation of Cedar Falls poet, James Hearst, who continued to devote his energies to poetry. Both Workshops seem likely to endure as University of Iowa programs, but they may not draw the national and international attention they did under Engle’s direction. In any case, neither Workshop has produced much “Iowa Literature” as I have defined it—fiction and verse with recognizable Iowa settings, characters and themes.