CAMP-MEETING REVIVALISM AND THE IDEA OF WESTERN COMMUNITY: THREE GENERATIONS OF OHIO VALLEY WRITERS

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I. The Archetypal Camp-Meeting

But far from esteeming the Kentucky Revival a day of small things, we believe it was nothing less than an *introduction* to that work of *final redemption*, which God has promised, in the latter days.[1]

—Richard McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival*

THERE are two profoundly opposed views of the camp-meeting between which history must find habitable ground. The first insists that the camp-meetings which seemed to spring up spontaneously across the Ohio Valley after 1800 were genuinely religious phenomena, the institutional center of a "blessed revival of religion" with strong apocalyptic overtones.[2] The second is a vigorous counter-tradition of skepticism which argues that the camp-meeting was both false to religion and composed of the all-too-human stuff of social history—"the demonic delusions of an ignorant people," in the words of John B. Boles.[3] Both views arose with the institution itself; both have persisted unreconciled into our own time. Given such an early and nearly absolute split into "sacred vs. profane" interpretations, it is not surprising that contemporary accounts are often zealously polemical. But what *does* give us pause is the scarcity—over a period of a century-and-a-half—of interpretations that attempt to see the camp-meeting whole: as a fusion of the sacred and the profane to form a vision of American community.

"Some people thought the world was coming to an end,"

wrote James B. Finley, who was on the ground at Cane Ridge in 1801, while others declared "that some dreadful calamity was coming upon the country as a judgment of God on the nation."[4] Rude and excitable as its evangelism might have been, the Kentucky Revival was, according to the "party of the faithful," a crucial work of redemption that would lead to the fulfillment of American Christianity. As the movement gained force and spread, camp-meeting sponsors invested their charge with more and more moral urgency: for they were now (or so they believed) under the pressure of millennial time and, despite hundreds and even thousands of rebirths, reckoned that the West was still largely unregenerate. Hence the camp-meeting's focus on individual conversion, for which purpose it was highly effective. Peter Cartwright, one of the camp-meeting's staunchest advocates (and a revival preacher of legendary status), liked to remind his church that in the tented grove "the word of God has reached the hearts of thousands that otherwise, in all probability, never would have been reached by the ordinary means of grace."[5]

From this narrowly institutional perspective, as Dickson Bruce has observed, "the only reason for holding camp-meetings was to convert new church members," which is just what the Methodists did in the West with such astonishing success. Yet, beyond the boasting about huge crowds and the careful tallying of the numbers of convicted, the emphasis at a camp-meeting was on the individual psychodrama of conversion—making the spiritually private socially public, in a perfect merging of self with community. According to Bruce the camp-meeting was consciously structured to be a collective model of the typical individual conversion, based on the conversion stories of the "saints": "Because there was a proper form for conversion, those experiences which were the goal of the camp-meeting had to be effected in that form. The preachers did not want something—anything—to happen to the convert. Rather, they wanted a particular kind of interaction to occur between the individual and the divine." The "saints," whose conversion narratives served as patterns (Cartwright and Finley are two of the most important), were

first of all frontier individualists, and one of Bruce's points is that the Kentucky Revival and its successors could not have flourished in any other form: the myth of individualism made any other structures impracticable.[6]

Almost paradoxically, however, the millennial idea of community is also deeply embedded in the form of the camp-meeting. The work of "final redemption" Richard McNemar witnessed during the Kentucky Revival was, he had no doubt, a preparation for the New Jerusalem; and there is reason to believe that McNemar and others had in mind the establishment of an actual chiliastic community in the western wilderness, a place that would be the fulfillment of God's promise in both sacred and secular history, if not the final proof that these were—in America—the same thing.[7] For McNemar millennial fulfillment was wholly transcendental, eschatological in the visionary manner of *Revelation*. Yet this was not the mainstream of western revivalism. As Sandra Sizer has pointed out, the language and experience of individual conversion had a social application that the managers of camp-meetings were bound to exploit: "It is clear from the available literature that prayer, testimony, and exhortation were employed to creat a *community* of intense *feeling*, in which individuals underwent similar experiences (centering on conversion) and would thenceforth unite with others in matters of moral decision and social behavior."[8] Whether the "latter days" were likewise the "last days" became less important as the years piled up without bringing the millennium, and as camp-meetings became more thoroughly institutionalized. The goal of the "community of feeling" gradually became that of putting the millenium into American time and place—actualizing it, that is, in the ante-bellum West. And since one of the necessary consequences of a "community of feeling" is the disappearance of social boundaries, camp-meetings were also instruments for the realization of American democracy. The myth of individualism, the community of feeling, the doctrine of free grace: these were all central camp-meeting enactments, and all of them helped make democracy millennial.

Even when they lacked any compelling vision of the millen-

nium, camp-meeting proponents were firm in their belief in its moral and social worth. Camp-meetings were healthy and progressive, even if they did not immediately bring about the Kingdom. But the critics of the institution give us a radically different picture. Through their accounts we see a Hogarthian burlesque of self-delusion instead of an apocalyptic night of the Holy Spirit: preachers who are mere ignorant ranters inciting hysteria among a lamentably susceptible crowd; a dark carnival of demon rum, sexual promiscuity, and all manner of religious imposters sharing the ground with the truly devout and all but indistinguishable from them in the chaos; finally, the entire panorama garishly back-lit by the monstrous fires of the nighttime services—when emotions ran highest and things were most likely to get out of hand.

Either the skeptics or the faithful might call such a scene "appalling," but they would mean something very different. James B. Finley found the spectacle at Cane Ridge "awful beyond description. . . . A vast crowd, supposed by some to have amounted to twenty-five thousand, was collected together. The noise was like the roar of Niagara. The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by a storm. . . . Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others were shouting most vociferously." Yet for Finley the "sublimely indescribable" led directly to his conversion and a re-made life.[9]

By contrast here is a passage from the rather more familiar account of a nighttime meeting in the summer of 1829: "But how am I to describe the sounds that proceeded from this strange mass of human beings? I know no words which can convey an idea of it. Hysterical sobbings, convulsive groans, shrieks and screams the most appalling, burst forth on all sides. I felt sick with horror."[10] To Frances Trollope the "indescribable" brings on only revulsion and disgust: camp-meetings are a visceral horror that degrades both participants and observers. But it is clear that both Finley and Mrs. Trollope are witnessing essentially the same "event." The "strange mass of human beings" is enacting something extraordinary in their individual and communal lives. Interpretation alone make the

camp-meeting a joyous shout of salvation or a religious sham and social outrage. The passionate, partisan responses of the witnesses attest to the historical importance of the camp-meeting, but they do not solve the problem of its nature. The marvelous human complexity of camp-meetings suggests that they were "social microcosms," yet the principles of their unity have remained elusive.

"There was certainly no such thing as an archetypal camp-meeting," says Dickson Bruce," and when *archetype* means *prototype* he is probably correct, since, from their beginnings in backwoods North Carolina and Kentucky, camp-meetings have varied markedly in matters of format: size, shape, amenities, duration. But in a more important sense of *archetype*—a structural or narrative model that becomes normative in a culture—Bruce is mistaken. Taken together, the documentary records indicate that an archetype did exist: born fully-formed in Bourbon County, Kentucky; enacted during the days of August 6th through 11th, 1801: the great camp-meeting at Cane Ridge.[12] According to John B. Boles (whose *The Great Revival, 1787-1805* is the most probing recent interpretation of the first camp-meetings): "This Cane Ridge camp-meeting, the truly Brobdingnagian meeting of the entire southern revival, immediately gained such fame and symbolic stature that it merits close description. Larger that any of the rest, far the best publicized, it became known all along the eastern seaboard. For countless praying congregations in the South, news of Cane Ridge was just the spark needed to ignite future revivals. This meeting was also the scene of the most bizarre of those physical manifestations of conviction which for many even today characterize the Great Revival of the South."[13]

Cane Ridge defined once and for all the religious phenomenology of the camp-meeting—its shocking psychological and emotional excesses as well as its superb efficacy in the matter of conversion. But more than this Cane Ridge also provided the social structure and the democratic meaning of the camp-meeting: people came freely together where salvation was free, and the transactions were productive

of equality and community. "The unprecedented size of the meeting," says Boles, "simply relegated Calvinistic talk of particular election to the background; the immediate effectiveness of the revival spectacle pushed emphasis on personal volition to the forefront."[14] And one might add that banished along with Calvinism were traditional notions of theocratic and denominational authority.

A successful camp-meeting preacher like Peter Cartwright, though he remained all his life an orthodox Methodist and was much affected by radical millennarianism, nevertheless projected a mythic version of his own individuality by treating conversion as a means to spiritual *and* social liberation. Cartwright made a career out of reenactments of Cane Ridge, and there is an amusing but telling anecdote from his *Autobiography* that illustrates his idea of the "democratic God." It seems that while preaching in Nashville in 1819, one of Cartwright's services was unsettled by the appearance of Andrew Jackson, who came in late and, not finding a seat, leaned against a post: "Just then I felt some one pull my coat in the stand, and turning my head, my fastidious preacher, whispering a little loud, said: 'General Jackson has come in; General Jackson has come in.' I felt a flash of indignation run all over me like an electric shock, and facing about to my congregation, and purposely speaking out audibly, I said, 'Who is General Jackson? If he don't get his soul converted, God will damn him as quick as he would a Guinea negro!'"[15] This gem of a vignette—an ineradicable part of the Cartwright folklore—is usually cited as evidence of his fire-and-brimstone temperament and his personal courage. Yet the story has more democratic than religious significance. Here are two of the West's larger-than-life individuals, both on their way to becoming legends and national figures. Jackson, of course, was ahead in the race. He would one day be president, and as president he would be both symbol and reality of the unvarnished, untrammeled western democrat. But in Nashville in 1819 Peter Cartwright challenged Jackson (and the congregation) with a doctrine of *absolute* equality which he believed was God's plan for America.

It is this harmony of religion and democracy, focused and amplified through the "community of feeling," that informs much of the fiction in which the camp-meeting is a serious subject. This essay examines works by three generations of Ohio Valley writers (Edward Eggleston's *The Circuit Rider,* 1874, and *The Graysons,* 1887; Francis Grierson's *The Valley of Shadows,* 1909; and Harold Sinclair's *American Years,* 1938) in light of the "myth of Cane Ridge." It is not, however, a study of sources and analogues but a broad interpretation intended to show that there was literature about the 19th century camp-meeting that treated revival religion and its concomitant sense of social community as equally important and as inseparable. Even when critical, such literature saw the camp-meeting whole. "Among all the weapons forged by the West in its struggle against lawlessness and immorality," writes Charles A. Johnson, "few were more successful that the frontier camp-meeting."[16] This is a modern judgment that the Ohio Valley writers reached first, perhaps because the nature of narrative fiction is to interpret through dramatization. A novelist like Edward Eggleston, though he often had the itch to comment authorially, dramatized the archetype of Cane Ridge. He was thus able to intuit the camp-meeting's "community of feeling" while avoiding ideological superimpositions that would treat religion as an aspect of some larger "reality" rather that as the organizing and unifying energy it was in western community life. Scholars have rarely been able to do as much. Only in the recent work of John B. Boles, Dickson Bruce, and Sandra S. Sizer do we see the kind of holistic characterizations of revivalism and camp-meetings that the writers drew almost instinctively. Bruce warns that "an exclusively social view falls short . . . in its failure to take the explicitly religious content of the camp-meeting seriously."[17] And Sizer argues that "we are here dealing with a crucial question in the analysis of religious ideology, which so often seems to be merely a reflection of some other kind of ideology or of some social situation. The problem appears often because scholars treat religion as composed of belief systems—systems which the scholars have constructed—rather than as it appears in the

forms which are its vehicles."[18]

Through the re-enactment *in the forms which are its vehicles,* Eggleston and his successors dramatized the "community of feeling" at camp-meeting revivals that gave unity to the lives of the folk. In the words of one of Francis Grierson's characters (who could easily be speaking for all), "sin in politics air ekil te sin in religion—thar ain't no dividin' line."[19] The "sin" in question is slavery; the salvation is individual regeneration, participation in the "community of feeling," and commitment to the democratic ideal of social justice which recognizes other individuality without qualification—even that of blacks and poor whites. All this was possible at the literary camp-meeting.

II. Heroic and Democratic Methodism

For Edward Eggleston (1837-1902), who was first a Methodist minister, last a social historian, and in between the most accomplished of the 19th-century Ohio Valley regional novelists, "Methodism was to the West all that Puritanism was to New England."[20] Now this is a bold assertion, but what exactly does it mean? Perhaps Eggleston is saying nothing more than that the Methodists, having gotten to the West first, simply grew up with the country, as the Puritans had in New England, building churches and towns, establishing custom and belief, and in short making a regional way of life that might one day be taken as a national type. This much would be consistent with Eggleston's beliefs about American social history. But there is a further implication. Puritanism had provided not only a lasting pattern for American community (the social and material aspects of which were often transplanted into the New England-dominated parts of the Old Northwest) but its prophetic authority as well. The famous "Errand into the Wilderness" was ultimately to be the realization of the New Jerusalem. As noted by Sacvan Bercovitch, "the Puritans' concept of errand entailed a fusion of secular and sacred history. The purpose of their jeremiads was to direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny,

to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God."[21] This version of the American millennium is recognizably that of the Kentucky Revival and Cane Ridge; but is it a part of Eggelston's thinking in the 1870's?

With two important differences, the answer is yes. In his novels *nature* in the positive romantic sense is decisive in the drama of conversion and the place of millennial community; and in the West the millennium will be democratic (rather than theocratic), founded on the individual (rather than the corporation), and freely available to all (rather than only to the elect). In the preface to *The Circuit Rider* Eggleston paid tribute to what he called the "heroic age" of Methodism on the Old Northwestern frontier: "more than any one else, the early circuit preachers brought order out of chaos. In no other class was the real heroic element so finely displayed."[22] Though encumbered with a comic plot and sentimental-melodramatic machinery, *The Circuit Rider* is a credible dramatization of heroic Methodism. And it is rich in religious materials drawn from history, folklore, and Eggleston's own experiences as a child in southern Indiana and later as a Methodist circuit rider himself.

The novel is set in southern Ohio in the embryonic and socially very doubtful settlement of "Hissawachee Bottom." The year is 1809, about the time that Methodism was taking hold in the region and not long after the Kentucky Revival had spread northward across the Ohio River into the Miami Valley. At times, speaking in the distancing voice of the social historian, Eggleston attempts to explain the Great Revival in terms of the western character:

> It is hard for us to understand the elements that produced such incredible excitements as resulted from the early Methodist preaching. How at a camp-meeting, for instance, five hundred people, indifferent enough to everything of the sort one hour before, should be seized during a sermon with terror—should cry aloud to God for mercy, some of them falling in trances and cataleptic unconsciousness; and how, out of all this excitement, there should come forth, in very many cases, the fruit of transformed lives seems to us a puzzle beyond solution. But the early Westerners were as inflammable as tow; they did not deliberate, they were swept into most of their decisions by

contagious excitements. . . . The Day of Judgment, the doom of the wicked, and the blessedness of the righteous were as real and substantial in their conception as any facts of life.[23]

Passages like this one have the effect of putting Eggleston knowingly above his materials—the undeliberative westerners. But the dramatizations of the camp-meetings in *The Circuit Rider* reveal a deeper identification with the western community of feeling.

Eggleston remembered two modes of evangelism from the early camp-meetings, the terrible and benign, and he accordingly devised two kinds of camp-meeting "genre scenes," the aesthetics of which corresponded to the romantic division of the landscape into the beautiful and the sublime. For the conversion of his heroine, a central incident in *The Circuit Rider,* Eggleston sets a scene of pastoral loveliness: "No religious meeting is ever so delightful as a meeting held in the forest; no forest is so satisfying as a forest of beech; the wide-spreading boughs—drooping when they start from the trunk, but well sustained at the last—stretch out with a steady horizontalness, the last year's leaves form a carpet like a cushion, while the dense foliage shuts out the sun." The language of the description—"delightful," "satisfying," "well sustained," "steady horizontalness"—prefigures the beauty of the religious experience awaiting young Patty Lumsden at the camp-meeting. To this point in the novel she has been drawn as a proud child of privilege, scornful of the rude Methodists and safely hidden behind the social garment of the family's Old Virginia Episcopalianism. But now the preacher, a crude but sympathetic man named Russel Bigelow, wins her to Christ with an "indescribable" sermon on the text "Seeking a bride for his master." As Patty becomes more and more powerfully convicted, she begins stripping off all her "artificials"—jewelry and other personal decorations—to the increasing interest of the congregation, for whom this was the "greatest of triumphs, this public conversion of Captain Lumsden's daughter:"

They showed their joy in many pious ejaculations. Patty did not seek concealment. She scroned to creep into the kingdom of heaven. It seemed to

her that she owed this publicity. For a moment all eyes were turned away from the orator. He paused in his discourse until Patty had removed the emblems of her pride and antagonism. Then, turning with tearful eyes to the audience, the preacher, with simple-hearted sincerity and inconceivable effect, burst out with, "Hallelujah! I have found a bride for my master!"[24]

The key sentence here is "It seemed to her that she owed this publicity." Eggleston is making a complex point: Patty's conversion is not religious alone but simultaneously democratic. The Rev. Mr. Bigelow, who is after all an itinerant and therefore an occasional visitor to Hissawachee Bottom, may have gained a new member of the Methodist church through his preaching, but of equal importance to the novel is Patty's joining the community in a genuine way. Espousal of Christ, Eggleston is implying, entails a form of social levelling—necessary in the West (as in America) if democratic community is to realized. Yet Patty's social transformation is achieved not through humiliation but spiritual exaltation. The Methodists triumphed in the Ohio Valley with the doctrine of free salvation and the institutions of the circuit and the camp-meeting to insure that it was offered to all. But it took a socially-minded novelist like Eggleston to see that, almost incidentally, the Methodists were also spreading democracy.[25]

The natural beauty of the daylight camp-meeting service and the quiet dignity of Patty Lumsden's conversion are consonant with the artistic ends of *The Circuit Rider*, which, besides being a tribute to frontier Methodism, is a sentimental love-story about two people who grow worthy of one another through religion. Moreover, the novel tells us something about Eggleston's early optimism—"early" both in terms of the period he is writing about and the stage in his own career. In the 1870's he is comfortable with golden nostalgia, and his books are full of Dickensian sentiment and burlesque made native by daubs of homely local color. This tone predominates right through *Roxy* (1878), which is also a novel about religion and revivalism and is Eggleston's finest work. But by 1887 and the publication of *The Graysons* he was revealing (intentionally or not) a darker social truth. The work may be read as authorial doubt about whether society in the American West really

tended toward democracy and civilization. The problem of evil has shifted position from the human heart to the heart of society, but by the late 1880's Eggleston is no longer a believer in straightforward solutions.

The Graysons, while not a religious novel in the sense of *The Circuit Rider*, contains one of Eggleston's most effective camp-meeting scenes. Subtitled "A Story of Abraham Lincoln," the plot turns on an adaptation of a well-known piece of Lincoln-iana, the so-called "Almanac Trial" of 1857, where Lincoln successfully defended a man named Duff Armstrong against charges of murder, brought after an assault at the Virgin's Grove Camp-Meeting in August of that year (Eggleston changes the name of the place to Timber Creek).[26] In a manner almost incidental to the story, Eggleston explores the symbolic contrast between "day and night" at the camp-meeting. He opens the Timber Creek narrative with a picture of western religion at its most convivial:

> In the early day of August there came a time of comparative leisure. The summer harvests were over, and the fields of tall corn had been "laid by" after the last plowing. Then Illinois had a breathing spell. . . . and in this time of relaxation came the season of Baptist Associations and Methodist Camp-meetings and two-days' Basket Meetings—jolly religious picnics, where you could attend to your soul's salvation and eat "roas'in'ears" with old friends in the thronged recesses of the forests, among a people who were perhaps as gregarious as any the world has ever produced.[27]

Here is the fulfilled pastoral dream of the American Garden—a scene so mythicized that a self-proclaimed social historian (writing, it is true, from alpine Switzerland) can speak unblinkingly of forests in central Illinois, and so idyllic that salvation is rightly incidental to hobnobbing and picnicking. The Timber Creek camp-meeting appears to be entirely a time of "sociability in the tented grove." On the narrative surface, at least, the spiritual welfare of the community is taken for granted.

But to the good rural feeling of the day, the night-meeting presents a stark and unexpected contrast:

> Within the oval of tents at the camp-meeting two great platforms were raised on posts six or eight feet high and covered with earth; on these were

built blazing bonfires, illuminating all the space inclosed by the tents and occupied by the enthusiastic assembly, which, as one great chorus, made the wide forest vocal with a tide of joyous or pathetic song. But there were two poles to the magnetism of the camp-meeting. In the region of outer blackness, quite beyond the reach of an illumination from platform bonfires or pulpit eloquence, there were also assemblies of those who were attracted by the excitement, but to whom the religious influences were a centrifugal force. Here jollity and all conceivable deviltry rejoiced also in a meet companionship.[28]

And, again, three pages later:

The preaching was vigorous and stirring, and the exhorter, who came after the preacher, told many pathetic stories, which deeply moved a people always eager to be excited. The weird scene no doubt contributed by its spectacular effect to increase the emotion. The bonfires on the platforms illuminated the circle of white tents, which stood out against the wall of deep blackness in the forest behind; the light mounted a hundred feet and more through the thick branches of lofty beech and maple trees, and was reflected from the under side of leaves quivering in the breeze. The boughs and foliage, illumniated from below, had an unreal and unworldly aspect. No imagery of the preacher could make the threatened outer darkness of the lost so weird to the imagination as this scene, in which the company of simple-minded people found themselves in the presence of a savage Nature, and in the sphere of light bounded on every hand by a blackness as of darkness primeval.

The oddest aspect of this striking scene is apparent only to a reader of the entire novel: it is irrelevant to the action. None of the characters' souls is saved, nor is anyone deeply affected by the preaching, despite Eggleston's rather unconvincing gestures ("pathetic song," "many pathetic stories") to the contrary. Tom Grayson, the protagonist, is so preoccupied with thoughts about a girl who is jilting him (ordinarily the best critical mass in Eggleston for a conversion) that he actually walks out on the exhorter well before the services end. Grayson isn't merely unconvicted; he's uninterested in what the camp-meeting has to offer. And, given the narrative inattention, the reader isn't much interested either. The quoted passages make a good genre-scene. But Eggleston's Timber Creek camp-meeting ties itself to the action only by providing an opportunity for murder, which in any case occurs off-stage and lacks even a rhetorical connection with the symbolic and meta-

phorical meaning of the "blackness of darkness." In fact it is the symbolism itself that stands out from the conventional pages of the novel. Eggleston may have been saying more than he knew. Throughout the description the imagery of alien darkness accumulates ("outer blackness," "weird scene," "deep blackness," "threatened outer darkness") until it culminates in such phrases as "the presence of a savage Nature" and "the blackness as of darkness primeval." Even the "sphere of light" at the center of the meeting, which should be sanctified, is utterly surrounded by the "outer darkness" and reveals an "unreal and unworldly aspect." That such a "blackness of darkness" characterization might have come to Eggleston through Hawthorne (particularly through stories like "Young Goodman Brown") makes it no less surprising. The "simple-minded people" at the camp-meeting—by the way an imputation that would have been unthinkable in *The Circuit Rider*—are evidently lost in a "savage Nature," cut off from what was a few hours before their amenable world. It is true that the notion of a "blackness as of darkness primeval" was a popular and effective nighttime theme at camp-meetings.[29] Yet Eggleston dramatizes no masses of people falling affrighted to the ground, no sea of penitents in conviction who would soon be harvested souls.

There is something blank, absolute and metaphysical about this darkness, which is all the more puzzling for not fitting into the novel's action nor being Eggleston's usual way of treating the western revival. In one respect only is the Timber Creek meeting familiar Eggleston: it is still a "social microcosm"—the one frontier (or, by 1857, rural) institution that was inclusive, its "two poles of magnetism" bringing to the same place, if not genuinely together, the disparate classes of the novel's two towns, the despised poor whites of "Broad Run" and the respected burghers of "Moscow." Following the program of *The Circuit Rider*, we might expect that the revival at Timber Creek would bring on the desired "community of feeling," a millennial love-feast heralding a new and classless life in the Illinois Garden. But not in *The Graysons*: by 1887 Eggleston was apparently unwilling to play out this particular ritual

drama. Religion alone cannot redeem American democracy.

What has made the difference? Certainly not the *place* of the revival. Timber Creek is generically the same delightful forest of beech under whose beneficent canopy Patty Lumsden was won to Methodism and democracy. And Eggleston's genre materials for the camp-meeting are narratively smooth from frequent working. What is different is the night: the night that has fallen at Timber Creek is far darker and more hopelessly impenetrable than anything else in Eggleston's work, where the sublime—when used at all—is always vanquished by the beautiful. To comprehend the symbolic power of the Timber Creek darkness is to relinquish not only the myth of western community but the plot of the novel as well. Since *The Graysons* ends well—the clever Mr. Lincoln saves Tom from hanging and the *right* girl is on the way to saving him from himself—we must assume that its author did not fully realize what he was doing, though he did it with great unconscious destructive force.

In the years between *The Circuit Rider* and *The Graysons*, Eggleston, like his contemporary Mark Twain, moved culturally afield from his sources, doubtlessly making the recreative acts of memory all the harder. But for mythologizing a good memory is not necessary. All that is required is the desire to see one's culture whole and the artistic ability to manipulate its symbols towards a synthesis. The first of these was one of Eggleston's special strengths. The second, however, he could never manage, lacking the skill of structuring symbols into his fiction. The Timber Creek camp-meeting reads like an unconscious irruption into the narrative of what *another* Edward Eggleston wanted to talk about: the unredeemed evil in America.

III. "Behold . . . the Garden of the Lord"

"'It's a pity Pete Cartwright's too feeble to be here,'" remarks one of the Illinois folk at the 1858 camp-meeting in Francis Grierson's *The Valley of Shadows,* "'fer if he wus he'd put 'em into hot water quicker'n lightnin'. A lot o' them folks don't

want preachin' half so much er brimstone.'" Cartwright, like Lincoln, is a legendary presence in this strange book, which Grierson called "not a novel, but the recollections . . . of my early life in Illinois."[30] Yet only in the loosest sense of the word can *The Valley of Shadows* be termed "recollections." It is actually a series of fictionalized sketches, somewhat the work of memory, to be sure, but full of imagination and literary invention as well. The first twelve chapters of *The Valley of Shadows* all treat rural life in the area around Springfield. These pieces have a continuity not found in the second half of the book, and, taken together, they give *The Valley of Shadows* the greatest part of its artistic power.

The unity of these "Sangamon Sketches" is based on symbolism, and the theme is the redemption of the Illinois Garden. This "second Garden of Eden," as Grierson calls the place, may be located in central Illinois, but it stands for millennial America at the threshold. The community of the Garden is torn with dissention over the issue of slavery and is therefore under an apocalyptic threat of destruction. The drama opens in early spring with a fiery abolitionist sermon by the local Methodist preacher, intensifies over the spring and summer with the activities of the Underground Railroad, and reaches its climax in the great autumnal camp-meeting.

In giving to his camp-meeting a powerful and coherent symbolism, Grierson transcends Eggleston's social history and his genre-painting. Grierson's gathering is huge: as at Cane Ridge there are more than twenty-thousand on the ground and the spiritual struggles last for many days.[31] The people are moved to leave their farms and villages deserted; they come from half-a-dozen neighboring counties and cannot precisely say what their motivation is, though all sense that politics and religion are being fused by the abolitionist controversy. "'Summow, right er wrong, the people hev an idee that this here meetin' ain't so much fer religion ez it air fer politics,'" remarks one of the participants, and we are reminded of the words quoted earlier, from the prophetic mouth of Elihu Gest, Grierson's moral spokesman: "'Sin in politics air ekil to sin in religion—thar ain't no dividin' line.'"

Elihu Gest is a curious figure, one of the most original creations in American regional literature. Neither an ordained preacher nor apparently any part of the institutionalized church, he is nonetheless universally recognized on the prairie as the "Load-Bearer"—he who takes up the people's burdens and carries the extra weight so that there may be community among the settlers. We see that Gest is a farmer, but his long-suffering wife (who can't quite cope with the mystical promptings that take him from the fields for days and weeks at a time) lets us know that he is an indifferent one at best. We hear no talk at the Gest homestead about ownership of the land or the rights of property. Grierson's Illinois community even lacks a name, and except for one brief scene at the post office there is no mention of a town. A community without such institutions is a community in a state of nature. Authority derives from the inner light of individuals and is expressed spontaneously and intuitively through acts of cooperation. At the camp-meeting Elihu Gest, as his community's "Load-Bearer," clearly has this kind of authority. And Grierson makes the point that Peter Cartwright's absence will not prove a problem.

The meeting itself, as so often happened, starts slowly. After the first day's fruitless exhortations, Gest remarks that "'the people air all right, but they must be tetched.'" Throughout the second day, and the third, the spark is likewise wanting, and by Sunday evening the camp-meeting's official sponsors are beginning to despair. At this point the "Load-Bearer," who has been apart from the meeting in solitary prayer, assumes command, literally aided by the heavens:

> A storm was approaching. . . . A few minutes more and a squall descended over the camp and a vivid blast sent a thrill through the assembly. The crash was followed by a hurricane of shifting light that swept down closer and closer over the camp. The lightning seemed to spring from the ground, the air, the woods, the camp itself. . . . Just before the hurricane passed away a dazzling bolt struck the big elm beside the platform. It fell in a blue-white zig-zag, and to many of the more superstitious it resembled nothing so much as a fiery serpent poured from a vial of wrath overhead, for it split the elm in two.[32]

The lightning his cue, the cloven elm his portent, the "Load-Bearer" ascends the preachers' platform:

A picture of peculiar fascination was now presented to the wondering and half-dazed people. Arrayed behind the Load-Bearer, in a jagged semi-circle that stretched from one end of the platform to the other, sat all the preachers and exhorters. Witnesses who had once mourned as penitents before the altar now marshalled to make others mourn, as fixed and motionless as statues hewn from syenite; for there was about them something of the mien of Egyptian bas-reliefs seated at the door separating life and death. Some were bearded and grimly entrenched behind a hairy mask; others, in their long, pointed goatees, sharpened the picture; while others again, clean-shaven and peering straight before them, presented a death-like pallor, at once frail and frightful.[33]

In the center of this "picture of peculiar fascination" stands Elihu Gest, wearing the authoritative mantle of the judge: "You are being weighed in the balance! Tophet is yawning for the unregenerate!" Was this then to be the time?

A sensation as if the ground had begun to move and float spread through the multitude; and when, a little later, he cried: "You're hangin' to the hinges of time by a hair!" all doubts vanished. Heads began to droop, bodies swayed side to side . . . people fell to the ground, while stifled groans and lamentations issued from hundreds of throats at once. . . . The camp resembled a coast strewn with the dead and dying after a great wreck, and a murmuring tumult alternately rose and fell like that from a moaning wind and a surging sea.

The night of nights had come! It seemed as if hundreds were in the throes of death and would never rise, so that a mingling of pity and dread filled those who had long since professed religion; for the strange union of material and spiritual forces . . . the falling away of all worldly props . . . rendered . . . even the helpers and exhorters speechless.[34]

Even out of context this is a compelling vision of judgment, the appropriate climax to perhaps the best camp-meeting scene in American literature. Though not after all the "night of nights," it is close. These has been a communal catharsis of evil, a purgation of "pity and dread" (Grierson chooses Aristotle's terms for the final cause of tragedy) so profound that even those who "had long since professed religion" were stricken anew. This is Grierson's paradox for Illinois and the nation. Many intermediate apocalypses will occur on the way to the

final one, with the ritual drama just concluded neither first nor last: foreshadowings of the millennium in historical time. As Elihu Gest puts it, in the final words of the camp-meeting chapter, "'Let 'em mourn, let 'em mourn; jedgment ain't far off.'"[35]

Yet the people do not go from the camp-meeting unchanged. They have been "tetched." They have seen God's judgment on slavery and are now ready to accept the abolitionists' prophecy about the coming "terrible swift sword." The landscape "round about Springfield" is also altered: the dark shadow is lifting from the valley. The Underground Railroad will soon close its stations, and in the meantime the dreaded slave-catchers will get no more collaboration from the formerly lukewarm, whose hearts have been fired by the events of the camp-meeting. Men and women are once again at home in the Illinois Garden—temporarily, until the next crisis. And this drama of redemption is the religious and social reason for Grierson's "little apocalypse."

IV. Peter Cartwright's Illinois Tabernacle

To the extent that 19th-century American millennialism involved a transformation of the landscape, and therefore became tied to an ideology of progress, it was vexing to realists like Eggleston, who could glance out his window in New York and see that each new day was decidedly not bringing about the earthly paradise. The natural wilderness of a century before might have been capable of supporting a chiliastic community, but the industrial city of 1900 was another matter. Francis Grierson, however, was physically and imaginatively removed from America when he wrote *The Valley of Shadows*. He regretted the "institutionalization of everything," he despised literary realism, and he turned his back on the 20th century, which meant turning toward the nostalgic past of his ten years in Illinois. Thus, as a work of idealizing romanticism, *The Valley of Shadows* was anachronistic even before it appeared. But as an evocation of the Illinois Garden the book has never been surpassed.

Its haunting mythic quality may explain why *The Valley of Shadows* has continued to appeal to students of American culture and to other writers, Harold Sinclair among them. Sinclair began his career in the 1930's and was aware of the reinvention of social realism during the years of the Great Depression. In his own novels he tended to be unsentimental about "actual America." Yet this did not prevent him from appropriating (almost without change) Grierson's camp-meeting chapter for use in *American Years* (1938).[36] Though seldom read today, *American Years* was notable in its time as an experiment in historical fiction. Containing plenty of stories but having no story-line, the novel chronicles the pioneering years of "Everton, Dane County, Illinois" (Sinclair's fictional name for Bloomington, in McLean County) from its founding to the eve of the Civil War. If *American Years* has a protagonist at all, it is the town of Everton in its struggle to become a community.

Sinclair was both a good journalist and a deft satirist, and one of the aims of *American Years* seems to be to de-mythologize the romance of pioneering and free modern Americans from slavish filiopietism. Yet in his camp-meeting narrative ridicule is absent and the tone is serious and for the most part admiring. This may have been due to the influence of his principle sources: Grierson's *The Valley of Shadows* and Cartwright's *Autobiography*.[37]

The "Willow Bend" camp-meeting occurs in the autumn of 1835, with Peter Cartwright on hand as the star preacher. Besides structuring the meeting after Grierson, Sinclair follows him in many details: the meeting is socially inclusive, replete with whisky-sellers and bands of rowdies; and, again, it begins without spirit: "With Peter Cartwright himself here they hoped to do better 'n this. This is Sunday too. . . . This ought to be a good day." After vanquishing the rowdies and bursting the kegs, and having put their social house in order, the Willow Bend organizers are ready to attend to soul-saving. Once more, the right time turns out to be the Sunday evening service:

> The night was hot and sticky, as had been the day. There were no stars, and

heat lightning played about on the horizon. The candles flickered fitfully, as though gasping for air to burn properly. A feeling of ominous unrest hung over the whole assemblage. . . .

In a few minutes the preachers filed in and took their places on the platform. Almost in the same instant there was a sudden stir at the opposite end of the building. Something was happening. The close-packed crowd murmured like a restless sea.

The storm struck with almost hurricane force. Rain fell in blinding masses, and a few roof slabs were carried away on the furious wind. Then, like the hammer of God, the jagged chain of lightning struck a stalwart elm standing a bare hundred feet from the huddled throng. Like a flaming sword it clove the huge trunk to the very grass, and even as the thunder rolled behind the lightning bolt, they saw the trunk part, hesitate momentarily, then fall faster and faster toward the ground, ending at last in two mighty crashes. . . .

And with the next blue flash Cartwright was on his feet, hands upraised, his face aglow with holy zeal. The faces of the other preachers stood out momentarily like carved stone.

"The gates of hell stand ajar for the unwary!"

His voice rolled like that of some super-Moses, and the crowd was stilled. Then again:

"You are being weighed in the balance! Thy God is a just God, but an avenging one! Come, ye sorry sinners!"

"Amen! Amen! Amen!"[38]

The similarities between the two camp-meeting narratives are so obvious as to amount to deliberate borrowing on Sinclair's part. And even the minor differences in the accounts point up the superior mythic authority of Grierson's version. *American Years* adapts the detail of having one of the main rowdies drown his body in the nearby river after drowning his soul in whisky. But Sinclair makes the scene melodramatic by staging a funeral procession through the congregation. While the faithful at Willow Bend regard the death of Zack Carpenter as a providential sign, they read it straightforwardly: God will punish those who mock his institution. Grierson, on the other hand, dramatizes *two* deaths, one sacred and one profane. In addition to the rowdy Wagner boy who drowned, there was Alek Jordan, killed by the same bolt of lightning that rent the old elm. Alek was the son of the most devout woman in the community, and his death, accepted by the mother "in a spirit of faith and resignation," points up both the inscrutability of providence and the symbolic complicity of *all* members of a democratic community in its evil.[39]

No such evil is impending in *American Years.* In 1835 slavery is not yet a polarizing issue, and Sinclair is in any event more interested in the human comedy than in the tragic and final chords sounded by Grierson. Those who come to Willow Bend from miles around come to hear and see the great Peter Cartwright; by his reputation they expect an impressive show. And that's what they get. In an interesting embellishment on Grierson, there are two lovers at the camp-meeting, "almost at Cartwright's feet," lying "clasped in each other's arms, their faces white with ecstasy." The ambiguity surrounding this sort of "ecstasy" was always troubling to defenders of the camp-meeting, and sexual passion is either sublimated (Eggleston) or entirely absent (Grierson) in the earlier and more decorous narratives. But Sinclair is as interested in conceived souls as he is in salvation: Peter Cartwright gets credit for inciting the couple into making something out of the Willow Bend camp-meeting. "It was the night of nights," he says, "and Cartwright knew it."

Yet what did Peter Cartwright know? Sinclair never burlesques or otherwise makes fun of the preacher or his meeting, but ironies appear almost in spite of the narrative's surface admiration. Cartwright is a powerful preacher—far the best in the area, we are told—and this "night of nights" might have been his finest performance. It is also clearly the "night of nights" for the lovers, though in a spiritually doubtful way. But it is not the "night of nights" in an apocalyptic sense. We are left wondering whether the revival at Willow Bend made any moral mark on the community of Everton. Religion in Illinois was, from Sinclair's progressive stance in the 1930's, much like other social activities: a process of institution-building to transform the open land. He can view progress ironically, even critically at times, but he cannot deny its reality. Hence the social importance of the Willow Bend Tabernacle is in its size: "Where more worshipers could assemble, there too would be more of the best preachers. More, for that matter, of everything which went to make up the social life of the community. And so the Willow Bend camp-ground was fast becoming an established institution."[40] Sinclair is having some

fun with the American "bigger is better" attitude (and sounding more like 1938 than 1835 in the process), but there is a deeper irony hiding in the word "tabernacle" itself. The original Tabernacle carried the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant into the desert, serving as a portable sanctuary during the long wandering on the way to the promised land. In this sense the Tabernacle became an appropriate symbol for the western camp-meeting, with the revivalists bringing their "new covenant" into the American wilderness, reenacting the mythic pattern both of the ancient Hebrews and the 17th century Puritans. Used as a verb, however, "tabernacle" means to dwell in a place temporarily. The leaders of the Great Revival were looking for *the* place of grace—nothing temporary about it. Sharing Sinclair's hindsight, we can safely agree with him that this was the delusion of a single historical moment. Sinclair, after all, had more of America to look back upon than Eggleston or Grierson. By 1938 the myth to be debunked was the material American dream. Willow Bend's boosters were making of it "an established institution"; from a crudely-carpentered wooden shed in the grove it would become as solid perhaps as that other latter-day monument, the Mormon Tabernacle. Or, given the caprice of "progress," perhaps it wouldn't. But in either case the millennialism behind Willow Bend's founding was no longer a serious theme in fiction.

In the face of disappointed millennial expectations what could the revivalists do? They simply defer the time of the "last days" and continue their preparations (as did the Shakers, the Millerites, etc.), or they could make the positive assumption that the spiritual work of the millennium had begun with the Great Revival and continue it through the institutionalization of the moment. Yet the danger of such "postmillennialism" was that it lent itself "to a linear, progressive view of history."[41] Out of the disillusionment of dashed chiliastic dreams, the mainstream of American revivalism forged a new and thoroughly *temporary* identity linked to national manifest destiny. Stronger, richer, larger churches were now needed to further the evangelism not only of the West, or of America, but of the entire world: millennialize the earth. So long as this

institutionalization was outer-directed, the traditional ideals of the western revival were served. But whatever the missionaries were doing in China, back home the trustees of the First Methodist Church were busy renting pews and air-conditioning to the sanctuary. The whole community no longer wanted to come together, and it was too hot for camp-meetings anyway. What was left of the Great Revival was firmly back in American time.

Even in 1856, when Peter Cartwright published his *Autobiography,* the Illinois Tabernacle was collapsing as a millennial vision but standing sturdier every day as an institution. Superannuated and living on his farm near Pleasant Plains, Cartwright looked back in discontent to the millennial promise of the Kentucky Revival fifty years before. "I am sorry to say that the Methodist Episcopal Church of late years, since they have become numerous and wealthy, have almost let camp-meetings die out." "O, how things have changed for the worse in this educational age of the world!" he lamented. "I awfully fear for our beloved Methodism." In his day, the preachers "could not . . . conjugate a verb or parse a sentence, and murdered the king's English almost every lick. But there was a Divine unction attended the word preached, and thousands fell under the mighty power of God, and thus the Methodist Episcopal Church was planted firmly in this western wilderness, and many glorious signs have followed, and will follow, to the end of time."[42]

We hear in Cartwright's voice the proper pride of one of Methodism's "founding fathers" (and soon to be one of its "saints"), but also a millennial echo down the years from Cane Ridge. He wanted a return to camp-meetings, to itinerancy, to homespun dress and plain speaking. These were not mere forms to him but the essentials of an evangelical religion that was aligned with God's plan and alone would allow the West to fulfill America's promise. Methodism was by 1856 already something very different. And Peter Cartwright is forced into the role of a prophet without honor uttering impotent jeremiads against his own church. It is sad and telling to see this once brashly confident man, who had overmastered everything

in his fifty years on the circuit, mustering near the end of his *Autobiography* a feeble plea for a return to what he must have known was gone forever. Henceforth the camp-meeting's apocalyptic power and its millennial prospects—"many glorious signs" in the western wilderness—would belong to the imaginative world of the novelist, not to the preacher or the church.

NOTES

[1]Richard McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival* (New York: Edward O. Jenkins, 1846), p. 3. Originally published in 1807, *The Kentucky Revival* remains one of the most interesting "millennialist" accounts of the camp-meetings that culminated in Cane Ridge. In 1805 McNemar became the most important "New Light" minister to convert to Shakerism (Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp-Meeting*, Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955, p. 75).

[2]"Apocalyptic" both in the sense of a dire last judgment of mankind, and the closely related sense of the onset of the millennium and the creation of the chiliad, or earthly paradise.

[3]John B. Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805* (Lexington; the University Press of Kentucky, 1972), p. 90. The phrase, however, does not reflect the view of Boles's important study, which treats the Kentucky Revival and its camp-meetings as the beginnings of a "Southern Great Awakening" the evangelism of which set the pattern for southern religious belief and practice that has lasted until the present day.

[4]James B. Finley, *Autobiography* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1853), p. 165.

[5]Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography* (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curts, 1856), p. 523.

[6]Dickson Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah; Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1974), pp. 61, 69, 33-35, 132-133. Because of their long and immensely popular evangelical careers, two of the most influential "saints" were James B. Finley and Peter Cartwright, whose conversion stories are told in chapters 9 and 4 of their respective autobiographies (cited above). And since Finley and Cartwright were in charge of countless camp-meetings between 1802 and 1850, speaking again and again on their individual conversion experiences, they probably contributed as much to this type of camp-meeting structure as anyone.

[7]For its interpretation of American chiliasm, the essay relies heavily on Sacvan Bercovitch's *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), and especially on his characterization of the thought of Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening ("The Typology of America's Mission," Chapter 4).

[8]Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 52.

[9]Finley, *Autobiography*, pp. 165-167, 168-174, and Chapter 9.

[10]Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1949), p. 172. Apologists for the camp-meeting movement, along with many American social historians, of ten dismiss Mrs. Trollope's narrative as "biased," which of course begs the question of whether her characterization of the camp-meeting in question as one of "atrocious wickedness" is credible. There are plenty of other sources that came to the same conclusion, and these make up the "party

of the skeptics." Their accounts usually stress the problem of evil in human nature and emphasize unruly behavior and emotional excesses at the meetings they witnessed.

[11]Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah,* p. 80.

[12]"Attendance estimates of Cane Ridge range from ten to twenty-five thousand, with most authorities placing the number somewhere between the two figures. Eager participants had boasted that 'many had come from Ohio'—probably from the Miami River Valley. While every shade of religious opinion was represented, there were many visitors whose religious convictions were nebulous" (Johnson, *The Frontier Camp-Meeting,* p. 63). In this limited sense, then, Cane Ridge was a "social microcosm" of its region.

But there is another way in which Cane Ridge may be seen as archetypal: in providing the temporal structure for many subsequent major camp-meetings. Commencing on Thursday, August 6, 1801 (this is Johnson's date and the right one; Boles mistakenly has the meeting beginning on Friday, August 8, but as can be seen from the year's calendar, Friday was the 7th), Cane Ridge continued its services through Tuesday, August 11. This six-day period became a standard throughout the Ohio Valley (Johnson, p. 89), with the religious excitement typically starting slowly, rising to an ecstatic climax Sunday night, and finally subsiding on Monday and Tuesday. This is explicitly the pattern followed in two of the fictions discussed below, *The Valley of Shadows* and *American Years.*

[13]Boles, *The Great Revival,* p. 64.

[14]Boles, p. 66.

[15]Cartwright, *Autobiography,* p. 192.

[16]Johnson, *The Frontier Camp-Meeting,* p. vi.

[17]Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah,* p. 7.

[18]Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion,* p. 129.

[19]Francis Grierson, *The Valley of Shadows* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), p. 69.

[20]Edward Eggleston, *The Circuit Rider,* William Randel, ed. (New Haven: College and University Press, 1966), p. 133.

[21]Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad,* p. 9.

[22]Eggleston, *The Circuit Rider,* p. 23.

[23]Eggleston, p. 94.

[24]Eggleston, pp. 174, 176-177.

[25]"The Methodists preached a doctrine of free grace and free salvation, and their Arminianism alone has often been cited as a cause of Methodist successes on the frontier" (Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah,* p. 41).

[26]The actual incidents are discussed in John J. Duff, *A. Lincoln: Prairie Lawyer* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1960), pp. 350-359; and Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1926), pp. 342-345.

[27]Edward Eggleston, *The Graysons: A Story of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: the Century Company, 1918), p. 112.

[28]Eggleston, *The Graysons,* pp. 112-113.

[29]To contemporary eyewitnesses, as to Eggleston and Francis Grierson, the appropriate mode for evoking night-scenes at a camp-meeting, with their intensification of apocalyptic feeling, was the rhetoric of the romantic sublime. Here is such an account of nighttime at Cane Ridge, set down a number of years afterward: "At night the whole scene was awfully sublime. The range of tents, the fires, reflecting light amidst the branches of the towering trees; the candles and lamps illuminating the

encampment; hundreds moving to and fro, with lights or torches, like Gideon's army; the preaching, praying, singing and shouting, all heard at once, rushing from different parts of the ground, like the sound of many waters, was enough to swallow up all the powers of contemplation. Sinners falling, and the shrieks and cries for mercy awakened in the mind a lively apprehension of that scene, when the awful sound will be heard, 'arise ye dead and come to Judgment'" (Theophilus Arminius, "Account of the Rise and Progress of the Work of God in the Western Country," *Methodist Magazine*, 2, 1819, p. 273; quoted in Boles, *The Great Revival*, p. 67). See also note 32 below.

[30]Francis Grierson, *The Valley of Shadows*, pp. 143, ix.

[31]Grierson, p. 138.

[32]Grierson, pp. 138, 148-149. Among many descriptions of the natural scene at night camp-meetings, one of the finest is by Frederika Bremer in her *Homes of the New World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853, 2 vols.). She renders a South Carolina night service with sympathetic detail: "I . . . was astonished by a spectacle which I shall never forget. The site was dark with the thunder-cloud, as well as with the natural darkness of night; but the rain had ceased, excepting for a few heavy drops, which fell here and there, and the whole wood stood in flames. Upon eight fire-altars, or fire-hills, and they are called—a sort of lofty table raised on posts, standing around the tabernacle—burned with a flickering brillance of flame . . . while on every side in the wood . . . burned larger or smaller fires, before tents or in other places, and lit up the lofty fir-tree stems, which seemed like columns of an immense natural temple consecrated to fire. The vast dome above was dark, and the air was so still that the flames rose straight upward, and cast a wild light, as of a strange dawn upon the fir-tree tops and the black clouds" (1, p. 307).

But sources for a violent storm during an evening service are much rarer. Grierson probably imagined this one on his own (or he may have actually experienced it), but he could have read an early account of such a storm in the *Methodist Magazine* for September of 1822. At a camp-meeting near Chillicothe, Ohio, in May 1809, the noted preacher John Sale was addressing the congregation when a sudden storm blew up: "The wind began to rise, and blew off the top of a large tree near the encampment. This alarmed the wicked. The trees round about began to crack and fall until the sermon was over. . . . A tremendous hurricane then ensued!" (Theophilus Arminius, "Short Sketches of Revivals of Religion Among the Methodists in the Western Country," *Methodist Magazine*, 5, pp. 351-352.

[33]Grierson, *The Valley of Shadows*, pp. 149-150.

[34]Grierson, pp. 150-151.

[35]For a more detailed interpretation of Grierson's "little apocalypse" in *The Valley of Shadows*, see Robert Bray, *Rediscoveries: Literature and Place in Illinois* (Urbana,: the University of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 35-47; and "The Mystical Landscape: Francis Grierson's *The Valley of Shadows*," *The Old Northwest*, 5, (Winter, 1979-80), pp. 367-385.

[36]Harold Sinclair never acknowledged his debt to Grierson, so that the derivation of his camp-meeting narrative from that in *The Valley of Shadows* is inferred from textual similarities.

[37]Sinclair's use of Cartwright's *Autobiography* as a source may be inferred from the occasional re-telling of an incident from the latter in *American Years*, such as the encounter between the "Kentucky Boy" and General Jackson (discussed in the essay).

[38]Harold Sinclair, *American Years* (New York: the Literary Guild, 1938), pp. 93, 94-95. As mentioned in note 12 above, the Sunday evening service was usually the most active of all those in a six-day meeting. Compare Sinclair's character's observation with this from *The Valley of Shadows*: "'I hev noticed more'n oncet haw Sunday kin be favoured by an outpourin' o' the sperit; en if Sunday passes 'thout a shakin' 'o dry

bones, thar ain't much hope left fer any protracted meetin'"" (p. 144).

[39]Grierson, *The Valley of Shadows*, p. 152.

[40]Sinclair, *American Years*, p. 90.

[41]Boles, *The Great Revival*, p. 106.

[42]Cartwright, *Autobiography*, pp. 523, 75, 81, 6.