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The American religious reformer as viewed in "New England reformers," An American tragedy, and "After the surprising conversions"

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The American religious reformer as viewed in "New England Reformers," An American Tragedy, and "After the Surprising Conversions"

by

Cleo Wynnette Dailey

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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INTRODUCTION

Definition of Terms

"Reform" means what it says. Literally, its sense is "to do again," "to shape over," and "to change." If we go only this far in our definition, the ends reshaped might be worse or better. The connotation, however, is that the changed effect will be better than the original.

The first step to "doing again," then, is a moral judgment. What is "bad" in the existing conditions? Are the "bad" conditions internal or external? Can internal evils be determined by observing external evils? Is poverty undesirable because its people are poorly nourished? Or is its principal evil that it produces criminals? But, since not all poverty-stricken people are criminals, does poverty really produce the criminally minded; or, are other factors to blame? What are the final ties between external and internal evils?

The second step to reform is particularizing the betterments. How can the poor be better housed, better educated, better nourished? How can the slums be cleared and their inhabitants uplifted? How can they be made self-supporting? How can the virtues be instilled in them? What are the "virtues"? Indeed, can virtues be instilled? Who decides these issues?
Must the poverty-stricken be compelled to be clean, hard-working, and virtuous? What are their rights of choice?

Since "to do again" and "to change" imply action, reform includes performance. Reform remains a moral or social analysis until an activity for improvement takes place. The expression "reform movement" is well-chosen. The finished product is a "move" from one set of conditions to another. The poor are allowed a base income. The poor are bussed to the "good" schools. The poor are enrolled in "clean" recreational activities.

There have been goings and comings, committees have been chosen, meetings have been attended. There are answers to the question, "What have you been doing?"

Since more action, alone, is not the end of reform, it must terminate where it began—with a moral evaluation. Have the schools been really "good"? Has the crime rate gone down? Are the people better nourished? Are the slums "clean"? And, perhaps more importantly, are the people happier?

The Roots of Reform in America

In an extended study of reform in the United States, Charles L. Sanford concluded that reform is a "characteristic" of the American people. Why is it "characteristic"?

The first settlers to the United States came expressly to form a "new society." As Protestants, they had adopted a
religious reform before arriving in the new land. The primitiveness of the continent was an Eden. Europe was Hell, the New World Paradise. In *Quest for Paradise*, Sanford says,

Jonathan Edwards thought that the New World had been chosen as the site of the Redemption because the old continent had Christ once, only to slay him and then shed the blood of His saints and martyrs. The colonial errand into the wilderness of America had as its principal objective the redemption of man from the carnal sins of a hellish Old World.

Early Americans, then, had the express purpose of a change from the Old to the New when they emigrated.

They also had ideas of millennialism. The millenarian writings of the English Protestant leaders had spread the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ—a period of earthly paradise. This was a vision of the ideal society. The Great Awakenings, along with the religious fervor after 1800, presaged the coming of the Kingdom of God. If paradise is a goal, reform will always be in the air. Jonathan Edwards thought that the religious enthusiasms of New England would make of it "a kind of heaven upon earth."
Another spur to reform lay in the idea of Christian perfectionism. Through "earnest study of the Bible" and after reading John Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Charles G. Finney, an early American revivalist, formulated some of the basic ideas of his preaching. One was that by the grace of the gift of God the redemption of sins need not wait for heaven but could take place in the present. This indoctrination strengthened the millennial and utopian notions of the possibilities of a "heaven on earth." Hence, reform is inherent in the search for social and Christian perfection.

Perfectionism permeated evangelical Protestantism. The perfectionist belief in humanitarian social reformation was broadcast by evangelism. The roots of reform in America were religious. "Moral regeneration became the collective mission of the American people, who identified their new country with a restoration to Eden."

American Reform and Its Literature

Continuing reform in America has been revealed in its literature.

Jonathan Edwards' tracts about freedom of the will, the nature of true virtue, and the purpose of God in creating the universe were reforming because they gave God a presence in the soul and in nature, even though the Puritan dogma did not recognize divinity in them.

Two offerings by Transcendentalists are Margaret Fuller's statement for the rights of women in "The Great Lawsuit" and Henry Thoreau's theme of "Private Vision as Substitute for Social Responsibility" in "Life Without Principle."

In an article--"Classics of American Reform Literature"--Charles L. Sanford discusses and lists the following examples: Walden, Henry Thoreau; Blithedale Romance, Nathaniel Hawthorne; Looking Backward, Edward Bellamy; A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Mark Twain; Autobiography, Lincoln Steffens; The Promise of American Life, Herbert Croly; and The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck.

In a Dial article, "Man the Reformer," Emerson asks, "What is a man born for but to be a Reformer, a Re-maker of what man has made; . . . ." If man imagines reform, implements it, and evaluates it, he is the complement to it. How have the reformers fared in our literature?

To examine the question for this study, three examples have been chosen.
Emerson's appraisal of reformers in his essay "New England Reformers" has been chosen as an example because, as a young man, he lived through an early "flowering" of the reform impulse (1825-50). Emerson gives us a good idea of the flurry of this activity in the first paragraph of his essay where he speaks of "a fertility of projects" and "the new harvest of reform." His is a contemporary view in a time replete in reform activities.

Dreiser's view of the reformers in An American Tragedy is a choice because, by the turn of the century, American attitudes toward social progress were in contrast to those of Emerson's time. This was a time when there was belief in "the goodness of man" and when James Buchanan, in his report on "the condition of the Republic," stated that "Divine Providence" had protected America "ever since our origin as a nation." Dreiser's position stems from the early 1900s when society's institutions, not Divine Providence, seemed to be developing into the controlling forces of American life. Irving Howe, in his "Afterword" to An American Tragedy, says,

No other novelist has absorbed into his work as much knowledge as Dreiser had about American institutions: the mechanisms of business, the stifling rhythms of the factory, the inner hierarchy of a
large hotel, the chicaneries of city politics, the status arrangements of rulers and ruled. For the most part Dreiser's characters are defined through their relationships to these institutions. 15

Robert Lowell's depiction of Jonathan Edwards as a revivalist in "After the Surprising Conversions" has been chosen because Edwards' account of Josiah Hawley's suicide and the frenzies which succeeded other conversions helped initiate revivalism—a continuing zeal in our history. The Hawley suicide was a facet of the first Great Awakening which was at its height in the 1740s. Following this time, revival enthusiasm was so intense (1795-1837) that this period is sometimes called the "Second Great Awakening." Ronald G. Walters in American Reformers: 1815-1860 says revivalism was "the core" of antebellum Protestantism with its evangelical beliefs in moral and social crusades. Revivalistic institutions like Lane Seminary and Oberlin College were, Walters says, "breeding grounds" for reformers. "Connections between revivalism and reform were obvious at the time and have been much emphasized by historians ever since." 16

Lowell's poem gives an insight into the power of the evangelistic preaching. Edwards' use of sensory images to make religious experience "live" for the congregation was a reformation of methods of sermonizing. The results established
a new pattern of revivalistic behavior which Edwards described in *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* upon which the poem is based. The word "after" is important in Lowell's title since it was *after* the revival meetings of 1735 that Edwards' parishioners reacted with twenty-four-hour trances, leaping for joy, and attempted suicides. Edwards, with his innovative use of sensory evocations in his sermons, was one of America's first reformers.

How do Emerson as essayist, Dreiser as novelist, and Lowell as poet, view the American reformer in their writings?
EMERSON'S "NEW ENGLAND REFORMERS"

Introduction

In 1829 Emerson was twenty-six years old. In that year Carlyle published an essay, "Signs of the Times," in the Edinburgh Review. In it he said that men had "lost faith in individual endeavour." This loss was "the chief source of modern ills," and he went on to say,

To reform the world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know, that the only solid though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on himself.

Documentary evidence shows that Emerson not only knew "Signs of the Times," but that it was a "potent factor" in the development of his ideas. Carlyle's statement is also Emerson's statement on reform. He devoted an essay to it in his "New England Reformers."

Emerson delivered his lecture on March 3, 1844. He was forty years old. His lecture, "Man the Reformer," had been published in The Dial, three years before. Brook Farm had been operating for three years; Fruitlands was terminated; and, in the year 1844 alone, at least sixteen other communitarian experiments had been established. Margaret Fuller had published The
Great Lawsuit. Dorothea L. Dix had delivered her "Memorial" lecture to the Legislature of Massachusetts on the inhumane treatment of "the unfortunate." Albert Brisbane had been promoting social reformation through Fourierism for five years. John Humphrey Noyes' Putney community, participating in "complex" marriage, was well-settled. Emerson, himself, had published "The Transcendentalist" the year before. Revival measures and perfectionist aspirations were flourishing.

In his essay, Emerson mentions medical cures current at the time—mesmerism, hydropathy, homeopathy, and phrenology. In his Journal E for the years 1839-1842, Emerson says, "In the history of the world the doctrine of Reform had never such scope as at the present hour." Reformers Are Criticized

Bronson Alcott said reformers "uproot institutions, erase traditions, revise usages, and renovate all things. They are the noblest of facts." However, Emerson's own appraisal of them is more considered.

Emerson's first quarrel with the New England reformers is that they are poorly qualified as exponents of reform. They are not, themselves, "renovated." The reformers' systems count, not their particular actions. If the unreformed try to reform others, "society gains nothing" (p. 455). In his journal notes for the years 1835-62, Emerson repeats at intervals and
at least four times the expression, "You are not good enough to be a reformer." Exactly who "you" might be is uncertain, but the repetition of the phrase means it is a recurring theme to the writer. In the same journal, Emerson repeats the phrase, "vulgar reformers," in three scattered instances. He describes the Garrisons and other "fanatics" as being "unreal, spectral, masks." He accuses them of "tactics" and "boys' play." Emerson says to the reformer that his reformative preachments are in vain if "when I see you, I do not look through your pure eye into a society of angels and angelic thoughts within. If you make on me the impression of a turbid dreamer withdrawing your thoughts from my gaze, I shall not trust you." He said the participants living at Brook Farm admitted having "no thoughts." Speaking again of the qualities desirable in a reformer, Emerson said, "A Reformer must be born; he can never be made such by reasons." In "New England Reformers," the author stresses the attributes of the reformer over the reform by saying, "It is of little moment that one or two or twenty errors of our social system be corrected, but of much that the man be in his senses" (p. 454).

In a lighter vein, Emerson said the reformers are "wearisome talkers." They use "new words in the old place, that is to say floating about in new parts of the same old vein or crust." He also said, "The Reformers wrote very ill. They made it a rule not to bolt their flour and unfortunately neglected also to sift their thoughts." In considering a new editorship
for *The Dial*, Emerson said he did not want "to put it in the hands of the Humanity and Reform Men, because they trample on letters and poetry." 33

More seriously, Emerson challenges the reformers' rights to reform others because of the equality of men. "And as a man is equal to the Church and equal to the State, so he is equal to every other man" (p. 465). He says one man's attempts to reform another may fail because reform "is good when it is the dictate of a man's genius and constitution, but very dull and suspicious when adopted from another" (p. 451).

Emerson's decisive criticism would seem to be in a statement in which he says to reformers, "And Jesus had a cause. You will get one by and by. But now I have no sympathy." 34

Reformers Are Partial

There is evidence that Emerson was thinking about reform and the "partiality" of reformers beginning five years before his lecture on the New England reformers. In "Notebook Ps"i begun in late 1839, under a heading entitled "Reform," is the statement, "Reform must not be partial." 35 In January, 1840, Emerson delivered a lecture entitled "Reforms," and in January, 1841, he spoke on "Man the Reformer." 36 In a copybook entitled "Index Minor," is the outline of his essay, "New England Reformers" (see Appendix A). Its title page bears the date, "Oct. 1843." 37
Emerson says reformers are mistaken in their selection of "particulars" for reform. "Wisdom always lays the emphasis of reform in the right place, on tendency, on character, and not on some absurd particular, as on a knife and fork, which is sure to produce dislocation and ridiculous jangle." Further, he says to the reformer, "If you rail at bodies of men, at institutions and use vulgar watchwords as Bank; aristocracy; agrarianism; etc., I do not believe you. I can expect no fruit." In a journal entry, he says, "When we see an Abolitionist or a special Reformer, we feel like asking him What right have you Sir to your one virtue? Is virtue piece-meal? . . . This is like a costly scarf or a jewel on the rags of a beggar."

Virtue is a goal of reform. It is a whole. Partiality is wrong when reformers try to disguise a particular as virtue, itself. Since virtue is indivisible, it must be rectified "all of a piece."

One of Emerson's notes is cryptic on this issue; he writes, "Every reformer partial." Noyes dissolved the ritual of marriage; the Shakers, among other practices, vowed celibacy; and Albert Brisbane saw the Fourier "phalanx" as a cure for social misery. Of these and similar efforts Emerson says, "There is no part of society or of life better than any other part. All our things are right or wrong together" (p. 455). For years, according to the scattered notations in his journals, Emerson held
to his belief that the "causes"—women's rights, temperance, dietary abstinences, etc.—were appendages to the organ of reform. If the whole body was diseased, removing the limbs would not cure it.

Reformers Want Faith

In his journal outline for "New England Reformers," Emerson notes, "Second fault, want of faith as exhibited in Concert."" 45

"Want of faith" for Emerson is lack of faith in the individual's ability to connect with the Divinity in Man. It is renouncing high aims, addressing oneself to externals, and failure to seek inspiration (p. 458). In education, it is disbelief that the divinity in youth can be touched (p. 458). "Want of faith" is failure to live on a "higher plane" (p. 459). It is believing in the "cause" above the virtue in mankind (p. 464).

Reformers who lack self-reliance hope to gain strength in aggregation; thus, they act in "concert." They place their confidence in numbers, but, to add up, numbers must have value. Of what use is a grouping of the "false and disunited"? Emerson says it is as if the reformers were saying to themselves, "I have failed, and you have failed, but perhaps together we shall not fail" (p. 457). In a journal entry, Emerson writes, "Union Many voices call for it, Fourier, Owen, Alcott, Channing. And its effect will be magical. That is it which shall renovate
institutions and destroy drudgery. But not in the way these men think, in none of their ways." The polarity of the "secret soul" within the person provides unity (p. 458). Communal living masses men into conglomerates. Associations produce "fractions of men" (p. 456). It is the Truth that makes men strong, whether one or many (p. 457).

Men resist reformers who do not bring truth (p. 464). Such reformers are "salt without savor." They do not know that Truth is a stable target and that men who move in progression towards it work in "concert" (p. 458).

Definition of The True Reformer

Two words which draw attention in Emerson's journal are "Pseudo reform." Reformers--who are partial, "want faith," and are themselves unreformed--foster "pseudo reform." A true reformer, on the other hand, promotes "true reform." What are the signals? "Every man is a lover of Truth," Emerson says (p. 464). But how shall he know the Truth?

"There is power over and behind us, and we are the channels of its communications. . . . This open channel to the highest life is the first and last reality" (p. 466). Using these "channels" man apprehends Truth. He must seek "new Selfreliance [sic]," cast off "means," and use his own powers. The "True office" of the New England reformers is to "Emancipate Man" [to seek his own reform].
As to the "thieves" who "confuse" virtue, and those reformers who "want faith," "the true reformer sees that a soul is an infinite and addresses himself to one mind." A "True reformer never addresses bodies of men." Instead, he addresses God. "Everything is in Man. The idea of God is one of his possessions."

True reform lies with Providence (p. 466). "All reform like all form, is by the grace of God, and not otherwise." There is gravity, and there is a "Law alive," and its ends are "justice" (p. 466).

When a man understands that a "high Will" controls society, "he settles himself into serenity." He trusts the future to be "worthy of the past" and leaves off his attempts to reform or "assist in the administration of the universe" (pp. 467-68). Instead, he will go immediately to the Origin of all reform, and, so inspired, act with independence.

Men bear their own "means" of reform, as they carry their own genes. They are inherently divine. "The soul lets no man go without some visitations and holidays of a diviner presence" (p. 460). In Intuition, "the last fact . . . all things find their common origin" (p. 155).

Conclusion

According to Emerson, Faith is the belief that Man can connect with the Divine Presence in him; Truth is realization
of the Divine Presence; and Virtue is continuing in that realization.

Reformers in shedding the old skin of social ills, forget the new creature (p. 454). Men want "to be made great" (p. 464). They want to live on a "mountain top" (p. 459). From reformers, men want inspiration; then the externals—the social evils—will heal from the core (p. 458).

"Out of the eyes of Reformer stares God." God is the Reformer. As a class, the New England reformers, pretending to be mediators between Man and God, are shams. They are extraneous.

Emerson seems to be dismissing reformers when, in a note, he says, "You never can hurt us with new ideas. God speed you, gentlemen reformers." Carlyle stated Emerson's theme when he wrote, "To reform the world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake."
DREISER'S AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

Introduction

In an interview published in the New York Times on January 15, 1907, Theodore Dreiser told a reporter,

The mere living of your daily life is drastic drama. To-day there may be some disease lurking in your veins that will end your life to-morrow. You may have a firm grasp on the opportunity that in a moment more will slip through your fingers. The banquet of to-night may crumble to the crust of the morning. Life is a tragedy.56

In the same interview, he also said he wanted to write about facts as they "exist." An American Tragedy bears both tragedy and "existence."

Some factual basis "existed" for Dreiser's novel. Dreiser modeled it on the actual story of the trial of Chester Gillette in 1907. Gillette, like Dreiser's main character, Clyde Griffiths, was the son of religious missionaries. Even if he had not been, it would have suited the author's purpose well to have invented this background for Clyde, for he wanted to show that Clyde was ill-equipped to succeed because of the rearing which missionary life provided.
When asked if he had a "moral" in his work, Dreiser replied that his only "moral" was "that all humanity must stand together and war against and overcome the forces of nature." With that attitude, "Dreiser had no sympathy for Christian meekness[.] He felt it was a self-destructive illusion." In his characterizations of Clyde's parents, Dreiser shows them as suffering in life's battles because of religious "delusions."

Clyde's father, Asa, was patterned in part after Dreiser's own father. One of Dreiser's biographers, Richard Lehan, says that Dreiser "lived in a house haunted by his father." Dreiser rejected his father whom he considered a religious fanatic and a failure as a breadwinner. His father was, he said, "unsuited for the humming world of commerce." Dreiser said his father was always more concerned with "the hereafter than with the now." He was "obsessed with religious belief," "weak," and "pathetic." As Asa, in the novel, he was not the sort to give his son confidence in facing the world.

Like Elvira Griffiths, Clyde's mother, Dreiser's own mother lived a drab existence. Dreiser says the Griffiths "seemed more or less troubled in their lives, at least materially. . . . The family was always 'hard up,' never very well clothed." In Dawn, one of his autobiographies, Dreiser says of his own family, "There seems to have been scarcely any money to do with."
In describing his mother, Dreiser says,

I can see her now, in her simple dresses always suggestive of that Mennonite world from which she sprang, and so devoid of any suggestion of smartness, only simplicity and faith in some form. But wandering about this humble home, shreds of slippers on her feet, at times the typical Mennonite bonnet pulled over her face, her eyes wide and expressive, bestirring herself about the things which concerned her home and family.

Just as Dreiser shows Mrs. Griffiths as being, "Despite much mission work and family cares . . . fairly cheerful, or at least sustaining . . ." (pp. 9-10), so his mother made the best of a "mean and uncomfortable state."

Dreiser’s supplying Clyde with parents of religious fervor was a natural one since the author himself had such impassioned feelings about the religious atmosphere in his own home. In *Dawn*, he says, "I picture this atmosphere because some phases of it were at times so stern and destructive." He speaks of his father’s religious beliefs as causing "darkness" in the home and being "intolerant." His father believed that "an atheist was a criminal," and that "anyone who doubted that Christ died on the cross to save all men or that men were truly saved thereby, or that there was a specific heaven, a definite
hell, and so forth, was a scoundrel, a reprobate, a lost soul. Just how people were to live and die had all been fixed long before. There were no crimes greater than adultery, atheism, and theft." Moved, perhaps, by these early religious ideas, Dreiser, as a youth, was "introspective and moralistic."

In *An American Tragedy*, he wished to show that "material and psychic" influences in Clyde's youth were forming the groundwork for his later religious doubts and lack of preparation for the realities of life.

Dreiser depicts the evangelistic reformers in his novel as being ineffectual. They are incompetent as evangelists and ineffective as providers for either the practical or spiritual needs of their family. In comparing the preachers' "illusory" Biblical proclamations about events with their "realistic" developments, Dreiser's attitude toward their pronouncements is ironic.

### The Reformers Are Ineffective as Evangelists

In the first chapter of *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser presents the scene of the Griffith family as "street preachers." Clyde feels that his parents have chosen religion as their "business" (p. 10). A member of the audience on the sidewalk says their music and preaching is a "religious dodge" (p. 11). Another member refers to the sermon as "all this stuff" (p. 11).
Dreiser calls it a "hackneyed description" of the "mercy of God and the "love of Christ" (p. 11). Clyde thought the whole performance of hymn-singing, exhortation, and collection-taking was "cheap" (p. 12). The success of their "business" is tallied by the missionaries in the number of tracts handed out—twenty-seven as against eighteen "on Thursday" (p. 13). These figures seem to make a mockery of the sign above the mission which reads "Everybody Welcome" (p. 13).

Dreiser's statement that Mrs. Griffiths had been "inoculated with the virus of Evangelism and proselytizing" implies that religion is a diseased condition (p. 16). He implies, too, that the reformers will fail to help "the botched and helpless" who come to them for practical aid and spiritual renewal (p. 17).

In the last scene of the novel, two women helpers of the Griffiths are described as "parched and spare" and taking religion as "a last resort" (p. 813).

The Reformers Are Ineffective Materially

In the second chapter, Dreiser writes,

For Clyde's parents had proved impractical in the matter of the future of their children. They did not understand the importance or the essential necessity for some form of practical or professional training for . . . their young ones. Instead, being wrapped up in the notion of evangelizing the world, they had
neglected to keep their children in school in any one place (p. 14).

Mrs. Griffiths describes her husband as "such a poor hand at business" (p. 89). Even though the father collected money from among various donors, the family were denied "many comforts and pleasures which seemed common enough to others" (p. 9). Their home, the mission, is described as an "old and decidedly colorless and inartistic wooden building" situated in a rundown, deserted, former commercial part of town (p. 15). The family moved "here and there," and, at times, "were quite without sufficient food or decent clothes" (p. 14). Clyde felt that he "had nothing" (p. 19).

Mrs. Griffiths' worldly innocence is shown at the time when Clyde is accused of murder and needing legal assistance. His mother collects eleven hundred dollars by selling interviews and lecturing, but Clyde's lawyers, "in a burst of humanity," take the money and advise Mrs. Griffiths "to return to her husband" (p. 766). Dreiser's use of "humanity" is ironic.

The Reformers Are Ineffective in Teaching Spiritual Values

Although the father preaches that those enjoying the pleasure of the world will soon be overtaken by sorrow (p. 13), Clyde does not turn to the religious life of the spirit, but
to the pagan beckonings of the sensuous. Beauty and pleasure are real; the rewards of the spiritual life are "cloudy" (p. 9). Clyde was proud, vain of his appearance, and interested in "getting ahead" (p. 18).

Esta, the Griffiths' daughter, is shown as a "weak girl," despite her religious upbringing. She had repeated dogmas and creeds and heard "revealed" truth, but within her was a "chemism" of dreams which counteracted any self-abnegating and self-immolating religious theory (p. 20). She "ran away from home with an actor who . . . took a passing fancy for her" (p. 19). Of this situation, Clyde thinks, "Mission work was nothing. All this religious emotion and talk was not so much either. It hadn't saved Esta. Evidently, like himself, she didn't believe so much in it either" (p. 26).

Clyde's religious training gives him no standards of morality to live by. He runs away after a car accident rather than face charges (p. 145). After he seduces Roberta, he avoids her. He prefers Sondra who is attractive to him partly because of her social standing (p. 450). When Roberta becomes pregnant, he suggests that she go away and have the baby alone (p. 418). Later, he tries to arrange an abortion (p. 394). Still later, he contemplates her murder (p. 461). During the trial for Roberta's murder, Clyde submits to a "false form of defense" (p. 787).
The Reformer, Duncan McMillan, Is Ineffective in Soliciting to Save Clyde's Life

Richard Lehan, in a critical study of Dreiser's work, writes that Dreiser believed in a dualistic existence—good and evil, tragedy and comedy, and life and death. He says, "Dreiser was caught between a world of dreams and a world of reality."

The interplay between Duncan McMillan—an unordained evangelistic minister, Mrs. Griffiths' friend, and Clyde's counselor—and Clyde is a study in the difference between the two characters' ideas of what is real.

When McMillan arrives at the jail for the first time, he announces to the warden his avowed purpose—saving Clyde's soul (p. 778). To McMillan, the spiritual world is the real world. His goal in repeatedly asking Clyde to repent and to confess is to give him spiritual life.

Even before arriving at the jail, McMillan is convinced of Clyde's guilt. He has read the newspaper accounts of the case and feels that the jury's verdict is probably "just" (p. 776). McMillan thinks, "unquestionably Clyde was guilty" (p. 777). After conversations with Clyde's mother, he knows that Clyde is guilty of "the deadly sin of adultery" (p. 778). But there is the question of legality. Maybe Clyde was not as guilty as he "appeared" (p. 777). McMillan is "puzzled" and is unable
to sort out Clyde's "real" needs—his spiritual needs—from his legal needs (p. 794). In the minister's mind, Clyde's spiritual needs—to repent, confess, and get "peace of mind" through prayer—are paramount.

But for Clyde, the spiritual world is a "remote and cloudy romance." He could not "get it all straight" (p. 9). He has seen his parents pray and embrace religion, but that hasn't helped them in their predicaments (p. 784). To Clyde, the "real" world is made up of his conviction, his confinement in jail, and his imminent execution. To him, his earthly needs are paramount.

Illusion and reality war with each other in Clyde's mind about the question of his guilt. Is he guilty, as McMillan says he is, because he was angry with Roberta and intended to kill her, or, is he innocent, as he prefers to believe, because he accidentally knocked Roberta from the boat?

Throughout their relationship, McMillan makes spiritual solicitations to save Clyde's soul, while Clyde's wishes are to be declared "not guilty" and so to save his life.

McMillan is not a good candidate to represent Clyde's interests before the governor because the minister is convinced that Clyde is guilty "before God and the law" (p. 803). He has not come before the governor to convince him of Clyde's innocence, but to ask for mercy. When the governor asks
McMillan for "material facts" to strengthen Clyde's case, the minister is helpless. His mind has not absorbed "material facts" (p. 803). McMillan disregards the "facts" and states that his qualification in appearing before the governor is that of "spiritual advisor" to Clyde (p. 803). The governor intuits McMillan's feeling that Clyde is guilty, and thus the last appeal for Clyde's life is lost.

After the execution, McMillan wonders. Before the Governor, should he have altered his conviction about Clyde's guilt, and, perhaps, mercifully saved his life (pp. 803 and 811)?

Conclusion

In the formative years of Dreiser's youth, his father's fanaticism and strictness in religious beliefs had turned Dreiser against religion. In Dawn, Dreiser says of his father, "Never have I known a man more obsessed by a religious belief." Attending a parochial school had further disappointed him. Dreiser described these schools as "an outrageous survival of a stultifying mediaevalism[ sic] which should be swept away to its last detail." He called the teaching "inane" and the Catechism a "discredited organism to divine inspiration." He remembered the nun in charge of the school which he attended as being a "Gorgon," and an "outlandish figure ... clad in black." Dreiser was not happy in this religious atmosphere.
For the Dreiser family, the necessities of living—food, clothing, and shelter—were hard-won. Life could be distressing. The teaching of the church and the father's faith did not alleviate this distress. Dreiser began to think that experience is real; environment and physical laws are real; but the spiritual is an illusion.

The religious reformers, as Dreiser depicted them, were failures. Their lives led to dead ends. Failures themselves, they also failed in meeting their responsibilities to Clyde. He was not ready for living his life. Nor, in spite of McMillan's efforts was he ready to die (p. 809).

The novel ends with the reformers in the same sad condition as in the first scene. Their lot has not improved. They are leading the same dreary lives as at the beginning. Nothing has been learned, nothing gained. They are still raising their voices "against the vast skepticism and apathy of life" (p. 813). To Dreiser, the religious reformer is a negative force.
LOWELL'S "AFTER THE SURPRISING CONVERSIONS"

Introduction

What is Lowell's judgment of Jonathan Edwards as a reformer?

After regarding the poet's depiction of Edwards as a revivalist in "After the Surprising Conversions," the question remains. He defends Edwards' theme, but deplores his severe dogma. He is empathic with both the preacher as exhorter and Josiah Hawley as sinner. The poet presents a case but reserves judgment.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) was an American Calvinist writer and preacher. Evidence that Lowell had read Edwards' writings rests in his having written several poems concerning the preacher, two of which are "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" and "After the Surprising Conversions" (hereafter referred to as "Conversions"). Lowell's reading of Edwards' work may have been wide and intense because the first poem recapitulates an essay of Edwards and a famous sermon, while "Conversions" closely reproduces the history of the suicide of one of the minister's Northampton parishioners as he described it in a letter to a fellow minister (see Appendices B and C). The original title of the letter was "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of New Hampshire in New England in a Letter to the Rev. Dr. Colman..."
of Boston" (hereafter referred to as Narrative). Although Lowell followed the Narrative closely, one significant Lowell injection into "Conversions" is his having Edwards say that he preached a sermon "on a text from Kings." This may have referred to an incident in the life of Elijah in I Kings (18:21). Elijah asks the prophets of Baal to choose between Jehovah and Baal—God or Mammon. The encounter between Elijah and the worshippers of Baal ends with a verse which states that the worshippers of Baal "Cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them" (18:28). This effect of remorse reminds us of Hawley's method of suicide—throat-cutting. In his Note prefacing Lord Weary's Castle, the author says, "I hope that the source of 'After the Surprising Conversions' will be recognized." Was Lowell referring to both the Narrative and the Biblical reference?

Another addition in "Conversions" is the character of the peddler. In the Narrative (see Appendix C), Edwards says that the converts felt compelled to suicide though "no reason suggested to them why they should do it." Lowell may be supplying the "reason" through the peddler's chant—"Now! Now!" It may be meant to imply a hypnotic refrain so that the victims would follow the suggestion without reason. Or it may be an imitation of the revivalist's exhortations in getting the converts to "come forward."
Almost as pronounced as the similarities between the original Edwards paragraph in the Narrative and the Lowell poem, are the echoes of style and theme in the two writers.

Similarities of Style in Lowell and Edwards

An Edwards biographer states that his sermons always had "symmetry, orderliness, and design." They "unvaryingly" followed the scheme of text, exposition, and application. Lowell, too, was interested in form. This assessment is seconded by Hugh B. Staples who says that Lowell's early poetry has a fitted "pattern." The reader has only to see the format of some poems from an early work, Land of Unlikeness, to note their strict regularity of line length and stanza form. Reading them reveals an equally stringent rhyme scheme. The sonnet, with its set prescriptions, is a Lowell favorite. An early appearance is "Concord." The fourteen-line form, though unrhymed, is used throughout in Notebook 1967-68. In comparison with Lowell's early poetry, a Table of Contents outlining of an Edwards dissertation on original sin is "stanzaic" in its regularity of Parts, Chapters, and Sections.

Lowell and Edwards are not only partial to form, but they also use virulent descriptive phrases. In his Narrative, Edwards refers to "the corruption of the heart," "heart-sins," and "pollution." In "Our Lady of Walsingham," Lowell writes that the sea is "fouled," ships are "corroded," and,
in "The Drunken Fisherman," the poet states that the "moth /
'Corrupted' its unstable cloth."  

Edwards, as a minister, and Lowell, as a poet, use script-
tural symbols. Edwards says, "Satan the old inhabitant seems
to exert himself, like a serpent disturbed and enraged."  
Lowell in "Children of Light" writes, "They planted here the
Serpent's seeds of light."  The preacher speaks of persons
"sleeping upon the brink of hell."  The poet writes, "the sun /
That never sets upon these hell-fire streets."  Again, Edwards
writes, "Persons are often revived out of their dead and dark
frames."  Lowell says, "Darkness has called to darkness."  

Both men tend to be graphic in their Biblical allusions.
Edwards writes in his Narrative, "Some ... have a lively
idea of Christ hanging upon the cross, and his blood running
from his wounds."  In "The Holy Innocents," Lowell says,
"King Herod shrieking vengeance at the curled / Up knees of
Jesus choking in the air."  Of a convert, Edwards writes,
"Her very flesh trembled for fear of God's wrath."  In
"Cistercians in Germany," the poet says of St. Bernard, "And
all his body one ecstatic womb."  

Similarities of Theme in Lowell and Edwards

Both the preacher and the poet are engrossed in man's
separation from God through wrongdoing. Edwards in his Narra-
tive tells of converts' "awakenings" to the "dreadful corruption
of their nature, their enmity against God . . . the stubborn-ness and obstinacy of their wills." Lowell symbolizes Man's sin in the expression, "blood of Cain"; the Puritan's sin when he writes of "King Philip and his scream / Whose echo girdled this imperfect globe"; the warmonger's sin in referring to "cannon-fodder," "munition pools," and "the serpent licking up Jesus' blood."

The reformer and the poet both see man's sin leading to judgment. Edwards describes judgment resulting from the anger of God. He says that when the sinners reflect "on these wicked workings of heart against God," they have "distressing apprehensions" that God will "never show mercy to them who are such vipers." Lowell's "Where the Rainbow Ends" envisions a judgment of Boston. The "eagle shifts its hold / On serpent-Time, the rainbow's epitaph. / In Boston serpents whistle at the cold."

Lowell Shows Sympathy with Both Hawley and Edwards

In revealing Edwards as an "awakener" so successful as to induce Josiah Hawley to suicide, Lowell enters into dual sympathies. Was Edwards' sermon too persuasive in arousing guilt feelings, or was Hawley simply too receptive to the message?

In some poems, Lowell's rhetorical expressions resemble those of Edwards. The theme of his poetry collection, Land
of Unlikeness. is Edwards' theme, too. One critic says that Lowell "repudiates" the Puritans "intellectually," but knows well their "buffetings and mortdity." Staples believes that the two Lowell poems about Edwards are a "rebellion" against Calvinism and an "indictment" of the preacher. Intellectually, Lowell's choices of themes and style resemble Edwards' choices of themes and style; emotionally, Lowell's susceptibilities resemble those of Hawley. Thus, the poet partakes of some qualities from both characters.

In "Conversions," Hawley is described as meditating "terror through the night (see Appendix B). We are reminded of Lowell's "Night Sweat" in which he felt "the creeping damp." Hawley dreams of Judgment Day for Concord as Lowell described judgment for Boston in "Where the Rainbow Ends." In "Conversions," Lowell has Edwards say, "Satan seemed more let loose amongst us." In "Night Sweat," the command, "Behind me!" implies that Satan is beside the speaker. Lowell shares Hawley's "concernment for his soul." This concernment has caused him to study the saints and question his faith until, in Land of Unlikeness, "revelation and hallucination merge." "Some things" in both Hawley's and Lowell's experiences were "hopeful." For Lowell, his talents were his "hope." Hawley is sensitive to the "knocking" of the wind, as Lowell sees "magnolia ignite the morning." Hawley is superstitious. He lays a "shilling" aside for a dead heifer. Lowell points up "magic" numbers--
"after thirteen weeks" and "This is the most kind / of the seven days." Hawley has a "thirst for loving." Lowell says "We wished our two souls / might return like gulls / to the rock." Hawley "durst / Not entertain much hope of his estate / In heaven." Lowell in "First Sunday in Lent" ends with a "prayer" for a "manifestation of God's Will." Hawley "sits late "behind his attic window." In "First Sunday in Lent," Lowell's periods of isolation are symbolized by "the fifth floor attic." If Hawley was "nervous" meditating "terror," so was Lowell. Lowell required "Miltown" for "taming" nervousness. Jerome Mazzaro states that in "Skunk Hour" Lowell "becomes the melancholy, suicidal Josiah Hawley."

Edwards and Lowell Are Similar in Ironic Stance

Staples says of Lowell's poems that they are "networks of interlocking ironies." The Edwards-Hawley relationship was ironic, too. It is ironic that Edwards, in trying to "save" a "life of the spirit," brought death. It is ironic that the convert, in trying to "live in the spirit," dies. In his poem about the conversions, Lowell uses the irony that in writing the Narrative, Edwards thinks of the phrase, "Cut your throat ... Now! Now!" with such clarity and imagination that it seems a repetition of a refrain that may have seemed real to the minister. Had he thought of adding it to his sermon? The
phrase, with its insistent "Now," has the hint of revivalistic fervor.

The aftermath of the historic Hawley conversion was ironic. Following the suicide, "The community was aghast. . . . A fast was appointed, and the congregation prostrated itself before God." But the ironic turning point had come. Hawley's death was the beginning of the end of the "conversions." 120

Although Lowell followed the Narrative closely in writing his poem about it, two details differ from the "facts." The imperative, "Cut your throat," hints at the possibility of insanity. Lowell spares Edwards this onus by introducing the peddler in his poem to "twang" the intonation. However, Edwards' biographer states that there was a taint of insanity in the family through Edwards' grandmother, Elizabeth Tuttle, and that it appeared in Edwards' son and two of his grandsons. 121 It is likely that Lowell was familiar with this history, since he considered writing a biography of Edwards himself. 122 The second variation is that in the Narrative Edwards says Hawley's mother had committed suicide some time before the conversion. Therefore, the line in the poem—"His uncle, I believe, was killed of it"—may be intentionally ironic, since Hawley was Edwards' uncle. 123
Conclusion

How, then, does Lowell sum up his feelings toward this early-day reformer? The poet agrees with Edwards in believing that men need reform. In *Land of Unlikeness* and *Lord Weary's Castle*, he has shown what he feels to be that need. That much is "good."

The poet shows that Edwards, as an "awakener," used excessively dramatic rhetoric—a fault of which Lowell himself was accused. Staples says the poet's style is so "harsh" and "grating" as to be "disruptive." And that is "bad."

Hawley is shown as a man concerned with his spiritual needs; "good." He is also shown as reacting "excessively" to "conversion," and that is "bad."

There is no "summing up." Edwards has been on trial. Are not all men? And Hawley and Lowell, too? They are all "good" and "bad." To Lowell, Edwards is not "The Reformer."

Through an understanding of human nature and the forces which play upon it, he is, to the poet, a fellow human being.
CONCLUSION

The religious reformer has been shown in three pieces of literature—in a transcendentalist’s essay, a twentieth century novel, and a contemporary poem. How has he fared?

To Emerson, to whom true reform means looking inward to the Divine Presence for guidance, reformers as a class are useless. He says the activities to promote causes are all "in vain." Reform cannot be passed from one man to another. True reform is the result of the individual's intuitive wisdom which comes directly from God.

To Dreiser, religious reformers are not only useless, but debilitating. In his novel he shows them to be ineffectual. Their actions have negative results both in preparing their children for the realities of living and in improving the society in which they live. They seem to be on the wrong track. There is no correlation between spiritual injunctions and earthly results.

To Lowell, Edwards is a fellow-thinker. They share a style of expression and a theme—the "alienation of the human soul from the Mind of God." They share a "surprise." It is clear that Northampton was "shocked" at the suicide of Hawley, and Edwards was "shocked" at this result of his preaching. Lowell's poem registers "shock" at the harshness of the
Calvinistic doctrines. The poem also reveals a personal "shock" because the poet himself knew firsthand the terrors of the questionings and soul-searchings of a convert. In the poem, Lowell takes part in both Edwards' theme and Hawley's reaction to it.

An aged, reminiscing Emerson in his *Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England* remembers with mellowness a time when there was "an eagerness for reform." Walter Hugins who explored this "eagerness" said its roots were in Utopianism, Evangelism, and Transcendentalism. What remains? "Utopia" is still a dream. Donald G. Bloesch in *The Evangelical Renaissance* (1973) assures us that evangelism survives. As always, some poets and philosophers are transcendentalists. Emerson begins his exposition of transcendentalism by saying that their views are not new views, "but the very oldest of thoughts cast into the mould [sic] of these new times."

Hugins concludes that "in the final analysis the reform impulse [of 1825-50] must be deemed a failure." Robert H. Walker, in his Introduction to *The Reform Spirit in America* (1976), says of this period prior to the Civil War that "there was very little permanent legacy from this wave of activity. . . ."

Does this assessment mean that Emerson was correct when he said that reformers, as such, act "in vain"? Does it mean that Edwards was right in shocking man to bring him, through
his "senses," to God, even though the shock was too strong at times for the human body? "Such a bubble is too weak to bear a weight so vast," he wrote. Does it mean that Dreiser is correct in believing that the spiritual forces in life, as activators of reform, are remote from the "accidental combinations of forces and sensitivities" which make up life? Does it mean that Lowell's perception of modern man as strayed from God's "likeness" is as true today as Edwards' perception of the same condition in 1735?

The "causes" are still with us. Margaret Fuller, in present-day circumstances, could still promote women's rights. Dorothea Dix could still ask for improved institutions for "suffering humanity." Albert Brisbane might still search for "A Social System Perfectly Adapted to Human Nature." And the headlines in the current newspapers read that the "'60s Activists Split Over Anti-Vietnam Ad," and the "Methodists Are Expected to Tackle Rhodesia Issue." Emigrants from Europe came to America looking for a "New" England, a "new" world, a "new" Eden--a millennium. The early nineteenth-century reformers hurried to bring about the alleviation of human misery "in the here and now, without waiting . . . for a Kingdom of God to be established." But Paradise, the Ideal, recedes as it is approached.
Although Carlyle said that no "wise" man would attempt to reform the world, some, not so wise, will surely try; and American writers will just as surely continue to expose, analyze, and dramatize their efforts.
NOTES

2 Sanford, p. 95.
3 Sanford, p. 80.
4 Sanford, p. 86.
7 Sanford, p. 266.
8 Perry Miller, "Jonathan Edwards to Emerson," New England Quarterly, 13 (1940), 602-03.
9 Veysey, Contents, p. v.


16 Walters, p. 23.


20 Emerson, *Selected Writings*, p. 450. All further references to this work appear in the text.


23 *Journals*, ed. Linda Allardt, XII, 536.
44

24 Journals, XII, 331, 359, 408, 417.
26 Journals, eds. William H. Gilman and J. E. Parsons.

VIII, 116.
27 Journals, VIII, 73.
28 Journals, VIII, 38.
29 Journals, VIII, 312.
30 Journals, VIII, 253.
31 Journals, VII, 452.
32 Journals, eds. Ralph H. Orth and Alfred R. Ferguson.

IX, 53.
33 Journals, VIII, 203.
34 Journals, IX, 446.
35 Journals, XII, 464.
36 Journals, XII, Chronology, xliv.
37 Journals, XII, 518.
39 Journals, VII, 39.
40 Journals, VIII, 162.
41 Journals, XII, 383.
42 Veysey, p. 17.
43 Walters, p. 46.
44 Veysey, p. 93.
45 Journals, XII, 564.
46 Journals, VIII, 305-06.
47 Journals, XII, 388.
48 Journals, XII, 564.
49 Journals, IX, 32.
50 Journals, VII, 39.
51 Journals, XII, 522.
52 Journals, XII, 417.
53 Journals, VIII, 312.
54 Journals, XII, 508.
55 Journals, VIII, 250.
57 Kazin and Shapiro, p. 60.
59 Lehan, p. 15.
61 Dreiser, Dawn, pp. 5-6.

All further references to this work appear in the text.
63 Dreiser, Dawn, p. 49.
64 Dreiser, *Dawn*, pp. 49-50.
65 Dreiser, *Dawn*, p. 50.
66 Dreiser, *Dawn*, p. 15.
67 Dreiser, *Dawn*, p. 15.
68 Lehan, p. 214.
69 Lehan, p. 45.
70 Dreiser, *Dawn*, pp. 5-6.
72 Dreiser, *Dawn*, p. 27.
74 Lehan, p. 6.
75 Lehan, p. 211.
77 Edwards, Title Page.
81 Winslow, p. 140.


85 Edwards, *Contents*, p. iii.


91 Edwards, col. 1, p. 351.

92 Lowell, *Achievement*, p. 43.


95 Edwards, col. 2, p. 358.


103 Edwards, col. 1, p. 352.

104 Lowell, *Castle*, p. 69.
105 Staples, p. 28.


107 Staples, p. 17.

108 Lowell, Achievement, p. 79.

109 Lowell, Achievement, p. 79.

110 Staples, p. 22.

111 Lowell, Achievement, p. 69.

112 Lowell, Achievement, p. 65.

113 Lowell, Achievement, p. 74.


115 Staples, p. 39.


117 Lowell, Achievement, p. 69.

118 Mazzaro, p. 117.

119 Staples, p. 18.

120 Winslow, p. 165.

121 Winslow, p. 20.


123 Winslow, p. 401.

125 Emerson, *Selected Writings*, p. 467.
126 Staples, p. 22.
127 Winslow, p. 165.
128 Staples, p. 18.
130 Hugins, Contents, p. vii.
132 Emerson, *Selected Writings*, p. 87.
133 Hugins, p. 20.
135 Winslow, p. 205.
136 Dreiser, *Dawn*, p. 50.
137 Hugins, Contents, p. ix.
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141 Veysey, p. 8.
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Primary Sources for Emerson


Secondary Sources for Emerson


Primary Sources for Dreiser


Secondary Sources for Dreiser


Primary Sources for Robert Lowell


Secondary Sources for Robert Lowell


APPENDIX A: OUTLINE OF EMERSON'S "NEW ENGLAND REFORMERS"¹

Sermon. V Lecture on N. England

Synopsis. Great activity of Speculation in young N. E
Dissent in diet; use of animals; commerce;
some serious protests and reforms.
in politics, p non-jurors, non-payers,
Episode on Concert.
in Education want of things
rejection of Lat and Greek

In all this dissent a casting off of means and new Selfreliance
Fault of the reformers partiality
Second fault, want of faith as exhibited in Concert

True office of N. E. to Emancipate Man

Particulars of the Faith in Man
Cardinal vice of the age is its want of Faith
Education a system of despair

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Journals and Miscellaneous
Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Linda Allardt, XII
Counterstatement

Men are all geniuses
radicals
devotees
(the very Caesars and Adamses are such)
want superiors not gossips
and to be benefactors
are lovers of truth and fidelity

A man equal to the Church
to the State
to every other man

Sermon continued

our connexion with the Spirit
the Future man
The Law

Work paid or unpaid
The pretender sets people right
Obedience to our genius is all
The life of man is the Romance,
of romances.
APPENDIX B: "AFTER THE SURPRISING CONVERSIONS"^1

September twenty-second, Sir: today
I answer. In the latter part of May,
Hard on our Lord's Ascension, it began
To be more sensible. A gentleman
Of more than common understanding, strict
In morals, pious in behavior, kicked
Against our goad. A man of some renown,
An useful, honored person in the town.
He came of melancholy parents; prone
To secret spells, for years they kept alone--
His uncle, I believe, was killed of it:
Good people, but of too much or little wit.
I preached one Sabbath on a text from Kings;
He showed concernment for his soul. Some things
In his experience were hopeful. He
Would sit and watch the wind knocking a tree
And praise this countryside our Lord has made.
Once when a poor man's heifer died, he laid
A shilling on the doorsill; though a thirst
For loving shook him like a snake, he durst
Not entertain much hope of his estate

In heaven. Once we saw him sitting late
Behind his attic window by a light
That guttered on his Bible; through that night
He meditated terror, and he seemed
Beyond advice or reason, for he dreamed
That he was called to trumpet Judgment Day
To concord. In the latter part of May
He cut his throat. And though the coroner
Judged him delirious, soon a noisome stir
Palsied our village. At Jehovah's nod
Satan seemed more let loose amongst us: God
Abandoned us to Satan, and he pressed
Us hard, until we thought we could not rest
Till we had done with life. Content was gone.
All the good work was quashed. We were undone.
The breath of God had carried out a planned
And sensible withdrawal from this land;
The multitude, once unconcerned with doubt,
Once neither callous, curious nor devout,
Jumped at broad noon, as though some peddler groaned
At it in its familiar twang: "My friend,
Cut your own throat. Cut your own throat. Now! Now!"
September twenty-second, Sir, the bough
Cracks with the unpicked apples, and at dawn
The small-mouth bass breaks water, gorged with spawn.
APPENDIX C: EXCERPT FROM: NARRATIVE OF THE SURPRISING CONVERSIONS

In the latter part of May, it began to be very sensible that the Spirit of God was gradually withdrawing from us, and after this time Satan seemed to be more let loose, and raged in a dreadful manner. The first instance wherein it appeared, was a person putting an end to his own life by cutting his throat. He was a gentleman of more than common understanding, of strict morals, religious in his behaviour, and a useful and honourable person in the town; but was of a family that are exceedingly prone to the disease of melancholy, and his mother was killed with it. He had, from the beginning of this extraordinary time, been exceedingly concerned about the state of his soul, and there were some things in his experience that appeared very hopeful; but he durst entertain no hope concerning his own good estate. Towards the latter part of his time, he grew much discouraged, and melancholy grew again upon him, till he was wholly overpowered by it, and was in a great measure past a capacity of receiving advice, or being reasoned with to any purpose. The devil took the advantage, and drove him into despairing thoughts. He was kept awake at nights, meditating terror.

so that he had scarce any sleep at all for a long time togeth-er; and it was observed at last, that he was scarcely well capable of managing his ordinary business, and was judged delirious by the coroner's inquest. The news of this extraordinarily affected the minds of people here, and struck them as it were with astonishment. After this, multitudes in this and other towns seemed to have it strongly suggested to them, and pressed upon them, to do as this person had done. And many who seemed to be under no melancholy, some pious perons who had no special darkness or doubts about the goodness of their state—nor were under any special trouble or concern of mind about any thing spiritual or temporal—had it urged upon them as if somebody had spoke to them,

**Cut your own throat, now is a good opportunity. Now!**

Now! So that they were obliged to fight with all their might to resist it, and yet no reason suggested to them why they should do it.