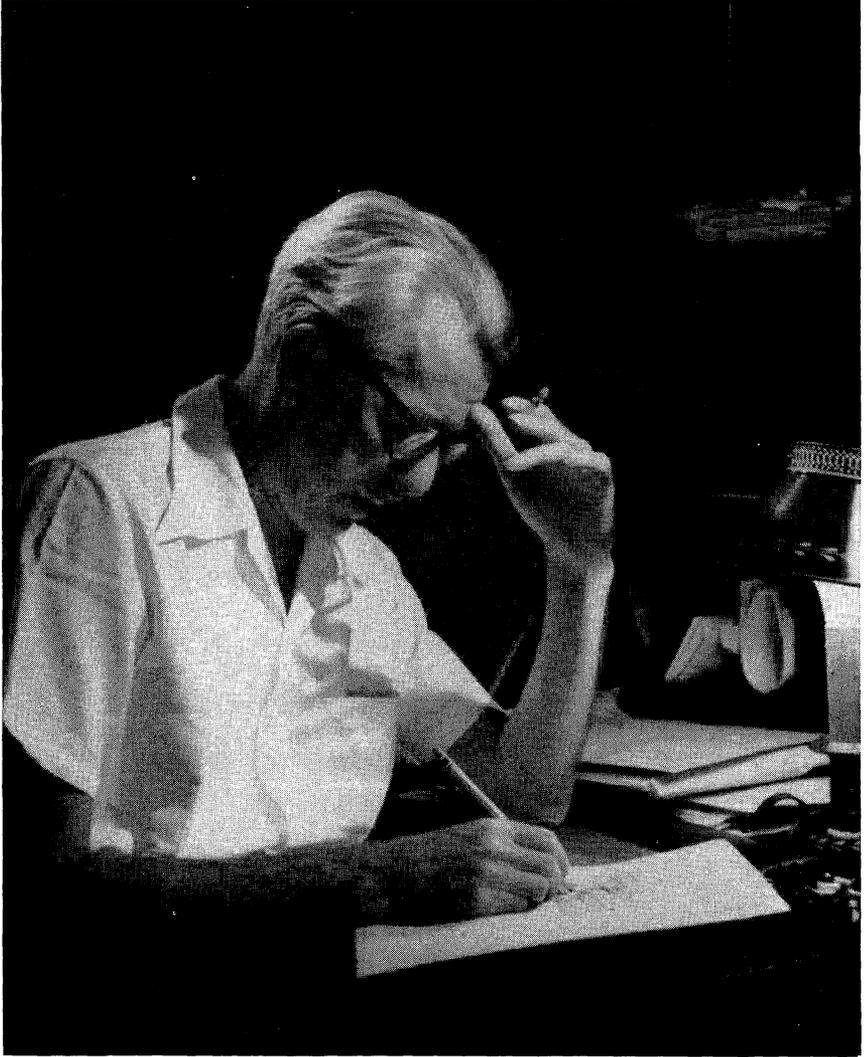


James Thurber and the Midwest

Stephen L. Tanner

Because of his large role in shaping the tone and character of *The New Yorker*, a magazine synonymous with urban sophistication, James Thurber is sometimes viewed as an Eastern cosmopolite. This impression is misleading, for although he lived half his life in the East and New York City was the site of his literary success, he remained a partially unreconstructed Midwesterner. His journey from Columbus, Ohio, to New York City was one more example of the familiar pattern of the young man from the provinces who finds the metropolis a catalyst for his genius. But unlike the usual provincial once-removed, he was unashamed of his Midwestern roots and trailed Ohio with him. Among his New York friends he often told stories about his eccentric relatives and acquaintances in Columbus, impersonating the various characters. And of course some of his finest writing treats this same subject. In a 1953 speech accepting a special Ohio Sesquicentennial Career medal, he said, "It is a great moment for an Ohio writer living far from home when he realizes that he has not been forgotten by the state he can't forget," and added that his books "prove that I am never very far away from Ohio in my thoughts, and that the clocks that strike in my dreams are often the clocks of Columbus."¹ In 1959, when Columbus was named an "All-American City," he wrote to the mayor, "I have always waved banners and blown horns for Good Old Columbus Town, in America as well as abroad, and such readers as I have collected through the years are all aware of where I was born and brought up, and they know that half of my books could not have been written if it had not been for the city of my birth."²

But if it is a mistake to view Thurber as an Eastern sophisticate, it is equally a mistake to infer from these glowing statements about Columbus that he



James Thurber. Courtesy of The Ohio State University Library.

maintained an uncritical love for his home region. Actually, the famous clocks of Columbus speech came just two years after he had shocked the trustees of Ohio State University by declining an honorary degree. His refusal derived from his protest some months earlier of the University's gag rule (prompted by McCarthyism) designed to screen out Communist speakers. One of his biographers suggests that Ohio was his least favorite state in 1953 and that he accepted the award (although he didn't go to Columbus to receive it and the speech was read by proxy) as "a way of signing a truce with the folks back home." Although the

clocks of Columbus sentence was a conciliatory gesture, the speech as a whole conceded nothing politically. "All in all, it was a ringing denunciation of McCarthyism, right in McCarthy's own backyard—and it worked."³ Likewise, the statement about Good Old Columbus Town was partly a conciliatory gesture of cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce. The fact is that many of those dreams Thurber mentioned were nightmares, and, as John Seelye suggests, "if Thurber heard the clocks of Columbus in his dreams, it was because he spent his days in New York City."⁴ That he preferred distance in his relationship with Columbus is ironically intimated in this phrase from his first book about his home town: "I am having a fine time now, and wish Columbus were here."⁵

In short, his relationship with the Midwest was complicated and ambivalent. As John K. Hutchens puts it, "He is neither the debonair expatriate making fun of his native heath nor the sentimental alumnus returning to the old campus."⁶ Charles S. Holmes, one of his biographers, summarizes the matter this way: "He was a combination of old-fashioned Midwestern values and international intellectual culture, and it is the tension between these forces which underlies much of his humor and at least some of the pathos in his work."⁷ Consequently, to understand the complicated attraction/repulsion dialectic of his attitude toward his home region is to understand much about Thurber and what he represents in American literature.⁸

The Midwesterner's fascination with the East, particularly New York City, is itself a significant ingredient of the American literary experience, receiving perhaps its most familiar expression in the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald. "The city seen from Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of the mystery and the beauty of the world."⁹ When the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* makes this statement, he is voicing an impulse of hope, quest and aspiration in relation to New York City that has characterized a number of Midwestern authors and their characters. While the hopeful dream outstripped reality in *The Great Gatsby*, the city proved to be much less than a city of dreams for other Midwesterners, including Thurber.

The contradictions in Thurber's relationship with the Midwest are not surprising when one is aware of the contradictory nature of the man himself. In his survey of critical response to Thurber's writing, Holmes notes that after a 1945 Malcolm Cowley review emphasizing the disturbing strain in his writing—the elements of nightmare, violence, madness and murder—two views of Thurber emerged: "one, the 'dark,' psychological view, emphasizing the neurotic and unsettling elements in his work; the other the 'light,' rational view emphasizing its aesthetic and humanistic qualities." The light view perceives him as the spokesman for individualism in a mass society, the champion of liberating imagination in opposition to the conventional and overly-rational mind, and the firm opponent of political fanaticism, whether on the Left or Right. The darker view focuses on Thurber as "a man writing to exorcise a deep inner uncertainty, to come to terms with fears and resentments which threaten his psychic balance."¹⁰ In the *New York Times* Thurber obituary, E. B. White, one of his closest

friends, said, "There were at least two, probably six Thurbers. His thoughts have always been a tangle of baseball scores, Civil War tactical problems, Henry James, personal maladjustments, terrier puppies, literary rip tides, ancient myths, and modern apprehensions. Through this jungle stalk the unpredictable ghosts of his relatives in Columbus, Ohio."¹¹ Thurber himself acknowledged the inconsistencies of his nature: "Unfortunately, I have never been able to maintain a consistent attitude toward life or reality, or toward anything else. This may be entirely due to nervousness. At any rate, my attitudes change with the years, sometimes with the hours."¹²

One of the most persistent and nettlesome contradictions in this singularly contradictory man was his liberal artistic temperament opposing his generally conservative Ohio view of life. One would expect, since New York and Columbus functioned as symbolic polarities in his life, that his inner conflict would pit the values of these two locations against each other, but an even more fundamental conflict existed between aspects of Columbus itself. Bernstein describes it as "old-fashioned liberalism, constitutionalism, individualism vs. old-fashioned conservatism, chauvinism, herdism—in short, the principled Middle West vs. the parochial Middle West."¹³ For Thurber there are several Columbuses and, as Robert E. Morseberger perceptively notes, the town takes a place in his work "similar to Hannibal in Mark Twain's, where it appears alternately as a haven of innocence and serenity—an ideal place for boys—and a muddy village whose dullness is broken by occasional episodes of violence and terror." But unlike Twain's town, which evolves into Eseldorf, Columbus appears increasingly as the symbol of the Great Good Place.¹⁴ This Columbus is located in time rather than space and, as a nostalgically idealized version of turn-of-the-century Columbus, exists more as a state of mind than as an actual location. It supplies a dramatic contrast to Thurber's tales of Manhattan, which, says Morseberger, "often seems to be the Unreal City, a denatured place with empty voices and a sequence of pointless parties where Thurber's hollow men and women go round the prickly pear."¹⁵

Another Columbus was the one with Ohio State University at its center. Thurber's feelings about this Columbus were apt to swing violently from one pole to the other. The University during his college years had been provincial, emphasizing agriculture and manifesting indifference if not hostility toward art and culture. He was fond of quoting one of his favorite English teacher's statements about the University: "Millions for manure but not one cent for literature."¹⁶ It is this Columbus, thinly disguised, that is the setting for his popular play *The Male Animal*, which satirizes a repressively narrow-minded university community. He kept a suspicious eye on Ohio State University throughout his life, always quick to protest such things as the censorship of the humor magazine or the previously mentioned gag rule on speakers. During the 1950s in particular he felt estranged from the University and from Columbus generally. He was critical of University policies and thought the city had become sprawling, vulgar and depressing. Bernstein refers to Ohio State as Thurber's



Downtown Columbus at the time of Thurber's youth. Courtesy of The Ohio State University Library.

alma mater of record and Yale (which awarded him an honorary degree and was nearer his Connecticut home) as his alma mater of choice.¹⁷

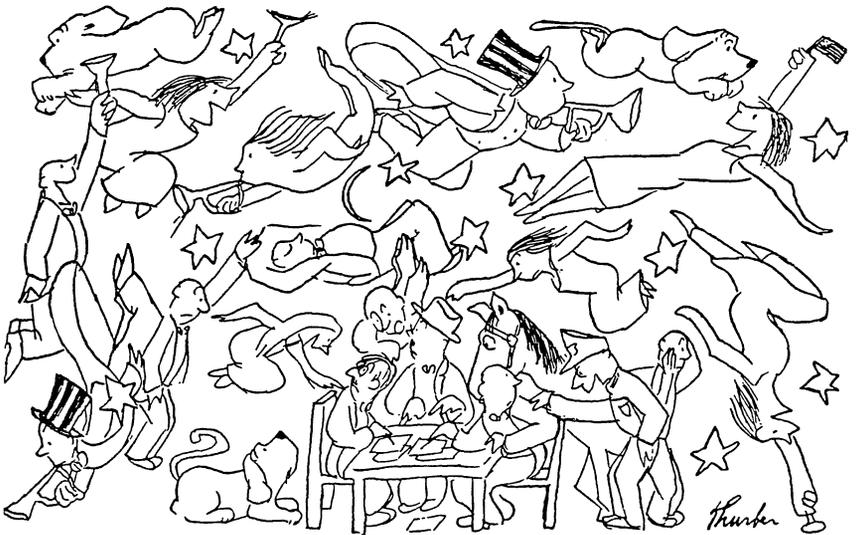
Thurber's tangled love-hate relationship with the Midwest manifested itself early in his career. During the early 1920s, Columbus and the everyday life of the Midwest were much on his mind as a literary subject. But he was uncertain in his allegiances. On the one hand, he admired Mencken and Nathan as critics of American Philistinism and said, "if you do not consider them two of the world's greatest humorists, you are a Babbitt."¹⁸ And he wrote to a friend praising and recommending Ludwig Lewisohn's attack on a fictionalized Columbus and Ohio State University in *Up Stream* as "indispensable" in its "cruel truthfulness."¹⁹ On the other hand, while his literary tastes were still developing, he complained that Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis "hysterically maligned" the Midwest, and he called for a return to the "civilized romanticism" of Willa Cather, who remained one of his favorite authors.²⁰ Although he identified himself with the aesthetes against the Philistine mass, he still retained his middle-class Columbus values. Even while in Paris avidly reading Henry James, he wrote letters to his family in which he sounded like a Sinclair Lewis character touting the good ole U. S. of A.: "Of all the nations of the earth," he wrote in 1919, "the Yanks easily lead in the matter of pep and enthusiasm, endurance and gogetum stuff. . . ."²¹

The unresolved conflict between Midwestern values and his emerging cosmopolitan tastes is clearly apparent in the "Credos and Curios" column he wrote for the *Columbus Dispatch* during 1923-24. The contradictions, most of which plagued him all his life, "fairly leap from the half-pages in bewildering inconsistency."²² In some pieces he defended the simple ways and wholesome

values of his region; in others he ridiculed its benighted provincialism. After supplying a generous list of such inconsistencies, Bernstein says, "The 'Credos and Curios' department was, in a way, a cheap psychoanalysis for Thurber. All the frustrations, doubts, and internal quarrels of twenty-eight troubled and bleak years had a chance to vent themselves."²³

The role of the Midwest in Thurber's work is most clearly displayed, of course, in his two books devoted exclusively to narrative descriptions of his relatives and acquaintances in *Columbus: My Life and Hard Time* (1933) and *The Thurber Album* (1952). Although written early and late in his career, these books overlap in subject matter and emphasis on eccentric individuality, but they are strikingly different in tone and purpose. A comparison of the two reveals the complicated and equivocal evolution of his feeling toward Columbus.

Morseberger calls the Columbus of *My Life and Hard Times* "a sort of Buckeye Bedlam."²⁴ Confusion, chaos and eccentricity reign supreme in Thurber's recollections of his boyhood. "Columbus," says Thurber, "is a town in which almost anything is likely to happen and in which almost everything has."²⁵ One relative fears he will stop breathing in his sleep and must be awakened every hour. Another has the horrible suspicion that dangerous electricity is leaking from empty light sockets and dripping invisibly all over the house. Aunt Sarah never went to bed without the fear that a burglar would blow chloroform under the door, so she always piled her valuables outside her door with a note saying take these



A Thurber drawing of himself at work. Copr. © 1989 Rosemary A. Thurber. From *Collecting Himself*, edited by Michael J. Rosen. Published by Harper & Row.

but don't use the chloroform. A maid mistakes Mr. Thurber for the Antichrist. One great uncle died of the chestnut blight, and the grandfather thinks he is still fighting the Civil War. And so on. It is all more fiction and fantasy than autobiography, more hysterical than historical. Through it all, eccentricity of character is portrayed as a life-enhancing quality. Being at odds with the conventions of the commonplace world becomes a positive value. The delightful insanities and picturesque obsessions of the people Thurber remembers are not simply amusing examples of a kind of Midwestern human comedy; they represent freedom, individuality and the irrepressible stuff of life that refuses to be encompassed by formulas and conventions. Throughout his career Thurber was alert to the way man-made systems, mechanical and mental, threaten individuality and cherished human idiosyncrasy. For him, hope lay in the unenclosed realms of instinct and imagination. The most interesting aspect of his artistic vision is, as Robert H. Elias notes, "his search for a place where the individual can finally reside—or preside."²⁶

Thurber's preface to *My Life and Hard Times* sets the tone for the book and implies the notion of the purpose of humor that underlies it. Norris Yates, in *The American Humorists: Conscience of the Twentieth Century*, labels the two major and contrasting personae in Thurber's writing the Little Man and the Liberal Citizen. Sometimes in his autobiographical sketches Thurber assumed the persona of the Little Man. That is the case in this preface. Describing the kind of humorist he is, he says, "He talks largely about small matters and smally about great affairs. . . . He can sleep while the commonwealth crumbles but a strange sound in the pantry at three in the morning will strike terror into his stomach. . . . He knows vaguely that the nation is not much good any more; he has read that the crust of the earth is shrinking alarmingly and that the universe is growing steadily colder, but he does not believe that any of the three is in half as bad shape as he is" (11, 12). This is humor written by and about the Little Man. Its focus is personal mishap rather than national crisis. There is no attempt in this book to bring humor to bear on large public concerns, even though it was published during the Depression. The "hard times" of the title refer to the narrator's personal times, which are generously tinted with fantasy. At this point, Thurber was willing to confine his humor to small personal and domestic matters—the comedy of everyday household bumbling. "In later years," Holmes explains, "he was to modify his view and see humor as a public force, a weapon for social good, rather than a subjective experience, but at this stage in his career, he obviously felt that the state of society and the crisis of history were not the best subject for the humorist."²⁷

Part of the book's comic effect is generated in the distance between the naive Ohio boy just awakening to the perplexities of this world and the more experienced but perhaps equally bewildered middle-aged Easterner who is trying to appear worldly and sophisticated. This latter expresses chagrin in the final pages at the bitter truth that "Nobody from Columbus has ever made a first rate wanderer in the Conradian tradition" (115). Francis Hackett detects behind this little joke

“a mocking deference to the Columbus norm.”²⁸ Both the concept of normal Ohio life and of the romantic adventurer are stereotyped patterns into which Thurber’s Little Man does not fit. He wants the best of both worlds but gets neither.

Moving from *My Life and Hard Times* to the *Thurber Album*, we enter a different world without leaving Columbus. The latter book has just as many eccentric characters; in fact, some are the same ones. And idiosyncratic individualism is again affirmed over collective conformity. The difference lies in tone and purpose. The portraits in *The Thurber Album* are, relatively speaking, truer to life. They are intended for admiration as well as amusement. Rather than caricatures, here are people of honor, kindness, family pride and irrepressible self-reliance. Controlled idealization replaces free-wheeling fantasy, and nostalgic reverence replaces pointless zaniness. Speaking metaphorically, something akin to Norman Rockwell magazine covers replaces Thurber cartoons, and, speaking literally, photographs replace actual Thurber drawings.

Why such a different treatment of the same material? The answer lies in the growing pessimism and misanthropy of his later years. The post-war years were anxious times for him, as for many Americans. He worried about politics, declining standards, the fate of humor, and the very possibility of human survival. According to Holmes, “In the era of the Bomb and McCarthyism, he saw man as less the victim of a too complex society and more a creature given over to folly and self-destruction.”²⁹ Besides this, his health was deteriorating and he was going blind. One effect of his blindness was to turn him inward and backward to childhood recollection. The older and sounder Midwestern America of his youth became an attractive realm for his unsettled mind. It offered a means for assuaging some of his growing bitterness and outrage—at his country, his world, and his infirmities. Bernstein singles out one particular reason for his writing about Ohio again: “It was for Thurber a way of rediscovering a fundamental American truth (and rediscovering his own values, consequently) in a nation rapidly being eroded by the Republican junior senator from Wisconsin, Joseph Raymond McCarthy.”³⁰ McCarthyism was undoubtedly a principal reason for the book. This is evident in a conspicuously incongruent digression in which Thurber shifts from a warm re-creation of the past to a rather somber and biting comment on the fear of Communism at Ohio State in 1951.³¹ And it is confirmed by Thurber’s own explanation of the book: “The *Album* was kind of an escape—going back to the Middle West of the last century and the beginning of this, when there wasn’t this fear and hysteria. I wanted to write the story of some solid American characters, more or less as an example of how Americans started out and what they should go back to—sanity and soundness and away from this jumpiness.”³²

By returning in memory to the Midwest, Thurber was not only escaping from a demoralized present and searching for values that America had lost somewhere along the way, he was making a journey of self-discovery. Consequently, although the book is about relatives and friends, it reveals a great deal about himself. In particular, it reveals a shift in his approach to humor. The narrator in

The Thurber Album is not the Little Man: he is the Liberal Citizen. The “times” he is concerned with are not the trivial incidents of personal life but rather a period of crisis in morale and character in the nation as a whole. The book displays a shift from humor to satire, for the glowing portraits of a past generation are an implied satire of mid-century America, and Thurber’s idealized Midwest serves as a satiric norm. This is comedy used not merely as a shield but as a weapon. *The Thurber Album* makes exact and palpable those social qualities Thurber admired and those he condemned. Thus, in *My Life and Hard Times* and *The Thurber Album*, he used the Midwest for two different purposes growing out of two different conceptions of the function of humor.

In contrast to nineteenth-century frontier humor, a prominent trend of modern urban humor is to dramatize a sense of inadequacy, impotence and defeat before the complexities and destructive potential of our century. Its protagonists are repressed, squeamish and hypersensitive. Their individuality and self-reliance has been compromised by life in a mass society. This is the situation of Thurber’s characters, particularly those created in the 1930s. The loss of individuality is probably why his characters resemble each other and we speak of them as the Thurber man and the Thurber woman. *The Thurber Album*, contrastingly, has characters he admired and respected, people of vitality, courage and integrity, with no need to hide their idiosyncrasies. “Group civilization” has come even to Columbus, he says, and “the individual has taken on the gray color of the mass. But there were individuals about during the first decade of the century, each possessed of his own bright and separate values” (70). By returning to the Midwest, and to the spirit of frontier humor, Thurber provides a pointed commentary on his own abject and supine characters done in the modern urban mode. Moreover, when his nostalgic recollection of a Midwestern past is played off against the depressing realities of mid-century urban America, the reader intuits a third possibility that neither accepts all of the past nor rejects all of the present, a positive vision beyond the idealized past and the sad present.

The contrasts between *My Life and Hard Times* and *The Thurber Album* clearly demonstrate Thurber’s intentions in returning to the Midwestern past in the later book. The earlier book concentrates on comic madness largely for its own sake, but the later looks back in order to identify the individualistic qualities that distinguish that earlier generation and make it worthy of emulation. It is more interested in revealing character than in provoking laughter. The first book focuses on events that sweep people along with them; the second focuses on people with a sense of self-direction and an instinct to act upon the world to give it purpose. The difference in intention is strikingly displayed in the contrasting treatments of Grandfather Fisher. In *My Life and Hard Times* he is a nearly pure fictional creation and epitomizes the element of fantasy in the book. In *The Thurber Album* he is a historical person of plausible character. Both portraits are eccentric enough for comedy, but the earlier grandfather is a conventional stereotype, while the later is a man of distinct virtues and foibles. We are struck by the antic behavior of the first and by the humanity of the second.

The choice of men and women for his album and the order of their portrayal demonstrates that Thurber aimed for a strategic structure of movement, from a rich and vital past in which energetic individuality held sway to an anxious, demoralized present in which individuality had capitulated to mass civilization. The book begins with chapters on the vitality, self-assurance and colorful individuality of his ancestors. The descriptions convey an atmosphere of deep roots and strong family ties, for which the unspoiled beauty of the Ohio countryside is the perfect setting. The last six sketches, devoted to newspapermen and teachers of a more recent generation, evidence a certain decline. These are fine and admirable men, but they are defeated in some measure by the growing forces of group civilization—indifference to distinction and accuracy, stupidity and laziness, jittery fear. Richard C. Tobias points out that as a comic work the book is written backwards: “It starts in sanity and soundness and ends in jumpiness; it juxtaposes the solid past against lesser men of the near past to dramatize a loss of vitality in the American character.” The beginning sketches are elegies; the ending ones are obituaries. “The book’s design shows that the wasteland is upon us.”³³ A decline in American womanhood is similarly implied. The female relatives in these sketches were born “in a time of stouthearted and self-reliant women.”³⁴ (The satire of women that appears elsewhere in his writing is absent from this book.) But when Grandma Fisher died in 1925, her passing “marked the close of a way of family life in the Middle West” (69). Hackett observes that many of the women in Thurber are not New York sophisticates but frustrated latter-day Ohio romantics.³⁵ The Thurber woman, in other words, is the urban granddaughter of those admirably spunky turn-of-the-century Midwestern women.

Thurber once said that *My Life and Hard Times* was the “funnier and better book.”³⁶ Perhaps he was feeling uncomfortable with his own uncharacteristic romanticizing, sentimentalizing, and working with an overt purpose in *The Thurber Album*. And of course his feelings toward the Midwest were equivocal enough that he was unable to maintain a positive view toward it for an extended time. But Tobias, for one, argues that, while *My Life and Hard Times* provides more laughs, “the satisfaction of human perception is greater in *The Thurber Album*.”³⁷

Whatever its achievement, *The Thurber Album* created problems for Thurber with family and people in Columbus. His family remembered the subjects of the portraits differently, and the Liberal Citizen flavor of the book was not wholeheartedly received in his conservative home town. This soured him a little on nostalgia. The attempt to provide models for the present and clarify his own values by recreating an idealized past proved less than successful. The past turned out to be, in its own way, as problematical as the present, and of course the present could not be shut out indefinitely. One reviewer, William Schlamm, read the book as the nostalgia of an “incorrigible conservative” and thought the Ohio characters would have sided with McCarthy. He called for Thurber to come home to Columbus. Thurber was amused at first and then bitter. He wrote to a friend

at the *Nation* refuting Schlamm and pointing out that he had softened the book because of the people involved. "The emotional debris was terrific, since Columbus is the heart of evasion and fatty degeneration of criticism."³⁸ This incident demonstrates once again the fluctuating ambivalence of Thurber's feelings about Columbus.

During his last years, he apparently made peace with Columbus. In addition to sending the Good-Old-Columbus-Town congratulatory letter to the mayor when Columbus was selected an "All-American City" in 1959, he returned to receive personally the Press Club of Ohio's Distinguished Service to Ohio Award, and he insisted that *A Thurber Carnival* premier there in 1960. On this latter occasion, the governor proclaimed "James Thurber Week" in Ohio and the mayor presented him with Columbus's first Distinguished Son citation. The climax of all this reconciliation was his acceptance in 1960 of an invitation to speak at the dedication of Denney Hall, the new College of Arts and Sciences building at Ohio State. His speech mentioned the importance of "the Middlewest to the culture and destiny of the United States" and acknowledged his indebtedness to certain of his professors.³⁹ Bernstein, however, describes his truce with Ohio as "a separate peace with honor," for although the speech at the dedication paid homage to the importance of the Midwest, it also made pointed references to the importance of light and learning and the danger of their enemies. "As a final gesture of armistice, he sent back to O. S. U. the two-hundred-dollar expenses check."⁴⁰

His secretary and stenographer during his last years said "he remained an Ohio boy at heart."⁴¹ In his final, disturbed year, he balked at the pier when he was leaving for a trip to London. His wife said, "We quieted him down, but I think what he was really trying to tell us was that he wanted to go back to Ohio. The hick in him picked that moment to come through. He was tortured by that old contradiction."⁴² He had written to friends in 1959, "We are leaving for Columbus tonight and hope to return in a week or so, especially since I do not want to be buried in Green Lawn Cemetery there, in which my once bickering, but now silent, family occupies a good square mile of space." But, despite his wishes, his ashes were buried there on November 8, 1961. Bernstein suggests that this was fitting because Columbus was the ultimate setting for his work. "There was always the thin Ohio lens through which the Thurber images had to pass."⁴³

Notes

1. Charles C. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus: The Literary Career of James Thurber* (New York, 1972), 3.
2. Robert E. Morseberger, *James Thurber* (New York, 1964), 105.
3. Burton Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography* (New York, 1975), 438.
4. "From Columbus to New York," *Thurber: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Charles C. Holmes (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1974), 18.
5. James Thurber, *My Life and Hard Times* (New York, 1973), 38.
6. John K. Hutchens, "Introduction," *My Life and Hard Times* by James Thurber (New York, 1973), 5.

7. Holmes, *The Clocks of Columbus*, 2.
8. The ambivalence of Thurber's attitude toward the Midwest is well known as a general impression. In what follows, I attempt to show specifically the nature of that attitude as it is revealed in an early and late example of his work.
9. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York, 1925), 69.
10. *Thurber: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1974), 10-11.
11. *New York Times*, November 3, 1961, 35.
12. Clifton Fadiman, ed., *I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Certain Eminent Men and Women of Our Time* (New York, 1939), 299.
13. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 316.
14. Morseberger, *James Thurber*, 105.
15. *Ibid.*, 105.
16. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 39.
17. *Ibid.*, 436.
18. Holmes, *Clocks of Columbus*, 66.
19. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 128.
20. Morseberger, *James Thurber*, 175.
21. Peter A. Scholl, "James Thurber," *American Humorists, 1800-1950*, Part II: M-Z, ed., Stanley Trachtenberg, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 11 (Detroit, 1982), 508.
22. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 130.
23. *Ibid.*, 131.
24. Morseberger, *James Thurber*, 98.
25. James Thurber, *My Life and Hard Times*, (New York, 1973), 60-61.
26. "James Thurber: The Primitive, the Innocent, and the Individual," *American Scholar*, 27 (1968), 356.
27. Holmes, *Clocks of Columbus*, 157.
28. Francis Hackett, *On Judging Books in General and Particular* (New York, 1947), 36.
29. Holmes, *Clocks of Columbus*, 12.
30. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 406.
31. James Thurber, *The Thurber Album* (New York, 1952), 210-11.
32. George Plimpton and Max Steele, "James Thurber," *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, ed., Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1959), 97.
33. Richard C. Tobias, *The Art of James Thurber* (Athens, Ohio, 1969), 140, 147.
34. Thurber, *The Thurber Album*, 86.
35. Hackett, *On Judging Books*, 33.
36. Plimpton, "Thurber," 97.
37. Tobias, *Art of James Thurber*, 142.
38. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 416-17.
39. Holmes, *Clocks of Columbus*, 312-13.
40. Bernstein, *Thurber: A Biography*, 469-70.
41. *Ibid.*, 386.
42. *Ibid.*, 488.
43. *Ibid.*, 503.