George Cram Cook and the Poetry of Living, with a Checklist

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In 1926 Babette Deutsch, reviewing George Cram Cook's posthumous volume of verse, *Greek Coins*, said, "The poetry of living, not the poetry of words, was his, and his poems are great where they catch the reflection of his life. . . ."¹ It would be difficult to think of a more appropriate motto for George Cram Cook's career than "the poetry of living," for he engaged himself in a continual search for beauty, a search which made of his own life a work of art. Other commentators, too, recognized that his life was the living out of a myth, and the *Dial* reviewer saw both his poems and his life as "symbols wherein we may read one man's quest for the perfection of beauty."² Although Cook has been praised for various things by some

Author's note: This article, written in late 1959 for the *Iowa Journal of History*, was accepted by that journal shortly before its suspension of publication in 1961 and thus never appeared in its pages. I am grateful to the editor of *Books at Iowa* for suggesting that the article be published here and for securing permission from the State Historical Society of Iowa for its use. The essay appears here without revision (except for additions to footnotes 31 and 34, made in 1962 after the publication of the Gelbs' biography of O'Neill); but I have attempted to bring the checklist up to date by supplying references to some of the more important comments on Cook which have been made in the last fifteen years. Since writing the essay, I have learned of the existence of the Cook Papers in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library but have not yet examined them. They contain many letters, diaries, manuscripts, clippings, and photographs and will clearly be an important source for any future work on Cook. Although the present essay is not primarily biographical, information from the Cook Papers would undoubtedly have been relevant in correcting or supplementing those biographical facts which are referred to, and it might have added new items to the checklist. As they stand, however, I hope that the essay and the checklist can serve to call attention to one of the lesser-known writers in the Iowa Authors Collection and perhaps provide a point of departure for further study.

¹ *Bookman*, 62 (February, 1926), 726.

² *Dial*, 80 (March, 1926), 253.

and completely ignored by others, it is only in relation to this quest that the activities of his life can be interpreted.

The name of George Cram Cook (1873-1924) is mentioned briefly in most of the literary histories because he was the founder of the Provincetown Players and, therefore, the discoverer of Eugene O'Neill. But there has been no extended discussion of his career except for the biography that his wife, the playwright and novelist Susan Glaspell, prepared after his death and published in 1926-1927. In that book, *The Road to the Temple*, one may read how Cook, a member of an important family of Davenport, Iowa, became a young poet-on-the-Mississippi and how he was educated at The University of Iowa, at Harvard, and at Heidelberg. One may find there the story of his friendship with Floyd Dell, of his publishing novels, and of his writing for Dell's *Friday Literary Review* (the *Chicago Evening Post* literary supplement); the account of his move to Greenwich Village and Provincetown, where he founded the Provincetown Players, wrote plays for them, and directed their activities until 1922; and finally the description of his fulfilling a lifelong dream by sailing to Greece and becoming a shepherd and poet among the Parnassian hills, where he was admired by the natives and honored at his death by the removal of a stone from the ruins of the ancient temple of Delphi to mark his grave.

I do not intend here to retell this story, for it has been narrated fully, if somewhat romantically and sentimentally, by Miss Glaspell in her book, which includes many extracts from Cook's unpublished writings. Rather I propose to evaluate Cook's career as a whole, examining his works and making use of biographical material not found in the Glaspell book, including some previously unpublished letters. In doing this, I shall be verifying Babette Deutsch's statement and showing that Cook's importance for American literature lies not in his writings, but in his life.

Cook's career conveniently falls into three distinct periods. The first comprises his Davenport years and includes his novels; the second is made up of his years in Greenwich Village and takes in his playwrighting; and the third covers his life as a poet in Greece.

I

By the time Cook began to write *Roderick Taliaferro*, the first novel of which he was sole author, his characteristic outlook on life was well-established—an awareness of the mystery and beauty of existence. During his three years at the university in Iowa City (1889-1892), he first began to experience the joys of literature under Professor Mel-

ville B. Anderson; and in certain moments of mystical insight, such as the time in the library "in the silence of noon"³ when he looked up from the words of Plotinus to see the unity of himself with the universe, he felt the wonder of being alive. Again, in his year at Harvard (1892-1893), where he studied under Barrett Wendell and Charles Eliot Norton, he held a night-long discussion with his friend John Alden, in which the two discovered ecstatically "the open secret of the universe"⁴—that all nature and life *are* God.

He was from then on always searching for beauty and for the meaning of time, always trying to capture and preserve for posterity the elusive weight of past time which rested on every individual action. This search, which eventually led him to Greece, took him in 1894 to the universities of Europe—Heidelberg, Geneva, Florence—for more study. It was this search which impelled him not only to trace his ancestors back many generations but to probe deeply into the present moment. When he began working on *Roderick Taliaferro*, he wanted to evoke those "world-old mighty forces that lie behind the day's events, the mystery that glimmers and flashes through the veils of the commonplace."⁵

The novel was to be, as its subtitle indicated, "a story of Maximilian's empire," and he left for Mexico late in 1898 to gather material. He had taught at The University of Iowa for almost two years, beginning in 1896 when he returned from Europe. In April of 1898 when war was declared against Spain, he quit teaching, joined Company B, 50th Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry, and spent the next few months in Camp Cuba Libre at Jacksonville, Florida.⁶ After the war he decided not to teach but to write.

³ Cook, quoted in Susan Glaspell, *The Road to the Temple* (New York: Stokes, 1927), p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶ Cook was appointed corporal on June 27, 1898, and discharged on September 10, 1898. (Cook, *Company B of Davenport* [Davenport, 1899], pp. 98, 141.) During his stay at Camp Cuba Libre he received a letter from Rudyard Kipling, whom he had met on board the *Havel* when returning from Florence. This letter was a reply to one Cook had written Kipling upon enlisting, and, according to Susan Glaspell, it was in this letter of Kipling's that "The White Man's Burden" first crossed the Atlantic (p. 98). However, C. E. Carrington, in his *Life of Rudyard Kipling* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), states that the poem was not finished until November 22, 1898 (after Cook had been discharged) and that Kipling's "first use of it was to send a copy to Theodore Roosevelt who had just been elected Vice-President of the United States" (p. 217). Cook's interest in Kipling is reflected in a paper he read before the Davenport Contemporary Club on March 16, 1899 entitled "The Prose and Verse of Kipling" (printed in the club's *Papers*, 3 [1898-1899], pp. 61-85).

At that time his experience in writing included his college compositions (one of which Barrett Wendell had labeled "decidedly the best theme I have received this year"),⁷ some poems, and a few reviews. He had written for the *Dial* a review of two works on Whitman, and a poem was to appear in the *Century* nine months after the publication of *Roderick Taliaferro*. In 1899 he had published a short book, *Company B of Davenport*, recounting the history of his company in the war; and his name had appeared as collaborator and assistant on three books by Charles Eugene Banks, a prolific Iowa journalist.⁸ One of these was a novel, *In Hampton Roads*, published in 1899 and adapted from a play the two had written in 1897, using the *Monitor-Merri-mac* battle as a background. The novel bears many traces of its earlier form, with its list of "Dramatis Personae," its small number of scenes, its compression of time (two days, March 8-9, 1862), its extended use of conversation, and its "Prologue" and "Epilogue."

He worked on the new novel between 1899 and 1902 and sent it to several publishers without success. Since he had married Sara Hern-don Swain of Chicago in May, 1902 and was making no money from his writing, he decided to take up teaching again. The academic year 1902-1903 he spent at Stanford under his old professor, Melville Anderson. It was during this year (in April, 1903) that his novel, finally accepted by Macmillan, was published.

Roderick Taliaferro is a long novel of adventure and intrigue set in the Mexico of 1865. Although it received generally favorable reviews and is a competent example of popular adventure fiction, it scarcely rises above this level and does not convey the "world-old mighty forces that lie behind the day's events." Roderick, the hero, has been a major in the Confederate Army and now, in Mexico, finds himself involved in the civil disputes there, where he is sympathetic with the Imperialists (quite naturally, considering his aristocratic Southern background). Inevitably he meets (in the very first chapter) Señorita Felise, who is to become his true love. One event follows another, from bullfights to duels to revolutionary intrigues and battles, until, at the end, after Escobedo and the rebels are successful, there comes the notice of general amnesty.

Cook demonstrates in this novel his sense of the dramatic—which, indeed, often becomes over-dramatic. In his effort to fill the book with action, he makes his hero too daring and too invincible to be be-

⁷ Quoted in Glaspell, p. 50.

⁸ Charles Eugene Banks (1852-1932), born in Clinton County, Iowa, published many volumes of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, and edited newspapers in several parts of the United States, including Hawaii.

lievable. For example, the story is barely on its way before Roderick, without any experience as a bullfighter, is placed in a bull ring before a huge crowd. His thoughts at such a time are pure melodrama: "He was afraid of being hissed—before the society of Mexico—before the Emperor and his court—before the girl whose beauty had brought him there" (p.80). The extravagance of the plot is indicated by the fact that he not only succeeds in killing the bull but also, when one of the attendants is gored, manages to sew up the wound with a thread from his stocking before the arrival of the surgeon (who, incidentally, admires the job). The color and atmosphere of a bullfight are depicted adequately, however, and this episode, with its faults, must be regarded as one of the most satisfactory in the book. *Roderick Taliaferro* hardly requires further analysis, for to attempt reading it on any other level than that of the popular romance would be fruitless.

After his year at Stanford, Cook again decided that the academic life was not what he wanted, and he retired to his seven-acre farm at Buffalo, Iowa (near Davenport), to raise vegetables and to write. Two years later, after many quarrels, he and his wife separated; but he brought a new wife to the cabin on the farm in January of 1908—an anarchist girl from Chicago, Mollie A. Price—with whom he lived for two and a half years until he realized he was in love with Susan Glaspell.⁹ This man, a member of a highly respected Davenport family of bankers and lawyers, was not earning a living at the age of thirty, and he did not fit into the conventional patterns of society. Floyd Dell feels that Cook was sensitive to the adverse opinions of the towns-

⁹ Floyd Dell was living at the cabin at the time Mollie arrived, and he fell in love with her. She appears as Roxie in his novel *Moon-Calf* (1920) and is the basis for a character in one of his unpublished short stories, "The Quick and the Dead." Mollie Price was the mother of Cook's two children, Nilla and Harl. Nilla Cram Cook later achieved some renown as a dancer and as a follower of Gandhi; she published her reminiscences in 1939 (*My Road to India*). Dell, in his autobiography, *Homecoming* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1933), gives his impressions of Mollie (pp. 171-177) and describes his love for her (pp. 212-216; see letter to Stanley Pargellis, November 10, 1949, Floyd Dell Papers, Newberry Library). He indicates that he sympathized with Cook in the divorce from Sara Herndon Swain but that he could not take Cook's side in the breakup of the marriage with Mollie (pp. 201-203), partly because of his own emotional involvement and partly because there were children in this marriage. Cook had various other love affairs, especially one with Marjorie Jones, a Chicago photographer, and one with the poet Eunice Tietjens (the latter while he was waiting in Chicago for his divorce from Mollie to come through, according to a letter of Dell's dated February 9, 1951, in the Newberry collection). He was married to Susan Glaspell on April 14, 1913, by the mayor of Weehawken, New Jersey. (Material in the Floyd Dell Papers is quoted by permission of The Newberry Library. All letters referred to in the following notes are to be found in this collection.)

people;¹⁰ but Wayne Cook, George Cram Cook's nephew who, at fourteen and fifteen, spent much time at the cabin with him and Dell, believes that his uncle was indifferent to these opinions and that he absent-mindedly but persistently pursued his chief interest of the moment. To Wayne Cook, he seemed a "queer mixture of idealist and realist," at times "as impractical as anyone could be" and at all times possessed by a consuming interest, whether it was genealogy, truck farming, play production, or the shepherd's life in Greece.¹¹

During his years of truck farming, he read extensively (especially Nietzsche), wrote stories and tried unsuccessfully to publish a novel, "The Balm of Life" (about the influence of liquor on a highly intelligent man), and had stimulating discussions with Rabbi Fineshriber from Davenport. But the most important event of these years was his friendship with Floyd Dell, a seventeen-year-old socialist who proceeded to convince him of the importance of socialism and to take him to meetings of the Socialist local. In 1907 when Dell was fired from his job on the Davenport *Democrat*, he went to live with Cook on the truck farm and the following summer worked for Cook as a hired hand. Their association and endless discussions were beneficial to each of them. Dell read the books in Cook's library and considered the truck farm of "Jig" Cook his college; Cook, on the other hand, was immensely stimulated by Dell's socialistic ideas and was challenged into a revaluation of his aristocratic Nietzschean notions. One can trace the change in Cook's thinking by glancing at the papers he read before the dignified Contemporary Club in Davenport. The paper delivered on December 27, 1906 was entitled simply "Evolution" (although it was issued in pamphlet form as "Evolution and the Superman"), but the one he read four years later, on October 6, 1910, contained "Some Modest Remarks on Socialism."

The result of Cook's new interest in socialism was another novel, *The Chasm*, begun as early as 1907 but not published until February 10, 1911. Into the story of Marion Moulton, who falls in love with a socialist gardener employed by her father, a wealthy Moline plow manufacturer, but who nevertheless marries Count Feodor de Hohenfels, a Russian aristocrat, Cook wrote the conflict present in his own mind. For the chasm of the title is not only the chasm between Amer-

¹⁰ *Homecoming*, p. 152.

¹¹ Interview with Wayne Cook, Davenport, January 23, 1960. In regard to his truck farming, Cook generally did not make much money raising vegetables, but he was more successful in the early spring, since the heated greenhouse he had built enabled him to put certain items on the market before other farmers could.

ica and Russia (the settings of the two sections of the book) but the seemingly insurmountable gap between capitalists and workers, between aristocrats and peasants—between Nietzsche and Marx. Even the title page includes a quotation from *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and one from William Morris's "The Voice of Toil." De Hohenfels is the Nietzschean with his theory that it is only out of an aristocratic few that a higher race of man can develop (pp.142-150), while Walt Bradfield, the socialist gardener (based in part on Floyd Dell), is the earnest Marxist with his inflammatory soapbox speeches and his criticism of the superman doctrine (pp.296-298).

The chief interest in the work lies in the scenes set in Sonya Demidoff's dressmaking shop, where a small revolutionary group gathers. Marion's only friends in Russia are among this group, and she gradually becomes more sympathetic with their program until she finally gives them essential information which results in a battle outside Zhergan and a victory for the revolutionists. Thus the chasm is also the increasing distance between Marion and her husband, and between the revolutionists and the official government. By the time Walt arrives in Russia (as he must if the book is to have any artistic unity at all), Marion has broken completely with her husband and is in the midst of a plot to save Dr. Grenning, one of the imprisoned revolutionists. After their efforts are unsuccessful and Grenning is sent to Siberia, Walt and Marion sail from Russia together.

The inevitable criticism of such a novel is that it becomes merely a tract and that the characters are nothing but embodiments of theories. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of the book as a novel, for it seems to have been written solely to convey certain socialist ideas. No opportunity is overlooked for inserting a socialistic reference or parallel. When the revolutionists are looking into Dr. Grenning's microscope to watch white corpuscles absorbing tubercular germs, Grenning comments, "There is a military caste worth having. If these co-operative citizens of the blood should imitate our present society, the white cells would be sucking the substance from the red" (p.226). Marion's reply (likely also to be the reader's), "Even bacteriology!", indicates that she understands the class struggle and marks an important stage in her acceptance by the revolutionists. There is no question where the reader's sympathy is supposed to lie, for the revolutionists are presented as dedicated and idealistic men and women fighting for a just cause, and even the socialistic Walt Bradfield early in the book is shown to be full of warmth and human feeling in contrast to the unperceptive and narrow-minded capitalistic Mr. Moulton. The difference between Cook's two published novels is a measure of the influ-

ence of Dell on Cook's thinking. In 1903 Roderick Taliaferro, a heroic imperialist, enlisted the reader's sympathy on behalf of an established monarchy; eight years later Marion Moulton, a heroic revolutionary, draws the readers over to the side of the populace.

Cook's thoroughgoing socialism at this time is reflected in the letters he wrote to Dell, who had moved to Chicago in the fall of 1908. In one of them, written the summer before the novel was published, he says, "I have to conventionalize, bourgeoisify, & respectableize that confounded Chasm for Stokes, and unless I can contrive to find more heat for the job, it won't be done." At another time the same summer he laments that he cannot "speak clearly in my own voice in a book which must seek publication with a New York capitalist publisher."¹²

Several writers praised the book, including Upton Sinclair, who wrote asking if he could review it.¹³ Sinclair Lewis also wrote Cook about it, and Cook remarks to Dell, "I am *lending* you a letter by a friend of Jack London's, Mr. Sinclair Lewis, whom I have just congratulated upon his corking good taste in novels. If you know anything else about him or his writings leave me not in ignorance."¹⁴ Francis Hackett, reviewing the novel for the *Chicago Evening Post*, after deploring the preponderance of theories in the book and asserting that Cook had been "carried away by his own pedantry," goes on to say that it "is a novel with that peculiar sincerity which is so rare in American fiction, that sincerity which thrills the reader like a quick look of understanding or a sudden burst of sunshine after rain."¹⁵

Three days after this review appeared, Cook criticized it in a letter to Dell (who was now Hackett's assistant on the *Friday Literary Review*). He wrote that perhaps Hackett disliked the clash of philosophies in the book because he felt that was expected of him. But if he truly did not like it, says Cook, *The Chasm* has failed, for "the clash of those splendid theories of life was the clash of the cymbals to which I danced." However, he admits in a postscript that "there *is* a bit too much high falutin' philosophy" in the book.¹⁶

¹² Letters from Cook to Dell [June, 1910].

¹³ Cook to Dell, February 1, 1911.

¹⁴ Cook to Dell, November 17, 1910.

¹⁵ "Revolt," *Friday Literary Review* of *Chicago Evening Post* [hereafter *FLR*], February 17, 1911, p. 1. The only recent comment on the novel is that of Walter B. Rideout in *The Radical Novel in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), where he describes it as "only one of the many lunges at self-realization" made by Cook; because Marxism is shown to have very different effects in Russia and in the United States, "the author has his constitutional cake and eats it too" (p. 54).

¹⁶ Cook to Dell, February 20, 1911.

Cook had many times before in his letters to Dell commented on the editorial policy of the *Friday Review* and especially of the *Post* in general. He pointed to what he called the *Post's* stuffiness, conservatism, and dogmatism, and, just as his own novel was to be criticized for intellectuality, he declared to Dell that "sometimes your point of view is over intellectual. . . ." Any hypocrisy or compromise of ideas aroused his disapproval: "I accept as entirely true your statement that you fellows go to the limit of that paper. But there is a limit. Sometimes you shut your eyes to the limit, and identify your own point of view and the paper's point of view—or at least identify yourself with the compromise."¹⁷ When he once was displeased with a review of Dell's, he made articulate one of his principal criteria for criticism:

Ten years ago I began to learn that the disinterested and impersonal critical attitude was a failure. That way lies apathy—absence of feeling—the death of intellectual desire. If you wish to remain alive do not cease to be a partizan [*sic*]. F. Dell was egocentric. Now he aspires to write like everybody in general, nobody in particular, to be a literary ventriloquist, to have no color in his own soul, to let other men's light shine through him unstained, to have no bias, no preconceived opinion—to write *reviews*. Views? How crude!¹⁸

Cook had a chance to demonstrate his own abilities at reviewing when Dell (who had become editor of the *Review* with the issue of July 28, 1911) made him a regular reviewer for the publication. Between May of 1911 and August of 1912 he contributed thirty reviews, most of them (especially after November 10, 1911, when his name was first listed on the masthead as "Associate") long front-page criticisms. As one would expect, he discussed philosophical works (Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* and Frau Foerster-Nietzsche's *Life of Nietzsche*) and works on science or evolution (Alfred Russel Wallace's *The World of Life*, Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thompson's *Evolution*, Fabre's *The Life and Love of the Insect*), but he also covered many important novels and plays—d'Annunzio's *Forse che si forse che no* (which he read in the Italian and reviewed before it was translated), Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, Henry James's *The Outcry* ("As costly human stuff devoted to the higher uselessness, Henry James is America's most conspicuous waste"),¹⁹ Rolland's *Jean Christophe in Paris* (which

¹⁷ Two letters from Cook to Dell, [June, 1910].

¹⁸ Cook to Dell, September 10, 1909.

¹⁹ "An Aesthetic 'Thriller,'" *FLR*, December 22, 1911, p. 1.

"makes the world poorer than it was, for in it a great and true and powerful novel pounds itself to pieces"),²⁰ Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*, and books by Ambrose Bierce, Maeterlinck, and Strindberg.

As Susan Glaspell says, Cook's "spiritual experiences are written into the files" of the *Friday Review* (p.212), and this is true not only because of the works discussed but because of the characteristic ideas that emerge. For example, in his review of Wallace's *The World of Life*, he mentions Haeckel (the philosopher who had so impressed him and Dell in Davenport that they named their organization "Monist") and goes on to say, in one of those flowing sentences which seem never to end, typical of his nonfiction prose,

His book makes me wish that some man of today—among thousands of Masters of Science a master of science indeed, and also a master of art—would rise to the height of the great argument and in the broad lost manner body forth in beauty the truer, finer, fuller conception which still lies latent in the hoarded splendor of all our slowly gathered knowledge of the world of life.²¹

Or he indicates his belief in the importance of the social aspects of literature: "Art and politics will both be gainers by the fact that men are ceasing to insulate them."²² Further views appear in the three essays he contributed to Dell's series "Chicago in Fiction"; there he discusses Frank Norris, Frank Harris, and Susan Glaspell (not his wife at that time), of whom he says that it is only through such books as her *The Visioning* "that mankind in the twentieth century is slowly growing conscious of its situation and itself."²³

During his period as reviewer, Cook also wrote a series of nearly twenty columns of random comment, entitled "Causerie." In one of these he sets forth his ideas about the function of the audience and his vision of the American literature that is to be:

Literature is, to be sure, a social product, created not only by the artist but by his audience; but it is for the artist to intensify his audience. He can also select it. American writers must conceive their function much more nobly than most of them conceive it today. They should send through their minds the electric shock of Nietzsche's saying that a hundred men bore on their shoulders

²⁰ "Degringolade," *FLR*, January 12, 1912, p. 1.

²¹ "Fifty Years After," *FLR*, August 11, 1911, p. 1.

²² "Art and Politics," *FLR*, May 26, 1911, p. 7.

²³ "Susan Glaspell's Chicago," *FLR*, March 15, 1912, p. 1.

the civilization of the Renaissance. If there is to be in our lifetime a Renaissance in North America, it will be one of two hundred men—and women—who will chiefly create it, express it, carry it on. . . .

American writers must develop within themselves and in each other more depth and fire, truth felt more blazingly, voices tuned by deeper feeling. They must strengthen into Caryatids capable of bearing each the hundredth part of the new Renaissance.²⁴

This was not only advice and encouragement to a Chicago that was just then ready to burst forth with a “renaissance” but the goal Cook was striving for a few years later with his Provincetown Players.

He left for New York in the fall of 1912 but he continued to write for the *Friday Review*. He sent back surveys of the new books in the fall and spring and became the New York correspondent for the *Review*, writing the weekly “New York Letter.” Although Dell himself, who had guided the *Review* during the years when it was one of the leading voices of the Chicago renaissance, moved to New York a year after Cook, it was Cook who remained an “Associate” of the paper under its two succeeding editors, Lucian Cary and Llewellyn Jones, until June of 1915.²⁵ During that time (from October 18, 1912 to May 14, 1915—or a total of 135 issues of the *Review*) Cook contributed 118 “New York Letters.” These columns contained gossip of the New York literary world, and such names as Dreiser, Dell, Lindsay, Untermeyer, and Ficke appear often, along with news of the little theaters and the activities of the group of writers at Provincetown.

Two pieces by Cook on American colleges appeared in Mitchell Kennerley’s *Forum* in 1913 and 1914. In both of these, one an essay and the other a short story, Cook objects to the lack of academic freedom—the tyranny which nonacademic boards of trustees exert on professors and the discharging of professors for advocating radical ideas. “We have enlisted,” according to him, “the professor’s instinct of self-preservation against original and courageous thought.”²⁶ In saying this Cook was indicating his own personal rejection of an academic career. Henceforth his life would be concerned less with Nietz-

²⁴ “Causerie,” *FLR*, October 20, 1911, p. 4.

²⁵ Hutchins Hapgood is in error when he says that Dell was Cook’s assistant on the *Friday Review* in *A Victorian in the Modern World* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), p. 374. Maurice Browne, in his memoirs, *Too Late to Lament* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956), makes a similar error by stating that Dell and Cary were Cook’s successors (p. 128).

²⁶ “The Third American Sex,” *Forum*, 50 (October, 1913), 447.

sche and Marx than with an attempt to revitalize American art through his "original and courageous" experiment, the Provincetown Players.

II

From 1915 until 1922 when he sailed for Greece, Cook's life was devoted to the encouragement of a native American drama. The story of his Provincetown Players has often been told—so often that one commentator, writing nearly a half-century ago, could say that "even the phraseology of the tale has become traditional."²⁷ Every general history of American literature gives some attention, if not to Cook, to the Provincetown Players, and there are many sources of more complete accounts: Susan Glaspell's highly sympathetic and necessarily biased treatment in *The Road to the Temple*; Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau's "official" and detailed account in *The Provincetown*; Mary Heaton Vorse's nostalgic description of the Provincetown's earliest days in *Time and the Town*; Floyd Dell's critical but perceptive version in *Homecoming*; and Hutchins Hapgood's extremely favorable view in *A Victorian in the Modern World*. Therefore, rather than repeat the story here, let us look at the specific contributions which Cook himself made to the Players.

In that first summer at Provincetown, 1915, four plays were given in the fish house at the end of Mary Heaton Vorse's wharf—the Wharf Theatre. Of the two plays on the first bill, one was a short comedy on which Cook and Susan Glaspell had collaborated, *Suppressed Desires*. The two authors took the leads; the play was successful, and they repeated their performances twice the following summer. Although the play has been popular ever since, especially among amateur groups, and has had a long stage history, it is essentially a rather shallow satire on psychoanalysis. In the play Henrietta Brewster is so enthusiastic over psychoanalysis that she is making life miserable for her husband, Stephen, and, upon the arrival of her sister Mabel, she immediately begins discussing Mabel's marital happiness. By the end of the play, however, she is quite willing to abandon psychoanalysis when Stephen's analyst finds in him a desire to escape the restrictions of his home life and Mabel's discovers in her a suppressed love for Stephen. The play's lack of subtlety is indicated by a characteristic piece of business: Henrietta hands a huge volume to Mabel saying, "Here, dear, is one of the simplest statements of psychoanalysis,"²⁸ whereupon Mabel, according to the stage direction, "staggers back under its

²⁷ Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau, *The Provincetown: A Story of the Theatre* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1931), p. 7.

²⁸ Susan Glaspell, *Plays* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1920), p. 251.

weight." This is almost slapstick, and *Suppressed Desires* might more logically be called a skit than a play.

The Provincetown audience (and later the Greenwich Village audience) liked to make fun of its own current interests, so it enjoyed the play immensely. Cook therefore, during the same summer, wrote another play with comparable intent, *Change Your Style*, a satire on the various schools of art competing with one another in Provincetown. This play, too, was repeated in 1916, when several other well-known plays were presented for the first time—Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* and Eugene O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* (in which Cook played the role of Yank).

When the Players moved to Macdougall Street in New York in the fall of 1916, this O'Neill play was on the opening bill and *Suppressed Desires*, also with Cook, appeared on the second bill. Cook played the part of the sailor in Floyd Dell's *A Long Time Ago* (fifth bill, January, 1917), Rougon in O'Neill's *The Sniper* (February, 1917), and the editor in Susan Glaspell's *The People* (March 9, 1917), about a radical magazine (obviously based on the *Masses*) which influences people in all parts of the country, despite its internal quarrels and its small circulation. Except for these early plays, Cook rarely acted, but he sometimes designed the scenery (as for Harry Kemp's *The Prodigal Son* in March of 1917) and often staged and directed the plays (Wilbur Daniel Steele's *Contemporaries* in March, 1918, Cook and Glaspell's *Tickless Time* in December, 1918, Alice L. Rostetter's *The Widow's Veil* in January, 1919, O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* in November, 1920, his own *The Spring* in January, 1921, Glaspell's *The Verge* in November, 1921, and Pierre Loving's *The Stick-Up* in January, 1922).

In April of 1918 (the fifth bill of the second New York season) the Provincetown Players put on its first full-length play—Cook's *The Athenian Women*, a play in three acts and six scenes with thirty-three characters (plus Scythian bowmen and messengers). This work manifests Cook's lifelong interest in ancient Greece; when later he lived in Greece, he translated the play into modern Greek, and it was published after his death in an English and Greek interleaved edition by the Athenian printing house Estia (1926).

The play is set in the Greece of Pericles and has a plot similar to that of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, although Cook treats it in a serious vein. Cook sees a connection between Pericles' public policy in 445 B.C., when he renounced his imperial conquests and signed a thirty years' peace, and his simultaneous private affairs, in which he turned from his wife to the courtesan Aspasia. The relation between the two events, according to the play, is that after Kallia, Pericles' wife, had

joined the other women in refusing to sleep with their husbands until peace was restored, Pericles and Kallia could never again become reconciled, and therefore Pericles took Aspasia as his companion. Cook explained his rationale for rewriting ancient history in a preface which reveals his characteristic exaltation of the "brooding dream":

A play must be true to its own orbit, not to history, unless history happen to be true to it. . . . Whether or not true in this instance, it is true in general that the brooding dream which brings a play to life is of a nature to bridge with truth gaps not filled by those poor piecemeal records from which man must write history. This is particularly true of those sources of public events which trace back into privacies of soul.²⁹

The Athenian Women has a further meaning for Cook, however, and is more than merely an opportunity for him to escape to his dream world. The real theme of the play—and this accounts for his serious treatment of an idea dealt with comically by Aristophanes—is the senseless destruction in war of man's greatest achievements, whether these be works of art or the ability to love. Cook intended for his audience to see the relevance of these ancient events to modern times, and he states that he could not have interpreted the Peloponnesian War as he did had he not lived through the period of World War I. Floyd Dell, who was in Provincetown with Cook at the time the war in Europe broke out, testifies in his reminiscences to the fact that Cook tried to comprehend what the ultimate results of such a war might be.³⁰ Cook's view of the tragedy of war comes out in the play, which ends as a new war is beginning. Although the Athenian women in Acts I and II are able to bring about peace in 445 B.C., they are powerless in Act III (which takes place fourteen years later, in 431 B.C.) to prevent the Peloponnesian War from beginning. The play emphasizes that war is an unqualified evil, capable of destroying all the best in life.

The next of Cook's plays produced at the Provincetown was another one-act comedy, *Tickless Time*, on which he collaborated with Susan Glaspell. It was presented in the third New York season, on December 20, 1918, with the authors directing and with a cast that included Edna St. Vincent Millay and her sister Norma. While this is

²⁹ *The Athenian Women: A Play*; with the original text and a modern Greek translation made by the author and revised by C. Carthaios (Athens: Printing House "Estia," 1926), pp. 2, 6.

³⁰ See Dell's *Homecoming*, p. 260.

another lighthearted satire, this time on people who carry to extremes of impracticality their desire to live by ideals, it is much more clever in its manipulation of ideas than *Suppressed Desires*. In the play Ian and Eloise Joyce, who wish to establish a "first-hand relation to truth," have decided to live by their sundial and to bury all their clocks (Cook himself constructed a sundial in his backyard at Provincetown). When this alienates their cook (Edna Millay) and their friends, they are forced to compromise, although they have in the meantime converted Mrs. Stubbs, wife of a Provincetown fish dealer. It is a highly amusing way of pointing out the idealist's eternal dilemma of alienation or compromise and makes use of less hackneyed stage devices than those in *Suppressed Desires*.

The last of Cook's five plays put on by the Provincetown Players was a full-length play with a "Prelude" and six scenes, *The Spring* (January, 1921). Though less interesting than *The Athenian Women*, it resembles the earlier play in suggesting a parallel between a remote event and a present one. Rather than going to the Greek past, Cook looks to the Indian heritage of his native Iowa. In the Prelude, set at Namequa's Spring on Rock River in October of 1813, Black Hawk, chief of the Sauks, saves the life of an American scout and takes him into the tribe as his son. The six scenes of the play occur on the same location a century later, where the Robbins family, descended from the scout, has its home. Young Robbins, an instructor in the University psychology department, invites Chantland, the head of the department, and his daughter Esther out for the weekend. When Esther gazes into the spring, she sees reenacted the scene presented in the Prelude, and she later produces some Indian writing. Her vision fits in with Robbins' theory that, although knowledge cannot be acquired from spirits of the dead, it can be psychically transferred from one living mind to another, and he feels that she has taken information about the Sauks from the mind of his father, who knows all the local Indian legends. Chantland, needless to say, ridicules the theory and strongly disapproves of Robbins' encouragement of Esther's fantasies. He finally threatens to discharge Robbins from the department if he uses Esther in his experiments and feels that both Esther and Robbins are insane. Other experts, representing the entrenched psychological interests, agree with Chantland but are defeated in the end when Robbins proves that only his method will release Esther's pent-up tensions and give her a healthy mental life.

Although the play combines Indian legend with psychology, it follows the pattern of conventional melodrama. Robbins is the hero, whose virtue and integrity triumph over the unqualified villainy of

Chantland and save the innocent maiden Esther. The villain is duly killed, and though Robbins faces a prison sentence, Esther says that her mind can learn to live with his in prison: "I will set sail with you into ourselves. I will go with you into that undiscovered country which is not death."³¹ And Robbins, as the curtain falls, declaims that "even *this* is victory. The demons be damned!" While the play manifests the interest taken by the Villagers in psychology, it illustrates even more Cook's desire to attack (as he had earlier in the *Forum*) the narrow-mindedness of college administrations—and, by extension, the reluctance of the world at large to accept new ideas. Robbins makes this clear when he discerns in the "experts" who have come to examine him and Esther "that bitter instinct in society to kill any new human power that might make the world different" (p.120).

After examining the quality of Cook's plays and the extent of his acting, one must conclude that his distinctive contribution to the Provincetown Players lies elsewhere. What he gave was more intangible but no less necessary. His was the guiding spirit, keeping the high goals of their enterprise constantly before the other members. It is to his credit that he was able to hold together and keep under control a heterogeneous group of bohemians and artists, most of whom were ready enough to take off on their own at any moment, long enough for them to accomplish something of lasting value for American literature. Cook had always been driven by idealistic dreams, and one can easily see how the task of leading the Players was perfectly suited to him. He was always in the act of creating, whether it was writing a play, building a set with limited finances, or spending practically all available funds on a plaster dome that seemed essential to him for special effects. It was he who took care of all details that were likely to be left undone by others. He was the moving force behind the Players and their administrator and executive as well.

Accounts of Cook by those who knew him at the time agree that he was a driven, inspired person, although they differ in their evaluations of him. Hutchins Hapgood recalls, "[If] ever I saw an inspired person in action it was Jig at that time."³² Floyd Dell, who had four plays produced by the Players, states explicitly that he "did not like George Cook during this period" and calls him "a Great Man, in dishabile"

³¹ *The Spring* (New York: Frank Shay, 1921), p. 140. The play was produced later the same year (beginning September 21, 1921) at the Princess Theatre in New York and ran for twenty-one performances. It has been said, to emphasize the lack of success which the run enjoyed, that only four tickets were sold for the third performance (see Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* [New York: Harper, 1962], p. 492).

³² Hapgood, p. 397.

and “a man who is driven by a daemon.” He feels that Cook could not delegate authority and that he allowed the most “lunatic ideas” to be tried out on his stage. “George tolerated everybody,” he says, “and believed in everybody and egregiously exploited everybody; and everybody loved him.”³³ It is probably true that some new talent was rejected, and the group may have seemed at times to be a “Broadway in miniature” bringing out traits of “meanness, cruelty and selfishness,” as Dell believes; but the fact remains that the Players did prove how important the little theater idea was; they did produce plays unacceptable to the commercial theater of the time; and they did give some significant talents a first hearing.

Cook’s discovery of Eugene O’Neill has also been viewed from various angles—from Dell’s opinion that the discovery of O’Neill was of questionable value, to Hapgood’s view that O’Neill might never have been heard of had it not been for Cook, to the more usual and more defensible position that O’Neill would have achieved his great reputation in any case but that the existence of the Players gave him a unique opportunity at the beginning of his career to try out his works and have them produced as he wished. O’Neill has himself described Cook, using once more the inevitable words “inspire” and “genius”:

Cook was the big man, the dominating and inspiring genius of the Players. Always enthusiastic, vital, impatient with everything that smacked of falsity or compromise, he represented the spirit of revolt against the old worn-out traditions, the commercial theater, the tawdry artificialities of the stage. I owe a tremendous lot to the Players. . . .³⁴

The turning point in the history of the Players was the production of O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones* on November 1, 1920 (played effectively against Cook’s plaster dome). For this play was sent “up-town.” “To

³³ Dell, pp. 267-268; p. 266.

³⁴ Quoted in Barrett H. Clark, *Eugene O’Neill: The Man and His Plays* (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1929), p. 43. O’Neill had other feelings about Cook at various times. For example, Arthur and Barbara Gelb (p. 514) quote a letter he wrote to Eleanor Fitzgerald after the breaking up of the Players: “Primarily . . . it is all Jig’s fault. As I look back on it now I can see where he drove all our best talent that we had developed away from the theatre for daring to disagree with him. . . . Then beat it to Greece, leaving a hollow shell as a monument to his egotism.” But O’Neill also suggested a plaque to Cook’s memory (Gelb, p. 546): “To the memory of George Cram (‘Jig’) Cook, poet of life, priest of the ideal, lovable human being, to whose imagination and unselfish devotion this Playhouse owes its original inspiration and development as a home for free creative expression.”

go up-town with our first success," says Edna Kenton, was considered by many a "higher honor than to stay down-town with our experiments."³⁵ But to Cook this move uptown by the Players meant failure—there were now different values and standards, salaries were being paid for the first time, and the group no longer seemed experimental. The creative community which Cook had envisioned in Provincetown had not come to pass. In February of 1922 the group voted a one-year interim, and Cook considered this the end of the Players, for he was not willing to prolong an organization which he felt had failed to shun the commercial spirit:

I am forced to confess that our attempt to build up, by our own life and death, in an alien sea, a coral island of our own, has failed. We have failed to draw from American writers enough of the kind of plays which justify our further existence as a theatre solely for the production of American plays. . . . Our individual gifts and talents have sought their own private perfections. We have not, as we hoped, created the community of life-givers. . . . We have valued creative energy less than its rewards—our sin against our Holy Ghost. . . . [We] have failed spiritually in the elemental things, and the result is mediocrity. . . . We keep our promise; we give this theatre we love good death. The Provincetown Players end their story here.³⁶

The "community of life-givers" was in his mind when he said to Dell that he would like to "gather the old Davenport crowd together, and go back there, and make it a new Athens,"³⁷ and when he and his wife, in March, sailed for Greece.

III

George Cram Cook achieved his highest ambition by spending his last days in Greece. Dressed in the Greek peasants' outfit and speaking their language, dancing and drinking with them, he lived the life of a shepherd for nearly two years before his death on January 14, 1924 (caused by glanders contracted from a sick dog he was caring for). During this time he tried to inspire the natives with love for the great heritage of their country, and he wrote poems. In 1925 his wife prepared for publication a small volume of his poems, most of which

³⁵ "Provincetown and Macdougall Street" in Cook, *Greek Coins* (New York: George H. Doran, 1925), p. 28.

³⁶ Quoted by Edna Kenton in *Greek Coins*, pp. 29-30.

³⁷ Quoted by Dell, p. 361.

were written in Greece, although a few of them date from his Iowa days.

What is probably Cook's best-known poem, "Though Stone Be Broken," is placed first in the resulting volume, *Greek Coins*. Arthur Davison Ficke praised the poem, comparing it to Shelley's "Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon";³⁸ and Floyd Dell said that he knew "few modern poems as beautiful as this" when he described the origin of the poem as a walk that he and Cook took through the pastures near Davenport in the summer of 1910.³⁹ Although Cook later experimented with free verse, this poem is written in a conventional form and makes use of conventional (even trite) diction. However much his later poems—or, more exactly, not poems at all but random thoughts jotted down—appear to be unrevised, this poem was worked over extensively. For example, he sent to Dell late in 1910 what he called his "new" version of the third stanza:

Below them in the shadowed water's peace
Their ebon mirror lies
Agleam with moving lights that shine and cease
Like lights in eyes.⁴⁰

Yet he revised it still further before he arrived at the improved final version:

Mirrored upon the shadowed water's peace
The slow, soft fires of the flies
In tremulous reflections shine and cease
Like lights in eyes.⁴¹

The poem reflects on the fact that a waterfall gradually wears away the rock over which it flows and thus introduces one of Cook's perennial themes—time and the past. The crumbled stones at the foot of the waterfall are a record of the past, just as the rock ledge above becomes a calendar of the future, containing that point "Where the receding waterfall shall pour/ The day I die" (p.56). Throughout his

³⁸ Cook to Dell, [December 13, 1910].

³⁹ "A Seer in Iowa" in *Greek Coins*, p. 15. See also *Homecoming*, p. 202. Dell also points out the background of Cook's poem "To Certain Renegades" in *Homecoming*, pp. 205-206.

⁴⁰ Cook to Dell, [December 13, 1910].

⁴¹ *Greek Coins*, p. 53. For another example of Cook's conventional verse, see the last four lines of "The World Is in Love" (p. 61), which are imitative of Swinburne and seem out of place in the poem.

life contemplation of familiar objects gave rise to thoughts of the past history enshrined in them. Another of the poems, "An Oak Tree Leans," expresses awe over the fact that the same tree was standing when Charlemagne, De Soto, and Columbus were alive. Perhaps the fullest statement of this idea occurs in one of his prose passages quoted by Miss Glaspell:

Too much American past dies with me. I should remain remembering. But I shall not remain. I must soon go where my Indian predecessors went. They left little record of their whole good way of life. I seem to be leaving not much more than they. And who then will remember or know or care anything about the deep-worn road of the Indian ponies there up-river from Buffalo through the Dodge farm—the deep old trail worn by a hundred years of Indian life—seen and felt by me and by no one else?⁴²

More often in his poems, however, reflections on the past are mixed with those on the evolution that has occurred during the past. In "I See the Hills," he feels that each piece of ice in the river is where it is because of its past history; he describes the ferns which have become coal; and he sees "The secrets of the hills come giving themselves to me,/ They lay off veil after veil for me—the veils of ages" (p.64). In "A Kite and the Earth" he ponders what future evolution is in store for man: "The fishes came ashore,/ Shall we go out into the ether?" (p.85). And in "From My Old Age" he speaks of the sun that "waited while we rose/ From worms/ And are worse now than worms,/ Lower because we might be so much higher/ And are not" (p.92).

Cook's free verse seems to be merely statements of ideas which in the end do not become poetry through lack of discipline. As statements of ideas, they reflect Cook's mind at various stages and are thus of value biographically. For example, he describes in "Georgic" (in which a greenhouse speaks) not only his usual feelings about the past (p.70) and about evolution (p.69) but his mystical ideal of working the land. His Iowa truck farm had represented for him communion with the past and a link with the future more than it had a way of making a living. In this poem he says, "Avalon has been found in Iowa" (p.68); and in "One Good Thing about Me" he declares that man's task is to make his world beautiful and that he loves "to shape the earth—/ . . . Pretending to raise vegetables,/ But really being architect/ In lines of green life and black soil" (p.87). The personal

⁴² *The Road to the Temple*, p. 1.

element also appears in his reaction against his former idol, Nietzsche, in "Polemic against the Dominant Idea." Even more personal are the reflections on his own life in "At Fifty I Ask God" or in "Nilla Dear," a verse letter to his daughter in which he writes, "If you could see how by a hair's breadth I miss/ Being a transforming force/ In the theatre of our unrealized nation . . ." (p.111).

Greek Coins, with its three essays of tribute by Floyd Dell, Edna Kenton, and Susan Glaspell, serves its purpose in being a memorial to Cook, and the poems, like his other writings, are of little importance aside from the fact that they are a manifestation of the life of one who "richly failed" (p.110). His undoubtedly large creative energies went into tasks such as gardening or constructing a stage set and especially into conversations with friends, and he was incapable of sustained literary effort. Whatever of greatness he may have must come from his life and its influence. As Dell says, "It was not in written works, nor even perhaps in deeds, but in that perishable substance, the memory of friends, that he left the full record of himself."⁴³ Hutchins Hapgood goes even farther: "Only a truly great book could have influenced as many lives as did Cook's remarkable personality."⁴⁴ By giving up the Provincetown Players after one of its greatest achievements to pursue his ideal in Greece, Cook became a symbol of the individual who escapes from conventional restrictions and finds his ideal. Dell, for example, was thinking of Cook in his novel *Runaway* (1925) when he has his hero leave a hypocritical and narrow-minded town (and a wife and daughter) to sail to the Orient, his dreamland (Dell even gives the hero Cook's characteristic mannerism—twisting a forelock of his hair).⁴⁵

⁴³ *Greek Coins*, p. 9. Cf. the comment of Leandros K. Palamas in his introduction to *The Athenian Women*: "Cook's value and personality do not lie solely in the importance of his writings. The living personality of the man, endowed with a large philosophic and esthetic culture, left behind the doer of deeds. His companionship aroused infinite possibilities in the soul of his friends, and he could make his friends realize these possibilities with greater intensity" (p. xiii).

⁴⁴ "The Instinct to Conform," *New Republic*, 77 (November 29, 1933), 80. Arthur Davison Ficke, another Iowa poet, made a similar comment after Cook's death; referring to the other writers of the time, he said, "Of all of them from a material standpoint Cook might have been called the only failure, for his few books had had only limited sale. But his inspired words in the endless talk-fests, his enthusiasms, holding others to the line when they might have wavered, his insistence always upon artistic integrity, made him in the highest sense the leader of them all. And his grave in Greece stands now as a challenge to writers of talent who feel the pull away from their ideals." (Quoted by Gladys Denny Shultz in her essay on Susan Glaspell in *A Book of Iowa Authors*, ed. Johnson Brigham [Des Moines: Iowa State Teachers Association, 1930], p. 121.)

⁴⁵ Cook is also the basis of the character Tom Alden in Dell's *Moon-Calf* (1920). Literary works in which Cook's name appears include Mark Reed's play,

When, in the twentieth century, a man becomes a poet-shepherd, mourned at death by other shepherds, existing in memory as a local legend, and honored by the reinstitution of the Pythian Games, certain parallels inevitably suggest themselves. Cook has been compared to Lycidas and the Scholar Gypsy, and—in relation to his journey to Greece—to Byron.⁴⁶ He himself suggested a comparison with Thoreau. Twenty-five years earlier, when he was still teaching in Iowa City, he wrote,

I'd like to build a cabin near a village of mountain shepherds, with a path winding down great dark rocks to the blue-green sea. And there I'd fashion a swimming, ax-swinging, climbing body, and a simple, active soul. Why not be a Greek Thoreau, living with Homer and the mountains, the olives, the grapes, the fish, the shepherds, the sailors, and the sea?⁴⁷

In his mysticism, his desire to lead a simple life, his ability to see the profound importance of common things, like an old Iowa road, and his tendency to write persistently in his notebook or on stray pieces of paper statements of depth and beauty, he does resemble Thoreau. But one looks in vain for Thoreau's firm footing in reality. Cook was a sentimental idealist; his journey to Greece was not merely an effort to recapture classic simplicity in life and art, for his withdrawal from the complexities of modern civilization was also a retreat from its responsibilities.

By the very nature of Cook's life, practically everyone who has ever commented on it has waxed sentimental at some point in the account. For many people his life is an embodiment and symbol of their own unfulfilled urges to escape and their own unrealized dreams of beauty. For a corrective to this saccharine view, one should take into account Upton Sinclair's belief that Cook went to Greece because prohibition made his constant drinking "too expensive in America"⁴⁸ and that drinking caused his death:

Yes, My Darling Daughter (New York: Samuel French, 1937), in which he is named as a typical Village bohemian (p. 59), and Irving Stone's novel, *The Passionate Journey* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1949), in which he is listed among the artists at Provincetown (p. 280).

⁴⁶ See Percy A. Hutchison, "George Cram Cook Was a Modern Lycidas," *New York Times Book Review*, March 13, 1927, pp. 2, 20. The degree to which Cook's life had the power to impress people is indicated by the fact that this review calls Byron's journey "superficial and tawdry" in comparison to Cook's.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *The Road to the Temple*, p. 87.

⁴⁸ *Money Writes!* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), p. 167. See also Sinclair's *The Cup of Fury* (Great Neck, N.Y.: Channel Press, 1956), pp. 87-90.

The plain truth . . . is that poor Jig Cook, a poet who pinned his faith to Bacchus instead of to Minerva, was at the age of fifty a pitiful white-haired sot, dead to the Socialist movement, dead to the whole modern world, wandering about lost among dirty and degraded peasants. He died of an infection utterly mysterious to his wife—who apparently knows nothing of the effects of alcohol in destroying the cells of the liver and breaking down the natural immunity of the body. (p.169)

Albert Parry, too, wondered “how in the world [Cook] could mistake that country of Balkan mongrels, of petty politicians and over-abundant bootblacks and waiters, for the noble land of his dreams.”⁴⁹

The truth is that Cook’s eyes were so fixed on his ideal that he could not see reality. He even gloried in billboard advertisements which were lettered in Greek, as Susan Glaspell approvingly notes. Cook’s enthusiasm never dimmed. Perhaps the energy of such a man is required for the inauguration of an important movement, like the Provincetown Players (and herein lies the significance of his life for American literature); but in the end that energy was misdirected. If he did not succeed in immortalizing his “deep-worn road” in Iowa nor in solving the mystery of past time through which it leads, he indicated the value of the task. And if he did not make a great poem of his life, it was not prose either. George Cram Cook’s tragedy is not that of the idealist who refuses to compromise in the face of reality, but rather that of the bewildered dreamer who can come to terms with the world only by ignoring the facts of life and pursuing his dream until it becomes his reality.

⁴⁹ *Garrets and Pretenders* (New York: Covici. Friede, 1933), p. 301.

Checklist of Works by and about George Cram Cook

(Abbreviations: *FLR*—*Friday Literary Review* of the *Chicago Evening Post*; *CEP*—*Chicago Evening Post*)

I. Works by Cook

BOOKS*

- Company B of Davenport*. Davenport, Iowa: Printed for Company B by the Democrat Company, 1899. 142 pp.
- Charles Eugene Banks and George Cram Cook. *In Hampton Roads: A Dramatic Romance*. Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally, 1899. 288 pp. (First printing has blue pictorial cover and includes eight illustrations [frontispiece, and following pp. 44, 80, 86, 136, 176, 220, 272]; later printing has green cover with lettering only and no illustrations.)
- Charles Eugene Banks, assisted by George Cram Cook and Marshall Everett [pseudonym of Henry Neil]. *Authorized and Authenic Life and Works of T. DeWitt Talmage*. Chicago: Bible House, 1902. 479 pp.
- Charles Eugene Banks, assisted by George Cram Cook and Marshall Everett [pseudonym of Henry Neil]. *Beautiful Homes and Social Customs of America: A Complete Guide to Correct Social Forms and Artistic Living*. Chicago: Bible House (Henry Neil), 1902. 352 pp.
- Roderick Taliaferro: *A Story of Maximilian's Empire*. Illustrated by Seymour M. Stone. New York and London: Macmillan, 1903. ix, 482 pp. 1st printing, March, 1903; 2nd printing, March, 1903; 3rd printing, May, 1903.
- The Chasm: A Novel*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1911. 379 pp. Published February 10, 1911; copyright copies deposited February 13. Finnish edition—*Kuilu*. Translated by A. B. Mäkelä. Fitchburg, Mass.: Suomalaisen sos. Kustannusyhdistyksen Kustannuksella, 1914. 408 pp.
- Provincetown Plays, Second Series*. New York: Frank Shay, 1916. Includes George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell's *Suppressed Desires* (pp. 113-144).
- George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell. *Suppressed Desires*. ("Provincetown Plays: 2") New York: Frank Shay, 1917. 27 pp.
- Susan Glaspell. *Plays*. Boston: Small, Maynard, 1920. 315 pp. Published June 30, 1920; copyright copies deposited July 8. 2nd printing, October, 1921. Includes *Suppressed Desires* (pp. 231-271) and *Tickless Time* (pp. 273-315), written in collaboration with Cook. English edition—*Trifles and Six Other Short Plays (Two of Them Written in Collaboration with George Cram Cook)*. London: Ernest Benn, 1926. 151 pp. (the two plays on pp. 103-126, 127-151).
- The Provincetown Plays*. Edited and selected by George Cram Cook and Frank Shay. Foreword by Hutchins Hapgood. Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd, 1921. 272 pp. Published April 11, 1921; copyright copies deposited April 15. Includes *Suppressed Desires* (pp. 9-44).
- The Spring: A Play*. New York: Frank Shay, 1921. 140 pp. English edition—London: Ernest Benn, 1925. 108 pp.
- Greek Coins: Poems*. With Memorabilia by Floyd Dell, Edna Kenton, and Susan Glaspell. New York: George H. Doran, 1925. 142 pp. Published November 6, 1925; copyright copies deposited November 14.
- Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook. *Tickless Time: A Comedy in One Act*. ("Baker's Royalty Plays") Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1925. 40 pp. Published November 20, 1925; copyright copies deposited November 27.

* This section includes books containing the first book appearances of Cook's short plays, but it does not list later anthologies which reprint those plays.

The Athenian Women: A Play. With the original text and a modern Greek translation made by the author and revised by C. Carthaios. Introduction by Leandros K. Palamas. Athens: Printing House "Estia," 1926. xvii, 321 pp.

PERIODICALS

Poems

- "Sonnet: On the Evening of October 16th, 1891," *The Hawkeye: Junior Annual of the Class of '93, State University of Iowa*, 2 (1892), 176.
"Frolic Elves in Eyes of Blue," *Century*, 67 (January, 1904), 480.
"To Certain Renegades," *FLR*, August 18, 1911, p. 2. Reprinted in *Greek Coins*, p. 60.
"Though Stone Be Broken," *Forum*, 47 (April, 1912), 437-440. Reprinted in *FLR*, April 5, 1912, p. 4; and in *Greek Coins*, pp. 53-59.
"Battle Hymn of the Workers," *Progressive Woman*, 6 (October, 1912), 9.

Play

- "Suppressed Desires," *Metropolitan*, 45 (January, 1917), 19-20, 57-58.

Essays

- "The Prose and Verse of Kipling," *Papers of the Davenport Contemporary Club*, 3 (1898-1899), 61-85.
"Evolution." *Papers of the Davenport Contemporary Club*, 11 (1906-1907), 57-86. [Offprint title: "Evolution and the Superman."]
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II. Works about Cook

(No attempt is made to include in this section the many literary histories which make very brief reference to Cook. Volumes of reminiscences by contemporaries, however, are included even when the comments on Cook are not extensive. Page numbers are given since many of the works do not contain indexes. English editions of the books are not recorded except for *The Road to the Temple* [1926].)

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