

Wandering from "The Gaiety and Color of the Garden"  
in Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware*

Wm. Thomas Hill

This paper examines the important shift which Theron Ware undergoes throughout the course of Harold Frederic's novel *The Damnation of Theron Ware*<sup>1</sup> from that of a journeyer in the true Western (Judeo-Christian / Greco-Roman) tradition to that of a *wanderer*. It is traditional to lump *The Damnation of Theron Ware* together with Frank Norris's *McTeague* and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*. All three novels mark an important shift away from Howellsian realism toward the emerging naturalism of that time. However, consistently overlooked by scholars of this period is the fact that Theron Ware is treated as a *journeyer* at the beginning of the novel and then moves toward being a *wanderer* in the traditional sense of these terms.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of this is that the movement from journeyer to wanderer signals a critical shift in the way Americans view the world. And this shift ushers in an important concomitant world view within the thought processes of the period which finds its source in post-Darwinian thought. Throughout the course of the novel, Theron turns his back on first his Judeo-Christian upbringing and then finally on the Greco-Roman traditions which underlie most of Western culture. By the end of the novel, he is the new American man wandering forth in search of the dynamo, political opportunity, and financial success.

Going all the way back to the theogonies, ancient Greek stories which tell of the Greek traditions and beliefs, the journeyer had always been prepared for his journey by some community of dwellers. After a period of preparation, he was then sent forth as a representative of his community in search of some Truth, the gods, or adventure and growth. According to

Jager, the journeyer "journeys from the realm of the mundane to the festive and awesome realm of the divine, where he seeks knowledge and change. Leaving behind the world of ordinary forgetfulness the journey effects a separation which renders available in a new way the self, the world, the divine" (216). But even while being separate from the community, the journeyer also bears the stamp and identity of the community from which he comes and by which he is identified.

This attachment to the dwelling of origin is extremely critical to the identity of the journeyer as a journeyer. To become detached from one's ground is to wander, to loose ground, and at the extreme edges, to loose balance and enter into madness. The wanderer represents no one. Without any backing the wanderer is merely a stranger in foreign lands, someone to watch with suspicion.

Traditionally, once the journeyer completed his task, he was expected to return to educate the community that sent him forth and share in preparing other journeyers while at the same time building his own dwelling.

Until the turn of the century, there had always been some residue of belief in some guiding principle which provided an ultimate foundation or ground for the journeyer's travels. Throughout Western literary history, writers have held tenaciously to this motif of the journeyer on his journey even when they rejected traditional notions of Judeo-Christian traditions or Greco-Roman myths.

In *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, the guiding metaphor for this action of turning from the journey to aimless wandering is the garden because the garden is at the center of Theron's original faith in God. It is the meeting place between God and His creation. In Heideggerian terms, it is Theron's dwelling of origin. The garden represents an ideal world in which God walks with his human creation. In this novel, Alice, Theron's wife, is the keeper of the edenic garden in their own back yard.

But from the beginning of Theron's ministry in Octavius where Theron has been assigned to serve as the new Methodist minister, his eyes are turned to the trees and fields beyond his own yard and its garden. Willfully and uncritically his mind and body wander from his wife

and the garden without digging his hands into the ground to work side by side with her there. Separated from the garden, he is easily swept away in the tide of new ideas that he is confronted with without any analysis and completely misjudges the firmness of his ground.

Shortly after his observation of the Elms in Chapter Two, Theron looked disinterestedly upon his own backyard.

The young minister stroked his chin thoughtfully, and let his gaze wander over the backyard in silence. The garden parts had not been spaded up, but lay, a useless stretch of muddy earth, broken only by last year's cabbage-stumps and the general litter of dead roots and vegetation. (14)

While the outside community around him is filled with possibilities, the church community to which he has been called is a ruin of dead stumps and roots that have failed to grow in a world of creative potential.

The natural world is used to parallel Theron's fall from grace as he wanders around Octavius moving from his innocent transcendental view toward the view of god as success. On the morning after Theron and his wife have arrived at Octavius his first reflection on nature is given in hopeful terms: "What a beautiful morning!" he exclaimed. "The elms over there are full of robins. We must get up earlier these mornings, and walk" (DTW 13). This suggestion that the two of them, Theron and Alice, walk together, while often repeated by Theron, is never realized. Partly because of this, by the end of the novel, Theron cannot even see the elms. Nature for him, prefiguring Eliot's wasteland, has disappeared. All Theron can see in the place of nature "out of the chaos" of his "shapeless" imagination is a world of men performing deeds of business. Nature as something beautiful to be appreciated has died along with his faith in God.

This paper deals with three gardens in this novel. Each of them have special significance for our study.<sup>3</sup> There is of course the Judeo-Christian edenic garden kept by Alice. But then, juxtaposed with Alice is Celia

whose name significantly is an anagram for Alice.<sup>4</sup> She is the keeper of the Greco-Roman primal forest or mythical garden; she is the priestess of classical aesthetics and myth.<sup>5</sup> When Theron enters the forest with her at the Catholic festival, she is Aphrodite / Venus — mother, lover, sister, applying the kiss of death — in the forest with Theron who takes on the character of Adonis before his descent into hades. Octavius, the town where Theron has been assigned, was named after *The Octavius* which was a polemic written in the seventh century A.D. by Marcus Minucius Felix, a lawyer in Rome, who wrote it to defend the Church against classical Roman religion which both Celia and Father Forbes represent. And it is *in* Octavius that most of Theron's struggle takes place.

The garden of Darwinian science represented by Dr. Ledsmar's scientific garden is actually at the heart of Celia's garden. The connection can be found in the myth of Hypatia of Alexandria. Hypatia was alleged to be religious Hellenist who (especially in the nineteenth century) represented the marriage of science and Hellenism, but who was eventually assassinated by Cyril of Alexandria, again according to the myth, because of her support of Hellenism.<sup>6</sup> However, it isn't until Father Forbes reveals Celia's and Dr. Ledsmar's strange relationship at the end of the novel that this becomes clear to Theron.

When Dr. Ledsmar raises the reptile in his hand and declares it to be Theron, this is descriptive of Theron's attitude of heart. Theron's heart has become arrogant (lifted up) and cold with resentment and bitterness. This separates him from all that the edenic garden represents and from his calling as a biblical expositor. Theron is the serpent in the garden.

Through all of this and in spite of the condition of the garden behind their house at the beginning of the novel, Alice should be read as the promise of the edenic garden. It is she who wears roses in her bonnet and carries the garden in her heart. When Theron acquiesces to the church trustees and forbids Alice to wear roses in her bonnet to church, he has rejected the final Eden. Not only does he fail to understand the seriousness of his act, but he fails to maintain the lines of communication between he and Alice which might have healed the early breakdown in

communication caused by his insensitivity. Instead he goes for a walk by himself and drifts into a romantic fantasy :

Looking back upon... past troubles, he persuaded himself that he had borne them all with a light and cheerful heart, simply because Alice had been one with him in every thought and emotion. How perfect, how ideally complete, their sympathy had always been! With what absolute unity of mind and soul they had walked that difficult path together. (38)

This fantasy possesses within it traces of the image of Adam and Eve walking with the voice of God in the Garden of Eden ; nevertheless, it is still a fantasy. And Theron is not walking in the garden as he should be, but walking alone outside his garden. Here he is in Chapter four, already walking by himself and talking with himself, dreaming and fantasizing in the early morning after just suggesting in Chapter Two that this is exactly what he and his wife needed to do together in order to enrich their spiritual unity.

When Theron meets Father Forbes and Celia at the last rights of a mortally injured laborer, he is deeply impressed by the ancient traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Soon after his initial meeting, he tells his wife he must go out in the evening on an errand concerning a book that he is writing on the life of Abraham. At the home of the Father Forbes he meets Dr. Ledsmar and becomes introduced to the petty self-congratulatory "intellectual" clique which eventually ensnares the unwary and naive Rev. Ware. He is inspired by their intellectual life, and feels in contrast that he has been deprived of by his narrow seminary training.

The priest informs Theron that modern theology no longer accepts the notion of Abraham as a real person and that in fact scholars have known and been discussing these truths among themselves for nearly two thousand years. Such an interpretation of the Bible and the early Church fathers, what Michelson has called "the *ignis fatuus* of the dinner table, a string of sententious falsehoods and half-truths" (64), is news to Theron.

And, at his surprise, the priest and Dr. Ledsmar exchange knowing glances with one another over the innocent Rev. Ware.

Later, walking home with Celia whom he meets in the cathedral playing the pipe organ, Celia encourages Theron to take sides with her against the "bloodless" Darwinian science of Dr. Ledsmar all the while reinforcing his innocence and sense of ineptness next to the priest and Dr. Ledsmar. The tone of her conversation with Rev. Ware is not only condescending, but leading and baiting. What he does not realize is that the threesome — Celia, Father Forbes, and Dr. Ledsmar — are an established clique, that they have their own language and internal set of signals, and that while Celia and Dr. Ledsmar seem to be at odds, they are both friends. Thus, in allowing Celia to engage him in gossip against Dr. Ledsmar, he is excluding himself from their little group. But the Reverend Ware is overwhelmed by Celia's beauty and talent as a musician. And because he has never questioned his own faith in God and is not in the habit of asking questions, he is easy prey to the new ideas of Celia and her friends.

Theron Ware does not share any of these early experiences with his wife. His excuse is that he is fearful that she will criticize him for communicating with heathens. Through subtle deception which brings Part One of the novel to a close, he leads her to believe that he has spent the evening with Dr. Ledsmar rather than admit that he entered the priest's home and later walked home with Celia.

With the continuation of this deception, Theron only notices that his wife is not the same as she was in Tyre, their previous ministry, where she had been "the most popular young woman" there. Since he has already cut himself off from her with lies and deception, he does not ask her outright why she seems distant. It never occurs to him that she is sensitive enough to feel his deception. He watches her closely as an outsider instead of talking to her, and in doing so he quite misses altogether the symbolic nature of her actions.

Never in her life had she been looking so well. She had thrown

herself, all at once, and with what was to him an unaccountable energy, into the creation and management of a flower-garden. She was out the better part of every day, rain or shine, digging, transplanting, pruning, pottering generally about among her plants and shrubs. This work in the open air had given her an aspect of physical well-being which it was impossible to be mistaken about. (115)

Except that Theron is "mistaken about" it. He sees it purely as a physical transformation. It isn't until the end of the novel when she confronts Theron with his deteriorated spiritual condition that we see that she has been the keeper of the spiritual ground upon which the hope of their relationship lay.

As the weeks pass after his first meetings with the priest, Dr. Ledsmar, and Celia, Theron becomes more and more excited by the newness of their ideas and by the show of wisdom behind them. He does not question them.

The young minister had arrived, all at once, at this conclusion. He did not question at all the means by which he had reached it. Nothing was clearer to his mind than the conclusion itself, — that his meeting with the priest and the doctor was the turning point of his career. They had lifted him bodily out of the slough of ignorance, of contact with low minds and sordid, narrow things, and put him on solid ground. (136)

Yet ironically, it is he who becomes "low" and "sordid" and "narrow" as he attempts to win the favor of Father Forbes, Dr. Ledsmar, and Celia Mad-den. He has become deluded by Celia's comments about what she and her companions want in a friend into believing that he is being offered their intellectual fellowship when in fact they see him as only a light passing entertainment.

This increasing tendency to wander without direction by himself be-

comes a pattern. Theron's act of lonely wandering is a deliberate turning from the journey. He wanders alone representing no one, separate and set apart within his own imagination. His feet lead him here and there, and once he arrives he comments with the sudden realization that where he has arrived is where he was going after all, impelled by internal drives seemingly beyond his control.

At the same time, the further away Theron gets from his own garden, the more he comes to despise the members of his own church. As his contempt for his own people is beginning to grow, Brother and Sister Soulsby arrive. They are what is known as "debt raisers." Their job is to raise the pitch of excitement in the church to such a level that the parishioners will empty their pockets into the church offering plates.

The old Theron despised such people. Brother and Sister Soulsby, we learn, were con artists, having worked at everything from being actors to mediums. Then after a short retirement, they hit upon the idea of becoming evangelists because they liked the excitement that could be created off of a good scam. As Sister Soulsby tells Theron: "It's a fraud, yes; but it's a good fraud. ...I'm glad that the change and the chance came to help Soulsby and me to be good frauds" (DTW 186).

In his introduction to the novel, Everett Carter says of the Soulsbys,

Of all [the] pragmatic attitudes [outlined by William James], Brother Soulsby, and most of all, his marvelous wife, Sister Candace Soulsby, are the complete and exuberant embodiments. ... Their "act," their assuming of an outward demeanor, their making the appearance becoming a reality, seem almost a parable of James's insistence that an emotion literally is identical with its physical manifestation. (xiv)

Sister Soulsby takes a personal interest in Theron because he is undergoing a crisis in his faith and he seems intelligent. Theron in return responds positively to her mothering of him much in the same way that he also responds to Celia's mothering.



It is Sister Soulsby who puts the idea into Theron's head that he is intellectually superior to his wife. After praising his heart and intelligence, she adds :

I like your wife, too, mind. She's a good, honest little soul, and she worships the very ground you tread on. Of course, as long as people will marry in their teens, the wrong people will get yoked up together. But that's neither here nor there. She's a kind, sweet little body, and she's devoted to you, and it isn't every intellectual man that gets even that much. (149)

With this reference to Theron as an "intellectual man," Theron is completely won over to Sister Soulsby. His heart swells with arrogance. Rather than appreciating his wife's simple faith in God, he begins to see himself as a martyr who must be saddled with an intellectually inferior and thus unworthy wife.

After his discussion with Sister Soulsby, Theron contemplates his wife's inferiority and the fact that she is no longer popular with people. He goes to the window and looks out into the garden : "...he watched in a blank sort of way Brother Soulsby take out a penknife, and lop off an offending twig from a rose-bush against the fence..." (DTW 151-52).

As we find in Homer and later Stasinus of Cyprus, Aphrodite is particularly connected with roses. Thus, this act is an early foreshadowing of Theron's rejection by Celia. In fact, primary among Celia's complaints with Theron is his attitude toward his wife and the congregation which supports him. The "offending twig" is obviously Theron who is wobbling precariously "against the fence."

Harold Frederic designed Part Three so that, it begins and ends with Celia and with Dr. Ledsmar, the messenger of Darwinian science, set right in the middle. But Chapter Eighteen begins significantly enough with Brother Ware "pacing slowly up and down under the elms on the side of the street opposite the Catholic Church" (188). In the one place in the Bible where elms are mentioned (Hosea 4 : 13), elm trees are associ-

ated with resting in the shade while contemplating idolatry. And as Theron paces there under the elms, the text reads, "it was pre-eminently a place to be alone in." Theron sends his wife back from the station where they have just seen Brother and Sister Soulsby back home on the train, and he remains behind where he meets Celia Madden.

Theron follows Celia back to her home where she invites him in; and his entering in, deep into her inner chamber becomes a systematic entering into an aphroditic temple through an antechamber filled with human creation, that is, works of art in the making.<sup>7</sup> This antechamber serves as Celia's workshop.

Once through the antechamber and into the inner chamber, Celia, plays a mass for his death, looking up into his face at the end as it hovers spectrally above her own. Hypatia's father's name was Theon.<sup>8</sup> Theron, thus, becomes the transcendent father / lover / dying god. Annis Pratt points out that,

In women's fiction the hero himself is more likely to become a "dying god" of feminine eroticism, punished by madness, death, or ostracism, or falling victim sexually to her opposite, the gothic rapist, hideous husband, or unsuitable suitor. (371)

This is the Aphrodite / Adonis pattern where after Adonis is killed, Zeus arranges for Adonis to return from Hades for a certain number of months (varying in time in different renditions of the story) out of each year.

As Celia plays the funeral march from Chopin's Second Sonata, Theron is borne along on this processional music as he writhes on cushions which Celia has set out for him. After she is finished Theron confesses that his entire life is changed, and Celia comments, "We are Hellenizing you at a great rate" (203). At this point, she leaves the room; and when she returns, she has changed into the white robe of a priestess. She then plays Chopin's lullaby. In the Third Ballad, Theron is greatly moved.

It seemed to him that there were words going along with it,—incoherent and impulsive very earnest words, appealing to him in strenuous argument and persuasion... Upon the silence [that followed] there fell the pure, liquid, mellifluous melody of a soft-throated woman singing to her lover. (205)

From the beginning Theron has been wooed — “There was the wooing sense of roses and moonlight, of perfumes, white skins, alluring languorous eyes...” (202). It continues as she moves on into the Ninth Nocturne. Then as Celia begins the Sixteenth Mazurka, Theron moves across the room as though he is floating, and stands behind Celia who has thrown her head back as she plays the piano, and he looks directly down into her face as she is playing. The piece comes to an abrupt and sudden end like a prophesy of Theron’s down fall, and Celia opens her eyes which had been closed while she played and says prophetically, “That is the end.”

Theron is shocked with disbelief. His face has become white with terror, fearing that his weak heart “had gone wrong.” but he recovers himself and responds significantly to the music: “I had never imagined anything like it. I shall think of it to my dying day.” Celia has presided at his spiritual funeral, and as with Samson in Judges 16 : 20,<sup>9</sup> Theron does not know the depth of his loss.

Theron’s attitude toward Alice becomes insufferable. As he continues on his way home after being with Celia in the temple / funeral scene, Theron questions why he should go home at all :

There was no reason whatever — save that Alice would be expecting him. Upon reflection, that hardly amounted to a reason. Wives, with their limited grasp of the realities of life, were always expecting their husbands to do things which it turned out not to be feasible for them to do. (220)

Celia has consumed Theron’s mind. Not only does Theron see himself as superior to his wife and not only has he cut himself off from Alice’s gar-

den but now his desire is to be rid of her. Even his fantasies are Aphroditic. According to the *Theogony* of Hesiod, Aphrodite was born out of the white foam of the sea. Theron fantasizes sending Alice off to the ocean where presumably she might be transformed into an Aphrodite figure herself.

Earlier in the novel, he has learned that many of the flowers in his wife's garden were donated by Levi Gorringer, one of the members of his church board. As he begins to meditate on this, he begins to construct a scenario of lustful motives on their part. If these thoughts bothered him in any real way, we might be able to attribute them to the invasion of Aphrodite, whose greatest weapons against her victims are jealousy and longing, into the edenic garden. But Theron is not jealous, rather he is taking pleasure in this fantasy.

As he is thinking about these things, he discovers that his feet have led him, almost by accident, to Dr. Ledsmar's house. From here on out in the novel everything is defined in terms of internal drives. Theron walks not by conscious intention but by internal forces, psychological drives, which send him, indifferent to his will, this way and that.

Theron is becoming, in Celia's sense of the word, a Greek which for her has come to mean a liberation from the super-ego, from childhood training and decision making based upon the whims of society.

In the middle of Part Three, Dr. Ledsmar takes Theron for a walk through his garden where he is doing research on various plants. He has a beautiful garden, so Theron remarks innocently, "You must be very fond of flowers" (228). But Dr. Ledsmar brushes off the comment with, "They have their points" (228). His interest is not aesthetic. His only interest is to do research on "Darwin's theory that hermaphroditism in plants is a late by-product" of earlier plant life. And when Theron asks him if Darwin was right, he can only reply that "We may know in the course of three or four hundred years" (228).

Dr. Ledsmar is also performing inhumane scientific studies on his Chinese servant using opium. He seems to Theron to be, as Celia has described him, a "bloodless scientist." Dr. Ledsmar seems on the surface to

also despise all women and Celia in particular. He refers to her as "a mere bundle of egotism, ignorance, and red-headed lewdness. ...with a little brain addled by notions that she is Hypatia..." (230-31). Theron tries to defend her. Then, because he is jealous of her relationship with the priest, he inquires about her relationship with Father Forbes.

At this Dr. Ledsmar cries out in disgust but attributes his cry to rheumatism and asks Theron to leave him with his pain. He goes into his laboratory and after looking around at his various tanks and test tubes, "he plunged his hand into [an] opaque fluid and drew forth a long, slim, yellowish-green lizard, with a coiling, sinuous tail and a pointed, evil head" (233). Then after scrutinizing it for a moment,

"Yes, you are the type," he murmured to it, with evident enjoyment in the conceit. "Your name isn't Johnny anymore. It's the Rev. Theron Ware." (233)

Nature, in the Darwinian laboratory, has taken on an evil naturalistic aspect. Dr. Ledsmar's comments about Celia echo Celia's comments about Dr. Ledsmar as she is questioning Theron as to whether or not he likes Dr. Ledsmar so that Celia and Dr. Ledsmar are seen to be two faces, the male and female of the same person: opposites, and yet reflections of one another. Aphrodite was worshiped in several traditions as both male and female, possessing both male and female physical characteristics and in some cases possessing male organs. And in a sense Dr. Ledsmar's acknowledgment of Theron's reptilian nature is a confirmation of his spiritual death which was presided over by Celia.

In the final three chapters of Part Three, Theron goes to an "annual camp-meeting of the combined Methodist districts" to which his church belongs. But as he has done at home in Octavius, Theron soon wanders and his feet lead him to the Catholic Christian Brothers down the hill from his camp, and there he meets Father Forbes and Celia who are drinking beer and generally having a wonderful time. After Celia's younger half brother gets drunk and makes a scene, Celia and Theron

wander off into the forest to be alone.

Here we have Aphrodite in the forest with Adonis before his descent into hades. When he asks her about the pictures of Mary and Jesus he as seen in her room, she explains that

they are not all pictures of Mary. One of them, standing on the moon, is of Isis with the infant Horus in her arms. Another might as well be Mahamie, bearing the miraculously born Buddha, or Olympias with her child Alexander, or even Perictione holding her baby Plato, — all these were similar cases, you know. Almost every religion had its Immaculate Conception. What does it all come down to, except to show us that man turns naturally toward the worship of the maternal idea? That is the deepest of all our instincts, — love of woman, who is at once daughter and wife and mother. It is that that makes the world go round. (266)

Without realizing it, Theron has become the son in the Greek garden just as Adonis is both man and boy: father, brother, lover, and son. And he confesses as much:

When I lay down there, and shut my eyes, — because the charm and marvel of this whole experience had for the moment overcome me, — the strangest sensation seized upon me. It was absolutely as if I were a boy again, a good, pure-minded, fond little child, and you were the mother that I idolized. (266)

As Paglia explains,

The Great Mother's main disciple is her son and lover, the dying god.... Neumann says of Attis, Adonis, Tammuz, and Osiris, "They are loved, slain, buried, and bewailed by her, and then are reborn through her." (52)

But when the Great Mother has had her way with the boy lover, she kills him off. After a sudden fright caused by the sight of the boy who spades his wife's garden and who appears like Faunus out of nowhere, Celia seals Theron's death at the end of Part Three with a kiss which drives him to madness.

Part Four begins, "The memory of the kiss abode with Theron. Like Aaron's rod, it swallowed up one by one all competing thoughts and recollections, and made his brain its slave." And on the next page it continues,

The kiss was a child of the forest. So long as Theron remained in the camp, the image of the kiss, which was enshrined in his heart and ministered to by all his thoughts, continued enveloped in a haze of sylvan mystery, like a dryad. Suggestions of its beauty and holiness came to him in the odors of the woodland, at the sight of wild flowers and water-lilies. (270)

Aphrodite is ministered to by other goddesses but not by dryads. Diana / Artemis is. And wild flowers and lilies are Aphrodite's domain, but the suggestion of waterlilies is a clear connection to Artemis again as Theron, like Actaeon, is wandering on his own into dangerous territory.

When he walked alone in unfamiliar parts of the forest, he carried about with him the half conscious idea of somewhere coming upon a strange, hidden pool which mortal eye had not seen before, — a deep, sequestered mere of spring-fed waters, walled in by rich, tangled growths of verdure, and bearing upon its virgin bosom only the shadows of the primeval wilderness, and the light of the eternal skies. (270)

Here we have Actaeon in serious danger of coming upon the virgin Artemis at her bath, being transformed into a stag, and torn apart by his own dogs. And to highlight the fact that he doesn't know with whom he

is dealing, the text continues,

His fancy dwelt upon some such nook as the enchanted home of the fairy that possessed his soul. The place, though he never found it, became real to him. As he pictured it, there rose sometimes from among the lily-pads, stirring the translucent depths and fluttering over the water's surface drops like gems, the wonderful form of a woman, with pale leaves wreathed in her luxuriant red hair, and a skin which gave forth light. (270)

The Aphrodite structure and the Artemis structure become so intertwined that they are thrown into nightmarish confusion.

Part Four is a picture of the growing chaos and insanity leading to hades that the suffering lover / dying god experiences. Later Theron visits Father Forbes and relates what he sees as the breach between Dr. Ledsmar and Celia. Father Forbes explains that these two good friends of his merely amuse themselves in their battle for his character. It is little more than a "habit" and a "hobby" which both pursue with admirable zest. He continues :

It amuses them, and it is not without its charms for me, in my capacity as an interested observer. It is a part of the game that they should pretend to themselves that they detest each other.

In reality I fancy that they like each other very much. (290)

Becknell notes that "these two, Celia and Ledsmar, seem to personify the age old conflict between the head and the heart" (68). And certainly on the surface, this is to some degree true ; however, closer examination reveals that it is also much more. In fact, their relationship is an erotic dance with the Darwinian / Ladismarian garden in the middle of the Aphroditic / Celian Temple. Furthermore, the hermaphroditism that Dr. Ledsmar is studying points directly to Hermaphroditus, the offspring of Aphrodite and Hermes the messenger god : their son, who while bathing



in her fountain, became one in body with the nymph Salmacis.

Father Forbes tries as gently as he can to point out that it is really none of Theron's business, but Theron refuses to acknowledge it :

"Of course," he said, "our warm mutual friendship makes the observation of these little individual vagaries merely a part of a delightful whole. I should not dream of discussing Miss Madden's confidences to me, or the doctor's either, outside our own little group." (290)

The reader cannot help but cringe at the arrogant presumptuousness in this comment.

Chapter Twenty-Seven begins with the theme of this paper :

That night brought the first frost of the season worth counting. In the morning, when Theron came downstairs, his casual glance through the window caught a desolate picture of blackened dahlia stalks and shriveled blossoms. The gaiety and color of the garden were gone, and in their place was shabby and disheveled ruin. (292)

Theron leans out the window and breathes in the cool air. He is pleased by the fact that Gorringe's flowers are dead because he sees them as belonging to Gorringe. He then glories in Gorringe's spiritual death because when he left Gorringe in the last chapter, he had disgusted Gorringe to such an extent with hints of adultery with his wife that Gorringe decided to disengage himself from the church.

And it is important that from his perspective, that is from the window that he is looking out of, all the flowers within his view are dead ; however, he has missed altogether the rest of the garden in the back yard where there is more sunshine which is flourishing beyond his notice, "and notably a bed of geraniums which literally made the eye ache" (274). But

from his single perspective, all he can see is death.

Throughout the novel, Michael who is Celia's brother, has been little more than a shadowy presence in the background. Theron confronts him briefly when he first meets Celia in the cathedral, then later at the Catholic camp, but toward the end of the novel, Theron sees him one last time as he is lying on his death bed with a terminal illness. Here Theron's disgust with purity and innocence which had been growing within him from early in the novel, continues to manifest itself. At Michael's deathbed, Theron and Michael discuss the condition of Theron's soul, and in his heart Theron mocks Michael's admonitions to go back to his spiritual foundations and stop wandering aimlessly among those he does not understand. But Celia's kiss has gripped his mind, and he is unable to hear anything. Michael tries to encourage him to return to his own garden, but Theron has long ago removed himself from his own garden and is set upon self-destruction.

After leaving Michael, Theron begins to suspect that there is a *liaison* between Father Forbes and Celia and follows them to New York. As he is traveling, he fantasizes being with Celia on the sea: "Every vague yearning he had ever felt toward sea-water stirred again in his blood at the thought of the sea — with Celia" (314). Again, of all the gods, Aphrodite is the only one to project such yearning.

Not long after his arrival in New York, he confronts Celia in her room. Predictably, Celia explains that Father Forbes, Dr. Ledsmar and herself are quite bored by him, and she explains why quite bluntly. He is boorish. He insults his wife and the church members who support him. He behaves like an immature child. Celia explains that the kiss was meant as a farewell kiss and that she is sorry that she hadn't explained it more explicitly. The earth is removed from underneath Theron's feet.

The world was all black again, — plunged in the Egyptian night which lay upon the face of the deep while the earth was yet without form and void. He was alone on it, — alone among awful, planetary solitudes which crushed him. (333)

Celia has killed him. But in all of this, it must be remembered that in the Greco-Roman myths, the gods have never had much concern for those with whom they toy.

Theron's only hope is to flee to the side of Sister Soulsby. I see her name as representing two images. That is, she stands by his soul at the same time she *buys souls* with the tricks of her trade.<sup>10</sup> She is a con and a fraud. As Carter has pointed out, she is a pragmatist; but beyond this, she is also sociopathic in her lack of conscience about what she is doing.<sup>11</sup> She has absolutely no guilt about anything. And this guiltlessness serves as a ground, insane as it is, which ultimately stabilizes Theron and returns him to health, albeit a bitter health.

In the final chapter,

Alice, clad gravely in black, stood again upon a kitchenstoop, and looked across an intervening space of back-yards and fences to where the tall boughs, fresh in their new verdure, were silhouetted against the pure blue sky. (349)

Theron is in hades, and like Persephone, Sister Soulsby has remained with him through his death. When Theron arrives on the porch next to his wife, there is no nature within his view. The elms in the distance which Alice has just observed have been replaced with visions of success in the business and political world, in the world of practical men. When Sister Soulsby suggests that they come and visit, Alice can only confess that the spring garden which she represents will probably be left behind to amuse itself while the works of men continue to prosper.

Throughout his spiritual death, he has been possessed by Sister Soulsby / Persephone until his release to face the new world as the new American man. But when he is released by her, he is thoroughly released. There can be no return. Separation from her is the final separation from spiritual grounding or backing of any kind. The Atlantic Ocean is impassable. The American man is on his own, separate and alone,

wandering his barren continent without any specific destination and without the Judeo-Christian traditions or Greco-Roman myths of his ancestors.

Harold Frederic's novel is much more sensitive than other novels written during this period in its examination of what man actually loses by rejecting an ordered universe. Theron is cut off from both Alice's Edenic garden and Celia's garden of ancient Greek myth because he no longer represents anything. Since he has cut himself off from his origins, he is a stranger to both the Christian community which has sent him forth as their representative and the ancient Greek myths and traditions that also inform Western culture.

By the end of the novel, Theron is the new American man wandering forth — and as Bennett has pointed out, borrowing from Twain, "lighting out for the Territory, as it were"<sup>12</sup> — on his own to achieve success and attain power without any ground of being beneath him and without any backing. With Dooley, my contention has been "that *The Damnation of Theron Ware* is a remarkable document and an illuminating philosophical critique" (75). At the beginning of the novel, Theron represented the Methodist Church. By the end of the novel, he — and by extension, the American man — represents no one. There is no Truth. God is dead. Adventure and growth will be defined for him only on the basis of how much success and power he can achieve during the remainder of his life.

#### Notes

1. Hereinafter abbreviated DTW when quoted within the text. All citations from this text will be from the Harvard Belknap Edition, 1960. See below for the full citation.

2. In fact, Carter states in his essay that "Theron's is a consciousness... which is designed to allow for circular journeys only. The immense psychological distance which he appears to have traveled in his flash of insight shrinks to nothing when the certainty that "his case was better" than his colleagues' puffs him right back up with pride. Theron has completed his journey from point A to point A" (48). Such a comment shows a complete misunderstanding of the journey in Western myth and tradition since ultimately going nowhere, is not a journey. While Stein doesn't have any clearer understanding of the nature of the journey, he is at least much closer to the truth since he argues throughout his article that Theron creates a pattern which he will be doomed to repeat for the rest of his life of forever starting off into new horizons without ever coming to the end of any journey.
3. There may be said to be a fourth garden located in Theron's mind. Early in the novel Theron notes that "Ignorance was a thing to be remedied, and he would forthwith bend all his energies to cultivating his mind till it should blossom like a garden" (61). The problem here is that Theron's mind never does blossom forth into a garden as Alice's backyard does. It merely becomes a reflection of the outside world in which he wanders.
4. Thanks are due to Professor Robert Narveson of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln for pointing this out to me.
5. For a study of Frederic's interest in ancient Judeo-Christian tradition and Greco-Roman myths while he was writing this novel, see John C. Hirsh, "The Frederic Papers,...". See full citation below.
6. Dzielska has argued convincingly that Hypatia held to no religion at all.
7. Crowley has referred to it as "a literalization of the 'enchanted cave' he had fantasized in the church" (386). The difficulty with this is the obvious presence of the artworks and drapes with the presence of the bed which suggest the sexual activities that took place at Aphrodite's temple on the summit of Acrocorinth just south of Corinth in ancient Greece.
8. Myers (7) makes the point that as a child Harold Frederic was forced by his mother and step father to go to the Free Methodist church where the pastor's name was Reverend Theron Cooper. Frederic no doubt enjoyed the double implications.
9. "He knew not that the spirit [of God] had left him."

10. Donaldson notes that,

Before that climactic trustees' meeting, Sister Soulsby calls Theron Ware aside to let him know that she has secured an extra hundred dollars to his salary ("do you hear?") and to demand that he reciprocate by going along with Winch and Pierce at the meeting. Once again, Theron responds that she has been "very kind"; once again they shake hands to seal their agreement (167). Though Theron Ware does not know it, the eagle has pounced; he has sold his soul to the collector of souls for a handful of silver and an appeal to his overweening pride. The curious odor he could not identify, when the bargain was first struck, was that of sulphur. (446)

Donaldson's observation is at once Christian in its reference Judas' sale of his soul for a handful of silver and mythic in its reference to the sulphurous Persephone.

11. Oehlschlaeger in his very fine article on this text argues convincingly that contrary to the opinions of most critics on the brilliance of Sister Soulsby's pragmatism, "Her philosophy is simply inadequate to deal with the highly irrational world that Frederic depicts, and her well-meant advice to Theron fails. There is a profound discrepancy in the novel between what she *says* and what Frederic *shows*" (247). I would argue that this is true throughout most of the novel; however, at the end when Theron is standing on the porch gazing off into the future, I would argue that he arrives at a far more Jamesian pragmatism than the Soulsbys ever achieve. That is, through is death in life experience, he surpasses them toward a more American form of pragmatism without the nightmarish insane quality of the Soulsbys' form of pragmatism.
12. Bennett's quote reads, "Part of what is at stake for Frederic is Theron's delusion: keeping him alive and sending him off West (lighting out for the Territory, as it were) is a far more ignominious ending both for him and for the future prospects of the United States than killing him off might be" (177).

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