A Study of The Jericho Novels of Paul I. Wellman

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A STUDY OF
THE JERICHO NOVELS OF PAUL I. ELLNANN

being
a thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science

by
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Date July 31, 1957
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Introduction

This paper is an outgrowth of the writer's interest in modern American literature, particularly in the field of the novel. The purpose of the study is to examine the literary work of a Kansas author, Paul I. Wellman, as developed in three novels with a Kansas setting: The Bowl of Brass, The Walls of Jericho, and The Chain. In making the analysis, use has been made of these works, critical comment on them, and comparison with other literary accomplishments. Particularly helpful has been a correspondence with Mr. Wellman during the past year.

Attempting an examination of a modern author's literary contributions is quite different from making a criticism of a writer whose literary reputation has been established. The student of Dickens, Cooper, or Hawthorne, for example, has a subject whose output is complete and whose value is well known. In dealing with a modern author, however, no such simplicity of approach presents itself. One stands in the forest trying to examine an individual tree. Here the student of literature must criticize the work of one whose lifetime may not be completed, or whose reputation has been ignored by the scholarly critics. No serious criticism has been made of
the Wellman novels; the only attention this author's work has received is in newspaper and periodical comment.

Yet examinations of the contributions of a popular novelist are not uncommon. Recent literary criticism includes analyses of the works of Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, and Willa Cather, to cite a few examples.¹ In general, these studies evaluate the author's works in relation to his objectives and current standards of criticism. The reputation of each of these authors, like that of Paul Wellman, is not a matter for complete agreement by the well-known critics.

Two comments by critics of the novel may indicate the need for study of a modern writer. Edward Wagenknecht writes: "Critics of the novel do not always show good judgment in deciding whom to discuss and whom to pass over in silence."² Alexander Cowie feels that considering the popular authors of an age is of value in estimating the achievements of the so-called major writers.³ Both Cowie and Wagenknecht include discussion of many popular authors in their books on the American novel.

This examination of the Jericho novels of Paul Wellman is presented in the hope that it will serve as a

¹These works are listed in the Bibliography.
contribution to the criticism of a popular writer whom the established critics have so far "passed over in silence."

Grateful appreciation is extended to the writer's graduate committee for their patience and assistance: Miss Alice Morrison; Dr. Ralph V. Coder; Dr. Roberta C. Stout; Dr. E. R. Craine; and Dr. Geneva Herndon, all of Fort Hays Kansas State College. Miss Morrison's help, as chairman of the committee, has been of particular value. Valuable aid has been given by a number of library staffs, particularly those of Forsyth Library, Hays, Kansas; the William Allen White Library, Emporia; the Kansas Historical Library at Topeka; and the Horton, Kansas, Public Library.

Finally, the writer wishes to dedicate the paper to his wife, Leann, and his children, Anne and Scott, who have encouraged the project and assisted in many ways with its preparation.
CHAPTER I

THE LITERARY CAREER OF PAUL I. WELLMAN

Travel and family conflict marked the early years of Paul Wellman's life, following his birth at Enid, Oklahoma, on October 14, 1896.1 His father, Frederick Creighton Wellman, was a missionary and well-known author using the pen-name, Cyril Kay-Scott. Paul Wellman's mother was Lydia Isely, daughter of a Swiss immigrant family which settled in northeast Kansas in the early years of Kansas statehood. Mr. Paul Wellman is a nephew of Bliss Isely, an author of several Kansas history texts.2

During his childhood, Paul Wellman was taken to Angola, Portuguese West Africa, by his parents who were missionaries there. Trips to Lisbon, London, and other European cities came during this period. There is little

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1Unless otherwise indicated, material for the biographical sketch of Wellman is taken from a word portrait in Saturday Review of Literature, March 19, 1949, p. 25, and Current Biography--1949, pp. 631-632.

2Interview with Mrs. Elise Isely Johnson, Hays Kansas, June 24, 1955. Mrs. Johnson, a first cousin of Paul Wellman, spent the early years of her life in close contact with the author at Cimarron, Kansas. She noted that the "Iselin" in Wellman's name is a Swiss spelling of the family name, Isely. The early Isely residence was near Fairview, in Brown County, Kansas.
in Wellman's career that can be traced to the years spent in Africa; it may be significant that none of his stories or books has an African setting.³

At the age of ten Wellman returned to the United States for more formal education. While living with an aunt in Vernal, Utah, he observed the Ute Indians on a nearby reservation and gained much first-hand knowledge regarding them. His first short stories and two non-fiction books, Death in the Desert and Death on the Prairie, were based on the Indian conflict with the white man.

During these years the family conflict between Wellman's parents ended in divorce and subsequent re-marriage for Frederick Wellman.⁴ Mrs. Wellman took her

³Mrs. Johnson felt that the early years in Africa had little influence on Wellman's writing career. She did feel that he inherited a gift of story-telling from his mother and a style of writing from his father. Both statements are extremely difficult to prove.

⁴In his autobiography, Life Is Too Short, Frederick Wellman states that he married Lydia Isely chiefly because she agreed to go to Africa with him. (p. 128) He accuses his wife's family of trying to turn his children against him, and places the blame for the divorce on incompatibility and the strictness of his wife. (pp. 151-152) He is quite proud of Paul Wellman's writing, and it may be worth noting that his son wrote the introduction for Life Is Too Short. The autobiography is entertaining reading about an absorbing personality. Of course, the Isely side of the family would disagree with Frederick Wellman's views on the divorce. Mrs. Johnson stressed the problems faced by the mother in caring for her children in Western Kansas. No further comment is included in this paper on the divorce, inasmuch as it apparently has little influence on Paul Wellman's writing.
four children to Cimarron, Kansas, to live; the time spent in Western Kansas forms a background for some of the incidents in The Bowl of Brass and The Walls of Jericho. Later the family moved to Wichita, where Paul Wellman acquired his high school education and college degree from Fairmont College, now Wichita University, in 1918. After graduation Wellman enlisted in the Army and attained the rank of sergeant before the end of the first World War. His military service was confined to the continental United States.

In 1919 Wellman began his journalistic career as a $12.50 per week cub reporter with the Wichita Beacon. For the next seventeen years he advanced steadily in the field of journalism, first with the Beacon and later with its Wichita competitor, the Eagle. In 1936 Wellman left Wichita for a position as feature and editorial writer with the Kansas City Star. He remained with the Star until 1944; during this period his first books began to appear. Death on the Prairie, published in 1934, and Death in the Desert, in 1935, as noted earlier, traced the eventual downfall of the Indian civilization in the Middle West. In 1936 Wellman's first novel, Bronco Apache was published, a story of Masai, the son of Geronimo, and his conflict with the white settlers in the Southwest. This first novel

Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, June 21, 1955
was later the basis for the motion picture, *Apache*, starring Burt Lancaster.

*The Trampling Herd*, a nonfiction account of the struggle to establish cattle ranches in the West after 1870 and their eventual replacement by homesteads, was printed in 1939. A second novel, *Jubal Troop*, also appeared the same year. Three years later, Wellman released a third fiction work, *Angel With Spurs*, the story of Confederate General Jo Shelby and his attempt to reach Mexico in the last weeks of the Civil War.

As a result of overwork, Wellman became seriously ill in 1943. Finding it impossible to continue both literary and journalistic careers, he resigned his position with the *Star* in 1944 and moved to California. Since then, in addition to writing books, Wellman has spent some time in script writing for the movies.

Paul Wellman's life is characterized by a steady rise as a journalist and novelist, as far as popularity and financial success are concerned. His life in Kansas, as well as his journalistic career have provided some of the background for his novels. In a letter, Wellman made this comment:

> Every novel is, of course, affected by the author's life, because it is through his life that he arrives not only at his viewpoints and philosophy

6This novel, with its Western theme, was the basis for a motion picture released in 1956.
of life, but also the episodes he describes, which, however little they resemble his own experiences, must always be based on something he has seen and felt.

I was, of course, a newspaperman for most of the time I lived in Kansas, and being a newspaperman, doing every kind of reporting and writing on the constant so for many years, provided me with an exceptional chance to see life in many forms, and to become acquainted with characters such as I might never have encountered in some less searching profession. Naturally this kind of background has been of enormous value to me in all the different aspects of writing a novel: plot invention, character formation, viewpoint, atmosphere, descriptive passages, and so on.7

The first of the three Jericho novels, The Bowl of Brass, was published in 1944. In it the author creates Jericho, a small town in southwestern Kansas in 1889. The novel presents the difficulties of growth experienced by this community in its struggle to win the county-seat location from its rival, Bedestown. In a letter, Mr. Wellman writes that the central theme is "the disintegration of character of an introverted paranoiac, whose religious bigotry and fanaticism lead to tragedy not only for others but for himself."8 This character is Simeon Trudge, a hateful old man who eventually destroys himself in an attempt to kill Til Rector, a young farmer who has fallen in love with Trudge's wife, Gary. Through the handicaps of weather and failure to get help from Henry Archelaus, the land

8Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, July 16, 1955.
speculator who is behind the creation of Jericho, Til has lost his farm. When he obtains employment with Simeon Trudge, Rector enters a situation which results in his falling in love with Gary.

The Bowl of Brass centers around the activities of these three characters, Simeon, Til, and Gary, and eventually has a happy ending. Many of the incidents in the work have a historical basis in the struggle over location of the county-seat in Stevens County, Kansas, between Hugoton and Woodsdale in 1885 and 1886. Mr. Wellman asserts, however, that Jericho is not any one Kansas community, but is, rather, the product of his imagination. It did not have a large sale, and critical comment on it is somewhat difficult to find. One reviewer noted Wellman's accuracy in the use of historical background and stated that the author had created "a terrible town and a terrible frontier."

The Kansas City Star critic felt that The Bowl of Brass was the best Wellman novel up to that time (1944) and noted the careful development of the three major characters in the book.

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9 Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, June 21, 1955. The title refers to "the impression of a bowl created by the sun's shining on the flat land of Western Kansas."


The review in The Wichita Beacon mentioned the use of the Stevens County conflict as background material for the novel and concluded, "It is a well-organized chunk out of a life that can never be lived again."\(^{12}\)

For the most part, the reviewers agreed that Wellman had been accurate in his historical research for The Bowl of Brass. The criticisms were generally favorable to the development of character and the treatment of a little-known period in Kansas history.

In February, 1947, the Literary Guild Book Club selected The Walls of Jericho, Wellman's next novel, as its offering. A sale of over one million copies, one of the largest issues ever distributed by the Guild, was recorded.\(^{13}\) The novel centers around the career of David Constable, an attorney and Republican leader in Jericho, now grown to a town of some ten to fifteen thousand. The time covered by The Walls of Jericho is from 1901 until World War I. The dramatic movement is based on the impact of three women on David Constable—Belle Dunham, his "vapid, petulant, overweight wife,"\(^{14}\) Algeria Wedge, his friend's wife, who breaks up David's friendship with

\(^{12} \)The Wichita Beacon, March 19, 1944, p. 24.

\(^{13} \)Publisher's Weekly, March 1, 1947, pp. 1379-1380. This sale contrasts with Wellman's estimate of 225,000 for The Bowl of Brass.

Tucker Wedge, Jericho's newspaper editor, for reasons of social and political ambition, and Julia Norman, a young lawyer with whom David finds happiness after several obstacles have been overcome.

This novel is not based on historical events to the extent that The Bowl of Brass is, but the progressive or insurgent movement in the Republican party in the first decade of the twentieth century does furnish background material. Other than the use of the Jericho setting, this book is not related to The Bowl of Brass. No carry-over in characters occurs, with one minor exception. There is one brief reference in The Walls of Jericho to Til Rector and Gary, now living happily on a farm near Jericho.15

Comment on this novel was mixed. Referring to an "eventful, complicated, and sometimes manipulated plot," Walter Havighurst asserted that the main value of the fiction work was its picture of a society taking shape in Jericho around the turn of the century.16 Birney Hoffman praised Wellman's accuracy in The Walls of Jericho and was favorably impressed with the creation of "strongly independent characters produced by the harsh climate of the treeless plains."17 Hoffman's discussion was

15The Walls of Jericho, p. 213
16Havighurst, op. cit., p. 20.
the most favorable to this second Jericho novel. Another critic expressed a view similar to that of Hoffman, stating that the chief contribution of the novel was its "portrayal of Jericho and its citizens, from the most respected to the criminal edge." In an interview regarding the title, Wellman suggested that "the walls were prejudice, evil thinking, and selfishness in Jericho which had to be overcome."

Two years later, in April, 1949, the Literary Guild selected the next Jericho novel, The Chain, as its monthly offering to members. A sale of over one million copies resulted, following an intensive sales campaign. The novel recounts the struggle of Episcopal Rector John Carlisle to transform St. Albans Church in Jericho from a social gathering place for the wealthy into a truly Christian institution for all regardless of class. The setting is post World War II in Jericho, now expanded to a city of nearly one-hundred thousand. In its development of religious and ethical problems, The Chain is a more philosophical novel than are the earlier works in the Jericho series.

There was, however, a historical basis for Father Carlisle. A Father Henry Jardine had been Rector of


St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Kansas City, Missouri, from 1879 to 1885. When he died, a chain was found welded around his body, apparently worn there in expiation for some past sin. Mr. Wellman writes:

"I had been wishing to write a novel about the Church and its mission. When I heard the story, I at once knew that I had my symbol." The events in the Wellman novel are not related to the Jardine story, however, other than in the use of the idea for the symbolism of the chain.

The action develops with the impact of John Carlisle on Jericho and a number of its citizens. Gilda Westcott, daughter of a meat-packing executive, and Dr. Murray Clifton, handsome physician to the upper class in Jericho, provide the romantic interest in this novel. There is much more than this in The Chain, however; the change that comes over Jericho as a result of Carlisle's death by mob action is striking. Wellman comments that he believes The Chain may be his best book and notes receipt of thousands of letters regarding the work.

A varied critical reaction was given this novel. Edmund Fuller wrote that the character of John Carlisle

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20Rev. Charles T. Cooper, Jr., Rector of St. Mary's Church, Kansas City, Missouri, correspondence, March 8, 1956.

21Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, October 18, 1955.

22Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, June 21, 1955.
lifted the quality of the entire book. He concluded:

    In its best moments The Chain touches movingly upon spiritual truth. It makes a sincere statement of the great need for vital change and regenerative grace in the individual. 23

In his review Mr. Fuller comments favorably on Wellman's description of the tornado and its effect on Jericho.

    At the other end of the critical scale, one reviewer saw Wellman attempting to write "a slick religious novel" in the hope of producing a best-seller. 24 He did view favorably the authenticity of the Wellman treatment of Kansas issues in the novel. Another unfavorable review is illustrated in the following statement: "The novel is fast reading and moves rapidly, but it is emotionally flat; the characters represent types, not people." 25

The three novels represent what might be considered a trilogy in the sense that the Jericho setting remains in all three works. Mr. Wellman supports this view:

    Yes, I think they could be so denominated. Together they tell the story of the growth and development of a typical Kansas town from its townsitie boom days, until it becomes an important Kansas community. The town itself is an important continuing character, ...and I have carefully traced its growth, while tracing out the human characters and their activities in the three novels. 26

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23 Edmund Fuller, "Regeneration in Jericho," Saturday Review of Literature, March 19, 1949, p. 26


25 Abner J. Gaines, review section, Library Journal, April 1, 1949, p. 549.

In addition to the similar setting, there is some carry-over of characters in the novels. Algeria Wedge, the wife of the editor in The Walls of Jericho, has an important part as a newspaper editor in her own right in The Chain. Porter Grimes, the conservative banker in The Walls of Jericho, is still more conservative in The Chain, and David Constable appears for one brief mention in the latter novel.

In this paper, however, the term "Jericho novels" is used rather than "Jericho trilogy" inasmuch as Wellman is now at work on a fourth novel in the Jericho group. The tentative title is The Daughters of Jericho, with publication scheduled for fall, 1956.27

Wellman's writing activities since the publication of The Chain may be summarized briefly. In 1951, The Iron Mistress, dealing with the activities of James Bowie, inventor of the famous knife and a defender of the Alamo, was a popular success. A year later, The Comancheros, a novel with a Western theme, also made best-seller lists. With the appearance of The Female in 1953, Wellman departed from his usual setting. This historical romance concerns the rise of Theodora from the streets of Byzantium to the palace as empress of Justinian in the sixth century A. D. Wellman writes: "In it I revealed the workings of the mind

and soul of a prostitute." A compelling narrative and vivid description mark this novel. Wellman's latest book, *Glory, God, and Gold*, a readable nonfiction account of the development of the Southwestern United States, was published as part of the *Mainstream of America* series in 1954.

A brief comment on the personality of Paul Wellman should perhaps close this chapter. His friendliness and generosity have been noted by a number of people. Mr. John Doohan, Librarian for the *Kansas City Star*, related in an interview that in Wellman's serious illness in 1944 a number of *Star* men gave blood for transfusions. Since that time, Wellman has sent each of them a copy of any new book of his as it appears. Mrs. Johnson commented favorably on the hospitality of the Wellman home in Los Angeles. Finally, the writer wishes to note Mr. Wellman's cooperation in answering promptly correspondence on the Jericho novels. The information gained has been of great value in preparing this study.

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CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Historical Novel: An Introductory Statement

Historical fiction is generally considered to have begun with the novels of Sir Walter Scott. In works such as The Talisman and Ivanhoe, this author discovered a wealth of material for fiction in the history of his nation. Edward Wagenknecht asserts that Scott knew the past and studied it carefully before writing his novels. "He had the historian's sense of time as strongly as any man who has ever lived. He added a 'fourth dimension--that of 'time past'--to the novel."

In The Spy and The Pilot, and later in The Leatherstocking Tales, James Fenimore Cooper established himself as the "first delineator of the American scene in fiction." This author became the first of a

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1 Helen E. Haines, What's in a Novel?, p. 108
2 Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel, p. 165
long line of American writers of historical fiction. As stated by Cowie, his pattern is still used by many authors today:

...a tale of high adventure set in the past, centering in a situation crucial in the life of a nation or a people, involving persons and places and actions partly invented and partly historical.4

Critics are not in complete agreement as to what constitutes a historical novel. For example, Ernest E. Leisy states that any novel set at least a generation in the past is historical, if it reflects the spirit and limitations of the age.5 Helen E. Haines writes, "One of the definitions is a novel which depicts actual persons, periods, or events in a manner readily identified."6 Orville Prescott, writing in a similar manner, has this definition: "...any novel which takes place before the author's birth so that he must inform himself about the period by study."7 These three views, while quite close in opinion, reflect the differences that enter into attempting a set definition.

The popular appeal of the historical novel has been strong from the time of Cooper and Scott to the

6 Haines, op. cit., p. 110.
present. This is indicated by John T. Frederick in a statement:

And at the end of 1953 when one publisher proclaimed with pride the sale of three hundred thousand copies of James Jones' *From Here to Eternity...* another publisher blandly noted that sales of Thomas B. Costain's *The Silver Chalice* had passed the two million mark.

A further example of the appeal of this type is the fact that *Gone With the Wind* was the fastest selling novel in literary history, having passed the six million mark at the time of Margaret Mitchell's tragic death in 1949.

Several critics are in agreement as to reasons for the popularity of historical fiction. The desire for "escape" from the realities of the present, interest in a nation's past, and curiosity about the lives of people who lived in another age--these three factors account for much of the interest in historical fiction. Undoubtedly many readers who pick up a novel of this type do so to read about an age safely past with a "this can't happen now" attitude. However, a desire to know about people and events of another time would seem, more than the escape

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8Leisy, op. cit., p. 1.
motive, to explain the appeal of this genre. For example, although much of its narrative related the inhuman conditions of a Civil War prison, MacKinlay Kantor's *Andersonville* remained high on best-seller lists for month after month in 1956. This novel could hardly be classed as pleasant escape reading.

The greatest value of a well-written historical novel is its ability to make the past alive and real for a reader. To attain this goal, however, a work must meet two standards: it must be accurate historically, at least as far as the broad and accepted outlines of historical truth are concerned, and it must contain qualities of literature—an absorbing plot, believable characters, and, perhaps, a pleasing style. Prescott sums up the standards of the best historical fiction:

...Sound technical craftsmanship; accurate historical background artfully introduced as the natural world which the characters take for granted; interesting and believable characters; and a plausible plot without excessive sensationalism or ridiculous melodrama.12

A combination of literary excellence and historical accuracy are not easily attained. Wagenknecht states the problem:

To write a good historical novel, a writer must have the same insight into character that he would need if he were writing about his contemporaries; in addition to this, he must have sufficient know-

ledge and imagination to be able to feel and think his way back into an alien mode of life.\textsuperscript{13}

Two examples of historical fiction which may meet these standards are Walter D. Edmonds' Drums Along the Mohawk, and Hope Muntz's The Golden Warrior. In his tale of the Mohawk Valley during the American Revolution, Edmonds appears to have combined accuracy in research with skillful characterization and creation of plot.\textsuperscript{14} Hope Muntz, in The Golden Warrior, presents an epic of the struggle between Harold and William at the time of the Norman Conquest. The vivid portrayal and defense of Harold is perhaps the outstanding feature of this novel.

Several examples illustrate some of the trends in recent historical fiction.\textsuperscript{15} A tendency by some novelists to portray little-known figures from the past is illustrated by Thomas B. Costain's The Moneyman, an account of the career of Jacques Couer, "the first modern merchant, inventor of the department store, and pioneer of big business."\textsuperscript{16} Northwest Passage, by

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{13}Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel, pp. 163-164.
\item\textsuperscript{14}In "How You Begin a Novel," Atlantic, August, 1934, Walter D. Edmonds relates some of the problems of historical research he encountered in writing this novel.
\item\textsuperscript{15}These trends, of course, are not limited to the historical novel, but apply in many cases to other forms of fiction.
\item\textsuperscript{16}Frederick, op. cit., p. 374.
\end{itemize}
Kenneth Roberts, relates the experiences of Major Rogers, a rather obscure figure of the American Revolution.

A re-interpretation of history has occupied the attention of several novelists. Kenneth Roberts' Oliver Wiswell presents the Loyalist side of the American Revolution. While the main character is fictional, severe criticisms are included of historical figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. An attempt to show George Washington as a very human farmer from Virginia is given by Howard Fast in The Unvanquished; in Freedom Road this author tries to show the part played by Negro "statesmen" in the South following the Civil War.

A compelling novel, which is characterized by the stream-of-consciousness technique, and use of flashbacks, is Ross Lockridge's Raintree County. The story develops the life of John Shawnessy, through the study of a single day, July 4, 1892. The unusual structure makes this a challenging novel for anyone who likes fiction.

These comments indicate some of the problems and trends in historical fiction. Inasmuch as only one full-length treatment of the subject has appeared recently, the need for additional research would appear an obvious conclusion.

17Ernest E. Leisy's, The American Historical Novel.
Historical Background in the Jericho Novels

When asked whether the first two Jericho novels were historical, Paul Wellman replied:

(In The Bowl of Brass) I was, however, much more interested in the development of the characters who lived in my pages than in recreating an actual historical episode. For these reasons I would not consider The Bowl of Brass a true historical novel, nor The Walls of Jericho for that matter. I consider a historical novel of the pure type as a vehicle for recreating an era, against the background of some important event or series of events....Like you, I believe that good historical novels are of incalculable value to readers who desire to grasp a picture of how people believed, acted, appeared, and thought, which the historian fails to present in the carefully documented history, for the reason that he cannot document such thinking and behavior.16

The Bowl of Brass, however, is considered as historical fiction, for its characters are influenced by the Western Kansas land boom of the 1880's, and the Stevens County conflict is used to provide background. The argument that actual persons or events must be included would seem too limited a definition of the historical novel. Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler were not historical figures, yet hardly anyone questions Gone With the Wind as a leading work of this type.

While the characters in the first two Jericho novels are products of Wellman's imagination, a picture of south-western Kansas in the past is presented, and the novels are at least historical in background.

16Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, August 5, 1955.
In the remainder of this chapter questions of historical accuracy and the location of Jericho are considered. The observations are drawn from examples and incidents intended to be representative rather than complete.

Wellman uses a relatively little-known segment of history as the background for The Bowl of Brass. He states that the Stevens County county-seat struggle in southwestern Kansas was the starting point for the plot in his first Jericho work. In 1885, a steady migration into the western third of Kansas began, a movement based primarily on the attraction of free land and the thought that "every quarter-section homestead represented a good farm." Within two years after 1885 the population of the western third of Kansas increased by a quarter of a million.

With this increase in population came the inevitable land speculators and schemers with "get-rich-quick" plans. For the most part, this element was responsible for the establishment of towns and the resulting conflicts over location of the county-seat. Henry Archelaus, the land

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\[20\] Henry F. Mason, "County Seat Controversies in Southwestern Kansas," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, February, 1933, pp. 45

\[21\] T. A. McNeal, When Kansas Was Young, p. 164.

\[22\] Ibid., p. 166.
speculator in *The Bowl of Brass*, receives advice from his patron which illustrates the lure of quick profits:

Listen, Hank, the profits accruing from the location of a town which is fortunate enough to prosper are—well, enormous. Consider this: a section of land at the government price is usually eight-hundred dollars. Plat that in town lots. At eight lots to the acre you have fifty-two hundred and twenty lots... Say you ask only one-hundred dollars a lot, you clean up more than half a million dollars.23

Usually the dreams of quick profit were only dreams, but this hope of wealth explains some of the bitter contests over location of the county-seat.24 In Stevens County occurred one of the most violent of these struggles. This county had been first organized by the Kansas Legislature in 1873, but settlement failed to develop, and the organization soon became defunct. In 1886, the county was re-organized after the start of the land rush. The first census, in 1887, showed 2,662 residents, and Hugoton was established as county-seat. A struggle with Woodsdale, four or five miles northeast of Hugoton, over the selection of the county-seat, soon became intense. After the Woodsdale people complained of the fraudulent census, an election to settle the issue was ordered by the governor. Hugoton won; again fraud was charged. In establishing polling places, for example, only one voting center was provided for the entire county—this at Hugoton. Also

23 *The Bowl of Brass*, p. 20.
24 *Mason, op. cit.*, p. 47.
the ballots were canvassed by the Hugoton group. These conditions served to increase bitterness between the two communities. 25

Conflict between Hugoton and Woodsdale reached a climax in the Haymeadow killings of July 25, 1888, in the "neutral strip", south of Stevens County in unorganized territory. With a posse at night, Hugoton Sheriff Sam Robinson surprised a group of men from Woodsdale near Wild Horse Lake. In a fit of anger, Robinson fatally wounded four men, and left a fifth, a boy of nineteen, for dead. The murders shocked all Kansas, but, due to political manipulations and quick loss of public interest in the crime, Robinson was not punished.

As in Stevens County, Wellman's characters in The Bowl of Brass use fraud in gaining the center of government for Jericho. Henry Archelaus and his assistants "seriously" establish gophers and prairie dogs as residents of the county. 27 In 1887 the Kansas Legislature had required that a census show four-hundred "householders

25 This account is taken from Frank W. Blackmar, History of Kansas, II, pp. 764-766. The organization of Stevens County is included in the Sixth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, p. 485.

26 McNeal, op. cit., pp. 170-177; Mason, op. cit., pp. 55-57; unpublished papers in the Kansas State Historical Library, Topeka.

27 The Bowl of Brass, pp. 34-35.
or property owners" before a county could be established. Western Kansas was at least a week's trip from Topeka, however, and it was easy to prepare false lists of voters. Writing in *The Sod House Frontier*, Everett Dick states that names were often given to animals in outright violation of the law. Methods used for securing "residents" in Wellman's novel appear historically probable.

The Haymeadow Massacre plays an important part in *The Bowl of Brass* because it provides the basis for the killings by Sherry Quarternight, the Jericho sheriff, at Antelope Lake. Four minor characters are killed by Quarternight, and Til Rector, the fifth, is severely wounded but recovers. Corresponding to the historical event, the killings take place in a "neutral strip" south of "Blair County." It is further significant that Quarternight escapes without punishment as did Robinson in the actual killings.

In a letter to the writer, Paul Wellman comments on his use of the 1888 tragedy:

Yes, the Haymeadow Massacre was the genesis of my episode in "The Bowl of Brass" although, as you will observe, I merely used the general situation and

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28 *State of Kansas, Session Laws of 1887*, p. 186
29 Everett Dick, *The Sod House Frontier*, p. 470
30 *The Bowl of Brass*, pp. 272-280. These pages cover the murders by Sherry Quarternight.
departed widely from its details so that actually my fictitious killings were by no means a historical recapitulation of that massacre... I was much more interested in the development of the characters who lived in my pages than in recreating an actual historical episode.\(^{31}\)

Although Wellman is correct, he has followed rather closely some of the Stevens County events.

The location of Jericho caused considerable comment at the time each of the novels was published; Wellman has a record of seven communities which claim to be the pattern for his town.\(^{32}\) In *The Bowl of Brass*, Jericho is located in southwestern Kansas near Hugoton. The Cimarron River is mentioned in the story and the locale is ninety miles west of Dodge City.\(^{33}\) Located four or five miles northeast of Jericho, Bedestown corresponds to the present location of Woodsdale.

Several examples further illustrate Wellman's use of background material. The county-seat election, controlled by Jericho, is held at only one polling place for the entire county, which is similar to the actual situation in Stevens County history.\(^{34}\) Simeon Trudge

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\(^{31}\) Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, August 6, 1955.

\(^{32}\) Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, June 21, 1955.

\(^{33}\) The *Bowl of Brass*, p. 236; p. 36.

\(^{34}\) Blackmar, *op. cit.*, p. 764. The comparison is based on *The Bowl of Brass*, p. 67
reads a *Kansas City Star* dated June 3, 1889. A check with the paper of that date reveals that Wellman was accurate in his use of the material.

Antelope Lake of *The Bowl of Brass* is similar to Wild Horse Lake of Stevens County. Wellman describes the body of water:

They were approaching the sand hills, gray with their crown of sagebrush, and suddenly they topped a low swell in the ground and saw Antelope Lake, bright beneath the sun like a wet steel shield. It was a curious freak of the plains, a lake with no outlet, created by an extensive hollow in the ground, which was fed by storm waters. After a long rainy spell, it was five or six miles long and a mile wide. Just now it was three miles long and perhaps a half-mile wide. The lake was very shallow, probably not more than ten feet deep at its widest point.

This description is similar to one written in 1889 about Wild Horse Lake. Wellman is accurate in his picture of this natural area in Stevens County.

The major departure from fact in *The Bowl of Brass* is the use of 1889 as the time of the action. Wellman states he chose that date because "that was in the midst of the Western Kansas land boom." The Haymeadow killings

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35 *The Bowl of Brass*, p. 47.


37 *The Bowl of Brass*, p. 236.

38 *The Seventh Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture*, p. 248.

39 Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, August 6, 1955.
took place in 1888, however, and crop failure that year contributed to a decline in Stevens County population. \textsuperscript{40} One possible advantage of using 1889 may have been that the historical background was complete by then.

History plays a less important part in \textit{The Walls of Jericho} than in \textit{The Bowl of Brass}. There are no actual background events in \textit{The Walls of Jericho}, although the progressive movement in the Republican party during the period from 1900 to 1914 receives some attention. The location of Jericho is still southwestern Kansas. Wellman describes the Jericho water tower:

> While gangs of men swarmed around the old water tower, straightening it, calking its cracks, tightening its iron hoops, cleaning out the guano left by bats, and repainting, Tucker arranged with the committee a program of festivities... \textsuperscript{41}

Mrs. Johnson comments that this water tower existed in Cimarron, Kansas, when Wellman was a child. She has a picture of the one referred to in an album at her home in Hays. \textsuperscript{42}

\textit{The Walls of Jericho} covers a time period from 1901 until the outbreak of World War I. The only historical figure presented--this only briefly--in any of the Jericho

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\textsuperscript{40}Seventh Biennial Report, p. 6, notes the crop failure. The population dropped from an estimated 3,000, probably inaccurate, in 1888, to 1,504 in 1889.

\textsuperscript{41}The \textit{Walls of Jericho}, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{42}Interview with Mrs. Johnson, June 25, 1955.
novels, is William Jennings Bryan. Wellman presents him in an unflattering light:

Dave saw before him a broad, balding man with immense Roman features, hair shaggy and long at the back of his huge head, and a mouth as wide as a saucer. Mr. Bryan was attired in the alpaca coat and string tie he had made his handmarks. In his hand was a plate, heaped high with sandwiches, which he ate greedily.43

This view may be compared with one by William Allen White, written about Bryan as he appeared in 1900, some ten years before the description fits into Wellman's novel:

The picture I held of him that day is still with me. He was a tall, at least a tallish young man, who was, as I was, beginning to get too opulent a crescent in his vest. He had a mop of black hair and a tawny complexion. His eyes were large, expressive, gentle. In all things he was a gentle person, I felt.44

Both writers give clear physical descriptions, while presenting sharply contrasting pictures of personality.

In The Walls of Jericho, Wellman compares the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft:

When Dave went into office as Peddigrew's assistant, Theodore Roosevelt was in the White House, talking radical and acting conservative; the Panama Canal was much discussed as a coming project; muckrakers were lambasting the trusts; ... and Bryan was still digesting the Populism the Democratic party had swallowed.

43 The Walls of Jericho, p. 207.
By the time Dave was well into his second and last term as county attorney, the fat, reactionary William Howard Taft was in the White House; Theodore Roosevelt was regretting having ever stepped out for him; the Panama Canal was well along toward completion; the trusts had made a great comeback; trade unionism was growing, but Populism was forgotten; and a schism had developed in Congress between the Standpatters and the Progressives.45

This rapid-fire summary is quite accurate, except that Taft was not quite as reactionary as Wellman presents him. One of his biographers, Henry F. Pringle, records that a number of progressive measures were enacted during the Taft administration; examples might include the parcel post law, creation of postal savings plans, and new laws for the control of trusts. Pringle also suggests in his biography of Theodore Roosevelt that the "radical talk and conservative action" characterization is close to fact.46

The third novel in the Jericho series, The Chain, has as its setting the present postwar world. The city has grown quite large, as illustrated by Wellman's picture early in the novel:

Below Gilda's terrace breakfast table lay outstretched Jericho, arranged in seemingly strata according to the social and economic grades comprising it. On the slope of the hill and near its base were the better homes of professional and business men, prosperous and dignified,

45 The Walls of Jericho, p. 104
46 Pringle states that Roosevelt would publicly threaten the trusts with legal action, then privately assure them that little action would be taken.
but not quite so pretentious as those on the crown of the acclivity itself. Beyond these were the second-rate dwellings, with here and there an apartment structure or church. After that came block on block of Kansas cottages, corner groceries, filling stations, schools, and smaller churches, screened by the verdure of countless trees. Yet further the lofty steel and concrete structures of the business section towered, then came the railroad yards, the two big flour mills, the stockyards, and finally the packing plant, with its twin smokestacks, at this distance somewhat resembling a gargantuan red steamship, aground on those plains so far from the sea.\footnote{37}

Rather than a Southwest Kansas location, this description suggests a composite city based perhaps on Wichita and Kansas City. The flour and meat packing areas in a city on a plain seem similar to Wichita, while Tower Hill could be compared with Kansas City's Cliff Drive. Wellman is careful to point out that Jericho is not an actual town or city, however, but "a sort of recreation of a state of being, purely imaginary, but I think true to the living fact."\footnote{38}

Quite concerned with historical accuracy in his novels, Wellman feels that he achieves it:

\begin{quote}
I believe it is fair to say that in my historical novels I have exceptional respect for and fidelity to the known historical facts. This is because, unlike some historical romancers, I am a serious historian myself, with a background of four major serious histories, and many contributions to such publications as the Dictionary of American History....I have sought to be extremely careful to build the buttresses of known and recorded history exactly, while giving myself
\end{quote}

\footnote{37}{The Chain, p. 38.}
\footnote{38}{Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, June 21, 1955.}
whatever novelists' leeway I needed in the maneuvering of non-historical characters within that framework.

In using the Stevens County conflict in *The Bowl of Brass*, Wellman is accurate to the broad outlines of historical truth. He builds the fraudulent creation of Blair County and the Quarternight killings on events that actually occurred. There is some discrepancy in time, but it is less than a year, and does not seriously affect the truth of the events presented.

The location of Jericho in southwestern Kansas seems authentic in the first two novels of the series. Since no city of considerable size exists in western Kansas, the location in the third novel, *The Chain*, is less authentic. Here Wellman has made use of the writer's privilege to depart from exact fact in creating a work of fiction. In addition, the location of Jericho is not extremely important in this novel.

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49 Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, August 6, 1955.
CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS OF CHARACTER IN THE JERICHO NOVELS

Certain considerations arise in analyzing the characters in a work of fiction. First of all, the reader expects figures who are authentic to the time and setting of the novel. Particularly is this important in historical fiction. "Factual accuracy based on sound historical data has become an accepted responsibility."¹ This adherence to fact is demanded in the creation of character and plot, as well as in use of background.

Another factor is that of individuality. Has the author created a distinctive person, or has he used a character type in his novel? The gruff old man with the heart of gold, the idealistic young nurse who falls in love with the handsome doctor, the misunderstood adolescent--these patterns appear frequently in fiction and drama. The greatest creations in fiction, however, would seem to be individuals, rather than types. Examples of superior characterization might include Captain Ahab in Moby Dick, Hester Prynne in The Scarlet Letter, and Scarlett O'Hara in Gone With the Wind.

¹Helen E. Haines, op. cit., p. 112.
A third issue concerns growth or development. One expects the major characters to change as the action of the novel affects them. The reader will also want a feeling of identification with at least one of the characters. Lack of sympathy with the central figure usually results in a weakened work of fiction. For example, one criticism that might be made of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* is that the reader cares little whether or not Clyde Griffiths is punished for what may or may not be murder. Lack of feeling for the main figure in Kathleen Winsor's sensational best-seller, *Forever Amber*, is one factor in the novel's essential weakness. After several chapters, one ceases to care much what happens to Amber.

Prescott sums up standards of characterization:

The basic first step of fiction: the author has to persuade, to convince, to make the characters real enough that his readers will temporarily believe in them....The second is to make the characters seem interesting and significant as well as believable.

In the following paragraphs, Wellman states his concept of character:

In particular, the strongly individual nature of the people of the high plains has been useful to me. My idea of a good novel is this: when, after you have read a book, you feel that you know the people in it intimately, and have lived their lives with them, you know that you have read a good book. That is what I strive for in my novels, and whether or not I have been successful, only a reader could tell me.

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2 Prescott, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
In general, I try to let them (the characters) work themselves out in the atmosphere and movement of the book, as nearly naturally as human beings can. I try to be true to human nature and human psychology, and if my characters are successful... this is the reason for it. 3

Wellman seems to consider himself a realistic writer, one who is concerned with the accuracy of his characters, and the reactions of the reader to them.

The first novel of the Jericho series, The Bowl of Brass, has three major characters: Simeon Trudge, a Western Kansas farmer and religious fanatic; Gary, his young and dutiful wife; and Til Rector, Trudge's hired helper. The most important subordinate figures are Henry Archelaus, the land speculator and organizer of Jericho; Sherry Quarternight, the sheriff; and Gussie Gosney, an amoral and attractive waitress. Without must preliminary action, the central characters are presented in the first forty pages of the novel. Rather than preparing a careful entry, Wellman fits them naturally into the action of the story.

The psychological nature of Simeon Trudge is developed by Wellman. Because Trudge secretly nurses a sense of failure, and religious activity offers him an opportunity for achievement, he becomes an ardent church member. 4 Trudge, a sexual satyr, completely dominates his

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3Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, July 16, 1955; October 18, 1955
4The Bowl of Brass, pp. 146-147
his wife, whom he considers little better than property. He senses, however, that he cannot control her spirit:

When first they were married, he went to Gary in their bed timidly. But afterward came an eagerness that was almost brutal. Suddenly it seemed that he must make up for all the years that he had lost.

The long celibacy was a mistake, a fearful error. He now perceived that he had cheated himself, starved himself, and he sought to make amends for the long frustration. Gary had been placed by the law and the consent of the church in his possession.

Simeon was baffled by her impersonality. Somehow she gave the impression of being able to divorce her spirit from her body. The flame in him awakened no answering spark; sometimes he believed he was completely distasteful to her. Spiritually she held him away from her; the essential Gary was as unreachable to him as the polar star. And this humiliated him savagely. 

Careful description, a Wellman technique, creates an unsympathetic picture of Trudge from the first:

Til was surprised at the appearance of the farmer. The man was undersized, lean, and stooped. He seemed at least half a head shorter than his wife. Leathery wrinkles drew at his thin face, and a tangle of short kinky whiskers, very gray, almost concealed his small petulant mouth. From a nest of crabbed lines his eyes glared yellowly like those of a Leghorn rooster. No symptom of the deterioration of the years was in his small, raw frame, but it was evident that he was past his prime, fifty at least. And the girl behind him, she could not be more than twenty-three. Til found the disparity in ages displeasing.

Trudge's language is generally uneducated and laconic in tone, reflecting the harsh Western Kansas environment of the 1830's. An example shows these characteristics:

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5Ibid., pp. 148-149.
6Ibid., p. 37.
"Looks like big doings at Jericho," the farmer said that night at the supper table.

"What is it?" asked Gary, quick with feminine curiosity.

"They're goin' to have an election at Jericho next week, a county seat election."

"Are we--are you going in to vote?" To Gary here was a possible chance to visit the town, to break the monotony of her existence for a day.

But Simeon shook his head. "No. Waste of time. No skin off'n my nose whether Jericho or Bedestown wins. I'm halfway betwixt an' between, an' anyway, it'll only mean more taxes."

In this novel of struggle on the frontier, Trudge seems quite authentic. He uses his religious convictions to justify the attempt to destroy Til, but only destroys himself. Trudge changes little throughout the novel and maintains to the end his Old Testament attitudes.

In contrast to him, Gary and Til engage the reader's sympathy at once. Gary's life is dominated by a sense of duty. She reflects on her marriage:

Her whole notion of a husband had been someone who would be a good provider, and who would, perhaps, be a companion in her home. Love—even affection—were left out of all consideration. . . .

The marriage bed had become a shocking reality and it was repellent. . . . She conceived that it was natural to feel as she did. A woman was not to expect to obtain any pleasure out of marriage, she thought, but always must be submissive as she had been taught in her home and in her church.

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Love...honor...obey. These were the injunctions. She had tried to encompass the first and found it not possible. It therefore was the more incumbent on her to be dutiful in the observance of the other two.

In sympathetic terms, Wellman first describes Gary in *The Bowl of Brass*:

She was a tall thin woman in a plain green dress. Thin, and delicate looking. She had red hair. Til looked again at that hair. It was worth a second look. It was not red after all—at least not plain red. It had rich shades and meanings to which he could not lay his tongue.  

Wellman seems to have some difficulty in describing Gary. At least she does not emerge as strongly as does Simeon. She does change, however, as she falls in love with Til Rector, the young farmer. Because of a sense of duty to her religious beliefs, she does not have an affair with him, however.

Til Rector, the young farmer who loses his land to Henry Archelaus, engages the reader's sympathy from his first description:

He was homely, but it was a man's strong homeliness. His face, after all, was youthful, pleasant, and good-natured. And about him was a jauntiness, a part of his youth, manifested in his wide, easy-smiling mouth, and the manner in which he carried his fine shoulders. They were powerful shoulders, spread and toughened by hard labor. And his legs were long and straight.

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Of the minor characters, Henry Archelaus is the most important. Driven by a desire for wealth, he organizes Jericho, builds a court house, and conducts the county-seat fight. Using an iron-clad contract, he takes possession of farms when the owners fail to make a mortgage payment. Archelaus is the only character in the Jericho novels to have appeared in another Wellman book; as a gold prospector in Jubal Troop he made enough money to undertake the Jericho venture. The murders by Quarter-night defeat Archelaus in his scheme to make money and he realizes it. In a manner reminiscent of George Eliot, Wellman uses the theme that evil brings its own punishment. Archelaus, as does Trudge, defeats himself through his own actions.

As the sheriff, Sherry Quarternight is a typical Western character; his description sounds like a Western movie characterization:

At Henry's right across the table sat a lean, dark man, with a kind of dangerous elegance in the way he lounged in the chair, and a kind of dangerous handsomeness in his countenance. He might have been in his early thirties. His face was arresting with its lean- ness, its black mustache and goatee, and the white and perfect teeth displayed as with considerable dexterity he worked a cigar around from one corner of his mouth to the other.  

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{Ibid.}, p. 22\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{Ibid.}, p. 16\]
Although he holds the position as sheriff, Quartermight actually is a coward. His reputation is based on rumor rather than accomplishment, a condition which may have been typical of many Western bad men. Wellman's handling of conversation for his minor characters is shown by Quartermight's first meeting with Gussie Gosney:

Sherry whistled to himself.

"You see what I see?" he asked Tooley.

Tooley glanced at Spiller. Women. Sherry was smoothing his sleek black mustache. A new girl—it was part of his religion that he would have to explore what possibilities lay here.

The girl had an insinuating figure and her blonde hair was piled high on her head. She came sidling down behind the counter with three glasses of water balanced dextrously.

"Hello," she said, putting the glasses before the men.

"Hi," said Shad and Chet, gruffly.

Sherry's teeth glared in his best smile.

"Sweetheart, pay no attention to my friends," he said easily. "They're a couple of broken down old men and simply can't appreciate something like you."

"I got ham, roast beef, roast pork, and steak," she said.

"You got more than that," said Sherry...  

\[1\text{3}^{\text{15}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 264-265}\
\[1\text{4}^{\text{15}}\text{Both McNeal and Mason in their works support this statement.}\
\[1\text{5}^{\text{15}}\text{The \textit{Bowl of Brass.}, p. 24.}\]
Gussie eventually becomes Quarternigh's mistress, although she has one sensational affair with Trudge.\(^\text{16}\)

In her lack of moral conduct, she is "bad", but Wellman seems to sympathize with her essential honesty. In The Bowl of Brass she changes very little, and must be considered a type rather than an individual.

The characters in this first Jericho novel would appear authentic to setting and purpose. To a large degree, they are conditioned by their harsh environment. Probably the most careful portrait is that of Trudge, a completely unlovely character.

In contrast to Trudge, David Constable, the central figure of The Walls of Jericho, is a likeable young man. Early in the novel his creator introduces him with a picture similar to that of Til Rector:

> He stood on the cinders beside the track--tall and not ill made, although he gave the impression of excessive thinness. His shoulders were wide and bony, and he had a baseball player's limber swing of the arms; but he was so lean in the loins that his greatcoat blew voluminously about him. He was twenty-five, and his habitual gait was indolent. Yet he was capable of great activity when he wishes.\(^\text{17}\)

Constable's main weakness is guillibility and blind trust in his friends. He is trapped into marriage by the scheming Mrs. Dunham, Belle's dominating mother. The marriage is a complete failure, as that of Gary and Simeon

\(^{16}\text{Tbid., pp. 224-227.}\)

\(^{17}\text{The Walls of Jericho, p. 19.}\)
had been. A liberal Republican, David expresses his views on government regulation of corporations:

"The biggest thing wrong with the country today is that sacred institution known as the corporation....It is, in effect, a huge, predatory, and immortal thing, outliving men, forever growing and expanding, through devices like mergers and interlocking directorships and holding companies. Nobody under the present laws can curb it."

"All the corporations, trusts, and companies which hold a direct influence over the lives of a great bulk of the people--the public utilities, gas, water, and electric companies, and transportation, including the railroads, should be publicly owned."18

This political philosophy leads David into conflict with the conservative wing of his party, led by Porter Grimes, wealthy banker of Jericho, and Tucker Wedge, the newspaper editor.

In the climax of The Walls of Jericho, David Constable almost loses his life, but recovers and later marries Julia Norman, an attractive lawyer who has been in love with David from her childhood. Her impression on Constable is recorded by Wellman:

He acknowledged the introduction without catching her name. He was too busy, standing before the seated girl, in appreciating her--the whiteness of her bosom in the low-cut dress, the roundness of her throat. Above all her eyes. They were set wide apart under clear dark brows; and they were violet blue.19

When she realizes that she is in love with David, Julia leaves Jericho. She returns from Kansas City, however, to

18 Ibid., p. 20.
19 Ibid., p. 210
defend Margie Ransome, a young girl of Jericho. When Gotch McCurdy, a town "bum", tries to assault Margie, she kills him in self-defense. In desperation, she flees to Julia in Kansas City. Upon her return to Jericho with the attractive attorney, the novel ends on a happy note, as the lovers are re-united.

David's strongest opponent in Jericho is Algeria Wedge, wife of The Clarion's editor, Tucker Wedge. Her social ambitions cause her to push Tucker's campaign for Congress, but her plans end in failure when she trusts Belle Dunham to destroy David's reputation. Algeria assumes the social leadership of Jericho in a manner like that of Carol Kennicott in Lewis' Main Street. In her desire to improve Jericho, however, Algeria is not sincere; she wants merely to impose a veneer of culture on the town. In the end, Algeria, like Carol, is defeated, and she is forced to live out her life in Jericho, a fate she seems richly to deserve.20

Pervading the novel is the development of Jericho from a small village to a town of some ten or fifteen thousand. This creation of a growing community is similar to one by Henry Bellaman in Kings Row. Here he traces the growth of a small Missouri city in the period before the first World War. While Kings Row appears to have had a

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20 Algeria later becomes a newspaperwoman herself, and has an important part in The Chain.
model, Jericho seems a composite of several Kansas communities. 21

In developing Jericho, Wellman sketches a number of minor characters with vividness and clarity. One example is the picture of Judge Hutto, a Democratic leader in Republican Jericho:

As they were sitting down to supper, an old man entered and took a chair. He had a hawk nose, a harsh pale face, a wintry blue eye, and his white hair and eyebrows bristled aggressively. Because his back was cruelly bowed from arthritis, he walked slowly with a cane; and he never seated himself or rose from a chair, without an effort and a grimace. 22

Having similar political beliefs, the Judge and David grow to be good friends. Both favored trust regulation and a program quite similar to the Democratic party approach at the present time.

Sketches of two other minor characters illustrate Wellman's descriptive abilities:

Dave became acquainted with the county attorney, a waddling, fat-faced, fat-nosed man, with piggy-shrewd eyes, and nondescript mustache, whose name was Jasper Pedigrew. He was an indifferent lawyer, but considered himself a wit, and constantly interrupted his own sallies with queer saw-edged laughter, made by drawing his breath gratingly back through his throat in a series of jerks.... 23

21 The college, the mental institution, and the location of Kings Row suggest Fulton, Missouri, as the pattern.

22 The Walls of Jericho, p. 35.

23 Ibid., p. 35.
Another impression is that of Jefferson Norman, Julia's alcoholic father:

He was of middle height, very spare, erect, and dignified, with black brows, iron-gray hair, and heavy-rimmed glasses. His pepper-and-salt suit, while threadbare, fitted him with distinction, and his shabby linen was spotless. About him hung a strong odor of alcohol.  

Wellman's skill in description possibly is due to his journalistic training in observation.

Lack of growth and change in personality is the chief defect of the major characters in The Walls of Jericho. David Constable, for example, seems to emerge smiling at the end, unchanged by his many experiences. The people are authentic, however, and are clearly defined by their creator.

In The Chain, "a novel of social contacts and the psychological interpretation of ethical behavior," John Carlisle is the central figure.  

Regarding this third Jericho novel, Wellman writes:

The study is of a clergyman, nursing a secret feeling of guilt which makes of him an ascetic, who attempts to lead a church along the path of what he considers the precepts of Christ. The difficulties he encounters again are somewhat typical. The book is highly allegorical. For example, John Carlisle, the minister, represents uncompromising good, which is sometimes hard to take. Gilda Westcott represents the human soul, and its struggle to find its way either upward or downward.

24Ibid., p. 36
25Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, August 6, 1955.
The outstanding figure in The Chain, John Carlisle, the Episcopal Rector of St. Albans in Jericho, struggles to develop a church for all regardless of class. The theme is similar to one used by Agnes Slich Turnbull in The Bishop's Mantle; the greatest difference is that Hilary Laurens, Miss Turnbull's Rector, has a love relationship and marries, while Carlisle leads a life of celibacy.

Possibly Father Carlisle is Wellman's most original creation. As a young man, Carlisle accidentally kills his brother in a scuffle and goes to prison, feeling he has committed murder. While in confinement, he becomes convinced that he wants to enter the ministry. His idea of Christianity is stated briefly in this passage:

He believed with fervor in the Christ of the Testaments, the precepts, and message of redemption for all men. Yet it had been no parish rectorship of which he dreamed, but another, to him more satisfying niche, in the world of God. He was here, however, and he longed to minister well. St. Albans was fat, rich, swollen with pride, but he felt in it a sickness, such as a doctor may recognize in a person bursting with health—a sickness of the spirit. He hoped to bring health to his people, but more than once he suffered a secret fear that he was unfitted for the role.27

Carlisle carries this theme into his ministerial duties. Instantly, he arouses the enmity of Algeria Wedge, the newspaperwoman, Porter Grimes, the wealthy banker, and Todd Westcott, a packing house tycoon. These

27The Chain, p. 90.
three look upon the church as a social center, and care little about the laboring element in Jericho. Carlisle, however, has a profound effect upon their lives; he leads them, through his ministry and death, to a different way of life.28

Wellman introduces Carlisle through the eyes of Gilda Westcott:

He seemed rather young—about thirty, she would guess. Light from the big window sharply etched his thin, sunburnt face. A decisive nose and chin and heavy eyebrows which formed a continuous line across the bridge of the nose accented the face. His mouth and eyes interested her most. The former was wide and almost stern, but its corners drooped and faint lines about it suggested to her some sort of physical suffering. The dark eyes shone with a strange splendor of inward high lights, yet in the expression seemed a brooding sadness that made her wonder.29

This introduction is characteristic of Wellman's careful physical description. Yet there is more than that; one catches the sadness and mystic qualities which are associated throughout the novel with Carlisle. Wellman is very sympathetic to this man and makes of him a quite memorable figure in modern fiction.

Carlisle loses his life as a result of mob violence incited by Algeria's newspaper, The Clarion. However, his influence is more pronounced after his death than before,

28Grimes and Westcott undertake a low-cost housing project for Jericho; Algeria completes the church spire with her donations. (The Chain, pp. 358-366)

29Ibid., pp. 17-18
as his spirit leads to changes in St. Albans and Jericho. The result is a closer approach to the Christian ethic for which Carlisle had been working.

The romantic interest in The Chain is provided by the relationship of Gilda Westcott, divorced daughter of the packing house executive, and Dr. Murray Clifton, brilliant physician of Jericho. Leaving little to the imagination, Wellman sketches his characters with direct comments. The picture of Clifton is typical:

Dr. Murray Clifton was quite handsome, with the dangerous attractiveness for women which a touch of the satyr gives to some men. Of this he was not unmindful, and in dress and deportment he was certainly the most elegant masculine figure in Jericho... From his first arrival in Jericho ten years before, Dr. Clifton had been successful. He possessed culture, perfect manners, could be amusing, and danced beautifully. He played excellent golf and bridge, was lavish with flowers and subtle compliments, and could be as charming to a ponderous dowager as to the dewiest debutante. Naturally the best circles took him up at once, and, equally naturally, he built up a highly profitable surgical practice. To have one's appendix removed by Dr. Clifton became a form of social distinction in Jericho. 30

The doctor is quite skeptical of Carlisle's religion, but becomes convinced of the truth in the Rector's program, and changes in that he becomes more humble and sincere. While a character of the Dr. Kildare type, Clifton is well developed by Wellman, and is authentic in The Chain. After Carlisle's death, he and Gilda are married.

30 Ibid., pp. 44-45
Although she has made mistakes in the past and is often tempted to sin again, Gilda Westcott is essentially good. As he does for Murray Clifton, Wellman sketches Gilda's past in flashback, a technique he uses in creating his characters. After an unsuccessful marriage, Gilda comes to Jericho, disillusioned and bitter. Through Carlisle's guidance, she gains a renewed religious faith. The effect of the Holy Communion service is described by Wellman in a beautiful paragraph:

Then she ceased considering all matters save worship, caring for nothing but the voice in the sanctuary, her own brave responses, and the wondrous simplicity of the service. Clear as a crystal with a sunbeam caught in it, silent as a prayer that will be answered silently, endowed with a passionate tenderness and serenity, the great mystery possessed her.

Typical of Wellman's creation of minor figures in The Chain is this striking picture of Ynez:

Ynez was perhaps a child in mind, but if so, she possessed in her body the wisdom of a thousand generations of women who lived for their bodies. Hers was the lithe superb carriage and the sweeping black glance of her Indian ancestors; and she loved clothing, dressing always bizarrely, because of a passion for vivid reds and greens and yellows....

Sex was more than a part of Ynez; it was the most important thing about her. She could not help it, nor did she wish to help it. In her childhood, when she attended a little Mexican church down by the railroad tracks, she learned vaguely that she carried within her the sparks of her own ruin. Yet she did not wish those sparks to die; and church long ago ceased to have any interest for her.

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31Gilda's background is given in The Chain on pp.32-35.

32Ibid., p. 322.
If Ynez had a religion at all it was dancing. When she was on the dance floor, men never took their eyes from her. She was like a sharp blade of moving light, with lean legs, a fine agile figure, and a back exquisitely arched... Every night was a triumph for Ynez. Men did not forget the sinuous perfection of her actions, the resilience of her body, the feel of her thighs, the heated lightning that seemed to crackle about her when the music sobbed and the lights were dim.33

Although a sensuous character with many objectionable qualities, Ynez undergoes a change and is persuaded by Carlisle to join St. Albans.

Wellman seems chiefly concerned with presenting a story and uses his characters to that end. For the most part, the major figures are presented early in the novels. Necessary background information is usually given in a flashback or an outright statement by the author. The author of the Jericho novels achieves what might be called the "well-made novel."34 The characters, while secondary to the plot, seem authentic. Their language fits well into their total personality. Perhaps the most effective creations are John Carlisle and Simeon Trudge. Creation and development of growth seems to be Wellman's main weakness in characterization. His descriptions of physical attributes and vivid personality sketches are his major accomplishments in character development.

33Tbid., p. 101
34Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel, p. 121.
CHAPTER IV

STYLE IN THE JERICHO NOVELS

Exactly what constitutes a writer's style is not always easy to state. Techniques which are typical of Paul Wellman, use of sentence structure, and the handling of mechanics are considered here.

Style may be judged by its effect on the reader and its contribution to the purpose of the novel. Since the publication of Joyce's Ulysses in 1922, the modern novel has seen many experiments and changes. Certain authors have come to be known for their characteristics of style. Ernest Hemingway has become noted for the short, clipped sentence and a tendency to avoid the use of descriptive adjectives. At the opposite pole from Hemingway is Wolfe, who created sensuous descriptions in an almost poetic style. His long sentences with their tortured and elusive meanings have made William Faulkner a figure of literary controversy. The techniques used by Joyce have influenced a number of writers, among them Virginia Woolf and John Dos Passos.¹

¹Beach, Twentieth Century Novel, pp. 428-429; 437-443, notes this influence. Ross Lockridge in Raintree County uses striking experiments in a historical novel.
While these writers have not attempted to become stylists to the extent of neglecting other elements, they are known for characteristics which mark a departure from the "well-made novel." Wellman, on the other hand, definitely considers style of secondary importance:

My books are always written for the people who read them. I'm a story teller, and my theory of writing is to keep the way the story is told from intruding on the story itself. Style is secondary. Some of the reviewers think that is my principal weakness, but, if so, it's a weakness that I'm going to cultivate. ²

Perhaps in this statement may be found a clue to the popularity of Wellman's fiction. He appeals to the human desire embodied in the phrase, "Tell me a story," rather than, "Develop a writing style." His audience is the mass audience, then, who read fiction primarily for entertainment, rather than the specialized groups to which novelists such as Faulkner and Joyce tend to appeal. Even though Wellman feels style is secondary, however, his use of the English language is important in analyzing the Jericho novels.

When asked what influences had aided in the development of his style, Wellman commented:

I would have difficulty saying what writers have influenced my style. Every young writer has trends in this or that writer whom he admires at the moment. Robert Louis Stevenson called himself "the sedulous ape" for imitating the style of others until he

²The Kansas City Times, February 24, 1947, p. 7.
arrived at his own magnificent style. My style is my own, and I remember that in my newspaper days I had some trouble because at one time or another I would not limit myself to the cliche-ridden journalese which passed for good writing with most copy readers... My own style has changed somewhat over the years, gradually becoming a little more rounded and leisurely as I grow older. Yet I believe that I write better today than at any time in my life.3

In the same letter, Wellman states the "writer most to be admired on the current scene is Somerset Maugham."4 He asserts, however, that there is little resemblance between his style and that of the British writer. When asked what he admired in Maugham, Wellman replied:

I have an especial admiration for his subtly warm and delicate writing style. To me he uses the English language as unaffectedly and without conscious stylized effort as any writer today.5

In comparing the two authors, one notes the use of regular sentence structure and a tendency to present a complete picture. An example from a Maugham short story illustrates this for the British writer:

And I met his wife a few days later....She was adorably pretty. She was no darker than a Spaniard, small and very beautifully made, with tiny hands and feet, and a slight, lithe figure. Her features were lovely, but I think what struck me most was the delicacy of her appearance....Though she wore but a muslin frock and a straw hat, she wore them with an elegance that suggested the woman of fashion.6

4Ibid., p. 2.
5Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, March 14, 1956.
Wellman's description of Gilda Westcott may be compared with the passage from Maugham:

At the wheel of the car was a girl in a white silk dress with a swirling silk scarf on her head of a bright green so exactly matching the shade of the car that in effect she wore the five-thousand-dollar automobile as a part of her costume....

She was tall, twenty-five, and overthin from dieting, so that her cheekbones and chin verged on severity. But her face was saved from harshness by wide, dark eyes with sweeping lashes and a magnificent cascade of jet-black hair. Though she could have hardly been called beautiful, unless with the beauty that comes from undimmed youth, a stiff hairbrush, and a cake of sweet-smelling soap, she was well worth the look she got from every man within seeing distance.7

The two passages reveal certain similarities. Both contain long, flowing sentences, with a tendency to open punctuation. Adjectives are used freely; Wellman tends to use many times two adjectives in combination. Both writers present careful descriptions, leaving little to the reader's imagination. It would seem that Wellman's admiration for the British writer is due to many aspects of similarity in style.

Description is an important element of Wellman's writing--description of people, weather conditions, and the Kansas scene. He describes Tulsa, Oklahoma, as a boom town in the early part of this century:

Tulsa, in the white heat of magical growth due to the oil which was being pumped up in viscous floods from the bowels of its earth, was still in the process

7The Chain, p. 10
of becoming accustomed to the tempo of its new life. It had been a sleepy little Indian trading post. Then it had grown used to the sight of skeletonic oil derricks multiplying on every hill, and the familiar blighted appearance as the petroleum killed the grass, and the stinking odor of sludge pools which sometimes added crooked pillars of inky smoke to the sky as they burned out. Tulsa had seen its population soar almost astronomically, had seen tall buildings shoot up, and had observed mansions in the nabob district, created by oil millionaires, who still wore cowboy boots and insisted on a brass cuspidor in the middle of a five thousand dollar Persian rug.8

In this passage appear the long sentences, the rich adjectives, and the extensive vocabulary which are characteristic of Wellman's style. A further example may be cited:

Charming vistas of the Kaw River rushed by the car window. Undulating river. Oak clad hills. Fat cattle in lush meadows. Stone farmhouses. Corn already tall. This was the rich Kansas. The smug Kansas. The bountiful Kansas.

In this part of Kansas there was little in common with the hungry, lean, strenuous West. Kansas was two, perhaps three, places, really. This eastern half, geographically and physically, was a part of Missouri. The south central portion belonged to Oklahoma. Only the west and northwest possessed truly and inescapably an entity of their own.8

A new characteristic enters in the passage above—the use of short groups of words. Here Wellman uses this technique for emphasis in picturing the countryside as seen from a fast-moving train. Such a style of broken sentence and word patterns is also used in indicating times of great stress in the Jericho novels.

8The Walls of Jericho, p. 216.
9Ibid., p. 330
Although several examples of character description have been given in Chapter III, an additional one may be used to show a Wellman tendency:

One in particular bore the marked stamp of will power and authority. He occupied the aisle seat; a powerful, wide-shouldered man with short, crisply curling black hair, shot a little with gray. In a hard masculine way he was handsome, but he carried his head with a savage, rude, indomitable energy, and there was self will in his strong jaw, and the deep, almost harsh, lines about his hard mouth. Clearly this man had learned success in a rough school. He would not spare others, much less himself.  

This sketch of Todd Westcott illustrates Wellman's use of detailed physical description in the depicting of character.

Wellman is concerned with the Kansas weather at many points in his Jericho fiction. He comments: "Anyone who has ever had the experience of living in Kansas becomes aware of the always changing and frequently violent weather." Wellman also portrays the pleasant side of the Kansas climate:

The day was charming: a late May day when it seemed that all the clear, untempered light of the world was gathered in Jericho. The eagerness of early spring was gone with its rushing winds, and the earth lay warm and fecund, burgeoning with green; the sun falling upon it like a heavy golden net.

\[10\] The Chain, p. 4.

\[11\] Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, June 21, 1955.

\[12\] The Chain, p. 1.
Wellman's view is that the frequently changing Kansas climate has produced a strongly independent man:

They were moulded by their common vicissitudes and by the pitiless bombardment of wind and sun. ... It might be supposed that, living under such circumstances, they would have formed a community of interests, insofar as great distances permitted. But the curious effect of the plains was to make men strongly individual, and therefore frequently antagonistic, so that their interests conflicted with each other, almost as if by design. 13

John Gunther and David Myers have commented that the Kansas weather produces a ruggedly individualistic type. 14 The weather seems an important influence especially in The Bowl of Brass with its harsh characterizations in Simeon Trudge, Sherry Quarternight, and Henry Archelaus.

A foreshadowing of the tornado in The Chain came earlier with the description of a rainstorm in The Bowl of Brass:

Now he saw the momentary glimmer of lightning. The under surfaces of a cloud were briefly limned—soft, insubstantial curves of light mottling vaguely the great imponderable masses above. A cloud mountain. Nobody could even guess to what lofty heights its invisible peaks towered. ... 15

In The Chain, written five years later, the great tornado is presented through the eyes of Gilda Westcott, as she sees it from the tower of St. Albans Church. Its

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13 The Bowl of Brass, p. 11.
15 The Bowl of Brass, p. 82.
terrifying first impression on her is caught in this passage:

To inconceivable heights the cloud mountain had climbed, and the great imponderable masses of it rolled and swirled in a terrifying manner, as if they were in torment or great struggle, their soft insubstantial curves changing so rapidly that the eye hardly had time to catch the constant quick variations.

The cloud wall was unlike anything she had ever before beheld: a black-green, foreboding the greatest evil, shading to a jet-black at the center, so intense and inky that the very sight of it was shocking, inasmuch as it transcended anything in her lifetime experience.16

A comparison of the passages reveals certain phrases in common, such as: "insubstantial curves;" "incredible peaks;" and "nobody could even guess."
The tornado description, however, is much richer and more complete than that of the rainstorm. The change to incomplete thoughts—a Wellman characteristic in handling times of trouble—occurs as the storm moves in:

At the same time they saw it.

Dimly at first, through the chaotically agitated obscurement. Then rapidly revealing itself with a clarity that stunned.

Gigantic. Incredibly malignant and towering.

16 The Chain, pp. 281-282. Edmund Fuller felt Wellman’s picture of the tornado was "first-rate."
(Edmund Fuller, "Regeneration in Jericho," Saturday Review of Literature, March 19, 1949, p. 26.)
It came rushing toward them with the speed of a hurtling locomotive through the furious curtain of its surrounding cloud.

The great Tornado. 17

Checking the details of this tornado picture against the accounts of a weather expert proved Wellman accurate in picturing the tornado cloud, the direction of travel from southwest to northeast, and the general effects of the destructive storm. 18 The death toll in Jericho, however, exceeded anything ever recorded in a Kansas tornado. There were 279 killed in the Jericho disaster, while the highest toll in a Kansas tornado is 79. 19

A comparison can be made between Wellman's tornado and the description of a typhoon in the novel of that name by Joseph Conrad:

As its setting sun had a diminished diameter, and an expiring, brown, rayless glow, as if millions of centuries elapsing since the morning had brought it near its end. A dense bank of cloud became visible toward the north; it had a sinister dark olive tint, and lay low and motionless upon the sea, resembling a solid obstacle in the path of the ship. 20

This passage describes the appearance of the approaching storm. Later in the novel Conrad records the impact

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17 The Chain, p. 283.
18 Based on S. D. Flora, Tornadoes in the United States.
of the typhoon upon the men of the Nam-Sham:

A faint burst of lightning quivered all round, as if flashed into a cavern—into a black and secret chamber of the sea, with a floor of foaming crests.

If unveiled for a sinister, fluttering moment a ragged mass of clouds hanging low, the lurch of the long outlines of the ship, the black figures of men caught on the bridge, heads forward as if petrified in the act of butting. The darkness palpitated down upon all this, and then the real thing came at last.

It was something formidable and swift, like the sudden smashing of a vial of wrath. It seemed to explode all round the ship with an overpowering concussion and a rush of great waters, as if an immense dam had blown up to windward. In an instant the men lost touch of each other. This is the dis-integrating power of a great wind: it isolates one from one's kind. An earthquake, an avalanche, a landslip, overtakes a man, incidentally, as it were, without passion. A furious gale attacks him like a personal enemy, tries to grasp his limbs, fastens upon his mind, seeks to rout his very spirit out of him.21

In comparing the two writers, one feels that both Wellman and Conrad had personally experienced the storms. Conrad knew the sea well and had probably been in a typhoon. Wellman indicated his own experience:

I have been in two tornadoes and have seen several others from a distance. By "being in" tornadoes, I mean close enough so that I felt the awe and terror which an expected cataclysm can bring, although in both cases the funnel itself passed me by. I do not think that one who has not been close at hand to a great tornado could adequately describe it.22

21Ibid., p. 310.
22Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, August 24, 1955.
The feeling of personal experience is reflected in the careful descriptions of both storms and the terror they create. Conrad appears somewhat more concerned than Wellman with the effect of the typhoon on his characters and their mental state; in psychological insight, the British author has the advantage. Wellman's description, however, is more vivid.

Wellman's description of the tornado may be compared with a third example of violent climatic conditions, that of the blizzard in Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. The Norwegian author pictures the approach of the blizzard through the eyes of Per Hansa, the chief character:

So far everything had gone without a hitch, and Per Hansa figured that in two or three hours they would sight the hills over by the Souix River. But just then, chancing to glance back, he caught sight of a black, billowy outline above the prairie, looming ominously against the sky....It was a veritable outline, the form of a low-lying dark cloud....His heart pounded against his breast; he spoke quickly and roughly to the oxen.

The apparition was moving out there--came rushing forward and upward with uncanny speed. The outline had now become a dark, opaque mass...it writhed and swelled with life...it seemed to be belching up all over the sky like sooty smoke out of a furnace. Above his head, the heavens were still clear, but under the rim of the onrushing cloud a bluish-black shadow had settled over the prairie.23

Several points of similarity between Rolvaag and Wellman in storm description may be noted here. Both

writers present the approach of the storm through an account of the feeling of terror created in one of the major characters. Wellman's style is somewhat more ornate than that of Rolvaag, who concentrates upon simplicity in use of adjectives. The actual impact of the blizzard is vividly recounted by Rolvaag:

Both Per Hansa and Hans Olga...had seen plenty of storms that made up fast, but nothing like this had ever before come within the range of their experience. Like lightning, a giant trull had risen up in the west, ripped open his great sack of woolly fleece, and emptied the whole contents of it above their heads.

A squall of snow so thick that they could not see an arm's length ahead of them, a sucking noise, a few angry blasts, howling in fury, then dropping away to uncertain drafts of air that wandered idly here and there, swirling the light snowfall around the sleighs. High overhead a sharp, hissing sound mingled with growls like thunder--and then the blizzard broke in all its terror....

Rolvaag and Wellman both use incomplete word groups to express the feeling of terror just before the storms strike. Wellman seems a little more detailed in his picture of the tornado, possibly because such an event in nature is so awe-inspiring.

John T. Frederick, in commenting on the style of Thomas B. Costain, made these observations:

Costain's novels are marked in style by a comfortable adequacy rather than by beauty or brilliance. His style is unobtrusive...For the most part, his style doesn't get in the way. In this, too, he conforms to

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24 Ibid., p. 269
the traditional qualities of historical romance, which has rarely displayed distinction in style. 25

Somewhat the same observations may be made of Wellman's technique. He is careful to avoid experiments in expression that might confuse or distract the reader. Rich and complete descriptions characterize the Jericho novels. There is a tendency to drop to incomplete sentences and phrases in depicting times of stress or high tension. The outstanding element in Wellman's writing style is his handling of description. On the whole, his style in the three novels, while pleasing and unobtrusive, is, as its author intended, secondary to the relating of the narrative.

25 Frederick, op. cit., p. 376.
CHAPTER V

PHILOSOPHY IN THE JERICHO NOVELS

In his longest letter, Wellman outlined his attitudes regarding several ethical problems which occur in his Jericho novels. First of all, this author describes briefly the extreme naturalism of some European writers:

European devotees of naturalism hold that man is a figure of tragedy by the mere fact of being born into the world, doomed from the beginning, however he may strive, to failure and extinction. The Gotterdammerung is a classic of this nature, and there is something to be said from an emotional viewpoint for this attitude of hopelessness. It builds up the ego of man if he can believe himself the object of something so vast and all-powerful as Fate, because it proves to him how important he is after all. So, in melancholy pride, he assumes a certain dignity as he progresses toward his final tragedy. 1

Wellman turns to a consideration of the opposite extremes:

The Romanticists take the opposite viewpoint: that all's right with the world. The silliest example of this is a book written many years ago called "Pollyanna." This book, despite its saccharinity, sold hundreds of thousands of copies, because, I think, so many people want some kind of reassurance of this nature, that they will accept the most inane. 2

1 Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, July 16, 1955.
2 Ibid., p. 2.
Wellman then goes on to state his belief in a philosophical "middle approach" and the effect it has had on his own treatment of character and outcome in his novels:

But there is, I think, a middle ground between these extreme viewpoints. Life ends in death, to be sure, but life is an object in itself, and if lived fully becomes an achievement that justifies existence. Death need not be hopeless, blind tragedy, even if it is the end for that individual, for the impress he leaves on the lives and thoughts of others of his own kind is a sort of continuing life for him. So, while not closing one's eyes to tragedy, which is plentiful enough and valid enough, in all good conscience one should, I think, if he tries to write truthfully, take into consideration also the credit side of life, its achievements, loves, rich experiences, courage, unselfishness, as well as its failures, hatreds, fears, greed, and so on, the things which make up the complex being we call man. In general I like to end my novels on an up-beat, not because I have any mawkish hyper-optimism, but because I like to leave things on a pleasant note, and it not only gives my reader a feeling of satisfaction, but me also, as the writer, when I bid farewell to my people in the book, to know for the moment at least that there is an upward look for them.3

The quotation shows Wellman's tendency to consider his readers first above all in his novels. As a writer, his main purpose seems to be entertainment. Beach accurately states, "Where writers have been most interested in what their characters think, the average reader would rather be told what they do."4 Wellman is an author who prefers to tell his readers what the characters "do" rather than what they "think."

3Tbid., p. 2-3
4Beach, op. cit., p. 546
An examination of the conclusions in the three Jericho novels shows the use of the happy or optimistic ending. In *The Bowl of Brass*, Til Rector wins Gary Trudge, after Simeon destroys himself through an accident. The happy outcome is not without its price, however, as Til nearly loses his life, and Gary lives a hellish marriage until her husband is killed.

After a long struggle, David Constable in *The Walls of Jericho* finds happiness with Julia Norman; presumably Belle Dunham leaves Jericho in defeat. In these two novels, there is a similarity in outcome, as the protagonists win happiness through love after overcoming the problems of unhappy marriages. Simeon Trudge and Belle Dunham defeat themselves as Wellman carries out the theme that evil brings its own punishment. Even though it is a romantic view, Wellman appeals to the reader's wish for such an outcome in life.

Although one sympathizes with John Carlisle, the central figure of *The Chain*, he loses his life by mob action. His influence persists, however, and Wellman leaves the impression that the rector gains happiness in his death:

"Tell him to comfort himself. Death does not matter when the peace of eternity is before you. He will learn to live on his own strength."

Then forgetfulness came, his eyes closed, and his soul passed on to the home it had so ardently desired.
Gilda looked down upon him... Upon (his face) was the fullness of peace which often is attained before the Great Change, as if his spirit already were bravely seeking the comradeship of heaven.  

Carlisle's influence touches nearly all the characters in The Chain. After he causes Murray Clifton to become more humble and leads Gilda Westcott to realize the importance of religion in her life, these figures win contentment through love.

The endings, with happiness attained after a struggle, are similar in the three novels. Problems are usually solved to the satisfaction of the reader, as Wellman meets Beach's definition of the well-made novel: "A single subject involved in a dramatic situation, developed logically, without interruption or interference, to the inevitable conclusion."

The comment made by Alexander Cowie on James Fenimore Cooper may afford a comparison with Wellman: "Good fortune usually attends good people, but Cooper keeps his reader guessing, and not all the good people can be saved." An example of this view appears in The Last of the Mohicans. Although Cora loses her life, Alice is saved from the Indians. She finds happiness with Major Dunwoodie, while

\[5\text{The Chain, p. 367.} \\
6\text{Beach, op. cit., p. 307.} \\
7\text{Cowie, op. cit., p. 161.}\]
Uncas gives his life in revenge for the death of Cora. This outcome demonstrates the Cooper tendency to have some characters win happiness while others fail. In somewhat the same manner, Wellman has Carlisle go down to physical defeat in *The Chain*, although Murray Clifton and Gilda Westcott are made happy through their love for each other. Algeria is defeated in both *The Walls of Jericho* and *The Chain*, although she salvages a sort of satisfaction in life:

> Algeria's expression was pleasant that Sunday morning. The church, rebuilt, had come out exceptionally well, and that appealed to her aesthetic side. She had, it is true, lost her battle for the removal of St. Albans to another location; but that, with the change of the neighborhood to respectability, was not much of an objective now. On the whole, she was not entirely dissatisfied with matters as they stood.

> Algeria was never one to grovel; not even, it is to be feared, before God.

Wellman's popular endings may be compared to those of another writer, Lloyd C. Douglas, who usually has his characters win happiness after overcoming difficulties. For example, the ending of *Magnificent Obsession* finds the two central figures united after a series of obstacles has been overcome. The similarity continues in comparing Douglas' best-seller, *The Robe*, with *The Chain*. In the Douglas novel, Diana and Marcellus meet death because of their profession of Christianity, although the reader is left with the assurance that they, like Carlisle, find eternal peace.

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8 *The Chain*, p. 366.
Along with the optimistic ending, another theme runs through the Jericho novels: Wellman's sympathy for the poor and criticism of the powerful rich. In *The Bowl of Brass*, the poor farmer, represented by Til Rector, loses his land to powerful Henry Archelaus. The author presents Archelaus' attitudes in unsympathetic terms:

He was convinced in his own mind that the Short Grass was never intended for the small farmer.... He had been reared in the belief that it was the duty and responsibility of the buyer to protect himself.... There remained only one step—the shiftless and insolvent should not be permitted to remain too long on the lands they took. What money they brought with them Henry considered his rightful prerogative. Squeeze that money out of them and let them go.9

In the end, Archelaus loses control of Jericho because of his own actions, a situation which appeals to the reader.

David Constable, in *The Walls of Jericho*, defends the poor farmers against the wealthy corporation and financial executives. Porter Grimes represents the conservative forces and is reminiscent of Archelaus:

He was a successful man and considered himself strong and self-reliant. Actually his strength was ruthlessness.... He was a 'big man'; recognized as such all over Kansas.... As for the political bosses, he confidently felt nobody in Kansas could longer give him orders; his growth had placed him among the top leaders of his political party.10

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9 *The Bowl of Brass*, p. 22.
10 *The Walls of Jericho*, pp. 151-152. Grimes is a powerful force in the Republican Party.
Grimes emerges from the novel still powerful, and, as a symbol of wealth, plays an important background part in The Chain. In this work, however, the "malefactor of great wealth" is Todd Westcott:

His thousands of employees regarded the Big Boss with uneasy awe. More than once, with his own fists, he had proved that he could stand up to the best of them. He fought and smashed labor unions, crushed out all opposition, imposed his will on his workers, and drove everyone, every day, to the limit of exhaustion. 11

Archelaus, Grimes, Westcott—all three illustrate the Wellman idea that wealth brings ruthlessness and a power complex. This theme is not developed to the extent that John Steinbeck uses it in The Grapes of Wrath. Steinbeck was criticizing a specific problem, the issue of migrant workers in California. He seems more concerned with this problem than with his characters, although he certainly traces the influence of the depression upon the "Okies". Although the picture in the first two Jericho novels of farmers dominated by Eastern finance seems authentic, Wellman's concept of wealth in The Chain may be criticized. In this work he hardly seems aware of the postwar world with its changed position of the laboring class. Today, a packing house owner would have extreme difficulty in crushing a labor union, a fact Wellman seems to ignore.

The idea of the downtrodden poor in Wellman's work reminds one of the fiction of Howard Fast, a writer about

11The Chain, p. 15.
whom there has been considerable controversy. In his novels, Fast uses consistently the theme of struggle between rich and poor. *Freedom Road,* for example, develops the thesis that the Negros in the South were on their way to establishing workable state governments, when the Republican Party "sold them out" in the election of 1876. In *The American,* Fast traces the career of John Peter Altgeld, almost idolizing the Illinois governor who sacrificed his political career when he pardoned the Haymarket rioters. Wagenknecht states accurately:

Fast represents the propagandist as historical novelist. No matter where he goes in search of a subject, he never fails to see any historical crisis as a struggle between entrenched privilege and the proletariat.

Wellman certainly is not as severe as Fast or Steinbeck in his criticism of the wealthy. The rich in *The Chain* do change through Carlisle's influence and attempt worthwhile projects. Wellman uses the theme of wealth versus the people throughout the Jericho works, however, with the fullest treatment given in *The Chain,* in which John Carlisle tries to reform Jericho through a sort of Christian socialism.

Because Wellman had extensive training in journalism, treatment of newspapers and their workers might be

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12 He has refused to answer charges that he was a member of the Communist Party.

expected to play a part in the Jericho novels. In The Chain Algeria Wedge develops The Clarion as a powerful weapon of public opinion:

But to say that Jericho was hen-pecked by The Clarion would hardly be correct. It was an attitude far more unassailable and devastating—the Mother Knows Best assumption—that ruled the city. 14

The Kansas City Star might be the pattern for this newspaper, although such a comparison is difficult to prove.

Wellman has, in The Chain, some illuminating comments on the changes in American journalism in the last fifty years:

There was a time when the American press was masculine, surrounded by much dignity; with editors, who, rightly or wrongly, were strong bulwarks of public opinion, so that editorial columns were read eagerly by the public because they said something. 15

He then makes the statement that a startling change came in newspapers with the discovery that women spent most of the money in the United States. Since the publishers were interested in circulation, they began to appeal to the tastes of women through columns of medical advice, crossword puzzles, pictures, and comics. Wellman comments, "That cynic who said that women have no pride, only vanity... might have said the same of the daily newspaper with absolute verity." 16 In a letter, the Jericho novelist expresses

14 The Chain, pp. 60-61.
15 Ibid., p. 59.
16 Ibid., p. 60.
his criticism of modern American journalism, opinions based on his experiences as a journalist:

Journalism has its seamy side, particularly in the cut-throat competition that exists in some towns. It is, unfortunately, degenerating rather than improving in character. I believe I am as well acquainted with the inside of newspaper work as anyone, and if you have every known an old newspaperman who wasn't cynical, I'd like to meet him. Newspapers are controlled by the publishers, not the editors, and the publishers are controlled by the advertisers, which means the big money. Just take a glance at the American press and see where it lines up on any issue where the big investor has an interest, and you'll see this demonstrated pretty clearly for yourself. Yet I like newspapers and newspaper work as you can plainly see, from what I've written of them.17

A timely article by a noted newspaperman, Louis B. Seltzer, supports many of the Wellman theories. This writer blames "bigness" and the craze for mass circulation with destroying the power of the press to produce original reporting and challenging editorials. He states that much of the best writing today is being published by magazines. A passage from his article is similar to Wellman's comment from The Chain on newspaper change:

For one thing, forty years ago newspapers were virtually alone as the principal source of fact and opinion. Newspapers were vital, enterprising, resourceful, and audacious. They dug. They tolerated no intermediaries. They went to original sources. They were courageous. They were dedicated, devoted, determined.18

Seltzer and Wellman agree that the modern trend in newspaper publishing has cost the reading public much in

17Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, July 16, 1955.
accurate news coverage and challenging reporting of controversial issues. Wellman is, however, fully aware of the power of American journalism; The Clarion is largely responsible for Carlisle's death. After Algeria realizes the change in public opinion, the newspaper "comes as close as a newspaper does to apologizing" in a front page editorial on the greatness of Carlisle.\textsuperscript{19}

Turning from journalism to a peculiar Kansas condition, Wellman notes the general flouting of the state's prohibition laws. One minor character in The Bowl of Brass comments:

They tell me this ain't allowed in Kansas," he said with a laugh. "Funny state, Kansas. Always passing laws to keep itself from doin' what it wants to do. Reminds me of a Hardshell Baptist preacher down at Austin, Texas. He gave up eatin' fried chicken. When asked why he done so, he said that he liked fried chicken too much. Likin' anything that much was sinful, he figured, so he gave it up. Kansas is a little different though. They may vote dry, but they still drink wet.\textsuperscript{20}

The connection between political ambition and drinking is noted in The Walls of Jericho:

The very blackest sin from a political standpoint was to be a "wet" in this state of prohibition protestation. It came ahead of fornication or fraud. Every man in politics felt it necessary to bugle afar his adherence to the state's dry laws. ... You may have been companions in Kansas who will join you in gambling and drinking, and sometimes in affairs of a primrose tinge;

\textsuperscript{19}The Chain, p. 365.
\textsuperscript{20}The Bowl of Brass, p. 26.
but it is a curious truth that these same friends will on election day, go to the polls and vote against you.  

Wellman's statement in The Chain on the pleasure  
Kansas received from breaking the prohibition laws is quite accurate:

Simplee Lou, the Westcott colored maid, had appeared with a tray of thin-stemmed glasses, each with its colorless liquid and its toothpick-speared olive. Because of the state prohibition law there was much more of a point to drinking in Kansas than in less-favored climes; and to the elite of Jericho especially, the pre-prandial cocktail was a rite of almost religious significance.  

Those who have lived in Kansas will recognize the truth in Wellman's comments. The enforcement of the prohibition laws became such a joke that in 1948 Kansas voters, by a margin of sixty thousand votes, brought the situation to an end.  

In the Jericho novels there is a rather unhappy view of marriage. Gary Trudge endures a loveless marriage from a sense of duty. David Constable enters a union with Belle Dunham after falling victim to a trap set by Belle's mother. In The Chain, Gilda returns from Reno after ending an unsuccessful matrimonial attempt with a drunkard. However, Til Rector and Gary, David Constable and Julia, and Murray Clifton and Gilda eventually find happy marriages.  

21The Walls of Jericho, p. 162.  
unhappy marriages do not seem to indicate a dim view of matrimony by Wellman. They appear, rather, to be part of the narrative in each novel and not an indictment of the married state.

Wellman shows a regard for conventional morality in the three Jericho novels. Gary refuses to enter an affair with Til because of her deep religious convictions. Although Julia and David have two "falls from grace" in The Walls of Jericho, Julia fights involvement with David, since she feels she can never marry him. In The Chain, Gilda leads a life of continence before her marriage and refuses to have an affair with Murray Clifton. Bernard DeVote comments that popular writers tend to follow the conventions of time. Wellman appears to do this in the three Jericho novels.

In matters of organized religion, Wellman is quite critical. In The Bowl of Brass, he points out the shallowness of the church in Jericho, and the desire for the appearances of religion with little of its meaning. One of the most sensational incidents in The Walls of Jericho involves the exposure in love-making of choir organist Kay Middlekauf and choir director Wilber Bratten. The.

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25 The Bowl of Brass, pp. 112-115.
The incident is complete with an emotional return to the church by Bratten, while Kay conveniently leaves town.

In *The Chain*, Wellman's religious view reaches its fullest development. John Carlisle works throughout his ministry against the social hypocrisy of religion in smug, wealthy St. Albans Church:

...he spoke of the causes of sin, and the greatest was pride, the source of self-indulgence, conceit, contempt of others, hypocrisy, self-important, and disobedience to God....Christianity was the hope of the world, said the voice in the pulpit, the answer to war and the ambitions of rulers. The Master knew no castes or cliques. The voice of the preacher deepened:

'All service ranks the same with God:

With God, whose puppets, best and worst,

Are we; there is no last nor first.'27

Carlisle leads a life of goodness and, in the end, his influence causes others to approach a more Christian way of life. Wellman summarized his views on religion in a letter:

My attitude toward organized religion is this: I am a churchman myself, and I believe that organized religion is essential to our civilization. I recognize that people are people, and that within the framework of a church there can exist all the seven deadly sins, plus hypocrisy. This does not vitiate the church, but it does sometimes highlight the human weaknesses in the background of what the professors of those weaknesses profess to believe and then practice.

Wellman advances no startling departure in ethics or philosophy in the Jericho novels. He provides for a

27 *The Chain*, pp. 128-129.

happy, or at least an optimistic, ending in each of these novels. When commenting on the Kansas scene and Kansas morals—prohibition, politics, and narrowness of small-town churches—he is accurate and his perceptions are keen. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Wellman's philosophy is his defense of the common man against what he considers the forces of wealth and privilege. This concept—possibly the most important of Wellman's messages—reaches its fullest development in John Carlisle's fight to replace formalized religion with a true Christian faith in Jericho.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study has been to evaluate from the standpoint of historical accuracy and literary value three novels by Paul I. Wellman, an author neglected by the scholarly critics. Newspaper and periodical comment, general references, and other novels have been used as they proved helpful in evaluating the Jericho series. Of greatest assistance, however, has been a correspondence with Mr. Wellman himself on specific problems considered in the paper.

In this comment from a letter Wellman disparages newspaper criticism:

Critical comment in the newspapers is no reliable yardstick for any book, since there are no really capable newspaper critics. A book does not receive a critical measurement, but a hodgepodge of personal opinions. I think you would be far better off using your own opinions, for at least you have read the books, whereas most newspaper critics have merely scanned the jacket blurbs. I never keep newspaper criticisms.\(^1\)

Wellman makes an excellent indictment of criticism in general in a later letter:

Don't pay attention to critics. An example: One critic called "The Chain" the worst novel he had ever

\(^1\)Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, July 16, 1955.
read. Yet this book has probably had the finest re-
ception any novel of mine ever received, and won
notably fine reviews. The particular critic was dis-
pleased at my treatment of the religious issue, and
his statement, a reflection of that belief, was, of
course, thoroughly irresponsible. As I have said to
you before, there is no authoritative criticism in
America. Every one of my books has received completely
conflicting appraisals, if not of the book itself, of
some certain feature or portion of it. One type of
critic hails anything that is tinged with sex deviation
as "daring" and "modern." I have always found the sub-
ject repellant and avoid it. Then there is the modern
craze for "psychological" novels, which means novels
about mentally deranged people, all full of the little
psychiatric catchwords. This will last until people dis-
cover that the greatest psychological studies of char-
acter have been written without any of the current catch-
words, and will continue so to be written in the future.
Shakespeare did not have to use phrases like paranoiac,
schizophrenic, eroto-compulsion, and so on, to dissect
the character of Hamlet with the surety of a scalpel.
I mention these instances only to indicate the way in
which transient styles affect some not very profound
so-called critics in their judgment of books.

It would be difficult to deny that many critics have
disparaged popular writers. The thesis seems to be that an
author read and understood by the general public is not
capable of producing great literature. These critics for-
get that Shakespeare and Chaucer wrote, not for a select
few, but for the masses. This is not to assert that all
popular writers can produce great books. It is, however,
a defense of the idea that a widely-read author is worthy
of serious study.

Wellman's novels have been popular, as indicated by
sales of more than one million copies each for The Walls of

2 Paul I. Wellman, correspondence, September 9, 1955
Jericho and *The Chain*. Here, then, is an author who has written for the public, not the critics. An estimate of his books, therefore, must be based, to a certain extent, on what he has tried to do and how well he has succeeded.

Wellman's life seems to have furnished some background material for the Jericho novels. His career as a newspaperman has been of value in providing a variety of experiences from which to create incidents and character.

Wellman's first work in the Jericho novels, *The Bowl of Brass*, is considered as a historical novel. From the time of Cooper and Scott, this type has been popular with readers. Reasons for this may be a desire to "escape", patriotic interest, or simply curiosity about another age. Two general standards may be set for the historical novel: it must be accurate to the broad outlines of truth, and it must have literary value. In the use of the Stevens County conflict and the location of Jericho in southwestern Kansas, Wellman meets these standards. His use of background in the later Jericho novels appears authentic, although Jericho seems a composite community, rather than one based on a definite pattern.

In the creation of his characters, Wellman is faithful to the purposes of the novels and to the Kansas background. Plot seems more important than character, however, and this author's role as a story teller usually dominates
that as a creator of people. His most original creation is John Carlisle, while the most striking characterization may be that of Simeon Trudge. Wellman's chief weakness in this phase of his work is the lack of growth in his characters. They are, however, easy to understand and fit smoothly into the narrative.

Style in Wellman's novels, like characterization, is subordinate to the telling of the story. He uses an easy method of expression, and makes no attempt to appeal to a specialized audience. Long and varied sentences, rich and descriptive adjectives, and a tendency to use incomplete expression to illustrate times of emotion—these features mark his style. His highest accomplishment in style is his descriptive ability.

In his novels, Wellman uses an optimistic ending and is consistent in expressing sympathy for the common man as he struggles against the forces of wealth. His philosophy reaches its fullest development in The Chain.

The growth and development of a Kansas community, its people and problems, is well depicted in the three Jericho novels. The Bowl of Brass represents effective use of the harsh Western Kansas environment of the 1880's, relating the struggles of the people against the difficulties of their surroundings. The Walls of Jericho seems the weakest of the three novels. This may be due to a tendency toward melodrama in the plot, and the fact that its characters are
less well-developed than those of the other two novels. Because of its ethical content and the portrait of John Carlisle, The Chain is the best of Wellman's novels.

Wellman writes entertaining and absorbing stories, which are popular with a large reading public. Those who read for entertainment are well served by Paul Wellman. While he may not be a great author, he is a good one.
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A STUDY OF
THE JERICHO NOVELS OF PAUL I. WELLMAN

Abstract of Thesis

This study is a criticism of three novels by Paul I. Wellman, a popular author neglected by the established critics. These works, The Bowl of Brass, The Walls of Jericho, and The Chain, have in common a Kansas setting. Of great assistance in the project has been a correspondence with Mr. Wellman.

A study of the background used in The Bowl of Brass indicates Wellman's accuracy in use of historical materials. This first novel in the Jericho group is a closely-knit account of struggle against the harsh Western Kansas background of the 1880's.

Character development is subordinate to the narrative in Wellman's novels. His most original creation is John Carlisle, the rector in The Chain. The chief weakness in characterization seems to be lack of growth. Also subordinate to relating the story, the method of expression is unobtrusive. His style is marked by long, varied sentences, and rich description. Wellman uses an optimistic ending, and is sympathetic to the struggle of the poor against the forces of wealth and privilege. His philosophy reaches its fullest development in The Chain. This seems his
outstanding novel, with its original portrait of John Carlisle.

The growth and development of a fictitious Kansas community is well depicted in the three novels. Wellman writes entertaining and absorbing fiction for a large reading public. While he may not be a great author, he is among the better writers of fiction in America today.