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tion" writers of the 1920s (particularly F. Scott Fitzgerald) gave his style a tinge of irony.

The landscape of "Cheever Country" is a suburban America populated by what we would today call the "preppie class." Cheever views his subjects with sympathy but detachment, engendered by his personal demons—a stormy marriage, alcoholism, and, later in life, growing homosexual proclivities.

With the exception of his first two (and best) novels, *The Wapshot Chronicle* (1957) and *The Wapshot Scandal* (1964), Cheever's books were attempts to exorcise those troubles and find redemption, argues Gussow. Both *Bullet Park* (1969) and *Falconer* (1977) worked poorly because Cheever, ever the short-story writer, had to rely on unlikely twists of plot to sustain his longer fiction. And the final line of *Falconer*—"Rejoice, he thought, rejoice"—suggests by its lack of conviction that Cheever's demons were still with him.

Ironically, Cheever's last novel, *Oh What A Paradise It Seems* (1982) is his worst—he writes about "abstractions" rather than concrete people and places, Gussow contends—but it also suggests a greater tranquility. Water, an ambiguous symbol (of purity, of alcoholism) in Cheever's stories, appears again. In the short story, "The Swimmer," for example, the alcoholic protagonist spends a day compulsively swimming in all of the pools in his neighborhood, stopping for a drink at each. But *Oh What A Paradise It Seems* opens with the main character skating effortlessly on the surface of a pond whose clearness, in Cheever's words, "seemed to have scoured his consciousness of the belief that his own lewdness was a profound contamination."

Getting Rich in American Fiction

"'Consider the Lilies of the Field': The Inheritance Theme in American Literature" by Jules Zanger, in *The Antioch Review* (Fall 1983), P.O. Box 148, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387.

Stories of self-reliant heroes succeeding through hard work pervaded early American literature. But despite the continuing influence of the Protestant work ethic in America, the nation's fiction has increasingly reflected the lure of shortcuts on the road to riches.

Beginning in the second half of the 19th century, writes Zanger, an English professor at the University of Southern Illinois, American writers became fascinated with the impact of *inherited* wealth on individuals. Henry James, in both *Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and *Wings of a Dove* (1902), focuses on women whose lives are changed by inheritances. In Mark Twain's *The Gilded Age*, Colonel Sellers waits "vainly for the great legacy that will transform [his] life." Inheritances also figure prominently in novels by William Dean Howells, Sherwood Anderson, and William Faulkner.

Zanger links the popularity of the inheritance theme to changes in American society at the end of the 19th century. The "realities of the corporate industrial state" were replacing the idyll of rural America. Thrift,

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hard work, and honesty—the virtues extolled in the stories of Horatio Alger—no longer guaranteed material success. In this new society, inheriting wealth seemed the only way to individualism and freedom; it “repudiated the crushing social environment and affirmed individual possibility and special fate in a world otherwise determined.”

The image of inherited wealth drawn by such authors as James represented an escape from the “frantic acquisitiveness” that dominated American life. Characters were catapulted into wealth and high status, as Zanger points out, in a way that carefully avoided “any realistic examination of the practical and moral problems attached to the accumulation of money.”

Ultimately, says Zanger, an aristocracy of inherited wealth contradicts the American ideal of the self-made man. Yet as long as fame and fortune appear out of reach to all but a select few, the popular longing for instant success will remain.

Romanticizing Beethoven

“The Beethoven Mystique in Romantic Art, Literature, and Music” by William S. Newman, in *Musical Quarterly* (Summer 1983), Circulation Office, 48-02 48th Ave., Woodside, N.Y. 11377.

“Mystic prophet of music” is how Victor Hugo described Ludwig von Beethoven. The mere mention of the composer’s name brings to mind the wild hair, rumpled clothes, and intense gaze of a tormented artist.

Such images of Beethoven, however, are largely fictitious, writes Newman, professor emeritus of music at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. They are the product of a Romantic movement “aroused to accept him in terms of its own concerns.”

In fact, Beethoven (1780–1827) represents two distinct periods, the late 18th-century “classical” era and the start of 19th-century Romanticism. His brilliantly unconventional music lent legitimacy to the longing of Romantic composers, writers, and artists for self-expression and freedom from classical artistic forms. In turn, they portrayed Beethoven in art and literature as a redeemer or prophet, a magician, a social revolutionary, and an innocent “wild child.” In short, they made the composer into all the things they saw as necessary to create great art, all the things they wanted to be.

Beethoven at the piano “looks like a wizard, overpowered by the demons whom he himself has called up,” declared British writer (and Prime Minister) Sir John Russell in 1825. Artist Friedrich Geselschap portrayed Beethoven with a choir of angels in the background; his French colleague, Antoine Bourdelle, simply inscribed his sculpture of the composer with the words, “to the man and to the God Beethoven.” Toward the end of the 19th century, Newman observes, some European writers came to view the joyous finale to the Ninth Symphony as “the Marseillaise of Humanity,” a revolutionary call to brotherhood and socialism.

World War I brought the end of the Romantic movement and a more