

## **Between Mottile and Ambloxi: Cordwainer Smith as a Southern Writer**

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Cordwainer Smith's science fiction has often been described as Chinese in form and to some extent in themes and characterization.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the evident qualities of the fiction itself, there are good reasons to assume Chinese influences on his work. Under his real name, Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, the author spent years in China from childhood onward, spoke Chinese fluently, read the Chinese classics in their original versions, and was a Professor of Asiatic Politics at the Johns Hopkins University. Linebarger also spent substantial periods of time in France, Germany, and England, and he acknowledged the influence of various European authors on the Cordwainer Smith stories.

However, another important aspect of Linebarger's life and fiction has received little if any attention. Linebarger's earliest distinct memories dated from a three-year period before he ever saw China or other foreign lands. His memories of this period were later transformed and incorporated into at least two of his most important stories, and influenced elements of other stories as well. During this period, when Linebarger was three to nearly six years old, his family lived in southern Mississippi, in a land of bayous and white-columned mansions. Linebarger later remembered this time and place as an isolated paradise. In its particulars, it was clearly a Southern paradise.

How did Paul Linebarger come to spend those crucial childhood years in Mississippi? His parents did not think of themselves as Southerners, and had no close relatives from the deep South. His father, Paul Myron Wentworth Linebarger, grew up in Milwaukee but traveled widely as a young man. After obtaining a legal education in Europe, Linebarger Senior practiced law in Chicago, until at age 30 he was appointed to a U. S. Federal Judgeship in the newly acquired Philippines. After six years in the Philippines, the Judge (as he was afterwards known) enthusiastically adopted the revolutionary cause of Sun Yat-sen, and spent the rest of his life as a legal adviser, propagandist, fund-raiser and gun-runner for Chinese Nationalist forces.

Paul's mother, born Lillian Bearden in northwest Arkansas, grew up in southwestern Missouri. She too pursued an early career in Chicago, in the millinery trade; she met the Judge in Paris while on a business trip. After they married in 1912, the Judge and Lillian continued their world travels, primarily on the Judge's missions for the recently successful Chinese revolution. They returned to Milwaukee in 1913, just in time for their son Paul to be born on American soil. Soon after Paul's birth, the family moved to Chicago, where the Judge resumed his legal practice but continued to promote the interests of Sun Yat-sen.

This was a difficult period for Sun in China. Though he became China's first provisional president after the Revolution succeeded in 1911, his political skills and his desire for personal power were not as strong as those of others in the revolutionary leadership. He quickly allowed Yuan Shih-k'ai to succeed him as president, whereupon

Yuan moved to convert the presidency into a dictatorship. Sun retreated to exile in Japan. By 1916, the dictatorship began to collapse and Yuan himself died (“some say from exasperation, others say from poison,” as Paul Linebarger later put it.<sup>2</sup>) But various Chinese warlords continued to struggle for power, and one or more of them put a substantial price on Judge Linebarger’s head. At the same time, the Judge became concerned that in the super-patriotic atmosphere of World War I America, he might be arrested and imprisoned for sedition if he remained visible as the chief American advocate of a foreign power, Sun Yat-sen’s exiled Chinese government.<sup>3</sup> The Judge therefore took himself and his family into voluntary internal exile until the war’s end. They moved to a location that had become a preferred spot for the summer homes of well-to-do Chicagoans: Ocean Springs, Mississippi.<sup>4</sup>

On August 31, 1916, Judge Linebarger purchased a house and land near Ocean Springs, bordering Davis Bayou. The Judge (or perhaps, as he said, his friends) promptly christened the place Point Paul Myron, from his and his son’s shared first two names.<sup>5</sup> The Judge described the place in the romantic language of the era:

[A] beautiful promontory wooded high with a terraced shore of live oak looked out over the Bay of Biloxi, with an enchanting view of Deer Island spread out with [the] mirage-like beauty of a desert, the great pine trees on the blue sea shore appearing like palms in the distance. It was an enchanting land, with the charm of singing birds and the splash of mighty fish as they came into the deep bayou which bounded one side of the property to gambol in the waters. The House was an old mansion with seven fireplaces and all the roominess which went with them, and 55 acres which were estate itself.<sup>6</sup>

His son Paul’s later recollections of the place tended to be somewhat more mixed. In an essay for an English class when he was fourteen, Paul wrote, “For the next two years, I was the only child in a great, scattered old Southern house, bayou-encircled, looking out on the Bay of Biloxi.”<sup>7</sup> At other times he described Point Paul Myron as “a lonely seaside estate” and as “an old plantation home . . . The place was quite isolated.”<sup>8</sup> But in a letter intended to comfort his mother, written during his Army Intelligence service in China in World War II, Paul described Point Paul Myron in language similar to his father’s:

I don’t know why, the memory of an old tune, I Dreamed That I Dwelt in Marble Halls, keeps running through my head and it keeps reminding me of the wonderful past, so terribly far away in reality and yet so near within my heart, when my own darling mamma used to romp the woods of the bayou peninsulas with me. There are all sorts of interesting memories tied up with that tune: Father reading Shakespeare by the kerosene lamp until you and he say that it’s almost ten o’clock, as though that were the latest that anybody ever stayed up, in the whole history of the world— . . . and the way we used to walk in the woods and I would run around picking out little tiny cute baby trees, which impressed me as the most darling-looking things—and the smell of the marsh in front of the house— . . . All these things, and a thousand others keep running through my mind when I think of those dear

dead unforgettable months and years; and all I have to do is to hum the tune to myself to bring all that back.<sup>9</sup>

Paul's most vivid reconstruction of those early Mississippi years appeared in a brief story published as fiction in his college literary magazine, under the pseudonym Anthony d'Este.<sup>10</sup> As fiction, with a protagonist named "Peter" rather than Paul, this reconstruction may not have been totally accurate. But from other information about Paul and his family's circumstances in Mississippi, it appears much closer to a memoir than to imaginative fiction. As an especially revealing work, the story is reprinted here in full.<sup>11</sup>

## **Old-Man Molly**

Peter was a big man now, almost five years old. He was such a big boy he had to make-believe he didn't like Molly.

Molly was truly the favorite among all his dolls. Molly wore girl's clothes, but he was really an old, old man. One leg was short and one leg long, and his face was broken, but Molly was the oldest one of his playmates. Molly was almost as old as Papa.

Peter wasn't lonely. He had lots of friends. They all slept in a row under his hammock at night. They would stay awake a long time with him and hear the whippoorwill sadly crying over the bayous. Peter almost felt like crying too, but he would hug Molly close and have a funny warm happy feeling in his throat.

Peter wasn't lonely. In the daytime he would put Molly and some fresh-faced silly dolls in his own old baby carriage that had the bottom falling out, and he would push them way down the corduroy road where the frogs were. Why did they call it corduroy? It was just a long row of logs put sideways across the swamp.

Molly knew why it was corduroy. Molly knew lots of things. Molly saw God once—He was a cloud, and His face was white and blurry. After that Peter knew that Molly was awfully wise and called him Old-man Molly.

The best time Peter ever had was when he and Molly ran away. Peter was crying and dragging Molly along behind him in the dust. They walked through the woods to Deer Point. Peter found lots of little trees, little cute baby pines that weren't as big as his finger. He made a pile of the little trees at Deer Point and then went on up the bayou where people had never gone before. It was all very still. No birds sang.

Peter went on and on and on. He at last came to a cliff, a little cliff. And there was a tiny beach, with bones of terribly big dead fishes on it, great big fishes that could eat alligators.

Peter made Molly stand by one of the big fishes so that it wouldn't run away. And Peter dug a hole in the ground to bury the fish. Peter dug by scraping with sticks and scooping with shells. He had to bury the fish. Molly had caught it and killed it a long time ago, before Peter could remember.

But Peter stopped digging. He was lonesome and tired. He lay down on the warm sand and looked up at the breathing sky. It was deep, deeper than the terrible bayou, where you could put a whole quarry and have it sink down for always and

always. A quarry was a pebble grown up after a million years. You could throw all the quarries into the sky. It was big enough. Maybe they would fall up—up and up forever. You could throw the whole world into the sky, and it would keep on falling through the boggy air. Peter was suddenly dizzy. Maybe he would fall in. What could he hold on to? But Old-man Molly was there. Old-man Molly knew that people didn't fall up, fall all the way to heaven. He hugged Molly.

Then there was a long groaning sound echo-like down the bayou. “Whooo-oooh!” It was Mama calling. Peter dropped Molly and ran into the forest.

He was lost. A stick suddenly turned into a rattlesnake and clicked at him. The logs were all sleeping alligators that would wake up and eat him. He ran on. Black things hurried around in the daylight. It was so lonesome here they were not afraid of the sun. Peter was a big, big man. He knew there was nothing to be afraid of in the daytime. But he began crying and running. He stumbled and screamed. There was an answering call. Just as he stood up the bushes swished—there was Mama! He was five years old, almost, but Mama picked him up and kissed him. He told her all about it.

That night, after Papa had talked a lot at him but hadn't spanked him, he undressed himself and went to bed. Where was Old-man Molly? Peter remembered he had left him on the beach. Peter knew that he could never go back to the beach, that Mama and Papa couldn't find it, that it was a million miles and a million years away. Peter began crying. Old-man Molly had ridden the big fish away down the bayou. Old-man Molly was a doll. He wasn't a good doll. He couldn't ride fishes. It was all make-believe. Everything was make-believe. Peter was a big man now. Everything had to be truly so.

Mama came, but he couldn't tell her. He didn't want Old-man Molly anyhow. Old-man Molly was just a girl-doll.

From a literary perspective, this is an unusually sophisticated work for an eighteen-year-old writer. It employs the point of view of a nearly-five-year-old child to convey complex perceptions and emotional states that the child himself cannot fully comprehend. From a psychological perspective, the story is primarily an account of a child on the cusp of completing an important transition, from a close union with the parents (especially the mother) to psychological separation and personality individuation. In these circumstances, the doll Old-man Molly serves as a transitional self-object, a figure on which the child can rely for dependable companionship while striving to develop independence from the parents.<sup>12</sup> This companion's psychological usefulness in the separation-individuation process is here compromised, however, by Peter's simultaneous struggle with issues of gender identity. Peter is told by his father both that boys don't play with dolls and that he is now grown-up enough to control his emotions. Peter's mother presents a somewhat different message: she is there when he needs her, but she may become again an enveloping figure if he does not maintain some psychological distance.

Old-man Molly did not altogether disappear from little Paul's fantasy world after the doll was left on the beach and rode the big fish down the bayou. Instead, Paul began to develop stories about the “Wild Dollies of Biloxi,” who lived on an island out in the Bay. Old-man Molly (or sometimes Old-man Myron) was King of the Dollies. Paul's

baby brother Wentworth was assigned to the ranks of the Dollies soon after his birth in 1918. These stories became so real for Paul, apparently, that certain adults in the house decided desperate measures were necessary. “Aunt May chased [Paul] with a dirty diaper to show him I was a real baby,” Wentworth recalled many years later. “That cured him.” But Paul still told stories about the Wild Dollies and Old-man Myron, until Paul’s Uncle Billy visited Point Paul Myron. After Paul told him the stories, “Billy came in one day and said to Paul, ‘Today I met Old Man Myron.’ That shattered Paul; he never mentioned Myron again.”<sup>13</sup>

During the same period or soon after, another important figure entered Paul’s life: a girl named Ruth. Ruth is mentioned only briefly in Paul’s surviving papers, first in a draft of a short autobiography apparently written as a school assignment: “About the second year of our residence there [at Point Paul Myron], my mother got a girl, named Ruth, who was about 12 years of age, as a nurse-maid for me and helper for her. [This sentence is accompanied in the margin by a stick-figure drawing of a girl in a dress, holding a small child’s hand.] Soon afterwards, my little brother arrived.” In a second draft, perhaps edited by his mother or by a schoolteacher, Paul rendered the same section of the autobiography as, “I had a nursemaid named Ruth, whom I liked very much. On the 17 October 1918, my brother Wayne Wentworth was born.”<sup>14</sup>

Sixty-five years later, Wayne Wentworth Linebarger was able to elaborate on this account. Early in my first interview with him, he answered a question about childhood pets: “Mother would take any animal in. They loved her more than anyone else. She would feed them—cats, dogs. The neighbors got angry because they would all come to her.” After discussing other topics, I asked about Ruth, and Wentworth responded: “Ruth was a wild girl Mother discovered in Ocean Springs, I guess like the cats. She appeared on the scene in a daze, dirty and ragged. She must have been abandoned by someone, maybe dropped off by a man. Mother cleaned her up, fed her up like a cat. Ruth became Paul’s playmate and a sort of nursemaid. They ran wild, chasing rabbits—they were very close together.”<sup>15</sup>

Wentworth assumed, from the family stories, that Ruth was 14 or 15—a white girl, whose last name was never mentioned.<sup>16</sup> She lived with the Linebargers for several months, then she “just disappeared. Maybe she took up with another man—Mother said she just disappeared.”<sup>17</sup> Paul’s daughter Marcia recalled hearing that Ruth had been dismissed because of some kind of “trashy” behavior.<sup>18</sup> Paul himself, in notes he wrote to prepare for a session with his psychotherapist in 1948, asked plaintively, “Why has Mother suppressed all mention of Ruth? Why did she tear all of Ruth’s pictures out of the old family album?”<sup>19</sup> He gave no answers to these questions; perhaps he knew none.

By the time of Ruth’s disappearance or soon after, the Judge was anticipating moving the family to China. World War I had ended; Sun Yat-sen had managed to re-establish himself as head of a regional Chinese government in Canton Province; and the Judge was hard at work again on Sun’s behalf. (Indeed, the Judge was on an extended speaking tour when Wentworth was born, and little Paul—according to the stories Wentworth heard later—had somehow helped with the birth.) In June 1919, Lillian Linebarger and the two children set out westward from Ocean Springs, joining the Judge at the Grand Canyon before proceeding on to board a ship in San Francisco. By mid-August they were in Shanghai, beginning the first of Paul’s many stays in China.

Paul Linebarger's involvement with China was a lifelong matter, as visible in his fiction as in his scholarly work. But the pre-China years in Mississippi left their own mark, especially in two major stories. One story, "The Game of Rat and Dragon," was written early in his science-fictional career, and it describes events relatively early in the vast chronology of his future history. The other story, "On the Storm Planet," takes place late in the future history; it was written less than three years before Linebarger's death.

"The Game of Rat and Dragon," the second Cordwainer Smith story to appear in print, has become one of the most widely anthologized.<sup>20</sup> Its central character is Underhill, a human telepath who is trained to use a technology called pinlighting so he can protect starships from deadly monsters in deep space. The story begins with Underhill telepathically experiencing the "hot, warm protection of the Sun" and the psychological comfort of our solar system (164). He becomes increasingly anxious and alert as he and several other human telepaths accompany a starship into interstellar space. The telepaths are aided in their protective mission by Companions—ordinary housecats whose telepathically alerted reflexes are much quicker than humans', and who can therefore destroy the attacking space monsters with photonuclear "light bombs" before the human spacefarers are seriously harmed.

Underhill is especially pleased to be joined in the current battle by his favorite Companion, a mother cat named Lady May. Important passages in the story describe not only Underhill's appreciation of Lady May's monster-fighting talents, but also the telepathically-shared love and understanding between man and cat. The story ends in a hospital back on Earth, where Underhill is recovering after a brief encounter with a space monster. A human female nurse scornfully condemns Underhill's close companionship with a cat. In response, Underhill thinks of Lady May's beauty, grace, speed, and undemandingness, and he wonders, "Where would he ever find a woman who could compare with her?" (175)

"The Game of Rat and Dragon" gives no surface hint of Southern origins. The title instead suggests a Chinese source, though it turns out to refer simply to the different ways in which cat and human telepathically perceive the space monsters: cats see them as giant rats, humans see them as dragons. On closer inspection the story is strikingly similar, in structure and in psychological content, to Paul Linebarger's college publication, "Old-man Molly."

In each story, the protagonist leaves the comforts of home to enter a zone of great danger. In the earlier story, the protagonist's most feared threat is from alligators; in the later story, from creatures experienced as dragons. In both stories, the protagonist is accompanied by a companion whose presence reassures and protects him—not a real human companion but a transitional object, whether doll or cat. In both stories, the protagonist is deeply aware of the companion's thoughts and memories without any overt communication between them. In both stories, the companion rather than the protagonist is the destroyer of monsters. Old-man Molly has caught and killed a great big fish that "could eat alligators;" Underhill's companion Lady May blasts a huge space monster and feels "a moment of fierce, terrible, feral elation" (173). In both stories, the protagonist is anxious not only about monsters but about the vastness of space itself. At one point, Peter shows increasing anxiety about "the breathing sky. It was deep, deeper than the terrible bayou. . . . Maybe they would fall up—up and up forever." At a similar point,

Underhill is described as feeling that “he was loose in the Up-and-Out, the terrible open spaces between the stars” (165).

In both stories, the protagonist comes home at the end, safe from his close call with monsters. But then he finds himself under attack by people at home who want him to give up his companion, people who make fun of him for being too involved with his nonhuman transitional object: “Old-man Molly was a doll. He wasn’t a good doll.” “‘She *is* a cat,’ he thought. ‘That’s all she is—a *cat!*’” (175; Linebarger’s italics).

We have no way to know whether Paul Linebarger consciously reworked his memories of a bayou childhood from “Old-man Molly” into those vivid fantasies of far-future space battles in “The Game of Rat and Dragon.” But it is clear from the commonalities of these stories that the feelings and perceptions first experienced in those early years remained available to him forty years later for creative elaboration.

The other Cordwainer Smith story that shares a strong Southern influence, “On the Storm Planet,” is also frequently anthologized.<sup>21</sup> It was a Nebula nominee for best novella of 1965. It holds the central place in a three-story sequence, collected in book form (along with a related fourth story) under the overall title *Quest of the Three Worlds*. The stories’ protagonist is Casher O’Neill, a nephew of the corrupt and recently deposed ruler of the planet Mizzer. Casher’s objective is to obtain enough firepower on some other planet to return to Mizzer and oust its new tyrant. In “On the Storm Planet,” Casher journeys to a planet called Henriada, where the official planetary Administrator promises to give him the best battleship in the planet’s space fleet. Casher’s only obligation in return is to assassinate a female underperson, “some kind of an animal turned into a domestic servant,” who lives in “the biggest and best house left on this planet” (476). Accepting the mission, Casher must struggle through Henriada’s constant hurricanes and tornadoes to reach the mansion called Beauregard, which is located “between Ambloxi and Mottile, on the Gulf of Esperanza. You can’t miss it” (476). After encountering strange creatures and dangerous situations along the way, Casher discovers the Beauregard estate to be “unlike anything else on Henriada—an area of peaceful wildness in a world which was rushing otherwise toward uninhabitability and ruin” (493). He also finds that the underperson he has agreed to kill is in appearance “a little girl,” somewhere between ten and thirteen years old (495).

Casher is unable to kill the girl, both because he has instantly fallen in love with her and because she possesses powers far beyond his own. She explains that her name is T’ruth, that she is the actual ruler of the planet, and that “I am a child . . . and not a child. I am an Earth turtle, changed into human form by the convenience of man. My life expectancy was increased three hundred times when I was modified. . . . Now it is ninety thousand years” (497-498). (In the Cordwainer Smith system of naming underpeople, the “T’ ” in T’ruth’s name identifies her as derived from turtle genetic stock.) T’ruth’s prime duty is to protect and maintain her master Murray Madigan, the owner of Beauregard, who has found a way to achieve near-immortality by passing most of his life in suspended animation. T’ruth has been aided in her protective mission by being imprinted with the skills and powers of Madigan’s late wife Agatha, a legendary “space-witch” who was able to conjure attack fleets “out of nothing by sheer hypnosis” (505). T’ruth also derives her powers in part from her belief in the Old Strong Religion. She promises to aid Casher in his own long-term mission by sharing her powers, if he will help her deal with an immediate problem: to frighten a crazed but famous houseguest into abandoning

his threats on her master's life, without violating the hospitality code of Beauregard by killing or injuring the guest. Casher manages to do the job, and is rewarded by being imprinted with the psyches and the powers both of T'ruth and of the space-witch, Agatha Madigan.

Certain elements of "On the Storm Planet" are easy enough to identify, given Paul Linebarger's penchant for word-play and for thinly disguised historical and literary borrowings. Overall, the several stories of *Quest of the Three Worlds* borrow lightly from the Chinese classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Linebarger worked into the story various names and situations from the violent politics of Egypt in the 1950s: Casher is the nephew of the corrupt ruler Kuraf (King Farouk), who has been overturned by Colonels Gibna (Naguib) and Wedder (Nasser), etc.<sup>23</sup> With a little knowledge of Linebarger's childhood, one may also recognize that the estate called Beauregard strongly resembles Point Paul Myron—though the name "Beauregard" may have been inspired by the nearby estate of Beauvoir, Jefferson Davis's retirement home. Beauregard is situated between Ambiloxi (Biloxi) and Mottile (Mobile), on the Gulf of Esperanza (Gulf of Mexico); these are all located on the planet Henriada (combining the names of a childhood friend and the nearby state of Georgia). Henriada is torn by constant and extreme winds (the Gulf Coast is a major hurricane zone). Beauregard is an area of "peaceful wildness" (as was the retreat of Point Paul Myron), "in a world which was rushing otherwise toward uninhabitability and ruin." Similarly, during the Point Paul Myron period, much of the world was at war and China was racked by constant internal struggles.

The real-life human prototypes of Beauregard's inhabitants are less readily identifiable, until we learn more about the inhabitants of Point Paul Myron. Casher O'Neill, though he surely represents certain aspects of the author, is engaged in just the sorts of weapons procurement and attempts to overturn tyrants that his father was doing both before and after the Mississippi interlude. On the other hand Murray Madigan, who survives by going into suspended animation, suggests Linebarger's father during the period of internal exile in Mississippi. Madigan's wife Agatha, the space-witch with tremendous powers of hypnosis, may represent Paul's domineering and intrusive (though loving) mother. The turtle-girl T'ruth is in certain ways, though not completely, modeled on Paul's childhood companion and nursemaid Ruth.

The name T'ruth is of course a Cordwainer Smith pun, and it has generally been left at that in other discussions of "On the Storm Planet": T'ruth represents what Linebarger saw as the truth of Christianity, or the truth of the philosophy of power, love, and desire that T'ruth also advocates in the story. Both true of T'ruth, no doubt—but T'ruth is also an imaginative version of the true Ruth. When Casher O'Neill first meets the "little girl" T'ruth, his thoughts are not about religion or philosophy. His response is instead, "He knew her. He had always known her. She was his sweetheart, come back out of his childhood. She was the sister he had never had. She was his own mother, when young. . . . She felt like someone he had never left behind; yet, at the same moment, he knew he had never seen her before" (495). Come back out of his childhood, indeed!

The true Ruth was the first in a long line of women (and cats) who became close enough to Paul Linebarger to be worked into his fiction by name: Nancy, Irene, Betty, Helen, Genevieve, Alma, Lucy, Melanie, and others. At least in one regard, Ruth was prototypical of most members of that list: they were strongly disapproved as unsuitable

companions for Paul by one or both of his parents. Though Ruth was originally chosen by Paul's mother, she seems to have provoked Lillian Linebarger's wrath or disgust after several months, sufficiently to be erased from the family history. In her case the picture is complicated by strong Oedipal elements in the fictional Ruth: T'ruth emphasizes to Casher that though she thinks of him as "my might-have-been" (537), she is irrevocably committed to her master, the ancient Murray Madigan, and is at the same time imprinted with the personality of Madigan's dead wife. In fictionalizing a 12- or 13-year-old girl who has served as both substitute mother and full-time playmate for a 5-year-old boy, such Oedipal imagery seems entirely appropriate.

The denouement of "On the Storm Planet," in which T'ruth gives Casher the power he needs by imprinting both her own and Agatha Madigan's psyches on his brain, can be related to the real-life circumstances in several ways. Ruth did indeed leave a strong psychological imprint on Paul Linebarger, as did his mother. Ruth's sudden disappearance, after little Paul had come to love her, would from a Freudian perspective lead to Paul's internalization of her personality as he saw it at the time, and thus to a partial identification with her—a problematic identification, for a boy who was already having serious difficulties with gender identity, as suggested in "Old-man Molly."<sup>24</sup> Issues of gender identity remained problematic for Paul throughout his life; these issues were explored most directly in his mainstream novels but were often represented in his science fiction as well. John Bowlby's theories of emotional attachment and loss, now major competitors to strictly Freudian theories, suggest that a loss as sudden as Ruth's disappearance, remaining undiscussed within the family, would prime Linebarger to be unusually sensitive to other separations and losses in later years.<sup>25</sup> Such a formulation is descriptive of Linebarger's major psychological problems as an adult, leading him on several occasions to suicidal depression.<sup>26</sup>

This paper is not intended to suggest that all of Paul Linebarger's problems, or the course of all of his relationships with women, or for that matter all of the major themes in his fiction, can be traced back to his three years in Mississippi and to his loss of Ruth. Only a few months after his family's departure from Mississippi, Paul encountered new stresses, including influenza at a time when influenza was often deadly; his loss of one eye in an accident; and the threat of total blindness from an infection in the other eye. Over his life span, Linebarger encountered a remarkable range of experiences in many cultures and in diverse life circumstances, which he often translated into the mythic structure of his science fiction. But the early environment of coastal Mississippi, ranging from the "warm sweet salty stink of seaweed" to the "changeless, musty old house" later depicted in "On the Storm Planet" (528), left traces in his brain as strong as T'ruth's self-imprint upon the brain of Casher O'Neill. As Linebarger wrote in one of his mainstream novels, "There is a doom in childhood, not perceived until it is beyond change. . . . Every child knows that being a child is not the main business of life; but few children are told—perhaps few could understand—that childhood is the pattern for all the future."<sup>27</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, John J. Pierce's general introduction and individual story introductions in *The Best of Cordwainer Smith*, as well as my introduction to the NESFA Press edition of *Norstrilia*.

<sup>2</sup> In Linebarger, Djang, and Burks, 132. The chapter on the Chinese Republican revolution of 1911-1912 was written primarily by Linebarger. Jonathan Spence, in *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, says that Yüan died "from natural causes" (99).

<sup>3</sup> The Judge had also bitterly opposed China's and America's entry into World War I. British policies in China over many decades had led him to feel more friendly toward Germany than toward England early in the war. In addition, he saw the war as likely to "corrupt [America's] political morality, drain its treasury to the bottom, and create an economic disorder which would endure for decades" (Paul Myron Wentworth Linebarger, *A Follower of Sun Chung Shan*, unpublished manuscript, 1937, p. 337; Paul M. W. Linebarger Papers, Box 20, Hoover Institution Archives).

<sup>4</sup> For much information on Ocean Springs and the surrounding area, I am grateful to Ray L. Bellande, local historian and columnist for the Ocean Springs *Record*.

<sup>5</sup> "Paul Myron" was also the pseudonym the Judge used at this time for his self-published novels and poetry. The house no longer stands. On current maps, its location is called Hollingsworth Point, named for the family who built the house. My information on the house's location and its history comes primarily from Ray L. Bellande, supplemented by documents from the Paul M. W. Linebarger Papers, Box 5, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Paul M. W. Linebarger, *A Follower of Sun Chung Shan*, 341.

<sup>7</sup> "My Preparation in English," handwritten essay, July 5, 1928; personal collection of Rosana [Linebarger] Hart.

<sup>8</sup> "For Introduction," typescript, n. d., Paul M. W. Linebarger Papers, Box 13, and "A Glance at My Reading," handwritten manuscript, n. d., Paul M. A. Linebarger papers, Box 2, both in Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>9</sup> Paul M. A. Linebarger to Lillian Linebarger, letter of 7 April 1944; personal collection of Rosana Hart.

<sup>10</sup> From Paul's third name, Anthony, and his paternal grandmother's maiden name, Estes.

<sup>11</sup> It first appeared in the *Creative Writing* supplement to the George Washington University *Hatchet*, December 1931.

<sup>12</sup> The concept of transitional self-objects, first discussed by D. W. Winnicott in such papers as "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," has been adopted by a wide variety of contemporary personality and developmental psychologists.

<sup>13</sup> Telephone interview with W. Wentworth Linebarger, March 26, 1983. Wentworth did not remember these incidents first-hand, since he was born only eight months before the Linebargers left Mississippi permanently. Evidently the stories about Paul and the Wild Dollies were often repeated within the family over the years. Wentworth recalled the Doll King's name as Old Man Myron rather than Old-man Molly, and said he had never read Paul's short story about the latter. Paul may have used the two names on different occasions, or he may have avoided using "Myron" in his college publication because it was a name shared by himself and his father and would have been recognized by others. Or Wentworth may have simply misremembered.

<sup>14</sup> "My Autobiography," handwritten manuscript, n. d.; Paul M. A. Linebarger Papers, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Telephone interview, March 26, 1983. Again, Wentworth's account is based on family stories, not on any direct memories.

<sup>16</sup> Telephone interview, June 16, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Telephone interview, March 26, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> Telephone interview, May 11, 1983.

<sup>19</sup> Typewritten page dated 6 June 1948; Linebarger Papers, Department of Special Collections, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

<sup>20</sup> It can be found, among other places, in Robert Silverberg's *Mirror of Infinity*, where Kingsley Amis calls it a "sad, haunting tale" (198), and in *The Road to Science Fiction #3*, edited by James Gunn, who introduces it with the statement that "The strangest of the worlds created in science fiction were the worlds of Cordwainer Smith (271). Page numbers for the Cordwainer Smith stories cited in this paper refer to the authoritative versions in the NESFA Press volume, *The Rediscovery of Man*.

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<sup>21</sup> It is reprinted, among other places, in Robert Silverberg and Martin H. Greenberg's *Arbor House Treasury of Great Science Fiction Short Novels*, and in *Modern Classic Short Novels of Science Fiction*, edited by Gardner Dozois, who calls it a "landmark novella" (94).

<sup>22</sup> Substantial portions of that work, written around 1400 by Lo Kuan-chung, are available in English translation as *Three Kingdoms*. Linebarger borrowed more heavily from the Chinese classic *Journey to the West* for his novel *Norstrilia*.

<sup>23</sup> John J. Pierce first identified these Egyptian elements in print, on the basis of information from Linebarger's widow Genevieve; see Pierce's introduction to the Ballantine/Del Rey edition of *Quest of the Three Worlds*. Genevieve Linebarger even told Pierce that Casher O'Neill was named after a street in Cairo, Qasr Al-Nil! She failed to tell Pierce, however, that her husband had visited Cairo at least three times during the political flashpoint year of 1954—ostensibly as a scholar and tourist, but actually to conduct psychological warfare. According to CIA operative Miles Copeland, "On short-term assignments, we had such experts as Paul Linebarger advise both the [Egyptian] Minister of Information and President Nasser himself on how the Egyptian press and Radio Cairo could issue stories and editorials which were seemingly pro-Soviet but did the Soviets and Communism more harm than good, and stories and editorials which were seemingly anti-American but which did us more good than harm" (180). For specific dates of Linebarger's travels to Egypt, see "Journeys of Paul M. A. Linebarger, 1913-1957," typescript, Paul M. A. Linebarger Papers, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Freud discussed internalization of the lost love object in "Mourning and Melancholia," 249-250, among other places.

<sup>25</sup> This combination of early loss plus absence of family discussion of the loss is especially evident in Bowlby's psychobiography of Charles Darwin. The early and sudden loss of a beloved nursemaid, similar to Paul's loss of Ruth, appears to have made Bowlby himself especially sensitive to issues of separation and loss.

<sup>26</sup> Some of these problems are discussed in my papers, "The Creation of Cordwainer Smith" and "Origins of the Underpeople."

<sup>27</sup> Paul M. A. Linebarger (as Felix C. Forrest), *Ria*, 236.