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# FROM FEIKEMA TO MANFRED, FROM THE BIG SIOUX BASIN TO THE NORTHERN PLAINS

ARTHUR R. HUSEBOE

In 1991, when he had just turned seventy-nine years old, Frederick Manfred was interviewed at his Luverne, Minnesota, home by three young writers for an article that was to appear in the *Agassiz Review* that spring.<sup>1</sup> He answered questions about his earliest urges to become a novelist when he was writing under the pen name Feike Feikema, questions about people who had encouraged his ambitions, and about the autobiographical sources for his novels, or his *rumes*, as he preferred to call

them. He was asked about his writing methods and the motivations for some of his characters and even about his favorite Fred Manfred book. Then there was the inevitable question about Manfred's invention of the term "Siouxland" as a name for his home territory and whether the creation of Siouxland was influenced by William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. Manfred's answer, a crystallization of the dozens of times he had explained his creation, was that the reason for "Siouxland" was a practical one. In his manuscripts, he had gotten tired of typing over and over the names of the four adjacent states that made up his home territory—Iowa, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

KEY WORDS: cartography, Feike Feikema, Frederick Manfred, Northern Plains, Siouxland literature

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## CREATING "SIOUXLAND"

The decision to coin a name for the region had come in 1945, when he was finishing his third novel, *This Is the Year*, and he had said to himself,

"Why don't I just drop all that state stuff and give the name for that Big Sioux River drainage basin?" So I went through a bunch

of different things like "Big Sioux River Country" and so on, but I finally settled on Siouxland. And I drew up a map, which is in the end pages of the book *This Is the Year*. I drew that up in '46, when I was finishing typing the book, and in '47, in April, when it came out, it was in the end pages. And within two months, all the advertising guys in Sioux City and Sioux Falls glommed onto it because it saved them from having to mention all these states. . . . So unlike Yoknapatawpha, which has never been picked up by anybody else except Faulkner, mine was taken by these people. Then I became aware of Wessex and Hardy . . . and John Steinbeck's Salinas Valley and so on. But I did it for a practical reason. I got sick of typing those states over and over again.<sup>2</sup>

Manfred knew well the land that he wrote about in *This Is the Year*. He had been a farmer there most of his life, and, as he wrote to college friend John Huizenga on 10 November 1945,<sup>3</sup> he had traveled all across that Big Sioux drainage basin in preparing for the writing of the novel and had even gathered flowers, weeds, tree leaves, and bits of mud and stone to be identified later by experts. He had studied the weather reports for the region as well in order to make certain that he had every detail right. To literary critic Van Wyck Brooks he wrote (6 May 1946) about Siouxland: "Already I've peopled it with many towns, mostly fictions (though real) and people, situations, and tragedies,"<sup>4</sup> and to George Shively of Doubleday, he wrote on 17 August 1946,

About the maps. Could they be used? I feel that it's important for the reader to get a good visual outline of the country, of the farm and its environs, and of Siouxland (my literary territory). If these aren't good enough for reproduction, then we'd better have new ones made. (Maps in Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* were of great aid.) (Also, I think the maps will pass as an author's scratching. As a professional map-maker, they wouldn't, of course.) I think

that when they're reduced to book page size the little tails and so will vanish.<sup>5</sup>

The maps that were intended to add further reality were indeed used in the end pages of the first edition of *This Is the Year* in 1947, and they are clearly those that Manfred had provided to Doubleday in the summer of 1946. They are labeled as "Maps redrawn from originals by Feike Feikema," and there are two of them, the first labeled "Siouxland" and the second "Pier's Farm and Neighborhood."<sup>6</sup> Manfred considered them essential to the narrative, and he referred to the Siouxland map throughout his career as the best directory to the region that was his home territory, his "magical place." In a 1990 essay, "The Siouxlander," written about the same time as the *Agassiz Review* interview, Manfred elaborated on the popularity of the term Siouxland throughout the region. The advertising people, he pointed out, could now substitute the all-purpose "Siouxland" in place of the names of the four adjacent states that comprised his home territory. Hence, said Manfred, there is the Siouxland Conference in sports, Siouxland Insurance, the Siouxland Heritage Museums (operated jointly by Sioux Falls and Minnehaha County), and so on.<sup>7</sup> And even today, we should note, the big AM voice of WNAX radio in Yankton announces "Siouxland weather" and "Siouxland highs and lows" and so on periodically throughout the day and throughout the year. The Sioux Falls stations, on the other hand, tend to use for their broadcast regions the term "Sioux Empire," a designation that Manfred despised.

The two maps from *This Is the Year* are far less expansive than the ambitious big signal from WNAX, which stretches out from Yankton in a great circle that—according to the station—reaches most of South Dakota and Nebraska and large areas of southwest Minnesota and northwest Iowa and can be heard even in southern North Dakota and northern Kansas. The map of Siouxland according to Manfred, however, barely includes the town of Yankton, which sits along the

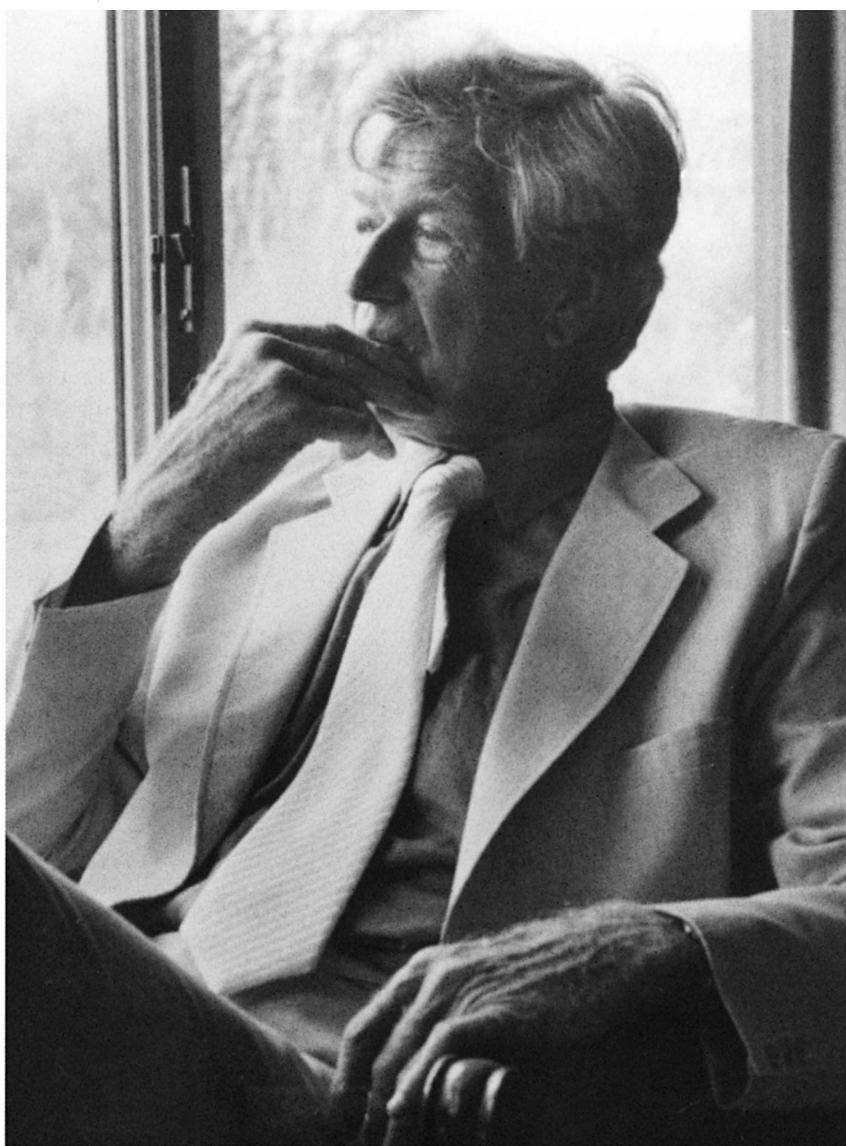


FIG. 1. *Frederick Manfred*. Photograph by Larry Risser. Courtesy of Frederick Manfred Estate.

Missouri River on the far left margin. And the state of Nebraska, which looms large in WNAX's outreach, has no interest for him, for there are no names of towns or cities written in, contrary to southeastern South Dakota, southwestern Minnesota, and northwestern Iowa, all of which Manfred has lavishly endowed with names of villages and towns.

In the selection of those names, Manfred indulged to the full his fondness for coined names and odd and unusual names, and he often placed real towns some distance from their true locations, for no apparent reason. In the southeastern corner of South Dakota, for example, it is farther from Vermillion to Richland in the east than it is from Vermillion

to Beresford to the north-northeast. In reality, Beresford is 30 percent farther away—some six miles farther. The endpaper map has a town “Haywire” located about halfway between Vermillion and Beresford, but no such town exists where Manfred has placed it, west of Interstate 29 at about the location of Union County State Park. He places the fictitious village “Welcome” at the location of Hudson, South Dakota, and the equally fictitious “Last Chance” across the Sioux River on the Iowa side. There really is a Newton Hills wooded area south of Canton, but no “Grub,” South Dakota, to the west-southwest of the Hills. Near Sioux Falls there *are* towns and villages named Tea and Pumpkin Center but no “Philosophy,” “Two-Bits,” “Sometimes,” or “Dell Valley” (a modification of the real Dell Rapids). On the Iowa side of the Big Sioux River Manfred has made wholesale substitutions for the names of real towns. Now we find “Whitebone” (Luverne), “Hazard,” “Starum,” “Rock Falls,” “Yellow Smoke,” “Heaven,” “Blow Out,” “Amen,” “Hello,” “Chokecherry Corner,” “Passage,” “Last Chance,” “Jerusalem,” “Million Dollar Corner,” “Anxious,” and “Resolute.” One of the fictitious names, at least, has significance. Starum is named in honor of Âld Starum, the “legendary capital of ancient Frisia,” Manfred’s ancestral land.<sup>8</sup> The rest of the fictitious towns and villages seem to have been chosen to lend color to an otherwise unremarkable landscape and to serve as Manfred’s claim to the territory as his own and as a truly fictional region, even while the names are like the ones Siouxland folks do in fact use. We recall the characterization of Siouxland that Manfred offered to Van Wyck Brooks: “I’ve peopled it with many towns, mostly fictitious (though real). . . .”<sup>9</sup>

#### CULTURAL REGIONALISM

In two essays about his territory Manfred presents in a series of vignettes the qualities he has found there. The earlier of the two pieces was a talk to scholars who attended the Humanities Seminar at Augustana College in

Sioux Falls in 1985.<sup>10</sup> It is in part a reminiscence of his childhood and youth in north-west Iowa and in part an encomium to the virtues of Siouxland folk. Manfred remembers the daily routine of running the seven-and-a-half miles to high school and back home and the unforgettable pleasure of being given an ecstatic greeting on his return by the Feikema dog, Rover. In his first months away from home, he learned how poignantly he could miss his brothers and his father—and his dog—and he came to realize in his Calvin College English courses how thoroughly his own Siouxland language was unlike formal English. Later, while working in New Jersey, his homesickness for Siouxland returned so often that he retreated there for a while, to baseball games and cob fights and made-up games with his brothers.

As to the virtues he had discovered in Siouxland after a lifetime there, Manfred says, “There are other reasons, too, why home was so magical. I had heroes at home. My father was one.” And he proceeds to tell stories about his father’s quick-witted responses in difficult situations on the farm, and about two of his hero uncles, Henry and Herm, also quick-witted and with a teasing sense of humor. Manfred said of them, “I loved the way they did life.”<sup>11</sup>

Siouxland took on a new significance for Manfred when he discovered that besides these heroes there were great creative minds percolating there. Ole Rølvaag’s *Giants in the Earth* was his first surprise, a book he read one summer when he was out of college and back on the farm north of Doon, Iowa, sitting on the front porch. He was startled to realize that Per Hansa and Beret could have crossed the very land beneath his feet during their trek to Dakota Territory. “My country was celebrated!” he exclaimed. “It was sacred! Just as sacred as the English land was for the English people with their *Beowulfs*, Spensers, Shakespeares, Doughtys, and Conrads.”<sup>12</sup> Later on he learned about Ruth Suckow and Herbert Quick and Hiram Chittenden, all from the Iowa side of Siouxland, and about the artist

and illustrator Harvey Dunn, who lived over in South Dakota.

And then there were those mysterious people who had held the land in trust before Rölvaag's pioneers entered. As a boy, Manfred had been fascinated by them. He had seen caravans of Sioux Indian people traveling south down Highway 75 from Flandreau, South Dakota, through Pipestone, Minnesota, to Sioux City, Iowa, and thence to visit their relatives at Santee, Nebraska. He wondered about them and about the Blood Run mounds along the Sioux River not far from his farm, where there were signs of an elaborate settlement of early Plains Indian peoples. Later, Manfred became deeply interested in Native Americans, found traces of them throughout Siouxland, and wrote three novels about them. On top of Blue Mounds north of Luverne, moreover, where he and his family had come to live in 1960, Manfred found a row of massive rocks piled up to mark the spring and fall equinox, perhaps built by relatives of the inhabitants of the great Indian settlement at Cahokia on the Mississippi River near St. Louis. By the time he had moved to Luverne, that deep interest from childhood on in American Indians had already led him to a far larger field of interest, beyond the narrow corner of the Sioux Valley that he had named Siouxland and embracing the broad expanse of grasslands that comprise the northern plains.

The elements that constitute the mystique of Siouxland were further developed in the previously named essay that Manfred wrote in 1990. "The Siouxlander" offers his analysis of the principal characteristics and virtues of the people who live there. They are, Manfred says, "all pretty much alike." Most are Protestants, he observes; the ancestors of most are from northern Europe and Great Britain: Germans, Norwegians, Frisians, Dutch, and English. Inter-marriage over the generations has produced what Manfred describes as a "purebred people with what I'd like to call Siouxland blood in us." The language of the people, too, is distinctive: "broad, full-toned, and very clear. . . . In part the weather demands it, hot or cold;

in part the lingering momentum of Anglo-Saxon imprinting given us in grade school is always at work in us." It is because of this clear accent that so many Siouxlanders have been chosen as radio and TV announcers, he says, and he offers as examples Eric Severeid, Tom Brokaw, Harry Reasoner, and Jack Van Valkenburg, president of CBS.<sup>13</sup>

Then, in four notable paragraphs, Manfred outlines the four qualities that distinguish the Siouxlander: First, "a special kind of morality, having to do with honesty, a sense of fair play, spirited competition without too much greed, of allowing every citizen to live his own kind of life, so long as it does not intrude too much on a neighbor's well-being." Second, says Manfred, "We've worked out our own kind of justice . . . filled with much compassion." As an example, he points to the many lawyers in Siouxland "who try to practice in the manner of a Solon," a percentage higher than that among lawyers from urban areas. Third, "we applaud financial success," says Manfred, but "we accommodate and help the poor or the momentarily bankrupt." For example, "When disaster strikes a farm family . . . the neighbors band together and help." Finally, the Siouxlander "admires those who are proud of their accomplishments, but who do not brag, who have what we call a permissible kind of arrogance which helps them 'handle' smart alecks coming in from other quarters of our country."<sup>14</sup>

Manfred concludes his sketch of the Siouxlander with a catalog of the older generation of famous authors of the region, adding to the names of Rölvaag, Suckow, Quick, and Dunn those of Herbert Krause, John R. Milton, L. Frank Baum, Hamlin Garland, painter Oscar Howe, and others. He ends with the new creative minds of the later twentieth century, among them novelists Pete Dexter, the University of South Dakota alumnus who won the National Book Award in 1989, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, who was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Bill Clinton in December 2000, poets Freya Manfred, Linda Hasselstrom, David Allan

Evans, and Bill Holm, and playwrights Wayne Knutson, Ronald Robinson, and Craig Volk. They are evidence that "our creations are as good as any other creations anywhere." "In fact," Manfred concludes, "because of the relative freedom from the patronizing airs of the east-coaster or the west-coaster, our works show wonderful independence, originality, and warm understanding, with little cynicism and less despair." We who live among these creative people have twice as much to enjoy as, say, the folk in the East, he observes. We read their magazines and listen to their broadcasts, but we also have a rich cultural life here. "And," says Manfred, "we have this in relative quiet and peace, with clear air always overhead, and sunny skies."<sup>15</sup>

#### MANFRED'S GREATER SIOUXLAND

The larger field of interest that began to draw Manfred's attention away from Siouxland was the part of the West that is the northern plains, from Minnesota and Iowa west, through the Dakotas and Nebraska and into Montana and Wyoming—from the Mississippi to the Rockies and from Kansas to Canada. In the foreword to *Conversations with Frederick Manfred* (1974), Wallace Stegner speaks of the move of novelist Manfred from realistic stories about Siouxland to epic stories about the Wild West that came to be called the Buckskin Man Tales. Stegner believes that Manfred "writes best about authentic heroes, not about the obscure farm boys he grew up among," that his Maurys (in *The Golden Bowl*) and his Elofs (in *The Chokecherry Tree*) "don't let him rise up and bstride Siouxland like a colossus the way his Indians and Mountain Men and cowboys do."<sup>16</sup>

How Manfred came to his discovery of the heroic material to be mined in the West of the mountain man and Indian is the subject of a foreword to Manfred's thirteenth novel, *Scarlet Plume* (1964), that I wrote eighteen years ago for the University of Nebraska Press edition.<sup>17</sup> In that essay I point out that only with the writing of *Scarlet Plume* did Manfred con-

clude that he had now created a series of fictional accounts, each of which dealt with a different important era in the history of America—*Conquering Horse* (1959) for pre-white days, *Lord Grizzly* (1954) for mountain man times, *Riders of Judgment* (1957) about the range wars in the West, and now the new novel—*Scarlet Plume*—about the Sioux Indian uprising during the Civil War. It would constitute a group of historically accurate works, all of them important to nineteenth-century America. The essay explains the genesis for Manfred's move west:

It was the first of the Buckskin Man Tales, *Lord Grizzly*, that taught Manfred how to handle the historical research that so enriches *Scarlet Plume* and the other books in the group. Until late 1944 he had drawn primarily on his own wide-ranging experiences as the basis for his writing, but in that year he came upon the story of mountain man Hugh Glass and his terrible wrestle with a grizzly bear along the Grand River in South Dakota. In a copy of the WPA *Guide to South Dakota* he discovered a woodcut and the account of Glass's terrible wounding, followed by his crawl across half of western South Dakota, and by his unusual revenge.

The sheer magnitude of Glass's ordeal appealed to Manfred, but, even more, he was drawn to learn more about frontier days on the northern plains because in writing his first novels, especially *The Golden Bowl* and *This Is the Year*, he had come to the realization that his knowledge of his own farm people was incomplete: he did not fully understand the land on which they had settled and flourished. Who were the Indians and white men, Manfred wondered, who had lived and traveled here? Something was wrong, something was missing. His characters up to now had no background; they came from nowhere. Manfred realized that he knew nothing beyond his grandparents and nothing about the land on which their grandchildren were now living. Further-

more, while the term "Siouxland" that he had coined fit very well the white farmers of the region of the Sioux River, it also carried the intriguing suggestion of a larger area, the land where the Sioux had once roamed, from western Minnesota and Iowa across the Dakotas and into Wyoming. Manfred began to burn with a passion to know the answers to his questions.<sup>18</sup>

The answers are worked out in the entire body of Manfred's novels—from *The Golden Bowl* of 1944, where his first look at the past was far back into "dinosaur times,"<sup>19</sup> through the twenty-third novel in 1992, *Of Lizards and Angels*, a vast work that once more returns to Siouxland, whence it sends its characters outward into the larger West. Six of the twenty-three novels are planted solidly in twentieth-century Siouxland: *The Golden Bowl* (1944), *This Is the Year* (1947), *The Chokecherry Tree* (1948), *The Man Who Looked Like the Prince of Wales* (1965), *Green Earth* (1977), and *No Fun on Sunday* (1990). Another group of eleven novels, also set principally in the twentieth century, have an essentially Siouxland connection, with many characters who are natives of the region who have left to live in the East or the Twin Cities or elsewhere in the Midlands. These include *Boy Almighty* (1945), *The Primitive* (1949), *The Brother* (1950), *The Giant* (1951), *Morning Red* (1956), *Wanderlust* (1962), *Eden Prairie* (1968), *Milk of Wolves* (1976), *Sons of Adam* (1980), *Flowers of Desire* (1989), and *Of Lizards and Angels* (1992). Three more novels also have twentieth-century Siouxland settings, but they remain unpublished at present.

The group of novels that have brought Manfred the greatest degree of fame are his nineteenth-century stories of Western heroes—Indian and non-Indian—that he named the Buckskin Man Tales. Their locale straddles the northern plains, from the Mississippi River in the east to the Rocky Mountains. The tales range from his first, *Lord Grizzly*—also the first novel to carry his new Manfred name as author in place of Feike Feikema, the pen-

name for his first seven novels—to *Riders of Judgment*, *Conquering Horse*, *Scarlet Plume*, *King of Spades*, and a late comer, *The Manly-Hearted Woman*, not included in the Buckskin Man series but clearly related, a slender novel about Sioux Indian life published in 1976.

This group of six novels serves to complete the grand design that he had first expressed in a 1940 letter to a Macmillan editor, explaining that he had in mind a cycle of from six to ten books about the farming Midwest, and he would complete it in ten to twenty years. "That will be a great monument in American literary history. . . . I just can't be stopped," he wrote to Lois Dwight Cole (3 February 1940).<sup>20</sup> By 1954 he could write that his goal was to enable the reader of his work to "get an enormous sweep of Midland (and USA) life, from its origins all the way to the last day of my life here."<sup>21</sup> By the end of his life, Manfred had reached that goal, a remarkable accomplishment in literary terms, and he was able to write to a friend shortly after the twentieth novel was published: "I've built a mountain range out here on the prairie and no amount of freezing or momentary neglect will wipe them out. My books may have to wait as long as Melville's *Moby Dick* . . . , but they'll eventually be found."<sup>22</sup>

The region where Manfred has set most of his novels, his short stories, and his poetry remains largely unaware, it would seem, that it is in fact a *region* in the Midlands of America. While the "Deep South," "New England," the "Southwest," and the "Rocky Mountain West" are terms widely accepted as identifying labels, the "Midwest" and "West" lack their clarity; and "Siouxland," "Siouxland and environs," and the "Midlands"—Manfred's terms for his home territory—have little currency except among the merchants and one radio station in Siouxland. It was one of Manfred's fellow Minnesotans, Paul Gruchow, who pointed out a little more than a decade ago that "the region we call Siouxland would, absent Manfred's invention, be almost definitionless. It is a parcel of the vast central grassland of our continent, roughly the drainage of the Missouri River."



Despite Manfred, it lacks any striking characteristics, has no great cities, no national heroes, and no history "that has turned the course of nations." Nevertheless, says Gruchow, Manfred has made from these unpromising materials a body of enduring fiction.<sup>23</sup>

While we applaud Frederick Manfred's accomplishment, we need no longer regret with Paul Gruchow that Siouxland is a definitionless place. Over the past several years a number of maps have appeared in print that, when interpreted, support Manfred's contention, first, that there is a region that can be identified as Siouxland, and with it a closely related larger West, and, second, that this region of the northern plains stands out above all others as a place of many virtues, a society that reveres law, religion, and education.

#### MAPPING CULTURE

In the year following Manfred's death in 1994, *US News & World Report* published the first in a series of maps that illustrated basic data about the United States on a county-by-county basis. The map I spotted first appeared on 6 November 1995, a rendering in color of the rate of murders by gun in America over a sixteen-year period from 1979 to 1994. Cartographer Rodger Doyle chose four colors, ranging from deep purple, to dark blue, to pale blue, to white, to represent the average number of homicides by gun per 100,000 people. Thus, a county with a sixteen-year average as high as six or more homicides per 100,000 people was colored purple; at the other extreme, a county with a sixteen-year average of zero homicides per 100,000 people was colored white. Nearly all of Florida, for example, was rendered in the dark purple color of six or more homicides per year, whereas virtually all of northwestern Nebraska was rendered in pure white, the color of zero homicides per year.

Besides serving as a visual rendering of the rate of murders by gun, the Doyle map also suggested the rate of *all* murders in America inasmuch as two of every three homicide victims were killed by guns in the 1979-1994

period. Additionally, the text accompanying the map offered the fact that 270 counties in America had no gun homicides during the sixteen-year period but that New Orleans averaged thirty-four gun homicides per year, the highest rate in the nation. In fact, from Virginia in the South, to California in the West, the lower one-third of America showed on Doyle's map as an almost solid deep purple, a vast region where violent crime, as measured at least by gun murders, averaged six or more killings per year for each 100,000 people. In the northwest corner of America, the picture was quite mixed, averaging between blue and pale blue, or about three gun murders per 100,000 per year. The mild-mannered New Englanders, by contrast, and their midwestern cousins were colored a universal pale blue, evidence of one to two gun murders per 100,000 persons per year.

What catches the eye, instantly, however, is not the violent purple and dark blues that characterized two-thirds of America but rather the sweep of almost pure white color that dominates from North Dakota and South Dakota, through Nebraska and into Kansas, including large sections of white in eastern Montana, western Minnesota, throughout Iowa, and in extreme eastern Colorado and northern Missouri. In the center is Manfred's Siouxland. It was clear in this visual rendering of killings by gun that there was a region of seven contiguous states and parts of two more in north-central America where the rate of violent crime was only a fraction of that in most of the rest of the country. A resident of southwest Minnesota, where Manfred lived in 1994, was on average thirty-four times safer from the threat of gun homicide than the citizen of New Orleans, twenty-five times safer than the citizen of the Bronx, and twenty-four times safer than a dweller in the nation's capital.

There were also exceptions in this peaceful northern plains paradise, as manifested in the Doyle map. Indian reservations in the region stood out in deep purple, a stark contrast to the pale counties around them. South Dakota offered the most dramatic example, with purple

Standing Rock, and Cheyenne River, Pine Ridge, and Rosebud occupying nearly one-fifth of the state's territory. The Doyle map, based on FBI records and data from the National Center for Health Statistics, was a graphic confirmation of much of the front-page news out of Indian country in the 1980s and early 1990s.

One map does not a region make, however, and so when more colored maps appeared in *US News & World Report*, it became increasingly clear in this graphic way that the region called the northern plains was not merely a geographic entity—America's northern grasslands—nor a governmental convenience. In February 1996 *US News & World Report* printed two more maps that reinforced the concept of a northern plains region of contiguous states with its own identity. The earlier of the two, published in the February 5 issue, illustrated in shades of green the percentage of people ages sixteen to nineteen who were not enrolled in school in 1995 and who were not high school graduates. The darkest green areas, representing counties where 15 percent or more were not enrolled and were not graduates, were scattered across all of America, with the thickest clusters in the Deep South. Counties with the highest percentages of enrolled students and graduates—95 percent and better—were represented by the color white, and once again the northern plains states stood out from the rest of America: North Dakota was nearly all white, followed by Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska. In neighboring Wisconsin, South Dakota, Kansas, and eastern Montana and Wyoming, the colors were mixed, but white continued to dominate. Clearly, the northern plains states constituted the region in America most committed to providing general education to its citizens.

In the February 12 issue, *US News & World Report* published a colored map illustrating—again on a county-by-county basis—the percentage of families headed by women in 1995, that is, one-parent families. The largest cluster of families headed by women, 20 percent or more and rendered in dark red, was found

across the Deep South, with a scattering elsewhere in America, notably in counties with Indian reservations. Most of the nation was portrayed in light red, representing 10 to 20 percent of families headed by women, but once again the northern plains states stood out as a separate region, one dominated by a light pink color representing 10 percent or fewer families headed by women. The Dakotas, Montana, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas shared this distinction; their neighbors did not.

Whether a high percentage of two-parent families proves a high degree of social stability in a community is not a matter that needs to be decided here. It is the fact that two-parent families characterize the seven-state region that is significant. Other maps have appeared in general circulation magazines in the years since the “gun murders” map of November 1995, all contributing to the concept of a distinct northern plains culture: maps in *US News & World Report* (18 November 1996) and in *Time* magazine (8 May 2000) show the northern plains states leading the nation in percentages of children and adults with health insurance. Both reports suggest a society that cares deeply about the physical well-being of its families. Other maps illustrate that the northern plains is a region of descendants of northern Europeans who are consistent churchgoers. An early map in *Newsweek* (29 November 1993) shows Lutherans as the dominant religious group in the Dakotas and Minnesota (more than one-third of church members), and another in *US News & World Report* (10 June 1996) shows Catholics as heavily represented in the northern plains and in the adjacent states of Wisconsin and Colorado. And a 1995 estimate, based on the 1990 census and published in map form in *US News & World Report* (4 November 1996), shows “where Scandinavian roots run deep.” In most of the nation fewer than 5 percent of the population claims Scandinavian ancestry; in the northwest two-thirds of America that population is at least 5 to 15 percent; and in large sections of the northern plains states Scandinavian descendants are 15 percent or more of

the population. That latter figure dominates in Minnesota, makes up nearly half of Wisconsin and Montana, and is prominently found in eastern South Dakota and northwestern Iowa. These latter two areas are, of course, the center of Manfred's Siouxland. A similar map for the descendants of Germans and Germans-from-Russia finds them heavily populating greater Siouxland. The ancestors of the German groups settled densely in central Kansas, eastern Nebraska, central South Dakota and North Dakota, southern Minnesota, all across Iowa, and throughout adjacent Wisconsin.<sup>24</sup> Reuben Goertz, author of *Princes, Potentates and Plain People* (1994), calls the region from Oklahoma north into Canada the new homeland of the Germans-from-Russia, and he calls US Highway 81 the Mennonite Holy Highway, for it cuts north for over 800 miles along the eastern edge of that five-state region, tying those communities together.<sup>25</sup>

Two years after the *US News and World Report* series, *Newsweek* published a map titled "Where Workers Are Mellow," created by Michael J. Weiss and based on surveys by Claritas, Inc., and NFO Research, Inc. The map was a graphic rendering of America according to a four-part "contentment scale." Counties where workers judged themselves in early May 1998 to be "Contented Types" were rendered in dark blue; the "Almost Mellow" were colored light blue, the "Frayed" were in light yellow, and the "Totally Stressed" were colored a bright orange. The effect is startling. From New York City south and all through the Southern states and into central Texas, the color was the deep orange of "Totally Stressed." At the other extreme were the states of the northern plains, colored an almost solid dark blue and representing the top rung on Weiss's contentment scale. There are anomalies, of course, in the northern plains region: the midsection of Minnesota, centered on the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul, was "Frayed"; so were Omaha and Kansas City and environs. Montana was an almost solid dark blue of contentment; Wyoming was half "Contented" and the rest "Almost Mellow"

and "Frayed." And the states on the periphery of the seven-state northern plains region, Wisconsin and Missouri, were more than half in the "Contented" column. We cannot be detained long by examining too closely the exceptions, however, for the overwhelming impression that remains when the nine maps of the United States are laid end-to-end or, as transparencies, laid over one another, is that these six states of Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas, with Montana closely connected, form a distinct and integrated cultural region of America, clearly separated in a variety of ways from their neighbors and extending, in a general way, from Kansas to Canada and from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains.

#### SON OF SIOUXLAND

My foreword to *Scarlet Plume* in 1983 argued that of all the Buckskin Man Tales, it was the nearest in locale to the Siouxland of *This Is the Year*. "Over the years Manfred's creative imagination has expanded out of the narrow confines of farm life on the northern prairies into the vast and varied landscape of the frontier West, the old Dakota Territory, the wide plains that the Sioux Indians roamed over freely before the coming of the white man." One could not anticipate at that time that in a few years there would be available maps that delineate clearly the very northern plains region that is Manfred's locale in the Buckskin Man Tales.

On the whole the maps show the Northern Plains in a positive light: the inhabitants here are safer, better educated, and in their own estimation more content than in any other region of the country. Frederick Manfred's fiction and other writings lead me to the conclusion that he is a son of his region and that his work is essentially optimistic, with many characters winning out in the end, usually after great struggles. And that is the right kind of ending, after all, that one expects from a novelist deeply imbued with the tenets of the Christian Reformed Church, who had had all

of his education in Christian schools and in a college of his church, and who—because his mother wished it—had read the Bible seven times through “at family worship, morning, noon and night.”<sup>26</sup> It is no wonder that Hugh Glass, in Manfred’s best-known novel, should turn the stereotypical pulp Western ending upside down by showing Christian forgiveness to those who had trespassed against him.

#### NOTES

1. Reprinted as “A Conversation with Frederick Manfred,” in *Duke’s Mixture*, by Frederick Manfred (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Center for Western Studies, 1994), pp. 228-51.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.
3. *The Selected Letters of Frederick Manfred*, ed. Arthur R. Huseboe and Nancy Owen Nelson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 199.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
6. Endpapers in *This Is the Year* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1947).
7. Manfred, *Duke’s Mixture* (note 1 above), pp. 221-27. In 1990 Manfred and I were contemplating launching a quarterly journal that would emanate from the Center for Western Studies, an agency that he had supported as a council member for twenty years.
8. Glossary to *This Is the Year* (note 6 above), p. 617.
9. Huseboe and Nelson, *Selected Letters* (note 3 above), p. 199.
10. “The Mystique of Siouxland,” in *A Common Land, A Diverse People*, ed. Harry F. Thompson, Arthur R. Huseboe, and Sandra Olsen Looney (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Nordland Heritage Foundation, 1987), pp. 71-88.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
13. Manfred, *Duke’s Mixture* (note 1 above), p. 222.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-27.
16. Wallace Stegner, foreword to *Conversations with Frederick Manfred*, moderated by John R. Milton (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1974), p. xii.
17. Arthur R. Huseboe, foreword to *Scarlet Plume*, Frederick Manfred (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. v-xiii.
18. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
19. Manfred in *Conversations* (note 16 above), p. 49.
20. *Selected Letters* (note 3 above), p. 106.
21. Frederick Manfred to Maxwell Geismer, 19 July 1954, *ibid.*, pp. 390-96.
22. Frederick Manfred to Steven Axelrod, 20 September 1981, Frederick Manfred Papers, Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S.D.
23. Paul Gruchow, “The Art of the Whole Rose,” *Minnesota Monthly*, May 1988, 22.
24. *US News & World Report*, 1 April 1996, 16.
25. Reuben Goertz, *Princess, Potentates, and Plain People* (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Center for Western Studies, 1994), pp. 213-14.
26. Manfred in *Conversations* (note 16 above), p. 20.