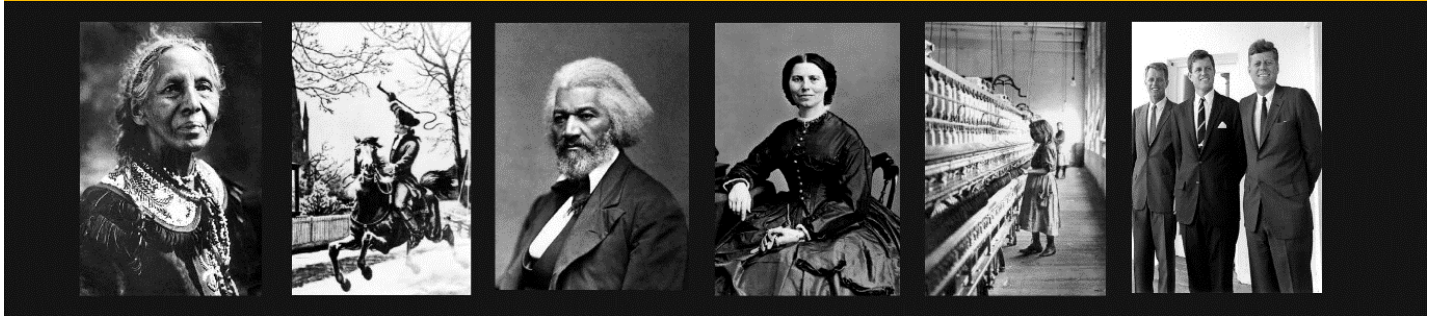


# *The Historical Journal of Massachusetts*



“The Pathos of Distance: Memory and Revision in S. N. Behrman’s *The Worcester Account*.”

Author: Kent P. Ljungquist

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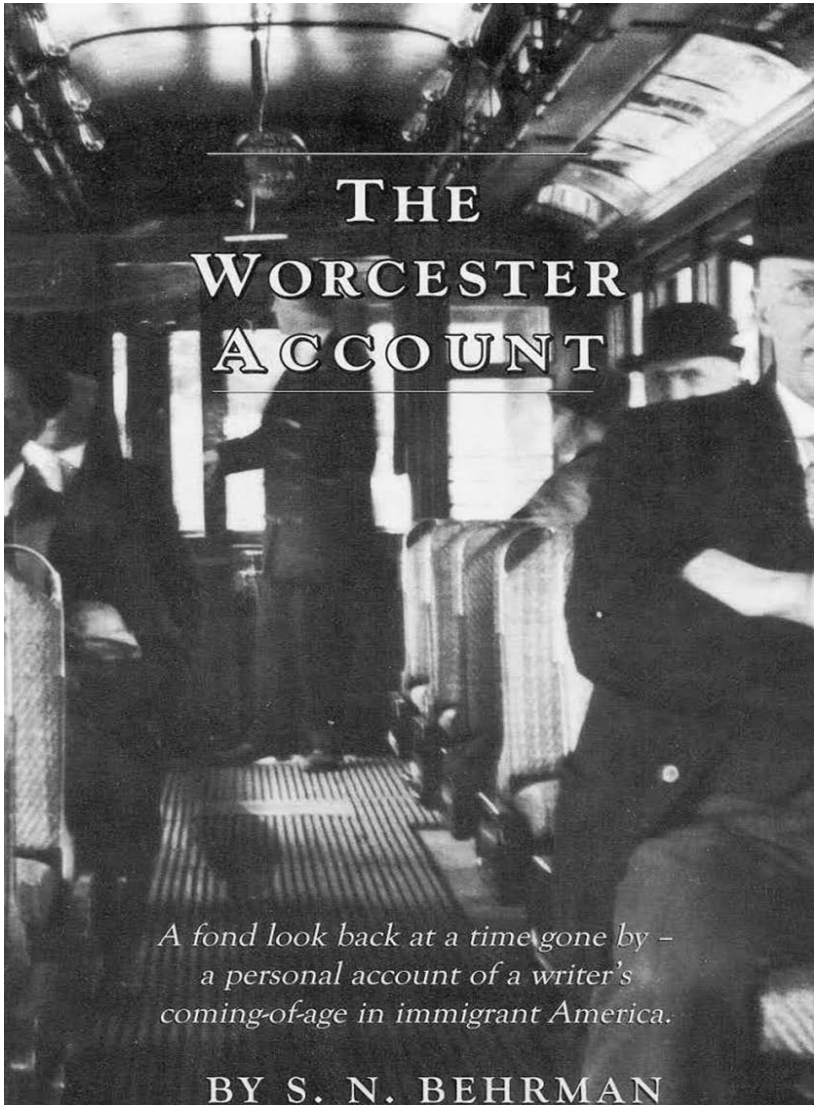


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***A Moving Account***

Rail travel, captured on the cover of Behrman's *The Worcester Account*, played a significant part in the book's stories and in the development of the central Massachusetts city. The importance of access to other cities and of Worcester's emergence as a destination in its own right was not lost on Behrman.

# The Pathos of Distance

## Memory and Revision in S. N. Behrman's *The Worcester Account*

KENT P. LJUNGQUIST



**Editor's Introduction:** *Samuel Nathaniel Behrman (1893–1973) was an American playwright, screenwriter, biographer, and longtime writer for The New Yorker. His family emigrated from Lithuania to Worcester, Massachusetts, where he was born in a tenement, the youngest of three sons. His parents spoke little English and his father was a Talmudic scholar. His own path, however, took him far from their Orthodox Jewish world.*

*At age eleven, an older friend brought him to the theater, inspiring a love of the stage. He served as an usher in a local theater and thus succeeded in seeing many of the famous plays and players of the early twentieth century. After graduating high school, he attempted a career as an actor on the vaudeville circuit. Bad health forced him to quit. He returned to Worcester and attended Clark University, where he studied under noted psychologist G. Stanley Hall. At the same time he immersed himself in the plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw, Arthur Pinero, and Maurice Maeterlinck. He transferred to Harvard, graduated in 1916, then went on to graduate studies at Columbia University. There he studied under the noted theater critic and historian Brander Matthews. He was supported for a time by his brothers Hiram and Morris, who ran*

*a successful accounting firm and who were willing to help their younger brother complete his education and try to establish himself as a writer.*

*From the late 1920s through the 1940s, Behrman was considered one of Broadway's leading authors of "high comedy." Theater critic and historian Brooks Atkinson described Behrman as "one of the Guild's [the Theatre Guild's] most adored authors." Behrman was known for his warm, witty personality. His comedies often celebrated tolerance, yet show how tolerant people are often vulnerable when confronted by fanatics or ruthless opportunists. He later moved on to Hollywood where he enjoyed a lucrative second career as a screenwriter.*

*Behrman's succession of witty and urbane comedies began with *The Second Man* (1927) and extended to *Biography* (1932), *End of Summer* (1936), and *No Time for Comedy* (1936), in which a playwright wants to deal with serious subjects, but displays a talent only for comedy. In the 1940s Behrman turned more of his attention to nonfiction prose. He wrote about his Jewish boyhood and adolescence in *The Worcester Account*, a vivid depiction of the European immigrant experience in a mid-sized New England city. It has been called the best book written about growing up in central Massachusetts.*

*When the book was published in 1954, its origin as a New Yorker series was well known. However, professor Kent Ljungquist's discovery of an unpublished chapter of *The Worcester Account* in the S. N. Behrman Papers at the New York Public Library sheds new light, not only on the author's interactions with New Yorker editor Katharine White, but on various themes and motifs that permeate the volume: travel, escape, economic and social mobility, and the painful resonance of memory, relieved by pathos and humor.*

*The Worcester Account was followed by a second memoir in 1972, *People in a Diary* (1972). This memoir revealed the breadth and depth of Behrman's life. Its "cast of characters" from his diary included Greta Garbo, Laurence Olivier, Louis B. Mayer, Somerset Maugham, Eugene O'Neill, Felix Frankfurter, the Gershwins, and the Marx Brothers, among many others. The author of this article, Kent Ljungquist, is a Professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He has published extensively and has edited several reference works on American authors.<sup>1</sup>*

\* \* \* \* \*

*The Worcester Account*, S. N. Behrman's vivid series of local reminiscences, contains the following comment on memory early in the book: "As a gloomy

German philosopher has said, we remember most clearly those things that have hurt us."<sup>2</sup> This comment may seem somewhat incongruous in a book that has been characterized as nostalgic or quaintly anecdotal, and many of its episodes are indeed colored by a rich comedy and a tender treatment of friendships and familial connections.<sup>3</sup> Behrman does not identify the source of his attribution to a German thinker, which is actually a recasting of a passage in Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1897): "If something is to stay in the memory, it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory."<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche (1844–1900) further explains how meaning emerges when pain is confronted through memory. Behrman, who enrolled in George Pierce Baker's famous "47 Workshop" for drama students at Harvard University after transferring from Clark University, was certainly a reader of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), the German philosopher's bold reassessment of ancient Greek drama. In all likelihood, that early work by Nietzsche led him to consult other passages on the role of memory as he drafted his Worcester reminiscences.

Samuel Nathaniel Behrman (1893–1973) had enjoyed nearly two decades of success as a playwright when he began regular contributions to *The New Yorker*, the magazine in which his Worcester reminiscences first appeared in the 1940s. Whatever reputation he sustains today probably stems from his work for Broadway and the London stage, and many of the theatrical luminaries of his time—Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, Noel Coward, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Katharine Cornell, Ina Claire, and Jane Cowl—appeared in his productions in the 1920s and 1930s. Another significant phase of his career commenced in the 1940s, perhaps because the kind of urbane comedy that typified his plays seemed to fall out of fashion, and he turned more of his attention to nonfiction prose.

*New Yorker* editor Katharine White encouraged him to submit a series of reminiscences about growing up in turn-of-the-century Worcester, Massachusetts. An article titled "Mr. Lavin, Mr. Lupkin, and Dr. Abercrombie" was the opening installment in the series, a colorful evocation of the immigrant experience, in 1946. As the series developed, White repeated her calls for more Worcester pieces, and told him subsequently that he had a "very fine" book in the making if he would "just go on remembering."<sup>5</sup> Nine more installments appeared in *The New Yorker* before Behrman's *The Worcester Account*, called by scholar Michael True the best book written about growing up in central Massachusetts, was published in 1954.<sup>6</sup>

The book contains much of the history of Behrman's boyhood and adolescence, roughly from the mid-1890s to 1915. He writes about educational experiences: he attended the Providence Street School, pursued



**Samuel Nathaniel Behrman (1893–1973)**

debating among other activities at Classical High School, and then spent two years at Clark University. Behrman recalls the response in his neighborhood to Emma Goldman, who set up an ice cream parlor on Winter Street, the same street that housed his father's grocery store. Goldman lived there with her lover Alexander Berkman in 1892, just before the latter's assassination attempt on Henry Clay Frick. Behrman describes his youthful response to Eugene V. Debs, who delivered brief but telling remarks in Mechanics Hall during one of his presidential campaigns. He also records his memories of outbreaks of violence between the immigrant Irish and representatives from his own Jewish neighborhood.

The arrangement of individual stories in the volume does not follow the sequence of publication in *The New Yorker*, nor does Behrman follow simple chronology in describing the austere religious atmosphere that dominated his orthodox Jewish household in the Providence Street section of Worcester. According to Behrman his parents had been uprooted from a veiled and unhappy past into the "tenement district of an industrial city in New England."<sup>7</sup> Young Sam could not fathom the mysterious journey of his father, a scholar of the Talmud, from Lithuania to Worcester. There seemed to be little connection between his father's world and the more mundane realities of contemporary life on the streets of Worcester. At home there was only one "Great Theme," the "thick-textured history of the Jewish people," which lent a "dark, fear-ridden, and oppressive" aura to the coming-of-age narrative that Behrman delineated. This atmosphere bred in young Behrman an "acute longing to escape" the religious exercises, exacting pieties, and burdensome, murky history that his father's God-centered perspective seemed to impose on him.<sup>8</sup>

This article explores the theme of escape and the techniques Behrman used to examine it in an uncollected and previously unknown chapter of *The Worcester Account*—titled "Out-of-Town Girl"—alongside several others that treat Behrman's youthful infatuations and misadventures. This theme is handled in various ways, including Behrman's deployment of a subtle narrative perspective and a rich comic tone. Behrman, with pointed comic effect, attempts to fulfill his desire to "penetrate—the immense, ill-defined area known as 'out of town.'"<sup>9</sup>

## WORCESTER'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

Haunted by memories of the wave of violent pogroms that swept Eastern Europe, decimating Jewish populations in the 1880s, Joseph Behrman and his wife emigrated from Vilna in Russian Lithuania by way of Hamburg,

Germany before arriving in the port of New York. The establishment and development of a Jewish community in Worcester could not have been possible without the influx of substantial numbers from the part of Russia known as the Pale Jewish Settlement, which had once belonged to Lithuania. While many immigrants gravitated to big cities, offering established community networks and clear prospects for intellectual and economic advancement, Joseph and Zelda, arriving in Worcester sometime between 1890 and 1893, may have chosen this midsized industrial city because of its strong religious community. Worcester was also emerging as a vital manufacturing center with a diverse industrial base. Immigrants often sought out family connections; the Behrmans eventually lived in the same three-decker with their relatives the Feingolds and the Cohens.<sup>10</sup>

Worcester Jews joined Poles, Italians, French-Canadians, and Swedes and lesser numbers of Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, and Albanians to make up the city's rich ethnic mix. They arrived well after Worcester's first group of nineteenth-century ethnic immigrants—the Irish—many of whom came to work on the Blackstone Canal in the 1820s and 1830s. One estimate suggests that between 1890 and 1910, the foreign-born population of Worcester rose to 22,000, an increase of 81.6% over those two decades. A study from the early 1940s indicated that of the total Jewish population numbering 9,230, half of that cohort arrived from foreign countries between 1898 and 1907.<sup>11</sup>

Jewish families sought opportunities for housing and employment at various levels of the local economic ladder. The Behrmans, with their sons Morris and Hiram, initially took up residence on Water Street, which Jewish store proprietors had turned into a busy commercial district. Joseph and Zelda moved their family to Providence Street, and Joseph made an effort to sustain a grocery store on Winter Street, another haven of local small business activity. Apparently an aggressive businessman with ready capital for investment, Samuel Wolfson, who figures prominently in Behrman's narrative to be discussed in this article, opened his comb company, the Globe Manufacturing Company, in 1904 on 67 Winter Street.<sup>12</sup> Because of limited English skills and lack of capital, other Jews sought other forms of self-employment, and a substantial percentage went into peddling. In the Behrmans' three-decker on Providence Street, Barney Feingold and Isaac Cohen were both peddlers.

In "Providence Street in Summer," Behrman recalls the castlelike estate of George Crompton, whose company (Crompton & Knowles on Green Street) specialized in power looms for the textile industry. As Behrman encountered the walls of the Crompton mansion, it was as if the vital





### **Shaarai Torah, Worcester, Massachusetts**

This temple across the street from the Behrman family home courted a younger, more modern congregation than the other orthodox temples in Worcester.

energy of a representative of the immigrant population was braked at its residential boundary.<sup>13</sup> Crompton epitomized the old Yankee elite that had dominated Worcester's economic and civic life, but immigrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds maintained control of neighborhoods, clubs, churches, and often schools.

Among the immigrant population, each new group tended to retreat into its own ethnic enclave. Certain street names signified discrete and insular neighborhoods, as was the case with the Providence Street area. As historian Roy Rosenzweig has suggested, whatever fragile harmony prevailed among different ethnic groups was based on an absence of contact rather than feelings of respect.<sup>14</sup> As Stanley Kunitz, who attended Classical High School and Harvard approximately a decade after Behrman, noted, "The Worcester that I knew was an immigrant city. Each group was isolated from the other . . . In

fact, you were apt to encounter animosity and even some violence if you strayed into the wrong neighborhood.”<sup>15</sup>

Because of the sacred nature of the Jewish Sabbath, the work week of orthodox Jews did not conform to the standard schedule of the majority culture, further creating a sense of separate worlds. Residents of the Providence Street section of Worcester focused their lives on family relations, social clubs, houses of worship, and religious practices. Of the five synagogues in Worcester in 1905, all were started by immigrants from Eastern Europe, and each congregation was religiously orthodox. Shaarai Torah, across the street from the Behrman three-decker, was designed to be a more modern synagogue that appealed to the younger generation with both Hebrew and English spoken. For young Sam Behrman, however, Jewish life on Providence Street seemed to be consumed by the traditional religious rituals and practices strictly observed by his pious father.<sup>16</sup>

After his grocery store failed, Behrman’s father became a collector of Jewish memorabilia and then a teacher in the Hebrew school. Classes were held initially at the synagogue and then in a building on nearby Waverley Street. One of Behrman’s recollections, unrecorded in *The Worcester Account*, is of waking one morning in his parents’ Providence Street flat to see the street decorated with flags, some of which seemed foreign or unfamiliar. He wondered initially if it was a national holiday like Memorial Day or the Fourth of July. His father, clearly excited about a special day for local Jews, explained that Nahum Sokolow, the Zionist leader, was coming to Worcester to speak. When Sokolow arrived in 1913, one account recorded the local reaction: “In Worcester, literally the entire Jewish community turned out to greet him.”<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the “Great Theme” at home, the pursuit of escape contributes coherence to Behrman’s narrative. Behrman’s aspirations, of course, ultimately took him outside Worcester to success in New York and London. Before that ultimate departure, however, he explored other forms of escape within the city and its environs that offered respite from life in the shadow of the orthodox synagogue across the street from his home. There were also various figures, both from inside and outside the city, that offered Behrman alternatives to his oppressive domestic setting. In several cases, the reputations of these characters, from reading about them in newspapers and magazines, preceded their immediate entrance into Behrman’s life.

In the case of celebrated actors like John Drew who performed at the Worcester Theatre, Behrman learned about them not only from posters but also from consulting the *Theatre Magazine* in the Worcester Public Library. He learned about Daniel W. Abercrombie, the principal of the rather

exclusive private school Worcester Academy on Providence Street, via word of mouth and from consulting the local papers. Knowledge of Abercrombie's background and standing in the community—his Harvard education, his trips to Europe, his study of European educational systems—made him a cosmopolitan figure above Behrman's social station, and provided background to the comically embarrassing encounter on the city trolley between Abercrombie and two outspoken representatives from his local Jewish neighborhood.<sup>18</sup> Behrman's vivacious Aunt Ida brought energy and vitality to Providence Street when she married his Uncle Harry, but Behrman stresses that his aunt was a Boston girl, the daughter of an eminent rabbi from Boston who quickly tired of Worcester's provincial character. When the Ramaz—as the rabbi was called—came to Worcester, his arrival was compared to that of a wandering scholar among the peasants of an illiterate hamlet.<sup>19</sup>

### ELEANORA SEARS

The contrast between working class Providence Street and figures of loftier social stature is nowhere more apparent than in "My Romance with Eleanora Sears," the eighth chapter in *The Worcester Account*. Daughter of a patrician New England family, "Miss Sears" became one of Behrman's obsessions via the sports and society pages of America's newspapers. Epitomizing the nation's sportswomen, she, in fact, paved the way for entrance into multiple sports and physical activities: tennis, horseback riding, swimming, dance, golf, skating, driving, and marathon walking. Behrman, to be sure, stresses well-known physical attributes of "Miss Sears": her reputation for donning masculine attire, displaying a wide array of hats and unconventional headgear, and the depths of her arresting blue eyes. If she was the most spectacular female figure in the long line of Boston Seareses, a well-known debutante of the early 1900s, she also represented Boston "at its most emancipated."<sup>20</sup> Behrman clipped photographs of her getting on and off horses and leaping fences; she also clearly jumped over social boundaries by achieving feats of strength and endurance once reserved only for men and for flouting the delicate requirements of conventional women's dress.

Behrman could have turned this chapter into a more conventional *New Yorker* profile with a simple chronology of Sears's eventful career. Instead, he begins his narrative closer to the present when a friend called him to arrange an actual meeting with the figure who was an object of naïve idolatry during his boyhood. The potential of that unanticipated meeting causes some brief consternation as Behrman tries to balance Sears's considerable public



### **Eleanora Sears on a Walk**

The Boston debutante who infatuated S.N. Behrman grew up to be a pioneering female athlete and unconventional individualist. Known for wearing men's clothing on the playing field and off, Sears captivated the public with her long-distance walking. Undated photo.

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reputation with what she represented to him during his adolescence. In this chapter as in others, Behrman, who conceived a volume about “the memory hooks that prod later in life,” develops an ironic contrast between the larger-than-life figure that beguiled him in the past and the actual woman he met in his adulthood.<sup>21</sup>

Far more than a distant object of affection for young Behrman, Miss Sears is responsible for providing him a “glimpse into the mysterious and rather frightening world . . . spinning outside the close confines of Providence Street.”<sup>22</sup> He recalls his painful embarrassment when one of his friends caught him with a picture of his beloved at the time of a scheduled

summer walk to a local recreational refuge, Lake Quinsigamond. If his ardor has been quickened by pictures of Miss Sears, a complementary emotional intensity was inspired by the lovely lake a few miles distant from the triple-decker tenements on Providence Street. Although the cost of the trolley to Lake Quinsigamond seemed prohibitive, life at the Lake offered the supreme excitement. It “took you right through the various stages of adolescence; it was the focus of a mass libido.”<sup>23</sup>

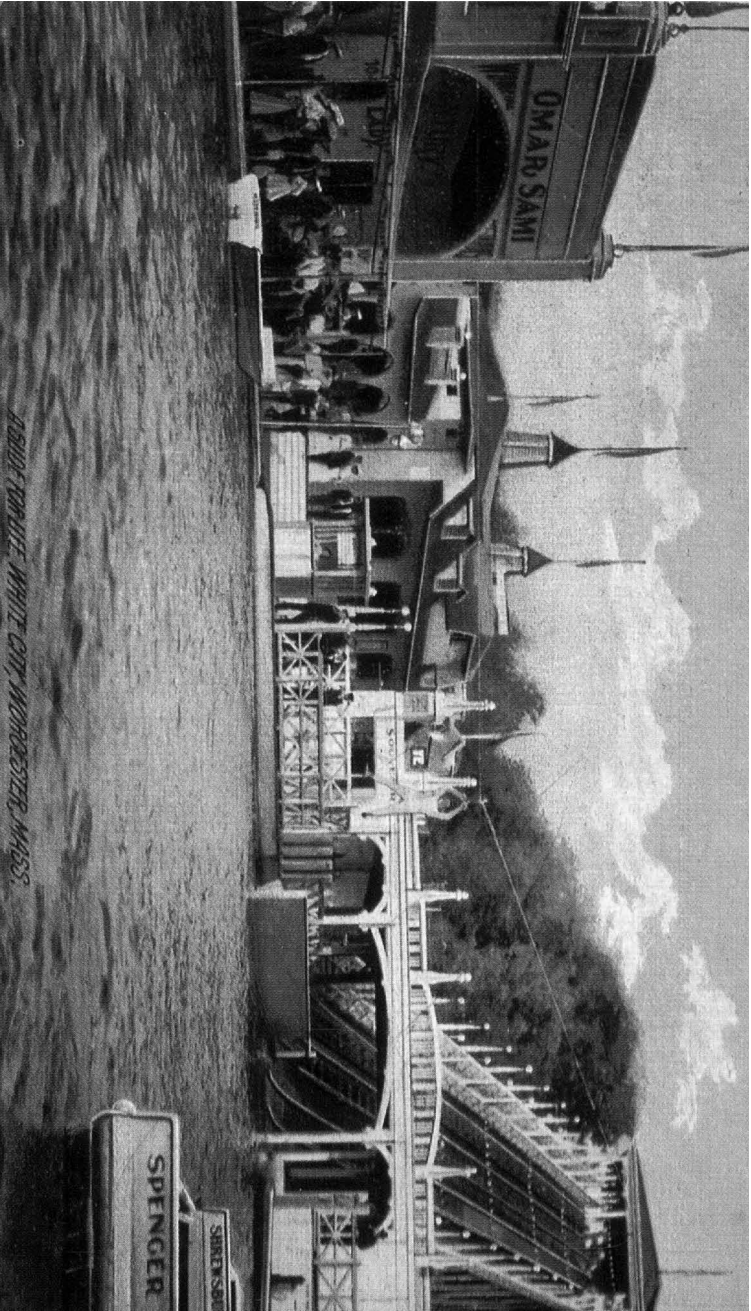
In addition to bathing, swimming, and canoeing, the main attraction was the amusement park opened by Horace Bigelow in 1905. Like Coney Island, it had features of other amusement venues that were sweeping the nation at the time. “Across the Lake, the water mirrored resplendently the dazzling lights of the amusement park, White City, with its Ferris wheel, chute-the-chutes, and penny peep shows.”<sup>24</sup> The light opera overtures and popular tunes seemed to transport patrons into more mysterious and potentially dangerous realms that left the more sober cares of Providence Street far behind.

If Sears courted danger by participating in various aquatic sports, the boys from Behrman’s neighborhood took up the volatile and potentially dangerous activity of canoeing. Canoeing at night supplanted daytime swimming as a preferred pastime, arousing consternation among protective Providence Street mothers, especially after a young neighborhood girl was forced to announce her engagement after an evening on the lake. The statement ‘He took her canoeing’ had a knowing overtone of the illicit. Behrman’s repeated walks to the lake ultimately demonstrate that he and Sears had a common avocation, and his discovery that she was a long-distance walker—a pedestrian—led him to compare and tally their respective coverage of distances. Behrman, in fact, stressed the physical activity of Sears that her contemporary biographer features in the opening chapter of her study of the versatile sportswoman’s career. Called “The Marathon Maid,” Sears embarked on a walk from Burlingame to Del Monte, California in 1910, only to fall short of her goal. She returned to California in 1912 in another attempt to complete the 110-mile route.

By 1925 her example made long-distance walking a popular sport, and her treks attracted national headlines.<sup>25</sup> After discovering their kinship as pedestrians, Behrman could no longer keep his fascination for her secret, and he revealed to his friends his long-held infatuation.

## UNION STATION: POINT OF TRANSIT

Reminding readers of *The Worcester Account* of the transportation revolution that had swept the nation, the multiple arrivals and departures



### White City Memories

This undated photo shows the entertainments available at White City, Worcester's amusement park. Behrman mentioned the park frequently in his memoir.

at Union Station and the trolley rides taking passengers inside and outside the city serve as checks on neighborhood insularity and isolation. Stressing various aspects of mobility, both literal and figurative, Behrman points out that his walks to the Lake took him by the old Union Station with its tall clock tower:

This station was very familiar to me, principally because, to satisfy an itch for travel, I often boarded the incoming trains from Springfield or Boston and sat on the plush seats while the train stopped to take on Worcester passengers.

He jumped off the train at the last minute, just before its departure, but the brief stop conferred on him a dream-like “worldly air” as if he were, albeit briefly, a passenger prepared for or “settling down for a transcontinental tour.”<sup>26</sup> Clearly the example of Miss Sears, the promise of train travel, and the excitement at the lake coalesce into a keen interest for what beckoned outside Providence Street.

Although the movement for construction of Union Station preceded Behrman’s birth by twenty years, its central role in his life is illustrated by repeated references to the facility and its features in *The Worcester Account*. In the opening chapter of the book, “A Little Glass of Warmth,” he awoke from a nap in New York City, “far away from Providence Street and the Union Station, in Worcester.”<sup>27</sup> In what turns out to be a dream, he imagined that his recently deceased brother was still alive. He recalls vividly the arrival of the train from Boston that was to take his brother back to school at Yale University, his departure punctuated with a promise to return to Worcester when Yale plays Holy Cross in football. This brief reference may take on greater pathos and poignancy if the reader knows that Behrman drafted the piece for *The New Yorker* several months after his brother had succumbed to a long illness, a fact he confided to editor White.<sup>28</sup>

The opening chapter in his book of memories, which moves with remarkable fluidity over various incidents from his past, marks an attempt to call back the dead to the realm of the living. In “Providence Street in Summer,” he once again mentioned the old Union Station and its “gray stone campanile tower.” At the end of the chapter he pondered his home street—Providence—and its track to other streets and locales outside the city, their place names recalled and viewed from “train windows” as if framed into a montage of memories.<sup>29</sup>

The construction of the station building, initially owned by the Boston and Albany Railroad Company, had commenced in 1874 and was completed

in the following year. Its Gothic architectural style was enhanced by the clock tower on its west corner. Readers of *The Worcester Account*, even those who had followed its development via *The New Yorker* installments, would not have known that Behrman had drafted a chapter with a far more extensive and elaborate description of Union Station. That unpublished narrative, drawn from the S. N. Behrman Papers, reinforces some of the prominent themes—travel, escape, economic and social mobility—found throughout the volume.

### “OUT-OF-TOWN GIRL”

“Out-of-Town Girl,” the previously uncollected chapter drafted in 1952, is set during a pivotal summer when the romantic and economic fates of several figures seem to be defined. Behrman’s attentions have turned from Sears to a neighborhood beauty he calls Ada Summit. During a delirious two-week period when Ada’s usual boyfriend Morton Leavitt (a pun on “leave it”) was distracted by a girl from out of town, Miss Summit seemed willing to go everywhere with young Sam: canoeing on the lake and even dancing at White City, “the pleasure-dome on the lake.”<sup>30</sup> Morton, a shoe salesman, had more financial resources than Sam and his friends, as evidenced by his travels to Revere Beach and Old Orchard Beach, Maine, where he met society girls or former debutantes from other towns. Morton even thought of traveling as far as Bermuda or jumping on his motorcycle for a trip to Chicago.

According to Behrman, this was the only summer he could remember when his father’s grocery store on Winter Street, “a frail enterprise” at best, was conducting formal business, only to be “snuffed out after several years.” To finance his dates with Ada, including trolley rides to the lake, young Behrman stole from his father’s inventory, sold the spoils to Morton and others, and thereby developed a source of income for his two-week courtship of Ada.

The title character of this unpublished narrative is Miss Sawyer, a banker’s daughter from Toronto, Canada, whose dramatic arrival at Union Station excited the inhabitants, particularly the young males, of Behrman’s neighborhood. Behrman truncated this narrative into a brief vignette of several pages when the book appeared, but in the longer version, her arrival was much more fully dramatized. According to Behrman:

If you were an out-of-town girl, you didn’t have to be much else. Simply by virtue of stepping off the train at the depot for a short visit, any girl was instantly clothed for us in glamor, mystery,



desirability. To be able to correspond with an out-of-town girl was considered distinguished. 'She's a Springfield girl and he corresponds with her,' it would be stated enviously of a lucky member of our set.

If Behrman's fixation on Eleanora Sears was primarily a long-distance private affair, the arrival of Miss Sawyer became a local cause célèbre with implications for his neighborhood and beyond; the names of faraway places on the railway cars, Behrman notes, made "all of us worshippers of any girl who hailed from these Elysia."<sup>31</sup>

Behrman literally establishes an elaborate set of stage directions in advance of Miss Sawyer's arrival at Union Station:

The great thing about the old depot was the visibility of the trains. They were not hidden away as if they were contraband or a commodity not quite respectable. The rest of the old Union Station, attached to the campanile, was a great, twilit crescent of a car-barn, its façade an enormous, half-moon proscenium with the curtain perpetually up. Into this hospitable proscenium the trains rushed, as if they had no intention of stopping, over the grade-crossing, which held up traffic on Front Street. These trains came from Springfield; if you wished to see them come in from Boston you had only to walk into the car-barn and to the end of the long platform, or even beyond, where the tracks made a beautiful curve. You heard the Bostonians and saw their smoke, and at night the beam of their headlights before they negotiated, with grace and power, this gleaming curve.<sup>32</sup>

By the time Behrman approaches adulthood, the grade-crossing has been eliminated to address traffic stoppages, and a new station, with a platform above street level, has been built. During his boyhood, however, the grade-keeper for the old depot acted like a director calling for the action to commence. Claiming a seat in the train, moreover, was like the experience of an expectant patron awaiting a spectacle. In preparation for the "rush of the train into the proscenium," smoke billowed up "against the blackened half-moon of the roof and was pressed down again, so that the whole arc of the opening became instantly a dark curtain with fireflies spangling it."<sup>33</sup> The stage and lighting effects are decidedly theatrical, and Behrman reinforces this figurative language with a brief anecdote on the arrival of the first trains in history when they made their initial trial runs in Wales. Watching

the arrival of trains, he notes, was exciting, particularly when a theatrical company was on board. Union Station, in effect, became the setting for several arrivals in this story and in the book, and allows Behrman to move fluidly among various points in local history and in the evolution of modern train travel.

## THE RAILROAD AND WORCESTER'S EXPANSION

These details may seem like rhetorical flourishes on Behrman's part, but in all likelihood, they reflect his knowledge of the railroad's role in Worcester's industrial and economic development. By mentioning both the eastern connection to Boston and the western link to Springfield, readers might be alerted to the multiple ties that the railroad, since its inception in the 1830s, provided in enhancing access to new markets and resources. A Norwich and Worcester line had been added in 1847 that connected Worcester to New London, Connecticut, from which passengers could transfer to boats that would take them to New York City. The advent of the Providence and Worcester Railroad in 1847 added a southern route to the network, and augured the imminent demise of the Blackstone Canal, which had played a significant role in the city's economic expansion. The development of an improved transportation network brought population growth and higher percentages of the workforce engaged in manufacturing. The final sharp curve that trains took on their route from Boston was the result of the so-called deep cut for the rail bed designed to provide an initial detour south to go around Lake Quinsigamond, followed by an abrupt turn to the north into the city.

The arrival of trains into the city not only brought the inevitable bells and whistles, characteristics of a maturing factory town that had shed its village character, but it also provided a resonant reverberation that alerted those in proximity to the station of the arrival of expected guests. In the words of one historian, the advent of the railroad launched Worcester "on its career as a major inland manufacturing center."<sup>34</sup> If the arrival of modern trains signaled Worcester's emergence as the second city of Massachusetts and its significant role in New England's economic expansion, for Behrman, Union Station provided lines of suggestiveness and metaphor oriented to worlds of motion and travel. The arrival of the train as an "eidolon of travel" has obvious visual appeal; it is also a poignant metaphor for the way in which pivotal events are moments of transit that echo in memory.

During Behrman's boyhood, many of these developments were already part of the city's heritage, and his flexible handling of time in *The Worcester*

*Account* allows him to make a smooth narrative transition from older traditions to present practices. “It was lucky,” claims Morton Leavitt, that Miss Sawyer arrived in late June, “in time for the Maccabees’ Fourth of July party. We would escort her, en masse to the party. Again, distrustful, we wondered how it would work out when that giddy event occurred.” As Rosenzweig points out, while various new forms of commercial entertainment and recreation were available on the Fourth of July to Worcester’s working class population, some immigrant groups kept their members together. The major social event for Providence Street Jews was the Independence Day picnic and dance held by the Maccabees Club, headquartered in the building next door to Behrman’s three-decker.<sup>35</sup> At the event, new officers were installed, and speeches, including one by Behrman’s brother, were delivered. All of this made this particular Fourth of July, with arrival of the Sawyers, a particularly memorable one, packed with sensation.

Behrman’s handling of Miss Sawyer’s arrival marks a collision between neighborhood traditions and new commercial and social interests. Behrman grew up in the wake of the city’s industrial boom, but his own financially straitened family was left behind during this period of growth. The much heralded approach of Miss Sawyer from Toronto, Canada, made her “our first, authentic foreign visitor,” almost as if she were a “visitor from Cathay.” Leavitt’s welcoming remarks for Miss Sawyer were designed to call “attention to the fact that Worcester was the Hub of the Bay State, and that the city was famous for its industries and penal institutions.”<sup>36</sup> His incongruous juxtaposition of penal institutions and successful industry reflected his maladroitness speaking skills, marking an awkward attempt to endow Miss Sawyer’s arrival with civic significance, though Worcester was associated with efforts at prison reform.<sup>37</sup>

Whereas Eleanora Sears had been described as a figure of Boston’s high-toned social elite, in “Out-of-Town Girl,” Behrman stresses the economic dimension of his narrative. Miss Sawyer was a banker’s daughter. She accompanied her father to inspect Mr. Samuel Wolfson’s comb factory with a view to buying it.

As Mr. Wolfson was the richest man in Worcester—by which we meant the richest man of Providence Street—and his factory made him so, it got around that Miss Sawyer’s father was a banker; because how could you even consider buying Mr. Wolfson’s factory unless you were a banker? The word ‘banker’ was a synonym with us for a man of wealth beyond computing.

Reflecting their place on the social and economic scale, the Sawyers were house-guests at the Wolfson mansion; and the socially aloof Wolfsons had possessions that were clear markers of wealth. In “My Romance with Eleanora Sears,” Behrman had wittily pointed out that an “outsider might have thought that all Providence Street was fairly homogeneous as far as class distinctions went, but he would have been wrong. Socially, it was as stratified as a geologic formation.”<sup>38</sup>

The Wolfson mansion might occupy space on the same street as the nearby tenements and three-deckers, but its architectural features made a clear announcement about Mr. Wolfson: He was a successful businessman. The imperious and arrogant Wolfson, with his bristling moustache and scowling face, may have exploited his wealth to assume a position as a City Marshall of Worcester, which allowed him to ride a white horse in an annual civic parade. His presence reminds the reader of the social hierarchy in Behrman’s own neighborhood. The Wolfson mansion had a separate room for the couple’s piano, he drove a Winton Six, and the signature image of his residence was its stained-glass window.

On Winter Street, where Behrman’s father ran his failed grocery store, stood Worcester Stained Glass Works, founded in 1898 by David Welch, which provided stained glass to churches and grander homes inside and outside the city. Welch’s Stained Glass Works provided the stained glass window above the Torah scrolls in Shaarai Torah Synagogue, and was the most likely source for Mr. Wolfson’s celebrated window.<sup>39</sup> Wolfson’s riding boots may have represented a self-defined marker of his status as an equestrian, but his rough bearing, Behrman suggests, fell far short of the refined demeanor of an Eleanora Sears.

The preparations for Miss Sawyer’s arrival were intense, and excitement for her arrival rose to an unbearable level. When the train arrived in the rain, perhaps a sign that all would not turn out right, the rushing locomotive filled the depot with smoke. Morton Leavitt, the dandy of Providence Street, assumed a position of leadership for the occasion. He had arranged that the neighborhood boys share in an investment for bouquets to be presented to her, though rumors persist that he had “bought the bouquet with what we put up, which enabled him to spend his own uninvested capital on Miss Sawyer.”<sup>40</sup>

As Behrman treats his naïve youthful persona, he develops a comically exaggerated vision of the out-of-town visitor: “We memorized passages, which we hoped would captivate Miss Sawyer, from Omar Khayam . . . In our private fantasies we saw Miss Sawyer, prone in a canoe as we warbled to

her Omar's hedonistic quatrains." His first sighting of Miss Sawyer, however, was vague and imprecise, an "impression of swirling beauty." His adolescent dream of beauty was quickly shattered as her arrival took a farcical twist; when Morton rushed to present the bouquet, he was nicked by Mr. Wolfson's elbow, and the crude businessman dismissed the neighborhood boys as "Bums!" When Wolfson ushered the Sawyers into his Winton Six, Morton awkwardly jumped on the running board with bouquet in hand. As the car quickly departed, he was left in the mud with the flowers ruined.<sup>41</sup>

Morton's embarrassment, however, was not long-lasting. His ambition and desire for success were undiminished, and he managed to secure Miss Sawyer's attentions at the Fourth of July dance organized by the Maccabees, the local organization sponsored by Jewish businessmen. In his role as naive protagonist, Behrman is consistently challenged to distinguish romantic aspiration from persistent illusion. Only with the help of his friend Willie Lavin does Sam discover that Miss Sawyer, far from being a "Princesse Lointaine," was tall and ungainly; that "her arms were thin and her shoulders bony; that her blue eyes protruded and that her features generally did not cooperate."<sup>42</sup> At Union Station the fever of anticipation had devolved into physical humiliation at Morton's expense. Later in the narrative, Behrman derives additional comic effect from the incongruity between his own adolescent vision of Miss Sawyer and the emerging reality that she was actually less attractive than girls in his own neighborhood.

Nevertheless, this out-of-town girl has temporarily imported an aura of the exotic into the narrow and provincial precincts of Worcester's insular neighborhoods. Miss Sawyer from Canada was called simply "Toronto," a place name like the varied labels stamped on the boxes in the Union Station freight yard. Those names seemed to leap out at young Behrman "with the intimation of travel." As Behrman notes:

The depot, long before we discovered the library on Elm Street, was the great point of escape for us in Worcester. We used to say: 'Going to the depot' the way older members of other societies might ask whether they were going to the opera or to the races.

When Morton danced with Miss Sawyer, resplendent in the only evening dress worn at the highly anticipated occasion, the neighborhood boys briefly suspended their posture of resentment and jealousy. Willie was convinced that if Morton could succeed, endless possibilities might beckon for others who "might acquire dazzling connections; we saw the portals of international society swinging open to us. The vista was dizzying." The cachet attached to the lady visitor Miss Sawyer, aka "Toronto," has certainly quickened the "tremendous, pent-up desire

for escape from the familiar into the strange, a hunger for places” from Boston to Maine and beyond.<sup>43</sup>

### EDITOR’S RESPONSE TO “OUT-OF-TOWN GIRL”

In May 1952, Katharine White sent “Out-of-Town Girl” back to Behrman after they apparently had a telephone conversation about the submission to *The New Yorker*. She felt that the reminiscence needed to be toned down, that the exaggerated aspects of the narrative needed to be streamlined. She asked to see the story again after considerable revision, but Behrman had several Worcester pieces in various stages of completion, including chapters designed to round off the volume.<sup>44</sup> He was also responding to queries and requests for revision from Saxe Commins, his editor at Random House, which had scheduled *The Worcester Account* for imminent publication.

Rather than a revision of his narrative about Miss Sawyer, Behrman, in 1954, submitted “Providence Street in Summer,” designed as an attempt to “describe the street and its environs.”<sup>45</sup> White responded that she “loved every minute of the piece,” but she felt that it had “too many separate and small details”; it lacked a unifying element and did not possess sufficient narrative momentum. She also felt that “Providence Street in Summer” should go into the planned book, as it did with a brief vignette about the Sawyers, but it never appeared in *The New Yorker*.<sup>46</sup> As recently as April of that year, Behrman and his *New Yorker* editor were still exchanging ideas on revisions of two other pieces, and White may have sensed that their energies needed to be directed toward those submissions for imminent publication in the magazine.

What White perceived as exaggerations in “Out-of-Town Girl” may stem from Behrman’s handling of the naively inflated perceptions of Miss Sawyer held by his youthful protagonist. He had attempted to derive humor from the incongruity of the imaginative projections of his younger persona and the reality that the much-ballyhooed beauty from outside Worcester is merely a rather ungainly woman from an adjacent country. White may have overlooked the pained sense of deflation experienced by young Behrman upon his realization that the social and economic hierarchies of Providence Street were difficult to penetrate, that he had overinvested, in all senses of that term, in his out-of-town dream girl.

As one of the more prominent Jews on Worcester’s immigrant East Side, Samuel Wolfson appeared to be the logical choice as an official representative of Providence Street in Worcester’s civic affairs. Behrman and his friends envied his wealth and possessions, but they also resented his pretensions, his



### **Katherine White**

Behrman's editor at *The New Yorker*, White encouraged Behrman to compile his Worcester stories into a book.

sense of superiority, and his Boston-centered social life. If he contemptuously dismissed the neighborhood boys as “bums,” they responded by calling him *Grosser Jung*, or “gross fellow,” a coarse parvenu with little knowledge of the Talmud or other spiritual matters.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, Morton Leavitt knew that the younger neighborhood boys had made fun of him behind his back, but he absorbed their criticism, recognizing “their underprivileged position in respect to wealth, travel, success with girls, general sophistication and clothes.” With his flashy appearance and

cool self-assurance, he managed successfully to monopolize the attentions of Miss Sawyer, keeping Ada Summit waiting, only to be able to manifest a “droit du Seigneur,” a power to recall his girlfriend back to his side upon Miss Sawyer’s departure. Supremely confident of his power, Morton even allowed other boys, his possible rivals, to hold Ada’s hand for intervals, which he carefully timed with a stopwatch. Even Behrman’s friend Willie underestimated Morton’s power, the costly courtship of Ada turned sour, and Sam experienced an acute, “throbbing sense of failure.”<sup>48</sup>

With Lake Quinsigamond and White City in mind, Behrman remembered most summers of his boyhood with a tone of “warm felicity,” but his disillusionment with Miss Sawyer and his abject failure with Ada caused him to recall this particular Fourth of July as one that left scars too painful to forget. His preparatory notes to *The Worcester Account* mention how confronting the “scar-tissue of failure” can engender a greater clarity of awareness. His acknowledgment, moreover, that crafting his reminiscences marked “the release of everything that had been seething since childhood” suggests a psychological dimension of the book that probes more deeply than mere nostalgia.<sup>49</sup>

In an exchange of letters between Behrman and another *New Yorker* editor, St. Clair McKelway, the two correspondents shared their mutual view that narratives of personal experience need not start in the past and move chronologically to the present. It was not only permissible but advisable for an author to begin a narrative with a present circumstance, then to draw on a storehouse of memories and experiences.<sup>50</sup> By the 1940s, *The New Yorker* could draw on nearly two decades of examples in which various accounts of personal experience were developed in an array of forms: ironic or semi-fictional narratives and other forms that experimented with narrative voice.

When White initiated a contributor’s agreement with Behrman that invited a continuation of his Worcester series, that contract did not specify that he was required to choose one among the various genres: story, reminiscence, or casual. White herself had coined the term “casual” to describe a piece of prose at the cusp between fiction and fact. Especially in the realm of humor and comedy, *New Yorker* contributors had pioneered various frameworks to allow for exaggeration, playfulness, and imaginative flexibility, especially when wedded to first-person narrative experimentation. In the words of one scholar, *New Yorker* writers explored “the way that first-person narration frames traumas with implications of escape, if not triumph.”<sup>52</sup> By using humor to establish a mood rather than advancing action, writers could more subtly focus on incongruities and pretenses, to develop personal narratives of intimate thoughts and emotions. Behrman, in all likelihood, would have



agreed with James Thurber's dictum: humor is a "kind of emotional chaos told calmly and quietly in retrospect."<sup>52</sup>

Although Morton and other figures in Behrman's story are comic characters, his handwritten insertion of "The Pathos of Distance" as an alternative title for "Out-of-Town Girl" suggests that serious themes were embedded in his narrative of apparently light-hearted adolescent romantic misadventures. The phrase "pathos of distance" comes from Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche distinguished two kinds of people: the powerful, superior, and high-minded versus the low and plebeian. Since the powerful have an unquestioned hold over those below them, a sense of superiority based on power, distance, and self-assertion, feelings of inadequacy and resentment are aroused by this arbitrary sense of entitlement. Within the context of his overall critique of conventional morality, Nietzsche eventually connected this assumed feeling of superiority to the phrase "the pathos of distance." However much the so-called plebeian and lower classes feel resentment and hatred toward the powerful, nothing will change without a wholesale transformation in values.<sup>53</sup>

In Behrman's eyes, the power that Samuel Wolfson and Morton Leavitt possessed, primarily through wealth and the trappings of success, seemed impervious to challenge at the end of "Out-of-Town Girl." The alternative title suggests weightier themes at work in his apparently light-hearted narrative. Behrman, who explored in his apprentice plays the role that strength and brutal assertion played in forming uneven human relations, seemed to have returned to such themes in this unpublished chapter intended for *The Worcester Account*.

## THE IMPACT OF NIETZSCHE & HUNEKER

Having entertained flesh and blood alternatives to his stifling environment at home, Behrman sought intellectual and imaginative exceptions to his father's rigid faith. Supported by his friend Willie Lavin in his educational endeavors during and after high school, he gravitated toward Nietzsche's writings as early as the time of his matriculation at Clark University.<sup>54</sup> The phrase "the pathos of distance," however, is drawn from a more immediate source. In "The Improvement in Mr. Gaynor's Technique," a story in which Behrman takes piano lessons from a local teacher, he and Willie go book hunting at the Worcester Public Library for works on music and mastery of the keyboard. Willie, he notes, had once found some excellent sources there on fishing when that subject was his latest keen interest. Behrman turns this comic narrative into a different kind of fishing expedition, and he came away

from the library fired by a fascination with a new author. He emerged with “two books by James Huneker . . . one on Chopin, and *Melomaniacs*. Spurred on by Willie, I eventually read everything by Huneker the Worcester Public Library had, so that by the time I got to New York some years later I knew all about him.”<sup>55</sup>

In the 1890s, James G. Huneker (1860–1921) advanced his career in periodical writing by contributing a musical column to *Town Topics*, signed “Melomaniac,” which covered general cultural matters for that weekly. H. L. Mencken, an enthusiast for the writings of Nietzsche, later hired Huneker for *Smart Set*, which was designed to appeal to urban men and women who appreciated good books, music, and plays. The work that Huneker did for *Town Topics* and *Smart Set* was similar to the “Goings on About Town” column for *The New Yorker*; in many ways *Smart Set* was a precursor to *The New Yorker* of Behrman’s time and our own.<sup>56</sup> Behrman, a contributor to *Smart Set* at the beginning of his literary career, claimed that the magazine represented to aspiring writers an appeal that was “electrifying avant garde.” Sensing its impulse to cross conventional moral as well as aesthetic boundaries, young writers, in Behrman’s words, targeted it “with a Nietzschean expansion Beyond Good and Evil.”<sup>57</sup>

In magazines and books, Huneker, an iconoclastic critic of music, drama, painting, and the other arts, repeatedly expressed his admiration for the works of Nietzsche. Some critics saw the German philosopher as the greatest threat to the survival of traditional faith as a new century dawned. In sharp contrast, Huneker championed him as a courageous apostle of individualism, personal freedom, and self-assertion. As Nietzsche introduced revolutionary concepts such as master-slave morality, herd morality, resentment, and the will to power, Huneker found in Nietzsche’s writings affinities with his own developing cosmopolitan temperament. Acknowledging an expansive vision that would be unappreciated in the United States, Huneker praised Nietzsche as a figure who appealed to liberated intellectuals.

In 1913 Huneker published *The Pathos of Distance*, a collection of essays and reminiscences based on his magazine writings. He began the title essay as follows:

The pathos of distance! It is a memorial phrase. Friedrich Nietzsche is its creator. Nietzsche who wrote of the drama and its origins in a work that is become a classic. Distance lends pathos, bathes in rosy enchantments the simplest events of a mean past; it is a painter, in a word, who with skillful, consoling touches

disguises all that was sordid in our youth, all that once mortified or disgusted, and bridges the inequality of man and man.<sup>58</sup>

With regard to his protégé Huneker's interests, Mencken observed, "'The pathos of distance' is a phrase that haunts him as poignantly as it haunted Nietzsche, its creator."<sup>59</sup> Huneker, adopting the phrase as one of the epigraphs for the volume, deployed it several times in other essays. For Huneker, Nietzsche's "memorial phrase" provided a psychological linkage through which feelings of past mortification might be checked by the distancing perspective of time and memory. That perspective, in the hands of a skillful artist, might be effected by humor, implied, naïve, or subtle.<sup>60</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Recalling conflicts with the parochialism and sectarianism of his youth, Behrman drafted what may seem to be a somewhat haphazard series of local reminiscences for *The New Yorker* as White encouraged him to shape memories into narrative form over the course of nearly a decade. A number of features, however, contribute to whatever coherence *The Worcester Account* possesses: the recurring character of Willie Lavin, the neighborhood setting, the alternation of solemn and comic tones, instances of humiliation and pain relieved by pathos and humor, and the themes of escape, travel, power, and success. Family members, friends, teachers, and the local physician make a varied cast of characters. Character contrast is perhaps sharpest in the clash of values between Willie Lavin and Behrman's father: the former representing impulse, speculative thinking, and rebellion vs. the latter's adherence to the written word, limitation, and tradition. According to Robert F. Gross, the contrast in "Point of the Needle," the book's final chapter, is "almost Nietzschean," as Willie pays a price for his rebellious (Dionysian) energies.<sup>61</sup> As this discussion has shown, Behrman's cast is expanded by the number of figures who enter his life from outside the confines of Providence Street via a series of arrivals and departures, thus lending an episodic quality to the volume. The various entrances and exits of these figures, some more dramatic than others, are like the appearances of actors in the genre that Behrman pursued before his two decades of work for *The New Yorker*.

Some of these figures make their entrance with much more fanfare than others, and some with explicit stage directions. Others enter the narrative more subtly and unobtrusively, through the doors of the unconscious, via dreams, visions, fancies, and reverie. As he notes in "A Little Glass of Warmth," "Submerged memories of the dead are like actors waiting for a cue

in the wings of the unconscious; the more assertive ones come on oftener.”<sup>62</sup> This passage fits appropriately into a volume of reminiscences about a socially awkward son of poor immigrants who fights isolation and estrangement to become a successful playwright. Behrman actually recast Huneker’s aphoristic statement about the transforming role that memory plays via temporal and emotional distance: “And to our recollection of favorite actors and actresses, the subconscious, in the dark room of which are stored all the old negatives of our life, adds a glow that is positively fascinating.”<sup>63</sup>

In his preparatory notes to *The Worcester Account*, Behrman contemplated incorporating more material on the broader history of the city into his narrative. He does, to be sure, include references to notable buildings, structures, and artifacts that defined the development and expansion of Worcester: Union Station, City Hall, Mechanics Hall, Worcester Academy, the Worcester Public Library, Bancroft Tower (named for the historian George Bancroft), the statue of Senator George Frisbie Hoar, and the estates of industrial leaders like George Crompton. In thinking of the ways in which figures like Hoar and other reformers intersected with the city’s past, he mused that much of what was considered national history was, in fact, local history. Ultimately he followed a plan through which his own personal search for clarity would be achieved via rendering life-experiences that he could call “fully one’s own,” and thus more public aspects of the city’s past, some of which were associated with the partially displaced Yankee elite, were seen as vestigial.<sup>65</sup>

Behrman was clearly no passive recorder of memories: each chapter of his Worcester reminiscences underwent a series of substantive revisions. This process led to a re-envisioning of past experience as playwright Behrman found in drama critic Huneker’s essay an apt visual metaphor for his often painful encounter with personal memory. As he noted in the first chapter drafted for the book, “a rendezvous with whatever remains of one’s past” can take on extraordinary and often alarming importance.<sup>65</sup>

HJM

## Notes

1. The information for this biography was taken with permission from an extremely comprehensive website maintained by the author’s son, composer David Behrman ([www.snbehrman.com](http://www.snbehrman.com)).
2. S. N. Behrman, *The Worcester Account* (New York: Random House, 1954), 39–40.
3. Saul Bellow, in his review of *The Worcester Account*, notes that “the air of nostalgia which pervades the book is often appealing but may at times emphasize the quaintness of Providence Street rather than its difficulty and poverty”—“Old World and the

- New," *Saturday Review* 37, No. 47, November 20, 1954, 41. See also Michael True, *Worcester Area Writers* (Worcester: Worcester Public Library, 1987), 55.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals, Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 497. Behrman may have read Nietzsche in Oscar Levy's translation: "Only that which never stops hurting remains in the memory," *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 18 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1924), XIII: 66.
  5. Katharine White to S. N. Behrman, Editorial Correspondence, April 5, 1951, *New Yorker* Records, Box 502, Folder 19, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
  6. True, *Worcester Area Writers*, 55. Fairly comprehensive studies of Behrman's career are Robert F. Gross, *S. N. Behrman: A Research and Production Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992) and Kenneth T. Reed, *S. N. Behrman* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975). Reed notes that the sequence of chapters in *The Worcester Account* differs from their arrangement in the volume and that some characters, circumstances, and settings are transformed for aesthetic reasons (94). A primary example is the change of the name of Behrman's friend Dan Asher to "Willie Lavin" in the book. Lewis William Heniford devotes attention to Behrman's early years in Worcester, "S. N. Behrman as a Social Dramatist" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1964).
  7. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 209.
  8. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 210.
  9. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 72.
  10. Reed, *S. N. Behrman*, 19–20.
  11. Norma Feingold, *Water Street: World within World* (Worcester: Worcester Historical Museum, 2001), 10–12.
  12. Behrman's distaste for Samuel Wolfson may stem from the businessman's arbitrary firing of 35 workers for union activities at the comb factory. The Massachusetts State Board of Arbitration, citing distrust between management and workers and roughhousing in the local neighborhood, ruled in favor of the workers' reinstatement in 1905, attaching the stipulation that there would be no penalty for union activities. See "Globe Manufacturing Company," *Public Documents No. 40, Annual Report of the State Board of Councilman for the Year Ending 1905* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Company, State Printers, 1906), 53–55.
  13. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 38.
  14. Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Work and Leisure in an Industrial City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1983, 30.
  15. Kunitz, *Conversations with Stanley Kunitz*, ed. Kent P. Ljungquist (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 125. U. S. Poet Laureate Kunitz edited the memoir of his mother Yetta Helen Dine, who lived in Worcester from 1902 to 1927 after traveling from the province of Kovno in Lithuania to New York in 1890. Yetta operated her own dressmaking shop in Worcester.
  16. Feingold, *Shaarai Torah: Life Cycle of a Synagogue* (Worcester: Worcester Historical Museum, 1991), 15–20.

17. Behrman, "Zion Comes to Culver City: Chaim Weizmann," *The Suspended Drawing Room* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965), 97; "Review of the Month," *The Maccabean* 23 (April 1913), 97. The major essays in *The Suspended Drawing Room* appeared in *The New Yorker*.
18. As a member of the Classical High debating team in 1909, Behrman took on the question: "Should U. S. Senators be elected by Popular Vote?" The judge for the debate was D. W. Abercrombie, principal of Worcester Academy and a member of Worcester's educational and social elite. Later in the same year, as captain of the debating team, Behrman took on the question: "Should reading or writing 25 words in any language be a test for immigrants?" See "High School Notes," *Worcester Evening Post* 26 March 1909: 2; 8 April 1909: 2.
19. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 104.
20. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 167.
21. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, Typescript Notes, 1945–1954, Writings, Box 87, Folder 10, S. N. Behrman Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.
22. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 168.
23. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 171.
24. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 173.
25. Peggy Miller Franck, "The Battles of Burlingame," *Pride's Crossing: The Unbridled Life and Impatient Times of Eleonora Sears* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 2009), 1–8. Franck also covers her long-distance walks from Providence to Boston in the 1920s.
26. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 170.
27. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 7.
28. Behrman refers to the "nightmarish summer" of 1952 when his brother's health quickly deteriorated, and he died. Behrman to Katharine White, Correspondence, August 26 1952, Box 27, Folder 1, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.
29. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 34, 54.
30. Behrman, "Out-of-Town Girl," Writings, 1952, Box 72, Folder 2, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library. Subsequent quotations in the next three sections of this article, unless otherwise noted, come from a 22-page typescript of "Out-of-Town Girl" in the Behrman Papers, a manuscript which Behrman apparently edited in preparation for possible publication.
31. Behrman, "Out-of-Town Girl."
32. Ibid.
33. Kenneth J. Moynihan, *A History of Worcester 1674–1848* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2007), 136. For further information on the railroad's role in Worcester's development, see Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester and Its People*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1917), 2: 614–618; Charles Washburn, *Industrial Worcester* (Worcester: Davis Press, 1917), 48, 52–57, 213–215; Franklin P. Rice, ed. *The Worcester of Eighteen Hundred and Ninety Eight* (Worcester: F. S. Blanchard, 1899), 389–395. In his typescript notes for the book, Behrman reminded himself to

procure a copy and to consult Charles Washburn's *Industrial Worcester* among other local sources, Box 87, Folder 10, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.

34. Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will*, 181–82.

35. Behrman, "The Out-of-Town Girl."

36. Behrman, in all likelihood, refers to the role that the Worcester State Hospital, founded in 1833, played in advancing the cause of more humane treatment of the mentally ill, spurred on by Levi Lincoln, a Worcester native who advocated prison reform as Massachusetts governor. Dorothea Dix, who as a teenager lived with her aunt and taught school in Worcester, spoke out against the practice of consigning lunatics and the mentally ill to jails or almshouses with criminals and paupers. According to Gerald Grob, the Worcester hospital served as a model to other public mental health hospitals across the nation, and Worcester was chosen because of its strategic location with so many railroad lines passing through it. See Grob, *The State and the Mentally Ill: A History of the Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts, 1830–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966). In "My Romance with Eleanor Sears," Behrman notes that the walking route to Lake Quinsigamond took him past the State Insane Asylum (*The Worcester Account*, 173).

37. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 173.

38. A photograph is provided in Feingold, *Shaarai Torah*, 28; "By the Canal: Canal District Walking Tour," Site 30, 82–88 Winter Street, Preservation Worcester, www.preservationworcester.org.

39. Behrman, "Out-of-Town Girl."

40. Ibid.

41. *Princesse Lointaine*: an ideal or unattainable woman. More likely, this is an overtly theatrical allusion to Edmond Rostand's play *Princesse Lointaine* (1895); the title, literarily speaking, means "distant woman," a figure inaccessible because of wealth, social standing, or beauty. Behrman, after graduating from Harvard, studied French drama with Brander Mathews at Columbia University. Better known as the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Rostand wrote his "Princess Far Away" as a vehicle for Sarah Bernhardt.

42. Behrman, "Out-of-Town Girl."

43. Katharine White to S. N. Behrman, Correspondence, May 28, 1952, Box 27, Folder 2, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.

44. S. N. Behrman to Katharine White, Correspondence, May 29, 1954, Box 27, Folder 2, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.

45. Katharine White to S. N. Behrman, Correspondence, June 4, 1954, Box 27, Folder 2, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.

46. Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will*, 166.

47. Behrman, "Out-of-Town Girl."

48. Behrman records that acute sense of failure in the book, accompanied by his partially veiled allusion to Nietzsche about memories that cause enduring pain in *The Worcester Account*, 39–40, 42. He then presents a highly condensed version of the Ada-Miss Sawyer episode. It is not entirely clear why he sacrificed the rest of "Out-

of-Town Girl”; perhaps it was out of deference to the judgment of White. Whatever lovely summers he enjoyed on Providence Street, this particular season is notable for his failure with two “distant princesses.”

49. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, Typescript Notes, 1945–1954, Writings, Box 87, Folder 10, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.

50. St. Clair McKelway to S. N. Behrman, Correspondence, June 8, 1967, Box 16, Folder 4, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.

51. Judith Yaross Lee, *Defining ‘New Yorker’ Humor* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 282. White’s term “casual” described a genre that applied techniques usually associated with fiction to narratives based on actual experience. Lee’s chapter “Ironic I’s Are Smiling” offers a valuable discussion of experimentation among *New Yorker* writers with first-person narration, from the pose of comic naiveté to other narrative frameworks (282–323).

52. Quoted in Lee, *Defining ‘New Yorker’ Humor*, 296–97.

53. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals, Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 462. Nietzsche also used the phrase in *Beyond Good and Evil* in a discussion of ranks and differences in society, *Basic Writings*, 391.

54. As an undergraduate, Behrman published “The Destroyer,” *Clark College Monthly* 3 (April 1914): 256–258. In this dramatic exercise, one character has read Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, and another comments: “It is only the strong of soul who should read Nietzsche.” For brief comments on Nietzsche’s impact on Behrman’s plays, see Gross, *S. N. Behrman: A Research and Production Sourcebook*, 27, 53–54.

55. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 157.

56. Arnold Schwab, *James Gibbons Huneker: Critic of the Seven Arts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 105. More recent assessments of Huneker’s role in advancing Nietzsche’s ideas in the United States are by Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 40–47; David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 164–170; and Weir, *Decadent Culture in the United States: Art and Literature Against the American Grain, 1890–1926* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 43–47.

57. Behrman, “An Introductory Reminiscence,” *The Smart Set: A History and an Anthology*, ed. Carl Dolmetsch (New York: Dial Press, 1966), xxi.

58. James G. Huneker, *The Pathos of Distance* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 332. The volume contains a discussion of a newly published edition of Nietzsche’s works, 319–25. Huneker also devotes significant attention to Nietzsche in *Overtones: A Book of Temperaments* (1904) and *Egoists: A Book of Supermen* (1910).

59. H. L. Mencken, *A Book of Prefaces* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1917), 182–83.

60. Huneker, *The Pathos of Distance*, 332.

61. Gross, “What Makes Sammy Run? S. N. Behrman and the Fugitive Kind,” *Hollywood on Stage: Playwrights Evaluate the Culture Industry*, ed. Kimball King (New York: Routledge, 1997), 19–38.



62. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 32. One of the earliest U.S. doctoral dissertations on Nietzsche was directed by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, president of Clark University, who invited Sigmund Freud to Worcester in 1909 for his sole American visit, Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche*, 65–66.
63. Huneker, *The Pathos of Distance*, 332.
64. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*. Typescript Notes, 1945–1954, Writings, Box 65, Folder 10, Behrman Papers, New York Public Library.
65. Behrman, *The Worcester Account*, 83.