

Sam Anderson

*The Mound Builders*

November 29, 2014 – January 11, 2015

**The world of *The Mound Builders* is a cruel one. Not only do people betray each other, but the simple passage of time makes everything people do turn to dust. The constant action of the universe is to destroy, yet, even knowing this, the primal urge of people is to try to build something permanent. At the burning heart of the theme was: Why did they build the mounds? They built the mounds for the same reason I'd build the mounds. Compare their house to a painting by the Midwestern artist Grant Wood, and compare her life to the Charles Dickens novel *Dombey and Son*. These references demonstrate that the past is useful in the present: people can use what others have left behind to help them live today. Chad plans to build a motel and a restaurant. Delia has written two books that will endure, and her ability to write more has driven her to alcohol and despair. Cynthia makes photographs, and although she is not as talented as the famous Diane Arbus, she is responsible for the visual record of August and Dan's work. (She is also the only one who chooses to destroy her own work.)**

**None of it is any good. August and Dan's work is destroyed, first by Chad and the bulldozer and then again by floods. Jean, presumably, will deliver a healthy baby, but not a family because her husband is dead. Chad is also dead, after being cheated out of his development. Delia and Cynthia find new outlets or sink deeper into drink. As for the *Mound Builders*, their pots and bone awls and gold beads lie at the bottom of the lake.**