

MidAmerica XL

*The Yearbook of the Society
for the Study of Midwestern Literature*

DAVID D. ANDERSON, FOUNDING EDITOR
MARCIA NOE, EDITOR

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butions from our members on any aspect of Midwestern literature and cul-
ture. Except for winners of our annual poetry and prose contests, we do not
publish poems, short stories, or creative nonfiction. If you would like to sub-
mit a scholarly essay of not more than 15 pages or 3,750 words to be consid-
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or page numbers. Do not put your name on your essay. Include your con-
tact information in your cover letter to Marcia. Be sure to give your insti-
tutional affiliation.

In Honor of
William Barillas

PREFACE

On May 9, 2013, members of The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature gathered in East Lansing for its forty-third annual meeting. Highlights included panels on Midwestern Noir, the poetry of Theodore Roethke, and the work of Ted Kooser. On Friday night members enjoyed a performance of two one-act adaptations by Sandra Seaton of short stories by Cyrus Colter. Mary Minock received the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize, Alex Engebretson won the David D. Anderson Prize for Literary Criticism, and Michelle M. Campbell was the winner of the David Diamond Student Writing Prize. William Barillas received the MidAmerica Award, and Ted Kooser received the Mark Twain Award.

SSML is currently operating at a loss due to increased expenses in publishing its journals and convening its annual symposium. Major gifts from the late Jane S. Bakerman and David D. Anderson have enabled us to continue our work while we seek to establish a more stable financial footing for the work ahead. SSML is also grateful to the following members and friends who have made contributions in addition to their dues. As more such contributions are received, and earlier ones are discovered in searching the archives, we will add more names to this Honor Roll: Walter Adams, Robert Beasecker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ray B. Browne, Mary Ellen Caldwell, Louis J. Cantoni, G.B. Crump, David Diamond, Bernard F. Engel, Kenneth B. Grant, Philip. A. Greasley, Theodore Haddin, Donald Hassler, Janet Ruth Heller, Ted Kennedy, Jean Laming, Barbara Lindquist, Larry Lockridge, Loren Logsdon, Bud Narveson, Marcia Noe, Mary Obuchowski, Tom Page, E. Elizabeth Raymond, Herbert K. Russell, James Seaton, Guy Szuberla, Doug Wixson, Melody Zajdel, and the family and friends of Paul Somers.

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RECENT MIDWESTERN LITERATURE AND POETRY

FICTION

- Airgood, Ellen. *South of Superior*. Riverhead Books, 2011. [Michigan,UP]
- Attenberg, Jamie. *The Middlesteins*. Grand Central, 2012. [Chicagoland]
- Berg, Elizabeth. *Tapestry of Fortunes*. Random House, 2013. [Minnesota]
- Campbell, Bonnie Jo. *Once Upon a River*. Norton, 2011. [Michigan]
- Coake, Christopher. *You Came Back*. Grand Central, 2012. [Ohio]
- Eugenides, Jeffrey. *The Marriage Plot*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. [Michigan]
- Franzen, Jonathan. *Freedom*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011. [Minnesota]
- Gass, William H. *Middle C*. Knopf, 2013. [Ohio]
- Harbach, Chad. *The Art of Fielding*. Little, Brown, 2011. [Wisconsin]
- Harrison, Jim. *Brown Dog: Novellas..* Grove, 2013. [Michigan]
- Kasischke, Laura. *The Raising*. Harper Perennial, 2011. [Michigan]
- Keillor, Garrison. *Pilgrims*. Penguin, 2010. [Minnesota]
- Lasser, Scott. *Say Nice Things about Detroit*. Norton, 2012. [Michigan]
- Moore, Edward Kelsey. *The Supreme's at Earl's All-You-Can-Eat*. Knopf, 2013 [Indiana]
- Paretsky, Sara. *Critical Mass*. Dutton, 2013. [Chicagoland]
- Pollack, Donald Ray. *The Devil All the Time*. Doubleday, 2011. [Ohio]
- Rhodes, David. *Jewelweed*. Milkweed, 2013. [Wisconsin]
- Riekke, Ron. *The Way North: Collected Upper Peninsula New Works*. Wayne State UP, 2013 [Michigan]
- Roy, Lori. *Until She Comes Home*. Dutton, 2013 [Detroit]
- Somerville, Patrick. *This Bright River*. Little, Brown, 2012. [Wisconsin]
- Snyder, Rachel Louise. *What We've Lost Is Nothing*. Scribner, 2014. [Chicagoland]
- Thompson, Jean. *The Year We Left Home*. Simon & Schuster, 2011. [Iowa]

POETRY

- Heller, Janet Ruth. *Exodus*. Cincinnati: Wordtech Editions, 2014.
- Knoepfle, John. *Shadows and Starlight*. Indian Paintbrush Poets, 2012
- Radavich, David. *The Countries We Live In*. Main Street Rag Publishing, 2013.
- Stillwell, Mary K. *Fallen Angels*. Finishing Line, 2013.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Contributors are sought for a collection of short essays, each focused on a poem by Theodore Roethke, to be published by a university press. Intended for a readership of students and teachers as well as scholars, the book will advance Roethke criticism by presenting original and highly specific commentary on individual poems. Essays are to be about 2000 words in length and must involve close textual reading of a single poem. Writers may explicate a short poem or a passage from a long poem, or analyze one aspect of a poem (such as diction, imagery, figurative language, symbolism, sound devices, meter, etc.). All critical approaches are welcome, including historicism, gender studies, reader-response, and ecocriticism. Essays should reflect knowledge of relevant Roethke scholarship, in most cases briefly quoting secondary sources. Deadline for submission is August 31, 2014. Send proposals and inquiries to Dr. William Barillas, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, at wbarillas@uwlax.edu

JOSEPH J. WYDEVEN: AN APPRECIATION

MARY DEJONG OBUCHOWSKI

Anything I can say about the loss of such a dear and valued friend will be inadequate. Among the many things that I admired about Joe were his energy and his appetite for life and culture, his compassion, and his humor. He and Alice traveled a lot, in spite of his illness, usually with literature, architecture, photography or art in mind. In the last few years, they visited Venice, Amsterdam, the Atlantic coast of Canada, and they drove around Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, California, Texas, and Michigan. They explored places from his favorite fishing streams to museums, including Curwood's Castle in Owosso. He especially loved contemporary music, art, film, books, ethnic food, his and Alice's children and grandchildren, and, above all, Alice.

He contributed more to SSML than I can probably enumerate. He served on the Executive Committee, and the Editorial Committee, helping to peer review SSML's journals. His service to the Dictionary was extraordinary. He finished entries that others could not—long, complicated ones that required a great deal of research, which he made look easy. I was lucky to be able to collaborate with him on some of them, and he helped me with one that I had to compose at the last minute. Other people tell similar stories: that he helped them with their papers, articles, topics, and research, too, because he was so generous with his knowledge and with his responses to people's presentations in sessions at the conference as well as balanced in his judgments, sensible and remarkably patient. Joe's papers and topics always drew people to his sessions, which were lively and generally stretched the boundaries of time with discussion. Above all, for me, Joe and Alice were the kind of friends I would wish for everyone. Although Joe and I had corresponded about SSML matters earlier, we became closer over his illness and that of my husband in 2009. The calls and correspondence went on from there, and, I hope, will continue with Alice. Joe's spirit will animate SSML for time to come.

Central Michigan University

ARVID F. SPONBERG: AN APPRECIATION

SANDRA SEATON

Arvid “Gus” Sponberg (1944-2013) was a dedicated member of The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature who enriched and enlivened our annual conferences with his wit, good cheer, and deep scholarship. His last service to the SSML was the editing of a special issue of *Midwestern Miscellany*.

Gus was a Midwesterner through and through. He grew up in Michigan, where his father, Harold Sponberg, held administrative positions at three universities, ending his career as president of Eastern Michigan University. Gus graduated from Augustana College in Illinois, received an MA degree from the University of Chicago, and earned his doctorate at the University of Michigan.

A member of the Department of English at Valparaiso University since 1972, Gus was an authority on twentieth-century drama and theater, with a special interest in theater in the Midwest. His publications include two books: *Broadway Talks: What Professionals Think About Commercial Theatre in America* (Greenwood Press, 1991) and *A.R. Gurney: A Casebook* (Routledge, 2003). During sabbaticals in 2001-2002 and 2010, he researched British productions of American plays, comparative histories of public financing for the arts in the US and the UK, and the rise of departments of theatre in American universities. He formed numerous relationships with theatre directors and playwrights in Great Britain. With the help of a \$10,000 Kapfer Research Award, he researched the rise of nonprofit professional theater in Chicago. (See the website www.chicagotheaterhistoryproject.org/about.php) This research led to his joining with colleagues at Columbia College in Chicago to organize the first scholarly conference devoted solely to the history of Chicago theater. “Sustaining Chicago Theatre: Past, Present, Future” was held from May 18 to 22, 2011, at Columbia College in the Loop. As an attendee at the conference, I can attest to the rich array of sessions it offered and to its beautifully organized and coordinated overall structure. Gus was in the middle of planning a second symposium with Chicago theatre colleagues when he passed away.

At Valparaiso Gus taught courses in the theory and practice of adapting plays for the movies. In 2009 he began teaching a graduate course, *New Ideas in Midwestern Literature*, for which he started a

blog at <http://blogs.valpo.edu/midwestlit>. In addition to teaching, Gus advised English majors and the Kappa Phi chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honor society. For many years, he served as a co-chair of Books and Coffee, an annual series of public book reviews. The page devoted to Prof. Arvid “Gus” Sponberg on the website of the Department of English at Valparaiso closes with this statement: “A beloved teacher and esteemed member of the English department for over 40 years, he will be dearly missed.” He will be missed as well by the members of The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature, to which he contributed so much through his thoughtful presentations, his scholarly publications, and his never-failing collegiality.

East Lansing, Michigan

MUDDY WORLD

MARY CATHERINE HARPER

*Honor requires that he die without confession. That he die uttering
a word of honor in the face of his captors and torturers. Honor
requires that he proclaim his community with those with
whom no one has anything in common.*

*-Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have
Nothing in Common*, 149.)*

The Tonle Sap got me there in 2006,
part muddy river, part lake,
from Phnon Penh to Angkor Wat,
the same as my own Mississippi.
If I paddle against the stream,
New Orleans runs into St. Louis.
I compare the navigable miles:
2,161 to something much less.

In 2013 I still read the 1976
University Society Encyclopedia,
to gather facts around me like the
photos of daughters, nephews,
nieces, friends whose names I fear
I'll lose in another 15 years unless
I keep them pasted to my refrigerator
door, reading the collage on weekends.

These 20 hardback volumes of blue,
the front cover embossed with
a small gold circle of earth,
the flattened continent I live on
south of an empty Arctic center,

the land of Kampuchea oddly north,
as if it truly were north of Asian tundra.

I remember how my husband and I
purchased the hefty books,
anticipating a family to educate
into the history of people far away,
but having no funds for annual updates,
not knowing what was happening
on the other side of the world
even as the entry on Cambodia ended:
“Phnom-Penh fell to the rebels on
April 16, 1975. An estimated two
million people were then herded
from the capital and other cities
by the victors and set to ‘till the fields.’”

When I walked across the killing fields
of Choueng Ek, I remembered being 8,
walking through the cemetery where
we had just buried one of my cousins,
my father maneuvering me between
the graves: “Never walk on the dead.”
But how could I avoid stepping on them,
with pits and paths so arbitrary
and no headstones to guide me.

In 2005 there was no navigating
among the photos at Toul Sleng,
hundreds of faces on stiff boards,
in tight rows and columns,
hundreds of people with names
once upon a time, me recording
those that had been translated
for people who pronounce my
language—Mong Sam Oeun,
Uy Ren—clumps of letters,
sounds I stumble over.

But then a woman whose name

was stamped only in Khmer,
followed by the number 462.
She held a baby, sleeping
or something much less.
It was in the woman's eyes
that I read the exact distance
between her home planet
and the muddy world I live on.

Defiance College

“TO HONOR A MAN”: THE DECLINE OF
HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN HENRY
BELLAMANN’S *KINGS ROW*

RACHAEL PRICE

Nowadays, if one remembers *Kings Row* at all, one usually thinks of the 1942 film adaptation of Henry Bellamann’s best-selling novel, which features a now-classic scene in which Ronald Reagan, as Drake McHugh, awakens one morning after a terrible accident to find that his legs have been amputated and shouts, “Where’s the rest of me?” It is ironic that *Kings Row* is now more associated with conservative icon Reagan than with anyone else, for Bellamann, in the novel, paints a picture of a community that, while postcard-perfect on the surface, is also a site in which characters transgress a variety of social norms. Bellamann depicts a place that, even in the late nineteenth-century Midwest, could not be part of the cultural simulacrum that was Reagan’s America.

Such subversion of conservative values speaks to the modernist nature of *Kings Row*. Bellamann published the novel in 1940, at the tail end of the modernist movement, and set its storyline around the turn of the twentieth century, during the advent of Freudianism. “The first sustained attempt to build a scientific account of masculinity,” writes R.W. Connell in her 1995 book *Masculinities*, “was made in the revolutionary depth psychology founded at the turn of the century by Freud” (8). She goes on to give some context by saying that “Freud’s early work coincided with a ferment in the European intelligentsia that produced modernist literature, avant-garde painting and music, radical social ideas, spirited feminist and socialist movements, and the first homosexual rights movement” (8). Such ideas are not what the popular imagination conventionally associates with a rural Missouri community at the turn of the twentieth century, and yet many of these ideas are touched on repeatedly in *Kings Row*.

Kings Row is a modernist piece not only chronologically but, in many ways, thematically as well. In their 2011 volume *Critical Rural Theory: Structure, Space, Culture*, Alexander R. Thomas, Brian M. Lowe, Gregory M. Fulkerson, and Polly J. Smith assert that “modernization theorists . . . believed that modern values and ideas would triumph over the backwardness of traditional (i.e., rural) societies” (128). After all, in a post-Industrial Revolution world, cities were signs of progress, and rural areas were the backwaters from which the intelligentsia escaped. Indeed, in 1973’s *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams writes that “[i]t is often said of the whole process of industrialization that all the able people went off to the factories and the towns, or decided to emigrate, leaving only the slow, the feckless, and the ignorant” (184).

While *Kings Row* does certainly feature characters whom one might describe as slow, feckless, or ignorant (or perhaps a combination of the three), these people are not the lifeblood of the novel. Rather, Bellamann presents us with several round characters who challenge the cultural norms of small-town America in many ways. *Kings Row* is definitely rural, but it is also, just as importantly, Midwestern. Though the novel itself appeared in the waning days of modernism, the village with which Bellamann presents us is distinctly Midwestern, at least by the standards of the day. While authors such as Edgar Lee Masters, Sherwood Anderson, and Sinclair Lewis gave us portraits of a rural Midwest full of corruption and hypocrisy, *Kings Row* is less of a cultural monolith. The town certainly features small-town gossip and vice, but it simultaneously hearkens back to conceptions of the Midwest that were popular at the time of the novel’s setting. In his article “The Emergence of ‘Middle West’ as an American Regional Label,” James R. Shortridge explains that the Middle West of the period, due to its relative novelty as a viable living space, was more progressive than the stuffy towns of the East Coast: “Self-satisfaction, dilettantism, corruption, and loss of idealism were . . . factors linked to old age and therefore to the East. Opposing traits such as progressivism, pragmatism, and idealism were the glory of the younger Middle West” (216). Thus, even though *Kings Row* is a less modern space due to its rural nature, it is more modern due to its Midwestern location. Bellamann’s portrait of the town goes beyond modernist conventions of the “revolt from the village” and paints a picture of a place where nonhegemonic ideas coexist with the more staid ideals of small-town America.

One way in which we see this throughout the course of the novel is in Bellamann's depiction of non-normative gender roles. The novel features female characters who defy traditional notions of femininity in many ways, but perhaps it is Bellamann's complex treatment of masculinities that is even more ahead of its time. While Bellamann does "revolt from the village" somewhat, he also, via the text, revolts from traditional modes of masculinity; more specifically, he revolts from what Connell labels "hegemonic masculinity," which she defines as "the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations . . ." (76). Bellamann creates a Midwestern modernist space in which a variety of masculinities coexist openly and often comfortably. The three characters who demonstrate this textual revolt most substantially are Parris Mitchell, Drake McHugh, and Jamie Wakefield.

In order to set the stage for just how these masculinities are non-hegemonic, we must first briefly examine the hegemony against which Bellamann is operating. While *Kings Row* is, in many ways, a classic modernist tale and makes reference to the very "European intelligentsia" enumerated in the Connell quotation above, it is very much an American story. While Bellamann never overtly refers to the town of Kings Row as being located in Missouri, there is strong contextual evidence for such a location. For the novel's characters, a trip to "the city" means a trip to St. Louis; even the town's young people are expected to have been to that particular city, as we see when, early in the novel, the young Drake McHugh expectantly asks his friend, Parris Mitchell, "'You've been to St. Louis, ain't you?'" (42). Bellamann makes such references many times during the course of the story. When the family of Parris's friend, Renee, suddenly relocates, his grandmother explains that she thinks that they went "down toward the Ozark Mountains" (64). In evaluating the story's ostensible Missouri setting, we must remember that the Midwest was once the West; in the age of Manifest Destiny, Missouri was part of the open frontier for which so many people set out. In many popular conceptions, hegemonic masculinity goes hand in hand with the idea of the frontier. Connell explains that "Exemplars of masculinity, whether legendary or real—from Paul Bunyan in Canada via Davy Crockett in the United States to Lawrence 'of Arabia' in England—have very often been men of the frontier" (185). In his book *Manhood in America*, Michael Kimmel explains such westward migration as, at least in part, a masculine reaction to the increasing feminization of the

home in the Eastern United States: "Part of the struggle was simply to get out of the middle-class house, now a virtual feminine theme park, where well-mannered and well-dressed children played quietly in heavily draped and carpeted parlors and adults chatted amiably over tea served from porcelain services . . . Women were not only domestic, they were domesticators, expected to turn their sons into virtuous Christian gentlemen . . ." (40-1). To demonstrate the extent of this masculine migration, he then goes on to note that "The rush westward reached its apotheosis with the California Gold Rush of 1849. Never before or since have men created such a homosocial preserve on such a scale. Nearly 200,000 men came to California in 1849 and 1850 alone, composing 93 percent of the state's population . . ." (42).

We see vestiges of this frontier masculinity in the older citizens of *Kings Row*, who spend much of their time lamenting the loss of the old frontier values and the accompanying postindustrial urban mentality that has the power to reach even Kings Row, Missouri. One such character is the town's most prominent lawyer, Colonel Isaac Skeffington, whom we first meet walking down the street with a commanding presence that could not easily be mistaken for that of a female: "The old lawyer walked slowly up Walnut Street. His great beard flashed and sparkled in the sun, and the clouds of smoke from his cigar gave him the appearance of a walking conflagration" (25). Here Bellamann emphasizes Skeffington's masculinity through pure biology. His great beard not only emphasizes his status as a male but also evokes the scruffiness of the frontier West. His cigar reinforces this masculine emphasis, as nineteenth-century Kings Row views smoking as very much a masculine behavior; indeed, we see evidence of this attitude when Bellamann reveals that protagonist Parris Mitchell is, as a child, embarrassed about his grandmother's own smoking habit: "One thing he was self-conscious about. His grandmother smoked cigarettes. He had seen country women smoke pipes, and it seemed quite the same" (21). Here Bellamann does not mention young Parris's having a problem with men smoking cigarettes, only women. His association of the habit with "country" women also reinforces the modernist superiority of the urban over the rural; even though Kings Row itself is not exactly a metropolis, Parris can still look down on the farm women who engage in such backward activities as the smoking of cigarettes. One should note that Skeffington himself came to Kings Row from Virginia and, before he dies towards the novel's end, laments the loss of the brand of frontier mas-

culinity that brought him West: “It had been like that . . . He dreamed then. All young men, he imagined, dreamed similar dreams. The great names were still echoing—Jefferson, Adams, Franklin. You felt that the living force of the colonial Americans still moved. All of those things were history now—cold, dead history” (356).

From early on in the novel, we see Bellamann construct a definition of masculinity that extends beyond the conventions of the bearded frontiersman. One scene that poignantly illustrates this is the funeral of Robert Callicott, a music teacher and a poet rumored by the townsfolk to have had affairs with members of both sexes. His eulogy comes not from a family member but from his friend Miles Jackson, the editor of the local newspaper. Bellamann introduces Jackson’s speech thusly: “‘We have come here today to honor a man.’ [Jackson’s] voice sounded thin and high-pitched—a little rasping. A sarcastic sound, Parris thought” (164). Here Bellamann reinforces the masculine nature of his subject with the phrase “to honor a man,” yet Jackson’s apparent sarcasm serves to undermine notions of Robert Callicott as traditionally masculine. The rest of the eulogy, though, makes the point that just because one does not embody hegemonic masculinity, it does not mean that that person has less value: “This universe was not conceived in beauty. It was conceived in tragedy and travail . . . In the midst of that continuous hurricane of destruction and death there are . . . men who resolve this disorder. They are poets, musicians, and artists. That is their answer to the ugliness of the world. They do not ask to be understood. They do not even ask to be liked. But without them we should find the universe an intolerable habitation” (165).

This idea of the necessity of multiple modes of masculinity is especially apparent in Henry Bellamann’s depiction of the young male characters of *Kings Row*. Despite their growing up in a small, rural community, the masculinities that these characters express go beyond the ideals of the frontier and instead often reflect the growing urbanization of the newly modern Midwest. Michael Kimmel writes that, in the beginning of the modernist era, “Rapid industrialization, technological transformation, capital concentration, urbanization, and immigration—all of these created a new sense of an oppressively crowded, depersonalized, and often emasculated life” (68). We see elements of this phenomenon even in the small burg of Kings Row. One of the characters who best illustrates this “emasculated” is the novel’s protagonist, Parris Mitchell. We first meet Parris as a boy of twelve; having been orphaned at an early age, he is under

the care of his European grandmother, Madame von Eln. Because of this continental upbringing, other children, "for the most part, thought him a bit queer . . ." (19). Here Bellamann's use of the term "queer" reinforces American ideals of masculinity, as it equates Parris's European upbringing with nonhegemonic masculinity. Indeed, as the young Parris struggles to come to terms with his outsider status in Kings Row, he fears that such status will somehow render him less masculine in the eyes of the town. In an early scene, the adolescent Drake McHugh scoffs at Parris's use of the French and German languages, saying that "[i]t's funny for an American boy to be talking any other kind of talk but American" (40). Here Drake's use of the term "boy" suggests that Parris's trilingual status renders him an Other not just rhetorically, but in terms of his gender as well. Parris then expresses his insecurity by asking, "Does—does it sound sissy, the way I talk?" (40).

While such insecurities are obvious in the young Parris, they are not enough to stop him from expressing his own brand of nonhegemonic masculinity. From the beginning of the novel, as Parris lingers on the precipice of puberty, he is always in touch with his emotions in a manner that belies the self-reliance and stoicism of the frontier man. Regarding the man of this particular time period, Kimmel writes that ". . . [e]motional outbursts of passion or jealousy, which had been associated with manhood in the eighteenth century, were now associated with lack of manhood; it was women, not men, who were said to feel these emotions most acutely. Real men held their emotions in check, the better to channel them into workplace competition" (87). Indeed, Parris is very prone to such outbursts. In the beginning of the story, he lies awake one night and thinks about the fact that his elderly grandmother will die someday, some day that is, most likely, not so far into the future. His reaction is clearly one of fear, fear that causes him to weep: "Terror seized him. He took the edge of the quilt between his teeth so he wouldn't cry, but it was no use—he was already crying. His throat felt like stone" (21).

This instance is only the first of a series of crying episodes on the part of Parris Mitchell that continues even as he becomes a young man. When Parris is fourteen, he loses his virginity to his friend and neighbor, Renee Gudrun; after the two of them are caught in flagrante delicto by a neighbor, Renee's father, Sven, beats his daughter violently and soon ends up moving his entire family to another locale (which is most likely the Ozarks, as mentioned previously) to avoid

the shame of having Renee's sexual activity known to the town. After Sven takes Renee away, Parris walks around the yard of her house in an effort to somehow reconnect with his lost love and, in the course of his exploration, stumbles upon a barrel full of garbage; among the debris he finds presents that he had brought for her from his time in Philadelphia (after all, as a modern youth with European connections, Parris has access to the urban realm in a way that many of his peers do not). Here Parris's reaction to seeing Renee's presents in the garbage does not bring on anger in the form of brute force; rather,

his sense of dejection expresses itself in the form of a crying spell: "Then he began to cry, a broken whimper that puffed out his lips and hurt his throat. He leaned against the barrel and held to the rim with both hands while tears ran down his face and dripped into the barrel. The drops fell on the soil and crumpled silk and made round, dark spots. He cried with long hoarse sounds, weakly, hopelessly—filled with despair and a harsh pressing realization of his own helplessness" (66).

This is not the powerful resolve of the frontier man; rather, Bellamann overtly emphasizes the "weakness" and "hopelessness" behind such vocalizations. Years later, as an older Parris remembers the loss of his first love, he has to invoke consciously the model of his friend Drake McHugh's masculinity in order to keep his natural instinct to cry at bay: "He was near to crying, but he thought of Drake. He was sure Drake wouldn't cry about a girl" (102).

While Parris's gender nonconformity does render him something of an outsider in Kings Row, he is hardly a social pariah. In fact, he forms a number of close relationships over the course of the novel. His friendship with Drake McHugh is an important example. Even though Parris is bookish and emotional, he nevertheless forms a close bond with Drake, who acts as his foil in many ways. While Drake does, early on in their relationship, express incredulity at Parris's foreign ways (as in the aforementioned comment regarding American boys "talking American"), he comes to express open admiration for Parris's modern lifestyle. Before Parris leaves for medical school in Vienna, Drake tells him, "I don't know much of anything, Parris. I'm not smart like you are. You think about things . . . I never think about anything unless someone makes me. I never could figure out anything much for myself. I guess I never even wanted to, and I guess that's just exactly the difference between a smart person and somebody that ain't" (142).

While Drake admires Parris's more urbane, modern brand of masculinity, there is much that Parris admires about Drake as well. From the story's beginning, Drake's masculinity manifests itself in ways more normative than those of his European counterpart. While the two are still schoolboys, Drake impresses Parris with his physical maturation: "Drake McHugh said he would have to shave next year. Drake already boasted the possession of a razor of his own" (50). It is the sexually precocious Drake McHugh whom Parris channels when he loses his virginity to Renee at the age of fourteen: "He scarcely knew what he did, but he knew with an amazing clarity how Drake McHugh's talk had prepared him for this moment" (59).

Parris's ease with sexual matters does not end there. Years later, when he is studying under the tutelage of the reclusive Dr. Tower, the latter's daughter Cassandra (also known as "Cassie") seduces him: "Cassandra lowered the shades and closed the door. In just a few minutes the room became hot and close. In the flashes of lightning [Parris] saw her fling the shining green dress across a chair. A white slip followed. Then she stepped out of a fluffy circle of frills that lay around her feet . . . Then she dropped beside him, and her deft fingers loosened his tie" (150). This particular scene is important for a number of reasons. For one thing, the ease and freedom with which the teenaged Parris expresses his sexuality is indicative of modernist masculinity. Kimmel points out that, while sexual continence was an important feature of hegemonic masculinity in nineteenth-century America, this view began to change during the Freudian era: "Freud was a fierce opponent of sexual puritanism . . . To Freud the sexual instinct was just that, an instinct, inherited and normal . . ." (89).

Being the modernist character that he is, Parris's attitude toward sex is very reminiscent of Freudian ideals. He feels no shame or guilt for having sex outside of marriage; in fact, when Drake mentions marriage, he balks at the idea: "I just never had thought about either one of us being old enough to get married" (243). When Drake mentions the fact that Parris has been "old enough" for sexual activity for years, Parris responds, "'Ye-es, I know. I never have been sorry, either'" (244). For Parris, as for Freud, sexuality is "inherited and normal." There is no bravado or machismo in his sexual expression. He does not need to prove his masculinity by sleeping with women; it is something that just happens naturally. This is another example of Parris's nonhegemonic expressions of masculinity, especially significant because it was Cassie who seduced him and not the other way

around. Parris does not wish to dominate women but to enjoy sexual relationships with consenting partners. When, after they finish making love for the first time, Cassie laments that Parris must think that she is a “terrible girl,” Parris instead tells her that he loves her (150). Later on, after Parris learns that his grandmother is dying of cancer, we see Parris yet again express his emotions in a manner not characteristic of hegemonic masculinity. He begins to cry in front of Cassandra: “All at once he felt unbearably desolate and tears started in his eyes. He held his head carefully to one side, but Cassie felt a drop on her shoulder. She put up her hand to his face” (225). We then see a further reversal of traditional gender roles, as it is she who comforts him, just as it was she who initiated their sexual relationship.

While Parris keeps company with rakish man-about-town Drake and the beautiful Cassandra Tower, he also befriends Jamie Wakefield, a classmate who, as we come to learn, is a homosexual. After Jamie makes sexual advances toward Parris, Parris rebuffs him and grows angry. We soon learn, though, that homophobia is not what motivates Parris’s behavior; rather, it is the fact that the experience brought back traumatic memories of his encounter with Renee and the ensuing abandonment: “He wanted to hit Jamie. He realized that it was the first time he had ever wanted to hit anyone—not for this night but for a strange ugly trail that Jamie was breaking across an area in his memory he had thought inviolable” (101). Here the notion of violence (presented in the form of Parris wanting to hit Jamie) reinforces complicated notions of masculinity; Parris considers using aggression as a means of dealing with his emotions but, in the end, does not do so. The fact that this incident was the “first time” that he had ever wanted to hit anyone further serves to reinforce the nonhegemonic nature of Parris Mitchell’s masculinity. The situation becomes even more complicated the following day, when Parris remembers the incident with Jamie on a walk around his grandmother’s property:

His resentment against Jamie was less violent today. After all, he was just as much to blame if anybody had to be blamed. He wasn’t sure it was a question of blame. Jamie—well, Jamie was just different, that was all. He did seem kind of like a girl, sure enough—as Drake McHugh said. Now if Jamie were really a girl . . . that thought crossed another which he must not let himself think. Jamie was—yes, he was really beautiful, and he made you like him just for that. And that was strange—Parris couldn’t exactly make sense of it. Beautiful in the way a girl is beautiful, and that always made you

feel you had something to do about it . . . He flounced about and lay face down, shutting his eyes in the crook of his arm. He pressed his face hard against his rough sleeve, and his breath came back hot and damp against his face. He shut his eyes tight. Pictures shaped in the reddish pulsing dark—rather meaningless pictures—Drake and Jamie, and over and over, Renee—and again, Jamie and Cassie Tower. He came wide-awake and stirred. Cassie Tower . . . what was she doing here with Drake and Jamie—and with Renee? (104)

This passage is significant because it is one of the instances in which we see that Parris is not homophobic; instead, in the spirit of Midwestern progressivism, he accepts the fact that Jamie is "just different." Not only does Parris tolerate these differences, but the fact that he would not allow himself to think about what would happen if Jamie were a girl suggests a degree of bisexuality; Bellamann reinforces this suggestion as Parris sees members of both sexes in his imagination as his breath comes "hot and damp against his face."

While Parris's sexual experiences are furtive and complicated (due not to any sense of shame on his part but rather due to the imposing morality of parents and the town itself), young Drake openly boasts of his sexual bravado. He brags of his numerous sexual encounters to Parris, often invoking the names of two of his favorite paramours, sisters Poppy and Jinny Ross; after his guardians die and leave him their house, he becomes even more transparent about his conquests: "'All this time I've been taking Poppy Ross out to Moore's tobacco barn! I just kind of forgot that I'm my own boss and live in my own house! Say, I'm going to get her to come up there—her and Jinny. Hot-choo, Parris, we can have us a time right in my own house'" (133).

This almost hypermasculine brand of sexual expression would not, at first glance, seem to violate the stereotypical bravado of the hegemonic masculinity that was in place during this period, yet Bellamann still effectively uses the character of Drake McHugh to undermine conventions of masculinity in many ways. For one thing, Drake, like Parris, is very accepting of the character of Jamie Wakefield. "'Aw, Jamie's all right,'" Drake says when asked. "'A little sissy, but that don't hurt anybody'" (117). In *Masculinities*, Connell writes that homophobia is deeply "connected with dominant forms of masculinity." Not only is Drake not homophobic, but he admits to engaging in homosexual acts with Jamie Wakefield as a youth: "'When we were kids, of course we fooled around and—kind of experimented, and played little games and all that stuff. That was

all right, I guess. Didn't do anybody any harm'" (305). This comment harks back to the Freudian, modernist ideals discussed at the beginning of this essay. Connell explains that "[c]onfronted with the facts of inversion, Freud offered the hypothesis that humans were constitutionally bisexual, that masculine and feminine currents coexisted in everyone" (9). Bellamann brings this sophisticated, modernist view of sexuality to small-town Missouri; in the character of Drake McHugh, he shows that even the most voracious womanizer can explore other modes of sexual expression. One should note, though, that Drake does see homosexual acts as something lesser than heterosexual encounters, something that he himself has outgrown. He explains to Jamie that "'[t]here's one kind of natural sex stuff, and all the rest is—just crazy'" (306). He supports his hypothesis by telling his friend that only one mode of sexual expression "'gets kids into this world'" (306). This latter statement is ironic and only serves to undermine his argument as, despite all of the sex that happens throughout the course of the novel, no pregnancies occur. Drake's brand of arm's-length acceptance of Jamie's sexual orientation is very much in line with Freud's theories; even though Freud did accept the idea of innate bisexuality, he still viewed homosexuality as pathological. Connell writes that "inversion," according to Freud, stemmed from "failure to separate from mother" (89).

Drake also defies hegemonic masculinity in his ultimate choice of a partner. We first meet Randy Monaghan as a young classmate of Parris and Drake. As she demonstrates feats of athleticism for the latter two in the railroad icehouse, she literally strips off her feminine restraints: "She flipped her dress over her head and hung it carefully on a projecting plank. Her frilled and starched white petticoat followed. She stood up, round and stocky in waist and drawers . . . She swung up on the parallel bars with ease and flung herself through the double roll" (43). Not only does Miranda Monaghan choose to go by the masculine moniker of "Randy," but, as illustrated earlier, she keeps company with the boys in her class, preferring athletic activities to more conventionally feminine behaviors. As a teenager, Parris thinks of Randy as "like a boy" (46).

After Parris leaves Kings Row to study psychiatry in Vienna (a move that not only signals a modernist flight from the rural to the urban, but also suggests not so subtly the modernist influence of Freud), Drake and Randy begin an affair that, while having a sexual component, is about more than just sex. It is not a masculine conquest

but a mutually satisfying relationship; as Randy explains, "'Listen, Drake, when a girl acts the way I do about you, she means it. It's because I want to, because I like you better than anybody in the world'" (298). Drake does not see her as a ruined woman but wants to marry her, although, ultimately, it is she who decides when they do get married. When they do marry, it is only after Drake has lost both his inheritance and his legs due to separate misfortunes, thus diminishing his hegemonically masculine presence in their household; it is she who takes care of him and not the other way around. Bellamann makes note of this gender shift via tableau right after Randy decides to marry him: "Drake raised his arms and clutched the head of the bed. Then he turned his face to the wall again, but one hand reached out for hers. He held it so tight she winced, but she held perfectly still . . . It seemed to Randy that all of the balances of life were slowly turning in the singing silence of the little room" (380).

Another character whose depiction challenges notions of hegemonic masculinity is the aforementioned Jamie Wakefield. Just as Randy is always "Randy" and not "Miranda," Bellamann always refers to Wakefield, even as an adult, with the diminutive "Jamie" rather than "James," thereby undermining his status as a fully realized adult male. From the novel's very beginning, other characters consistently comment on how he is not like other males. As his schoolteacher, Sally Venable, looks at the twelve-year-old Jamie, she thinks, "'He's pretty, that boy . . . Too pretty for a boy'" (4). This thought reinforces hegemonic notions of masculinity, i.e., that one must look a certain way to be "a boy." The character's opposition to such norms becomes even more apparent as he matures; even though the 1940 novel dared not show us the word in print, Jamie Wakefield is clearly a gay character. This becomes blatantly obvious during the aforementioned scene in which Jamie makes a pass at Parris:

Jamie had strange hands—small, and plump for so slight a boy. His fingers left a tingle where they touched . . . Without warning—Jamie leaned forward and kissed him on the mouth. Parris was too amazed to move, too amazed to think. He felt as if a gust of flame swept him from head to foot. He was not too clearly aware of anything for a while except Jamie's caresses and his flattering hands which carried both violence and appeasement in their touch. (101)

Here we see a rejection of hegemonic masculinity not only in Jamie's advances but also in Parris's reaction to them. He does not invoke the

homophobia which, as discussed earlier, we typically associate with traditional masculinity; not only does he not dislike the experience but, as we see via syntactical choices such as fingers that “left a tingle” and “flattering hands,” he does enjoy it on some level. The fact that Parris associates his friend’s touch with both “violence and appeasement” illustrates the Freudian rejection of sexual binaries that is so important to the burgeoning modernism characteristic of the time period and even to the town of Kings Row itself.

Jamie has a similar power over Drake McHugh. As Bellamann makes the reader privy to the character’s innermost thoughts, we realize that, even though Drake decries adult homosexuality as “unnatural,” he maintains sexual feelings for his male friend that have lingered beyond the days of youthful “experimenting”: “Jamie was much as he had always been. He looked no more than sixteen, Drake decided. His face was as soft of contour and warm and lovely in coloring as ever . . . Drake slapped the horse with the reins, and half-whistled under his breath. He would not have liked for anyone to know just what he was thinking at that moment, or how Jamie actually made him feel” (303).

Parris Mitchell, Drake McHugh, and Jamie Wakefield are all able to realize their own brands of masculinity in the small community of Kings Row. Even though they face an insularity that modernist writers frequently associated with small towns, they also experience a freedom and acceptance typical of the Midwestern progressivism of the time period. *Kings Row* shows us that gender expression need not be limited by binaries and neither should geographical spaces. While Bellamann’s *Kings Row* is, in many ways, a classic revolt from the village, it also brings the revolt to the village and ultimately shows us that modernist ideals can thrive even in the rural Midwest.

University of Arkansas

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“THE MOVING WAS OVER AND DONE”:
THE PROFESSOR’S HOUSE AND MIDDLE AMERICA

PATRICIA OMAN

As Janis Stout has argued, the new historicist turn in Cather scholarship began about twenty years ago as scholars began exploring how Cather’s work engages with its contemporaneous culture, material culture in particular. *The Professor’s House* (1925) has been a popular subject of this type of study because of the protagonist’s obvious resistance to mass and material culture. As the title suggests, houses are a specific object of critique in this novel, but I argue in this essay that *The Professor’s House* not only reflects the United States’s complicated obsession with houses in the 1920s but also helps to usher in an era of homogenized domestic architecture in an increasingly homogenized Midwest.

The novel’s protagonist, Godfrey St. Peter, is a history professor who teaches at a small liberal arts college called Hamilton College in the small town of Hamilton, Michigan. The opening line of the novel, “[t]he moving was over and done,” refers to the fact that the St. Peters family has just moved into a new house built with the rewards from the professor’s lucrative scholarly research. St. Peter is not happy about this move, however, and spends most of the novel at the old, empty house that the family rented for over twenty years and that he continues to rent. While his wife loves the new house, St. Peter is not interested in the luxuries of the new house or any of the “stuff” his relatively new wealth allows him to buy. The professor’s stubbornness thus constitutes one of the novel’s primary critiques of material culture.

The professor’s two houses are not the only houses of note in the novel, however. Like their mother, the professor’s two daughters, Kathleen and Rosamond, are interested in luxury. Rosamond and her husband Louie are incredibly wealthy and have built a huge mansion; however, Kathleen is married to a journalist and thus lives in a much

more modest, though brand-new, bungalow. The rivalry between the two daughters is demonstrated through several material objects in addition to their houses, including furs, jewelry, and even door knobs.

Given the emphasis on accumulating material objects and the jealousies that result from that desire, the novel has been interpreted by many scholars as a critique of material culture of the 1920s. St. Peter's reluctance to move into his newly built house or to accompany his family on what is essentially a shopping trip to Europe, many suggest, indicates an uneasiness with material culture in general. One of the reasons this novel has been so fascinating to scholars, however, is its *ambivalence* about material culture. Despite the novel's explicit critique of materialism through the characters of St. Peter and his daughters, the novel also embraces materiality in many ways. In fact, by the end of the novel, St. Peter has given up his qualms about moving to the new house.

This paradox exists on many different levels. Stout, for instance, has revealed through an examination of Cather's personal letters that Cather herself enjoyed the material benefits of *The Professor's House*. Sales of the novel were pretty good, but even before it was published as a novel in September of 1925, Cather was paid \$10,000 by *Collier's Weekly* to serialize it during the preceding summer. Even though within the novel Rosamond and Kathleen fixate on furs as one of their many modes of competition, Cather gleefully wrote to her friend Irene Miner Weisz on January 22, 1926, that she used the money she made from the novel to buy a nice mink coat (Stout 67). Thus, Cather was not totally opposed to material objects.

On the level of form, John Hilgart has argued that "in the Twenties a friction is apparent between Cather's aesthetic model and her stance regarding mass culture and its levelling effects" (380) and that the novel was "an enactment and critique of the most formalist version of Cather's aesthetic" (388). In Cather's famous remarks about *The Professor's House*, she argued that a novel's style should be like an unfurnished house, unadorned with the trivial and material descriptions characteristic of realist novels by writers such as Balzac ("The Novel D meuble"). The professor's empty house and Outland's empty mesa are literal representations of this simile, but the failure of both St. Peter and Outland to protect these special places indicates the central problem with this aesthetic style. Hilgart writes, "Cather embodies 'culture' itself in the structural qualities of an empty building removed from all of its contexts. However, the novel's surround-

ing plot shows the idealism of such a project to be ineffectual against the contingencies of the present” (388). In other words, Cather’s attempt to transcend material culture through form is a failure.

Similarly, Charles Johanningsmeier identifies this conflict in his recent theorization of the reader reception of *The Professor’s House*. Johanningsmeier examines the serialization of the novel in *Collier’s Weekly* and attempts to construct a profile of the novel’s initial audience and predict their responses to the novel based on what Stanley Fish calls the “reading field” created by the other articles included in those issues of the magazine. Given the magazine’s general emphasis on material culture, especially its “fixation—almost obsession—with houses” (82), he argues that “what modern scholars have seen as Cather’s implied critique of modern house-fetishism would likely have fallen on deaf ears among the *Collier’s* audience” (83). That is, the reading field of the magazine encourages readers to be critical of St. Peter, not of the materialism he tries to resist.

In another brief analysis of advertisements that appeared in the same issues of *Collier’s* as *The Professor’s House*, Matt Lavin argues that Cather was “an engaged participant in the [technological] debate of her historical moment” (31). He focuses specifically on the number of advertisements for new scientific technologies that appeared in these issues alongside Cather’s celebration of the mechanical and scientific genius of Tom Outland. After all, his invention is a vacuum or gas-engine, depending on which version of the text you look at. Thus, both the novel’s content and its serialized context enact a tension between critique and valorization of material culture.

While Johanningsmeier does not mention advertisements specifically and Lavin focuses primarily on advertisements for new technologies, after looking at the original issues of *Collier’s* that contain *The Professor’s House*, I found that the ad tie-ins were actually more obvious than either author had implied. The first installment of the novel appeared in the June 6, 1925, issue of *Collier’s*. Accompanying the opening line of the novel, “[t]he moving was over and done,” on page five is an advertisement on page four for the REO Speed Wagon (Figure 1), which was a vehicle designed to haul things. In other words, it was a vehicle that could help you move. The second installment of the novel (in the June 13 issue) is accompanied by an advertisement for door knobs (Figure 2). Door knobs, of course, become an object of jealousy in the novel when Louie remarks offhandedly that he and Rosamond had just outfitted their new house with “won-

derful wrought-iron door fittings from Chicago . . . None of your Colonial glass knobs for us!” (40). Mrs. St. Peter is annoyed by this thoughtless remark because her younger, less affluent daughter had just fitted her new bungalow with glass door knobs (41).

The advertisement for Russwin Distinctive Hardware that appears alongside the second installment of the novel is not just an obvious appeal to readers’ covetous desire for Louie and Rosamond’s door knobs, however. It features a very large metal door knob, echoing Louie’s snobbish sentiment about “wrought-iron door fittings,” and even helpfully notes that the company has an office in Chicago. (Perhaps we are supposed to assume that Louie purchased his door knobs from Russwin Distinctive Hardware itself?). Underneath the company name the ad notes that Russwin Distinctive Hardware is “[f]or the Bungalow—the Pretentious Home—the Monumental Structure.” We can perhaps infer that Louie and Rosamond are likely customers in the “Pretentious Home” category, but the ad assures us that even Kathleen and her less affluent husband can afford distinctive hardware for their modest bungalow. The implication is that consumerism at any level is good, despite the accompanying novel’s critique of it.

This simultaneous appeal to customers of both generous and modest means points to the general readership of the magazine, as other ads and articles suggest. Prominent in these issues, as Johanningsmeier notes, are many articles related to homeownership, homemaking, and the improvement of one’s material condition. While he calls this an “obsession” with houses, this obsession is not specific only to *Collier’s* readers. This trend was actually part of a major cultural push by private organizations, national and local governments, and trade organizations to educate and encourage consumers to build new houses. Organizations such as Better Homes in America, Inc. (founded in 1922), the Small House Architects’ Service Bureau (founded in 1919 in Minneapolis), and the Home Owners Service Institute (founded in the 1920s in New York and run by architect Henry Atterbury Smith) sponsored design contests and public exhibitions. Discussions of homeownership were thus ubiquitous in the post-World War I decade, and many private businesses took advantage of and encouraged this home-building mentality by selling ready-designed house plans and even pre-cut, ready-to-assemble houses. The focus was on nice but modest-sized homes. (This type

of home-building was so common that Buster Keaton parodies ready-to-assemble houses in his 1920 short film *One Week*.)

In addition to ads, *Collier's* also included helpful articles about house-building. In the June 6 issue (which contains the first installment of the novel), for instance, there is an article by Harold Cary called "Counting the Costs on a Small House." This is the last installment in a series chronicling the building of a new house and is clearly designed to encourage readers to build their own homes by demonstrating how to control costs. Although this article does not start on the same spread as Cather's novel, they are both continued on the same spread toward the end of the magazine (Figure 3). The end of the first installment of the novel is juxtaposed with the floor plan of this affordable small house. In fact, when readers finish reading Louie's explanation of his plans to turn his magnificent new house into a museum to Tom Outland

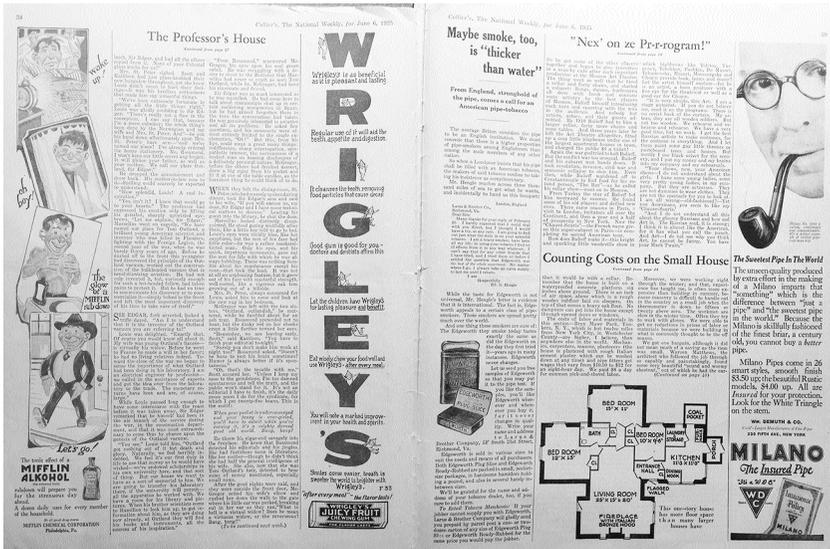


Figure 3. The end of the first installment of *The Professor's House*, juxtaposed with an article titled "Counting Costs on the Small House" and various and sundry advertisements (*Collier's*, June 6, 1925. pp. 38-39).

on page thirty-eight, their eyes might naturally be drawn to the floor plans placed directly opposite on page thirty-nine. (This spread of the magazine also demonstrates just how embedded the novel is within advertising, including ads for Mifflin Alcohol, Wrigley's Gum, Edgeworth Pipe-Tobacco, and the Milano Pipe.)

The very last lines of the novel, which appear in the August 1 issue, are juxtaposed with another article by Harold Cary titled, "Don't Let Building Costs Scare You." Thus, at the end of a novel that critiques house worship and material culture is an article that explicitly encourages them. Of particular interest in these articles by Cary is the combined rhetoric of advertising and public service announcement. In the Counting the Costs on a Small House series, he breaks down the actual costs of building a small house and gives readers advice about how to save money. In fact, one article begins, "We have saved 32 per cent on the demonstration house about which I have been writing" (23). What Cary does not state explicitly is that the method used for this house is the modular stone method of Ernest Flagg, which Cary had written about in a book published by *Collier's* called *Build a Home, Save a Third* (1924). Thus, in addition to giving advice about house building, Cary is also implicitly advertising a particular building method.

This same rhetorical combination of advertisement and public service announcement can be found in house catalogues from the 1920s. A partnership between Dover Publications and the Athenaeum in Philadelphia has made many house catalogues from the early twentieth century cheaply available, so it is now easy to compare these catalogues to the house articles that appear in the *Collier's* issues that contain *The Professor's House*. The 1925 Harris, McHenry, and Baker Co. catalogue, for instance, includes inspirational descriptions with its house plans. The description for an American foursquare design called The Webster reads, "Those only are great who love and are kind, and these greatest of human faculties are best developed in the home. Those who strive hardest to attain a home, strive hardest for the development of the best in themselves and in turn bring out the best in others they meet. Striving for a home such as The Webster elevates, educates and ennobles" (9). Similarly, a text box placed above the house plans for a bungalow called the Brewster explains, "The nickels and dimes that go down in drink and up in smoke could easily solve the housing problem" (88). Owning a house, therefore, is likened to improving oneself spiritually and morally.

If we think about these house catalogues in relation to Cather's novel, we might surmise that the Brewster is similar to Kathleen and Scott's "new bungalow," the one with the glass door knobs. Cather is thus situating the novel squarely within its cultural milieu, even echoing the inherent contradiction between simultaneously calling for

moral/spiritual betterment and advertising the latest materialist craze. Even though Kathleen's jealousy of her sister's larger and nicer house is meant to seem petty (as the professor remarks), the novel as a whole still gives in to the seductiveness of the post-World War I housing craze: every member of the St. Peter family lives in a newly built house by the end of the novel. The professor's eventual acceptance of his own new luxurious house thus mirrors the rhetoric of Cary's articles and many of the house catalogues from the decade. The original readers of Cather's novel might not have even recognized its critique of material culture, however, since they, as consumers, were being constantly encouraged to build new houses as a method of self-improvement. The lines between fiction, nonfiction, and advertisement are considerably blurred in these examples.

What I find particularly interesting about the house catalogues from the 1920s is not that they all offer a variety of houses, but that they offer the *same* variety: several classic American foursquare or farmhouses, several colonial-inspired houses, a few Tudor-inspired designs, and many bungalows. The offerings from these different companies were so similar, in fact, that some companies advertised the same designs, even using the same copy. For instance, the Standard Homes Company, based in Washington, D.C., published a catalogue in 1928 called *Better Homes at Lower Cost*. The content of this catalogue is essentially a condensed version of the 1925 catalogue of the same name from the Harris, McHenry & Baker Co., based in Elmira, New York. These might, in fact, be the same company under a different name, but another example, the Gordon-Van Tine Home No. 608, called "A Rarely Distinctive Bungalow Home," uses the same picture as the Harris, McHenry, and Baker house called "The Cardenas," even though the houses have different floor plans. Clearly these companies are trying to offer the same house types. Further, because there were so many of these companies that shipped pretty much anywhere in the United States, house designs and even house materials no longer had to be regionally based. The Gordon-Van Tine Co., for instance, had timber sources and shipping points in Davenport, Iowa; St. Louis, Missouri; Chehalis, Washington; and Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Thus, standardized house designs and the ability to ship anywhere in the United States after World War I began to homogenize domestic architecture in the United States. It is no wonder, then, that Tom Outland's mesa village and St. Peter's quirky

old house are eventually abandoned for newer models in *The Professor's House*.

As I have already noted, many scholars have pointed out the conflict that stems from *The Professor's House's* simultaneous critique and embrace of materiality: Stout looks at the ironic material benefit that Cather enjoyed with the success of the novel; Hilgart notes that Cather's overly abstract aesthetic style proves ineffective against material culture; and Johanningsmeier argues that the novel's serialization in *Collier's* would have encouraged readers to dismiss the novel's critique of materiality. I am suggesting another layer to these cultural readings. Given the larger cultural milieu of the 1920s that emphasized the importance of home ownership, I argue that Cather's interest in domestic architecture is related not just to material culture as such and not just to an obsession with houses, but also to the trend in the post-World War I period to make house design more homogenized.

The combination of advertising and public service rhetoric in house catalogues and in the *Collier's* issues that contain *The Professor's House* implicitly encourages this homogeneity, but so, too, does the novel. The first line of the novel, "[t]he moving was over and done," suggests that the quiriness and regional specificity of the professor's old house is a relic of the past. The older house illustrates the Midwest's vital regional characteristics and its many cultural crossings, that is, the intersection of both geography and history. The walled French garden represents the strong French influence on the region; the German landlord, various central and northern European settlers; the faded blanket that St. Peter keeps in his office, a Native American presence; and so on. The new house may be more luxurious and the professor may appreciate having his own bathroom instead of sharing one bathroom with his wife and two daughters, but the house has none of the quirks or unique charm of the older house.

The death of Tom Outland and his failure to preserve the Blue Mesa is another example of a lost regional identity. While the novel is sympathetic to his efforts to save the mesa, Outland's failure to secure help from any politicians in Washington, D.C. underscores the inevitability of the mesa's loss. Even though the village seems to be the epitome of regional architecture since it is built directly into the sides of the mesa, the reality is the huge and pretentious house that Louie and Rosamond build in Michigan with Outland's fortune, a house they ironically name "Outland." Thus, even though the novel critiques the loss of the mesa

and the professor's old house, it nevertheless ushers this change along by showing that critique to be a lost cause.

This homogenization of even highly personal things such as houses is, I argue, one of the steps toward the Midwest's identification with the vague regional label *Middle America*—a label that is not really associated with a particular region, but with a middle-of-the-road relationship to art, politics, the economy, architecture, and even national identity. Cather may have been critical of this cultural shift to homogeneity, but *The Professor's House's* initial publication in *Collier's* points to a much more ambivalent relationship to the material culture of the 1920s. The content, reading field, and larger cultural context of this serialized novel all reflect acceptance, or at least resignation to, architectural homogenization.

Hastings College

NOTE

Many thanks to the staff at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln's Love Library, who were kind enough to pull these 1925 issues of *Collier's* out of storage for me. Although a few issues were missing and all issues were in fragile condition, I was able to examine six of the nine issues that contained *The Professor's House*.

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THE MYTH OF THE MIDWESTERN “REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE”

JON K. LAUCK¹

When the twentieth century dawned, the American Midwest stood tall as the republic’s ascendant and triumphant region—economically prosperous, politically formidable, culturally proud, and consciously regional. The Midwest, according to the geographer James Shortridge, “reached a pinnacle of self-confidence in the 1910s” when it was popularly viewed as the heartland of “morality, independence, and egalitarianism.”² In quick succession, however, this popular conception was upended and the region’s standing embattled. In the years after World War I, vocal intellectuals recast the Midwest as a repressive and sterile backwater filled with small town snoops, redneck farmers, and zealous theocrats or, in a more benign version, as a “colorless, flat spot in the middle of America.”³ This nascent interpretation was sparked by cultural rebels who had escaped their cramped upbringings in the region and unmasked its failings and collectively, so it was argued, constituted a “revolt from the village,” or a cultural rebellion against the small town and rural folkways of the Midwest. The “village revolt” interpretation won wide approval from cultural elites of the era and was reinforced by a wider gathering of intellectual and political forces which were amenable to such a formulation and fueled a spike in the number of attacks on the Midwest and, ultimately, a decline in attention to the region, despite the interpretation’s deep flaws. To find the Midwest and its lost history, this flawed interpretation—which is still embraced by many intellectuals and still exerts great power in the American cultural imagination—must be dissected and amended so that a dated and one-sided but still common interpretive construction does not block the path toward finding the history of the Midwest.⁴ “One reason to know our own histories,” Lucy Lippard explains, “is so that we are not defined by others, so that we can resist other peo-

ple's images of our pasts, and consequently, our futures," and, as David Radavich argues, so that it is possible to combat the "cultural silencing" that too often mutes the voices of the Midwest.⁵

The formative thrust of the "revolt from the village" interpretation came by way of an essay by Carl Van Doren, a Columbia University English professor and the literary editor of the increasingly radical magazine *The Nation*, in *The Nation's* fall book supplement of 1921.⁶ Van Doren argued that for a half-century American literature had been "faithful to the cult of the village."⁷ The "essential goodness and heroism" of the village had been a "sacred" pillar of literature and had become a "doctrine" whose tenets included little white churches, corner groceries, decent and wise ministers, faithful local doctors, diligent farmers, and picturesque country scenes.⁸ But then, as World War I was raging, a cadre of literary truth-tellers emerged who revealed the realities of the "slack and shabby" village and exposed its closeted skeletons, secrets, sexual escapades, degeneracy, "grotesque forms," "subterfuges," "pathos," "filth," "illusions," "demoralization," "rot," "complacency," "stupidity," and "pitiless decorum which veils its faults" and obscured an "abundant feast of scandal."⁹ Van Doren celebrated, in particular, Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and noted their embrace of a "formula of revolt" against "provincialism" which, after being consumed by the American reading public, would finally undermine the "hazy national optimism of an elder style" and cause the "ancient customs [to] break or fade."¹⁰ The "bright barbarians" of Fitzgerald, for example, "significantly illustrate[d] . . . the revolt from the village," according to Van Doren, by breaking the "patterns" and "traditions which once might have governed them" and then "laughing" and pursuing "their wild desires" among "the ruins of the old."¹¹

Van Doren's interpretation was absorbed into subsequent historical treatments of the era. Frederick Lewis Allen's famous synthesis of the 1920s, published soon after the close of the decade, set the tone by spotlighting the "revolt of the highbrows" against boosters and Rotarians in "cities and towns where Babbity flourished" and noting the "overwhelming" impact of authors such as Sinclair Lewis, who "revealed the ugliness of the American small town."¹² An early and influential interpreter of the era, Alfred Kazin, age twenty-three and writing from his kitchen table in Brooklyn as World War II

approached, drew on Van Doren's formulation, cited the works of Masters, Lewis, Fitzgerald, and Anderson, and explained how the rebels "had revolted against their native village life in the Middle West" and attacked "provincialism" and the "ugliness" and "bitterness of small town life."¹³ After World War II, in his well-known summary of American intellectual history, Henry Steele Commager included a chapter on "The Literature of Revolt" that argued it was "incontrovertible" that almost "all the *major* writers" of the 1920s were critical of American culture and commercialism and embraced the "revolt from the farm" theme.¹⁴ When Mark Schorer's massive biography of Sinclair Lewis was released in 1961, Lewis was touted as the "great emancipator" of stunted souls from the Midwest's "smug provincialism" and "false sentiment and false piety."¹⁵ In 1969, Anthony Channell Hilfer published a book essentially restating the "revolt" thesis for a new generation and argued that the work of the cultural rebels of the 1920s could be revived and used by the rebellious students of the 1960s.¹⁶ In another major synthetic treatment published during the 1970s, Richard Pells described the village rebels, who shared their "origins in rural and small-town America," as people who "found the village or farm claustrophobic" and "too constricting for individual creativity and self-expression."¹⁷ Pells specifically points to Anderson, Lewis, and Fitzgerald and sees them as part of a broader movement among intellectuals who rejected American life during the 1920s for its "stupidity, aimlessness, and vulgarity."¹⁸

The working assumption that the Midwest was "culturally impoverished" and the critical focus on cultural rebellion have persisted in recent decades.¹⁹ Citing Fitzgerald, Anderson, and Lewis, Lynn Dumenil's 1995 synthesis of the history of the 1920s specifically relies on the "theme that historians have called the revolt against the village."²⁰ In Christine Stansell's more recent treatment of the era, cultural "rebels" were drawn to Bohemia because, as one Greenwich Village resident said, they were "bored by some small place in the Middle West" and, as Stansell says, because they found the Midwestern towns Sinclair Lewis described "self-satisfied" and "mean-spirited."²¹ Critics continue to see *Spoon River*, *Winesburg*, and *Main Street* as the "principal monuments of a phase of American fiction known as 'The Revolt from the Village.'"²² In his comprehensive literary history of the Midwest which tends to follow Van Doren's lead, Ronald Weber notes Van Doren's "celebrated 1921 arti-

cle in *The Nation*” about the “revolt-from-the-village books.”²³ Weber views 1920, which saw the publication of key works of revolt, as the “high-water mark” for “Midwestern writing,” giving the village rebels center stage in the literary history of the Midwest.²⁴ These supposed works of rebellion afforded privileged status and, “conditioned by their early reception,” provided “confirmation for what [critics] already believed” about the provincialism and monotony of the “American waste land,” the “plains and prairies that started west of the Hudson River,” and this mode of thought has been consistently echoed by historians and other critics.²⁵

These historians and critics have thus contributed to the entrenchment and institutionalization of Van Doren’s original interpretation, which has also migrated into journalistic accounts of the era.²⁶ They have helped create what Maurice Beebe called the “revolt-from-the-village tradition,” one shorn of any of the nuance Van Doren may have once recognized.²⁷ Anthony Channell Hilfer, who favored the writings of the village rebels, explained that the “revolt from the village” formulation had “become an accepted rubric of historical criticism.”²⁸ The social and cultural criticisms in the alleged village rebels’ books, which focused on the repression of thought and emotion and the conformity of small towns in places such as the Midwest, “gave the revolt unity.”²⁹ When *Main Street* became a national “sensation,” Hilfer explains, the “revolt from the village became official, public, almost institutional” and Van Doren’s thesis was proven beyond doubt.³⁰ Van Doren’s “famous phrase,” Gordon Hutner observes, became a “premise seemingly so true that it has never needed to be revisited.”³¹ As an entrenched and unquestioned force in American letters, one that tidily summarizes an important cultural moment, however, the revolt thesis—an interpretation based on one tossed-off magazine summary of a few works of literature, not on historical analysis—serves not as a useful and accurate shorthand but functioned and still functions as a set of blinders, blocking out and distorting significant parts of the past.

The “village revolt” interpretation is simplistic and flawed and its “institutionalization” within the annals of history clouds our vision of the Midwestern past. The failure to account for the intellectual and cultural context of the revolt obscures the reason that the thesis took hold and persisted. Accounting for the intellectual and cultural forces that gave the revolt thesis currency explains why it emerged to the

exclusion of other emphases or more nuanced interpretations. The revolt thesis fails to comprehend fully other intellectual trends and cultural forces that complicate and undermine its assumptions and it remains too stark and one-sided. It ignores, more specifically, regionalist or anti-rebel voices. The revolt thesis is also premised on a one-sided interpretation of the supposed rebels, who were more complicated than the thesis presumes. The village revolt interpretation thus blurs our ability to see accurately regions such as the Midwest, which often served as the home of the rural areas, small towns, and "villages" under assault. If the typical traditions of the small town were the target of the purveyors of the village revolt thesis, as Hilfer notes, the "Midwestern small town was doubly typical," and thus the Midwest's "hick towns" were doubly the target of attack.³² The works of Masters, Anderson, Lewis, and others, Ronald Weber notes, made the Midwest a "convenient whipping boy" and generated a "massive cultural resistance to the region."³³ The "Middle West [became] a metaphor of abuse."³⁴ But if the dominant place of the revolt thesis can be weakened and space can be created for more and varied voices from the past, the Midwest can be more fully comprehended.

The inspiration for Van Doren's assessment can be traced in part to the writings of the critic Van Wyck Brooks, who helps explain the origins of the revolt thesis and its effect upon the Midwest, and, later, exposes its central flaws.³⁵ Brooks grew up in New Jersey, the son of a failed and personally distant businessman, and attended Harvard, where his professors emphasized the coarseness of, among other things, "the wilds of Ohio."³⁶ Brooks's first book, *The Wine of the Puritans* (1908), blamed the continuing influence of the Puritan colonists and the materialism of the westward-moving pioneers for the sterility and shallowness of American culture.³⁷ Brooks's second book, *America's Coming of Age* (1915), was, according to Van Doren, highly influential and "virtually the first book to voice the new age" complaints about the cultural repressiveness and provincialism in the hinterlands that formed the basis of the revolt thesis.³⁸ For Brooks, the pioneer and the puritan were "our cultural villains" and he specifically traced this villainy to the American Midwest.³⁹ Brooks's third book, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1920), which was published the year before Van Doren's "village revolt" interpretation appeared, argued that Twain's imagination was repressed by "puritanism and pioneering" because he came from, as Brooks said, the "dry, old barren, horizonless Middle West," "a desert of human sand!—the barren

renest spot in all Christendom, surely, for the seed of genius to fall in.”⁴⁰ Brooks hoped for a day when “grotesque” places such as Sioux City, Iowa, and the “unlovable and ugly” towns of the American interior more generally would finally have culture and thus “dignity.”⁴¹

When Van Doren published the revolt thesis while drawing on Brooks’s intense criticism of American culture, Brooks was closely allied with H.L. Mencken, who exerted great influence over American intellectual life and generally hated “Middle Western *Kultur*.”⁴² The “keynoter” of the cultural “revolt” of the 1920s, Frederick Lewis Allen concluded, was Mencken.⁴³ In 1927, Walter Lippmann called Mencken “the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people.”⁴⁴ Mencken saw Americans as “provincial” and “stupid” and his “most articulate opponents were village editors, clubwomen, Fundamentalists, or conservative critics,” who were often located in the Midwest.⁴⁵ Mencken focused on the “loneliness and hopelessness of the buried life of small towns” and directed his attacks at the “provincial American” and viewed the elements of American backwardness as an “essentially rural phenomena.”⁴⁶ The Chicago writer James T. Farrell saw Mencken’s writings as based on the “superiority of the values of the city over those of the rural areas.”⁴⁷ Mencken attacked “yokel” farmers as “simian” and the source of, as Hilfer says, a “husbandmanly tyranny” over the nation.⁴⁸ Mencken was voicing a “well-worn vocabulary of condescension” among intellectuals that included “bumpkin, hick, yokel, hayseed, clodhopper.”⁴⁹ Mencken belongs to “the ‘revolt from the village’ writers” and remains a valuable voice, as one *New Yorker* critic recently noted, because of “his campaign against provincialism.”⁵⁰ In addition to having a broad impact on the intellectuals of the era, Mencken was, more specifically, a “central influence” on major revolt books such as Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street*.⁵¹ Although the themes of the revolt thesis and Mencken’s attacks could be applied generally, the focus came to be on the American small town, which, Hilfer says, was “nicely adaptable” for articulating criticisms of repressiveness and conformity.⁵² In Van Doren’s formulation, the “villages of the Middle West” were particularly threatening because their “provincialism” could spread and thus present a wider danger.⁵³

The intellectual heft of Brooks and the polemical firepower provided by Mencken’s more popular media platforms gave voice to a broad intellectual attack on the alleged provincialism of American culture and were thought to signal and justify new literary themes.

As Van Doren explained in his influential essay, it was crucial that intellectuals transcend and undermine an existing "cult of the village," or the existing respect for the traditions of small town and rural life which persisted from the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ Broadly speaking, Brooks, Mencken, and Van Doren were seeking to undermine and overcome the persisting customs and values of nineteenth-century Victorian culture. The village revolt thesis both fueled and was bolstered by criticism of Victorian culture and thus was launched at a propitious time for its adoption and perpetuation. The purveyors of the revolt thesis found strong allies among the critics of Victorianism generally and, more specifically, among those who embraced the vogue of literary modernism.

Victorianism, as Daniel Joseph Singal explains, was the "culture against which the early Modernists rebelled."⁵⁵ Victorianism's "American reign" roughly stretched from the 1830s to the early twentieth century and its "guiding ethos was centered upon the classic bourgeois values of thrift, diligence, and persistence and a recognition of the value of standards learned through education, religion, and manners that created a separation between stable communities and savagery."⁵⁶ Victorian ideals were especially strong in the rural areas and small towns of the Midwest, leaving the region vulnerable to the criticisms of the literary modernists.⁵⁷ If the decade prior to World War I was seen as the "last age of innocence," it was "a time in which simplicity and moral idealism still reigned supreme in the small towns and Midwestern farmhouses."⁵⁸ Even as it began to erode in other areas, Victorian culture still lived on in small cities and towns and in the rural areas.⁵⁹ Citing the rural sociology literature of the 1920s, the historian James Shideler explained how rural people were "conservative and tradition-minded" and "rested patiently on a conventional certainty about good and evil, with staunch adherence to the values of hard work, thrift, and self-denial."⁶⁰ Carol Kennicott's husband in *Main Street* adhered to the Victorian code of honest labor, moral uplift, community service, and patriotism. These Victorian beliefs and cultural norms came under assault, as Stanley Coben explains, by a "growing subculture of alienated intellectuals" which would form the basis of support for the village revolt thesis and contribute to what Paul Gorman deems the project of "breaking up the Victorian moral and cultural synthesis."⁶¹ The revolt thesis, Barry Gross concluded, was invented and perpetuated by intellectuals "who themselves wanted to see the village revolted from, who were

convinced that provincial life, especially in the Middle West, condemned America to the status of second-class culture.”⁶²

The influence of the intellectuals who led the criticism of Victorian culture was a new phenomenon in American life. While novelists, patrician writers, ministers, newspaper commentators, public speakers, political leaders and others had always shaped American public discourse, the emergence of intellectuals as a “social type” was new.⁶³ More specifically, “alienated” intellectuals, or writers and thinkers who felt disconnected from the main traditions of American life and sought to criticize and reform them, rose to prominence. A dedication to “intellect” and the “life of the mind” was often set against an ingrained tendency toward the “[g]lorification of the small town” and the emphasis on “horse sense” and “simple honesty” out in the provinces such as the Midwest.⁶⁴ When *The New Yorker* was launched in the 1920s it proclaimed its reverence for the serious and urbane intellectual life and its opposition to rural provincialism by announcing its motto as “Not for the old lady from Dubuque.”⁶⁵ “From its superior vantage point in the citadel of New York, *The New Yorker* persistently in its early years deprovincialized the rest of America through ridicule and satire,” Edward A. Martin explains, and the “most persistent debunking campaign of the early years involved ridicule of those regions of the country so unfortunate as to lie outside of New York.”⁶⁶ A primary goal of the new “cosmopolitan” intellectual that *The New Yorker* would cater to, as David Hollinger has explained, was to oppose “parochialism” and “provincialism” and to “transcend the limitations of any and all particularisms” and to undermine Victorianism, patriotism, and “Puritanism.”⁶⁷ These new intellectuals tended to privilege writers — including the “refugees from the Midwest” who provided the corpus of work which substantiated the village revolt thesis — who bolstered their critique of American life.⁶⁸

A common enemy of the emergent intellectuals was the strictures of American Christianity. Van Doren included among the symbolic tenets of the cult of the village “the white church with tapering spire” and the “venerable parson.” The prominence of New England and its Puritan tradition in American historical development, in particular, became a frequent target of criticism, causing one critic of the period to note the “present preoccupation with ecclesiastical muck-raking.”⁶⁹ Frederick Hoffman has explained how the Puritan became “an unhistorical victim and villain” during the 1920s and how it

became "fashionable" to attack religion and an invented form of Puritan history "in the attempt of the 1920s to justify its successful revolt against convention."⁷⁰ The Puritan, Hoffman argues, became a "convenient 'enemy'" for the cultural rebels of the 1920s and the emerging intellectual class, which sought to transform American culture.⁷¹ Intellectuals believed that American religiosity, Warren Susman once explained, made it "impossible to have a decent art, architecture, and literature."⁷² They venerated the freedom of Bohemian enclaves such as Greenwich Village as a refuge from provincialism and the repressiveness of religious doctrine.⁷³ Intellectuals saw Greenwich Village as an "escape" and a "dream Mecca" for young spirits who "fled their Western villages" for the joy and freedom of a "stool in the Village Café."⁷⁴ One reason that American intellectual expatriates preferred living in France was its freedom from any stain of Puritanism, as in England, and because their images of France "clearly drew attention to many of the weaknesses of America."⁷⁵ The veneration of Greenwich Village and Paris complemented the assault on Puritanism and the interior villages and farm life in the Midwest because, as Walter Lippmann noted, the "deep and abiding traditions of religion belong to the countryside."⁷⁶ The influence of these assaults upon religiosity and provincialism was felt far beyond Bohemia. As Malcolm Cowley recalled, there were people all over country "who had never been to New York and yet were acting and talking like Greenwich Villagers."⁷⁷

The critiques advanced by the emergent and alienated intellectuals and writers were both part of and bolstered by the rise of social science, especially anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict—both, like Van Doren, associated with Columbia, where, Van Doren said, "everybody seems to be reading" *Main Street*—and other anthropologists saw Victorian culture as backward and repressed when contrasted with other foreign and primitive cultures.⁷⁸ The village rebels' attacks on American puritanism were supported by the anthropologists' praise of primitivism and their efforts "to point out the great happiness of people who were not brought up in terror of sex and who therefore lived a normal, happy, casual life."⁷⁹ Margaret Mead, a student of Benedict, believed that, in comparison to South Pacific cultures, "Victorian culture crippled Americans emotionally" and was the cause of their "neuroses."⁸⁰ Mead and other anthropologists embraced the cultural practices at work, for example, in Samoan and Mexican villages as superior to the American way of

life.⁸¹ These anthropologists, along with the village rebels and other emergent intellectuals, felt “estranged from the dominant values of their society” and thus were eager to find alternatives.⁸²

Before a later division, anthropology and sociology had existed as one field of study and were focused on conducting studies of varying ethnographic groups. By the 1920s sociology had emerged as a prominent and independent field dedicated to “scientific” methods of analyzing society and often embraced “a model of modernizing society that suggested folk culture, and therefore communal order, was becoming extinct.”⁸³ These methods shaped *Middletown* (1929), the “single most influential book by social scientists published during the 1920s.”⁸⁴ *Middletown*, written by Robert and Helen Lynd, focused on the social inadequacies—the “lag of habits” caused by tradition—of the medium-sized Midwestern city of Muncie, Indiana, and proved to be a popular interpretation with other intellectual and literary critics of the Midwest, providing a method of analysis borrowed by these critics.⁸⁵ Sinclair Lewis’s *Main Street*, for example, has been viewed as “not only a sociological novel but a sociological event.”⁸⁶ Lewis was known for doing extensive research and for using research assistants and, as one biographer notes, went “into ‘the field’ like any cultural anthropologist.”⁸⁷ Lewis’s “meticulous” research in Minnesota and Kansas and other states enabled him to depict the “life of the new middle class, in Dakota villages and in the Cincinnati and the Minneapolis.”⁸⁸ Consequently, *Main Street* has been interpreted as “a sociological caricature unmasking the small town.”⁸⁹ With his extensive research and pseudo-scientific field work, Lewis was able, as E.M. Forster said, “to lodge a piece of a continent in our imagination” and to shape permanently the popular view of the Midwest.⁹⁰

In addition to anthropology and sociology, the field of psychology had a pronounced effect on the intellectual life of the 1920s. Freud, as Alfred Kazin noted, “suddenly became the indispensable text.”⁹¹ The growth of Freudian psychology and its strong emphasis on the impact of repressed emotions were directly linked to the “Puritan-baiting” of the era.⁹² Freud’s analyses were also connected to attacks on the pioneer for his “continuous suppression of desire.”⁹³ The psychological focus on “personality,” with its emphasis on soul-searching, personal liberation, and appealing to one’s peers, began to replace Victorian “character,” with its emphasis on self-reliance and moral restraint.⁹⁴

Some intellectuals of the 1920s—whether writers, critics, anthropologists, sociologists, psychiatrists, or those in other fields—were tempted to take their criticism beyond the realm of intellectual discourse and into the field of active politics. While some were active in progressive causes, others were drawn to more radical politics and forms of Marxism, especially in the wake of the Russian revolution and its supposed accomplishments.⁹⁵ Lionel Trilling later recalled the “commitment that a large segment of the intelligentsia of the West gave to the degraded version of Marxism known as Stalinism” and the “belief that the Soviet Union had resolved all social and political contradictions and was well on the way toward realizing the highest possibilities of human life.”⁹⁶ Sinclair Lewis talked of praying to the “spirit of Lenin” and noted the growing number of “good writers” in the Soviet Union.⁹⁷ In the late 1920s, Stalin called for the “intensification of the class war on the cultural front” which led, in 1929, to the formation of the John Reed Club in New York as a platform for promoting “proletarian artists” who could combat reactionary forces.⁹⁸ The club adopted the motto “Art is a Class Weapon.”⁹⁹ Whether supporting the fledgling communist movement or less activist forms of politics, intellectuals often saw the rural and small town traditions of the country as barriers to the political transformation they sought. Van Doren’s assault on the “cult of the village” bolstered the case of those who thought the enduring beliefs in the values of small towns were simply “propaganda” used by business to combat “centralized control” by government and that the “praise of the small town was a covert way of denying the need to think, a method of evading the admission that old formulas no longer served the new conditions.”¹⁰⁰ The praise of the small town was viewed as a technique to “deny the bleaker realities” of America.¹⁰¹ To the frustration of radicals, however, the belief in the value of small towns still held sway. In the 1928 presidential race, Herbert Hoover of Iowa was successfully billed as “a boy from a country village.”¹⁰²

In addition to critiquing small-town life and its effects on politics, Marxists also targeted the leading figure in the field of Midwestern history. In 1933, Louis Hacker, a Marxist historian, also at Columbia, published the first major assault on Frederick Jackson Turner’s views on American history in—like Van Doren—*The Nation*.¹⁰³ Hacker was a student of Charles Beard, whose highly influential and critical form of history sought to debunk much of what was once thought sacred in American history.¹⁰⁴ This included

Turner's scholarship on the frontier, which had become a "major ideological force" in the country and thus in need of criticism and debunking.¹⁰⁵ Hacker viewed Turner as an obstacle to reform and viewed his own "scholarship as building a historical consciousness for the coming revolution."¹⁰⁶ Drawing on Van Wyck Brooks—who saw the frontier as an "almost totally negative" force—a new generation of historians came to believe that how one viewed the past determined how one operated in the present and how one should act in the future and therefore, as Warren Susman explained, the "control over the interpretation of the nature of that past [became] a burning cultural issue."¹⁰⁷ It "became especially the function of the intellectual to find a useful past" which could "overthrow the official view" and therefore the "values and policies repellent to these intellectuals."¹⁰⁸ Turner understood the motivation of this new intellectual current. In a letter to Arthur Schlesinger Sr. in 1925, Turner argued that efforts to minimize the importance of the frontier were part of the "pessimistic reaction against the old America that have followed the World War—the reaction against pioneer ideals, against distinctively American things historically in favor of Old World solutions" and the desire "to write in terms of European experience, and of the class struggle incident to industrialism."¹⁰⁹

The critiques of an emergent group of scholars during the 1920s and the strong intellectual forces they represented provided lift to and substantiation for the "revolt from the village" interpretation and helped create a generally favorable intellectual climate for its perpetuation. The disillusionment with World War I and its intense moment of hyperpatriotism and the realization that the nation had become more urban than rural contributed further.¹¹⁰ The mood fostered an urge to expose and discredit and created a ready audience for such treatments. It was an age in which "debunking" had become de rigueur and included not just assaults on the supposed myths of the small town and Turner's frontier, but attacks on George Washington and Queen Victoria.¹¹¹ Rochelle Gurstein explains the "popularity of debunking" which "quickly became a staple of the party of exposure," or those who sought to unmask the hidden and ridicule the private and traditional.¹¹² In the new era of debunking, the "veil was removed from the small town" and the "debunkers turned with hostile joy against the staunch belief . . . in quiet country towns and hamlets."¹¹³ One writer of the era noted that the ascendant intellectuals, "remembering bitterly the small towns they were brought up in,"

turned to "Puritan-baiting," Freudian analysis, and debunking.¹¹⁴ Those who advocated a "revolt from the village" thesis were a part of this movement. Literature, as they saw it, needed to break free of the "obsolete dreams of the farm and village" and "destroy the myth of the village," which was "hostile to the imagination," and expose its illusions and lies.¹¹⁵

The power of these combined intellectual forces during the 1920s had an impact on the ways in which the supposed village rebels fashioned their writings. John T. Frederick, who was attempting to promote local writers in Iowa, noted the effect of outside influences on Midwesterners. Frederick worried about what Ronald Weber calls the "harmful commercial influence" on writers caused by the concentration of the publishing industry in New York, which instilled what Frederick called a "tendency to false emphasis, distortion, in literary interpretations."¹¹⁶ Frederick's attempts to provide Midwestern writers a regional platform was a response to New York demands that the "midland artist warp his material to conform to a preconceived notion of what represented the Midwest, or that he burlesque his native soil for the amusement of the East."¹¹⁷ Writers were "warped to the market," Hamlin Garland said, by the power of "New York publishers and managers" and the lure of financial gain.¹¹⁸ "New York is Medusa," Edgar Lee Masters warned young writers.¹¹⁹ Would-be writers noticed, of course, how authors such as Lewis were "*being applauded* for exposing the small town in *Main Street* as being a place of repression and small-mindedness" and making money and becoming famous in the process.¹²⁰ Many of them recognized that Lewis was obsessed with marketing and publicity and finding clever methods to sell books and that his efforts paid handsomely.¹²¹ Thomas McAvoy, a Notre Dame historian, priest, and native Indianan, noted the incentive for financial gain among the village rebels, choosing to exclude from his survey of the "Midwestern mind" the "pessimistic view of the Midwest drawn up chiefly by the literary critics who went east to New York or west to Hollywood to reap the benefit of their midwestern origins."¹²² McAvoy was arguing that certain ambitious writers in the Midwest were willing to "sell out" to those in the East who, given the intellectual forces of the era and the urban biases of the publishing industry, were eager to publish works critical of the Midwest, especially those by "insiders" who could write in a revelatory mode.¹²³ The "cultural coercions and

imbalances” caused by Eastern cultural dominance, in other words, created a strong market for the “revolt from the village” genre in the East and incentives for rebels to advance negative portrayals of the Midwest.¹²⁴ One University of Minnesota English professor chided Midwestern writers who “derided their homeland for the edification of Manhattan.”¹²⁵ The novelist Herbert Krause, a Minnesotan who was trained in Iowa and taught in South Dakota, grew weary of Midwesterners too concerned with Eastern tastes and too “in awe of dicta from beyond the Appalachians” and their attempts to “write as though their offices overlooked the Hudson River.”¹²⁶

However much the village rebels were influenced by the incentives of fame and fortune and failed to resist the gravitational pull of Eastern cultural centers and publishing houses, the varied intellectual and political forces of the era certainly caused the “revolt from the village” thesis to be embraced, widely believed, and afforded special status. Because some of the writings of the supposed village rebels were “usable” to the causes of prominent intellectuals, their writings were given the spotlight and canonized while other authors who tended to dissent from the cause of cultural rebellion were derided or ignored.¹²⁷ The resulting bias in favor of the cultural rebels and famous expatriates yielded a distorted view of the events of the 1920s which persists in the historical literature.¹²⁸ The continuing awareness of the village rebels, as well as the fame maintained by the “lost generation” and the attention afforded their “moveable feast” leaves far too much buried in the past, however, including regionalist works set in the small towns and on the farms of the Midwest.¹²⁹ The rebels’ and expatriates’ great literary status abides while the rural Midwest remains stereotyped and marginalized. “The most celebrated literature about the Midwest has been written by those who left,” notes Scott Russell Sanders when discussing Lewis and Anderson and others, “and who made a case for their leaving” a place “populated by gossips and boosters and Bible thumpers who are hostile to ideas, conformist, moralistic, utilitarian, and perpetually behind the times.”¹³⁰

In addition to leaving a residue of disdain behind which continues to obscure the view of the rural Midwest, privileging the cultural rebels and expatriates compels a privileging of urbanism and rural dislocation and a discounting of regional attachments. Still-famous writers like Fitzgerald, for example, were strongly urban oriented, James Shideler once explained in a presidential address to the Agricultural History Society in Ames, and his “twilight fell over

cocktails at the Biltmore."¹³¹ Privileging the cultural radicals and expatriates necessarily meant privileging and favoring rootlessness and circumscribing regionalism. Malcolm Cowley recalled that the lives of the expatriates had involved a "long process of deracination" and asserted that their early experiences were "involuntarily directed toward destroying whatever roots we had in the soil, toward eradicating our local and regional peculiarities, toward making us homeless citizens of the world."¹³² The privileging of the rebels and expatriates thus emphasized alienation, dislocation, and flashy flapper circles and overlooked the common life of people in areas such as the rural Midwest. As Sinclair Lewis's first wife Grace once asked, "Were the 1920s really the Jazz Age except for a few?"¹³³ While some of the expatriates may, at times, have had nostalgic thoughts of home, these fleeting longings were seldom the subject of popular attention, which further highlights the favoritism displayed toward the narrative of rebellion against provincialism.

Because of the bias for cultural rebellion, the "village revolt" writers were given great attention while others were ignored until they showed signs of joining the revolt. National praise and attention for Midwestern writers, Sara Kosiba notes in a recent study, were generally limited to those who perpetuated stereotypes of the Midwest.¹³⁴ Van Doren's construction of the revolt thesis includes Zona Gale, for example, who was from Frederick Jackson Turner's hometown of Portage, Wisconsin. Gale received a much more positive treatment from national critics when she seemed to leave behind her positive "Friendship Village" stories and became more critical of the Midwest, a move which became a "positive turning point in Gale's career."¹³⁵ Interest in the "Chicago Renaissance"—or the burst of literary activity in Chicago about the time of World War I—also stemmed in part from its emphasis on critical realism or early modernist influences, its Bohemianism, its role as a feeder system of writers who moved to New York, and its position as a distinctly unique outpost in the Midwest, seemingly removed from the agrarian and small-town traditions of the region and a haven for refugees of rural life.¹³⁶ Chicago is interesting to critics, in other words, because its writers were seeking a "cosmopolitan center beyond their seemingly small native worlds."¹³⁷

If the village revolt school privileged certain writers to the exclusion of others, it also depended on a stark dualism. It relied on the

image of a sanitized pre-revolt view of happy village life in the Midwest being overthrown by a later tradition of brilliant avant-garde cultural rebels speaking truth to sterile and oppressive traditions. But this simple dichotomy obscures a more complex history, one that included a pre-revolt tradition of both criticism and praise.¹³⁸ It is demonstrably untrue that prior to 1920 the Midwest was portrayed only with a warm and loving glow, as the early writings of Hamlin Garland and Willa Cather and other Midwestern realists demonstrate.¹³⁹ Literary realism was a Midwestern export, after all. But Van Doren downplayed the tradition of critical writing about the Midwest that disproved his contention about the existence of a long-standing and monopolistic “cult of the village,” a miscalculation which allowed his “revolt from the village” characterization to seem like a radical break in the flow of literary works about the Midwest.¹⁴⁰

The fatal flaw in the revolt thesis—a flaw which fully exposes the mistaken enshrinement of the supposed village rebels as a representative group of intellectuals who stand for the wholesale rejection of the Midwest as a region—remains the rebels themselves. While the rebels were certainly critical of the Midwest at times, a fragment of their thought Van Doren permanently burned into literary history, this negative element is but a partial and misleading component of the purported rebels’ universe of thought. Masters, for example, whom Van Doren cast as the revolutionary leader of the village revolt, vehemently rejected his inclusion in the revolt category and “never had any use” for Van Doren and saw him as a failed novelist.¹⁴¹ Masters demanded that he not “be tied up with any one, with any group,” and specifically rejected being lumped in with “the ‘revolt-from-the-village’ group.”¹⁴² But he went much further than rejecting Van Doren’s theory and actually promoted his home region, a part of his life story that is rarely used to supplement or balance the use of *Spoon River*—which itself includes what Masters called “joyous parts”—in treatments of American literary history.¹⁴³ Masters’s “literary life” was pronounced dead in 1917, just after publication of the *Spoon River Anthology*, but such a pronouncement grossly misrepresents the overall character of Masters’s body of work and severely limits our ability to see Masters’s Midwest.¹⁴⁴ Masters protested the “horse mind” of simplistic critics, a “mind that has learned the road and follows it with blinders” and ignores evidence which fails to fit the preferred grand narrative.¹⁴⁵ Masters thought the critics were too wedded to pursuing theories: “Those fellows get a line going and they

have to follow it."¹⁴⁶ When confronted, Masters said, critics too often protested that authors did something "unwittingly — not what he says he did but what they say he did."¹⁴⁷

Masters's historical and biographical works, which mostly focus on his home region, are largely forgotten, along with his dedication to rural life and social and political decentralization and his affection for the rural Midwest and its writers.¹⁴⁸ Masters was strongly inclined toward Jeffersonianism and saw Jefferson as the "genius of this republic."¹⁴⁹ Because of Masters's adherence to Jeffersonianism, agrarianism, and local control, his biography of Lincoln, *Lincoln, the Man* (1931), was critical of Lincoln's war-making and his tolerance of "centralists" and "monopolists."¹⁵⁰ Masters criticized the ugly side of life in urban Chicago—a city "full of demagogues, corruptionists, and egotists and snobs"—and New York, but praised southern Illinois and its Jeffersonian qualities in works such as his last book, *The Sangamon* (1942), written for the Rivers of America series, a regionalist project which was inspired by Frederick Jackson Turner.¹⁵¹ *The Sangamon* was a "celebration of the region of Masters' boyhood," Lois Hartley once noted, and his home country, Masters said, had a "magical appeal to me quite beyond my power to describe. I loved the people there then and I love their memory."¹⁵² Masters endorsed Emerson's calls for "less government" and more "private character" and condemned modern poets because they had "no moral code and no roots."¹⁵³ He also loved the nonrebel James Whitcomb Riley and Riley's attention to "neighborhood flavor" and the "common life" of Indiana and the way that Riley "put Indiana as a place and a people in the memory of America, more thoroughly and more permanently than has been done by any other poet before or since his day for any other locality or people."¹⁵⁴

In keeping with Masters's embrace of Riley and the Jeffersonianism of Riley's Indiana and Masters's southern Illinois, Sherwood Anderson was similarly concerned about the detachment from place, the growing rootlessness in the nation, the rise of technology, and the "terrible bigness of the country."¹⁵⁵ Anderson spent most of his childhood in Clyde, Ohio, and enjoyed piano, baseball, dancing, sleigh rides, and picnics there. Walter Rideout notes that despite how *Winesburg, Ohio* is often remembered, the "profoundest meaning of Clyde" for Anderson was "not alienation but communion."¹⁵⁶ Anderson was more focused on the old folkways of the rural

Midwest, the legacies of “Jeffersonian yeomen,” and “pastoral stillness” and on distancing himself from boomtowns such as Chicago, which Anderson saw as a “strident wasteland, a nightmare of disorder, ugliness, and noise.”¹⁵⁷ To break with Chicago, Anderson, as he wrote, put his “hope in the corn,” or the old rural life of the Midwest.¹⁵⁸ Anderson was concerned, Lionel Trilling rightly recognized, that the “old good values of life have been destroyed” and explained how “the river, the stable, the prairie are very dear to him.”¹⁵⁹ Trilling did not care for Anderson, but he recognized Anderson’s belief in the “salvation of a small legitimate existence, of a quiet place in the sun and moment of leisurely peace.”¹⁶⁰ One critic later noted that throughout his “career the *return to the village, not the revolt from it*, was to become the characteristic journey of Anderson’s idealized self.”¹⁶¹ By the mid-1920s, Sherwood Anderson “had come almost full circle” from the impression left by *Winesburg, Ohio*. He confessed that he was “glad of the life on the farm and in small communities” and ended, as one of his biographers, David D. Anderson, explained, “his enchantment with bohemian values and fraudulence.”¹⁶² Recognizing how his work had been misconstrued, Sherwood Anderson said that New York boosters of his books such as *Winesburg* had “always a little misunderstood something in me” and explained that his goal was to explore the inner life of the Midwest, not to attack the region.¹⁶³ When Carl Van Doren insisted that Anderson’s writing represented “weariness,” “contempt,” and “bitterness,” Anderson responded by writing a letter to Van Doren to express his “confusion” about Van Doren’s theories, to explain that Van Doren was touting “a weariness I do not feel,” and to note that he preferred living in the Midwest to more trendy literary haunts such as France.¹⁶⁴ Anderson said he “always lived among these Midwestern American people” and that “I do wish to stand by these people.”¹⁶⁵

The “limited attention” still given to Anderson—despite his own protests and the recognition of his complexity by some now-distant critics in some largely neglected criticism—remains focused on Anderson’s “rebellious against the village” and his other work is dismissed.¹⁶⁶ Anderson’s career, Anthony Channel Hilfer asserted, “hit its peak with *Winesburg*” and then his novels became “banal” and as a “mystagogue of cornfields, he became insufferable.”¹⁶⁷ Anderson also suffered from the attacks launched by Irving Howe, who, along with Trilling, was a prominent part of the emerging and still well-

known community of writers and critics deemed the New York Intellectuals.¹⁶⁸ Given Howe's "exaltation of Western Europe and a slighting of the small town which was Anderson's origin and fertile field of operation" and his rejection—in keeping with the New York Intellectuals—of life beyond the Hudson River as "arid, stultifying, crude, materialistic, isolated" and of Clyde, Ohio—which Anderson saw as a "fair and sweet town"—Howe's attack on Anderson is entirely predictable.¹⁶⁹ Howe thought *Winesburg, Ohio* was Anderson's "best work," written before his "downward curve" of the mid-1920s, and his judgment reflects the prevailing view of Anderson who, when remembered, is cast in the role of village rebel.¹⁷⁰

Sinclair Lewis, perhaps the most famous of Van Doren's rebellious quartet during the 1920s and the author of the work most commonly cited as a critique of the Midwest, also, after a second look, defies categorization. Lewis's rebel designation is in part explained by his own intense commitment to marketing and publicity and making a literary splash.¹⁷¹ Lewis understood that scandal sold and he is remembered as a master entertainer. Lewis was also motivated in his early years by the criticisms of the intellectual Left and was especially admiring of H.G. Wells, inclinations which helped him find favor among the prominent critics of the 1920s.¹⁷² Some note that Lewis was at times unhappy as a child in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, and this caused him to seek revenge later.¹⁷³ One mentee noted that Lewis was "fiercely ugly," which, he thought, added to his bitterness.¹⁷⁴ Lewis's tendency to sensationalize to sell books, his interest in leftist social criticism and the support it generated for him, and perhaps some early grudges may partially explain his motivations and early literary bent and justify the village rebel label, but an exploration of Lewis should not end there. Lewis's other actions and statements also deserve consideration. While Lewis could be strange and petty and attack his friends and drink to excess, he could also be kind and generous and mentor young writers,¹⁷⁵ such as Midwesterners Zona Gale and Willa Cather.¹⁷⁶ Lewis also promoted and supported regionalists such as Ruth Suckow. He noted that after their early sojourns, writers like Suckow had the "good sense" to return to the Midwest, and to young writers he "regularly preached the doctrine of remaining where their roots were."¹⁷⁷ Lewis said Midwestern authors were "rough fellows but vigorous, ignorant of the classics and of Burgundy, yet close to the heart of humanity. They write about farmyards and wear flannel shirts."¹⁷⁸ Lewis also spent a considerable

amount of time in the Midwest, perhaps hoping to deepen his rootedness, too, but his restlessness and devotion to publicity and fame and rubbing shoulders with other literati meant that he could not stay put for long. When Lewis moved to Madison, Wisconsin, for a teaching stint, he said he wanted to “renew my knowledge of the Middle West. I find the country beautiful, open and stirring, with enough hills here to avoid stagnancy.”¹⁷⁹ Although he acknowledged his affection for the Midwest, Madison was too boring for him and he fled the scene by midsemester, leaving his students in the lurch.¹⁸⁰

Lewis’s affection for the region could also be found in his famous works. Lewis’s novels—as the often forgotten ambiguity of *Main Street* attests—were not merely assaults on the Midwest. In *Main Street*, Lewis reveals Carol as “flighty” and frivolous, and one of his characters tells Carol that she is “so prejudiced against Gopher Prairie that you overshoot the mark . . . Great guns, the town can’t be all wrong!”¹⁸¹ After publication, Lewis stressed the affirmative aspects of *Main Street* and confessed a “love of Main Street . . . a belief in Main Street’s inherent power.”¹⁸² Lewis rejected Van Doren’s attempt to cram him into the “village revolt” category while noting his affection for primary characters in *Main Street* such as Will Kennicott, Bea Sorensen, various farmers, and others.¹⁸³ Lewis rebuffed English jabs at America when discussing *Main Street* in London and said he “had intended *Main Street* as constructive criticism of his country.”¹⁸⁴ Lewis said, “[i]f I seem to have criticized prairie villages, I have certainly criticized them no more than I have New York, or Paris, or the great universities.”¹⁸⁵ Lewis wrote to Mary Austin and asked “[i]f I didn’t love Main Street would I write of it so hotly?”¹⁸⁶ Lewis also saw *Main Street* as a “tribute” to his decent, generous, and hard-working father, the doctor in Sauk Centre.¹⁸⁷ The ambiguities of Lewis’s work extend beyond *Main Street*. In *Babbitt* (1922), Babbitt happily returns to the normal life of Zenith.¹⁸⁸ In *Dodsworth* (1929), Lewis highlighted “Midwestern virtues” and Sam Dodsworth sees Zenith as a place of “Midwestern saneness.”¹⁸⁹ John Updike, upon a re-reading of Lewis, concluded that the Midwesterners in his novels were “basically decent folk.”¹⁹⁰

The literary historian John Flanagan noted that in later years Lewis “spoke nostalgically of his Sauk Centre days, of the friendliness of the people, and of the indelible memories of childhood” such as fishing, hunting, rafting, and hiking.¹⁹¹ Lewis took pleasure in the civic institutions of Sauk Centre—the GAR hall, the Community

Club, the Bryant Public Library, the Main Street Theater.¹⁹² Of his early years in Sauk Centre, Lewis said, "[i]t was a good time, a good place, and a good preparation for life."¹⁹³ Lewis "felt a very strong pull toward" Minnesota and praised its rural landscape and places such as the St. Croix Valley.¹⁹⁴ Lewis wrote that it "is an illusion that the haze and far-off hills is bluer and more romantic. In every state of the union, as in Minnesota, we have historical treasures small and precious and mislaid. It is admirable that we should excavate Ur of the Chaldees and study the guilds of Brabant, but for our own dignity, knowledge and plain tourist interest, we might also excavate Urbana of the Illinois."¹⁹⁵ Lewis was brought home from Italy after his death in 1951 and buried in Sauk Centre, proving, his brother thought, that "he had a lot of love for the old place."¹⁹⁶

But Lewis's fondness for the Midwest is not what he is remembered for, which is partially explained by his own literary jabs, ambiguity, and personality flaws but also, more importantly, by how literary critics and intellectuals have used his work. In 1920, *Main Street* perfectly fit the mood of many intellectuals, who were eager to assault small-town provincialism. *Main Street* became the best-selling book in the country during the first quarter of the twentieth century and sold because it featured "scandal, and scandal is always exhilarating," said the publisher Ernest Brace, and, Richard Lingeman says, because it "meshed with the postwar mood of cynicism among the intelligentsia and the young."¹⁹⁷ Lewis must be viewed through the village revolt prism, the critics say. Benjamin Schwartz opined in the *Atlantic Monthly* a decade ago that "Lewis can be rightly appreciated *only* by concentrating on his anomalous book *Main Street*," after which began his supposedly grim decline.¹⁹⁸ To read Lewis for "anything more" than a blip in "literary and cultural history" as a definer of small towns would be a mistake, Ronald Weber concludes.¹⁹⁹ After the 1920s, Alfred Kazin thought, Lewis went into "heart-breaking decline."²⁰⁰ Lionel Trilling, perhaps the leading light of the New York Intellectuals, thought it was better for "the public" to be "confronted" with the Sinclair Lewis (and, he added, the Sherwood Anderson, then in his *Winesburg* phase) of 1919-1920—back when Lewis "flamed across the sky with *Main Street*"—than the Lewis of 1940, when Lewis embraced the "belief that to be an American is a gay adventure."²⁰¹

Critics' insistence that Lewis and other Midwestern writers be remembered only for rebellion is why the fullness of the Midwest is now so hard to see; it represents a great betrayal of what these writers intended. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Wisconsin regionalist writer August Derleth, who had vowed to remain close to his "roots" in Sauk City, Wisconsin, had several meetings with Masters, Anderson, and Lewis; he published a little-known account of these meetings in 1963.²⁰² Since Derleth was interested in regional writers and taught a course on regional literature through the College of Agriculture at Wisconsin, he naturally inquired about the revolt theory. In their conversations with Derleth, the supposed rebels—Masters, Anderson, and Lewis—all vehemently rejected the village revolt interpretation. Masters professed his love of the Midwest and his boyhood in Illinois, calling the time period the "best years of my life" and deeming the revolt interpretation as "just about as silly as you can get! . . . I didn't revolt against my village . . . There never was anything to this revolt from the village business. We didn't do any such thing."²⁰³ Masters said, "Carl Van Doren started [the revolt interpretation] and everybody else parroted him . . . It was all nonsense, but they perpetuated it."²⁰⁴ He called literary critics who promoted the theory "lice."²⁰⁵ Anderson also rejected the view that his characters were only "hopeless and defeated" and laughed at the revolt thesis: "There wasn't anything to this revolting. I liked Clyde [Ohio] . . . There's no such thing as 'revolting' or 'rebellious' or whatever it is they want to call it."²⁰⁶ Critics who insisted on giving Anderson's work such a "point-of-view" were wrong.²⁰⁷ Lewis said the revolt interpretation was "unsound, one of those theories put forth by critics who thereafter tend to look away from any evidence to the contrary."²⁰⁸ Lewis dismissed Van Doren's "theories, unsupported by fact. The trouble with critics is that they like to create a horse and ride it to death."²⁰⁹ Lewis thought critics were prone to "dig around and trump up a whole lot of motives and meanings the author never intended."²¹⁰ Lewis said he "loved" the characters in *Main Street*: "I didn't think it was rebellious then. I don't think it is now, either."²¹¹

Over the long term, critics have been far kinder to F. Scott Fitzgerald than to the other supposed rebels, but his inclusion in Van Doren's revolt rubric because of *This Side of Paradise* (1920) remains, perhaps, the most questionable of Van Doren's choices. Even though Van Doren believes Fitzgerald "had broken with the village" in *Paradise*, the book is focused not on the rural Midwest but

on personal frustrations, drinking, sex, wealth, and self-absorption in the East and on exposing places such as Princeton, which Fitzgerald saw as the "pleasantest country club in America."²¹² Edmund Wilson said *Paradise* was not "really about anything" and saw it as a "gesture of indefinite revolt."²¹³ Others viewed it simply as a "series of episodes" relating to the main character.²¹⁴ Barry Gross is more generous, finding the novel to be successfully focused on the theme of searching and finding personal meaning and spiritual guidance.²¹⁵ Others see it as a "college novel."²¹⁶ Whatever the case, *Paradise* does little to indict the rural and small-town Midwest. In his other fiction, it must be stressed, Fitzgerald is actually quite generous toward the Midwest or, at the worst, promotes a mixed picture. Most famously, in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses St. Paul to depict a "stable community of familiar names and places with traditional and personal qualities that contrast with the chaotic and indifferent elements of his Long Island experience."²¹⁷ For Nick Carraway, St. Paul symbolized a "city of the pastoral ideal not altered to an urban ash heap as was the eastern green breast of America," a "spiritual home" and a "place of continuity and consistent values."²¹⁸ Fitzgerald confessed "tremendous nostalgia" for St. Paul and wanted his daughter to debut there.²¹⁹ In other short stories, Fitzgerald also notes some petty differences among St. Paul socialites and youth, so the image he presents is mixed. But Fitzgerald was never focused on the rural and small-town Midwest—"the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns"—but on St. Paul, and then not very much, and, much more often, on the dalliances and drama and social climbing of the Eastern seaboard.²²⁰ Van Doren's classification of Fitzgerald should be discarded for a final reason: Nick Carraway finally returned to the Midwest, after all, and came to see it as the "warm center of the world."²²¹

The weaknesses of the village-revolt paradigm—its subservience to intellectual trends, its shallow understanding of Midwestern culture, its bias in favor of cultural radicals, its misreading of or slanted approach to the supposed rebels' work, its imperviousness to any vision of the Midwest as a warm center of stability, calm, and community—was later revealed by Van Wyck Brooks, who did so much to launch Van Doren's interpretation and give the village revolt form.²²² Brooks had a mental breakdown in the late 1920s that brought him to the "brink of madness" and incapacitated him for five years and, after his recovery, he spent less time, as he said, obsessing

on “the dark side of our moon”; his studies led him “right out into the midst of the sunny side.”²²³ By the mid-1940s, Brooks thought, “we are heading into a great half-century.”²²⁴ In contrast to his early denunciations of American culture, the Columbia University historian Casey Blake noted, a later Brooks and some other World War I-era critics now saw the middle-class culture of the late nineteenth century “with a fondness unimaginable in the 1910s and 1920s, when they had led the youthful revolt against Victorian gentility.”²²⁵ Brooks and others began to see the old “Victorian ethos”—which was particularly strong in the Midwest—as lending “a sense of place and of belonging to a wider culture” and as an alternative to the “individual rootlessness and bureaucratic organization they believed had supplanted Victorian self-reliance, pride in work, and loyalty to place and family.”²²⁶ He became annoyed with those who “could not seem to forgive the towns they were born in” and their tales of “escape” and thought his generation would be “remembered as the one in which everyone hated, often without visible reason, the town in which he was born.”²²⁷ In 1952, Brooks said, “What an ass I was at the age of 22!”²²⁸ Of his famous *America’s Coming of Age* (1915), which inspired so much repetition and rebellion, he said, “It isn’t right.”²²⁹ Brooks dismissed his earlier writing as “youthful levity” and rejected the work of the other writers of that era, believing that they had “ceased to be voices of the people” and were instead “poisoning one another with their despair and poisoning society” and that the “literary mind” had “lost its roots in the soil.”²³⁰ Brooks began to work against those writers he thought were trying to “kill off” the nation’s cultural roots.²³¹ He also recognized Midwestern regionalists for their work to give an interior voice to literature and admired their mission to “get in touch with the common life, with small-town life and rural life” and to “root oneself.”²³²

Brooks largely failed to advance his new cause. As he told the Minnesota regionalist Frederick Manfred, his later work was “attacked and sneered at.”²³³ By mid-century he was “outmoded” and “out of fashion” and it had “been at least a decade since anyone concerned with literature took him very seriously.”²³⁴ Casey Blake, similarly, could not abide the new Brooks, nor, like so many other critics, could he recognize the positive portrayals of the Midwest advanced by the supposed village rebels or accurately see and appreciate the work of Midwestern regionalists.²³⁵ Blake dismissed Brooks’s abandonment of a “critical voice” in favor of a “misty lyri-

cism" and "antiquarianism" which would "alienate" him from cultural radicals attracted to his earlier attacks on American culture.²³⁶ Blake failed to account for the cultural consequences of Brooks's early polemics and the fact that, as Bernard DeVoto noted, "for twenty years his false description had been a gospel to many writers whose careers consisted of preaching it to the dwellers in darkness."²³⁷ Blake thus personifies, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the chronic inability of intellectuals to dismantle the rickety framework of the "revolt from the village" thesis, despite its rotted foundations, and break its persistent hold on the historical imagination.²³⁸

If Casey Blake was too resistant to the new Brooks, Blake's mentor, the Midwesterner Christopher Lasch, was more adept at finding value in Brooks's "spiritual conversion."²³⁹ Lasch recognized the costs of a "wholesale repudiation of American life and a cult of alienation" that undergirded the "revolt from the village" thesis.²⁴⁰ He regretted how the early twentieth-century forms of regionalism had been "abruptly 'brushed aside' in the '20s by the revolt against provincialism."²⁴¹ He recognized how the later Brooks came to find earlier precedents for the emergence of an "indigenous culture" in the provinces and how the work of earlier writers, as Brooks said, "destroyed the subservience of Americans to the local ideals of the motherlands—it broke the umbilical cord that attached them to Europe."²⁴² He also recognized Brooks's new-found opposition to the purported anti-village themes of Lewis, Fitzgerald and others that Brooks had made possible.²⁴³ While he recognized Brooks's many inconsistencies, odd conversions, and intellectual "ordeal," Lasch correctly noted the costs of the tendency—in the early Brooks and among other intellectuals—to "brush aside the past," the essential flaw in the enduring "revolt from the village" formulation, which obscures, among other things, the ability to see the Midwest and its complete history.²⁴⁴

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

NOTES

¹Jon K. Lauck received his Ph.D. in economic history from the University of Iowa and his law degree from the University of Minnesota and is the author of *American Agriculture and the Problem of Monopoly: The Political Economy of Grain Belt Farming, 1953-1980* (University of Nebraska Press, 2000), *Daschle v. Thune: Anatomy of a High Plains Senate*

Race (University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), and *Prairie Republic: The Political Culture of Dakota Territory, 1879-1889* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) and co-author and co-editor of *The Plains Political Tradition: Essays on South Dakota Political Culture* (South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2011). Lauck's newest book is *The Lost Region: Toward a Revival of Midwestern History* (University of Iowa Press, 2013). The author wants to extend special thanks to Robert Dorman, Richard Etulain, Ellis Hawley, and John E. Miller for reading and offering their advice on this chapter.

²James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1989), 8.

³Phil Stong, "The U.S. in the Middle," *Saturday Review of Literature*, September 17, 1938.

⁴On the decline of Midwestern history, see Lauck, *The Lost Region*.

⁵Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York, The New Press, 1997), 85; David Radavich, "Midwestern Dramas," in Becky Bradway (ed), *In the Middle of the Middle West: Literary Nonfiction from the Heartland* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003), 187.

⁶Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 137, Box 7, FF 7, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University. *The Nation* was one of the "most admired vehicles for shaping literary opinion during the decade." Gordon Hutner, *What America Read: Taste, Class, and the Novel* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 52. Van Doren taught English at Columbia from 1911-1930 and called himself an "unbeliever, a scholar and a skeptic." Gloria Lubar, "Carl Van Doren Is Storehouse of Americana," *Washington Post*, December 2, 1945. *The New York Times* remembered him as an "outstanding liberal." "Carl Van Doren, 64, Noted Author, Dies," *New York Times*, July 19, 1950. In his autobiography, Van Doren confessed to "snob-bishness." Van Doren, *Three Worlds* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1936), 1.

⁷Carl Van Doren, "Contemporary American Novelists X. The Revolt from the Village: 1920," *The Nation* vol. 113, no. 2936 (October 12, 1921) (Fall Book Supplement), 407. The essay was reprinted in Van Doren, *The American Novel, 1789-1939* (New York, Macmillan, 1940). See also Van Doren, *Three Worlds*, 152. Clayton Holaday noted that the "antivillage view" or revolt thesis was not "precisely identified" until Van Doren's essay. Holaday, review of Anthony Channell Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village, 1915-1930* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1969) in *American Literature* vol. 42, no. 2 (May 1970), 262. The narrative of "heroic" writers attacking "ferociously smug" small towns has become a "powerful" force in American literary history, according to Gordon Hutner, *What America Read*, 21. See also Van Doren's chapter entitled "On Hating the Provinces" in Van Doren, *The Roving Critic* (Port Washington, New York, Kennikat Press, Inc., 1923), 83-86.

⁸Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 407.

⁹Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 407.

¹⁰Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 408-10. In *Main Street*, Nicolas Witschi notes, "contemporary critics such as Van Doren saw nothing less than a wholesale rejection of the fantasy of a livable small-town ethos." Witschi, "Sinclair Lewis, the Voice of Satire, and Mary Austin's Revolt from the Village," *American Literary Realism* vol. 30, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 78. Van Doren wrote to Lewis that *Main Street* was "fearfully truthful," but also believed that the "towns a little bigger than Gopher Prairie seem to me a good deal better than the 3000-population towns." Carl Van Doren to Sinclair Lewis, November 22, 1920, Box 49, FF 630, Lewis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1961), 285.

¹¹Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 412.

¹²Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (New York, Harper & Row, 1964 [1931]), 191, 196. Allen's *Only Yesterday*, Burl Noggle noted, "has deeply shaped historical recall of the 1920s." Burl Noggle, "The Twenties: A New Historiographical Frontier," *Journal of American History* vol. 53, no. 2 (September 1966), 300. David Kennedy concluded that "[m]ore than any other single work, [*Only Yesterday*] has for

longer than half a century shaped our understanding of American life in the 1920s" and saw its "spiritual heart" as "The Revolt of the Highbrows" section. David M. Kennedy, "Revisiting Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday*," *Reviews in American History* vol. 14, no. 2 (June 1986), 309, 312. Allen's interpretation coincided "precisely with a vision of the twenties that found great currency during the thirties and that has helped to distort the history of American fiction." Hutner, *What America Read*, 55. In addition to Allen, the "best example of the revolt against the village is" the essay collection by Harold Stearns in *Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1922). Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1995), 325. Stearns' book is seen as the "classic expression" of 1920s alienation. Charles C. Alexander, *Here the Country Lies: Nationalism and the Arts in Twentieth Century America* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1980), 90-92; Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., *Ideologies and Utopias: The Impact of the New Deal on American Thought* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1969), 12. One of the "chief themes" of the book, Stearns announced, was that the "most moving and pathetic fact in the social life of America to-day is emotional and aesthetic starvation." Stearns, *Civilization in the United States*, vi-vii. Stearns said that the new intellectuals disliked "almost to the point of hatred and certainly to the point of contempt, the type of people dominant in our present civilization." James H. Shideler, "Flappers and Philosophers, and Farmers: Rural-Urban Tensions of the Twenties," *Agricultural History* vol. 47, no. 4 (October 1973), 289 (quoting Stearns). Stearns and others "left an enduring picture of a barren, neurotic, Babbitt-ridden society." Henry F. May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* vol. 43, no. 3 (December 1956), 409. Stearns dramatically boarded a ship to Europe as soon as he finished *Civilization* and said he would never return. Richard Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street* (New York, Random House, 2002), 180. Although he died before its completion, the revolt thesis was also outlined for the planned final volume of Vernon Parrington's literary history trilogy *Main Currents of American Thought*. See "Addenda" in Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America, 1860-1920* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1930), 323-86. On page 373, Parrington notes "A revolt of the young intellectuals against the dominant middle class—its Puritanism, its Victorianism, its acquisitive ideals: represented by Sinclair Lewis." In 1931, Russell Blankenship offered a similar treatment in *American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind* (New York, Henry Holt, 1931) (note section on "The Attack").

¹³Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (San Diego, A Harvest Book: Harcourt Brace & Company, 3rd edition, 1995 [1942]), 192-194, 197, 205. Merle Curti's *The Growth of American Thought* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1943) also includes a section on "The Revolt Against the Genteel Tradition," 710-14. See also Granville Hicks, *The Great Tradition: An Interpretation of American Literature since the Civil War* (New York, Biblio and Tannen, 1967 [1935]), 231 and Arthur Moore, "There's Ink in Black Soil," *Chicago Sun Book Week*, May 4, 1947. In an early warning about this line of thought, Bernard DeVoto noted in 1944 that historians were being too accepting of the ascendant literary treatment of the 1920s. DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy* (Boston, Little, Brown, 1944), 22-23.

¹⁴Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: In Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880s* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954), 247 (italics added). Richard Hofstadter also included a chapter entitled "The Revolt Against Modernity" in his book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York, Knopf, 1962) which interpreted an "older, rural and small-town America" as "now fully embattled against the encroachments of modern life." See page 122. In a later book, Hofstadter argued that intellectuals began an "assault on national pieties" which "culminated in the unconstrained frontal attack of the 1920s" and which included a "war" of "metropolitan minds against the village mind." Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Parrington, Beard* (New York, Knopf, 1968), 86-87. For another prominent historian who was critical of the 1920s, see William E. Leuchtenberg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago, University of Chicago

Press, 1958), which David Danbom sees as grounded in an “approach which seemed to elevate the satire of H.L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis to established historical fact.” David B. Danbom, “The Professors and the Plowmen in American History Today,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* vol. 69, no. 2 (Winter 1985/86), 108. Catherine McNicol Stock similarly notes that in place of actual social history too many historians rely on the “uniformly uncomplimentary images of the ‘village rebels.’” Stock, *Main Street in Crisis: The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 4. For another invocation of the “drabness of small town midwestern life” and its “provincialism,” see Arthur S. Link, *American Epoch: A History of the United States since the 1890’s* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 325. For yet another use of the “flatness of small town life” theme, see Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1965), 911. See also Robert Spiller et al, *The Literary History of the United States* (New York, Macmillan, 1948), 1181 and Arthur Hobson Quinn, *The Literature of the American People: An Historical and Critical Survey* (New York, Appleton-Century, 1951), 868-86 on the “Analysts of Decay.”

¹⁵*Book-of-the-Month Club News*, September 1961 (featuring the Schorer biography as the cover story and noting that Book-of-the-Month Club books reflected “the unanimous choice” of the board), FF Mark Schorer, August Derleth Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS); Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*.

¹⁶Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 251.

¹⁷Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (New York, Harper & Row, 1973), 35.

¹⁸Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams*, 23, 35.

¹⁹See James M. Cox, “Regionalism: A Diminished Thing,” in Emory Elliott (ed), *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1988), 773.

²⁰Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1995), 151-53. In 1992, Gore Vidal also perpetuated the conventional view of the “revolt,” placing Lewis among the group of writers who were “brought up in similar towns in the Middle West and every last one of them was hell-bent to get out!” Gore Vidal, “The Romance of Sinclair Lewis,” *New York Review of Books* (October 8, 1992) (emphasis added).

²¹Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2000), 44, 46.

²²Jerome Loving, “Introduction,” Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* (New York, Penguin Books, 2008 [1915]), x.

²³Ronald Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992), 85. Weber’s *Midwestern Ascendancy* is an impressive synthesis which emphasizes the complexity of Midwest writers, but he also tends to favor more negative accounts of the region and to cast doubt on the writers who move from more negative assessments to more positive ones, highlighting a broader tendency to privilege accounts which fit the “village rebel” mold. But Weber, more importantly, also recognizes the declining attention to the Midwest as a region, concluding that the “Midwest as a place is more than ever in danger of vanishing completely.” Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 224.

²⁴Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 81. See also Ed Piacentino, “Challenging the Canon: Other Southern Literary Lives,” *Southern Literary Journal* vol. 38, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 146. On the intense “anti-rural bias” and the “gratuitous insults” on rural Americans in histories of the 1920s, see Danbom, “The Professors and the Plowmen in American History Today,” 124-28.

²⁵Barry Gross, “The Revolt that Wasn’t: The Legacies of Critical Myopia,” *CEA Critic* vol. 30, no. 2 (January 1977), 4-5.

²⁶Wes D. Gehring, “The Henpecked Hustler,” *USA Today*, November 2006; Joan Acocella, “On the Contrary,” *New Yorker*, December 9, 2002; Benjamin Schwarz, “Sheer Data,” *Atlantic Monthly*, February 2002; Morris Dickstein, “The Complex Fate of the Jewish-American Writer,” *The Nation*, October 4, 2001; Robert Brustein, “The War on the Arts,” *New*

Republic, September 7 and 14, 1992; Richard Lingeman, "Home Town, USA," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1978; John Blades, "An Age of Innocence Recalled," *Chicago Tribune*, July 2, 1971; Gerald Carson, "Our Towns," *New York Times*, November 15, 1964; Nobuo Abiko, "Revolt from the Village," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 19, 1962.

²⁷Maurice Beebe, review of David D. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), in *American Literature* vol. 40, no. 4 (January 1969), 571. The revolt "tradition" lives on. Hilary Hallett recognizes "the 'revolt from the village' school" in Hallett, "Based on a True Story: New Western Women and the Birth of Hollywood," *Pacific Historical Review* vol. 80, no. 2 (May 2011), 207. David Davis also notes the "Revolt from the Village School." Davis, "Regional Criticism in the Era of Globalization," *Modern Fiction Studies* vol. 54, no. 4 (Winter 2008), 847. Evan Brier highlights "revolt-from-the-village luminaries like Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis." Brier, "The Accidental Blockbuster: Peyton Place in Literary and Institutional Context," *Women's Studies Quarterly* vol. 33, no. 3-4 (Fall 2005), 53. Martha Carpenter similarly notes "'the revolt from the village'" "literary phenomena." Carpenter, "Susan Glaspell's Fiction: Fidelity as American Romance," *Twentieth Century Literature* vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 98. Nicolas Witschi also notes the "'revolt from the village' canon." Witschi, "Sinclair Lewis, the Voice of Satire, and Mary Austin's Revolt from the Village," 79.

²⁸Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 3.

²⁹Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 29.

³⁰Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 158 (italics added).

³¹Hutner, "The 'Good Reader' and the Bourgeois Critic," *Kenyon Review* vol. 20, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 23-24. On the "ingrained" nature of the revolt thesis and its flaws, see Barry Gross, "In Another Country: The Revolt from the Village," *MidAmerica* vol. 4 (1977), 101-111. See also Gross, "The Revolt that Wasn't," 4-8. On the unfortunate perpetuation of the village revolt thesis, see also David D. Anderson, "Notes Toward a Definition of the Mind of the Midwest," *MidAmerica* vol. 3 (1976), 8-10. On the weaknesses of the revolt thesis, see Marcia Noe, "The Revolt from the Village," entry in volume two of the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature* (forthcoming, Indiana UP) and Abigail Tilley, "Winesburg, Ohio: Beyond the Revolt from the Village," *Midwestern Miscellany* (Fall 2003), 44-52. On the growth, more generally, of a "literary genre" which is premised on "condescension and retribution toward one's origins," see Wendell Berry, "Writer and Region," *Hudson Review* vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 1987), 23.

³²Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 4 (doubly); George F. Day, "The Midwest," in *A Literary History of the American West* (Forth Worth, Texas Christian University Press, 1987), 636 (hick). The "'village' has in nearly all cases been a small town in the vast agricultural areas of the Middle West." R.T. Prescott, "Ruth Suckow," *Prairie Schooner* vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 1928), 138. The critics who embraced the revolt thesis "were convinced that provincial life, especially in the Middle West, condemned America to the status of second-class culture." Gross, "The Revolt that Wasn't," 4.

³³Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 196-97.

³⁴Frederick J. Hoffman, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (New York, Macmillan, 1949), 369.

³⁵Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 181, Box 7, FF7, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University.

³⁶Christopher Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 3 (source of quotation), manuscript located in Lasch Papers, Rush Rhees Library, University of Rochester; Malcolm Cowley, "Van Wyck Brooks: A Career in Retrospect," *Saturday Review of Literature* (May 25, 1963), 17-18; William Wasserstrom, *Van Wyck Brooks* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1968), 13-14; Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank & Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 17-19.

³⁷Brooks, *The Wine of the Puritans: A Study of Present-Day America* (London, Sisley's, 1908); Bernard Smith, "Van Wyck Brooks," in Malcolm Cowley (ed), *After the Genteel*

Tradition: American Writers, 1910-1930 (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), 59; James R. Vitelli, *Van Wyck Brooks* (New York, Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969), 79-80; Gorham B. Munson, "Van Wyck Brooks: His Sphere and His Encroachments," in William Wasserstrom (ed.), *Van Wyck Brooks: The Critic and His Critics* (Port Washington, New York, Kennikat Press, 1979), 47-48; Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism* (New York, Octagon Books, 1974 [1961]), 10; Paul R. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 56; Blake, *Beloved Community*, 102-105; Joan Shelley Rubin, *Constance Rourke and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 44-49; Jan C. Dawson, "Puritanism in American Thought and Society, 1865-1910," *New England Quarterly* vol. 53, no. 4 (December 1980), 508.

³⁸Brooks, *America's Coming of Age* (New York, B.W. Huebsch, 1915) (the critique of Puritanism begins on page eight); Van Doren to Brooks, March 13, 1934 (confessing his pleasant memories of discovering the book at Columbia Library and describing how he "read it through standing on my excited feet") (virtually) and Van Doren to Brooks, March 6, 1934, Folder 2963, Brooks Papers, Annenberg Library, University of Pennsylvania; Richard Ruland, *The Rediscovery of American Literature* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1967), 3, 5, 8; David M. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 1993), 107-10; Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 113; Kim Townsend, *Sherwood Anderson: A Biography* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 118; DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 45, 48, 57; Oscar Cargill, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," *English Journal* vol. 35, no. 9 (November 1946), 472; Dayton Kohler, "Van Wyck Brooks: Traditionally American," *English Journal* vol. 30, no. 4 (April 1941), 264. On Brooks' call for revolution, his turn to socialism, and his attraction to Bohemianism, see Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community*, 52-63.

³⁹Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 114 (villains); Blake, *Beloved Community*, 134; John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1992), 139. On Brooks's view of the "innate depravity and barbarity of the frontier influence," see Donald Davidson, *The Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 14. Some critics like Brooks "eagerly awaited" the decline of frontier influences because they saw them as "culturally regressive." David M. Wrobel, "Beyond the Frontier-Region Dichotomy," *Pacific Historical Review* vol. 65, no. 3 (August 1996), 415. The writers in Stearns's collection *Civilization in the United States* also criticized the pioneer. See, for examples, Stearns, "The Intellectual Life" and Van Wyck Brooks, "The Literary Life," in Stearns (ed.), *Civilization in the United States*, 135-50, 183. But, Malcolm Cowley noted, Stearns's writers "knew nothing about vast sections of the country" and were "city men." Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (New York, Penguin Books, 1994 [1951, 1934]), 74.

⁴⁰Brooks, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (New York, Dutton, 1920), 30, 38. Brooks asked "how can we compare the fertile human soil of any spot in Europe with that dry, old, barren, horizonless Middle West of ours? How was Mark Twain to break the spell of his infancy and find a vocation there? Calvinism itself had gone to seed: it was nothing but the dead hand of custom; the flaming priest had long since given way to the hysterical evangelist." Brooks, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, 30. See also DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 40-41, 60; DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America* (New York, Little, Brown, 1932), 41. The metaphor is not uncommon. Diane Dufva Quantic notes how the revolt caused critics to condemn "that intellectual desert, the Middle West." Quantic, "The Revolt from the Village and Middle Western Fiction, 1870-1915," *Kansas Quarterly* vol. 5 (1973), 6.

⁴¹Van Wyck Brooks, *Sketches in Criticism* (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1932), 130 (unlovable); Blake, *Beloved Community*, 104 (grotesque; dignity). In contrast to the treatments of intellectuals such as Brooks, the frontier remained popular with the public and was given con-

tinuing expression through writers such as Emerson Hough and Bernard DeVoto. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism*, 105-6.

⁴²Terry Teachout, *The Skeptic: A Life of H.L. Mencken* (New York, HarperCollins, 2002), 178 (kultur; italics in original); Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 121.

⁴³Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 191.

⁴⁴Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 193.

⁴⁵Kazin, *On Native Grounds*, 200-201.

⁴⁶Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 122, 125, 127.

⁴⁷Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 127.

⁴⁸Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 129; Don S. Kirschner, *City and Country: Rural Responses to Urbanization in the 1920s* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Publishing, 1970), 17; James H. Shideler, "Flappers and Philosophers, and Farmers," 289; Robert Wuthnow, *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America's Heartland* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012), 155.

⁴⁹Shideler, "Flappers and Philosophers, and Farmers," 289. See Mencken, "The Husbandman," *Prejudices: Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Series* (New York, Library of America, 2010), 23-33.

⁵⁰Joan Acocella, "On the Contrary," *New Yorker*, December 9, 2002. "Never in all history, as Edmund Wilson said, did a literary generation so revile its country; and never, as Mencken proved so unforgettably, was the abuse so innocent or so enjoyable." Kazin, *On Native Grounds*, 192. Mencken's biographer Terry Teachout makes the ironic observation that Mencken had "seen comparatively little of his native land" and suggests that he was "as much of a philistine as the philistines." Teachout, *The Skeptic*, 202.

⁵¹Stephen L. Tanner, "Sinclair Lewis and the New Humanism," *Modern Age* vol. 33, no. 1 (1990), 33-35 (quoting Lewis's 1922 statement that "If I had the power, I'd make Henry Mencken the pope of America"); Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 162 (central). Mencken wrote to a friend about Lewis's *Main Street*: "That idiot has written a masterpiece." Teachout, *The Skeptic*, 177; Benjamin Schwarz, "Sheer Data," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 2002.

⁵²Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 29.

⁵³Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 410.

⁵⁴Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 407.

⁵⁵Daniel Joseph Singal, "Towards a Definition of Modernism," *American Quarterly* vol. 39, no. 1 (Spring 1987), 9; James Gilbert, "Many Modernisms," *Reviews in American History* vol. 29, no. 2 (June 2001), 265.

⁵⁶Singal, "Towards a Definition of Modernism," 9 (ethos); Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 5 (December 1975), 521.

⁵⁷Daniel Walker Howe notes the rural version of Victorian culture. Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," 515.

⁵⁸Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 111.

⁵⁹Stanley Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," *American Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 5 (December 1975), 605.

⁶⁰Shideler, "Flappers and Philosophers, and Farmers," 286.

⁶¹Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," 605; Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 5; Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 97.

⁶²Gross, "The Revolt that Wasn't," 4.

⁶³Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York, Knopf, 1965); F.W. Dupee, "The Americanism of Van Wyck Brooks," in Robert Wooster Stallman (ed), *Critiques and Essays in Criticism, 1920-1948* (New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1949), 463; Stow Persons, *The Decline of American Gentility* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1973), 266; Teachout, *The Skeptic*, 189 (on the rise of "the adver-

sary culture”).

⁶⁴Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 30 (source of quotation); Danbom, “The Professors and the Plowmen in American History Today,” 106; Russell Lynes, “Intellectuals vs. Philistines,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1949 (noting Carlyle’s definition of the Philistine as “a man without sentiment, who cares naught for moonlight and music. A low, practical man who pays his debts. I hate him.”).

⁶⁵Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 196; Aram Bakshian, Jr., “The New Yorker Casts Its Ballot,” *National Interest* no. 123 (January/February 2013), 83. Dubuque is also subject to another crack in Cowley, *Exile’s Return*, 58. The *New Yorker* “reflected [Greenwich] Village’s values by flying in the face” of conventional publications. Peter Watson, *The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century* (New York, HarperCollins, 2001), 217. Lasch also notes the decline of “provincial culture” and the “concentration of cultural life in the city of New York,” including the emergence of the *New Yorker*, as a sign of the emergence of a new “intellectual class.” Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America*, 319-20.

⁶⁶Edward A. Martin, *H.L. Mencken and the Debunkers* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1984), 186. For the debunkers’ attacks on Midwestern service clubs, see Jeffrey A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1993), 86-89. For the view that the debunkers were targeting the Midwest and Midwestern service clubs, see Thomas S. Hines, Jr., “Echoes from ‘Zenith’: Reactions of American Businessmen to *Babbitt*,” *Business History Review* vol. 41, no. 2 (Summer 1967), 127-30 (one *New York Times* interviewee commented “What gets me is why, when these literary fellas want to get funny about America, they always pick on the Middle West.”). One Rotary Club president protested that his organization was simply about “good fellowship” and working for the “good of the community.” Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 434. For a review, by the Midwestern writer Booth Tarkington, of the trendy criticism of Rotary, see Tarkington, “Rotarian and Sophisticate,” *World’s Work* vol. 58 (January 1929), 42-44, 146.

⁶⁷David A. Hollinger, “Ethnic Diversity, Cosmopolitanism, and the Emergence of the American Liberal Intelligentsia,” *American Quarterly* vol. 27, no. 2 (May 1975), 133, 135-37. *The Smart Set* was launched in 1900, *Vanity Fair* in 1914, *The American Mercury* in 1924, and the *New Yorker* in 1925. Joan Acocella, “On the Contrary,” *New Yorker*, December 9, 2002. These larger circulation periodicals were supplemented by various low-circulation “little magazines.” Hutner, *What America Read*, 52; Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1946).

⁶⁸Frederick J. Hoffman, “Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s: An Example of the Misuse of the American Past,” *American Quarterly* vol. 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1949), 253.

⁶⁹Hutner, *What America Read*, 88 (source of quotation); Rochelle Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence: America’s Cultural and Legal Struggles over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1996), 128-34; Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 7-8; Robert T. Handy, “The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935,” *Church History* vol. 29, no. 1 (March 1960), 6-7.

⁷⁰Hoffman, “Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s,” 247; Cowley, *Exile’s Return*, 61; Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 139; DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 35, 52-53; Paul A. Carter, *Another Part of the Twenties* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1977), 43-44; Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 118; John Higham, “The Rise of American Intellectual History,” *American Historical Review* vol. 56, no. 3 (April 1951), 466. For the Midwest, moreover, the “Puritan” influence was but a fraction of the religious influence in the region, which included large numbers of Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and other denominations. Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Midwest, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 5.

⁷¹Hoffman, “Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s,” 263; Teachout, *The Skeptic*, 125; Kazin, *On Native Grounds*, 196. On the advantages of having a convenient enemy and, more

specifically, the need for a new, more "usable past," Van Wyck Brooks wondered in 1918 if "we might even invent one?" Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *Dial*, April 11, 1918. Brooks's ally Randolph Bourne said "If there were no puritans we should have to invent them." Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 66.

⁷²Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," Lucy Maddox (ed), *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 31.

⁷³Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 10-12; Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s," 252; Edward Abrahams, *The Lyrical Left: Randolph Bourne, Alfred Stieglitz, and the Origins of Cultural Radicalism in America* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1986), 6-11; John Strausbaugh, *The Village: 400 Years of Beats and Bohemians, Radicals and Rogues: A History of Greenwich Village* (New York, Ecco, 2013).

⁷⁴Harlan Hatcher, *Creating the American Novel* (New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1935), 77.

⁷⁵Warren I. Susman, "A Second Country: The Expatriate Image," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* vol. 3, no. 2 (Summer 1961), 174, 183; Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 140.

⁷⁶Shideler, "Flappers and Philosophers, and Farmers," 294 (source of Lippmann quote). In *Main Street*, a suffrage leader instructs Carol that the "Middlewest is double-Puritan—prairie Puritan on top of New England Puritan." Lewis, *Main Street* (New York, New American Library, Signet Classics, 2008 [1920]), 462.

⁷⁷Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 10.

⁷⁸Carl Van Doren to Sinclair Lewis, November 22, 1920, Box 49, FF 630, Lewis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," 606; Richard Handler, "Boasian Anthropology and the Critique of American Culture," *American Quarterly* vol. 42, no. 2 (June 1990), 252-53; Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 97.

⁷⁹Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s," 252. For a critique of intellectuals' and cultural rebels' exultation of the "primitive" and the neglect of the common life of the Midwest, see Ruth Suckow, "The Folk Idea in American Life," *Scribner's Magazine* vol. 88 (September 1930), 245-55. On the "implicit" radicalism of anthropology and its criticism of "Anglo-Saxon custom," see James Atlas, *Bellow: A Biography* (New York, Random House, 2000), 50.

⁸⁰Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," 606-7; Watson, *The Modern Mind*, 277-81.

⁸¹Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 99; Michael C. Steiner, "Regionalism in the Great Depression," *Geographical Review* vol. 73, no. 4 (October 1983), 433.

⁸²Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 98.

⁸³Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 91 (model); May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," 407; Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review* vol. 104, no. 4 (October 1999), 1158; Vicente L. Rafael, "Regionalism, Area Studies, and the Accidents of History," *American Historical Review* vol. 104, no. 4 (October 1999), 1209; Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York, Knopf, 1999), 140. Sociological theory privileged the triumph of the "modern" over the "backward folk." Mary Neth, "Seeing the Midwest with Peripheral Vision: Identities, Narratives, and Region," in *The Identity of the American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001), 836. See also Nathan Glazer, "The 'Alienation' of Modern Man: Some Diagnoses of the Malady," *Commentary* vol. 3, no. 4 (April 1947), 378-79. The sociological work of Robert Park at the University of Chicago became especially prominent. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals*

and *Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 100. On the related role of Thorstein Veblen, see also Morton White, *Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism* (New York, Viking Press, 1949), 180-202.

⁸⁴Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," 608 (source of quotation); Hutner, *What America Read*, 90-91; Watson, *The Modern Mind*, 212-15; Christopher Shannon, *Conspicuous Criticism: Tradition, The Individual, and Culture in American Thought, from Veblen to Mills* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 27.

⁸⁵Henry F. May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* vol. 43, no. 3 (December 1956), 408 (lag). Although often viewed as supporting the village revolt thesis, some sociologists embraced themes supportive of the regionalists' critique of the social costs of a declining rural culture and the growth of urban life. They recognized the costs of breaking away, as one sociologist said, "from home ties, from church affiliations, from moral obligations." Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 90. While the prominent sociologist Louis Wirth thought there was relatively "little in the way of sociological study of midwestern towns," he noted that Chicago was "one of the most intensively studied cities in the world." Wirth to Stanley Pargellis, June 27, 1947, NL 03/05/06, Box 2, FF 46, Pargellis Papers, Newberry Library.

⁸⁶Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 158 (quotation); Thomas D. Horton, "Sinclair Lewis: The Symbol of an Era," *North American Review* vol. 248, no. 2 (Winter 1939/1940), 381. By seeming sociological, the work thus had a larger impact on historical interpretation. Ronald M. Grosh, "Provincialism and Cosmopolitanism: A Re-Assessment of Early Midwestern Realism," *Midwestern Miscellany* vol. 21 (1993), 16. See also Stephen S. Conroy, "Sinclair Lewis's Sociological Imagination," *American Literature* vol. 42, no. 3 (November 1970), 348-62.

⁸⁷Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 159 (quoting Mark Schorer); Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 147.

⁸⁸Benjamin Schwarz, "Sheer Data."

⁸⁹Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 160.

⁹⁰Benjamin Schwarz, "Sheer Data."

⁹¹Kazin, *On Native Grounds*, 194; Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 34; Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 61; Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930* (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 1970), 47-9; Watson, *The Modern Mind*, 273; Carter, *Another Part of the Twenties*, 38-39; Theodore S. Hamerow, *Reflections on History and Historians* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 188; Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine*, 170-88; Lawrence R. Samuel, *Shrink: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2013). See also Frederick Hoffman, *Freudianism and the Literary Mind* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1957, 2nd edition [1945]), 52-8 and C.B. Stendler, "New Ideas for Old: How Freudism Was Received in the United States from 1900-1925," *Journal of Educational Psychology* (April 1947), 202 (connecting the popularization of Freud to the postwar mood and the "revolt against the accepted American order" and social mores) (*italics added*).

⁹²Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s," 249.

⁹³Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s," 250.

⁹⁴Blake, *Beloved Community*, 50-51.

⁹⁵Aaron, *Writers on the Left*, 62-64; Ekirch, *Ideologies and Utopias*, 59-61. Dimitri von Mohrenschildt explains that throughout the 1920s among the "rebels" and "liberals and left-wing groups of American intelligentsia there was a steadily increasing interest in revolutionary Russia" in "American Intelligentsia and Russia of the N.E.P. [1921-28]," *Russian Review* vol. 6, no. 2 (Spring 1947), 59-60.

⁹⁶Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, vii. See also Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 110; Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims:*

Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society (New York, Oxford University Press, 1980), 76-77; Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, 33; and Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 106-7; Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine*, 148-69.

⁹⁷Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 151.

⁹⁸Carl Van Doren noted that by 1932 "many of the younger writers in New York were communists or inclined to communism" (he had originally written "most," not "many"). Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 286, Box 7, FF 9, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University; Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 117 (intensification; proletarian).

⁹⁹Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, 117. Attacks on the middle class were common among intellectuals and writers of the era and the "great question for many critics was to determine the revolutionary potential" of literary works. Hutner, *What America Read*, 6. The village revolt tradition gave the politically inclined "literary support for theories of sovereignty which assumed that the people were fools and the institutions of a foolish people must be corrupt and contemptible." DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 46.

¹⁰⁰Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 30 (source of quotation). Van Doren thought the "best American literature has always inclined toward the left." Van Doren, "To the Left: To the Subsoil," *Partisan Review & Anvil* vol. 3, no. 1 (February 1936), 9.

¹⁰¹Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 31.

¹⁰²Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 165.

¹⁰³Louis M. Hacker, "Sections—or Classes," *The Nation*, July 26, 1933; Scott C. Zeman, "Historian Louis M. Hacker's 'Coincidental Conversion' to the Truth," *Historian* vol. 61, no. 1 (Fall 1998), 89; Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*, 152; Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 446-47. See also Hacker, "Frederick Jackson Turner: Non-economic Historian," *New Republic*, June 5, 1935.

¹⁰⁴Zeman, "Historian Louis M. Hacker's 'Coincidental Conversion' to the Truth," 87; Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly* vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 1964), 258.

¹⁰⁵Susman, "History and the American Intellectual," 254; Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism*, 127.

¹⁰⁶Zeman, "Historian Louis M. Hacker's 'Coincidental Conversion' to the Truth," 91.

¹⁰⁷Blake, *Beloved Community*, 134 (negative quote); Susman, "History and the American Intellectual," 256.

¹⁰⁸Susman, "History and the American Intellectual," 258.

¹⁰⁹Turner quoted in Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 21, n. 29.

¹¹⁰The "urban experience" in places such as Greenwich Village served as a contrast with the "revolt from the village that energized many leading figures of the rebellion." Leslie Fishbein, review of Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick (eds), *1915, the Cultural Moment: The New Politics, the New Woman and New Psychology, the New Art & the New Theater in America* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1999), in *Journal of American History* vol. 79, no. 4 (March 1993), 1648; Danbom, "The Professors and the Plowmen in American History Today," 107.

¹¹¹Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 196; Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People*, 910; Oscar Handlin, *Truth in History* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979), 98; Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly* vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 1964), 258.

¹¹²Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence*, 134.

¹¹³Martin, *H.L. Mencken and the Debunkers*, 12, 88.

¹¹⁴Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence*, 135.

¹¹⁵Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 26.

¹¹⁶Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 177. Roderick Nash notes how “eager” publishers were to find writers who could muse on life in Paris during the 1920s and how publishers believed that the “public appetite for the fabulousness of the 1920s to be unsatiated.” Nash, *The Nervous Generation*, 18, 20. Welford Dunaway Taylor also notes how the “tastes of the publishing industry have been largely shaped by the native New York ambience.” Taylor, “Anderson and the Problem of Belonging,” in David D. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson: Dimensions of His Literary Art* (Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1976), 63.

¹¹⁷Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine*, 8.

¹¹⁸Hamlin Garland, “Current Fiction Heroes,” *New York Times Book Review*, December 23, 1923. Garland also noted the ratchet effect of fashion on authors and how, to seem edgy, “each must go a little further than his predecessor.” Garland, “Current Fiction Heroes.”

¹¹⁹Masters to August Derleth, January 15, 1939, Derleth Papers, WHS.

¹²⁰Sara A. Kosiba, “A Successful Revolt? The Redefinition of Midwestern Literary Culture in the 1920s and 1930s” (Ph.D. dissertation, Kent State University, 2007), 100 (italics added). The “hard-drinking Red Lewis was the media image of the American novelist in the twenties.” Hutner, *What America Read*, 42. Joseph Wood Krutch argued that the “social situation” and the “cultural climate” made Lewis’s early books “perfectly apropos” and “strongly favored him.” Crutch, “Sinclair Lewis,” *The Nation*, February, 24, 1951. By the time Lewis and Anderson published their most remembered village revolt works, Edward A. Martin notes, “contempt for life in the provinces was a fashionable attitude.” Martin, *H.L. Mencken and the Debunkers*, 8. New York publishers above all wanted to make a profit from this fashionable trend. Tremaine McDowell, “Regionalism in American Literature,” *Minnesota History* vol. 20, no. 2 (June 1939), 112. On authors who want “to sell many copies of a book” by being sensational and the mistake of interpreting this to reflect the wider beliefs of a culture, see Bruce Kuklick, “Myth and Symbol in American Studies,” *American Quarterly* vol. 24 (October 1972), 444.

¹²¹*Main Street* was “the most sensational publishing event in twentieth-century American publishing history” in part because of Lewis’s marketing. Benjamin Schwarz, “Sheer Data”; Eileen Power, “New Novels,” *New Statesman*, February 4, 1933 (calling Lewis a “publicist ran than an artist”). R.T. Prescott said the “revolt” “crescendoeo in a pyrotechnical detonation in Sinclair Lewis.” Prescott, “Ruth Suckow,” 138. August Derleth recognized how Lewis’s career “throve on adversity.” August Derleth to Sinclair Lewis, October 5, 1937, Box 46, FF 488, Lewis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University. Hemingway thought Lewis was “exploiting” his topic. Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 161. Lewis was intense about publicity, shrewdly business-like with editors, insistent on the broad distribution New York publishing houses could provide, and willing to browbeat writers such as Frederick Manfred about abandoning a St. Paul publisher—a lowly “Midland outfit”—in favor of New York outlets. “Got to have a big house in the East,” Lewis said, or “you’re writing in a wilderness, in a vacuum. To nobody.” Frederick F. Manfred, “Sinclair Lewis: A Portrait,” *American Scholar* vol. 23, no. 2 (Spring 1954), 179-82; Lewis to Frederick Manfred, February 10, 1946 and Manfred to Van Wyck Brooks, May 6, 1946, Box 13, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota; Manfred, “Some Notes on Sinclair Lewis’ Funeral,” *Minnesota Review* vol. 3, no. 1 (Fall 1962), 89. When choosing the name for his novel *Babbitt*, Lewis made his choice carefully and correctly believed that “two years from now we’ll have them talking of Babbitt.” Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 165. On Lewis’s obsession with marketing, publicity, and winning prizes and his attempts to disguise such ambitions, see Martin Light, “A Further Word on Sinclair Lewis’ Prize-Consciousness,” *Western Humanities Review* vol. 15 (Autumn 1961), 368-71. Gore Vidal noted that as “a careerist, Lewis was an Attila. In his pursuit of blurbs,

he took no prisoners." Vidal, "The Romance of Sinclair Lewis," 16. Brooke Allen also noted Lewis's "insatiable need for attention." Brooke Allen, "Sinclair Lewis: The Bard of Discontents," *Hudson Review* (Spring 2003), 193. On the intense marketing of the cultural rebels generally, see Kevin J.H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt, "Introduction," in Kevin J.H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt (eds), *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996), 6-9 and essays in same. When commenting on the village rebels, John Frederick said a "good way to become famous is to attack something." John T. Frederick, "Ruth Suckow and the Middle Western Literary Movement," *English Journal* vol. 20, no. 1 (January 1931), 5.

¹²²Thomas T. McAvoy, "What is the Midwestern Mind?" *The Midwest: Myth or Reality?* (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), 54.

¹²³On the role of "literary politics or 'connections'" in the East which could afford "more publicity and momentum" to published works, see Grosh, "Provincialism and Cosmopolitanism," 17. On the branding and marketing of a Midwestern writer, the forces of consumerism during the 1920s, the use of a "national literary network," and how a career is "strategically marketed," see Guy Reynolds, "Willa Cather's Case: Region and Reputation," in Timothy R. Mahoney and Wendy J. Katz (eds), *Regionalism and the Humanities* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 79-81, 84. Another commentator noted how much better Northeastern writers were at "literary politics" and charming the "community of editors and publicists and review specialists." Edward Hoagland, "But Where Is Home?" *New York Times Book Review*, December 23, 1973.

¹²⁴Edward Watts, "The Midwest as a Colony: Transnational Regionalism," in Mahoney and Katz (eds), *Regionalism and the Humanities*, 172 (coercions). On the "dearth of publishing centers" in the middle of the country and the resulting "bottleneck of publishing" in New York, see Joseph A. Brandt, "A Pioneering Regional Press," *Southwest Review* vol. 26 (Autumn 1940), 26.

¹²⁵McDowell, "Regionalism in American Literature," 114. McDowell was the first professor of American literature at the University of Minnesota and promoted the creation of the school's American Studies program. John T. Flanagan, Theodore C. Blegen: A Memoir (Northfield, Minnesota, Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1977), 78.

¹²⁶Krause, review of Roy W. Meyer, *The Middle Western Farm Novel in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1965), in *Minnesota History* vol. 39, no. 7 (Fall 1965), 293 (source of quotation); Robert C. Steensma, "'Our Comings and Goings': Herbert Krause's *Wind Without Rain*," in Arthur R. Huseboe and William Geyer (eds), *Where the West Begins: Essays on the Middle Border and Siouland Writing, in Honor of Herbert Krause* (Sioux Falls, Center for Western Studies Press, 1978), 14. Early in her career, the Iowa regionalist Ruth Suckow, in a characteristic concern, worried about being "so far away from the centers of writing" and asked is "there any hope for one who is not in Chicago or New York?" Leedice McAnelly Kissane, *Ruth Suckow* (New York, Twayne Publishers, Inc, 1969), 22. Speaking of the South, Cleanth Brooks noted the aggressive critiques of Southern fiction by over-compensating Southerners "who meant to show that they were just as emancipated as the critics of New York." Cleanth Brooks, "Regionalism in American Literature," *Journal of Southern History* vol. 26, no. 1 (February 1960), 37.

¹²⁷On the impact of "antibourgeois prejudice permeating literary academe," see Hutner, *What America Read*, 6. Hutner notes that if "history is written by the victors, so too is literary history." His book attempts to highlight the literary works of the 1920s that are not part of the "rebellion" genre. Hutner, *What America Read*, 6. On the canonization of certain works—including Van Doren's attempt to "enshrine" the village rebels—and the exclusion and neglect of others, see Hutner, *What America Read*, 42-50.

¹²⁸See generally Nash, *The Nervous Generation*, 1-32.

¹²⁹On the interpretive problems of the “lost generation,” see Marc Dolan, “The (H)story of Their Lives: Mythic Autobiography and “The Lost Generation,”” *Journal of American Studies* vol. 27, no. 1 (April 1993), 35-56.

¹³⁰Scott Russell Sanders, “Writing from the Center,” *Georgia Review* vol. 48, no. 4 (Winter 1994), 735. For an early summary treatment of Midwestern literature which emphasizes negative portrayals of the Midwest, see John T. Flanagan, “Literary Protest in the Midwest,” *Southwest Review* vol. 32, no. 2 (1949), 148-57.

¹³¹Shideler, “*Flappers and Philosophers*, and Farmers,” 283.

¹³²Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 27. Cowley was, in effect, making an argument for a stronger grounding in regionalism and goes on to chide Harvard for its efforts to shed any “regional or economic ties.” Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 29. Cowley also criticizes the “life-is-a-circus type of cynicism rendered popular by the *American Mercury*: everything is rotten, people are fools; let’s all get drunk and laugh at them.” Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 35.

¹³³Benjamin Schwarz, “Sheer Data.” Fitzgerald later said that the “jazz age” only applied to the “upper tenth of [the] nation.” Nash, *The Nervous Generation*, 3.

¹³⁴Kosiba, “A Successful Revolt?,” 54.

¹³⁵Zona Gale, “The American Village Defended,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 19, 1931; Kosiba, “A Successful Revolt?,” 54-55 (turning). Gale was changed by the “force of the current” of the 1920s. Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 136. Gale “changed with the times.” Leon T. Dickinson, “America’s Main Street,” *Chicago Sun Book Week*, May 4, 1947. Van Doren praised Gale for abandoning her “sweet and dainty” and “sugary” early works, which he saw as “dull and petty.” Van Doren, “The Revolt from the Village,” 410-11. I want to thank Robert Dorman for first highlighting the implications of Gale’s transition to me. For the process in reverse, also note how Mencken “lost most of his audience” when became “more conservative.” Martin, *H.L. Mencken and the Debunkers*, 43. Mencken was seen as a “crank” at the end of his life for opposing the New Deal and his anti-Semitism. Joan Acocella, “On the Contrary,” *New Yorker*, December 9, 2002.

¹³⁶Irving Howe thought the Chicago Renaissance “worked on the assumption that in America there was no cultural tradition either valuable or accessible” and that its participants understood that “they were trapped in the Midwest’s dead-end as a sectional culture.” Irving Howe, *Sherwood Anderson* (New York, William Sloane Associates, 1951), 65, 74. He also thought the Chicago writers were too limited to succeed at literature because they were provincial “townsmen.” Howe, *Sherwood Anderson*, 60. Robert M. Crunden also focuses on the Chicago scene’s modernism and its writers’ interest in socialism, psychoanalysis, and sexual liberation and their belief that religion was a “fraud” and that “small towns repressed” the soul and Anderson’s role in the “revolt of Americans against their village upbringing.” Crunden, *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885-1917* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), 122, 124. The Chicago Renaissance was also known as the “Chicago Liberation” for what it “represented: a release from the restraints of outmoded Victorianism and Puritanism.” David D. Anderson, “Midwestern Writers and the Myth of the Search,” *Georgia Review* vol. 34, no. 1 (Spring 1980), 138. See also Richard Lingeman, *Small Town America: A Narrative History 1620-The Present* (New York, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1980), 366-67, 376; n.a., “The Second Annual Newberry Library Conference on American Studies,” *Newberry Library Bulletin* 2nd series, no. 1 (October 1952), 25-29.

¹³⁷Timothy B. Spears, *Chicago Dreaming: Midwesterners and the City, 1871-1919* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005), xvii (italics added). Spears, drawing on Van Doren’s revolt thesis and Raymond Williams’ Marxism, points to what he sees as Chicago’s surprisingly strong “bohemian work—radical politics, the talk and practice of free love, and the commitment to avant-garde representations.” Spears, *Chicago Dreaming*, 209-10.

¹³⁸Grosh, “Provincialism and Cosmopolitanism,” 9-18; Quantic, “The Revolt from the Village and Middle Western Fiction, 1870-1915,” 5-16.

¹³⁹Although written after Van Doren's essay, the title of the final chapter in O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1927) sufficiently makes the point: "The Great Plain Drinks the Blood of the Christian Men and Is Satisfied."

¹⁴⁰While Van Doren did recognize the earlier critical work of E.W. Howe, for example, he believed that such earlier works failed to dethrone the "sacred" nature of the "cult of the village." Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 407. In *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, Weber correctly emphasizes the ambivalence and complexity of writing about the Midwest, but he also tends to find the negative portrayals more satisfactory. For a critique of the tendency to miss earlier, pre-revolt works which included criticism of the Midwest, see Quantic, "The Revolt from the Village and Middle Western Fiction, 1870-1915," 5-16. See also Margaret D. Stuhr, "The Safe Middle West: Escape to and Escape from Home," *MidAmerica* vol. 14 (1987), 18-27. On Howe, his son Gene A. Howe wrote "My Father Was the Most Wretchedly Unhappy Man I Ever Knew," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 25, 1941.

¹⁴¹Masters to Derleth, December 15, 1944, Derleth Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society (never); Robert Van Gelder, "An Interview with Mr. Edgar Lee Masters," *New York Times*, February 15, 1942. In contrast to Masters's rejection of his designation as a village rebel, Van Doren, in the revolt thesis, "found the Masters poem the genesis of all the literature of protest against village life that appeared between 1915 and the early 1920s." Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 296 (emphasis added).

¹⁴²Robert Van Gelder, "An Interview with Mr. Edgar Lee Masters," *New York Times*, February 15, 1942.

¹⁴³Masters to Derleth, December 31, 1939, Derleth Papers, WHS; Edgar Lee Masters, "The Genesis of Spoon River," *American Mercury* vol. 28 (January 1933), 39 (joyous); Ernest Earnest, "A One-Eyed View of Spoon River," *CEA Critic* (November 1968), 3-4; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 101. Masters emphasized that there were "poems in my *Spoon River* books about faithful and loving hearts, about kind and generous and hopeful people." August Derleth, *Three Literary Men: A Memoir of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters* (New York, Candlelight Press, 1963), 42. Masters noted that he had "written much beside the *Spoon Rivers*" and that he had "stood for that side of man which hopes and toils in spite of the biting insects that infest this bank and shoal of time." Masters to Derleth, December 31, 1939, Derleth Papers, WHS. Of the people of the "Sangamon river neighborhood," Masters said they "were hospitable, warm-hearted and generous beyond any people I have known, and full of the will to live." Masters was more critical, however, of the town of Lewistown. Masters said he wrote *Spoon River* to "awaken that American vision, that love of liberty which the best men of the Republic strove to win for us, and to bequeath to time." Masters, "The Genesis of Spoon River," 39, 41, 55.

¹⁴⁴Loving, "Introduction," Masters, *Spoon River Anthology*, xviii. Masters is remembered as a "one-book author." Ronald Primeau, *Beyond Spoon River: The Legacy of Edgar Lee Masters* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981), x. Aside from Masters's *Spoon River*, critics thought, the "rest of his work merited only a speedy oblivion" and they "disregard his large output as insignificant and consider his one important book as somewhat of a literary accident." John T. Flanagan, "The Spoon River Poet," *Southwest Review* vol. 38, no. 3 (Summer 1953), 227, 237. Masters thought his work faded, in part, due to his hostility to the "experiments" and "driveling idiocies" of the "modernists." Masters to Derleth, September 13, 1943, Derleth Papers, WHS.

¹⁴⁵Masters to Derleth, December 31, 1939, Derleth Papers, WHS.

¹⁴⁶Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 42.

¹⁴⁷Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 42 (emphasis in original).

¹⁴⁸Masters to Derleth, March 22, 1938, Derleth Papers, WHS; Lois Hartley, "Edgar Lee Masters: Biographer and Historian," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* vol. 54, no. 1 (Spring 1961), 57. Masters said his "heart is with the prairies, and for that matter with

Wisconsin and Michigan.” Masters to Derleth, September 14, 1941, Derleth Papers, WHS. For a similar Jeffersonianism from another once-prominent and now-forgotten Midwestern writer who was rejected by critics by the time of World War II, see David D. Anderson, *Louis Bromfield* (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1964), 173-79. Anderson concludes that in “all his works Bromfield is very much a Midwesterner and an agrarian romantic.” Anderson, *Louis Bromfield*, 175. Bromfield wrote that the “‘revolt’ was the product of the excitable young men who issued manifestos, created riots in theatres and launched new revues.” Bromfield, “The Novel in Transition,” in Oliver M. Sayler, *Revolt in the Arts: A Survey of the Creation, Distribution and Appreciation of Art in America* (New York, Brentano’s, 1930), 288. By the time of the war, Bromfield was dismissed by Edmund Wilson as not simply a “second-rate” writer, but a “fourth rank” writer. Wilson, “What Became of Louis Bromfield,” *New Yorker*, May 13, 1944.

¹⁴⁹Lois Hartley, “Edgar Lee Masters, Political Essayist,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* vol. 57, no. 3 (Autumn 1964), 252, 259 (source of quotation); Robert Van Gelder, “An Interview with Mr. Edgar Lee Masters,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1942; Gross, “The Revolt that Wasn’t,” 5.

¹⁵⁰Masters to Derleth, April 10, 1938, Derleth Papers, WHS; Masters, *Lincoln, the Man* (New York, Dodd, Mead, 1931); Hartley, “Edgar Lee Masters: Biographer and Historian,” 61-65 (source of quotations). Perhaps because of his decentralist views, Masters voted for Willkie in 1940. Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 31. Masters saw Lincoln as a “Hamiltonian clothed as a country rube.” Masters to Derleth, September 17, 1941, Derleth Papers, WHS.

¹⁵¹Masters manuscript, “Survey of the Country,” July 21, 1939, Derleth Papers, WHS (quotation); Masters, *The Sangamon* (New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1942); Primeau, *Beyond Spoon River*, 168-69; Hartley, “Edgar Lee Masters,” 77-82; Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 147; William F. Thompson, “Introduction,” Derleth, *The Wisconsin: River of a Thousand Isles* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985 [1942]), xi-xii. Masters thought Chicago was the “most ridiculous city in the country.” Masters to Derleth, October 25, 1943, Derleth Papers, WHS.

¹⁵²Hartley, “Edgar Lee Masters,” 83; Ronald Primeau, “‘Awakened and Harmonized’: Edgar Lee Masters’ Emersonian Midwest,” *MidAmerica* vol. 5 (1978), 42-43. In Van Doren’s estimation, by contrast, Masters could “hate as no other American poet does.” Van Doren, “The Revolt from the Village,” 408.

¹⁵³Hartley, “Edgar Lee Masters, Political Essayist,” 251; Robert Van Gelder, “An Interview with Mr. Edgar Lee Masters,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1942 (roots) (italics added). Ronald Primeau concluded that Masters was “a ‘regionalist’ to the end.” Primeau, *Beyond Spoon River*, 183.

¹⁵⁴Masters, “James Whitcomb Riley: A Sketch of His Life and an Appraisal of His Work,” *Century Magazine* (October 1927), 704-15. Masters said that Riley “never lost perspective upon himself” and “did not get the idea that his success entitled him to leave Indiana” for Boston or New York. Masters, “James Whitcomb Riley.” Masters also praised the Midwestern poet Vachel Lindsay and in a biography concluded that “Lindsay’s ancestry, his education, his religion, his morals, his tastes were Middle West.” Masters, *Vachel Lindsay: A Poet in America* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), vii.

¹⁵⁵Anderson to Derleth, January 17, 1940, Derleth Papers, WHS.

¹⁵⁶Walter B. Rideout, *Sherwood Anderson: A Writer in America* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 46, 48 (source of quotation); Howe, *Sherwood Anderson*, 15-16.

¹⁵⁷Glen A. Love, “Winesburg, Ohio and the Rhetoric of Silence,” *American Literature* vol. 40, no. 1 (March 1968), 38-40. See also Love, “Horses or Men: Primitive and Pastoral Elements in Sherwood Anderson,” in Hilbert H. Campbell and Charles E. Modlin (eds), *Sherwood Anderson: Centennial Studies* (Troy, New York, Whitson Publishing Co., 1976), 235-45.

¹⁵⁸Love, "Winesburg, Ohio and the Rhetoric of Silence," 41; Brom Weber, *Sherwood Anderson* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1964), 20; Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), xv. Instead of keeping *Winesburg* trapped inside the "village revolt" rubric, John Ferres explores its much deeper agrarian sympathies in Ferres, "The Nostalgia of *Winesburg, Ohio*," *Newberry Library Bulletin* vol. 6, no. 8 (July 1971), 235-42.

¹⁵⁹Lionel Trilling, "Sherwood Anderson," *Kenyon Review* vol. 3, no. 3 (Summer 1941), 297-98.

¹⁶⁰Trilling, "Sherwood Anderson," 297-98, 301; Weber, *Sherwood Anderson*, 30. Trilling recognized an "odd, quirky, undisciplined religious strain" in Anderson and a "graciousness or gracefulness which seemed to arise from an innocence of heart." Trilling, "Sherwood Anderson," 294-95.

¹⁶¹Love, "Winesburg, Ohio and the Rhetoric of Silence," 43 (italics added).

¹⁶²Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 279 (full circle quotation); David D. Anderson, "Sherwood Anderson and the Coming of the New Deal," *Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* vol. 5, no. 2 (1972), 92.

¹⁶³Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 115 (source of quotation). Anderson also thought that Twain "belonged out here in the Middle West" and had "lost something of his innocence" when under the influence of Easterners. Howard Mumford Jones, *Letters of Sherwood Anderson* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 31. Anderson was also misunderstood because of his quirkiness and what one critic called "typical Andersonian nebulousness." Ralph Cianco, "'The Sweetness of the Twisted Apples': Unity of Vision in *Winesburg, Ohio*," *PMLA* vol. 87, no. 5 (October 1972), 994; Brom Weber, "Anderson and 'The Essence of Things,'" *Sewanee Review* vol. 59, no. 4 (Autumn 1951), 682.

¹⁶⁴Van Doren, "Accusation," *Nation*, November 23, 1921; Anderson to Van Doren, November 22, 1921, FF 4, Box 14, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University.

¹⁶⁵Anderson to Van Doren, November 22, 1921, FF 4, Box 14, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University.

¹⁶⁶Maurice Beebe, review of David D. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), in *American Literature* vol. 40, no. 4 (January 1969), 570.

¹⁶⁷Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 156.

¹⁶⁸Brom Weber notes the "excessive personal animus directed against Anderson by Howe." Weber, "Anderson and 'The Essence of Things,'" 681.

¹⁶⁹Howe, *Sherwood Anderson*; Weber, "Anderson and 'The Essence of Things,'" 683 (source of quotation). Susan Sontag also found Sherwood Anderson, according to David D. Anderson, "almost laughable." Anderson, "Introduction," in David D. Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson: Dimensions of His Literary Art* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 1976), xi. Anderson, from the "unfashionable Midwest," was seen as "strange if not downright outlandish" by New York critics. Welford Dunaway Taylor, "Anderson and the Problem of Belonging," in Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson*, 63.

¹⁷⁰Howe, "American Moderns," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Morton White (eds), *Paths of American Thought* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), 311; Howe, *Sherwood Anderson*, 75, 197-213.

¹⁷¹Joseph Ward Krutch opined that "Sinclair Lewis loved notoriety almost as much as he loved fame." Crutch, "Sinclair Lewis," *The Nation*, February, 24, 1951, 179.

¹⁷²Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 34; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 152; Richard Lingeman, "Sinclair Lewis Arrives," *New England Review* vol. 23, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 39; Barnaby Conrad, "A Portrait of Sinclair Lewis: America's 'Angry Man' in the Autumn of his Life," *Horizon* (March 1979), 42; Lingeman, *Sinclair*

Lewis, 51-53, 104, 484; Vidal, "The Romance of Sinclair Lewis," 14. Joseph Wood Krutch argued that the "social situation" and the "cultural climate" made Lewis's early books "perfectly apropos" and "strongly favored him." Crutch, "Sinclair Lewis," 179. On the strong influence of Wells and his call for a "revolt of the competent" against the provincial, see Fred Siegel, "The Godfather of American Liberalism," *City Journal* (Spring 2009). Lewis named his son Wells after H.G. Wells. Mary Austin to Sinclair Lewis, December 17, 1920, Box 48, FF 447, Lewis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

¹⁷³John J. Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis: Home at Last* (Bloomington, MN, Voyageur Press, 1981), 14, 16; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 146-47, 150. Van Doren thought Lewis had "revenge to take upon the narrow community in which he grew up." Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 410. On Lewis's many personal foibles and family difficulties, see the account by his ex-wife Dorothy Thompson, "The Boy and Man from Sauk Centre," *Atlantic Monthly* vol. 206 (November 1960), in which Thompson minimizes the claims of Lewis's bitterness and opines that the sports, hunting, and outdoor activities of rural Minnesota created an "environment which was not uncongenial but whose demands [Lewis] could not meet." On Lewis and Thompson, see Vincent Sheen, *Dorothy and Red* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1963). August Derleth also downplayed Lewis's supposed resentment. Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 11.

¹⁷⁴Conrad, "A Portrait of Sinclair Lewis," 42 (ugly). Gore Vidal said Lewis "was garboly ugly: red-haired, physically ill-coordinated, suffered from acne that was made cancerous by primitive X-ray treatments." Vidal, "The Romance of Sinclair Lewis," 14. Frederick Manfred also noted that Lewis was "incredibly ugly" but that after a half hour of conversation with Lewis "males forget about it." That Manfred thought females did not may explain why Manfred thought Lewis was "tremendously suspicious of women." Frederick Manfred to Van Wyck Brooks, May 6, 1946, Box 13, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota. On this point, James McManus condemns those writers who lack the "emotional intelligence to stop associating their pimply emotional frustration with where it took place." McManus, "Your What Hurts?" in Becky Bradway (ed), *In the Middle of the Middle West: Literary Nonfiction from the Heartland* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003), 15. On Conrad's final completion of an assignment Lewis gave him, see Adam Nagourney, "After 60 Years, a Promise Kept to Sinclair Lewis," *New York Times*, January 26, 2011.

¹⁷⁵Frederick Manfred to Mark Schorer, October 23, 1953, Box 16, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota; Conrad, "A Portrait of Sinclair Lewis," 40-51; Allen, "Sinclair Lewis," 192. Lewis extended great praise, for example, to the University of Minnesota's regional fellowship program designed to "encourage youngsters in regional writing." Helen Clapesattle to Theodore Blegen, May 15, 1944, FF Fellows, Box 5, Blegen Papers, UM Archives. When Barnaby Conrad and Mark Schorer were discussing Schorer's extensive biography of Lewis at Trader Vic's in San Francisco in 1960, Schorer remarked on studying Lewis: "I like him less every day, every week, every month, every year." Conrad, "Arts & Letters," *Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 2002), 114. Schorer worked on his massive Lewis biography for a decade and was greatly relieved at "being free of the thing at last." Mark Schorer to August Derleth, June 27, 1960, Derleth Papers, WHS. Gore Vidal marveled at how Schorer's critical biography of Lewis "could effectively eliminate a popular and famous novelist" from the cultural scene. Vidal, "The Romance of Sinclair Lewis," 14. Schorer was born in Sauk City, Wisconsin and collaborated with the Wisconsin regionalist August Derleth, who was also from Sauk City. Derleth noted Lewis's assistance to budding writers and criticized Schorer's biography for neglecting this aspect of his career. Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 13. In a 1937 speech to the Wisconsin Education Association, Lewis strongly advocated Derleth's work, especially the various books of his "Sac Prairie Saga." Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 16. Derleth remained an advocate of Lewis and rejected the idea that he revolted from the village, while Schorer thought that "Lewis did revolt from the vil-

lage," "lied" about and obscured his unhappy youth, and tried to make his youth seem "normal." Schorer thought Lewis's revolt had failed and that Lewis "did always remain a provincial, stuck to the end in Sauk Centre but unable to endure it." Mark Schorer to August Derleth, September 30, 1958, Derleth Papers, WHS. When considering the work of Schorer, one should remember that he "came to loathe his subject." James Atlas, *Bellow: A Biography* (New York, Random House, 2000), x.

¹⁷⁶Zona Gale to Lewis, March 22, 1921, Box 47, FF 503 and Willa Cather to Lewis, April 14, [1920s?], Box 46, FF 470, both in Lewis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 146. Cather noted to Lewis that "[w]e have managed to hang together, though there are a good many people who would like to see us claw each other." Cather to Lewis, September 2, [1938?], Box 46, FF 470, Lewis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

¹⁷⁷Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 175. Lewis hoped the Iowan Wallace Stegner, for another example, would "get away from all the cultural quacks" at Harvard and "go back to Utah and Iowa, and put on the mantle of greatness that is awaiting him." Lewis, "Fools, Liars and Mr. DeVoto," *Saturday Review*, April 15, 1944, 11.

¹⁷⁸Lewis, "Minnesota, the Norse State" (1923), reprinted in Sally E. Parry (ed), *The Minnesota Stories of Sinclair Lewis* (St. Paul, Borealis Books, 2005), 14.

¹⁷⁹Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 450. In 1944, when living in Duluth and visiting Two Harbors and Grand Marais, Lewis wrote to Van Doren that "[a]s always, I'm fascinated by the Middlewest" and praised the beauty of fall on the North Shore of Lake Superior. Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 716.

¹⁸⁰William Holtz, "Sinclair Lewis, Rose Wilder Lane, and the Midwestern Short Novel," *Studies in Short Fiction* vol. 24, no. 1 (Winter 1987), 46; Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 452. Rumors circulated that Lewis was planning to write a novel about the Wisconsin faculty. Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 20-21. Van Doren commented that what Lewis "doesn't realize is that in order to have friends, one must be willing to suffer a little boredom, and Red has never learned that, and he has almost no friends left." Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 519. On Lewis's "passion for novelty and excitement" that prevented him from settling, see John T. Flanagan, "A Long Way to Gopher Prairie: Sinclair Lewis's Apprenticeship," *Southwest Review* vol. 32 (August 1947), 405. Lewis said he had "to combine being settled and working with having a taste of new lands." Lewis to Stuart Pratt Sherman, July 7, 1923, Box 2, Sherman Papers, University Archives, University of Illinois. An acting president of Iowa State University scotched a position for Lewis because he was viewed as a drunk and because of *Babbitt*, which had "misrepresented the American businessman and encouraged Middle Western students in their inferiority complex." Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 449.

¹⁸¹Lewis, *Main Street*, 69, 304; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 159.

¹⁸²Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 164; Richard Lingeman, "Home Town, USA," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1978; Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 320; Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 185; G. Thomas Tanselle, "Sinclair Lewis and Floyd Dell: Two Views of the Midwest," *Twentieth Century Literature* vol. 9, no. 4 (January 1964), 180, 182; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 164; Perry Miller, "The Incorruptible Sinclair Lewis," *Atlantic Monthly* (April 1951), 33.

¹⁸³Van Doren, *Three Worlds*, 153-9; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 164; Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 320. Richard Lingeman says that Lewis "hit the roof" when he read Van Doren's revolt thesis. Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 185. William Allen White appreciated such characters, but also thought *Main Street* focused too much on "the shady side of *Main Street*." Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 159. See also Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 285. The editor of the Sauk Centre *Herald* also wrote that "Sauk Centre is proud of Sinclair Lewis, but we've felt that in *Main Street* he only told one side of the story, missed the fun of the small town." Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 435.

¹⁸⁴Lingeman, "Sinclair Lewis Arrives," 35. Lewis's bristling at European criticism calls to mind his ex-wife's comments about his Minnesota roots: "He was as American as ham and eggs and strawberry shortcake, and always distinguishably so." Thompson, "The Boy and Man from Sauk Centre."

¹⁸⁵Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis*, 15 (source of quotation); Sally E. Parry, "Gopher Prairie, Zenith, and Grand Republic: Nice Places to Visit, But Would Even Sinclair Lewis Want to Live There?" *Midwestern Miscellany* vol. 20 (1992), 15-19.

¹⁸⁶Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 18-19. Lewis wrote in another letter that "[m]ind you, I like G.P. [Gopher Prairie], all the G.P.'s; I couldn't write about them so ardently if I didn't." Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 301. Austin often saw herself at the other "end of the rainbow" from critics such as Lewis. Witschi, "Sinclair Lewis, the Voice of Satire, and Mary Austin's *Revolt from the Village*," 77.

¹⁸⁷John T. Flanagan, "The Minnesota Backgrounds of Sinclair Lewis's Fiction," *Minnesota History* vol. 37, no. 1 (March 1960), 3. Lewis's father was a "staid Victorian" and Congregationalist and opposed the cultural rebellion and was not impressed with *Main Street*. Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis*, 5, 10, 19.

¹⁸⁸Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 168.

¹⁸⁹Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 171.

¹⁹⁰John Updike, "Exile on Main Street," *New Yorker* (May 17, 1993), 96. George Douglas similarly found, upon an earlier re-reading, that *Main Street* did not fit "our working stereotypes" and noted Lewis's "nostalgic attachment to and belief in the freedom and cleanliness of midwestern life." He concluded that *Main Street* had "become beclouded by our stereotypes of Lewis as heckler and village atheist." George H. Douglas, "Main Street after Fifty Years," *Prairie Schooner* vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 1970/1971), 340-41.

¹⁹¹Flanagan, "The Minnesota Backgrounds of Sinclair Lewis' Fiction," 2; C. Rath, "On the Occasion of Sinclair Lewis' Burial," *South Dakota Review* vol. 7 (1969), 46.

¹⁹²Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis*, 11. On the Byrant Public Library, see Wayne A. Wiegand, *Main Street Public Library: Community Places and Reading Spaces in the Rural Heartland, 1876-1956* (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2011), 11-46.

¹⁹³Flanagan, "The Minnesota Backgrounds of Sinclair Lewis's Fiction," 13.

¹⁹⁴Flanagan, "The Minnesota Backgrounds of Sinclair Lewis's Fiction," 3.

¹⁹⁵Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis*, xxi.

¹⁹⁶Rath, "On the Occasion of Sinclair Lewis's Burial," 44.

¹⁹⁷Lingeman, "Sinclair Lewis Arrives," 28. It was "scandal," Van Doren thought of *Spoon River*, that "spread its fame." Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 407.

¹⁹⁸Schwarz also notes the "literary community's consistent dismissal of Lewis after his early work and how the "literary tastemakers" lost interest in a "hopelessly dated" Lewis. Schwarz, "Sheer Data." On the privileging of Lewis's negative works and the tendency to ignore his positive portrayals, see Kenneth H. Wheeler, *Cultivating Regionalism: Higher Education and the Making of the American Midwest* (DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 99-101.

¹⁹⁹Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 173.

²⁰⁰Alfred Kazin, "Mark Schorer," *Book-of-the-Month Club News*, September 1961, 6, available in FF Mark Schorer, August Derleth Papers, WHS.

²⁰¹Lionel Trilling, "Mr. Lewis Goes Soft," *Kenyon Review* vol. 2, no. 3 (Summer 1940), 364, 366.

²⁰²Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 13.

²⁰³Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 42, 49; Masters to Derleth, December 31, 1939, Derleth Papers, WHS.

²⁰⁴August Derleth, "Masters and the Revolt from the Village," *Colorado Quarterly* vol. 8, no. 2 (Autumn 1959), 164.

²⁰⁵Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 48. Masters also called editors the "scum of the earth," "whimsical as whores, and as corrupt." Masters to Derleth, July 17, 1940, Derleth Papers, WHS.

²⁰⁶Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 34; Anderson to Derleth, January 4, 1940, Derleth Papers, WHS.

²⁰⁷Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 35. Anderson rejected, for example, Ima Honaker Herron's *The Small Town in American Literature* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1939). Anderson to Derleth, January 17, 1940, Derleth Papers, WHS. Herron's book included contrasting sections on the "The Battle of the Village" and the "Village Apologists."

²⁰⁸Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 12.

²⁰⁹Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 12.

²¹⁰Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 23.

²¹¹Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 13. Van Doren also included Floyd Dell, who had grown up in small-town Illinois and Davenport, Iowa, in his village rebel taxonomy because of Dell's novel *Moon-Calf* (1920), which was released just before *Main Street*. Dell later protested in his autobiography that it was "ridiculously untrue" to deem *Moon-Calf* a part of, as Ronald Weber says, an "exposé of the Midwest." *Moon-Calf* was dedicated to Dell's young Minnesota wife and the Midwest's "hospitality" toward the young. Dell also saw *Main Street* not as an "exposé" of the Midwestern small town but of Carol Kennicott's urban pretensions and abuse of the fictional Gopher Prairie and told Lewis that he was "too cruel to the...Middle West." Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 410-11; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 85 (exposé), 160 (cruel); Tanselle, "Sinclair Lewis and Floyd Dell," 175-78 (hospitality); Spears, *Chicago Dreaming*, 219; Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 150-51; Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 277; DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 99.

²¹²Van Doren, "The Revolt from the Village," 412; Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 35; Fitzgerald, "Early Success" (1937), in Edmund Wilson (ed), *The Crack-Up* (New York, New Directions, 1993), 88.

²¹³Edmund Wilson, "Fitzgerald before *The Great Gatsby*," in Alfred Kazin (ed), *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Work* (New York, Collier's, 1966), 79.

²¹⁴Clinton S. Burhans, "Structure and Theme in *This Side of Paradise*," *Journal of English and German Philology* vol. 68, no. 4 (October 1969), 605, n. 1.

²¹⁵Barry Gross, "This Side of Paradise: The Dominating Intention," *Studies in the Novel* vol. 1 no. 1 (Spring 1969), 51-59.

²¹⁶Jeffrey Hart, "Rediscovering Fitzgerald," *Sewanee Review* vol. 112, no. 2 (Spring 2004), 194.

²¹⁷Patricia Kane, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's St. Paul," *Minnesota History* vol. 45, no. 4 (Winter 1976), 141.

²¹⁸Kane, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's St. Paul," 142.

²¹⁹Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 212.

²²⁰Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 177; Kane, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's St. Paul," 142-48. Fitzgerald grew weary of the farm novels of Garland, Cather, and others. Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 206.

²²¹Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 3.

²²²Van Doren himself actually recalled his early years on a farm and in a small town in Illinois in such a tender manner that it significantly undercuts his later promotion of a revolt against Midwestern backwardness. See Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds."

²²³Glenway Wescott, "Van Wyck Brooks," *New York Times*, December 14, 1964; Cowley, "Van Wyck Brooks," 18; Blake, *Beloved Community*, 239-240 (quotations). Brooks's breakdown is recounted in Van Wyck Brooks, *Days of the Phoenix: The Nineteen-Twenties I Remember* (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1957).

²²⁴ Van Wyck Brooks to Frederick Manfred, June 28, 1945, Box 13, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota.

²²⁵ Blake, *Beloved Community*, 11.

²²⁶ Blake, *Beloved Community*, 11. Brooks had earlier recognized, as he said, "that a man without a country could do nothing of importance, that writers must draw sustenance from their own common flesh and blood and that their deracination also meant ruin." Cowley, "Van Wyck Brooks," 1963.

²²⁷ Van Wyck Brooks, *On Literature Today* (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1941), 21. It was fashionable, Brooks noted, to feel "that our towns were peculiarly damned...I cannot count the number of my friends who complained of the human 'sinks' and 'dumps' in which their lines were cast." "Just to escape from these towns and tell the world how ugly, false and brutal they were seemed to be almost the motive of these writers in living." Brooks, *The Opinions of Oliver Allston* (New York, E.P. Dutton, 1941), 265, 270 (Allston was a pseudonym for Brooks).

²²⁸ Blake, *Beloved Community*, 40. In 1937, three decades after his casual denunciations of the rural interior, Brooks told Hamlin Garland that he was finally turning in a serious way to the "growth of the Western mind and the literary feeling for the Western scene." Brooks to Garland, January 17, 1937, Box 1150, Hamlin Garland Papers, University of Southern California. On Brooks's regrets for his earlier attacks and his admission that "he had read American history wrongly," see James Hoopes, *Van Wyck Brooks: In Search of American Culture* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), 234-35. See also T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981), 256-7. Louis Hacker, who began the assault on Frederick Jackson Turner in keeping with the directives of Brooks and others, also changed his mind and gave "credence to the Turnerian viewpoint." Zeman, "Historian Louis M. Hacker's 'Coincidental Conversion' to the Truth," 94; Hacker, *The Shaping of the American Tradition* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1947), xv. Lewis Mumford later admitted that his circle's critique of the United States was "so relentless, so unsparing, so persistently negative that it was often grossly unjust, as I was in my ruthless denigration of the saving virtues of the...Pioneer." Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 86.

²²⁹ Harvey Breit, "Talk with Van Wyck Brooks," *New York Times*, January 13, 1952.

²³⁰ Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 9 (levity quote). For other Brooks quotes, see DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 26.

²³¹ Thomas, "The Uses of Catastrophe," 245 (kill). For Brooks's later assessment of Midwestern writing, see Brooks, *The Times of Melville and Whitman* (New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1947), 73-97.

²³² Brooks, *The Opinions of Oliver Allston*, 258, 262. The popularization of Brooks's early views by way of Carl Van Doren's thesis should also be tempered by the important fact that Van Doren, in contravention of the conventional wisdom, confessed to great fondness for his youth on a farm and in a small town in Illinois and great admiration for his father and only later became "morose" and felt "superior" to that way of life. Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 41, 44, 70-74, 164, Box 7, FF 6, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University. Van Doren noted to friends that he had a "happy childhood" despite the "common" literary tendency to "abuse families;" Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 44, Box 7, FF 6, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University. The "revolt," Van Doren said, was prompted by "early irritations" (he had deleted the phrase "out of hatred") and the "villain" was "dullness." Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 165, 284, Box 7, FF 7, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University. In Van Doren's literary world, "Youth...was always right" and the old was "death" and so he sought to "revise the canon." Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 184, 210, Box 7, FF 7, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University. In perhaps an allusion to his doubts about the notion of a "revolt from the village," Van Doren's original manuscript was subtitled "Revolt from the Village?"

but this subtitle was deleted from the later book. Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," title page, Box 7, FF 6, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University.

²³³Brooks to Frederick Manfred, December 9, 1947 and December 15, 1947 (sneered), Box 14, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota. For criticism of Brooks from the New York Intellectuals, see Lionel Trilling, "Family Album," *Partisan Review* vol. 15, no. 1 (January 1948), 106 (arguing that the later Brooks appealed "only to the Philistine" and was "impossible to take seriously"); Van Wyck Brooks to Frederick Manfred, January 21, 1948, Box 14, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota (telling Manfred to note the attacks on Brooks's work). Brooks also told Manfred, for another example, that his *The Opinions of Oliver Allston* was "pretty generally disliked and abused." Brooks to Frederick Manfred, March 4, 1946, Box 13, Manfred Papers, Upper Midwest Literary Archives, University of Minnesota.

²³⁴William H. Prichard, "Not to Write Was Not to be Alive," *New York Times Book Review*, November 1, 1981.

²³⁵On the collapse of Brooks's reputation caused by his "nostalgia," see Joseph Epstein, *Plausible Prejudices: Essays on American Writing* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1985), 258. "If Brooks continues to be read," claimed Anthony Hilfer, a proponent of the revolt thesis, it would only be because of the role of *America's Coming of Age* in helping writers create the village rebellion school of thought. Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 157.

²³⁶Blake, *Beloved Community*, 240, 247.

²³⁷DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy*, 66.

²³⁸For the attacks on the later Brooks as a totalitarian and fascist, see Hoopes, *Van Wyck Brooks*, 236-37.

²³⁹Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 11. On Lasch as a Midwesterner, see Jon K. Lauck, "The Prairie Populism of Christopher Lasch," *Great Plains Quarterly* vol. 32, no. 3 (Summer 2012), 183-205.

²⁴⁰Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 1.

²⁴¹Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 2. On Brooks's later criticism of intellectuals who inhabited a "small closed world, walled in from the common world," see Brooks, "Reflections on the Avant-Garde," *New York Times Book Review* (December 30, 1956).

²⁴²Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 9.

²⁴³Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 10.

²⁴⁴Lasch, "The Ordeal of Van Wyck Brooks," 15.

RECONSIDERING CARL SANDBURG: “PICNIC BOAT” AND THE *EASTLAND* DISASTER

PHILIP GREASLEY

With 2013 marking the 135th anniversary of Carl Sandburg’s birth and 2016 the centennial of his *Chicago Poems*, this is an appropriate time to reconsider Sandburg’s place in American poetry as well as the nature and impact of *Chicago Poems*, his first mature poetic collection. Although Sandburg was a socially engaged writer, an innovator advancing use of realistic poetic subjects and language, and a significant experimenter in oral and imagistic poetry, his orientations diverged from those of nationally and internationally heralded early twentieth-century poets. Today, Sandburg is largely absent from the public consciousness. At best, those recalling his poetry may remember the words, “Hog Butcher for the World” (“Chicago,” 1916 edition: 3; all subsequent references to *Chicago Poems* will provide pagination based on the original 1916 edition) or his brief imagist poem “Fog” (71). The common perception of Sandburg today is that of the much loved, universally affirming poet of his later years. Even students of literature are likely to view him as out of the early twentieth-century poetic mainstream, as typified by less socially engaged poets as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Criticisms arising from that perspective often downplay Sandburg’s artistry, claiming that his poems are too readily accessible in contrast to those that reveal their meanings slowly over time.

All these misperceptions can be disproved, revealing Sandburg as an innovator in poetic form, language, and subject, a writer whose work is marked by depth, staunch opposition to social injustice, and advocacy for the working class in America and around the world. To regain a picture of Sandburg as an artful poetic innovator and socially critical political activist, it is important to experience, at first hand, the uncertain, combative world in which Sandburg lived and wrote and to assess his poetic interactions with that world. The context sur-

rounding his poem "Picnic Boat" and the disaster that befell the excursion ship, the SS *Eastland* on July 24, 1915, provide one such vantage point. A close look at these reveals the travail of working people as well as Sandburg's socially engaged artistic responses, circumventing the poetic sensibilities and publishing strictures of his time to express his rage and call for social change.

Many poems in *Chicago Poems* capture urban-industrial workers' moments of transcendence through beauty, pride, and simple pleasures. The poem "Happiness" exemplifies Sandburg's affirmations of working-class strength and right-mindedness in the face of largely unrestrained early twentieth-century capitalist society:

I asked professors who teach the meaning of life to tell me what is happiness.
And I went to famous executives who boss the work of thousands of men.
They all shook their heads and gave me a smile as though I was trying to fool with them.
And then one Sunday afternoon I wandered out along the Desplaines river [sic]
And I saw a crowd of Hungarians under the trees with their women and children and a
keg of beer and an accordion (20).

Sandburg's poem "Fellow Citizens" similarly portrays a desperately poor accordion and guitar maker living in Chicago's Hull-House immigrant settlement district, his "jaw wrapped for a bad toothache," but his pride manifested by "a light in his eyes of one who has conquered sorrow in so far as sorrow is conquerable or worth conquering" (48).

Sandburg uses Lake Michigan's beauty and expansiveness as a counter to the difficulties and class-based injustices marking the lives of Chicago's working class. "The Harbor" provides an excellent example.

Passing through huddled and ugly walls
By doorways where women
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
I came sudden at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake,
Long lake waves breaking under the sun

On a spray-flung curve of shore;
 And a fluttering storm of gulls,
 Masses of great-gray wings
 And flying white bellies
 Veering and wheeling free in the open. (48)

Sandburg's dichotomy is strong. In the early twentieth-century labor unions were under continual attack by government-sanctioned, company-paid goon squads, who shot and beat workers protesting abuses, and blacklists denied activists all future work. Dangerous working conditions were consistently ignored, and companies refused compensation to those maimed or killed at work. In that world, which Sandburg captured in *Chicago Poems*, particularly for ethnic immigrants and those at the bottom of the social ladder, life was a constant struggle against great odds. In that context, it becomes understandable that his apparently unimportant short poem "Picnic Boat" may well have been intended to do more than luxuriate in rare moments of working-class release from the constraints of early twentieth-century urban-industrial life. At first look, however, this poem appears to be a minor work, embodying the positive aspect of Sandburg's thematic opposition between working-class lives marked by ugliness, constriction, danger, and death and their ability to grasp beauty and joy in rare, transcendent moments:

Sunday night and the park policemen tell each other it is dark as a
 stack of black cats on

Lake Michigan.

A big picnic boat comes home to Chicago from the peach farms of
 Saugatuck.

Hundreds of electric bulbs break the night's darkness, a flock of red
 and yellow birds

with wings at a standstill.

Running along the deck railings are festoons and leaping in curves
 are loops of light from

proW and stern to the tall smokestacks.

Over the hoarse crunch of waves at my pier comes a hoarse answer
 in the rhythmic

oompa of the brasses playing a Polish folk-song for the home-
 comers. (19)

The initial impression is light-hearted and positive. The park police jocularly await the boat's after-dark return to Chicago, and the boat's polka band continues playing to passengers sated by the day's activities and the soporific effects of sunshine and fresh lake air. The string of lights piercing the darkness and the polka music suggest happiness. Events outside the poem, however, provide a broader context and much darker undertones. In this broader context, Sandburg's "Picnic Boat" comes to be the understated ironic companion to his overtly enraged "The *Eastland*." Both poems reflect on the *Eastland* disaster, to this day the most lethal maritime event in Great Lakes' history.

The composition date of "Picnic Boat" is unclear. It appears in *Chicago Poems*, which was first published in April 1916. In *Carl Sandburg: A Biography* (1991), Penelope Niven reports that in summer 1915, Sandburg, at Theodore Dreiser's request, had put together some poems toward a collection ultimately rejected by a British publisher (268). In August 1915 and the succeeding months, Sandburg added more poems. He worked through early January 1916 to complete the collection for his ally Alfred Harcourt at Henry Holt and Company (Niven 270-71). Holt ultimately accepted the collection, although requiring some modifications and excisions, and published it in April 1916. Throughout the period, Sandburg divided his time. He worked as a full-time Chicago journalist for *Day Book*; he contributed free lance articles and poems to other newspapers and journals, many building on his earlier crusading work as a labor organizer and socialist party member; and he put every available moment into his poetry.

Books, magazines, journal, and newspaper articles have been written about the events surrounding the *Eastland* disaster. Today, the vast majority of the initial and subsequent journalistic and photographic coverage is accessible online. The Eastland Disaster Historical Society maintains a partial online source list. The Eastland Memorial Society website makes available the most important print pieces from 1915 to the present. Additional coverage encompassing all media exists online and via YouTube. Information from all sources includes newspaper articles contemporaneous to the disaster, the August 1915 *Western Electric News*, photographs, first-person accounts, passenger and casualty lists, and records of criminal and civil court proceedings. Also available are multiple retrospective analyses by entities like the Eastland Disaster Historical Society, the Eastland Memorial Society, the Chicago *Tribune*, the Chicago *Daily*

News, the Chicago *Sun-Times*, other Chicago and area newspapers, and the Chicago public television station WTTW. The Chicago History Museum and the Library of Congress American Memory Collection also maintain photographs depicting the *Eastland* disaster. Most touching of the online sources are the August 1915 *Western Electric News*, accessible at the Eastland Memorial Society site, and Dale Caruso's January 3, 2009, YouTube video: "America Comes of Age: The 1915 *Eastland* Disaster." Caruso compiles and transmutes many still photographs of the *Eastland*'s capsizing and its tragic aftermath into a coherent video narrative. All subsequent references to *Eastland* disaster reportage cite online sources.

On Saturday, July 24, 1915, the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne Works of Cicero, Illinois, which produced phone equipment for the Bell System, was to hold its fifth annual employee picnic. Early that morning over 7,000 people waited in downtown Chicago at the dock on the south side of the Chicago River, just north of Wacker Drive, then called South Water Street, between Clark and LaSalle Streets (Eastland Disaster Historical Society). Five ships were to carry the Western Electric employees and their families on a cross-lake excursion to Michigan City, Indiana (*Western Electric News*, August 1915), near the Indiana Dunes ("The *Eastland* Disaster," *Chicago Stories*, WTTW television, 2013). The SS *Eastland*, a speedy, multi-deck, 265-foot excursion ship was among them. Originally launched in 1903 and designed to carry 500 passengers at twenty miles per hour (Eastland Disaster Historical Society), it had been modified and had changed ownership several times by 1914 ("SS *Eastland*," *Wikipedia*). The *Eastland* was the pride of the Lake Michigan excursion fleet and the first choice of those waiting to board.

Despite the ship's great size, speed, and appearance, it had serious problems. Foremost was its instability and tendency to uncontrolled listing owing to the ship's great height and narrow beam. This instability was recognized early and evidenced by multiple severe listing and near-capsizing incidents, complaints, and legal actions during its first decade of operation ("SS *Eastland*," *Wikipedia*). In order to permit loading in shallow lake ports, the ship's gangways were set very low. This design allowed water to enter the hull when the ship listed. At best, the ballast system was hard-pressed to offset the ship's high center of gravity; a court later judged it defective. Finally, the ship's heavy furnishings and equipment were not bolted

down, permitting dangerous shifting when the ship listed.

Modifications after the *Eastland's* initial construction further diminished stability. Over the winter of 1914-1915 the rotting wooden decks and floors on the *Eastland's* top deck were replaced and reinforced with several tons of concrete ("The *Eastland* Disaster," *Chicago Stories*, WTTW, quoting Ted Wachholz, Eastland Disaster Historical Society). The April 1912 Titanic sinking in the North Atlantic had led to the March 1915 Seamen's Act, requiring American ships to carry additional lifeboats. To comply with the new rules, *Chicago Tribune* reporter David Young says, "On July 2, 1915, the owners of the *Eastland* added three lifeboats and six rafts, weighing 14 to 15 tons, to its top deck. A boat that had already exhibited stability problems became top-heavy." Adding to these problems, immediately preceding the July 24th excursion, ship safety inspectors were prevailed on to further increase the *Eastland's* legal passenger carrying capacity to 2,572, over five times its originally rated capacity ("The *Eastland* Disaster," *Chicago Stories*, WTTW Television, 2013). The ship was at capacity when it left the dock.

The Eastland Disaster Historical Society maintains a minute-to-minute chronology of events on July 24, 1915. A paraphrased condensation of that chronology follows:

- 6:30 a.m.: Boarding begins in anticipation of the scheduled 7:30 departure.
- 6:41: The *Eastland* begins listing to starboard, owing to the large number of passengers on the ship's starboard side.
- 6:48: The chief engineer orders water to be pumped into the port ballast tanks, righting the ship.
- 6:53: The chief engineer again orders that ballast be shifted, righting the ship once more.
- 7:00 a.m.: With 1,000 people now on board and many more arriving each minute, the ship again begins listing to port.
- 7:07: One port ballast tank is emptied.
- 7:10: The *Eastland's* list is estimated at 7 degrees. 2,500 people are now aboard. The ship's radio officer attempts unsuccessfully to direct passengers to the starboard side.
- 7:13: The orchestra begins playing and passengers begin to dance.
- 7:16: The *Eastland's* list to port is estimated at 10 to 15 degrees. The chief engineer orders the opening of two starboard ballast tanks, but no water enters for seven minutes.
- 7:18: The *Eastland* straightens, the gangplank is drawn in, and the ship again begins listing to port. A stern line is cast off.

7:20: The list to port continues. Water coming through a port scupper enters the main deck, and passengers retreat from the port side.

7:23: The chief engineer gives orders to move passengers to starboard. Water enters the *Eastland* through the port gangways. A warning signal is sent to the captain. The Clark Street Bridge refuses to open because of the *Eastland*'s list, now at 20 to 25 degrees. The harbor master directs the captain to right his ship. The *Eastland*'s stern swings away from the dock and passengers return to the port side.

7:27: The *Eastland* is now listing at 25 to 30 degrees. The boiler room crew runs up to the main deck, sensing that the list and the incoming water have doomed the ship. Passengers on the hurricane deck are directed to starboard, but the heel angle and the deck's slipperiness make that impossible. The list reaches 30 to 40 degrees. The musicians try to maintain their footing.

7:28: The list reaches 45 degrees. The orchestra stops playing. Dishes fall from racks. A piano slides to port. A bar refrigerator turns on its side, pinning people beneath it. Water pours in. Panic ensues. The ship's list continues to worsen. People jump to the dock from the starboard side.

7:28 to 7:30: The *Eastland*, still tied to the dock by its forward lines, heels over, capsizes, and comes to rest on its side in twenty feet of Chicago River water, still several blocks from Lake Michigan.

“‘The screaming was terrible,’ one man told the *Tribune*, which devoted eleven pages of coverage to the disaster. ‘I watched one woman who seemed to be thrown from the top deck . . . I saw her white hat float down the river, and that was all’” (David Young, “The *Eastland* Disaster,” *Chicago Tribune*, 2013). The terrible screaming is also emphasized by a Western Electric nurse who first heard it while riding a trolley over two blocks away. She is quoted in the August 1915 *Western Electric News*:

I shall never be able to forget what I saw. People were struggling in the water, clustered so thickly that they literally covered the surface of the river. A few were swimming; the rest were floundering about, some clinging to a life raft that had floated free, others clutching at anything they could reach—at bits of wood, at each other, grabbing each other, pulling each other down, and screaming! The screaming was the most horrible of all. (11)

Eight hundred and forty-four people die. Most are women and children. Long, heavy dresses doom many women. Passengers and crew fall into the water on top of those already there. Others are

trapped inside the partially submerged hull. Asphyxiation kills most as hundreds pile up helplessly inside the now-horizontal port-side hull (WTTW retrospective "The *Eastland* Disaster," *Chicago Stories*, WTTW, 2013, quoting Ted Wachholz, Eastland Disaster Historical Society).

Carl Sandburg was among the Chicago journalists who wrote contemporaneous articles on the *Eastland* disaster. His September 15, 1915, column, "LOOKING 'EM OVER," from his ongoing *International Socialist Review* series, reflects his outrage:

In the second largest city in America, a passenger steamship, tied to the dock, loaded with 2,500 working people dressed in their picnic clothes, topples slowly and sinks to the river bottom like a dead jungle monster shot through the heart. Over 1,000 men, women and children, trapped like rats in a cellar, are drowned.

The foregoing piece of news sent out to American cities one Saturday was at first not believed. It was the ghastliest commentary on American efficiency so far written into national history.

["Efficiency" was the then-current euphemism for management initiatives to maximize profits by speeding up assembly lines and requiring more work from employees.] Sandburg continues, asserting: "No one fact among all those uncovered in the days following stood out more sinisterly than that the head of the United States Department of Commerce, under which steamboat inspection is carried on, is perhaps the foremost figure in the American efficiency movement."

William C. Redfield, Secretary of Commerce . . . is the most widely quoted authority on efficiency . . . In the Redfield efficiency gospel, organization, business and factory organization, the co-ordination of many human units into one rapid and perfect machine, is the ideal.

Why didn't this ideal work out in the bureau of steamboat inspection service directly responsible to Redfield? Why didn't Redfield co-ordinate the human units, the high salaried bureau heads under him, so as to stop a cranky, unstable ancient hoodoo tub like the *Eastland* from going loaded with 2,500 human lives? There's one answer. Business required it.

The Redfield ideal is business. The business interests who run the Great Lakes and the coast and the oversea steamship lines told

Redfield everything was all right with the inspection service and there was no danger. So he, like a faithful bureaucrat, considering himself responsible only to business, lifted no finger to change the inspection service. Warning after warning came to his hands.

Secretary Ed Nockels of the Chicago Federation of Labor wrote a letter to Edwin Sweet, first assistant to Redfield, predicting that unless a genuine instead of a bunk inspection was started, a boat would go to the bottom some day in the Chicago river [sic] while “tied to the dock.”

. . . Redfield sat in his easy chair in Washington, chatted with business men on the beauties of efficiency, his ears deaf to Andy Furuseth of the Coast Seamen’s Union . . . to Victor Olaner of the Lake Seamen’s Union, and . . . to every plea for more human safety and more social efficiency on the lake steamships. The efficiency of . . . Redfield is a business efficiency not a social efficiency. And that is one prime explanation of why the *Eastland* became a coffin boat from which truckloads of dead working people were hauled away one Saturday.

Sandburg then attacks Western Electric, which, he asserts, compelled employee participation as a condition of their employment, and ends by saying: “Grim industrial feudalism stands with dripping and red hands behind the whole *Eastland* affair” (16.3: 132-35).

Sometime after July 24, 1915, Sandburg wrote the scathing poem, “The *Eastland*,” the then socially unacceptable complement to his “Picnic Boat.” It was then considered far too inflammatory and controversial for mainstream publication. In fact, not until 1991 did fragments of “The *Eastland*” first appear; they did so in Penelope Niven’s 1991 *Carl Sandburg: A Biography*, with full publication coming only in George and Willene Hendrick’s 1993 collection of Sandburg’s unpublished, uncollected, and unexpurgated works, *Billy Sunday and Other Poems*. “The *Eastland*” begins and ends focusing on the *Eastland* disaster. The middle section catalogues other abuses that cost the lives of working people. Then Sandburg returns to the *Eastland* for his conclusion. The poem’s first and last sections read:

Let’s be honest now
 For a couple of minutes
 Even though we’re in Chicago.
 Since you ask me about it,
 I let you have it straight;
 My guts ain’t ticklish about the *Eastland*.

It was a hell of a job, of course
To dump 2,500 people in their clean picnic clothes
All ready for a whole lot of real fun
Down into the dirty Chicago river [sic] without any warning

Women and kids, wet hair and scared faces,
The coroner hauling truckloads of the dripping dead
To the Second Regiment armory where doctors waited
With useless pulmotors and the eight hundred motionless stiff
Lay ready for their relatives to pick them out on the floor
And take them home and call up an undertaker . . .

.....
Yes, the *Eastland* was a dirty bloody job—bah!

I see a dozen *Eastlands*
Every morning on my way to work
And a dozen more going home at night. (Hendrick 11, 14)

Sandburg's overtly angry poem, "The *Eastland*," and his equally outraged editorial suggest that he must have considered both the nature of "Picnic Boat" and its presence in *Chicago Poems* during the six months between the *Eastland* disaster and his final January 1916 submission to Holt. Clearly, also, readers of that time would have recognized any allusion to the highly charged *Eastland* disaster. Sandburg's naming of the poem "The *Eastland*" and his very close paralleling of the historical facts of the disaster in his poetic rendering had made that poem unacceptable for publication during that era, just as his poem "Billy Sunday," referring to the revivalist preacher of that era, had to be retitled "Ode to a Contemporary Bunkshooter" to permit its inclusion in the volume (61-64). Similarly, his poem "Anna Imroth," alluding to the events of New York City's March 25, 1911, Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, had to be fictionalized and significantly reduced in scale in order to secure a publishable place in the collection:

Cross the hands over the breast here—so.
Straighten the legs a little more—so.
And call for the wagon to come and take her home.
Her mother will cry some and so will her sisters and brothers.
But all of the others got down and they are safe and this is the only
 one of the factory girls who wasn't lucky in making the jump
when the fire
 broke.
It is the hand of God and the lack of fire escapes. (33)

Sandburg reduced from 146 to one the number of working-class immigrant seamstresses killed by fire, smoke inhalation, and desperate leaps to the pavement from the building's eighth, ninth, and tenth floors. The company's owners and managers had callously allowed flammable scrap cloth to build up in the work area and had chained the exit doors closed to increase efficiency and reduce pilferage (33). While Sandburg's poetic strategies vary from direct frontal assault on religious charlatans to dramatic monologue, reflecting the transparently self-serving hypocrisy of business, both "Ode to a Contemporary Bunkshooter" and "Anna Imroth" manifest the same outrage marking "The *Eastland*."

While the earlier-presented narrative of "Picnic Boat" initially suggests a positive interpretation, given the societal context, Sandburg's other writings on the *Eastland*, and his use of similar poetic techniques elsewhere in *Chicago Poems*, a much darker reading of "Picnic Boat" appears more appropriate—that of the "coffin boat" Sandburg described in his September 15, 1915, *International Socialist Review* article (16.3: 135). Rather than portraying happy families celebrating a sunny day on Lake Michigan and in the countryside, the poem opens by referring to the lake's blackness at night. Sandburg compounds the negativity by referring to "black cats." Furthermore, no passengers are seen or heard on the returning ship. The only sound is the music of the band, then suggestive of the orchestra on the *Titanic* still playing moments before the ship slipped beneath the waves in April 1912. Even Sandburg's reference to the music is negative. He describes it as "hoarse," mirroring the "hoarse" sound of the waves. Both allude to the *Eastland's* hoarse human victims screaming out their death agonies, as is repeatedly emphasized in the historical reportage. Sandburg's reference to birds flying at night contradicts normal avian behavior, and his birds' wings are at a standstill, not suggesting hovering but rather spirits leaving the dead and dying. Sandburg's poetry uses the color red for many purposes, sometimes for beauty, more often to symbolize blood, working-class rage, retribution, and the hoped-for socialist revolution. Yellow, for him, often connotes beauty or spirit. Reference to both colors is appropriate here. The poem's final reference to "the home-comers" can easily connote the dead going to their final rest rather than the picnickers returning from their excursion. Even the silent ship, with its formal festoons, mimicking garlands of flowers, carries funereal associations. References to the brilliantly lit ship include the

words "bulbs break" and, in this context, the string of lights, looping from bow to stern above the ship and piercing the darkness, becomes suggestive of working-class souls rising from their collective funeral pyre. Listen once more to the poem, this time paying attention to Sandburg's dark undertones:

Sunday night and the park policemen tell each other it is dark as a
stack of black cats on

Lake Michigan.

A big picnic boat comes home to Chicago from the peach farms of
Saugatuck.

Hundreds of electric bulbs break the night's darkness, a flock of red
and yellow birds

with wings at a standstill.

Running along the deck railings are festoons and leaping in curves
are loops of light from

proW and stern to the tall smokestacks.

Over the hoarse crunch of waves at my pier comes a hoarse answer
in the rhythmic

oompa of the brasses playing a Polish folk-song for the home-
comers. (19)

Rather than presenting a day of joy and release, Sandburg provides a ghost ship travelling by night. Rather than offering beautiful music, the polka music depicts the immigrant nationality and working-class status of the passengers. Its echoing hoarseness alludes to the hoarse cries of those dying on the *Eastland* or in the Chicago River. Lake Michigan remains a symbol of release and transformation, but his passengers' homecoming is to death, not to Chicago. The ship is indeed a "coffin boat."

Constrained by mainstream poetic publishing conventions, Sandburg could not directly name and excoriate the ship's owners and corporate leaders while expecting poetic publication. He, however, remained in the field, the artist combating society's controlling, moneyed interests. He recognized the criticality of writers, journalists, artists, and humanists retaining a pulpit from which to combat societal evils. And he did so using direct and indirect means. Sandburg adopted a wide range of the strongest poetic tools available and remained poised on the edge of poetic acceptability in order to

fight for the future of democratic America. Unlike other poets of the era, he consistently asserted the dignity and heroism of the working class and called for social change. Sandburg, then, was a significant, socially engaged poetic innovator who battled contemporaneous limits on what could be said in published art and social commentary. His poetry is rich, allusive, and rewards multiple readings; his work deserves contemporary reconsideration.

University of Kentucky

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DEFINING AND SUBVERTING THE MIDWESTERN ETHIC: GENE STRATTON-PORTER AND LOUISE ERDRICH AS WARY EDUCATORS

JORDAN HORVATH

The past few decades have seen an increased interest in attempts to define and interrogate the American Midwest, a geographic location which seems at times to be hostile to either definition or interrogation. Many such attempts have taken place within the realms of literature and literary criticism, twin harbingers of cultural identification. William Barillas, in the opening chapter of *The Midwestern Pastoral*, lists a few of the traits he's observed cropping up recently in literary portrayals of Midwesterners, nearly all of them flowing from the pens of Midwesterners themselves. He describes the Midwestern Boosters, the Utilitarians, the overzealous Puritan types, the variously insensitive, and the anti-intellectuals, and he notes that this vaguely defined region has yet to fully escape from under the philistine label. Such a label is puzzling for a number of reasons, but here I wish to examine the ways in which Midwestern authors negotiate and subvert the stereotypical notion that the Midwest is not a place for probing intellectual curiosity and achievement. Specifically, I will look at the work of Gene Stratton-Porter—a writer best known during much of her writing career, and its period of legacy, for her popular romances—and the work of Louise Erdrich, a highly acclaimed contemporary Ojibwean author. I will examine how both Stratton-Porter and Erdrich provide valuable insights into the “educate to civilize” paradigm which dominated the Midwest in its formative years. Typically considered amongst the darkest functions of American racism, this “educate to civilize” paradigm, and the various ways in which it was developed, disseminated, and subverted, is crucial to understanding the struggle to define the American Midwest as a distinctive region with its own distinctive ethos. I will compare the earliest novel by Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (1984) with

Stratton-Porter's *A Girl of the Limberlost* (1909). While the latter novel was written at the beginning of the twentieth century and Erdrich's was written at the end of that century, both novels deal with the American cultural landscape as it was in the early 1900s.

In the earliest book-length study of Stratton-Porter's work, a formalist analysis of the salient themes and functions of Stratton-Porter's stylistic choices, John Chase Bussell describes the novels of Stratton-Porter as successful and effective propaganda: indeed, propaganda of "the finest kind" (xi) which lacked "wearisome moralizing and didacticism" (xii). Such an assurance that Stratton-Porter was not overly moralizing comes as a bit of a shock to the twenty-first-century reader. Mary Ryder, writing about Stratton-Porter's *A Daughter of the Land*, describes the role this work and others like it played in the lives of contemporary readers; readers were largely middle-class American women who "read to discover characters like themselves or like what they aspired to be" (43).

Ryder's analysis is reminiscent of Radway's work studying contemporary readers of romance novels insofar as both Ryder and Radway agree that a good deal of the appeal of romance novels (as opposed to other forms of so-called escapist entertainment) lies in the knowledge to be gleaned. Radway writes that "romance reading . . . allows a woman to believe she is learning and changing herself at the very same time it is reassuring her that she already knows how to make sense of an existence which always is as she expects, even in fiction" (61). This finding is important because it suggests that readers of romance do want a certain degree of "didacticism," to use Bussell's word, but not a challenging didacticism. Speaking, of course, very generally, romance readers want to be taught the mores they already embrace. Accepting these premises, then, we can agree with Cheryl Birkelo when she writes of Stratton-Porter that her work would have been "comforting and engaging to the mostly female readers of her time, who . . . would perhaps be repelled by too much scientific jargon" (10). Stratton-Porter's function was not only to entertain but also to educate, and educate she did—about the natural world and how best to observe it, yes, but also about what it is to be a civilized young woman. To the masses of middle-class women in a burgeoning America, Stratton-Porter taught introductory lessons in naturalism and, as Ryder points out, lessons in how to be their best selves.

So, what did it mean for a middle-class woman in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century to be her best self? A great many things, undoubtedly, but the values of industriousness and economic assurance are two that are argued for particularly strongly in Stratton-Porter's work. Elnora Comstock in *A Girl of the Limberlost* works more industriously to attain her education than almost seems reasonable to an average American reader today. Elnora is instructed early on by a character called the Bird Woman, a fictional representation of Stratton-Porter herself, who plays a role something like that of a patron, funding Elnora in exchange for the delivery of expertly preserved moths and other relics of the natural world. "Remember this," the Bird Woman tells Elnora, "What you are lies with you. If you are lazy, and accept your lot, you may live in it. If you are willing to work, you can write your name anywhere you choose" (46). If Elnora puts in the hard work and survives the educational system, she will, according to the Bird Woman, be able to live the kind of life which Stratton-Porter admired herself for being able to live. She will be able to live a life "among the only ones who live beyond the grave in this world, the people who write books that help, make exquisite music . . . and work for others" (46).

Elnora heeds this advice, as Stratton-Porter hoped her readers would, and devotes herself throughout the remainder of the book to proving her willingness to work, spending hours and hours in the Limberlost swamp gathering specimens of moths, arrowheads, flowers, and the like for sale to wealthy city dwellers building up their own collections; she fits this all in around completing her household chores, excelling at her school lessons, and becoming one of the most popular students at her school. Thus, the necessity of being independently motivated, lessons in market negotiations, the hand-in-hand nature of ecology and economics—all this and more are promulgated within the pages of *A Girl of the Limberlost*, and such is representative of the ethic delineated and perpetuated in Stratton-Porter's work as a whole. Hard work and a good (i.e. formal) education are what one needs to secure one's proper place in "civilized" society, which should, ultimately, be one's goal.

Stratton-Porter does, though, provide opportunities to subvert this Midwestern ethic. In *A Girl of the Limberlost*, the opportunity to reject the mores of the society in which Elnora is situated comes in the form of Philip Ammon, the privileged son of a wealthy and socially established lawyer. While Elnora is frantically attempting to

work against time and reconstruct a valuable moth collection in time to pay her college tuition, Philip, quickly becoming enamored of Elnora and her intimate connection with the natural realm, makes the following speech:

What you have to give is taught in no college, and I am not sure but you would spoil yourself if you tried to run your mind through a set groove with hundreds of others. I never thought I should say such a thing to anyone, but I do say to you, and I honestly believe it; give up the college idea. Your mind does not need that sort of development. Stick close to your work in the woods. (299)

The implications this passage might have for attempts to argue for Stratton-Porter's feminist undertones are interesting—it is implied in the novel that Elnora eventually marries Philip rather than attending the college she is ultimately unable to pay for—but within the context of this paper, the passage is noteworthy because of the opportunities it opens up within the Midwestern ethic. Education is necessary for success, but if one believes Philip's intuition on the matter, how one receives that education, and where, are matters up for a little debate. One need not necessarily follow the institutional path to the good life—there is room for self-motivated critical engagement with the power structures, and there is room for some redefinition of civilization. Indeed, in a 1923 article published by *McCall's*, addressed to “The Boys and Girls Who Cannot Go to College,” Stratton-Porter argues that, given the debauchery and licentiousness running rampant on college campuses, it might be better if such serious students without money to spare would just stay home and cultivate their minds rather than their social calendars. Following a lengthy and, by today's standards, rather quaint, description of the sorts of scenes she has witnessed at a hotel ballroom party, she writes, “it is . . . true that any degree of culture acquired by any boy or girl in any college can be obtained by the same boy or girl in the environment of his own home if he or she chooses to make the mental effort” (30).

This—the positive acknowledgement that civilization is not necessarily a byproduct of education—is a significant aspect of the Midwestern ethos. One can stay home and fashion a meaningful and productive culture through self-instruction and engagement with the pre-existing culture; indeed, as Stratton-Porter suggests in *A Girl of the Limberlost* and in the above-mentioned *McCall's* article, staying

home can for some be the surest route to the securing of such a culture. Of course, it is implied in *A Girl of the Limberlost* that one must have certain advantages to be able to get away with taking an alternative route to culture, advantages such as being white, respectable, middle class, and endorsed by the powerful and wealthy.

Erdrich, on the other hand, explores the possibilities open to persons who do not fit such a description and, through her work, points out that attending formal educational institutions can for many be the surest route to the decimation of a culture. For a little background into the historical context in which Erdrich's Native American characters are operating—a very different kind of context from the one in which Elnora is operating—David Wallace Adams's *Education for Extinction* is an invaluable guide. In this book, Adams describes the ethos of the government-funded acculturation of various Native Americans at the turn of the century. Integral to this process was the creation of off-reservation boarding schools, many modeled on the early prototype created by Richard Henry Pratt, the Carlisle school. Pratt believed that "Indian's inferiority" was "cultural, not racial" (52), and designed a system of cultural assimilation which emphasized, among other things, training in trade skills for the boys and homemaking for the girls as well as in English language literacy and oral proficiency. Boarding schools like Carlisle were based a model reminiscent of liberal prisons of the period: everyone woke early, did the chores requisite to the self-sufficiency of the institution, partook in rigorous lessons designed to catch the children up to the work being done in the white schools, and strongly discouraged them in a myriad of ways from maintaining too strong of ties with friends and family back home on the reservations. Measures were taken to anglicize Native American names and the children were not allowed to wear the clothes they were sent with, even when those clothes were of a higher quality than the often shoddy uniforms sewn by the students themselves. The inherent lesson in all of this was, roughly stated: rise early, work hard, learn the lessons put before you, and change your dress to mirror ours, and you will earn a place within our civilized society. It is a message remarkably similar to the message in Stratton-Porter's work, without the encouragement toward subversion.

There were, of course, Native Americans who did subvert the totalitarian efforts of Pratt and educators like him. Erdrich's work, coming as it does a century after the founding of the Carlisle school, provides a working illustration of how subversion of the ethic pro-

mulgated by Stratton-Porter and the likes of Pratt might be considered. Throughout *Love Medicine*, characters express a certain wariness toward the act of writing itself, as when Lulu, entrusted with relating the denouement of Gerry's story (did he kill the trooper?), writes, "If I tell you he said *yes*, and relate to you how it all happened, it might get used against him. I'm sorry, but I just don't trust to write down what he answered, *yes* or *no*. We have entered an area of too deep water" (269). The tools of communication learned in the government schools can be dangerous, Lulu realizes; through them can be found a shortcut to determining just desserts, a shortcut to the disseminations of the lessons of history in which something crucial may be lost.

Lulu is, of course, responding to a historical and ancestral history when she decides that some things are better left unwritten. When characters, particularly Erdrich's female characters, do embrace the fruits of an institutionalized education, this often takes the form of unhealthy physical and psychological attachments to the Catholic church, typically an omnipresent, largely ineffectual entity looming over the reservation and dedicated to the goal of educating and converting the reservation's inhabitants. In the "Saint Marie (1934)" section of *Love Medicine*, Marie Lazarre is encouraged by the dangerously illimitable Sister Leopolda to come and study in the Sacred Heart Convent itself rather than limit her educational endeavors to the school and weekly church visits. The convent is described by Marie as being "a catchall place for nuns that don't get along elsewhere" (42), yet Marie decides to immerse herself in the clerical populace anyway. She does this despite knowing, as she puts it, that "I could have had any damn man on the reservation at the time. And I could have made him treat me like his own life" (45). She decides to go because she "wanted Sister Leopolda's heart . . . sometimes I wanted her heart in love and admiration. Sometimes. And sometimes I wanted her heart to roast on a black stick" (45).

Like Elnora in *A Girl of the Limberlost*, Marie is righteously eschewing the ill-advised tradition of an early marriage, a quickly built family, and eternal dependence on a man, but Marie's thought process is radically different from Elnora's. Marie decides to go up the hill to the convent despite having what she considers to be a suitable range of alternatives, and, unlike Elnora's moralizing motivations, which are rooted in a desire to be self-sufficient and independent, Marie's are grounded in an almost psychotic love-hate

relationship with Leopolda, who was able to establish firmly her reign within Marie's soul while she was a young and impressionable student in Leopolda's school. This relationship quickly becomes increasingly deranged as Marie suffers more and more punishment under the rule of Leopolda, each punishment crueler than the last. This ill treatment culminates in a scene in which Marie's back is scalded with boiling water, she is clocked on the head with a poker from the fireplace, and then, finally, is stabbed through the hand with a fork, an injury which ultimately presents in a way that suggests stigmata. All of this abuse occurs under the guise of an education in sound Christian morality and a hearty Midwestern work ethic, and though it occurs outside of the home, its effects are sure to color Marie's interactions within her family's private space for the rest of her life. It is thus no wonder that Lulu is wary of doing anything which would relocate the reservation squarely in the domain of the educated white establishment.

Erdrich speaks often of her own subject position and the bridge it spans between Native Ojibwe and German cultural heritage. In *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, a memoir of travel and cultural and linguistic education, Erdrich relates a trip taken with her youngest daughter to see the Ojibwean rock paintings of Minnesota and Ontario and to participate in a language-learning retreat on the book-stuffed island belonging to Ernest Oberholtzer, an American conservationist. In this book Erdrich explores explicitly the two competing sides of her own intellectual make-up: the logico-rational side stemming from her German ancestry and the more spiritual side which she attributes to her Ojibwe heritage. The conflict between these two ways of perceiving and ordering the world and apprehending one's responsibility to it is excellently embodied in an early scene in which Erdrich is internally debating the logic behind the tobacco offering traditionally doled out by Ojibwes to the spirits in thanksgiving and benediction. She writes, "[T]he question whether or not [the spirits] *actually* existed became irrelevant. After I'd stopped thinking about it for a while, the ritual of offering tobacco became comforting and then necessary. Whenever I offered tobacco I was for that moment fully there, fully thinking, willing to address the mystery" (16).

This section exemplifies the wariness of overintellectualizing throughout Erdrich's work. By this I do not mean a wariness of intellectualizing or an anti-intellectual stance or an aversion to institutionalized education. *Books and Islands* was, after all, written to edu-

cate. Rather, I mean a wariness of subscribing, with too much negligent, easy certainty, to any particular system of epistemic norms or absolute moral universalism. A corollary to this position is a wariness of making explicit that which may be only fully realizable when understood implicitly or of making explicit that which, for any number of reasons, one's interlocutor should not and does not need to know. This same wariness is present in Lulu's refusal to commit to writing the truth of the incident which occurred between Gerry and the trooper in *Love Medicine*; this same wariness presents itself in the addendum to Erdrich's *The Painted Drum* (2005), which explains that Erdrich has taken great care to portray Ojibwe rituals as factually as she can while still being equally careful not to relate privileged information not already on record elsewhere.

Erdrich's subtle but unmistakable refusals to share too much—to share what could be misinterpreted, removed unethically from its context, made dangerous—is crucial to her project. If one of the reasons that people read is, as Radway elucidates, to apprehend the factual knowledge in a novel, Erdrich is intent on complicating this motivation. Knowledge is important, yes, whether it is knowledge of the natural environment or knowledge of a culture, but knowledge must be accumulated in the right sort of way. It cannot be bought in the form of a tuition bill or in the form of a paperback novel; it must be earned—worked for—in a way appropriate for both the knowledge itself and the student looking to access that knowledge.

Stratton-Porter wrote her novels in large part because she wanted to impart to her readers the vast store of naturalist knowledge she had accumulated over years of exploring her environment. Just as important in her novels as the relation of these facts, though, is the insistence that book knowledge alone is not enough. Memorizing the lessons of the classroom will take one only so far in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the ways of the world. Not recognizing this can, as Philip points out to Elnora, do irreparable damage. This message is similar to Erdrich's in many respects, though Erdrich is concerned not, as Stratton-Porter is, exclusively with the damage that one could do to oneself in closeting oneself away from the wider world in the interest of academic study. Erdrich is concerned also with the damage that one could do to one's loved ones, one's community, and one's entire culture. A formal education is one path to civilization, to be sure, but it is a path to a particular kind of civilization, and it is not the only path. Both Stratton-Porter and Erdrich

thus present meaningful ways of negotiating the “educate to civilize” paradigm which was, in the twentieth century, if not still today, a significant part of the Midwestern ethic.

Purdue University

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MONSTER DECODED: SCIENCE VS. HUMANITY IN JEFFREY EUGENIDES'S *MIDDLESEX*

SARAH WARREN-RILEY

*We accept that knowledge can generally
overpower fear; but we have also learned that the
application of new knowledge often has a dark side
that can lead to brutality and disaster.*

—George J. Annas

In 1990, at the height of the hype over the newly formed Human Genome Initiative, with its primary focus on mapping and understanding the role of genes in humans, an article in the *Emory Law Journal* written by renowned bio-ethicist and Boston School of Public Health Professor George J. Annas discussed the Initiative's incredible potential for both benefits and risks. In particular, Annas's article explored the relationship between science and society and expounded on the legal and ethical issues raised by the new initiative, invoking monster mythology literature, such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as a tool to "help frame the emotional and intellectual debate about the ends of genetic research today" (4). In the article Annas stated that "[s]ince at least Elizabethan times, English literature has reflected a fascination with stories of scientists and physicians who have attempted to change the attributes of humankind, and the monsters their attempts have created" (2).

In this essay I discuss Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex* as a novel that continues this literary tradition of cautionary commentary regarding the intersection of science and humanity. By exploring *Middlesex* as a post-Human Genome Project work, I discuss how the novel uses the implications of the science versus humanity theme to discredit the mythology and stigma of the monstrosity of difference by showing biological causation, bringing attention to the potential

ethical concerns of scientific intervention in the human condition, and advocating for free will.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jeffrey Eugenides's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Middlesex* is a novel that the author himself proclaimed to be a hybrid. Scholars and critics have debated the novel in terms of its literary form/techniques (genre, narrative voice, use of tropes), its treatment of various social issues (ethnic identity/assimilation, gender/sexual identity, race relations), and its statement on philosophical debates such as nature vs. nurture. The hybrid form of the novel (part immigrant family saga, part coming-of-age tale) further emphasized by the use of an intersexed narrator has invoked investigations of the text in terms of a variety of notions of duality. Many of the close-reading critics have interpreted the novel through a series of socio-politically themed lenses.

In a review of *Middlesex* in the *New York Review of Books*, "Mighty Hermaphrodite," Daniel Mendelsohn criticizes the novel as seeming to be two distinct stories that Eugenides tries (in his view unsuccessfully) to merge into one tale. He states, "Eugenides' novel seems itself to be composed of two distinct and occasionally warring halves" (2). Mendelsohn sees the first part of the novel as a successfully portrayed immigrant saga and the second part, Cal's hermaphrodite coming-of-age story, as less compelling. To Mendelsohn the two stories are not successfully woven together, resulting in an overall disjointed effect. Mendelsohn further locates the novel's failure to live up to its potential in the intersex narrator's failing to provide "some kind of rare or remarkable insight into sex and gender" (7). He additionally argues that the novel "pretends to be about being in the middle, only to end up suggesting that you have to choose either end And so, in the end *Middlesex* itself is stranded in the middle, somewhere between either of the two books it might have been. Or, perhaps, it has extremes but no "real" middle, no place where the two parts connect" (8-9).

Mendelsohn's assertions regarding the novel's failed attempt at hybridity and its lack of a successful middle have led to further examinations of the text in terms of these concepts. Debra Shostak's article, "Theory Uncompromised by Practicality": Hybridity in Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*," expounds on this lack of middle when explor-

ing the novel's implications for theoretical discussions of "categorical identity" (386). Shostak posits that the novel exposes the impracticality of the theoretical possibility of living outside "the constraints of the binary system that defines sex and gender" and "exposes impasses in the politics of gendered and cultural identity that, in turn, highlight the distance between theory and practice" (387).

The novel's inability to transcend categorization, to find the successful middle in Mendelsohn's view, is further explored by some critics in terms of how categories of race and gender are politicized. In "Ethnicity and the Biopolitics of Intersex in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*," Stephanie Hsu discusses how the implications of the ways in which biopower and ethnicity are represented within the novel. According to Hsu: "Eugenides's characters remind us that biopower consists precisely of the notion that politics should remain secondary to the body's biological imperative not just to live, but to thrive" (106).

Middlesex has been criticized by some scholars who argue that the representations in the book serve to perpetuate stereotypes. In "See synonyms at MONSTER': En-Freaking Transgender in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*," Sarah Graham argues that "the novel itself continually expresses anxiety about sexual ambiguity by associating hybridity with monstrosity and freakery" (2). Graham contends that "while the novel may be defended for bringing to light the exploitation of intersex people, the metaphors and inter-textual references it uses suggest that it is also complicit with that exploitation" (3). Some critics, such as Robert Zecker, also contend that the presentations of other social issues, including race relations, are problematic. Zecker ("Metropolis: The American City in Popular Culture") criticizes the novel for its portrayal of African Americans and for perpetuating stereotypes about them. In this same vein Mendelsohn was unimpressed by the presentation of gender identity.

Other critics, however, view the novel as a challenge to socially constructed categorizations. Francisco Collardo-Rodriguez argues in "Of Self and Country: U.S. Politics, Cultural Hybridity, and Ambivalent Identity in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*" that the novel is a challenge to Aristotle's "Law of the Excluded Middle," which dictates that a mixture of two things cannot exist: one must be one or the other. The novel "may be singled out as an example of the type of contemporary literature that sides with the hybrid in the ideological struggle against the artificial limits imposed by categorical

thinking . . .” (83). Other scholars have praised the novel for the role it has played in opening a conversation on difficult socio-political issues, such as gender identity, and in doing so creating the possibility for change. In “‘Sing Now, O ‘Muse, of the Recessive Mutation’: Interrogating the Genetic Discourse of Sex Variation in Jeffrey Eugenides’ *Middlesex*,” Olivia Banner suggests that approaching *Middlesex* as “a work whose effect in the material realm overcomes its limitation in the rhetorical—might allow us to think more broadly about how cultural texts can be made useful for activist efforts to change biomedical practice” (150). Banner brings attention to the impact that the novel had on medical practitioners by referencing sources that showed that *Middlesex* had helped doctors to understand the inner life of the intersex patient as well as impacted policy on the timing of gender selection procedures.

In “D(NA) Coding the Ethnic: Jeffrey Eugenides’ *Middlesex*,” Patricia Chu discusses the novel as a post-Human Genome Project work. Chu presents the post-Human Genome Project as one which moves away from genetic determinism and into a space (genomic) that opens “up the possibilities of intervention and transformation” (278). Chu’s primary interest in the possibilities the Project creates concerns the potential implications for ethnic literature. She discusses early race novels as those which accepted their biological fate but attempted to “envision the novel as a political act, a way of making black people human through something the novel genre is famous for: its ability to produce resonant accounts of the individual and his or her social order” (279). Chu sees *Middlesex* as a novel that moves away from the “old world notion of fate” and into the postgenomic biology which “allows for excessive narrative and for free will” (280). Chu ultimately questions whether the novel’s use of the “immigrant saga,” which she views as leading to a “revival of white ethnicity,” could be translated to ethnic literature or whether the ethnic would have to “take to science fiction (loosely defined) in the form of alternative history” (282-283).

Chu’s discussion of the postgenomic construction of the subject in literature is particularly compelling, but rather than view this concept in terms of ethnicity (or for that matter gender, sexuality or any other political category), why not see the implications for all of humanity? Couldn’t the novel be read as a nonpolitical exploration of the postgenomic subject that ultimately succeeds in finding the essence of humanity somewhere in the middle . . . our free will?

Middlesex can be read as a post-Human Genome Project novel that harkens back to our former knowledge of genetics only to emphasize the indeterminacy of the new genomic knowledge. Through engaging readers with a memoir, the author endears himself to the reader and gains sympathy for the human condition as science seeks to “solve” our inadequacies. And whereas earlier novels have spun cautionary tales of the monsters science could create by manipulating nature, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Middlesex* cautions against scientific intervention and eradication of the perceived natural monster (which could be any one of us) by reminding us that while science, and specifically genomics, can explain some of the biological causation, it cannot address the implicit humanity of the subject. The novel debunks mythology—science explains the monster—yet resists science’s attempt to “cure” the monster and, in doing so, advocates for free will.

A SHORT NOTE ON THE HUMAN GENOME PROJECT

When work began on the decoding of the human genome, scientists anticipated creating a map of the specific genes that correlated to their functions in the human body, similar to maps that have been created of areas of the brain. When the work was completed, what was discovered was that there were a lot fewer genes in humans than anticipated. Eugenides describes this in the novel itself:

In the twentieth century, genetics brought the Ancient Greek notion of fate into our very cells. This new century we’ve just begun has found something different. Contrary to all expectations, the code underlying our being is woefully inadequate. Instead of the expected 200,000 genes, we have only 30,000. Not many more than a mouse. And a strange new possibility is rising. Compromised, indefinite, sketchy, but not entirely obliterated: free will is making a comeback. Biology gives you a brain. Life turns it into a mind. (479)

Make no mistake; the implications of the discoveries made while mapping the human genome are significant. The decoding of the genome has led to a vastly deeper understanding of the role of genes, and therefore heredity, in a variety of physical conditions, including congenital defects, Alzheimer’s, and breast cancer. The ongoing work on the genome will continue to provide invaluable insight for

years to come. The Human Genome Project did not, however, culminate in concrete explanations of all human conditions. With fewer genes than anticipated there cannot be simply one gene for one thing. What researchers discovered was that there are many other factors: proteins and other materials that attach themselves to the genes, mutations that occur, environmental influences, and multiple genes that can play a role in a given trait or predisposition. Our simple genes are inadequate in explaining us entirely; there is much, much more to it. At best, most scientists agree that the decoding of the human genome created a framework for determining the probability of genetic expression based on genetic variations.

Despite this indeterminacy, the momentous work completed in the Human Genome Project has created an atmosphere of mass public awareness of our genetic liabilities. In this age of medical explanation and intervention, the implications of genetic predisposition plague us all. In television and newspaper advertisements we are constantly cautioned to “tell the doctor if we have a family history of x.” The news media report daily on various studies that find links between our genetics and disease and on the pursuit of cures to various illnesses and ailments. And so, while science has brought us education and insight into our physiology, it has also brought to light our vulnerabilities.

Middlesex, a novel in memoir form, calls attention to this vulnerability through its intricately woven narrative that follows a single predisposed gene through several generations until it finally arrives at expression. Through scientific explanation the narrative reveals that the resulting physical condition is not the result of any actions of the individual, but the effect of the culmination of this genomic expression: 5-alpha-reductase-deficiency syndrome, an autosomal recessive intersex condition caused by a genetic mutation. In the post-Human Genome Project world, straight biological determinism is a thing of the past; while you cannot deny the potential predisposition of your genetic heritage, it is no longer deterministic, merely probabilistic. Science can explain the monster of difference based on genomic variation.

MIDDLESEX IN MEMOIR FORM

Middlesex's narrative follows a gene through its travels toward and until its expression in the narrator Cal, who tells the gene's story

as if he were present throughout these travels, first in the form of history as he gives the gene a voice and later in the form of his own personal coming-of-age experience. Eugenides wastes no time acknowledging the reader's concern about the reliability of his narrator, having Cal admit: "Of course, a narrator in my position (prefetal at the time) can't be entirely sure about any of this" (9). Despite the hybrid nature of the novel, the unusual subject matter, and the undeniable unreliability of Cal's narration, the novel does succeed at creating a sense of the intimacy that Philip Lopate finds essential to endearing the reader to this type of work.

In the introduction to the *Art of the Personal Essay*, Lopate identifies several of the hallmarks of the personal essay, of which memoir is one form: "The hallmark of the personal essay is its intimacy. The writer seems to be speaking directly in to your ear, confiding everything from gossip to wisdom. Through sharing thought, memories, desires, complaints, and whimsies, the personal essayist sets up a relationship with the reader, a dialogue—friendship, if you will, based on identification, understanding, testiness, and companionship" (xxiii). Eugenides opens up the intimate dialogue with the reader immediately through Cal's honest confession in the first sentence of the novel: "I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974" (3). There remains throughout the text a pervasive sense that the reader is privy to an unfolding secret that needs to be told, that this secret contains an essential lesson to be learned.

The use of the memoir form is significant to the argument that *Middlesex* avoids the necessity for making a political statement. According to Lopate this type of writing has an "implicitly democratic bent in the value it places on experience rather than status distinctions" (xxiii). Additionally he finds that "[a]t the core of the personal essay is the supposition that there is a certain unity to human experience" (xxiii). Through the intimacy created by befriending the reader and the nonpolitical nature of the text, the universal vulnerability of the post-Human Genome subject is established and cautionary commentary on maintaining free will takes place. We are all at the mercy of our genetic predispositions and this story has a lesson to be shared.

SCIENCE CREATES THE MONSTER VS. SCIENCE SOLVES
THE MONSTER — THE HUMAN VARIABLE

Unlike former novels that were fraught with the cautionary notion of scientists creating monsters, *Middlesex* takes on the vulnerable post-Human Genome Project human condition. Science can now not only create monsters but can also eradicate the perceived natural monster. Using the extreme, and rare, genetic condition of the intersexed body, the novel brings to light concerns that speak to the vulnerability of all perceived genetic inadequacies. While the potential for intervention to prevent illness, disability, and suffering that will result from the decoding of the genome will be great, there are also tremendous risks. The narrative of *Middlesex* shows that there is the potential for misuse of this knowledge, potential for fear and intimidation, and for manipulation. The novel cautions that the “possibilities for intervention” that are available to humanity post-Human Genome Project must remain a matter of personal choice.

Even in novels predating genetics, authors have warned of the dangers of scientific intervention into humanity and the potential creation of monsters. In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* the scientist Dr. Frankenstein creates the monstrous Creature on his quest to create life. In Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll creates the monstrous version of himself, Mr. Hyde, when he endeavors to separate his good side from his bad by taking a self-concocted potion. In contrast, the “monster” in *Middlesex* is naturally occurring in the form of a genetic mutation resulting in the intersexed condition of the novel’s narrator Cal, raised as a girl (Callie) until a trip to the emergency room following an accident results in the discovery that she is intersex. Callie’s parents take her to a gender disorder clinic where science seeks to solve her difference—the monstrosity of her intersex body—by performing gender corrective surgery.

In *Middlesex*, Cal’s naturally occurring intersex condition is viewed through a socially constructed definition of monstrosity. The condition does not fit in a societal version of “normal” (categorically either male or female) and being abnormal is presented as undesirable. The treatment for Callie’s condition (the monstrosity) is to surgically alter her genitalia and inject her with hormones that will make the rest of her body appear “normal.” Dr. Luce, the gender disorder doctor her parents take her to, provides evidence of the significance

of the perception of normalcy as he describes the benefits of the proposed treatment: “Her outside and inside will conform. She will look like a normal girl. Nobody will be able to tell a thing. And then Callie can go on and enjoy her life” (428). Life for Callie then is only to be enjoyed under the auspices of socially constructed normality, as a “normal” girl. Callie is unconvinced both of the doctor and of the value of this normality:

I had miscalculated Luce. I thought that after talking to me he would decide that I was normal and leave me alone. But I was beginning to understand something about normality. Normality wasn't normal. It couldn't be. If normality was normal, everybody would leave it alone. They could sit back and let normality manifest itself. But people especially doctors—had doubts about normality. They weren't sure normality was up to the job. And so they felt inclined to give it a boost (446).

Interestingly, despite some suspicion that she might be a little different, Callie does not perceive herself as abnormal (or some version of monstrosity) until she hears an unknown medical term in the doctor's office and decides to look it up. Researching the word “hypospadias” in the dictionary at the library she ends up tracing through a line of synonyms that ultimately lead to the synonym “MONSTER” (430). Upon seeing the word “monster,” Callie becomes acutely aware of her situation, of her *perceived* monstrosity:

The synonym was official, authoritative; it was the verdict that the culture gave on a person like her. Monster. That was what she was. That was what Dr. Luce and his colleagues had been saying. It explained so much, really. It explained her mother crying in the next room. It explained the false cheer in Milton's voice. It explained why her parents had brought her to New York, so that the doctors could work in secret. It explained the photographs, too. What did people do when they came upon Bigfoot or the Loch Ness Monster? They tried to get a picture. (431)

It is important to note that at the point where Callie says this, she is not yet even aware of her actual medical condition. In the absence of information, she determines herself to be a monstrosity based on the projection of others' emotions onto her.

The story of discovery is complicated by the fact that Dr. Luce has not given Callie or her parents all of the information about her medical condition. Callie's tests show that she is chromosomally

male and (among other things) has undescended testes. Dr. Luce unethically presents the results of his testing on Callie to her parents in a way meant to steer their decision regarding her treatment. Luce's desire to prove his own theory of gender identity—that gender identity is based on the way children are reared—causes him to do so. It is only by chance that later Callie happens to be left alone in Dr. Luce's office, where she quickly reads her own file and learns the truth of her condition. After reading the file, armed with knowledge, she runs away, leaving her parents a note proclaiming: "If you want to know why I'm doing this, you should ask Dr. Luce, who is a big liar! I am not a girl. I'm a boy. That's what I found out today" (439).

ETHICAL CONCERNS: GENETIC MANIPULATION,
DENIAL OF FREE WILL, DENIAL OF EXPERIENCE

The depiction of Callie's experience at the gender disorder clinic highlights three main concerns for humanity in the post-Human Genome Project era. First, it brings to light the issue of standardization of what society views as desirable or "normal." Undoubtedly, we are all vulnerable to a scientific world that could seek to remove traits or features from the population that are seen as less desirable or abnormal. Science fiction's visions of breeding the perfect human are no longer strange and far-off fantasies. The technology for genetic manipulation exists today, and the new knowledge of genetic mapping only fuels the potential for genetic intervention to eradicate perceived weaknesses. While intervention to prevent illness or painful deformities will benefit many, there is also great potential for misuse. Who will decide what is "normal" or what traits are undesirable and should be eliminated?

Secondly, Dr. Luce's attempt to deny Callie's free will in order to prove his own theories further emphasizes the precarious nature of the subject in the post-Human Genome Project era. Callie is denied access to the truth. She isn't asked her opinion; Dr. Luce attempts to deny her the ability to choose her own destiny. He does not share the true results of the testing done on Callie with her or her parents. In fact, when asked by Callie's parents he outright refuses to share her medical file with them, demonstrating the potential for unethical manipulation of the new genomic knowledge. The novel advocates

for full disclosure of the information and the ability of individuals to choose their own paths.

The third concern is the way in which the new genomic knowledge can change the way we view ourselves. Annas discussed this potential ethical issue in terms of maps. According to Annas, maps change the way we view the world and ourselves. When Callie reads the information in the medical file, her perception of herself changes; presented with the medical evidence that she is chromosomally male, she now sees herself as a boy. While full disclosure and allowing for individual choice are crucial to the subject, the consequence of our knowing what our genome contains is that it can change how we think about ourselves.

Journalist Amy Harmon included an admission to just this type of concern in her article “My Genome, Myself: Seeking Clues in DNA” which won a Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting in 2008. Harmon’s article followed her own experience as one of the early testers to utilize the personal genomic service offered by 23andMe. Despite submitting her own DNA for testing and exploring the implications of her genomic predisposition for her own health and future, Harmon acknowledged that she had decided not to do so for her then three-year-old daughter. “I had decided not to submit my daughter’s DNA for testing—at least not yet—because I didn’t want to regard anything about her as predestined. If she wants to play the piano, who cares if she lacks perfect pitch? If she wants to run the 100-meter dash, who cares if she lacks the sprinting gene?”(3).

Harmon’s concern about her daughter helps to highlight a critical point: that the new genomic knowledge may impact the way we as individuals view ourselves and our potential. If, for example, an individual’s genome showed a predisposition to be limited in some way, such as not having the genomic probability of being athletic, perhaps that person wouldn’t try to play a sport that he or she might have enjoyed and potentially even excelled at, resulting in self-limiting (based solely on probabilistic data) and, in turn, the denial of experience? How do we responsibly and ethically manage this new genomic information without preordaining the perception of a limited potential?

MANAGING CONDITIONS: HOW THE NOVEL
ADVOCATES FOR FREE WILL

The truth about the new genomic knowledge lies in its probabilistic (not deterministic) nature that, as Chu so aptly said, “opens up the possibility of intervention.” Yet the simple knowledge or awareness of a condition or a predisposition is irrelevant until action is taken. What matters is what we, both as individuals and a society, choose to do with our genomic knowledge. Knowing that you are genetically predisposed to develop breast cancer may encourage you to be more vigilant in getting regular screenings and mammograms. Knowing that you are predisposed for heart disease or high cholesterol may make you more conscious of your diet. How we choose to manage our conditions with the knowledge that we have currently remains a matter of free will. But will it stay that way?

The wonders of science and industry, coupled with advancements in medical technology—now fueled by the knowledge of the decoded human genome—continually improve the mechanisms by which we as individuals can manage our respective conditions with such things as new medications, early methods of detection, and innovative screenings. But these advancements and their engendered management come at a high financial cost that may not be sustainable. With the skyrocketing cost of health care in the United States the last decade may come a turn in the tide of the proliferation of individual management mechanisms toward the institution of requirements and mandates in order to control these costs. Will increased genomic knowledge eventually result in compulsory and imposed management of conditions under the guise of the “greater good” of society? New York City’s recent attempted ban on the sale of large-sized sugary soft drinks, although based not on genomic knowledge but on scientific data about the health implications of large-scale consumption of such beverages, implied an imposed compulsory management of consumption in order to control individual weight and its resulting medical conditions. This type of legislative action makes a bold statement that if we as individuals choose not to manage own conditions, the government will choose to manage them for us. Given the proliferation of new information regarding the possibilities for medical intervention available post-Human Genome Project, the New York proposal may be a frightening indication of things to come.

In *Middlesex*, despite being offered a solution to his “monstrosity,” his intersexed condition, Cal chooses not to have gender corrective surgery. Critics of the novel have taken issue with what they view as Cal’s decision to live as a man; to these critics I offer an alternate reading, that of personal choice and free will. Cal remains the intersexed individual that he was born to be. He simply makes the deeply personal choice to portray himself outwardly as a man but does not alter his physical self. In the end he finds a companion who is comfortable with him, and his body, exactly as he is. It could be said that in this postgenomic world Cal chooses to manage his condition. But what if he did not have that choice, what if the management of his condition was imposed on him?

ON READING BACKWARD AND LOOKING FORWARD: THE POST-HUMAN GENOME SUBJECT TODAY AND ONGOING

The pre-Human Genome Project article referenced at the opening of this paper by George J. Annas brought attention to the potential legal and ethical issues raised by the project on three levels. Level One (Individual/Family) Issues would deal primarily with how the genomic knowledge would affect individuals and families, e.g. genetic screening and counseling, voluntary health screening to eliminate/limit disease. Level Two (Societal) Issues would deal with population-based screening, resource allocation, commercialism of genetic information and eugenics. The final level, Level Three (Species) Issues “relates to the fact that powerful new technologies do not simply change what human beings can do, but also change the way people think, especially about themselves” (8). The narrative of *Middlesex* elucidates potential ethical concerns on at least two of these levels and alludes to the third.

Now, twelve years after the initial publication of the first draft of the decoded human genome, over ten years after the initial publication of *Middlesex*, and more than twenty years after Annas’s article was published, the after effects of the decoding of the human genome continue to unravel. As Annas predicted, the commercialization of personal genomics has begun. Until November of this year for a mere ninety-nine dollars, anyone could order a do-it-yourself-at-home kit from 23andMe to have his or her DNA genotyped with a simple cheek swab that is submitted to a lab. (The same DNA genotyping kit

was available to Harmon for \$999 five years ago.) Earlier this year the personal genomics company even patented its first diagnostic discovery, linking certain genetic variations to Parkinson's disease, to the surprise of their subscribers, most of whom had no idea that the genomic data they had freely supplied the company was subject to use to provide potential profit for the company. In the latest turn of events, the FDA issued a directive in November to 23andMe to immediately stop marketing its product as a health-related diagnostic device, citing concerns about consumer safety (i.e. how patients might respond to the potential health predispositions identified in the reports provided, such as seeking or stopping treatments based on information received from the reports). Despite complying with the FDA's demand, the company is still providing the service, albeit without interpretive reports, and is fighting fiercely to return to providing the interpretive service.

In response to the Human Genome Project, laws—including the federal Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) with its aim to prevent discrimination in insuring and employment—have been enacted to head off discrimination against individuals based upon their genomic information. Yet the ability to enforce such laws remains a matter of considerable debate. Legal battles over ownership and individual privacy rights concerning the use of genomic information continue to be waged around the world. In fact, these battles seem to be just beginning. In July the United States Supreme Court ruled that human genes could not be patented, a decision that has set off a series of patent wars and lawsuits between companies developing diagnostic devices that identify specific genetic anomalies, leaving the issue of who controls genomic information unsettled at best.

Middlesex, written at the beginning of the new postgenomic era, advocates for humanity and the essential imperative of free will in the application of new science. Where the next generation of the literature of science versus humanity will go is yet to be known. While cautioning against scientific intervention into humanity may remain a critical theme, it may ultimately be the narrative of what humanity chooses to do with the new genomic knowledge (i.e., who controls the information and how it is put to use) that will have a much further-reaching consequence in the post-Human Genome Project world.

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AN “UNLIKELY”¹ INTERSECTIONALIST: BLACK
FEMINIST ETHICS IN WILLIAM MAXWELL’S
TIME WILL DARKEN IT

GRETCHEN C. COMBA

In her seminal work on William Maxwell, *William Maxwell: A Literary Life*, Barbara Burkhardt treats all of Maxwell’s book-length works, situating them within a biographical context and then analyzing each from a New Critical perspective. In her analysis of Maxwell’s fourth novel, *Time Will Darken It* (1948), Burkhardt claims that “[a]s in *The Folded Leaf* (1945), the narrator becomes a mouthpiece for the writer’s observations and ideas; here, however, no character’s life parallels his own” (*A Literary Life* 137). Although her claim lies in the second half of the sentence, a point reiterated in her assertion that *Time* “distinguishes itself from the author’s other five novels as the least overtly autobiographical” (Burkhardt, *A Literary Life* 137), the first half of the sentence is telling: Burkhardt suggests that the narrator speaks for the “writer’s observations and ideas,” observations and ideas that necessarily change during the course of an author’s lifetime and career. Maxwell’s professional career spanned more than six decades, decades that included US involvement in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, as well as the rise of New Left social movements. As a close reading of his early works against his later works attests, Maxwell’s “observations and ideas” about people from different social and economic locations altered significantly throughout the course of his career.

In *Time Will Darken It*, which was written at the roughly late-early to mid-point of Maxwell’s career, the omniscient narrator privileges the viewpoints of characters who socially and economically most closely mirror Maxwell’s own. The story centers on Austin and Martha King, a white middle-class couple who live in Draperville, Illinois; the plot revolves around the ways in which both Austin and Martha are forced to reconsider their marriage when visited by

estranged US Southern relatives, one of whom falls in love with Austin. Although the perspectives of Austin and Martha dominate the narrative space of the novel, the narrator also presents the perspective of a number of peripheral characters, several of whom are socially and economically marginalized. One of these perspectives is that of Rachel, the Kings’ Black female working-class housekeeper and cook, a character whom Burkhardt treats in her analysis of race in the novel. In her treatment, Burkhardt hints at, without explicitly acknowledging, the ways in which Maxwell, consciously or unconsciously, espouses principles related to intersectionality theory, which would not become codified until the 1970s and 1980s. This theory includes the following concepts: (1) marginalized people have a valid epistemological standpoint arrived at through lived experience, (2) they are more socially knowledgeable than their more privileged counterparts because they must necessarily transgress boundaries that afford them access to a greater number of social situations than these counterparts, and (3) the voices of marginalized people should be moved from the margins of culture to the center in order to increase knowledge production.

As a white economically privileged male, Maxwell lacked the lived experience to hold a legitimate standpoint in relation to the lives of oppressed people. Hence, from a purely political perspective, his voicing of the viewpoints of marginalized others is negligible. In addition, even if he were to embody the status of the marginalized other, his voice, in a poststructuralist framework, would lack legitimacy because it would be the voice of the representative rather than the subaltern. The purpose of this essay, however, is not to consider the political ramifications of Maxwell’s narration in the novel, nor is it to situate the novel within a poststructuralist framework. Rather, I wish to make explicit and build upon Burkhardt’s ideas about Maxwell’s Black feminist ethical position in relation to standpoint epistemology and, in so doing, situate these ideas in the appropriate theoretical framework. I do so in order to strengthen my argument that in *Time Will Darken It*, Maxwell demonstrates a sensibility in relation to marginalized people that is not only visionary for his time and social location, but also looks forward to the more progressive social consciousness he displays in his later works.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY

Despite the fact that women of color voiced their concerns about various forms of oppression during the First Wave of the feminist movement, their voices were largely superseded by the voices of white middle- and upper-class reformers. The voices of these more privileged liberal feminists continued to be heard over the voices of others into the twentieth century, and the voices of those who differed from the normative feminist standpoint were largely ignored by the general public. Their voices were ignored, at least partly, because white economically privileged feminists held to an essentialist ideology that posited that women were bonded more by their similarity in relation to biological or constructed identity than they were separated by their differences in relation to race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, age and/or nationality. And yet, within the Second Wave were visionary feminists of color who decried the essentialist arguments and normative strictures of those feminists who held to and did not see past the ideas espoused by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*. Their ideas, now codified as Intersectionality Theory, are rooted in nineteenth-century Black feminist thought and encompass a broad range of theoretical perspectives. The most important of these perspectives are, arguably, the theories of interlocking oppressions, identity politics, and standpoint epistemology.

The term “interlocking oppressions” posits that oppressions in relation to gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, age, and national origin, among other systemic forms of oppression related to binary thinking, are multiple and simultaneous. In other words, if a person is subject to more than one form of oppression, those oppressions cannot be considered singly, but instead must be considered in relation to the others also present. In 1851, Sojourner Truth spoke about the ways in which race and gender intersect, emphasizing how Black economically disenfranchised women are constructed differently than white economically privileged women, as well as how a Black woman may be subject to the simultaneous oppressions of race, gender, and class. Her argument looks far forward to the Third World Women’s Alliance, a feminist organization founded by US women of color, whose members, in 1973, chose to name their journal *Triple Jeopardy*, a title that reflects the interlock-

ing nature of gender, race, and class oppression. The Combahee River Collective furthers the conversation on this stance:

[T]he most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. (qtd. in McCann and Kim 106)

In their “Black Feminist Statement” (1977), the women of the Combahee River Collective pointed to the necessity of an “integrated analysis” that takes into consideration the interlocking nature of oppressions. In 1988, Deborah King added to the conversation, reflecting on how “a black feminist ideology fundamentally challenges the interstructure of the oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism both in the dominant society and within movements for liberation” (72). For King, “[i]t is in confrontation with multiple jeopardy that black women define a multiple consciousness essential for our liberation” (72). Finally, Kimberlé Crenshaw argued that “[b]ecause the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (209).

The term “identity politics” includes the larger concept of how groups of people may be identified and unified through social location and how such identification and unification may foster political action. In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper decried not just sexism, but racism and nationalism, and thus highlighted the multiplicity of oppressions that white liberal feminists failed to acknowledge. In identifying various socially marginalized groups, she laid the groundwork for the collective consciousness necessary for political action. This collective consciousness re-emerges during the Second Wave of feminism, again most notably in the Combahee River Collective’s “Black Feminist Statement,” a piece in which the members of the Collective make claims that contradict the essentialist “sisterhood” often espoused by white liberal feminists. They suggest that the focus “on our oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics” and “believe that the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else’s oppression” (108). Black feminists, those

belonging to the Collective, as well as others, recognize the differences between women and how those differences translate into different experiences and oppressions and, therefore, different identities. For these feminists, the recognition of difference allows for unification of homogenous groups within the heterogeneous feminist movement, and this unification enables political discourse and action.²

An outgrowth of the theoretical concepts of interlocking oppressions and identity politics is standpoint epistemology, which holds that the standpoint occupied by the dominant group and espoused by the dominant group as universal is limited and that the knowledge of marginalized people should be moved from the margins to the center of the cultural conversation. In her 1892 critique of the depiction of Black characters in white-authored US literary texts, Cooper argued that the voices and visions of Black writers and artists must be fostered and then heard and seen so as to counteract the racist construction of Black characters in white-authored texts and present a more accurate picture of social and cultural constructions and conditions related to race in the United States.

Once again, Cooper's argument resonates with late twentieth-century feminisms. For example, Patricia Hill Collins discusses the nature of Black feminist standpoint epistemology, suggesting that "Black feminist thought consists of specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women. In other words, Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it" (343). Many of the proponents of this critical perspective argue that the standpoints of marginalized others offer more insight into cultural and social norms than those of the economically privileged because those on the margins necessarily transgress social boundaries and, therefore, are more knowledgeable than those who do not. This point is made plain in Ann Petry's novel *The Street* (1946). The protagonist, Lutie Johnson, leaves her home and family in Jamaica, New York, to work as a maid for a white family in Connecticut and thereby discovers "a very strange world" in which she feels as if

she [were] looking through a hole in a wall at some enchanted garden. She could see, she could hear, she spoke the language of the people in the garden, but she couldn't get past the wall. The figures on the other side of it loomed up life-size and they could see her, but

there was that wall in between which prevented them from mingling on an equal footing. The people on the other side of the wall knew less about her than she knew about them. (41)

Petry implies that Lutie is more knowledgeable than her employers, for she knows the details of both her life and theirs, whereas as they know only, and bother to know only, the details of their own lives. This idea is underscored in the introduction to bell hooks’s seminal text *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984). Drawing from her own experiences, bell hooks discusses how, in racially segregated Kentucky, Blacks necessarily crossed social and geographical boundaries, entering a restricted white space, for employment as well as for other reasons. As whites rarely crossed those boundaries to enter Black space, hooks points out how whites were less socially knowledgeable than their Black counterparts. Ultimately, hooks (among others) argues that the standpoint of Black feminists needs to be moved from the margin to the center in any feminist theoretical discussion (ix-x).

Derived from nineteenth-century Black feminist thought, intersectionality theory includes theories related to interlocking oppressions, identity politics, and standpoint epistemology. The work of early reformers such as Truth and Cooper informed the ideas of those who began theorizing during the development of the New Left. Ultimately, the voices of these women, both early and late, were instrumental in changing the dominant and normative vision of Second Wave feminism into an inclusive movement in which differing voices are honored and heard.

INTERSECTIONALLY OPPRESSED VOICES IN *TIME WILL DARKEN IT*

In her discussion of *Time Will Darken It* in *A Literary Life*, Burkhardt devotes a section to Maxwell’s treatment of African American characters. In this section, she situates the construction of race in the novel within the broader context of Maxwell’s works, suggesting ways in which Maxwell’s depiction of Black characters changes throughout the course of his career. She also treats the construction of Blacks within the context of the novel, considering the marginalized characters in general and the character of Rachel specifically³ and, in so doing, noting how the narrator of *Time* sub-

scribes to the basic principle of standpoint epistemology, a subject that will be treated at greater length in the final section of this paper.

Burkhardt focuses on the difference in the depiction of Jefferson Carter in Maxwell's first novel, *Bright Center of Heaven* (1934), and the depiction of Billie Dyer in the late story that bears his name and that is housed in Maxwell's final original collection, *Billie Dyer and Other Stories* (1992); in addition, she notes the intersection of race and class in the novel. In her discussion of Maxwell's first novel, Burkhardt suggests that Maxwell, in a desire to privilege dramatic action over character development, ultimately creates a stereotypical portrait of one of the novel's central characters, Jefferson Carter, an African American man who visits Meadowland, the artists' colony in which the action takes place. Burkhardt writes that Maxwell's "deepest regret about the novel remained the characterization of black lecturer and teacher, Jefferson Carter. As a first-time novelist, [Maxwell] had assumed that a good novel needed a dramatic climax followed by the requisite denouement, so . . . he concocted a conflict" (*A Literary Life* 54). As Maxwell himself suggested in a 1991 interview, he would have done better to have eschewed the conflict for something far less dramatic, and much closer to the personal experience that was the genesis of the novel, an experience in which, in his words, "nothing much" happened (*A Literary Life* 54). Burkhardt writes of how

[t]he overly dramatized Jefferson Carter of the first novel gives way to more believable black characters and depictions of relationships between the races [and of how] Maxwell attempts to capture how black Americans in heartland towns endured not only direct racism and poverty but also hypocritical and conditioned acceptance, genteel bigotry, and cordial condescension. (*A Literary Life* 162)

In her use of the conjunction "and" in the above passage, Burkhardt indirectly suggests the idea of simultaneous oppressions in relation to racism and poverty in her assessment of Maxwell's depiction of African American characters in *Time*.

Burkhardt continues with a discussion in which she implicitly suggests that marginalized characters are more socially knowledgeable than their more privileged counterparts. She discusses the division between upper Elm Street, where the white middle-class Kings and others of their social milieu live in comfortable homes, and lower

Elm Street, where Rachel and other African Americans and working-class whites live with “roofs that leaked, ceilings that cracked and fell, floors that were uneven, and the scratching of rats at night inside the walls” (*Time* 54). Like “the wall” that separates Lutie Johnson from her employers in *The Street*, “a great pane of glass, opaque from one side, transparent from the other” (*Time* 54) separates the two sides of Elm Street, with the “residents of Lower Elm [living] behind the opaque wall that separates their residences from their employers” (*A Literary Life* 162). Burkhardt implicitly suggests how the narrator is aware of the first principle of standpoint epistemology: marginalized people are more socially knowledgeable than their more privileged counterparts. The residents of upper Elm Street cannot see past the “opaque wall” that they have constructed in order to separate themselves from their neighbors, while for the residents of lower Elm Street, including Rachel, the wall is “transparent”: by virtue of their employment on upper Elm, these characters can “see” into the lives of their neighbors.

Burkhardt reiterates this point in her discussion of the interactions between Martha King and Rachel. When Rachel asks Martha if her daughter might spend more time in the Kings’ home, Martha agrees, yet she is blind to the possibility that Rachel’s alcoholic, wandering husband has beaten Rachel’s daughter (*A Literary Life* 162). Once again, the privileged character’s blindness is juxtaposed with the underprivileged character’s sight. Burkhardt suggests that the narrator of *Time* is keenly aware of the division between the worlds and lives of those who reside on upper Elm and lower Elm and the way in which underprivileged characters are more socially knowledgeable than their privileged counterparts.

Burkhardt concludes this portion of her analysis by pointing toward her later discussion of “The Front and the Back Parts of the House,” another story found in Maxwell’s collection, *Billie Dyer and Other Stories*. She considers Maxwell’s later narrative style, a style perfected in his final novel, *So Long, See You Tomorrow* (1980), in which Maxwell lets go of the traditional boundaries between fact and fiction, emphasizing that in this story the narrative style is one that explicitly interweaves historical fact, personal memory, and imaginative speculation: “More than in any of his other works, [Maxwell] seems to want to tear down any remaining barriers between himself and his reader. Here no metaphors impart artistic form and unity; no fiction stands in for things not known” (*A Literary Life* 268).

In her discussion of “The Front and the Back Parts of the House,” Burkhardt suggests how professional obligation led Maxwell to personal revelation with regard to his depiction of African American characters. When he submitted “House” to *The New Yorker*, he was asked to revise the story to reflect more contemporary attitudes on race and race relations. After reviewing his treatment of the character of Hattie in the story, Maxwell revised the story to include a narrative thread drawn ostensibly from his own life; again, at this point in his career, Maxwell appears to have been consciously blurring the line between fact and fiction. In this thread, the narrator details an earlier visit to Lincoln, Illinois, a visit in which he meets again and is slighted by Hattie Dyer (sister of Billie Dyer), a woman who cooked for the Maxwell family. The narrator concludes that Hattie is upset with him for the imaginative portrayal of Andy, the abusive and alcoholic husband of Rachel, the cook and housekeeper in *Time*. Although he “never had in mind to write about [Hattie], [that] Rachel the colored woman who worked in the Kings’ kitchen was imaginary,” the narrator concludes that Hattie “was perfectly right not to look at me, not to respond at all, when [he] put his arms around her” (*Billie Dyer* 107). Burkhardt suggests that Maxwell’s later narrative style “more closely binds Maxwell’s ties between art and life while it clarifies his sorrow and guilt for racial offenses both intended and unintended,” ultimately concluding that the “evolution of Maxwell’s narratives about race from the 1930s to the 1990s suggests a white male writer’s struggle to portray black Americans accurately and empathetically” and that “the strength of these late stories stems from [Maxwell’s] willingness to bare his own regret that as a white man he could neither fully comprehend nor adequately portray black experience” (*A Literary Life* 269).

In her analysis of race in *Time Will Darken It*, Burkhardt concludes that Maxwell’s depictions of Black characters are no longer the stereotypical portraits seen in his first novel, *Bright Center of Heaven*, but rather are nuanced portraits of complex individuals whose desires are not determined by the writer’s need for high dramatic action. In addition, she notes the way in which the narrator of *Time* considers the intersection of racism and poverty as well as subscribes to a basic principle of standpoint epistemology. Finally, she points to how his portraits of characters that differ from his own ascribed status evolve in relation to his later narrative technique, in

which he seeks to erase the boundaries, like those that separate upper and lower Elm Street, between himself and his reader.

INTERSECTIONALITY THEORY AND *TIME WILL DARKEN IT*

In light of a postmodern sensibility that considers race, as well as gender and sexuality, as performed rather than essential, Maxwell’s views on race may appear somewhat troubling. Nevertheless, given the fact that *Time* was written before either the New Left movements of the US that fostered theories related to identity politics or the New Left movements of France that led to the poststructuralist ideas that permeate feminist thinking today had crystallized, Maxwell’s depiction of working-class female and African American characters looks forward to the standpoint epistemology that did not become part of the theoretical landscape until roughly twenty or more years after the novel appeared. Although Maxwell lacked the standpoint of lived experience necessary to lend an authentic voice to Rachel, the character subject to interlocking oppressions whose viewpoint, while not privileged, still occupies a relatively significant amount of space in the novel, he, at the very least, considers how she is more socially knowledgeable than her more privileged counterparts.

At various points in the novel, Maxwell emphasizes the greater knowledge of his marginalized characters. As previously mentioned, Burkhardt articulates how Maxwell is aware of the ways in which upper and lower Elm Street are divided both geographically and socially and implies how he considers the marginalized characters that live on lower Elm to be more socially knowledgeable than their counterparts who live on upper Elm. She cites a portion of the passage that most clearly demonstrates Maxwell’s perspective on these characters, but an analysis of the entire passage from which she pulls further suggests Maxwell’s awareness of interlocking oppressions as well as the basic principle of standpoint epistemology:

Something like a great pane of glass, opaque from one side, transparent from the other, divided the two halves of Elm Street. Beulah Osborn, the Ellises’ hired girl, Snowball McHenry, who worked in Dr. Danforth’s livery stable, and the Reverend Mr. Porterfield, who looked after Mrs. Beach’s furnace from October until April, and her flower garden from April until October, knew a great deal about what went on in the comfortable houses on the hill. But when they

or any of their friends and neighbors passed under the arc light at the intersection, the comfortable part of Elm Street lost all contact with them. (*Time* 54)

Of the three characters mentioned, all experience simultaneous and interlocking oppressions: Beulah (who is not characterized by race) is at least subject to the interlocking oppressions of gender and class, while both Snowball and Reverend Porterfield (who are specifically described as Black) are subject to the interlocking oppressions of race and class. As Maxwell notes, these characters, who traverse the boundary between upper and lower Elm Street for employment, “knew a great deal about what went on in the comfortable houses on the hill,” yet those who live on “the comfortable part of Elm Street,” because they do not cross the intersection, know very little of the lives of those who live on lower Elm. Implicit in these lines is the idea that the people of lower Elm Street are more socially knowledgeable than their white middle-class counterparts, and this idea is reinforced a number of times in the novel.

The idea that Rachel, as well as the other people who live on lower Elm Street, is more socially knowledgeable than those who live in “the comfortable part” is perhaps most strongly reinforced in the interactions of Rachel and Martha King. This idea is emphasized in the narrator’s comparison of houses to faces: “There are only two kinds of faces—those that show everything openly and tragically, and those that (no matter what happens) remain closed . . . The same thing is true of houses, for anyone who is interested enough to look at them, at what is there” (*Time* 295). The Kings’ house is closed: the “Kings’ house showed nothing” (*Time* 294), whereas Rachel’s house is open: “Rachel’s shack cried out that she was gone, taking her children with her” (*Time* 294). Clearly, the inhabitants of upper Elm Street are not “interested enough to look” at the houses of lower Elm Street and, thus, they remain ignorant. In addition, as Burkhardt notes, Martha, due to her insulation as a white middle-class woman, cannot fathom that Rachel’s husband, Andy, is either abusing or considering abusing, Rachel’s daughter (162).

Martha’s “respectability,” a privilege constructed by and afforded to her by those in a position to consciously and/or unconsciously direct and maintain a dominant discourse, blinds Martha to Rachel’s difficulties: “Rachel’s trouble was something that Martha King would never have to cope with. She was protected by the thousand

and one provisions in the code of respectability, and had been, from the moment she was born” (*Time* 255). Martha, by virtue of the privilege afforded her, cannot ascertain elements of Rachel’s life. Because the inhabitants of upper Elm Street never travel past the Elm Street intersection, they remain ignorant, as Martha King does of Rachel’s abusive and alcoholic husband Andy, of lives other than their own and those of their social circle. Conversely, Rachel is knowledgeable not only of the goings-on in her own household and neighborhood below the intersection, but also the goings-on above the intersection in the household of the Kings and their neighborhood. And ironically, it is the “closed” house that is open to the people who live on lower Elm Street, while the “open” house is closed because the people of upper Elm Street choose not to look.

Martha’s ignorance of Rachel’s life is underscored in a scene in Martha’s kitchen upon Andy’s return home. Again, as Burkhardt notes, Martha is unable to see the real trouble: While they drink coffee, Martha tells Rachel that “[she] won’t ask [her if she is] in trouble . . . I don’t need to ask. I’ve never pried into your affairs,” and then lets Rachel know that she can come to her for help (*Time* 254). Rachel chooses not to explain to Martha her situation. She “did not explain why she sat with her shoulders hanging limp and heavy and her feet twisted under the chair, or why she looked old and frightened” (*Time* 254). By virtue of crossing the intersection and spending a significant portion of her day at the Kings’ residence, Rachel knows Martha’s life as well as her own, yet Martha, never crossing the intersection divided by that “great plane of glass” through which she cannot see, knows nothing of Rachel’s life and is at the mercy of the understandably reticent Rachel to provide insight into that life. Ultimately, Martha is powerless: she cannot react without Rachel’s prior action.

Rachel’s use of her social knowledge is perhaps most apparent in the scenes in which Rachel interacts with Randolph, the young Southern guest, yet, depending on whether or not one reads the narrative stance as ironic, the characterization of Rachel in this scenario may be viewed as problematic in terms of racial stereotyping. Rachel and Randolph share an intimacy, for there were “things Randolph told [Rachel] about himself, about the members of his family, that he would not have told any white person” (*Time* 115). Randolph is forthcoming with Rachel in a way that he wouldn’t be with white people, and this point may reflect an inherent racism on his part—a racist atti-

tude rooted in the notion that whites consider African Americans' opinions as negligible, and therefore Black people make trustworthy confidants for white people because their stories won't be afforded any weight by those in the white cultural milieu. This idea is tied to the fact of white cultural dominance, for as a Black person, Rachel cannot speak out against white people without possible, even probable, physical, economic and/or social repercussions. In addition, Randolph may trust Rachel because he knows that she may not speak out against the oppressor without such repercussions. The narrator then writes how "Randolph had become [Rachel's] child, as he had been long ago in the past the child of some other black woman who watched over him in the daytime, put him to bed at night, sang to him, told him stories, and was there always, the eternal audience for anything he had to say" (*Time* 115).

On the one hand, this statement may be read as decrying, or at least pointing out, the way in which Black women, subject to dominant racist and sexist discourse, had little opportunity to employ themselves as anything other than caregivers to white children. On the other hand, this line may reflect the narrator's use of the Black Mammy stereotype, a racist construction of the Black woman as a maternal figure who relishes her subservience to whites. Nevertheless, when Randolph tells Rachel a story about a differently abled boy in Mississippi, "[b]y the time he had finished, [Rachel] had a very clear idea in her mind of the crippled boy who knew how to wait for what he wanted, and she also knew one more thing about Randolph Potter" (*Time* 155). In this line, the narrator appears to suggest that Rachel consciously stores, and perhaps even solicits, information related to Randolph and, likely, other family members, for, given her socially ascribed position, such information may prove useful for economic and perhaps other forms of survival.

The depiction of Rachel as a character who consciously acquires knowledge related to her employers suggests that the narrator may, indeed, have been ironic in the earlier passage in which Rachel appears to be stereotyped as a Mammy figure. Ultimately, however, the passage reflects how Rachel knows more about the white members of the family for whom she works than the white characters know about her and her own family on lower Elm Street. In addition, Rachel's thoughts in relation to what she knows about Randolph are never disclosed. Rachel asks Randolph why he hurt a dog and, following his reply, Rachel's face "revealed nothing whatever. If she

had been shocked, it would have been all right. Or if she had been sufficiently under his spell that she had laughed, but all she did was look at him thoughtfully” (*Time* 117). That Rachel is not shocked, or at least doesn’t reveal that she is so, gives her control of the situation: That “it would have been all right” for Randolph if she “had been shocked” or “had laughed” suggests that her unwillingness to disclose her thoughts renders Randolph powerless. Just as Martha cannot react without Rachel’s action, Randolph cannot act without Rachel’s reaction. As Rachel is not “sufficiently under his spell,” she is not the socially constructed figure of the Black Mammy who loves the white children placed in her care, but rather the intelligent observer of those children and their families, an observer whose knowledge helps her to survive within a culture that oppresses her.

Ultimately, Rachel is the most socially knowledgeable character in the novel, a fact that points to Maxwell’s comprehension of the standpoint epistemology that Black feminists brought to the foreground in the 1970s and 1980s. This point is underscored in Maxwell’s commentary on the people who live on lower Elm Street, in his treatment of Rachel and Martha King’s relationship, and in his treatment of Rachel and Randolph’s relationship. Given Maxwell’s ascribed privilege as a white middle-class man writing *Time* prior to the New Left movements that, although already beginning to foment, were not yet known within the larger cultural context, his insight into and acknowledgement of social knowledge in relation to marginalized people reflect the ways in which, even at this stage of his career, he imaginatively reached out from the center to the margins.

CONCLUSION

In a 1993 interview with Burkhardt, Maxwell spoke of how “a white writer writing about black Americans must call forth his utmost powers of sympathetic imagination, and even then the chances of success are not very good or are limited . . . [One problem] is ignorance of details, since our lives are so little shared with them” (*Conversations* 134). If we extrapolate from this self-analysis, we might conclude that economically privileged white male writers may have difficulty honestly portraying the perspectives of people who don’t share their particular ascribed status; indeed, Maxwell appears in this statement to acknowledge his own position on the privileged

side of the “great pane of glass.” In the same interview, but in a different context, Maxwell describes a “feeling person” as ““a person with some imaginative ability to put himself in another’s shoes”” (*Conversations* 131). Maxwell, at times in his career, imaginatively puts himself in the shoes of Black, female, and working-class people and, in the character of Rachel, imaginatively explores the psyche of a person who experiences simultaneous and multiple oppressions. Maxwell’s treatment of Rachel in *Time Will Darken It* demonstrates a sensibility in relation to the intersection of race, gender, and class that echoes a salient facet of standpoint epistemology: that marginalized people are more socially knowledgeable than privileged people. That he is able to embody such a sensibility at a time when, among other movements, the Civil Rights movement, the radical Black Power movement, the Chicano movement, and the women’s liberation movement with all of its various voices, had not yet permeated the dominant cultural context of which Maxwell was a part suggests that he, even in the late 1940s, at what might be considered the late-early to mid-point of his career, was already considering the authority of marginalized people, particularly those subject to simultaneous oppressions.

As noted earlier, in his later work and particularly in “Billie Dyer” and “The Front and the Back Parts of the House,” Maxwell revisited and reassessed his treatment of marginalized people. Even in final revisions for the stories in *Billie Dyer*, he was still reassessing this treatment in order to, as Burkhardt suggests, “make amends.” When “House” first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1991, the story was titled “The Front and Back Parts of the House” (29). When it appeared in *Billie Dyer* in 1992, the story was titled “The Front and the Back Parts of the House” (emphasis mine, *Billie Dyer* 82). The addition of the article, “the,” reflects Maxwell’s recognition that the story is equally shared by the privileged white narrator who spent his time in the “front” part of the house and the Black character who was relegated to the “back” part of the house. From a more abstract perspective, the addition of the article suggests Maxwell’s growing awareness that his position and perspective as a white middle-class male is not any more relevant or important than the perspective of the intersectionally oppressed Hattie Dyer. Yet he does not invert the “front” and “back” of the title, thus leaving the traditional binary opposition in place. Similarly, in *Time*, he does not go so far as to move the voice of his intersectionally oppressed character to the cen-

ter of the novel. Nevertheless, both the addition of the article and the acknowledgement of Rachel’s voice attest to a belief in the authority of the knowledge and voices of marginalized Others. Further analysis of Maxwell’s other works may shed light on whether or not ideas related to intersectionality theory permeate these works, and an exploration of his works from various feminist perspectives may reveal ways in which he looks forward to and/or reflects the modern and postmodern feminist ethics of the late twentieth century as well as the early part of the twenty-first.

Virginia Commonwealth University

NOTES

¹I draw my title from Burkhardt’s claim that Maxwell becomes an “unlikely postmodernist” by the end of his career (*A Literary Life* 246).

²Third-wave feminists disavow the idea of identity politics. Theorists point to ways in which even seemingly unified social groups are, in fact, made up of disparate individuals whose identities differ in relation to religion, region, etc.

³Burkhardt does not consider the character of Rachel in her section on gender, nor does she consider this character in relation to the interlocking oppressions of race, class, and gender.

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THREE MIDWESTERN BIOGRAPHIES: A REVIEW ESSAY

MARCIA NOE

- Bauer, Paul J, and Mark Dawidziak. *Jim Tully: American Writer, Irish Rover, and Hollywood Brawler*. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2011.
- Stillwell, Mary K. *The Life and Poetry of Ted Kooser*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2013.
- Shields, Charles J. *And So It Goes. Kurt Vonnegut: A Life*. NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2011.

An ex-boxer from Ohio turned best-selling author, a gentle Nebraska poet-farmer, and a Hoosier novelist who came to represent the zeitgeist of the 1960s; what could these three Midwestern writers possibly have in common? The answer: they are the subjects of three recent highly readable biographies, each the first biography to be published on its author.

Jim Tully's upbringing and education made him an unlikely candidate for best-selling author. Born in Ohio in 1886, Tully was the son of a ditch digger who turned Tully and his brother over to an orphanage in Cincinnati after their mother died. There Tully received only six years of schooling, the extent of his formal education. However, while there he developed the love of reading that his father had instilled in him, devouring Dickens, Hugo, Goldsmith, and Shakespeare. Leaving the orphanage at age sixteen, Tully became a road kid, riding the rails with career hoboes, learning the ways of the hobo jungle, reading voraciously in libraries along the way, and befriending those in even worse shape than he was.

By turns, Tully also worked as a circus roustabout, dishwasher, farm laborer, chain maker, tree surgeon, journalist, and boxer. Finding his way to Hollywood, Tully wrote puff pieces for the movie magazines, more nuanced celebrity profiles for *Vanity Fair*, and press releases for Charlie Chaplin, for whom he worked for a year. He put

this wide-ranging experience to good use in the fourteen books he published between 1922 and 1943. His hobo novel, *Beggars of Life* (1924), became a film that starred Louise Brooks and Wallace Beery and was subsequently adapted for the Broadway stage, as was his Hollywood novel, *Jarnigan*. His chain gang novel, *Laughter in Hell* (1932), became a film that starred Pat O'Brien and Gloria Stuart, and his best work of fiction, *The Bruiser*, republished several times, is still in print today.

Dawidziak and Bauer have written a well-researched account of Tully's colorful life that reads like a novel, with each chapter ending on a note that piques the reader's curiosity about what will come next. They argue persuasively for Tully's place in American literature, quoting critic Frank Scully's claim that he was "the leader and the founder of the hard-boiled school of writing (4), and noting that his "staccato style . . . provided the . . . link between [Jack] London's literature of the 'strenuous life' and Ernest Hemingway's muscular prose" (4). They also emphasize Tully's role as one of the first twentieth-century American writers to chronicle the lives of the working-class Irish, anticipating James T. Farrell and his Studs Lonigan trilogy. Ken Burns addresses Tully's contribution to American proletarian literature in his foreword to this book, stating that reading Tully's books is valuable because that experience is like "getting a remedial course about whole parts of America that heretofore have been excluded for the obvious reason that they are embarrassingly unfit for our sanitized Madison Avenue view of the past" (xi-xii).

Bauer and Dawidziak, no slouches as prose stylists themselves, offer a succinct and powerful summary of Tully's life in their introduction:

Jim Tully . . . had several times tramped his way across the country, had boxed to victory with blood clogging his nose and one eye nearly closed, had co-starred in a Hollywood movie with a future Oscar winner, had broken bread with Langston Hughes, had used his influence to save death-row inmates from the electric chair, had won drinking contests in San Francisco and Baltimore, and had swapped jokes with W.C. Fields and written them for Charlie Chaplin. (7-8).

While they do not offer theoretically informed analyses of Tully's books, they do provide a thoroughgoing account of their critical reception by including summaries of and excerpts from contemporaneous

book reviews; moreover, they discuss the ways in which Tully's fictional technique and prose style developed from book to book.

The Life and Poetry of Ted Kooser is a compact and accessible introduction to the former Poet Laureate of the United States (2004-2006) and winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Stillwell relates Kooser's relatively short journey from his birthplace in Ames, Iowa, to his current home in Garland, Nebraska, as well as his longer path from student poet to master craftsman. A poet herself, Stillwell brings a special expertise to her close readings of Kooser's poems, perhaps the most valuable element in the book. She discusses the way in which Kooser builds an extended metaphor from the beginning of the poem to its end and attends closely to Kooser's prosody, noting that the "Kooser sonnet" is a unique contribution to the genre.

Stillwell also emphasizes the ways in which form and theme are integrated in Kooser's poems. She discusses the poet's composing process and the ways in which other poets, notably William Carlos Williams and Karl Shapiro, have influenced him. She also deals with issues such as the tension between the regional and the universal in the poet's oeuvre, the ways in which his poems are grounded in Transcendentalism, the significance of the pastoral in Kooser's poems, and the element of the surreal that defamiliarizes his reflections on the quotidian of Midwestern life.

Stillwell chronicles the critical reception of Kooser's books and offers her own analyses as well. Because she quotes liberally from the poems and even includes several of them in their entirety, the reader is able to experience them both first-hand and also through the lens of the biographer herself, as well as from the perspectives of the scholars and reviewers that she brings into the conversation. The result is a multi-dimensional book that offers many contexts for understanding Kooser's work and portrays a poet whose dedication to living authentically and compassionately enables his poems to transcend technical proficiency to achieve a unique quality of humanity. Although it could have been more carefully proofread, this book is, on the whole, well-crafted and, as the first book-length study of Kooser's work, an essential resource, not only for Kooser scholars but for scholars of American poetry as well.

Kurt Vonnegut's chaotic life is the subject of Charles J. Shields's *And So It Goes*, the title reiterating the famous catch-phrase of Vonnegut's best-known novel, *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969). The title also works as a four-word summary of Vonnegut's life, which began

in 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana, with detours through Ithaca, New York; Chicago, Dresden, Germany; Iowa City, and Cape Cod before ending in New York City in 2007. Throughout his life Vonnegut was continually unable to get out of his own way and allowed people close to him to misdirect him in ways that would have derailed a less determined writer. That he was able to achieve his dream despite many false starts and failures is a testament to the adage that talent will prevail if combined with unrelenting perseverance.

Trained as a scientist, although he never finished his undergraduate degree at Cornell, as an engineer, although he never finished this course of study at the University of Tennessee, and as an anthropologist, although he never finished his master's degree at the University of Chicago, Vonnegut bounced from job to job and city to city. After serving a stint in the US Army during World War II, he worked as a public relations man for General Electric, taught in a boys' school, wrote advertising copy, and ran a foreign car dealership. With these day jobs he supported a family of five, which became a family of nine when he and his wife Jane took in his sister's four orphaned boys.

Through all of this upheaval, Vonnegut never stopped writing. He achieved some success selling short stories to mass circulation magazines, and his early books were marketed in drugstores and bus stations as popular science fiction paperbacks. In 1965 he took a step toward literary respectability when he was invited to be a writer-in-residence with the Iowa Writers Workshop. Here his sketchy formal education became apparent when he asked, "Who is Keats?" in response to a student's comment in class. Despite this and other gaffs, he soon became one of the most popular instructors in the program, appreciated for his down-to-earth advice about writing and markets and one-on-one attention to his students. Seventeen years after his first novel, *Player Piano* (1952), was published and five novels later, Vonnegut achieved literary superstardom in spite of himself and finally received the literary respect he had always coveted with the publication of *Slaughterhouse Five*. In this novel Vonnegut combined his war experience during the fire-bombing of Dresden with science fiction and social critique to craft a novel that became the "It" book of the early seventies, propelled by the twin engines of post-modernism and the anti-war movement.

Don't look to *And So It Goes* for nuanced scholarly discussions of Vonnegut's fiction in terms of literary genres, modes, and movements such as black humor, postmodernism, and metafiction; read it

instead as a page-turning account of the ways in which life experiences helped inform the fiction of this highly original late twentieth-century author.

All three of these books are landmark works that make much-needed contributions to literary studies. Shields's is the first biography of Kurt Vonnegut to be published, while Dawidziak and Bauer's biography of Tully and Stillwell's of Kooser are the first book-length studies to be published on these authors and the only ones in print to date. All are well written, interesting, informative, and richly deserving of our attention.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MIDWESTERN LITERATURE, 2011

ROBERT BEASECKER, EDITOR
Grand Valley State University

This bibliography includes primary and secondary sources of Midwestern literary genres published, for the most part, during 2011. Criteria for inclusion of authors are birth or residence within the twelve-state area that defines the Midwest. Fiction and poetry using Midwestern locales are included irrespective of their authors' ties with this region. Primary sources are listed alphabetically by author, including (if applicable) designations of locale within square brackets at the end of each citation. However, because of space constraints, primary source materials are limited to separately-published works; those appearing in literary journals and magazines are generally not included. Secondary sources, usually journal articles, books, or doctoral dissertations, are listed by subject.

Periodicals published for the first time in 2011 that relate in some way to Midwestern literature, either in subject, content, or locale, are listed alphabetically by title in the third and final section of this bibliography.

Not included in this bibliography are the following types of material: reprints or reissues of earlier works, except for some new or revised editions; baccalaureate or masters theses; entries in reference books; separate contents of collected essays or *Festschriften*; audio or video recordings; electronic databases; and internet websites which have the tendency to be unstable or ephemeral.

Abbreviations used in the citations denoting genre and publication types are as follows:

A	Anthology	juv	Juvenile fiction
bibl	Bibliography	lang	Language, linguistics

biog	Biography	M	Memoir
corr	Correspondence	N	Novel
crit	Criticism	P	Poetry
D	Drama	pub	Publishing; printing
I	Interview(s)	rev	Review essay
jrnل	Journalism	S	Short fiction

Citations for novels, poetry, short stories, memoirs, and other types of literature about the Midwest, as well as those written by Midwestern authors, are continually sought by the editor for inclusion in this annual bibliography. Please send them to Robert Beasecker, University Libraries, Grand Valley State University, 1 Campus Drive, Allendale, Michigan 49401; or via email: <beaseckr@gvsu.edu>.

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