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Carl Van Doren's "The Revolt from the Village: 1920"

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In honor of

Rebecca Makkai

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PREFACE

This issue of *Midwestern Miscellany* deals with a zombie literary movement that, while it hasn't yet cannibalized Midwesternists' brains, has certainly sucked them into a debate that never dies. According to Anthony Channell Hilfer, the Revolt from the Village is an accepted rubric of historical criticism (3). According to David D. Anderson, the Revolt from the Village doesn't exist (212). And so it goes.

This year marks the centenary of Carl Van Dorn's "The Revolt from the Village: 1920," published in the *Nation* on October 12, 1921. The tenth in a series on contemporary American novelists, Van Doren's essay on books that denigrate the Midwestern small town has proven to be one of the most influential discussions of Midwestern literature of our time. This issue of *Midwestern Miscellany* aims to find out why.

Part One deals with the individual books that Van Doren discussed. How do today's Midwesternists view Van Doren's take on these books? Ronald Primeau finds that Van Doren was mostly right about *Spoon River Anthology*, while Robert Dunne argues that he was mostly wrong about *Winesburg, Ohio*. Sally Parry points out some key elements in *Main Street* that Van Doren missed, as do Marcia Noe and Tyler Preston with respect to *Moon-Calf*, and Molly P. Becker, writing on *The Romantic Woman*. Marilyn Judith Atlas contends that Van Doren set up *Friendship Village* in a straw-man argument to make his Revolt thesis work, and Deborah Davis Schlacks discusses his apparently surprising choice of *This Side of Paradise* as a Revolt text, arguing that he emphasized the Revolt aspects of the book more than its village elements.

Part Two deals with larger questions. Why has the Revolt from the Village persisted, despite (or perhaps because of) continual scholarly controversy and denial? What role has it played in Midwestern identity formation? How has it affected national perceptions of the region? What role can it play in today's political climate? Jason Stacy examines how Van Doren, as well as some of the books he reviewed in his essay, has changed the way we envision the small town. Jon Lauck sees the Revolt from the Village as a flawed notion, the product of East Coast alienated intellectuals and leftist scholars and critics and, thus, a major factor in the Midwest's decline in national sta-

tus. Jeffrey Swenson endorses the Revolt as a literary moment that offers a corrective to the notion of the idyllic small town that has become a fixture in the American cultural imaginary; moreover, he argues that a cosmopolitan perspective can reconcile these apparent opposites. Marcia Noe reviews the scholarly conversation about the Revolt from the 1920s to the present, suggesting that one reason it has endured is Van Doren's use of a battle metaphor in his conceptualization of the Revolt.

All of which leaves us where? Perhaps the notion of the Revolt from the Village as a literary movement has persisted, first and foremost, because of its ongoing ability to generate multiple readings and controversial stances within the Midwestern cultural conversation. Its tendency to cling to and entangle Midwesternists with kudzulike resilience suggests that it won't be going anywhere anytime soon. For good or for ill, rightly or wrongly, the Revolt from the Village is here to stay and is likely to provoke scholarly discussion and dissension for the coming decades, if not for the next hundred years.

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THE REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE: 1920

CARL VAN DOREN

We reprint Van Doren's essay here, retaining his original spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

1.

The newest style in American fiction dates from the appearance, in 1915, of "Spoon River Anthology," though it required five years for the influence of that book to pass thoroughly over from poetry to prose. For nearly half a century native literature had been faithful to the cult of the village, celebrating its delicate merits with sentimental affection and with unwearied interest digging into odd corners of the country for persons and incidents illustrative of the essential goodness and heroism which, so the doctrine ran, lie beneath unexciting surfaces. Certain critical dispositions, aware of agrarian discontent or given to a preference for cities, might now and then lay disrespectful hands upon the life of the farm; but even these generally hesitated to touch the village, sacred since Goldsmith in spite of Crabbe, sacred since Harriet Beecher Stowe in spite of E. W. Howe. The village seemed too cosy a microcosm to be disturbed. There it lay in the mind's eye, neat, compact, organized, traditional: the white church with tapering spire, the sober schoolhouse, the smithy of the ringing anvil, the corner grocery, the cluster of friendly houses, the venerable parson, the wise physician, the canny squire, the grasping landlord softened or outwitted in the end, the village belle, gossip, atheist, idiot, jovial fathers, gentle mothers, merry children, cool parlors, shining kitchens, spacious barns, lavish gardens, fragrant summer dawns, and comfortable winter evenings. These were elements not to be discarded lightly, even by those who perceived that time was discarding many of them as the industrial revolution went on planting ugly factories alongside the prettiest brooks, bringing in droves of aliens who used unfamiliar tongues and customs, and fouling the

atmosphere with smoke and gasoline. Mr. Howe in "The Story of a Country Town" had long ago made it cynically clear—to the few who read him—that villages which prided themselves upon their pioneer energy might in fact be stagnant backwaters or dusty centers of futility, where existence went round and round while elsewhere the broad current moved away from them. Mark Twain in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" had more recently put it bitterly on record that villages which prided themselves upon their simple virtues might from lack of temptation have become a hospitable soil for meanness and falsehood, merely waiting for the proper seed. And Clarence Darrow in his elegiac "Farmington" had insisted that one village at least had been the seat of as much restless longing as of simple bliss. "Spoon River Anthology" in its different dialect did little more than to confirm these mordant, neglected testimonies.

That Mr. Masters was not neglected must be explained in part, of course, by his different dialect. The Greek anthology had suggested to him something which was, he said, "if less than verse, yet more than prose"; and he went, with the step of genius, beyond any "formal resuscitation of the Greek epigrams, ironical and tender, satirical and sympathetic, as casual experiments in unrelated themes," to an "epic rendition of modern life" which suggests the novel in its largest aspects. An admirable scheme occurred to him: he would imagine a graveyard such as every American village has and would equip it with epitaphs of a ruthless veracity such as no village ever saw put into words. The effect was as if all the few honest epitaphs in the world had suddenly come together in one place and sent up a shout of revelation. Conventional readers had the thrill of being shocked and of finding an opportunity to defend the customary reticences; ironical readers had the delight of coming upon a host of witnesses to the contrast which irony perpetually observes between appearance and reality; readers militant for the "truth" discovered an occasion to demand that pious fictions should be done away with and the naked facts exposed to the sanative glare of noon. And all these readers, most of them unconsciously no doubt, shared the fearful joy of sitting down at an almost incomparably abundant feast of scandal. Where now were the mild decencies of Tiverton, of Old Chester, of Friendship Village? The roofs and walls of Spoon River were gone and the passersby saw into every bedroom; the closets were open and all the skeletons rattled undenied; brains and breasts had unlocked

themselves and set their most private treasures out for the most public gaze.

It was the scandal and not the poetry of "Spoon River " criticism may suspect, which particularly spread its fame. Mr. Masters used an especial candor in affairs of sex, an instinct which, secretive everywhere, has rarely ever been so much so as in the American villages of fiction, where love ordinarily exhibited itself in none but the chastest phases, as if it knew no savage vagaries, transgressed no ordinances, shook no souls out of the approved routines. Reaction from too much sweet drove Mr. Masters naturally to too much sour; sex in Spoon River slinks and festers, as if it were an instinct which had not been schooled—however imperfectly—by thousands of years of human society to some modification of its rages and some civil direction of its restless power. But here as with the other aspects of behavior in his village, he showed himself impatient, indeed violent, toward all subterfuges. There is filth, he said in effect, behind whited sepulchers; drag it into the light and such illusions will no longer trick the uninstructed into paying honor where no honor appertains and will no longer beckon the deluded to an imitation of careers which are actually unworthy. Spoon River has not even the outward comeliness which the village of tradition should possess: it is slack and shabby. Nor is its decay chronicled in any mood of tender pathos. What strikes its chronicler most is the general demoralization of the town. Except for a few saints and poets, whom he acclaims with a lyric ardor, the population is sunk in greed and hypocrisy and—as if this were actually the worst of all—complacent apathy. Spiritually it dwindles and rots; externally it clings to a pitiless decorum which veils its faults and almost makes it overlook them, so great has the breach come to be between its practices and its professions. Again and again its poet goes back to the heroic founders of Spoon River, back to the days which nurtured Lincoln, whose shadow lies mighty, beneficent, too often unheeded, over the degenerate sons and daughters of a smaller day; and from an older, robuster integrity Mr. Masters takes a standard by which he morosely measures the purposelessness and furtiveness and supineness and dulness of the village which has forgotten its true ancestors. Anger like his springs from a poetic elevation of spirit; toward the end "Spoon River Anthology" rises to a mystical vision of human life by comparison with which the scavenging epitaphs of the first half seem, though witty, yet insolent and trivial. It is perhaps not necessary to point out

that the numerous poets and novelists who have learned a lesson from the book have learned it less powerfully from the difficult later pages than from those in which the text is easiest.

Mr. Masters himself has not always remembered the harder and better lesson. During a half dozen years he has published a half dozen books which have all inherited the credit of the "Anthology" but which all betray the turbulent, nervous habit of experimentation which makes up a large share of his literary character. There comes to mind—if one may borrow and abridge a discussion published here some months ago—the figure of a blindfolded Apollo, eager and lusty, who continually runs forward on the trail of poetry and truth but who, because of his blindfoldedness, only now and then strikes the central track and throws out memorable flashes. Four of Mr. Masters's later books are collections of miscellaneous verse; during the fruitful year 1920 he undertook two longer flights of fiction. In "Mitch Miller" he attempted in prose to write a new "Tom Sawyer" for the Spoon River district; in "Domesday Book" he applied the method of "The Ring and the Book" to the material of Starved Rock. The impulse of the first must have been much the same as Mark Twain's: a desire to catch in a stouter net than memory itself the recollections of boyhood which haunt disillusioned men. But as Mr. Masters is immensely less boylike than Mark Twain, elegy and argument thrust themselves into the chronicle of Mitch and Skeet, with an occasional tincture of a fierce hatred felt toward the politics and theology of Spoon River. A story of boyhood, that lithe, muscular age, cannot carry such a burden of doctrine. The narrative is tangled in a snarl of moods. Its movement is often thick, its wings often gummed and heavy. The same qualities may be noted in "Domesday Book." Its scheme and machinery are promising: a philosophical coroner, holding his inquest over the body of a girl found mysteriously dead, undertakes to trace the mystery not only to its immediate cause but up to its primary source and out to its remotest consequences. At times the tales means to be an allegory of America during the troubled, roiled, destroying years of the war; at times it means to be a "census spiritual" of American society. Elenor Murray, in her birth and love and sufferings and desperate end, is represented as pure nature, "essential genius," acting out its fated processes in a world of futile or corrupting inhibitions. But Mr. Masters has less skill at portraying the sheer genius of an individual than at arraigning the inhibitions of the individual's society. When he steps down from his

watch-tower of irony he can hate as no other American poet does. His hates, however, do not always pass into poetry; they too frequently remain hard, sullen masses of animosity not fused with his narrative but standing out from it and adding an unmistakable personal rhythm to the rough beat of his verse. So, too, do his heaps of turgid learning and his scientific speculations often remain undigested. A good many of his characters are cut to fit the narrative plan, not chosen from reality to make up the narrative. The total effect is often crude and heavy; and yet beneath these uncompleted surfaces are the sinews of enormous power; a greedy gusto for life, a wide imaginative experience, tumultuous uprushes of emotion and expression, an acute if undisciplined intelligence, great masses of the veritable stuff of existence. No one need be surprised if Mr. Masters finally elects to become a novelist and goes far in that direction.

2.

"Spoon River Anthology" has called forth a smaller number of deliberate imitations than might have been expected, and even they have utilized its method with a difference. Sherwood Anderson, for example, in "Winesburg, Ohio" speaks in accents and rhythms obstinately his own, though his book is in effect, the "Anthology" "transprosed." Instead of inventing Winesburg immediately after Spoon River became famous, he began his career more regularly, with the novels "Windy McPherson's Son" and "Marching Men," in which he employed what has become the formula of revolt for recent naturalism. In both stories a superior youth, of rebellious energy and somewhat inarticulate ambition, detaches himself in disgust from his native village and makes his way to the city in search of that wealth which is the only thing the village has ever taught him to desire though it is unable to gratify his desires itself; and in both the youth, turned man, finds himself sickening with his prize in his hands and looks about him !or some clue to the meaning of the mad world in which he has succeeded without satisfaction. Sam McPherson, after a futile excursion through the proletariat in search of the peace which he has heard accompanies honest toil, settles down to the task of bringing up some children he has adopted and thus of forcing himself "back into the ranks of life." Beaut McGregor, refusing a handsome future at the bar, sets out to organize the workers of Chicago into marching men who drill in the streets and squares at night that they may be prepared for action if only they can find some sort of

goal to march upon. These novels ache with the sense of a dumb confusion in America; with a consciousness "of how men, coming out of Europe and given millions of square miles of black fertile land mines and forests, have failed in the challenge given them by fate and have produced out of the stately order of nature only the sordid disorder of man." Out of this ache of confusion comes no lucidity. Sam McPherson is not sure but that he will find parenthood as petty as business was brutal; Beaut McGregor sets his men to marching and their orderly step resounds through the final chapters of his career as here recorded, but no one knows what will come of it—they advance and wheel and retreat as blindly as any horde of peasants bound for a war about which they do not know the causes, in a distant country of which they have never heard the name. Mr. Anderson worked in his first books as if he were assembling documents on the eve of revolution. Village peace and stability have departed; ancient customs break or fade; the leaven of change stirs the lump.

From such arguments he turned aside to follow Mr. Masters into verse with "Mid-American Chants" and into scandal with "Winesburg, Ohio." But touching scandal with beauty as his predecessor touched it with irony, Mr. Anderson constantly transmutes it. The young man who here sets out to make his fortune has not greatly hated Winesburg, and the imminence of his departure throws a vaguely golden mist over the village, which is seen in considerable measure through his generous if inexperienced eyes. A newspaper reporter, he directs his principal curiosity toward items of life outside the commonplace and thus offers Mr. Anderson the occasion to explore the moral and spiritual hinterlands of men and women who outwardly walk paths strict enough. If the life of the tribe is unadventurous, he seems to say, there is still the individual, who, perhaps all the more because of the rigid decorums forced upon him, may adventure with secret desires through pathless space. Only, the pressure of too many inhibitions can distort human spirits into grotesque forms. The inhabitants of Winesburg tend toward the grotesque, now this organ of the soul enlarged beyond all symmetry, now that wasted away in a desperate disuse. They see visions which in some wider world might become wholesome realities or might be dispelled by the light but which in Winesburg must lurk about till they master and madden with the strength which the darkness gives them. Religion, deprived in Winesburg of poetry, fritters its time away over Pharisaic

ordinances or evaporates in cloudy dreams; sex, deprived of spontaneity, settles into fleshly habit or tortures its victim with the malice of a thwarted devil; heroism of deed or thought either withers into melancholy inaction or else protects itself with a sullen or ridiculous bravado. Yet even among such pitiful surroundings Mr. Anderson walks tenderly. He honors youth, he feels beauty, he understands virtue, he trusts wisdom, when he comes upon them. He broods over his creatures with affection, though he makes no luxury of illusions. Much as he has detached himself from the cult of the village, he still cherishes the memories of some specific Winesburg. Much as he has detached himself from the hazy national optimism of an elder style in American thinking, he still cherishes a confidence in particular persons. "Winesburg, Ohio" springs from the more intimate regions of his mind and is consequently more humane and less doctrinaire than his earlier novels. It has a similar superiority over the book he wrote for 1920, "Poor White," which returns to the device of a bewildered strong man rising from a dull obscurity, successful but unsatisfied. At the same time, "Poor White" proceeds from an imagination which had been warmed with the creation of Winesburg and its people, and is richer, fuller, deeper than the angular sagas of McPherson and McGregor. It does not yet show that Mr. Anderson can construct a large plot nor that his vision comes with a steady gleam; it shows, rather, that he is still fumbling in the confusion of current life to get hold of something true and simple and to make it clear. Perhaps he tried in "Poor White" to manipulate a larger bulk than he is yet ready for. Perhaps because he was aware of that he has worked in his latest book, "The Triumph of the Egg," with a variety of brief themes. At least it is certain that he keeps on advancing in his art. Although life has not hardened for him, and he sees it still flowing or whirling, he steadily sharpens his outlines and perfects the fierce intensity of his style.

3.

With "The Anthology of Another Town" E. W. Howe, obviously on the suggestion of Spoon River, returned to the caustic analysis of American village life which he may be said to have inaugurated in "The Story of a Country Town" almost forty years before. Then he had been young enough to feel it necessary to invent romantic embroideries for his grim tale, something as Emily Bronte under somewhat similar circumstances has done for "Wuthering

Heights"—the novel which Mr. Howe's story most resembles. But all his inventions were stern, full of a powerful dissatisfaction, merciless toward the idyllic versions of country life which sweetened the decade of the eighties. Even among the pioneers whom Mr. Masters idealizes there were, according to the older man, slackness and shabbiness, and at the first opportunity to take their ease in the new world they had won from nature they sank down, too nerveless for passion or violence, into the easy vices: idleness, whining, gossip, drunkenness, sodden inutility. Against such qualities Mr. Howe has from the first proceeded with the doctrines of another Franklin, but of a Franklin without whimsical persuasions or elegant graces. Having apparently come to the conclusion that he was a failure as a novelist because he made no great stir with his experiments in that trade, he confined himself to more or less orthodox journalism for a generation, and then, retiring, founded his organ of "information and indignation"—*E. W. Howe's Monthly*—and began to pour forth the stream of aphoristic honesty which makes him easily first among the rural sages. In no sense, of course, does he assume the cosmopolitan and international attitude which most of the naturalists assume: "Provincialism," he curtly says, "is the best thing in the world." Nor is he in any of the casual senses a radical: "In everything in which man is interested, the world knows what is best for him…Millions of men have lived millions of years, and tried everything." Neither has he any patience with speculation for its own sake: "There are no mysteries. Where does the wind come from? It doesn't matter: we know the habits of wind after it arrives." As to politics: "The people are always worsted in an election." As to altruism: "The long and the short of it is, whoever catches the fool first is entitled to shear him." As to love: "We cannot permit love to run riot; we must build fences around it, as we do around pigs." As to money: "In theory, it is not respectable to be rich. In fact, poverty is a disgrace." As to literature: "Poets are prophets whose prophesying never comes true." As to prudence: "Trying to live a spiritual life in a material world is the greatest folly I know anything about." As to persistent hopefulness: "Pessimism is always nearer the truth than optimism."

When the author of such aphorisms undertook to write another anthology about another town he naturally avoided the mystical elevation of Spoon River as well as its verse; he used the irony of a disillusioned man and the directness of a bullet. His scheme was not to

assemble epitaphs for the dead of the village but to tell crisp anecdotes of the living. He had no iniquities in the human order to assail, since he believes that that order is just enough and that it rarely hurts anyone who does not deserve to be hurt by reason of some avoidable imbecility. He made no specialty of scandal; he did not inquire curiously into the byways of sex; he let pathology alone. He appears in the book to be—as he is in the flesh—a wise old man letting his memory run through the town and recalling bits of decent, illuminating gossip. He is willing to tell a fantastic yarn with a dry face or to tuck a tragedy in a sentence; to repeat some village legend in his own low tones or to puncture some village bubble with a cynical inquiry. Yet for all his acceptance and tolerance of the village, he is far from helping to continue the sentimental traditions concerning it. The common sense which he considers the basis of all philosophy—"If it isn't common sense, it isn't philosophy"—he has the gift of expounding in a language which is piercingly individual. It strips his village of trivial local color and reduces it to the simplest terms—making it out a more or less fortuitous congregation of human beings of whom some work and some play, some behave themselves and some do not, some consequently prosper and some fail, some are happy and some are miserable. His village is not dainty, like a poem, for the reason that he believes no village ever was; at least he has never seen one like that. Downrightness like his is death to mere pretty notions about tribes and towns quite as truly as are the positive indictments brought against them by Mr. Masters and Mr. Anderson. If Mr. Howe is less vivid than those two, because he distrusts passion and poetry, he is also quieter and surer. "I am not an Agnostic; I *know*…I have lived a long time, and my real problems have always been simple."

4.

"Spoon River Anthology" was a collection of poems, "Winesburg, Ohio," was a collection of short stories, "The Anthology of Another Town" was a collection of anecdotes. It remained for a novel in the customary form, Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street," to bring to hundreds of thousands the protest against the village which these books brought to thousands. Mr. Lewis, like Mr. Masters, clearly has revenges to take upon the narrow community in which he grew up, nourished, no doubt, on the complacency native to such neighborhoods and yet increasingly resentful. Less poetical than his predecessor, the younger novelist went further in both his specifications

and his generalizations. Instead of brooding closely, ironically, profoundly, under the black wings of the thought of death, Mr. Lewis satisfies himself with a slashing portrait of Gopher Prairie done to the life with the fingers of ridicule. He has photographic gifts of accuracy; he has all the arts of mimicry; he has a tireless gusto in his pursuit of the tedious commonplace. Each item of his evidence is convincing, and the accumulation is irresistible. No other American small town has been drawn with such exactness of detail in any other American novel. Various elements of scandal crop out here and there, but the principal accusation which Mr. Lewis brings against his village—and indeed against all villages—is that of being dull. "It is contentment…the contentment of the quiet dead, who are scornful of the living for their restless walking. It is negation canonized as the one positive virtue. It is the prohibition of happiness. It is slavery self-sought and self-defended. It is dulness made God." Not dulness itself so much as dulness militant and prospering arouses this satirist. The whole world, he believes, is being leveled by the march of machines into one monotonous uniformity, before which all the individual colors and graces and prides and habits flee—or would flee if there were any asylum still uninvaded. Thus Mr. Lewis's voice continues the opposition which Wordsworth raised to the coming of a railroad into his paradise among the Lakes and which Ruskin and Matthew Arnold and William Morris raised to the standardization of life which went on during their century. The American voice, however, speaks of American conditions. The villages of the Middle West, it asseverates, have been conquered and converted by the legions of mediocrity, and now, grown rich and vain, are setting out to carry the dingy banner, led by the booster's calliope and the evangelist's bass drum, farther than it has ever gone before—to make provincialism imperialistic; so that all the native and instinctive virtues, freedoms, powers must rally to their own defense.

Mr. Lewis hates such dulness—the village virus—as the saints hate sin. Indeed, it is with a sort of new Puritanism that he and his contemporaries wage against the dull a war something like that which certain of their elders once waged against the bad. Only a satiric anger helped out by the sense of being on crusade could have sustained the author of "Main Street" through the laborious compilation of those brilliant details which illustrate the complacency of Gopher Prairie and which seem less brilliant than laborious to bystanders not particularly concerned in his crusade. The question, of course, arises

whether the ancient war upon stupidity is a better literary cause to fight in than the equally ancient war upon sin. Both narrow themselves to doctrinal contentions, forgetting for the moment that either being virtuous or being intelligent is but a half—or thereabouts—of existence, and that the two qualities are hopelessly intertwined. The greatest novelists, as they do not condemn lapses of virtue too harshly, so also do not too harshly condemn deficiencies of intelligence. With Fielding and Balzac and Tolstoi the common humanity of men and women is enough to make them fit for fiction. Mr. Lewis must be thought of as sitting in the seat of the scornful, with the satirists rather than with the poets; must be seen to have understood the earlier, vexed, sardonic "Spoon River" better than the later, calmer, loftier. Satire and moralism, however, have large rights in the domain of literature. Had Mr. Lewis lacked remarkable gifts he could never have written a book which got its vast popularity by assailing the populace. The reception of "Main Street" is a memorable episode in literary history. Thousands doubtless read it merely to quarrel with it; other thousands to find out what all the world was talking about; still other thousands to rejoice in a satire which they thought to be at the expense of stupid people never once identified with themselves; but that thousands and hundreds of thousands read it is proof enough that complacency was not absolutely victorious and that the war was on.

5.

Before "Main Street" Mr. Lewis had belonged to the smarter set among American novelists, writing much bright, colloquial, amusing chatter to be read by those who travel through books at the brisk pace of vaudeville. If it seems a notable achievement for a temper like Mr. Masters's to have drawn such a character into its serious wake, it seems yet more notable to have drawn in that of Zona Gale, who for something like a decade before "Spoon River Anthology" had had a comfortable standing among the sweeter set. She was the inventor of Friendship Village, one of the sweetest of all the villages from Miss Mitford and Mrs. Gaskell down. Friendship lay ostensibly in the Middle West, but it actually stood—if one may be pardoned an appropriate metaphor—upon the confectionery shelf of the fiction shop, preserved in a thick syrup and set up where a tender light could strike across it at all hours. In story after story Miss Gale varied the same device: that of showing how childlike children are, how sisterly

are sisters, how brotherly are brothers, how motherly are mothers, how fatherly are fathers, how grandmotherly and grandfatherly are grandmothers and grandfathers, and how loverly are all true lovers of whatever age, sex, color, or condition. But beneath the human kindness which had permitted Miss Gale to fall into this technique, lay the sinews of a very subtle intelligence; and she needed only an example and a chance to be able to escape from her sugary preoccupations. Though the action of "Miss Lulu Bett" takes place in a different village, called Warbleton, it might as well have been in Friendship—in Friendship seen during a mood when its creator had grown weary of the eternal saccharine. Now and then, she realized, some spirit even in Friendship must come to hate all those idyllic posturings; now and then in some narrow bosom there must flash up the fires of youth and revolution. It is so with Lulu Bett, dim drudge in the house of her silly sister and of her sister's pompous husband: a breath of life catches at her and she follows it on a pitiful adventure which is all she has enough vitality to savor but which is nevertheless real and vivid in a waste of dulness. Here was an occasion to arraign Warbleton as Mr. Lewis was then arraigning Gopher Prairie; Miss Gale, instead of heaping up a multitude of indictments, categorized and docketed, followed the path of indirection which—by a paradoxical axiom of art—is a shorter cut than the highway of exposition or anathema. Her story is as spare as the virgin frame of Lulu Bett; her style is staccato in its lucid brevity, like Lulu's infrequent speeches; her eloquence is not that of a torrent of words and images but that of comic or ironic or tragic meaning packed in a syllable, a gesture, a dumb silence. Miss Gale riddles the tedious affectations of the Deacon household almost without a word of comment; none the less she exhibits them under a withering light. The daughter, she says, "was as primitive as pollen"—and biology rushes in to explain Di's blind philanderings. "In the conversations of Dwight and Ina," it is said of the husband and wife, "you saw the historical home forming in clots in the fluid wash of the community"—and anthropology holds the candle. Grandma Bett is, for the moment, the symbol of decrepit age, as Lulu is the symbol of bullied spinsterhood. Yet in the midst of applications so universal the American village is not forgotten, little as it is alluded to. If the Friendships are sweet and dainty, so are they—whether called Warbleton or something less satiric—dull and petty, and they fashion their Deacons no less than their

Pelleases and Ettares. Thus hinting, Miss Gale, in her clear, flutelike way, joins the chorus in which others play upon noisier instruments.

6.

The year which saw the appearance of "Main Street" and "Miss Lulu Bett" saw also that of "The Age of Innocence," Edith Wharton's acid delineation of the village of Manhattan in the genteel seventies, given over to the "innocence that seals the mind against imagination and the heart against experience"; saw Mary Borden's "The Romantic Woman," with its cosmopolitan amusement at the village of Iroquois, otherwise Chicago; and saw Floyd Dell's "Moon-Calf," which, standing on the other side of controversy, lacks not only the disposition to sentimentalize the yillage but even the disposition to ridicule it. If Mrs. Wharton was calculating from the meridian of Paris in her study of New York as a town too unimaginative to be anything but innocent, Miss Borden was calculating from London in her interpretation of Chicago as a community unable to take the sophisticated world for granted but still, like some self-conscious adolescent, worrying itself over the management of hands and feet. In the fashion of Henry James, at some removes her master, Miss Borden, even while exposing the clumsiness of her Americans, surveys with liking the simple virtues which are found in Chicago more frequently than in the circles of the world into which her heroine marries: the capacity for sainthood, bourgeois probity, the easy intercourse of different classes, ingenuous delight in new experiences. Still, she looks at Chicago from the post of a secure outsider, sometimes vexed, sometimes smiling, sometimes ready with approbation, but always critical. She belongs among the novelists of the new style: she hails, in a way, from the village and has hints of mystical fervor; she has, however, the hard outward manner of the worldling who has passed beyond village bounds.

Floyd Dell's emancipation is the fruit not so much of mere wider experience as of a revolutionary detachment from village standards. His detachment is too complete to have left traces of any such rupture as is implied in almost every paragraph of "Main Street." "Moon-Calf," recounting the adventures of a young poet in certain river counties and towns and villages of Illinois, touches without heat upon the spiritual and intellectual limitations of those neighborhoods. It settles no old scores. It relates an unconventional career without conventional reproaches and also without conventional hero-

ics. Felix Fay dreams and blunders and suffers, but he goes on growing like a tree, pushing his head up through one level of development after another until he stands above the minor annoyances of his immaturity and looks out over a broader world. He has a soul which is naturally socialist, and yet he never loses himself in proclamations or statistics. He can be fresh and hopeful, and yet learn from the remarkable old men he encounters. He lives and loves with an instinctive freedom, and yet he holds himself equally secure from devastating extravagances and devastating repressions. Mr. Dell writes as if he had steadier nerves than most of the naturalists; as if he regarded their war upon the village as an ancient brawl which may now be assumed to have been as much settled as it ever will be. At least, it seems scarcely worth wrangling over. The spirit seeking to release itself from trivial conditions behaves most intelligently when it discreetly takes them into account and concerns itself with them only enough to escape entanglements. Mr. Dell leaves it to the moralists and the satirists to whip offenders, while he himself goes on to construct some monument of beauty upon the ground which moralism and satire are laboring to clear.

"Moon-Calf" is very beautiful. Felix has a poetic gift sufficient to warm the record with fine verses, and delicate susceptibilities upon which his adventures leave exquisite impressions. Even when his rebellion is at its highest pitch he wastes little energy in hating and so avoids the astringency and perturbation of a state of mind which is always perilous. To say Felix Fay is, of course, to mean Floyd Dell, for the narrative is obviously autobiographic at many points. But were it entirely invention, it would testify none the less to the affection with which this novelist feels his world and the lucidity with which he represents it. He has a genuine zest for human life, enjoying it, even when it invites mirth or anger, because of the form and color and movement which he perceives everywhere and particularly because of the solid texture of reality of which he is admirably aware. Hatred closes the eyes to a multitude of charms. If Mr. Dell suffered from it he could never have enriched his fabric as he has with so many circumstances chosen with an unargumentative hand; he could never have extracted so much drama out of dusty people. Had he been a sentimentalist he might have fallen into the soft processes of the local color school when it came to portraying the various communities through which Felix takes his way. Instead, the story is everywhere stiffened with intelligence. Felix has no adventures more exciting

than his successive discoveries of new ideas. Even the women he loves fit into the pattern of his career as a thinking being, and he emerges, however moved, with a surer grasp of his expanding universe. That grasp would lack much of its confidence if Mr. Dell employed a style less masterly. As it is, he writes with a candid lucidity which everywhere lets in the light and with a grace which rounds off the edges that mark the pamphlet but not the work of art. He can be at once downright and graceful, at once sincere and impersonal, at once revolutionary and restrained, at once impassioned and reflective, at once enamored of truth and scrupulous for beauty.

7.

"Domesday Book," "Poor White," "The Anthology of Another Town," "Main Street," "Miss Lulu Bett," "The Age of Innocence," "The Romantic Woman," and "Moon-Calf" would make 1920 remarkable even if that year had not brought forth novels of a still wider range; if it had not brought forth James Branch Cabell's richly symbolical romance "Figures of Earth" and Upton Sinclair's terrible indictment "100%." And though all these seem rather somber, there came along with them another novel in which were gaiety and high spirits and the fires of youth. F. Scott Fitzgerald in "This Side of Paradise" also had broken with the village. He wrote of his gilded boys and girls as if average decorum existed only to be shocked. But he made the curious discovery that undergraduates could have brains and still be interesting; that they need not give their lives entirely to games and adolescent politics; that they may have heard of Oscar Wilde as well as of Rudyard Kipling and of Rupert Brooke no less than of Alfred Noyes. Mr. Fitzgerald had indeed his element of scandal to tantalize the majority, who debated whether or not the rising generation could be as promiscuous in its behavior as he made out. It is the brains in the book, however, not the scandal, which finally count. His restless generation sparkles with inquiry and challenge. When its elders have let the world fall into chaos, why, youth questions, should it trust their counsels any longer? Mirth and wine and love are more pleasant than that hollow wisdom, and they may be quite as solid. "This Side of Paradise" comes to no conclusion; it ends in weariness and smoke, though at last Amory believes he has found himself in the midst of a wilderness of uncertainties. Yet how vivid a document the book is upon a whirling time, and how excellent an entertainment! The narrative flares up now into delightful verse and

now into glittering comic dialogue. It shifts from passion to farce, from satire to lustrous beauty, from impudent knowingness to pathetic youthful humility. It is both alive and lively. Few things more significantly illustrate the moving tide of which the revolt from the village is a symptom than the presence of such unrest as this among these bright barbarians. The traditions which once might have governed them no longer hold. They break the patterns one by one and follow their wild desires. And as they play among the ruins of the old, they reason subtly about the new, laughing.

PART ONE:

THE REVOLT BOOKS: SEVEN PERSPECTIVES

"ALL THE SKELETONS RATTLED": CARL VAN DOREN ON *SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY*

Ronald Primeau

In his now-famous 1921 essay in the *Nation,* Carl Van Doren identified Edgar Lee Masters's influence on the fiction to come, even as he disparaged the literary merit of a work admired throughout the world then and now. Van Doren focused on the "cult of the village" in American literature and gave Masters much credit for a long-overdue discrediting of that myth. At the same time, his oracular pronouncements judged Masters's setting and characters to be ineffective overall. His brazen pronouncements help us, nonetheless, to understand achievements in the *Anthology* most often overlooked. Whether or not the "Revolt" theory is valid, Van Doren helped us understand Masters's importance for the poetry and fiction coming later.

In Van Doren's day, critical commentary often featured pronouncements rather than the detailed arguments we now expect. His generalizations were sharp and clever, sweeping in scope, and frequently expressed by proclamation rather than demonstration. He offered broad conclusions based on scarce detail and proceeded full throttle into often exasperating opinions that were always interesting and often groundbreaking. On one level he dismissed *Spoon River Anthology*, asserting that its fame was due to its scandalous content rather than its poetic achievements. At times he seemed to confuse the scandal exposed along the Spoon River with the oft-noted sourness, crankiness, and impetuousness of Masters in his personal life.

Overall, Van Doren alerted us to flashes of genius mixed in with a large measure of the derivative and the pedestrian. Masters's rejection of the cult of the village followed in the line of many rebuffs of the neat, wholesome, jovial, and well-ordered Midwestern village that had become standard fare. The sense of place embracing the gen-

uine, the cozy and welcoming demeanor, as well as the stability of tradition, had already been shaken by the intrusion of the Industrial Revolution with its ugly factories and pollution. E. W. Howe in *The Story of a Country Town* found the wholesome village deteriorating into "stagnant backwaters or dusty centers of futility." In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," Mark Twain dismissed untested "virtue" as ripe for "meanness and falsehood." In *Farmington*, Masters's law partner, Clarence Darrow, had identified what was taken as bliss to be discontent and a "restless longing." On one level, Van Doren found nothing original in Masters's scandalous graveside monologues that "did little more than to confirm these mordant, neglected testimonies" (407).

What Van Doren saw as truly original about Masters—and his greatest achievement—was his creation of a new dialect, a language so genuine that it "sent up a shout of revelation" in a way no earlier exposés of the village had captured (407). "Closets were opened, and all the skeletons rattled," Van Doren noted, as "the most private treasures" were on display to the "most public gaze" (407). Van Doren distinguished between the crude heaviness and turgid learning early in the work and the later, deeper passages of soaring praise for the ancestors who had "a gusto for life" expressed in "sinews of enormous power" reaching for "the veritable stuff of existence" (408). This mostly overlooked "wide imaginative experience" was too big for the poetic monologues (408). Van Doren predicted in 1920 that Masters's greatest talents would no doubt yet make him a novelist.

Though he dismissed the bulk of Masters's *Anthology* as overrated, Van Doren praised his creative use of the *Greek Anthology* as "less than verse but more than prose" and his "ironical and tender, satirical and sympathetic" formal use of the Greek epigrams (407). In crucial ways, he took back his harsh dismissal of Masters by noting that his use of the classical model is "a step of genius" toward an epic portrayal of modern life (407). He found this an admirable scheme to visit the prototypical village graveyard and "equip it with epitaphs of ruthless veracity such as no village ever saw put into words" (407). Unfortunately, Van Doren contends, the first half of this masterpiece was choked by "scavenging epitaphs" that are "witty, yet insolent and trivial" (408). At the same time, in what is his shrewdest judgment of *Spoon River*, Van Doren identified the emergence in the last part of the book of "a mystical vision of human life" inspired by the "older robuster integrity" of the villagers' "true ances-

tors" whom they had forgotten or—worse yet—buried in purposelessness, dullness, and hypocrisy (408). This chance to recover ancestral integrity is, for Van Doren, the most genuine attraction of Masters's work. This brief venture into the mystical was an opportunity that neither Masters nor his adoring public could adequately exploit. We are left with a book the "easiest" pages of which have been overpraised while its "difficult later pages," which entice with "harder and better" messages, have been neglected (408). The author could not or would not pursue the difficulty, and his readers mostly missed it entirely.

As a result, over the next five years, Masters went on to write several works that became mired in less-than-successful experimentation. More importantly, however, the sensationalist attack-dog monologues from the grave have continued to fascinate readers and helped take the fiction of the next decade in significantly new directions. Van Doren was at his best when speculating wisely on how the *Anthology* did much to pave the way for important new directions in American fiction in the decades to follow. Masters inspired Midwestern authors of fiction to widen their imaginations and gave them permission to release "tumultuous uprushes of emotion and expression," and to follow in the path of Masters's "acute if undisciplined intelligence" (408).

Van Doren saw American novelists headed toward distancing themselves from any idyllic notion of the village, but—standing on Masters's shoulders—they were better because of him. On his way to creating *Winesburg, Ohio* Sherwood Anderson wrote *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men* in formulaic attacks on the village in favor of naturalism. Anderson was drawn to the raw power of Masters but rose above his raging anger. Instead of irony, he created beauty and trusted virtue and wisdom when he came upon them. Anderson was moved by Masters's irony, but he transmuted it in his belief in the goodness of an idealized place like Winesburg.

It took Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* to perfect for the novel what Masters and Anderson had done for poetry and the short story. Van Doren saw in Lewis the same "revenge" against the complacency of Midwestern villages where "legions of mediocrity" bolstered by "the booster's calliope" and "the evangelist's bass drum" would "make provincialism imperialistic" (410). Lewis shared with Masters a great dislike for dullness, though his path of action was not through "the black wings of the thought of death" but in his "photographic

gifts of accuracy" to expose through mimicry how dull it all was (410). According to Van Doren, both had limited success because they were more satirists than poets: "Lewis understood the earlier, vexed, sardonic 'Spoon River' better than the later calmer, loftier" (410). The results are questionable when so many readers "rejoice in a satire which they thought to be at the expense of stupid people never once identified with themselves" (410).

In the end, Van Doren's assessment of Masters's role in the Revolt from the Village was mixed. His sensationalism drew attention, though his unbridled anger overshadowed brushes with subtlety which his readers and he himself tended to gloss over. He effectively fueled a war on complacency and dullness, though he lacked the talent and the patience to achieve the restraint demonstrated by the greatest writers. Van Doren identified early what would become the theme of commentary on Masters over the next hundred years. His moments of mystical vision were buried far too often in shabby scandal and sensationalism.

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WINESBURG, OHIO: COMPASSION *FOR* THE VILLAGE—AND EVERYWHERE ELSE

ROBERT DUNNE

In an influential essay published in 1921, Carl Van Doren explained what he called the "newest style in American fiction," which he dubbed "The Revolt from the Village" (407). Van Doren singled out Edgar Lee Masters as the forerunner of this new movement, centered primarily in the Midwest, that set out to debunk a half century's worth of the "cult of the village," which celebrated small-town America's "delicate merits with sentimental affection" (407). Masters he deemed a hater of the village in poetry; later in the essay he would attribute the "fingers of ridicule" against the village in the realm of fiction to Sinclair Lewis (410). Sandwiched between his observations of Masters and Lewis, he rather bizarrely includes Sherwood Anderson, paying glancing attention to Anderson's early novels but primarily honing in on *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). If Van Doren set out to define a new pattern in American literature, he was not very convincing, precisely because of how he made a pretty poor case for Anderson's inclusion.

In an overview of literary treatments on the village for the half century leading up to *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), Van Doren summarizes that the "village seemed too cosy a microcosm to be disturbed. There it lay in the mind's eye, neat, compact, organized, traditional. . ." (407). There were critical outliers of this "cult," like E. W. Howe and Mark Twain, but the rise of industrialization was rapidly transforming the bucolic Midwestern landscape, thus challenging whether the coziness of the cult could endure for much longer. But the Revolt from the Village crystalized in Masters's poetic epitaphs of Spoon River townsfolk. As Van Doren observes, "The roofs and walls of Spoon River were gone and the passersby

saw into every bedroom; the closets were open and all the skeletons rattled undenied. . . " (407). Van Doren, however, does not approve of the extent of this radical shift: "Reaction from too much sweet drove Mr. Masters naturally to too much sour . . . [I]n his village, he showed himself impatient, indeed violent, toward all subterfuges" (407). In summation, "When [Masters] steps down from his watch-tower of irony he can hate as no other American poet does" (408).

Sinclair Lewis, the novelist-avatar of Van Doren's revolt thesis, does not fare much better. Regarding *Main Street* (1920), Van Doren proclaims, "Mr. Lewis, like Mr. Masters, clearly has revenges to take upon the narrow community in which he grew up . . . Less poetical than his predecessor, the younger novelist . . . satisfies himself with a slashing portrait of Gopher Prairie done to the life with the fingers of ridicule" (410). As Van Doren sees it, Lewis pursued a "crusade" against "dulness [sic] —the village virus," and that hundreds of thousands of readers of his novel would conclude "it is proof enough that [small-town] complacency was not absolutely victorious and that the war was on" (410).

So: how does Anderson fit in?

Not very well—and Van Doren admits as much. He begins his discussion of Anderson by incorrectly including *Winesburg* among the "deliberate imitations" of what Masters executed in *Spoon River*—specifically, that "Sherwood Anderson . . . in 'Winesburg, Ohio,' speaks in accents and rhythms obstinately his own, though his book is in effect, the 'Anthology' '*transprosed*'" (408, emphasis added). First of all, while it is widely known that Masters's poetry collection was probably a key influence on Anderson's eventual conception of *Winesburg,* additional potential influences are also highly likely (Dunne 37-40). But more to the point, Van Doren begins his treatment of Anderson by admitting that Anderson's speech is "obstinately his own" and not a mere replication of that of Masters. And far more than Anderson's speech differs from that of Masters, as Van Doren later recognizes.

Van Doren acknowledges the sometimes scandalous nature of *Winesburg,* as he earlier bemoaned about *Spoon River*. But he quickly qualifies this with a key distinction: "But touching scandal with beauty as his predecessor [Masters] touched it with irony, Mr. Anderson constantly transmutes it" (408). Further on, he elaborates:

> Religion, deprived in Winesburg of poetry, fritters its time away over Pharisaic ordinances or evaporates in cloudy dreams; sex, deprived of spontaneity, settles into fleshly habit or tortures its victim with the malice of a thwarted devil; heroism of deed or thought either withers into melancholy inaction or else protects itself with a sullen or ridiculous bravado. Yet even among such pitiful surroundings Mr. Anderson walks tenderly . . . He broods over his creatures with affection, though he makes no luxury of illusions. Much as he has detached himself from the cult of the village, he still cherishes the memories of some specific Winesburg. (409)

I do not see the hate of a Masters or the ridicule of a Lewis anywhere in the above passage. What he attributes to these writers—contempt, dismissiveness, condescension, vitriol—are nowhere to be found in the passage (or in *Winesburg*). If one wants to accede to Van Doren's assessment of these two writers, one would be hard pressed to find any persuasiveness in his assessment of Anderson.

Even a cursory perusal of *Winesburg* will clearly bear this out. But before doing so, it is worthwhile to note another off-key observation that Van Doren makes in the above passage. In "*Winesburg, Ohio*: Beyond the Revolt from the Village," Abigail Tilley refutes Van Doren's errant assertion that Anderson's scope in *Winesburg* was restricted to small-town America ("he still cherishes the memories of some specific Winesburg"). In citing important scholars like David D. Anderson and Monika Fludernik, as well as quoting Sherwood Anderson himself, Tilley persuasively demonstrates that Anderson's perceptions and portrayals of Winesburg's grotesques are but a microcosm of the human condition facing the United States—both urban and rural—in the early twentieth century. Thus, Anderson's work should not be shoehorned squarely in the realm of the provincial, or the "village."

So, in terms of locale and scope, Anderson does not make for a neat fit for Van Doren's thesis. But, far more importantly, the kind of hostility and ridicule he attributes to Masters, Lewis, and others comprising this supposed movement is simply not to be found in *Winesburg*. From the introductory tale to the very last tale, Anderson demonstrates compassion and sympathy for the grotesques. In "The Book of the Grotesque," the narrator says of the old carpenter hired to raise the writer's bed, "I only mentioned him because he, like many of what are called very common people, became the nearest thing to what is understandable and lovable of all the grotesques in the

writer's book" (10). And in "Departure," an incredibly anti-climactic story of George Willard leaving the town, Anderson gives us neither a tumultuous farewell by the grotesques of the town nor a bold act of George kicking the dust of Winesburg from his heels as he boards the train:

> The young man, going out of his town to meet the adventure of life, began to think but he did not think of anything very big or dramatic. Things like his mother's death, his departure from Winesburg, the uncertainty of his future life in the city, the serious and larger aspects of his life did not come into his mind.
>
> He thought of little things. . . . (203, ellipses mine)

From there, Anderson includes a short list of rather ephemeral or otherwise forgettable memories, such as the lamplighter doing his job or Helen White mailing a letter at the post office. *These* are the things that preoccupy George's mind at the moment of his departure, memories recalled with fondness. And this sympathetic understanding pervades the book—in almost every instance not by the grotesques themselves featured in each story, but implied throughout by Anderson's narrator.

It is not necessary to provide an exhaustive inventory of each tale, but a cursory review should suffice. Anderson's grotesques, often haunted by past experiences and seeking to achieve a kind of catharsis that ultimately concludes in failure, demonstrate a *consciousness,* an *awareness,* of their unhappiness and unfulfillment. By either succumbing to or selecting various societal influences as to how they should lead their lives, they recognize that these influences are ultimately empty verbal constructs. However, confining themselves to trying to *articulate* their frustrated lives (oftentimes to George Willard), they fail to achieve any understanding or catharsis.

Some characters devolve into resignation. In "Hands," for instance, Wing Biddlebaum entreats George to "'shut your ears to the roaring of the [town's] voices,'" and then recoils in terror when he catches himself caressing George (14). Traumatized from years earlier, when he was run out of a town after a "half-witted boy" confessed of his supposedly inappropriate touching (15), Wing quickly dismisses George and shuts down any further attempt at soliciting understanding from him. The story ends not on a derisive note but with pathos, as Wing prepares for bed and gets on bended knee to

pick up carefully a few crumbs off the floor, a confined monastic living in isolation (17).

Elizabeth Willard, in "Mother," suffers a comparable resignation, when, failing to warn George about his carping father Tom, she decides to murder her husband. Failing in strength, she neither executes this plan nor achieves an understanding with her son. "She wanted to cry out with joy because of the words that had come from the lips of her son, but the expression of joy had become impossible to her" (30). Even in "Death," Elizabeth fails to connect with George while approaching death, and it is only after she dies that George achieves a kind of epiphanic moment in finally recognizing how "unspeakably lovely" his mother now appears to him lying in bed covered by a bedsheet (190). This is a poignant and heart-rending scene, utterly devoid of condescension or dismissiveness.

And in "Adventure," we follow Alice Hindman over a period of years as she becomes both a miser and a hermit, ostensibly awaiting the return of her first love but knowing that such will never be the case. In a desperate, break-out moment (one of many "adventures" Anderson describes in the book), she strips naked on a rainy night and runs through the town's streets. Determined to confront the first person she encounters, she happens upon a half-deaf old man (who must also have vision problems!), and, startled back into reality, "crawl[s] on hands and knees" in the rain until she returns home (92). Much like Wing and Elizabeth, Alice sinks into resignation, "trying to force herself to face bravely the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg" (92). The experiences of these characters are hardly confined to small-town America ("even in Winesburg"). Whither a revolt?

In other tales, characters do not necessarily succumb to resignation but instead unconsciously choose to delude themselves. For instance, in "The Philosopher," Doctor Parcival puffs up his sense of self-importance to George Willard, regaling him with stories of his past, which include deep-seated resentment that his mother always loved his renegade brother over him, in spite of his early attempts to be a journalist and a minister. When, while with George, he refuses to attend to a dying child, he convinces himself that the town will rise against him and hang him. Realizing that there will be no ensuing posse against him ("the fright that had been in his eyes was beginning to be replaced by doubt"), Parcival resumes his tenuous sense of self-importance in declaring, "'In the end I will be crucified, use-

lessly crucified'" (37). Here, rather than resorting to condemnation, Anderson presents us with a character who opts for continued self-delusion, a pathetic figure.

Likewise, we see this pattern in others, who, in their stories, end up manipulating and eventually hiding behind the superficial precepts of their religion: Jesse Bentley in the "Godliness" tales and Curtis Hartman in "The Strength of God." In "Godliness," unlike his hale and hearty four brothers, Jesse, the youngest, "did not look like a man at all" (45). Returning home from school, his brothers killed in the Civil War, Jesse takes over the family farm and begins to manipulate his knowledge of the Bible to justify a rapacious quest to be the biggest landowner in the region. "Jesse thought that as the true servant of God the entire stretch of country through which he had walked should have come into his possession" (50). He regards his neighboring farmers as Philistines and demands of God that he have a son. Denied this, years later when his daughter Louise bears him a grandson, David, Jesse returns to his manipulative ways, with David in tow, to demand of God a sign, again without success. Finally, in "Terror," Jesse attempts to sacrifice a lamb to force God's hand in manifesting Himself, to make a "true man" of his grandson (74). When this attempt fails miserably, resulting in David running away after he wounds his grandfather, Jesse fully withdraws into his religious fantasy, telling himself that "a messenger of God had taken the boy. 'It happened because I was too greedy for glory,' he declared, and would have no more to say in the matter" (76).

And in "The Strength of God," Curtis Hartman, a rather humdrum and uninspiring minister, catches himself observing Kate Swift next door through a stained-glass window. His ogling of Kate makes him now a surprisingly inspired preacher and "something like a lover in the presence of his wife" (120). However, to suppress his voyeurism, Curtis attempts to manipulate both his faith and God to resist temptation. Failing this, he becomes determined to reject God and the ministry and "utterly give way to sin" (122). However, one night he gazes into Kate's window, seeing her crying naked upon her bed and then, he believes, praying. Curtis breaks the window he used for his ogling and trudges through the snow to proclaim to George Willard that "'God has manifested himself to me in the body of a woman . . . Although she may not be aware of it, she is an instrument of God, bearing the message of truth'" (124). We are left to assume that the minister, now firmly cloaked by his religious conventions,

has made a quick retreat to the uninspired and passionless—but *safe*—person he was before. So, even though neither Doctor Parcival, Jesse Bentley, nor Curtis Hartman elicits much overt sympathy, they do not come across as condemned hypocrites but rather as pathetic figures deserving of pity because of their self-delusions.

Sympathy and pity, not hate and ridicule, pervade *Winesburg*. It is worth returning to Van Doren's statement asserted above: "But touching scandal with beauty . . . Mr. Anderson constantly transmutes it" (408). *Precisely*! Because his grotesques evince a consciousness of their unhappiness and strive to overcome their miserable condition, Anderson imbues them with a dignity that commands our respect. Had he intended to rake small-town life over the coals because of its provincialism and hypocrisy, then he could easily have singled out the dullards of Winesburg as subjects of their own stories—characters like Tom Willard and banker White's wife.

In the few guest appearances these characters make in the book (Tom in "Mother," "Death," and "Departure"; Mrs. White in "Respectability," "The Strength of God," and "Sophistication"), they are *oblivious* of their own obtuseness; they utterly lack self-awareness. George Willard himself can be construed as just such a dullard in "Nobody Knows," "The Thinker," and "An Awakening," in which he displays the kind of thoughtlessness that his father and Mrs. White do. Of course, "Death" and "Sophistication" are stories that denote the growing consciousness and awareness in George that prepare him for his eventual departure. George does, indeed, leave the geographical locale of Winesburg, but the town nevertheless will remain in his mind as the "background on which [he would] paint the dreams of his manhood" (204).

In conclusion, it may be important to mark—not celebrate—the 100th anniversary of Carl Van Doren's "The Revolt from the Village: 1920." It has certainly generated a hundred years of critical attention, including this essay. But, speaking strictly about Van Doren's treatment of Sherwood Anderson as to whether his thesis fairly and accurately includes *Winesburg, Ohio*, I have to firmly conclude: *Basta!*

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ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN: READING *MAIN STREET* THROUGH "THE REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE: 1920"

Sally Parry

In 1921 Carl Van Doren identified a new movement in American literature, "The Revolt from the Village," which turned away from sentimental presentations of the village as the repository for all that was good about American society, especially in contrast to noisy, dirty, unfriendly, highly industrialized cities. In its place, this new genre exposed the hypocrisy behind this presentation. In his essay in the *Nation,* Van Doren dated the beginning of the movement to 1915 with Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* but noted that it took Sinclair Lewis to realize it in novel form with *Main Street* in 1920. In general Van Doren celebrated this turn toward a more realistic view of the small town, indicating that its popularity showed a growing sophistication among American readers.

In his discussion of *Main Street*, Van Doren focused on the negative portrayal of Gopher Prairie, its complacency and dullness. Praising Lewis for his "photographic gifts of accuracy," Van Doren considered him as primarily a satirist on a crusade to call attention to and break up the uniformity and mediocrity of the small town (410). That Lewis has "remarkable gifts" is evident; otherwise "he could never have written a book which got its vast popularity by assailing the populace" (410). Van Doren also seemed to think that Lewis had scores to settle and the novel was a form of payback for the life he lived in Sauk Centre, Minnesota: "Mr. Lewis, like Mr. Masters, clearly has revenges to take upon the narrow community in which he grew up, nourished, no doubt, on the complacency native to such neighborhoods" (410).

Lewis read Van Doren's series of essays on literature in the *Nation* with interest and, after "The Revolt from the Village: 1920" was published, wrote him a seven-page letter offering corrections to some of his assertions. Operating on the assumption that Van Doren planned to publish his *Nation* essays as a book, Lewis hoped to set the record straight. He wanted to make clear that his plan for *Main Street* had started in 1905, so he was not influenced by Edgar Lee Masters; he claimed that he had not even read all of *Spoon River Anthology* yet. In addition, although some critics likened *Main Street* to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Lewis contended that he hadn't read that novel until he was over halfway done with *Main Street*:

> And I rather question (though here I am only guessing) that you are equally wrong about the influence of Masters on Zona Gale, and possibly even on Sherwood Anderson. Of course Masters, Gale, Anderson, myself, a hundred others, are all influenced in various ways by the same spirit of the times, by the same environment and the same reactions against that environment. But this is no more unusual than the same influences acting at the same time on Keats, Shelley and Coleridge; or on Bennett, Wells, and a number of others. (Lewis to Van Doren, 25 Oct. 1921)

Lewis also wanted to make clear that he worked at being a writer and that dismissing his earlier fiction as "bright, colloquial, amusing chatter to be read by those who travel thru books at the brisk pace of vaudeville" was doing him an injustice. He had been a professional writer for eighteen years, and although his earlier writing is "bad, for various reasons . . . they are none of them vaudeville" (my ellipses). He mentioned the novels *The Job, Our Mr. Wrenn,* and *The Trail of the Hawk* as serious, as well as some of his short stories for popular magazines, "honest work as the powerful negations of the magazine editors would permit." Among the short stories that he was most proud of are "The Willow Walk," "Young Man Axelbrod," "He Loved His Country," and "Things"[1] and hopes that Van Doren will read some of his other writing, especially *The Job*.[2]

Although Van Doren read *Main Street* and other Revolt-from-the-Village writings as partly revenge for small-town childhoods that the authors found stultifying, Lewis mentions his fondness for many of his characters:

> In Main Street, I certainly do love all of the following people, none of whom could be classed as anything but "dull" (using your own

> sense of dull as meaning lacking in conscious intelligence): Bea, Champ and Mrs. Perry, Sam and Mrs. Clark, Will Kennicott (dull about certain things tho not all), Will's mother, and almost all of the farmer patients. And I love Carol who is dull about all the male world that interests Kennicott. And Guy Pollock who is of only a slight and dilettantish intelligence. (qtd. in Schorer 301)[3]

Lewis engaged with his characters beyond what is in the novel, creating family trees, a map of the town, and other details in such a way that the novel becomes a distilled version of the town and its people.[4]

Since 1921 critics have often used Van Doren's essay as a touchstone for heralding a progressive change in American literature. Although Masters, Lewis, Anderson, and Gale, among others, were not the modernists that some of the American expatriates of the 1920s were, their writing acknowledged that the American landscape was changing. America still had rural roots, but the nation as a whole was becoming more diverse and industrialized, disturbing what many thought of as a comfortable status quo. As Richard Lingeman points out, "*Main Street* meshed with the postwar mood of cynicism among the intelligentsia and the young, a reaction to both the betrayal of the Wilsonian ideals for which the war had been fought and (at least among liberals) the savage repression of the postwar Red Scare" (158). Through the years, other critics have followed up on and expanded on Van Doren's critique. For example, Robert Spiller, in 1955, noted that "Sinclair Lewis was willing to look coldly at the world in which he found himself, to examine its values rather than his own, and to declare what he found" (166). C. Hugh Holman compared Lewis's critique to a scientist examining bugs in a glass case, calling him a moralist who hopes that if a community sees "itself in the steel mirror of his description" that it will "repent and improve" (253, 258).

Van Doren's short essay calls attention to a new trend in American literature but does not have the space to discuss the nuances that Lewis, Masters, and Gale delineated in their fiction. Anthony Channell Hilfer's *The Revolt from the Village, 1915-1930*, the first major scholarly work on these writers as a group, acknowledges their ambivalence for the small towns they came from, for "revolt, even at its most extreme, was never total, for, bad as the village was, no alternative way of life did much more to satisfy the heart's desire" (4). Hilfer believed that for many Americans "the

small town served as a mental escape from the complexities, insecurities, and continual changes of a society in rapid transition from a dominantly rural to a dominantly urban and industrial civilization" (5). Like other scholars, Hilfer noted their ambivalence because, in general, since "their fictive small towns were based on the real small towns of their childhood, ambivalence between nostalgia and revolt was natural" (4).

What critics tend to ignore about the presentation of the small town in *Main Street* is that it contains many voices commenting on the town, from boosters to outsiders. Most Revolt-from- the-Village writings have characters who are born in a small town and long to escape, characters such as Floyd Dell's Felix Fay in *Moon-Calf* or Sherwood Anderson's George Willard in *Winesburg, Ohio*. What makes *Main Street* unique is that the main voice is that of an outsider. Rather than being part of Gopher Prairie, Carol Kennicott arrives there from the big city of St. Paul after marrying Dr. Will Kennicott, a proud member of that community.

Much of Carol's struggle to try and fit in derives from her lack of the same history as her husband's friends and her view at Gopher Prairie from a jaundiced eye since she is used to a big city with many amenities, entertainments, and cultural opportunities. Will's friends remember when Gopher Prairie was smaller, had fewer buildings, and no movie theater. Their shared community is reinforced through activities such as hunting and fishing, which are done at the same time every year, and parties and other social events at which the same types of food and same entertainment are expected. Carol sees this boring repetition as evidence that the town is static, a feeling amplified by the somewhat cranky and sarcastic narrator, who sees the town as exemplifying "dullness made God" (265).[5] Critics have seized on Lewis's frequent pronouncements that he identified with Carol Kennicott as a way to build on Van Doren's thesis and stress the small-town critique.

Such an approach, however, does not do justice to the complexity of Lewis's novel. Although Carol's voice and thoughts are the ones that we are most aware of, there are others, both insiders and outsiders, who comment on the town and provide a variety of perspectives. Champ and Mrs. Perry represent the original settlers of the town, and, although Carol initially romanticizes them, they are cranky about the town and think that there have been changes, mostly for the worse. Will Kennicott and his friends think that Gopher

Prairie is wonderful, but has room for improvement. When Honest Jim Blausser comes to town toward the end of the novel and proposes change—street lights on a couple of blocks of Main Street, a reorganized and peppier amateur baseball team, and new uniforms for the town band—they think it's great and help make it happen. Bea Sorenson, who becomes Carol's maid and her friend, finds Gopher Prairie fascinating because it's many times the size of the town she comes from, and her walk through town, which parallels the one that Carol took shortly after she arrived, takes on a totally different tone from that of Carol.

Some who live there, like Erik Valborg, the tailor, long to leave for the big city where there is more culture. Others who come to town, like the teacher Fern Mullins, feel forced to leave because they don't fit in and are bullied for it. Vida Sherwin, a long-time member of the community, may be among the most admirable because she realizes that to make changes in a small town, one has to start small, be it by getting flower boxes on the main street or establishing a waiting room for farmers' wives. It isn't the glamorous change of new architecture and vibrant culture that Carol wants, but it is making the town better. Carol even comes to realize that many of the attitudes that she criticized about Gopher Prairie exist in big cities like Washington, DC as well.

Van Doren himself, in some of his later writings about *Main Street*, tempered his view of the novel, partly because he was able to see it at a greater perspective and partly because he was able to write at greater length and with more nuance. His biographical sketch of Lewis, published in 1933 after Lewis had won the Nobel Prize for Literature, argued that *Main Street*, along with his other major novels of the 1920s, disrupted the status quo. What stood out for Van Doren was that *Main Street* was "an honest story told without regard to consequences" and that it violated a comfortable pattern of thought about the American village in American fiction (22).

By 1920 Lewis was "one of millions of Americans who had come to think of their villages as dull in comparison with the more variegated worlds spread before them by newspapers, motion pictures, excursions in train or automobile" (38-39). In 1940, in a chapter on Lewis in *The American Novel*, Van Doren noted that his reading the "panoramic caricature of a small provincial town" in 1920 seemed to show that vices appeared to outweigh virtues (306). However, a rereading of the novel twenty years later made him realize that the

vices and virtues were more evenly balanced that he had earlier thought. *Main Street* has been read from a variety of perspectives over the years, from literary ones that examine feminist and rhetorical aspects to ones that apply sociological and political theory. In most readings there is an acknowledgment of Lewis's ambivalence toward *Main Street*'s Gopher Prairie and, by extension, his own hometown of Sauk Centre.

There have been occasional attempts to push back against critiques of small towns. Over sixty years after *Main Street* was published, Helen Hooven Santmyer tried to counter its criticism with her best-selling novel . . . *And Ladies of the Club*.[6] Santmyer considered . . . *And Ladies of the Club,* a lengthy novel set in fictional Waynesboro, Ohio, between 1868 and 1932, an answer to *Main Street*, even creating a character who vows to write a long novel "'covering several generations of life in a small midwestern city' as a rebuttal to the calumnies uttered against the region in Sinclair Lewis's 1920 novel 'Main Street'" (Lyons). Although critics compared her novel to Lewis's, she told Gene Lyons and Tracy Robinson, "My book was something I had been planning to do most of my life. Lewis wrote his version and I wrote mine." She also told them that she found *Main Street* "shallow."

More recently, conservative critic Jon Lauck argued for the centrality of Midwestern literature to American identity and downplayed the Revolt from the Village movement, contending that the center of the country represented true American values and that the emphasis on the Revolt by scholars was overblown. Ralph Goldstein, in a review of *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge*, notes that Lauck blames "New York Intellectuals" and their "cosmopolitanism" for blowing the Revolt out of proportion. Although Lewis in later years wrote more kindly of his hometown, especially in "The Long Arm of the Small Town" in 1931 for the 50th anniversary of his high-school annual,[7] Goldstein points out that Lewis saw criticism of society in a positive light, not a negative one. In a 1944 article in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, critic Bernard DeVoto claimed that Lewis's criticism of America misrepresented the country. Goldstein notes that Lauck cites DeVoto approvingly, but ignores Lewis's response to DeVoto, in which he wrote that critical writers "so loved their country that they were willing to report its transient dangers and stupidities" (qtd. in Goldstein 13).

The Fall 2020 issue of *Midwestern Miscellany*, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Main Street,* is indicative of current critical trends. George Killough's "The Sauk-Centric Sources of Lewis's Alleged Ambivalence in *Main Street*" states the case most clearly for a nuanced reading of Lewis's critique:

> There is little, if any, doubt in the novel about which characteristics of Gopher Prairie are bad and which are good. The bad points are devastating for protagonist Carol Kennicott, but a few good points do help her decide, after making a temporary escape, to return there to live. If Lewis knew the town's bad features from living in Sauk Centre, his knowledge of its good features very likely also came from his experiences there. Abundant evidence exists, actually, of positive qualities in Lewis's youthful surroundings, which scholars have not yet fully investigated. In order not to dilute the satire on Main Streets everywhere, he did not include every positive feature, but he did include some. (9)

Robert L. McLaughlin, in the same issue, applies a rhetorical and narrative analysis to show how Lewis "makes it possible for the reader to feel the plight and live the critique," as his "narrative voices situate Carol and the reader in the tension between the tyranny of official discourse and the ambiguous freedom of open-ended discourse" (34). By complicating the novel through a Bakhtinian lens, McLaughlin makes clear that a simplistic alignment between Lewis and the many narrative voices to make a case for a satire or a tale of revenge reduces the complexity of the story.

Van Doren became a friend of Lewis and, as Mark Schorer pointed out, held "a rather special place; it was one friendship that was not marred by quarrels, one that was never broken" (721). Summing up Lewis's importance to American literature most beautifully in his 1933 biographical sketch, he stated that Lewis is not only "an American telling stories, but he is America telling stories" (Biographical Sketch 49).

NOTES

[1]Additional short stories included "The Scarlet Sign," "Mother Love," "The Enchanted Hour," "A Woman by Candlelight," and "The Whisperer."

[2]Van Doren read *The Job* after Alfred Harcourt sent it to him and "eliminated the offending passages when he published the articles as a book" (Lingeman 185).

[3]Schorer made several silent corrections to the letter from Lewis to Van Doren. The quotation from the letter here is as Lewis wrote it.

[4]See Hutchisson's chapter on *Main Street* (9-46) for a discussion of Lewis's creative process and how much he trimmed from the lives of his characters in order to make the novel

more focused. Originally Bea Sorenson was a more developed character as a counterweight to Carol and there was more focus on Guy Pollack, who, in an excised chapter, has a possible romantic liaison with Carol, marries another woman, and dies, to Carol's great sorrow.

[5]Hutchisson also notes that this cynical voice was more pronounced in a draft of the novel. "In this additional material, Carol's awareness of the difference between the myth of village life and its reality is disrupted by the voice of an alien cynic who intrudes to moralize about the deterioration of democracy in America" (32).

[6]The book was originally published in 1982 and sold poorly. However, it was championed by several well-connected readers and republished in 1984 as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, eventually selling over two million copies and becoming the best-selling paperback up to that time (Fisher). See also Kakutani's review.

[7]"The Long Arm of the Small Town" was read at Lewis's funeral in Sauk Centre in 1951 by schoolmate Dr. J. F. DuBois. See the introduction to the piece in *A Sinclair Lewis Reader*.

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ZONA GALE'S *FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE*, MODERNITY, AND THE "REVOLT" IN—NOT FROM—THE VILLAGE

MARILYN JUDITH ATLAS

In his essay, "The Revolt from the Village: 1920," published in the *Nation,* Carl Van Doren inaccurately sets the stage so that future readers of Zona Gale and even her biographer, August Derleth, see her revolt from the village as tentative and incomplete and her work as sentimental and romantic rather than realistic and modern. Van Doren tries to make peace with *Friendship Village* (1908) because Gale writes well, but what he perceives as uncalled-for sweetness annoys him. He fears that Gale, like many other late nineteenth- and-early-twentieth-century writers, is afraid to criticize village life:

> For nearly half a century native literature had been faithful to the cult of the village, celebrating its delicate merits with sentimental affection and with unwearied interest digging into odd corners of the country for persons and incidents illustrative of the essential goodness and heroism which, so the doctrine ran, lie beneath unexciting surfaces. Certain critical dispositions, aware of agrarian discontent or given to a preference for cities, might now and then lay disrespectful hands upon the life of the farm; but even these generally hesitated to touch the village, sacred since Goldsmith in spite of Crabbe, sacred since Harriet Beecher Stowe in spite of E. W. Howe. The village seemed too cosy a microcosm to be disturbed. (407)

Van Doren is setting up the reader to see *Friendship Village* in a way that unfairly bolsters his argument and does not shed light on the novel. In this novel, in this village, not every character is either saint or villain; they are alive, ever changing. To qualify as a novel exploring modernity, a revolt from the village is not required. The narrator of *Friendship Village*, just like George Willard, the central character of *Winesburg, Ohio*, leaves the village in the last chapter of the novel,

but she leaves the village not because she must leave it to self-actualize but because this village, though it has helped her to heal, is not her original home and she chooses to return to the one from which she temporarily escaped.

Winesburg, as Sherwood Anderson imagines it, may be rigid, poisonous to many inhabitants, incapable or unwilling to accommodate difference, but Friendship Village, as imagined by Zona Gale, is capable of accommodating difference, though it does not always do so. Gale is creating a different type of village than is Anderson; it is not sentimental and romantic, just another version of a village's complexity. George Willard leaves to have a chance because there is none available to him in Winesburg, and the narrator of *Friendship Village* leaves because she prefers her older to her newer home—both imaginary places reflect visions of the turn-of-the-century village.

Characters who stay in Friendship Village are not doomed to grotesqueness and isolation as they tend to be in Winesburg. Zona Gale makes this clear by having the narrator in the last chapter, "The Hidings of Power," decide to leave and her best friend and central character, Calliope Marsh, decide to remain. Both narrator and best friend have agency and purpose. In Zona Gale's *Friendship Village*, the revolt is mainly *in* the village and in his analysis of the novel, Van Doren is guilty of setting up a straw man argument to bolster his agenda that realism and modernity equal revolt from the village, that staying is always romantic and sentimental, that the farm can be criticized in literature, but the village is off limits.

Friendship Village, a novel divided into twenty chapters, is a study of modernity, a feminist revolt *in* the village. In this novel, characters learn to appreciate difference and to create a more functional, fluid community. Even though Zona Gale continued to publish other books of collected "Friendship" short stories, such as *Neighborhood Stories* (1914) and *Peace in Friendship Village* (1919), the first book is entitled *Friendship Village* and is a novel as much as is *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919). Because there are major recurrent characters who change and grow in this book, reading it as a novel helps to demonstrate its complex, nonsentimental vision of village life. *Friendship Village* is less sexist and dark than *Winesburg, Ohio,* but it is critical of human behavior, privilege, and elitism. Zona Gale has avoided an either/or approach to village life and has instead opted for something more multi-valanced: in Gertrude Stein's words from the subtitle of the second section in *Three Lives,* "Melanctha,"

"Each One as She May" seems to be the philosophy that Gale is following here (71).

Characters choose to help one another, sometimes in humorous chapters, such as "The Tea Party," where the guests are snarky and more judgmental than polite, and sometimes in darker chapters, such as "Put on Thy Beautiful Garments," in which a young outsider finds a way through grave digging to discover with the help of new friends that she can, indeed, do more than she ever thought possible and therefore can survive as an independent person, a person with agency. This novel does not require the reader to feel more than the characters earn; it is not cloying, but offers readers a combination of emotions, wisdom, and other ways of seeing how one imaginary Midwestern village at the turn of the century deals with individuality and community through the lens of a female narrator from the city who needs a place to regroup.

Friendship Village came out of Zona Gale's world. Portage, Wisconsin, was a world filled with immigrants—German and Jewish—and, most likely, with European humor and fables. As Derleth notes, she associated with the progressives in her state, and some of those were German and/or Jewish immigrants, probably well versed with the fables they brought with them from Europe (Cohen 24). At dinner parties, over drinks, she may well have heard Chelm fables exploring human foibles with wit and wisdom.

European Christians and Jews from 1597 onward circulated stories. Not so different from "Snow White," or "Little Red Riding Hood," these fables were about village life, and they were particularly relevant around the turn of the century when a new wave of immigrants arrived in Wisconsin. With wit and humor, they explore humans in exile, searching for stability. Knowing their world was precarious and even the wisest seeming to miss the reality of how their world worked, Europeans in danger created stories to help them both understand and cope with the problems in front of them. Wise men and fools were conflated. One book, a translation of these fables, was popular in Lvov, Galicia, a village in turmoil that many individuals were leaving in search of a safer, better life (Friedman 2). There were economic troubles and anti-Semitism was once again on the rise in Europe.

What better coping mechanism than humor? A new Yiddish translation of these stories was created in 1887. One can imagine immigrants taking such a book with them for companionship as they

left the Old World for the New. That book of Chelm stories includes the classic story of a wise rabbi, hidden under a blanket, who sets out from his village, Chelm, to visit a nearby city. The driver of the rabbi's wagon allegedly transports him around for a few minutes and then deposits him back in the same place, Chelm. The rabbi is astonished to discover as he walks around that this "city" looks just like his village, Chelm. Indeed, the whole world is Chelm.

Turn-of-the-century modernity was global. Europeans and Americans were on the move searching for better places yet questioning that move. This funny, universal tale—Christian, German, and Jewish—might have been popular in Zona Gale's multicultural Wisconsin. Ambivalence concerning change is global, not particularly Midwestern.

Though there is not space in this essay to explore the multiculturalism of Zona Gale's world, one might assume that her refusal to reject the village is not a reactionary gesture embracing sentimentality or romance but rather a modern response that the whole world is "Chelm" or "Friendship Village." Cruelty, suffering, loneliness, grotesqueness, depression, ostracism, helplessness, desertion, and betrayal exist in Zona Gale's village as they do in American and European cities. Not all characters have common sense—some are fools, some manipulators—but human nature is perhaps the same everywhere, in the village and in the city.

The second chapter of *Friendship Village*, "The Début," is such a Chelm story. In it, Mrs. Ricker, the town cleaner, is divorced from her first husband, Al Kitton, who has just died and left her with a little fortune. The latter, "early divorced and later repentant," has decided to have a proper, if belated, coming-out party for her daughter, Emerel, although Emerel is now in her thirties and engaged to Abe Daniel (10). Mom wants to throw this party now because she can finally afford to do so. Emerel escapes the ordeal by eloping, but the party must go on anyway because it has become a competition as to who will attend.

Mrs. Postmaster Sykes, a leader in the town, visits the narrator, who lives in the town's best house, The Oldmoxon's property, where the furniture is "carved," the house "different," i. e., better than the others in the village. Mrs. Sykes wants access to this house for Sodality events and so invites the narrator to join the group, regardless of her status as a single woman. The group's formal name, The Friendship Married Ladies' Cemetery Improvement Sodality, under-

lines the status of single women in the community: not acceptable. Seeing Mrs. Ricker's foibles but not her own, Mrs. Sykes decides to host a dinner party at the same time as the coming-out party because she does not want her town to be a "laughing stock."

Things go south until Calliope Marsh intervenes, and the narrator, who has come to Friendship Village "to get away from everywhere," finds herself the bargaining chip for combining the two parties and also finds herself launched in society (27). She is the center of the coming-out party because Emerel has eloped, and her house will host Mrs. Sykes's Sodality meetings. Cities, the town leaders note, allow guests to come to two parties in one night, but because Mrs. Sykes is a town leader and not a cleaner, Friendship Village solves its dilemma by having all those who accepted Mrs. Sykes's invitation also come to Mrs. Ricker's home, a home covered with flowers for the début that never was because she had issued in the Friendship *Daily* the following request: "All that would give flowers when ded [sic] please send same anyhow and not expect to send same if we do die afterwards" (17).

In this chapter, city and village merge in terms of etiquette, cleaning ladies get the same respect as society ladies, the narrator who wants to be separate is nevertheless central; in other words, up is down and logic is twisted. The global humor of the little village where wisdom comes in through the side door in odd forms and packages is also the humor of Zona Gale's *Friendship Village*, not sentimental but universal. Situational irony and dramatic irony hold hands, and as insider/outsider, our narrator sees what is going on: the flowers of death and of life are, well, flowers after all. The reader gets to enjoy the craziness.

In the various chapters that make up this novel, the careful reader experiences grotesque characters mostly from the village, some living in the village, others in the city, and not all ends well. But here, in this novel, grotesqueness is not a permanent state for those who remain in the village. For instance, Zona Gale has one of her odd characters, Eb, realize that another character, Elspie, not quite stable, is lonesome. He tries to help her because he loves her and awkwardly touches her elbow in order to be kind and comforting. It is the best he can do at the moment of need. This woman is his future wife, and though community gossip posits that she is mad, and she herself questions her own sanity, Eb does not. Elspie is simply lonely beyond endurance.

Eb, a poor man in the village, a man with a problem finding appropriate words, but one who has scrimped and saved, becomes Elspie's hero, her savior, and his own, finding a way to make things better in the village for both. Sherwood Anderson might have Alice Hindman run naked through the streets because she is lonely, but Zona Gale depicts a male character, Eb, who wants to create a culturally acceptable stable, loving, environment for both himself and his love and he is willing to be methodical. Eb believes, rightly, that Elspie is suffering from loneliness and that, for her, a stable relationship without financial anxiety will make her life better.

Why is one version of reality particularly more compelling to Van Doren? It is the agenda and not the text that is causing VanDoren to see *Friendship Village* as sentimental. Eb can assuage Elspie's loneliness; taking her elbow, he tells Mrs. Fire Chief Merriman that he will buy her late husband's store and marry Elspie. This is an economic story, a story of two misfits, and it works because Eb works, and Elspie is not insane. This, too, is realism.

The way Eb proposes is absurd, endearing, memorable, and awkward—like the characters. Calliope Marsh tells the novel's narrator the story using the language of John Wesley, a Protestant reformer who was born in Epworth, United Kingdom, a town that combines the names of "Eb" and "Elspie." These names are likely not accidental. Subtleties and ironies abound. John Wesley's most famous metaphor condemning the churches' missteps and self-sabotaging choices is alluded to here: "The church recruited people who had been starched and ironed before they were washed."

Calliope Marsh recalls the scene where Eb proposes to Elspie in chapter six, "Lonesome—II," explaining nothing, but demonstrating much about the connection of these characters to this reformer:

> "You're lonesome. Like—other folks."
> "An all to once Eb took a-hold o' her elbow—not loose an' temporary like he shook hands, but firm n' four-cornered, an' when he spoke it was like his voice hed [sic] been starched an' ironed." (162)

Zona Gale is writing a novel punctuated with insight and critizue in which characters must be careful not to judge and in which one must proceed with caution to prevent doing damage: one must wash before one starches and irons. Luckily for Elspie, Eb, odd but decent, has a sense of a workable order and Elspie has the likelihood of a better future in Friendship Village.

This cautionary domestic image of John Wesley, eighteenth-century reformer, is repeated with a difference in several modernist texts, including *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Perhaps Zona Gale's *Friendship Village* was that popular. Just as Gertrude Stein named the second section of *Three Lives*, "Melanctha," suggesting the reformer Philip Melanchthon—who had two daughters, Anna and Magdalena, variations of the titles Stein uses for sections one and three—"Good Anna" and "Gentle Lena,"—so other modernist writers might use this John Wesley phrasing to amuse the careful reader and to give a nod not just to this reformer but simultaneously to *Friendship Village*. Sherwood Anderson and Zora Neadle Hurston might be giving Zona Gale an intertextual nod to show not only their respect for *Friendship Village* but their interest in reform and reformers, again not sentimental.

Each of these excellent writers, Anderson and Hurston, uses the same language but not identically of for the same purpose. Lonesomeness is a theme not only in *Friendship Village,* but also in *Winesburg Ohio* and in *Their Eyes Were Watching God.* Eleven years after the publication of *Friendship Village,* in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio,* Elmer Cowley, a character in "Queer," beats up George Willard and, before he heads out of town, remarks, "'I'll be washed and ironed and starched'" (*Winesburg* 111). Perhaps Anderson, in 1919, is playing off Zona Gale's characters in "Lonesome II." Eb and Elspie stay in Friendship Village; Elmer Cowley, true to Sherwood Anderson's vision of the village, gets out of town.

In another text exploring modernity and village life, Zora Neale Hurstons's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)*,* Zora Neadle Hurston sends her main character, Janie Starks, to her husband's funeral with a mask. Janie Starks had "starched and ironed her face," and places that face behind a veil, appearing as a widow in mourning when in actuality her heart has left the place of her entrapment, has revolted and gone frolicking with the springtime toward her more vital self and her willing and much more appropriate lover, Tea Cake (88-89). She had left two husbands for a chance at happiness and self-fulfillment. Her revolt was major, and it was mental as well as physical, a revolt not only from the village but also from sexist values.

The characters in *Friendship Village* are wittily and memorably written and their actions have larger cultural implications. Intertextuality is not an argument for realism and modernity versus

romance and sentimentality, but in these cases, later modernist writers may be acknowledging obliquely Zona Gale's exploration of village life, images, and values. Gale's characters' use of language, dialect and image is memorable, often brilliant. Zona Gale influenced other major writers of village life that came after her not because her vision was identical to theirs but because she offered unique, realistic, insights into the texture and limitation of village life.

Some of the Friendship Village women may need to be seduced into taking care of themselves, but Zona Gale's portrayal of change is neither romantic nor sentimental. For instance, several women without the protection of marriage, a group that includes the narrator and Calliope Marsh, prepare and serve a Thanksgiving dinner to one another instead of simply feeling excluded from the holiday festivities. Calliope wants Thanksgiving and asks the narrator to help her to host a dinner for a few "poor sick folks" because she dares not ask for herself (29). The problem is that no one is "traditionally" sick or poor in Friendship, but there are many who are heartsick and unable to admit their loneliness. The author implies that her characters do not need to be lonely and deprived on Thanksgiving even if they are single, never married, or without functioning families.

In chapter three, "Nobody Sick, Nobody Poor" and chapter four, "Covers for Seven," Zona Gale gathers and tricks Friendship Village characters in happiness and self-value. Zona Gale's point can be seen as poignant rather than saccharine: marriage is not a requirement for enjoying beauty, for creating beauty, or for enjoying life's small pleasures. One can act, even on one's own behalf, without shame or guilt. Happiness is appropriate even for unattached older women. The idea of women acting on their own behalf was radical for 1908. Again silly hunor abides as does questionable logic.

The narrator has gone along with Calliope Marsh's Thanksgiving scheme for reasons that don't make sense even to her: "In order to keep my self-respect, I recall that I was as ungracious as possible. I think I said that the day meant so little to me that I was willing to do anything to avoid spending it alone. A statement which seems to me now not to bristle with logic" (29). The narrator, escaping the city, orders delicacies from the unnamed city, again a bit of humorous illogic and complexity: "And in the midst of all came from the City the box with my gift of hothouse fruit and a rosebud for every plate" (46). Gale is not being sentimental here; she is being complex, insightful, and funny.

In an illogical, complicated way, Zona Gale leads characters and readers to an understanding that what the village thinks it is, what people think they are, often do not align with reality. In "The Shadow of Good Things to Come," a new character, Delia, who clearly belongs in the town but has been absent for over a decade, and the narrator both understand that there is much here to examine and discover: "and here to Calliope's cottage Delia More had come creeping, whom all Friendship would hold in righteous distaste. But I alone of all Friendship knew that she was here, 'fair body-sick to see the place again'" (66).

Pretending to feel wrath, the narrator understands that the woman who came off the train is somehow her double, that the narrator's solitary walk seems spoiled but is not. The narrator's blood is singing, and while she calls herself a busybody, the reader understands that her experiences in Friendship will lead her where she cannot lead herself (67).The true Friendship Village and its inhabitants are a complex mystery with some, like one of the Topladys marrying a "foreigner," and some, like Linda Proudfit, fleeing with a poor young clerk "'into the storm'" (61, 63).

From the beginning of *Friendship Village*, Zona Gale makes sure that the reader understands that this town is Everytown and its inhabitants every person, and that modern technology, because it is the turn of the twentieth century, has found a way to enter the village's borders: modernity does not require overt, consistent consent. This village is not afraid of everything new, nor does it revere all that is old; members simply want to use the new as they deem appropriate and as they become ready for it. Zona Gale allows their values to change and their paradigms to shift. Modernity, in the form of a telephone line, an automobile, the latest in funeral equipment, peppers the first *Friendship Village* chapter, "The Side Door," where we meet our first-person narrator, a distraught, confused, and lonely outsider seeking a new beginning and human connection—some refuge in a Midwestern village (4). She will not stay, and by the last chapter, she is reconnected to her more "authentic" past and returns to a home more familiar to her, one the reader does not know much about other than it is not Friendship Village. The reader knows no more about her prodigal lover, but the reader does come to understand that even though not all characters achieve it, both love and agency are possible, and possible together, in and out of Friendship Village.

The reader is not told how to read these chapters, but the reader is told that the Telegraph and Cable Office, a modern office, is on Daphne Street. And Daphne Street is named Daphne Street for a purpose: to commemorate a "real" young woman who fled the town (5). The mythical Daphne, a young virginal Naiad, was pursued by Apollo and was desperate to escape. She knew how to protect herself from Apollo, who relentlessly pursued her: action and prayer. She ran and prayed to the earth and was turned into a laurel tree. Our narrator, also, will be no victim in this story and will combine the right dose of modernity, tree-lined streets, and older histories, acknowledging that the old and new are intricately intertwined and exist as one—regardless of what erring humans choose to acknowledge or name.

That idea is developed from the beginning of the novel in chapter one, "The Side Door" (1-9). There is a tendency in *Friendship Village* to mutually annoy, to gossip and to pretend, but also to "do," to save oneself and one's neighbors in this village, and this particular imaginary village is perhaps less sweet, not sweeter, than real ones. Zona Gale makes this clear in the introductory "Author's Note" that can be found in the first edition of the novel. Van Doren is resistant to this novel because he wants the argument in his essay to work and he needs Gale's writings to play the part he assigns to them, and *Friendship Village* does not.

There is some warfare between the old and new, the village and the city, in *Friendship Village*, and though the new generally wins, it wins best when it is subtle. Calliope Marsh, who stays and loves and is loved, finally, near the novel's end, finds happiness—she will stay and she will "do." In the first story Calliope hints at her nature and at the nature of Friendship Village. She explains to the narrator, who quickly becomes her dearest friend:

> "You know my father before me was rill musical. I was babtized Calliope because a circus with one come through the town the day't I was born." And with her, too, the grafting of to-morrow upon yesterday is unconscious; or only momentarily conscious, as when she phrased it:—"Land, land, I like New as well as anybody. But I want it should be put in the Old kind o' gentle, like an i-dee in your mind, an' not sudden, like a bullet in your brain." (7-8)

The narrator explains that Friendship Village tends to accept eventually what "Progress" sends. So what is seen by Van Doren as senti-

ment and by August Derleth as conservative also can be seen as unique, thoughtful, subtle, kind, and more realistic than romantic. In another, later, section of this first chapter, the narrator, again through the lens of Calliope Marsh, is guided along with the reader toward a perspective that will aid in understanding the village and the novel: "'This town is more like a back door than a front—or givin' it full credit, *anyhow,* it's no more'n a side door, with no vines'" (8, italics in original). With or without vines, the narrator and reader enter—each one as she may.

As Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* is framed by the "Book of the Grotesque," so this novel is framed by "The Side Door." Gertrude Stein teaches her readers in *Three Lives* (1909) and *Tender Buttons* (1914) that the "ands" do not always add up nor do they need to add up. The world is not made up of either/or; realistic, modern *Friendship Village* allows both the metaphorical and modern, the scientific "electric" bells and the "neighbors with shawls pinned over their heads" to coexist beautifully, sometimes without explanation and always without apology (9).

So, Zona Gale has Calliope Marsh stay, not because she is passive or a grotesque, but because she has strength and choices and has chosen to stay; she stays because she has decided that Friendship Village is the site from which she will be able to do the most good, and she chooses to do good, not because all women must, but because she can and because she wants to make a difference. Calliope Marsh has agency: she chooses and acts, and nothing can be more feminist than that. Loyalty to an imaginary village need not be sentimental or romantic, and in *Friendship Village* it is neither. Ironically, Calliope's staying is belittled by Carl Van Doren, but as feminism would have it, Gale has no intention of pleasing anyone other than herself or of making decisions by anyone else's light other than her own. Carl Van Doren is simply not reading this novel through a feminist and/or accurate lens.

In this novel, Zona Gale seems to imply that women can make it in the city and in the village. With all the power that the Genteel Tradition has in this novel, this type of power is laughed at and often dismantled, and no one place, neither the city nor the village, is fetishized as being a superior environment, one that is essential if one is to lead a full, rich, modern life. Actualized men and women can choose either or live in both. Carl Van Doren is being more provocative than fair in his assessment of *Friendship Village*. He writes of

the village in England, but also in America, particularly in the Midwest:

> The American voice, however, speaks of American conditions. The villages of the Middle West, it asseverates, have been conquered and converted by the legions of mediocrity, and now, grown rich and vain, are setting out to carry the dingy banner, led by the booster's calliope and the evangelist's bass drum, farther than it has ever gone before—to make provincialism imperialistic; so that all the native and instinctive virtues, freedoms, powers must rally in their own defense. (410)

Not here in Zona Gale's *Friendship Village*: Calliope Marsh is anything but a booster for village life; rather, she is a sensitive reformer of the village: direct, perceptive, honest, and in plenty of personal pain. Her lover has left town and erred and then through his child and father has symbolically found his way back home. Though recurrently lonely and seriously stressed, Calliope is not consistently passed over by happiness. Passivity is not in her nature, and she makes choices so that her life remains meaningful and useful. As much as any human realistically drawn, she is the captain of her fate. Carl Van Doren suggests that Zona Gale, about a decade before Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, had a "comfortable standing among the sweeter set" (410). Perhaps she did, but this novel is by no means simply sweet, and her standing is also high, it seems, among the brilliant reformers and experimental writers such as Sherwood Anderson and Zora Neale Hurston.

The *Friendship Village* that Carl Van Doren reads is not the one that exists, but the one which fits his argument:

> Friendship lay ostensibly in the Middle West, but it actually stood—if one may be pardoned an appropriate metaphor—upon the confectionary shelf of the fiction shop, preserved in a thick syrup and set up where a tender light could strike across it at all hours. In story after story Miss Gale varied the same device: that of showing how childlike children are, how sisterly are sisters, how brotherly are brothers, how motherly are mothers, how fatherly are fathers, how grandmotherly and grandfatherly are grandmothers and grandfathers, and how loverly are all true lovers of whatever age, sex, color, or condition. But beneath the human kindness which had permitted Miss Gale to fall into this technique, lay the sinews of a very subtle intelligence; and she needed only an example and a chance to be able to escape from her sugary preoccupations. (410-11)

Van Doren mocks *Friendship Village* unfairly but goes on, to give him credit, to praise "Miss Lulu Bett," explaining that Warbleton, where the Lulu Bett novel and plays take place, is akin to Friendship Village, but written "during a mood when its creator had grown weary of the eternal saccharine" (411). His praise for *Miss Lulu Bett* is powerful, but his condemnation of *Friendship Village* is simply unjustified. Here are some of his words of praise for *Miss Lulu Bett* (1920):

> Miss Gale, instead of heaping up a multitude of indictments, categorized and docketed, followed the path of indirection which—by a paradoxical axiom of art—is a shorter cut than the highway of exposition or anathema. Her story is as spare as the virgin frame of Lulu Bett; her style is staccato in its lucid brevity, like Lulu's infrequent speeches; her eloquence is not that of a torrent of words and images but that of comic or ironic or tragic meaning packed in a syllable, a gesture, a dumb silence. Miss Gale riddles the tedious affectations of the Deacon household almost without a word of comment; none the less she exhibits them under a withering light. The daughter, she says, "was as primitive as pollen"—and biology rushes in to explain Di's blind philanderings. "In the conversations of Dwight and Ina," it is said of the husband and wife, "you saw the historical home forming in clots in the fluid wash of the community"—and anthropology holds the candle . . . Thus hinting, Miss Gale, in her clear, flutelike way, joins the chorus in which others play upon noisier instruments. (411)

My point is that while *Friendship Village* and Miss Gale only get a light whipping, Zona Gale deserves no whipping at all for *Friendship Village*. Perhaps Carl Van Doren indicated that he kind of likes *Friendship Village* in spite of what he sees as its sweetness, sentimental, and/or romantic tendencies (in a broad way), and in spite of the fact that he holds the book up as a whipping boy. Perhaps Van Doren partially tolerates *Friendship Village* because it is beautifully crafted, and he says so in this article, but also because *Miss Lulu Bett,* the novel published twelve years after *Friendship Village*, and its eponymous main character show that irredeemable problems with village values exist and that Bett's wanting to leave Warbleton at any cost partially redeems *Friendship Village* and what he sees as poisonous even if whitewashed values.

In *Miss Lulu Bett* Zona Gale explores how difference is punished in the parallel village of Warbleton, which, as Van Doren points out,

can be seen as a continuation of the turn-of-the-century Midwestern village that Zona Gale creates first in *Friendship Village*. In Zona Gale's creation of Lulu Bett and in her interrogation of the way she is treated by family and community because she is single and thus unprotected by a marriage/ a man, Van Doren, perhaps, gives himself permission to read between the lines of the earlier novel, finding in these chapters the DNA of critique, if not critique itself, and thus *Friendship Village* is marginally redeemed for him—the "revolt from" is coming just a bit later in the form of *Miss Lulu Bett*. But Van Doren misreads *Friendship Village* values—these characters are more complex than he thinks—so he is right in liking these chapters, but he isn't reading them accurately or well.

In *Still Small Voice: The Biography of Zona Gale*, August Derleth disagrees with the honesty and value of *Friendship Village*. He also admires *Friendship Village*, but with a caveat—it is well written but sentimental. Derleth is using the same language as Van Doren. It seems he has read Van Doren and been swayed: *Miss Lulu Bett* is a better novel because it is less sentimental. Derleth writes in his biography of Gale that "[s]he began to see for the first time the mosaic of life as it had been lived all around her for decades. Yet the ties of her bondage to Romance and Beauty were strong, her dislike of anything unpleasant, of cruelty, suffering, brutality, coarseness, sex, violence—all these were strong still, and when she wrote of these commonplace people, she did so with care that nothing of the unpleasant should appear in her stories. In this experience was born *Friendship Village*. . ." (*Still* 70-71).

But *Friendship Village* is not sanitized as Derleth suggests, and although he suggests that Zona Gale is caught in romanticism and squeamishness, I see no squeamishness here and no romantic portrayal of plot or character. Rather, Zona Gale critiques Friendship Village values through humor and irony, demonstrating and exploring the ramifications of class and the inappropriate use of power and ostracizing behavior. "The Side Door" offers the reader an excellent example of a mocking tone where inhabitants are racist ("the little blacks") and pretentious (pre-cleaning the carpets by night so that when they are officially cleaned and hung on the lines the next day, they will appear to the neighbors to have contained less dust than they actually did) (4).

Friendship Village has problems, and they are acknowledged. Many of its inhabitants are hegemonic, exclusive, narrow, and judg-

mental. It is no haven/heaven, and Zona Gale doesn't apologize for the village or simply make its values cute, funny, and benign. If her chapters do not instigate a revolt—she is writing to sell books in a conservative marketplace—just as Harriet Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is conscious of audience, the novel still recommends much room for improvement in this particular village. The chapters of *Friendship Village*, when read carefully, surely suggest that there is room in Friendship Village for better, kinder behavior and values. Zona Gale may posit in this novel that a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down, but she never pretends that sugar is meat or drink.

Other critics agree that *Friendship Village* is neither sentimental nor romantic and is unfairly treated by Van Doren in a "straw man argument." Derleth's equally incorrect position demonstrates that a reassessment was overdue, and that reassessment came with the second wave of feminism. In 1962 Henry James Forman wrote "Zona Gale: A Touch of Greatness," in which he ambivalently apologizes for Calliope Marsh's concern over her neighbors' having what they needed. Forman chuckles over God being neighborless, repeating William Allen White's critique of the novel as creating a village that had "no evil, no vice, no 'bad guys' and no 'shady women'" (32-33). In "The Big Wind," chapter seven of *Friendship Village*, a village leader considers not sheltering orphans because that is not what a "non-church," a not yet fully built and "dedicated" church, should be used for (79-107). However, this chapter is still not one of the chapters that registers with critics such as Forman or White as being neither romantic nor particularly sentimental.

In 1973, at the beginning of the second wave of feminism, *Friendship Village* began to get a different type of reading. Diane Dufva Quantic began her critical re-evaluation of this novel, arguing that in spite of the "bucolic" title that Zona Gale gives this novel, it "reveals some of the dissatisfaction with the village" and that this dissatisfaction appears with increasing regularity in later works (13). In 2001, Deborah Lindsay Williams explored "The Cosmopolitan Regionalism of Zona Gale's *Friendship Village*," also arguing that Gale, through these stories, is exploring egalitarianism and uses the small town as "her lab," thus owning Friendship Village's need for improvement (46). In 2003, Catherine Kalish argued in "Nobody Sick, Nobody Poor: Zone Gale's Construction of a Feminist Utopia" that Gale "presents her contemporary readers

with a mode for exercising authority via community by singing the conventions of feminist utopia" (25). In 2008, Michelle Ann Abate argued that the novel expands the scope of feminist fabulation and broadens the boundaries of speculative fiction, forming a powerful union of activism and art (5).

Abate also writes about how Gale defamiliarizes our concept of Thanksgiving and who deserves to have a celebration. She reads the two Thanksgiving chapters as radical rewritings of the status of old maids, widows, and spinsters in the fictional world of *Friendship Village* and, by extension, early twentieth-century America: "The Thanksgiving dinner shows the narrative's unmarried women that they need not adhere to the negative stereotypes about single women, from the image of the selfless maiden aunt to the equally disparaging portrait of the lonely, isolated eccentric. Instead, these women can band together to create their own self-contained community, and, hence, their own meaningful existence" (5).

Carl Van Doren misses this radical rethinking of life within the village as being sometimes lonely, sometimes funny, sometimes grotesque, sometimes acerbic, sometimes cruel, a place where outsiders wander in and insiders are betrayed and sometimes wander out, where characters sometimes transform themselves with the help of others, sometimes leaving because of this transformation, and sometimes staying because of it as well, a place where revolution can happen within its borders through a change of mind; or revolution can happen outside of its borders through a change of place.

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MOON-CALF: THE REVOLT NOVEL THAT WASN'T

Marcia Noe and Tyler Preston

Carl Van Doren must have been disappointed when he read Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf* (1920). His essay, "The Revolt from the Village: 1920," salutes a new kind of American novel, one in rebellion against "the cult of the village" (407). Van Doren asserts that for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American writers had lauded the village as the home of virtuous, friendly, hard-working Americans and enshrined this notion in their books. Now, thanks to Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920), the literary tide had turned, washing the myth of the American village out to sea.

Van Doren found that, in addition to Masters, Anderson, and Lewis, a number of other authors had published books in 1920 or thereabouts, constituting a literary movement that he termed the Revolt from the Village. But Dell's novel was different, and this difference posed a problem for him. Dell's protagonist, Felix Fay, is not revolting from the village and does not resent Port Royal (Davenport, Iowa). At the end of the book, when he leaves for Chicago, he still looks fondly at Port Royal. He isn't leaving the town in an act of revolt; he's just growing up.

Although not a megahit like *Main Street, Moon-Calf*, the first and most successful of Dell's novels, went through eleven printings, sold 38,500 copies, and garnered admiring reviews. "That novel was based on a selection of memories, with a very few bits of innovation to piece it out," Dell reflected in his autobiography, *Homecoming* (ix). Of this fictional account of the five happy years Dell spent in Davenport, Heywood Broun wrote, "Drop whatever you are doing and read Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf*. Yes, *Main Street* can wait . . . We'll

say it's some novel" (qtd. in Tanselle 266). Harry Hansen asserted that with *Moon-Calf*, Dell had moved into the front rank of American novelists, and Upton Sinclair proclaimed Dell to be not only the best reviewer in America, but also one of the best novelists. Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser admired the book, and even curmudgeonly H. L. Mencken liked it. (Tanselle 266-70).

Van Doren, therefore, needed to include *Moon-Calf* in his Revolt-from-the-Village essay; he could not ignore it as an inconsequential outlier. To his credit, he did not do so, nor did he try to make it fit into a procrustean bed of revolt theory. Although he got the setting somewhat wrong, writing that the novel takes place in river towns in Illinois without mentioning that the larger and more significant section is set in Port Royal, there was much that he got right. One hundred years later, Van Doren's positive take on *Moon-Calf* holds up, yet there is much to appreciate about the novel that he did not discuss.

Van Doren praises *Moon-Calf* as a bildungsroman: "Felix Fay dreams and blunders and suffers, but he goes on growing like a tree, pushing his head up through one level of development after another until he stands above the minor annoyances of his immaturity and looks out over a broader world" (411). Van Doren is certainly right to stress this aspect of the book. The first part of the novel deals with Felix's boyhood in Maple (Barry) and Vickley (Quincy) Illinois, where he learns that he loves books and likes girls. He also learns what poverty is, what socialism is, and what hard, dirty work a factory job is.

The rest of the book takes place in Port Royal, where Felix relocates as a teenager. There Felix the nascent poet is mentored by librarian Helen Raymond (Marilla Freeman) and Felix the baby Socialist by Franz Vogelsang (Frederick "Fritz" Feuchter) and Rabbi Nathan (W. H. Fineshriber). While trying to reconcile his poetic gift with his Socialist activism, Felix gets hired by and fired from two newspapers, edits a Socialist periodical of his own, founds the Monist Society with Tom Alden (George Cram Cook), and falls in love with girl after girl, as well as a married woman or two. He learns how to do practical politics, how to write a compelling newspaper story, how to speak confidently in public, how to choose his own destiny. But, most important, he learns what all young people must learn if they are to function as adults: "Perhaps, in a blundering and painful way, he was learning the uses of the real world . . . Ideals, he realized, were different from realities; and he was living in the real world, and getting along in it very well" (Dell 199, 277). When he decides to move

to Chicago, he reflects that Port Royal had been a good town to grow up in (Dell 394).

Van Doren lauds *Moon-Calf* 's beauty, intelligence, and style, writing that "Felix has a poetic gift sufficient to warm the record with fine verses, and delicate susceptibilities upon which his adventures leave exquisite impressions" (411). Dell was pretty much done with poetry by the time he wrote *Moon-Calf*, although he does include some of his early verses in the novel. However, the poet in him comes through in passages like these: "Felix became aware of the great white moon over the roofs—aware too of the breeze with its odours of cool dampness—aware of the poignant wonder of night . . . Night, the moon, the shadows of the trees, the wind with its strange scents, all the beauty that had tortured him, became his thoughts, became his emotions, became himself" (160, 162). Such passages justify Van Doren's appreciation of Dell's ability to impart his zest for human life and convey "the form and color and movement which he perceives everywhere" (411). "He writes with a candid lucidity which everywhere lets in the light and with a grace which rounds off the edges that mark the pamphlet but not the work of art" (412).

If Van Doren had focused less on style and more on substance, he might also have noted another of the novel's strengths: its portrayal of Port Royal's unique culture, one shaped by free-thinking, music-loving German immigrants who numbered about one-fourth of the town's population and made their distinct mark on it, as Rabbi Nathan points out:

> "Port Royal has a quality of its own. I suppose this is partly due to the pioneers from New England, who brought with them ideals and a respect for learning; but it is more due, I think, to the Germans, who left home because they loved liberty, and brought with them a taste for music, discussion, and good beer. There are so many of the Germans, and they have so much enthusiasm, that they dominate the town. And for some reason they are not as solemn and stodgy as Germans often are—perhaps because of a slight but pervasive Flemish strain. Their robust mirthfulness is extraordinarily like the scenes in Flemish paintings. At all events, their influence has stamped the town with its own flavour. It is true, they have never been able to convert the descendants of New England to gymnastics and choral singing; but they have laid out these magnificent parks, and built our library—which, you may have noticed, is well stocked with free-thought literature. . . ." (ellipses in original, 254)

This libertarian-inflected culture was hospitable to the arts and to leftist politics, endowing Felix with a cosmopolitanism that would serve him well later in life.

Another substantive strength of *Moon-Calf* is its picture of Midwestern Socialism at a time when the movement was gathering enough momentum to give its presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, almost one million votes in 1912. Dell's hilarious account of how sixteen-year-old Felix takes over the pokey Central Branch of Port Royal's Socialist Party, ousts its feckless leadership, and makes it over in his own image is priceless. Describing the group as he found it as "like a small, unpopular, semi-respectable heretical church which continued to exist because it is in the nature of institutions, once started, to keep on existing," Felix gets himself elected to the program committee, as well as to the delegation going to the state convention, and proceeds, supported by a cohort of like-minded members, to turn tedious business meetings into stimulating debates: "The spirit of earnest dullness which had hung so heavy over the little hall was banished, and in its place ruled the willful and capricious impulses of intellectual curiosity, the passions of affirmation and denial, and the utter intoxication of talk" (214, 227). Felix prides himself on his Socialist resistance to the conventions of owning private property, religion, and marriage, and he even considers Socialism to be "'better than just ordinary, every-day happiness'" (328-29). In summarizing his Socialist beliefs, he says, "'I can't put my heart and soul into the effort to own things,'" preferring to embrace the freedom from social convention and confinement (329).

Similarly, the novel is valuable for its exploration of early twentieth-century gendered power dynamics. Felix had come to Socialism and feminism through a wide and rigorous program of reading that included works by Jean Jacques Rousseau, Ernst Haeckel, Victor Hugo, Frank Norris, and Robert Ingersoll; he opines to Tom Alden that "'[p]erhaps the trouble is that we try to think that men and women are opposed categories'" (292). However, reality intervenes when, during his first serious love affair, he naively expects his sweetheart not only to talk the talk but walk the walk. Early in the couple's romance, she tells him the story of her expulsion from college, but the story enthuses Felix more than it does the storyteller, leaving him to wonder, "Were girls never proud of their rebellions?" (313). The couple also determine that their society expects girls not to be human beings but young ladies, an expectation that Felix and

his sweetheart both treat with contempt. Felix insists that he wants "'an enduring love that is free—absolutely free'" and proclaims to his sweetheart that "'I don't see why a girl isn't as much entitled to her fling as a boy'" (293, 314). However, his commitment to free love gives way to jealous surprise in the final chapters of *Moon-Calf* when his sweetheart and soul mate, who initially appears to sympathize with Felix's feminist principles, ultimately rejects him for a more conventional suitor who can offer her marriage, children, and a comfortable middle-class lifestyle.

Van Doren gives Dell his due as a writer; however, he doesn't point out that *Moon-Calf* demonstrates that life in a Midwestern town does not have to be stultifying and soul-destroying but can offer the kind of vibrant mix of leftist politics, free thought, and multicultural ambience that can be formative for an adolescent growing up there; had he done so, he would have undermined his Revolt thesis. He notes that Dell neither sentimentalizes nor ridicules Port Royal, a comment echoed over seventy years later by Dell's biographer, Douglas Clayton, who praised him for capturing "that delicate balance between alienation and affection that had always characterized his feelings for the Midwest" (4). At the end of the novel, Dell tips that balance as he ends on an elegiac note that reflects his affectionate, if not sentimental, feeling for the Midwestern town that played a major role in who he became: "He had been happy in Port Royal; it had given him love, and painful wisdom, and the joy of struggle. He would like to write a poem about it. The town had been built for him, though they who built it had not known. It had been built for young men and girls to be happy in, to adventure in, and to think strange and free and perilous thoughts" (394).

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“STRAIGHT OUT OF THE WILDERNESS”: NATION AND VOICE IN MARY BORDEN’S *THE ROMANTIC WOMAN*

Molly P. Becker

Mary Borden was many things during her life: heiress, missionary, suffragette, war nurse, best-selling author, and center of controversy. She was still relatively unknown in 1921, however, when Carl Van Doren selected *The Romantic Woman* (1916) as one of the novels that made 1920 a landmark year in American literature. Placing Borden alongside Edith Wharton, who would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for *The Age of Innocence* later that year, and Floyd Dell, an influential magazine editor and book reviewer, Van Doren praised *The Romantic Woman* for its satirical portrait of turn-of-the-century Chicago society. “Miss Borden was calculating from London in her interpretation of Chicago as a community unable to take the sophisticated world for granted but still, like some self-conscious adolescent, worrying itself over the management of hands and feet,” he wrote, using London, and its implicitly more sophisticated culture, as a foil for the immature Chicago of Borden’s novel (411).

Van Doren’s characterization of Chicago as a city and society still striving to reach its full maturity reflects the evolution that Joan, the novel’s protagonist and narrator, undergoes throughout the course of the story as she makes her way from Chicago to London. It also, however, suggests the development Borden herself was going through as a new author trying to find her voice. Although Borden has recently been rediscovered as a war writer, she fell out of critical and popular favor in the years after her death, and few modern critics have considered *The Romantic Woman* on its own merits. In suggesting that Mary Borden, in *The Romantic Woman*, has developed “the hard outward manner of the worldling who has passed beyond village

bounds," Van Doren offers a template to analyze Joan, a woman who must come to terms with her Midwestern background in order to find her own authorial voice, as well as a way for today's readers to revisit a novel that has fallen out of critical view in the century since its publication (411).

Mary Borden spent most of her life abroad, and *The Romantic Woman,* published in 1916 in London and 1920 in the US, reflects her international background, following Joan Fairfax from the United States to India and to the United Kingdom. The novel—a bildungsroman in the guise of a murder mystery whose mystery is not the identity of the murderer, but of the victim—opens at a dinner party in London, which, we are quickly told, will end in tragedy. From here, the novel jumps back in time to Joan's childhood, as Joan recounts the events that led up to the dinner party from the perspective of two years later, in the early days of World War I. Borden, who was herself writing Joan's story in 1915 during the war, had already lived outside of her native city for over a decade. She left the United States to travel the world after graduating from Vassar College in 1907, and she had left Chicago even earlier than that, attending both boarding school and college in New York.

Despite this years-long absence, Gertrude Stein, whom Borden met during her time in Paris during World War I, recalls in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* that "Mary Borden was very Chicago" (210). Stein leaves it to her readers to decide what "very Chicago" might mean, but she goes on to add that the true mark of a Chicagoan is someone trying to shed that identity. Chicagoans "spend so much energy losing Chicago that it is often difficult to know what they are," Stein says. "They have to lose the Chicago voice and to do so they do many things" (210). In Borden's case, "the Chicago voice" suggests not only her Chicago dialect and accent, but also her authorial voice, and the influence of regional and national identity in shaping it. "Mary Borden was very Chicago," Stein repeats, emphasizing Borden's status as a Chicagoan despite—or perhaps because of—her effort to redefine herself (210).

Borden's Chicago emerges as a central figure in the novel at the opening of the second chapter, as the narrative leaps back in time from the fateful dinner party:

> If you can imagine the whole of industrial Manchester, a large slice of the Riviera, most of the East End of London, with half a dozen

> Polish, Hungarian, and Italian towns thrown into one, and all spread upon a brand new prairie by the side of a lake as big as a sea, you will have an idea of Iroquois, a place of gigantic incongruities and pretensions! And Iroquois is American as no other city in the United States is American. New York is New York, but Iroquois is American; it is gigantic, it is provincial; it has sprouted like a mushroom out of the inexhaustible riches of the prairie; it is more or less exactly in the geographical centre of the United States. (19)

This version of Chicago is a mix of places and cultures, absorbing elements of European locations and transposing them onto a distinctly American environment to create a city that, as Van Doren points out, is still figuring out how to manage the "clumsiness" of all of its parts.

Borden's portrait is unflinchingly critical. If, as Van Doren claims, Borden is surveying "with liking" Chicagoans' "capacity for sainthood," then it is not the overwrought, performative worship at Ebenezer Sprott Church, where Joan's mother is a loyal attendee, that is producing the saints (411). The "easy intercourse of different classes" that Van Doren cites might be strictly true, but it was still possible for Chicago society to shut a person out quickly and effectively for any perceived violation of the social and moral code; even as children, for example, Joan and her friends knew instinctively that while the public school students might come from good families, they were not "gentlemen" (411). And far from taking "ingenuous delight" in their new opera house, the Chicago society in *The Romantic Woman* is almost universally bored by this prescribed cultural undertaking, and all look the other way as the men escape to the nearby Club as soon as the lights go down (411).

Chicago is also a city that, in being "American as no other city in the United States is American," lacks its own distinct identity, something Borden reflects in the name she gives it (19). In a review published soon after the novel's publication in the United States, the writer wondered: "Why, in 'The Romantic Woman,' does Mary Borden call Chicago Iroquois? She has no euphemism for New York or London" ("Books" 11). This discrepancy does not seem to bother Van Doren: Chicago and Borden's portrayal of it form the crux of his discussion of the novel, but he does not attach much significance to her decision to cloak Chicago's identity in a pseudonym. After a first reference, when he praises Borden's "cosmopolitan amusement at the village of Iroquois, otherwise Chicago," he never uses the novel's

name for the city again (411). Yet it is through Chicago's thinly veiled identity—cloaked by a name that, in suggesting the Native history of the United States, puts American cultural inheritance into contrast with European cultural inheritance—that Borden is most sympathetic to her native city as a place with an identity not quite yet fixed, something that Joan faces in this novel and Borden faced during her early days as an aspiring author.

Joan is Borden's substitute in *The Romantic Woman*, which, like much of Borden's literary output, draws heavily on autobiographical material. Both Borden and Joan grew up the daughters of wealthy fathers in mansions on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago; like Joan, Borden began her relationship with her first husband, Douglas Turner, while in India and eventually moved with him to London. A relationship—part patronage, part affair—that Joan carries out with a poet late in the novel has shades of Borden's own affair with writer and painter Wyndham Lewis.

But if some of the novel's events occasionally feel unrealistic, they are somehow less sensational than the events of Borden's real life. Joan's life in London is a quiet, lonely one as she struggles to find her place among the British; Borden was known in London for her lavish parties, which brought her into London literary society and into the company of writers and artists such as E. M. Forster, Ezra Pound, and Lewis. Joan's marriage to Binky, whom she meets while in India, sours, but she never leaves him, and they end the novel in a friendly, if passionless, marriage; Borden divorced her first husband for Edward Louis Spears, a British army captain whom she met in France while running a field hospital during World War I (*Journey down a Blind Alley* 8-9). While Joan is a middle-aged housewife during the war, only peripherally involved in the conflict through her husband's participation, Borden played a significant role in the war effort, using her own money to establish field hospitals in France and serving as a frontline nurse herself (*Journey down a Blind Alley* 6-9).

Perhaps because of this autobiographical material or maybe a lack of confidence in herself as a writer in the early days of her career, Borden did not publish her first novels under her own name, choosing instead to hide her identity with a pen name, Bridget Maclagan. Joan, too, slips between identities according to the social and cultural environments in which she finds herself. In the British community in India, Joan is "Miss Fairfax," a title that defines her in relation to her wealthy father and reflects her standing with

Binky's British family and circle of friends, to whom Joan is nothing more than an American heiress whose value can be measured solely by how much money she can inject into the impoverished family. Binky calls her "Kiddie," an overt reference to the immaturity and naïveté Joan herself acknowledges is one of her defining characteristics during their courtship. After her marriage she is "Mrs. Dawkins," a woman who feels she cannot even interact with her children as she wishes for fear of disapproval, and late in the novel she becomes a duchess when Binky inherits his uncle's dukedom, a title she does not want or value and that effectively takes away her choice in regard to her relationship with her husband when she realizes her children must always remain in England.

But while Joan, coming into British society unformed, is constantly buffeted by the cultural differences between her native country and her adopted one, making her feel a stranger in London, she is also not portrayed as fully and comfortably American. In yet another discrepancy between real life and fiction, it was Borden's mother, a devout Christian, who encouraged her daughter to go abroad as a missionary after her father's death, but in the novel it is Joan's mother who dies during her childhood, and her father who takes her abroad as his companion.

Although this parental swapping seems relatively insignificant, the lack of a maternal influence is both unusual and disorienting among the American women. "Doubtless you think Louise an uninteresting person; perhaps she is, as a character, but not as a social product, as the sort of thing America with its American mothers turns out; for whatever she is, her mother made her," Joan says about her childhood friend Louise, whose mother exerted iron-fisted control over Louise as she grew up (93). As an adult, Louise, devoid of personality or intellect, is a direct product of her mother's upbringing. Phyllis, the third member of their childhood triumvirate, is, likewise, a reaction to her mother, with her desperate need to be coveted by all who meet her a direct result of her own mother's discontent with their financial and social situation throughout her childhood. Meanwhile, Joan, motherless from a young age, is left on her own to figure out what kind of "social product" she will become.

It is her father, a self-made millionaire and "the only gentleman" in Iroquois, who eventually becomes Joan's model (45). Joan, given the childhood nickname "Johnny" after her father, is aware, even from a young age, that John J. Fairfax is not a product of Iroquois

society, but an exception to it. "Where did he get it, his grand simplicity," Joan wondered. "How did he come to exist in Iroquois?" (48). Unlike Joan, her father remains unchanged against the background of different cultures; he stands out as a gentleman among Binky's aristocratic family in London as easily as he stands apart from and above the denizens of Iroquois. "[W]hat he was, he was by virtue of himself," Joan realizes as she reflects on her father later in her life. "Even had he raked up the bits of his family tree and discovered it to be rooted in illustrious soil, that would not have explained. The American climate can obliterate type in a wink of time—time I mean as the evolution of races is measured. What he had learned, he had learned with great effort" (48).

It is not until the climactic dinner party that Joan, surveying the collection of Brits and Americans gathered around her table, suddenly understands how this quality allows her father to stand apart. Having been given up by her American countrymen but not taken on by British society, Joan perceives that she "existed nowhere, and belonged to nobody," and in this nationless state she is able to see the people around her clearly for the first time, unobscured by questions of cultural inheritance, class, or background (12). "How was I to know, coming straight out of the wilderness, that when Binky talked so easily and gaily of great men and great treasures, men and things we regard with awe on the other side of the Atlantic, that his polish was . . . just the result of rolling about in a world of treasures, and of rubbing up against a rich background?" Joan wonders, finally freeing herself of the burden of cultural inheritance under which she had earlier sagged (11).

This realization gives Joan her authorial voice and the ability to understand everything "sufficiently to attempt to write about it," which she does to give herself "something to do" during the quiet days during the war (15). The war itself does not seem to have much of an impact on Joan's life—in fact, she is "ashamed of being in debt to the greatest horror of all time for my own peace of mind" (16). For Borden herself, however, her experience during the war seems to have brought with it a new certainty about herself as a writer. After publishing her first three novels under a pseudonym, she published *The Romantic Woman* in the United States as Mary Borden, the first use of the authorial name that she would maintain for the rest of her prolific career. She never republished the first two novels under her own name and for many years refused to discuss them, thus marking

The Romantic Woman, the first novel she believed was mature and polished enough to bear her name, as the start of her career. And it is the war, once again, that has unlocked Borden's voice for today's reader. In recent decades she has been remembered as the author of *The Forbidden Zone* (1929), a collection of sketches that emerged from her time as a nurse during World War I and that has revived scholarly interest in her as a war writer.

Although Van Doren notes the "liking" with which Borden surveys "the simple virtues which are found in Chicago more frequently than in the circles of the world into which her heroine marries," he concludes that it is her position as an outsider to Chicago culture that makes her work so striking: "Still, she looks at Chicago from the post of a secure outsider, sometimes vexed, sometimes smiling, sometimes ready with approbation, but always critical" (411). *The Romantic Woman,* with its description of a woman coming to terms with her own history, is the story of how Borden "passed beyond the village bounds" (411). She has passed as well beyond the disillusionment, re-evaluation, and heartache that come from realizing that she no longer belongs in the place she came from. The novel is also, however, a depiction of a woman who has come to terms with this background and acknowledged its impact, for good or for bad, on her personal and artistic identity. As Joan says: "I was born in the city of Iroquois. That explains a lot" (17).

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“A GESTURE OF . . . [VILLAGE] REVOLT”: F. SCOTT FITZGERALD’S *THIS SIDE OF PARADISE* AND “THE REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE: 1920”

DEBORAH DAVIS SCHLACKS

In his influential 1921 article in the *Nation,* “The Revolt from the Village: 1920,” Carl Van Doren lambasts “the cult of the village” that he says held sway in American literature for years until 1915. This cult idealizes the village, with authors digging into “odd corners of the country for persons and incidents illustrative of the essential goodness and heroism which, so the doctrine ran, lie beneath unexciting surfaces” (407).[1] The village in such works is described as

> neat, compact, organized, traditional; the white church with tapering spire, the sober schoolhouse, the smithy of the ringing anvil, the corner grocery, the venerable parson, the wise physician, the canny squire, the grasping landlord softened or outwitted in the end, the village belle, gossip, atheist, idiot, jovial fathers, gentle mothers, merry children, cool parlors, shining kitchens, spacious barns, lavish gardens, fragrant summer dawns, and comfortable winter evenings. (407)

Wisconsinite Zona Gale’s early novels are among Van Doren’s examples of village cult works, with Gale having invented in these works “Friendship Village, one of the sweetest of all the villages…Friendship lay ostensibly in the Middle West, but it actually stood…upon the confectionary shelf of the fiction shop…” (410). This cult, says Van Doren, has persisted even as “the industrial revolution went on planting ugly factories alongside the prettiest brooks, bringing in droves of aliens who used unfamiliar tongues and customs, and fouling the atmosphere with smoke and gasoline” (407). Indeed, Van Doren suggests, perhaps these changes have made village cult authors all the more intent upon preserving an idealized past.

Van Doren favors what he deems a more recent Midwestern literary movement: the Revolt from the Village. He knows that some older works, such as E. W. Howe's *The Story of a Country Town* (1883) and Mark Twain's "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899), critique small-town life but proclaims them exceptions. But since 1915, with the publication of Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, work after work has appeared in which villages are "stagnant backwaters of dusty centers of futility, where existence went round and round while elsewhere the broad current moved away from them" (407). As Jon K. Lauck explains, Van Doren was "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…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. " (45). That is, to speak of "village values" is to speak of "Victorian values."

Besides *Spoon River Anthology*, the two other seminal village revolt works are, for Van Doren, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920). It is easy to see why. Masters's epigraphic poems reveal grim, stagnant lives of past Spoon River citizens. Anderson depicts complacent small-town grotesques viewed by a young man who leaves for a bigger canvas in the end. Lewis skewers small-town Midwestern society, having a newcomer react with scorn and thwarted reform efforts to the stultifying conformity and dearth of culture there. These works have everything needed to conform clearly to the village revolt rubric: settings in physical villages and criticism of them.

One of Van Doren's choices as a village revolt work has surprised many: F. Scott Fitzgerald's debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*. Thus, Fitzgerald critics and village revolt critics alike have usually simply ignored Van Doren's inclusion of this novel. In the few cases where *This Side of Paradise* and the village revolt are mentioned in the same breath, it is typically only to stress that they should not be. For example, Lauck states that *This Side of Paradise* is "the most questionable of Van Doren's choices" because the novel "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 …[and] "does little to indict the rural and small-town Midwest" (61). He recommends discarding the novel from Van Doren's classifica-

tion.[2] Or, as Edmund Wilson says of Fitzgerald, "Fitzgerald is as much of the middle west of large cities and country clubs as [Sinclair] Lewis is of the middle west of the prairies and little towns" (22).

However, Van Doren does not specify that a physical village setting is necessary for a work to be a village revolt work. After all, he includes on his list not only *This Side of Paradise* but also Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, set in what Van Doren calls "the village of Manhattan" (411), and Mary Borden's *The Romantic Woman*, set in what he calls "the village of Iroquois, otherwise Chicago" (411). John T. Flanagan has stated that the Revolt from the Village "has since [Van Doren] been metamorphosed into a rebellion against complacency, provincialism, and exploitation in both rural and urban environments" (18), but, in fact, Van Doren thought so from the outset. Being on Van Doren's list required criticism of village values gleaned from the Victorian past, values that have, in his view, produced complacency, conformity, a sense of futility, and so on, sometimes buried under an idyllic surface. So Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* cannot be denied membership on the basis of a (supposed) lack of village setting.

Nor can it be denied membership based on Fitzgerald's identity as a modernist, though some (including, most likely, Fitzgerald himself) would say it should.[3] For John N. Duvall, for instance, Fitzgerald fits squarely "in the club of international modernism. No one would call [T. S.] Eliot (born in St. Louis, Missouri) a Midwestern writer. Nor, for that matter, would Midwestern literature typically claim Hemingway or Fitzgerald" (242). To this way of thinking, to term someone a "New England writer" or a "Midwestern writer" or a "Southern writer" is to suggest that the writer focuses on the rural or small-town folks of the region, and it is also to suggest that the writer is certainly not also a modernist.

However, regionalism and modernism are *not* mutually exclusive. For instance, Robert L. Dorman, in *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regional Movement in America, 1920-1945*, views regionalism as part of modernism. And Van Doren's interests are aligned in many ways with modernism, as evidenced by Ryan Poll's comment that the Revolt movement is "an unfinished literary and critical modernist project" (40). Regarding Fitzgerald specifically, the point of convergence between the two movements is suggested in the remarks of two critics who intended to make the opposite point: James H.

Shideler speaks of how Fitzgerald's mostly urban characters reflect "an onrushing modernism," which Shideler says is linked to the transformation "from a rural-agrarian country to an urban technological nation." Meanwhile, Duvall remarks that Fitzgerald is a modernist in that he is responding in his works to T. S. Eliot's "diagnosis of the spiritual wasteland of modernity, a world in which all institutions have failed" (242). For Fitzgerald, in the wake of the change from agrarian to urban, one of those failed institutions is the village and all it has represented.

It is usually easier to see that *This Side of Paradise* is about revolt than it is to see that it is about the village. Indeed, Van Doren stresses revolt more than village in discussing the novel. He states that in it, Fitzgerald has "broken with the village. He wrote of his gilded boys and girls as if average decorum existed only to be shocked." But, Van Doren continues,

> It is the brains in the book, however, not the scandal, which finally count. His restless generation sparkles with inquiry and challenge. When its elders have let the world fall into chaos, why, youth questions, should it trust their counsels any longer? Mirth and wine and love are more pleasant than that hollow wisdom, and they may be quite as solid. "This Side of Paradise" comes to no conclusion; it ends in weariness and smoke, though at last Amory believes he has found himself in the midst of a wilderness of uncertainties. (412)

Van Doren further states: "The traditions which once might have governed them no longer hold. They break the patterns one by one and follow their wild desires. And as they play among the ruins of the old, they reason subtly about the new, laughing" (412). In short, *This Side of Paradise* includes two overlapping kinds of revolt: revolt that manifests as shocking, scandalous acts, and revolt that manifests as the questioning of village/Victorian values and institutions.

In the realm of the shocking and scandalous (shocking and scandalous by period standards, that is), protagonist Amory Blaine kisses well-bred girls, and these well-bred girls kiss back. "None of the Victorian mothers—and most of the mothers were Victorian—had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed," the narrator tells us (61). Later, Eleanor Savage (whom Amory meets in a very unconventional haystack in rural Maryland) proclaims her disbelief in God and jumps off her horse at the last possible second as she deliberately heads for a cliff, allowing her poor, doomed horse

to plunge over. Assignations in hotel rooms and drunken sprees resulting in danger or death take place.

Fitzgerald's characters also challenge old standards and customs. Amory's Princeton classmate Burne Holiday tries to abolish Princeton eating clubs and becomes a pacifist as World War I looms. Amory himself comes to question all institutions, flirting with socialism. Indeed, for Van Doren, the shocking behavior is of a piece with the questioning: with war nearing and then again post war, these young people feel let down by what their society has told them about life, so why not eat, drink, and be merry? Why not try to find something brand new to try to believe in? In 1922, Wilson was to join Van Doren in using the word "revolt" to describe *This Side of Paradise,* calling the novel "a gesture of indefinite revolt" (22). In contrast to Wilson, who sees the revolt in the novel as unclearly motivated and unclearly targeted, Van Doren sees a revolt with a definite target: village/Victorian values.

As mentioned, Van Doren states that Fitzgerald has "broken with the village," that his characters "play among the ruins of the old," as if Fitzgerald's characters have nothing at all to do with village values except to have discarded them. Not so: if Van Doren is mistaken at all about the relationship of *This Side of Paradise* to the village revolt movement, his error lies in overemphasizing the revolt part of it. Indeed, Amory Blaine embraces elements of the new modern world but also continues to embrace old ways. Thus, throughout the novel are shards of the shattered village ethos, popping up here and there, yet still with a mighty effect. Van Doren's comment that Fitzgerald's characters "play among the ruins of the old" pertains as well to the method Fitzgerald uses in presenting a shattered village ethos, for Fitzgerald often seems to be playing with the notion of the idealized village in fragmented modernist fashion.

One way Fitzgerald evokes a village presence is by having Amory live initially in two different Midwestern locales: Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, Amory's birthplace and residence during his first thirteen years; and Minneapolis, where he spends the two subsequent years. With a population just over 3,000 in 1910, Lake Geneva is a Midwestern village only in location and size ("Population of Lake Geneva, WI"). Otherwise, Lake Geneva is no Friendship Village. As James L. W. West and Lynn Setzer explain, Lake Geneva was "developed as a year-round resort for the wealthy during the 1840s and would have been in its heyday during Amory's youth" (316). Further, David W. Ullrich points out that Lake Geneva was "populated by 'the

great feudal families' of Chicago, flush with extraordinary amounts of Gilded Age money and eager to show it…Lake Geneva, Wisconsin …is associated with the most rarified and affluent of Chicago's upper class…" (48). Certainly, such a rich enclave of erstwhile city dwellers seems far from the image of a more humble small town familiar in the works of village cultists and more unassailable village revolt authors, such as Masters, Anderson, and Lewis. Yet Fitzgerald offers a critique similar to that offered by these authors.

Masters's small-town dwellers, for instance, have had "buried lives"; no one really knows the truth of each other's life. Something similar is conveyed in Fitzgerald's treatment of Lake Geneva, for the town remains murky and blurred to readers, suggesting that it is the same way for residents. That is, the town is referred to, but the town itself is never described, and no residents except the three Blaines and some briefly-referred-to servants ever appear in the narrative. That Lake Geneva remains a mystery can be explained in part by its identity as a resort town. Those with wealthy estates do not normally live there all the time; these are their second homes (or perhaps their third or fourth?). In such circumstances, neighbors may well not know each other. Readers know little of the town because the wealthy denizens know so little of it themselves.

And the Blaines appear to be particularly isolated. It would be usual for a wealthy family with an estate in such a community to claim a city such as, in this case, Chicago as their primary residence and have the resort be the place they got away to. However, "The Blaines were attached to no city. They were the Blaines-of-Lake-Geneva; they had quite enough relatives to serve in the place of friends, and an enviable standing from Pasadena to Cape Cod" (13). To be the "Blaines-of-Lake-Geneva" is to admit to a thoroughly nomadic existence. Their wealthy neighbors there would typically come and go, back and forth from their primary residences in Chicago. But the Blaines have only their resort residence, and it works for them because they, too, come and go, but in their case, they (at least Amory and Beatrice) go from coast to coast, from wealthy watering hole to wealthy watering hole. Amory is privately tutored up to age thirteen, his mother often his only companion, so he knows no peers.

Among the missing in Fitzgerald's account of Amory's Lake Geneva are the others besides the wealthy who undoubtedly live there: namely, those who provide services for the wealthy. Only those who serve the Blaines are mentioned, and then only in terms of their ser-

vice to Amory and Beatrice: Clothilde, who brings Amory his breakfast, and the two maids, nurse, and physician who travel with the pair.

A few years later, in "Winter Dreams," Fitzgerald does write from this other point of view, and the contrast between depictions illuminates our understanding of the novel. In "Winter Dreams," Dexter Green and his family live in Black Bear Village, Minnesota (based on real-life White Bear Lake), described as one of those "country towns" that are "used as foot-stools by fashionable lakes" (53). Dexter's father owns a grocery store, and Dexter caddies at the resort golf course. In other words, the village provides the workforce and supplies that allow the abutting resort to be a playground for the wealthy. Dexter is condescended to and objectified as a caddy, resulting in his quitting the job. Much later, as a prosperous adult living in a nearby city, he is so ashamed of being from Black Bear Village that he tells people his hometown is a town farther away that they will know less about. The image of the rich with the proverbial boot on the neck of the poor emerges in the image of the "foot-stool." But in *This Side of Paradise*, the point of view of a Dexter Green is not there—until nearly the end of the novel, as we shall see.[4]

The values of such a sumptuous social setting as Lake Geneva are implicitly critiqued by Fitzgerald in the over-the-top depiction of Amory's flamboyant hypochondriac of a mother and in the effects of Amory's early pampered existence: turning him into a teenaged snob who speaks affectedly. In short, this is no idealized village, and the problems with it are both alike (people are isolated and unknown) and different (the rich nurture a belief in their superiority) from those that authors such as Masters, Lewis, and Anderson portray. In particular, the belief in the superiority of the aristocracy that he learned there continues to influence Amory.

Amory is next associated with another Midwestern place: Minneapolis (standing in for Fitzgerald's hometown of St. Paul). At thirteen, Amory is sent to live with his aunt and uncle in Minneapolis to recuperate from an appendectomy. Minneapolis is presented as in some ways an idealized village. There are lovely pastoral descriptions of "frosted glass along the lamp-lit street," of a sky that is "half-crystalline, half-misty," of a night that is "chill and vibrant," of a "white holiday moon" (20). Amory becomes involved with pursuits often glorified for young boys such as football and school and outings with peers.

Amory is also "brought down a peg or two," to salutary effect, in the humbler Minneapolis when, shortly after he arrives in town, he

tries to act posh, Lake Geneva style, by arriving fashionably late at Myra St. Claire's bobbing party. He is greeted by a butler who, we are informed is "one of three in Minneapolis," a butler whose "failure to be cockney was ruining his standing" in the eyes of the British-aping Amory (17). The butler tells Amory that the party departed without him when he was not on time. He will not try that again, and Amory ultimately feels that his years in Minneapolis dull the influence of Beatrice (and with her the social circle exemplified by Lake Geneva), knocking some of the assumptions of aristocratic superiority out of him.

Yet Minneapolis is really no idealized village either. It is not even a village, being a city of around 300,000 in 1910 ("Population of Minneapolis, MN"). Also, the part of Minneapolis in which this section of the novel takes place is a rarified one by Minneapolis standards, as indicated by Myra St. Claire's family having a butler and by the country club setting of a major scene. So in these respects, it does not compare to more humble villages. However, like more humble towns, Minneapolis, too, is a study in conventionality. Here Amory reads books that, as Kirk Curnutt has pointed out, are "Victorian expositions on children's proper moral education" (85). Here Amory decides he must attend an eastern prep school and then an Ivy League college, simply because everyone else in his social circle in Minneapolis does so. "'I adapted myself to the bourgeoisie. I became conventional,'" he concludes of his experience in Minneapolis (27).

Amory's moral conventionality—his ultimate desire not to depart from village/Victorian sexual mores—shows first in Minneapolis, though it has been prepared for in the narrative of his Lake Geneva days, when Amory has a spotty exposure to Catholicism via his mother. In Minneapolis, when Myra and Amory are in the country club's out-of-the-way den, Amory kisses her cheek and then her lips—shocking behavior at the time. Even the fact that the two are alone there is shocking, for the normal Victorian custom would have been for Amory to call on Myra at her home, under her parents' careful supervision. What they are doing is more like a date, a new courtship practice that, according to Richard M. Clark, constituted "a break with the Victorian past" (39). However, even though Amory has been eager to kiss Myra, when he does so, "sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident. He desired frantically to be away, never to see Myra again, never to kiss …He wanted to creep out of his body and hide somewhere safe out of sight, up in the corner of

his mind" (21). Amory's extreme discomfort in departing from Victorian—a.k.a. village—moral dictates is palpable.

After Minneapolis, Amory spends most of his time in the East. There he finds the village values established for him in the Midwest, now reinforced by his newfound association with Monsignor Darcy, a priest who influences him to consider Catholicism further.[5] Amory does not merely join in on the shocking, scandalous doings of his generation; he is often the one shocked by these revelries himself. For example, during Amory's Princeton years, when the narrator comments on how shocked the Victorian mothers would be at "how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed" (61), the narrator soon adds that "Amory saw girls doing things that even in his memory would have been impossible: eating three-o'clock, after-dance suppers in impossible cafés, talking of every side of life with an air half of earnestness, half of mockery, yet with a furtive excitement that, Amory considered, stood for a real moral let-down" (61). That is, it is Amory who finds the new morality shocking, even as he is partner to it.

Amory's continued link to village values never shows more fully than in the novel's devil episode. At Princeton, Amory admires classmate Dick Humbird as "the perfect type of aristocrat" who seems "the eternal example of what the upper class could be" (78). Dick has courage, honor, charm, and noblesse oblige. People try to be like him. So imagine Amory's shock at learning that Humbird's father is "'a grocery clerk who made a fortune in Tacoma real estate and came to New York ten years ago,'" just as Dexter Green's father will be associated with groceries in "Winter Dreams" (78). Humbird is actually nouveau riche. Amory's disenchantment ("he had felt a curious sinking sensation") upon learning Dick's true background shows how wed Amory is to his old idea of the superiority of the aristocracy (78).

Soon after, drunk after a riotous excursion to New York with a group of Princeton students, Dick is killed in an auto accident. Amory, who was in another car, comes upon the accident scene and sees Dick's body as a "heavy, white mass." Amory reflects that "oh, it was all so horrible and unaristocratic and close to the earth," reminding him of the way animals die (86). Beyond conventionality, beyond aristocracy, death intrudes, the great leveler. For Amory, it is as if Dick has sunk low in two huge steps: first, he is revealed to have been "common," and then, in death, he becomes a mere animal carcass.

Weeks later, again in New York, as Amory and his friend Fred Sloane have dinner with two young women, Axia and Phoebe, Amory

becomes aware of a strange pale man watching him. Later, in the women's apartment, sexual "temptation crept over him," and Amory sees the man again. The man is described as an unearthly figure, with a face that seems made of "yellow wax," as if he were "a strong man who'd worked in a mine or done night shifts in a damp climate"—thus not only unearthly but also "common," as though Amory is revulsed at being near a manual laborer. Amory focuses most on the man's feet, which are "all wrong." The man is wearing a "half moccasin, pointed, though, like the shoes they wore in the fourteenth century and with the little ends curling up" (109).

Terrified, Amory flees into the night and down the street, hearing footsteps, as though being followed. Then, "before his face flashed over the two feet, a face pale and distorted with a sort of infinite evil that twisted it like a flame in the wind; but he knew . . . that it was the face of Dick Humbird" (111). As Clark puts it, in death, Dick transforms from "a model of aristocrat glamour to a symbol for debauchery" (38)—and a symbol of commonness. Amory's reaction is an indication of his allegiance to a belief that evil—the devil—does exist, a belief that was prevalent in the Victorian world but was becoming less common by the day as the postwar world advanced (See Tanner). Equating a manual laborer with evil indicates yet again Amory's allegiance to a belief in the superiority of the aristocracy.

Later in the novel, Fitzgerald illustrates this modern lessening of the notion of evil when Amory and his friend Alec Connage are in Atlantic City. Alec has picked up a prostitute named Jill and has taken her to his hotel room. Amory is in the adjoining room when the house detectives appear at Alec's door. Alec has violated the Mann Act in transporting Jill over state lines for immoral purposes and will presumably be prosecuted, bringing ignominy to him and his family. At this moment, "an aura, gossamer as a moon-beam, tainted as a stale, weak wine, yet a horror" appears in the room, followed by the appearance of a different spirit, "strangely familiar" by the window, a spirit of goodness that Amory realizes later was the spirit of Monsignor Darcy, who, as Amory finds out later, has just died.

Amory feels he is being confronted with good vs. evil, with good being the idea of sacrificing himself to preserve Alec's reputation (228). So Alec and Amory switch places, but Amory is concerned that "the man with the queer feet in Phoebe's room had diminished to the aura over Jill" (242). According to Stephen L. Tanner, "Fitzgerald intended Amory Blaine's struggle with a diminishing

instinct for recognizing evil to represent an important phenomenon of modern America on the eve of the 1920s" (66). That is, the idea of evil, commonplace in the Victorian world, was becoming passé. Conversely, that Amory thinks of evil at all indicates some continued allegiance to Victorian/village values.

As Van Doren points out, this novel's depiction of the continued importance of older values to Amory concerns more than sexual scandal. The questioning of institutions and traditions is also an important part of the picture, and it remains so in the latter part of the novel that is set in the East. Yet even there, the continued pull of village values is felt. Burne does question the eating clubs of Princeton and work toward their abolishment, and he becomes a pacifist, but though Amory comes to admire him for these stances, he does not join in, remaining more conventional during his Princeton years. In addition, Amory is appalled by Eleanor's frank disbelief in immortality, even though he has labeled himself an agnostic previously.

The final episodes of the penultimate chapter and the final chapter of the novel are filled with the tumbling down of the last of Amory's defenses, and only then is he able to break with the village more fully. Amory's family fortune has dwindled away completely by this point, dwindled because his mother gave half the fortune to the Church upon her death and invested the rest in street car companies now facing bankruptcy as a soon-to-be obsolete form of transportation. He has lost the love of his life, Rosalind Connage, because of the lack of fortune. And as a veteran of World War I, he remains disillusioned and traumatized by the war and its aftermath.

Several things happen that seem to mark a line in the sand for him. As mentioned, he decides to sacrifice his reputation by taking the fall for Alec's indiscretion. However, his sacrifice does not work out as he wished: instead of being arrested, Amory merely gets his name printed in an obscure spot in a newspaper. No important sacrifice happens. He also faces New York City, not as a wealthy man this time but as a poor one, and proclaims that he hates the poor. In this, he seems like Dexter Green of "Winter Dreams," whose hatred of his own humble circumstances as a child includes his looking down on poorer townsfolk, as evidenced by the opening line of the story, which gives Dexter's feeling on the matter: "Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses . . . but Dexter Green's father owned the second best grocery in Black Bear. . ."(43).

What seems to work better for Amory, causing him to rethink his narcissistic failure to consider the lived experiences of the economically oppressed, is Monsignor Darcy’s funeral. This event and the final episode of the novel in which Amory discusses socialism point to Amory’s decision to move into new thinking:

> Of Amory’s attempted sacrifice had been born merely the full realization of his disillusion, but of Monsignor’s funeral was born the romantic elf who was to enter the labyrinth with him. He found something that he wanted, had always wanted and always would want—not to be admired, as he had feared; not to be loved, as he had made himself believe; but to be necessary to people, to be indispensable; he remembered the sense of security he had found in Burne … Amory felt an immense desire to give people a sense of security. (246)

Amory will enter the labyrinth that is the modern world of the 1920s, intent upon doing something that involves security for others, not just himself. That he thinks of the radical Burne as he considers this idea indicates that Amory’s choice of avenues is likely to mark a departure from the metaphorical village.

And it does. It has become almost a commonplace of Fitzgerald criticism that Amory’s subsequent conversation about socialism with the big man and the little man is muddled, but that is part of the point: Amory says he has never argued or even thought carefully about socialism before. In view of the downfall of all institutions, he is grasping for something new and different that might work for him and others, most especially those outside his erstwhile social stratum. His ending proclamation about his generation—that they have “grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken”—means the death of village values for that generation (206). His final words—“‘I know myself, but that is all’”—also suggest the same conclusion, for the sense of the importance of individual experience as its own truth is also very modern, as William James made clear (206, see Berman 75). As Van Doren states, the novel “ends in weariness and smoke, though at last Amory believes he has found himself in the midst of a wilderness of uncertainties” (412). This description is on point—as is Van Doren’s having put *This Side of Paradise,* with all its attention to village values and their shortcomings yet continued effects, into the village revolt category in the first place.

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NOTES

[1]All Van Doren quotations are from "Revolt from the Village: 1920."

[2]By 1940, Van Doren no longer considered Fitzgerald a village revolt author. He instead placed Fitzgerald in the "Lively Decade" category (*The American Novel* 322, 326-27), which relegates Fitzgerald to the 1920s only. Regardless, Van Doren's 1940 comments on *This Side of Paradise* remain much the same as in the 1921 article (or in his 1922 book *Contemporary Novelists 1900-1920*, in which, in the village revolt section, he virtually duplicates his 1921 comments on Fitzgerald's novel [172-73]). Van Doren in 1940 also deems *The Great Gatsby* (1925) "a short realistic novel about a romantic bootlegger that remains one of the brilliant books of a brilliant decade" (*The American Novel* 327), missing a chance to see *Gatsby* as concerning James Gatz's and Nick Carraway's revolts from the provincial Midwest. Otherwise, he simply lists Fitzgerald's pre-1925 books and ignores post-1925 works. Later studies of the village revolt not mentioning Fitzgerald include those by Hilfer and Lutz. Among Fitzgerald critics, the movement is also usually ignored or deemed unconnected to Fitzgerald. See Gross for an example. Tangedal and Gatzemeyer are critics who do attend to Fitzgerald's connection to the movement.

[3]Fitzgerald emphasizes in "How to Waste Material—A Note on My Generation" (1926) that he does not want to be aligned with regionalists. See Gatzemeyer for a thorough discussion of Fitzgerald's attitude, which was primarily a reaction to such critics as Van Doren's and Wilson's attempting to assign him to the regionalist camp.

[4]Fitzgerald's depiction here of an upper-class Wisconsin town departs from his usual portrayal of Wisconsin as more traditionally rural and provincial. See Schlacks 28-30.

[5]For discussions of the ways in which Fitzgerald's Catholicism influences the depiction of Amory Blaine, see Allen, Moore, and Tanner.

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PART TWO:

“THE REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE: 1920”: FOUR PERSPECTIVES

WHOSE REVOLT? CARL VAN DOREN AND THE MANUFACTURED REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE

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I didn't revolt against my village.
The best years of my life were spent back there in Illinois.
—Edgar Lee Masters

In the 21 October 1921 issue of the *Nation,* the book editor and native Illinoisan, Carl Van Doren, declared in " The Revolt from the Village: 1920" that "[t]he newest style in American fiction dates from the appearance . . . of 'Spoon River Anthology,'" which offered a "thrill" to "conventional readers," "delight" to "ironical readers," and a "demand that pious fictions should be done away with" by readers more "militant" in their anger at American hypocrisies.[1] In his characterization of Masters as the vanguard of a new "style," Van Doren captured a subtle shift in the perception of small towns generally at the dawn of the 1920s.

Whereas highbrow critics in the few years after the publication of *Spoon River Anthology* perceived the "terrible truthfulness" of an amoral cosmos in the book, or understood it as a pioneer in "new movement" literature, Van Doren characterized Masters and authors like him as rebels against small towns themselves. This represented an important re-conception of the small town in popular discourse as Midwestern rural communities ceased to be characterized as

American microcosms and, increasingly, became battlefields for a short-lived culture war between the modern and the traditional. While critics today reject the simplistic idea of a common "revolt," and even the authors themselves denied Van Doren's terms, the persistent tradition of a literary revolt against rural communities in the 1920s marks its impact in the evolving myth of the American small town.

In Van Doren's characterization, the village rebels were literary muckrakers of retrograde America. "Where . . . were the mild decencies of Tiverton, of Old Chester, of Friendship Village?" he asked ironically, naming idyllic literary villages from earlier in the century. Now, "[t]he roofs and walls . . . were gone and the passersby saw into every bedroom; the closets were open and all the skeletons rattled undenied; brains and breasts had unlocked themselves and set the most private treasures out for the most public gaze."[2] The revolt that began in Spoon River inspired "deliberate imitations." Books like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf* (1920), E.W. Howe's *The Anthology of Another Town* (1920), Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920), and Zona Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett* (1920) capitalized on Masters's poems of small-town pathos and, taken together, represented a wholesale rejection of the idea of the rural village as the repository of simple pieties and unaffected ethics.[3]

Howe and Gale were odd choices for Van Doren's "newest style" since Howe published his first novel of grim Midwestern tales, *The Story of a Country Town* (1883), nearly forty years before. And while Zona Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett* was the story of a young woman who declares her independence from the strictures of her sister's family, Gale was best known for writing in the village idyllic tradition (Van Doren used Gale's *Friendship Village* as an example of this genre in his introduction), and Van Doren noted that Gale's latest work only hinted "in a flutelike way" at what other village rebels "play[ed] upon noisier instruments."[4] Van Doren made his strongest claims for the "new style" of village rebels in his review of the works of Masters, Anderson, Dell, and Lewis, and these four authors have since been canonized as members of a "village revolt," though not without controversy, even among the authors themselves.

According to Van Doren, Masters "drag[ged]…into the light" the "greed and hypocrisy" of a town that "clings to a pitiless decorum which veils its faults and almost makes it overlook them."[5] Indeed, the primary targets of these rebels, at least in Van Doren's terms, were the hidden faults beneath the small town's stable surface.[6] For example,

Van Doren found in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio,* Masters's *Anthology* "transprosed" from verse to prose. And while Anderson threw "a vaguely golden mist over the village" through the story of young George Willard on the cusp of his departure from the town, according to Ronald Weber, the author intended the book to be a series of "grotesques" that exposed the "truths" that people had allowed to define their existence, tragically limiting their embrace of life's uncertainty and development…."[7] Presented in a series of short vignettes about characters on the themes of dislocation and disappointment,[8] Anderson, according to Van Doren, created a world where "there is still the individual who, perhaps all the more because of the rigid decorums forced upon him, may adventure with secret desires. . . . "[9]

For example, in "Mother," Elizabeth Willard lives a desultory life as a proprietor of a shabby hotel and the wife of an indifferent husband, Tom, who hates the money-losing hotel and grows embittered while his youthful visions of political success curdle as younger men pass him by. Elizabeth is sympathetic in her plight and pathetic in her inability to understand its causes. But Elizabeth had been a bon vivant in her youth, fraternizing with out-of-town guests at her father's hotel, wearing bright colors, and once riding a bicycle in men's clothes down Main Street. As a young woman, she sought love with men who came through town, which "beg[an] with kisses and end[ed], after strange wild emotions, with peace and then sobbing repentance."[10]

Anderson portrays Elizabeth's youthful lovers as "bearded," signifying these apparitions as memories of a previous era. In the present, Elizabeth places all her hopes in her languishing son, George, for whom she "'will take any blow that may befall if but this boy be allowed to express something for us both.'" And yet, while she prays that God "'not let him become smart and successful,'" she also sees in him a "'secret something . . . I let be killed in myself.'" Tom Willard, on the other hand, mouths elite opinion and chides his son for his awkwardness and apparent misanthropy. Perceiving himself a success, "although nothing he had ever done had turned out successfully," Tom demands the boy "'wake up.'"[11] Enraged by her husband's treatment of George, Elizabeth retrieves a pair of scissors, which she holds "like a dagger" to threaten her husband: "'I will stab him,'" she said aloud. "'He has chosen to be the voice of evil and I will kill him. When I have killed him something will snap within myself and I will die also. It will be a release for all of us.'"[12] But before she can act, George enters her room and tells her, "'I'm going

to get out of here…I don't know where I shall go or what I shall do but I am going away.'" Elizabeth reacts with rage: "'You think that? You will go to the city and make money, eh? It will be better for you, you think, to be a business man, to be brisk and smart and alive?'" As he leaves, George declares his self-imposed exile, "'I just want to go away and look at people and think.'"[13]

Later in the book, George reaches "sophistication" at the county fair, where "[g]hosts of old things creep into his consciousness":

> A door is open and for the first time he looks out upon the world, seeing, as though they marched in procession before him, the countless figures of men who before his time have come out of nothingness into the world, lived their lives again and disappeared into nothingness…He knows that in spite of all the stout talk of his fellows he must live and die in uncertainty, a thing blown by the winds, a thing destined like corn to wilt in the sun.

Here George embraces freedom in a universe devoid of overarching order. Helen White, the banker's daughter home from college, also dreams of release, "to feel and be conscious of the change in her nature." In this regard, both George's and Helen's revolts are only incidentally against Winesburg. They walk together to the edge of the fairgrounds after the fair has ended where "[o]n all sides are ghosts, not of the dead, but of living people…The silence is almost terrifying…One shudders at the thought of the meaninglessness of life while at the same instant…one loves life so intensely that tears come into the eyes."[14]

After a kiss and a jovial roll down the hill, George and Helen feel like "splendid young things in a young world" where "they had for a moment taken hold of the thing that makes the mature life of men and women in the modern world possible."[15] *Winesburg, Ohio,* in its portrayal of the lives of Elizabeth and Tom and George and Helen, is both less and more than a "revolt." Barry Gross's description of the book as "nostalgic, even elegiac" better captures the spirit of its stories.[16]

Yet in 1919 Anderson's book met receptive reviewers who foreshadowed Van Doren's interpretation. A critic in the *New Republic* characterized the book as a "revolt of youth against custom-morality,"[17] and the *Chicago Tribune* called it "an intensively real and sound record of small-town life."[18] The *Akron Beacon Journal* claimed "the same incidents could be and no doubt do happen in any small town in the country,"[19] though an incredulous review in the

New York Times could not "believe that even a small town could produce such a large percentage of neurotics...."[20] A critic in the *New York Herald* saw in Anderson a pale reflection of Masters: "Write out the *Spoon River Anthology* in long hand, leave out its subtlety and humor, change its simplicity to crudity, replace inspiration with determination, take from it, in other words, all of those intangible qualities which make it great instead of disgusting and you will have Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*....[21] Like Van Doren, this critic claimed Anderson owed a debt to Masters's book.

Other reviewers recognized in Anderson a condemnation of small towns generally and thereby presaged Van Doren's characterization of the small town as the seat of moribund values. Writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, future novelist, Idwal Jones asked, "whence come the [city's] citizens whose [death] is celebrated with the greatest splendor, lamentation, and publicity? From the small town." These exiles left home "[a]t the ominous whisper of instinct...from some cross-roads haunt, some village, or a county seat of such inconsequence that only the patience of the biographer could find the dot on the map." Though sometimes the prick of nostalgia sent these exiles home "on the tide of affluence, or purely at the bidding of a sentimental impulse," they stayed "only for a little while." In Jones's terms, George's departure from Winesburg is more triumphant than elegiac. When Jones visited a town he claimed to be similar to the fictional Winesburg, he found it full of archaic tragic characters, "an old Agamemnon...ran a post office, a gaunt Cassandra...presided at accouchements, and a forlorn Medea...drove a thriving trade...." Warming to his own literary muckraking, Jones found "[u]nderneath the placid crust of its exterior life...all [the] comedies, tragedies, and illicit loves...in 'Spoon River' or Sherwood Anderson's remarkable work...."[22]

Some of the rebels Van Doren identified fit even less comfortably within his designation. Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf* (1920) presented a "revolutionary detachment from village standards," though one "without conventional reproaches and...without conventional heroics."[23] Like Anderson, Dell portrayed a sensitive young man who left a Midwestern town, but Dell's dreamy, bookish Felix Fay is "happiest when he was let alone...making up stories and living them," when he "lost the sense of helplessness and bewilderment that made him so miserable outside."[24] Like Anderson's George Willard, Felix dreams of escape from the rural Midwest. As he left his village he

"saw again in his mind's eye, as he tramped the road, a picture of the map on the wall of the railway station—the map with a picture of iron roads from all over the Middle West centering in a dark blotch in the corner… 'Chicago!' he said to himself. "[25]

However, Dell proved uncomfortable with the characterization of his work as a kind of revolt. Felix, according to Dell, "does not hate the Middle West…In fact…he manages to find in it the things he needs—the friendship, comradeship, love, and human education." For Dell, *Moon-Calf* was a meditation on the plight of dreamers in modern society: "What is society going to do with its moon-calves? …What are the moon-calves going to do with society?"[26] In this regard, Dell rejected the characterization of *Moon-Calf* as the work of a small-town rebel.

Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920) better fit Van Doren's characterization.[27] Lewis began his book with a preface that decentered Main Street from its Midwestern origins and aimed his critique at rural communities generally: "This is America—a town of a few thousand, in a region of wheat and corn and dairies and little groves …[I]ts Main Street is the continuation of Main Streets everywhere. The story would be the same in Ohio or Montana, in Kansas or Kentucky or Illinois, and not very differently would it be told Up York State or in the Carolina Hills…." From this perspective, Lewis reviewed the cultural wasteland of the American village:

> Our railway station is the final aspiration of architecture. Sam Clarke's annual hardware turnover is the envy of four counties which constitute God's country. In the sensitive art of the Rosebud Movie Palace there is a message, and humor is strictly moral.
>
> Such is the comfortable tradition and sure faith. Would he not betray himself an alien cynic who should otherwise portray Main Street, or distress the citizens by speculating whether there may not be other faiths?[28]

According to Ryan Poll, Lewis's preface transformed the Midwestern small town into a "highly mobile form that can be located anywhere," whose significance lies not in its "content" but in its "ideological form."[29] In this regard, *Main Street* lifted the Midwestern town out of any region in particular and reframed it as an ideology, where it represented traditional (or retrograde) values.[30] A cursory reading of Lewis's elevation of the Midwestern town to an archetype could lead a reader to see a similarity to Masters's idea of

the town as a microcosm. But where Masters's epitaphs elided his populist politics, and Anderson's tales aspired to reflect universal human longings, Lewis's preface threw down a gauntlet, and his book followed a different kind of exile: a character from elsewhere who defiantly seeks change as a means to self-actualization.

Main Street follows the young adulthood of Carol Milford, who had grown up in the relatively large town of Mankato, Minnesota, attended college, trained as a librarian, lived for a time in Minneapolis, and now finds herself married to a small-town doctor, Will Kennicott, and living in tiny Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. As a newcomer, Carol is by default an internal exile, and brings an outsider's perspective to the town honed in her youth: "From those early brown and silver days and from her independence of relatives Carol retained a willingness to be different from the brisk efficient book-ignoring people; an instinct to observe and wonder at their bustle even when she was taking part in it.[31] But Carol soon recognizes in Gopher Prairie a canvas too small to paint her dreams of community planning, gleaned from her time at the university. Main Street itself presents a dismal view "with its two-story brick shops, its story-and-a-half wooden residences, its muddy expanse from concrete walk to walk, its huddle of Fords and lumber-wagons, [Main Street] was too small to absorb her…."[32]

Carol exhibits a naïve admiration for the community's common folk, "I wonder if these farmers aren't bigger than we are? So simple and hard-working."[33] At the same time, she disdains Mrs. Lyman Cass's "plutocratic parlor" and struggles against people in the town's cliques who reject her plans for improvement.[34] Significantly, Carol's antipathy toward Gopher Prairie is both aesthetic and progressive. Mrs. Cass's parlor symbolizes both the ponderousness of Victorian class stratification and furniture design.[35] Carol's nostalgia for the simplicity of earlier generations represents a innocent pining for pioneering life, a kind of spectatorship of the past rather than connection to it; she wonders why Gopher Prairie "[c]ouldn't…somehow…turn…back to simplicity," and at the same time progress in its tastes.[36] And while she finds succor with the socialist handyman Miles Bjornstam, the "Red Swede," and takes "her ration of blessed cynicism" with him,[37] her philistine husband chides her new friends in low places: "'See here, my dear, I certainly hope you don't class yourself with a lot of trouble-making labor leaders! Democracy is all right theoretically, and I'll admit

there are industrial injustices, but I'd rather have them than see the world reduced to a dead level of mediocrity.'"[38]

Ultimately, Carol leaves Gopher Prairie to find herself in Washington, DC, though she returns "'thoroughly beaten,'" having nevertheless "'kept the faith.'" She claims she will never admit that "'dish-washing is enough to satisfy all women!'" In an ambivalent conclusion, Kennicott responds, "'Well, good night. Sort of feels to me like it might snow tomorrow. Have to be thinking about the storm-windows soon.'"[39] In Will's tacit dismissal, Carol is encased in her exiled status, even as she accepts her permanent residency.

While Van Doren placed the start of the village revolt with *Spoon River Anthology* in 1915, the popularity of *Main Street*, its vehemence, and its explicit translation of Gopher Prairie to "Main Streets everywhere," helped Van Doren characterize Masters, Dell and Anderson, as well as E. W. Howe and Zona Gale, as part of a general revolt. In this regard, the village rebels were guilty by Van Doren's association. The popularity of Lewis's *Main Street* (it sold nearly 200,000 copies during its first half-year in print) inspired Van Doren to claim that the book brought " to hundreds of thousands the protest against the village which these books [by Masters, Anderson, and Howe] brought to thousands."[40]

The village revolt, therefore, in Van Doren's terms, proved to be a trend, beginning with Masters, rising through Anderson and Dell, and culminating in Lewis, a compelling narrative of a literary revolt's growth that downplayed the differences between the works themselves.[41] Lewis's novels *Babbitt* (1922), about a successful realtor who suffers ennui in the face of American conformity, *Arrowsmith* (1925) about the travails of the son of a small-town doctor who seeks to become a celebrated medical scientist, and *Elmer Gantry* (1926), about an unethical Baptist preacher, established his position as the reigning village rebel of his era.

However, Van Doren was not the only critic to discover signs of a revolt against small towns in 1921.[42] The popular journalist and author, William Allen White, in "The Other Side of Main Street," noticed a similar literary trend that made "the country town . . . the villain."[43] White, as editor of the Emporia *Gazette,* covered the rise of the Populist Party in the late nineteenth century from the center of the movement. Throughout the 1896 campaign, White opposed William Jennings Bryan, published editorials wondering where Bryan acquired the funds for his whistle-stop campaign, and claimed

that the Populist Party was generally "composed of dull men who really believed what [Bryan] told them.…[44] But White was no organ of plutocracy and called for a victory of "altruism" over the forces of "egoism," an embrace of the "centripetal" over the "centrifugal forces of nature," a future where "law and custom" and "the creed of the people" moved "in some small measure away from the selfishness of other generations."[45]

At the core of White's ideology was a belief that within the small town resided all the mores necessary to maintain good social order: "Time and again we have been surprised at the charity of our people. They are always willing to forgive, and be it man or woman who takes a misstep in our town—which is the counterpart of hundreds of American towns—if the offender shows that he wishes to walk straight, a thousand hands are stretched out to help him and guide him.… We are all neighbours and friends, and when sorrow comes, no one is alone. The town's greatest tragedies have proved the town's sympathy.…[46] According to White, while both he and Lewis found in the small town a mold that shaped vast regions of the United States, Lewis nevertheless failed to see the "pleasant…side of the street" and, in this oversight, presented readers with a "picture of a maggoty mind; a snapshot from a wapperjawed camera." While no modern utopia, the "American country town…is much like the Utopia of the mid-Victorian dream."[47]

Whereas towns like Spoon River, Winesburg, and Gopher Prairie became communities of thwarted ambition or stifling hothouses of mediocrity in Van Doren's revolt, White argued that Midwestern small towns were inheritors of the pioneering ideal of a town "in social commerce met," a place where "the mother moves in that small circle of friends and neighbours which circumscribes American motherhood of the best type," where "we are all workers as people are in every small town," where leisure activities are "confined…to baseball in the summer, football in the autumn, and checkers in the winter."

In this fashion, White sought to redeem the small town by framing it in terms that recalled the idealized New England village in the nineteenth century, as a repository of unchanging American values. While a rage for newfangled trends from nearby cities temporarily unsettled the town's youth, "in time our social life will resume its old estate."[48] This "old estate" reflected contemporary ideals of small-town life: "grassy plots," a library, running water, schools, automobiles and the Chamber of Commerce, that "exponent of altruism in

the American small town...." Comity proved to be the heart of this mid-Victorian dream, where, in White's telling, voluntary organizations drove the community's self-generating moral order: Rotarians, Masons, Knights of Columbus, Elks and churches "burning with fellowship" and, behind it all, a "collective neighborliness."[49]

White granted that *Main Street* was a great book, even though it was written "in ignorance of the tremendous forces that make for righteousness in every American town."[50] And while the town had its elites, "they are not the whole town." While the "church crowd" might be dull, they are "essentially kind." Laborers in White's small town have no class consciousness since "[h]ow can the...son of toil be class conscious when his...daughter is tripping the street in tricolette, and his son is sitting on the small of his back in a homemade racing car...?"[51] And regarding the poor, "their sons and daughters get into high school and college and the next generation sees them in the country club."[52] For White, "[t]o fail to see the sheer power of sentiment in American life merely because you dislike sentimentality is bad art."[53] White's defense of small town neighborliness inspired the *Des Moines Register* to ask, "Is Main Street, Iowa, a Place of Ugliness or Beauty? Which is right, White or Lewis?"[54]

In this way, White and Van Doren helped stake out the lines over which American rebellion took place in the twentieth century: were small towns and, later, modern suburbs, receptacles of values, or incubators of pathologies? Were village rebels "impatient...toward all subterfuges" or "wapperjawed?" The accuracy of the characterization of these writers as rebels is less important than the impression it left. While authors like Masters, Anderson, Dell, and Lewis did not perceive themselves as part of singular rebellion, the appearance of their books within a few years of each other, the common Midwestern location of their subjects, and the characterization of a trend by critics like Van Doren and White, fostered the easy conclusion that something was afoot in the hinterlands. In this respect, the significance of Van Doren's characterization lies not in the motivations of the authors, but in the historical moment in which they were received.

WHOSE REVOLT?

Needless to say, many scholars have been incredulous of Van Doren's characterization of the village revolt during this period.[55] Henry Steel Commager claimed these authors as part of a longer literary trend, starting in the 1880s, that "paralleled the political [revolt

in that]…both were directed toward the economic malaise."[56] Henry May, conversely, discerned a short and "innocent" rebellion between 1912 and 1917 that rejected convention and celebrated the spontaneous and beautiful.[57] Ronald Weber notes that critiques of Midwestern rural life like Masters's, Anderson's and Lewis's had been in existence for "a half-century since Eggleston's *The Hoosier School-Master*…."[58] Jon Lauck argues that the village rebels of Van Doren's designation "were more complicated than the thesis presumes."[59] According to David D. Anderson, the exile's departure from the small town followed a longer-standing American compulsion "for personal advancement in an open society," that traced "the movement West beyond the Appalachians [that] began in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries…." In these terms, George Willard's life in Winesburg taught him, and others like him, that "only they could determine the end of the search" and proved "one more manifestation of the age-old human search, American search, Midwestern search, for an ill-defined, vaguely-perceived but convincing ideal" of the "continuing unfolding myth of America."[60]

But while writers before Masters mocked, pierced, and deflated the pretentions of a romanticized rural America, and while the will to escape one's birthplace can be considered a longstanding American literary theme, the common attributes of the revolt Van Doren identified fit within changing contemporary conceptions of the legacy of a Victorian ethos of progress, character, and community and thereby encapsulated a discrete shift in some readers' conception of what constituted a just community.[61] According to Narayana Chandra, Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* "gathered around it the aura of a myth widely current in the first decade [of the twentieth century]…[that] celebrated the virtues of community life…" and "reverse[d] all the[se] premises…."[62] Anthony Channell Hilfer likewise claims that literary exposés like Masters's, Anderson's and Lewis's were precisely aimed at middle-class platitudes in light of recent trends in American culture since they "[saw] their locale as a microcosm of the nation and, provincial bourgeoises that they were, of the world." In this regard, the idea of a revolt became a means to explore issues significant to contemporary middle-class audiences.[63]

Yet this "overall attack on middle-class American civilization"[64] was nevertheless dependent upon the older version of the mythologized small town. As the nostalgic New England village represented

all that was unchanging in America, the ambivalent Midwestern small town, with its underlying secrets and sins, appeared to critics like Van Doren to be reservoirs of unplumbed truths. An attack on contemporary bromides—about the righteousness of social leaders and about the goodness of small-town life—required an already mythologized place of preternatural, but ultimately hollow, American values. This is why the relocation of the myth from the New England village to the Midwestern town proceeded along with the shift of the American "center" of the nation; by 1915, "[e]ven the East…usually granted the superior 'Americanism' of the Middle West."[65] This shift invited the rending of gauzy images on terms poignant to the descendants of the nineteenth-century middle class and allowed a broader critique of Middle-American norms overall.

In this regard, the Midwestern small town became the seat of a previous generation's original sins. The re-conception of the Midwestern small town as the symbol of a generation's moral shortcomings was, therefore, shaped by changing norms in middle-class culture itself.[66] Barry Gross reminds us that the village rebels were not necessarily in revolt against the village, "but from the myth of the village as a great good place."[67] In her entry on the "Revolt from the Village" in the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, Marcia Noe admits that "it cannot be denied that much negativity exists in the early twentieth-century literature of the small-town Midwest."[68] Accordingly, Van Doren characterized these authors as rebelling against a contemporaneous notion of fatuous self-righteousness, exemplified by William Allen White's mid-Victorian dream, a place whose claims to be "simple and innocent, pure and virtuous, democratic and egalitarian" proved fraudulent once one looked under the surface.[69]

Intellectual trends provided the impetus and support for this characterization, largely by reconfiguring assumptions about human psychology. The popularization of Freud's theories of sexual repression since the 1910s provided the means by which to overturn perceived notions of the small town as a "great good place." Freud's visit to the United States in 1909 led to the dissemination of his ideas, especially after the translations of *Selected Papers on Hysteria and Other Psychoneuroses* (1909) and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1910). These translations, according to Richard Skues, transformed Freud's reputation from "a psychotherapist who had adopted a new method" to a psychologist with a cohesive "body of thought" regarding "neurosis, dreams, jokes, slips, [and] sexual-

ity," at least initially among a high-brow reading public.[70] According to William Everdell, "[a]fter [Freud], self-knowledge [became] recursive, an infinite task undertaken against a fierce resistance that comes from the self. The human mind…is neither continuous nor whole."[71]

By the 1920s, Freud's influence continued apace. According to Russell Blankenship, writing in the 1930s, literature in the previous decade turned to the "psychological," and many of Anderson's characters, for example, "parallel cases described by scientific psychoanalysts."[72] Other contemporary critics recognized as much. For Vernon Louis Parrington, Anderson was a writer of a "single theme: the disastrous effect of frustrations and repressions…[d]ue to: (1) Crude, narrow environment that drives to strange aberrations; (2) Repressed instincts that break forth in abnormal action."[73] In the pages of *Reedy's Mirror,* William Marion Reedy embraced the influence of Freudian theories by printing the poet Conrad Aiken's reply to a critical review of his book *Turns and Movies and Other Tales in Verse*. (1916). Aiken claimed, "if [my book] is decadence, then Freud is decadent, and all psychologists are decadent," thereby embracing Freud's ideas about the human unconscious as a modern form of self-abnegation in the face of trite moral sanctimoniousness.[74]

Likewise, Eunice Tietjens, in Harriet Monroe's magazine *Poetry,* connected Aiken's verse to Masters's: "If…Masters…had never written, there is small doubt that *Turns and Movies* would prove Conrad Aiken an authentic poet. But as it is, their unquiet ghosts stalk behind his work."[75] William Marion Reedy's biographer, Max Putzel, called Aiken's poetry and Reedy's support for its Freudian undertones an "eloquent plea for a kind of poetic realism Masters had striven for, a realism that would conform not to a theory but to the newly recognized secret symbolism of man's buried life."[76]

This concept of a "buried life" is a significant aspect of contemporary notions of Van Doren's village rebels, since Freud's theories of the sublimated id, its repression, and the everyday anxieties this repression spawned, offered a revised conception of human psychology. Whereas the myth of the New England village depended upon a romantic notion of the inherent goodness of humanity in its natural state and allowed the industrial city of the nineteenth century to serve

as a foil to the naturalistic village, Freud's concept of the id traced moral struggles to the repression of unconscious desires.

Truth telling, therefore, derived its power from uncovering the origins of human neuroses in the struggle between unconscious needs and the demands of a repressive society, a kind of psychological muckraking to reveal the latent causes of personal anxieties. According to Pericles Lewis, Freud "taught the twentieth century to look for hidden meanings," thereby giving intellectual heft to the exile's ability to pierce claims of moral integrity and natural goodness.[77] By the mid-1920s, Freud's theories shaped conceptions of human nature in a way that allowed a wholesale critique of pre-Freudian psychology. In 1927, even the critic Vernon Louis Parrington recognized as much when he characterized middle-aged readers as "in the unhappy predicament of being treated as mourners at their own funeral…Their counsel is smiled at as the chatter of a belated post-Victorian generation that knew not Freud…."[78]

By the middle of the 1920s, a largely urban, middle-class cross section of the reading public reimagined the rural American town as the seat of contemporary anxieties, where moral hypocrisy proved to be a manifestation of social neuroses. Jon Lauck reminds us that the popularity of H. L. Mencken's articles in the *American Mercury* had "broad impact on intellectuals of the era." Mencken waged an ongoing rhetorical war against the rural "booboisie," "village editors, clubwomen, [and] Fundamentalists," that mocked them to scorn.[79]

Mencken also called for a new kind of truth teller, "emerged from the general," who had "lost [his] original certainties" and used skepticism "like a spray of acid upon all the ideas that come within his purview."[80] Lauck, channeling Christopher Lasch, traces this blanket critique of middle American backwardness to the advent of the American intellectual as a "social type," who "felt disconnected from the main traditions of American life and sought to criticize and reform them…. "[81] David Hollinger finds here an effort among self-anointed American intellectuals and their highbrow audience—for example, readers of the newly inaugurated *New Yorker* magazine—to reject American parochialism for the supposedly scientifically sound theories of modern psychology.[82]

Intellectuals in different fields made similar arguments. In 1923, Thorstein Veblen, University of Chicago economist and noted critic of consumer capitalism, reversed the innate "neighborliness" that William Allen White described in the American small town—"[i]ts

name may be Spoon River or Gopher Prairie, or it may be Emporia or Centralia or Columbia"—and discovered, instead, naked self-interest: "[a country town's] municipal affairs, its civic pride, its community interest, converge upon its real-estate values, which are invariably of a speculative character." Veblen's mixing of fictional and actual towns is telling here; he assumed his readers saw in both Spoon River and Centralia evidence of his claims. According to Veblen, the avarice at the heart of small-town life fed the moral hypocrisy exposed by Van Doren's rebels:

> One must avoid offence, cultivate good will, at any reasonable cost, and continue unfailing in taking advantage of it; and, as a corollary to this axiom, one should be ready to recognize and recount the possible shortcomings of one's neighbours, for neighbours are (or may be) rivals in the trade, and in trade one man's loss is another's gain, and a rival's disabilities count in among one's assets and should not be allowed to go to waste…One must be circumspect, acquire merit, and avoid offence. So one must eschew opinions, or information, which are not acceptable to the common run of those whose good will has or may conceivably come to have any commercial value.

And while "[a]ny person who…takes his ecclesiastical verities at their face might be moved to deprecate…these mixed motives," Veblen recognized that at the heart of neighborliness resided a "salesmanlike pusillanimity" that upheld both the moral and economic structure of small towns. Veblen's small town, then, stood "pat…somewhere about Mid-Victorian Times" in its proclamations of community values and pursuit of rapacious ends.[83] In this vein, the popularization of anthropology, especially Margaret Mead's celebration of the primitive, advanced an attack on vestigial Victorian culture,[84] while Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown* (1929) turned the methods of social science on the Midwest. According to Henry May, for the Lynds, "individual child-training, religion, and the use of patriotic symbols represent [ted] the past, while the future is represented by whatever is thoroughly secular and collective, particularly in the community's work life. The town has tended to meet its crises by invoking tradition in defense of established institutions."[85]

In the 1920s, these trends, especially the rise of a segment of the reading public ambivalent (or hostile) toward older perceptions of rural America, pointed to a growing divide between readers. While literary critics like Amy Lowell and Midwestern columnists like the

Kansan Jay House admired Masters for different reasons between 1915 and 1917, Carl Van Doren's and William Allen White's reactions to Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* represented the growing gulf between readers who saw American small towns as placid frauds and small-town residents who proved resentful at finding themselves the target of a culture war between the traditional and the modern.

The trope of the town's exile, then, in Van Doren's terms, became a character who pierced the pretentions of Main Street. Dreamers like Webster Ford, George Willard, and Felix Fay or malcontents like Carol Milford and, through them, authors like Masters, Anderson, Dell, and Lewis served as a reader's interpreter of the small town and thereby translated its dreams into symbols of repressed desires. Here, then, lay the ambivalence at the heart of the mythological Midwestern town, where a second generation of residents claimed to transform a pioneering spirit into William Allen White's municipality of "neighbours and friends," but the stolid surface belied antisocial unconscious desires. Thereafter, according to Russell Blankenship, even the virtues of the pioneering ethos, "its intellectual conformity, its gospel of thrift and industry, its democracy, and especially its optimism," proved to be ready targets for "ridicule" and "reasoned examination of premises."[86]

This revised mythology of the frontier generation and its descendants supported a revision of the Turnerian Thesis itself, as Robert Dorman notes, in the hands of literary critics like Lewis Mumford, Vernon Parrington, Waldo Frank, and Van Wyck Brooks, who reimagined the Midwestern "settling out" phase and frontier communities as precursors of, in Lewis Mumford's words, "deserted villages, bleak cities, depleted soils" and "sick and exhausted souls that engraved their epitaphs in Mr. Masters's Spoon River Anthology."[87] Mumford's use of Masters's fictional characters as evidentiary symbols here is as telling as Veblen's use of Spoon River as an analogue for real towns. Both assumed their readers would recognize the reference and understand that this fictional community proved emblematic of reality itself.

Since the rural communities that the village revolt portrayed were only incidentally Midwestern, especially after Lewis's prologue, the myth proved adaptable, a modern passion play of rapacity and repression, and a truth-revealing exile who spoke for an indolent mass. The exile on Main Street, as author or character, exposed the falsity of the previous generation's truisms and displayed the town's anxieties for their own good. While the contours of this drama can be traced to

authors that predated Masters—in the stories of Eggleston or Howe—the popularity of *Spoon River Anthology* and *Main Street* and their packaging as part of a village revolt by contemporary critics, mark the appeal of this kind of literary muckraking to large sections of the American reading public in the 1920s. Whether these authors saw themselves as part of a general revolt or not, and regardless of the nuanced differences in their works, the idea of a village revolt captured the zeitgeist of the third decade of the twentieth century with a durable formulation. For readers in the 1920s who had imbibed, likely secondhand, a little Freud, perhaps read or read about Thorstein Veblen, and likely recognized parts of Spoon River, Winesburg, or Gopher Prairie around them, Van Doren's village-in-revolt thesis felt realistic. It seemed true that freedom was repressed by hidebound values, that sanctimoniousness covered sublimated desires, and that the darker corners of the American unconscious resided in a place quintessentially American.

WHAT REVOLT?

According to Anthony Hilfer, interest in the small town as a locus of a struggle between the traditional and the modern "fizzled out rather dismally" by the end of the 1920s.[88] Two trends, Hilfer notes, brought about this change. First, the stock market crash and subsequent economic collapse after 1929 transformed literary antipathy toward modern capitalism from "the aesthetic vs. the acquisitive" to the portrayal of the businessman as "objectively vicious."[89] While Masters claimed in the heady days of spring 1915 that what ailed the United States was spiritual apathy caused by the scourge of "materialism," his critique still largely depended upon a Victorian belief that character was destiny and that a personal change of heart and self-knowledge could lead to individual rejuvenation and justification.

By the 1930s, however, according to Hilfer, "radicals saw village rebels…as not exactly wrong…but…off center, irrelevant" in the face of economic collapse. Whereas the characters of the village rebels were "bourgeois inflected with a germ of revolt against dominant pieties," the literary hero of the 1930s proved to be a "rebellious working man…against the entire capitalist system." In this light, the "aesthetic revolt" of Van Doren's village rebels appeared to be "mere dilettantism."[90] Critics like Bernard DeVoto, in *Mark Twain's America* (1932), claimed that Eastern elites had projected their own Victorian repression onto Western pioneers and their

descendants; the popularity of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) portrayed populist characters whose plight was structural and economic.[91] The appearance of John Reed Clubs in the 1930s, sponsored by the Communist Party USA, represented a turn in American literary trends toward more proletarian and politically activist topics.

Likewise, a "return to the soil motif," exemplified by works like James Agee's nonfictional *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) and Robert Penn Warren's *At Heaven's Gate* (1943) celebrated rural Americans as inheritors of collective traditional wisdom.[92] For Hilfer, "the thirties had come to admire certain qualities of American life that could on a hazy day be mistaken for just those qualities the village rebels attacked."[93] In this regard, Thornton Wilder's sentimental portrayal of Grover's Corners in *Our Town* (1938), in which the deceased Emily Webb Gibbs learns from the grave the everyday joys of an average life, reflects the waning intensity for finding in the American small town the nation's underlying pathologies. Whereas the village rebels, at least in Van Doren's estimation, revealed the sordidness in the small towns around them, Wilder's Emily discovers the beauty that her fellow citizens failed to recognize. In this way, Wilder's vision of Grover's Corners echoed William Allen White's own celebration of the American small town, whose only shortcomings lie in its residents' failure to appreciate it.[94]

By the 1930s, even the so-called village rebels rejected the category. Floyd Dell thought Lewis "too kind to your heroine and too cruel to the…Middle West." Sherwood Anderson described Lewis's prose as "dull" and "unenlightened."[95] And when August Derleth interviewed Lewis, Anderson and Masters for the book *Three Literary Men,* each, in his own way, rebuffed Van Doren's characterization of themselves as part of a village revolt.[96] Lewis, who eventually resettled in the Midwest, claimed, "'I disliked some things about village life. I dislike some things about city life, too.…[But] I like those people—Carol Kennicott…and Will Kennicott… I put into my books what I saw and what I felt. I didn't think it was rebellious then. I don't think it is now, either.'" When Lewis asked Derleth why he remained in the Midwest and Derleth stated that he wanted to be "'close to my roots,'" Lewis agreed, "'Yes, I understand that…I wasn't aware of such roots then.'" [97] Derleth found significance in Lewis's "then," implying that his perspective on the Midwest had changed, or at least that his connection to a place proved indelible, a connection that illuminated a certain nostalgia at the heart of Lewis's

ambivalence. In this regard, Lewis's rejection of Van Doren's characterization of his work as part of a rebellion and Derleth's sympathy for this rejection represented the influence of contemporary literary trends in the 1930s. Nevertheless, Lewis's emphatic repudiation of Van Doren's characterization of a village revolt over fifteen years after Van Doren coined the term marked the endurance and cultural valence of the appellation.

In 1940, Derleth met with Sherwood Anderson and, ranging over a number of topics, eventually came to his place in Van Doren's village revolt. Anderson also rejected Van Doren's term, saying "'[t]here wasn't anything to this revolting…I saw it the way it was and put it down the way it was…There's no such thing as "revolting" or "rebelling" or whatever it is they want to call it.'"[98] But while Anderson rejected Van Doren's "revolt," he accepted the idea that his portrayal of people in Winesburg represented a realistic look at Americans generally from a psychological perspective: "'I'm interested in people. I want to know what makes them go. I've spent years trying to find out.'"[99]

Masters also took issue with Van Doren's characterization of a village revolt and his place within it. Derleth met Masters in 1939 in his apartment at the Chelsea Hotel in New York City, where the poet had moved after relinquishing his career in law to write full time. When Derleth asked the poet about the legacy of *Spoon River Anthology*, Masters rejected Van Doren's claim that he began the Revolt: "'I didn't revolt against my village. The best years of my life were spent back there in Illinois.'"[100] Nevertheless, he acknowledged that his book appeared at a time when readers sought a reformulation of the village myth: "'The people were ready for *Spoon River*. They needed that kind of book. They'd had their fill of moonlight and silly love stories. They'd had enough of sentimentality and unreality. They wanted books like *Sister Carrie* and *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Spoon River* and *Main Street* because they were about flesh and blood men and women—like the men and women they knew—the men and women I knew at Petersburg and Lewistown…."[101]

Scholars and authors have wrestled with Van Doren's characterization of a village revolt nearly since its inception.[102] Nevertheless, the popular and critical reception of books like *Spoon River Anthology; Winesburg, Ohio; Main Street; Moon-Calf*; and others, as well as the three-generations-long debate about the accuracy of the term, signifies its potent legacy. Carl Van Doren captured a long-sim-

mering sentiment about the small town, a so-called “mid-Victorian dream,” and provided a contemporary foil for its pretentions. In this new myth of the Midwestern small town, readers found an archetype of traditional America, one that appeared stable, moral, and, most damning, self-satisfied, but which, in fact, hid a churning mix of dislocation, anxiety, and avarice. As Barry Gross notes, “[t]he city and the small town, the farm and the village, are regions of the mind as well as regions on a map.”[103] A key figure in this region of the mind was the internal exile, like George Willard or Carol Kennicott, who revealed the underlying instability of Main Street. Figures like George and Carol, Cassandralike, proved inexplicable to the other members of the community, but able to reveal unappreciated forebodings to a receptive reader. In this regard, the village rebels in Van Doren’s terms created a new folk tale for Americans in the twentieth century about an individual who knew the community’s true nature and conspired with the audience to divulge its undisclosed secrets for the sake of self-fulfillment.

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NOTES

[1]Carl Van Doren, “The Revolt from the Village: 1920,” *Nation,* vol. 113, No. 2936, October 21, 1921, 407-412. Van Doren revisited this theme in “On Hating the Provinces,” in *The Roving Critic* (Port Washington, New York, Kennikat Press, Inc., 1923). See also Van Wyck Brooks, *Letters and Leadership*, (New York: B.W. Heubsch, 1923).

[2]Van Doren, “Revolt from the Village: 1920,” 407.

[3]Van Doren also included F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise*.

[4]Van Doren, “Revolt from the Village: 1920,” 411.

[5]Van Doren, “Revolt from the Village: 1920,” 407.

[6]Needless to say, entire populations and regions were left out of the idea of a village revolt. Authors like Masters, Anderson, Lewis, Gale, and Dell, and propagators of the idea of a “revolt,” like Van Doren, proved almost entirely blind to African Americans, for example; and, in fact, the villages they supposedly revolted against reflected the rise of the “sundown town” during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The wave of lynching in the Midwest during this period was almost entirely absent from these meditations on the indignities of small-town life. See James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism,* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 90-116. See, also, James H. Madison *Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Michael Pfeifer, *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence Outside the South,* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

[7]Ronald Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 105, 104.

[8]A number of Anderson’s stories had appeared previously as stand-alone short fiction in journals like *Masses* and *Seven Arts*. See Weber 106.

[9]Van Doren, "Revolt from the Village: 1920," 409. Russell Blankenship, likewise claims that "[t]he only vestige of the frontier [in *Winesburg, Ohio*]…was a unified society held together by standardized thinking."

[10]Sherwood Anderson, "Mother," Winesburg, Ohio: *Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, Ed. Charles E. Modlin and Ray Lewis White (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 20-21.

[11]Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio,* 17-19.

[12]Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*, 20.

[13]Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*, 22.

[14] Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*, 130-136. Ryan Poll offers a very useful interpretation of the ambivalent undertones to George Willard's departure in *Main Street and Empire: The Fictional Small Town in the Age of Globalization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 44.

[15]Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio,* 130-136.

[16]Barry Gross, "In Another Country: The Revolt from the Village," *MidAmerica* 4 (1977): 101-11, 105.

[17]Quoted in Barry Gross, "In Another Country: The Revolt from the Village," *MidAmerica* 4 (1977): 101-11, 103.

[18]*Chicago Tribune*, "'Winesburg, Ohio,' [Hubsch]." June 8, 1919, pg 53, col. 1.

[19]The *Akron Beacon Journal*, "Sketches of Life in a Small Town," June 14, 1919, pg. 4, col. 4-5.

[20]*New York Times*, "'Winesburg, Ohio,'" May 31, 1919, pg. 12, col. 8.

[21]*New York Herald*, "A Gutter Would be Spoon River," June, 1, 1919, pg. 57, cols. 1-2.

[22]Idwal Jones, "'Winesburg, Ohio' Sundry Tales of an Ohio Small Town Life by Sherwood Anderson," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 31, 1919, pg. 6, cols. 5-6.

[23]Van Doren, 411.

[24]Floyd Dell, *Moon-Calf*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1920), 30.

[25]Dell, *Moon-Calf*, 394. Ellipses in original.

[26]Dell quoted in "Books," *New-York Tribune*, November 12, 1920, pg. 10, cols. 7-8.

[27]Though Lewis himself rejected Van Doren's claim, especially that he was inspired by Masters. See Richard R. Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street,* (New York: Random House, 2002), 185.

[28]Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), v.

[29]Ryan Poll, *Main Street and Empire: The Fictional Small Town in the Age of Globalization* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 37.

[30]Book like *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, notwithstanding. Twain's setting forty-odd years before the book's publication put its moral critique at a remove, though its skepticism of contemporary religious discourse proved poignant.

[31]Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*, 1920, (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999), 6.

[32]Lewis, *Main Street*, 29.

[33]Lewis, *Main Street*, 51.

[34]Lewis, *Main Street*, 152.

[35]Lewis, according to James Shortridge, took "aim squarely at the values of the town aristocracy," a class that maintained the staid hypocrisies of Gopher Prairie and policed the borders of accepted decorum, James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture,* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 43-44.

[36]Lewis, *Main Street*, 151.

[37]Lewis, *Main Street*, 116.

[38]Lewis, *Main Stree*t, 180.

[39]Lewis, *Main Street,* 400.

[40]Van Doren, The Revolt from the Village: 1920," 410. See James M. Hutchisson, *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis, 1920-1930,* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996),9. For the impact of Lewis's *Main Street,* see Nathan Miller, *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America*, (New York: Scribner, 2003), 64, cited in Poll, 38. *Main Street* was also chosen unanimously by a three-judge panel to receive the Pulitzer Prize in 1921, though the decision was ultimately overturned since the book was deemed undermining of the prize's "wholesomeness" requirement.

[41]Neither Howe nor Gale fit easily into this trajectory, especially since both had published successful novels before Masters. Van Doren also fit in Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* at the end of his review.

[42]Shortridge also notes that "the initiation of a change from ebullient self-assurance to doubt and defensiveness can be dated rather precisely at 1920." 39.

[43]William Allan White, "The Other Side of Main Street," *Collier's Weekly*, July 30, 1921, 7-19.

[44]*Emporia Gazette,* October 12, 1896, pg. 2 col. 2; *Emporia Gazette,* "History Repeated," October 23, 1896, pg. 2, cols. 2-3.

[45]William Allen White, *The Old Order Changeth: A View of American Democracy*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), 69.

[46]William Allen White, *In Our Town*, (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1906), 19. A reader of White's book scrawled in the margins "your [sic] a liar W" and crossed out "help him" and replaced it with "drag him down." While it is impossible to date this marginalia, White's portrayal of small-town ethics, and this reader's rejection of its claims, exemplify the antipathy expressed by Van Doren's village rebels to a romanticized vision of small-town life. For White's fictional versions of the small Midwestern town as the ideal American community, see *The Court of Boyville* (1899), *A Certain Rich Man* (1909), and *In the Heart of a Fool* (1918).

[47]White, "The Other Side of Main Street," 7. Vernon Louis Parrington best summarized White's conception of this mid-Victorian dream as "(1) A land of economic well-being, uncursed by poverty and unspoiled by wealth; (2) a land of 'folksiness'—the village a great family of neighborliness, friendliness, sympathy; (3) Primarily middle-class, and therefore characteristically American, wholesome, and human…; (4) The home of American democracy, dominated by the spirit of equality, where men are measured by their native qualities," Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought, vol. III, The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930), 373-374.

[48]William Allen White, *In Our Town*, (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1906), 332, 79, 81.

[49]White, "The Other Side of Main Street," 8.

[50]White, "The Other Side of Main Street," 8.

[51]White, "The Other Side of Main Street," 19.

[52]White, "The Other Side of Main Street," 19.

[53]White, "The Other Side of Main Street," 18.

[54]*Des Moines Register*, "Is Is Main Street, Iowa, a Place of Ugliness or Beauty?" August 21, 1921, pg. 30, cols. 1-6.

[55]It is impossible here to thoroughly discuss the half-century of scholarship that interrogates the idea of a village revolt. The "Revolt from the Village" entry by Marcia Noe in *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature: Vol. II*: *Dimensions of Midwestern Literary Imagination* (Philip A Greasley, ed.) provides an excellent review of this scholarship.

[56]Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of America*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950), 248.

[57]I am indebted to Marcia Noe's interpretation of May's "innocent rebellion" here, from *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature, vol. II,* 738.

[58]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing,* 162.

[59] Jon Lauck, "The Myth of the Midwestern 'Revolt from the Village." *MidAmerica* 40 (2013): 43. Also see Lauck's *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920-1965,* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2017), 11-37, and Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual As a Social Type,* (New York: Norton), 1986.

[60]David D. Anderson, "The Midwestern Town in Midwestern Fiction," *MidAmerica,* 6 (1979): 27-43.

[61]In this regard, I am more concerned with how these works were received in light of intellectual trends in the third decade of the twentieth century. Admittedly, these were largely driven by influential critics, like Van Doren and H.L. Mencken, who were inclined to interpret Midwestern literature from a perspective that privileged an urbane perspective.

[62]Narayana K. Chandran, "Revolt from the Grave: *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters." *Midwest Quarterly* 29.4 (Summer 1988), 439.

[63]Anthony Channell Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village: 1915-1930,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 5. John Timberman Newcomb notes that topics of interest to poet's and audiences shifted from the rural and romantic to the urban and modern between 1910 and 1925. According to Newcomb, these poems of "urban modernity" sought "meaning from the city's welter of discordant material, but not by effacing anxieties over emotional dispossession and social heterogeneity. Instead, they posit ironic forms of coherence built from the jagged contradictions of experience in the twentieth-century metropolis," 148. While Masters's poems were set in a rural community, *Spoon River Anthology*'s sensitivity to irony and "jagged contradictions" appealed also to the readers of the avant-garde, urbane verse that Newcomb describes. See Newcomb, 147-179.

[64]Hilfer, 5.

[65]Ibid.

[66]It seems that *Spoon River Anthology*, at least in one instance, provided the means for this kind of revolt as well. One student at Grinnell, Marguerite Merryman, published a series of poems based on her hometown in the college's literary magazine *Junto,* and was sued by her former teacher for $5000 in 1926. "Sues Student Writer: Former Teacher Objects to Amateur 'Spoon River Anthology' at Grinnell," *Lincoln Star Journal* (Lincoln, Nebraska), Janury 26, 1926, pg. 1, col. 6.

[67]Gross, "The Revolt that Wasn't: The Legacies of Critical Myopia," *CEA Critic* 39.2 (January 1977), 5.

[68]Marcia Noe, "Revolt from the Village," *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature: Vol. II: Dimensions of Midwestern Literary Imagination* (Philip A Greasley, ed.), 741.

[69]Gross, 4-8, 5.

[70]Richard Skues, "Clark Revisited: Reappraising Freud in America," *After Freud Left: A Century of Psychoanalysis in America,* John Burnham, ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 75-76.

[71]William R. Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 140.

[72]Russell Blankenship, *American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 650, 672.

[73]Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought, vol. III, The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), 370.

[74]Conrad Aiken, "Poet Aiken's Reply," *Reedy's Mirror,* 26 (April 13, 1917), 260.

[75]Eunice Tietjens, "*Turns and Moves and Other Tales in Verse* by Conrad Aiken," *Poetry Magazine*, November 1916, 99-100.

[76]Putzel, 33.

[77]Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 24.

[78]Parrington, 401.

[79]Lauck, "The Myth of the Midwestern Revolt from the Village," 44. Also see Lauck's *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920-1965,* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2017), 11-37.

[80]George Jean Nathan and H.L. Mencken, *The American Credo: A Contribution Toward the Interpretation of the National Mind,* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1921), 10.

[81]Lauck, "The Myth of the Midwestern Revolt from the Village," 45. Also see Lauck's *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920-1965,* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2017), 11-37. Also see Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type*, (New York: Norton, 1986).

[82]David A. Hollinger, "Ethnic Diversity, Cosmopolitanism, and the Emergence of the American Liberal Intelligentsia," *American Quarterly*, vol. 27, no 2 (May 1975), in Lauck, 45.

[83]Thorstein Veblen, "The Country Town," *The Freeman*, July 11, 1923, 417-420, and July 18, 1923, 440-443, quoted in Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America*, (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1923), 142-165. For a historical analysis of Veblen's arguments see Lewis E. Atherton, "The Midwestern Country Town: Myth and Reality," *Agricultural History,* vol. 26, no. 3 (July 1953), pp. 73-80.

[84]Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization,* (New York: William Morrow Company, 1927), see 85-109. Also see Lauck, *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge*, 19.

[85]Henry May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920s," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Dec., 1956), pp. 405-427, 408.

[86]Blankenship, *American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind,* New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1931, 650.

[87]Lewis Mumford as quoted in Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 6, 84-85. See Dorman on the regionalist overturning of the Tunerian thesis, 84-85. For Mumford, see *The Golden Day*, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), 107.

[88]Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village: 1915-1930,* 220.

[89]Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village: 1915-1930, 244*.

[90]Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village: 1915-1930,* 245.

[91]See Hilfer, 67, 247.

[92]Hilfer, 245-246, 247.

[93]Hilfer, 247.

[94]Thomas Halper and Douglas Muzzio note that during the 1930s and 1940s, cinematic portrayals like *Boys Town* (1938), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Four Daughters* (1938) and the movie adaptation of *Our Town* (1940) offered similarly optimistic portrayals of the moral integrity of small-town life. *Fury* (1936), directed by Fritz Lang, offered a notable exception. See Thomas Halper, Douglas Muzzio, "It's a Wonderful Life: Representations of the Small Town in American Movies," *European Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Spring 2011), 1-21, 6-8.

[95]Quoted in Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, 160-161.

[96]Thanks to Jon Lauck for drawing attention to this useful book in "The Myth of the Midwestern 'Revolt from the Village." *MidAmerica* 40 (2013): 43.

[97]August Derleth, *Three Literary Men: A Memoir of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters,* (New York: The Candlelight Press, 1963), 13.

[98]Derleth, 34.

[99]Derleth, 36.

[100]Derleth, 49.

[101]Derleth, 40.

[102]Derleth notes that Lewis rejected the term soon after Van Doren coined it. See Derleth, 12-13.

[103]Gross, "In Another Country," 111.

THE MYTH OF THE MIDWESTERN "REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE"

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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 crimped upbringings in the region, 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 people'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 its 1921 fall book supplement.[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 Babbitry 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 arguing 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 as "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 article 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." 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; 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, *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 barrenest 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] He focused on the "loneliness and hopelessness of the buried life of small towns," directed his attacks at the "provincial American," and viewed the elements of American backwardness as "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] He 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" that 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,* 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, Kansas, and other states enabled him to depict the "life of the new middle class, in Dakota villages and in the Cincinnatis and the Minneapolises."[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" that 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 frus-

tration 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 revisionist effort 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 future; 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 fos-

tered 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; "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 hand-

somely.[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 become 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 later 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, "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 Anthology*—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 his body of work and severely limits our ability to see Masters's Midwest.[144] He 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, he 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 focused 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] He 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] He 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' s boyhood," Lois Hartley 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," 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 he 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 rebelling 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"; 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 discontent 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; he fled the scene by mid-semester, 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 Sorenson, 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 construc-

tive criticism of his country."[184] He 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; it 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 Schwarz 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…There's no such thing

as 'revolting' or 'rebelling' 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] He 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] He 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 was more generous, finding the novel to be successfully focused on the theme of searching and finding personal meaning and spiritual guidance.[215] Still 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 returns to the Midwest, after all, and comes 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—were 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; 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 in giving 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 lyricism" 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]

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NOTES

[1]Jon 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.

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

[3]Phil Stong, "The U.S. in the Middle," *Saturday Review of Literature,* September 17, 1938, 11.

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

[5]Lucy 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.

[6]Van 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 "snobbishness." Van Doren, *Three Worlds* (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1936), 1.

[7]Carl 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.

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

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

[10]Van 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.

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

[12]Frederick 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's 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").

[13]Alfred 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.

[14]Henry 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 Hoftstadter 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*.

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

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

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

[19]See 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.

20 Lynn 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 sim-

ilar 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).

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

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

[23]Ronald Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992), 85. Weber's *Midwestern Ascendency* 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 Ascendency in American Writing*, 224.

[24]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency 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.

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

[26]Wes 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.

[27]Maurice 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 Hallet, "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.

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

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

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

[31]Hutner, "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* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2016) 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.

[32]Hilfer, *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 (italics added).

[33]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing,* 196-97.

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

[35] Van Doren typescript "Three Worlds," 181, Box 7, FF 7, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University.

[36]Christopher 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.

[37]Brooks, *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.

[38]Brooks, *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's call for revolution, his turn to socialism, and his attraction to Bohemianism, see Casey Nelson Blake, *Beloved Community*, 52-63.

[39]Hilfer, *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's (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.

[40]Brooks, *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.

[41]Van 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 continuing expression through writers such as Emerson Hough and Bernard DeVoto. Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism,* 105-6.

[42]Terry 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.

[43]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 191.

[44]Allen, *Only Yesterday,* 193.

[45]Kazin, O*n Native Grounds,* 200-201.

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

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

[48]Hilfer, *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.

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

[50]Joan 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.

[51]Stephen 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.

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

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

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

[55]Daniel 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.

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

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

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

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

[60]Shideler, "*Flappers and Philosophers*, and Farmers," 286.

[61]Coben, "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.

[62]Gross, "The Revolt that Wasn't," 4.

[63]Christopher 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 adversary culture").

[64]Hilfer, *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.").

[65]Allen, *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.

[66]Edward 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 fellow-

ship" 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.

[67]David 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 Caroyln F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1946).

[68]Frederick 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.

[69]Hutner, *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.

[70]Hoffman, "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.

[71]Hoffman, "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.

[72]Warren 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.

[73]Aaron, *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).

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

[75]Warren 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.

[76]Sideler, "*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.

[77]Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 10.

[78]Carl 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.

[79]Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s," 252. For a critique of intellectuals' and cultural rebels' exhultation 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.

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

[81]Gorman, *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.

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

[83]Gorman, *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 American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001), 27-47, Andrew R. L. Cayton and Susan E. Gray, eds. 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.

[84]Coben, "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.

[85]Henry 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.

[86]Hilfer, 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.

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

[88]Benjamin Schwarz, "Sheer Data," 98-101.

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

[90]Benjamin Schwarz, "Sheer Data," 98-101.

[91]Kazin, *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).

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

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

[94]Blake, *Beloved Community*, 50-51.

[95]Aaron, *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.

[96]Trilling, *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.

[97]Lingeman, *Sinclair Lewis*, 151.

[98]Carl 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).

[99]Gorman, *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.

[100]Hilfer, *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.

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

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

[103]Louis M. Hacker, "Sections—or Classes," *The Nation*, July 26, 1933, 108-110. 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.

[104]Zeman, "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.

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

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

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

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

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

[110]The "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.

[111]Allen, *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.

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

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

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

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

[116]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency 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.

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

[118]Hamlin Garland, "Current Fiction Heroes," *New York Times Book Review,* December 23, 1923, 2, 23. 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."

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

[120]Sara 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." Krutch, "Sinclair Lewis," *The Nation,* February, 24, 1951, 179-180. 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, 98-101. Peter Quennell, "New Novels," *New Statesman*, February 4, 1933, 133. (calling Lewis a "publicist ran than an artist"). R.T. Prescott said the "revolt" "crescendoed 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 Ascendency 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 Babbittry." Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency 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.

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

[123]On 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, 19, 17.

[124]Edward Watts, "The Midwest as a Colony: Transnational Regionalism," in Mahoney and Katz (eds), *Regionalism and the Humanities,* 172 (coercions). On the "dearth of pub-

lishing 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.

[125]McDowell, "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 Assocation, 1977), 78.

[126]Krause, 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 Siouxland 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.

[127]On 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.

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

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

[130]Scott 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.

[131]Shideler, "*Flappers and Philosophers*, and Farmers," 283.

[132]Cowley, *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.

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

[134]Kosiba, "A Successful Revolt?," 54.

[135]Zona 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 he 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.

[136]Irving 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.

[137]Timothy 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's 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.

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

[139]Although 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."

[140]While 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 Ascendency 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, 42, 44-46, 49.

[141]Masters 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).

[142]Robert Van Gelder, "An Interview with Mr. Edgar Lee Masters," *New York Times*, February 15, 1942. BR, 2.

[143]Masters 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 Ascendency 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, Candelight 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.

[144]Loving, "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.

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

[146]Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 42.

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

[148]Masters 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, 20.

[149]Lois 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, BR, 2; Gross, "The Revolt that Wasn't," 5.

[150]Masters 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.

[151]Masters 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.

[152]Hartley, "Edgar Lee Masters—Biographer and Historian," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1908-1984), Vol. 64, no. 1 (Spring 1961), 56-83, 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.

[153]Hartley, "Edgar Lee Masters, Political Essayist," 251; Robert Van Gelder, "An Interview with Mr. Edgar Lee Masters," *New York Times,* February 15, 1942, BR, 2 (roots) (italics added). Ronald Primeau concluded that Masters was "a 'regionalist' to the end." Primeau, *Beyond Spoon River,* 183.

[154]Masters, "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.

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

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

[157]Glen 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.

[158]Love, "*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.

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

[160]Trilling, "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.

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

[162]Robert 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.

[163]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency 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.

[164]Van Doren, "Accusation," *Nation,* November 23, 1921, 602; Anderson to Van Doren, November 22, 1921, FF 4, Box 14, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University.

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

[166]Maurice 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.

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

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

[169]Howe, 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* (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.

[170]Howe, "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.

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

[172]Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village,* 34; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency 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." Krutch, "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). http://www.city-journal.org/html/godfather-american-libeeralism-1317.html/39-48. 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.

[173]John J. Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis: Home at Last* (Bloomington, MN, Voyageur Press, 1981), 14, 16; Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing,* 146-47, 150. Van Doren thought Lewis had "revenges 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), 39-48, 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.

[174]Conrad, "A Portrait of Sinclair Lewis," 42 (ugly). Gore Vidal said Lewis "was gargoyle 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, 1, 4.

[175]Frederick 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 village," "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.

[176]Zona 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.

[177]Weber, *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.

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

[179]Lingeman, *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.

[180]William 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.

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

[182]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing*, 164; Richard Lingeman, "Home Town, USA," *New York Times,* January 29, 1978, 1, 14-15. 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.

[183]Van 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.

[184]Lingeman, "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, 39-48."

[185]Koblas, *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.

[186]Dorman, *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.

[187]John 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.

[188]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing,* 168.

[189]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing,* 171.

[190]John 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.

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

[192]Koblas, *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.

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

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

[195]Koblas, *Sinclair Lewis,* xxi.

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

[197]Lingeman, "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.

[198]Schwarz 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," rev. of *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street,* by Richard Lingeman, *Atlantic Monthly* vol. 289, no. 2 (Feb. 2002), 98-101, 98 (my italics). 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.

[199]Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendency in American Writing,* 173.

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

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

[202]Derleth, *Three Literary Men,* 13.

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

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

[205]Derleth, *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.

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

[207]Derleth, *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."

[208]Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 12.

[209]Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 12.

[210]Derleth, *Three Literary Men*, 23.

[211]Derleth, *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, *Homecoming,* 343, 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 pretentions 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.

[212]Van 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[220]Fitzgerald, *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.

[221]Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 3.

[222]Van 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, Box 7, Van Doren Papers, Princeton University."

[223]Glenway Wescott, "Van Wyck Brooks," *New York Times Book Review,* 2, December 14, 1964, 2; 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 Book Review,* January 13, 1952, 16.

[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.

[233]Brooks 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.

[234]William H. Pritchard, “Not to Write Was Not to Be Alive,” *New York Times Book Review,* November 1, 1981, 3.

[235]On the collapse of Brooks’ 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 Age* in helping writers create the village rebellion school of thought. Hilfer, *The Revolt from the Village*, 157.

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

[237]DeVoto, *The Literary Fallacy,* 66.

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

[239]Lasch, "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.

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

[241]Lasch, "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), 1, 10.

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

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

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

REAFFIRMING THE REVOLT: THE VALUE OF A CONTESTED MAIN STREET IN THE TRUMP ERA

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Defining the small town in American literature and culture is like trying to capture water with a sieve. Even when you just consider the Midwestern small town, the place of fact cannot be contained: towns are by nature diverse and in flux, shrinking and growing in population and architecture, studies in change. While the small town may be amorphous, its cultural character—especially an idealized Main Street—lies largely fixed in the popular imagination. Miles Orvell observes, "As an idea, a Platonic form almost, Main Street exists on a plane apart from reality, and given its heterogeneity, in many ways Americans *have* ascribed a certain mythical character to 'the small town,' as if it were a single template, a type, out of which the myriad versions have emerged" (14). Any reasonable discussion of Main Street in the United States would acknowledge these towns' variability, but the idyllic singular image of the small town in American culture remains.

It follows that a discussion of the Revolt from the Village, Carl Van Doren's celebration of subversive, anti-idyllic small-town tropes in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street,* would also be fraught. It's difficult to argue about something as slippery and changing as the cultural depiction of small town. Critics often take to task Van Doren's conceptualization of the Revolt by arguing the texts he chose are not representative of the small town—not *really*. Further, they challenge Anthony Channell Hilfer's theory—one that

conceived the Revolt not as a rebellion against small town provincialism but, rather, against the constricting presence it represented in mainstream American culture—by arguing that the Midwestern town can't be a cultural mainstay because it is beleaguered, a place thought only of as fly-over country in the popular imagination.

Any defense of the Revolt has to begin with an assertion that while real Midwestern small towns are flexible and changing, in popular culture the image of an idyllic place is fixed and pervasive. The pleasant vision of Main Street established in the late nineteenth century in local color writing has proved resilient, perpetuated time and time again in popular culture, a simple place of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* (1957) and Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon Days* (1985). But perhaps the best example of this idyllic, simplistic town lies in Disney's Main Street U.S.A.

For those who haven't been there, Main Street U.S.A. is the first attraction any visitor to Disneyland or Disneyworld will see, a street fixed in small-town 1900s America. As Richard Francaviglia notes, "Main Street U.S.A. is so familiar that any detailed description is unnecessary. Briefly, it is a romanticized assemblage of architecture carefully controlled in matters of style, period, size, scale and color. The Victorian period provides the framework. Ornately detailed Italianate store fronts emulate the commercial facades seen on countless Main Streets across the country, but especially prevalent in the middlewest" (143).

And this vision of Main Street is not wholly a creation of Disney's imagination. Robert Neuman observes that Walt Disney constructed a Main Street in his parks similar to the ones depicted in films like *Alice Adams* (1935), *Our Town* (1940), and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944): "Main Street was a uniquely American symbol that Disney shared but did not invent…the idea of Main Street was widespread in literature, the theater, and film in the years before Disneyland's creation" (86). Even today, the idyllic past depicted in 1930s to '40s Hollywood still stands.

According to the Disney World website, on Main Street U.S.A. you can "[h]ave a grand old time mingling with colorful characters who spread the cheer of yesteryear with delightful antics and song" ("Citizens"). The "colorful characters" are each white, one man in a top hat and tails, two women in Edwardian gowns, broad hats, and long white gloves. While Disney parks and attractions constantly change, Main Street U.S.A. remains at its core unchanged.

More than being long lasting, *Main Street* has become a synecdoche for the small town, which is "offered as a microcosm of America, yet an America in which conflicts are resolved, differences elided, a world that stands symbolically for order" (Orvell 14). And as Ryan Poll argues, "As its name suggests, Main Street U.S.A. is a fantasy about the nation. According to this fantasy, the small town is first and foremost a national space" (6). Simplistic as Disney's caricature of Main Street is, this is what most people think about when you talk about Main Street—and America writ large—not Sinclair Lewis's stultifying vision of the same. The Disney version of Main Street hasn't faded from our collective memory—it's entrenched.

Despite the fact that the idyllic Midwestern small town is still firmly a part of the American consciousness, discussing the merits of the Revolt as a literary movement or construct has import, particularly as the debate has significance in the polarized American political climate exemplified by the 2016-2020 Trump presidency. Examining the Revolt's political implications requires a look at the movement's foundations, particularly the local color writing to which the Revolt texts respond. Additionally, any defense of the Revolt construct calls for an examination of critical attacks on that construct, as well as a reading of some of the movement's key texts, including Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Lewis's *Main Street*, and Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett*. The only Revolt that can be discounted in these texts is one that willfully misreads or neglects their central ambiguities and complexity.

If critics of Midwestern literature have a problem with Carl Van Doren's reading of the small town, it likely in part stems from a sense that Van Doren seems today to be punching down, attacking a beleaguered, belittled, and largely ignored American setting for fiction. But at the time Van Doren wrote, he was responding to nearly a century of writing wherein the small town was dominant—a central locale of popular fiction. Part of the reason Van Doren embraced the writing of Lewis, Masters, and Anderson in his initial review essay was because of how their work broke from a long, tired version of the small town depicted in short fiction in the last half of the nineteenth century, a saccharine vision of main streets filled with homogenous stock characters indistinguishable from each other but for their various regional dialects.

In the stories written during the local color movement, beginning with Harriet Beecher Stowe's "A New England Sketch"

(1834)—later titled "Uncle Lot"—the small town had long been celebrated as a beatific, pastoral paradise, and the stories composed about it tilted quaint and nostalgic. Stowe's story was among the earliest example of what would become a relentless tide of quaint local color fictions that filled magazines for the better part of a century. As Van Doren characterized it, while the farm was sometimes worthy of a full depiction, the village was largely untouched in the literary imagination:

> The village seemed too cosy a microcosm to be disturbed. There it lay in the mind's eye, neat, compact, organized, traditional: the white church with tapering spire, the sober schoolhouse, the smithy of the ringing anvil, the corner crockery, the cluster of friendly houses, the venerable parson, the wise physician, the canny squire, the grasping landlord softened or outwitted in the end, the village belle, gossip, atheist, idiot, jovial fathers, gentle mothers, merry children, cool parlors, shrinking kitchens, spacious barns, lavish gardens, fragrant summer dawns, and comfortable winter evenings. (407)

We can think about Van Doren's pronouncement about the literary depiction of the small town in two ways. First, the impulse to embrace the novels of 1920 as part of a Revolt doesn't come from a desire to deride the small town but rather to deride the facile characterization of that small town. The towns represented in these nineteenth-century stories were often simplistic caricatures, flimsy sets upon which to set redeeming plots; the representation neglected the complexity and individuality of small towns. While Van Doren calls his literary trend a revolt, he might as well be saying that it's a celebration of the true complexity of the small-town literary landscape. Even Anthony Channell Hilfer was careful to note in his treatise on the Revolt that it was not an attack on the small town itself.

Hilfer and Van Doren may well have held a celebration of a nuanced vision of the small town as a central reason for their Revolt theories, but it is important to recognize the likely sexism that may have driven the response to local color writing—and that fiction's primarily female authorship. Kate McCullough and others have noted how local color and regional writing created an opportunity for nontraditional writers, particularly women and writers of color. While this development opened a broader representation of woman authors in both local color and regional texts, these female authors often had to work well within a set of conventions to be published

and thus were asked to churn out relative treacle in order to make a living as writers.

In some ways, Revolt literature could be conceived as male authorship allowed to come into and upset what had been staked off as a woman's realm of village writing. This sound critique, one supported in detail in Fetterley and Pryse's seminal *Writing out of Place,* reconsiders how we should think about the Revolt texts, but it doesn't question the idea of a Revolt. These local-color small towns of the late nineteenth century, while certainly meriting study, were driven to be beatific by gender expectations of the authors and the publishers. An audience wanted positive, uplifting stories of the Midwest, and the magazines provided them.

And it's that demand for uplifting local color stories that we should be suspect. According to historians and critics, including T. Jackson Lears and Richard Brodhead, local color writing responded to an increasingly urban readership that longed for something more "authentic" than the harried movement of modern, urban life. Brodhead notes that while the call for this writing opened up a realm for authors who may well not have had an opportunity to write before, local color writing was itself enacted as a reaction to unease with a new, foreign element (Lears 32-33; Brodhead 149).

As Stephanie Foote argues in *Regional Fictions,* "regional writing gave strangers with accents literary recognition at exactly the same moment that accented strangers in the form of immigrants were clamoring for recognition and representation in the political arena" (5). In other words, the idealism expressed in local color fictions worked in American society as a kind of soothing balm against the problems of immigration—the perceived threat of changing social standing. While the characters in local color fiction had accents, they also were nonthreatening. In their Revolt texts, Anderson, Lewis, and Gale were responding to this domesticated vision of the Midwestern small town.

Perhaps you could say that three or four points plotted on a graph don't signal a trend, thus making Van Doren's formulation of a trending Revolt a product of his urban imagination. But Van Doren didn't orchestrate the popularity of *Main Street*—or that of *Miss Lulu Bett*. While Lewis's novel was well reviewed, Harcourt—its publisher—did little print advertising for the novel and initially only planned a print run of 10,000 copies. Lewis himself was worried that his novel would be seen as saccharine small-town fare and "neglected as

another magaziney tale" (qtd. in Hutchisson 41). Despite those worries, the book immediately became a bestseller, admittedly first in New York City, where estimates placed 40,000 of the 47,000 copies sold between October and Christmas.

But word of the novel soon spread, and the book was being shipped by the train-car load from New York. By April of 1921, *Main Street* was the number one best seller across the country, and, as Hutchisson reports, within a year of publication it had sold over 290,000 copies (42). *Main Street* went on to be not only the best-selling book of 1920-21, but the best-selling book from 1900-1925. Similarly, Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett* was one of the two best-selling books of 1920 and was adapted as a Pulitzer Prize-winning play in 1921. Big-city critics do have some power in their ability to set tastes and raise the visibility of texts, but the sort of reaction that these novels created shows that they were touching a nerve with the American reading public.

Many of the critical attacks on the Revolt rely upon centering the literary movement as a construct created in the minds of urban, coastal intelligentsia, a movement produced in collusion with authors who—like much of the American population in the '20s—left their Midwestern small towns and farms for the city. In the imagination of the Revolt deniers, these transplants, having burned their Midwestern bridges and now under the sway of big-city literati, schemed to foist a maligned literary vision of the small town upon the innocent hearts and minds of H. L. Mencken's unwitting booboisie. The sales of *Main Street* and *Miss Lulu Bett* alone prove that the readers were neither unwitting participants nor unwilling to participate in the Revolt.

Because Revolt texts like *Main Street* were popular with readers, another line of attack is to resurvey the works of Revolt authors, looking for evidence that writers canonically associated with the movement changed their philosophy. As Marcia Noe points out in her history of the Revolt in the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, volume 2, August Derleth makes this case in his 1963 *Three Literary Men: A Memoir of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters* wherein he takes the words of the authors themselves to protest the idea of the Revolt.

It's hard to believe that teachers and scholars should rely too much on authors to interpret their own work, especially reflections made much later in their lives. Reviews, interviews, and letters are of great use in the study of literature, but they should support—not supplant—the study of the text. Additionally, it is easy to take a few sen-

tences of a writer's work out of context and thus misread the whole of their work. Take, for example, this Midwestern author's warm recollection of his Illinois boyhood small town:

> Hope was a church, a school, a blacksmith shop, one store at first and two after a while and ten houses…It lay at a cross-roads on the long slope of a terminal moraine in the middle of a prairie…Most of the men saw each other almost every day at the store or the blacksmith shop. The children went five days of the week during nine months of the year to school. And everybody met everybody else at church on Sunday. Although the village was a bare crossroads in a cornfield, it was also the heart of a community, with the bones, flesh, blood, and nerves of any community. Any community is a world. (*Boyhood* 8)

That somewhat idyllic vision of the town was written in 1939 by Carl Van Doren in his memoir, *An Illinois Boyhood*. Van Doren's language here also reaffirms the importance of reading an entire work for context, for despite the nostalgia of the lines above, he goes on to reaffirm his belief in the antipastoral late in the book: "If, remembering, I make out life at Hope as a cool pastoral, I misrepresent it" (57). He catalogs Hope's sins and base desires from "swift and savage" violence to "scandals," "feuds," "grudges," and "fornication" (58-61). Of his hometown Van Doren concludes: "The other vices of Hope were the greed which drove whole families to senseless toil, the avarice which denied them satisfactions they might as well have had, the cruelty which came both from anger and from stupidity. Hope was, I repeat, a microcosm" (62). Read in whole, Van Doren's characterization of his home village doesn't devalue the place but rather shows it as rich and complex a cultural landscape as anywhere else.

Any critique of the Revolt that builds its foundation on a few words from an author in a newspaper article or a sentence from personal correspondence is inherently problematic; a short essay penned late in life can't undermine the whole of an author's work. As Donald Pizer demonstrates in his collection of Hamlin Garland's early radical writing, authors' views often change over time and—as happened with Garland—become more conservative. Garland's populist-leaning philosophy expressed in his stories and essays published in the 1880s and early 1890s are nonexistent in the mountain romances he would write between 1898 and 1916 (Pizer xxv). His later conservatism doesn't mean Garland was never a populist or that we should forget his more radical younger writing.

And even authors often cited as counterpoint to the Revolt like Ruth Suckow were much more amenable to the cause than it might seem. In her essay, "Middle Western Literature" (1932), Suckow reflects on the great works of Midwestern literature, including *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; My Antonia; Main Street; Spoon River Anthology; Winesburg, Ohio; Chicago Poems*; and *Main-Travelled Roads*, noting that they all grapple with bleak themes: "Meagerness, barrenness, has always been the critics' complaint against American life, I am afraid against the Middle West most of all. And of course, it does have, like all provincial life, its deadly Main Street side. But one thing that suggests the vigor of the list of books I have just mentioned is its variety. They are all quite different. But they are all middle western" (178). The kind of diversity that Suckow celebrates is not the kind that would be found in prevalent local color work. She argues that the best of Midwestern literature—much of it falling in the school of the Revolt—is complex, ambiguous, and problematizing in its representation of that Midwest.

For those who resist the idea of the Revolt, it is anathema that the East Coast intelligentsia would, in the process of portraying the small town in all its complexity, air its dirty laundry. These defenders of the Midwest heap blame on Van Doren or H. L. Menken for their lack of understanding of the complexity of the Midwestern vision presented in the Revolt texts, sometimes viewing the city—particularly New York City—and the Midwestern village as somehow at war.

Epitomizing this view is Barry Gross, who, after cataloging the sins of New York authors and critics in their opinions about the Midwest, goes on to castigate the whole of the city in 1977, calling it a "cesspool": "There are many, in fact, who gloat over New York's current crisis as the come-uppance it has long and richly deserved, proper punishment for its sophistication and snobbishness, on the one hand, and its historic role as cesspool of races and religions, colors and creeds, crime and corruption, on the other. It has come to symbolize all that is 'wrong' with America, all that is worst in twentieth-century modernity" (109). The thrust of Gross's essay is that the Revolt texts, particularly *Main Street,* do much more than simply show the Midwest village as stultifying. But his conceptualization of the city as some kind of horrible alternative to the Midwestern village, as if the two were set in opposition, is troubling, mainly because it makes a caricature of the city even as it accuses scholars of making a caricature of the small town.

In his recent *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge*, a study of the literary and cultural representation of the Midwest in the early twentieth century, Jon K. Lauck develops a critique of the Revolt movement that is more reasoned and well-researched than that presented in Gross's essay, but it follows the same logic, pitting a coastal intellectual elite against a virtuous—and often idealized—Midwestern village culture. In a review for the *Los Angeles Review of Books,* Stephanie Foote ably teases out the strong center of Lauck's argument:

> Lauck argues that the urban, Eastern critics substantially misread the work of even those writers who were assigned to the "revolt" school, and completely ignored those writers whose work pointedly declined to expose the grim contours of life in small towns. He persuasively argues that a cadre of Midwestern writers attempted to revolt against "revolt from the village" criticism, continuing to create widely circulated fiction that celebrated the values of small-town communities and deliberately turned away from the dominance of Eastern aesthetic judgments.

Lauck has long been a champion of Midwestern history and culture, and he presented early versions of his ideas on what he termed the "Myth of the Midwestern 'Revolt from the Village'" in *MidAmerica* in 2013. But as *Washington Post* reviewer Michael Dirda notes, Lauck's argument also makes an implicit connection between the Midwestern small town and "the centrality it grants to family, community and church, and even the Jeffersonian ideal of a democracy based on farms and small land-holdings." This conceptualization posits the Midwestern small town as inherently virtuous, even as it decries intellectuals—the Eastern sophisticates—as somehow snobbish and urbane (or spacey, in terms of Californians), and conversely sees the small town as simpler but more virtuous—an assertion the Revolt authors were attempting to complicate. If as critics we don't want the village presented as a caricature, then we can't similarly stereotype the urban scholars, many of whom, like Van Doren, were born in the Midwest.

Many studies of the Revolt attempt to make sense of the dissonance of reception and interpretation surrounding the key Revolt texts. Noe notes the relative lack of consensus upon what the Revolt is and does and then goes on to ask implicitly how a critical construct that is so ill defined can stand (730-32). As part of this line of debate,

Noe discusses the conflicting readings of *Winesburg, Ohio* from two noted scholars, David D. Anderson and Anthony Channell Hilfer.

Viewed in this way, Revolt texts become Rorschach tests in which the reader or critic sees either butterfly or beast depending on their personal biases. I understand the argument, but I also wonder if there are many truly literary texts that don't reflect this kind of dispute in both critical and reception circles; certainly the work of Jonathan Franzen evokes this kind of bifurcated response in readers. Critical consensus generally only comes in the case of a fixed and well-defined interpretive community, as Stanley Fish would term it, and the real question we have before us is what sort of bounds we want to put on our literary community in terms of the Revolt texts.

If we follow from this oppositional construct of intellectual urbane critics controlling the vision of the small town, then we as critics buy into the simplistic construct of those towns as helpless, the Midwest being subjugated by the cultural elites of the urban centers. To see such a characterization, however, is to embrace an idea wherein the Midwestern small town residents, rubes as they may be presented to be at times, suffer under colonial domination. To portray the white Protestant communities of the Midwest as the victims of urban intellectuals is absurd. These were communities governed by white men who often controlled national electoral politics. As any child from Ohio will tell you, eight US presidents elected between 1840 and 1921 were born in Ohio. When every road to a presidential election begins with the Iowa caucuses and when the presidential races of 2016 and 2020 are decided based on razor-thin vote margins in Michigan and Wisconsin, any grousing about a devalued fly-over country becomes absurd.

Perhaps the best critique of the Revolt comes from careful readers who recognize the beauty within Anderson's, Gale's, and Lewis's depictions of the small town, but while it's clear that these writers saw the beatific in their depictions, it was rarely uncomplicated. George Willard's affection for Winesburg is clear in the poetic images he reflects upon as he leaves town at the end of the novel: "He thought of little things—Turk Smollet wheeling boards through the main street of his town in the morning, a tall woman, beautifully gowned, who had once stayed overnight at his father's hotel, Butch Wheeler the lamp lighter of Winesburg hurrying through the streets on a summer evening and holding a torch in his hand, Helen White standing by a window in the Winesburg post office and putting a

stamp on an envelope" (138). Anderson's images here are both timeless and connected to a wide world: Turk Smollet is reminiscent of Ben Franklin wheeling his paper through the streets of Philadelphia, and the memory of Helen White places her in communication with the wider world. George's memories are beautiful but complex—not saccharine.

Similarly, Zona Gale wrote of a kind of inexorable community of women in her volumes of Friendship Village stories, even as she recognized how stultifying the small town could be for an unmarried woman in *Miss Lulu Bett*. In "The Début" from *Friendship Village,* for example, the narrator comes to Friendship "chiefly to get away from everywhere" but finds herself "abruptly launched in its society, committed to its Sodality, and, best of all, friends with Calliope Marsh" (15, 27). While Gale's "Friendship" stories sometimes gently mock the provincial manners of that small town, they never undercut the value of the community of women within the town. At the same time, Gale's Bett struggles to find anything for herself in her life as a single woman in a small town, as she expresses to Dwight, her controlling brother-in-law: "I've lived here all my life—on your money. I've not been strong enough to work, they say—well, but I've been strong enough to be a hired girl in your house—and I've been glad to pay for my keep…But there wasn't anything about it I liked. Nothing about being here that I liked…" (130). Gale recognized both what the community could offer women and how it could constrain them.

Even "Red" Lewis balanced Carol Kennicott's withering description of the stolid ugliness of Gopher Prairie with a following chapter from the viewpoint of Bea Sorenson, who, in coming from her home town, tiny Scandia Crossing, sees her new town as grand—even elegant: "What did she care if she got paid six dollars a week? Or two! It was worth while working for nothing, to be allowed to stay here" (55). These complex and sometimes contradictory representations of small towns don't mean, however, that there was no Revolt, but only that these are all good books.

Tom Lutz theorizes this balance of perspective, what he calls a cosmopolitan vista, as a literary strategy that holds two elements in opposition, creating sympathy within the reader for both poles. Regional narratives, he posits, seek not only to represent the hinterland of the rural, but also to value the perspective of the urban, creating a third, cosmopolitan, perspective that values both urban and

rural. He explains: "What these narratives offer again and again is a third term, a vantage point from which these distinctions represented are erased in favor of a cosmopolitan ethic, which usually respects and disrespects both poles. These texts promote a superior cultural position that transcends all difference and dismisses difference as atavistic" (97-98). The joy for the reader, or the literary experience of the text, emerges through his or her kinship with the author in recognition of a perspective wider than the play between poles. And it's this play between negative and positive portrayals of the small town—the two contained within a single narrative—that made the Revolt texts literary, that made the small town worth reading about again after a half century of simplistic portrayal.

And as the Revolt texts recognized the fullness of perspectives on the small town, they also began to represent the underrepresented, championing voices which had been overlooked or ostracized. In "Hands," Sherwood Anderson gives us an understanding and even tender representation of Wing Biddlebaum, a schoolteacher whose passion for his boys is misinterpreted, even as Anderson provides the image of an angry father beating Wing with his fists, a lynch mob stopping short of stringing him up for an imagined offence (11-12). Anderson recognizes the kindness and passion in Wing, but he shows these qualities within a man crushed by a stultifying town. In *Miss Lulu Bett,* Gale's unmarried title character is left with little choice but to live under the careless demands of her sister Ida and the blustering whims of her brother-in-law Dwight, but Gale is also careful to write real affection between the sisters in the novel. The complexity of the sisters' relationship makes Bett's situation more tragic and her eventual bid for freedom less easy and more conflicted.

And in *Main Street,* when Miles Bjornstam's wife Bea and son Otto come down with typhoid fever, Will Kennicott doesn't hesitate to throw off his disdain for Miles and come to their aid immediately and competently, even agreeing that Carol should serve as nurse to the family. But this competence is balanced with the fact that Bea and Otto get typhoid from bad water, water Bjornstam resorts to using because he is kidded relentlessly about getting free water from a cleaner source, even though he offers to pay for it. Lewis never portrays Will as anything but a good doctor and good man, but that doesn't erase the fact that Bjornstam walks alone to the funeral of his wife and child (338-341). In each case, the Revolt text creates place and feeling for the outsider: a passionate, misunderstood oddball; a

woman; and an immigrant. The Revolt gave a place for these outsiders within a complex, sometimes beautiful, sometimes stultifying, small-town landscape. That kind of complexity makes for great, important novels.

The anti-Revolt, as it might be called, with its celebration of the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer and an idyllic pastoral lifestyle, falls into the danger of presenting an unquestioned village landscape—perpetuating a once "great" America that never was. In subsuming the revolt in the Revolt texts, we run the risk of following the reactionary path of John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren and their attempts to solidify the South in the literary imagination with the other "Angry Southerners" in their *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition,* a book that, in championing the agrarian lifestyle in the South, ignores the ills of sharecropping; apologizes for, forgets, or forgives the trauma of slavery; and waxes nostalgic on a romantic vision of the antebellum South that never existed.

As Roberto Dainotto has argued, while regionalism is sometimes posited as a counterhegemonic force to nationalism, unquestioned regionalism acts just the same as nationalism in that it conceives of regions as whole, unquestioned, undisputed, and homogenous—thus walling out dissenting voices and unwanted bodies. When regionalism is unquestioned, Dainotto posits, it becomes reactionary: "This is, after all, the reactionary trait of the literature of place; it tries to take the question of identity away from the space of politics—away from the space of negotiation. It imposes identity as a rooted absolute, and fosters what Adorno called a 'jargon of authenticity'—but this time against itself, and against its own passionate affirmation of multicultural peace and harmony" (33).

In imagining the Midwest as uncontested, the troubling essence of homogeneity raises its ugly head. As Dainotto posits and the work of the Twelve Southerners shows, a regionalism that forgets the political struggles and strife of a place can itself be used to promote an authoritarian political agenda. What is Donald Trump's slogan of "Making America Great Again" if not a celebration of an uncomplicated past that never was? Rejecting the Revolt as an idea instead of complicating it means effectively walling off the critique of the Midwest, minimizing the struggles of those who did falter within small-town life.

And what truly endangers the small-town Midwest isn't some of the best American novels of the early twentieth century, but, instead, a growing and pervasive homogenization of American life and culture. Regions are under attack not by urban centers trying to view them as fly-over country but by their own desire to homogenize, to get the best deal, to be like the rest of America, and to wall off dissent. Every Walmart and Target in the Midwest has the same general design, the same layout, and the same products as the ones in California and New York. That's not the work of the coastal elite; the first Walmart opened in Arkansas, the first Target in Minnesota. The fact that architecture in McMansion-style housing developments looks the same from coast to coast isn't an attack from outside either. Midwesterners are choosing to build homes that belong more on a California cul-de-sac than a Midwestern prairie. That's the homogenous vision that is attacking the Midwest, not some phantom intelligentsia or mysterious group of book editors chatting cattily about how to deride the Midwest over cocktails at some upscale New York eatery.

The Revolt from the Village is an important movement in American literature not because it is simple and clean and clear but because it is messy, reflecting the ugly and strange as well as the beautiful and sublime in the Midwestern small town. The writing of the Revolt is an attempt to reflect the whole of that small-town weirdness, and that grand reflection is likely to always rankle. I'm reminded of a newspaper clipping I found pasted inside the cover of my prized first edition of Carl Van Vechten's *The Tattooed Countess*. In the yellowed clipping, a "Hanna Drexel Saxe, Dept. of English, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa," writes: "What IS this thing that Carl has thrust upon us unsuspecting folk? A travesty on 'MAIN STREET' or 'BLACK OXEN?' Heaven help us! Not content by offending by a family style, replete with inconsistencies, he must disgust us with a burden which in its cheapness and flatulence violates all principles of good taste." Drexel Saxe is offended by anything lacking in "good taste" and "family style," and what she sees as "cheapness and flatulence" in Van Vechten's work is simply difference—of gender, of ethnicity, of sexuality. In the end, this argument against a Revolt text is an argument against the whole of what the Midwestern small town was and is.

And Sinclair Lewis, perhaps the most revolting of all the Revolt authors, understood the danger of this impulse. In his 1930 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he argued:

> [I]n America most of us—not readers alone but even writers—are still afraid of any literature which is not a glorification of everything American, a glorification of our faults as well as our virtues. To be not only a best seller in America but to be really beloved, a novelist must assert that all American men are tall, handsome, rich, honest, and powerful at golf; that all country towns are filled with neighbors who do nothing from day to day save go about being kind to one another; that although American girls may be wild, they change always into perfect wives and mothers....

In laying aside the Revolt, we risk "returning" to a pleasant but bland imagined America that never was. We deny the weirdness and diversity that is the Midwestern small town, instead condemn ourselves to a constructed, theme-park reality and conception of the same. And, as Donald Trump would suggest we do, we wall out difference under the guise of keeping ourselves safe. In neglecting the importance of the Revolt, we risk again the idea of making concrete an uncontested past that never existed, one that didn't consider the experience of immigrants in small towns, of women in the home, of oddball individuals in the small town. These varied experiences, ones that were as prevalent in the 1920s as they are today, need expression and representation. Forgetting them is building a wall against the difference that has always pervaded the Midwestern small town, attempting to wall off the multiple viewpoints that have always been a part of the Midwest. It's tempting to want to see the Midwest as homogenous and kind, but in doing so we neglect the diverse and sometimes hard experience that is the Midwest.

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STILL REVOLTING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS: THE POWER OF METAPHOR IN "THE REVOLT FROM THE VILLAGE: 1920"

Marcia Noe

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In October of 1921, Carl Van Doren fired the first shot in a literary war that, for the better part of the twentieth century, would engage writers, critics, scholars, and readers in continual skirmishes over the construction of the Midwest and its meaning in American culture. Focusing on a number of recently published books, such as Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, Van Doren argued that these books rejected what he called the cult of the village: the notion that life in American small towns was happy, harmonious, virtuous, and peaceful.

Although the writers Van Doren discussed at greatest length in his essay—Masters, Anderson, and Lewis—later told August Derleth that they had participated in no such movement, the term "Revolt from the Village" became widely accepted and was employed uncritically throughout the rest of the century and into the new millennium. By the second half of the twentieth century, however, "Revolt from the Village" had become a contested term. Some scholars worked to refine the concept, others rejected it completely, and still others sought to situate the movement within a larger cultural perspective on the Midwest, generating a lively conversation about exactly what

the Revolt from the Village was, whether such a revolt in fact existed, and more significantly, how perceptions about this movement have participated in the cultural construction of the Midwest. Although a number of explanations have been advanced to account for the persistence of the Revolt thesis, one that must be considered is Van Doren's skillful and continual use of an agonistic metaphor.

In "The Revolt from the Village: 1920," Van Doren began by noting that during the second decade of the twentieth century a number of American books were published that reflected a change in attitude toward the American small town. This essay, the tenth in a series on contemporary American novelists that was published in the *Nation,* heralded what Van Doren termed "the newest style in American fiction" (407), a fresh breath of candor that blew away the facade of innocence from American small-town life and exposed the raw emotions that made up its inner core. He presented Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* as the urtext of the Revolt from the Village and went on to discuss the "Revolt" books that followed in its wake: Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*; E. W. Howe's *The Anthology of Another Town*; Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*; Zona Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett*, Floyd Dell's *Moon-Calf*, Mary Borden's *The Romantic Woman*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*.

Van Doren continued to beat the drum of revolt for the next twenty years. In 1922, he republished his seminal essay in *Contemporary American Novelists* as a chapter, "The Revolt from the Village," which he updated in 1940 as two chapters, "The Revolt from the Village" and "Sinclair Lewis," for *The American Novel, 1889-1939*." In 1923, he included an essay, "On Hating the Provinces," in *The Roving Critic*. There he asserted that "voice after voice is added to the *regiments* of criticism being raised against suburban Philistia and the vilatic bourgeoisie" (83, my italics). In 1926, Van Doren reiterated this notion in the textbook he published with his brother Mark, *American and British Literature since 1890*, and again in a 1933 biographical sketch of Lewis. Here, as well as in his landmark 1921 essay, he used a sustained battle metaphor that would control the way the Revolt from the Village would later be conceptualized and written about:

> Thousands who had suffered from their villages rose to shouts of triumphant recognition and turned missionary. Tens of thousands who had not felt dull in their villages defended them and any like them. Rival prejudices, having found in the book a cause for war, read it

> chiefly to pick up ammunition. Main Street made a flag and a target, became a symbol, and was blamed for all the war's excesses. (*Sinclair Lewis: A Biographical Sketch,* 23-24).

As the 1920s wore on, Van Doren found new recruits. Having devoted more ink to this alleged literary movement than did other critics, he was arguably most responsible for its perpetuation. Moreover, his use of a sustained metaphor of battle engaged the imaginations of other scholars and critics; soon the notion of a Revolt from the Village became a hot topic in literary conversation. In 1926, Dorothy Dondore discussed the Revolt in *The Prairie and the Making of Middle America* as part of a movement away from romanticism, referring to Van Doren and his essay and emphasizing, as he did, that the rebellion was a cultural movement led by Lewis, Dell and Anderson. By the 1930s, the revolt had escalated into an all-out war, at least in the language of some scholars, who picked up on and developed Van Doren's martial imagery.

Among these was Ima Honaker Herron, who seemed to have been so heavily influenced by Van Doren's Revolt theory that she devoted her entire career to the literature of the small town, the focus of her 1926 MA thesis and her 1935 PhD dissertation, published in 1939 as *The Small Town in American Literature*. This book, republished in 1959 and again in 1971, echoed Van Doren's military metaphors as Herron conceptualized "the battle of the village," opposing the "village apologists," including William Allen White, James Whitcomb Riley, Meredith Nicholson, Booth Tarkington, and Zona Gale to the "prophets of the new age," among whom she named Masters, Anderson, Lewis, Dell, and Willa Cather. Van Doren's influence continued to pervade Herron's scholarship, reappearing in 1969 in her second book, *The Small Town in American Drama*, which included a section called "The Flight from Main Street."

In 1931, Russell Blankenship's *American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind* constructed the Revolt from the Village similarly in a chapter, "The Battle of the Village," that exploited the two familiar twenties-era shibboleths of the puritan and the pioneer as those prototyps of village life that had provoked the rebellion: "As the home of such elements the village drew the first fire of the critics. The defenders of the small town had not waited for the attack of the hostile party" (650). Such agonistic images were further developed by the structure of the chapter, which first discussed

"the defense," including White, Tarkington, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher and then "the attack," represented by Lewis and Anderson. Blankenship's innovation was to include a third subsection, "Beyond the Village," in which he praised Cather's work. In 1935, this construction of the Revolt from the Village as literary war was noted by Harlan Hatcher in C*reating the Modern American Novel*: "Ruth Suckow has joined no side in the controversy between Main Street and Friendship Village" (106).

The 1940s and 1950s saw influential New York critics embracing and elaborating on the notion of the Revolt from the Village. In 1942, Alfred Kazin devoted a chapter of *On Native Grounds* to Anderson and Lewis, linking them as "two stories of revolt against small-town life in the Middle West" that "signalized even more the coming of a fresh new realism to fiction" (205). Frederick J. Hoffman, in *The Twenties* (1955), stressed the Midwestern herd mentality in his conceptualization of the literature of revolt as an attack on conformity, emphasizing that the motif of escape linked the novels of revolt.

By midcentury, the Revolt from the Village had, according to Anthony Channell Hilfer in *The Revolt from the Village, 1915-1930,* "become an accepted rubric of historical criticism" (3). In 1950, Henry Steele Commager devoted a chapter of *The American Mind* to "the literature of revolt" and joined in the chorus of critics who portrayed this literature as a protest against middle-class values. The Revolt also appeared in Robert Spiller's *The Literary History of the United States*; here it transmogrified from a war into a deadly pestilence: "Writers like Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Leis were now ready to report that the infection had spread to the village where, so their countrymen wanted to believe, the democratic virtues still lingered. Masters's Spoon River was the first village to have its shroud of decency violently removed. Anderson's Winesburg and Lewis's Gopher Prairie were not spared for long" (1181).

In 1951, Arthur Hobson Quinn concurred, stating in *The Literature of the American People* that "what Carl Van Doren was soon to label 'the revolt from the village' began in Spoon River" (870). In 1955 no less a scholar of Midwestern literature than John T. Flanagan recognized the massive attack on the Midwest and its culture, arguing that "by the early 1920s, what Carl Van Doren called the revolt from the village was in full swing, the Midwest small town had been recorded as an ugly, gossip-ridden, materialistic, hypocritical, prurient stolid community, death at once to the imagination and to the artist" (152).

Thus, although "the Revolt from the Village" would become a contested term throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, many scholars and critics used it as if everyone agreed on what it was and what it meant. In 1965 Roy W. Meyer invoked the phrase to emphasize the difference between the Middle Western farm novel and the Middle Western village novel. In *Famous American Books* (1971), Robert B. Downs included a chapter on Main Street, "The Revolt from the Village," that hewed to the Van Doren line, as did George F. Day sixteen years later in *A Literary History of the American West* when he cited the Revolt as one of four major themes in Midwestern literature. In 1992, Ronald Weber contextualized his discussion of *Moon-Calf* in terms of the Revolt from the Village in *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing*, and in 2005 Timothy B. Spears positioned the Revolt as a search for artistic freedom in *Chicago Dreaming*.

A few decades earlier, several scholars had sought to refine and clarify the Revolt from the Village as a literary movement. Hilfer argued that the Revolt was not an attack on the village per se but on what the village stood for: middle-class values and conventions. He also asserted that there were two Revolts from the Village: the first Revolt that comprised the prairie realism of E. W. Howe, Joseph Kirkland, and others, and the early twentieth-century Revolt that Van Doren identified, a case made by Philip H. Ford in 1956 in "Evidence of a Revolt from the Village in the Eighteen Nineties."

In her 1971 dissertation and in "The Revolt from the Village and Middle Western Fiction, 1870-1915," Diane Dufva Quantic noted that the term had become a vague designation for any book that was critical of small-town life and sought to develop a more precise definition of the term. Like Hilfer, Quantic maintained that many saw the Revolt as an attack not so much on the village itself as on a state of mind typical of middle-class residents of Middle Western towns. However, she argued that a critical stance against the middle class was too broad a definition to characterize accurately the Revolt-from-the-Village movement. She then established some characteristics of a Revolt-from-the-Village book: contemporary Middle Western town setting, rebellious central character, and stagnant community. Like Hilfer and Ford, Quantic took issue with critics who posited 1915 as the beginning of the movement, noting that it was strongly rooted in prairie realism.

Other scholars joined Hilfer, Ford, and Quantic in seeking to clarify, refine, and qualify the term "the Revolt from the Village." In

1964, G. Thomas Tanselle warned in "Sinclair Lewis and Floyd Dell: Two Views of the Midwest," that the term could be misleading if taken to mean a complete rejection of the region. Tanselle cautioned against lumping together as Revolt authors all who wrote unsentimentally about the Midwest, citing Dell and Lewis, and argued that the differences between *Main Street* and *Moon-Calf* demonstrate how pointless it is to try to classify either novelist as a Revolt writer.

Another scholar of that period who attempted to define the term more precisely was Park Dixon Goist. In *From Main Street to State Street*, Goist acknowledged Hilfer's view of the Revolt as an attack on village conformity but added that some so-called Revolt authors, namely Gale and Dell, were ambivalent about their towns, finding community in them as well as conformity. Seven years later, Charles Wordell, like Quantic, attempted to clarify the term. In "The Revolt from the Village and the Exquisites: Carl Van Vechten's *The Tattooed Countess*," Wordell delineated four characteristics of the Revolt novel: emphasis on the negative elements of village life, the village's interference with personal development, the need to leave the village for self-realization, and the acceptance of the village as a social reality that has strengths and weaknesses.

While scholars like Hilfer, Ford, Quantic, Tanselle, Goist, and Wordell sought to sand off the fuzzy edges of the term "Revolt from the Village," others wrote in opposition to the notion itself. Barry Gross tackled its proponents head on in "The Revolt That Wasn't: The Legacies of Critical Myopia." In this 1977 essay, Gross characterized the Revolt as a concept developed by urban Eastern critics who wanted to put down Middle Western life as harboring a second-class culture (4). He argued that Masters, Anderson, and Lewis were in revolt, not from the village itself, but from the myth of the village as "the great good place, as simple and innocent, pure and virtuous, democratic and egalitarian" (5), thus evoking a preindustrial, vanished Midwest. In a second essay, "In Another Country: The Revolt from the Village," Gross primarily blamed H. L. Mencken for loosing the Revolt from the Village onto the American cultural scene and also indicted Kazin and Hoffman for perpetuating distorted views of the Midwest.

David D. Anderson wrote extensively against the notion of a Revolt-from-the-Village literary movement as a defining characteristic of Midwestern literature. In his many books and articles on the work of Sherwood Anderson, he argued forcefully that *Winesburg, Ohio* is not

part of the literature of revolt, if indeed there is such a thing. In "The Search for a Living Past," he wrote, "One of the most persistent and most misleading attempts at interpreting Midwestern literature is the so-called 'Revolt from the Village Myth'" (212). Anderson summarized Van Doren's argument and his influence on later critics such as Hoffman and Hilfer and stressed that "the conviction with which Van Doren stated his case has made that interpretation of Midwestern literature a fixture of modern American criticism" (212.

Anderson criticized Hoffman and Hilfer for grounding their arguments in "the sandy interpretation originally constructed by Van Doren on the basis of a few isolated works" (213) and for not carefully analyzing the so-called Revolt books or the Midwestern myths they perpetuate. What these authors were revolting against, he asserted, was not the village itself but the changes imposed on village life that resulted from an increasingly commercial and materialistic way of existence that came to the villages with modern times. The fundamental myth of the Midwest, contended Anderson, was not a myth of revolt but a myth of movement and search in response to the death of the Jeffersonian dream.

In "The Midwestern Town in Midwestern Fiction," Anderson elaborated on his objections to the simplistic "Revolt from the Village" characterization seen in much early twentieth-century Midwestern literary criticism. Anderson maintained that the novels that describe the movement from the towns to the cities during the first two decades of the twentieth century contain no evidence to support Van Doren's assertion that they constitute a revolt from the village, emphasizing that George Willard and his fictional contemporaries who leave the Midwestern small town for the big city are not revolting from the village; to the contrary, in their quest for self-fulfillment and success, they are taking with them the village and its ideals of progress, individualism, democracy, and education.

In a subsequent essay, "Sherwood Anderson and the Critics," Anderson argued against the unquestioning acceptance of what he called "the most widespread and most widely accepted literary metaphor of the Midwest" (1). Anderson traced the literary genealogy of the Revolt and exposed it as an oversimplified generalization unsupported by facts, pointing out that Van Doren and other Eastern critics glossed over the affection and respect that the so-called Revolt authors felt for the people in their respective villages while projecting their own Eastern cultural biases into their readings.

In the waning decades of the twentieth century, scholars of Midwestern literature sought to provide a more complex and nuanced discussion of the Revolt-from-the-Village phenomenon, as well as of the books that had traditionally been cited as exemplifying the movement, and sometime situated the Revolt within a larger story of the region. In "The Safe Middle West: Escape from and Escape to Home," Margaret Stuhr found the notion of "middleness" to be at the heart of what she called "the double-edged mythology of The Safe Middle West" that centers on the diametrically opposed meanings of the adjective "safe" (18). To explain why the region "has both attracted and alienated its sons and daughters," she showed how the Midwest is beneficially safe as a haven of harmony and stability and strong family values but also safe in a bad way because these very qualities make it "a cowardly retreat from the unknown and the challenging" (19). Stuhr related the Revolt from the Village to this second aspect of the safe Middle West, which has generated ambivalence in its writers, citing the many comings and goings that characterize the region's literature and are reflected in the departure/return motif as seen in novels by Lewis, Tarkington, Suckow, and Fitzgerald.

For Stephen Enniss, as for Stuhr, ambiguity and ambivalence were central to the Revolt-from-the-Village concept. Focusing on Anderson's landmark novel in "The Implied Community of *Winesburg, Ohio*," Enniss described the stigmatizing effect of Van Doren's classification of the book as part of the literature of revolt and analyzed the way in which this label has resulted in oversimplified interpretations of the novel as a critique of repressive small-town life. Similarly, John E. Hallwas introduced his 1992 critical edition of *Spoon River Anthology* with a seventy-nine-page essay in which he noted that "readers of American literature continue to associate the book with the so-called 'revolt from the village' movement that also produced Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920)" (2).

However, Hallwas rejected that simplistic classification and advocated for a more complex vision of the book as "a depiction of the struggle for self-realization in a society that has lost contact with the great democratic vision that once gave purpose and meaning to American lives" (2). In his emphasis on the main thrust of *Spoon River Anthology* as "a spiritual quest for the 'Petersburg environment,' an attempt to recover what had vanished—from his life and

from American culture—by memorializing it in his poetry," Hallwas echoed David D. Anderson's analysis, as did David Holman in *A Certain Slant of Light* (1995), arguing that the failure of Midwestern society to achieve the Jeffersonian dream resulted in disillusionment with the Midwestern small town (3, 97).

In "The Ambiguities of the Escape Theme in Midwestern Literature, 1918-1934," Matts Vasta endeavored to complicate the traditional notion of the Revolt from the Village as an exodus and an estrangement from the village. Vasta, like Stuhr and Enniss, emphasized the ambiguities of the escape theme in the literature of revolt, outlining several types of escape found in these books: the escape of no return, the conclusive escape, the open-ended escape, and the inconclusive escape. He asserted that the inconclusive escape "qualifies the revolt-from-the-village approach and makes the attitudes towards the Middle West much more complicated than merely looking at the Middle West as a 'metaphor of abuse'" (63). He concluded that the conflicting nuances of the escape motif, as well as the escape-return pattern frequently found in Revolt literature, reflect the ambivalence and complexity of the characters' attitudes toward the Midwest.

With the coming of the new millennium, Jon Gjerde sought in "Middleness and the Middle West" to theorize the region by means of the same doubled-edged notion of middleness that engaged Stuhr, claiming that Midwestern identity derives largely from the middleness in its name. After reviewing both positive and negative kinds of Midwestern middleness, Gjerde identified four defining characteristics of Midwestern identity: revolt, nostalgia, condescension, and defensiveness. He stated that revolt was a more common and successful theme than nostalgia and cited Howe, Garland, Lewis, Cather, Masters and William Dean Howells as authors of works that comprise complex mixtures of condemnation of and nostalgia for the Midwestern small town but that nevertheless have had the overall effect of foregrounding repressiveness, conformity, and stultification as key elements of Midwestern identity.

Another twenty-first-century scholar, Tom Lutz, maintained that the best "Revolt" books, such as those by Anderson, Lewis and Suckow, evince a kind of double consciousness that can articulate both the limitations and the advantages of small-town life. Lutz contended that these works are characterized by a cosmopolitan outlook; they work on multiple levels, comprising both critique and celebration and valuing both the particular and the universal. Other contem-

porary scholars, such as David M. Jordan, Edward Watts, Roberto M. Dainotto, Judith Fetterley, and Marjorie Pryse, have taken a post-colonial approach: the interior region has been viewed as marginalized space subject to the cultural hegemony of the Eastern seaboard. Ryan Poll situated his discussion of the small town within the context of globalization; in *Main Street and Empire* he challenged essentialist notions of the small town as an icon of national identity that signifies stability, security, and community and analyzed its ideological function in furthering the spread of US power and global capitalism, conceptualizing the Revolt from the Village as a modernist critique of this ideological function. The Revolt from the Village has also been cited, sometimes preceded by the qualifier "so-called," in several scholarly publications over the past five years: John E. Hallwas's "Village Realism but No Revolt" (2017), Jon K. Lauck's "Typecast Rebels: The Strange Careers of *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Main Street*" (2017), Sara Kosiba's "Breaking Binaries: Deconstructing the 'Revolt' and Reassessing Midwestern Literature and Art" (2018), Andy Oler's *Old-Fashioned Modernism* (2019), and Adam R. Ochonicky's *The Midwest in Film and Literature* (2020).

Although Van Doren never formally defined the literary movement he heralded in his 1921 essay, he conceptualized it by means of a powerful metaphor that he repeated in several subsequent publications. This sustained metaphor was adopted by later scholars, resonating throughout discussions of Midwestern literature and shaping notions of Midwestern literary identity during the twentieth century and beyond. Van Doren's agonistic metaphor, in which Midwestern authors chose up sides and engaged in battle, took on a life of its own in the scholarly conversation; its prevalence soon validated the term "Revolt from the Village" and facilitated its unquestioned acceptance as a literary movement.

Metaphor, as Aristotle and many scholars after him have noted, is not just a decorative device but a generative mode of thinking and a powerful rhetorical tool. Jeffrey Donaldson suggests that people use metaphors because nature itself is metaphoric:

> The reality of difference and identity in electromagnetic charges, the constitution of the atom, the formation of chemicals and chemical relations, the origins of life in the advent of replication, tools like DNA and RNA, the fortuitous fact of mutation, the story of evolution with all its productive gaps and its penchant for reaching always further with, and into, its own associative leaps; these are the contigu-

> ous spaces through which the metaphoric initiative has passed, always adapting to the new materials and conditions that it both helped to form and inhabited. (217)

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson conceptualize metaphor as one of our senses, which are often our only means of experiencing the world: "Metaphor is as much as part of our functioning as our sense of touch, and as precious" (239). George Steiner maintains that metaphor is an integral part of our thought process, creating "a new arc of perceptive energy" that enhances cognition (qtd. in Bartel 81). Terence Hawkes points to yet another attribute of metaphor that gives it power: by its very nature, it requires us to articulate the unstated connection between its tenor and its vehicle, thus requiring an interactive encounter: "Even in such a poor metaphor as 'my car beetles along' the reader is forced to make an imaginative 'completion' from within his own experience of what the metaphor figuratively suggests…The reader has to *do* something, to join in, in order to hit the 'target'" (72, italics in original).

Donaldson argues that metaphor's "hermeneutic and ontological status as a *being as* is the root and reality of consciousness as we experience it . . . the designing and designful agent that provide for the condition of cultural change. . ." (8, italics in original). The psychologist Stephen Pinker speculates that human intelligence may be fundamentally metaphoric; Donaldson sees the evolution of our metaphoric minds as the key adaptation that secured our survival as a species (15; 8-9).

Metaphors, therefore, are powerful because they are basic to human cognition. Mark J. Landau, Michael D. Robinson, and Brian P. Meier argue that metaphor creates "a systematic set of associations between elements of a target [tenor] (i.e., features, properties and relations) and analogous elements of the source [vehicle]…In this way a conceptual metaphor allows people to draw on their knowledge of the source as a framework for thinking about the target" (6). They use the term "conceptual metaphor," originally coined by Lakoff and Johnson, to describe these cognitive functions.

Landau, Robinson, and Meier contend that metaphor-based conceptual mapping can impact the way we think and feel about the target. Their example evokes Van Doren's battle metaphor and suggests why it resonated so strongly with generation of readers, scholars, and critics: "For example, conceptualizing arguments in terms of war ('I

cannot penetrate her defenses') should promote a hostile orchestration in which one party is the victor and the other is the vanquished" (7). Roland Bartel also makes this argument, citing Winston Churchill, who used the term "iron curtain" to describe the Berlin Wall in his March 1946 speech, thus informing the Cold War attitudes of generations of political scientists and politicians. Likewise, the theory that the fall of Vietnam to the Communists would precipitate that of other southeastern Asian nations, expressed as the domino theory, kept the United States involved in Vietnam for many years.

These scholars have shown us that metaphor is a powerful means of persuasion because it involves us in a cognitive interaction, shaping the way we think and feel. Van Doren's battle metaphor doesn't just describe a literary phenomenon; it involves his readers in a conceptual conflict that invites them to root for a side and project a winner. Lakoff and Johnson deal directly with the power of a battle metaphor:

> To give some idea of what it could mean for a concept to be metaphorical and for such a concept to structure an everyday activity, let us start with the concept ARGUMENT and the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. This metaphor is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions…It is important to see that we don't just talk about argument in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own.…" (4)

Similarly, Jonathan Charteris-Black shows how Margaret Thatcher used a battle metaphor in several Party Conference speeches to generate support for her policies, noting that "[c]onflict is intrinsically compelling; it galvanizes, prods, motivates people. . ." (Charteris quoting Burns 3). Thus, Van Doren's representation of the Revolt from the Village as a metaphorical war contains within itself the power to influence readers in a way that a nonmetaphorical discussion would have lacked. Van Doren's use of this battle metaphor in "The Revolt from the Village: 1920," as well as its subsequent adoption by other scholars and critics, offers a cogent explanation for the endurance of the Revolt from the Village as a literary movement.

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