

other eight chapters and conclusion. Improved consistency of style would have allowed readers to get a sense of the book's strengths from the beginning. Also slightly clunky, at first, is the author's phrase for this generation of children. "Grasslands Grown" does not initially land as a memorable descriptor, but as the reader gets to know this generation through Rozum's work, the phrase somehow becomes more suitable. I even liked it by the end of the book, a shift in attitude facilitated by my growing acceptance of Rozum's argument and the importance of her work.

Grasslands Grown is an important book on a neglected topic. The research and analysis are impressive, demonstrated through people and their stories. Rozum's book will be enjoyed for years to come by academics, students, and history enthusiasts alike.

Spoon River America: Edgar Lee Masters and the Myth of the American Small Town, by Jason Stacy. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021. x, 234 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$110.00 hardcover, \$27.95 paperback.

Reviewer Patricia Oman is associate professor of English at Hastings College. Her research focuses on twentieth-century American regional literature and culture, with a specific emphasis on the Midwest, forgotten writers, and popular culture.

Jason Stacy's *Spoon River America: Edgar Lee Masters and the Myth of the American Small Town* is a biography of Edgar Lee Masters's most famous and enduring book, *Spoon River Anthology*. Masters's book of poetry may not be as popular now as it was in the decade following its original 1915 publication, but it has never been out of print and it still shows up occasionally in high school and university courses. As Stacy notes, "Masters is neither quite a leading light nor a forgotten poet. He is generally remembered and, therefore, never really rediscovered" (6).

Spoon River Anthology is a collection of 244 poems, mostly first-person epitaphs from the deceased citizens of the fictional small midwestern town of Spoon River. Each character posthumously narrates the most significant event of their life or characteristic of their personality, as they see it, in a short free-verse poem. Taken together, these epitaphs provide an accessible introduction to modernist aesthetic forms—particularly fractured perspective and non-linear narrative—forms that many later American regional writers adopted. The famous and often-anthologized cluster of poems connected to the poetess Minerva Jones, for example, demonstrate multiple perspectives on a single event. Through the epitaphs of Minerva, Butch Weldy, Doctor Meyers, and

Mrs. Meyers, readers can piece together the story of Minerva's death by rape and a botched abortion.

In *Spoon River America*, Stacy unearths *Spoon River Anthology's* complex origins and reception while simultaneously arguing for its legacy in American culture: "The significance of Masters's one famous book," he argues, "lies in the way it gathered historical trends from the Midwest of the second half of the nineteenth century and repackaged them in a compelling style and format that, for a time, helped make the Midwestern small town a synecdoche for the United States" (6).

Stacy's book meticulously traces the regional roots of *Spoon River Anthology*, from the mythic American small town imagined in New England literature of the nineteenth century to the place-based historical and cultural influences of Masters's life in Illinois—including the settlement patterns of the Midwest generally, the political geography of Illinois specifically, Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, the rise of Populism and its influences on the Democratic Party around the turn of the twentieth century, the literary scene in fin-de-siècle Chicago, and Masters's family history and professional experience as a lawyer. By tracing each of these threads, Stacy argues convincingly that *Spoon River Anthology* was "a product of its time" (168). In fact, one could argue that through careful parsing of the book's influences, Stacy creates a more cohesive picture of Spoon River than Masters did.

Spoon River America's most compelling contribution to the field of regional studies, though, is the detailed explication of *Spoon River Anthology's* "time" as both real and imagined, as much determined by the varied critical voices swirling around it as by the varied fictional voices within it. Stacy notes that critical reception "sympathized with the perceptive exiles in Spoon River who lucidly understood the limits of their fellow citizens' radical subjectivity," whereas popular reception lauded the book as "something particularly American, which . . . aspired to universal claims" (102). Even though the fractured narrative voices of Masters's book resist totalizing mythologies, Stacy argues that *Spoon River Anthology* was not only read by many in the context of the myth of the American small town but also "helped redefine the American small town in Midwestern terms" (2).

The push of realism and the pull of mythologizing are common features of regional texts. In fact, *Spoon River Anthology's* most direct formal influence might be seen in later regional fiction such as Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and Grace Metalious's *Peyton Place* (1956), whose narratives all signal the dissonance between realism and

mythologizing through the revelation of secrets and contrasting interpretations of events. Readers have to work to create, as best they can, a cohesive narrative of place from the highly subjective perspectives of each character. Stacy shows, however, that this dissonance is evident in *Spoon River Anthology's* origins and reception, too. For a time, *Spoon River Anthology* helped to construct the midwestern small town as an American myth.

The Dawn of Industrial Agriculture: Anthropology, Literature, and History, by E. Paul Durrenberger. 317 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. Louisville, CO: University of Colorado Press, 2021. \$37.95 paperback.

Reviewer J. L. Anderson is the author and editor of numerous publications on Iowa and midwestern history, including *Industrializing the Corn Belt: Agriculture, Technology, and Environment, 1945–1972* (2009), *The Rural Midwest since World War II* (2014), and *Capitalist Pigs: Pigs, Pork, and Power in America* (2019).

Anthropologist E. Paul Durrenberger's *The Dawn of Industrial Agriculture* describes the changing Iowa landscape through the eyes of Iowa-born novelist Paul Corey and, to a lesser extent, his partner Ruth Lechlitrer. The thrust of the book is that Corey's writing about the midwestern rural experience of the early twentieth century through the 1940s was as much anthropological as it was literary; Corey's stories were not classic protagonist vs. antagonist fiction, but instead functioned as a Geertzian "thick description" of a disappearing culture, a sentiment Corey expressed when noting that his work was "more of a historical and social document as well as fiction" (160). According to Durrenberger, the rural industrialization of the twentieth century was led by land-grant universities, agricultural scientists, economists, main street businesses, and the Farm Bureau, all of whom emphasized increased profit through the application of technology and a strong business ethic, with catastrophic consequences of rural depopulation, community collapse, and environmental degradation.

The narrative moves between history, biography, literary description, and analysis, as well as multiple geographic locations, including Iowa, Chicago, New York, Europe, and California. Throughout, Durrenberger addresses the broader context of Corey's work, including the "revolt from the village" and Regionalism movements, the economic distress and dislocation of the Great Depression, the collective action and government intervention of the New Deal, and the Cold War. Corey's Iowa-based stories, planned and executed in the 1930s and 1940s, were some of his most successful. One reviewer recognized Corey's distinctive contributions by highlighting his keen observations of farm life