THE "CHICAGO SCHOOL" OF POETRY Three Midwestern poets who grew up in Illinois and shared the midwestern concern with ordinary people are Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, and Edgar Lee Masters. Their poetry often concerns obscure individuals; they developed techniques – realism, dramatic renderings – that reached out to a larger readership. They are part of the Midwestern, or Chicago, School that arose before World War I to challenge the East Coast literary establishment. The "Chicago Renaissance" was a watershed in American culture: It demonstrated that America's interior had matured.Among the intriguing contemporary poets the journal printed was Edgar Lee Masters, author of the daring Spoon River Anthology (1915), with its new "unpoetic" colloquial style, frank presentation of sex, critical view of village life, and intensely imagined inner lives of ordinary people. Spoon River Anthology is a collection of portraits presented as colloquial epitaphs (words found inscribed on gravestones) summing up the lives of individual villagers as if in their own words. It presents a panorama of a country village through its cemetery: 250 people buried there speak, revealing their deepest secrets. Many of the people are related; members of about 20 families speak of their failures and dreams in free-verse monologues that are surprisingly modern. Carl Sandburg (1878–1967) A friend once said, "Trying to write briefly about Carl Sandburg is like trying to picture the Grand Canyon in one black-and-white snapshot."Some of the best known of Robinson's dramatic monologues are "Luke Havergal" (1896), about a forsaken lover; "Miniver Cheevy" (1910), a portrait of a romantic dreamer; and "Richard Cory" (1896), a somber portrait of a wealthy man who commits suicide: Whenever Richard Cory went down town, We people on the pavement looked at him: He was a gentleman from sole to crown, Clean favored, and imperially slim, And he was always quietly arrayed, And he was always human when he talked; But still he fluttered pulses when he said, "Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.What he wanted from life, he once said, was "to be out of jail...to eat regular...to get what I write printed,...a little love at home and a little nice affection hither and yon over the American landscape,...(and) to sing every day." A fine example of his themes and his Whitmanesque style is the poem "Chicago" (1914): Hog Butcher for the World, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler; Stormy, husky, brawling, City of the Big Shoulders...Robinson's imaginary Tilbury Town, like .Masters's Spoon River, contains lives of quiet desperation

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