

# the southern agrarians, h. l. mencken, and the quest for southern identity

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The most prominent characteristic of Southern intellectual history during the 1920's and 1930's was the emphasis on regionalism by writers, economists, sociologists, historians and political scientists busy exploring and defining Southern identity. This interest in regionalism was reflected in the founding of regional learned societies such as the Southern Political Association (1929), the Southern Economic Association (1929), the Southern Historical Association (1934) and the Southern Sociological Society (1934), as well as in the establishing of regional journals such as the *Southern Economic Journal* (1933), the *Journal of Southern History* (1935) and the *Journal of Politics* (1939). The most famous and significant publications by Southerners during this period had titles such as "The Central Theme in Southern History" (Ulrich B. Phillips, 1928), *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (Twelve Southerners, 1930), *Human Geography of the South* (Rupert B. Vance, 1935), *Culture in the South* (William T. Couch, ed., 1935), *Southern Regions of the United States* (Howard W. Odum, 1936), *A Southerner Discovers the South* (Jonathan Daniels, 1938), *The Mind of the South* (W. J. Cash, 1941) and *Below the Potomac* (Virginius Dabney, 1942).<sup>1</sup>

Part of this concern with regionalism was a natural reaction to what Professor George B. Tindall has appropriately termed the image of the "benighted South." Throughout the 1920's Northern journalists and social scientists pictured the South as a land of bigoted clergy, degraded sharecroppers and Ku Klux Klan supporters. Edwin Mims, Virginius Dabney and other Southern liberals countered by stressing the rapid economic, social and intellectual progress the South had experienced since the Civil War. Other Southerners accepted the validity of the benighted image, believing the amelioration of the South's economic and social conditions depended upon a frank recognition of the South's short-

comings. The Southern Agrarians, however, warmly defended the agrarianism, religiosity and conservatism of the South, traits which had been the most derided by the South's critics. Their counterattack was directed at H. L. Mencken, the major propagator of the benighted image, and reached a climax in 1935 over an article Mencken published in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* mocking the Agrarians.<sup>2</sup>

Surprisingly, prior to 1925 the Agrarians had admired Mencken. His famous essay "The Sahara of the Bozart," first published in 1917, was like a breath of fresh air for young Southern writers, such as the Agrarians, who were dismayed by the smug complacency, provincialism and moonlight-and-magnolia mystique of Southern literature. Below the Mason-Dixon Line, Mencken wrote, "a poet is now almost as rare as an oboe-player, a dry-point etcher or a metaphysician. It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity. One thinks of the interstellar spaces, of the colossal reaches of the now mythical ether. . . . In all that gargantuan paradise of the fourth-rate there is not a single picture gallery worth going into, or a single orchestra capable of playing the nine symphonies of Beethoven, or a single theater devoted to decent plays, or a single public monument (built since the war) that is worth looking at, or a single workshop devoted to the making of beautiful things." The Agrarians, later to become the leading critics of Southern industrialization, also welcomed Mencken's attack on Southern philistinism and babbitttry. Southern public opinion, Mencken lamented, "is set by an upstart class but lately emerged from industrial slavery into commercial enterprise—the class of 'hustling' business men, of 'live wires,' of commercial club luminaries, of 'drive' managers, of forward-lookers and right-thinkers—in brief, of third-rate Southerners inoculated with all the worst traits of the Yankee sharper." Little wonder, then, that while other Southerners were describing Mencken as a "pestilential nuisance," a "modern Attila," a "brachycephalous Caliban," "the Black Knight of Slander," and "an intellectual Houyhnhnm," were calling for his deportation even though he had been born in the United States, and were offering to send him a two-volume deluxe illustrated set of *The Folklore of Romantic Arkansas* in answer to his attacks on the deficiencies of Southern culture, the Agrarians were using Mencken's comments on the South to promote *The Fugitive*, a poetry journal they had established in 1922.<sup>3</sup>

Mencken's vindictive attacks on the South during and immediately after the 1925 Scopes Trial, however, quickly transformed the Agrarians' initially favorable impressions of the Baltimore journalist. Mencken believed the key to understanding Southern backwardness lay in the hold over public opinion exercised by fundamentalist Baptist and Methodist clerics, and he blamed the Ku Klux Klan, prohibition and all the other ills afflicting the South on the intolerance, anti-intellectualism and egalitarianism of these "grotesque ecclesiastical mountebanks," "vermin of God," "prehensile pastors" and "snakecharmers." Christianity in the

South was a form of “psychic cannibalism,” a “vast machine for pursuing and butchering unbelievers.” Mencken’s response to the Scopes Trial was therefore predictable. “On the one side was bigotry, ignorance, hatred, superstition, every sort of blackness that the human mind is capable of,” he reported, while “on the other side was sense.” He described the Tennessee fundamentalists as “morons,” “yokels,” “gaping primates,” and an “anthropoid rabble” led by a band of “gibbering baboons.” While Mencken’s reports of the trial were highly praised in the North, with Sinclair Lewis appropriately dedicating *Elmer Gantry* to him, they were deeply resented throughout the South where they were widely syndicated.<sup>4</sup>

Mencken attributed the South’s susceptibility to the rantings of fundamentalist preachers to its lack of big cities. The region was dominated by country towns and “in every country town there is some Baptist *mullah* who rules by scaring the peasantry. The false assumption that his pretensions are sound, that he can actually bind and loose, that contumacy to him is a variety of cursing God—this false assumption is what makes the yokels so uneasy, so nervous, and hence so unhappy.” In his essay “The Husbandman” Mencken described the farmer as a “prehensile moron,” a “grasping, selfish and dishonest mammal,” “a tedious fraud and ignomamus, a cheap rogue and hypocrite, the eternal Jack of the human pack,” “a mundane laborer, scratching for the dollar, full of staphylococci, smelling heavily of sweat and dung. . . .” The KKK, the Eighteenth Amendment, fundamentalism and all the other “imbecilities” which had made the United States a laughing-stock in the civilized parts of the world were products of the yokels’ “dung-hill” culture. Mencken believed civilization would never develop in America until the cities liberated themselves from “yokel rule,” and he was encouraged by indications that the cities were becoming increasingly restive. The urban dweller, he asserted, “is tired of being governed by his inferiors, and has begun to harbor an active desire to throw them off.” Even in the South ministers, prohibitionists, peasants and Ku Kluxers were being challenged by an “emerging South” consisting largely of the young and citified. The continuing urbanization and industrialization of the South doomed “yokel” control because it was “plainly incompatible with civilized progress.”<sup>5</sup>

The Agrarians were amazed and horrified by these bitter attacks on the South by Mencken and his imitators. Even more shocking was their acceptance by much of the country as an authentic picture of the South. Perhaps for the first time in their lives the Agrarians realized they belonged to a scorned minority and that their own lives and careers were ineluctably enmeshed with the history and future of their region. Relatively uninterested in the South till then, the Agrarians now began their study of Southern history which was to result in Allen Tate’s “Ode to the Confederate Dead” (1927) and his biographies of *Stonewall Jackson*

(1928) and *Jefferson Davis* (1929), Robert Penn Warren's *John Brown* (1929), Donald Davidson's "The Tall Men" (1927) and *The Attack on Leviathan* (1938) and Andrew Nelson Lytle's *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company* (1931). The Agrarians became determined to vindicate the unique character of the South, but their perception of what this was would not become clear until the publication in 1930 of *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*. It is doubtful whether this, the most militant defense of Southern distinctiveness of this century, would ever have appeared had not Mencken viewed the Scopes Trial as an opportunity to lambast some of his favorite targets. In the meantime, several Agrarians found themselves in the surprising position of defending the fundamentalists against the barbs of Mencken and religious liberals.<sup>6</sup>

John Crowe Ransom was the first of the Agrarians to express support for fundamentalism. The occasion was an effort by Edwin Mims, chairman of Vanderbilt University's English Department and a prominent Southern liberal intellectual, to line up support in 1925 among members of his department for a statement attacking the fundamentalists. The Scopes Trial was a severe embarrassment for Southern liberals and Mims wished to demonstrate that fundamentalism and intolerance was a minority position in Tennessee. Much to Mims' surprise, Ransom refused to go along, arguing that the issue at Dayton was not tolerance versus free inquiry but rather science versus religious mythology. Ransom elaborated this idea in his 1930 work *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy*. Here Ransom argued that the triumph of science had resulted in personal unhappiness and intellectual anarchy by undermining modern man's belief in the stern God of the Old Testament, leaving him with a "God without thunder." The fundamentalists, because they took religion seriously, had developed a mythology which is "practicable and communicable, because it is unitary, consistent, and dogmatic." According to Ransom, the mistake of the fundamentalists had been in joining their mythology to an obviously erroneous astronomy and biology, whereas the error of the scientists who had testified in behalf of John Thomas Scopes had been in combining a correct science with a desiccated religious mythology. Ransom claimed that Mencken's book *Treatise on the Gods* demonstrated that even he, the great sceptic, had been "intimidated" by the effort of organized scientists to discredit religious myth. Writing to Allen Tate, Ransom protested against the whittling down of the Old Testament God into "the Spirit of Science, or the Spirit of Love, or the Spirit of Rotary; and now religion is not religion at all but a purely secular experience like Y.M.C.A. and Boy Scouts." If modern man desired peace of mind and a more humane economic and social order, then he must realize that religion "is fundamental and prior to intelligent (or human) conduct on any plane."<sup>7</sup>

Donald Davidson agreed with Ransom on the mythological value of

fundamentalism. In an article which certainly must have surprised the sophisticated readers of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, he described fundamentalism as “a fierce clinging to poetic supernaturalism against the encroachments of cold logic; it stands for moral seriousness.” He warned Southerners to take fundamentalism seriously because it expressed qualities which “belong to the bone and sinew” of their nature. He believed it was the responsibility of the Southern writer to give these qualities “a positive transmutation,” to purge them of “blind and belligerent ignorance,” without destroying their ability to articulate a religious and moral commitment. In another place Davidson speculated that the major contribution of fundamentalism might well turn out to have been its raising the question of how influential the ethical relativism disseminated by science should be in determining one’s philosophy of life.<sup>8</sup>

Davidson never changed his opinion of Mencken as an unscrupulous troublemaker and “lowly misanthrope” which had been formed during the Scopes Trial. Davidson’s fullest analysis of the trial is in the second volume of his history of the Tennessee River, published nearly a quarter of a century after the event. Here he pictured George Washington Butler, the author of Tennessee’s anti-evolution law, as sober, tolerant, and self-educated, whereas he described Mencken and the other reporters as “publicity seekers, extremists, and character assassins” who undermined the good will that should have existed between Tennessee and the states of the North and West. Because of the antics of Clarence Darrow, Mencken, and the agnostic scientists supporting Scopes, the Trial became “the focus of a holy war in behalf of science and liberalism.” In 1958 Davidson was still portraying Mencken as a “vulgar rhetorician” who, along with others of his ilk, had been largely responsible for the image of the benighted South taking hold in the popular imagination during the 1920’s. He attributed his own commitment “to advance the cause of the South” to the effects of the Trial.<sup>9</sup>

*I’ll Take My Stand* may be seen as a direct answer to Mencken’s charge that the rural and religious South was a cultural wasteland. The Agrarians, in fact, turned his argument on its head by contending that it was precisely the religious and rural character of the South which was responsible for the South’s cultural excellences: her emphasis on leisure and the enjoyment of life, her code of manners, her folklore and arts and crafts, her delight in conversation and good food. According to the Agrarians, it was the industrial and urban North, with her spirit of mechanistic progress, material aggrandizement, and secularism, which was the cultural aberration and in need of the type of criticism which up to then had been mistakenly directed at the South.<sup>10</sup>

Mencken predictably did not think highly of the Agrarian manifesto. Reviewing the book in the *American Mercury*, he noted that it deserved attention, but not for the wisdom of its ideas. There was simply no future for the South if it should reject industrialization and return to

agrarianism, and he suggested that the sooner the poor farmers of the South became "proletarians" the better it would be both for themselves and for the South. The real plight of the South stemmed from religion and not industrialization. The Southern mind had been paralyzed by "a debasing mass of superstitions, designed frankly to make its victims hopeless in this world." Southern religion had created "the very sort of dull, shaky, fearful anthropoid who is now the chief obstacle to all true progress in the South, and a shame to all humanity." The Agrarians were "fashioners of Utopia," "sufferers from nostalgic vapors," and ivory-tower pedagogues for believing that a Southern renaissance depended upon a return to the soil. Instead they should redirect their energies toward repealing the Tennessee anti-evolution law, "an insult and disgrace to every self-respecting citizen of the State."<sup>11</sup>

Hostilities resumed in October, 1934, when Davidson attacked Mencken in the *American Review*. Davidson was then formulating a broad interpretation of American cultural history influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner's stress on the clash between the frontier and the eastern seaboard in American development, and by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, which contrasted the sophisticated, nihilistic and cosmopolitan "civilization" of the city with the organic, religious and provincial "culture" of the countryside.<sup>12</sup> According to Davidson, a struggle had been taking place since World War I between the large northern cities, especially New York, and the hinterland of the West and South for cultural supremacy. Urban artists and writers, fascinated by Marxism, Freudianism, German Expressionism, French Dadaism and the erotic primitivism of D. H. Lawrence, had popularized the image of the backward and barbaric South with its "lynchings, shootings, chain gangs, poor whites, Ku Kluxers, hookworm, pellagra, and a few decayed patricians whose chief intent is to deprive the uncontaminated, spiritual-singing Negro of his life and liberty." The Middle West had become "a land of morons, boobs, and shoulder-smacking Babbitts," "of lonely farms where men and women drudge away their sterile lives," "of repressions and shams, where tender little Clyde Griffiths's who start out as bell-boys must perforce end up as murderers." The artists and writers of the South and West, however, had rejected the decadence and defeatism of their European-oriented counterparts and had remained faithful to "the living and diverse traditions of their native America."

Davidson naturally pointed to Mencken as a prime example of the cynical "rebel aesthetes" who, possessing a "volatile dissatisfaction with most things indigenously American," were responsible for these absurdly false pictures of the South and West. He bracketed Mencken with Ludwig Lewisohn, Waldo Frank, Granville Hicks and V. F. Calverton as participants "in one of the most ominous chapters in American literary history." Fortunately the provinces stood firm in their determination to

defend their cultural identities against the onslaughts of the Menck-enites.<sup>13</sup>

Mencken was infuriated by Davidson's piece, especially because Davidson had grouped him with the New York Marxist literary critics, a clique which he had repeatedly condemned. His answer was to come in an article he was then working on for the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Back in January of 1934 Lambert Davis, the review's editor, had requested a contribution from Mencken, suggesting the literary South as a possible topic since Mencken's essay "The Sahara of the Bozart" had been so controversial and because many considered him to be the father of the South's literary renaissance. Davis also proposed as an alternative subject the folkways, customs and prejudices of the South. "You might resolve in print the paradox," Davis wrote, "that you are the South's severest critic—and a sentimental Southerner at heart."<sup>14</sup>

Mencken's reply was typical. He agreed to do an essay for Davis but it would focus on the South's most prominent problem, the power of the clergy. He anticipated it would be in the form of an address to Southern youth warning them about the threat which evangelical churchmen posed to intellectual freedom. Perhaps nothing better reveals the anachronistic flavor of Mencken's thought than this contention in 1934, during the depths of the Great Depression, that the South's major problem was neither economic nor political but ecclesiastical.<sup>15</sup>

When Davidson's article came out Mencken decided to retain the idea of an address to Southern youth but to center instead on the religious and regional program of the Agrarians. Davidson's essay had provided him with the opportunity to strike a few more blows against agrarianism and Southern religion, as well as against Davidson personally. He immediately wrote to Davis about his change of plans, noting that although there was a core of truth to what the Agrarians were preaching, "like all enthusiasts, they are riding it to death." Davis welcomed this revision because he himself had serious misgivings about the Agrarians' program and wished to see an intelligent refutation of it in his journal. He was pleased when he finally received Mencken's manuscript. "It is a delightfully written piece of work," he told Mencken, "and blows like a clean breeze through a good deal of our swampy thinking."<sup>16</sup>

"The South Astir" described the Agrarians as "a band of earnest young revolutionaries" offering ideas "only a little less absurd than the old balderdash that they seek to supplant." These utopian reformers had become so isolated from the realities of Southern life that they were unable to recognize the permanence of Southern industrialization or that industrialization had been a godsend to the South. Factories, Mencken contended, had increased the South's wealth, had established salutary impediments to political demagoguery and had offered new hope to an already disinherited peasantry. Wherever in the South industrialism was

most firmly entrenched, there you would find not only “a higher level of physical well-being than in the agrarian areas, but also a higher tolerance of ideas.” Mencken found it difficult to believe the Agrarians were serious. Didn’t these “Agrarian Habakkuks” realize that without industry they “would be clad in linsey-woolsey and fed on sidemeat, and [that] the only books they could read would be excessively orthodox”?

Mencken distorted Davidson’s *American Review* essay in order to show the “preposterous conclusions” to which Agrarianism led. Davidson’s contention that the South should develop its own cultural identity was interpreted by Mencken as a proposal that the South “should cut itself off from the rest of the country altogether.” Davidson, he claimed, wished to turn the South into a “cultural Tibet”; his response to outside ideas was “precisely that of the Mayor and City Council of Dayton, Tenn. . . . he simply throws up his hands, and yields to moral indignation.” Mencken compared the Agrarians to the “incense-swingers,” the nostalgic defenders of the Old South, since both groups had the same “petulance with outside opinion, and the same incapacity for turning it to profit.” Fortunately “the high falutin dream stuff” being broadcast by the Agrarians did not appeal to the new breed of young, concerned and educated Southerners. The chief impediment to the spread of this new spirit of realism remained “the curious Southern tolerance of theological buncombe and pretension.”

Mencken ridiculed Davidson’s complaint that the benighted image of the South had arisen because the Menckenites resented the Southerners’ belief in God. The cities of the North, Mencken retorted, were perfectly willing to allow the pious of the South to make fools of themselves if they so desired. The fundamentalists themselves had made Southern religion a joke throughout the rest of the world as Davidson could discover for himself “by going to Capetown, or Samarkand, or Bogota, and telling the first literate man he meets that he is from Tennessee.” Davidson should stop worrying about imaginary plots being hatched in the East against the South, and should concern himself with the “hog-wallow superstition and pseudo-intellectualism” of Southern rural religion. The “earnest but somewhat ridiculous” Agrarians would do more good by cleaning up the Daytons in their own back yard than by marching on the North, a region which had not as yet adopted some of the more notable Southern customs such as “the public frying of blackamoors.”<sup>17</sup>

Davidson, outraged by Mencken’s personal attack upon him and by his sneering references to Agrarianism, demanded an immediate explanation from Lambert Davis of why he had published such a vilification of himself and the other Agrarians. Certainly, he claimed, there had not been anything in his own article warranting such abuse. He previously had assumed the *VQR* was interested in serious discussions of the South and not in backbiting and vulgarity. Did Mencken’s essay indicate a change in editorial policy?<sup>18</sup>



Mencken's outburst came as a great surprise to Davidson, partially because his previous relationship with Davis had been quite cordial. He had warmly congratulated Davis the previous February upon becoming editor of the *VQR* and shortly after had praised him for the high quality of the articles appearing in the journal. Davis, for his part, had published Davidson's "Sacred Harp in the Land of Eden" in the April, 1934 issue, had encouraged Davidson to send him future manuscripts and had lauded the Agrarians for having "done more to raise the issue of culture in the South than any one thing in the past 60 years." Davis had also invited Davidson to contribute to a special tenth anniversary number of the *VQR* to be published in April, 1935.<sup>19</sup>

Davis immediately replied to Davidson's indignant letter. He was able, he wrote, to describe his editorial philosophy and the background of Mencken's essay to Davidson because the "special quality of friendliness in your personality . . . makes me feel that I can answer you more personally and frankly than, under ordinary circumstances, I might." He explained that the origin of the Mencken article antedated Davidson's *American Review* essay, and therefore was not designed to furnish Mencken an opportunity to attack Davidson. His first impulse on receiving Mencken's manuscript had been to reject it because it seemed to be a personal attack on Davidson and also a direct response to Davidson's article, and hence really belonged in the *American Review*. Further consideration, however, had convinced him that Mencken's article could be understood without any awareness of Davidson's essay and that it represented "an intelligible point of view—the metropolitan point of view" which deserved a hearing. Instead of obscuring the issues, as Davidson had claimed, Mencken had actually clarified the differences between the Agrarians and the Southern liberals. Davis did not believe Mencken's personal references to Davidson were exceptional since Mencken never wrote in an aloof and detached manner. "No intelligent person," Davis reassured Davidson, "would come to the conclusion that Mencken had come down from Mount Olympian heights to deliver a personal attack on you."

Davis praised the Agrarians for presenting issues which demanded attention. However he also gently chided Davidson and the other Agrarians for defending the entirety of Southern culture merely because it was Southern. Although he had been too extreme, Mencken had been essentially correct in arguing that Southern intellectuals should not protect all aspects of Southern culture merely because they were indigenous. "After all, even Athens borrowed from the barbarians." Davis hoped the *VQR* could contribute to a much needed synthesis of the positions of Mencken and the Agrarians by continuing to publish articles from both camps. He pointed out that it was in this spirit that the journal had published in the same issue Robert Penn Warren's essay "John Crowe Ransom: A Study in Irony." He had originally planned to put Warren's

piece in the April, 1935, issue but decided to include it in the January number to balance Mencken's contribution. In conclusion, Davis promised that the *VQR* would remain open to all intelligible points of view, that it would continue to publish articles by the Agrarians defending aspects of Southern culture warranting defense and that he welcomed the opportunity to talk with Davidson personally regarding these matters. "I want you to believe," he told Davidson, "that no malice, and no desire to obscure the issues, led me to publish the Mencken article."<sup>20</sup>

Davis' attempt to mollify Davidson had to overcome several years of strained relations between the Agrarians and the *VQR* dating from the period when Stringfellow Barr, Davis' predecessor, had been editor of the review. Barr had come to the attention of the Agrarians in April, 1929, after publishing "The Uncultured South" in the *VQR*, and they then invited him to contribute to *I'll Take My Stand*. Although Barr viewed himself at this time as an agrarian decentralist and even went so far as submitting an outline of an essay to the Agrarians for approval, he decided against joining the group because he was unable to endorse completely the statement of principles introducing the Agrarian manifesto. Instead he developed his outline into "Shall Slavery Come South?" which appeared in the *VQR* in October, 1930, the same month he became editor of the quarterly. Here he argued that it was absurd to expect the South to reject the material prosperity and comforts resulting from factories and modern technology. He mocked visionary and traditionalist "Neo-Confederates" who, "frightened by the lengthening shadows of the smokestacks, take refuge in the good old days. . . ." Davidson, Ransom, and Tate correctly assumed that Barr had them in mind and publicly protested. George Fort Milton of the *Chattanooga News* suggested a public debate be held between the Agrarians and Barr, the *Richmond Times Dispatch* publicized this idea, and on November 14, 1930, Richmond's "great debate" took place with over thirty-two hundred persons witnessing the clash between Barr and Ransom in the city's Civic Auditorium. Barr's approach, Tate noted, was typically modern: "he thinks if the South gets rich again, it will be the South still. But the South is not a section of geography, it is an economy setting forth a certain kind of life."<sup>21</sup>

These initial misgivings regarding Barr increased when the *VQR* published Gerald W. Johnson's hostile review of *I'll Take My Stand*. Did the Agrarians realize, Johnson asked, that "the obscenities and depravities of the most degenerate hole of a cotton-mill town are but pale reflections of the lurid obscenities and depravities of Southern backwoods communities?" If the Agrarian program should be enacted the South would be "thrust back into the jungle. . . ." The Agrarians, above all, resented Barr's refusal to transform the *VQR* into a militantly pro-Southern journal. "'Airing the Southern tradition,'" Barr retorted to Tate, "is only one of my purposes. I always prefer to print things by

Southerners—but my taste frequently leads me to print things by other people instead.”<sup>22</sup>

The Agrarians thus welcomed Barr’s resignation as editor of the *VQR* and hoped that Lambert Davis would be more sympathetic to their point of view. But Davis’ conception of the *VQR* as an honest broker between the North and South, a function which he believed to be in keeping with Virginia’s historic role as conciliator between the sections, was similar to Barr’s and would not win him friends among the Agrarians who were searching for allies and not mediators in their struggle with Northern cultural and economic penetration of the South. Soon they would have reason to view Davis as a traitor to the traditional South and the *VQR* as a Twentieth Century scalawag magazine.<sup>23</sup>

The precipitating incident was Davis’ rejection of Davidson’s article “*I’ll Take My Stand: A History*” which had been submitted for the tenth anniversary number. Davis wrote Davidson that, although initially intending to publish it, he was unable to accept it because the April issue already contained several articles by the Agrarians and their sympathizers, and because this issue was to be devoted exclusively to literature whereas Davidson’s paper was historical. Even though professing admiration for the article, Davis also asserted that he did not think it would be appropriate for any future issue of the *VQR* as well. He suggested Davidson edit a collection of Agrarian writings, using the article as an introduction. Despite its friendly tone, Davidson was incensed by Davis’ letter. When he later published the essay in the *American Review*, Davidson added a sentence praising this magazine for giving the Agrarians “understanding and hospitality of a sort we have never received . . . from the *Virginia Quarterly Review*.”<sup>24</sup>

Davis would have been amazed by the tempest created by his rejection of Davidson’s essay had he read the Agrarians’ frenzied correspondence of March, 1935. The Agrarians viewed his rebuff to Davidson as an insult to the entire group even though Davis’ relations with them up to this point had been most professional and correct. He had made it quite clear when inviting Davidson, Tate, Ransom, Lytle, and John Donald Wade to contribute to the anniversary number that the issue’s emphasis would be exclusively literary. Thus his rejection of Davidson’s article because of its “historical” nature was in conformity with the general guidelines he had established. Davis’ honesty toward the Agrarians is further illustrated by his response to the Mencken article.<sup>25</sup>

Upon hearing from Mencken that he planned to discuss the Agrarians, Davis immediately wrote Lytle informing him of Mencken’s plans, and proposing that an essay Lytle was then working on entitled “A Tradition and a Program” might be suitable for inclusion in the same issue as the Mencken piece. Although Davis had previously discouraged Lytle from submitting this essay to the *VQR*, he now believed it imperative that the Agrarians be represented in the January issue. “Under the cir-

cumstances," he wrote to Lytle, "it seems to me fair play to let the other side know about it [i.e., the Mencken article]. Of course, this is not a commission, but I think that the chances are good for both sides being heard from in the January number." Davis eventually rejected Lytle's article because, he claimed, it was too broad, oversimplified and inaccurate, criticisms which Lytle accepted in good grace. Davis now substituted Warren's essay on John Crowe Ransom for the Lytle piece. He noted to Warren that he "needed this essay very much in the present makeup . . . there was need of something to set off against Mencken's blast against Davidson. I don't think any discerning reader will miss the point." Davis thought he was being scrupulously fair to the Agrarians. As he confided to Frank L. Owsley, "You will probably be amused at the extent to which the agrarians come in for praise and blame in this issue. . . . Perhaps everybody will be offended all the way round. But that is what an editor has to expect." Amusement was not quite the way the Agrarians responded to the January issue nor were they particularly sympathetic to Davis' broadminded view of his editorial responsibilities. The *VQR* was, after all, supposedly a Southern journal.<sup>26</sup>

The other Agrarians immediately sprang to Davidson's defense when they heard of his difficulties with the *VQR*. Tate protested to Davis the publication of Mencken's article, describing it as sensationalistic and ignorant. He also questioned his refusal to print Davidson's history of the Agrarians: "I suppose it comes down to this: whether you think the history of our group interesting and important enough to be published at this time." Although this comment to Davis does not reveal it, Tate had been quite angered by his rejection of Davidson's essay. John Gould Fletcher, one of the more militant of the Agrarians, without delay wrote to Davidson, Owsley, Warren, Ransom and Tate, demanding that the Agrarians boycott the *VQR*, including the special anniversary number. Fletcher acted partially out of spite at not having been invited to contribute to the anniversary issue, and partially out of his deep commitment to Agrarianism and contempt for critics of the Agrarians, especially Mencken. He had long been suspicious of what he saw as the lukewarm support of the *VQR* for the traditional South, and he had urged Ransom for some time to establish a staunch Southern literary and political journal modeled on the antebellum *Southern Review*. Such a review, he asserted, was absolutely necessary if the Southern Agrarians were ever to have a serious hearing.<sup>27</sup>

While grateful for Fletcher's support, Davidson told him a boycott was obviously impossible because the *VQR*'s April issue was due to come out within a few days and because the contributors had already been paid. In addition, Warren, Ransom and Tate were offended by Fletcher's peremptory tone and his arrogant demand that they submit to what was, in effect, a loyalty oath. The decision where to publish his works must remain with the author, they told him, and his proposed course of

action would prevent them from using one of the nation's leading journals to disseminate the Agrarian message. Not even the fire-eating Owsley supported Fletcher's call for an immediate boycott of the *VQR*.<sup>28</sup>

Owsley, along with Davidson, proposed instead a careful investigation of the *VQR* to be followed by a manifesto signed by the Agrarians denouncing this "thoroughly vicious institution." Owsley hoped this would discredit this "scalawag publication" throughout the South. Although Owsley and Davidson never carried through on their investigation, Owsley did answer Mencken. Ignoring Davidson's advice that the only way to deal with a person such as Mencken was to ignore him, Owsley wrote "The Pillars of Agrarianism," perhaps the finest brief defense of Agrarianism, to clear up Mencken's misrepresentations and to give a true picture of the Agrarians. The original draft of this essay contained an extensive attack on Mencken, but Davidson and Ransom convinced Owsley to remove much of this criticism because they feared Mencken would reply in kind. Owsley's comments on Mencken were thus restricted to a few sentences describing "The South Astir" as unworthy of rebuttal, "violent and lacking in restraint," and full of "billingsgate." Mencken's inability to understand the Agrarians, Owsley claimed, was typical of spokesmen for modern technology and industrial civilization.<sup>29</sup>

Lambert Davis, meanwhile, unaware of the fury he had aroused, continued to profess esteem for the Agrarians. "I can say again," he declared to Tate in late March, "that I have the greatest admiration for what you and the agrarians are doing. I think that we must cultivate historicity and the best way we can do it is to examine our past. You and the other agrarians have done a great job in promoting this cause, and you deserve much credit for it." He did, however, realize that his editorial policy had provoked criticism among the Agrarians, and possibly this was the reason he prefaced the special anniversary number with a two-page statement of editorial purpose. The *VQR*, the statement avowed, attempted to promote an interaction of opposing ideas in order to humanize knowledge. Although fully recognizing that it was a Southern magazine, the *VQR* refused to confine itself to regional concerns, and would continue to seek contributors throughout the world who could write about "matters of interest to any intelligent laymen."<sup>30</sup>

In retrospect, the quarrel between the Agrarians and Mencken and the *VQR* should never have occurred. Mencken's extravagant rhetoric and the Agrarians' combative mood obscured the fact that their views regarding the South and northern criticism of the region were quite similar. Davidson dimly recognized this as late as 1934, when he noted that Mencken "stood suspect of being at heart a romantic southerner. . . ." Mencken was anything but a critic of the traditional agrarian South. "The Sahara of the Bozart" excoriated the modern South not for failing to measure up to northern standards, but rather for falling away from the level reached by the ante-bellum South, "a civilization of manifold

excellences—perhaps the best that the Western Hemisphere has ever seen. . . .” Mencken’s ideal society, as seen in his panegyric “Maryland, Apex of Normalcy,” was not New York, Chicago, or Pittsburgh, but instead colonial Maryland and Virginia. He attributed the South’s decline to the displacement of the landed aristocracy by businessmen and industrialists resulting from the southern defeat in the Civil War, “the most calamitous human event since the discovery of America.” The Agrarians were the leading Twentieth Century critics of the “New South” spirit about which Mencken complained, and they, as well as he, used the image of the Old South as a foil with which to attack the rapid industrialization and commercialization of the South.<sup>31</sup>

One of the things which attracted Mencken and the Agrarians to the Old South was the absence of large cities. Both were horrified by modern urbanization, especially as exemplified by New York City. Despite his reputation as an urban scoffer and despite his verbal onslaught against “yokels” and peasant “morons,” Mencken was actually a provincial Baltimorean who admired the small-town verities and always approached New York as a shy rustic nearing Babylon. His periodic visits to the big city earned him the nickname in Greenwich Village of a “monthly hick.” He responded by describing New York as gross and debauched, lacking manners and style, and good only for making money. One question, he once asked, whether New York City was “American at all. Huge, Philistine, self-centered, ignorant and vulgar, it is simply a sort of free port, a Hansa town, a place where the raw materials of civilization are received. . . . The town is shoddily cosmopolitan, second-rate European, extraordinarily cringing.” Identical sentiments were being expressed at the same time by Davidson, Tate, Fletcher, and other Agrarians.<sup>32</sup>

Mencken was at a loss to explain how Davidson could have bracketed him with the New York intellectuals. “Long before Davidson and his friends ever discovered the fraudulence of the Greenwich Village intelligentsia,” he wrote to Lambert Davis, “I was denouncing it monthly in the old *Smart Set*.” Mencken and the Agrarians were both dismayed by the extent to which the New York intellectuals had separated themselves from anything taking place west of the Hudson River. In fact, Mencken’s primary importance in American letters during the 1920’s was his encouraging of American writers and artists to cease facing eastward toward New York and Europe, and to look toward the South and the Middle West for their material. The publication of *The American Language*, his patronage of regional writers and artists and his attacks on the expatriates attest to Mencken’s cultural nationalism. “I remain on the dock, wrapped in the flag, when the Young Intellectuals set sail,” he announced. “Here I stand, unshaken and undespairing, a loyal and devoted American, even a chauvinist . . . contributing my mite toward the glory of the national arts and sciences, enriching and embellishing

the national language. . . .” Mencken was a vital part of the regionalism of the interwar years which Davidson praised as a valuable protest against the “artistic leviathanism of the machine age, symbolized by the dominance of New York during the nineteen-twenties.” The revolt of the Agrarians against the cultural preeminence of New York City was preceded, and perhaps made possible, by the rebellion of Mencken during the 1920’s and the support he gave to the burgeoning southern literary renaissance.<sup>33</sup>

Certainly Mencken and the Agrarians misunderstood each other. Davidson’s article in the *American Review* misinterpreted Mencken’s relationship to the New York intelligentsia, while Mencken’s “The South Astir” exaggerated the differences between himself and the Agrarians and ignored their wide areas of agreement. Although based on several misconceptions and undoubtedly blown up all out of proportion, the Mencken-Agrarian feud helped reinvigorate the perennial historical quest for the nature of Southern distinctiveness. Their experiences with the *VQR* and Mencken left the Agrarians even more conscious of their own identity as Southerners. This would later be manifested, for example, in Fletcher’s *Arkansas* (1947), Owsley’s *Plain Folk of the Old South* (1949), Davidson’s *Southern Writers in the Modern World* (1958) and Warren’s *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (1961). The Agrarians’ militant defense of Southern uniqueness, in turn, provoked others to explore the theme of Southern identity. Although unable to accept the Agrarian explanation of Southern distinctiveness, these later commentators were equally convinced that the South was different from the rest of the nation. These later attempts to locate the source of the Southern ethos have variously emphasized the South’s romanticism and inclination to mythologize, her laziness, her heightened historical consciousness, her folk culture, and her sense of guilt, pessimism, frustration and tragedy. The effort to define Southern identity will undoubtedly continue and probably prove to be just as difficult as it had been for Mencken and the Agrarians, for, to quote the late David M. Potter, “the South remains as challenging as it is baffling, which is about as challenging as a subject can be.”<sup>34</sup>

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### footnotes

1. George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, 1967), 575-606; Tindall, “The ‘Colonial Economy’ and the Growth Psychology: The South in the 1930’s,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXIV, 4 (Autumn, 1965), 465-66; Tindall, “The Significance of Howard W. Odum to Southern History: A Preliminary Estimate,” *Journal of Southern History*, XXIV, 3 (August, 1958), 289-90; Clarence H. Danhof, “Four Decades of Thought on the South’s Economic Problems,” *Essays in Southern Economic Development*, eds. Melvin L. Greenhut and W. Tate Whitman (Chapel Hill, 1964), 5-7; Earl H. Rovit, “The Regions Versus the Nation: Critical Battle of the Thirties,” *Mississippi Quarterly*, XIII, 2 (Spring, 1960), 90-98; Marion Irish, “Proposed Roads to the New South, 1941: Chapel Hill Planners Versus Nashville Agrarians,” *Sewanee Review*, XLIX, 1 (Winter, 1941), 1-27; “Industrialism Versus Agrarianism for the South,” *University Debaters’ Annual*, ed. Edith M. Phelps (New York, 1932); C. Vann

- Woodward, "The Search for Southern Identity," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XXXIV, 3 (Summer, 1958), 321-27.
2. Tindall, "The Benighted South: Origins of a Modern Image," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XL, 2 (Spring, 1964), 291-93.
3. H. L. Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart," *H. L. Mencken Prejudices: A Selection*, ed. James T. Farrell (New York, 1958), 69-74, 79-82; Tindall, "Benighted South," 284-86; William J. Bosch, "Henry L. Mencken's Image of the South" (unpublished seminar paper, Department of History, University of North Carolina, 1963), 5; Edgar Kemler, *The Irreverent Mr. Mencken* (Boston, 1950), 176-78; John M. Bradbury, *The Fugitives: A Critical Account* (Chapel Hill, 1958), 6-7; Alexander Karanikas, *Tillers of a Myth: Southern Agrarians as Social and Literary Critics* (Madison, Wis., 1966), 21-23; John Lincoln Stewart, *The Burden of Time: The Fugitives and Agrarians* (Princeton, 1965), 114; Rob Roy Purdy, ed., *Fugitives' Reunion: Conversations at Vanderbilt, May 3-5, 1956* (Nashville, 1959), 92.
4. Mencken, "In Tennessee," *Nation*, CXXI, 3130 (July 1, 1925), 21-22; Mencken, "The Hills of Zion," *The Vintage Mencken*, ed. Alistair Cooke (New York, 1955), 153-61; Bosch, "Mencken's Image of the South," *passim*; Kemler, *Irreverent Mr. Mencken*, 186-87; William Manchester, *H. L. Mencken: Disturber of the Peace* (New York, 1950), 191-217; Oscar Cargill, "Mencken and the South," *Georgia Review*, VI, 4 (Winter, 1952), 374.
5. Mencken, "The Husbandman," *H. L. Mencken Prejudices*, ed. Farrell, 157-68; Mencken, "The Politician," *ibid.*, 169-71; Mencken, "The Champion," *ibid.*, 210; Malcolm Moos, ed., *H. L. Mencken on Politics: A Carnival of Buncombe* (New York, 1960), 162-71, 197-200.
6. Purdy, ed., *Fugitives' Reunion*, 178, 199, 204-205; Stewart, *Burden of Time*, 109-115; Louise Cowan, *The Fugitive Group: A Literary History* (Baton Rouge, 1959), 208, 240-46; Virginia Rock, "The Making and Meaning of *I'll Take My Stand*: A Study in Utopian Conservatism, 1925-1939" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Modern Language and Literature, University of Minnesota, 1961), 209.
7. Stewart, *Burden of Time*, 114-15; Ransom, *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy* (New York, 1930), 95-107; Ransom to Tate, July 4, 1929, Tate Papers (Princeton University).
8. Davidson, "The Artist as Southerner," *Saturday Review of Literature*, II (May 15, 1926), 783; Davidson, "First Fruits of Dayton: The Intellectual Evolution in Dixie," *Forum*, LXXIX, 6 (June, 1928), 898. For other evidence of the Agrarians' interest in religion, see Tate, "The Fallacy of Humanism," *Hound and Horn*, III (Winter, 1930), 234-57; John Donald Wade, *John Wesley* (New York, 1930); and Robert Penn Warren's poem "August Revival: Crosby Junction," *Sewanee Review*, XXXIII, 4 (December, 1925), 439.
9. John Tyree Fain, ed., *The Spyglass: Views and Reviews, 1924-1930 by Donald Davidson* (Nashville, 1963), 126-31; Davidson, *The Tennessee* (New York, 1948), II, 195-204; Davidson, *Southern Writers in the Modern World* (Athens, Ga., 1958), 31-41; Davidson to Tate, August 15, 1926, Tate Papers.
10. See especially Ransom, "Reconstructed But Unregenerate," *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York, 1930), 1-27.
11. Mencken, "Uprising in the Confederacy," *American Mercury*, XXII, 87 (March, 1931), 379-81.
12. Davidson, "Sectionalism in the United States," *Hound and Horn*, VI (July-September, 1933), 561-89.
13. Davidson, "Lands That Were Golden. I. New York and the Hinterland," *American Review*, III, 5 (October, 1934), 545-61. John Gould Fletcher was so impressed by Davidson's article that he wrote a similar one entitled "New York Versus American Culture" (unpublished mss., John Gould Fletcher Papers, University of Arkansas); Davidson to Fletcher, October 7, 1934, Fletcher Papers; Fletcher to Davidson, October 9, 1934, December 5, 1934, Davidson Papers (Vanderbilt University); Fletcher to Robert Penn Warren, December 14, 1934, Warren Papers (Yale University).
14. Mencken to Lambert Davis, November 17, 1934, *Virginia Quarterly Review* Editorial Correspondence, *Virginia Quarterly Review* Papers (University of Virginia); Davis to Mencken, January 13, 1934, *ibid.*
15. Mencken to Davis, January 16, 1934, *ibid.*
16. Mencken to Davis, October 13, 1934, October 16, 1934, *ibid.*; Davis to Mencken, October 15, 1934, November 14, 1934, November 16, 1934, *ibid.*
17. Mencken, "The South Astir," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XI, 1 (January, 1935), 51-60.
18. Davidson to Davis, January 9, 1935, January 23, 1935, Davidson Papers.
19. Davidson to Davis, February 18, 1934, March 25, 1934, September 25, 1934, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence; Davis to Davidson, February 20, 1934, March 14, 1934, March 27, 1934, *ibid.*; Davis to Davidson, September 14, 1934, October 1, 1934, Davidson Papers.
20. Davis to Davidson, January 17, 1935 (misdated January 17, 1934), Davidson Papers.
21. Davidson to Tate, February 21, 1930, February 25, 1930, Tate Papers; Barr, "Shall Slavery Come South?" *Virginia Quarterly Review*, VI, 4 (October, 1930), 481-94; Stewart, *Burden*



of *Time*, 145-47; Rock, "Making and Meaning of *I'll Take My Stand*," 349-57; M. Thomas Inge, "Richmond's Great Debate," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 6, 1970.

22. Johnson, "The South Faces Itself," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, VII, 1 (January, 1931), 155-57; Barr to Tate, December 31, 1931, Tate Papers; Tate to Ellen Glasgow, March 30, 1933, Tate Papers. The *VQR*'s editorial policy, Davidson complained in 1934, was "studiously non-combatant; it touched mildly upon social and economic issues but ignored literary issues." Davidson, "The Trend of Literature: A Partisan View," *Culture in the South*, ed. William T. Couch (Chapel Hill, 1934), 195.

23. For the Agrarians' dislike of Barr's editorial policies, see Tate to Fletcher, March 14, 1935, Tate Papers; Fletcher to Owsley, March 11, 1935, Frank L. Owsley Papers (in possession of Mrs. Frank L. Owsley, Nashville, Tennessee); Davidson to Fletcher, March 6, 1935, March 12, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Davidson to Tate, March 17, 1935, Tate Papers; Fletcher to Barr, January 20, 1935, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence; Owsley to Fletcher, March 16, 1935, Fletcher Papers. For Davis' view of his editorial responsibilities, see Davis to Davidson, January 30, 1935, Davidson Papers.

24. Davis to Davidson, February 28, 1935, Davidson Papers; Davidson, "*I'll Take My Stand: A History*," *American Review*, V, 3 (Summer, 1935), 317. In January, 1935, Davidson had praised the *VQR* along with the *Southwest Review* for making important contributions to cultural and literary regionalism. This leads one to believe that Davidson's reaction to Davis' rejection of his essay was due in part to pique. Davidson, "Regionalism and Education," *American Review*, IV, 3 (January, 1935), 324-25.

25. Davis to Tate, July 3, 1934, Davis to Warren, September 11, 1934, Davis to Lytle, September 11, 1934, Davis to Ransom, September 11, 1934, Davis to Wade, September 10, 1934, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence.

26. Davis to Lytle, October 3, 1934, October 15, 1934, October 19, 1934, November 11, 1934, November 14, 1934, Lytle to Davis, December 3, 1934, Davis to Warren, December 6, 1934, Davis to Owsley, December 20, 1934, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence.

27. Tate to Davis, March 10, 1935, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence; Tate to Davidson, March 5, 1935, Davidson Papers; Fletcher to Davidson, March 5, 1935, March 11, 1935, March 12, 1935, Davidson Papers; Fletcher to Warren, December 14, 1934, December 27, 1934, March 11, 1935, Warren Papers; Fletcher to Tate, March 7, 1935, March 13, 1935, Tate Papers; Fletcher to Owsley, March 13, 1935, Owsley Papers; Fletcher to Stringfellow Barr, January 20, 1935, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence; Davis to Fletcher, January 31, 1935, *ibid.*; Fletcher to Charles Pipkin, June 22, 1934, *Southern Review Collection* (Yale University); Fletcher to Davidson, March 8, 1934, Fletcher Papers. For Fletcher's commitment to the traditional South, see "Is This the Voice of the South?" *Nation*, CXXXVII, 3573 (December 27, 1933), 734-35; "Regionalism and Folk Art," *Southwest Review*, XIX, 4 (July, 1934), 429-34; *Life Is My Song* (New York, 1937), 356-57, 371-79. Fletcher's widow has recounted how he insisted, against the advice of the architect, that his house "Johnswood" be built in such a way that he could sleep facing south. Charlie May Simon, *Johnswood* (New York, 1953), 27.

28. Davidson to Fletcher, March 12, 1935, March 17, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Tate to Fletcher, March 12, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Tate to Fletcher, March 14, 1935, Tate Papers; Tate to Davidson, March 14, 1935, Davidson Papers; Warren to Fletcher, March 20, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Ransom to Fletcher, March 15, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Davidson to Tate, March 17, 1935, Davidson Papers; Fletcher to Davidson, March 25, 1935, Davidson Papers.

29. Owsley to Fletcher, March 12, 1935, March 16, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Davidson to Fletcher, March 6, 1935, March 12, 1935, Fletcher Papers; Owsley, "The Pillars of Agrarianism," *American Review*, IV, 5 (March, 1935), 529-30. Fletcher also answered Mencken in "The Sin of City-Mindedness: A Reply to H. L. Mencken" (unpublished mss., Fletcher Papers). For Davidson's praise of Fletcher's essay, see Davidson to Fletcher, April 14, 1935, Fletcher Papers.

30. Davis to Tate, March 26, 1935, Tate Papers; "The Green-Room," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XI, 2 (April, 1935), ii-iv.

31. Davidson, "The Trend of Literature: A Partisan View," 196; Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart," 70-73; William Nolte, *H. L. Mencken, Literary Critic* (Middletown, Conn., 1964), 178-83; Douglas C. Stenerson, *H. L. Mencken: Iconoclast from Baltimore* (Chicago, 1971), 65; Kemler, *Irreverent Mr. Mencken*, 175.

32. Manchester, *Mencken*, 86; Ernest Boyd, *H. L. Mencken* (New York, 1927), 3-15; Charles Angoff, *H. L. Mencken, a Portrait from Memory* (New York, 1956), 55; Kemler, *Irreverent Mr. Mencken*, 146; Stenerson, *H. L. Mencken*, 206-207; Mencken, "On Living in Baltimore," *H. L. Mencken Prejudices*, ed. Farrell, 206-210.

33. Mencken to Davis, November 17, 1934, *VQR* Editorial Correspondence; Stenerson, *H. L. Mencken*, 10-15, 133, 219-20; Nolte, *Mencken*, 114-18, 230-31; Kemler, *Irreverent Mr. Mencken*, 168-69; Carl Bode, *Mencken* (Carbondale, Ill., 1969), 174-76; Mencken, "On Being an American," *H. L. Mencken Prejudices*, ed. Farrell, 90; Davidson, *The Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States* (Chapel Hill, 1938), 78-87.

34. T. Harry Williams, *Romance and Realism in Southern Politics* (Baton Rouge, 1966); David Bertelson, *The Lazy South* (New York, 1967); F. Garvin Davenport, Jr., *The Myth of*

*Southern History: Historical Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Southern Literature* (Nashville, 1970); David M. Potter, "The Enigma of the South," *Yale Review*, LI (October, 1961), 150-51; Woodward, "The Search for Southern Identity," 321-38; Potter, "On Understanding the South: a Review Article," *Journal of Southern History*, XXX, 4 (November, 1964), 462; Monroe L. Billington, *The South, a Central Theme?* (New York, 1969).