



Main Street and Empire: The Fictional Small Town in the Age of Globalization (The American Literatures Initiative)

Ryan Poll Ph.D

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The small town has become a national icon that circulates widely in literature, culture, and politics as an authentic American space and community. Yet there are surprisingly few critical studies that analyze the small town's centrality to the United States' identity and imagination.

In *Main Street and Empire*, Ryan Poll addresses this need, arguing that the small town, as evoked by the image of "Main Street," is not a relic of the past but rather a metaphorical screen upon which America's "everyday" stories and subjects are projected on both a national and global scale.

Bringing together a broad selection of texts—from Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, Grace Metalious's *Peyton Place*, and Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* to the speeches of William McKinley, Ronald Reagan, Sarah Palin, and Barack Obama—Poll examines how the small town is used to imagine and reproduce the nation throughout the twentieth- and into the twenty-first century. He contends that the dominant small town, despite its innocent, nostalgic appearance, is central to the development of the U.S. empire and global capitalism.

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