

Another chapter investigates the expansion of baking powder during World War I as doughnut girls served American-style chemically-leavened doughnuts to soldiers on the front lines. Back in the states, Civitello also touches upon the ways baking powder facilitated patriotic Wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays and helped housewives produce War Breads and Victory Breads out of unrationed grains like corn, rye, oats, and barley which relied on baking powder to rise properly.

Despite these rich and appetizing anecdotes, portions of Civitello's research, like the dense chapters concerning the corporate jockeying of the Baking Powder Trust, are hard to digest. That said, throughout her research, Civitello shines a light

on baking powder's darker past, pointing out numerous instances of systemic racism and gendered marketing strategies used by the baking powder industry. She also raises important questions concerning health and the use of baking powder, the "indispensable invisible ingredient" of American cuisine. Although it is not inherently unhealthy, baking powder facilitated the proliferation of fast-foods and everyday baked goods. While Civitello acknowledges this dietary concern in her final chapter, she leaves plenty of room for future scholarship to rise.

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From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920–1965

By Jon K. Lauck

(Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017. Pp. 252. Notes, references, index. Paper, \$27.50.)

In *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge*, Jon K. Lauck posits that early twentieth-century midwestern literature negatively affected the region's image. Since at least 2013, upon the founding of the Midwest History Working Group, Lauck has been a tireless advocate for Midwest Studies, and this is his second book

for the University of Iowa Press series "Iowa and the Midwest Experience." In it, he addresses a wide range of midwestern literary and historical figures, including Indiana University historians John D. Barnhart and R. Carlyle Buley, as well as Indiana authors Booth Tarkington, Scott Russell Sanders, Michael Martone,

and "the Hoosier Poet," James Whitcomb Riley.

Lauck examines "how the Midwest as a region faded from our collective imagination, fell off the map, and became an object of derision" (p. 3). To begin, he charges that one of "the forces that wilted midwestern identity" (p. 3) was Carl Van Doren's 1921 "Revolt from the Village" thesis of American literature. The revolt thesis, as it became known, holds that early twentieth-century midwestern writers such as Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis rejected nostalgic interpretations of small town life in favor of the ennui that characterized modernist literature. The thesis has remained at the forefront of midwestern literary studies, but Lauck argues that it distorts the field by overemphasizing the critical impressions of the region that emerged in the 1910s and 1920s. According to Lauck, the revolt thesis ignores not only Hamlin Garland and other earlier writers who were critical of rural midwestern life but also the wide variety of modernist-era authors such as Ruth Suckow and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, whose writing continued to represent what Van Doren calls the "cult of the village."

Lauck offers a wide-ranging intellectual history of the Midwest in which he discusses urban influences on mass culture, describes midwestern voices in national political debates, and compares

regionalist thinkers to those focused on broader, conceptual issues. In the final chapter, he turns to the evolution of midwestern historical study through the contributions of figures such as Frederick Jackson Turner, Henry Nash Smith, and William Appleman Williams. He also traces the development of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA) beginning with its founding in 1907 as a small group focused on Midwestern sociopolitical, small-town, and economic history. In the 1950s-60s, MVHA grew in size and scope, eventually becoming the Organization of American Historians, a change Lauck attributes to the broader national interests of its younger, more liberal members. In the conclusion, Lauck issues an admirable call for a new midwestern regionalism that should account for the long-term consequences of the economic and cultural changes of the early twentieth century. Lauck believes that this revived regionalism should include the voices of marginalized groups as well as "draw on the older forms of agrarian and small-town regionalism" that have fallen out of favor (p. 102).

Despite such a broad-minded call for inclusion in the future of Midwest Studies, Lauck undermines many of the fields which might actually be central in his effort to reinvigorate American regionalism. One notable contradiction

lies in his concern that academic emphases on race, class, and gender studies have overtaken the study of regionalism. Lauck might have resolved this question through more sustained consideration of recent scholars who use cosmopolitanism or hybridity as a means of reincorporating regionalism into the study of American history and culture. Lauck tends to generalize about cities and suburbs, and he fails to critique the implications of the “cult

of the village” to the same extent he does the revolt thesis. Still, perhaps some generalization is unavoidable in a survey, and these faults do not obscure this book’s efforts to promote studies of the Midwest and American regionalism in the academic conversation.

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