

Horace M. Kallen in the Heartland: The Midwestern Roots of American Pluralism, by Michael C. Steiner. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2020. xi, 228 pp. Photographs, notes, index. \$37.50 hardcover.

Reviewer David Mislin is an associate professor in the Intellectual Heritage Program at Temple University. He is the author of *Saving Faith: Making Religious Pluralism an American Value at the Dawn of the Secular Age* (2015) and most recently, *Washington Gladden's Church: The Minister Who Made Modern American Protestantism* (2019).

The philosopher Horace Kallen's role in developing the theory of cultural pluralism has long been acknowledged. In the early twentieth century, Kallen asserted that the healthiest societies are those that affirm ethnic and cultural diversity rather than demand conformity to a monolithic national culture. What has gone unacknowledged, Michael C. Steiner argues, is the Midwest's pivotal role in the development of this theory. Kallen spent seven years teaching at the University of Wisconsin, an experience which provided the young academic with "an image of ethnic diversity in an expansive landscape" (74). Steiner challenges the common interpretation of Kallen's tenure in Madison as an unhappy, unproductive exile from the Northeast. Rather, the Midwest was crucial in shaping his "generous open-ended vision of diversity" (3).

In briskly paced, lucidly written chapters, Steiner explores the pluralistic nature of the early twentieth-century Midwest. The book opens with an exploration of how Americans of the time recognized the region as "a kaleidoscope of cultures and a vanguard of diversity" (8). Crucially, though, the "vivid ethnic and racial segmentation" in "both the rural and urban Midwest" meant that this diversity persisted over time (13). Steiner explores how this milieu inspired other notable midwesterners, including Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, and Frederick Jackson Turner, to articulate some ideal of pluralism.

After the introductory chapters, the book offers a more standard intellectual biography of Kallen and his theory of pluralism, beginning with Kallen's early life and education. Steiner traces several key influences on Kallen: his Harvard mentors, including William James, as well as his fellow student during a year at Oxford, Alain Locke. Steiner then focuses on Kallen's time in Madison. The philosopher found a fulfilling intellectual community in Wisconsin, yet he also encountered expressions of anti-Semitism and xenophobia from colleagues. It was in this context, Steiner contends, that Kallen's theory of cultural pluralism emerged as a "fertile middle ground" between arguments for "melting pot" assimilation and demands for immigrant exclusion (90).

Much of the remainder of the volume considers that theory of pluralism. Steiner addresses critiques that Kallen's "belief in the immutability of ethnicity and the right of ethnic groups to live apart" seemed to come "uncomfortably close. . . to the very segregationism and racist nativism he abhorred" (92). He also notes the effect of World War I-era loyalty campaigns, which pushed Kallen to leave Madison and confirmed his belief in the need of a pluralistic ideal to "protect minorities from tidal waves of mass emotion" (74). The book's final chapters consider Kallen's return to the theory after the pluralistic ideal gained greater cultural currency during the 1940s. Late in life, Kallen belatedly expanded his theory to fully encompass the experience of African Americans.

Though the book's primary focus is Wisconsin, this work has implications for conceptions of the Midwest more broadly. Steiner persuasively contends that in the early twentieth century, the Midwest was the part of the United States that best exemplified the pluralistic ideal. As Steiner notes, this reality of history offers a stark contrast to modern perceptions of the region as "a homogenous refuge and white redoubt" (9). Moreover, the volume's early chapters offer a powerful meditation on "the power of place in individuals' lives" and how the particularities of place—not limited to the Midwest—mold lifelong intellectual commitments (37).

Nevertheless, the expansive discussion of the "heartland" seemingly promised by this study at times feels underdeveloped. Much of the book's focus is on Kallen's life in Madison and his forays into Chicago. To be sure, this approach has merit: it offers an oft-needed reminder that being a cosmopolitan academic center does not negate a place's claim to a heartland identity. Still, Steiner points to more profound insights by suggesting that "the constellations of small towns and self-sustaining ethnic communities throughout Wisconsin and the upper Midwest also influenced Kallen" (17). But discussions of these influences occupy a small place relative to Steiner's explorations of Kallen's interactions with a more familiar cast of characters, such as John Dewey and Randolph Bourne.

One particularly rich example of what the book might have provided occurs in Steiner's brief discussion of Ole Edvart Røllvaag. Røllvaag, a professor at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, espoused the pluralistic ideal in urging his "fellow Norwegians to retain their culture in order to live fuller lives and to interact with other cultures and enrich their new nation as a whole" (107). Devoting more attention to Kallen's interactions with people like Røllvaag and his sense of the Midwest's "constellations of small towns" would have made this study's claims about pluralism in the heartland all the more provocative.