

aspects of small-town life, like the drowning of a young boy, business failures, and impoverished neighbors, are mentioned, Truckenbrod's remembrances remain largely positive. Even his sexuality seems to have created little conflict, aside from confusion over normative gender roles and the pressure he felt to date girls.

The book will appeal to Iowa audiences looking for a personal and intimate portrayal of small-town Iowa in the 1940s and 1950s. Documentary qualities aside, Truckenbrod's longing for the small-town of his youth will be familiar and appeal to anyone who grew up in a similar setting but felt forced to leave.

The seasonal organization of Truckenbrod's book makes for enjoyable reading but comes at the cost of clearly laying out the trajectory of his own growth and development. Additionally, the text does not feel firmly rooted in the place of Winterset until Chapter 22, when we finally get a close tour of the townscape rather than isolated vignettes. Finally, in the book's first postscript Truckenbrod shares that he did not want to include "one little three letter word" in the subtitle (62). This resistance to discussing the issue of sexuality permeates the book and, when it does appear, the discussion feels achingly restrained and even repressed. Readers looking for fuller discussions of LGBTQ lives outside urban centers in the Midwest might turn to other texts, like Will Fellows's *Farm Boys*.

These critiques, however, do not completely undermine what is otherwise an enjoyable book. Truckenbrod's style—florid, occasionally a bit campy, and very often wry and witty—is pleasing to read and the short chapters make it a convenient book to pick up and put down again. While the book does not deliver on the promise offered in its subtitle, it will be a pleasant read for anyone who is the least bit sentimental about life in the upper Midwest's small towns.

*Punks In Peoria: Making a Scene in the American Heartland*, by Jonathan Wright and Dawson Barrett. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2021. 240 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$125.00 hardcover. \$22.95 paperback.

Reviewer Kevin Dunn is professor of political science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York. He is the author of numerous books including *Global Punk: Resistance and Rebellion in Everyday Life* (2016).

*Punks In Peoria* offers a detailed historical examination of the birth and evolution of the Peoria, Illinois, punk scene in the 1980s and 1990s. Drawn from archival research and numerous interviews with partici-

pants from the scene, the book documents how a growing group of social outcasts and misfits created a subcultural community that, at its best, gave voice to the marginalized, hope to the despairing, and a sense of purpose and empowerment to the lost. While by no means a historically influential punk scene, Jonathan Wright and Dawson Barrett argue that the Peoria scene was important because of the city's long-standing reputation of being synonymous with "Anywhere, USA" (3). In this sense, the book offers a model of historical interrogation that should be of interest to readers and researchers throughout America, from Iowa to Alaska. The purpose is not to document a well-known national treasure, but to explore the lesser-known but equally significant small-town cultural creations. It is easy to build a scene where a conducive infrastructure already exists, such as in San Francisco. As Wright and Barrett repeatedly illustrate, creating and sustaining one in less hospitable places such as Peoria takes a great deal of work. As such they offer a "story about making the most out of very little" (9).

Well-written and researched, this is a valuable window into both the Peoria musical underground but also into midwestern American life at the end of the twentieth century. Certainly there were memorable bands that emerged from the scene, including Planes Mistaken for Stars, Caustic Defiance, and Dollface, but the real heroes of the book are the dozens of young individuals dedicated to building a community and making their lives better, in whatever way they could. A large part of the story is the self-empowerment that comes from do-it-yourself punk rock. Your voice isn't being heard? Start a punk zine. A venue won't book your band? Rent a hall or organize a house party. Instead of being a passive consumer, turn yourself into an active cultural producer. *Punks in Peoria* documents this important transformation again and again.

But a significant part of the story is also about how geographic location shapes cultural evolution. Local punk scenes draw upon national and global trends while evolving organically based on uniquely local factors. Thus, the story of the punk scene in Peoria tells us a great deal about that city's place within the national and global contexts as well as offering tremendous insights into the rich complexities at play within the local community. This includes not only individual actors, but also the fluctuating political, social and economic forces that make Peoria "Peoria" at any given historical moment. Thus, while the book does a wonderful job of introducing and discussing individual people, musicians, bands, and business people, the biggest and most important character in the book is Peoria itself. On the one hand, this leads to a case of exceptionalism. The scene that Wright and Barrett document could only

have happened when it did in a place like Peoria. On the other hand, if it could happen in “Anywhere, USA,” it could and did happen elsewhere. As the authors note, “this could easily be the story of a dozen or more Rust Belt cities, whether Des Moines, Iowa; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; or Kenosha, Wisconsin” (197). As such, *Punks in Peoria* is a welcome contribution to a growing set of books and films documenting underground musical scenes across America in the late twentieth century.

*Firepower: How the NRA Turned Gun Owners into a Political Force*, by Matthew J. Lacombe. American Politics Series. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021. x, 312 pp. Graphs, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Michael McLaughlin is a doctoral candidate in religion at Florida State University. His research focuses on the intersection of religion and firearms in the twentieth century.

Matthew J. Lacombe makes a vital contribution to the emerging field of gun studies with his data-driven and richly evidenced analysis of the NRA’s political journey to becoming the right-wing powerhouse it is today. He argues the NRA’s political power derives from connecting gun-owner identity to a broader political ideology and mobilizing members in defense of that identity. Using automated topic modelling to make sense of eighty years of *American Rifleman* editorials and letters to the editor from major newspapers, Lacombe presents his reader with statistics and graphs demonstrating changes in the NRA’s rhetoric and, more interestingly, how the general public picks up and reproduces the NRA’s language. That is, the NRA is not simply a dominant but also a driving force in conversations about guns. *Firepower* is both highly technical yet broadly accessible. Lacombe explains his methods and findings in terms comprehensible to non-experts and leaves the full technical discussion of his methodology to the book’s appendix.

*Firepower* consists of two halves. The first considers how the NRA fosters a politically relevant identity and ideology among its members, a theme Lacombe lays out in Chapter 2. Lacombe’s prowess in statistical analysis shines through in Chapters 3 and 4 where he presents his findings on how the NRA has articulated and promoted its gun-owner identity and ideology. The second half of *Firepower* follows the NRA from its early twentieth century opposition to gun control through its late twentieth century alignment with the GOP to its recent successes preventing gun control legislation in the wake of mass shootings. Lacombe’s conclusion seeks to articulate the broader lessons political scientists might take from studying the NRA.