What the authors do not adequately explain is how a project that came to be associated almost exclusively, in historical memory, with the venerated Civilian Conservation Corps, popularly known as "Roosevelt's Tree Army," was, in reality, a very complicated undertaking. Brief passages devoted to funding, land tenure, management, and workers reveal that the PSFP employed a variety of specialists and workers, including women, and relied on cooperative agreements with farmers to achieve what would have been impossible had the federal government tried to repurchase the land: establish "nearly 19,000 miles of disconnected shelterbelts on 33,000 separate farms" (141). The PSFP thus forged an important pathway into what we now call public-private partnerships, one that ultimately left farmers in control of the shelterbelt's long-term sustainability.

Deeper inquiry into how the PSFP worked on the ground would have been helpful, and would have been warranted considering the authors' purpose, which is finally revealed only in a concluding chapter devoted to the project's legacy. In a nutshell, despite inconsistent and often competing agricultural policies that swing from promoting maximum production to encouraging resource conservation, plus widespread use of irrigation technology that is slowly draining the Ogallala Aquifer, the PSFP, the authors argue, "represents a balance among long-term planning, far-reaching national policies, and a willingness to reconsider core values at the local level regarding the federal government's involvement on private land" (134). They see a "striking parallel" (139) between the looming effects of climate change on agriculture and the federal government's response to the devastating environmental and economic effects of the great drought of the 1930s, positing that the PSFP is a cogent case study for climate adaptation. Although the authors might have developed their argument more coherently, *Conserving the Dust Bowl* is worth a look by those who continue the noble effort of cultivating a land ethic in the agricultural sector. A good bibliography awaits anyone who wants to dig deeper.

From Warm Center to Ragged Edge: The Erosion of Midwestern Literary and Historical Regionalism, 1920–1965, by Jon K. Lauck. Iowa and the Midwest Experience Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017. xii, 246 pp. Notes, index. $27.50 paperback.

Reviewer C. Elizabeth Raymond holds the Grace A. Griffen Chair in History at the University of Nevada, Reno. She has written extensively about a sense of place in the Midwest and West.

Midwesterners weary of eastern intellectual condescension, or of hearing the charms of their subtle landscape casually dismissed as "flyover

country" by Californians who have never actually seen it, will find much to cheer about in Jon Lauck's latest book. *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge* is a fervent regional call-to-arms disguised as a modest history of the Midwest's brief, late nineteenth-century ascendancy in American politics and culture and its subsequent decline into marginality during the years highlighted in the subtitle.

Lauck makes his argument in three succinct chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion. The entire text takes up less than half the volume, the bulk of which is devoted to footnotes (of which more later). His sympathies are never in doubt. From the beginning, Lauck announces that his "primary purpose" is "to bolster the new and concerted search for the history of the lost region at the heart of our nation by studying what went wrong" (3). In that quest he is a clear, consistent, and unabashed booster of the region he defines loosely as "the rolling green expanse between the rivers Ohio and Missouri" (2).

Readers looking for a nuanced assessment of that expansive region will be disappointed. Jon Lauck takes the Midwest as a given, assuming that his readers will recognize it as their own home territory. Rather than examining its origins or history, he sets out to explain why such "vast mental and physical territories . . . have been neglected and marginalized" in contemporary scholarship (7). Although his context is nominally global, with allusions to both Scotland and Catalonia justifying his contention that "the regionalist impulse persists" (6), his book focuses resolutely on the American Midwest as "the warm center of the world" (108). His perspective on it is predominantly, though not exclusively, scholarly. In this work Lauck apprehends the Midwest through its literature and its historical scholarship. He writes clearly about both, with a fluency based on extended study of his subject.

From Warm Center to Ragged Edge recounts the origin and persistence of the familiar "revolt from the village" characterization of midwestern writing. The trouble began in 1921 with the publication of an essay by Columbia University professor Carl Van Doren in *The Nation*. Van Doren suggested that a bold new crop of contemporary American novelists like Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Sinclair Lewis were unified in their liberating rebellion against the provincialism of the interior American villages from which they came. Lauck explains how Van Doren's provocative thesis was taken up and repeated verbatim by subsequent literary critics and scholars, all of whom ignored other, more nuanced regional writers, and even the nonconforming works of the writers initially championed by Van Doren.

The damage to midwestern regional reputation was done, however. Regardless of the determined efforts of regionalist writers like

Frederick Manfred, Ruth Suckow, and Herbert Quick, or publishers such as John T. Frederick in *The Midland*, the region was visible to eastern intellectuals only as a backwater. In a prevailing postwar intellectual climate of cosmopolitan internationalism, the frequently agricultural and small-town subject matter of midwestern writers was easily dismissed by modern critics as nostalgic and ultimately inconsequential. The difficulties were compounded by concurrent trends in the history profession, as midwestern universities enlarged their faculties to encompass new areas of study such as Russian history and international affairs. Midwestern history did not disappear, but it was no longer so prominent or so exclusive a focus. Previously, the history of the Midwest had been seen as the history of all America, as illustrated by Frederick Jackson Turner in his famous 1893 essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." By the 1940s, however, that was no longer the case. The unfortunate association of Senator Joseph McCarthy with Wisconsin further solidified the region's national reputation as a domain of ignorance and prejudice. In that context, the controversial transformation in 1964 of the venerable *Mississippi Valley History* Review into the *Journal of American History* was emblematic of a broad cultural turn away from the American Midwest.

In his conclusion Lauck argues for a view of midwestern regionalism that does not simply equate it with the 1920s village revolt and thereby confine it to the irrelevant past. Instead, he seeks a vibrant, revived regional study that would amplify Hispanic and African American voices and grapple with twentieth-century regional transformations in agriculture, population distribution, and economy. A culture that obsessively seeks out local food, he seems to suggest, might profitably also learn to appreciate other, even more consequential forms of regional variation.

Lauck is too modest to inform readers that he himself is at the heart of just such an effort. Instrumental in the formation of the Midwestern History Association in 2014, he has almost singlehandedly rejuvenated scholarly and public attention to the region by means of the new organization and its two associated journals: *Middle West Review* (where Lauck serves as a member of the editorial board,) and *Studies in Midwestern History* (where he is the general editor). In addition, Lauck has published four other books on various aspects of midwestern history and politics and is editor or coeditor of numerous others. His immersion in all aspects of contemporary midwestern regional study makes the footnotes of *From Warm Center to Ragged Edge* a particular treasure trove. Longer than the actual text, they are a tour de force for any scholar or general reader interested in aspects of midwestern writing or history scholarship. Lauck has read broadly and generously, and he shares his

knowledge joyfully. These are not the pedantic notes of a critic, but the enthusiastic comments of a supportive scholar. No one with interest in the region should skip his footnotes. They testify volubly to the fact that descriptive writing and scholarly analysis have, in fact, continued in and about the Midwest even as it moved to what Lauck regretfully characterizes as "the ragged edge" of American culture.

The Fighting Sullivans: How Hollywood and the Military Make Heroes, by Bruce Kuklick. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017. xi, 212 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. $27.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Anna Thompson Hajdik is a full-time lecturer in the English Department and Film Studies program at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater. She is the author of "'You Really Ought to Give Iowa a Try': Tourism, Community Identity, and the Impact of Popular Culture in Iowa" (*Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy,* 2009).

Bruce Kuklick brings together various elements of biography, community history/memory, and the broader currents of twentieth-century American history through the lens of the "Fighting Sullivans," five brothers who lost their lives together on the USS *Juneau* during the naval battle of Guadalcanal in November 1942. But this is far from a simple story. Rather, it is fraught with contradiction and controversy and lays bare the many tensions between nation and region, family and community, and even propaganda and truth. Ultimately, as Kuklick writes in his introduction, it is a book that "shows how narratives of the heroic are constructed and why we need them" (3).

Kuklick's work is at its strongest when he places the Sullivans' story in context with such topics as the shifting fortunes of the American war effort in 1943–44, Hollywood's influence on the home front, and the postindustrial decline of Waterloo, Iowa. Chapters 8–11 are especially valuable, as Kuklick traces the history of Hollywood's treatment of the Sullivan family, turning to such rich archival sources as correspondence among movie executives, the film's director (Lloyd Bacon), various screenwriters, and family matriarch Alletta Sullivan. Script treatments and various promotional materials also prove to be especially rich archival documents. Ultimately, the film became much more of a homefront story, centering on an idyllic family and its strong Catholic faith, in stark contrast to the reality of the actual Sullivan family. As Kuklick argues, the persuasive power of Hollywood was much greater in the 1940s than it is now, shaping "morality, politics, and attitudes towards social problems" (96).

Much of the Sullivans' story takes place in Waterloo, Iowa, the family's hometown. The author chronicles the family's working-class exist-