



The Midwestern Region of the United States

Places identified by name refer to places mentioned in the essays

THE STORY OF THE MIDWEST: AN INTRODUCTION

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THIS BOOK originated in a conference held at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, in October 1998. Entitled "Writing Regionally: Historians Talk about the American Middle West," the gathering was frankly experimental. Neither of the organizers (who have subsequently morphed into editors) considered ourselves self-conscious regional historians. Indeed, we were acutely aware that the Midwest lacks the kind of geographic coherence, historical issues, and cultural touchstones that have informed regional identity in the American South, West, and New England.¹ We assumed that historians writing about the Midwest carry a historiographical burden loaded with irony: rather than argue for the distinctiveness of the Midwest, they must always demonstrate the national, even universal, significance of what is generally considered both the most American and the most amorphous of regions. Being good Midwesterners, however, we fretted that our feelings about regional identity were idiosyncratic. So we sought the opinions of other historians who have studied "The Midwest." We wondered if they recognized this burden, and if they did, what they made of it. In short, we asked what they thought it meant to write "Midwestern history," or if they even accepted the existence, real or imagined, of such a genre.

We invited a group of historians who had published important monographs about subjects located in the Midwest to join us in a conversation about regional identity. We encouraged them to write freely and informally, to be more suggestive than definitive. We emphasized that our goal was to consider the value of a self-conscious Midwestern historiography. To our surprise and delight, the historians we approached not only enthusiastically accepted our challenge, they made it clear that we were not the only people itching to talk about "Midwestern history." Now we offer our collective reflections on the subject to our readers as a general invitation to think, talk, and write about the intertwined topics of regional identity and regional history.

To a significant degree, our interest in regional identity springs more from personal than professional concerns. When we began, none of us described ourselves as regional historians. But we all identified ourselves as

Midwesterners. While college, graduate school, or first jobs had drawn most of us away from the region for periods of time, all but four of us had eventually returned to what we call the Midwest. Most of our essays, some more explicitly than others, are efforts to come to terms with a landscape we think of as home.

This sense of ourselves as Midwesterners is the foundation of our book's thematic coherence. We offer a dual regional consciousness; that is, we place our sense of ourselves as Midwesterners in tension with the history of the Midwest as a region. One way or another, we are concerned with the evolution of Midwestern regional identity over a long nineteenth century that extends from the creation of the Old Northwest as a political unit in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 to the early decades of the twentieth century, when a popular image of stifling, bourgeois, small-town conformity began to compete with and overshadow the traditional, triumphal view of the region as the realized promise of the United States.

More formally, the essays unite two lines of study: the work of the past several decades on republican ideology among early American historians, and the new rural history. For the most part, historians writing about the Midwest have worked on at least two separate tracks. The first has focused on the early nineteenth century and highlighted the birth of the region in the nearly simultaneous emergence of American citizenship and market capitalism in what we would now call the eastern and lower Midwest. The creation of the Northwest Territory (or Old Northwest), from which emerged the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, was part of an elaborate imperial design intended to secure for the citizens of the United States the independence and institutions necessary for successful self-government. The conquest and settlement of this region in the early nineteenth century involved the cultivation of a landscape of widespread landownership, a primarily agrarian economy, and a commitment to moral and material development.²

Meanwhile, the new rural history has emphasized late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century resistance to the structures and behaviors inculcated a century before in the Old Northwest. Following the migration streams of the European immigrants and white, native-born Americans, this work has featured the upper and western Midwest, and has developed within two related paradigms: the market and the state. Scholars writing within the first paradigm have focused on the political ramifications for household and local and state institutions of the increased production of farms for market in tandem with increased capital costs of farming in land, labor, and technology. They focus as well on the consolidation of corporate control, by interlocking directorates of transportation and wholesaling interests, over marketing itself. One of the ways in which the two paradigms intersect is in analyses of attempts to use the power of the state to regulate corporate capitalism.³

The paradigm of the state also speaks to the social and cultural history of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Midwest. Here practi-

tioners of the new rural history have been particularly concerned with relations between white, native-born inhabitants of the region and European immigrants and their descendants. Both groups saw in the Midwest a promise of untrammelled material and moral progress, although on occasion they disagreed profoundly over the relationship of the individual to the state. For many immigrants, settlement in the Midwest meant the freedom not to become American, but to retain European ways and values. Thus, from the most intimate terrain of the household to the halls of state government, the turn-of-the-century Midwest proved a battleground over the right to define the terms of citizenship.

The worlds described by historians of the early Republic and their colleagues devoted to rural America exist in separate eras and areas, and the historiographies in which they are embedded are equally distinct.⁴ Read together, our essays give us a story about the Midwest with a beginning and an ending but without a middle. How was it, for example, that the place widely seen as the cutting edge of Western civilization in 1800 came to be perceived as a cultural cul-de-sac by the early 1900s? How, only decades after the region had exemplified reform and innovation, had Main Street and Middletown arisen to silence radicals, dissidents, and social critics, or drive them into exile? And why did the ideal of republican independence that nurtured Eugene V. Debs come to support the conformity of George F. Babbitt?

By examining the ways in which the dynamism of the Old Northwest became the cultural inertia of the Midwest, our essays contribute to the completion of an old manuscript. But they do so less by elaborating and extending the longstanding master narrative of material and moral development than by confronting it with alternative tales. Because most of the essays in *The American Midwest* treat counter-narratives, we have chosen to devote most of our introductory essay to explicating what we see as the master narrative of the Midwest. To put it another way, we intend our essay, which explores some of the most powerful and pervasive ways in which Midwesterners have imagined themselves as members of a regional community, to serve as a foil for the work that follows.

Like any collection of essays, this book is not comprehensive. Although our essays engage the story of the Midwest as a whole, certain aspects of both that narrative and its relation to various counter-narratives are missing. We regret that we do not have an essay on Chicago. We wish that the book as a whole dealt in greater depth with the question of gender and public space. And our book concentrates on the nineteenth century, which is especially problematic when we want to emphasize the roles of African Americans in creating one of the most powerful of the regional counter-narratives. This introductory essay tries to compensate for these omissions by suggesting how some of the undeveloped topics fit into the larger arguments of the volume. We hope that readers will take our introduction as an invitation to think at greater length and in greater depth about the issues we raise so schematically here.

In this volume, regional identity is a form of storytelling. To distinguish regional identity from regionalism as an early-twentieth-century intellectual movement, we have collectively appropriated Kathleen Conzen's term "regionality."⁵ In so doing, we affirm the historian Katherine Morrissey's assertion that regions are "mental territories" in which "the boundaries that govern the residents are those they draw themselves."⁶ In other words, "regionality" connotes something that is largely cognitive and emotional. Whether the Midwest exists as an entity defined by lines on a map or a barrage of statistics is not especially interesting to us. In these essays, regionality is about how people locate themselves intellectually and emotionally within complicated landscapes and networks of social relations. Like many scholars of our generation, we assume that identity exists as a fundamentally political process, that regional identity in particular is dynamic and unfinished, and that what gives it vitality are the many voices together continually contesting, negotiating, and redefining the Midwest.

Thinking about regional identity, therefore, necessarily leads us to focus on the stories people tell about themselves. We agree with David Carr and William Cronon that "narrative . . . is fundamental to the way we humans organize our experience."⁷ Stories tell us what people care about, who they think they are, and how they think their worlds work and ought to work. Whatever the degree of their tellers' self-consciousness, stories are guides to identity. They can be told in any medium that can be read as a text—whether paintings, jokes, songs, clothes, houses, or novels. Stories are about giving names to places and events; they are about creating and transmitting memory. "[R]emembering often provides a basis for imagining," writes the linguistic anthropologist Keith Basso. "What is remembered about a particular place—including, prominently, verbal and visual accounts of what has transpired there—guides and constrains how it will be imagined by delimiting a field of workable possibilities." Or more succinctly: "We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine."⁸ What we make of these place-worlds, what the poet Seamus Heaney has called the "feeling assenting equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind," is stories.⁹

Stories are a way to engage other people in conversation. Storytelling is inherently social, a process of negotiation between narrator and audience. As Cronon has written, "We tell stories *with* each other and *against* each other in order to speak to each other." Among the most important characteristics of regionality is its contested and unfinished quality. Regions, in Morrissey's words, are "always in the process of formation." Never fixed definitions, they are distinguished by "the persistence of conflict and contestation." Regions "are made up of different individuals and groups who are engaged in conflicts over meanings of places, over the relations of peoples in and with places, and over their often competing visions of the future. These struggles are both material and representational. And they take place not only in the world of writers and historians but

also in the world of the everyday."¹⁰ Our essays constitute a study in regionality because they analyze stories that express the teller's identity through explicit reference to a particular place in time. These essays deal with various Midwestern landscapes through the long nineteenth century. Sometimes the expressions of regionality depicted here are highly individual; sometimes they speak to dominant class, racial, or gender interests; and sometimes they manage to be both idiosyncratic and representative of the core values informing the master narrative of the Midwest. By definition, however, all of these stories are exclusionary to the degree that they delimit a community by imagining and enforcing borders that separate those within from those without. In the largest sense, we are analyzing and participating in an extended conversation involving the narratives and counter-narratives of both nineteenth-century Midwesterners and their historians past and present.¹¹

THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN REGIONALITY

Our anachronistic use of the terms "regionalism," "regionality," and "Midwest" is deliberate. No one in the eighteenth century and few in the nineteenth century employed these words. The term "Middle West," or the more common abbreviation "Midwest," as the geographer James Shortridge has reminded us, was an invention of the early twentieth century; before then, Americans talked about the West, the Great West, or the Old Northwest.¹² Similarly, regionality we understand as the creation of a nineteenth-century romantic obsession with provincialism and a celebration of the local. Many western Europeans and Americans began to take pride in their distance from perceived centers of political and intellectual power. In Germany, Scotland, the American South, and New England, among other places, writers, artists, musicians, and eventually politicians accentuated the peculiarities of an imagined relationship between specific peoples and specific places. This burgeoning regionality was often more cognitive than real. The Scotland of tartans and bagpipes was as much the creation of the imagination of Sir Walter Scott as our idealized image of New England was the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Romantic regionalism was all about transforming a perceived liability—that is, provincialism—into a perceived asset.¹³

In the United States, some of the most persistent archetypes in American culture, including the grasping Yankee, the chivalrous Cavalier, and the noble Backwoodsman emerged in the early Republic. The characterological attributes of these stock figures associated a particular people with a particular place. By mid-century, Americans could also draw upon concrete images of regional landscapes themselves as morally evocative as Ichabod Crane or Natty Bumppo: the luxury verging on licentiousness of the Southern plantation, the orderliness masking hypocrisy of the New England green, and the raw energy and squalor of new settlements in the Old Northwest. This emergent regionality was the result of the convergence of

important developments, which, at least initially, may have seemed destructive of regional communities.¹⁴

Regionalism, defined as differences rooted in place within a larger community, had long been present on the North American continent. The lives of English colonists in seventeenth-century Massachusetts and Virginia were as different from one another as were those of enslaved Africans in the Chesapeake and in the Carolina Lowcountry or various groups of Native Americans. Areal demographic, economic, social, and political patterns persisted into the nineteenth century. Germans were far more heavily concentrated in the Old Northwest than they were in either the South or New England. Africans, enslaved and free, influenced Southern lifeways far more profoundly than those of New England. Industrialization transformed the landscape of New England to a greater degree than anywhere else, while the South remained overwhelmingly agrarian. In the Old Northwest, a peculiar balance of agriculture and industry, urban centers and rural worlds, emerged.¹⁵

Regionalism, however, did not necessarily create regional consciousness. Indeed, many factors in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries contributed to the opposite effect. One of the great themes of colonial British American historiography over the past generation has been the importance of "Anglicization," or the efforts of leading European Americans to locate themselves within English culture, to prove their European credentials by ostentatious displays of wealth, civility, and political loyalty. Until the last third of the eighteenth century, most colonists thought of themselves as provincials, people on the periphery, who had to strive to make themselves part of a superior metropolitan world. They defined themselves with and against Europe, not other parts of North America. As such, they had no interest in celebrating their provincialism.¹⁶

The reversal of this attitude, the transformation of European colonists into American citizens, is one of the most complex stories of the eighteenth century and one we cannot explicate here. Suffice it to say that while American rhetoric became more democratic in the late 1700s, it also became more exceptionalist. When Thomas Jefferson and company mouthed elegant platitudes about human conduct, they increasingly focused on the appropriateness of the North America continent for a grand imperial experiment in republican government. Europe, they contended, was old and corrupt, lazy and feeble. The promise of the United States, with its extensive land, its relative freedom from foreign enemies, and its huge commercial possibilities, was an opportunity to create a world of independent and equal white men who would set the standard of civilized behavior for the rest of the world. The key to the realization of this opportunity was the citizen. Only the conscientious participation of citizens in their own governance could make work a loosely structured republican empire of unprecedented size. But no one was really sure how to guarantee that white men would take seriously their responsibilities as citizens. Were religion and education sufficient to inculcate the necessary qualities

of virtue and intelligence in the rank and file of American society, or should the business of government be left to a political elite?

However the loyalty of citizens to the new Republic was to be achieved, American nationalism would at first blush seem diametrically opposed to regionality. For the creation of a nation-state demanded loyalty to it above all else. The small scale and limited resources of the United States government made its patronage something worth fighting over. Nearly everyone wanted to get more than his share of federal largesse. To be sure, within American federalism, allegiance was subdivided among states, counties, and towns. But this territorial hierarchy of political entities tended to reinforce the idea of the primacy of national loyalty. The story of American citizenship, the imagining of an American community, took precedence. As observers such as Alexis de Tocqueville noted, in the enlarged public space of the new Republic, in pamphlets and parades, orations and poems, in taverns and salons, Americans talked a lot about what it meant to be American. The practice of democratic citizenship inhered in the constant negotiation of its meaning. Institutionally, the federal republic both facilitated and reinforced this national conversation through frequent elections, an extensive system of courts, and a burgeoning network of federal post offices.¹⁷

Two other developments accentuated the importance of a national political community in the United States. The first was the market revolution. Indeed, the intensity with which many Americans sought to make money and to build improvements that would make money-making easier, was antithetical to regionality. Capitalism was built upon the impersonal exchange of commodities. In the political rhetoric of the period, the growth of a market economy, and the banks, roads, canals, and railroads that made it possible, was justified in no small part because it would overcome localism and provincialism by binding Americans together in a common cause. To be sure, capitalism thrived on greed and competition, the antithesis of the disinterested virtue so essential to the exercise of good citizenship. But the seductions of Mammon also pointed to the nation's potential for an economic greatness worthy of its brilliant experiment in republicanism, which in turn validated a common set of expectations and understandings about the blessings of entrepreneurial endeavor.¹⁸

The second factor underscoring the importance of a national political community was the American population. How could regionality exist among people so diverse in their origins and so peripatetic? Americans in the early nineteenth century became, in the words of the Englishman Morris Birkbeck, "migrating multitudes."¹⁹ Moving their households hundreds of miles, Americans seemed to foreign observers to be always in search of greener grass. By the middle of the nineteenth century, states barely decades old, including Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, were exporting more people than they were importing. Surely there were few places in the United States where the attachment of people to a specific place could be anything more than imaginary. Although every community had its small

group of usually prominent, deeply rooted families, most Americans did not stay in one place for more than a generation, if that long. Moreover, they were so different from each other that they often seemed to each other to share little more than their American citizenship. One of the most striking features of the accounts of white Americans traveling in the early years of the Republic outside their home regions is their horror at the sheer foreignness of their compatriots. Margaret Van Horn Dwight was hardly the first, and certainly not the last, New Englander to be appalled by the language, food, and customs of the Germans and Scotch-Irish that she encountered while en route to Ohio.²⁰

Where, then, was a place for regionality in a young nation of perpetually mobile, heterogeneous expectant capitalists? Everywhere, it would seem. Ironically, the very strength of nationality made the emergence of regionality possible. Indeed, nationality created regionality; the latter would never have mattered without the existence of the former. To a great extent, the American national conversation was about such glittering generalizations as republican notions of social equality among white males, the importance of personal independence, and the exclusion of non-whites and women from direct political participation. These rhetorical flourishes had powerful resonance among Americans even as they could not agree exactly on what they meant in practice. The problem was that the major political issues of the first century of American independence, including slavery, internal improvements, and the definition of citizenship, increasingly demanded specificity. Unsurprisingly, the more precise American rhetoric became, the more excluded from it some Americans began to feel. The process of definition, like the exercise of power, alienates as much as it rewards. Some see benefits; others see losses. The foremost, but not the first, example of this exclusionary impulse was the transformation of many leading Southerners in the 1820s from ardent nationalists into ardent sectionalists, defenders of the interests of their part of the larger nation. The pioneers of sectionalism were New Englanders whose fear of the rise of Virginia and the national influence of its democratic slaveholders led them to the brink of secession during the War of 1812.

In other words, the imagining of a national political community in the United States occurred less because of the identification of a people with a place they had long inhabited than because of the perception that a group of people was being shunted to the periphery for no other reason than that they lacked the power to define meaning within the national discourse. Alienation from the center engendered regionality. Residents of distinct areas began to band together in common cause in the early Republic to protect and advance particular interests and definitions. Regionality was a cultural and political expression of peripheral status transformed into boasts of moral superiority and demands for a greater, territorially specific voice in national government. Regional communities emerged among people who felt excluded or potentially excluded from the national discourse and the national patronage trough, and who found in their shared

alienation a way of demanding recognition of their special attributes. The power of exclusions based on race and gender is well known, no less important was exclusion based on place. "Mainstream" America may have been male and white, but it was also about where one lived.

In the early Republic, the conversations that created communities among the excluded took place for the most part in print. Even the powerful orations of the period, whether they occurred in Congress or at a local hall, became widely known through their dissemination on paper. Newspapers, pamphlets, and books made information and arguments available to wide audiences, allowing people in post offices, in coaches, in taverns, in kitchens, to engage in a larger conversation. The world of print was an extension of public space. If reading was often a solitary activity, the discussion of reading was a social one. Print made a multiplicity of voices available to wide numbers of people. Print more than anything else not only facilitated the emergence of a national discourse, it facilitated the emergence of opposition discourses—among free blacks, among women, among laborers, and most powerfully in this period, among sectionalists.²¹

THE ORIGINS OF MIDWESTERN REGIONALITY

There were coherent regional stories in the United States by the 1840s and 1850s. In political and literary discourse, Americans had begun to talk about their section as a peculiar variation on larger national themes, as a particular expression of American life and landscape. Within imagined regional communities, there was of course considerable resistance to and dissent from emerging definitions. Regional conversations mirrored the process of nationalism of which they were a part: a multitude of voices worked through issues of definition by focusing on the extent to which they felt included within or excluded from regional stories. In the face of industrialization and immigration, some nineteenth-century New Englanders created a cozy world of pastoralism and domesticity, of white steeples and village greens, safe from the intrusions of urban hustle and working-class Catholics. White Southerners had to fashion a tale around the issue of slavery, and many did so by celebrating the peculiar institution as the bedrock of a more humane society than that of Northern industrial cities. In their broad outlines, these were stories about loss or potential loss, about dealing with the deleterious consequences of rapid change, about celebrating dissociation from national political and economic developments.²²

In what we call the lower and eastern Midwest there emerged an altogether different tale from very different sources. Here a remarkably diverse group of people from all over the eastern United States were brought together within a nationally created and administered framework outlined in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Here, too, was a place that attracted large numbers of western European immigrants, most notably Germans and Irish, in the 1840s and 1850s. Here was a place where the conversation

about specificity in the national discourse promised to be especially contentious.

Together, the many voices of the Old Northwest created a basic plot rehearsed again and again in regional newspapers, histories, fiction, and orations. Obsessively interested in communicating with each other, the residents of the Old Northwest wrote and spoke at great length; they kept diaries, gave lectures, read books and newspapers, listened to sermons, and filled their days with discussions of the place in which they lived. Those who had access to print dominated the regional conversation. They were more Yankee than Southern, but there was no rigid separation of the regional migration streams. Largely middle class in their occupations and manners, they were not defined exclusively by their wealth or profession. They were, in general, people who not only liked to read and write but who thought it socially useful to do so. They combined boosterism and morality in the creation of one of the most salient features of their landscape: the local college. Hundreds of small sectarian schools appeared in Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois in the 1830s and 1840s. At once decentralized and democratized, they served the interests of God, capitalism, and the Republic by putting commercially viable towns on the map and training young men and women to participate in the body politic.²³

Unlike its New England and Southern counterparts, the Midwestern story as it emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century was not about alienation from either the market or the nation. On the contrary, it was about near total identification with both, for few whites in the Old Northwest wanted to escape from either. Difficult as it is for us to remember in an age when the popular image of the Midwest is one of mediocre conformity, contemporaries thought of the territory north of the Ohio River as a promised land. Remarkable was the extent of social and religious experimentation in communities throughout Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois. Shakers, Mormons, English reformers, African Americans and a host of others tried to mold parts of the landscape to their purposes. Often harassed by their neighbors, they were nonetheless part of the extraordinary complexity of life in the region. Many people saw the Midwest as malleable, as a place of liberation from tradition and a source of enormous energy for change, both of which were made possible by a unique combination of place, capitalism, and nationalism. The fortunate residents of the Old Northwest had the power to perfect this world. "If we do but try—try heartily and cheerfully," the young and ambitious Ohio lawyer Rutherford B. Hayes asserted in his diary, "we *can* be, for all the purposes of every-day happiness, precisely what *we could wish* to be."²⁴

In a larger sense, according to the Cincinnati editor and poet William Davis Gallagher, the Old Northwest was home to "an Experiment in Humanity higher in its character and sublimer in its results" than anything tried anywhere else. Here were "the freest forms of social development and the highest order of human civilization." All signs pointed to "a Day . . . dawning upon this North-Western region," which would awaken all "to a

just sense of their real dignity and importance in the social scale, by proclaiming to them that they are neither slaves nor nonentities, but true men and women."²⁵ Development was the main theme of public life in the Old Northwest. Seeking access to markets, middle-class Midwesterners trumpeted canals and railroads with such abandon that they often neglected the details of who would pay for them. What mattered was the promotion of commerce. And they celebrated with gusto their ability to do just that. By the 1840s and 1850s, a whole host of people in the Old Northwest saw their history as one of rapid and inexorable progress: the arrival of hardy pioneers, the conquest of noble savages, the taming of a wilderness, the transformation of a landscape from forests to farms, the growth of civilization in churches, schools, and cities. Indeed, Midwestern boosters positively celebrated the loss of simpler, rural times that many New Englanders and Southerners lamented. By 1850, the regional narrative was so commonplace that an author introduced the popular story of the rough and tumble boatman Mike Fink by assuming that his readers agreed that "the savage and the wild beast" and "dark forests" had given way to "villages, towns, and cities, rife with the bustle and progress of a vast and rapidly growing population of civilized and enlightened beings."²⁶ Exaggerated and contested, the story of the Old Northwest was a narrative of success: We came, we saw, we conquered, we improved, we are deservedly enjoying the fruits of our labor. What the story lacked in irony and nuance it possessed in energy and optimism.

By the 1850s, middle-class Midwesterners had flattened the complicated and contested history of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions into a linear narrative of unimpeded progress. It was a story that extolled benefits without reckoning their costs. The blood and treasure expended on conquest of land and native peoples, the grinding poverty of frontier life, the damage done to nascent commercial networks and transportation systems by two national financial panics and economic depressions—none of these was interpreted to mean that the social and economic development of the region had not flowed smoothly, but instead proceeded by fits and starts. Utterly unapologetic, Midwesterners had no need to take refuge behind plantations or village greens; unabashedly unrefined, they celebrated the changes wrought by the market and national revolutions: a landscape of small towns and cities, in which banks, stores, and public buildings featured prominently. To be sure, dealing with some of the same fears as native-born, white New Englanders and Southerners, Midwesterners were creating a history that would both obscure and discipline growing numbers of foreign and urban residents. But the Midwestern tale was not solely nativist. German Protestants were deeply implicated in formulating this story. In Cincinnati, the headquarters of the Midwestern world of print, it was Germans who gave shape to the cultural refinements that the city's early boosters had craved. Elsewhere, in Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee, prominent Germans became bulwarks of the Midwestern doctrine of materialism and morality.²⁷

So strong was the identification with the nation and the market that Midwestern regionality turned on discussion of two pairs of bonded concepts: slavery and labor, equality and race. Ignoring the range of attitudes toward slavery north of the Ohio River, not to mention the abusive treatment of free blacks, many of whom fled to Canada in the 1850s, the emerging story of the region emphasized that the abolition of slavery within its borders (in Article Six of the Northwest Ordinance) forever marked the Midwest as a land of freedom. Alone among American regions, the Midwest, according to its story, celebrated free labor. There was no room for slavery, no room for immigrant servitude, but plenty of hard work for all. No wonder, then, that one of the most enduring symbols of the nineteenth-century Old Northwest is the Underground Railroad, even though admiration for the commitment of (mainly black) Midwesterners to helping enslaved Africans to freedom obscures the formidable racism that suffused Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Whether told as history or literature, the story of the Old Northwest was a paean to the sanctity of labor, as if the exclusion of slavery ensured the dignity of work. More than anything else, the prohibition of slavery made the perceived development of the region more rapid and more encompassing than that of Kentucky or the states of the Deep South. The trope of the Ohio River as a border between not only slavery and freedom but underdeveloped and developed regions, as well as laziness and labor, was widespread. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville famously expressed the sentiment by comparing Kentucky, where labor was "degrading" because of its connection with slavery, with Ohio, where labor was associated with "progress" and people could "profit by industry and do so without shame."²⁸

Related to the theme of slavery and labor was the theme of equality and race. Midwesterners' strong sense of equality rested on the foundation of racial (and gendered) exclusion. The removal of Native Americans in a series of federally directed, forced migrations in the 1830s and 1840s rid the Lower Midwest of a prominent Indian presence, although it could not eradicate it all together.²⁹ Only a little less spectacular than this wholesale expulsion was the pervasive hostility to African Americans in the land of the Underground Railroad. Pockets of sympathetic whites and choruses of disdain for slavery could not counteract the fact that blacks were not welcome north of the Ohio River. Deprived of their rights as citizens, hobbled by institutional and informal racism, Midwestern blacks in the nineteenth century found community in de facto segregation.³⁰

Ironically, however, no group of people was more eloquent in asserting the meaning of Midwestern identity than the free black men who gathered in annual state conventions in the 1850s to protest their treatment and demand their full rights as citizens. They demanded inclusion in the emerging Midwestern narrative. In their meetings, speakers and resolutions affirmed complete identification with the values of capitalism and nationalism. Black men endorsed temperance, public education, and the

creation of newspapers that would allow them to participate in the public sphere. They sought *entrée*, not revolution. But no matter how strong the desire of blacks for roles in the regional story, they were excluded on the basis of their color.³¹

Like black men, white women also campaigned for temperance and public education, not to mention abolition, in the mid-nineteenth-century Midwest. Of the relationship between these activities and Midwestern regionality, however, we know very little; indeed, there is no coherent, regionally specific history of women in the Midwest. Most accounts of Midwestern women treat them either as part of a larger story about race or ethnicity, or as the westernmost exponents of female public activism centered in the northeastern United States.³² In this way, the Midwest proves itself yet again an "anti-region," historiographically as well as historically. Consider, in contrast, Western and Southern regionality, which have long been understood to depend on gender imagery and implied regional histories of women. One of the first missions of women's historians who were also practitioners of the new Western history, for example, was to explode the stereotype of the Anglo female conqueror, the "gentle tamer" or "sun-bonneted helpmate," who brought civilization to the "wild" West. Similarly, Southern historians, confronting the regional story of slavery, have examined the Janus-images of black slave women, Jezebel and Mammy, and their relationship to the figure of the white plantation mistress.³³

As these examples make clear, in the United States female virtue has been coded differently by region, and women's history has thereby been embedded in different master regional narratives. Where, then, do Midwestern women fit in the master narrative of "success," of material and moral development, whose course we are tracing here? The gendered dimensions of the Midwestern story, not to mention those of its counter-narratives, seem to us well worth exploring.³⁴ The story's emphasis on the Midwest as the site of a republican good life exclusively for whites suggests a conservative public role for women as the upholders of private virtue. In the nineteenth century, in other words, a gendered Midwestern regionality may have resembled the politicized domesticity of a Catharine Beecher who, after all, drew much of her support for her efforts to train female educators from women in the Old Northwest.³⁵

If black men and middle-class white women demanded roles within the story of the Midwest, the largest group of dissenters were white Southerners and their descendants living in the river valleys of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Their values diverged sharply from those of pietistic Yankee reformers who were becoming so influential in the cities and small towns of the Old Northwest. Fundamentally local in their orientation, white Southern settlers were more committed to the preservation of household economies and family networks than the development of a larger society, especially when the latter threatened both their pocketbooks and their way of life. The tension between Yankee and Southern settlers played itself out

most powerfully in political conflict over the power of government to develop the region culturally as well as economically, and resulted in serious conflicts over public support for education.³⁶

The voices of Southern-born Midwesterners did not dominate the region, however, because they had neither the means nor the interest in sharing their views in the public world of books, newspapers, and voluntary organizations. They did not write a coherent alternative narrative. Despite their numbers, they could not exert great influence in the public sphere. Only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did the white Southern counter-narrative take shape. Celebrating the achievement of white male democracy, local historians stressed the contributions of Virginians and Carolinians in the origins of the Old Northwest. The development of the Southern counter-narrative reached its apogee in the work of John D. Barnhart.³⁷

Southerners were most influential in the Lower Midwest. The experiences of Indians, métis, and European immigrants in the Upper Midwest offer a much more complex dialectic between the master narrative and counter-narratives. There, racial exclusivity worked against, but did not eradicate, the well-established worlds of Indians, French, and métis who had inhabited the region for close to a century. These people had decisively shaped the landscape of the Great Lakes and the upper Mississippi Valley through their participation in the extensive fur trade that had flourished since the early 1700s. A "middle ground" of mutual accommodation and misunderstanding marked social and economic exchanges well past 1815.³⁸ The United States' victory over Indians and the British in the War of 1812 established permanent, national borders and gave the Republic unchallenged control over what would become the Midwest. This triumph paved the way for the federal policy of Indian removal.

But while this policy was overwhelmingly successful in eliminating the presence of Indians and métis from the Lower Midwest, it was far less successful in the north. Despite efforts to the contrary, Indians remained an important presence.³⁹ The equation of conquest with elimination that characterized the Lower Midwest failed in the Upper Midwest. The dominant narrative of Midwestern history, which was largely constructed by whites in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois in the first half of the nineteenth century and was extended into Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa, rested on a falsehood. Indians and métis continued to shape the landscape of the Upper Midwest, and their stories about themselves and their relationships with new settlers persisted in the face of the rhetoric of removal. Their stories did not reach a large public audience in part because the government and settlers deliberately marginalized them, and in part because they had difficulty in gaining access to print. Nonetheless, they created a counter-narrative to the hegemonic discourse that had taken shape in the Lower Midwest. Their persistence both in body and word gave the lie to the idea of the region as a place of homogeneous progress.

Meanwhile, European immigrants streamed into the Upper Midwest.

The most distinctive feature of this migration was its complexity. Whereas most of the migrants to the Lower Midwest had been from North America or Germany, their counterparts to the north and west were much more diverse. They included people from the British Isles, Scandinavia, and eventually eastern Europe. Like native-born Americans, Europeans practiced chain migration. They tended to congregate in a progression of places on the basis of family, religion, and neighborhood ties. Twentieth-century historians describe the resulting pattern of settlement as a "patchwork quilt," or a collection of relatively isolated, homogeneous communities in a sea of ethnic and racial heterogeneity.⁴⁰

If divergent racial and ethnic populations characterized the Lower and Upper Midwests, people throughout the region, from white Southerners in Indiana to Scandinavians in Minnesota, shared similar attitudes toward economic development. Most eagerly embraced the possibilities of production for market even as they attempted to distance themselves from its social consequences. While they were happy to sell their crops and buy goods, to utilize banks to gain credit to get land, to support extensive internal improvements that would make access to international markets a reality, they were reluctant to allow capitalist structures to undermine familial and communal institutions in the name of the individual and his property. Competition and the pursuit of profit, they believed, should take place within a context of moral obligation and social responsibility. Like many Indians, European and native-born settlers were committed to tempering the social impact of capitalism. But the specific patterns of the relationship between communities and commerce varied from group to group. In short, Midwesterners, from Southerners in the Ohio Valley to Scandinavians in Minnesota to certain Indians, such as the Wisconsin Menominee, shared a willingness to enter the market as long as they perceived that they could control its impact on their values and social relationships. Of necessity, capitalism had to be small scale. What would happen when the market became large scale and, more importantly, people began to see the market not as means to an end but as an impersonal monster controlling their lives?⁴¹

Before capitalism became so huge and impersonal, the central event of Midwestern history intervened. The Civil War consolidated the regional master narrative and contributed to the growth of an international industrial order that would significantly transform both the physical and mental landscapes of the region. Above all, the Civil War enabled large numbers of Midwesterners to imagine themselves as citizens of a regional community defined largely by the middle-class residents of small towns from Ohio to Iowa and beyond. The war against the Confederacy made Midwesterners conscious of what they had in common by highlighting their differences from white Southerners.

The Civil War illustrates the dialectic between the regional narrative and counter-narratives. As elsewhere in the United States, the Democratic Party, with its Jacksonian commitment to local autonomy and fear of con-

centrated power, had become the public home for Midwesterners who felt excluded from the regional story. Democrats by the 1850s were an alliance of immigrants, Catholics, and Southerners offended by the pietistic moralism and righteous plans of Yankee improvers. Meanwhile, the Republican Party, which originated in the Midwest and flourished there from the mid-1850s, attracted a disproportionate number of middle-class persisters, professional and commercial men and their wives and children, who were committed to a vision of what they saw as unending and interrelated moral and material progress. Like the Democrats, the Republicans were defined as much by whom they were against as whom they were for: their party was against white Southerners and Catholic immigrants—the Slave Power and the Papal Power. It was for the independence of middle-class people eager to exploit the possibilities of life in the Midwest. And they supported a Republican Party, as historians have remarked, that was more overtly racist than in the Northeast. As the historian V. Jacque Voegeli has argued, “Except for the South, the Middle West . . . was the region most firmly committed to white supremacy.”⁴²

In the 1860s, these largely Republican Midwesterners reinforced their prejudices by tramping through Mississippi, Georgia, and the Carolinas. They prided themselves on more than bringing freedom to enslaved African Americans and teaching arrogant Southerners a lesson. Noting the lack of schools, railroads, and industries, seeing the South as decadent, backward, and unrefined, they believed that their triumph in the Civil War affirmed the superiority of their values, of a way of life nurtured in a region where slavery had never been permitted to exist. Meanwhile, Democrats in the Midwest criticized the costs and tactics of the war, and feared that a Union victory would bring a flood of African Americans across the Ohio River. Many Southern-born Democrats identified culturally more strongly with Confederates than with Yankees, but they were on the defensive in the Midwest. Since Republicans took the initiative in asserting the meaning of regional discourse, Democrats could only respond negatively to their opponents’ ideas. They could react, but not propose.⁴³

Still, it was hardly coincidental that a Midwesterner led the Union to victory in the greatest crisis of the nineteenth century. Abraham Lincoln embodied the dominant class of the region as well as its contradictions. Born in Kentucky, he had risen through education and perseverance to the status middle-class Midwesterners craved the most: he and his family were respectable. A lawyer, a Whig in politics, an advocate of schools, railroads, and progress through development, a man of moderation and refinement who had long since given up chopping his own wood and resided in a substantial frame house in Springfield, Lincoln was a man of the middle. Neither laborer nor aristocrat, against slavery but racist in his attitudes toward blacks, his triumph was to a significant extent a regional triumph. For the Civil War marked more in American history than the defeat of the South and the abolition of slavery. It also was the moment in which the Midwest emerged as the preeminent region of the nation. No longer the “great

West,” the Midwest became the place that best exemplified the United States. As it became the physical center of the country, so it also became the literal and spiritual metonymy of the nation.⁴⁴

RECONSTRUCTING MIDWESTERN REGIONALITY

In the century after the Civil War, even as Midwesterners chafed about their real and imagined economic and cultural dependence on the northeastern United States and northwestern Europe, a multitude of the most important figures in the United States were born and raised in the Midwest. For the most part, they were people profoundly shaped by the regional story as it had emerged before the Civil War. If immigrants and others bridled at its exclusivity, and subsequent generations found the Midwestern tale stifling, in the second half of the nineteenth century there was no more dynamic or powerful regional story in the United States than the one Midwesterners told about themselves. The Midwest had been conquered, settled, developed, and defined in little more than a half century.

Success, however, does not eliminate dissent. On the contrary, as the master narrative of the Midwest gained coherence and explanatory power in the late nineteenth century, resistance to it grew sharper and more focused. One of most important developments of the period after the Civil War was the consolidation of economic and structural transformations that had begun before the firing on Fort Sumter. In the late 1800s, as William Cronon has detailed in *Nature's Metropolis*, the Midwest was fully integrated into a burgeoning international market. Responding to the attractions of profit and changes in technology, Midwesterners found themselves living less and less in a landscape of small family farms and small towns and more and more in the hinterlands of emerging systems of urban places centered on Chicago. The story of the Midwest in the late nineteenth century was the triumph of the city over the countryside. The old narrative was being stretched to the limit by new circumstances.⁴⁵

The city's triumph was both economic and cultural. Rural people had to respond to decisions made in cities about the costs of goods and transportation. No longer able to imagine themselves as small-scale capitalists in control of their own destinies, Midwesterners of all backgrounds and classes increasingly saw themselves as living at the mercy of large-scale corporations whose workings were unfathomable. As the case of Chicago demonstrates, the city's cultural domination followed inevitably from its economic clout.

By the late 1800s, Midwestern literature no longer celebrated the progress of small-town bourgeois values. Hamlin Garland and Willa Cather showed the travails of life in rural areas, where people find themselves on the economic and cultural periphery of a world from which they feel spiritually as well as geographically distanced. Meanwhile, Theodore Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson allowed their characters to escape the barrenness of small-town and rural life to the place where possibility still remained—

the city—only to learn that even there success was elusive. Such works declared that the narrative of the Midwest as a progress toward an ever higher level of commercial civilization was, in reality, the story of a progress stalled. Instead, in the 1920s Sinclair Lewis mocked the pretensions of the bourgeois burghers who had been at the forefront of a dynamic Old Northwest in the 1850s, and F. Scott Fitzgerald composed in *The Great Gatsby* an elegy for the lost promise of the nineteenth-century Midwest.⁴⁶

The sense that the region had lost its ideological moorings, that people no longer either controlled development or were sure where it would lead, provoked a huge debate over corporate capitalism and culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Midwesterners became much more self-conscious about the divergence in their interests and their values. The story of the Midwest no longer seemed fair; it no longer made sense. In brief, it was losing its ability to explain the region's past and thereby to foretell its future. The economic transformation of the region after the Civil War abundantly demonstrated that success and failure were not predicated solely on individual effort. Through no fault of their own, many Midwesterners were not sharing in the bounty promised by the region's master narrative. As important, large numbers of people, from Catholic immigrants to rural farmers, felt constricted or restrained by the essentially Protestant, bourgeois emphasis upon self-control and moral development advocated by regional boosters.

In the late nineteenth century, Midwesterners began to argue with each other publicly and vociferously about economic justice and cultural diversity. Frustrated and frightened citizens participated loudly in public conversations that at least initially tended to harden their positions about what life ought to be like. Farmers, laborers, and intellectuals articulated powerful counter-narratives about the meanings of the Midwest. Although Indians, white Southerners, and Catholic immigrants had long challenged the hegemonic image of the Midwest as the apogee of ceaseless material and moral development, dissenting voices achieved unprecedented depth and breadth in the late nineteenth century. Social and political organizations ranging from farmers' alliances to labor unions, the People's Party to the Socialist Party, as well as an array of middle-class professional associations and reform societies (such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union) institutionalized profound disagreements about the past, present, and future of the region. Among the more prominent of such organizations were the Grange Movement, whose efforts to lower and regulate railroad and grain elevator rates in states in the upper Mississippi Valley climaxed in the 1870s, and the Knights of Labor, which was founded in 1869 and was dedicated to the achievement of a republic of independent skilled craftsmen. Criticism of corporate capitalism occasionally led to violence, as the Haymarket Square Riot and Calumet copper strike of 1886 and the Pullman Strike of 1894 attest. But resistance was more commonly visible within the contours of partisan politics.⁴⁷

For the most part, however, dissenting citizens sought reform, not

revolution. To one degree or another, they deplored what many Midwesterners saw as the injustice of the economic and political structures of the United States as a whole and the Midwest in particular. Nevertheless, they founded their critique of regional development less on a shared sense of class consciousness than on a desire to defend and perpetuate local and ethnic values. Driven by a strong sense of exclusion from both public life and private prosperity, their goal was to find a way to redress their grievances, to restore a sense of fairness, and to make regional identity more inclusive.

Increasingly in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Midwesterners tended to identify government, whether on the local, state, or federal level, as the most reliable vehicle for realizing their visions of the future. This turn to the state as not only a facilitator, but as an umpire among competing interests who had lost any interest in consensus, was an international phenomenon in the late 1800s and the early 1900s.⁴⁸ We make no claim that the Midwest was unique in the growth of the role of government. We do, however, insist that the ways in which this process played out had a significant regional dimension.

Almost unique to the Midwest was the fact that from Ohio to Kansas, public debate about the legitimacy of the regional tale of moral and material progress, as it had been defined by middle-class Protestants in the mid-nineteenth century, was most visible within the contours of two-party politics. Nowhere in the United States was the competition between the established parties of Republicans and Democrats more intense or more evenly divided. For decades, the remarkable diversity of the Midwest had given both parties fertile ground in which to recruit and retain members. Because elections throughout the region were normally close, often hinging on the behavior of small groups of swing voters, both major parties were of necessity responsive to popular movements for reform. In states such as Kansas and Ohio, the relative eagerness of Democrats and Republicans to gain partisan advantage by embracing the calls of the People's Party in the early 1890s for a governmental redress of economic grievances went a long way toward limiting the life span, but not the influence, of third-party movements. In the election of 1896, Democrats and Republicans made clear the extent to which they had co-opted radical critiques of life in the Midwest as well as radical proposals for economic and political reform.

In other words, Midwestern critics and dissenters were able to force revisions in the regional narrative. The core story of the Midwest was significantly renegotiated and reinvigorated between 1890 and 1914. Indeed, perhaps the greatest testimony to the success of the reform impulse is that the most distinctive political movement in the region at the beginning of the twentieth century was the loose collection of municipal and state reform movements associated with the term "progressives." As in the 1850s, so in the early 1900s, the Midwest led the nation in defining a new relationship between civic identity and state responsibility.

This process of reimagining identity was most vivid in public conversations about the challenge of cultural diversity in a region whose most influential citizens had long insisted on adherence to essentially Protestant and middle-class values. Since before the Civil War, Protestant, native-born, middle-class Republicans had asserted their version of moral and material development against a Democratic coalition of Catholics, immigrants, and transplanted rural Southerners loosely united in defense of local autonomy and ethnic diversity. Critical to the emergence of Midwestern regionality before the Civil War had been the notion that prosperity and progress depended upon the ability of individual citizens to hold themselves and their neighbors to high standards of moral discipline. If this prescription made some sense in a world of mostly native-born, white, small producers, it increasingly seemed untenable in a world of corporations, cities, and ethnic diversity. Many immigrants and their children insisted that their identity followed mainly from their religious and communal traditions rather than from values imposed upon them by evangelical Protestants.

While Republicans generally controlled state and local governments in the late 1800s, elections were hard fought and decided by narrow margins out of massive voter turnouts. Campaigns centered on cultural issues such as public education and temperance. Matters of public education particularly aroused controversy and contentiousness in Midwestern elections because they determined whether one group could impose its vision of moral and material development on everyone else's children. In a few places like Cincinnati, where students were allowed to alternate lessons in English and German, compromise proved possible. But, in general, the native-born Protestants dominating the usually victorious Republican Party insisted upon English-only education and public schools. Their campaign for cultural conformity climaxed in Wisconsin with the Bennett Law, which required that all children attend a public or private school where teaching was in English. Ferocious immigrant opposition to the bill enabled Democrats to sweep state elections in 1890.⁴⁹

Opposition to the Bennett Law was only the beginning of a serious renegotiation of the terms of regional identity. Pressure from people who felt excluded from the imagined Midwest led Republicans in particular to reconstruct their political agenda. They had no choice. Throughout the Midwest in the early 1890s Republicans went down to defeat in election after election as the pressure of overt cultural conflict exploded the long-standing pattern of regional politics. In response, the Republican leadership abandoned cultural issues in the presidential election of 1896, and instead promised to promote economic prosperity for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or class. Successfully drawing off a number of Democratic voters, the Republicans rode their new agenda to victory throughout the Midwest until the Great Depression. The political realignment resulted in changes in substance as well as style. To advance the prosperity of the Midwestern citizenry, the Republicans deployed the power

of local and state governments to assert public control over private corporations. Under the leadership of Governor Robert La Follette, for example, the State of Wisconsin enacted a series of laws for regulating railroads, public utilities, insurance companies, and women's and children's labor. Reform-minded mayors like Hazen Pingree of Detroit, Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones of Toledo, and Tom C. Johnson of Cleveland took such urban amenities as water, lighting, and streetcars out of the hands of private corporations, and made them the responsibility of municipal government. The cultural goal of all of these reform initiatives was to restore legitimacy to the Midwestern story by renewing its explanatory power.⁵⁰

That power rested on a reconstructed conception of the public good and a new sense of the role of government in nurturing that conception. Years of debate over the meaning of the Midwest had enlarged the public sphere; bringing more people into discussions of public issues required more respect for diversity of opinion and more reliance on experts and professionals to translate the public will into reality. What gave the enlarged public sphere its coherence was the assumption that beneath the diversity of opinion lay shared interests that the state ought to promote. Within the tower of Babel, there was one language that everyone spoke. Unsurprisingly, it was the language of material, not moral development. Catholics and Protestants, Irish, Swedes, and Yankees all rode streetcars and needed clean water and electric lights, and they could all see the advantages of putting local and state governments in charge of providing these things. Ironically, the emphasis on economic issues would ultimately reshape the regional narrative yet again by reducing Midwestern landscape and people from vigorous diversity to bland conformity. But few people knew that in 1900.

As important, the creation of public space and public institutions, the architectural creativity of the turn of the twentieth century that produced new city halls, museums, public parks, and a peculiarly Midwestern urban landscape associated with the Chicago School of Louis Sullivan and later Frank Lloyd Wright, helped mold an enlarged conception of the Midwest as commonwealth. This new landscape was not merely monumental in scale; it reflected a persistent faith that Midwesterners could and would find some way to imagine themselves as a public community. Part of that faith was a belief in the essential rightness of development, properly understood. Midwesterners had accommodated public structures and regional discourse to an incredibly large and powerful corporate, integrated economic order. Their public world, from the Chicago World's Fair through countless public exhibits and buildings, was not simply a monument to the past. Its essence was an affirmation of the rightness of progress, of their continuing belief in themselves as citizens of a place moving toward ever higher levels of human civilization.⁵¹

Enlarging the public narrative required a parallel expansion in the means and methods of writing history. As elsewhere in the United States and Europe in this period, history became a professional enterprise. Unique

about the Midwest among American regions was the simultaneous emergence of public and professional history. Local historical societies and local histories flourished in the early 1900s. The creation of state historical societies and graduate history programs reflected a near obsession with collecting and preserving the records of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. State universities took the lead in defining the Midwestern story, replacing the religious college as a key symbol of the region. Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, among others, demonstrated a strong interest in state history as a way of articulating the basic story of the region. Telling is the career of Frederick Jackson Turner, whose famous theses were in many ways an elaboration of the kind of local history that swept the region in the late 1800s. As important, much of his work and that of his contemporaries was devoted to building the major institutions of regional history. Under the sponsorship of states, academic historians joined local historians in legitimizing the progressive tale of Midwestern material and moral development. Like Turner, they were not only fascinated with the origins and legacy of this early-nineteenth-century story, but concerned with explaining its relevance in the face of the triumph of the city. Writing history was a way of expanding and securing the story of the Midwest.⁵²

It would be a mistake to assume that this narrative was inherently conservative. On the contrary, the revised story was told in an enlarged world made possible by political reform. State-sponsored history expressed the values of the region's leading citizens. Progressivism was an effort to use state power to restore a sense of justice and to encourage the development of an enlarged public. It became the role of the state to protect the rights of individuals and to guarantee an equal hearing for their interests in the making of public policy. But governments did not do this alone. So, too, did the explosion of private philanthropy in the service of an extended public sphere. The great art museums, public buildings, symphonic halls, and public parks of Chicago, Cleveland, and Milwaukee served to institutionalize and advance regional boosterism. They reinforced the essential characteristics of a regional story. To be sure, other regions had similar developments. But the Midwest had a particularly strong commitment to the development of the public good, to the maintenance and expansion of a place for people to think and act. The vision of the public good in the Midwest was so widely shared, so pervasive, as to be breathtaking.

Never did this regional narrative of development make more sense to a greater number of people than it did in the early twentieth century. Nor should it be surprising that this was the period in which Midwestern history as universalized regional history flourished. Even at this moment of triumph, however, the Midwestern faith in development was undermined by a fear that the future would be more a place of material accumulation than moral energy. Thus, the return to the past: history was not merely a record of achievement or a source of inspiration for the future but an elegy for a vanished simpler world in which faith in the future had been secure.

MIDWESTERN REGIONALITY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This Midwestern narrative, revised, enlarged, and professionalized in the early 1900s, persisted throughout the twentieth century as the primary story: Midwesterners told about themselves and others told about them. But over the decades it lost much of its relevance and energy, so that, although it remains with us today, it resembles an eccentric old relative trotted out on holidays more for show than substance. Midwesterners continued to tell the story of the future realized and the importance of disciplined citizenship, but in increasingly reflexive fashion. Important on ritualistic public occasions, it had less and less resonance with the region's residents. Indeed, it became flat and shallow. For many, in and out of the Midwest, the story became a kind of parody, a way of dismissing the region, and of mocking its past and its pretensions. No one has played more successfully with this narrative than the humorist Garrison Keillor.⁵³

The regional story lost its power for many reasons. First was the decline in ethnic identity among European Americans. Provoked by World War I and the closing of immigration in the 1920s, German and other ethnic Midwesterners abandoned their efforts to maintain distinctive traditions; they stopped speaking their languages in public, stopped publishing newspapers and books in their languages, and changed their names. In general, they more fully embraced American ways and values. World War II and the Cold War reinforced this emphasis on consensus by exaggerating for ideological purposes the homogeneity of the American citizenry. Asserting one's ethnicity in the 1940s and 1950s was tantamount to proclaiming disloyalty to the nation. While cultural traditions remained very much a part of private life, they were no longer as visible in the larger public conversations within the region. The communal power they had had from the 1840s through the 1910s, their power to direct public participation, faded. By the end of the twentieth century, the revival of such ethnic events as Oktoberfests and tulip festivals was more for entertainment or diversion than to perpetuate concrete cultural traditions.

The privatization of diversity was more than a response to political developments. All Midwesterners felt the impress of mass consumer culture by the 1920s. Studies ranging from the Lynds' famous work on Middletown (Muncie, Indiana) to Lizabeth Cohen's monograph on working-class culture in Chicago between the world wars show how automobiles, movies, radio programs, and retail stores created a world in which consumer interests transcended local and neighborhood identities. The essence of this world was advertising, which sought to create demand for and supply goods to satisfy an audience rooted in the lowest common denominator.⁵⁴ In time, Midwestern regionality itself became associated with consumerism. Especially after World War II, the most ubiquitous appearance of the word "Midwest" was in the service of advertising and marketing.

Even more recently, as part of a national interest in regionality as lifestyle, Midwesternness is abundantly evident in manufactured images of small-town domesticity, of wraparound front porches festooned with red and white bunting, punctuated with hanging baskets of geraniums and impatiens, which appear in magazines, mail-order catalogues, television programs, and travel brochures. So ingrained are these images that they are the stuff of satire in movies such as *Fargo* and *Election* and television programs such as *Third Rock from the Sun* and *Picket Fences*. Only occasionally does popular culture offer a critique or counter-narrative set in the Midwest. A notable exception that emphasized class was the television sitcom *Roseanne*. Among the most successful are the movie *Breaking Away* and the songs of John Cougar Mellancamp. More typical is the film *Hoosiers*, which reinforces the basic values of the regional story.⁵⁵

Nothing was more critical to the flattening of white ethnicity in Midwestern regionality than the mass migration of tens of thousands of African Americans from the South, particularly in the decades after the two world wars. African Americans came to the Midwest with familiar expectations; they were drawn to the region by the promise of a place in which material and moral progress could be shared by a wide variety of peoples. Here seemed to be a region where black people could succeed economically and participate fully in the public realm as citizens. Like many earlier migrants, African Americans soon discovered the limits of the region's power to deliver on the promise of its story. Clustered by choice and by de facto segregation in often impoverished urban neighborhoods, blacks deeply resented the gap between rhetoric and reality in the Midwest. As the Mississippi-born Chicago novelist Richard Wright wrote of his most enduring character, Bigger Thomas:

The urban environment of Chicago, affording a more stimulating life, made the Negro Bigger Thomases react more violently than even in the South. . . . It was not that Chicago segregated Negroes more than the South, but that Chicago had more to offer, that Chicago's physical aspect—noisy, crowded, filled with the sense of power and fulfillment—did so much more to dazzle the mind with a taunting sense of possible achievement that the segregation it did impose brought forth from Bigger a reaction more obstreperous than in the South.⁵⁶

African Americans posed a serious challenge to the self-image of white Midwesterners. Unlike other immigrants, they could neither be ignored nor assimilated. The color line made white ethnicity superfluous. For the first time in the history of the Midwest, racial prejudice made European Americans see themselves as one people. The sharing of color trumped all ethnic divisions. Blacks became to whites in the Midwest the epitome of people who failed to realize the potential of the Midwest because they failed to inculcate its central values of self-discipline and in-

dustry. This was a false reading of black life, but the power of this image is undeniable. Blaming blacks for their poverty and unemployment affirmed the legitimacy of white Midwesterners' collective self-image. As white ethnics fled the cities for the suburbs, the association of urban areas and blacks became a cliché. Crime and poverty were linked with black faces in inner cities. All whites shared a fear of entering a landscape both foreign and dangerous. William Cronon talks about this segregation of urban life from the rest of Midwestern life in the introduction to *Nature's Metropolis*. As a child traveling with his parents through Chicago on their way to their summer home in Wisconsin, he had to close the car windows to the smell of the South Side. But he could as easily have written about locking the doors to the people who lived there.⁵⁷

As a result of accumulated black and white resentments, racial tensions periodically exploded into violence in Midwestern cities throughout the twentieth century, beginning with the Chicago riots of 1919 and climaxing most spectacularly in urban unrest in the summer of 1968. Race segregated the experience of blacks in the twentieth-century Midwest. They shared with other Midwesterners, however, the experience of the unfolding regional economic crisis of the last decades of the twentieth century. The once triumphant industrial order fell on hard times as other regions of the world emerged with cheaper labor and newer technology to undersell key Midwestern products such as automobiles and steel. In popular terms, the Steel Belt became the Rust Belt. This economic crisis was as much rural as urban. The costs of farming, especially land and technology, skyrocketed. Even with federally mandated price supports, farmers could not afford to keep their farms in production. Throughout the Midwest, farm after farm fell into the hands of real estate developers either by choice or bankruptcy.

Since the early 1970s, the Midwest has undergone an as yet unfinished period of economic redefinition. Agriculture and heavy industry continue to decline while the service sector expands. The new economy rests on education, high tech, and health. The relative decline of nineteenth-century industrial, heavily ethnic cities such as Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cleveland has continued; schemes for their revitalization have proved problematic or have met with only intermittent success. Simultaneously, secondary cities such as Columbus, Indianapolis, Ann Arbor, Madison, and Minneapolis have emerged as tribunes of the new economic order. Chicago, still the capital of the Midwest, has reoriented its economy from heavy industry to service industry. This change is visible in the growth of the high-tech corridor connecting metropolitan Chicago and DuPage County. Symbolic of the new order is the increased importance of state universities. If sectarian colleges were the face of the Midwest in the nineteenth century, then state universities with their huge conglomerations of education, health, leisure, and research interests fueled by complex combinations of private and public monies were the face of the region in the twentieth century.

We have come a long way not only from the world of nineteenth-century Republicans, but from the world of Frederick Jackson Turner. Indeed, Turner's vision of the Midwest seems no less antique than that of the authors of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The regional narrative of progress and development has become anachronistic. And that, in the end, is our most important point. It is the fact that the Midwestern story is now so distant, so remote in time, so detached from the experience of twenty-first-century Midwesterners, that allows us at last to recognize it in its totality and to examine it with some rigor. As this collection demonstrates, a small but growing number of scholars are interested in at least discussing the possibility of studying something called the Midwest. The history of sporadic efforts to do something similar suggests that we should approach the topic with a healthy dose of skepticism.⁵⁸ But given the resurgence in the study of regionalism in general in the United States, the pervasiveness of identity politics throughout the world, the increased interest in the relationship between place and identity, and, above all, the spectacular growth of a global economy, it would be profoundly ahistorical to ignore the history of a region that prefigured for the United States precisely these trends. Even in decline, even with a more peripheral status, the Midwest remains central to the history of the nation and the world.

We would be less than candid if we did not confess that part of our interest in the Midwest is personal. We are all Midwesterners who write about the region. And we are tired of confronting an old story about the region that makes no sense when applied wholesale and without reflection to the region today. We who grew up the Midwest recognize it as neither an analytical construct nor as a personal myth. This vibrant nineteenth-century tale has long since collapsed under the weight of its own internal contradictions. It has become a series of clichés and jokes about flatness and homogeneity. Only now that the story no longer reflects the ways in which people live and the values that they hold are we capable of understanding the story of the Midwest on its own terms. In short, it is our recognition of the very foreignness of Midwestern regionality that compels us to write about why this story has exerted so much power over so many people for so long.

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SEEING THE MIDWEST WITH PERIPHERAL VISION: IDENTITIES, NARRATIVES, AND REGION

Mary Neth

WHEN I first moved from the prairies to the mountains of Virginia in 1987, I did not experience the claustrophobia that I had heard several transplanted Midwesterners note. What I did notice when I took the long drive back west in the summers was a sense of brightness and lightness, what I realized was a feeling of full peripheral vision. The expanse of sky stretched down fully to eye level before meeting the gently rolling ground. The only time that I felt the mountain landscape as enclosing and slightly ominous was on nighttime drives on I-81 from Roanoke to Christiansburg, when my peripheral vision captured that extra layer of mountain darkness stretching well above the place where the lighter darkness of the sky should have been. I had the epiphany of how to reorganize my dissertation into a book somewhere on I-70 in Illinois or Indiana, and, in storytelling, I like to attribute the suddenness of the insight to the "openness" of the landscape—the return of full peripheral vision. That a Midwestern section of I-70 can be the place of a romantic epiphany rather than routine boredom truly marks me as a native Midwesterner.

In this essay, I want to explore the meaning of this "personal" identity. To choose to discuss a personal narrative within a scholarly one challenges "professional" practice. Professionalism demands "objectivity" in narrative form, even as it requires an interpretive point of view. The point of view must be presented as argued truth. We train our graduate students to read this point of view, to take it apart, to analyze its biases, to critique its narrative claim to truth. However, for the author to directly inject the personal into a scholarly narrative is to be "fluffy," "feminine," less rigorous. The proper scholarly role is to argue "truth" and let others challenge it, not to argue perspective and point of view and have a conversation about its limits and potentials or to recognize that knowledge-building is a community activity that grows from multiple perspectives. Our practice of footnoting other scholars or holding symposiums acknowledges that we build upon the work of a community, but our narrative practice, that one must assert a bigger and better truth than all other scholars, undercuts it. In this case, I am making a narrative and analytical choice to include the personal. Its purpose is to illuminate the need to develop a more conscious

NOTES

THE STORY OF THE MIDWEST

1. A collection of provocative essays on the construction of regional identities in the United States is Edward L. Ayers et al., *All over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

2. See, for example, Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780-1825* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986); Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); James Simeone, *Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000); and Alan Taylor, "Land and Liberty on the Post-Revolutionary Frontier," in *Devising Liberty: Preserving and Creating Liberty in the New American Republic*, ed. David Thomas Konig (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).

Recent state histories include R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); James E. Davis, *Frontier Illinois* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Susan E. Gray, *Great Lakes Frontier: Michigan, 1650-1860* (forthcoming, Indiana University Press); and Mark Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

3. See, for example, Jane Adams, *The Transformation of Rural Life: Southern Illinois, 1890-1990* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Hal S. Barron, *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Agricultural History," in *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Lou Ferleger (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 303-42; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991); Richard O. Davies, *Main Street Blues: The Decline of Small-Town America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998); John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996); Deborah Fink, *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway to the Upper Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); John C. Hudson, *Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Timothy R. Mahoney, *River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820-1870* (New York: Cambridge

- University Press, 1990); Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Jane Marie Pederson, *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870-1970* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).
4. The work of synthesizing these two approaches is just beginning. See Susan E. Gray, *The Yankee West: Community Life on the Michigan Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
 5. Kathleen Neils Conzen elaborates on this concept in her essay in this volume.
 6. Katherine G. Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 8.
 7. William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78 (1992): 1368.
 8. Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 5, 7.
 9. Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), 132.
 10. Cronon, "Place for Stories," 1373-74; Morrissey, *Mental Territories*, 14.
 11. Our understanding of the function of boundaries in the formation of communities is informed by, among other works, Frederik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, ed. Frederik Barth (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 9-38; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
 12. James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989). We have left the choice of "Middle West" or "Midwest" to the discretion of each author.
 13. On this point, see especially Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).
 14. On antebellum regional stereotypes, see Stephen Nissenbaum, "New England as Region and Nation," in *All over the Map*; Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of National Character* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986); and William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).
 15. Philip D. Morgan makes this point in *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1998). See also Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
 16. See, among many works that make this point, David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1997).
 17. See John L. Brooke, "Ancient Lodges and Self-Created Societies: Voluntary Associations and the Public Sphere in the Early Republic," in *Launching the "Extended Republic": The Federalist Era*, ed. Ronald L. Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the United States Capitol Historical Society, 1996); Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1997); and the essays by Frederika J. Teute and Jan L. Lewis in *A Republic for the Ages: The United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic*, ed.

- Donald R. Kennon (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the United States Capitol Historical Society, 1999).
18. On historians and the market revolution in the early Republic, see the essays in *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic*, ed. Paul A. Gilje (Madison, Wis.: Madison House, 1997). See also, John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
 19. Morris Birkbeck, *Notes on a Journey in America* (London, 1818), 31.
 20. Margaret Van Horn Dwight, *A Journey to Ohio in 1810* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). On the dangers of blending analytically ethnic, religious, and other differences among early-nineteenth-century white Americans into a homogeneous Euro-American identity, see Elizabeth Perkins, *Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
 21. The essays in *The History of the Book*, vol. II, ed. Robert Gross and Mary Kelley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) provide an overview of these developments. See also William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).
 22. On New England, see John L. Brooke, *The Heart of the Commonwealth: Society and Political Culture in Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1713-1861* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Nissenbaum, "New England as Region and Nation"; and Joseph S. Wood, *The New England Village* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). On the South, see O'Brien, *Rethinking the South*; and Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).
 23. Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Timothy R. Mahoney, *Provincial Lives: Middle-Class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Daniel Aaron, *Cincinnati, Queen City of the West, 1819-1838* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992).
 24. *Diary and Letters of Rutherford B. Hayes*, 5 vols., ed. Charles Richard Williams (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922-1926), 1:369.
 25. William Davis Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West. Being the Annual Discourse for 1850 before the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby, 1850), 2.
 26. Emerson Bennett, *Mike Fink: A Legend of the Ohio* (Cincinnati: Robinson & Jones, 1848), 9.
 27. Kay J. Carr, *Belleville, Ottawa, and Galesburg: Community and Democracy on the Illinois Frontier* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996); Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee, 1836-1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); Bruce Levine, "Community Divided: German Immigrants, Social Class, and Political Conflict in Antebellum Cincinnati," in *Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati since 1820*, ed. Henry D. Shapiro and Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 46-93; and Walter D. Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).
 28. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), 345-46. See also Don Feherenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996).
 29. *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, ed. Helen Hornbeck Tanner (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press for the Newberry Library, 1987); Ronald N. Satz, "Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era: The Old Northwest as a Test Case," *Michigan History* 60, no. 1 (spring 1976): 71-93. See also the essay by Eric Hinderaker in this volume.

30. Stephen A. Vincent, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Juliet E. K. Walker, *Free Frank: A Black Pioneer on the Antebellum Frontier* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).
31. See Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840-1865* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).
32. On race and ethnicity, see Gjerde, *Minds of the West*; and Wanda Hendricks, *Gender, Race, and Politics in the Midwest: Black Club Women in Illinois* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); on female activism, see Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). A collection of essays that begins to bring together Midwestern and women's history is Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet, eds., *Midwestern Women: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
33. On the Midwest as an "anti-region," see the essay by Andrew Cayton in this volume. On Western history, see Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (May 1980): 173-213. More recent formulations of the relationship between regional and gender history are Susan Lee Johnson, "'A memory sweet to soldiers': The Significance of Gender in the History of the 'American West,'" *Western Historical Quarterly* (November 1993): 495-517; and Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Altemendinger, eds., *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). On Southern history, see Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1999); and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
34. In this volume, the essays by Kathleen Neils Conzen, Susan Gray, and Mary Neth deal with gender in the context of Midwestern counter-narratives.
35. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1973).
36. Etcheson, *Emerging Midwest*; Richard Lyle Power, *Planting Corn Belt Culture: The Impress of the Upland Southerner and Yankee in the Old Northwest* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1953). See the essays by Etcheson and John Lauritz Larson in this volume.
37. See, for example, John D. Barnhart, *Valley of Democracy: The Frontier versus the Plantation in the Ohio Valley, 1775-1818* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953).
38. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republic in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
39. See the essays by Kathleen Neils Conzen and Susan Gray in this volume. See also James A. Clifton, ed., *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989); and Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Métis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1850," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985). Good examples of the persistence of specific Indian peoples in the Upper Midwest are Brian C. Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakatians, 1870-1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); and James M. McClurken, *Gah-Baeh-Jhagwah-Buk (The Way It Happened): A Visual Culture History of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Museum), 1991.
40. Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer*, German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., Annual Lecture Series No. 3 (New York: Berg, 1990); Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers*; Robert C.

- Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted: The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West, 1835-1915* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); and Robert Swierenga, "The Settlement of the Old Northwest: Ethnic Pluralism in a Featureless Plain," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9 (spring 1989): 73-105.
41. Hosmer, *Indians in the Marketplace*; and Gjerde, *Minds of the West*.
42. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
43. See the essay by Nicole Etcheson in this volume.
44. See the essay by Kenneth Winkle in this volume.
45. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*; John Lauritz Larson, *Bonds of Enterprise: John Murray Forbes and Western Development in America's Railway Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).
46. See the essay by Mary Neth in this volume. See also E. Bradford Burns, *Kinship with the Land: Regionalist Thought in Iowa, 1894-1942* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996); Ronald Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); and John L. Thomas, *Alternative America: Edward Bellamy, Henry George, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Adversary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983).
47. Jeffrey Ostler, *Prairie Populism: The Fate of Agrarian Radicalism in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, 1880-1892* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); and Michael Pierce, "Farmers and the Failure of Populism in Ohio," *Agricultural History* 74, no. 1 (winter 2000): 58-85. On labor, see Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Richard Schneirov, *Labor and Urban Politics: Class Conflict and the Origins of Modern Liberalism in Chicago, 1864-1897* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Richard Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
48. Daniel P. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).
49. The classic studies are Richard Jensen, *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict, 1888-1896* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); and Paul Kleppner, *Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900* (New York: Free Press, 1970).
50. Melvin G. Holli, *Reform in Detroit: Hazen S. Pingree and Urban Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Russel B. Nye, *Midwestern Progressive Politics: A Historical Study of Its Origins and Development, 1870-1959* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1959). On the development of urban infrastructure in the nineteenth-century Midwest, see Robin L. Einhorn, *Property Rules: Political Economy in Chicago, 1833-1872* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Ann Durkin Keating, *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988).
51. Daniel M. Bluestone, *Constructing Chicago* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991); James Burkhart Gilbert, *Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
52. Turner's essay "Pioneer Ideals and the State University" (1910) epitomizes the shared work of state historical societies and public universities in shaping Midwestern regionality at the turn of the century (in Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* [1920; reprint, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986]). On Turner's career as a historian, see Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

53. Garrison Keillor, *Lake Wobegon Days* (New York: Viking, 1985).
54. See Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). The classic account is Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (1929; reprint, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956).
55. See the essay by Andrew Cayton in this volume.
56. Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1966), xv. On the Great Migration, see James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Joe William Trotter Jr., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Kimberley L. Phillips, *Alabama North: African American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
57. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 5-8. On African Americans in Midwestern cities, see, for example, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).
58. See, for example, Thomas T. McAvoy, ed., *The Midwest: Myth or Reality? A Symposium* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961).

1. SEEING THE MIDWEST WITH PERIPHERAL VISION

1. Patricia Nelson Limerick, "What on Earth Is the New Western History?" in *Trails: Toward a New Western History*, ed. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 81.
2. The phrase the "view from nowhere" was coined by Thomas Nagel in *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). My discussion draws more particularly from its use by Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Skepticism," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990), 133-56, and LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 1-14.
3. R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992).
4. This is not to say that racism did not exist in my all-white town, of course. I remember that a rumor that blacks were going to be brought in from Kansas City to worship at the local Baptist Church sent up a furor. From my own adolescent, Methodist perspective, this seemed to be decidedly foolish and unchristian. Other than television, newsreels, and classroom discussions, this was the extent of my contact with the civil rights movement.
5. The association of African Americans and Native Americans with a "past" regional experience and what it means to "white" definitions of regional identity deserves more attention.
6. My best friends as an undergraduate at Northwest Missouri State University had been from farms and small towns in Missouri or Iowa.
7. The farmers who have sold their produce at Eastern Market in D. C. would be an interesting topic for study. At least two families had been marketing their crops there continuously since the nineteenth century. One African American woman said that the lilacs she sold were from bushes planted by her great-grandfather, who had also sold goods at Eastern Market.
8. See Clyde A. Milner II, "The View from Wisdom: Four Layers of History and Regional Identity," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, ed. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: Norton, 1991), 203-15. James

- Shortridge's questionnaire of college students in 1980 about their regional identification produced some interesting results. See James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 74-96.
9. Shortridge, *Middle West*, 2, 7. On the relational nature of region and nation, see Edward L. Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum, and Peter S. Onuf, *All over the Map: Rethinking American Regions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), vii.
 10. This kind of analysis has been a key to women's history, where the definitions of "woman" are often freighted with such oppositional meanings. Although this discussion might seem elemental to scholars familiar with the new approaches emanating from cultural studies, I have found that most of the literature on the Midwest is rooted more in social science methodologies, and, consequently, rarely uses these types of methodological approaches. In addition, even recent literary studies that use region as a central category rely to an alarming degree on these dichotomies. See, for example, Ronald Weber, *The Midwestern Ascendancy in American Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), and David Marion Holman, *A Certain Slant of Light: Regionalism and the Form of Southern and Midwestern Fiction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995). Although Shortridge, who studies the shifting uses of the term "Middle West" in magazines from the nineteenth century to the 1980s, recognizes that the shift from a positive to a negative association with the Midwest and pastoralism was never clear-cut, he, nevertheless, argues that the oppositional images were largely sequential rather than simultaneous. His sources are also not adequately contextualized in either their social context or the literary/publication process that created them.
 11. See Stephen S. Nissenbaum, "New England as Region and Nation," and Edward L. Ayers, "What We Talk about When We Talk about the South," in *All over the Map*, 39-46, 65-66, 70-73.
 12. An arena that decidedly needs more attention is the links of farm, town, and city, not just in an economic sense, as in William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West, 1848-1893* (New York: Norton, 1991), but also in a social sense, for example, migrations and family/kin ties. As regional historians encounter the twentieth century, this question of urban-rural connection becomes even more vital. Southern historians usually use race relations and Jim Crow laws as the connector between rural pasts and urban presents, but Western historians have had more difficulty. See for example, Michael E. McGerr, "Is There a Twentieth-Century West?" in *Under an Open Sky*, 239-56.
 13. Richard White, "Trashing the Trails," in *Trails*, 26-39; Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Region and Reason," in *All over the Map*, 83-104, and Shortridge, *Middle West*. At some point in the middle of the Great Plains, "farms" become "ranches" in popular language, and this may mark the twentieth-century West and, consequently the twentieth-century Middle West, as opposed to the ever-moving "frontier" West. Shortridge locates the origins of the term "Middle West" along a north-south trajectory that distinguished first Kentucky and Tennessee and later Kansas and Nebraska from the Northwest and Southwest of the 1820s-1830s and 1880s-1890s, respectively (Shortridge, 16-17). An interesting attempt to define contemporary regions is Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).
 14. Nissenbaum, "New England," 39-41, and Ayers, "What We Talk," 70-74.
 15. Susan LaFlesche was actually French-Ponca-Omaha-Otoe-Ioway-Anglo, but her father, Joseph (French-Ponca), had allied with the full-blood Omahas and had been adopted as a chief with full status. The LaFlesche family practiced a more individualized agriculture and Christianity, and cooperated in establishing an Indian police force to enforce sobriety among the Omaha; however, they also maintained some "traditional" practices, such as polygyny and ritual practices. Susan's sister Susette was active in publicizing a legal case that sought to give Poncas individual land titles as an alternative to removal to Oklahoma. Thorne compares this to the Cherokee use of American law to preserve Native American ownership of land, even though it also was a precursor of the

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ANDREW R. L. CAYTON *and*
SUSAN E. GRAY, *editors*

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