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## Dictionary of Midwestern Literature, volume 2, Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination

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## Book Reviews and Notices

*Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, volume 2, *Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination*, general editor Philip A. Greasley. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. xiv, 1,057 pp. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$85.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Elizabeth Raymond holds the Grace A. Griffen Chair in History at the University of Nevada, Reno. She is the author, most recently, of "Creating the Heartland: The Midwest Emerges in American Culture," in *The Midwestern Moment*, edited by Jon Lauck (Hastings College Press, 2017).

The Midwest, it seems, is currently enjoying something of a moment. Ascribed a consequential role in recent electoral politics, it is also experiencing an academic publishing renaissance. The present volume, a behemoth of almost five pounds, is only the second in a projected three-volume series covering midwestern literature. It succeeds volume one from 2001, which included biographical information for approximately 400 individual midwestern authors, and will be followed by a projected third volume that will present the region's literary history. If readers hunger for even more information, they can consult a 1,890-page cousin from 2007, *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia* (also published by Indiana University Press). It treated the 12 states of the region individually and then discussed topics common to all of them. Volume two of the *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature* covers similar ground, but concentrates on literary aspects of the region. It was sponsored by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature and prepared by scores of its members. The resulting publication is clearly a labor of love.

*Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination* covers an eclectic series of topics, some expected and others surprising. In addition to articles on 35 "pivotal texts" selected by the editorial board, there are entries for literary genres such as poetry and drama but also subgenres such as mystery and detective fiction and Arab American and Scandinavian American literature. Topics include popular culture texts, the historical development of midwestern states, important social movements, eminent regional periodicals, and cities with a significant literary heritage. This last category includes obvious candidates like Chicago and Detroit but also less apparent choices like Kansas City and Minneapolis-Saint Paul, the latter joined together into a single entry that will likely annoy some. Both Iowa and the Iowa Writers' Workshop have extensive entries, but no Iowa city has a separate entry. There is

an ample and detailed index that will greatly assist users who want to find all references to a particular text or writer.

According to the general editor's introduction, the *Dictionary* volumes are designed to serve a broad audience, including students at the high school and college levels but also literary scholars and casual readers. Students will find full and detailed introductions to myriad movements, publications, places, and themes in regional literature. Perhaps most useful for literary scholars will be the carefully selected bibliography of secondary works on midwestern culture. It's difficult to envision the casual reader who might sit down to browse a literary dictionary, but *Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination* rewards casual curiosity. Iowa's entry, for example covers almost 20 pages and includes comprehensive coverage of published texts relating to the state. It distinguishes carefully between the first fictional work physically published in the state (*A Home in the West; or, Emigration and Its Consequences*, published in 1858 by M. Emilia Rockwell) and the first novel with Iowa as its setting (*The Pet of the Settlement: A Story of Prairie-Land*, by Caroline A. Soule in 1860). Popular literature is separated from more ambitious novels by writers such as Ruth Suckow or Marilynne Robinson, but both types are given serious coverage. Children's literature, detective fiction, horror and fantasy, romantic fiction, and religious fiction are all discussed along with poetry and drama. The state's entry includes coverage of printing and journalism history as well as notable periodicals, the Iowa Federal Writers' Project of the Depression years, and various state literary awards. If this comprehensive coverage stimulates further questions in the casual reader's mind, there's also a compilation of bibliographies of Iowa literature. Other dictionary entries are similarly expansive in scope. In this reference work, *The Great Gatsby* appears along with *Black Elk Speaks* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* on the list of pivotal midwestern literary texts.

This expansiveness is both a strength and a weakness. Although much territory is covered (Who knew there was so much midwestern literature centered on technology and industry, or on rivers?), there are also glaring omissions. While texts originally written in Scandinavian languages are allotted 12 pages, there is no entry at all for similar works in German. More fundamentally, there is no clear operating definition of what constitutes midwestern literature, whether writing about the region, writing from the region, or writing by people who have passed through the region. This massive reference work tends to concentrate on literature produced by long-term residents but also incorporates works about the region produced by writers living elsewhere, especially if they are native to the 12 states that constitute the Midwest.

In the end, it seems churlish to quibble about definitions in such a comprehensive volume. Better to sit back and take it all in. In future decades, the *Dictionary of Middle Western Literature* is likely to play the same authoritative role in regional literary definition as the earlier anthologies edited by John T. Frederick (*Out of the Midwest* in 1944) and John T. Flanagan (*America Is West* in 1945) did for the regionalist literary flowering of the Great Depression. The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature can be proud of the herculean effort that produced this comprehensive survey of regional literature. They set out to demonstrate that the Midwest is neither homogeneous nor static nor culturally backward. With *Dimensions of the Midwestern Literary Imagination*, they have undoubtedly succeeded.

*The Borderland of Fear: Vincennes, Prophetstown, and the Invasion of the Miami Homeland*, by Patrick Bottiger. Borderlands and Transcultural Studies Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. xix, 244 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

Reviewer George Ironstrack is assistant director/program director of the Education and Outreach Office at the Myaamia Center, Miami University (Ohio). His research has focused on the history of the Miami Indians.

In a quickly paced and engaging narrative history, Patrick Bottiger lays out his case for “pervasive lying among Indian, French, and American communities” in the early eighteenth century. Bottiger focuses on what he identifies as widespread falsehoods about the village of Prophetstown within the “Miami-American borderland” of the Wabash River valley in what later became the state of Indiana (8, 12). The village, which existed from 1808 to 1813, was led by the Shawnee Prophet Tenskawatawa and inhabited by members of multiple tribal communities who shared his vision of a Pan-Indian nativist revitalization movement.

Bottiger begins his narrative by outlining what he calls the “longue durée of Miami history” and attempts to assume the perspective of Miami Indian people prior to the creation of Prophetstown. By the 1800s, Bottiger argues, American aggression had transformed this Miami homeland into a Miami-American borderland (8). In that space, Miami Indians, French fur traders, and American settlers often focused on the needs of their villages and towns over the interests of their respective nations (5, 113). Violence in this period arose not out of intercommunal hostility but instead out of intracommunal competition among factions seeking control of their respective towns and villages. The narrative of these intracommunal disputes spins off the four battles of Tippecanoe: the conflict of words to “determine the intentions of the Prophet’s community at