

goes on to argue for three elements central to the early twentieth-century identification of the Midwest as region: the family farm, heavy industry, and widespread confidence. The icon for the Midwest became not the cowboy, but the pioneer—"members of families and communities, not Marlboro men, but ordinary men and women of log cabins and schoolhouses, of grist mills and churches" (47). The course of the twentieth century, though, has subverted the triumphalistic master narrative of both the West and the Midwest, for "both regions now know failure" (50). Madison muses that perhaps the ongoing symbiosis of the West and the Midwest can include midwestern historians riding "western coattails toward gaining some little respect" for the Midwest as a historical region (50).

As historians refine the concept of region, the very fluidity of historical regions suggests that there also needs to be an awareness of borderlands—places where historical experience, self-perception, and ascription by outsiders develop and interact in complex, messy ways. Iowa is midwestern—but has it always been so, and even now is it only partly so? Iowa is not western—but has it always not been, and even now is it not only in part? To be able to clarify the questions, let alone provide anything more than impressionistic answers, will take more attentiveness, for example, to the sense of place over time by residents and observers of that part of Iowa in the Missouri River basin.

Madison's essay alone makes *Frontier and Region* worth perusing. The contributions by Pisani, Riley, White, and Hurtado are also especially cogent and stimulating. Taken together, the collection is a worthy tribute to Martin Ridge.

Midwestern Women: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads, edited by Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet. Midwestern History and Culture Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. xi, 276 pp. Maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY KATHERINE JELLISON, OHIO UNIVERSITY

In their introduction, the editors set forth two particularly laudatory aims for this collection of essays: (1) to show the diversity of women's historical experience in the Midwest; and (2) to demonstrate the existence of a uniquely "midwestern" women's identity. These ambitious goals, however, remain only partially realized.

The dozen essays in this volume, which cover more than three centuries of midwestern history, go a long way toward challenging the

notion of ethnic homogeneity in the Midwest. Native-born whites, European immigrants, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinas all make significant appearances within the pages of this collection. Rebecca Kugel's profile of Susie Bonga Wright, a nineteenth-century Ojibwe who served as a cultural intermediary between the white and Native American worlds; Earline Rae Ferguson's chapter on African-American club women in Indianapolis; and Irene Campos Carr's investigation of contemporary Mexicana factory workers in Aurora, Illinois, are especially skillful case studies that highlight the experiences of midwestern women of color. Many of the essays also burst the stereotype of the midwestern woman as farm woman. Lucy Eldersveld Murphy's imaginative study of itinerant milliner Emily Austin and Tamara G. Miller's examination of female kinship networks in the frontier river town of Marietta, Ohio, are particularly impressive analyses of the experiences of nonfarm women.

The anthology is less successful, however, in representing the geographic diversity of the twelve-state region known collectively as the Midwest. For example, only three of the twelve essays deal in any fashion with the four Great Plains states within the region—North and South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas—and just one of those essays, Pamela Riney-Kehrberg's study of Kansas dust bowl survivor Martha Friesen, focuses exclusively on the unique experience of plainswomen. As Riney-Kehrberg notes near the end of her essay, the greater physical isolation that women endured on the plains set their situation apart from that of midwestern women located east of the Missouri River. For instance, individual women on the sparsely settled plains frequently lacked access to the kind of supportive female communities celebrated in many of the other essays included in the volume.

In the only essay that focuses solely on women in the Hawkeye State, Dorothy Schwieder briefly addresses the contrasting experiences of plainswomen and other female residents of the Midwest. Focusing on the 1920s and the 1950s, Schwieder argues that Iowa farm women obtained meaningful companionship as well as useful homemaking advice through participation in Cooperative Extension Service activities. Schwieder notes near the end of the essay, however, that her generalizations probably apply only to women in prairie states such as Iowa and not to the more socially isolated and often technologically deprived women of the plains states. While paved roads and electricity had become the norm for most Iowa women shortly after World War II, women on more widely spaced Great Plains farms often had to wait several years longer for such luxuries. In the best of all possible worlds, the typical plainswoman would have loved to own the electric kitchen

range that the Extension Service touted, but the realities of Great Plains farm life rendered such equipment utterly useless and therefore undesirable. Greater attention to other of the numerous contrasts between life on the midwestern prairies and life on the midwestern plains would have enriched the collection as a whole.

Taken in sum, the essays in this volume also fall short of proving the existence of a uniquely midwestern female identity. None of the characteristics of midwestern women's experience that Murphy and Venet describe in their introduction, and that the essayists explore in their various contributions to the anthology, are exclusive to women in the Midwest. For instance, the editors' statement that "women's religious affiliations maintained or increased women's leadership capabilities and their opportunities for political and social influence" (11) could apply equally well to New England women, just as the argument that "women suffered from isolation and what they considered unsettled conditions" (11) could as easily describe women in the Far West as those in the heartland.

The editors note, however, that this anthology represents only a beginning attempt to define a specific midwestern women's history. Let us hope that it is just the first of many works to address midwestern women's history as a distinct field of study. Although the scholarship represented in *Midwestern Women* does not quite measure up to the editors' stated objectives, the essays do raise issues and questions to be built upon in the future and thus make an important historiographical contribution. Murphy and Venet have also constructed an excellent bibliography for the volume that provides a comprehensive list of existing scholarship on midwestern women.

Building and Breaking Families in the American West, by Glenda Riley. Calvin P. Horn Lectures in Western History and Culture. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. xi, 204 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA HANDY-MARCHELLO, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

In *Building and Breaking Families in the American West*, Glenda Riley argues that distinctive patterns of courtship, marriage, and divorce mark the social history of the American West. Her statistical and anecdotal evidence suggests that we can place little hope in marriages contracted in a western setting, but she uses this gloomy conclusion to suggest ways marriage might be socially and legally restructured.

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