

## Book Reviews

*Frontier and Region: Essays in Honor of Martin Ridge*, edited by Robert C. Ritchie and Paul Andrew Hutton. San Marino: The Huntington Library; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. xvi, 263 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DOUGLAS FIRTH ANDERSON, NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE

As a reader, I am one for whom the benefits usually outweigh the frustrations of reading essay collections. Article-length presentations of new material, reconsiderations of "old" material, and condensations of material covered at length elsewhere are the warp and woof of such compilations, so perusing collected essays is a convenient way to gain or maintain familiarity with much of the scope and substance of a given theme or field. As a reviewer, however, I acknowledge that it is impossible to do justice to each contribution in a review; furthermore, unevenness in scope, substance, and insight are endemic to collections.

*Frontier and Region* coheres around the academic interests of Martin Ridge, in whose honor the book was created. The four sections of *Frontier and Region* reflect Ridge's subject interests: locating the West, the political West, the popular West, and the historiographical West. The volume's title and the irenic tone of its editors and contributors, who include representatives of the "new" as well as "traditional" western historiography, honor the unifying intent of what could be called Ridge's "progressive traditionalism."

*Frontier and Region* is notable neither for opening new lines of research nor for systematically summarizing and assessing the state of the history of the trans-Mississippi West. It is successful, though, in indicating—from a more traditionalist stance—a measure of constructive convergence in the field. The frontier of historical experience ironically juxtaposed with myth is represented, for example, in the contributions by Walter Nugent, who considers especially diverse and changing "stories" about the West after 1870; James P. Ronda, who underlines the importance of Thomas Jefferson's fascination with rivers as routes of westward expansion; Charles E. Rankin, who examines the career of Frederic C. Lockley as only partially supporting

stereotypes of frontier journalists; and Paul Andrew Hutton, who reviews the development of the legendary Davy Crockett through the Crockett almanacs. Such "older" topics are treated with more than a nod to emphases raised by the "new" western history.

At the same time, "newer" topics are treated without anti-Turner triumphalism. Donald J. Pisani cautions that noting the significant role of the federal government in the conquest and development of the trans-Mississippi West does not establish that western interests contributed to a decisive centralization of power in the American state. Richard Lowitt points out the irony that not only did preservationists lose in the debates over and outcome of the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley, but so did the progressives who envisioned popular control of water and electric power for the municipality of San Francisco. Melody Webb forcefully illumines the heretofore obscured conservationist component of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. Glenda Riley establishes the formative role played by Annie Oakley in creating a decorous yet athletic image of cowgirls for a mass audience. Richard White stresses how frontier historians and frontier entertainers both relied on and promoted "the iconography of their time" (210). Albert L. Hurtado illustrates how historians' own cultural commitments and social contexts can distort their critical judgment with the cautionary tale of Herbert E. Bolton's erroneous authentication of "Drake's Brass Plate." Howard R. Lamar reminds readers that historical Turnerians in the academy were not the only source of support in the twentieth century for the frontier concept; literary Turnerians such as Bernard DeVoto, Constance Rourke, Archibald MacLeish, and Stephen Vincent Benet made major contributions between 1920 and 1960 to the sustaining of a national mythology of frontier, pioneer, and individualism.

James H. Madison's essay, "Diverging Trails: Why the Midwest is Not the West," is certainly the most relevant essay in the collection for readers of the *Annals of Iowa*; it is also the essay that I found the most stimulating. Madison stresses the interconnectedness yet discreteness of the Midwest and the West. Both regions underwent a frontier process in the nineteenth century; further, many people from the Midwest settled and shaped the trans-Mississippi West. Yet the regions do not conflate. Perhaps Madison's most enlightening point is that self-consciousness about both regions took a decisive turn in the early twentieth century. As Turner, Cody, Oakley, and others helped form perceptions of the West in the decades surrounding the turn of the century, so Turner—himself a native midwesterner—and others helped popularize the concept of the Midwest. "The rise of the West thus necessitated the creation of the label 'Midwest'" (46). Madison

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

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