

Adler has produced a nicely written and clearly argued monograph that should forever dispel the idea that any real explanatory power can be attached to abstract notions of geographic "destiny." What happens to a place is almost always the product of controllable and historical forces: the choices made and actions undertaken by the *people* who create its economy, culture, and politics. Adler's sophisticated sense of the cultural and economic meanings of "region" adds further depth and innovation to his argument; like all other discernable areas of the country, as he shows, what seems particular to the Midwest must be located within a national history of markets and capitalist development. Anyone interested in the complex interrelations of eastern finance and (then) western economic potential, the power of imagery to determine the fate of a place, and the meaning of cities in this mostly agrarian region will find much of value in Adler's fine study.

*The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*, edited by William H. Truettner. Washington, D.C., and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of American Art, 1991. xiv, 389 pp. Illustrations, artists' biographies, references, notes, index. \$60.00 cloth.

*The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865*, by Albert Boime. New Directions in American Art. Washington, D.C., and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. xi, 188 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BRIAN W. DIPPY, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Revisionism in western American history took a national turn in 1991 when the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C., opened its most controversial exhibition ever, "The West as America." With the exhibition long since dismantled, the passions it aroused by "reinterpreting images of the frontier" are hard to recapture simply from a reading of the catalog. The didactic labels accompanying individual works in the show were the flash points for public anger, and their didacticism is much muted in the six major essays that make up *The West as America*. The paintings were refractory material for revisionism. They remained appealing even when arranged to argue the exhibition's premise that nineteenth-century western art can best be understood as propaganda for expansionism. A collaboration between mostly eastern artists and patrons with much to gain from the dispossession of the natives

and the exploitation of the land itself produced seductive images that captivated the public and fostered an uncritical acceptance of the process that the art validated. This interpretation effectively reduces western art to a celebration of the seizure of the continent by white Americans.

William Truettner, the exhibition's curator, explains in the catalog's opening essay that history paintings, much in fashion in the mid-nineteenth century, served to establish the inevitability of ongoing westward expansion. Patricia Hills treats images of the heroic white pioneers as affirmations of progress intended to silence concern over the violent nature of the actual land-taking. Julie Schimmel contends that the images of the Indian in art (noble, bloodthirsty, doomed, assimilated) all served expansionist ends while neglecting the "real" Native American. Elizabeth Johns argues that western genre scenes linked geographical expansion with expanding political and economic opportunity. Democracy and prosperity both had a western bent, in short, though social equality was discountenanced in art intended for upper-class consumption. Wilderness landscapes, Nancy Anderson maintains, were best understood as inventories of raw resources that promised that American wilderness and American development were compatible—a notion especially appealing to land speculators and railroad barons who had every reason to promote it, and every reason to patronize artists such as Albert Bierstadt who best conveyed it. Finally, Alex Nemerov, in the most methodologically radical essay in the book, engages in close readings of select turn-of-the-century works by Frederic Remington, Charles M. Russell, and others to establish how the ideology that had justified expansionism in the nineteenth century was bequeathed to future generations submerged but intact in beguilingly nostalgic images that still served the agenda of the capitalist elite as models for economic and social control of restive laborers and undesirable immigrants.

Albert Boime's *The Magisterial Gaze*, also published by the Smithsonian Institution Press, is so similar in argument and tone that it could easily be part of *The West as America*, though it does overlap the contributions by Hills, Schimmel, and Anderson. An extended essay on "Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting," *The Magisterial Gaze* contends that the angle of vision in nineteenth-century landscapes, from the heights looking down on broad expanses receding into the distance, correlates with a national will to power and dominion over what was so invitingly spread out before the viewer. Artists, patrons, and public alike embraced art that sometimes explicitly promoted the idea of Mani-

fest Destiny. Natives and wilderness were transient phases in national development, as progress, preordained and irresistible, transformed the continent into a white civilization.

Boime is at ease in discussing the work of the Hudson River painters and their patrons but less effective in dealing with landscapists west of the Mississippi. His fascination with the prose of travel writers and the rhetoric of expositors of Manifest Destiny overshadows his discussion of the visual evidence in his sections on western railroads and surveys. Boime's argument straitjackets certain artists. John Mix Stanley, for example, is represented by a typical composition showing a group of government surveyors on a small bluff studying the horizon; but Stanley employed an identical composition in many of his Indian scenes. This creates a problem for *The Magisterial Gaze*. Boime treats an Indian on a bluff and a white man on a bluff as the same, since both represent the artist's understanding that what the one views sadly, with a sense of loss, and the other eagerly, with a sense of expectation, add up to the same thing: the land will soon belong to the Anglo-Saxon. But is the message *identical* when an Indian commands the height? Is there no qualification in that native figure—no ambivalence, no regret, no guilt? It is ironic that modern critics mine such images for evidence of white rapaciousness without recognizing an ancestral source for their own sense of outrage. Boime's argument also seems simplistic because the view from the hill (the overseer's, the proprietor's—and, according to the romantic, God's, after all) is neither exclusively nineteenth-century nor distinctively American. And "the magisterial gaze" has to neglect too many views from the valley floor, where the eyes are asked to scale mountain peaks that soar towards heaven. Boime ends, neatly, with Mount Rushmore as the concrete embodiment of the magisterial gaze, then spoils the effect for me by some historically naive sermonizing on Black Hills history in which General Custer—yet again—is fingered for massacring Sioux women and children (he did not) and leading an illegal expedition into Sioux country "to provoke the Native Americans to hostile confrontation" (164). You would never guess who actually did the losing when Custer confronted the Sioux.

*The West as America* and *The Magisterial Gaze* are narrowly conceived in ideology and argument (white mostly equals bad), in their choice of sources, and in their selective use of artistic evidence. Both books target America's sanguine, romantic western myth. Their approach is adversarial and argumentative. Thus the reader cannot expect, and does not get, a balanced presentation of the visual evidence. At the same time, the adversarial approach, by stimu-

lating disagreement, may also stimulate discussion and research. Both books are bound to invigorate the study of western American art, a field already much the livelier for the passions aroused by "The West as America."

*The Civil War in the American West*, by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991. xiv, 448 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY M. PHILIP LUCAS, CORNELL COLLEGE

The West during the Civil War has been too often forgotten or presented in a fragmented fashion. In this volume Alvin Josephy gives the topic careful and comprehensive consideration. Using a wide variety of secondary sources and published memoirs, Josephy offers a sweeping view of the West between 1861 and 1865. Not only is this survey particularly effective, but it also establishes how the Civil War years fit into the broader context of western history.

The volume is divided into discussions of five geographical areas that saw distinctive kinds of warfare: New Mexico; Minnesota and the High Plains; Louisiana; California and the Central Plains; and, finally, Arkansas, Missouri, and Indian Territory. In New Mexico and Louisiana Josephy emphasizes the maneuvering and clashes of Union and Confederate armies. In Minnesota the focus is on the Union's deteriorating relations with the Sioux. Subduing southern sympathizers and escalating conflicts with Indian tribes characterized the Civil War years in the Far West and Central Plains. The tragic brother-against-brother confrontation not only occupied whites in Missouri and Arkansas, but each side also sought allies among the Native Americans in present-day Oklahoma. It is a complex story that Josephy tells well.

Accompanied by a fine series of maps, Josephy's crisp narrative informs the casual reader and scholar alike how troops moved and why. Woven throughout the volume are portrayals of the personalities of the commanders and their troops which add color and augment the tragic nature of the war. Attention to the interests of Native Americans further balances those chapters dealing with Indian-white relations. Readers interested in Iowa's contribution to the war will encounter those often forgotten regiments that did not fight with Grant or Sherman. Iowa troops appear in accounts about Pea Ridge, the Red River campaign, the patrols along the Oregon Trail, and elsewhere.

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