

to go into the ranching business either themselves or through controlled leases had not federal policy been ambiguous when it came right down to it.

This is a book not only sympathetic to the strengths of and the strains on Indian culture since the Civil War, but one that often dramatically illustrates in a simple narrative of events the awkwardness for the native people of the "development" of the West. Certainly Iverson's final conclusion that group cultural identity need not be seen as fixed and can change, given a little time and understanding, is well documented by his text. The question is not whether Indians can change, but, as Iverson puts it, "Will the urban West still afford sufficient room for people who know more than a little about particular landscapes, about generations, about the glare of noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk?" (224).

*The Prairie in Nineteenth-Century American Poetry*, by Steven Olson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. xi, 211 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BERNICE E. GALLAGHER, LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

For most of the nineteenth century, prairies existed in all of Iowa, the northern half of Illinois, the southwestern and western part of Minnesota, the northwestern part of Missouri, parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, and the Texas panhandle. Steven Olson argues that nineteenth-century poetic images of the American prairie were more than depictions and characterizations of an impressive physical landscape, however. Prairies became poetic symbols that incorporated the people, imagination, ideology, and place that existed in the United States during the nineteenth century. Tracing the use of the prairie metaphor from William Cullen Bryant through Walt Whitman, Olson shows how poets confronted the openness of America, celebrated its potential for good, acknowledged its potential to destroy, and reflected the growing tension between nationalistic ideals and paradoxical conditions existing in a democratic society. Collectively, the prairie poets created a new American poetry, one that is characterized by opposition: "public versus private, the individual versus the democracy, artistic freedom versus artistic constraints, personal freedom and equality versus slavery, manifest destiny versus genocide, abundance versus destruction, nature versus civilization, nationalism versus internationalism, hope for the future versus spiritual degeneration" (171).

Olson shows how accounts of actual experiences on the prairie evolved into poetic expression. Early exploration journals and travel books depicted physical landscapes and private experiences, both negative and positive, and then poetry reshaped the prairie's physical geography into a perceived landscape. Poets such as Bryant spoke in a popular, public voice that embodied American expansionist ideology and cultivated a national metaphor. Others expressed more private, less popular views. Emily Dickinson suggested that the individual creates the prairie metaphor and denied the influence of American culture, while Herman Melville reshaped the prairie metaphor into a pessimistic view of American spirituality and morality. Walt Whitman ultimately reconciled these private and public voices in an optimistic poetic metaphor, stressing individual development in union with the mass and placing the American prairie in a global context.

Olson effectively analyzes the relationship between the physical characteristics of the continent and its poetry, beginning with lesser writers such as William Leggett of Illinois and continuing in canonical poets such as Bryant, Whittier, Longfellow, Dickinson, Melville, and Whitman. While individual poetic voices varied—it is worth noting that female writers such as Phoebe and Alice Cary and Lydia Huntley Sigourney briefly introduced white and native women into the prairie metaphor and emphasized the gloomier aspects of their existence—together they demonstrated the development of a national literature and an increasingly important role for the poet in American society. Olson includes only brief excerpts from selected poems, but these references, along with his notes and extensive bibliography, will provide valuable resources for readers interested in further study of the region, its literature, and history.

*Cities of the Mississippi: Nineteenth-Century Images of Urban Development*, by John W. Reys. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994. vii, 342 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$85.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LOREN N. HORTON, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Many historians have come to depend upon John Reys for information about and illustrations of nineteenth-century bird's-eye, panoramic, and other town views. His long and distinguished career of teaching and publication in this field has resulted in an unparalleled contribution to urban history in general, and to the urban frontier in particular. His previous books have been both general—such as *The Making of Urban America* and *Town Planning on the American Frontier*—and geographically focused—such as *Saint Louis Illustrated: Nineteenth-*

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