

## THE ANNALS OF IOWA

chusetts, and Iowa. Readers of the *Annals* will appreciate her obvious familiarity with, and use of, Louise R. Noun's *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman-Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames, 1969). Although both Noun and DuBois concentrate on the movement during the quarter-century following the Seneca Falls Convention, their accounts are quite dissimilar, but for reasons more important than Noun's focus on Iowa and DuBois' on the national scene. The differences between the two studies reflect developments in the women's movement during the decade between the writing of the two, and the differences between Noun's and DuBois' educational and employment experiences. As increasing numbers of young women enter graduate programs in history, and subscribe to the new feminism, more and more women's history will be produced by women like DuBois, a Ph.D. graduate of Northwestern and an assistant professor of history at the State University of New York at Buffalo. As increasing numbers of women with training and perspectives similar to those of DuBois write women's history, the works they produce will undoubtedly confirm the maxim that each generation rewrites its history.

**Thomas G. Ryan**  
University of Northern Iowa  
Cedar Falls, IA

*Crossing Frontiers: Papers in American and Canadian Western Literature*, edited by Dick Harrison. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1979. pp. 174. \$10.00.

*Crossing Frontiers* is a collection of the six addresses featured at a conference on American and Canadian western literature held in Banff, Alberta in April 1978. Each paper is followed by a response. The volume is introduced with an essay by Dick Harrison, the conference convener, and closes with four short summaries.

Both the conference and this resultant volume are filled with the kind of passion that results when two young, vigorous cultures encounter each other, but this is a joyous cross-fertilization, not a battle. As scholarly disciplines, the studies of Canadian literature and of western American literature are hardly more than a decade old. It is an age of exploration and discovery; *Crossing Frontiers* is a first outline map of the hitherto unnamed country where the two new disciplines merge. The papers in this volume also cross boundaries of academia. Only

## Book Reviews

one is by a full time critic. Three are by historians, one by a poet/critic, and one by a poet/novelist/critic.

Howard Lamar and Lewis Thomas re-examine the historical "reality" behind the societies that have produced western literature. "Do the discomforts of living in a society that suffers from a widespread delusion about its nature affect the way in which that society's denizens write about its experience?" asks Thomas to preface his essay. In "Prairie Settlement: Western Responses in History and Fiction; Social Structures in a Canadian Hinterland," he shows that the belief in the frontier equality of the prairie provinces during their formative years masks the importance of a privileged class. Using his thesis to look at cattleman-settler relationships, Thomas concludes, "The exploration of such a problem cuts across deeply entrenched stereotypes of western egalitarianism and the homogenizing effect of a harsh environment that erases every evidence of human distinctiveness." Lamar, dealing with the overland trail experience, also questions Turnerian assumptions. Subtling his essay "The Mobility of Defeat," Lamar points out that for many immigrants, the experience was not one of moving toward a better future, but rather of moving away from a past, a past that for many women was more attractive than what waited at the end of the trail. Lamar also points out that far from being settings of rampant individualism, the wagon trains were "middle class, even Victorian," with "all kinds of constitutions and written rules of conduct."

Don D. Walker writes "On the Supposed Frontier Between History and Fiction," using the cowboy as a case study. His emphasis is on literature as an historian's tool for getting a different point of view on the elusive historical "reality" that Thomas and Lamar seek to grasp. Leslie Fiedler's curiously disappointing "Canada and the Invention of the Western" seeks to blend history and literature into a functioning myth of the West, but does not account for the orderly surface of the Canadian West in its literature. More damaging, as Fiedler's commentator Jack Brenner points out, "If seriously meant, Fiedler's use of the myth appears to be as exclusionary of women as is the myth itself."

The two most exciting essays are those of the two poet/critics. Eli Mandel's "The Border League: American 'West' and Canadian 'Region,'" demonstrates through the poetry of three writers who are ambiguously western/Canadian/American that space is the central concern for Americans while for Canadians what matters is the "regional myth of origins." Thus the content of the two Wests is different. A response from W. H. New pinpoints the idea of incongruity, "the difference between factual error and creative inaccuracy, which is

## THE ANNALS OF IOWA

one of the murky borderlands of art and one to which Eli's paper repeatedly turns." Creative inaccuracy characterizes as well "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction: An Erotica of Space," in which Robert Kroetsch purports to compare Willa Cather's *My Antonia* and Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*; but in which he far more usefully articulates the myth of irresponsible, impotent male freedom versus terrifyingly responsible female fecundity—or thwarted fecundity—which characterizes his own novels and, to some degree, American westerns.

Dick Harrison's "Introduction" and Rosemary Sullivan's "Summing Up" seem to pull together the most salient facets of the papers, and particularly the differences between the myth of the Canadian West and the myth of the American West. (As Sullivan points out, Americans at the conference tended to see similarities and Canadians differences.) The Canadian West has presented itself in literature as a just, orderly, family-based, egalitarian society, in contrast to the irresponsible, violent, all-male cowboy society south of the border (and west of the "middle border" farmers' frontier).

The only flaw in this remarkable collection is that, in concentrating on the major papers and not including other conference sessions on Native American literature and minority literatures—French, Spanish, and so forth—the published document is monolithically Anglo and predominantly male. However, this is a new field, and there is much more to be done. *Crossing Frontiers* is more than a collection of essays, however brilliant and well-ordered. It is a passionate experience in literary criticism in which critics become artists to produce material as vital and resonant as D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* or Charles Olson's *Call Me Ishmael*.

Frances W. Kaye  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Lincoln, NB

*Southeastern Indians: Since the Removal Era*, edited by Walter L. Williams. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979. Illustrations, maps, bibliographic essay, index. \$18.00 cloth, \$6.00 paper.

This collection of essays is a most welcomed addition to the growing body of literature on Indian history. But this book is even more valuable than most, for it treats a unique topic, which has previously received little attention: many Indians of the Southeast did not move westward pursuant to the policy of removal. Many stayed behind.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.