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strive to improve and perfect nature and thereby build a better life for himself; he therefore worked to facilitate that striving through public works and private liberty. The better life he sought could be measured in material goods, and Norris's struggles aimed to use Federal money to spread the wealth through jobs, projects, and programs.

As he tells this story of success, Lowitt refrains from analyzing the darker impacts of Norris's progressivism. At no time, apparently, did Norris consider the negative environmental impacts of water resources development or the ultimate problems for small, family-farm agriculture brought by dependency on irrigation. He was, in other words, imprisoned by the panaceas of his day and did not look beyond them. Likewise, the author describes a charismatic leader, but does not explain why he did not build an organization to carry on his struggle, a seeming inconsistency in a life ostensibly devoted to the future of the nation. Indeed, Norris's continuing inability to bring either Nebraska party to his way of thinking detracts from the believability of the biographical portrait of a consummate politician, and instead opens the door to speculation about the self-centeredness of his politics. Lowitt neither elaborates upon nor explains this important inconsistency.

Despite the unanswered questions raised by the biography, Lowitt leaves a strong picture of Norris as a man whose great integrity and courage deserve emulation. His consistent devotion to lifelong goals and his ability to be flexible as times changed gave Norris national stature during an age when charismatic leaders ranged through the American scene. Though traditional and hardly critical, this biography will become the standard reference for its subject and should find a place in every well-rounded political history collection.

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Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays, edited by Barbara Stuhler and Gretchen Kreuter. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society, 1977. pp. 402. Illustrations, notes, index. \$12.00.

A collection of biographical essays dedicated to increasing "our knowledge about the contributions of women in our society," *Women of Minnesota* succeeds in its purpose. The editors, Barbara Stuhler and Gretchen Kreuter, have chosen seventeen women for considera-

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tion and have included a series of brief biographies of more than one hundred other women along with a separate article on women in Minnesota's legislature. Their choices, ranging in period from Minnesota's territorial days to the present, also suggest issues pertinent for the study of women's history generally. Those women who served in the legislature merit consideration on the basis of traditional definitions of historical importance, while the inclusion of a Kate Donnelly challenges those very definitions. Just as the thirty-two women who have held seats in the legislature since 1922 document female involvement in a sphere historically restricted to males, so Kate Donnelly, who remained within woman's traditional private sphere but who hardly conformed to the stereotype, suggests the complexities of women's experiences.

Taken together, the women in this volume cannot be considered representative in a conventional sense. Not only were the large majority middle or upper class, but they were more highly educated and their participation beyond the home was more extensive than their female contemporaries. For example, Frances Densmore, whose pioneering efforts in the study of Native American music began in her mid-twenties and continued uninterrupted until her death at the age of ninety, was hardly typical of early twentieth-century women. And Gratia Alta Countryman's tenure as head of the Minneapolis Public Library from 1904 to 1936, during which she transformed the library into an institution that committed itself to social betterment and that reached nearly every segment of the community, earned her the title "Jane Addams of the libraries."

The legacy of the three Larson sisters in the field of education and research is as striking. Agnes combined the instruction of some 4000 students during her thirty-four years at St. Olaf College with chairing the Department of History for eighteen years; Henrietta, a Research Associate at Harvard and the first woman to become an Associate Professor at the Business School, was a pioneer and major force in the development of business history; Nora, a bacteriologist, made significant contributions in research at the University of Minnesota's Hormel Institute and later taught at St. Olaf. All of these accomplishments, it should be added, were made in the face of discrimination against women. One example will suffice. Applying for a position at Southern Illinois State Normal School, Henrietta was informed that she would be considered only if a man could not be found. Apparently male candidates were unavailable because Henrietta received the position and arrived in Carbondale to find that she was the only member of the faculty with a doctorate and that her department was chaired

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by a man who had completed his education with the eighth grade.

In another sense the experiences of the women included in this collection are representative. Victorian America's designation of traits and roles on the basis of gender and its glorification of woman as a distinctive creature fitted for a particular function influenced the perceptions and behavior of women in the twentieth as well as nineteenth century. Harriet Bishop's experience is pertinent in this regard. A graduate of Catherine Beecher's program to train teachers for the West and founder of St. Paul's first public school in 1847, Bishop's dedication to her vocation mirrored the convictions of a society that perceived women as spiritually and morally superior and endowed with a special role as inculcators of virtue. Accordingly Bishop merged professional and womanly obligations in a classroom which contained bars of soap for scrubbing faces as well as texts for the essentials of grammar. She also followed a familiar pattern in enlarging her sphere of influence through religious and reform activities. Nearly a half century later, Maria Louise Sanford brought the same ideals to bear as an instructor at the University of Minnesota. For women, education necessarily involved training in morality as much as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and they were regarded as peculiarly fitted for the role of teacher.

Professions other than teaching also opened their doors to women during the nineteenth century. The rationale was generally the same, and the women involved tended to perceive their role as moral. Maud Hart Lovelace's career as writer provides one example. An author of children's fiction which found a large audience among girls, Lovelace idealized her own childhood in turn-of-the-century Mankato, Minnesota. Hers was a world filled with playfulness, innocence, and joy and peopled by young heroines with aspirations for a variety of careers. The series of stories, however, concluded with the ultimate happy ending, the marriage of the primary heroine and the implication that hers would probably be a career in domesticity. Catheryne Cooke Gilman's moralism was more obvious. A social worker who perceived the family as a linchpin of society and motherhood as a noble calling, Gilman's dedication to the realization of her convictions can be seen in activities ranging from a "Baby Health Improvement Contest" established to promote improved infant care in Minneapolis, to efforts aimed at regulation of the movie industry for the purpose of shielding the nation's children from supposedly objectionable films.

Some women found that society's perspective on woman's nature and role thwarted their aspirations and their desire for autonomy. For them at least, challenge rather than accommodation was characteris-

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tic. The nineteenth-century feminist and abolitionist Jane Grey Swisshelm who spent six years in Minnesota and published the *St. Cloud Visiter* while there rejected the notion that women were different in more than a biological sense and demanded that they be considered individuals with needs, desires, and talents as complex as their male counterparts. Eva McDonald Valesh and Anna Dickie Olesen would have benefitted had Swisshelm's perspective been dominant. Both dedicated to politics, Valesh as a Populist and Olesen as the first woman chosen by a major party to be a candidate for the U.S. Senate, were frustrated by the conventions associated with womanhood. Valesh, her political ambitions thwarted in the mid-1890s, left Minnesota to pursue a career as a journalist, while Olesen, defeated at the polls in 1922, remained a Democratic Party stalwart and received as her reward federal appointments including the postmistresship of Northfield, Minnesota. Needless to say, neither felt that their potential as individuals had been fulfilled.

The essays which tend to be narratives are directed toward a general audience as well as professional historians. The former will discover history that until recently has been ignored in both scholarship and classroom, while the latter will find essays that serve as an excellent point of departure for further explorations of women's experiences. Readers of this journal will find it particularly interesting to compare the experiences of women in Minnesota and Iowa.

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South Dakota: A History, by John R. Milton. New York: W. W. Norton, and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977. pp. xv, 200. Illustrations, maps, notes, suggestions for further reading, index. \$9.95.

One positive outgrowth of the nation's bicentennial was an increased interest in both state and regional histories. *South Dakota: A History* is a volume of the State and Nation series published under the direction of the American Association for State and Local History. The author, a professor of English and editor of several literary anthologies, has written a concise history of South Dakota utilizing the essay format. In an attempt to recreate the past and capture the

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