

with discrete episodes of extraordinary scenery. Exactly why and how the chromos were compelling images is harder to determine. If the portfolio was so important, why was it difficult to market? Were the chromos just victims of a developing attitude that devalued reproductions as worthy works of art, or was Moran's imagery losing its hold on a popular imagination? Perhaps there was another reason for the Yellowstone portfolio's lackluster sale and meager critical attention: Prang debuted the portfolio at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, where, Kinsey astutely points out, "immediately after the opening of the fair, news of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana turned all eyes westward" (188). While it is difficult to know how this news affected the reception of the portfolio's images, the verbal image of a western landscape soaked with the blood of General George Armstrong Custer and all his men likely gave new meaning to these chromolithographs of western landscapes. One possible consequence I see is that the brilliant colors of the Moran/Prang chromos (brashly compelling to our eyes) conveyed an optimism that was challenged by lurid reports of "American" deaths at the hands of Indians. While Kinsey focuses on the production of western imagery, she also sets up questions for future debate about the history of its consumption.

An American Colony: Regionalism and the Roots of Midwestern Culture, by Edward Watts. Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, University of Ohio Press, 2002. xxv, 328 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.

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Edward Watts's *An American Colony: Regionalism and the Roots of Midwestern Culture* presents a uniquely interdisciplinary treatment of the by now mythic midwestern inferiority complex. Drawing from post-colonial theory as set forth by Peter Hulme and others, Watts strongly posits, without insisting, a historical Midwest functioning as a de facto Third World entity – the *colony* of the book's title. Citing Hulme's claim that "a country can be both postcolonial and colonizing itself" (5), Watts examines the many ways the American heartland is, indeed, a colony of a colony. The colonizer is the "Yankee Nation" of New England and its defenders (Manasseh Cutler, James Fenimore Cooper, and their ilk); John Peter Altgeld, E. W. Howe, and especially Hamlin Garland represent the ambivalently colonized. In the book's introduction,

Iowa's Grant Wood is allowed to sound the latter-day battle cry on behalf of the colonized regionalists; his provocative claim, excerpted from "Revolt Against the City" ("the colonial spirit is, of course, basically an imitative spirit"), serves as the monograph's tone-setting epigraph.

Divided into 11 chapters spread over four numbered parts or sections, Watts traces the cultural history of the midlands from the Northwest Ordinance of the 1780s (a typo on page 11 transposes 1784 to 1874 in the book's sole illustration) to Hamlin Garland's restless turn-of-the-century narratives. As with Andrew Cayton and Susan Gray's *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (2001), Watts focuses on the Old Northwest states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin; Iowa earns not a single entry in the book's index, though the state is mentioned briefly in relation to Wood, Garland, and, most notably, Black Hawk (in a useful chapter devoted to the era's often paradoxical Native American biographies and autobiographies). Case studies highlight Ohio and antebellum Cincinnati, in particular, as emblematic of a "conflicted colonial center" suspended between cultural separatism and eastern wanna-be-ism. This concentration on sources and narratives drawn from the Ohio Valley may make *An American Colony* potentially disappointing for Iowa and Great Plains readers.

A winner of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature/Ohio University Press Book award, *An American Colony* benefits from multiple layers of peer review as well as the author's careful and eclectic research that culminates in more than 50 pages of notes and bibliography. Suitable for classroom adoption and library acquisition in support of curricula combining regional history and literature—such as the American Thought and Language program at Michigan State University, where Watts is a professor of English—the volume will find an eager interdisciplinary audience at colleges and universities; the density of the writing and theoretical terminology deployed may make it less appealing to amateur historians or regionalists.

The book, billed as a work of cultural history, will also frustrate purists entrenched in disciplinary camps. Historians are likely to criticize the book's scant use of archival sources and its primarily literary analysis of historic texts. Literary types, meanwhile, may want a closer, more theoretically informed reading of the motifs, themes, and implicit ideologies of the texts themselves. To his credit, a courageous Watts anticipates such criticisms throughout and faces them head-on in strategically deployed qualifying statements, though he stumbles somewhat in his introduction's all-important yet needlessly polysyllabic mission statement: "To reconstitute the vernacular heterogeneity of the Old Northwest—in opposition to the nationalist homogeneity

ascribed to it in so much American cultural history" (xxii). Despite the occasional wordy passage, Watts's writing is crisp.

Multiculturalists will appreciate Watts's insightful chapters on "natives, crossbloods, and settlers," though the region's African American legacy remains little explored. Women will be hard pressed to find examples of pre- or proto-feminist historical perspectives on the region, as among the handful of literary authors Watts examines in detail, only one, Caroline Kirkland (*A New Home, Who'll Follow?*), offers a woman's impressions. Moreover, Watts criticizes Kirkland's fiction because, despite its Michigan setting, "its universalizing sentimental nationalism drains the actual conditions she observes of their specificity, exposing the local only to lock it away in the past" (178). Watts makes amends for the dearth of period female voices by incorporating the voices of a number of contemporary female scholars, most notably Susan E. Gray and Susan-Mary Grant.

The continuity of Watts's treatment suffers somewhat from its piecemeal case-study methodology, but the book covers the principal literary-cultural players of the nineteenth century, with the exception of Twain, whose omission is explained in the book's introduction. Throughout, Watts demonstrates scholarly discipline, taking care to avoid historical overreach prompted by theoretical giddiness while also eschewing unsupportable claims about the contemporary Midwest. Watts allows himself just two moments of contemporary cultural criticism, the first in the book's introduction, where he asserts the relevance of nineteenth-century historical regionalism for a globalism-minded present, and the second in a concluding foray, where he cites the "lack of reciprocity . . . still present in interregional contacts" (220) via Garrison Keillor, *Cheers!* Woody Boyd, the Walsh family on *Beverly Hills 90210*, and Kevin Costner's *Field of Dreams*.

If a Grant Wood-style regionalism does indeed rise again along the Middle Border, Edward Watts's *An American Colony* will doubtless serve as a useful historical primer, an intriguing literary retrospective, and (never say never) a mobilization manual for an informed resistance.

The Rise of Jonas Olsen: A Norwegian Immigrant's Saga, by Johannes B. Wist, translated by Orm Øverland. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. xxxiv, 435 pp. Notes, bibliography. \$29.95 cloth.

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This novel of immigrant upward mobility was written in Decorah, Iowa, appeared serially in the Norwegian American newspaper, *De-*