

(some occasions involved multiple executions). Drawing on sources such as governors' correspondence on criminal matters (gubernatorial papers often include complete trial transcripts when those sentenced to death petitioned the governor), newspapers, and county histories, Haws interestingly charts the circumstances of the crimes that led to capital convictions, the efforts made at legal defense and appealing convictions, and the last moments of the condemned. A final, brief chapter describes abolition in 1965, noting that the Democratic wave in the previous year's election of Lyndon Johnson over Barry Goldwater offered Governor Harold Hughes (an ardent opponent of the death penalty) a decisive margin in the legislature for abolition.

The book merits a wide readership among those interested in the history of capital punishment and criminal justice in Iowa. It does have one weakness, however. Only the introduction bridges the individual case studies to offer a broader analysis of the history of the death penalty in Iowa; the introduction's comparison of legal executions over time is well considered and intriguing but invites a higher level of comparative analysis within the case studies of particular execution days. For instance, the introduction notes that 7 of the 46 men executed in Iowa were African Americans, including three men — Fred Allen, Robert Johnson, and Stanley Tramble — convicted of rape by a military court and hanged at Camp Dodge in 1918. All seven African Americans were convicted and executed between 1906 and 1925. Their case studies reveal rampant racism in press coverage and in prosecutorial tactics; analysis of broader regional and national trends in racialized criminal justice during the nadir of Jim Crow would have helped to fill out the picture here. Regardless of Haws's tendency to emphasize the particular detail over the larger pattern, lay and academic readers will find the book a valuable resource for understanding the historical contours of the death penalty in Iowa.

Women Writers of the American West, 1833–1927, by Nina Baym. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011. 384 pp. Bibliography, index. \$40.00 cloth.

Reviewer Annamaria Formichella Elsdon is professor of English at Buena Vista University. She is the author of *Roman Fever: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing* (2004).

As the title suggests, this book is a comprehensive review of women's writing about the American West. Baym chooses as her starting point the first western book she could find, published by Mary Austin Holley about Texas in 1833, and concludes with Willa Cather's *Death*

Comes for the Archbishop (1927). In all, Baym discusses almost 640 books by 343 writers. She divides the West into nine subregions — Texas/Oklahoma, the Pacific Northwest, northern California and Nevada, Utah, Colorado, the Great Plains, the High Plains, Southern California and Nevada, and the Southwest — devoting a chapter to each. Within these chapters she includes a range of genres, from poetry to textbook, and some diversity of cultural and racial background, although the majority of authors are Anglo. Additional chapters include one about “road books” and a compilation of author biographies. Baym’s approach is broadly historical: “I sacrifice depth for breadth, describing rather than analyzing. . . . I don’t engage much with literary criticism, partly because literary criticism is skewed toward a small number of already-known women” (2).

Baym’s project is to open up the widest possible view of what women wrote during the settlement of the West. Her discussion focuses on three main interests: (1) how women make lives for themselves in the West, (2) how the West itself is represented by writers, and (3) how each author represents herself. Covering some 640 books (with a paragraph or so on each) allows Baym to gesture toward these general topic areas without going into much depth, yet some fascinating themes do arise in this exhaustive literary tour. The women writers come across as bold adventurers, and they depict a nation undaunted by the journey — frequently treacherous — toward a better life. The time frame interestingly parallels the transition from the True Woman of the nineteenth century to the New Woman of the twentieth, and the western texts Baym discusses offer glimpses of that cultural shift. The idea of the West develops from a geographical definition into a more thematic and ideological significance, with such concepts as athletic prowess, health, freedom, and open space dominating the discourse.

Although Baym’s definition of the West excludes Iowa geographically, Iowa readers might be interested in how the ideology of the West informs their own cultural history. Certainly notions of freedom from urban stresses and profound connection to the land will resonate with many midwesterners. Baym’s reflections on Nebraska — which she does include in her chapter on the Great Plains — will likely be of interest to Iowans, as it is a bordering state.

Women Writers of the American West offers readers a unique view of a region typically associated with male writers and masculinist ideology. It offers a much-needed corrective to the idea that the American West was solely the domain of cowboys and scoundrels. As Baym ably illustrates, independent women sought the freedom of the West, settled new frontiers, and wrote memorable books about the experience.