

after World War II. Her examination of the rise of the feedlot beef industry is also generally well done. However, her explanation of how the older packers, such as Swift and Armour, “were wedded to union workers who resisted innovations that eliminated jobs, whether plant layout, processes, or machinery” (165) and only tried to adapt by moving their plants out of Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s is woefully lacking. Her criticism of contemporary consumers’ meat concerns as “hopelessly utopian” (251) is unnecessarily contentious since she does not acknowledge the widespread environmental consciousness that has made Americans rightfully concerned about safe meat.

Unfortunately, Ogle’s quirky heroification of the rise of low-cost meat detracts from what is in many respects a well-researched book that draws upon a fine array of primary and secondary sources. A cautionary note to scholarly readers: while the book includes many content notes, the use of general page references instead of specific citations is frustrating and often left this reader wondering about her sources.

The Red Man’s Bones: George Catlin, Artist and Showman, by Benita Eisler. New York: W. W. Norton, 2013. vii, 468 pp. Illustrations, bibliographic references, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Kate Elliott is assistant professor of art history at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. Her research considers the representation of Native Americans in western American art.

Benita Eisler’s new biography of George Catlin, *The Red Man’s Bones*, attempts to do what no other scholar has tried—to offer a full examination of the life, historical context, and problematic motivations of the nineteenth-century American painter and showman George Catlin. Catlin devoted himself to depicting American Indians at a critical point in our nation’s history. During the 1830s, as President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy took effect, Catlin traveled past the frontier to document in ethnographic detail the appearance and lifeways of native people in America. In the end he amassed more than 600 portraits that were later exhibited up and down the eastern seaboard (and later Europe), with accompanying lectures by the artist. Catlin worked throughout his life to sell the collection to the federal government, but was unsuccessful. Finally, after his death in 1872, the original collection was given to the Smithsonian Institution. A portion of the extensive collection hangs today in the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C.

Catlin’s complex and often contradictory biography has made him a controversial figure in American art circles in recent decades, prompt-

ing Eisler to write that Catlin “remains to this day a contentious figure: artist and huckster, celebrity and outlaw, Indian advocate and exploiter, hero and pariah” (8). In the end, Eisler does little to settle the controversy. Instead, she gleefully adds fuel to the romantic fire.

The issue with Catlin is not that we have little on which to base our analysis but rather that we have so much. He has left behind more than a thousand painted works, countless letters, and numerous published manuscripts. Eisler has combed through archives, talked with Catlin experts around the globe, and poured through the artist’s published writings. Her research is to be commended as it allows her to piece together the events of Catlin’s life, events that the artist himself was often guilty of occluding in his own writings as he published sometimes confused and often contradictory accounts of his travels.

Eisler heroically tries to make sense of the self-inflicted confusion. At times she does this well, probing Catlin’s strange relationships with his father, Putnam, and his long-suffering wife, Clara. We also discover more about the shadowy character of Joe Chadwick, whom Catlin mentions repeatedly in his published letters, and also about Catlin’s relationship to other notable American painters, such as John Nagel and Asher Durand. Of particular interest is her attention to the last years of Catlin’s life, a period that few have examined in any comprehensive way.

The question is, however, where this new information comes from. With few footnotes and fewer references, scholars are left unsure of her exact sources. Of course, this is not out of character with the genre, but it is troubling as it is often unclear what Eisler is pulling from her sources and what is pure speculation. No potentially titillating detail is left unmentioned. For instance, as she introduces Joe Chadwick, she speaks of their immediate attraction, built from similar family circumstances but also from the fact that Joe “burst into George’s life a reincarnation” of his brother, Julius (101). Later she refers to Chadwick as Catlin’s “protégé, friend, brother, caretaker, and, probably, lover” (191). Where that characterization comes from, we aren’t told.

Thus unencumbered, Eisler is free to weave an incredible tale of adventure and inspiration, of fortune and folly. Readers are rewarded with a fun, raucous read that is fitting to a man whose adult life was spent creating spectacle after spectacle. Her breathless writing style, though, is better suited to recounting the details of Catlin’s life than to discussing his art work.

In the end, *The Red Man’s Bones* might not be for everyone. Those looking for in-depth art historical or even ethnographic discussion of Catlin’s life’s work had best look elsewhere. Those unwilling or unable to suspend scholarly disbelief will find the text frustrating if not irre-

sponsible. But for those looking to immerse themselves in the complex and romantic history of the American frontier, told through the experiences of one of its most colorful characters, this may be an ideal read.

Sight Unseen: How Frémont's First Expedition Changed the American Landscape, by Andrew Menard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. xxix, 249 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Vernon L. Volpe is professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He is working on a biography of John Frémont.

John C. Frémont's report of his first expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1842 once attracted substantial scholarly attention, partly because of its obvious literary attributes. Now Andrew Menard's impressive analysis should help Frémont's report reclaim its place in the literature of American westward expansion. Indeed, Menard seeks to position Frémont's "best-selling" government report within the gallery of great works of artistic impressions of the western American landscape. The author's erudition is truly remarkable; beyond the usual notice of the works of Thomas Jefferson (and his agents Lewis and Clark), the Hudson River School, James Fenimore Cooper, and Washington Irving, allusions (or significant digressions) are made to the ideas of Pascal, Emerson, Montesquieu, Condorcet, Bacon, Malthus, and others too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say that Frémont's work is subjected to a thorough literary and intellectual examination.

Clearly, Frémont's exploits provided something intriguing, if not inspirational, for westward-looking Americans. Suggesting that the report made America's "longitude" as enticing as its "latitude," Menard attempts to pinpoint Frémont's influence by contrasting it with the traditional "bleak" or "dreary" images crafted by the reports of Zebulon Pike and Stephen Long. Scholars have long known that Frémont "painted" a more pleasing portrait of the western prairies and ranges, helping make the western "landscape" itself an object of desire. (Other factors naturally contributed, including the work of western expansionists in Washington, led by Frémont's father-in-law, Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri—not to mention an expanding population and dynamic market economy.) Menard extends this analysis by skillfully placing Frémont's observations within the context of numerous historical, scientific, and literary trends and genres.

Fittingly enough, the heart of Menard's approach focuses on Frémont's seemingly quixotic quest to climb what he (mistakenly) took to be the "loftiest peak" of the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming's