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All of those concerned with the environmental problems that continue to confront our society will find Petulla's book a provocative discussion of the difficulties of establishing a coherent ideological base for environmental sanity. But the historian whose academic concern is with the past and not with the future will find American Environmentalism less than satisfying.

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**Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience.** By GLENDA RILEY.

In a lecture at Stetson University in 1959, historian David Potter questioned whether Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis was applicable to American women and raised a challenge for future scholars. "Attention to the historic character of American women," he said, "is important not only as a speciality for female scholars or for men who happen to take an interest in feminism, but as a coordinate major part of the overall, comprehensive study of the American character as a whole." Within the last five years a spate of articles and books on frontier women have appeared, marking a renewed interest in the issues raised by Potter. Were there economic opportunities for women on the frontier, and did this encourage a movement toward political equality? What special qualities did the frontier experience produce in women?

Focusing on the frontierswomen in Iowa between 1830 and 1870, Glenda Riley's new book makes a Turnerian argument. The women on the Iowa frontier adjusted their lifestyles, standards, and expectations to meet new circumstances, and with "patience, persistence, . . . optimism," and "resourcefulness" (pp. 38, 41), carved out a better life for themselves and their families in the West. Women's economic partnership with men in this task rendered them men's equals, and this led to improved educational opportunities for women, "revised concepts of economic importance," diversified occupational choices, and increased demands for political equality (pp. 74, 136–137, 152).

Though there is a clear Turnerian bent to her book, Riley's explicit goal was not to refute or support Turner, but to challenge the stereotyped image of frontierswomen. In the context of her writing, it becomes clear that the stereotype which she is most anxious to dispel is that of the overworked and discontented frontierswoman featured in Hamlin Garland's novels and given credence in recent studies by Julie Jeffreys and John Faragher. This scholarship stresses the conservatism of western women, that is, their reluctance to depart from the mandates of the "cult of domesticity." Tension and discontent resulted from the conflict between their ideals of womanhood imported from the East and the demands of the pioneer experience, which required women to do tasks outside their proper sphere.
Glenda Riley summons a number of arguments to deny that Iowa frontierswomen suffered emotional strain or conflict in migrating and settling, emphasizing instead these women's sense of challenge, capability, and faith in the promise of eventual economic and social improvement. In her final chapter she even challenges the notion that frontierswomen were debilitatingly lonely. Riley's argument is plausible. She correctly discards the fallacy of assuming that the "cult of domesticity" was normative for all pioneer women. Yet she tends to make equivocal judgments about the manifestations of Eastern ideals of femininity in the West due to her somewhat narrow interpretation of domesticity. Riley's most telling criticism--the one that goes to the heart of the issue--is her observation that frontierswomen did not verbalize that they felt tension over their inability to live up to the prescriptions of "true womanhood." In the rather limited number of primary documents written by pioneer women, one rarely finds information of an intimate nature. This leaves the entire issue of discontent unresolved.

Riley has made a significant contribution to scholarship in locating the rare documents left by Iowa's frontierswomen and attempting to write their history from their own perspective. Her best evidence comes from census data and letters and memoirs of middle and upper class women living in Iowa's towns during the mid-nineteenth century: suffragettes, women in voluntary associations during the Civil War, and other "strong-minded women." Her book is enhanced by the incorporation of a chapter on black and immigrant women. Foreign-born Iowans comprised twelve percent of the population in 1850 and twenty percent in 1870.

The book's weaknesses do not outweigh the contributions it makes to the literature on western women, but the author falls short of attaining her primary objective. Many will find her practice of making general statements based on a few examples unpersuasive. In one case, she reviews the experiences of two individuals and concludes that women "readily and happily accepted their many and varied moves" (p. 39). More critically, she does not appear to see the inconsistency of using evidence drawn primarily from women in a more urban sector to discredit a stereotype about rural women. Iowan women living in towns in the mid-nineteenth century may well have been content and optimistic, but Hamlin Garland's farm wives of the upper Midwest during the Populist era had ample reason to despair of ever having a life free from unremitting toil and debt. The irony of Frontierswomen is that as Riley strenuously attempts to debunk the stereotype of the "unhappy and overburdened" pioneer woman, she inadvertently reaffirms the "saint in the sunbonnet" stereotype. As the author herself points out, "stereotypes are elusive[,] amorphous concepts--difficult to dissect and even more troublesome to dispel" (p. 171).

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