Review
Reviewed Work(s): The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography by Steven J. Holmes
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markable virtues of this book, however. The sections on hide hunters, industrial markets, and preservationist efforts in the last third of the nineteenth century are particularly strong and offer many new insights. The real beauty of Isenberg's scholarship lies in his ability to illuminate the differences between native and non-Indian societies and to find the consistent parallels that shaped all peoples on the Great Plains in the nineteenth century. In the process, Isenberg integrates complex social, economic, and ecological analysis and brings new understanding and relevance to an important subject.

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The Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. By Virginia McConnell Simmons. (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 2000. xxii, 323 pp. $29.95, ISBN 0-87081-571-7.)

Covering the history of all eleven Ute bands, Virginia McConnell Simmons presents a comprehensive account of recorded events involving Utes from 1598 through 1923. Chapters 1 and 2 sketch the archaeologically known prehistory of the Utes and their territory as well as the geography and the linguistic and cultural affiliations of the Utes with other Native Americans. A concluding chapter, "Today's Ute Indians," sketches changes and the eventual stabilization of life on the three Ute reservations between 1918 and 1934. The book's comprehensiveness brings a number of situations and events into the narrative that are little known; for example, the brief residence of several hundred Utes as prisoners of war at forts in South Dakota. An index makes the book user-friendly as a reference; a center photo section of twelve pictures adds visual interest.

Ouray and his wife Chipeta, who outlived him by more than thirty years, emerge as heroes, but generally there is little effort either to analyze causes or to assign blame for any particular situation or set of events. No one is demonized; no one is lionized. The book's even-handedness and comprehensiveness are at the same time its strongest and its weakest points. The narrative treats all events with equanimity. There is no watershed event, no decisive confrontation, no identifiable process that gives the reader either a focus or a standpoint for pondering just how the Utes have dealt with all the historical changes of the past few centuries. Very few Ute voices are heard throughout the narrative—Chipeta being the exception. Utes primarily reacted to history rather than being part of it. Aside from a few military actions, did Utes play any role in constructing either their history or their future?

The book's approach to history places the onus on the reader to look further for what the important events and processes were that made the Utes who and what they are today. For example, Frances Swadesh attributes some of the dynamics of reservation life and interaction between Utes and United States government personnel to the role that Hispanics in the northern New Mexico–southern Colorado area played in the volatile days of the early allotment period (1895–1915). Unfortunately, this role barely merits more than a paragraph from Simmons, who did not consult Dr. Swadesh's thesis ("The Southern Utes and Their Neighbors, 1877–1926," 1962). Likewise, Katherine M. B. Osburn's *Southern Ute Women* (1998) presents some Ute cultural values and gender relationships that Simmons could have used to situate Chipeta's continuing influence.

The end result of reading Simmons's narrative of this happened and then that happened is a blurred focus on just how history results in change. Yet her use of archival sources as well as published works on all eleven Ute bands makes this book undeniably the most complete history of the Utes ever written. It certainly fills a gap in the histories of Native American groups.

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The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography. By Steven J. Holmes. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. xvi, 309 pp. Cloth, $55.00, ISBN 0-299-16150-1. Paper, $22.95, ISBN 0-299-16154-4.)

Decades after his death, John Muir remains

American environmentalism's patron saint; interpretations exist aplenty, though several have a hagiographical air about them. Not so Steven J. Holmes's intensive reading of Muir's intellectual and emotional development. Maintaining an appropriate blend of respect and critical insight, Holmes investigates the young John Muir. Yet he does so to lay the foundations for understanding Muir's life as a whole. Holmes takes issue with much of Muir scholarship, using close textual analysis, but Holmes matches evidence with imagination and a sense of social and cultural contexts.

The main thesis of this self-styled environmental biography depicts Muir as the product of key life experiences. Using the psychoanalytical formulations of object relations theory, Holmes argues that Muir did not come to his wilderness appreciation and eventual relationship with Yosemite through a sudden romantic conversion. Rather, Muir constructed his concept of wilderness from his psychological development. Especially important were "enduring erotic relationships with certain natural beings and phenomena." Those relationships drew upon "energies and images of his relationships with important women" that "were ultimately nonsexual in character." Muir projected those life experiences onto the natural world, using familiar religious and domestic imagery.

Muir's Scottish background is perceptively treated as an aesthetic through which his American experience is assimilated; then follow sketches of his time in Wisconsin, as a student of Professor Ezra Carr. By 1865, Muir had entered an intellectual mentoring process forged in an erotic and intense but mostly correspondence-based relationship with Jeanne Carr, the professor's wife. Holmes rightly draws attention to the impact on Muir of this older woman (later influential in Californian environmentalism herself), and his interpretation could encourage more perceptive analyses of gender's role in environmental perceptions than is now readily available in American scholarship. The visits to western Canada in 1864, to Indiana, and then to the South in 1867–1868 are detailed, and the study ends with Muir's removal to California and his encounters with the natural wonders of Yosemite, 1868–1872.

Above all, Holmes offers a persuasive critique of the privileging of wilderness in much American thinking about the West and particularly about Muir. Holmes's departure properly rejects a dichotomy between wilderness and civilization. Muir did not construct that division until later in life and "never did really *live* it." Here the argument provides timely support for William Cronon's plea against wilderness fetishism.

This book is anything but conventional, from its prefatory invocation of the singers Bruce Cockburn and Jackson Browne to its impassioned concluding pleas for an environmental sensibility that involves "actual human lives-in-nature." Though some may be annoyed with his occasionally distracting textual exegesis and sermonizing, Holmes breaks new ground. Whether his category of environmental biography is useful is harder to judge. To construct generalizations and avoid the perhaps circular conclusion that each individual's response to the world is different because each individual is different, environmental biography must be linked to collective biography and group perceptions of the natural world. Yet Holmes's work provides valuable evidence and probing analysis for such a collective project.

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George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation. By David Lowenthal. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000. xxvi, 605 pp. $40.00, ISBN 0-295-97942-9.)

This book easily surpasses its previous avatar, David Lowenthal's *George Perkins Marsh: Versatile Vermonter* (1958), hitherto the standard life of the author of the seminal early conservationist summa, *Man and Nature* (first edition 1864). This new biography is a more compendious work of research, more boldly interpretative, more zealously resourceful in pressing the case for Marsh as a prophet of environmental reform.

Marsh (1801–1882) was a polymath and polyglot who retained close ties to his native Vermont despite living most of his adult life