

relationship between region and nation. Furthermore, this study often works through making powerful contrasts at the levels of race and gender, but it might have also been illuminating to compare depictions of adoption in New England with those of the U.S. South or even Southwest. Plantation romances such as Caroline Lee Hentz's *Linda; or the Young Pilot of the Belle Creole* (1848), for example, often featured adoptive family formations and contested guardianships, and a consideration of this body of work would potentially demonstrate how questions of adoption differed from region to region, with resulting implications for national norms. Of course, it is a testament to Singley's framework that we can even posit these connections between Hentz and other writers, and one of her many distinctive contributions here is to provide a model for the ways in which a nuanced appreciation of adoptive family formation allows scholars to re-read the contours of American literature and culture. Singley outlines the various ideological roles of adoption stories: they curb the excesses of individualism; they conserve and reaffirm specific social categories and norms; they are at times radical in their desire for mobility and change but also portray this change in socially acceptable ways; and they reflect specific gender roles or racial realities that determine life chances. The meanings of adoption here are shown to be varied and contentious but always of tremendous social and national concern.

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*Women Writers of the American West, 1833–1927*. By Nina Baym. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. Pp. x, 372. \$40.00.)

In *Women Writers of the American West, 1833–1927*, Nina Baym has produced an invaluable resource for scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From a vast and varied archive ranging from scholarly essays and monographs to booksellers' catalogs and publishers' book advertisements, Baym has found nearly forty American women who published books about the West from 1833 to 1927. Some are canonical, such as Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, which serves as the endpoint for Baym's study. The vast majority of writers, however, have received little to no scholarly

attention. Among them are Margaret Hill McCarter, who produced over a dozen books about Kansas, and Delilah Beasley, an African American from Cincinnati who moved to Oakland in 1910 and wrote *Negro Trail Blazers of California* (1919).

Although Baym's title suggests that the book is framed chronologically, its narrative structure combines time and place by arranging the chapters according to region, beginning with Texas, not only the first western region settled by Anglos but also the place where women's western books began, with Mary Austin Holley's *Notes on Texas* (1833, 1836). This emphasis on region is significant. In contrast to Baym's first survey of U.S. women's literature, her groundbreaking *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870* (1978), a book that is organized according to author, this most recent work focuses on the writers' relations to distinct western places like Utah and Colorado and includes chapters on the Pacific Northwest and Southern California. This structure underscores a point that Baym makes at the start: "There might be an overarching and abstract concept of the West, but on the ground there were many different Wests" (p. 3). We learn, for instance, that Indians are an obsessive feature of Anglo-American women's writing from Oklahoma and that late-nineteenth-century Colorado was marketed as a vacation spot for weary, affluent easterners in need of rejuvenation. We see that though the Southwest was considered to be the most lawless region of the country, it takes on a more varied cast through the eyes of its women writers and their books, which feature, for example, automobile tours of the nascent artist colonies in New Mexico and early anthropological studies of the Zuni.

The regional framework also allows Baym to cover a wide range of writers, themes, and genres, including romance, local color sketches, and realist fiction as well as pioneer memoirs, dime novels, travel narratives, and "myths and legends" of Native Americans and of the Chinese. There are also poets, such as the Mormon Emmeline B. Wells, who wrote passionately in defense of polygamy while also identifying Mormons as Puritans in principle and by descent. Two sisters, Emma and Alice Wolf, published novels about San Francisco's Jewish community, an important antidote to Frank Norris's portrayal of San Francisco Jewishness. I was especially struck by the extensive presence of nonfiction writing, most notably comprehensive surveys of state histories or historical events such as Luella Shaw's *True History of Some of the Pioneers of Colorado* (1909) and Helen Elliott Bandini's 1908 textbook on the history of California.

Baym begins her final chapter by noting that “most women’s western books were about the place, not getting to it” (p. 246). By structuring her book around region, Baym realizes the goal for western literary history that historian Patricia Limerick established a number of years ago for western U.S. history, namely to “conceive of the West as a place and not a process.”

Furthermore, *Women Writers of the American West* works to de-center not only the iconic cowboy of Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1902) but also the well-known women writers of the West, most notably Helen Hunt Jackson and Willa Cather, an effort that further distinguishes this book from *Woman’s Fiction*. Included but not dominant, Jackson and Cather’s texts are discussed alongside those of their lesser-known contemporaries, including minority writers. Baym acknowledges that non-Anglo women wrote only 6 percent of the books she compiled. Though writers now considered canonical—Gertrude Bonnin (better known by the pen name Zitkala-Sa), Edith Maud Eaton (Sui Sin Far), and María Ruiz Amparo de Burton—have a place here, what is especially valuable is the space given to figures such as Adina de Zavala, who worked to preserve Texas historical monuments such as the Alamo and was the granddaughter of Lorenzo de Zavala, the first vice-president of the Republic of Texas. She also draws attention to Maud Cuney-Hare and Emma J. Ray, African American writers who made Manifest Destiny more racially inclusive by validating black citizenship.

There are, however, certain shortcomings with the regional model. One limitation is that it occludes works by western women that are set primarily in the eastern United States. One such novel is María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872), which begins in the Southwest but quickly moves to New England during the Civil War. Furthermore, the regional emphasis tends to highlight exteriority, both in terms of landscape description and crosscultural encounters. What about the interior world of western women? How does this literature capture interiority in terms of western domesticity as well as at the more personal psychic dimension, which includes self-consciousness, reflection, and yearning, qualities that are central in Cather’s characterizations of her western subjects?

With that said, the strength of Baym’s book is in its archival scope and its conceptual humility. She states at the start that this is not a work of literary criticism. “Covering so much material, I sacrifice depth for breadth, describing rather than analyzing.” Her objective is to open up a subject rather than to master it. This book is a feminist

recovery project, an archival offering to future generations of scholars as a source to “mine” (an apt trope for the subject matter) and to analyze. For that enormous task, nineteenth-century scholars ought to be very grateful.

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