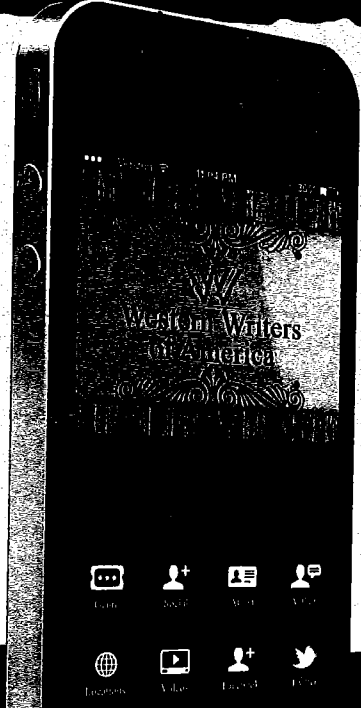




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ranchers or anyone involved in agricultural production will enjoy this look into their history.

Ultimately, this book will appeal to a wide audience and dovetails nicely with Elofson's other work, all of which is worth reading.

Matthew Todd

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon

✓ **Epiphany in the Wilderness**

HUNTING, NATURE, AND PERFORMANCE IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WEST

Karen R. Jones

University Press of Colorado, Boulder, 2015. \$55.00 cloth.

One only has to look at an iconic 1885 photograph of Theodore Roosevelt to be convinced that historian Karen R. Jones has it right. Roosevelt, decked out in the buckskin-fringed garb of a Badlands hunter, sports a Tiffany-handled knife and hunting rifle against the

backdrop of a western scene—all captured in a New York photographer's studio. This carefully staged image exemplifies the impressively wide and varied range of hunting performances that Jones has amassed in her detailed analysis of the nineteenth-century West. Hunting as a cultural performance, she argues in *Epiphany in the Wilderness*, “became a critical device through which frontier experience in the trans-Mississippi was constructed, maintained, and memorialized” (p. 4). Taken together, these performances depicted the West as a “hunter’s paradise”—an imaginative landscape that produced epiphanies about individual, regional, and national identities.

Jones divides her study into three “acts.” The first concerns itself with the actors on the western hunting stage: masculine hunter-heroes, frontier gunslingers, lady sharpshooters, and wild women. In the second and strongest section of the book, Jones turns to the “afterlife of the hunt” dramatized in hunting stories of the Wild West, animal trophies, and wildlife photographs. The final act brings down the curtain on the “hunter’s paradise” at the nineteenth century’s end, as repentant sportsmen-hunters, troubled by dwindling wildlife populations and disappearing wild lands,

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took on new roles as conservationists. Throughout, Jones argues that hunting, in all its assorted expressions, was central to the creation and dissemination of a national mythology that was thoroughly western in form.

Epiphany in the Wilderness is particularly notable for its comprehensive perspective on hunting and hunters. Rather than presenting one-dimensional portraits of familiar figures such as the Turnerian-inspired frontiersman subsistence hunter, the rapacious hide hunter killing for the market, and the overcivilized, elite sportsman in pursuit of authentically masculine experiences, Jones stresses the complex ways in which hunting played out across the West. She gives female hunters more than bit parts in her story, crediting the performances of "hunter heroines" and "lady adventurers," including Calamity Jane, homesteader Elinore Pruitt Stewart, and author Grace Gallatin Seton Thompson, with "an alternative reading of frontier experience" (p. 205). Jones also extends hunters' performances beyond the field and into the parlors, theaters, and museums where the hunt was re-created and remembered. As a result, *Epiphany in the Wilderness* offers not a unitary reading of hunting,

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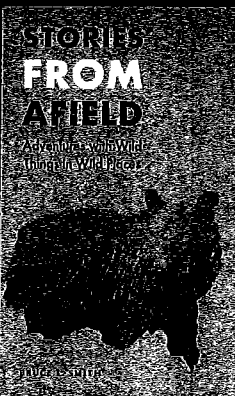
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but rather a multi-layered interpretation of the many hunting acts and reenactments that shaped the cultural ecology of the West.

While in many ways a strength of the book, Jones's synthetic approach occasionally obscures her main argumentative trail. It is not always clear what was specifically western about the hunter-hero, the lady sportsman, and the trophy hunter. They were stock characters in the hunting landscapes of other places and times as well. Nevertheless, *Epiphany in the Wilderness* makes a compelling case for hunting's significance and thus stands as an original contribution to the cultural and environmental history of the West.

Andrea Smalley

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb

Horsehair Bridles

A UNIQUE AMERICAN FOLK ART

Ned and Jody Martin

Hawk Hill Press, Nicasio, California, 2016. \$65.00 cloth.

Horsehair bridles are works of art in their own right. For over a century, men with an eye for color and design (and time on their hands) have twisted, dyed, and knotted long strands of horsehair into bridles, reins, belts, and canes. The story of hitching is as fascinating as the hitched items themselves. There are Montana artists who have achieved fame beyond the boundaries of the state and whose work is sought after by knowledgeable collectors around the world. Among them are inmates of the state prison at Deer Lodge.

That this is not mere hyperbole is made clear in Ned and Jody Martin's *Horsehair Bridles: A Unique American Folk Art*, which details the history of hitched work at several western prisons. This book is the third and last volume of an epic undertaking, *Bridles of the Americas*, which began with the 2010 publication of *Indian Silver*, coauthored with the Martins by scholar and silversmith Robert Bauver. The second volume, *Horses and Bridles of the American Indians*, puts the craft into context with the Native cultures that turned a utilitarian item into an art form. Maps illustrate the spread of the horse in North America from 1494 to 1800. Historical photos and text detailing how the tribes were affected by the arrival of the horse show the same scholarly rigor as the volume on hitched work.



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