

exceptional roads of the Early American Republic, serving as the spine of the most dynamic region of the American West,” overreaches the evidence, which primarily documents the role of Maysville Road as a local route connecting a “Village West” rather than as a migration highway (p. 2). Nevertheless, scholars of the trans-Appalachian west in the early republic will find much useful information in this microhistory of social change in a region where revivalism, patriotism,

and entrepreneurial ambition helped to define a new American identity. Friend’s narrative writing style will also appeal to a broader public audience interested in the history of Kentucky and western migration.

LISA C. TOLBERT is associate professor of American history at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and author of *Constructing Townscapes: Space and Society in Antebellum Tennessee* (1999).



Confronting Race

Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1815-1915

By Glenda Riley

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 326. Illustrations, notes, index. Clothbound, \$39.95; paperbound, \$21.95.)

Glenda Riley, Alexander M. Bracken professor emeritus of history at Ball State University, has contributed substantially to the field of women’s history throughout her remarkably productive career. Historically speaking, she is largely responsible for putting midwestern women on the map. In *Confronting Race*, Riley examines white-Indian relations and the racial prejudices of nineteenth-century, trans-Mississippi migrating women, many of whom had midwestern roots. She contends that, as a result of proscribed gender roles, white women interacted with American Indians and demonstrated changing attitudes toward them in ways that white men did not. Even so, she concludes, white women remained “solidly colonialist”

in their opinions about other groups (p. 2). Riley’s analysis is based primarily upon a range of women’s private writings including diaries, journals, and daybooks, along with a number of public accounts, records, and cultural sources such as novels. This study speaks to the need to investigate the role of gender in the legacies of white expansionism in the West.

Confronting Race is a revised version of a 1984 publication into which Riley has integrated newer findings and at least one major theoretical argument to engage in the larger conversation about race and colonialism. Western frontiers are identified as geographical zones wherein groups of people met and where one group

intended to subdue another. Frontiers also include "procedures" and phases that, Riley contends, infused the drama of westward migration: frontier philosophy, the process of relocation and imposition, and geographical place and colonialism (p. 7). She also examines their consequences. The groundwork is laid in the first two chapters, which examine nineteenth-century American and European discourses on the constitution of white womanhood and on the American Indian as an "other." As it pertained to white women, the frontier experience involved encounters with Indians and a subsequent shifting of their views from vilification to humane understanding. Riley contends, however, that in their relationship with non-Indian "others" (such as Mexicans, Asians, and African Americans), white women proved unable to moderate their "race-based consciousness" (p. 223).

On one level, this is a difficult book to review. Weaknesses in the author's style and contentions periodically threaten to undermine the strength of her basic argument. Riley tends to universalize her characterizations and to make assumptions about matters of the mind that she cannot possibly know for certain. To cite one of many examples, she notes that "[t]eachings about women's moral authority, white superiority, Manifest Destiny, and European-style colonialism were so deeply entrenched, they remained always at

the back of women's minds" (p. 96). One expects to find such contentions followed by corroborating contemporary remarks; but in this case none are offered. One also wonders how "deeply entrenched" Manifest Destiny and colonialism actually were in the minds of westering white women. For that matter, neither of these could be the real driving forces that "propelled" them westward, as Riley claims (p. 7). Personal economics and aspirations, rather than popular ideology, were the most likely immediate factors. Throughout this study, Riley employs a pattern of overstatement and universalization without illustrating, strengthening, or proving her contentions.

Concerns aside, *Confronting Race* is significant for its gendered analysis of westward expansion, with its implications for our understanding of white women's role in the legacies of migration and frontier development. The book also offers an important link between midwestern women and westward migration, one of the most important events of the nineteenth century.

GINETTE ALEY is assistant professor of history at the University of Southern Indiana. Her dissertation on early Indiana, "Westward Expansion, John Tipton, and the Emergence of the American Midwest, 1800-1839," is currently under review at Indiana University Press.