

expected them to. Missionaries and even government officials would later impose a legal system that seemed more humane and less bloody but that in fact constituted a much more ambitious program of colonization.

Reid's greatest service in *Patterns of Vengeance* is to challenge historians' conflation of "law" with "European." He repeatedly illustrates that Native peoples had well-established and consistently applied procedures for treating homicides and that behavior whites considered innocuous—such as traveling or trading freely—could deeply offend and injure them.

Despite or because of its shortcomings, *Patterns of Vengeance* rewards readers by offering suggestive insights into the contested cultural, social, and political interactions of the fur trade.

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DAVID PETERSON DEL MAR

Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri. By Dick Steward. (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2000. ix + 286 pp. \$29.95)

Dick Steward writes that "Missouri, with its brusque amalgam of southern and western heritages," provides an excellent case study of the origins of violence that "stalks the American landscape and haunts the minds of our people" (p. 1). *Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri* explores dueling during Missouri's antebellum years. Steward's themes are the class ramifications of dueling and its role in upward social mobility, the chivalric qualities and folkloric status often ascribed to duelists, the unique aspects of dueling as practiced in an Old Southwestern milieu, and the ubiquitous American violence that Steward believes Missouri dueling symbolized.

"This book will disclose the violent paths taken by many of the state's prominent and not so prominent citizens to achieve their goals" (p. 3). Prominent duelists include Senator Thomas Hart Benton, Charles Lucas, Thomas Biddle, and John Smith T. (the latter is of particular interest to Steward, who has written his biography). Much of the action takes place on jurisdictionless Southwestern river "dueling islands." Having thoroughly combed an impressive array of primary and secondary sources (including over one hundred firsthand accounts of duels), Steward ably describes the causes, conduct, and ramifications of *code duello* in the Old Southwest. Yet, ultimately, "the duelist became an anachronism" (p. 209), Steward concludes. He was replaced after the Civil War by the less formal Western "shootist" of Missouri's borderlands.

Interestingly, this book further documents one side of a debate that has arisen since its publication. Steward narrates and footnotes references to hundreds of “firearms” that he states were “commonplace among the pioneers” of Missouri (p. 4). This documented conclusion counters the thesis recently presented (with much fanfare) by Michael Bellesiles. Bellesiles and other gun control advocate-historians contend that the notion of widespread antebellum gun ownership is an American “myth.” This history of Missouri duelists and gunmen proves that widespread gun ownership in that state was no “myth.”

Duels and the Roots of Violence in Missouri will achieve the author’s aim of providing one of the “building blocks of historical generalizations” (p. 1). While its sharp focus and academic prose make it inappropriate for public or undergraduate libraries, it belongs in graduate and regional library collections and on the bookshelves of all serious scholars in the field.

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American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture. By Brian Roberts. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000. xii + 328 pp. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper)

The California gold rush was central not only to the history of California but to American middle-class formation, argues Brian Roberts in this interesting new cultural history. “At its most basic level . . . the gold rush was a rebellion against certain middle-class values; this revolt, in turn was largely carried out by middle-class individuals” (p. 5). Occurring at the same time as the consolidation of the market revolution, the 1849 rush both revealed and changed the ways American middle-class men attempted to define themselves in a changing economy and society.

Focusing on the Northeast, Roberts explains that one of the most striking features of the gold rush was its status as a literary event. As any historian who has studied the event knows, the miners left behind a torrent of diaries, letters, and reminiscences. The discovery of gold in California forced middle-class men to confront profound questions of what it meant to be middle-class—how could they fiercely seek individual wealth and still remain respectable? For those middle-class men trapped by the strictures of bourgeois decorum, the rush seemed to offer a way out of their former existence, to begin life anew.

But, Roberts argues, it was impossible to get truly away. Once