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## Review of *Hope and Dread in Montana Literature* By Ken Egan Jr.

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*Hope and Dread in Montana Literature*. By Ken Egan Jr. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003. xxi + 207 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.

While the title of this perceptive study of hope and dread in Montana literature might seem to limit his audience, Ken Egan takes care to point out that the boom-and-bust cycle so well known to his fellow Montanans and so well documented by many of the state's authors is a familiar pattern throughout the Great Plains states whose economies and lifestyles have also depended on extractive industries and agricultural pursuits.

Egan makes this clear in his discussion of Joseph Kinsey Howard's *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome* (1943). Howard's book of essays, Egan says, recapitulates the trends that *Hope and Dread* documents: "waves of dreams that come to naught on the high plains and in the mountains; betrayal by word and deed of native peoples and later immigrants; a surliness toward each other that takes root in this deprived soil." The Great Plains, portions of which some think should now be turned into a buffalo commons, shares both a past and a future, and a careful reading of Egan's study of the lessons learned through both historical and literary accounts of who we are, what we have done, and where we can go from here may help us map out a more successful future. Especially since Egan, despite his recognition of *dread*, is still able to offer personal anecdotes that support his belief that "[w]e haven't killed the thing entire" and to point to several authors whose work centers on the building of "community" as a source of hope.

A. B. Guthrie Jr., D'Arcy McNickle, Dorothy M. Johnson, James Welch, Richard Hugo, and Mildred Walker are but a few of the authors whose works Egan discusses—and his careful readings of classic works along with his new perceptions will no doubt send readers of *Hope and Dread in Montana Literature* back to some well-loved titles for enriched readings.

As a Montanan and a teacher of Montana literature, I appreciate Egan's conclusion that, as Montana and the Great Plains region "negotiate the answers to dilemmas in their communities . . . they have access to a vital archive of insight in their sophisticated literary tradition." This book makes a tremendous contribution to literary scholarship and will certainly enhance the understanding and enjoyment of readers who return to or read for the first time these gems of Montana's literary giants.

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