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**Review of *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990* By Kerwin Lee Klein**

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*Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990.* By Kerwin Lee Klein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Notes, bibliographic note, index. xi + 377 pp. \$45.00.

In *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*, Kerwin Klein traces the changes in the historical discourse of the European conquest of Native America. This interdisciplinary and wide-ranging study synthesizes twentieth-century historiography, encompassing debates in history, anthropology, literary criticism, and the philosophy of history. While Frederick Jackson Turner's writings serve as organizing texts for Klein's account, the changing interpretations and narratives of the American frontier provide the thematic focus.

Klein arranges his study into four books, each in turn, organized around a trope—à la Hayden White's *Metahistory*: metaphor ("The Language of History"), metonym ("From Spirit to System"), synecdoche ("Time Immemorial"), and irony ("Histories of Language"). Klein's arguments are complex and difficult to summarize. During the past century, historical traditions have moved from poetic to analytic interpretations of narrative, often embracing a dichotomy between figurative language and scientific fact. This analytic turn was advanced by the growing use of the culture concept, which dramatically altered the way history could be imagined, as "scholars defined their relevant context *spatially* rather than temporally." The American frontier was thus continuously reconfigured in terms of myth and history, comedy and tragedy, and local and global narratives.

While the Great Plains are not specifically addressed in the book, Klein's eclectic range and historical breadth will appeal to those with an interest in western historiography, American studies, and cultural studies. He not only discusses the works of well-known authors like John Dewey, Walter Prescott Webb, Ruth Benedict, and Henry Nash Smith, but also reintroduces more obscure figures like William Christie MacLeod, Edward Spicer, and Américo Paredes. Klein is both sympathetic and critical of his authors and subjects, except perhaps for Webb, who emerges as a Texas crank and anti-hero interested in the provincial politics of regionalism.

One of Klein's controversial arguments is that Turner, strongly influenced by German idealism, was more than an economic determinist with millennial or Republican tendencies: "Turner's essays took up traditions in idealism and universal history that gave his frontier tales a coherent plotline, an ambitious philosophical frame, and a place in a larger story of history. In German historicism Turner found the materials for an Emersonian project transfiguring folk memory into historical consciousness." Klein simultaneously casts Turner in the traditions of Emersonian poetics and Hegelian dialectics, turning him into a protagonist of historicism who surfaces as the ghostly father figure behind the subsequent, modern trends.

Klein's arguments sometimes get lost in the details, but his study remains a significant excursion into "intellectual western history"—something, he suggests, Turner pioneered. Bold, ambitious, well-written, and at times controversial, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination* makes a valuable synthetic contribution to intellectual history and the historiography of the American frontier.

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