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Review of *By Grit and Grace: Eleven Women Who Shaped the American West* Edited by Glenda Riley and Richard W. Etulain

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By Grit and Grace: Eleven Women Who Shaped the American West. Edited by Glenda Riley and Richard W. Etulain. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997. Illustrations, acknowledgments, introduction, contributors, index. xiii + 226 pp. \$22.95 paper.

The biographical essays in this volume present a spectrum of diverse women to illustrate the mythical as well as the actual image of women in the American West. Some are flamboyant and unconventional like Santa Fe's gambling businesswoman Gertrude Barcelo ("La Tules") in the 1840s or Martha Canary (Calamity Jane) whose real and imagined exploits in Dakota and Wyoming Territory thirty years later were the stuff of dime novels. Some sketches characterize more typically "pioneer" types. Seventeen-year-old Abigail Scott Duniway followed the Oregon Trail west from Illinois with her family in 1852. The harsh experience became the basis for her writing career and her staunch advocacy of women's rights in the Pacific northwest. Elinore Pruitt Stewart also wrote of her experience, enthusiastically describing homesteading in Wyoming at the turn of the century.

The lives of Susan and Susette La Flesche and Mary Ellen Pleasant are anchored in actuality. The La Flesches were Omaha Indian women who successfully assimilated into American culture; Pleasant, an African American, arrived in San Francisco in 1852 and worked actively for civil rights while accumulating a fortune and ingratiating herself among the leading white men of the city, in whose homes she worked as a domestic servant.

Some sketches recount the lives of women who actually spent little time in the West. Jessie Benton Frémont's final home was California, but she lived in Washington, Virginia, New York, St. Louis, and Europe for most of her life, championing the military and political career of her explorer husband. The self-invented beauty Lola Montez, dancer, singer, and lecturer, performed in California in 1853, settled for a time in Grass Valley, and was popularly identified with the new state, al-

though her stay there was very brief. Even the famous "cowgirl" Annie Oakley, who demonstrated her riding and shooting skills in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, was born in Ohio and visited the West infrequently.

Most readers will delight in this panoply of women of "grit and grace" who figure in the multiple phases of Western history, but the essays seem vaguely unsatisfying. They are too brief to bring any of the women to life, while their very diversity makes them seem like pieces of a puzzle that don't quite fit together to create a complete picture.

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