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Fall 2001

Review of *Frederic Remington: The Writer* By Roscoe L. Buckland

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Erisman, Fred, "Review of *Frederic Remington: The Writer* By Roscoe L. Buckland" (2001). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2194.

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Frederic Remington: The Writer. By Roscoe L. Buckland. Twayne's United States Authors Series. New York: Twayne Publishers, 2000. Photographs, notes and references, selected bibliography, index. xvii + 113 pp. \$33.00.

Roscoe L. Buckland's *Frederic Remington: The Writer* sets out to introduce the literary side of the well-known painter-sculptor. It achieves an overview of Remington's life, fiction, and journalism, including a helpful bibliography of critical studies (especially those appearing after 1975), but ultimately proves disappointing.

Part of the disappointment derives from its organization. After a thoughtful preface and a biographical chapter, the book offers six topical chapters focusing on Remington's writings: "Soldiering in the West," "Indians," "Cowboys," "The Strenuous Life," "The Martial Spirit," and "*John Ermine of the Yellowstone*." The arrangement emphasizes Remington's principal topics, but leads to an arbitrary categorization of the works discussed and at times compels the reader to flip from chapter to chapter while tracing a theme.

Works dealing with the military appear in at least three of the chapters, for example, while *John Ermine* (1902), Remington's notable novel of Anglo-Indian tensions, stands wholly apart from other Indian-related materials. Buckland's judgments about the works, to be sure, are often sound, but the organization precludes both ease of use and any sense of Remington's evolution as a writer.

Also troubling are unsupported or inconsistent statements and scattered, outright errors. Buckland asserts, for example, that the flamboyant cavalry officers who move through

Remington's writings and paintings are modeled upon Seth Remington, the artist's father, yet gives no evidence to back up his case. Similarly, he asserts that Remington's writing of *John Ermine* was prompted by envy of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), yet the sources he cites make clear that Remington was gestating the work at least as early as 1901.

The errors that crop up, while trivial, unavoidably suggest careless writing and proof-reading. The date, 1899, appears at least twice as "1999," Clarence Gohdes's name is spelled "Ghodes" in the notes, and the distinguished Western historian Richard W. Etulain is cited twice as "Howard" Etulain. The Etulain error, in particular, hints at haste and, perhaps, inadequate conceptualization.

Its flaws notwithstanding, there are merits to Buckland's work: it *does*, yet again, call attention to Remington's writings, and it *does* suggest the extent to which those writings complement his paintings and sculptures in advancing a vision of the American West. If approached judiciously, it can offer an introduction for readers unfamiliar with the West or Remington's work; for the more experienced student of the West, however, it says little that is new.

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