



Wisconsin Historical Society

P R E S S

Review: [untitled]

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Reviewed work(s):

The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography by Steven J. Holmes

Source: *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (Summer, 2000), pp. 285-286

Published by: Wisconsin Historical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4636875>

Accessed: 23/10/2009 11:36

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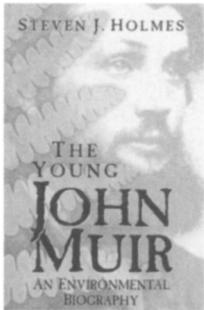
carried on in the work of Alden Dow and Bruce Goff and is today evident in the architecture of Bart Prince and Terry Brown.

LEONARD K. EATON

Otter Rock, Oregon

THE YOUNG JOHN MUIR:
AN ENVIRONMENTAL BIOGRAPHY.

By Steven J. Holmes.



(University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1999. Pp. xv, 309. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-299-16154-4, \$22.95.)

Wisconsin has always been quick to claim John Muir as a native son because he passed most of his youth here. We like to think that the rolling hills and sparkling streams of our own landscape may have planted seeds that germinated in Muir's later environmental activism and literary work.

Until now, however, no one has investigated this assumption with intellectual rigor and scholarly discipline. In this difficult and sometimes tedious volume (based on his Harvard doctoral dissertation), Steven Holmes painstakingly applies the psychoanalytic theory of object relations to Muir's published and unpublished texts. His goal is to untangle the complicated and sometimes contradictory responses that young John Muir had to the people and places around him. Holmes hopes this in-depth analysis will debunk some of the romantic myths that still cling to Muir's reputation and so let us see him and his work with fresh eyes.

Unfortunately, his prose suffers from many defects common to technical scholarship. Psychoanalytic jargon abounds, and readers unfamiliar with it will find the book

off-putting, at best. Holmes's desire to explicate theoretical subtleties often leads him into seemingly endless, labyrinthine sentences, such as the seventy-six-word leviathan that spans pages 29 through 30. Readers who value clear, concise prose will wade through such quagmires reluctantly. Holmes sometimes reads far too much significance into minor passages in Muir's writings, allowing his eagerness to demonstrate theoretical sophistication (this was a dissertation, after all) to get the better of his common sense.

Despite these drawbacks, *The Young John Muir* is a brave and challenging book. Holmes's chosen methodology of object relations helps him probe deep into the buried or semi-conscious aspects of Muir's relationships with people and nature. This depth of analysis gives new insight into familiar stories, such as the digging of the family well in Fountain Lake or the epiphanies recorded in *My First Summer in the Sierra*. At the same time, this approach is sufficiently flexible to accommodate questions of gender roles, nationality, ethnicity, economic class, and religion, so Holmes is not trapped within the confines of a narrowly Freudian biography. Indeed, to people concerned with how individual consciousness confronts and interacts with nature, the appendix—in which Holmes explains the genesis and utility of the object relations approach—is worth the price of the book all by itself.

Such readers are, of course, few and far between, and curious lay-people intrigued by the book's title are more likely to be puzzled than gratified. For them, the best place to encounter John Muir is still in his own charming books, recently reissued in one of the Library of America's impeccable handy volumes.

So what part did Wisconsin play in shaping Muir's environmental ethic? His capacity for deep emotional and spiritual intimacy with nature came over with him from Scotland, but the romantic guise in which he cloaked it was woven here. More

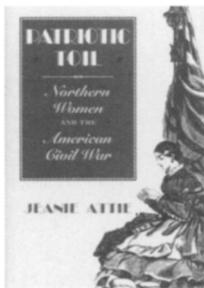
importantly, Muir's work at the University of Wisconsin grounded him in scientific observation and nomenclature, which enabled him to integrate poetic and technical language in the books that made him famous long after he had left the Midwest.

MICHAEL EDMONDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

PATRIOTIC TOIL: NORTHERN WOMEN
AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

By *Jeanie Attie*.



(Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1998. Pp. xiii, 294. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-8014-2224-8, \$37.50, hardcover.)

In her important new book, Jeanie Attie explores the “economic, political, and ideological conflicts that surrounded northern women’s unpaid labors in support of the Union army.” Northern women produced vast quantities of goods, especially clothing, food, and medical supplies, needed for the war effort. Without these contributions, the government would have found it nearly impossible to field armies and carry out the war. Although women produced these goods without monetary compensation, Attie shows that they expected certain things in return: that the economic value of their labors be recognized, and that the goods produced not be wasted through inefficient distribution or corruption.

Women’s demands remained central as northerners created formal organizations to channel goods to the armies. The United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), formed to coordinate relief efforts in 1861, soon became the center of controversy. Many male leaders of the organization sought to use it to further their own na-

tionalist goal of creating a stronger state, while imposing their “male authority and discipline” over the what they saw as the disorganized and chaotic efforts of the female-led USSC. Female leaders of the USSC sought to use women’s war work to argue for increased political, economic, and social rights. When national leaders began to disagree over the structure and activities of the USSC, while neither properly acknowledging the value of women’s contributions nor allaying widespread fears of corruption and waste, donations to the USSC decreased and its influence waned. Other organizations proved more responsive and appreciative, and northern women began to redirect their energies toward these groups.

The experiences of national leaders of the USSC are well documented here, and Attie offers a persuasive analysis of their goals and conflicts. Less clear, however, is how ordinary women across the northern homefront viewed the larger meaning and purpose of their efforts. Attie’s sources focus on national women leaders of the USSC. This white, middle- to upper-class, well-educated, eastern group came out of the war with newfound organizing skills, experience in the public arena, and complex networks of female contacts on which they built a postwar women’s rights movement. Attie occasionally conflates elite women’s goals with those of ordinary women, such as when she claims that “masses of women participated with expectations that their homefront contributions would translate into expanded political rights.” Attie provides little evidence for this, and misreads many women’s motivations.

Most northern women contributed to the war effort for more pragmatic reasons, such as the provision and care of sons, brothers, and husbands. This is not to say that they believed their efforts had no political meaning. Attie deftly reveals how “economics” was a gendered term that valued men’s paid labor while hiding and un-