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the new transmitter of tribal myth. Laundry (and Vizenor) conclude that "the published stories over those we hear are not more trouble than the earth over our bodies, cold water over a hot red stone, a cage to hold the wounded crows. . . . We must go on." *Dead Voices* assures us that Vizenor can be counted on to keep us laughing as we go.

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Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West. By Jules David Prown, Nancy K. Anderson, William Cronon, Brian W. Dippie, Martha A. Sandweiss, Susan P. Schoelwer, and Howard R. Lamar. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992. 217 pages. \$35.00 cloth.

Central to this handsome volume is an interdisciplinary analysis, by art historians, historians, and curators, of Western American art from the late eighteenth until the late twentieth century. They consider both what is depicted in the images of the American frontier and the western lands and what is omitted—which often allows deeper insights into the perceptions and opinions of the particular period of time. Scrutinizing the omitted elements in paintings helps to redefine the value of Western American art, which has always been evaluated as an inferior art form. Nancy Anderson, one of the authors, describes it as the "unwanted stepchild" of American art history.

The early painters of western landscapes, such as Albert Bierstadt, Benjamin West, and George Catlin, accompanied teams of explorers to the frontier in the middle and late nineteenth century. It was their task to depict the geography of the unknown land and its indigenous people. Documentation and accuracy were their top priority, foregoing any artistic values. Catlin, for example, had the authenticity of his Indian portraits certified by some local government agents. The paintings were shown widely upon the painters' return to the East and were accepted at face value. But even the widely admired, European-trained Albert Bierstadt modeled his Rocky Mountain scenes after the Swiss Alps. Mark Twain ironically remarked that Bierstadt's panoramic landscapes of the West were "altogether too gorgeous" (p. 13).

In the 1870s, painters such as Thomas Moran and George de

Forest Brush followed Bierstadt's lead. Their paintings did not strive for exact representation but tried to capture the atmosphere and the beauty of the western landscape. Stating that "the literal truth counts for nothing" (p. 15), these painters scorned the opinion that Western art had to serve only physical science and history; their work depicted emotional scenes of the Grand Canyon and lonely Indians.

During 1843–63, elaborately illustrated Railroad Surveys were published in editions of 6,600,000. These volumes were available to a wide audience, and their prints of western landscapes, together with those in numerous other publications, strongly influenced the perception of the American West. Often the illustrations were altered in the lithographic process, as the author Martha Sandweiss shows, to create a more heroic and romanticized picture of the West, preferably without people. This tradition has been carried on ever since. "Nostalgia, not change, is the defining character of Western American art today" (p. 90), writes author Brian Dippie.

The second phase of Western art dealt with the occupation and the settlement of pioneers in the American West. The landscape was no longer a subject of study and admiration but a commodity that had to be tamed and changed to suit its new inhabitants. Early illustrations by John Audubon are good examples of this phase. They display native plants and animals out of their natural context and dissect them scientifically as objects of exploitation and usefulness to the new settlers.

In paintings like Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's *Westward the Course of the Empire Takes Its Way* (1861), progress is glorified, and the settlers are portrayed as heroes on their way to the promised land. The Indians are depicted either as engaged in battle with the white conquerors, who are far superior in number and technology, or as the last remaining survivors of a native culture that must make way for a newer, stronger civilization. Racist views were expressed quite openly in the prints of Thomas Nast or John Gast, to mention two examples.

Similarly to the Indian, who was perceived as a symbol of savagery and therefore had to vanish, the landscape itself had to change. No longer portrayed by artists as a threatening wilderness, it was now depicted cultivated and progressive, complete with houses, churches, fences, cattle, railroad, and roads (Coates, Stanley, Cole, etc.).

As William Cronon, one of the authors, points out, "The frontier narrative was about settling a new land, it offered little wisdom

about how best to live once the settling was done and the new land had become old" (p. 79). As soon as the frontier was declared closed in 1890, the nostalgia began. The glories of discovery, exploration, and occupation were still important parts of the American myth, and if they were no longer happening in real life, they at least had to be recreated and kept alive in art.

"As the frontier recedes, the wilderness ceases to be either an opportunity for progress or an occasion for terror. Instead it becomes scenery," observes Cronon (p. 81). The few people presented in the romantic landscape paintings of Church and Moran are tourists. Others, such as Remington and Russell, continued to create "cowboy art" (Anderson), depicting trappers and frontiersmen, who, in reality, had long ceased to exist. Paradoxically, these idealized images, which have continued in Ansel Adams's photographs of an unnaturally empty and untouched Yellowstone Park, have attracted even larger numbers of visitors and crowded the "untouched" landscape that they advertise.

Women were often omitted in Western art, particularly Indian women. Susan Prendergast-Schoelwer observes in her essay that women had a prominent and important role in pioneer life. The lone trapper and mountain man, so successfully shown in popular Remington pictures, usually was, in reality, a married man, whose Indian wife helped him to clean hides, to maintain contacts with natives, and to survive in unknown terrain. Nevertheless, Indian women are shown, if at all, either as aloof Indian princesses or as available squaws (Miller, Chapman). Their real role as companion of the white pioneer and mother of his children was obviously too threatening to the conventional masculine values of the public, especially because Indian women were independent, knowledgeable, and often the owners of households and possessions, according to Indian right. Therefore, their image had to be altered or suppressed. In addition to women, Black men also are conspicuously absent in Western American art, even though they were very much present on the western frontier; one out of five cavalry soldiers in the West was Black. This omission is not mentioned in the book.

Western art in the twentieth century represents the final phase of the invented past. Author Howard Lamar examines contemporary Western artists and finds a variety of styles and approaches, many of them carried out by women or American Indian artists. They range from naive folk art paintings of farms to photo-realistic cowboy pictures, to abstractions of light and landscape, to the

introverted dreamscapes of Georgia O'Keefe and Marsden Hartley. Howard Lamar observes that "all of these painters have come to terms with place—indeed with nature" (p. 190), and he senses a feeling of belonging that was missing in previous periods.

Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts is not only a survey of the development of Western American art; it is also a striking example of human perception—the tendency to see what one wants to see. The American myths of discovery, pioneer spirit, and rugged individualism are too deeply rooted to be erased by simple facts such as the disappearance of the real frontier. The essays in this book unravel several dimensions of Western art, and the numerous color and black-and-white prints illustrate the theme well. A bibliography would have given interested readers the opportunity to look deeper into the subject. In addition, the book should have included a list of the plates of paintings represented in the exhibition accompanying this book and a description of the exhibition itself. The book is certainly more than a mere exhibition catalog and can stand on its own, but I am sure it will entice everybody who has a chance to go and see this temporary exhibition, either at Yale University Art Gallery from 19 September 1992 until 3 January 1993 or at Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, from 6 February to 11 April 1993.

Cornelia S. Feye

In Defense of the Indians. By Bartolomé de Las Casas; translated and edited by Stafford Poole, C. M. Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992. 410 pages. \$18.00 paper.

In August 1992, five hundred years after participating in the genocidal invasion of Central America, the Roman Catholic church of Guatemala asked the Mayan Indians for pardon. The bishops' pastoral letter to that effect cited "errors and contradictions in the actions of members of the church that have fallen unjustly on the indigenous people . . . We, the current pastors of the church, ask for forgiveness."

The contemporary Guatemalan bishops, however, are in the minority. The Vatican is celebrating "500 years of Christian evangelism" and pushing forward with the process of canonization of Junipero Serra, the Franciscan missionary who established the California mission system, the primary colonizing institution of