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The Rise of Jonas Olsen: A Norwegian Immigrant's Saga

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ascribed to it in so much American cultural history" (xxii). Despite the occasional wordy passage, Watts's writing is crisp.

Multiculturalists will appreciate Watts's insightful chapters on "natives, crossbloods, and settlers," though the region's African American legacy remains little explored. Women will be hard pressed to find examples of pre- or proto-feminist historical perspectives on the region, as among the handful of literary authors Watts examines in detail, only one, Caroline Kirkland (*A New Home, Who'll Follow?*), offers a woman's impressions. Moreover, Watts criticizes Kirkland's fiction because, despite its Michigan setting, "its universalizing sentimental nationalism drains the actual conditions she observes of their specificity, exposing the local only to lock it away in the past" (178). Watts makes amends for the dearth of period female voices by incorporating the voices of a number of contemporary female scholars, most notably Susan E. Gray and Susan-Mary Grant.

The continuity of Watts's treatment suffers somewhat from its piecemeal case-study methodology, but the book covers the principal literary-cultural players of the nineteenth century, with the exception of Twain, whose omission is explained in the book's introduction. Throughout, Watts demonstrates scholarly discipline, taking care to avoid historical overreach prompted by theoretical giddiness while also eschewing unsupportable claims about the contemporary Midwest. Watts allows himself just two moments of contemporary cultural criticism, the first in the book's introduction, where he asserts the relevance of nineteenth-century historical regionalism for a globalism-minded present, and the second in a concluding foray, where he cites the "lack of reciprocity . . . still present in interregional contacts" (220) via Garrison Keillor, *Cheers!* Woody Boyd, the Walsh family on *Beverly Hills 90210*, and Kevin Costner's *Field of Dreams*.

If a Grant Wood-style regionalism does indeed rise again along the Middle Border, Edward Watts's *An American Colony* will doubtless serve as a useful historical primer, an intriguing literary retrospective, and (never say never) a mobilization manual for an informed resistance.

The Rise of Jonas Olsen: A Norwegian Immigrant's Saga, by Johannes B. Wist, translated by Orm Øverland. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. xxxiv, 435 pp. Notes, bibliography. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer J. R. Christianson is research professor of history at Luther College. He edited the anthology, *Scandinavians in America: Literary Life* (1985).

This novel of immigrant upward mobility was written in Decorah, Iowa, appeared serially in the Norwegian American newspaper, *De-*

corah Posten, in the years 1919–1922, and was subsequently published in book form. Orm Øverland's admirable English translation appears in a durable half-buckram binding. The story is fast paced, the characterizations finely nuanced and full of human insight.

Jonas Olsen arrives in Minneapolis from Norway in the 1880s and works his way up from laborer to grocer. His methods are not always above board, but *bisnes* is *bisnes* in booming America. When his grocery store goes bankrupt in the Panic of 1893, Jonas and his charming bride, Ragna, go into farming in the Red River Valley. The railroad comes through, and Jonas competes with the overbearing Elihu Ward to lay out a new town, with lots of shenanigans on both sides. The novel ends with Jonas as the tycoon of Jonasville around 1910, locked in a fierce rivalry with Ward's town of Normanville to become the county seat and dominate local affairs.

Unlike grim classics of Scandinavian immigrant life such as O. E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, this novel sparkles with humor, and it deals with immigrants who cope successfully (though not without difficulties) with American farming, small towns, and urban life. It describes a rich multicultural panorama of midwestern immigrant life, literature, and culture. This is a marvelous Scandinavian American novel, well worth your time and money. It deserves to stand next to Rølvaag on your bookshelf.

Delivering Aid: Implementing Progressive Era Welfare in the American West, by Thomas A. Krainz. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. xiv, 325 pp. Illustrations, appendix of tables, notes, index. \$37.50 cloth.

Reviewer Joan Gittens is professor of history at Southwest Minnesota State University. She is the author of *Poor Relations: The Children of the State in Illinois, 1818–1990* (1994).

In *Delivering Aid*, Thomas Krainz sets out to determine whether the social welfare theories developing during the Progressive Era had an impact on public assistance as it was actually experienced by needy people in Colorado. Colorado is a useful focus of study, Krainz argues, because it experienced so many conditions that made the Progressive Era the time of turmoil that it was: immigration, labor struggles, and political contests between reformers and entrenched politicians. Krainz examines six counties in Colorado, representing a wide range of conditions, from urban Denver to Costilla County in southwest Colorado (peopled largely by a long resident Hispanic population) to Montezuma County (30 percent of which was made up of the Moun-