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Perimeters of Democracy: Inverse Utopias and the Wartime Social Landscape in the American West

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For those interested in the history of the Midwest, this book offers a fair amount. It offers, for example, intimate looks into the workings of clinics in places like Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee. Although we learn very little about those found in Iowa, this could serve as a source of inspiration. As the charts in the beginning of the book make clear, by the end of the 1930s the state did have some clinics; we just don't know very much about them. That dearth of knowledge should energize Iowa historians to rectify this gap. Each clinic has its own story, and each adds new insight into a complex national movement.

I do have several reservations about the book. First, for all her efforts to examine the clinics' many intersections, their interaction with the marketplace is only tangentially examined, perpetuating the notion that these worlds existed apart when in reality they overlapped. Thus, the title somewhat misleads. While the sentiment behind it is worthy, in practice "birth control on main street" usually meant commercial sources of birth control, not clinics. Indeed, large as the movement was, clinics served only a fraction of the American population. Finally, as is the case with so many birth control movement histories, Hajo's story ends in the late 1930s, leaving readers again hanging as to the future of this complex institution. But perhaps she can be forgiven, because, as she puts it, "It is a story for another day" (17). Now it is up to us to make that day happen.

Perimeters of Democracy: Inverse Utopias and the Wartime Social Landscape in the American West, by Heather Fryer. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. xi, 373 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth.

Reviewer Roger W. Lotchin is professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of *The Bad City in the Good War: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego* (2003).

In this ambitious book Heather Fryer compares four World War II western settings: the Topaz Japanese Relocation Camp, the Los Alamos Atomic Laboratory community, the Vanport housing project in Portland, and the Klamath Indian Reservation in Oregon. She concludes that, besides many differences, they shared several commonalities: "marginalization, repression, displacement, and disillusionment [with] the federal government" (32). She also ties their story to a larger one that dates back to President Thomas Jefferson and the physical anthropologist Thomas Morton. Jefferson's views of a nation based on the yeoman farmer and Morton's pseudoscience of racial hierarchies

dominated government policy well into the period of McCarthyism. Throughout, the U.S. government tried to manage the West demographically in the interest of creating an Empire of Liberty. Each of the settlements was conceived as a utopia where controlled demographic management by the government would create little Empires of Liberty that would influence the rest of America and the world. The hand of mission through Manifest Destiny rests heavily on the author's text. Unfortunately, these projects backfired and created "inverse utopias" instead. It is an interesting argument by a younger scholar who shows great command of both primary and secondary sources. The book is also informative and offers new material on all of the communities. However, my objections are fourfold.

First, the communities are not comparable; the commonalities fit some of the four, but not others. For example, the scientists at Los Alamos were not marginalized, displaced, or repressed. None of them was forced to participate in the Manhattan Project. What the author is calling repression was simply the army's attempts to provide security for a project of the utmost importance to national security, the race to create an atomic bomb before the Nazis did. Far from being security-conscious to the point of repression, the army was not safety-conscious enough to prevent numerous breaches of security by Klaus Fuchs and others. And the scientists were hardly marginalized; they were at the center of the most earthshaking change in the history of warfare. The Klamath Indians and the Nikkei were certainly marginalized, but not the scientists. And none of the four communities was repressed. One of the author's best chapters is on "resistance" at Topaz, but even that could not have happened if the government had really repressed them.

I also object to Fryer's characterization of these histories as part of the government's attempts to create utopias in the West. She treats the story as one enormous, two-century government plot. If one believes in conspiracies, this is the book to read. In fact, the hard-pressed Roosevelt administration improvised each of the communities ad hoc to meet a specific war emergency. The government did not intend any of the communities to be utopias; it intended three to respond to a specific historical emergency. Especially in the case of the relocation of Japanese Americans, the government basically stumbled into the camp solution and even then not until well into 1942, when it determined that it had no other option.

The author is also oblivious to the impact of wartime politics on her story. For example, she treats the problem of racial segregation at Vanport as a stand-alone story of civil rights. She precociously docu-

ments that there was racial prejudice against African Americans in the Portland area, but she does not integrate that discussion into the larger one of impressive black gains during the conflict. African Americans earned good money, even in segregated shipbuilding work; the NAACP increased its members tenfold; and millions migrated from the very segregated South to the less segregated North, where they joined big-city political machines and began to make their voices heard in politics. In Vanport there was housing segregation in part because managers had to find homes for blacks without alienating whites, who might move to another job or back home. The hypermobility of the work force was one of the biggest production problems of that conflict. Fryer sees only the civil rights implications of the Vanport managers' actions, not their political realities.

Finally, Fryer's conspiracy is above all a conspiracy of race. One is reminded of excitable McCarthyite politicians and pundits who thought there was a Communist behind every bush. For Fryer, there is a racist lurking there instead. Yet the Midwest, and Iowa in particular, was especially friendly to Japanese resettlement there from the camps!

Acts of Conscience: World War II, Mental Institutions, and Religious Objectors, by Steven J. Taylor. Critical Perspectives on Disability. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009. 484 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, indexes. \$34.00 cloth.

Reviewer Kimberly D. Schmidt is professor of history at Eastern Mennonite University. Her research and writing have focused on Amish and Mennonite women.

An old debate among historians centers on World War II as a watershed moment in American history. Where some see continuity in issues besetting the nation such as civil rights and women's rights, others see significant change. Place disability history in the picture and the claim for watershed becomes stronger; prior to World War II the plight of the mentally disabled, confined for the most part to state and privately run "insane asylums," was readily and conveniently forgotten. That all changed, as Taylor documents, with the assignment of conscientious objectors to serve in such institutions.

Conscientious objectors (COs or "conchies") were young men who for religious or moral reasons refused to bear arms, although they were willing to serve their country in alternative service assignments. Most of the men were from the historic peace churches: Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and Quakers, although the Methodists were represented as well. Under the direction of the Selective Service, con-