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Clint Eastwood: Actor and Director ed. by Leonard Engel
(review)

Paul Wilson

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from women's viewpoints. Chapter 8 covers the years Rushing stopped writing, culminating in her untimely death. Rodenberger closes by promoting Rushing as an old-fashioned storyteller who captured "the every day lives of Texans who settled the Rolling Plains of Texas with a perceptive understanding of what motivated and governed those lives" (165). Rushing comes across as a non-traditional female voice who realistically presents many underappreciated characters that populate West Texas.

Although readers may wish for more biographical details about Rushing, Rodenberger's persuasive narrative makes compelling further study of this West Texas author's fiction. The universal themes of appearance for appearance's sake and major social issues entwined with a voyeur's perspective into a private, rural way of life insist on closer examination. Rodenberger succeeds in establishing Rushing as an important figure in Texas regional writing whose strong, vibrant women and farmers hold their own among the iconographic ranchers and cowboys who have long populated the myth of a Texas mystique.

Clint Eastwood: Actor and Director. Edited by Leonard Engel.
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007. 269 pages, \$21.95.

Reviewed by Paul Wilson
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Given the current era of conservative decline, a collection of essays about Republican filmmaker Clint Eastwood seems especially timely. Eastwood's label of conservatism has some merit; the violent, claustrophobic urban vision of *Dirty Harry* (1971), for example, likely augmented white flight to the suburbs in the wake of 1960s social changes. Yet as the essays in this worthwhile book reveal, if the depth of his recent films compels us to acknowledge Eastwood's artistry, we should also re-examine his previous work. Eastwood is too slippery to be easily regarded as a right-wing mouthpiece. In this collection alone, he is alternately condemned and celebrated as a fascist, an anarchist, a liberal, a feminist, a chauvinist, a libertarian, a tragedian, and a working-class hero. Surely, this idiosyncratic man deserves scholarly scrutiny.

The book's focus on Westerns yields plentiful insight. Brett Westbrook argues that *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976) is no simple revenge story; despite Josey's violent reaction to the murder of his family, he never abandons the idea of society and eventually helps forge a community of mixed ethnicities—a group intriguingly identified by David Cremean as an anarchist "Mutual Aid" society (69). As Josey argues, "Governments don't live together, people do." If Cremean's desire to squeeze Eastwood into an anarchist schema results in evasions, his essay nevertheless opens up fascinating interpretive possibilities. Even *Dirty Harry* is defended by critic Matt Wanat; and if Wanat will not convince everyone of the film's alleged irony, it is illuminating to recall that Harry's path (killing a sadistic criminal despite bureaucratic red tape) is only a jaunt away from Josey's anarchistic observation about governments and people.

Although Eastwood evokes the *constraints* of genre, his work frustrates expectations by exploding order. As Dennis Rothermel notes, Eastwood's "fondness for jazz improvisation" permeates his narrative style and pacing (230). Like practiced musicians, he and his crew have perfected a mutual rhythm so that the films wander freely in unpredictable directions. *Mystic River* (2003) baits the audience with the hope of solving a crime but instead reveals a "miasma" of interconnections: "No deed is understandable on its own, but arises within the irrepressible tangents of causality that connect to a thousand deeds" (234). Raymond Foery identifies a similarly free-form style in *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995), in which Eastwood develops a hypnotic pace that progresses loosely and surely.

But what should feminists do with Eastwood? Is it true that Eastwood creates a "poisonous masculine space built on the performance of aggression" (Metz 216)? Contrary to Walter Metz's depiction, in *Mystic River* Eastwood powerfully questions the figure of the violent white man at the Western's heart. The vengeful vigilante, Jimmy (Sean Penn), accidentally kills the wrong man. Yet in the film's most chilling scene, Jimmy's wife, Annabeth (Laura Linney), celebrates him as a "king" who will risk injustice to protect his family. According to Rothermel, the film places the problem of violence where it belongs: not as the simple province of Jimmy *or* Annabeth but as a tragic outgrowth of an entire society. As Richard Slotkin argues, "we will need a myth that allows us to see our history as an ecological system: not a false pastoral of pure harmony, but a system bound together by patterns of struggle and accommodation within and among its constituent populations, in which every American victory is also necessarily an American defeat" (*Gunfighter Nation* 658). Jimmy's victory is also a defeat for the innocent victim's family. More recently, in his World War II films, Eastwood deconstructs the American "victory" at Iwo Jima, showing the myriad ways in which violence is never purely a victory but also simultaneously a defeat for all sides.

On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape.

By Jared Farmer.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. 472 pages, \$29.95.

Reviewed by **Jessie L. Embry**

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In *On Zion's Mount*, Jared Farmer, a native of Provo, Utah, maps out how Eugene Roberts, a Brigham Young University professor, created an Indian legend and transferred the Utes from lake to mountain people. But the Mount Timpanogos story had twentieth-century meanings and not nineteenth-century Mormon attachments. Farmer's complex web reveals interesting aspects of Utah history and its relationship to the changing past. To accomplish these goals, he discusses Utah Lake as a fishery for the Utes and then the