

Book analysis: a texas frontier

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In the preface section of Ty Cashion's book *A Texas Frontier*, it is quite notable that the author aims at giving an account of Texas, more specifically West Texas, through an expository journey in Clear Fork country and the events and people that helped shaped the 'frontier experience'.

It attempts at showcasing the identity of being a West Texan embedded deeply into the consciousness of those "local citizens" who "embrace the heritage of life as it existed (Cashion, 1997c)", putting up a unique personality and indelible character that never fails to fade away and succeeds at extending even up to this very day.

This book analysis attempts at analyzing how the author was able to explain and interpret the numerous themes as well as concepts that he has intended to deal with in the preface section of the book. An understanding of the explanations and interpretations that are written across the pages of the book will be of great significance in having a better grasp of the content of the author's work inasmuch as one will obtain a clearer and more defined view of, to borrow the author's words, the 'Texas frontier'.

It must be noted, however, that this book analysis merely serves the purpose of shedding light on the intricate parts of the book and several crucial points of contention. In spite of the analysis directed towards identifying what the book is lacking of, it does not aim at arriving at a substantial substitute for the written sections of the book that may or may not be criticized.

Nevertheless, using the preface as the main guide, a closer look into the rich pages of *A Texas Frontier* will bring one to realize the main contentions of the author and, more importantly, acquire a mental perspective of what it is

to be a citizen of ' West Texas' in the face of a growing society and a constantly changing environment.

Looking into the frontier

In the author's attempt to bring about an exposition on the " development of Anglo-American settlement in Northwest Texas west of Fort Worth (Barr, 1997)", it is certainly quite a remarkable feat to be able to arrive at a substantial understanding and diffusion of who may be included among the group of those contributed to such a development.

The ultimate task, then, of Cashion is to not only to be able to elucidate on matters that revolve around the idea of such a significant development but also to be able to identify the contributors.

Cashion effectively enables himself to meet this goal by not only focusing on the " history of the Anglo cattle herders" (Powell, 1997) but also on other people who pose a great deal in the development of the settlement, barely spreading out the very context of the concept of " we".

By including narratives on the lives of the African-American soldiers of the 10th U. S. Cavalry or those who came to be known as Buffalo Soldiers, the Tonkawa Indians or the corporeal adversaries of the Comanche, and the " Yankee" soldiers among others helped Cashion achieve his goal of enlarging and, thereby, not limiting those who took primordial roles in the historical background of West Texas.

Cashion mentions of " African American buffalo soldiers of the U. S. Army", the " handful of former slaves who came West and settled" among the "

white ranchers" (Cashion, 1997a) in order to broaden the very contention of the " we" that pertains to those who settled in West Texas.

This concretizes further the fact that the development of that region, notwithstanding the areas of Clear Fork country and Fort Griffin, was also taken in a little but significant part by the " handful of the hundred-odd black civilians" and " many former buffalo soldiers" who " remained near the post after being discharged (Cashion, 1997b)."

The succeeding parts of the book reflect and emphasize the " development of society and the transition from southern to western culture in the region" (Barr, 1997). It brought into light the transition that began " with the 1849 expedition of explorer Randolph B. Marcy and ended in the late 1880s when the ' formative development' of the area was complete" (Noelke, 1997).

Throughout this stretch of time considerable changes took place, adding up to the continued transformation of both the locality of the region and the entire " west" itself. This continued transformation bears the crude system that involved both external and internal forces in bringing about both subtle and obvious changes that altered the mindset as well as the attitude of those who lived and died in West Texas towards those who came and went in that region.

Not only is Cashion trying to highlight the role of individuals and groups of people in the development of the area. He also settles on the significant events during those days that marked not only the beginning of the transformation but also the transformation itself.

This process, as Cashion himself argues in the preface section of the book, “turned Southerners into Westerners”, stirring-up the idea that the entire context of the creation of a West Texan perspective is largely influenced by the combination of both human and event forces.

Some of these critical events include the Civil War and the Reconstruction era, affected in significant fractions by a wide range of crimes and outlawry as well as brisk inhabitation and, conversely, diversification of a number of races and ethnic and societal backgrounds.

The impacts of these events are felt not only on a single isolated region where it transpired but rather to a degree upon which a vast number of innocent people can be afflicted. Civil wars, for example, draw upon the thought that these types of conflict are “terribly bloody, accounting for nearly 12 million battle-related fatalities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Balch-Lindsay & Enterline, 2000).”

Hence, civil wars account for the loss of a huge number of deaths, wiping away a considerable number of a group of people, especially in the region of West Texas, raising the possibility of having a new breed of citizens inhabiting a former dense spot of its original inhabitants.

Quite apart from this, the development of the West Texan region has also been affected by outlawry even after the time of the civil wars and the reconstruction period. This has virtually changed the way in which the residents viewed the law, recognizing the fact that having these bandits and outlaws goes beyond the reach of the law must be a sign that the law is not enough in maintaining a crime-free territory.

Thus, the “ emerging culture” that Cashion mentions in the preface and throughout the pages of the book narrates the culture that was on the process of constant change and remolding.

That same culture is also a culture that has been under a constant injection of worldviews and local perceptions from human factors both coming from the internal locality as well as from the external or those beyond the immediate fences of the region who settle within the place.

Opinion on the frontier

In general, the course of the work and its expository nature provides us with the impression about the development of a “ West Texas” both from inner and external perspective. If one’s aim is to merely acquire an in-depth understanding of the process behind the region’s formation, then reading the book is of great value.

Putting in context the various explanations elucidated in the chapters of the book, we can arrive at the observation that the patches of ideas separated by the pages actually contribute to the entirety of the ideas conjured by the paragraphs that are seemingly dependent with one another.

Thus, to have a thorough reading it is a necessity to not fleetingly skip through the pages and jump towards the succeeding themes and interpretations. From a scholarly point of view, the book is worth reading inasmuch as it makes the academic individual enjoy the book and the historical background of the region all the more.

However, inasmuch as the book is primarily intended to be a scholarly piece of work, the reader who merely fancies the content of the stories and who

does not have a hint of scholarly attitude may be prompted to dismiss the book as something that compares to those that are simply kept in shelves and aged through time, eaten away by cobwebs and the cruelty of human forgetfulness.

Although *A Texas Frontier* benefits the scholarly individual from expanding one's knowledge and understanding towards the 'westerners' in Texas, much of the text lacks the characteristic of being able to sustain the passing reader's interest. Yet this is not to totally discredit the efforts of the author and the substantial content of the book.

Conclusion

Ty Cashion and the book *A Texas Frontier* provides us not only with a fleeting glimpse and feel of "West Texas" and the events and people that stood behind its colorful history and development through decades of evolution. It also gives us with an in-depth understanding of the 'external' elements that sustained the stages of changes and expansion of the 'Texas frontier'.

From the preface section of the book down to its last pages, one can picture-out the historical evolution of the people of 'West Texas' and how they were able to establish for themselves a cultural identity that is solely their own in spite of the fact that their society is one that has been contributed by a significant portion of external events.

References

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