

Reviews

Warriors of the Cloisters: The Central Asian Origins of Science in the Medieval World, by Christopher I. Beckwith. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. 211 pages. \$35.00, cloth.

A number of general and scholarly monographs on the history of Central Asia have been published recently, targeting audiences with various levels of knowledge about the region. However, Christopher Beckwith's *Warriors of the Cloisters* departs from traditional generalist accounts of Central Asian history and focuses on a single and very specific aspect: the contribution of Central Asian scholars to "the history and transmission of the college and the recursive argument methods (the scholastic method) from the Islamic world to medieval Western Europe" (p. x). In so doing, the author not only discusses intellectual history and the development of scholarly debate in the Eurasian continent, but also controversially positions this region at the center of intellectual progress in the medieval world. He highlights that very few mainstream Western scholars concentrate on the Central Asian region as central to the intellectual development of the day, although almost all acknowledge that the greatest of Western scholars—Roger Bacon, Peter of Poitiers, and others—learned about classical Greek philosophy, including the works of Aristotle and Plato, from the translated manuscripts and commentaries of Avicenna and Al-Farabi. These two scholars were the foremost in Central Asia and probably the greatest world thinkers of that era.

Christopher Beckwith conducted very intensive research, and in this work introduces his own interpretation of the evolution and development of what he calls "recursive argument methods"—"the highly distinctive argument structure used in the medieval Latin summas and other works by Robert of Courzon, Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas..." (p. 11). He not only rejects the Eurocentric view that the modern scientific methods of intellectual inquiry and the institution of the college were introduced in the West, but also calls for more nuanced interpretation of the contribution of Islamic scholars to the transmission of knowledge from ancient Greece to Western Europe. He shows how Central Asian scholars intensively interacted with the Buddhist scholars from Central and South Asia. The author styles these scholars as "Warriors of the Cloister" who constructed the foundations of modern scientific inquiry. He argues that in modern historiography, the origin of "recursive argument methods" has been largely overlooked. He builds a strong line of argumentation for revisiting existing interpretations of the history of science—and indeed of scientific progress and globalization.

Christopher Beckwith highlights that many scholars have missed a critical link in studying the intellectual exchanges in the medieval era, thereby fixing on certain

assumptions about the linear, progressive development of science as an exclusive domain of European civilization and European progress. His fourth chapter makes a novel and interesting argument, claiming it was in “the Graeco-Bactrian and Graeco-Gandharan branches of the Sarvastivada school of Buddhism—that is, in Central Asia—that the recursive argument methods developed out of their own special analytical approach” (p. 50), enriching the Islamic scholars who thrived in the region because of the generous support of science by local rulers. Chapters five and six introduce evidence from various sources to support his argument of a “classical Arabic Central Asia,” where the ancient Greek philosophical heritage was carefully preserved and developed during the “dark ages in Europe.” Later, this heritage was transmitted back to Europe, stimulating the intellectual recovery of the Renaissance. Beckwith’s seventh chapter summarizes the early globalization of knowledge and creativity, the internationalization of intellectual discourse, and the growth of an international network of scholars connecting such medieval creative communities as India, Tibet, China, and Byzantium. He argues that “in Western Europe these foreign cultural elements, despite their various origins, were eagerly accepted [and] blended with native institutions” (p. 121). Of particular interest here is his discussion of the ways in which medieval scholars exchanged ideas and conducted medieval-style academic conferences and public debates. This contextualization works against the traditional general perception that most centers of scholarly excellence were isolated islands of creativity. Rather, they were, according to the author, already connected to each other through an elaborate network of medieval-style fellowships and internships.

Beckwith’s account does not of itself constitute a revolution in our interpretation of the history of sciences, yet it will shake many readers’ assumptions about scientific progress and, importantly, their Eurocentric views on medieval and early modern world history. As a teaching resource for faculty, this book would be very useful in stimulating critical rethinking of world history or stirring debates about different views on globalization among participants of undergraduate seminars or advanced survey courses. The author makes an important contribution not only to the field of Central Asian studies, but also to world history by repositioning this region at the center of the medieval world, where indeed it once belonged.

Columbia University
Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan

Rafis Abazov
Zhanat Doskhozina

Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776, by Richard R. Beeman. New York: Basic Books, 2013. 492 pages. \$29.99, cloth.

In the spring of 1774, the British Parliament enacted the Coercive Acts to punish its American colonies for the Boston Tea Party. These punitive laws, which closed the port of Boston and drastically reduced colonial political power in Massachusetts, were intended to penalize the revolutionary fanatics in New England. Richard R. Beeman, Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania and author of the best recent history of the constitutional convention, begins his narrative of the two years before the Declaration of Independence when the Continental Congress first meets in September 1774.

Beeman joins several other prominent historians in writing popular histories of the mid-1770s. In 2004, David Hackett Fischer’s *Washington’s Crossing* won a Pulitzer Prize; two years later, David McCullough’s *1776* told the history of the early revolution

within the space of one calendar year. Nathaniel Philbrick hit the bestseller lists with *Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution* in mid-2013. Joseph Ellis, probably the best-known historian of the Revolution and its leaders, released *Revolutionary Summer* in late 2013. Now, Richard Beeman, author of *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution*, gives the famous period a try.

Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor: The Forging of American Independence, 1774-1776 has no argument to make and explores no new questions. However, it is a gracefully written popular history that will help non-specialists understand a critical and complex period in American history. Beeman traces the divergent interests of the American colonies over almost two years, beginning seven months before the Battles of Lexington and Concord and ending with a unanimous declaration of independence in July 1776. (Though New York state did not allow its delegation to approve the document until later in July.) This story is mostly a history of the Continental Congress, as it struggled to chart a course for the thirteen colonies. It was hobbled by its lack of actual constitutional power and an inability to require any colony to do what it did not want to. Two major characters, John Adams and John Dickinson, represent two opposed philosophies in the narrative. Adams was an opinionated and committed patriot, while Dickinson wanted to find a peaceful solution to the conflict within the British Empire. Beeman traces much of his story with these two men.

Beeman's story includes many well-known revolutionary characters, such as Jefferson and Washington, as well as lesser-known leaders, including Thomas Paine and Sam Adams. Brief and finely written biographies are scattered throughout the book, which is more than 400 pages. Beeman's short biographies are excellent sources for lecture material and the chapter on Thomas Paine provides a fine character study and highlights the importance of the forgotten founding father. The narrative is punctuated by famous events, ranging from the Battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill to the publication of *Common Sense*. While highly readable, it suffers from a very large cast of characters that may confuse some readers. (This is the unfortunate result of a complicated history of a government run by committee.)

Our Lives, Our Fortunes and Our Sacred Honor is not a book that will be immediately useful as a classroom text. It is too long to be used as a monograph for students; this is a dense, complex book written at a college level, even if it aims for a more popular audience. The narrative is focused on the political history from 1774 to 1776. Social history is absent here and the lives of average people are not a part of Beeman's story. Other sources, such as Robert Middlekauff's *The Glorious Cause* or Pauline Maier's *From Resistance to Revolution*, will be more useful in classes on the American Revolution. Books that provide an alternative to mainstream political history, such as Gary Nash's *The Unknown American Revolution* or Billy Smith's *The Lower Sort: Philadelphia's Laboring People*, will be helpful to instructors and students. However, Beeman's book will remain the source for a history of the Continental Congress before the Declaration of Independence.

Iowa State University

Jeff Bremer

FDR and the Jews, by Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard Press, 2013. 433 pages. \$29.95, cloth.

Did Franklin D. Roosevelt turn his back on European Jews during those critical years when their very survival was at stake? This question has attracted the attention of historians over

the past six decades, with provocative titles such as *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*, *No Haven for the Oppressed*, *The Jews Were Expendable*, David Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews* (1984), and most recently, Raphael Medoff's *FDR and the Holocaust: A Breach of Faith* (2013). Books that defend Roosevelt include *The Myth of Rescue* by William D Rubinstein (1997), *Roosevelt and the Holocaust* by Robert Bier (2006), and *Saving the Jews* by Robert N. Rosen (2006).

Central to this controversy was whether the rescue was even possible, and whether the Roosevelt administration was crassly indifferent to the fate of European Jews. Was the president a callous politician who took Jews for granted? Specifically, what latitude did FDR have with Congress and with the State Department? Critics of the president argue that international conferences convened for the purpose of rescuing Jews were merely cosmetic efforts and that Roosevelt acquiesced to the State Department's attempt to severely limit Jewish refugees trying to enter the United States. As evidence of such deceit and indifference, they point to Roosevelt's refusal to meet with concerned rabbis; the decision not to accept Jews aboard the *St. Louis*, which was then forced to return to Europe; and the administration's reluctance to bomb Auschwitz and other concentration camps.

Breitman and Lichtman do not seek to exonerate Roosevelt from these charges, but rather they attempt to provide context and nuance in explaining the president's decisions. They are careful to point out that the president's administration was operating in a climate of intense isolationist and anti-immigrant pressures and a heightened anti-Semitic feeling that limited many of his options. He was sensitive to charges that he was giving too much attention to Jewish matters, and even some American Jewish leaders cautioned him against doing too much lest unleashing a violent anti-Semitic backlash. Nevertheless, the authors argue, Roosevelt worked behind the scenes to loosen immigration restrictions and to seek to resettle European Jews in Latin America and elsewhere. They conclude that while FDR early in his administration placed other priorities ahead of assisting European Jews, and that he could have done more to persuade Congress and the State Department to ease immigration restrictions, on the whole, he deserves credit for the rescue of as many as 200,000 Jews. This was no mean accomplishment given the political climate at home and the nation's commitment to subordinating all concerns to the overriding goal of defeating the enemy by unconditional surrender.

While it is unlikely that this book will end the controversy, *FDR and the Jews* represents a necessary corrective to accusations that Roosevelt was unconcerned and apathetic to the victims of Nazi racism. History teachers in particular will benefit from the insights provided in this dispassionate analysis of the challenges and obstacles Roosevelt faced in trying to help European Jews.

Emeritus, California State University, Long Beach

Donald Schwartz

Lady Bird Johnson: An Oral History, by Michael L. Gillette. New York: Oxford Press, 2012. 400 pages. \$29.95, cloth.

Over the course of eighteen years, Michael L. Gillette conducted a series of forty-seven interviews with Lady Bird Johnson, one of the most effective and admired First Ladies. Throughout the course of these interviews, Lady Bird illustrated vibrant experiences of dinners, galas, outings, and even simple interactions within Washington's most influential political circles. Gillette, who ran the LBJ Library's Oral History Program from 1976 to

1991 and was the director for the Center for Legislative Archives at the National Archives, records Lady Bird's intimate narrative of her evolution from a Texan farm girl, through her accompaniment of Lyndon Johnson's political career, through her retirement years as a philanthropist.

Claudia "Lady Bird" Taylor was raised in east Texas by her aunt, who came to live with the Taylor family after the tragic death of Claudia's mother. Aunt Effie was a passive parental figure, as she lacked the knowledge of how to truly guide a child. However, Claudia's father still fulfilled that role, and Aunt Effie taught an appreciation for the beautiful details of life. What Aunt Effie truly taught Claudia was what she didn't want: Claudia knew that she did not want to be dependent on anyone, for anything. After finishing degrees in journalism and history, as well as obtaining a teaching certification, Lady Bird ventured into the world prepared for anything. Stalling a career decision, she followed a dream of renovating the Brick House, the house she was raised in. However, a cruise around New York City and Washington, D.C. would direct her towards a "whirlwind courtship" that would lead to her marrying the future President, Lyndon B. Johnson (p. 45).

Lady Bird would immerse herself in the culture of politics, accompanying Mr. Johnson through his time in the House of Representatives (maintaining his office while he was away for naval service during World War II), as well as his time in the Senate, as Vice President, and then as President of the United States. She remained encouraging and supportive throughout her husband's political career. Lady Bird felt as though her role as First Lady would "emerge in deeds, not words" (p. 346). Her deeds would come as beautification not only of the White House, but also of roads, parks, and the nation as a whole. The National Wildflower Research Center, which is now the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, became the focus of her later years in life, along with her efforts on the beautification of her home state of Texas.

The narrative of Lady Bird presented by Michael Gillette is unlike any other, as Washington's elite was dominated by men until recently. The experience of women, supportive and encouraging, is often neglected in history. Lady Bird's contributions to not only her husband's career, but also to our nation, are intimately explicated within her narrative. An insight into a woman's experience in Washington during the mid-20th century provides a new and refreshing perspective of the inner workings of Washington. Gillette conducted a lengthy series of thorough interviews with Lady Bird Johnson, vibrantly bringing to life her experiences from childhood, and throughout the most powerful circles in Washington, D.C. This narrative would be ideally utilized not only in a women's studies course, but also in political science courses in early undergraduate courses. The narrative presented allows readers to feel as though they are experiencing these events that are not often explored in political science education.

Austin Peay State University

Naomi Rendina

Blood Sisters: The Women Behind the Wars of the Roses, by Sarah Gristwood. New York: Basic Books, 2013. 390 pages. \$29.99, cloth.

The Wars of the Roses, or "Cousins' War," is a conflict that many historians find difficult to deal with. It is hard to define and hard to describe. As a result, it has been treated not so much by itself, but as a prelude to the rise of the Tudors. The emphasis is on the rise of Henry VII and the key date is 1485. Recently, however, the Wars of the Roses has taken on renewed interest. In the first place, the burial site of King Richard III has been

discovered under a parking lot in Leicester, and secondly, a new series, *The White Queen* (based on the work of Phillipa Gregory), concerning Elizabeth Woodville, Margaret Beaufort, and Anne Neville, is now appearing on television. So the “Cousins’ War” is in the news. Thus, it is very timely that Sarah Gristwood’s *Blood Sisters* has arrived on the scene. Gristwood provides a very useful guide to the conflict. Starting with the 1430 arrival of Queen Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, she carries the story until the death of Henry VII in 1509, recognizing that the war did not end until he was secure in the throne. Gristwood also does a very good job of cutting through the confusion of names, dates, and battles to create a coherent picture of what happened during the period.

In the course of her monograph, Gristwood presents a number of insights into some of the decisive events. For example, she carefully investigates the circumstances surrounding the marriage between Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, considering whether he had a pre-contract with Eleanor Butler, which would have invalidated the match and made their children illegitimate. And she does a nice job dealing with the murder of the princes in the tower. Gristwood goes through all the evidence, discusses all the motives, and points out all the suspects. Gristwood does make it clear, however, that Richard was the major force in creating the circumstances that led to their death.

The “sisters” in her monograph are well treated. Margaret of Anjou took the most active role in politics and war, due to the incapacity of her husband, and comes off as tragic figure. Elizabeth Woodville was plagued by her background as a commoner, while her daughter, Elizabeth of York, added important legitimacy to the claim of her husband, Henry VII. Anne Neville, the wife of Richard III, comes off as a pawn who had an unhappy life. Of all the women, Margaret Beaufort was outstanding. She was a shrewd, intelligent advisor and survivor who navigated the political waters during almost this whole period. She chose her marriages with care and steered the path to the throne for her son Henry VII. Despite her connections to him, she remained active and at liberty. Margaret is an excellent example of Gristwood’s argument that women were often exempt from punishment at this time.

Gristwood writes well and keeps the reader interested with well-chosen anecdotes. She also points out the routine and tasks that were part of the queen’s responsibility. In addition, she has a very useful section of explanatory notes. There is also a beautiful set of illustrations from medieval texts, showing the skill of their compilers. There is a comprehensive bibliography, but this reviewer noticed the omission of Paul Murray Kendall’s worthy *Richard III*.

There is quite a bit of information in this book, but sometimes there is too much. The item-by-item rundown of menus at banquets and the detailed description of clothing is unnecessary and diverting. Moreover, in dealing with the guilt of Richard III, the author could have dealt with the later evidence concerning the princes, such as the discovery of the two boys’ skeletons found in the bloody tower during the reign of Charles II. This being said, scholars will find this a very helpful study, while it also will appeal to the general reader. Teachers should have no hesitation in suggesting it to students who will find it readable and a valuable source for term papers.

University of New Hampshire

Marc Schwarz

The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East, edited by Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013. 274 pages. \$27.00, paper.

With the onset of uprisings across the Arabic-speaking Middle East in late 2010, it was only a matter of time before attempts to document what has collectively become known as the “Arab Spring” emerged in virtually all quarters of the academic, journalistic, and policymaking worlds. In publishing *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East*, political scientist Mark Haas and historian David Lesch expand on a growing body of “Arab Spring” literature with the more focused objective of providing students and non-specialists with a broad but equally nuanced overview of the uprisings. Despite the inherent challenge of reflecting on events becoming more complex in real-time, the authors succeed in de-constructing the “Arab Spring” and in presenting a useful tool for teachers of Middle Eastern history and politics at both the high school and university level.

In *The Arab Spring*, Haas and Lesch showcase the work of thirteen specialists, including social anthropologists, historians, and political scientists, to offer country-specific analyses, regional assessments, and insights into the international implications of the uprisings. The essays appear according to the chronological order of the uprisings before the book turns to explore the absence of revolutions in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Essays then examine the policies of the key non-Arab regional actors, Turkey, Iran, and Israel, and the book ends with two lucid essays on the Russian and American responses respectively. The historian of modern Syria, James Gelvin, concludes by highlighting some of the major misconceptions of the uprisings, mainly that they emerged in a vacuum without precedents. Each of the contributors draws on different methodologies to address the most pressing questions of the Arab Spring. Why has the Arab Spring re-shaped the politics of some countries while others, as Steve Yetiv describes Saudi Arabia, remain “springless?” Is it appropriate to speak of common causes of the revolutions, like failed neoliberal policies, a “youth bulge”, rising commodity prices, and online social media, or were the uprisings the result of unique local circumstances? Interspersed throughout the essays are some revealing, first-hand observations. Lesch, for example, relates how he was stopped at customs on a visit to Syria in 2007. A colonel of the state secret police, the *mukhabarat*, dangled what Lesch assumed to be a loaded pistol in front of him before finally confirming with Assad’s office that Lesch had indeed been invited to visit the country. The experience was a stark reminder of the arbitrary power, but also of the independence of the *mukhabarat* under Assad.

The primary contribution of the work is that it lays out an accessible framework for students who have little prior exposure to contemporary Middle Eastern politics to engage with the events from Tunisia to Bahrain across time and space. Most of the contributors correctly situate the revolutions within longer historical trajectories. Mary-Jane Deeb does this most effectively in her essay on Libya, but in some cases, the switch from a historical debate to contemporary analysis, as in Julia Clancy-Smith’s worthy discussion of regional tensions and corruption in Tunisia, might be confusing to readers with little to no background. The main limitation of the book, as the authors concede, is simply that it was published too soon. This affects all of the essays, but some more than others. In their piece on Iran, for example, Reza Marashi and Trita Parsi emphasize the possibility of closer ties between Iran and Egypt and cite the opening of the Rafah crossing with Gaza as an early sign of a more sympathetic Egyptian position on Hamas and Iran. The September 2012 Hamas-Israel conflict, however, showed that the new Morsi government was committed to acting as a mediator rather than a facilitator of local Iranian aims, and responded to joint American-Israeli pressure in flooding up to 200 tunnels used to smuggle weapons and goods into Gaza. In other areas, the absence of a chapter on Yemen is curious considering the significance of political changes in that country, while a chapter on European Union foreign policy might have provided a useful comparative perspective alongside the sections on Russia and the United States.

These minor shortcomings notwithstanding, *The Arab Spring* accomplishes what Haas and Lesch set out to achieve in their introduction. Either as supplementary reading or as an introduction to different methodological approaches to studying the most recent uprisings, the book serves as an especially valuable resource. It could no doubt be used with much success at the undergraduate level and seems equally suited for high school students in advanced placement courses.

Pembroke College

Max Reibman

Civil War Dynasty: The Ewing Family of Ohio, by Kenneth J. Heineman. New York: New York University Press, 2013. 385 pages. \$35.00, cloth.

Thomas Ewing, Sr., sired an impressive family that influenced the shape of Ohio and national history in the mid-nineteenth century. Three of his sons became generals in the Union army during the Civil War, and his adopted son, William T. Sherman, rose to become one of the greatest generals of America. Ewing himself was involved in activities that built the Western United States before and during the conflict. A lawyer and politician, he criticized and supported a range of important men in politics and watched over a family of intelligent, ambitious, and sometimes hyperactive people.

Historian Kenneth J. Heineman, whose previous works have dealt with twentieth-century American history, aptly calls Ewing's family a Civil War dynasty. The brood included Hugh Boyle Ewing, who commanded a division in Sherman's Fifteenth Corps; Thomas Ewing, Jr., who contended with a brutal guerrilla war in Missouri and ably commanded a Union force against the Confederate invasion of that state in 1864; and Charles Ewing, who followed his adopted brother Sherman throughout much of the war. The cast of characters includes John Sherman, the brother of William Tecumseh, who became a U.S. Senator from Ohio. One will also find many references to James G. Blaine, Abraham Lincoln, and the Frank P. Blair family in the pages of this book.

Heineman's study lends itself to classroom use because of the breadth of coverage and the significance of his subject. A range of topics is covered, including economic development of the west, partisan politics on the state and national level from the antebellum period to the post-war era, the history of Kansas before the Civil War, the role of Catholics in Protestant America (Thomas, Sr., married a Catholic woman and accommodated a multi-religious family). Even the trial of the Lincoln conspirators is given attention because Thomas, Jr., represented Samuel Mudd in his trial. Many Civil War campaigns are dealt with as well, from those in western Virginia to Shiloh, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and the Carolinas.

The book is based on very sound research. In fact, Heineman has done a thorough job of searching out the archival sources, and many members of the Ewing dynasty left collections of unpublished papers at various archives. He also has covered most of the relevant published primary and secondary sources. Perhaps the strongest asset of the book is the writing style. Heineman sweeps through complicated subjects and ranges widely across a host of sub-topics with pungent phrases in an attempt to capture what he sees as the essence of the material he found in his research. This allowed the author to cover a great deal of ground in only 289 pages of text and it makes for a very good reading experience for students at the college level and secondary level.

For the seasoned scholar of the Civil War era, the book also has value in similar ways, but its usefulness would have been enhanced if a bibliography had been included.

Heineman's unfamiliarity with military history also comes through, at least to a reader who already is steeped in the sources and controversies attending the campaigns. He makes far less use of the *Official Records* than he should have done, given that this multi-volume compilation contains literally thousands of documents penned by the four Ewing clan members who served in the Union army. He also avoids most of the recently published studies of the campaigns he surveys. Heineman often positioned his interpretation in ways that prejudice reality. For example, in order to emphasize Thomas, Jr.'s achievement in defending Fort Davidson during the Confederate invasion of Missouri in 1864, he wrongly disparages the fort's defensive capabilities. Rather than a mere pile of dirt, it was actually well designed and constructed as attested by the successful defense by a handful of Union soldiers against a much larger Confederate force. That impressive defensive victory was won at least as much by military engineering as by Thomas Ewing's leadership.

Every book has its flaws, and the ones to be found in *Civil War Dynasty* are minor compared to its assets. Highly recommended for Civil War students and scholars, and an apt reading assignment for classes dealing with the Civil War, Ohio history, or mid-nineteenth-century America, it is a welcome addition to the literature.

Lincoln Memorial University

Earl J. Hess

Russia's People of Empire: Life Stories from Eurasia, 1500 to the Present, edited by Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012. 384 pages. \$90.00, cloth. \$35.00, paper.

The key development in the historiography of Russia and the Soviet Union in recent decades has arguably been what some have called the "imperial turn." Recognizing that the USSR fragmented along the lines of ethno-territorial units that the Soviet state itself created—and that ethnic Russians comprised only half of the Soviet population—historians have increasingly looked beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg for their subjects, producing a dramatically more complex and compelling picture of Eurasian history in the process. Rarely, however, has their work been presented in a format as accessible as this volume, which distills many of the key findings into thirty-one brief (ten pages apiece) microhistorical studies of individual "people of empire." Spanning five centuries and four major political entities—Muscovy, the Russian Empire, the USSR, and the Russian Federation—it is certain to be a landmark in the field, not least because of its great potential for classroom use.

Editors Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland begin with an outstanding introduction that previews the book's major themes and offers a helpful discussion of the relationship between history, biography, and microhistory. Their central theme is "the utter ordinariness and omnipresence of ethnic and religious diversity in Russian life" (p. 8). As they note, the longstanding historiographical habit of bifurcating the study of Russia's past into "Russian" history and the history of the empire (of "non-Russians," of "the periphery") has sometimes done more to obscure than to explain. Far from being a "spatial and thematic addendum, an extension of Russia's history," they write, the history of the empire was a "dynamic of diversity and power that turned like a drive shaft through all facets of the country's development" (p. 9). Collaboration and cooperation between the peoples of the empire and the state (itself comprised of a diverse array of people) was no less important to building and maintaining imperial rule than military conquest. In an empire in which "cross-cultural lives" were common, identity was often as much a product

of performance as of birth—sometimes opening doors, sometimes closing them. Sorting out who was “Russian” from who was “non” was, in any case, a messy, often impossible task. The English term “Russian,” it is worth adding, causes significant confusion, as it conflates two Russian-language adjectives—*russkii* (“ethnic Russian”) and *rossiiskii* (“of the Russian state”)—with distinctly different connotations.

The variety of the chapters is remarkable, and all focus on illuminating “imperial lives” that reflect the theme of cultural mixing. Some chapters feature famous subjects: a Georgian cobbler’s son, Ioseb Jughasvili (1873-1953), better known as “Stalin”; a German Princess, Sophie Auguste Frederike von Anhalt-Zerbst (1729-1756), famous as “Catherine the Great”; a Ukrainian writer who came to occupy a leading place in the “golden age” of Russian literature, Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852). Most of the subjects, however, are less familiar: a Tajik man’s fourth wife, Jahon Obidova (1900-1967), who fled her home and became an exemplary communist; the Tatar Khan Sain Bulat (?-1616), who converted to Orthodoxy—and thus became “Simeon Bekbulatovich”—before briefly replacing Ivan “the Terrible” as tsar and ending his days as the “Elder Stefan” in a Moscow monastery; Vladislav Surkov (born Aslambek Andarkebovich Dudaev in 1964), the half-Chechen heavy-metalist known today for his pivotal role in shaping the Putin and Medvedev administrations. As these examples suggest, the book features a diverse cast of characters that illustrate the book’s overarching themes well. (It would, however, have been helpful if more chapters had featured women: twenty-five of the thirty-one essays focus on men.)

Teachers of Russian, European, and World History have much to gain from this book, both as a resource for preparing courses and, for some, as a course text. It will prove a valuable tool for those seeking to make course themes more meaningful by grounding class lectures and readings in the stories of “real people.” Not surprisingly, it will be most useful for teachers of Russian history. Many of the latter have remarked how challenging it can be, given time constraints and the difficulty and diversity of the content, to integrate the many peoples of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union into their courses in a meaningful, yet accessible way. Assigning essays from this book throughout the semester could do much to remedy the problem. Moreover, with its long timeframe and short chapters, it would make an excellent supplementary text to assign alongside a standard textbook, for it would challenge students to reconcile the macrohistorical narratives the textbook provides with the microhistorical ones that these essays develop so well.

Aurora University

Mark Soderstrom

The Hopkins Touch: Harry Hopkins and the Forging of the Alliance to Defeat Hitler, by David L. Roll. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 510 pages. \$34.95, cloth.

The successful campaign against Hitler’s Germany would not have been possible without the cooperation and collaboration of the Big Three, and, according to David Roll, the collaboration and cooperation of the Big Three would not have been possible without Harry Hopkins. Acting often as an unofficial advisor to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Hopkins cultivated a genuinely warm relationship with each member of the Big Three. Even Stalin commented that Hopkins could be believed and trusted because he spoke “from the soul” (p. 409). After proving his value as a New Dealer, Hopkins worked his way into FDR’s confidence. Once war broke out, Hopkins travelled back and forth across the world,

forging the links, and dampening the fires between the Big Three that culminated in the successful conference at Yalta. What made Hopkins so successful in gaining the trust of the Big Three was an innate ability—the Hopkins Touch—to know what to say and when to say it. With disagreements over Lend-Lease, the African campaign, the opening of a second front, and the post-war European order threatening to shatter an already fragile alliance, Hopkins always managed to keep the major players in the game, sometimes with nothing more than a telegram.

Using a wealth of archival sources, and new material unavailable to previous Hopkins biographers, Roll has successfully made a compelling case for the pivotal role played by Hopkins. The last major biography of Hopkins was written decades ago, and Roll argues that, due to the availability of new sources, the time for a fresh look at Hopkins was due. Though the title suggests a focus on Hopkins' wartime record, the volume really is a complete biography. And while a biographical approach helps the reader understand the man, it sometimes detracts from the larger goal stated in the subtitle. Next to that, the biggest critique is that Roll's objectivity wanes, and by the end of the book, it's clear that Roll has a deep admiration and respect for his subject, but that remains the pitfall of any biography—it's overly laudatory or overly critical; why else would an author take up the task of a biography if not to ultimately vindicate or condemn the subject?

In classroom use, this book would only find a real home at the graduate level, where courses on U.S. diplomacy could easily benefit from its detailed exploration of the complex, conflicting, and sometimes comical dance of foreign relations. It would also make a valuable contribution to any graduate-level course examining FDR's presidency specifically or studying the political side of military planning. Students in these classes will find the text clear and easy to read, neatly organized, and adequately cited. The volume is fully indexed, with a complete bibliography and a small photograph collection. At any level below graduate, however, the book really doesn't have a place, except perhaps in crafting a senior thesis on American diplomacy. While Roll has made a compelling case for Hopkins' essentiality, survey texts have their hands full covering the other aspects of World War II to devote much time to including an unofficial member of FDR's cabinet. Individual chapters might find a place as part of a course readings packet, but doing so reduces the overall thesis. If it is to be used, the book needs to be read and discussed in its entirety, and that can only reasonably happen at the graduate level.

Blinn College

Christopher Thomas

Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat, by Bee Wilson. New York: Basic Books, 2012. 310 pages. \$26.99, paper.

With the growing popularity of cooking shows on television and a network dedicated to food preparation, Bee Wilson's *Consider the Fork* should find a receptive audience in the United States. Wilson, who earned her doctorate from Trinity College, Cambridge, writes extensively on the history of food, and the enthusiasm she displays for the art of cooking in the pages of *Consider the Fork* certainly dispels negative stereotypes of British cuisine and food preparation. Different from most food histories that focus upon consumption, Wilson's book is "an exploration of the way the implements we use in the kitchen affect what we eat, how we eat, and what we feel about what we eat" (p. xii). Thus, Wilson provides readers with a technological investigation of why we eat the way we do.

And similar to modern electronic technology, the history of food implements is not a story of consistent progress. Like the eight-track tape player, food preparation innovations such as the water-powered egg whisk or magnet-operated spit roaster have found their way into the dustbin of history. The real strength of Wilson's work is getting us to think critically about the innovations we take for granted and how they have altered the way we eat and live. For example, the boiling of water requires the development of pots and pans to hold the water, along with the domestication of fire to heat the water. Wilson also points out the dangers of food preparation due to kitchen accidents caused by fires and the use of knives. She even suggests that table manners in Western culture are due to the necessity of placing some restraints upon the person eating next to you armed with a knife for cutting meat. Wilson also acknowledges the convenience of the microwave, but she speculates that the social experience of gathering around a fire and sharing stories has been lost. Perhaps this explains the continuing fascination with the backyard barbeque as a site of social interaction. Wilson also discusses the use of common measurements to impose some order upon the chaos of cooking, while in her examination of ice and refrigeration in the preservation of food and changing our eating habits, Wilson observes that the refrigerator now serves as the focal point of most kitchens.

Wilson writes in a straight-forward fashion, often illustrated with personal anecdotes, which should make her work accessible to general audiences as well as students at both the secondary and university levels. Her pithy style is quite apparent in the following quotation regarding eating with a knife and fork. Wilson writes, "We often overattribute efficiency to the technologies we are accustomed to. Because we use knives and forks every day, we do not notice how they hamper us. Our table manners require us to use two hands to perform with less dexterity what chopsticks can do well with only one" (p. 195). This passage also illuminates the international and historical perspective Wilson brings to her subject through extensive research into anthropological sources. *Consider the Fork* includes an extensive bibliography, but inexplicably, the volume fails to include an index.

Although not addressing possible pedagogical applications, Wilson's book could certainly be employed to good use by history teachers at both the secondary and university levels. *Consider the Fork* would make excellent supplemental reading for any specialized course dealing with food preparation or consumption, including home economics courses. A close reading of Wilson's text would also dispel the notion of some students that food preparation is strictly the preserve of women. For more general history classes, there is considerable student interest in social history and everyday life, such as one finds at Colonial Williamsburg, which may be tapped through classroom food preparation. In addition, students at the secondary level always seem to be hungry, and incorporating some of the historical examples of food technology and preparation discussed by Wilson would provide some culinary delights for the history classroom. Thus, history teachers might peruse the pages of *Consider the Fork* for some interesting classroom applications.

One caveat with Wilson's book is the question of social class. Wilson does a good job of historically examining issues of class in food preparation, noting that some more efficient modes of culinary technology, such as the egg beater and mixers, were implemented when slaves and servants became less of an option for kitchen labor. In her survey of the modern kitchen, Wilson seems more fixated upon the middle class. For example, she talks about how easy it is to prepare a pancake breakfast from scratch. Yet, for the working poor, who might be holding two jobs to make ends meet, frozen waffles might be the more attractive choice after working a couple of shifts. Also, the urban deserts in which there are few opportunities for the poor to purchase fresh food

provide few alternatives in food preparation, and the joy of cooking an omelet for lunch, which Wilson describes at the conclusion of her book, is not available for all. While keeping these class considerations in mind, history teachers should find much to enrich the curriculum in Wilson's *Consider the Fork*.

Sandia Preparatory School, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Ron Briley

Reading Like a Historian: Teaching Literacy in Middle and High School History Classrooms, by Sam Wineburg, Daisy Martin, and Chauncey Monte-Sano. New York: Teachers College Press, 2013. 155 pages. \$28.95, paper.

What more can be said in praise of *Reading Like a Historian*? Lauded by such educational leaders as Diane Ravitch, Grant Wiggins, and Linda Darling-Hammond, the book also recently won the James Harvey Robinson Prize from the American Historical Association. Indeed, this groundbreaking book—carefully aligned to the Common Core—gives teachers who want to chart a course toward inquiry-based learning many of the tools they will need to get started.

The authors present eight distinct lessons that address the arc of U.S. History, from disputed accounts of Pocahontas and the battle at Lexington Green, to conflicting stories about the Dust Bowl and Rosa Parks. Was Lincoln a racist? Did women benefit from the spread of electricity? Each lesson sets up a historical question and then provides various, often conflicting, materials that students must examine in order to come to some conclusion. Instead of learning names, dates, and facts, the lessons lead students through the process of reading, and thinking, like a historian. At no point do the authors advocate abandoning the textbook altogether. Instead, they offer these lessons as a way to expand traditional approaches to “covering” American history in a way that teaches the very critical thinking, reading, and writing skills mandated by the Common Core.

Still, *Reading Like a Historian* should not be seen as a “just add water” solution for teachers who want to embark on an inquiry approach. AP and honors history students may be able to jump right in, but the average high school student will need more prep work than the book provides. In their defense, the authors correctly argue that historical thinking should not be reserved only for those students who love history or who thrive in the classroom. Sources have been adapted, and in some cases, modified to meet the needs of students who struggle with reading. Each chapter includes background information, suggested sources for additional research, graphic organizers, source material, visual tools, and student worksheets. Lessons are outlined, but not prescribed, in order to provide maximum flexibility. Nonetheless, teachers will still need to provide significant scaffolding and preliminary skill-building for students who are inexperienced in sourcing, reading for content, contextualizing, or corroborating sources before they can expect to be successful using the lessons in the book. It's also difficult to imagine middle school students being able to use most lessons in this text without extensive adaptation. Indeed, teachers who themselves are inexperienced with this approach will need more coaching than this book provides before they can crack the cover and get started.

Beyond this caveat, however, lies a deeper potential problem that teachers will need to consider. Missing from this book is the critical step of helping students to care about these issues—or history generally. “Did Pocahontas rescue John Smith?” is the correct historical question to ask when examining different accounts of the story, including the

version created by Disney. But without providing students with larger, more essential questions to frame the lessons, *Reading Like a Historian* risks being an intellectual exercise for the academic elite, rather than the democratizing citizenship tool the authors claim it is. Teachers will themselves need to find ways to excite and motivate students, perhaps by crafting essential questions that are more compelling and that help all students, even those without extensive cultural or academic references to Pocahontas, or Lexington, or the Dust Bowl, to engage emotionally and intellectually with the past.

Reading Like a Historian is an incredibly important first step in the direction away from obedience to coverage and toward inspiring students to think and ask questions. It is worthy of the praise it has received and teachers should be excited to read it and give it a try. Let us hope it will be only the beginning of an entirely new approach to teaching U.S. history, inspiring the creation of many more books advancing its important purposes.

University of Illinois at Chicago

Julie L. Peters