

## Reviews

*The Straight State : Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*, by Margot Canaday. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. 320 pages. \$29.95, cloth.

This slender book packs a real wallop. Everything about it—concept, argument, sources, style, and pertinence to contemporary issues—demonstrates excellence in historical scholarship. No surprise, then, that Margot Canaday’s first book is the recipient of several awards, including the prestigious Ellis W. Hawley Prize from the Organization of American Historians.

Canaday chose three areas of the modern American state (Bureau of Immigration, the military, and federal welfare) to illustrate the tandem relationship between state formation and homosexual identity. Her purpose is twofold. She aims to demonstrate the close connection between the history of sexuality and political and legal history. She also wants to add something new to the history of sexuality by showing that the U.S. government did not embark on a campaign of discrimination against homosexuals because of their “sudden” visibility during World War II. Rather, since the beginning of the twentieth century, as the government consolidated its own bureaucratic power, it recognized and attempted to regulate what Canaday refers to as sex and gender nonconformity, ultimately relegating nonconformists to second-class citizenship.

Part I of the book, “Nascent Policing,” covers the pre-World War II years. Through three chapters, one on each of her chosen topics, Canaday explains how the government’s concern over sexual nonconformity was actually folded into attempts to manage larger problems in American society such as poverty and crime. In the first chapter on immigration policies from 1900-1924, Canaday recounts how federal immigration officials were on the lookout for people they labeled prostitutes, pederasts, and sodomites. Although no specific law existed yet to bar them because of sexuality, occasionally these people were prevented from entering the United States and some were even deported, based on the “likely to become a public charge” clause of the immigration law (p. 21). The second chapter focuses on the military in the World War I era. This may seem like an abrupt shift from immigration policies, but Canaday smoothly establishes the connection. Important immigration officials abandoned their positions for work in the military when the United States went to war in 1917, prompting an exchange of information between the two bureaucracies. Chapter three explores welfare during the early New Deal, particularly programs directed at transient men, many of whom were World War

I veterans. Thus, these growing government bureaucracies increasingly attempted to identify “homosexuality” and marginalize the people associated with it.

The second part of the book, covering the same three subjects in reverse order, addresses “Explicit Regulation.” Canaday opens with the topic of welfare, exploring the 1944 GI Bill and its role in “settling men down” after the disruptions of wartime (p. 137). Homosexual veterans could and did benefit from the bill, but only if they kept their sexuality secret. In addition to closeting these veterans, this resulted in second-class citizenship for homosexuals since Veterans Administration officials could then deny that homosexuals had met their military obligations. This section’s chapter on the military focuses on women, and Canaday shows that in the cold war period, women as a class, rather than individuals, were policed for nonconforming sexual behavior. The resulting anti-lesbian policies helped reinforce gender hierarchy in the military and in citizenship. The final chapter returns to the topic of immigration law, which beginning with the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, drew from military policies in establishing methods for excluding and deporting immigrants for homosexual behavior or for being homosexual. By the end, Canaday has proven her contention that both homosexual identity and modern citizenship “crystallized” along with the rise of the U.S. federal bureaucracy (p. 255).

*The Straight State*, compact and clearly written, is most appropriate for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. It could be successfully used in a variety of upper-level history courses and graduate seminars, from broader ones on Twentieth-Century America to more specialized ones on the History of Sexuality, Gender History, the History of Modern American Government, and even Military History. It would also do particularly well in a history methods course. This is a perfect book for students to take apart and examine to learn how history is written. Canaday’s introduction is a model of clarity. Her sources are impressive (and kudos to Princeton for its use of footnotes), and she pulls her argument through each of the chapters, showing how it works. Moreover, the book’s fascinating subject matter provides much to think about in connection with contemporary political and social issues.

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Theresa Kaminski

*Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power*, by Gene Dattel. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2009. 416 pages. \$28.95, cloth.

The central argument of *Cotton and Race in the Making of America* is that cotton was, in fact, king, not just of the antebellum south, but of the United States as a whole from roughly the development of the cotton gin (which may or may not have been Eli Whitney’s) through 1930. The author offers a broad narrative of the development of the United States in the nineteenth century, keeping cotton at the center of all aspects of that growth, linking the rural south with the urban north, Mississippi slaves with Wall Street, and westward expansion with London finance. Post-Civil War, Dattel points out that blacks would remain essentially trapped in sharecropping by debt peonage in the south and a lack of opportunities elsewhere as racism did not stop at the Mason-Dixon Line—and the north did not welcome them.

The strength of this book is the author’s knowledge of finance, but in his drive to make cotton the single most important factor in the development of the United States, he discards the production of other crops produced via plantation agriculture which predated

the cotton boom and helped to structure the legal, social, and economic framework of slavery. While this fits the simple narrative message of the book, it also reduces the south to cotton plantations populated by rich whites and downtrodden, exploited slaves, disregarding generations of scholarship exposing the “many souths” contained in the region. Importantly, it also eliminates tobacco regions, the sugar plantations of Louisiana, and the rice-producing South Carolina Lowcountry, all of which continued to use slave labor and turn a profit before and during the cotton boom. The usage of slavery within urban and industrial settings is also seen as irrelevant since, as the author argues, a significant number of slaves could not have been used effectively in anything other than cotton production. How he arrives at this conclusion is completely unclear, as unlike other studies dealing with the economics of slavery, readers are not provided with the data and methodology which led to these findings.

Scholars will find similar frustrations throughout this work. In the first place, this book is written for a more general audience and as such only rarely engages the deep historiography of the nineteenth century. The lack of references mistakenly will give readers the impression that this is a groundbreaking new study when it is, in fact, a synthetic product that owes debts to works not mentioned in the very short “notes” section. Secondly, the book relies on the assumption that readers will be surprised at the level of connection between the north and south over cotton and shared American ideas about the meanings of race, but most with a basic understanding of U.S. history will likely already know this.

Though race is prominently mentioned in the title of this book, the concept is only superficially explored. Decades of scholarship have been devoted to uncovering the agency of African Americans within slavery and the Jim Crow period, yet Dattel constantly discusses them as objects whose lives were bound by forces completely out of their own control—the market, the whims of whites, and the determinism of cotton production. Race itself is viewed as static with meanings apparently so well-defined by the desire for cotton that even landmark legal decisions are given little space within this narrative. For example, there are five sentences on Dred Scott and very little sense of how racial ideology prior to the Civil War functioned to protect and perpetuate slavery.

The discussion of international finance and its relationship to cotton production might be useful for college courses dealing with nineteenth-century America, but probably only in conjunction with other works offering a more complete look at the social and political divides between whites and blacks, the north and the south, and the antebellum and postbellum periods. The narrative structure makes this an easy read, but lacks the kind of deep analysis of other histories dealing with slavery and the economics of the era.

Troy University

Timothy R. Buckner

*The Axe and the Oath: Ordinary Life in the Middle Ages*, by Robert Fossier. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. 384 pages. \$35.00, cloth.

In *The Axe and the Oath*, Robert Fossier, one of France’s most distinguished medieval historians, recounts an entertaining, if unexpected, history of everyday man in the Middle Ages. Presumably, he writes for a general readership (there are no references or bibliography); certainly, he has no interest in conversing with specialists whom, he readily acknowledges, will surely find their “teeth on edge” (p. xii) at his overly broad

generalizations and simplistic treatment of chronological and geographical distinctions. He writes hastily and in a casual, conversational voice that scholars without his proven publishing record can ill-afford to do. Many readers will find his chatty asides and self-effacing claims refreshing; still others will applaud his bold comparisons between medieval and modern humans. “[M]edieval man is us” (p. 383), proclaims Fossier. With little hesitancy, he sweeps aside indisputable differences in political, economic, and social conditions to make his case that the daily, material concerns of ordinary men and women living in the Middle Ages were not so different from those of modern individuals. Of course, such universalizing tendencies will not sit well with most critically minded readers, as Fossier knows. His frequent asides often leave the reader thinking that the author enjoys undermining his own deterministic argument simply because he can. A case in point is his breezy discussion of illness in the medieval and modern context. After dismissing the superficial parallelism of the medieval plague and the modern AIDS pandemic, and before posing a few asides on such shared “minor miseries” as the common cold and corns on toes, Fossier off-handedly tells the reader that “people were and are under ‘stress’ (a term that dates to 1953 in this usage!)” (p. 12). What an interesting reveal; one that will leave curious students wondering if there is a medieval equivalent to modern stress. In our current sense, is stress merely a convenient excuse for a “state of tension” (p. 198) that also afflicted medieval men and women, or is stress a cultural feature definitively separating our lived experiences from their own? Indeed, medieval man may not be us.

Fossier organizes his humanistic history of medieval peoples into two unequal parts—the human material world, which is by far the more engaging, thought-provoking, and lengthy of the two parts, and human mental “superstructures” à la Marx. Fossier is at his best in pursuit of the material world and he adroitly utilizes a variety of literary, linguistic, botanical, archaeological, and anthroponymic data to describe the medieval social condition. Readers will encounter a multiplicity of lenses through which to view ordinary life including health and illness, food and diet, naming traditions, the ages of life from pregnancy and birth to old age and death, ghosts, privacy, clothing and fashion, sexual relations (licit and otherwise), marriage and kin connections, housing types, household goods, farming practices, as well as other types of work and tools. Given the whirlwind speed with which Fossier presents the various aspects of medieval life, humans’ relationship to the environment and animals (over which, in theory, humans had dominion) receives good attention by comparison. The products of the soil and the forest take center stage with brief forays into the vagaries of the weather and the beneficial and detrimental aspects of fire and water. From falcons and bees to beavers and wolves, Fossier demonstrates that medieval peoples depended upon and utilized the products of a wide array of domesticated and wild animals: It was a complex interaction that ran the gamut from fear and disgust to respect and affection on the part of ordinary men and women.

As for the second part, students who read *The Axe and the Oath* will come away with a cursory understanding of a medieval mentalité privileging aristocratic and clerical conceptions of money, time, order and disorder, peace and honor, law, memory, measurement, sin and penance, good and evil, literacy, and the arts. Unfortunately, the ordinary man makes few appearances in chapters five through seven, a lamentable omission justified on grounds that an ordinary man “probably could not have cared less” about such knowledge anyway. The ordinary woman fares much worse. She is absent almost entirely from *The Axe and the Oath*, which is not surprising given that Fossier is laboring under the serious misconception that medieval “women did not write” (p. 79).

Robert Fossier's portrayal of ordinary life in the Middle Ages is spirited and entertaining, but undergraduates should be advised to read with caution.

Roanoke College

Whitney Leeson

*Projections of Power: The United States and Colonial Southeast Asia, 1919-1941*, by Anne L. Foster. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. 241 pages. \$22.00, paper.

Scholarly studies of American imperialism in Southeast Asia tend to focus on the United States and its interaction in the Philippines after 1898 or America's involvement in Vietnam during the Cold War. In addition, scholars, when studying the imperialism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rarely mention the participation of the United States as an imperial power in Southeast Asia. Anne L. Foster's slim volume, *Projections of Power*, offers a different perspective by analyzing the United States in Southeast Asia during the interwar period from 1919 to 1941 and demonstrates that the United States was an active imperial power in the region during that period.

Foster explains that when the United States first became an imperial power in Southeast Asia in 1898, a fully functional European imperial system was in place. By the end of the First World War, the United States had begun creating a new imperial order in the region based on American consumerism and capitalism while simultaneously taking on European imperial elements such as trade regimes. One of Foster's overall themes in the work is that, not only did America's presence in Southeast Asia bring about political change, but the United States also changed as a result of its interaction with the European imperial powers. For example, Foster points out that American officials worked with their European counterparts to quell radical nationalism and communism in the region while at the same time American officials sought autonomy and political freedom for Southeast Asia. Europeans were at first fearful of America's intentions in the region, but after the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, which emphasized the Japanese and communist threat to Western interests, Europeans found common ground with the Americans. Soon after the conference, "intercolonial cooperation" took place in which American imperial officials would establish friendly relations and share information with their European counterparts.

Foster also explores the economic relationship between Americans, Europeans, and Southeast Asians. Economic interactions were accompanied by American cultural imports, which brought about political and economic change. In one section of the work, Foster explains how Americans perceived their economic model as the ideal paradigm for modernity and eventual self-rule. This often clashed with the European agenda for the region, which focused on maintaining hegemony over Southeast Asians. In exploring American cultural relations, Foster explains the impact that American missionaries and Hollywood had on the region. For example, Foster points out that Americans believed that their cultural power was a force for good and exposing Southeast Asia to this would bring about democratic institutions that would mirror the American example, leading Southeast Asians to become "wealthier, freer and more entertained" (pp. 108-109).

The one flaw of the book is Foster's consistent reference to European imperial strategy as uniformed. Both London and Paris seem to follow one European policy,

while the United States pursued a purely American agenda. Nonetheless, Foster's work is an invaluable source for teachers who want to focus on American foreign relations and imperialism in Southeast Asia during the interwar period. By pointing out the struggle between Western interests and nationalistic movements and juxtaposing Western perceptions of these movements as communist, Foster's volume is an excellent analysis of American colonial history in Southeast Asia for students at the secondary and undergraduate level, but is too narrowly focused for graduate studies. In addition, the volume is a useful reference source and Foster provides a rich bibliography of primary and secondary material that teachers and students alike would find useful in researching the subject further.

*Florida State University*

Alexander Shelby

*Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880-1945*, by Jennifer Guglielmo. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 404 pages. \$39.95, cloth.

"A wave of popular unrest washed over Sicily at the close of the nineteenth century. In town after town, peasants mobilized labor strikes, occupied fields and piazzas, and looted government offices. While the island had a long history of revolt, this marked a new era of social protest. For the first time, women led the social movement and infused the struggle with their own mixture of socialism and spiritualism. The activity began in the autumn of 1892, in the towns surrounding Palermo in the northwestern part of the island. In Monreale, women and children filled the central piazza shouting, 'Down with the municipal government! Long live the union!' After attacking and looting the offices of the city council, they marched toward Palermo crying 'We are hungry!' waving banners with slogans connecting socialism to scripture" (p. 9).

So begins Chapter 1 of Jennifer Guglielmo's landmark study of strong Italian women engaged in radical activism that bridged two centuries. Divided into two parts, one on the Italian immigrant cultural background and another on Italian women's anarchist-socialist political action, Guglielmo's book projects us into the labor struggle in Italy, where future emigrants learned and practiced resistance methods. She then transports us along with the emigrants to New York City; Paterson, New Jersey; and other urban areas, where Italian workers once again found themselves confronting horrendous working conditions. Here, we see Italian women, previously stereotyped as domestic, apolitical, and non-participating in labor activism, in an entirely new role. Guglielmo includes a mini-portrait of Frank Sinatra's mother as an example of an Italian woman who, along with others, worked to ameliorate conditions in the urban industrial setting by "building and sustaining everyday networks of reciprocity and mutual aid; engaging in patterns of subterfuge... and pursuing spiritual work, including healing practices, religious devotion, and the transmission of sacred knowledge to the next generation" (p. 113).

Guglielmo comes from an Italian-American family with a strong female support group, certainly an asset to this study. She researched her subject in Italy and the United States, documented her findings in an extensive bibliography and endnotes, and explored an array of primary and secondary sources in two languages. They range from U.S. Census records, Dillingham Commission Records, anarchist and socialist newspapers and pamphlets, labor union records, theses, unpublished papers, oral interviews, and video-recordings. The result is a more accurate portrait of Italian women than those

of scholars relying exclusively on documents in English. Guglielmo offers effective commentaries on her sources, diligently cites their strengths and limitations, and as a researcher has produced a landmark work.

From an ethnic perspective, Guglielmo's work parallels Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1995) and her previous work, *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (2003) in her treatment of Italians as a minority suffering discrimination. In her new work, she adds the anarchist-socialist dimension to reveal how Italians, unlike the earlier Irish, largely bypassed election politics, and instead mobilized pressure groups to ameliorate working conditions in their attempt to achieve upward mobility in their adopted society. Specifically, she describes Sunday meetings of female Italian workers, storefronts where anarchist and socialist literature was distributed, rallies and picnics where labor tactics were strategized, and speakers who stirred up groups to resist capitalist oppression.

To the lists of more familiar male labor leaders such as Samuel Gompers and Eugene Debs, she adds Maria Roda, Ernestina Cravello, Ninfa Baronio, and numerous others overlooked in previous scholarship. To the list of more familiar labor organizations—the American Federation of Labor and American Brotherhood of Railroad Workers—Guglielmo adds the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and Italian Dressmakers Local 89.

Guglielmo offers new insight to labor and gender scholars who seek fresh information on the anarchist and socialist movement among female workers. Perhaps too complex for other than advanced placement high school students, her work will serve both undergraduate and graduate level students well in offsetting traditional interpretations of immigrant struggles with industrial working conditions. Readers will find Guglielmo's work more than adequately fulfills their expectations as a carefully crafted scholarly work. They will also find her new historical interpretation refreshing, since it refutes a long-held stereotype and brings to life a different portrait of Italian and Italian-American women and the numerous activist roles they played *outside* the home in struggling for their rights as workers and citizens and to "end all systems of oppression and hierarchal authority" (p. 164).

*Center for Holocaust/Genocide Study, Drew University*

Michael Gialanella

*Religion in American Politics: A Short History*, by Frank Lambert. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. 294 pages. \$18.95, paper.

Frank Lambert, Professor of History at Purdue University, describes the continuous intersection of religion and politics in American life in this well-informed and accessible volume. A survey based on a synthesis of existing secondary sources rather than an archives-based exploration of a specific religion and politics topic, the book stands out as perhaps the most engaging and accessible of a recent crop of similar works, most of them by political scientists rather than historians. Lambert's book is also a somewhat original entry into this literature because it successfully deploys a marketplace approach to the history of religion and American politics. Most authors of works on politics and religion designed for classroom use and general readership still construct their narratives in relation to a more or less explicit modernization theory, according to which religion and the sacred are gradually displaced by science and the secular. According to this "secularism thesis," the faith-based political movements in the United States since

the 1970s would appear to be aberrant departures from, and attempts to deconstruct, modernity. Lambert draws on a tradition of theorizing that counters the secularism thesis by emphasizing how, from colonial times to the present, “the presence of a multitude of religious groups, each free to pursue its own moral vision and each relying only on its own members for support, ensures a vigorous competition among those groups” (p. 10). Lambert develops this approach with two central arguments. First, the history of religion and politics is a contested one. Contests among religious groups and between them and their secular opponents have always been with us, waxing and waning at key moments of intense engagement, since colonial times. Second, and Lambert takes particular care to underscore this point at the outset of his book, religious politics has been a subversive enterprise. “Religious coalitions seek by political means what the Constitution prohibits, namely a national religious establishment, or, more specifically a *Christian* civil religion” (p. 5).

Lambert begins by describing the political process by which advocates of Protestantism, republicanism, and libertarianism vied with one another in the colonial political cultures and in the political process that created the Constitution. Students will come away from this opening chapter with a well-informed answer to questions that have swirled around in the media about the Founding Fathers and religion, and they will understand why when the “Constitution separated church and state, it did not keep religion out of politics” (p. 34). Chapters follow on the challenges to Protestant unity in the antebellum years; the disagreements among churches and believers regarding the Gospel of Wealth and the Social Gospel; the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century clashes within the churches and between believers and nonbelievers over science and the Bible; the ways that Catholics, Protestants, and Jews developed their respective discourses on the role and responsibility of government during the wars and depressions of the twentieth century; how advocates and opponents of civil rights movements deployed their arguments and rallied their followers. The final two chapters cover the rise of the “Religious Right” and—in what is perhaps the most original departure in synthetic works of this kind—the counter movement of the “Religious Left.” Lambert concludes this chapter by highlighting the degree to which the polarization of politics attendant upon “the politicization of religion” has returned the nation to the kind of divisive and overheated political culture that existed after the American Revolution. Although he avoids levying a moral indictment himself, Lambert closes his account of religion and American politics by giving the floor to “critics of both the Religious Right and the Religious Left [who] think the delegates were wise to keep religion out of national politics” (p. 250).

The book is written in a lively style, well-informed by the latest historiography and—in the final chapters—by recent social surveys and other Internet-based sources, and upper-level high school as well as college and university students will find it a very good “quick fix” on the topic. Instructors who would like to read up in order to “bring back religion” into their courses beyond the embarrassingly slight coverage available in almost all of the major United States history textbooks will find Lambert on religion and politics a good place to begin.

San Francisco State University

Bill Issel

*The Teaching American History Project: Lessons for History Educators and Historians*, edited by Rachel G. Ragland and Kelly A. Woestman. New York: Routledge, 2009. 352 pages. \$40.95, paper.



The recent death of Senator Robert Byrd has sent shivers through the relatively large community sustained over the last decade by Teaching American History grants. Byrd's vision, along with his unmatched talents in obtaining federal funding, has provided unparalleled opportunities for innovations and professional development in K-12 history education since the TAH program began in 2001. Since that time, the U.S. Department of Education has provided close to one billion dollars to improve the teaching of the past at the same time that No Child Left Behind has generally inspired a neglect of history in the nation's classrooms.

With the demise of West Virginia's most distinguished member of Congress, the future of the TAH program is currently in doubt. Therefore, it is clearly now time to reckon with the success and failures of that one billion dollars—which is obviously small change in relation to the budget of the war machine, but which represents unheard of riches for those of us in the history ed biz.

Fortunately, Rachel Ragland and Kelly Woestman have provided a valuable foundation for such a reckoning. Ragland and Woestman have assembled a thoughtful and talented set of scholars and teachers—all participants in TAH grants—who offer important information about their grants as well as general reflections and lessons about the program. To be sure, the essays in the volume are uneven in quality, and some are, to be honest, dry as dust even for those of us who care deeply about TAH. Most authors also lack the kind of critical edge to their analysis of teacher education that comes through in the work of scholars such as (to name just a few) Keith Barton, Lendol Calder, Linda Levstik, James Loewen, Peter Seixas, Sam Wineburg, and Jonathan Zimmerman. Yet the volume's overall quality is quite good, making *The Teaching American History Project* a significant book for all who care about the teaching of history.

Opening with a challenging preface from Wineburg, the volume is divided into four main sections. Part I analyzes TAH grants from the perspective of scholarly historians, Part II concentrates on elements of the program most applicable to classroom practice, Part III focuses on lessons for professional development emerging from TAH, and the final section includes two more general assessments of TAH-related issues. (A note on conflict of interest: one of the reviewers was involved in the Chicago History Project grant discussed by Ann Marie Ryan and Frank Valadez in Part III.)

Arguably the book's most important lesson, and one that emerges from multiple essays and is articulated most powerfully by David Gerwin, is the need to respectfully include teachers from the target group through all phases of program planning and implementation. From the value of a needs assessment to the integration of current classroom teachers in the program leadership teams, the most successful programs were structured around the needs of local teachers and students and continually integrated teachers' participation. The volume also contains other lessons that are hardly news but still bear repeating: the need for more time and collaborative opportunities for teachers, the lack of respect for the discipline of history from administrators, and the constant battle against the conception of history as a static list of facts.

Perhaps the most troubling issue on display throughout the projects discussed in the book is the wall of separation between collegiate and precollegiate instructors. Remaining barricaded within the ivory tower has not served academic historians well, as this seclusion has helped foster history's being largely written out of many schools' core curriculum over the last twenty years. Essays by Kelly Woestman and Peter Knupfer, in particular, focus on the many ways in which TAH may reverse this trend, while also reinvigorating participating university departments (the dramatic possible changes in *professorial* pedagogy as a result of TAH come through most clearly in Dawn Abt-Perkins's fine essay). Of course, teachers also bear responsibility for this divide,

as many embrace the “list of facts” view of history and fail to continually pursue their own historical education and expand their ability to “think historically” in ways they can model for their students.

The coming revisions to No Child Left Behind and the institution of Race to the Top may threaten many aspects of the TAH program, even if TAH ultimately proves to be the most important spur to improved teaching of the past in our nation’s history. Yet regardless of TAH’s fate, the concrete information and general lessons in this book should help shape professional development, assessment of student learning, and teacher evaluation for many years to come.

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

Mary Lopez and Robert D. Johnston

*China in World History*, by Paul S. Ropp. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 184 pages. \$19.95, paper. \$74.00, cloth.

Faced with over three thousand years of recorded history, as well as millennia of Neolithic prehistory, anyone teaching a survey course on China knows how selective one must be. In this contribution to the New Oxford World History series, Paul Ropp of Clark University offers a concise overview of all of Chinese history in 155 pages of text. He covers the last ninety years since the May Fourth era in a mere thirty-seven pages. He succeeds surprisingly well, given the limited scope allowed by the series.

*China in World History* begins with a preface laying out the broad questions the book attempts to address, followed by a discussion of the ways that China’s geographical setting shaped its history. Ropp then describes several major continuities in Chinese history, including intensive wet-rice agriculture, the cult of ancestors and the patriarchal family, and a holistic worldview Ropp calls “optimistic humanism.” Ropp also challenges the notion that Chinese civilization developed without significant external influences or contributions.

Chapter 1, *The Formative Age*, begins with Peking Man—probably not the ancestors of modern Chinese—hundreds of thousands of years ago, followed by the earliest settled agriculture and Neolithic settlements in what is now China. The Shang dynasty, oracle bones, emergence of Chinese writing, and Zhou dynasty follow in quick succession. Only five and a half pages are allotted to Confucianism, Legalism, Mohism, and Daoism.

Chapters two through five cover the creation of a unified empire by the Qin and Han, the period of division, the reunified empire of the Sui and Tang, and the “Diminished Empires and Nomadic Challengers” of the Song and Yuan, respectively. These chapters are competently done, although not particularly original in their treatment.

Ropp shows his strength in chapter six, which examines the Ming and early Qing periods, from 1368 to 1800. His treatment of Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming dynasty, is vividly written and judicious, though it is certainly not true that had Shakespeare been Chinese, “his greatest tragedy would be the life of Zhu Yuanzhang” (p. 86). Zhu died peacefully after a thirty-year reign as the Hongwu Emperor, founder of one of China’s great dynasties. His erstwhile prime minister, executed in 1380, would have been the subject of the tragedy. A specialist in early modern cultural and gender history, Ropp describes the tension between orthodox norms for women and the growing opportunities for literary women in late imperial China, using as an example the seventeenth-century courtesan poet Liu Shi.

The final three chapters cover the decline and fall of the Qing empire, the impact of

imperialism, the Revolution of 1911 and the failure to create a viable republic, warlordism, and the May Fourth Movement. The civil wars, invasion, and the rise of Communism are covered in sixteen pages, and the People's Republic in twenty-one. The author cannot be faulted, of course, for the page limits imposed on him.

The New Oxford World History series is designed to offer comprehensive, connected, and comparative histories, and the preface promises "to narrate the long history of China within the context of world history" (p. xi). This volume makes that effort, but not more thoroughly than other Chinese history texts available. It is, however, ideal for courses in which a short, concise, and inexpensive survey text is needed.

*St. Olaf College*

Robert Entenmann

*Women in American History Since 1880: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Nancy J. Rosenbloom. West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 265 pages. \$32.95, paper.

As Nancy J. Rosenbloom states in her introduction to this collection of sources on women in history, historians are well-trained in the use of primary sources (p. 9). Our knowledge of and familiarity with particular historical periods provide essential context for the meanings we make of letters, diaries, published speeches, oral histories, and cultural artifacts. We know to ask the "who, what, when, why" questions when analyzing documents or artifacts and to compare those sources with others produced during the same time period. It is because of this training and the years spent living in "our" historical time periods that we find primary sources so richly rewarding and exciting! Alas, students often do not share this enthusiasm. As teachers, our challenge is to somehow find a way for students to experience the excitement that comes from seeing how the puzzle pieces of history fit together. Document collections can either help or hinder us in this endeavor. This one definitely helps.

Rosenbloom's primary objective is to show "how, when, and why" American women "have participated in the nation's political, social, and economic life" (p. 5). She approached this task by organizing the text into seven chapters whose chronological time periods correspond to major historical events or eras: 1) *The Boundaries of Convention in the Gilded Age, 1880-1900*; 2) *Reform and Revolt in the Modern Era, 1900-1920*; 3) *Sex and Politics in an Age of Conservatism, 1920-1933*; 4) *Work and Family in Times of Crisis, 1933-1948*; 5) *The Second Sex in America, 1948-1968*; 6) *Race, Class, Gender, and the redefinition of America, 1968-1988*; and 7) *Globalization, Glass Ceilings, and the Good Life? 1988-2008*. The collection reflects four decades of research by scholars who have explored both the variety of women's experiences in history and the diversity of women themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. Rosenbloom identifies four main themes emerging from this scholarship and has organized the documents in each chapter around these themes. Thus, each one includes primary sources related to the themes of: *Work*; *Citizenship*; *Representations*; and *Domestic Lives*. Each major theme encompasses a broad range of topics and related documents. For example, sections on *Work* include documents related to urbanization, unionization, wage labor, household management, and women and poverty. We see women as producers and consumers; as both critics and advocates of capitalism. Under the theme of *Citizenship*, selections include documents linked to women's suffrage, office holding, participation in political parties as well as military service, volunteerism, and

civil rights. The third theme, *Representations*, incorporates literature, film, song lyrics, cartoons, photographs, and articles in popular magazines to reveal women's views of themselves (or how they wished to be viewed) as well as the ways in which women have been portrayed in popular culture. The final theme, *Domestic Lives*, explores issues such as marriage, childbirth, and death as well as the intersection of women's personal lives with various political issues, including lesbian rights, birth control, and abortion. The chronological and thematic structure of the text facilitates an understanding of change over time and among different groups of women and provides opportunity to compare issues and time periods.

What I especially like about this text is that it does not try to do too much. Rosenbloom assumes that teachers will provide instruction or perhaps use additional texts for an understanding of the historical contexts in which the documents originated. She does not include lengthy chapter introductions, which essentially tell students what they will learn from the documents. The tasks of critically analyzing and interpreting the materials are rightly left to students. At the end of each chapter, there are the ubiquitous "Questions to Think About." Yet rather than fact-based queries, these require students to analyze various sources based on a specific theme and determine their relevance to historical economic, political, social, and cultural events and movements. An added pedagogical advantage to the reader is the brevity of many of the documents. One could easily use chapter sources for in-class analysis and group discussion. *Women in American History Since 1880* offers valuable insights into the diverse experiences of women. Equally important, it allows students to experience the fun part of historical work—engaging with the sources, making connections, identifying similarities and differences, and drawing conclusions. Teachers of high school advanced placement courses as well as college instructors will find it useful in helping students participate in this creative historical process.

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*Across the Revolutionary Divide: Russia and the USSR, 1861-1945*, by Theodore R. Weeks. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 282 pages. \$39.95, paper.

This textbook is one of three in an innovative new series in Russian history from Wiley-Blackwell. It stands in between two other textbooks—one covering the period 1649-1861 by Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter and the other 1941 to the present by Stephen Lovell, both excellent historians in the Russian field. Theodore Weeks is equally capable, having published important work on nationalism in late-Imperial Russian history. Weeks's contribution to this series does not disappoint.

Two features make this textbook a good option for instructors. First, as the title suggests, Weeks has shaken up traditional chronological boundaries, beginning his survey with the emancipation of Russia's serfs in 1861, rather than with the Revolutions of 1917. While duly noting the radical disjuncture of 1917, especially the Bolshevik Revolution that ultimately produced the Soviet Union, Weeks nonetheless highlights the many problems that cut across the revolutionary divide. Second, Weeks explores those common problems in chapters that are arranged thematically. He begins with "Politics" and "Society," moving then to "Nations" and "Modernization," and ending with "Belief," "World," and "Culture." The resulting narrative highlights common challenges across the revolutionary divide, but also points to radically different approaches to their solution. In short, Weeks does what historians often say they want to do: shake up long-standing

chronologies—not simply for the sake of being innovative, but to challenge students to consider the rationale for proclaiming one date or another to be a radical disjuncture. Repetition, however, is one danger in following numerous themes across the same chronological territory. Admittedly, some replication is unavoidable, but other instances in the textbook (for example, separate discussions of abortion and prostitution) could have been consolidated with tighter editing.

As one would expect, given the author's expertise in nationalities issues, the chapter on "Nations" does a particularly good job of summarizing the dilemmas that faced both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union—a multi-ethnic empire where ethnic Russians made up only about a half of the overall population. But the other chapters are also strong, helping to elucidate one of the most dramatic transformations across the period covered. Thus, while Russia in 1861—with the emancipation of the serfs—was on the decline, having been forced into a series of dramatic reforms in response to humiliating military defeat, Soviet Russia in 1945 could not have been more different. True, it was devastated by a ruinous war against fascism, but it emerged as the most powerful nation in Europe—and next to the United States, in the world. And while in 1861, Russia was an overwhelmingly poor and agricultural society, by 1945, it had embarked on an impressive program of urbanization and industrialization. Yet other difficulties emerged during Soviet modernization, as Weeks points out. The Soviets had sacrificed personal freedom and living standards, especially in the countryside, to obtain the power and influence in Europe that it lacked in 1861. And in some ways, Soviet citizens were less empowered—especially the millions of innocents sent to Stalin's Gulag—than the "subjects" of the theoretically all-powerful autocrat and Tsar. Each chapter will force students to confront the many continuities and discontinuities across the revolutionary divide—and thus to devise their own explanations for why things either remained the same or changed so dramatically.

Finally, the textbook benefits from the integration of the latest research in all the areas covered. In political and economic history, as well as in the history of culture and society, Weeks has constructed a narrative that uses most of the relevant new monographs in the field. The footnotes for each chapter are also useful. They point the reader toward sources that delve more deeply into the issues raised, but without cluttering the text with irrelevant information. And brevity, not to mention relative affordability compared to many surveys of Russian history, is another one of the textbook's attractions.

As someone who has taught surveys of Russian history for more than a decade, I do anticipate one major challenge in adopting this textbook: reconfiguring course offerings to straddle revolutionary divides that have traditionally marked the beginnings or ends of courses. Lethargy and inertia will no doubt prevent many instructors from changing Russian history courses to put 1917 in the center, rather than the front or back, of their surveys. But the benefits of doing so, as Weeks's textbook illustrate, far outweigh the downside.

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