

William H. Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff, eds. *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. xiv, 524. Paper, \$13.95.

A good anthology can be enormously valuable in a college history course, allowing the students to sample a variety of writers and sources without requiring that they spend enormous sums of money or read an enormous number of pages. Good anthologies, however, are not easy to come by, and bad anthologies simply clutter a course.

For the most part, the third edition of *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America* is (in keeping with the first two editions) a good anthology, and worth considering for either a lower- or upper-level course that deals with post-World War II American social and political history. The book contains nine sections, chronologically arranged: "The Sources of the Cold War;" "The Cold War at Home;" "The Politics of the Affluent Society;" "The Black Struggle;" "The Challenge to Sexism;" "Vietnam;" "Years of Mobilization;" "Politics of the 1970s and 1980s;" and "Where Do We Go From Here?" Each of these sections contains a short introductory essay and four to six pieces, with a good mix of secondary and primary sources (the inclusion of additional primary documents is one of the improvements in this edition). At the end of the reader is a solid and well-structured bibliography, with paragraphs of suggested additional readings roughly corresponding to each of the book's nine sections.

Some sections are particularly good. For example, "The Cold War at Home" starts off with Robert Griffith's helpful "American Politics and the Origins of 'McCarthyism,'" followed by three significant documents of the era: Joseph McCarthy's Wheeling speech; Margaret Chase Smith's "Republican Declaration of Conscience;" and a passage from Lillian Hellman's *Scoundrel Time*. To give another example, "The Challenge to Sexism" contains a historical selection from William Chafe, three important and provocative pieces by Sara Evans, Robin Morgan, and a portion from Rebecca Klatch's fascinating *Women of the New Right*.

Of course, regarding a collection of this sort, it is easy (and unfair) to make picayune criticisms. Still, *A History of Our Time* has two fairly substantial shortcomings that must be taken into account by any instructor who would contemplate assigning this volume. The first is rather surprising, given that editor Harvard Sitkoff has authored *The Struggle for Black Equality* and other excellent works on African-American history. The section entitled "The Black Struggle" contains five selections, including Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Vincent Harding on King, and Bayard Rustin's 1965 "From Protest to Politics." However, and somewhat surprisingly, there is nothing here from Malcolm X; in fact, from the more militant side of the black struggle, there is but a five-page SNCC position paper. More important, "The Black Struggle" only carries the story up to the late 1960s. Only one other article in this entire volume deals directly with African-Americans, and that is a piece by William Julius Wilson on the urban underclass. Given the importance of race in the American story and the persistence of racism in American life, this treatment seems more than a little skimpy.

But it is not only African-American history that is given short shrift when it comes to the last two decades. As with the first two editions, the third edition of *A History of Our Time* essentially remains a reader for post-World War II, pre-Watergate America. The first seven sections of the book deal almost exclusively with the years 1945-1970. On the other hand, the years 1970-1990 are covered in just two sections, "Politics of the 1970s and 1980s" and "Where Do We Go From Here?" It is true that the latter category is new, and includes interesting pieces on, among other items, the greenhouse effect and the end of the Cold War. Still, these two sections together account for nine selections; if one adds in the three post-1970 pieces contained in "The Challenge to Sexism," this comes to 12 selections, out of a grand total of 46 contained in the anthology. We can hope that, if there is a fourth edition, this marked chronological imbalance will be corrected. Until then, professors using *A History of Our Time*

in twentieth-century America classes may have to consider providing supplementary material for the last two decades.

Messiah College

William Vance Trollinger, Jr.

Larry Cable. *Unholy Grail: The US and the Wars in Vietnam, 1965-8.* London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. ix, 292. Cloth, \$35.00.

Walter Capps, ed. *The Vietnam Reader.* New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. ix, 318. \$15.95.

Larry Cable may be the most knowledgeable scholar on the Vietnam War; he is certainly the most colorful. Dressed as a cross between a Hell's Angel and a hippie, with his hair down below his waist, he mesmerizes audiences in his frequent lectures at places such as the Air Force Command and Staff College and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School. Beside his encyclopedic command of the documents and his erudition, his war record captivates even those at first taken aback by his appearance. As enlisted marine, junior officer, and CIA operative, Cable spent 64 months in counterinsurgency warfare in Indochina, mostly along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. He lived a large portion of the war on the ground, and his scarred body shows it.

After Vietnam, Cable devoted his career to understanding the war he fought. His first book, from his Ph.D. dissertation, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (1986), argued the thesis that American policymakers "had not read the lessons of history" on counterinsurgency and "interventionary" warfare that could have spared them the tragedies of Vietnam. In *Unholy Grail*, Cable escalates the indictment: Military leaders not only did not understand but did not want to understand the nature of a limited war in support of policy. In his words, "their reports showed a jejune and puerile comprehension of the global policy matrix of which the Vietnam war represented only one portion. Invariably, the Chiefs demonstrated a complete willingness to sacrifice the policy matrix and the domestic consensus in order to win a military victory in Vietnam. They were eager to redefine Pyrrhic victory." His pithy assessment continues, "If intellectual and moral courage had been as prevalent in the corridors of power and chain of command as physical courage was in the bush of the South and the sky of the North, failed concepts and theories could have been recognized as such and their consequences mitigated in a timely fashion." The study is an insightful and meticulously detailed critique of the three disparate wars—which America miscondacted for so many years in Vietnam.

Every teacher who deals with military strategy and conduct of the war should give serious attention to *Unholy Grail*. Along with Andrew Krepinevich's *The Army and Vietnam* (1986) and Mark Clodfelter's *The Limits of Airpower* (1989), it is essential reading and an invaluable base for lecture material. However, the treatise's specific focus, challenging vocabulary, and sophisticated analysis of the policy process limit its appeal to serious advanced students. The book is not for the casual or uninformed reader. Cable has recently completed the manuscript of a shorter, more general survey directed to the student audience. When this volume is available in late 1993 or early 1994, it should be an excellent text for many courses.

The Vietnam Reader is directed toward a separate audience and has a quite different purpose. Though not an expert on Vietnam, Walter Capps, professor of religious studies at University of California at Santa Barbara, presides over probably the most famous Vietnam course in the country. His course gained national attention in the mid 1980s with its enrollments in the thousands and a CBS "Sixty Minutes" segment.