

courageous struggle of Debs. The lives of Dubois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Morrison provide a rather comprehensive consideration of the African-American experience, while Randall and Nahra explore issues of ethnicity through case studies of Iva Toguri (one of the Tokyo Roses) and César Chávez. Along with consideration of Myra Bradwell, the first woman licensed to practice law, the authors illustrate the varied and changing roles of women through the lives of Theda Bara, silent film star; Margaret Sanger, birth-control crusader; Eleanor Roosevelt; Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*; O'Connor; and Morrison. Cultural change fueled through the medium of Bara's motion pictures is also explored via the life of Jack Kerouac, the guru of the Beat Generation. Contrary to many who in constructing collections of short biographies place heavy emphasis on politicians and generals, Randall and Nahra consider only George Patton and Huey Long in addition to the three presidents.

Through a look at these 44 personalities of note, the authors move American history from abstract generalities to tangible specifics--from movements and ideologies to moments of personal glory and individual despair. The specific case studies infuse typical textbook narratives with meaningful individual experiences to which readers can relate. Relying on careful research largely in secondary works, Randall and Nahra skillfully move the narratives along through lively description frequently emphasizing personal relationships. The authors do occasionally offer some interpretive judgment and regularly establish a strong behavioristic relationship between those character-shaping experiences of youth and the direction of adult lives.

Although there are a few factual errors--the 54th Massachusetts Infantry under Colonel Robert Shaw did not take Fort Wagner as is strongly suggested and Wilberforce University is not in northern Ohio--the sketches provide both a significant amount of interesting personal information and a challenge to myths such as those relating to Lincoln's early poverty and Jefferson's "fascination" with Sally Hemings. Thus, students, especially high school juniors and seniors as well as college freshmen and sophomores, should find these portraits fascinating and a link to the big historical picture. Instructors, even the old hands, those around from Morrison and Commager days, should discover a few new anecdotes as well, to liven up their lectures.

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**Clyde A. Milner II, ed. *A New Significance: Re-Envisioning the History of the American West*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. xiii, 318. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-19-510047-6. Paper, \$19.95; ISBN 0-19-510048-4.**

For the past two decades, historians have produced a voluminous "new" Western history. This anthology of essays covers some important topics of that history, while also considering the need for newer perspectives on the historical significance of the West. Although these essays came from a conference on the centennial of Frederick Jackson

Turner's frontier thesis, only the first two spend much time reviewing that idea. Each of the book's seven "correlation papers" charts an important topic or perspective for the future of Western history. Accompanied by two commentaries each and introductory and summarizing essays, these articles offer insight into the thinking of a newer, younger group of Western historians and how their themes are reshaping that region from the predominantly white, masculine mosaic of frontiers that Turner and his followers portrayed.

Most of the major essays are thought-provoking and challenge some of the most established ideas about the West. William Deverell rejects any interpretation of the West as a physically, socially, or perceptually homogenous area and offers a broad vision of power as a fundamental theme. Four other authors review the revisionist image of the West as a multicultural region historically, with essays on Mexican-American roles. Susan R. Neel's essay on nature echoes Deverell's rejection of a single physical image of the West and sees the extreme variations of its topography as its unique feature. The most theoretically different essays were Anne F. Hyde's review of Western history as perceptions and Susan Johnson's analysis of the significance of gender in Western history.

As with many revisionist works, this one is open to the criticism that writers focus on previously overlooked or misinterpreted aspects of Western history. In the process, many topics, events, and persons formerly considered essential are omitted. John C. Fremont is mentioned only for reports that misled Americans about how similar Western and Eastern environments were. General George Custer is noted for his cinnamon-scented hair, which calls into question images of gender. In focusing on items such as these, several authors fail to address Allan Bogue's observation that whatever his flaws, Turner gave Western history national significance. Only Deverell suggests the most widely cited alternative interpretation of "new" Western historians: that corporate power and government programs shaped the distribution of power and wealth in the West.

Despite these limitations, *A New Significance* has much to offer teachers. Some essays, especially those on racial groups, are detailed narratives of their histories and offer a treasury of specific information as well as a broader sense of how those groups influenced the West. The more theoretical essays might be difficult to apply directly to courses, but they will stir thinking and could influence emphases or curricular arrangements. Especially useful will be the extensive notes. These include much of the recent literature in fields covered, often with helpful comments on individual works. Also to be commended is a combined index of all articles, which enables the reader to find specific topics easily. Teachers might not conclude that they need to completely revamp their treatments of Western history, but it will be difficult to leave this book without reconsidering some specific viewpoints.

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