

some fixed and well-known meaning at the moment of its adoption dissolves into an mirage." Various participants attached various meanings to the document.

Since even in an upper-level college course only two of these essays would be useful without massive explanation, the teacher might prefer to look toward other sources.

Cortland, New York

C. Ashley Ellefson

**Larry Madaras and James M. SoRelle, eds. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in American History*. Vol. 1: *The Colonial Period to Reconstruction*. Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 2000. 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Pp. xvii, 384. Paper, \$19.25; ISBN 0-07-303188-7.**

This book, part of the long and successful *Taking Sides* series, brings together sixteen case studies in historical disagreement, starting with American exceptionalism and ending with the impeachment of Andrew Johnson in 1868. This eighth edition adds seventeen new selections to the book, including eight new units. It also adds the Dushkin web site <[www.dushkin.com](http://www.dushkin.com)> for student use and internet resources keyed to each section of the book.

The addition of the new units is a substantial gain, as the added units, on subjects such as Columbus, the abolitionists, Jefferson's political philosophy, and Andrew Johnson's impeachment, create a balance between political and social history, and between the history of men and women. They also are useful in documenting the history of different groups in early America: European-Americans, African-Americans, and Native Americans. The book is, in many ways, a model of balance, something not found in many survey textbooks.

This range of issues and selections ensure that specialists in many fields will have quibbles with this book and the topics it includes. Some of the debates do not fit together exactly, and others seem to be stale compared to more recent debates, such as the three-decade old exchange "Were the abolitionists unrestrained fanatics?" The exchange between Oscar and Mary Handlin and Carl Degler on the origins of racism in America took place in the 1950s, and recent scholarship has produced many more appropriate selections that could have been chosen for this volume.

The *Taking Sides* approach focuses on secondary, rather than primary historical literature. In some instances, there is enough primary evidence quoted within the documents to allow students to see how primary sources are used by historians. In other sections, however, the argumentation becomes disembodied from the source material. With these, it is hard to see how students are expected to make up their minds about the two sides in conflict, since there is so little evidence in either piece of writing.

For teachers of survey college or AP history classes, there is much to be said for *Taking Sides*, as it allows teachers to show students the range of topics scholars investigate and the approaches they take. Several of the topics have a great deal of promise in the classroom. For instance, the debate over the role of women in eighteenth-century America, the exchange over who emancipated the slaves, and the pieces about the inevitability of the Civil War represent up-to-date scholarship and are well edited and introduced. Madaras and SoRelle have done an excellent job of editing pieces for space, and their introductions and conclusions to each debate are informative and well-written.

However, out of the author's control, the internet support material for the book provided by Dushkin/McGraw Hill has not strengthened the book as much as it could have. The internet sites mentioned in the text are not keyed to the debates, but broadly relate to the period. They include some odd choices, and omit many noted and useful sites. For example, for the Civil War period, the book refers the reader to an online list of Civil War links, but not to Edward Ayers's famous Valley of the Shadow project. The Dushkin web site for students is a disappointment, as it is a compilation of sites that the creators believed students might find useful, without any critical annotation or real guidance provided.

Eastern Michigan University

Russell Olwell

**Charles W. Calhoun, ed. *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America*. Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1996. Pp. xix, 347. Cloth, \$50.00; ISBN 0-8420-2499-9. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-8420-2500-6.**

In his preface, editor Charles Calhoun notes that the idea of this book grew out of conversations with colleagues who agreed on the need for a book teachers could use to introduce their students to a "reconsideration of the various aspects of American life in the Gilded Age." In general, Calhoun's anthology accomplishes this goal extremely well. Composed of an introduction and fourteen essays by, with one exception, recognized scholars of the period, most of the major developments of the period are covered. Additionally, the essays reflect many of the newer interpretations of the period that have marked the work of social, legal, and business historians since the 1960s. As with most such works, the quality and value of the essays vary, but overall the book provides an updated look at a much-maligned period in U.S. history.

In an introduction Calhoun gives a brief description of the content and major conclusions of each essay and attempts to set them into context with one another. The linkage, however, is somewhat superficial, and he does not really point to common conclusions across the essays. As well, while the essays are not specifically identified