

presented to children via popular media. The last essay of this section takes a more optimistic view of digital and printed media by presenting the author's experience of his own illustrated children's books.

A helpful critique in this section is Helaine Silverman's chapter on Disney's "visually stunning" film, *The Emperor's New Groove*. Unfortunately, according to the author, Disney created blatant stereotypes and constructed a past that blurs the line between the simulated and the real. Because of the popularity of Disney's films, this chapter might be of special interest to teachers, parents, and other adults, who should be concerned about the false information and images of people and civilizations of the past that are fed to youths and the public at large.

In Part III, "Contexts of Telling II: Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites," the authors argue for creating museum environments that can convey aspects of the past effectively to children through the use of language, family-friendly exhibitions, mixed media, and hands-on activities. One successful interactive activity is discussed in chapter eleven by Lauren Talalay and Todd Gerring, who describe a program at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, where museum educators teach children about Egyptian mummification practices using a Barbie doll and candies.

Part IV, "Contexts of Telling III: Schools and Special Classrooms," is the final section of the book. It includes three chapters that offer case studies that explore issues of ethnicity and nationhood in very different locales. Chapter 14 presents the Lakota ways of relating the past; chapter 15 examines Brazilian government policy regarding national heritage, and chapter 16 discusses the teaching of prehistory to children in Romania.

The quality of the essays is uneven, but as a whole, the writing is clear and the essays offer a variety of insights into the teaching and learning of the past. Those who would find this collection most useful would likely be public historians, museum educators, and early childhood and elementary school teachers.

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Frank W. Elwell. *Macrosociology: The Study of Sociocultural Systems*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009. Pp. 492. Hardback, \$129.95; ISBN 13: 978-0-7734-4900-8.

Frank Elwell's *Macrosociology* is a rare find because it is well written and accessible, yet treats its subject, sociological theory, in the proper manner. Elwell's choice of theoretical traditions covers the "big three" classical thinkers—Marx, Durkheim, Weber—but the readers might find themselves pleasantly surprised by the inclusion of Robert Malthus. The book is broken down into sections based on these four essential theorists, with additional chapters in each section covering thinkers whose ideas build upon or complement the classics. For instance, to Weber's treatment of

rationalization, Elwell adds George Ritzer's recent and popular notion of "McDonalidization"—an idea that brings familiarity to a concept otherwise intimidating to many students.

Elwell's prose is above all else down to earth. His writing style somehow upholds the complexity of the ideas in question, while making readers feel as if they are talking with a trusted and thoughtful friend. Many writers attempt this but few succeed—*Macrosociology* is simply a pleasant book to read, a refreshing deviation from the norm.

In his chapter on Emile Durkheim, Elwell candidly admits his (previous) longstanding lack of familiarity with Durkheim's ideas. He then mentions his use of sources by the Durkheim scholar Stjepan Mestrovic—and subsequent realization of the significance of Durkheim's ideas. Having some familiarity with Mestrovic's work, I can attest that Elwell has tapped the right source. Though perhaps better known for his postmodern writing, Stjepan Mestrovic was instrumental in making Durkheim better understood and relevant to contemporary sociologists.

Durkheim is, unfortunately, often watered down and misunderstood in texts accessed by undergraduates. Elwell's treatment of Durkheim helps remedy this by identifying the classic thinker's most important ideas, though not necessarily those held to be important by conventional textbooks. This pattern holds for other theorists covered in *Macrosociology*, and what is perhaps most refreshing about Elwell is his judgment in this sense.

The choice of Robert Malthus is an interesting one, and reflects the book's tendency to favor ideas rooted in material realities. Sociology is, to understate the case, abstract, and yet good theorists ultimately tie their notions to the exigencies of day-to-day life. Malthus certainly does this as he points out the harsh realities that characterize the relationship between populations and resources. Elwell's chapter on Malthus, which elaborates in an eye-opening manner his lesser known yet still relevant ideas, fomented in myself a new respect for the eighteenth-century demographer, who clearly deserves more careful attention from sociologists and historians alike.

Teachers of history will find *Macrosociology* useful as both a history of social thought and a sociology that can, like all good sociology must, take history into account. Sociology as a field is primarily interested in explaining the emergence and nature of modernity. Those who take Elwell's book seriously will gain direct knowledge of the history of modernity from thinkers (like Max Weber) who favor the historical approach, but should also internalize sociological ideas and concepts that have the potential to augment subsequent interpretation of historical data. Sophisticated and comprehensive enough for use in graduate courses, *Macrosociology's* accessibility makes it equally appropriate for undergraduate students.