

that has been formed of Victorian servants as repressed, obedient folk is, states Paterson, quite simply wrong. Drunkenness, clumsiness, petty thieving, and dallying would be more apt to describe the average domestic hand.

Moving through a range of topics that include diet, interior design, the presence and influence of religion, behavior and manners, leisure, the mass media, and Britain's relationship with the wider world, Paterson offers the thesis that the Victorians as the world's first modern urban citizens were, to put it bluntly, a rather odd lot, hence the mythology surrounding them! Reacting in many instances to the problems instigated by the industrial revolution, the Victorians thus created numerous rituals and codes, many of which were downright bizarre given our present-day mindset, from which they were able to cope with the wonders and problems that modern life manufactured.

Sadly lacking in visual representations, and at times shallow in intellectual rigor, Paterson nonetheless offers an interesting and insightful perspective to Victorians and their culture. Of possibly best usage with an introductory undergraduate program, and with a large number of short sub-sections, *A Brief History* is a text readily workable for instructors. Not stuffy in prose and cheap in price, *A Brief History* does though contain flaws. For example, in terms of exploring themes like transport or governance, much better works exist in the marketplace. Similarly to devise a detailed lecture from the book on a subject like architecture would be problematic unless it is given, as previously mentioned, to students of lesser historical knowledge. For higher-level classes the weaknesses in the book will become all too evident, but for tutorials with freshman students there is much to work from.

One might state that the adage "you get what you pay for" applies to *A Brief History*. Such an idiom though would downplay Paterson's work. While probably not likely to win an honorific award, praise should be heaped onto Michael Paterson for bringing a fresh interpretation to what is a complicated phase of British cultural history, and one all too often presented in a stuffy, highbrow manner that puts it out of reach of maturing intellectuals.

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**Ariela J. Gross. *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. 368. Cloth, \$19.95; ISBN 978-0-674-03130-2.**

In recent decades, biological and social scientists have rejected the notion of distinct human races. Rather, they assert, race was a creation of human culture, crafted to help manufacture, sustain, and justify socio-political and economic hierarchies. In *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial*, Ariela Gross, professor of history and law, uses race trials from the antebellum period to the present as a window into how

local communities of common white America shaped and reshaped our racial understandings through their legal systems in order to preserve their hierarchies.

Gross argues persuasively that, throughout history, the law relied more heavily upon white people's shifting "common sense" understandings of what determined a person's race, such as racial/cultural "performance," than upon any clear evidence of lineage or skin color. She also traces these malleable understandings through several stages, as changing times inspired shifts in race-defining strategies.

For example, antebellum America focused on the black/white dichotomy, where performing citizenship rights like voting, mustering in the militia, and jury duty served as proofs of whiteness. When blacks received citizenship after the Civil War, white Americans created separationist strategies to argue (ahistorically) that real whites had never associated socially with blacks. Whiteness relied suddenly upon illustrating one's lack of interactions with blacks. During this Jim Crow era, the law also transformed Indians and Hawaiians from nations to races, supposedly measurable by blood quantum (which few courts could determine precisely), and whether they had mixed with "Negroes" or "Mongolians." As immigration then rose from Asia, Mexico, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East—and racial science began recognizing several "color races" like white, black, red, yellow, and brown—those deemed most different from whites, and most like "Negroes" in their perceived inability to become like whites, were often also segregated and disfranchised, whether through *de facto* or *de jure* methods. Mexicans, while deemed legally white after 1940, remained largely segregated by reason of their assumed cultural differences and educational abilities rather than officially by race. This "cultural racism" became a preferred means for justifying and sustaining racial hierarchies when whites could no longer legally use race as the reason. Each of these evolving strategies also deterred interracial class-based alliances by encouraging groups to better their positions through distancing themselves from blacks while seeking as much whiteness as the law might allow. Blacks became the foil against which other struggling people of color and poor whites sought improved status from the courts.

One of this book's many strengths for teachers is Gross's attention to how each of these strategies still pulses through present battles over race and the racial hierarchies that remain. Her conclusion argues against both color-blindness and identity politics as ways to resolve problems stemming from this race-based past—thoughts sure to fuel dynamic class discussion. Gross's sweeping, engaging, and highly-detailed account is a must-read for history teachers seeking to enhance their own knowledge, sharpen lectures, or craft case studies for students' exploration of race. While it is too advanced for most undergraduates, graduate students specializing in race also will find its superb research, broad context, comparisons, and details invaluable.

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