

shamans and non-Indian artists continue an American tradition of robbing native people of their cultural capital.

University of Kansas

David Anthony Ty-ee-me Clark

Robert W. Cherny. *American Politics in the Gilded Age, 1868-1900*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1997. Pp. Xi, 167. Paper, \$11.95; ISBN 0-88295-933-6.

Robert Cherny, a member of the Department of History at San Francisco State University, has written a comprehensive overview of American politics from the immediate post-Civil War period to the Progressive Era. In a lively prose style, he reviews major political happenings and suggests ways to interpret this spirited period.

Cherny contends that American voters principally responded to issues of ethnicity, religion, and race. At times a strong sense of class identity influenced behavior at the polls. Generally, Republicans represented a more homogeneous coalition of voters, who embraced Protestantism, promoted moral values, and endorsed a positive expectation that government could accomplish a limited number of social and economic goals. Democrats, on the other hand, showed greater religious heterogeneity, represented by Roman Catholics in the North and old-stock Protestants in the South, but they shared common opposition to the strong use of government. As Cherny suggests, Democrats were part of the "personal liberty party," carrying on the tradition of the Jeffersonian-Jacksonians. Moreover, there existed considerable popular interest in politics, resulting at times in fierce competition between the two major parties. Any effort to enact a national party agenda was doomed, given the need to win approval from two houses of Congress and the White House. After all, it was unusual for either Democrats or Republicans to dominate this all-powerful political trinity. And Cherny cogently argues that political assumptions, strategies, and events of the Gilded Age helped to establish the essential foundation for twentieth-century politics.

This is a solid piece of work. Cherny has crafted a readable monograph that is ideally suited for classroom use, especially upper-division courses on the Gilded Age or the Populist crusade. Perhaps, too, this book might find a place in a post-Civil War survey class. Cherny consistently explains complicated political events in a clear and interesting fashion; his review of the Greenback movement is a good illustration of such coverage. An imaginative appendix, which includes tables on such topics as farm production, crop prices, and popular and electoral votes for the presidency, should assist readers to understand this "watershed" period in the nation's political life. A bibliographical essay is also helpful; it is extensive and up-to-date. If there is a weakness, it surely involves some of the poorly reproduced illustrations. Nevertheless, quality and price make *American Politics in the Gilded Age* a smart choice for

classroom adoption. Instructors, too, will discover that this book is an ideal way to refresh their own memories about the Gilded Age.

Clemson University

H. Roger Grant

Maria Sturken. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. x, 358. Cloth, \$45.00; Paper, \$16.95.

Tangled Memories is a challenging piece of cultural criticism that explores how a nation remembers its past and what the political battles over the construction of those memories mean for the present. The book operates on two levels. First, it has a rather dense theoretical discussion of the relationship between memory and history. Sturken, assistant professor at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California, uses psychological theory, mostly Freudian, of how an individual remembers and forgets to suggest that a culture and/or a nation selectively shapes its memory of past events to define itself and give meaning to those events for the present. These events might be specific, such as the Kennedy assassination or the Challenger disaster, or in a series like the Vietnam war or the AIDS epidemic. In either case, they produce artifacts that both memorialize and become the focus of debates on the meaning of these events.

The book is at its best when it moves from theory to analysis of specific cultural artifacts, as in the chapters on movies about the Vietnam War, the fight over the design and construction of the Vietnam veterans memorial, and the display of the AIDS quilt on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Sturken convincingly argues that both the movies and the memorial show a nation deeply conflicted over the meaning of the Vietnam war, particularly that its loss represented a weakening of American masculinity. On the other hand, she shows how a very traditional form of folk art (quilts) becomes politicized when it is used to memorialize those who have died of AIDS and exhibited at the symbolic heart of the nation. It is disappointing that AIDS movies and tele dramas did not receive the same careful attention as the Vietnam movies. Productions like *An Early Frost*, first broadcast in 1985, *Parting Glances* (1986), and *Longtime Companion* (1990) contributed to documenting the early response to AIDS, particularly its devastating impact among gay men. While these three films never had the ratings or the box office receipts of the overhyped and dramatically inferior *Philadelphia* and thus did little to shape the debate over AIDS, they nonetheless deserve analysis as artifacts that are still available to influence how the nation remembers AIDS.

Uses for this book in the classroom are limited. It could be used most effectively in courses on twentieth-century America, though it presupposes a thorough knowledge