

Reviews

Making Black Los Angeles: Class, Gender, and Community, 1850-1917, by Marne L. Campbell. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. 302 pages. \$85.00, cloth. \$29.95, paper. \$19.99, electronic.

W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington often serve as symbols for opposing responses to what Du Bois called “the problem of the color line” at the turn of the early twentieth century. Du Bois, the Harvard-educated offspring of free Northerners, focused on the role of black elites as he championed immediate integration. Washington, the son of slaves, took a pragmatic gradualist approach that encouraged the laboring black majority to grow into the responsibilities of citizenship. Both visited Los Angeles early in the century, seeking to shape the growing metropolis according to their respective visions. In *Making Black Los Angeles: Class, Gender, and Community, 1850-1917*, Marne L. Campbell strives to correct historians’ tendency to reproduce Du Bois’s depiction of a community dominated by middle-class professionals in their portrayals of black Los Angeles. Campbell fleshes out the narrative of the underclass majority, highlighting in particular the roles of women and working-class people in community formation. The result is a rich, complex portrait of black Los Angeles as home to both property-owning black professionals and economically marginalized working-class residents, a city of both opportunity and oppression.

While the book concentrates on post-1850 American California, the first chapter, “Myths and Origins: Racial Formation in Los Angeles,” lays a foundation by exploring the place of blacks in Spanish and Mexican California. Blacks were among the American city’s first non-indigenous settlers, and some of the leading families were of part African descent. Tapping into a robust vein of scholarship on race and American legal history, Campbell probes the fluidity of racial classification, showing how members of the prominent Pico district might be considered mestizo, mulatto, or white depending on the system employed.

Chapter 2, “Heaven Ain’t Hard to Find: The Formation of the African American Community,” teases out a portrait of individual migrants and community formation from 1850 to 1870 based on available statistical data. Campbell illustrates the opportunities for advancement the city made possible for some founding-

generation black figures, including Bidley Mason, an enslaved woman who gained freedom, became a land owner, and used her resources to provide opportunities for the advancement of other blacks.

The bulk of Chapter 3 addresses similar themes of migration, household formation, land acquisition, and labor for the period roughly from 1870 to 1910. It includes an exploration of the development of the city's professional and business class that largely confirms the picture provided by Douglas Flammang and other scholars of black Los Angeles. The chapter's title, "Establishing and Maintaining Institutions," is somewhat misleading, as Campbell addresses the aforementioned professional and business relations, but devotes relatively little attention to black organizations, including clubs and mutual aid societies. Her brief coverage of churches would benefit from additional discussion, as she notes that as "the first institution operated by local African Americans that allowed them complete autonomy," black churches "served as the center of African American life."

The fourth chapter, "The Development of the Underclass," makes the book's most significant contribution. Focusing on so-called "Nigger Alley," Campbell examines the formation of the city's poor black community and the way the Anglo-Protestant elite rhetorically constructed this residential area as a center of crime, disease, and degeneracy. Her discussion of white efforts to establish racial hygiene complements William Deverell's study of the strategies that white officials employed in this era to "ethnically quarantine" Mexican residents.

Chapter 5's role in the book's scheme is a bit puzzling, marking a departure from the structure of earlier chapters. "They Were All Filled with the Holy Ghost!" is essentially a stand-alone narrative of the Azusa Street Revival, frequently seen as the founding of the Pentecostal movement. Campbell's account of the revival largely replicates narratives offered by scholars of Pentecostalism, but she makes the case that "Pentecostalism in Los Angeles [w]as illustrative of the city's multicultural and multiracial characteristics" (p. 11). Though her general narrative addresses the movement's interracial character, this tiny, short-lived revival, rejected by most of the city's black residents, offers just one case study about the formation of Los Angeles's black community, rather than a broad study of black churches in the City of Angels.

Where Chapter 5 zooms in from Los Angeles to the specifics of Azusa Street, Chapter 6 expands outward from Los Angeles to the West in general. "Booker T. Washington Goes West" addresses Washington's visits to the West, beginning with his efforts in Los Angeles—getting the *Los Angeles Times* to provide positive coverage of blacks, increasing black membership in civic organizations, and encouraging black property acquisition. The rest of the chapter addresses his tours of other Western states and his support for Allen Allensworth's quixotic attempt to build an all-black community outside Bakersfield. Undeniably intriguing, these accounts shed little light on black community in Los Angeles in particular, but instead offer insight on the interactions between local, regional, and national movements seeking advancement for all black communities.

While these last two chapters move the spotlight from Los Angeles proper, *Making Black Los Angeles* remains an informative monograph that could make a useful classroom text. A succinct book, *Making Black Los Angeles* dovetails

with several larger issues that could be a good fit for an American survey course, or courses in African American, urban, or Western history. Campbell utilizes a variety of distinct source types in different chapters, so the book would lend itself well to a discussion of evidence and argument. The book's periodization, beginning with statehood and ending with the U.S. participation in World War I, invites student exploration of historical turning points. Finally, as a study of one urban area, the book prompts comparative questions about how and why location shaped the experiences of black Americans in the early twentieth century.

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David Neumann

Universities and Their Cities: Urban Higher Education in America, by Steven J. Diner. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. 170 pages. \$44.95, cloth. \$44.95, electronic.

When most Americans imagine a college campus, they envision a secluded, bucolic setting dotted by ivy-covered buildings. And many colleges do fit this archetype. However, as higher education grew in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban universities became more prevalent and served increasing numbers of students. While previous scholars have written institutional histories of these universities, there have been fewer attempts to synthesize and generate an overarching account. Steven J. Diner's *Universities and Their Cities* begins to fill this gap.

Diner's narrative knits accounts together from a diverse set of higher education institutions, while utilizing the robust historiography of urban America to build context around these universities. Overall, the book historicizes the shifting meaning of "urban university" amidst America's anti-urbanism. In doing so, Diner deploys a capacious definition for "urban." In Diner's schema, being classified as an urban university has less to do with the university's location and more to do with its mission. He differentiates between a university in a city and an urban university. The "university in a city" exists within the urban space, but it is not of the space. Conversely, the "urban university" engages the space as an empirical laboratory both to improve the city, and to further the institution's mission of teaching, learning, and research. Rather than viewing these two concepts as a binary, though, it is more useful to think of them on a continuum, especially when viewing institutions over time.

Diner, beginning his account in 1900, investigates several salient issues related to American universities and cities throughout the twentieth century. In the first chapter, he reveals how anti-urbanism undermined the growth of undergraduate education in cities. At the same time, professional schools considered cities as a lab for preparing students for future careers. Diner, in Chapter 2, spotlights the growth and democratization of urban higher education during the Progressive and Depression eras. In particular, the chapter examines how these institutions served working-class and immigrant students during the day and adult students of various

backgrounds at night. In Chapter 3, Diner illustrates how higher education's democratization, spearheaded by urban universities in the first half of the century, became the norm for American higher education as a whole in the post-war period. He also highlights how urban universities and colleges became more explicitly involved in serving communities surrounding the university. After focusing on the expansion and democratization of higher education in cities, Diner steers the narrative towards the most significant issue facing post-war cities: the urban crisis.

The second half of the book begins to uncover the relationship between the "urban crisis" and urban universities. In Chapter 4, Diner argues that the urban crisis "focused public attention on the role that universities could play in addressing economic inequality, racism, and the needs of cities and their residents" (p. 90). However, while urban universities attempted to mitigate the effects of the urban crisis, they had "a modest impact on the future of their cities" (p. 110). In the final chapter, the book returns to the paradox of universities in cities. On the one hand, leaders at these schools still try and avoid the negative connotations associated with the "urban university." As revealed by Diner, leaders at these institutions believed—and largely still believe—such an association represents second-class citizenship in the landscape of higher education. On the other hand, universities in cities have embraced the "great assets of their locations" (p. 133).

Universities and Their Cities should be added to introductory courses on higher education, urban studies, and public policy. Diner's slim volume provides a good historical foundation for tracing the shifts in higher education and urban spaces in the United States. It could be read for a single class meeting at the beginning of the semester, or read in small chunks throughout the semester. It could also be utilized as a foil for deeper conversations about the relationship between these universities and immigration, the Civil Rights Movement, and the urban crisis to name a few. For instance, Diner's account falls short in explicating the ways in which urban universities created and perpetuated the crisis. This shortcoming can be mitigated by drawing upon texts such as Arnold Hirsch's *Making the Second Ghetto* (1998) or Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (2014) and putting them in conversation with Diner's text. Despite this shortcoming, Diner's synthetic yet expansive book deserves inclusion in courses grappling with the role of higher education in American life.

University of Virginia

Alexander Hyres

Game Changer: The Technoscientific Revolution in Sports, by Rayvon Fouché. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. 262 pages. \$29.95, cloth. \$29.95, electronic.

The history of sports has been accelerating into maturity. It has conferences, journals, publication series, and numerous textbooks for the popular undergraduate survey courses increasingly entering college curricula. As Rayvon Fouché admirably demonstrates, it is also infiltrating other avenues of scholarly inquiry.

His book is a contemporary historical and sociological study of the application of science and technology to athletic equipment, and it makes for fascinating reading.

But it is more than that, for this book is also about the future. Fouché, director of the American Studies program at Purdue University and a former professional cyclist, worries that technoscience—"the inseparable interweaving of science and technology"—will destroy popular narratives about sport as a fair meritocracy (p. 2). Drawing inspiration from Leo Marx on technology and agrarian literature (*The Machine in the Garden* [1964]), Donna Haraway on mechanical visions of the body (*Symians, Cyborgs, and Women* [1991]), and the social history of science typified by Bruno Latour, Fouché offers six case studies illustrating the increased use of technoscience to enhance performance, countering the current focus on illegal drug use.

Fouché divides his book into two parts. In the first, tellingly called "Judging Artifacts," he studies how technology has improved swimmers' ability to slip through water with the least resistance possible; how various types of equipment (including legally redesigned shoes and illegal motors in bicycle frames) helped give science a place in sports; and how Oscar Pistorius tested the limits of physical augmentation with specially designed prostheses. The second half, "Evaluating Bodies," examines the barriers to identifying and catching rule-breakers. He shows how the South African track star Caster Semenya illustrates the scientific and cultural challenges of sex identification; the ineffectiveness of direct drug testing; and the contentious and incomplete development of a "biological passport" by the Union Cycliste Internationale to replace blood tests for performance-enhancing drugs.

Fouché elegantly mixes the obscure with the well-known to forefront issues raised at the intersection of sports and technoscience. Probably the most notorious case he covers is that of cyclist Lance Armstrong, a serial cheater who successfully evaded detection for over a decade. Fouché puts Armstrong into the wider context of public resistance to discrediting athletic heroes, arguing that drug testing does little more than "quell and mollify public concerns about the fairness within sport" (p. 155).

What unites these intriguing and well-presented case studies is the interaction among four groups. Various publics (fans, critics, journalists, etc.) consume sports; governing bodies adjudicate and try to control particular sports; competitors play to win; and technoscientific actors develop and sell equipment to improve performance. It is the last of these which form the main object of this book. Fouché contends that consumers want fair games in which merit determines winners, a desire technoscience undercuts. At what point, he wonders, will consumers become disillusioned by the dominance of technoscientific advances and spurn sports completely?

Game Changer offers a fine introduction to complex questions raised by the application of science and technology to athletic competition. Where does the athlete stop and the technology begin? This and a host of other issues should spark debate in upper-division and graduate courses in sociology, ethics, American Studies, and sports history. *Game Changer* also provides an excellent alternative approach to the study of sports. Though he occasionally touches on what might

be called the major sports—because of their financial clout and cultural power—Fouché brings to light compelling stories about athletic worlds often omitted from the headlines.

This strength could prove something of a weakness, at least for students weaned on the major American sports. There are references to but little of substance about football, basketball, and baseball. Readers looking to understand how technoscience is changing these sports will be disappointed, as will lovers of the growing power and purchase of data analysis. But *Game Changer* resonates beyond the sports he covers, and in that sense, Fouché addresses the future of *all* sport.

Game Changer is at heart a morality tale. If those who consume sports lose faith in the dominant narrative, they will stop watching. This could damage the profitability of sports equipment manufacturers and broadcasters, eject competitors from the arena, and undercut the need for governing bodies. Everyone loses. We are at the edge of what Fouché calls “a precipice where the differences between the bodily abilities of athletes in a sporting domain may become so infinitesimal that athletic performance may cease to determine the outcomes of sport competitions” (p. 207). The future will reveal whether or not professional sports fall into this “precipice.”

Iowa State University

Simon Cordery

Gender and the Great War, edited by Susan R. Grayzel and Tammy M. Proctor. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 286 pages. \$99.00, cloth. \$29.95, paper. \$19.99, electronic.

The centennial of the First World War has brought with it a host of new scholarly work on the war, including *Gender and the Great War*, a collection of twelve original essays, each of which synthesizes the existing scholarship on the gendered nature of a particular aspect of the war. Each essay is transnational in approach and includes suggestions for further research on the subject. Taken as a whole, the essays synthesize scholarship on both feminine and masculine genders in wartime. The final essay provides a brief historiographical overview of the trends in Great War scholarship, placing the more recent focus on gender history into that larger context. An extensive, if selective, bibliography of the scholarship on the war concludes this volume, which is an appropriate one for students in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on subjects such as gender history, the history of the Great War, and transnational history. Individual essays will also be a valuable resource for instructors wishing to incorporate gendered or transnational perspectives on the war into their courses.

Taken as a whole, the essays effectively demonstrate what the editors refer to in their Introduction as “the absolutely crucial functions of gender in wartime” for both men and women (p. 8). Some of the essays focus primarily on women in the context of the war. Kimberly Jensen’s essay, “Gender and Citizenship,” for example, delves into the complex ways in which the war affected women’s

voting rights in various nations as well as the citizenship status of women on both sides of the conflict who were married to enemy aliens. In "Gender and Work," Deborah Thom synthesizes the extensive scholarship on women's war work in America and European nations, pointing out the transnational similarities as well as the ways in which women's experiences varied by country. Karen Hunt's "Gender and Everyday Life" focuses on women's struggles to feed their families, primarily in Britain, Germany, and Austria, while Joy Damousi examines the "transnationalism of war grief and loss" (p. 212) for grieving mothers and widows in her essay, "Gender and Mourning." Jovana Knežević's "Gender and Occupation" synthesizes the scholarly literature on the impact of living in occupied nations during the conflict, noting that women, who tended to be overrepresented in occupied populations, also played important symbolic roles as martyrs in wartime propaganda about the occupation. In "Gender and Memory," on the other hand, Karen Petrone focuses on "the centrality of the male in memorialization" of the war in post-war years, regardless of nation (p. 234).

The remaining essays examine both masculine and feminine genders during the war. Editor Susan Grayzel's own contribution, "Gender and Warfare," considers both how the new wartime technologies of airpower and chemical weapons affected definitions of the masculine gender and how women on "the so-called home front" (p. 176) experienced the overt violence of war. Erika Kuhlman's "Gender and Resistance" delves into how gender shaped both the roles women played in opposing the war, including through such transnational organizations as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the ways in which men resisted the war by refusing to participate in the military effort. In "Gender and Race," Richard Fogarty considers the intersections of gender and race for both men and women in the context of a global war involving multiple empires and continents, while editor Tammy Proctor's "Gender and Age" delves into the impact of age on both male and female experiences of the war. In a well-illustrated chapter, "Gender and Sexuality," Ana Carden-Coyne and Laura Doan examine the issue of sexuality and sexual identity for both men and women in the context of the war. Fitting somewhat less comfortably into this collection of essays which otherwise synthesize existing scholarship from multiple regions, Michelle Moyd's nonetheless fascinating original research essay, "Gender and Violence," focuses on the East African campaign during the Great War. As the editors note in their Introduction to the volume, the gendered nature of the war has been studied far more extensively for European and North American nations than for other areas of the world, which perhaps explains the editorial decision to include Moyd's original research in a collection otherwise focused on synthesizing existing scholarship.

While chapters focusing on the scholarship on gender and imperialism or gender and revolution would have been welcome additions to this excellent volume, overall, *Gender and the Great War* provides a comprehensive and accessible introduction to the transnational scholarship on the gender dynamics of World War I.

This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy, by Matthew Karp. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. 360 pages. \$29.95, cloth. \$29.95, electronic.

In Matthew Karp's telling, historians have misread elite slaveholders' views about the future of slavery in the antebellum era. Instead of perceiving slaveholders as anxious and defensive about the increased isolation of their "peculiar institution," Karp finds these men to be outward-looking optimists who boldly planned for the expansion of slavery to advance modern civilization. They worked not only to secure and expand slaveholding areas within the United States, but also to encourage other countries within the western hemisphere to retain or embrace the system of slavery. As the book title suggests, these slaveholders advocated—at home and abroad—for building and sustaining "this vast Southern Empire." Initially concerned about rising abolitionism in the 1830s, the slaveholders' confidence grew over the next two decades. More and more, they believed that the "principle of free labor was in retreat, while the tangible facts of racial hierarchy and 'compulsory' toil grew stronger with every hour" (p. 149). Karp's argument about these self-assured slaveholders is persuasive, and one that scholars need to know.

Taking on the existing historiography of slaveholders as adherents of states' rights and small government, Karp argues that elite slaveholders believed that the best way to extend their "Southern Empire" was to use the power they retained within the executive branch in the 1840s and 1850s, including that of the presidency, the army, the navy, and the diplomatic corps. As a result, they supported the modernization and expansion of the military. In doing so, slaveholders could point to many achievements: they succeeded in averting war with abolitionist Great Britain; helped to maintain Cuba as a slaveholding Spanish colony; added Texas as a slave state; and secured a "buffer zone" for slavery in the southwestern territories, which increased the likelihood that the enslaved runaways would be returned via the fugitive slave clause in the U.S. Constitution. They used everything within their power—from diplomacy and treaties with Great Britain to making war against Mexico—to bring these events about.

Having enhanced the nation's military power to maintain and extend slavery, most elite slaveholders were not among the fire-eating secessionists of the 1840s and 1850s. If they had been, Karp contends, they would hardly have supported the military's expansion. They did so because they were in favor of a strong federal government to secure the profitable institution of slavery—both within and outside of the nation. Secession in the 1860s, then, was not about states' rights or an act of desperation in defense of a dying institution. Instead, Karp believes, it was a means by which slaveholders intended to maintain and enhance the Southern empire through international support for systems of compulsory labor. Initially committed to a federal government that had helped to create this empire, these slaveholders seceded only after they understood that President Abraham Lincoln would not support their agenda for slavery in the hemisphere, or permit any compromise to allow for slavery's expansion.

Although they had lost the 1860 election and any hope for the continuation of a hemispheric empire of slavery under Lincoln, these slaveholders felt confident

of their success within the newly created Confederate States of America. They took comfort in their belief that some European countries had come around to their way of understanding: that the best way to prosper and build civilization was through white supremacy and coerced labor. They pointed to evidence that even Great Britain had begun to use other forms of coerced labor—contract labor from India and “coolies” from Asia—to get their tropical plantations to flourish. Although “pushed out” of power within the United States, Karp finds these slaveholders “pulled into the Confederacy by their ravenous ambition” to spread slavery throughout the hemisphere (p. 233). To some extent, Karp sees their self-confidence as disturbingly accurate, in that variations of their beliefs in white supremacy and compulsory labor outlasted the Confederacy’s demise to resurface in the new imperialism of the 1890s.

Karp’s writing style is clear, well-organized, and persuasively argued, but at times it is a dense and difficult read, especially when he details the intricacies of political arguments concerning the modernization and expansion of the military as well as myriad diplomatic correspondence and exchanges. As such, this book would work best for a graduate course on slavery, or perhaps a very advanced undergraduate class. It is essential reading for all specialists in the politics of slavery, who will find this book critical in helping them to rethink and reframe their lectures on the antebellum period.

Morgan State University

Linda C. Noel

The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters, by James McPherson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 232 pages. \$27.95, cloth. \$14.95, paper.

During the 1960s, sentimentalized celebrations of the American Civil War overlapped with the high-water mark of the Civil Rights Movement. Historians, powerfully affected by the latter, sought new ways to understand the former. They insisted that slavery was the essential catalyst for the war, and emancipation its paramount consequence. They also scuttled “revisionist” interpretations, widely promoted during the 1930s, which lamented the “needless” Civil War. Revisionist ideas, nurtured amid post-World War I disillusionment, tended to see all wars as wastes of lives and treasure. The new mood among historians in the 1960s celebrated the Civil War as a key step forward in the struggle for racial justice.

James M. McPherson was among a “post-revisionist” generation of historians who heralded the war as a “new birth of freedom” and deplored its post-war reversal during Reconstruction. This view has been ascendant in large part because of a full half-century of his influential scholarship, public presence, and sparkingly accessible writing.

Recent events have challenged his generation’s view of the Civil War and its consequences. More than a decade and a half after 9/11, the spiral of armed conflict centered in the Islamic world seems relentless and inconclusive. Long military

occupations have failed to bring stability or security to Iraq and Afghanistan, and brutality and atrocity, especially in Syria, appears to be the new normal. At the same time, despite the election of the first African American U.S. president (who championed Lincoln's legacy), the struggles for equal rights and racial equality appear stalemated. The sesquicentennial of the Civil War brought renewed division, recrimination, and debates about enduring Confederate symbols. Black Lives Matter protests triggered a counter-mobilization across the country, and scapegoating of immigrants, Muslims, and black and Jewish Americans fueled a conservative political resurgence.

McPherson's latest volume, *The War That Forged a Nation*, offers lucid answers to those who might question "why the Civil War still matters." Twelve chronological essays, all but one republished, present his own evolution of thought and scholarship over the past decade, drawing fresh conclusions and responding to groundbreaking recent Civil War scholarship by prominent academic historians such as Mark E. Neely, Jr., Harry Stout, James Oakes, Drew Gilpin Faust, Eric Foner, Gary Gallagher, and David Blight. McPherson does not always agree with these historians, but what the essays make clear is that he has swayed little from his belief that the Civil War's relevance derives from its changed definition of freedom that in turn paved the way for civil rights advancements and ongoing contests over the meaning of liberty in America. In fact, recent challenges by libertarian and anti-government political movements to this legacy make the war even more important, as McPherson argues in his original first chapter, "Why the Civil War Still Matters."

Two chapters are particularly historiographical in nature, and demonstrate McPherson's formidable critical skills. (Not surprisingly, both were published as reviews in *The New York Review of Books*.) "A Just War?" questions Harry Stout's inconsistent conclusions, reminding readers that the war to liberate enslaved people and the "hard war" against Southern society were mutually reinforcing elements of strategy. "Death and Destruction in the Civil War" reminds us that it was the most catastrophic conflict in American history, employing J. David Hacker's projection that the war's death toll was closer to 750,000 to critique Neely's argument that the Civil War was characterized by "remarkable restraint."

Less historiographical but no less interpretive or relevant to today's issues are McPherson's chapters on the Mexican War (which he compares to the Iraq War as a "war of choice" [p. 15]), the naval war, and reconsideration of George B. McClellan, who he concludes was a narcissist with "paranoid tendencies" (p. 145) and whose leadership limited the Army of the Potomac's ability to wage war. This command depiction of "Young Napoleon" contrasts with depictions of Lincoln as a principled and pragmatic wartime leader.

McPherson's insights into Abraham Lincoln appear in several chapters, and suggest how scholarly debates have revised his own earlier conclusions. Having previously engaged in a notable debate with historian Ira Berlin over the role of presidential versus self-emancipation, McPherson posits that Lincoln, Union armies, and the enslaved all played important roles in the wartime liberation, which then became national policy to secure African American freedom. In his final chapter, he emphasizes the role of collective violence in the retreat from

Reconstruction, one that conjures the lessons of Vietnam, but more directly assesses the challenges of the ongoing “War on Terror” and entwinement of the ghosts of the Confederacy with recent spates of domestic racial violence. McPherson reminds us that the debates that spurred the Civil War—race, citizenship, region, the place of government—are part of the war’s complicated legacy.

More than one prominent historian has referred to James McPherson as a “national treasure.” This slim and highly readable volume explains why, and will appeal to students, academics, and popular audiences alike.

University of Cincinnati

Christopher Phillips

In the Looking Glass: Mirrors and Identity in Early America, by Rebecca K. Shrum. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. 232 pages. \$54.95 cloth. \$54.95 electronic.

Rebecca K. Shrum has written an original, interdisciplinary book about the shapes, exchange, ownership, and varied cultural uses of mirrors between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in America. Working at the intersection of material culture studies, economic and cultural history, Shrum draws on museum collections, archeological evidence, trade records, probate inventories, and archival research in private papers to present a multi-faceted, multicultural study of early Americans’ first encounters with and expanding use of mirrors. While some of the book’s claims are more fully supported than others, *In the Looking Glass: Mirrors and Identity in Early America* is consistently intriguing.

Most impressively, *In the Looking Glass* adopts a multicultural and at times intersectional approach, juxtaposing and comparing the ownership and uses of mirrors among European Americans, African Americans, and Native Americans in early America. When her archival evidence fails her (as it does most notably in relation to African Americans’ use of mirrors), Shrum fills in the gaps with comparative, transnational studies of West and West-Central Africans’ centuries-old desire to harness “the power of the sacred with reflective materials” (p. 137). Her exhaustive documentation of Native Americans’ wide ownership and interest in mirrors from the earliest periods of contact, based primarily on the rich extant records of British and French fur traders, is particularly eye-opening. Drawing on the private papers of nineteenth-century Euro-Americans, including Abraham Lincoln, Shrum also uncovers a lingering (pre-modern) reliance on mirrors for magical divination, particularly among the Civil War generation. Her evidence of the resurgence of this older form of mirror use among battle-scarred, traumatized nineteenth-century white men suggests the breakdown of their faith in rationality along with their customary gendered and racial narratives, and demands further study and psychological analysis.

Moving between cultures and over three centuries, *In the Looking Glass* places the history of mirror use within the context of cultural theories of identity and race/gender construction. Arguing that Euro-Americans employed mirrors

to cast “themselves in the role of the ‘rational,’ individual self while assigning the role of ‘primitive,’ communal, and collective selves to people of African and Native descent,” Shrum views this “as part of their larger project of constructing and solidifying ‘whiteness’” (p. 9). Yet she also posits that “the process by which the mirror shed its magical and ritual meanings to become a rational tool for increasing self-understanding was contingent and uneven” among all three cultures, and notes (as have many historians of other cultural objects and practices) that mirrors illustrate “how supposedly ‘modern’ and ‘premodern’ impulses could be joined in the same object and flourish there together for centuries” (p. 9). In an all too fleeting Epilogue, the book promises an impending cultural inversion at the end of the nineteenth century, as “white women, Native Americans, and African Americans claimed ownership of and the right to determine the meaning of mirrors” for themselves, challenging white men’s long control of the looking glass as “an important material object through which they believed that they displayed their mastery over the world and in which they could see the inferiority of those they desired to subjugate” (p. 164). If “American gender and racial hierarchies” did not topple immediately, Shrum concludes considerably more optimistically than her limited evidence justifies, subordinate groups would soon assert “the right to define their own identities for themselves” as they claimed their mirrored selves (p. 164).

This brief volume, meticulously footnoted, generously illustrated, and beautifully produced by the Johns Hopkins University Press, could certainly be adopted in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses. It might well teach history majors and graduate students the value of daring to ask questions for which there are no easy or complete answers, and of painstakingly piecing together fragmentary evidence from a wide range of archival, archaeological, and material collections. Shrum’s intelligent use of cultural theory and interdisciplinary perspectives might also serve as a model for advanced history students. Teachers of lower-division college and high school history courses probably will not want to assign the book, but could introduce some of Shrum’s interpretations to their students. The 150 freshmen and sophomores in my General Education survey of American History were fascinated (and saddened) by Shrum’s analysis of women internalizing the “male gaze” (p. 80) and African Americans judging themselves harshly through the “white gaze” (p. 132) as they first glimpsed their mirrored selves. Perhaps some of my students recognized their own reflections in this mirror?

San Diego State University

Eve Kornfeld



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