

BOOK REVIEWS

Testimonios: Early California Through the Eyes of Women, 1815-1848. Translated by Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz. Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2006. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. 288 pp. \$27.50 cloth. \$17.95 paper.

Reviewed by Deborah Lawrence, Associate Professor Emeritus of English, California State University, Fullerton.

Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz's *Testimonios* is a fascinating collection of interviews with thirteen women who lived in California during the late Spanish and Mexican periods. Collected in the 1870s, these oral histories were part of historian Hubert Howe Bancroft's effort to write an exhaustive history of California. Until now, these interviews have never been brought together in one translated edition.

In nineteenth-century America, men were regarded as the makers of history and, consequently, interviewing women for Bancroft's project was only incidental to the larger consideration of men. Yet even a casual reader of *Testimonios* will appreciate the significance of these women's observations. Not surprisingly, their stories offer an intimate look into their family lives: courtship, childbirth, and household chores. Of special interest to readers are the glimpses of how these women's domestic spheres were inextricably linked with California's changing social and political events. For example, Eulalia Pérez remembers that she was ready to give birth when an earthquake destroyed the San Juan Capistrano church. Describing her elopement after Governor Echeandía forbade her marriage to Henry Fitch, Josefa Carrillo claims that the governor thwarted their marriage not only because he was hostile toward foreigners, but because of his love for her. Juana Machado recalls her parents' distress when her father was forced to cut off his braid when California became part of Mexico. These firsthand accounts mention almost every significant military and political event from 1818 to 1847, including the transfer of power from Spain to Mexico, the secularization of the missions in the 1830s, and the American invasion of 1846.

The diversity of the women in this collection is impressive. Eulalia Pérez and Apolinaria Lorenzana spent time working at the missions. A few of the women came from elite families with long and well-known histories in California. Some of them, such as Catarina Avila, Juana Machado, and Felipa Osuna, are from prominent landowning families. Dorotea Valdez was a mestiza, and Isidora Filomena was an indigenous woman whose husband had been an important ally of the Mexicans in the Sonoma area in the 1830s and 1840s. Because the women are from various locations – including Monterey, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, San Diego, and Santa Clara – sectional differences between northern and southern Alta California are illuminated.

Unlike autobiography, oral history is not self-generated work. Bancroft's interviewees – Henry Cerruti, Vicente Gómez, and Thomas Savage – came to the interviews with a series of prepared questions. These women were answering questions directed at them by a man they had just met, and thus they were not always willing to be bound by the interviewers' priorities. Their testimonios

occasionally reveal the women changing the subject, expanding on their answers, and squeezing in topics they wanted to talk about.

This book also contains excerpts from "Ramblings in California," by Henry Cerruti, the entire manuscript that Savage wrote describing his efforts to obtain the testimonios, and a series of short, biographical sketches of historical figures. The introduction includes an explanation of the editors' methodology for translation, the chronological organization of the book, and the setting of the original interviews. Each testimonio is preceded by a commentary that provides an informative synthesis of the oral narrative and its cultural and historical context.

Beebe and Senkewicz's introduction, notes, and appendices provide an excellent guide to the interviews and to the historical background of California from 1815 to 1848 for both the novice and specialist alike. Consequently, *Testimonios* is a valuable source not only for scholars of Alta California, but for anyone wishing to have a firsthand account of early California – from the woman's perspective.

Spreading the Word: A History of Information in the California Gold Rush. By Richard T. Stillson. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. Appendices, illustrations, maps, index, and notes. 278 pp. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Michelle E. Jolly, Associate Professor, Department of History, Sonoma State University.

As Richard T. Stillson notes in the conclusion to his intriguing study, *Spreading the Word: A History of Information in the California Gold Rush*, "few events in American history have been retold as many times and for as many reasons as the gold rush," (p. 183). Stillson's "history of information" encourages readers to see the gold rush – and the myriad firsthand accounts of the gold rush with which they may be familiar – through a new lens that refocuses our attention even on such oft-told tales as that of the overland route.

Spreading the Word is, in Stillson's words, about "how Americans from the East who went overland to California for the gold rush in the years 1849 to 1851 obtained, assessed, and used information," (p. 1). When the news first came in late 1848 about the discovery of gold, California was so distant – physically and in the American consciousness – that would-be argonauts' primary need was for more and better information. Were the claims about gold in California true? How much gold was there? Would it be worth a trip? What was the best way to get to California? What supplies should one bring? These kinds of driving questions emerged in the context of an information revolution that was taking place in mid-nineteenth-century America. As information itself became a commodity, newspaper editors, government officials, authors of guidebooks, and epistlers from the gold fields took on the task of meeting this demand for information while consumers struggled to figure out how to assess and use it.

Stillson takes us into this varied and changing world of information. He tells us how eastern Americans acquired and assessed information in the first months of the gold rush and the extent to which that information varied by region (affected both by regional politics and by the economics of publishing). Then

Stillson analyzes the Overland Trail in terms of information flow: how information changed as goldrushers moved west toward the trailheads in Missouri and Iowa and then toward California, and the ways in which goldrushers' preferred sources of information—and their criteria for assessing that information—changed as they moved west. Finally, Stillson describes how the argonauts' arrival in California shaped the flow of information, both for the goldrushers themselves and for easterners who could now get firsthand accounts to supplement other sources of information.

Stillson's emphasis on the importance of information – and the variations by time and place in how goldrushers received, evaluated, and used it – is thought-provoking. As I read other gold rush histories that describe migrants' motivations for making the trip to California, I am now more conscious of the flow of information: How did these particular people get their information? What kinds of information did they have? How did newspapers, government reports, guidebooks, traders' reports, and letters answer their questions about the gold and about the trip to California? How did their access to, and assessment of, information change over time?

At the same time, Stillson's approach to the gold rush itself strikes me as simplistic. He utilizes a body of secondary sources on both the gold rush and the history of information that seems thin and, in the latter case, somewhat dated. Moreover, this study focuses almost exclusively on the information experiences of white, middle-class, northeastern men who traveled to California on the Overland Trail. Such a focus might make it easier to see the flows of information, as Stillson claims, but it also reinforces an image of the gold rush as primarily involving gold seekers of these particular characteristics. Even granting Stillson's emphasis on the American experience, nearly half of all U.S. migrants to California in 1849 – and most of those from the East Coast – did not travel overland but by sea. How did their information needs, access to information, and methods of assessment change and compare to the experiences of those goldrushers who traveled overland? What effect did the existing trade and information routes to California, the timely establishment of a steamer mail route between Panama and California just as gold was discovered, and the presence of Americans living and trading abroad have on information dispersal and assessment? Although the study would surely be more complex, more attention even to the experiences of other Americans – such as those who traveled by sea, women, and southerners – seems warranted.

Stillson's book certainly intrigued me and encouraged me to ask different questions about the gold rush and about the history of information in antebellum America. But I wish that Stillson had extended his analysis to offer a fuller story of the myriad ways in which information – its availability, its sources, its commodification, its assessment, and its uncertainty – shaped the gold rush and its era.

Eugenic Nation: Faults & Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America. By Alexandra Minna Stern. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2005. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. 361 pp. \$25.95 paper.

Reviewed by Christina Cogdell, Ph.D., Department of Art and Art History, College of Santa Fe, New Mexico

Alexandra Stern's *Eugenic Nation: Faults & Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* aims to fill a gap in the literature on the twentieth-century American eugenics movement by exploring its manifestations on the West Coast and California in particular. The book's title, therefore, inaccurately suggests that it is a history of the national movement that focuses closely on issues of breeding in modern America. The book examines the *legacies* and *offshoots* of eugenic ideas and policies more than serving as a definitive documentation of the history of the movement itself. Despite the misnomer, however, Stern offers her readers some new and compelling material – particularly in her discussion of the period from the mid-1940s through the 1970s – that shows how developments in California, both for and against eugenics and its legacies, affected the broader national populace.

The book is organized into chapters that combine a chronological approach with a close topical focus on such issues as tropical disease control and immigration restriction (Chapters 1 and 2, 1900-1940s), sterilization legislation and practice (Chapter 3, 1910-70s), the environmental conservation movement (Chapter 4, 1900-60s), postwar marriage counseling and gender role reification (Chapter 5, 1945-70s), and counterculture protests against discriminatory practices which, for years, were bolstered by eugenic ideology (Chapter 6, 1960s-present). These topics are united by Stern's regional focus on the West Coast, and together they reveal the diverse interests and conceptual legacies of eugenics supporters and critics. Stern generally succeeds in demonstrating at least some connection between her chosen topics and concurrent ideas about eugenics and controlled breeding.

For example, the first two chapters address issues of disease control and immigration on the West Coast, first at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 and then after 1924 at the U.S.-Mexico border. Stern shows that U.S. public health officials who combated tropical diseases in Panama by destroying insects and other carriers of disease brought their techniques home, albeit with changed approaches for differing contexts. The San Francisco fair was the most hygienic to date, although immigrants and their neighborhoods were disproportionately singled out as potentially diseased. Similarly, in order to eliminate diseases from Mexico entering the U.S. on the backs of "Mexican paupers," the U.S. Border Patrol initiated stringent practices of dousing immigrants with kerosene and, later, DDT, after stripping them of their clothes.

Such practices undoubtedly constituted harassment and abuse based upon racist and classist assumptions equating impoverished ethnic others with disease, a mental connection that many eugenicists most certainly embraced. However, without explaining how disease control through environmental sterilization relates to human heredity and controlled breeding, Stern fails to convince that these racist impulses were demonstrations of eugenic social policies. Killing disease-carrying insects might be considered a form of eugenics, but certainly not

eugenics directed at humans. The federal anti-immigration legislation of the 1920s was in fact sponsored by ardent eugenics supporters, so Stern's mistake is more one of argument and documentation than accuracy. By not laying out in detail the nature-nurture debate and its changes between 1900 and 1940 – with regards to neoLamarckian emphases on the environment as a source for hereditary change, germ theory, and Mendelist theories of innate disease susceptibility – she weakens the argument of the book's title that her topical discussions do, in fact, demonstrate the implementation of eugenics.

This oversight infiltrates aspects of other chapters. For example, early conservationists' arguments for the necessity of untouched environments were oftentimes based upon neoLamarckian impulses, and not just Mendelist metaphors of "race suicide," as Stern asserts. Without an explanation of this, though, the reader does not have a sense of the eugenic ramifications beyond the level of metaphor and projection. Or, take the case of Paul Popenoe's postwar marriage counseling tactics. His methods of personality testing, theories of biotypology, and strict gender constructions based upon biological determinism undoubtedly derived from earlier eugenic approaches. Stern's discussion of this is very convincing and enlightening; this is the strongest section of the book. However, it remains unclear to readers how his goal of saving all marriages, especially dysfunctional ones, was supposed to have a eugenic outcome, if eugenics in fact means genetic improvement (or "better breeding") and not just the social reinforcement of strict gender "norms."

These differences in belief, definition, and explanation do matter, for they affect our understanding of reformers' motivations, of the history of science (which Stern hardly touches), and of whether or not their actions are justifiably classified as eugenic. Hygiene measures, racism, primitivism, xenophobia, homophobia, and conservative heterosexist gender construction do not by themselves equal eugenics, despite the fact that the converse – that many eugenicists promoted these attitudes and justified them as supposedly derived from scientific evolutionary theories – is true. The nuances and complications of this difference must be carefully explored, documented, and argued in order for a historical discussion of the former to serve as a history of eugenics.

Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America. By Mae M. Ngai. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Bibliography, illustrations, figures, tables, index, appendix, and notes. xxii + 377 pp. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., Postdoctoral Fellow, University of California, Berkeley.

Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects* rearticulates how we debate immigration history by moving away from the European model of assimilation and inclusion and centering the argument on racialization and exclusion. The book covers the period between 1924 and 1965 and demonstrates how immigration restriction created the "illegal alien" in American society. As Ngai notes, "Immigration restriction produced the illegal alien as a *new legal and political subject*, whose inclusion within

the nation was simultaneously a social reality and a legal impossibility – a subject barred from citizenship and without rights” (p. 4). This “production” of illegal aliens was further reinforced by U.S. racial ideology, which placed both Mexicans and Asians in a category Ngai calls “racial otherness.” Combined, these forces had profound impacts on how Mexicans and Asians were treated, not only through their exclusion, but also in relation to the creation of the Border Patrol in the 1920s and deportation policies.

Ngai’s study fills a much needed gap in the literature by arguing how many Americans in this particular time period differentiated between desirable and undesirable immigrants. Restrictionists used the post-World War I era and the rising red scare to put an end to open immigration from southern and eastern Europe. They accomplished this with the passage of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. The establishment of quotas based on race and nationality created what Ngai calls a “hierarchy of desirability” (p. 17). Furthermore, she shows how racial overtones influenced this categorization as the United States was moving from an industrial to a post-industrial era. The demand for labor prior to the late nineteenth century created an environment in which immigrants were encouraged to come to contribute to the industrial growth of America. With the rise of mechanization in American industries by the early 1920s, a massive labor force was no longer needed. The exception, of course, was large-scale agriculture, most notably in cotton, fruit, and vegetable production.

One of the most interesting sections of her study examines what Ngai calls “imported colonialism” and how the demand for cheap labor in the agricultural industry, most notably on the West Coast and in the Southwest, necessitated the importation of both Mexican and Filipino workers to the United States. As U.S. nationals, Filipinos were exempt from immigration restrictions. Mexico’s proximity to the U.S. and the exemption of the Western Hemisphere from restrictions under the 1924 Immigration Act ensured that Mexican immigrants met these labor demands in large numbers. As the Great Depression crippled the U.S. economy during the 1930s, both became targets for xenophobic whites who called for their exclusion and deportation. For Asians, the 1924 Immigration Act ensured that they remained a small group, since they were practically barred from coming to the United States. Furthermore, many whites questioned the loyalty and place of American-born Japanese and Chinese based on what Ngai calls their “alien citizenship.” Their perceived racial foreignness was equated with being unassimilable.

The Hart-Cellar Immigration Act of 1965 may have abolished racially restrictive quotas, but as Ngai also notes, numerical restrictions placed on immigration continued to create illegal immigrants. In fact, illegal immigration increased due to legal restrictions on Western hemisphere countries combined with an increased demand for low wage labor during the 1980s. She poignantly points out how the U.S. has a “schizophrenic attitude” towards illegal aliens. Americans need their labor in “unwanted” occupations, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and service and domestic work, yet at the same time want them out of sight and out of mind.

Nativist rhetoric of Mexican hordes overrunning America’s borders led to the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border in the 1990s. Furthermore, increasingly strident nativist movements, such as the one that led to California’s Proposition 187, added to the growing animosity towards the undocumented. Moreover, the

racial implications of who is considered “illegal” also affects U.S.-born Mexicans, Latinos, and Asians, who continue to bear the stigma of racial foreignness as they fight for their place in the social fabric that is America.

This book will be of use to historians interested in the intersection of immigration, race, labor, and citizenship. Ngai’s study not only helps us to reexamine the immigration question, but encourages us to consider how future generations of Americans will decide who gets to be included in citizenship and ultimately, nationhood.

The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II. By Kevin Allen Leonard. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. Photographs, notes, and index. xii + 360 pp. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Min Hyoung Song, Associate Professor, Department of English, Boston College.

The Battle for Los Angeles is a scrupulous study of the ways in which Los Angeles-area newspapers covered the issue of race between the years 1940 and 1946. Kevin Leonard examines the major dailies – the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Los Angeles Examiner*, and the *Daily News* – as well as ethnic newspapers – the Spanish-language *La Opinión*, the English sections of *Rafu Shimpo*, the *California Eagle*, and surviving issues of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and the *Los Angeles Tribune*. Discussion of this concentrated archival undertaking is divided into several chapters clustered around important historical events. The first chapter begins with an examination of how the coverage of the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) differed between the major dailies and the ethnic press. The second chapter focuses on the coverage of Japanese Americans immediately after Pearl Harbor, the third on juvenile delinquency and Mexican Americans, the fourth on Sleepy Lagoon and the Manzanar riots, the fifth on the Zoot Suits Riots, the sixth on the ending of internment and the return of Japanese Americans, and the final chapter on the Cold War.

One important conclusion that can be drawn from this survey of newspaper coverage is the ways in which Angelenos debated the meaning of race, yielding a gradual but noteworthy widening of vocabulary for talking about this topic. In the early years, the dailies were narrowly receptive to biologically based ideas about race as well as to sweeping generalizations about whole groups based on such ideas. “To a growing number of people” in the later years, as Leonard observes, “‘race’ meant something different. It meant a set of distinct biological characteristics, but these characteristics determined only a person’s outward appearance. They did not affect a person’s beliefs, behaviors, abilities, or place in the social order” (p. 297). Although the greater circulation of this “modernist racial ideology” made earlier notions of race unacceptable in public discourse, substantive change was much slower to come.

Leonard argues such changes were unlikely to “have occurred if the war had not led to changes in the language that people employed to discuss ‘race’” (p. 301). For example, he reveals the ways in which the major dailies were fixated on

Japanese Americans during the whole of the war years, rarely allowing coverage about this group to die down even when they were no longer physically present in the Los Angeles area. At the same time, coverage of Mexican Americans, and especially of the Zoot Suits Riots, seems to mark an important turning point in the kind of language the dailies employed to talk about racial difference. The African American newspapers, especially the *Eagle* under the leadership of the charismatic Charlotta Bass, also play an important role in the story Leonard tells. These papers exerted a steady pressure on the ways in which race could be talked about in the press. The role that African Americans themselves played in the changing meaning of race during the war years, however, remains unclear.

Overall, *The Battle for Los Angeles* is a welcome addition to the critical literature on mid-century race relations in the Southland. By deliberately limiting itself to the longitudinal study of a specific type of archival material, it thoughtfully complements recent works like Eduardo Obregón Pagán's *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, Eric Avila's *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, and Lon Kurashige's *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*.

Border Oasis: Water and the Political Ecology of the Colorado River Delta, 1940-1975. By Evan R. Ward. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2003. Bibliography, illustrations, index, and notes. 230 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Eric Boime, Assistant Professor, History Department, San Diego State University-Imperial Valley Campus.

The story of the Colorado River Delta's modern metamorphosis is an iconic tale of audacious imagination, technological marvel, and tragic unsustainability. Prodigious amounts of wealth, extensive exploitations of humans and nature, and acute political laxities have made the region the "poster child" for Carey McWilliams's *Factories in the Fields*, Mark Reisner's *Cadillac Desert*, Donald Worster's *Rivers of Empire*, and other pivotal chronologies of the western waterscape. Yet this narrative allure is so much beside the point. The future growth of California, Arizona, and Baja California has literally come to hinge on the delta's lion's-share allotment of the Colorado River. Inevitably, Southwesterners will be asking how seemingly remote places like Mexicali, Yuma, and the Imperial Valley were able to lay claim to so much of this vital resource.

Accordingly, Evan Ward's *Border Oasis* is a history that is long over due. His is an exclusive focus on the delta rather than a mere chapter in a larger study of water policy, or an obligatory prelude to the more famous epic of Hoover Dam. His book also underscores the "transcendent role" of U.S.-Mexican relations and their impact on the shape and trajectory of regional transformation (p. xxviii). Either of these reasons makes *Border Oasis* an essential contribution to the history of western water, the majority of which has been framed north of the boundary line.

The complex legal and diplomatic wrangling between and among federal, state, and local agencies, as well as among myriad urban, rural, Native American and environmental groups (the acronyms fly fast and furious), might make Ward's

story unavoidably slow going at times, but scholars, journalists, technocrats, and politicians on both sides of the border will be grateful for his concise synthesis of complications, decisions, and debates regarding the allocation and use of the Colorado. For those dealing with the ongoing ramifications of rural-urban water transfers, salinity problems, and groundwater depletion, the book will be an indispensable resource.

Ideally, the book will challenge the myopia of policy makers and influential groups, who, according to Ward, have been unable to rise above their narrow interests or particular fields of jurisdiction. The best parts of *Border Oasis* emphasize the delta's "shared history, ecosystem, and regional identity" (p. 152). Agribusiness on both sides of the border owed their livelihoods to U.S. capital and Mexican labor power. Actions taken by both nations to assert independence from the other – through new hydraulic works, ground water pumping, federal investments, or binding international agreements – only further bound them in a web of conflict and cooperation.

The "salinity crisis" of the postwar years is the principal template for Ward's major themes. Its political origins (not its ecological ones) lay in the notoriously constructed Wellton-Mohawk Project near Yuma, Arizona. The irrigation district's poor drainage facilities resulted in an unremitting salty froth that devastated acreage along the lower Colorado, and, most significantly, in the Mexicali Valley in the 1950s and 60s. Grass-roots outrage in Mexico led to protests in Mexico City, stoked the election of socialist candidates in Baja California, and stirred deep nationalist sentiment. It also spurred Mexicali's dependence on subterranean sources, creating new international friction over the depleting aquifer.

Rural Arizonians won initial funding for Wellton-Mohawk to prevent urban Arizona (Phoenix), as well as Mexico and California, from seizing the Gila confluence. Such dynamics portended the lengthy and convoluted resolution that would ensue. The crisis would underscore "the challenges" for policies endeavoring to "balance diplomatic, national, regional, and local priorities within the river basin" (p. 141). Regional inflexibility forced the intervention of national governments, whose need for international harmony placed them at odds with local entities. Mexico City's proactive stance was taken to protect Baja California and to co-opt radical elements. The unwillingness of U.S. western states to concede anything drove the ever-expanding, ever-malfunctioning, obscenely expensive construction of a desalinization plant in the Sonoran Desert. Ultimately regional interests could all agree on their shared dependence on U.S. federal largess to combat basin-wide salinity problems.

Border Oasis is primarily a compilation of already published essays, which may or may not explain the book's sparse historiographical context. While Ward mentions "environmental history," his contribution to that field is especially elusive. The non-human world (i.e. water) is less an actor in his narrative than a commodity. Various interpretations of nature and their impact on the landscape are only superficially examined. Ward himself invites this criticism with a largely disconnected collection of two- to three-page snippets at the end of each chapter. These self-labeled "Deltascapes" are comprised of individual accounts (one by a historian, another by a naturalist, and another by a journalist), sidebar descriptions ("the threat of salinity"), and a musing on the Las Vegas Strip (the only time Nevada is even mentioned). Their detachment from the larger story calls attention

to the omission of significant cultural questions. What, for example, was natural or unnatural in the delta environment, a stunning hybrid concoction of elemental forces and human terra-forming? How did water policy reflect and influence people's real and imagined relationships with nature?

Such questions may well be tangential inquiries in what is really a solid policy piece. As the politics of the delta inexorably interweave with the entire river basin, many people will be thanking Ward for doing the difficult and essential homework.

Drift: A Novel. By Jim Miller. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. Photographs, illustrations, and maps. 208 pp. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Bart Thurber, Professor of English, University of San Diego.

Jim Miller, the author, with Mike Davis and Kelley Mayhew, of *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See* and the editor of *Sunshine/Noir: Writing from San Diego and Tijuana*, has now written a novel, *Drift*. For the most part it is the story of Joe Blake, a disaffected and under-employed academic on a kind of pilgrimage through San Diego(s) past and present, searching for significance in a land of radiant sunshine, the ghosts and echoes of pasts that did or did not happen, and the complex detritus of failed dreams, including his own.

But the novel is more than just the story of Joe Blake and his progress towards, in the end, love and redemption. There are sections too of actual San Diego history and the interwoven narratives of other characters with whom Joe interacts, sometimes, or who are just there, part of the tapestry the author weaves of life in San Diego, circa 2000. *Drift* is both a novel, then, and an attempt to come to terms with actual San Diego history; it is also an attempt to give voice to the voiceless – a prostitute in Tijuana, a homeless former student, an angry retiree living in a cheap downtown hotel – each of whom, the author suggests, has a story to tell that otherwise would not be heard.

The strength of the novel lies in the way it looks at San Diego itself. The city is overwhelmingly *there*, felt and seen, not simply as an actual place but as its own metaphor, which in the author's telling is a fading, sometimes shabby remnant of Anglo dreams of yet another Southern California Shangri-La, or the forced destruction of entire neighborhoods in the name of progress. And there is an accompanying apocalyptic vision, the price we pay, for Miller, for dreaming, rather than seeing, the actual: in the final pages of the novel Joe and Theresa, the woman he finds at last, visit the remains of long-closed hotels and broken down bars surrounding the Salton Sea. "It's like," Theresa says, "the party for the end of the world." It is, Miller is suggesting, an image of what the future of San Diego can only be, given the self-indulgent, exclusive, and overwhelmingly Citizen Kane-ish fantasies out of which San Diego was born.

That San Diego is so present in the novel is noteworthy in and of itself; San Diego has been, except for the novels of Max Miller, Oakley Hall and a few others, largely invisible in the literary universe, unseen and unimagined, especially by comparison to Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York. On the other hand, Miller's

San Diego is *a* San Diego; whether it is San Diego itself is open to question. Not so much because his history is wrong – I have no reason to doubt any of it – but because he has axes to grind. His sympathies are with the underclasses: the Wobblies, the union organizers, and immigrants terrorized (then and now) by white San Diego thugs. There are at least three problems with this. First, from a novelistic point of view it is hard to see what the history of the Wobblies in San Diego County has to do with the narrative present, except, perhaps, that some things never change, in the author's view; second, it means there are characters the author likes and characters he doesn't like, judging them for what they are rather than simply letting them *be* what they are. "Why do they deserve special treatment?" one character, Janie, asks of fat-cat union organizers on her way to her "nice new peach Santa-Fe style home"; the author's scorn is palpable, but this makes Janie a cartoon, a stick figure rather than a fully-imagined human being. And finally, there is what the author leaves out in this novel cum history cum novel: the Navy, the new demographic (sometimes in partnership with the Navy but often without) that has led to the rise of high tech industry, especially in and around UCSD, and the fact, which readers of *Drift* might not otherwise guess, that large swathes of San Diego county are now more Democrat than Republican. History *Drift* is, then, but it's a certain history told in a certain way.

Strange New World: Art and Design from Tijuana. Edited by Rachel Teagle. San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, 2006. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, and exhibition checklist. 254 pp. \$39.95.

Reviewed by Vanessa M. Corbera, Curatorial Department, San Diego Museum of Art.

It is about time that Tijuana was given its due. In 2006, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego attempted to do just this in the exhibition *Strange New World: Art and Design from Tijuana*. Broad in scope, this exhibition presented a thoughtful overview of the history and development of contemporary art in Tijuana. Accompanying the exhibition is a bilingual catalogue written by multiple contributors representing a wide range of disciplines, including the visual arts, architecture, and music. Part "cultural experimentation" (according to contributor Teddy Cruz) part artistic "revolution" (in the view of Rachel Teagle), this exhibition catalogue delivers an insightful discussion of and stimulating journey through Tijuana as a legitimate player in the contemporary art world.

For decades, Tijuana has been viewed as a cultural abyss. The catalogue attempts to change this perception by tackling issues of such grand proportion as the economic, political, and geographical disparity that are both reflective of Tijuana's position as a border town and complicated by the city's transient nature. Some of the questions these writers address are how artists in Tijuana are challenging norms accepted throughout the West (including in both the United States and Mexico) and, at the same time, how these artists come to reference such norms through artistic expression. These sorts of questions are critical to understanding the catalogue's central purpose, which is to highlight the artistic

surge currently taking place in Tijuana.

What this catalogue sets out to accomplish is of unquestionable importance. Perhaps too ambitious in its efforts, the essayists nonetheless should be applauded for their keen understanding of the city's art scene, and further, for beginning a much-needed dialogue. Thus what is most exciting about the collection of essays is the study it offers of what Tijuana artists are currently doing. This is most clearly seen in exhibition curator Rachel Teagle's essay. She presents a succinct overview of the city's artistic production of the past thirty-five years and depicts Tijuana as a laboratory where artistic expressions come together. Moreover, Teagle successfully explores how these artists are concerned with projecting a certain image of themselves as *Tijuanenses*.

Overall the catalogue is more narrative than analytical. This narrative quality is illustrated in sociologist and film historian Norma V. Iglesias Prieto's essay. She offers a clear, historical outline of the avant-garde film industry of Tijuana from its inception to its current manifestation. Iglesias Prieto suggests that artists have used film, a relatively under-explored medium in Tijuana, to define and expose the border as a contested space. She sheds light on how these artists are no longer using film as part of "a survival mechanism" but rather are challenging the very stereotypes created by an earlier generation. This worthwhile discourse on identity elucidates the methodologies behind these artists' works.

The catalogue not only references the visual arts but also emphasizes the importance of architecture. In his essay, Tijuana-born architect Rene Peralta revisits architectural modernism as a "cultural product" of the West, but it is architect Teddy Cruz who takes this idea a step further. On the one hand, Cruz explores how the city's location in relation to San Diego creates an ironic contradiction where the stark contrast between San Diego's "McMansions" and Tijuana's shacks brings attention to the vast social and economic gap between the cities. On the other hand, San Diego's gated communities are being imported into Tijuana, which in turn raises questions about the "privatization of social and public institutions." Is Cruz suggesting that to some extent Tijuana has become a make-shift utopic vision of American urban planning? Have border towns become playgrounds for corporations of the West? Ultimately, Cruz's essay is an intelligent reflection on the complex and varied "allure of Tijuana."

One of the many factors that contributed to the exhibition's success was its presentation of the multi-faceted approaches of these artists. But in this strength of the exhibition also lies the principal weakness of the catalogue. However, despite its heavy-handed romanticization of the city as a present-day art Mecca, the catalogue is a valiant attempt to demystify Tijuana as a city of stereotypes, one that embodies all that is corrupt, seedy, and sordid. Instead, the catalogue presents Tijuana as a legitimate player on a universal stage. And perhaps, as Teagle muses, Tijuana, as a metaphor for a cultural phenomenon taking place in developing countries around the world, is a vision of a global artistic revolution in the making.

The Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City. Updated with a new preface. By Robert Gottlieb, Mark Vallianatos, Regina M. Freer, and Peter Dreier. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2006. Photographs, illustrations, table, index, and notes. xxiv + 304 pp. \$21.95 paper.

Reviewed by Keith Pezzoli, Lecturer, Urban Studies and Planning Program, University of California, San Diego.

The Next Los Angeles is a major contribution to new progressivism on several fronts: theory, vision, method, and praxis. The book is peppered throughout with theoretical insights regarding urban-social change under conditions of hardship and struggle in one of the world's greatest cities: Los Angeles. Many of the book's colorful stories of L.A.'s progressive people, organizations, social movements, and policy initiatives draw attention to significant untold histories. The co-authors build on this hidden history well. They provide a historically-grounded and forward-looking vision for progressivism at the dawn of our complicated twenty-first century. The vision is not the abstract concoction of arm-chair academics. The co-authors characterize their commendable approach as "scholarship of engagement" (p. xii). About themselves, they say: "The four of us have been writing about and have been participants in this aspiring progressive political force that has taken shape in Los Angeles since the civil unrest in April 1992" (p. xii). The collective grassroots experience of these authors combined with their critical pragmatism is a breath of fresh air. The book includes a detailed appendix outlining "A Policy Agenda for the Next L.A." Much of the urban studies literature is heavy with critique but light on normative guidance in terms of methods and praxis. Thus this book's successful integration of hard-hitting critique and constructive vision is much needed.

The first edition of *The Next Los Angeles* was written prior to the election of L.A.'s progressive mayoral candidate Antonio Villaraigosa. The second edition (reviewed here) was published after Villaraigosa's victory in May 2005; it includes an updated preface with an upbeat but cautious retrospective analysis of Villaraigosa's first six months in office. Gottlieb and his co-authors note how the new mayor's landslide victory injected hope into "Progressive L.A." – a term they use "to describe an emerging social change movement concerned with issues of social and economic justice, democracy and livability" (pp. 4-5). But the hope is tempered. Recent events like the eradication of the South Central Urban Farm (an important site for community gardening and efforts to make L.A. a greener and more livable city) and the police violence against protesters assembled in L.A.'s MacArthur Park on May 1, 2007 are indicative of deep-seated problems and obstacles. The leaders of L.A.'s progressive movement, Gottlieb et al argue, are well aware of such obstacles. They know that even with the support of a progressive mayor they must continue to "build the base": recruit new activists, strengthen their organizing and forge new coalitions, and improve their capacity to mobilize for elections, grassroots campaigns, and protests" (p. xxi). This is what makes *The Next L.A.* such a timely and useful text. The authors are well aware of the forces arrayed against progressivism at local, regional, national, and global levels – yet they do not shy away from articulating a utopian vision (with a pragmatic twist).

As a way to get their message across, the authors combine biography, narrative,

and critical analysis to good effect. For instance, they tell the story of Charlotta Bass, an unsung champion of progressive activism in L.A. for over 40 years during the first half of the 20th century. The case of Charlotta Bass goes beyond her remarkable skills as a communicator and negotiator. Gottlieb et al reference the Bass case to highlight important strategies for putting progressivism into action. In a way that prefigures contemporary efforts focused on community-based advocacy and cross-constituency organizing, Bass advocated a kind of activism that saw strength in building new kinds of multi-issue and multiracial coalitions, and she saw the power in providing public access to good information.

The Next L.A.'s most important message can be summed up as follows: L.A. has a fertile progressive history (much of which is still not well documented in the urban studies literature), and this history embodies vital lessons. Some contemporary efforts are building on this legacy to good effect – including, for instance Justice for Janitors (pp. 87-90) and the living wage initiative (pp. 45-47). But much remains to be done with respect to scale and integration: “The history of Progressive L.A. in the twentieth century – dynamic movements, important policy breakthroughs, and a wave of social action, but an inability to extend itself beyond the political moment to establish a more cohesive and continuing alternative to the dominant forces in the region – remained an invaluable, though ambiguous legacy” (p. 48). Thus, one of the most significant challenges that lie ahead, as the authors point out, is the task of “constructing a regional progressive politics” driven by a new, more sophisticated, locally-embedded but globally-minded “civic left” (p. 185). This is complicated. What L.A. and other city-regions of the world need is a dynamic form of Progressive Regionalism (a subject on the rise in the planning literature). *The Next L.A.* does a great service in pointing the way forward. The book puts meat on the bones of key themes and principles for progressivism: livability, democratic participation and empowerment, and social and economic justice. The book is a must read for anyone engaged in struggles for the common good in urban and regional contexts.

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BOOK NOTES

A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930-1960. By Shirley Jennifer Lim. New York: New York University Press, 2006. Illustrations, notes, and index. ix + 241 pp. \$21.00 paper. Shirley Lim examines the lives of American-born Asian women who attempted to translate their status as United States citizens into American "cultural citizenship" through pursuit of various leisure activities, patterns of consumption, and involvement in voluntary associations.

American Dreaming, Global Realities: Rethinking U.S. Immigration History. Edited by Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006. x + 563 pp. Illustrations, notes, and index. \$75.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper. The twenty-two essays in this collection explore immigrant experiences in an age of globalization and transnational identities.

Hardy Californians: A Woman's Life with Native Plants. Expanded edition. By Lester Rowntree. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. lxxxii + 308 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$19.95 paper. This updated edition of the pioneering botanist's 1936 book includes descriptions of the flora of a number of California environments. The book also contains practical advice pertaining to the cultivation of native plants.

Making the Americas: The United States and Latin America from the Age of Revolutions to the Era of Globalization. By Thomas F. O'Brien. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007. 390 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$24.95 paper. O'Brien draws on the rich literature on international relations to examine how Americans have sought to transform Latin America over the past two centuries. He examines the development of the process of Americanization and the responses it has engendered.

Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process. By Mark Edwin Miller. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. xii + 355 pp. Map, notes, bibliography, and index. \$34.95 paper. Miller explores the historical development of the process by which the federal government determines whether a Native American community receives official recognition as a tribe. Four chapters provide case studies of Indian struggles to achieve federal recognition.