Lone Star Mind: Reimagining Texas History by Ty Cashion (review)

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Detroit Black Community Food Security Network in 2006 after deindustrialization, white flight, and disinvestment left the city with only one remaining large chain grocery store. The case studies demonstrate how rural and urban social justice activism were connected, as African Americans responded to mass unemployment and poverty caused by the loss of agricultural jobs in the South and factory jobs in the North.

Writing consciously with an eye on the uses of the past for understanding the present and influencing the future, White recovers the lost stories of black activists who worked to ensure access to adequate and nutritious food for low-income communities, promoted alternatives to capitalist economic exploitation, and demanded a voice in the decisions affecting their lives. Scholars of African American history, agricultural history, and urban history will find much value in this book. Additionally, the brief length and clear writing style make *Freedom Farmers* ideal for classroom use.

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Lone Star Mind: Reimagining Texas History. By Ty Cashion. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. Pp. xiv, 281. $34.95, ISBN 978-0-8061-6152-5.)

In this thoughtful exploration of how scholars have shaped public perceptions of the Texas past, Ty Cashion identifies a clear tension between traditional and progressive historians. Although traditionalists have constructed a narrative that celebrates Anglo-American triumphs and have deliberately obscured the consequences of those achievements, Cashion argues that they can offer progressives lessons on how to develop a usable past for the twenty-first century. He believes that progressives have lost their way. They are too focused on "victimization and blame that conservative Texans have found antagonistic," and while these scholars have uncovered a multicultural past, such pluralism nevertheless "remains detached from a collective sense of identity defining who its [Texas's] people are and how they got that way" (p. ix). He further states that this failure "is a symptom that history is not doing its job" (p. ix).

In *Lone Star Mind: Reimagining Texas History*, Cashion charts the development of this history. He wades into the discussions about whether Texas reflects southern or western traditions. After World War II with the increasing momentum of the civil rights movement and the emergent Cold War, white Texans adopted the persona of the ultrapatriotic Big Tex in order to absolve themselves of the guilt associated with Johnny Reb forebears. Further, the predominance of nineteenth-century imagery in public memory and the omission of the state from regionalist constructions of the U.S. South and the U.S. West "left Texas history stranded within that static paradigm of exceptionalism" (p. 36). Cashion concludes, "While Texas is unique, it is not exceptional, because Texas *is* like other places" (p. 71). He contends that cultural history—with its flexibility, blurry parameters, and embrace of contradictory narratives—might provide the means to fashion a usable history from the many discordant perspectives of the Texas past.

Cashion believes that professional historians are duty bound to create a usable past for their fellow citizens. He uses terms like *gestalt*, *metanarrative*,

unifying, *collective identity*, and others to describe this idea. Although supportive of the multicultural perspectives that revisionist historians have uncovered, Cashion argues that the inability of these scholars to create a "'new plotline'" represents a failure (p. 158). Yet as his debunking of the traditionalist narrative suggests, such monolithic constructions too often rely on exclusion to create that sense of belonging—that usable past. The author wants to avoid this mistake and proposes the development of an inclusive story that emphasizes "a community of interconnected, competing cultures, both human and institutional, transmutable and opportunistic, whose collective identity can be understood only by appreciating the historical forces that have formed and reconfigured the relationships among them" (p. 15).

Beneath this examination flows a political undercurrent. Cashion provides examples of how politicians have employed the usable past. The populist surge of the twenty-first century that has heretofore culminated in the calls to "make America great again"—rooted in a traditional usable past—informs his discussion, and he provides an assessment of how that mechanism works. Cashion explains that the Texas mythology remains important to the state's economic and political elite because it forms "a bond of kinship uniting the state's colloquial one-percent with the unwashed masses of *true* Texans whose own material interests would otherwise pit them at odds" (p. 80). Cashion suggests that they draw on a "southern tradition, where its leaders have kept so many successive generations of followers ill-informed, incurious, and disinclined to know better, while cultivating an obsessive mistrust of anyone 'different'" (p. 80).

Cashion raises big questions and intentionally offers few answers or resolutions, content to draw a road map for future study. Some scholars may not share his devotion to the concept of a usable past. Nevertheless, *Lone Star Mind* leads the reader through the processes of how communities construct and deploy narratives of the past, and it confirms that Cashion remains one of the more perceptive scholars of Texas history and culture.

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Writing History with Lightning: Cinematic Representations of Nineteenth-Century America. Edited by Matthew Christopher Hulbert and John C. Inscoe. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2019. Pp. xii, 335. $55.00, ISBN 978-0-8071-7046-5.)

The editors of this volume set out with the objective "to scrutinize the movie-born visual narratives that undergird and trigger collective memories of American history and to grapple with how (and why) understandings of them have changed over time" (p. 6). This seems to suggest that their book is not so much about movies, as its subtitle suggests, as about the memories and history that movies purport to represent.

And indeed, with a few valuable exceptions, the method of this work is less grounded in current approaches in film and media studies than in historians' frustration with the cinema's (or, more accurately, Hollywood cinema's) inability to get history right. A great majority of the twenty-six concise essays here (most of them devoted to a single film) include elaborate plot summaries of