

categories for long. Graduate students looking to question overarching narratives of postbellum America will surely be inspired by the book's insights.

Texas Populism and American Liberalism

Cantrell, Greg. *The People's Revolt: Texas Populists and the Roots of American Liberalism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020. ix + 555 pp. \$22.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-0300100976.

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In *The People's Revolt: Texas Populists and the Roots of American Liberalism*, Gregg Cantrell convincingly links the Populism of the late nineteenth century to the later development of American liberalism. Focusing on Populists' advocacy of government intervention, notions of equality, and support for an educated and empowered citizenry, Cantrell argues for the history of the Texas People's Party as a crucial transition point in American political history. Citing everything from Lyndon Johnson's Populist genealogy to Barack Obama's campaign for a national healthcare bill, Cantrell roots liberal principles within the Populists' earlier political insurgency. Conscious of the resurgence of the term "populism" in reference to contemporary right-wing movements, Cantrell further explains how the word has evolved to reflect a *style* of politics rather than any coherent ideology or definable political platform. A welcome addition to the literature on Populism and to reform movements more generally, Cantrell's work offers clear insights into the history of Populism.

The People's Revolt is more than just political history. As Cantrell argues, "Populism became an emotional as well as an intellectual and political undertaking" (225). He therefore employs frameworks that analyze politics, culture, social relations, religion, intellectual history, race, and gender on their own terms. The book is organized both chronologically and thematically, focusing in depth on ideology, religious identity, race relations, gender dynamics, and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Central to the book's mission is to answer a simple question: Who were the Texas Populists? Cantrell's work aligns with the recent arguments by historians such as Charles Postel, Robert McMath, and Matthew Hild that Populists were modernists who sought to humanize American capitalism. Cantrell deploys brief biographical sketches of major Texas Populists to convey the variety of their backgrounds, the diversity of their experiences, the compromises they were or were not willing to accommodate, and the labor to sustain the Populists' political revolt. In short, Cantrell captures their basic humanity. The chapter "Legislating Populism," for instance, uses

keen insights and research into the lives of Texas reform leaders to shed new light on a more than century-old political movement. Cantrell's material on the Populist culture of dignity as a modern counter-culture to the Southern code of honor is yet another excellent contribution.

In 2008, an academic roundtable on Populism in *Agricultural History* identified race and gender as areas of analysis that demanded further attention from scholars.¹ Cantrell addresses both. He emphasizes the limitations of Texas Populists' racial liberalism while demonstrating how they were far more broad-minded than their in-state Democratic rivals. He conveys an acute sense of how African American and Mexican American leaders experienced the Populist movement. Nevertheless, there is little mention of the Colored Farmers' Alliance and its relationship to Texas's white reformers. Similarly, Cantrell depicts the Populists as offering political progress for women, and yet he could analyze the role of women at greater depth and capture the greater complexities of women's involvement in the movement, especially as the People's Party eclipsed the Farmers' Alliance as the site of Populist energy. Estimates of women's political support and examples of women's political leadership would only strengthen Cantrell's analysis.

Populism was a "big tent" movement that saw individuals playing important roles across the country. Luna Kellie of Nebraska, Senator William Pfeffer of Kansas, Ignatius Donnelly of Minnesota, Annie Diggs of Kansas, and many others dedicated themselves to pushing American Populism forward. Cantrell's book is of course a study of Texas Populists. Although at several points he compares his Texans to Populists in other states, Texans remain his focus and are the subject of superlatives. He asserts, in a discussion of the People's Party 1892 Omaha Platform, that "no Populists would exhibit greater devotion to it than the Texans" (78). Texans, he further asserts, best understood that corporate power could be balanced by government power (118). Texas Populists undoubtedly contributed to the development of American liberalism, but they, of course, were not alone.

Meanwhile, the legacy of American Populism remains controversial. Some scholars and political observers see little or no connection between Populism and later political movements. But others do. Cantrell accounts for these differing viewpoints while offering his own typology of American liberalism and its transition into neoliberalism. That Populists influenced liberal movements is hardly a novel idea, but Cantrell develops this relationship in great depth. The oft-cited argument that existing political parties contributed to the defeat of Populism by co-opting its reforms points to the continuation of Populist ideas beyond the life of the People's Party. Cantrell adds to this understanding by arguing that, for reformers, co-option was not necessarily a defeat, but an opportunity, a malleable environment that provided them with other avenues of reform after the demise of the third-party movement. Cantrell shows how new political arguments, especially the championing of greater government intervention into the economy, were increasingly potent precisely because they had already been championed and debated by previous generations.

Cantrell's ability to translate the history of American Populism effectively and accessibly renders his book a valuable resource for undergraduate students and members of the reading public, although its length—443 pages—might discourage classroom use outside

¹Robert C. McMath Jr., Peter H. Argersinger, Connie L. Lester, Michael F. Magliari, and Walter Nugent, "Agricultural History Roundtable on Populism," *Agricultural History* 82 (Winter 2008): 1–35.

of graduate seminars. In any case, the history of Populism in Cantrell's hands offers, as he puts it, "a compelling human story" (22).

Woman's Work as the Work of the World

Jabour, Anya. *Sophonisba Breckinridge: Championing Women's Activism in Modern America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019. vii + 322 pp. \$29.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0252084515.

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Sophonisba Breckinridge's (1866–1948) work on behalf of women's rights, the poor, and the dispossessed spanned multiple reform efforts: legal aid for immigrants, antilynching legislation, labor protections for workers, a minimum employment age, citizenship rights for women, and many others. From her early connections at Hull House to a nearly fifty-year career at the University of Chicago, Breckinridge labored in the background of Progressive Era and New Deal reforms. Moreover, her work as cofounder for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and as a delegate to the Seventh Pan-American Conference bridged national boundaries. Anya Jabour's biography of Breckinridge, *Sophonisba Breckinridge: Championing Women's Activism in Modern America*, deftly weaves Breckinridge's life into major reform movements and demonstrates the ways in which Breckinridge alternately shaped and was shaped by the social and political forces of her time.

Detailing Breckinridge's vast and tireless activism is a daunting task. She worked across multiple decades, labored in various locations, and embraced numerous social and political causes. She worked to reform child and maternal welfare, install social work within academic departments at the University of Chicago, worked on behalf of women's rights through the League of Women Voters, advocated for women workers, and embraced the World War I peace movement. Jabour organizes her biography thematically rather than strictly chronologically. She outlines Breckinridge's early life, traces her academic endeavors, and then explores her work in the women's rights and peace movements.

Jabour's first three chapters trace Breckinridge's Kentucky roots. She was born at the end of the Civil War to an often-pregnant, sickly mother and a father recently returned from military service in the Confederacy. Breckinridge was close with her father. He practiced law after the War and won a seat in Congress in 1884. Her parents recognized Breckinridge as exceptional and encouraged her to study and achieve independence. She attended Wellesley in Massachusetts, where she would reject the white supremacist beliefs