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## Review of *A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West* Edited by Clyde A. Milner II

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*A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West.* Edited by Clyde A. Milner II. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Photographs, illustrations, index. xiii + 318 pp. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Playing off the title of the famous essay by Frederick Jackson Turner, this volume of essays and commentaries is, for the most part, the outgrowth of a 1992 Utah State University conference planned as an opportunity for young scholars, as well as a few older ones, to offer new perspectives on the future directions of Western history a century after Turner delivered his influential words. For this collec-

tion of essays, several of them previously published in the *Western Historical Quarterly*, Clyde Milner provides the usual cogent introductory remarks and excellent editing skills we have come to expect of him.

The essays consider many of the topics associated with the New Western History. All are worthwhile, but most impressive are those authored by Allan G. Bogue, Susan Rhoades Neel, Susan Lee Johnson, and Quintard Taylor. Bogue's tightly constructed article examines the multiple ways Western history has developed since Turner, focusing particularly on curricular offerings in universities, the evolution of scholarship, and textbook treatments. Susan Neel offers a distinctive approach to current Western environmental history by positing the view that what makes the West environmentally unique is its natural diversity. Rather than trying to compel a particular characteristic fit to the West, she stresses the region's extremes as shaping a continuity in terms of human response and impact. Looking at the multicultural, gendered West, Susan Johnson encourages a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to understanding Western history. Questions of domination, difference, and construction intrigue her; an engaging writing style is likely to make these questions intriguing to readers as well. Quintard Taylor is interested in recovering the history of African Americans in the American West, until recently one of the most underdeveloped topics in Western history. In eight pages, Taylor's impressive sweep takes us through power relationships and the complex role race has played in the history of the region.

The collection's commentaries and conclusion are not as useful. There is a vaingloriousness about too many of them. Some compete with rather than address the essays at hand, and a few quote themselves in over half of their notes. The conclusion, which does not comment on the Bogue and Quintard essays, contains seventeen paragraphs, six of which deal with its authors' own essays.

Several helpful and thoughtful comments, however, offer careful, constructive analyses

of a preceding essay and possible new directions for research. Particularly noteworthy are commentaries by Arnoldo De León on Mexican American history, Dan Flores on environmental history, Sucheta Mazumdar on Asian American history, Martha A. Sandweiss and Elliott West on cultural history, and Peter Iverson on Native American history.

Taken as a whole, *A New Significance* indicates the state of Western history a century after Turner and the prospects for its future. There are truly good times to come.

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