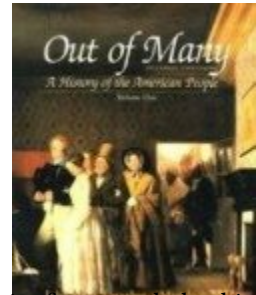


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

John Mack Faragher et al. *Out of Many: A History of the American People*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994. xxxi + 543 pp. \$44.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-13-191065-2.

Reviewed by Henry E. Stamm (Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College)  
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There are many worthy textbooks available to teachers of the U.S. survey. Few, however, take the approach of John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, and Susan H. Armitage in their entry into the burgeoning textbook field, *Out of Many*. Eschewing traditional political or social history arrangements, their work focuses on continental history with a strong emphasis on the various communities of peoples whose lives and stories comprise the American story. This process, as one might expect, forces instructors (as well as students) to embrace a sweeping palette of historical narratives and to consider many alternative analyses and interpretations of U.S. history. For the most part, this focus works well, but as with all general texts, there are topical areas where one wishes for more coherence and integration, or at least more detail.

This first volume of *Out of Many* contains seventeen chapters, which cover pre-historic North America to 1877. Topical headings and sub-headings help organize each chapter, but unlike many texts, the chapters themselves are not arranged into parts or sections. Chapters open with a well-crafted vignette of a representative community or with a succinct overview of the chapter's primary topics. Both formats serve as good introductions to the material covered by the chapter; vignettes and overviews generally are reprised with fuller analysis and discussion within the body of the chapter. Overall, the stories and information presented within each chapter reflect lively writing, thematic coherence, and beautifully illustrated analysis. (Faragher wrote chapters 1-8, Armitage wrote chapters 9-16, and Czitrom crafted chapter 17.)

Several of the chapter discussions are outstanding. Chapter 1, "A Continent of Villages, to 1500," is an ex-

traordinary overview and synthesis of recent scholarship on the pre-European contact history of the North American continent. Chapter 4 thoroughly analyzes the development of slavery in colonial America and makes clear the link between slavery, trade, and economic development in all colonies, including those claimed by France and Spain. The "military" chapters, those which narrate the American Revolution and the Civil War, balance maneuvers with politics, life on the domestic front with international affairs. Likewise, the chapters covering the events of the creation of the Constitution, Jeffersonian agrarianism, the 1850s, and Reconstruction are all well-done. Throughout the text, the authors take pains to include discussions of Spanish, French, and Russian influences on the continent and to include histories of women, African Americans, Native Americans, and backwoods settlers.

Although the chapters follow a rough linear chronology, the topical materials and time periods of adjacent chapters frequently overlap. For example, chapter 4 is titled "Slavery and Empire, 1441-1770," while chapter 5 is titled "The Cultures of North America, 1701-1780." Chapters 9 through 12 discuss the multi-faceted history of the early nineteenth century. Some instructors, as well as students, might find the chronological flow confusing. On the other hand, it is possible to re-arrange reading assignments of some chapters to fit bit better with individual instructors' preferences without disturbing narrative flow.

There are two other organizational problem areas, however. Chapters 3-5 basically cover 1588-1770, but sequential events are discussed by categories, rather than by chronology. For example, in chapter 3 (on European settlement) most of the New England focus rests on 1630-

1643, then skips to King Philip's War (Metacomet) in the 1670s. Chapter 4 brings information (with respect to slavery) about British regulations of colonial trade that affected New England during the 1600s and 1700s. In chapter 5, which analyzes eighteenth-century colonial life, the section on the Great Awakening reaches back to 1662 to discuss the Half-Way Covenant and the Salem trials of 1692 before getting to the main topic.

The second difficulty comes in the organization of chapters 10-12. These deal with democratic expansion, the South and slavery, and northern industry and society during the 1790-1850 period. Chapter 10, "The Growth of Democracy, 1824-1840," nicely recounts the election of 1824 and the significant events of Jackson's presidency, moves to a discussion of the transportation revolution (which also includes an overview of New England and southern agricultural systems), and finally returns to political issues such as the Bank War and the Second American Party System. Chapter 11 then introduces a full-blown discussion of southern-style slavery and socio-economic life. Chapter 12 offers a similarly detailed look at northern industrial development and throws in nineteenth-century reform movements for good measure. Individually, each of these chapters reads well. Together, however, they present a somewhat disjointed look at the critical changes in American life between 1790 and 1850. In a future edition, it might be useful to divide these three chapters into linear time periods and discuss the political, economic, and social topics of each period rather than retrace steps for each chapter.

Despite these criticisms, this an excellent text on which to base a survey course. Students generally give grudging praise to the work; the special care taken with women, African Americans, and Native Americans seems especially effective. Students often report that they enjoyed the "stories" that begin each chapter. In essence, many students get "hooked" by the narrative, which is high acclaim indeed for a history survey text!

The text's resource materials, for the most part, add to

its attractiveness. Each chapter includes a suggested list of recent monographs which expand the themes of the chapter. A fuller bibliography based on each of the main sub-headings of each chapter is placed before the index. Both the suggested readings and the bibliography reflect current scholarship (up to 1990) as well as the standard classics in the field. Furthermore, Prentice Hall offers a very useful instructor's resource guide, which yields lecture hints, sources, and thematic aids. The map transparencies are plentiful, if a bit hard to use (they come packaged in a box rather than in a 3-ring binder). A test item file is available, as is a PC- or Macintosh-based test manager that enables instructors to generate test questions via computer. Student study guides and a videodisk of historical images are also offered.

The most useful supplement, however, is the collection of documents which can be packaged with the text. The documents are a set of primary sources (letters, songs, poetry, selections from pamphlets, governmental laws or policies, etc.) chosen to complement each chapter. Most documents are less than three pages (many are less than one page), which makes them ideal for use in small-group discussions or short written analyses. Students generally report an appreciation for the documents because the stories and articles flesh out textual themes and add "life" to the narrative.

*Out of Many* succeeds in its aim; it truly presents the myriad stories of the communities and peoples who merged on the North American continent and participated in (or fought against) the formation of the United States. To some extent, then, it helps to dispel many of the more simplistic notions concerning American history which informs many survey students. But success comes at a price—this is a work that celebrates the diversity of America's communities; it neither strives for nor achieves overarching narrative synthesis. Many social historians will find much to like in this text; those who seek a more straightforward political narrative need to look elsewhere.

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