

2 Perspectives

book, she shows how similar the mistresses were to each other, spanning not only centuries but also an entire continent.

Herman's book is a must read for anyone who enjoys European history, women's studies or the history of royalty. One should not assume that this book is merely a fun read, although it is enjoyable for those with or without a background in history. Herman herself has devoted her life to writing about the feminine side of history trying to portray the many ways women are alike throughout history.

—Amy Luu

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Edward J. Larson. *A Magnificent Catastrophe: The Tumultuous Election of 1800, America's First Presidential Campaign*. New York: Free Press, 2007. Pp. 352. Cloth \$27.00.

Some would ask why write another book exploring the tumultuous election of 1800. With many believing that the topic has been over-analyzed to the minutest detail by a host of historians, what added insight can Pulitzer Prize winner Edward J. Larson provide to the topic? Those interested in the upcoming election will find that this book analyzes the historical parallels with many contemporary political issues such as the Imperial Presidency, conflicts within the structure and selection of the Electoral College, and the determination of the President in the House of Representatives. Those parallels provide the impetus and distinction for this work in contrast to many previous discussions of the election of 1800.

In an incredibly readable three hundred plus-page work, Larson outlines the conflicts between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans as they entered the first real fight between the newly developing political parties in this country's history. He reviews the antics of the characters and the deliberations within the states for the selection of Presidential electors. He pays close attention to setting up the conflict between the Federalists, many of whom sought to transform the Presidency into a British style monarchy, against the Republicans, who sought a more representative democracy. Larson's discussion of the Naturalization, Alien, and Sedition Acts provides interesting parallels to the Patriot Act.

Larson documents the dramatic nature of the electoral events through detailed recounts of struggles within each state by the various means of selecting the electors. The drama is intertwined with politicking, maneuvering, and good old horse trading. Larson holds a Ph.D. in History, but as a professor of Law at Pepperdine University he approaches the subject from a legal perspective. At the same time, his background in science and religion is apparent in his analysis of the conflicts between Adams's Christian understanding of the republic and Jefferson's deist beliefs.

Starting at Independence Day, Larson recounts the events leading to the contested election of 1800 and the tied vote in the House of Representatives. Larson explores the emerging conflict between Adams and Jefferson, who shared the offices of President and Vice-President within the only split party occupancy of the two offices in the history of the republic. The thirty-eight ballots cast by Congress to break the tie, the maneuvering within state delegations, and the eventual outcome inspired constitutional changes in order to avoid future conflicts. Larson reiterates these points, providing analysis and contemporary parallels regarding presidential style and constitutional balance between the three branches of American government.

Readers searching for relevant historical precedents to understand contemporary political events will find Larson's work rich and rewarding.

—Howard Gaass

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Nancy Shoemaker. *A Strange Likeness; Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. 232. Paper \$19.95.

Although the common perception, reinforced by scholars and popular histories, dwells upon the conflicts between Indians and Europeans, Nancy Shoemaker, a professor at the University of Connecticut specializing in American Indian History, argues that Indians and Europeans shared similar social constructs. In *A Strange Likeness; Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America*, she examines the similarities between Indians and Europeans to ascertain how these cultures constructed new identities