

The Baron's Cloak A History of The Russian Empire in War and Revolution. Willard Sunderland. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014, \$35.00, hardcover, 344 pp.

Reviewed by Lt Col (Ret) Kristine Swain, United States Air Force Academy

The power struggle which ensued from the collapse of the Russian Empire pitted those who wanted a restoration of the monarchy against those who advocated a new order. Ironically, the ascendant force, the Bolsheviks, adhered to an ideology intent on destruction of Imperial Russia but, in the end, actually reincarnated the Russian Empire under a new name. Examining the chaotic collapse of the Russian Empire and the subsequent civil war, Dr. Willard Sunderland, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati, chose the life of one individual to grasp the essence of this momentous event. *The Baron's Cloak* examines the centripetal and centrifugal forces swirling in the morass of a collapsing empire. Rather than focus on the center of power, Dr. Sunderland's book uses the unique lens of a Baltic German aristocrat and tsarist officer who served and fought on the multi-national frontier of the empire. The problems of imperial control in an age of nationalism, exacerbated by violent and horrific wars, take a central role in this book.

Dr. Sunderland's courses and published works underscore his expertise in the areas of imperialism, empire, and the problems and opportunities offered by frontiers. His previous book, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*, examined the transformation of the steppe from a wild periphery to the heart of an empire. The theme of the complications and rewards of this endeavor carry over to *The Baron's Cloak*. Having traveled to all the geographic areas he described in the book, Dr. Sunderland brings to this work a real sense of place and how the different regions and nationalities of Russia fit together in a fabric of empire that was at the same time surprising strong and equally vulnerable to be unraveled. *The Baron's Cloak* is a refreshing approach to a much studied topic and by incorporating a number of themes from the role of frontiers, the issue of nationalism and ethnicity, empire and its periphery and the diversity and

convergence of strongly held ideologies, provides a plethora of tangents for readers of diverse interests in this period.

Dr. Sunderland begins his narrative with a description of Baron Ungern's unique cloak or "deel." When the Bolsheviks captured him, his cloak defined much of who he was. It was an orange-gold color, which was reserved for nobles. It was made out of silk, much more regal than a more common wool. Finally, the deel, adorned with two faded grey-green European style army epaulettes and marked with two small stars and A.S. (for warlord Ataman Semenov), represented who he felt he was and where he fit into the Russian imperial structure. He was a warlord with a vision to restore both the Russian and Chinese empires and driven by an ideological and spiritual fervor rooted in the elitism of his German aristocratic and tsarist military roots. Unfortunately for Ungern, despite his efforts, the restoration of the Russian monarchy and Qing Dynasty would not come to pass. His ethnic background automatically labeled him a criminal in the new Bolshevik order. The merciless ferocity with which he sought the destruction of all revolutionaries assured his execution once captured.

After this introduction, Dr. Sunderland steps back and traces Ungern's life from his origins in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to his education which helped to Russify him, his early military experience in the Russo-Japanese War, his subsequent commission in the Russian military and postings to the Trans-Baikal and the Amur region, his World War I service (with experience on all of the major fronts in which the Russians fought) and his eventual alliance with Ataman Semenov to fight against the Bolsheviks in the Civil War. The book carefully evaluates Ungern's final campaigns. In his Mongolian Campaign, aimed at imperial restoration, Ungern successfully captured and held the Mongolian city of Urga. His subsequent unsuccessful attack on the Red stronghold in the city of Kiakhtha (back across the Russian border) culminated in his capture, trial and execution by the Bolsheviks. Ungern, with his obsessive and violent behavior, unbridled hatred of revolution and revolutionaries and unfailing belief that monarchy was the linchpin of civilization, provided an ideal candidate for the Bolsheviks to exploit in a show trial that "delivered swift proletarian justice while educating the masses" (215). Ungern knew his fate and actually twice tried unsuccessfully to kill himself. Meanwhile, before the trial even took place, Lenin sent orders that he was to be shot following the trial and the Bolshevik apparatchiks duly complied.

Dr. Sunderland approaches his complex topic by introducing the broader issues and then narrowing the scope to the experiences of one individual. The nobility and officer corps represented two key pillars of society. Ungern, a member of both,

lived at the heart of the complexity of this historical period. During his lifetime, Russia transitioned into the modern era struggling with the issues of conservative modernization, nationalist challenges amidst robust Russification, and the allure of revolutionary ideas clashing with the ingrained monarchical order. Although the limited source material forced Dr. Sunderland to often make inferences about Ungern's intentions and beliefs, he is careful to point this out to the reader. Organizing his chapters by the geographical areas in which Ungern spent his time, Dr. Sunderland also highlights the role of geography, and in particular the borders, in shaping Ungern's outlook but also in providing the opportunities and challenges which shaped and ultimately destroyed the Russian Empire.

Dr. Sunderland very clearly lays out his objectives, methods and central thesis in the opening pages of the book and then in a very organized fashion, follows through on his objectives. He provides the reader with essential tools such as maps, timelines and analysis of his sources. The thematic flow of the book melds nicely with the chronological and geographic organization of the chapters. Dr. Sunderland's book reads like a good history lecture starting with clear objectives, scope, methods and his central argument, following a thematic progression using geographical locations to frame the story, and culminating with a comparison of the central figure with the forces that ultimately overcame him and established their imprint on the future of Russia.

The author's central argument is that "knots of connection, both internal and external, help to explain how the empire "worked" as well as how it fell apart, and what then allowed the Bolsheviks to reassemble it" (10). He points out that the locations of Ungern's life allow us to see a "snapshot of imperial machinery" (10) such as the government policies, dynamics of local society and cultural interconnections. These are the pieces that helped meld the empire. The author's well-chosen central character provided an intriguing mirror on these very issues. He represented the external connection of non-Russian nationalities subsumed into the Russian Empire, and their role in legitimizing and upholding tsarist authority. It was also the rejection of these ties that helped fuel the revolution and subsequent civil war. The increasing interconnection of the center with its periphery, particularly the eastern borderlands, offered an enticing opportunity to expand Russian control to create a durable connection between the various nationalist interests and the empire. Ultimately, Imperial Russia and later its champions, the White forces, failed in these efforts and provided an easily exploitable weakness for the Bolsheviks. Ungern's experiences clearly highlight the central role of World War I in weakening imperial state control and creating

a culture of violence. Dr. Sunderland masterfully utilizes Ungern's own personal struggle to reestablish imperial control in Mongolia as a microcosm of this broader problem of the complexities of borders with nationalist sentiment on both sides. Through his military service, Ungern had developed an affinity for the borderlands of Eastern Russia and Mongolia in particular. His aristocratic upbringing along with his experiences in working alongside the various ethnic groups along Russia's borders armed him with a conviction that he had a spiritual and political destiny to fulfill. However, his ill-conceived military plans, along with his own ruthless and cruel exploitation of his own men and the surrounding civilians, created animosity both toward him and ultimately towards the cause he supported.

This book will challenge the reader to view a historical struggle through the life experiences of one man. This approach is both a strength and weakness of this book. Although Ungern is undoubtedly a fascinating character, the book does not provide a level of detail to satisfy the reader seeking a biographical study. Those looking for an engrossing life story will be disappointed. To be fair to the author, he exhaustively researched the available material but as he readily admits throughout the book, the material is sparse and most of Ungern's thoughts and intentions must be inferred. This can be frustrating as it leaves the reader wanting to know more about this fascinating character. The strength of this approach is to provide a very human example of those knots of connection that held the empire together and allowed it to function. Ungern's human weaknesses, very apparent in Dr. Sunderland's telling of his story, help us to understand why these particular knots of connection could not hold strong in the crucible of war, modernization and rising nationalism that engulfed Imperial Russia. Ultimately, it does leave the reader wanting more and thus may be overly frustrating to the casual reader. This book will appeal more to history and geography enthusiasts who want to understand the forces that shaped modern Russia.

In his conclusion, Dr. Sunderland underscores the value of Ungern's life as he was a man created by the milieu of Imperial Russia and ended up in Mongolia largely due to the "chaotic maelstrom of the empire's unraveling" (229). He is careful to point out that Ungern cannot be representative of the entirety of Imperial Russia but does embroil himself in many of the great issues of his time. Although sworn enemies, both Ungern and the Bolsheviks sought a level of control which inevitably would create an empire. The Bolsheviks were far better at harnessing nationalist sentiment and then co-opting it to create loyalty to the central political entity. In the end, despite ideology specifically meant to be anti-imperial, Dr. Sunderland points out that the creation of the USSR established a political space that "proved

to be at once radically different and curiously continuous with the empire it was replacing” (225). In its design, the USSR was meant to address anti-Russian sentiment but the reality was an authoritarian, hierarchical, rigidly centralized state, ultimately dominated by Russian culture.

The Baron's Cloak provides a fascinating look at the problem of borderlands and political control through the lens of multi-cultural experiences. By using Ungern as the lens, Dr. Sunderland manages to personalize a very complex era of Russian history. As Dr. Sunderland points out, despite the ferocity of their hatred towards one another, Ungern and his fellow White Forces and his Red rivals shared the experience of being “imperial people with diverse ethnic backgrounds and long-standing habits of mobility and cross cultural combination” (221). Those interested in the history of Revolutionary Russia, the geographical influence of Russian borderlands, or the theme of Russian imperialism will find much to relish in this book. For those interested in contemporary Russian geo-politics this book offers some intriguing insights. It seems that Russia, an empire since the conquest of Kazan in 1552, cannot leave behind its imperial ambitions. Although the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 offered Russia new possibilities, it also set Russia adrift in search of a future. Under President Putin, the awakening of Russian nationalism and reclaiming the legacy of 19th century geopolitics and spheres of influence represents a clear return to the deeply rooted imperial ambitions that fueled Russia's political, social, economic and military landscape and determined the trajectory of its future.

Putin is a creation not just of modern Russia but a product of long held imperialist ambitions repackaged multiple times to fit the current ideological leanings of Russian leaders. Ungern probably would have approved of Russia's recent annexation of Ukraine as he would view it as reestablishing order and stability under a strong tsar-like figure. Ungern, much like the current Russian administration, would have no qualms about violent or ethically deviant methods to eliminate any opposition as he viewed his cause as a spiritual crusade. This crusade would ensure the reestablishment of the “rightful” order of things which had been sabotaged by those who held a different version of the world than Ungern.

Theater of Cruelty: Art, Film, and the Shadows of War. Ian Buruma.
New York: New York Review Books, 2014, \$29.95, hardcover, 423 pp.

Reviewed by Charlie Canning, University of Adelaide

Theater of Cruelty: Art, Film, and the Shadows of War is a collection of 28 essays and reviews written by Ian Buruma and published in the *New York Review of Books* over the years 1987-2013. About half concern topics related to Germany: the Weimar Republic, Nazism, the Holocaust, Germans in exile; while eight have to do with Japan and/or East Asia: Pearl Harbor, kamikaze pilots, Eastwood's two Iwo Jima films, theme parks. The remainder showcase artists living and working in Paris, London, Calcutta, and New York.

Given the Germany / Japan focus of much of Buruma's longer work (*The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan, Year Zero: A History of 1945*), it is hardly surprising that his shorter pieces should reflect this same interest. For the reader of *Theater of Cruelty*, this is undoubtedly a good thing because when it comes to writing about the cultural manifestations of war and its aftermath in Germany and Japan, Ian Buruma is hard to beat.

What sets Buruma apart from other historians is that he seems to have spent an equal amount of time in the library, the archives, the theater, the art museum/gallery, and the screening room. This gives Buruma's prose a richly layered texture to it that few others can match.

The essays are generally of two types. In the first, Buruma pairs two seemingly disparate subjects or genres (such as an obscure Kawabata title and an art exhibition in "Virtual Violence" or 3/11 and a John Dower book in "A Japanese Tragedy") to develop his theme. The second type is a kind of "call and response" form where Buruma asks then (sometimes) answers questions that occur to him while considering an artist's work or milieu. In "The Afterlife of Anne Frank," for example, we learn of the long-running battle over Anne's legacy between her father (who wished to stress the universal message of Anne's writing) and the promoter and playwright Meyer Levin (who wanted to emphasize Anne's Jewishness). The "call and response" essays are rhetorical and the reader is left to come to his own conclusions.

By noting a certain uniformity of style, I do not mean to suggest that all the essays and reviews in *Theater of Cruelty* are of equal quality, however. While most are informative and compelling, a few—such as the review of Christopher Hitchens' *Hitch-22* ("The Believer") and "The Invention of David Bowie"—don't

quite come off as fully rounded treatments of their subjects. Better are the class of very accomplished introductions to the films of Herzog and Fassbinder and the art of Kirchner and Grosz. In these reviews of retrospectives and art exhibitions, Buruma shines.

The best essays in the collection have Buruma's characteristic wide-ranging intelligence together with an added poignancy that comes with just the right pacing and development. Two that are especially noteworthy in this regard are "Occupied Paris: The Sweet and the Cruel" and "Dressing for Success".

In "Occupied Paris: The Sweet and the Cruel", Buruma compares and contrasts two war-time diaries: One by Helene Berr, a university student studying English literature at the Sorbonne and another by Philippe Jullian, a young artist and writer from Bordeaux. Though both are living in Paris during the Occupation, are of the same age and have similar aspirations, their experiences come to be defined by one major difference: Berr is Jewish, Jullian is not.

After setting up a structure that goes something like this: Helene = Jewish experience of shattered dreams and horrible death / Philippe = French ambivalence and grudging acceptance of German occupation, Buruma uses his two foils to discuss "the sweet" life enjoyed by the collaborationists and "the cruel" fate of those destined for Auschwitz. Helene has the last word. Though the ending is heartrending, what makes the essay truly memorable is the patience with which Buruma develops it. Buruma waits and waits and waits until he can slot in the final quotation at just the right moment.

"Dressing for Success" is another gem. It begins with a very colorful look at Paris in the 1920s when Japanese painter Foujita was "at the height of his fame," known as much for his costumes (an early form of Japanese *cosplay*, it appears) as his paintings. In the 1930s, Foujita ("Fujita" in Japan) returned to Japan and began to express a "belligerent Japanese chauvinism" in both his costumes (he favored smart-looking officers' uniforms) and his art. The essay closes with a bittersweet rumination on Foujita/Fujita's departure from Japan after the war and his final years in France. Once again, nothing is rushed—the beginning, middle and end of the essay are equally balanced and assured.

Perhaps the most glowing review in the collection is "Eastwood's War" about Director Clint Eastwood's pair of films on Iwo Jima. Before Eastwood, the "rules" for making war films were patriotism, partisanship, and a dehumanization of the enemy: "But Clint Eastwood is the first director, to my knowledge, who has made two films of the same battle showing both sides from the perspective of individual soldiers with fully developed characters. Deftly, without polemics or heavy-handed

messages, he has broken all the rules of the traditional patriotic war movie genre and created two superb films, one in English, the other in Japanese: *Flags of Our Fathers* and *Letters of Iwo Jima*. The latter, in my view, is especially fine” (181).

What Buruma likes about *Letters of Iwo Jima* is that Eastwood’s film is as much of a breakthrough in the Japanese war film genre as it is in the American one. It is not melodramatic as Japanese war films tend to be nor is it infused with overtly jingoistic notions of samurai spirit or other cultural myths. That Eastwood, a foreign director, was able to make “a film in which the characters, who speak in subtitled Japanese, are wholly convincing and thoroughly alive, is an extraordinary feat” (186).

If Buruma has a blind spot in *Theater of Cruelty*, it is his failure to take into account the spiritual side of life. Apart from a rather summary discussion of Christian imagery in painter Max Beckmann’s art, there is very little coverage of the spiritual in either art or religious institutions. While the religious elements of things like the Holocaust, Emperor-worship and the like are properly identified, they are seldom considered in their own right. The closest Buruma gets is an analysis of the propaganda-value of various belief systems that the state can use to further its interest and a parallel discussion of art either in acceptance or in opposition to this. But there is more to it than that.

It is interesting to note the subjects Buruma doesn’t treat. For all the allusions to Wagner and the German alpine soul in several of the reviews, there is no discussion of Lutheranism or the Confessor Church. Perhaps most surprising is the absence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer from the voluminous discussions of Nazism and Berlin. The same could be said about Buruma’s writing on London. What about a consideration of T.S. Eliot or C.S. Lewis?

Men go to war for politics but they seldom die for it. The name on their lips when they leave this world is either their mother’s, their husband’s or wife’s, their child’s or God’s. As someone once wrote, few will waste their last breath mouthing “democratic socialism” (or “secular humanism”, for that matter). It has too many syllables. “Jesus” is good because it has two. “God” has only one.

The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War. Hew Strachan.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, \$45.00, hardcover, 416 pp.

Reviewed by Michael David Kennedy, United States Air Force Academy

This edition of the *Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* is the revised edition released in 2014 during the centennial of the start of World War I. The previous edition was released in 1998, in time for the 90th anniversary of the signing of the armistice in 1918. As with the original edition, the editor is Sir Hew Strachan, a renowned authority on this particular conflict. He is an Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford and a Life Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and currently serves as a Professor of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews. In addition, he is an Imperial War Museum trustee, a Commonwealth War Graves Commissioner, and serves on the national advisory panels for the centenary of the First World War for the United Kingdom and Scotland. He has authored numerous works on World War I in particular and military history in general.

The book itself consists of twenty-four chapters written by separate contributors. The chapters are arranged thematically and examine all aspects of the war such as society, economics, geography, and culture. Strachan himself provides the introduction as well as authoring Chapter 10, “Economic Mobilization: Money, Munitions, and Machines.” The other contributors to this edition include many of the world’s leading authorities on World War I including Dennis Showalter (Colorado College), J.M. Winter (Yale University), Holger Herwig (University of Calgary), John Morrow (University of Georgia), and David Trask (United States Army Center of Military History).

According to Strachan, “there have been three high points over the last hundred years” (Strachan 9) in regard to scholarship about World War I. The first involved the wealth of personal memoirs in the years following the war and including the release of the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The second high point surrounded the commemoration of the war’s fiftieth anniversary and involved mostly narrative histories celebrating the nostalgia of the conflict. The final high point is in conjunction with the centennial of the war (9-10). Strachan describes the challenge for those celebrating the centennial to avoid the “clichés of the fiftieth anniversary in order to shape a fresh set of popular narratives” (10). This summation places this edition of the book firmly in the midst of the final high point in World War I literature.

Published seventeen years apart, key differences between the two editions include an expanded introduction, new illustrations, and a brand new chapter entitled, “No End to War.” There are also three new authors replacing the original contributors for chapters 2, 11, and 14. Sadly, the original authors passed away during the interim between the two editions. In the first two chapters, the titles remained the same, but Chapter 14 changed from “Women, War, and Work” to “The Role of Women in the War.” All three of the chapters by new authors retained some of the original illustrations, but also included new ones.

The sole new chapter was written by Robert Gerwarth of University College Dublin and focuses on the continuation of violence following the signing of the armistice. Gerwarth depicts how the peace treaty did not end the fighting but resulted in political and social turmoil throughout Europe. This turmoil was the result of the dissolution of the Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires. “Their disappearance from the map provided the space for the emergence of new and often nervously aggressive national-states seeking to defend their real or imagined borders through unrestrained force” (Gerwarth 304). In the introduction, Strachan describes this chapter as “a reflection of one of the directions which the study of the war has taken since 1998” (Strachan 9).

Chapter 11 entitled, “The Role of Women in the War” deviates from the original version in that it explains the role of women in the context of the war as opposed to the role of women in the war effort. Historian Gail Braybon in the 1998 edition of the book focused on the numerous jobs on the homefront in agriculture or industry where women replaced men sent off to the front to fight. Historian Susan Grayzel in the new edition explains the perception of women in the context of World War I and also the role that geography played in their participation as active participants or bystanders. She also spends time discussing the impact that women had on the war effort. The result is a better rounded chapter on the role of gender in World War I.

Chapter 2, “The Strategy of the Central Powers, 1914-1917” remains basically the same in structure in both editions by providing an overview of the military and diplomatic goals of the Central Powers during the course of the war. Historian L.L. Farrar, Jr. in the original edition emphasized military strategy at the start of the war, the shift in strategy in 1916, and the leadership of influential Germans Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. Both chapters provide a detailed explanation of the Schlieffen Plan, Germany’s war plan going into the war, which is critical to understating the early phase of the war. The major difference with the new version by Holger Afflerbach of the University of Leeds is a more in-depth

description of the evolution of strategy as evidenced by the different campaigns as the war progressed.

Chapter 14, "Mutinies and Military Morale" was originally written by David Englander and the updated version was completed by Alexander Watson of Goldsmiths, University of London. Both the original and the revised have similar structures addressing the basis for morale and discipline and including statistics for corporeal punishment from various countries during the war. The new chapter rounds out the theme of morale with a discussion of the nature of unit cohesion and organizational support as well as the concept of the citizen soldier.

The "Illustrated" edition, which Oxford University Press has become renowned for, includes twenty-four color plates and seven maps. The color plates are located approximately in the center of the book and are gorgeous in reproduction quality. Copious black and white illustrations are also littered throughout the book to complement the writing.

In addition to the index at the very back of the book, key terms are listed in the margins throughout the text to guide the reader to particular topics within the chapters. Interestingly, there are no footnotes or endnotes to cite sources used by the authors. This absence should not invite skepticism regarding the scholarly nature of the work since a cursory review of the academic background of the authors quickly establishes their credibility as experts. Instead, this deficiency could slow down further study of the themes covered in the book. There is an updated further reading section of the book that is organized by chapter that provides sources for research into the topics covered by the individual authors.

The strength of this type of book is the credibility of the individual authors and their extensive knowledge of their given areas of expertise. Unfortunately, there is somewhat of a lack of cohesion between the different chapters as they were written individually and without collaboration. Aside from the introduction by Strachan framing the scope of the work and illustrating some of the material in the ensuing chapters, there are no intermediate chapters to give cohesiveness to the book. Further, there is no conclusion to provide a summary of the previous chapters, but in its place a chapter entitled, "Memory and the Great War" by Modris Eksteins of the University of Toronto. This final chapter discusses the war as remembered by the participants and society in subsequent years. The biggest weakness of this title that I could identify is the fact that there is no overarching thread to connect all of the chapters. As with any work attempting to cover a topic as vast as World War I in only one volume, this title unfortunately does omit certain topics and theaters of the war. In particular, there is no mention of the war in Asia. Nevertheless, this

is still an excellent source for the study of World War I. Due to its nature as a collaborative effort and the wide range of themes that it covers, this title would serve well as a complementary source to a general overview of the war such as Strachan's *The First World War*. It could be challenging to a student or researcher who did not already have a rudimentary knowledge of the conflict if they were attempting to use it as an introductory text.

Sand Opera. Philip Metres. Farmington: Alice James Books, 2015, \$16.95, paper, 114 pp.

Reviewed by Irina Nersessova, Illinois State University

Philip Metres's *Sand Opera* is a visually compelling book of poetry that envelops the reader in the space of war's victims. The victims of imprisonment, torture, and silencing in the post 9/11 world are moved from the margins of discourse to the center of the poetry in this text. In the poems, the spectators respond to the war as well, recognizing their involvement in the surrounding war culture.

Haunting from the title page, *Sand Opera* is contrasted with the rhetorically evasive Standard Operating Procedure as its double title. Metres turns the Standard Operating Procedure of the U.S. Military and rewrites it as Standard Operating Procedure, or Sand Opera, to tell the human story that is often erased by procedure and its rhetoric. Metres's treatment of the title is reminiscent of Travis Macdonald's *The O Mission Repo: A Repo of the O Mission Error Attacks on Unit*, which revises *The 9/11 Commission Report* and places the author's criticism of the report in the revision. Employing translucent paper vellum to represent words and images, Metres emphasizes the silences of individuals and the missing information in public consciousness. Blacked out text and greyscale letters make silences meaningful by representing the erased, misinterpreted, and displaced voices of war. Some poetry is created out of original texts, such as news stories, and Metres writes about his sources and inspirations for *Sand Opera* at the end of the book, which helps understand the content and invites the reader to further research the context.

Automatic, fluid, depersonalized, and humanized types of speech in the poetry are powerful in distinct ways, and these voices overlap to represent the difficulty of listening to war. Metres also creates poetry from silence. The voices, silences, and censorship of the perpetrators of violence complicate the visual experience of witnessing Abu Ghraib through the photography circulated in the media in 2004. "The Blues of Javal Davis" (9), "The Blues of Charles Graner" (13), "The Blues of Lynddie England" (19), "The Blues of Ken Davis" (21), and "The Blues of Joe Darby" (25) are narrated from the perspectives of the perpetrators and the whistleblower. The perpetrators' abuses were rejected as representations of the war and treated as singular cases of violence. After photos of the prisoners were released, those in positions of power, such as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and General Richard Myers, stressed to the world that the soldiers in the pictures of Abu Ghraib were not representative of the military and urged the public to have confidence in

the administration and the war. Instead of questioning how the administration failed the soldiers and the detainees, the national rhetoric turned to punishing the “degenerate” soldiers who have disappointed those in power. Confronted with Javal’s voice—the voice of a scapegoat the system turned into a torturer and made to seem like a singular “bad apple”—the reader is forced to reconsider if justice is possible when prison time is only served by those who take orders. If those who received prison sentences are “some dumb poor kids from Garbagecan USA” (9), as Javal recalls the media say, the audience’s attention is turned away from the system that facilitated the behavior seen in the photographs of Abu Ghraib.

Charles Graner’s voice in the poetry is perhaps the most challenging, bearing in mind he is often cited as a ringleader in the cruelty. His blues read “the corrections/officer in me can’t/help but love/making a grown man/piss himself” (13), prompting readers to consider what he was trained to do. The Milgram experiment (1961) and the Stanford prison experiment (1971) illuminated obedience to authority, and Abu Ghraib should have further informed how obedience can turn dangerous, but how susceptible people are to imperatives to harm other living beings for a perceived greater good was mostly absent from rhetoric about post-9/11 U.S. wars. That the individuals who were dishonorably discharged were arguably more obedient complicates how the spectators of the photographs may look at them. The blues change what the eye perceives. In the United States and globally, the public was to be satisfied by the sentences received by military personnel seen in photographs of tortured and humiliated prisoners. The blues poems ask the reader to consider the uncomfortable: the experience of perpetrators whose post-Abu Ghraib experiences and viewpoints are diverse, yet they follow a pattern. Their pattern is formed by the training and the circumstances they have in common. The conflicted feelings in the blues poems become the conflicted feelings of the reader.

The book is also a visual experience of Abu Ghraib maps. The images of cells on translucent paper vellum that may be imposed on poems that represent prisoners’ voices remind readers of the materiality of war. The poems leave a space for the image to impose itself on, capturing how the prison is inescapable even after release. One example of a poem paired with the image of a prison cell is “Black Site (Exhibit I),” in which the prisoner (whose words echo that of Mohamad Farag Ahmad Bashmilah) finds an escape from isolation by seeing a fly, yet he wishes “for it/to slip under the door/so it would not be/imprisoned itself” (67).

The breakdown of communication is evident in “Cell/(ph)one (A simultaneity in four voices)” (76-77), for which Metres “employs found language” (103), including a story from the *New York Times*. The poem is an example of how silence and erasure

are not the only conflicts in communication by depicting too much sound. Seeing and hearing are thematic in *Sand Opera*. The ear is especially significant in the section of the book titled “Hung Lyres” (45), in which a child makes a symbolic correction: “it’s ‘ear-rock,’/not ‘eye-rack” (55). Hearing and seeing the voices of war, especially of imprisonment during war, teaches the readers that avoiding that which disgusts them leads to dangerous indifference. Not wanting to hear the stories of prisoners and the military personnel charged with abuses against them occurs out of disgust with the situations, and the unwillingness to hear and see emerging out of that disgust can end genuine discourse about war. How far one goes to see and hear the voices Metres represents is up to the reader and his/her willingness to engage with the poems.

In the fifth section of the book, Metres’s voice provides an American counterpart to a prisoner named Mohamad Farag Ahmad Bashmilah by placing poems from their points of view side by side. Bashmilah is a Yemeni man who was held prisoner and tortured in CIA “black sites” (secret prisons) for 19 months without being charged (79). The representations of Bashmilah’s voice in the poetry remind the reader of voices of those who are silenced and neglected, and while Metres’s voice is the more privileged voice, the poet clearly struggles with being seen and heard in war discourse as well. In the book notes, Metres states: “*Sand Opera* began out of the vertigo of feeling unheard as an Arab American, in the decade after the terrorist attacks of 2001. After 9/11, Americans turned an ear to the voices of Arabs and Muslims, though often it has been a fearful or selective listening” (101). The connection he has to the voices in the poems asks the reader to consider their connection to the victims and perpetrators of violence. Not everyone will find the subject of the poetry relatable, but anyone may find a reciprocity with the poetry.

Historical Dictionary of World War I Intelligence. Nigel West. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014. hardcover, \$120.

Reviewed by John Abbatiello, USAF pilot (retired), author, and educator, Monument, CO

Readers interested in strategic intelligence and espionage during the Great War will find Nigel West's new historical dictionary an extremely useful source. The author teaches intelligence history at the Virginia-based Centre for Counterintelligence and Security Studies and also serves as European editor for the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence*. West, who authored or coauthored ten historical dictionaries for Rowman & Littlefield's series on intelligence and counterintelligence, provides over 400 entries that focus on the leaders, spies and key intelligence organizations of First World War adversaries.

There are a number of true gems in this collection of entries. In his article on Mata Hari, the well-known spy whose true name was Margaretha MacLeod, West publishes the surviving transcript of a London Police interrogation from 1916. The French military later convicted MacLeod of espionage and executed her in October 1917. In a later article on questionnaires, the author explains how German spy handlers provided their agents with extensive surveys and reproduces a detailed example from available archival sources. A nine-page article on W. Somerset Maugham, a British writer, explains the activities of this agent who served the British and Americans in Switzerland during the war. In his appendix, West provides photos of the prewar "Special War List," a roster of espionage suspects that British intelligence agencies maintained in preparation for war with Germany. One section of the document is entitled "List of Persons to be Arrested in Case of War." Again, these are superb entries offering valuable insights for the interested reader.

West expertly provides an overview of intelligence organizations from the major powers. His rundown of British police and military intelligence directorates, such as Special Branch, MI5, and MI1(c), is especially useful for both students and faculty who study the First World War. Military, naval, and diplomatic intelligence organizations of Germany, the United States, France, and Russia receive less detailed, though adequate, attention.

Readers looking for information on battlefield intelligence, at both the tactical and operational levels, will be disappointed. A few well-written entries explain the uses of air and signals intelligence and some of the major battles where intelligence

played an important role, such as Tannenberg and Dogger Bank. Details of how armies collected, disseminated, planned with, and otherwise employed intelligence are sadly lacking. In a volume supposedly covering a ground war that relied on photo-reconnaissance for every major operation, this is a serious gap. Likewise, for the naval war, which heavily relied on signals intelligence and captured U-boat crew interrogations, a lack of depth is evident. For example, there is no description of the radio interceptions setting the stage for the most important naval battle of the war—Jutland.

Other questions go unanswered. How well did the major powers share intelligence with their allies? How did Britain assess the effectiveness of the blockade and did the Germans attempt to collect intelligence on the results of their U-boat campaigns? Perhaps this volume would have been more accurately titled had it referenced “espionage” or “strategic intelligence.”

West provides an initial chronology and introduction, both very brief, but to his credit offers a superb bibliography of the major primary and secondary sources in the field of World War I strategic intelligence. Sadly, he missed Terrance Finnegan’s superb *Shooting the Front*, which describes Allied photo-reconnaissance from soup to nuts. He also does not include some recent important campaign studies by Holger Herwig, Bill Philpott, and Bob Doughty, among others, all of which mention the importance of battlefield intelligence collection and employment.

But perhaps this reviewer has been too critical. Authors of encyclopedias and historical dictionaries are just that—authors. They pick and choose their entries based on their own expertise and interests. Nigel West is clearly an expert on strategic intelligence and espionage and proves his knowledge admirably here.

The Lotus and the Storm. Lan Cao. New York: Viking, 2014, \$27.95, hardcover, 386 pp.

Reviewed by Quan Manh Ha, University of Montana

Lan Cao's *The Lotus and the Storm* is a Vietnamese American war novel that focuses primarily on the traumas of the protagonist-daughter Mai and of her father Minh. The novel's twenty-nine chapters are divided into three parts, and the point of view in each chapter alternates between that of Mai, Minh, and Bao (Mai's alter ego). Events in Cao's novel are narrated in non-chronological order, as the past and the present are intermixed into a complicated narrative fabric.

The novel begins with the years 1963-1964, in wartime South Vietnam. Mai and her older sister Khanh grew up in a wealthy family. Their mother, Quy, was a successful and beautiful businesswoman, and their father was a high-ranking colonel of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. In their childhood, Mai and Khanh, under the tutelage of a Chinese maid, whom they affectionately referred to as Grandma, befriended James Baker, an amiable American serviceman at a nearby military compound. One day, when Mai and Khanh were in Minh's car on their way to see James, Khanh unfortunately got killed, at the age of thirteen, by a bullet that had targeted Minh. The death of Khanh had an extremely negative impact upon every member of the family, and Mai stopped talking after the tragic incident. Her parents, superstitiously believing that Mai was being manipulated by a ghost, asked a spirit exorcist to free her. James then became Mai's English tutor, and he cheered her up: "that is how my [Mai's] second life with James begins" (140).

Quy, the mother, was an anticommunist whose Catholic father had been executed by the communists for being a rich landowner, and her brother—whom Mai refers to as Uncle Number Five—was a Vietcong operative. This political division created personal tension between Quy, her husband Minh, and her brother whenever the latest paid a visit. During the war, Phong (a.k.a. Uncle Number Two) was one of Minh's best friends, and both of them held important positions in the South Vietnamese government. Although Quy already was married and had two children, Phong developed a clandestine affection for her, but as his love was not requited, he married Thu. During the Tet Offensive of 1968, Phong was blown to the ground, and he lost one of his legs.

In 1966, Minh met John Clifford (or Cliff), who came to Vietnam as an American adviser, and they developed a strong friendship. Like Phong, Cliff also found Quy romantically desirable. It is Cliff who later saved Minh's life when Minh became

severely injured at the Cambodian border during a military operation. When the communists took over South Vietnam in April 1975, Mai and Minh were airlifted out of the country and then resettled as refugees in Northern Virginia, but Quy decided to stay in Vietnam. It is revealed later in the novel that it is Cliff who had arranged for Mai and Minh's successful departure amid the chaos of Saigon on the last day of the war.

The narrative present in the novel is set in the year of 2006, in Virginia. After arriving in America, Mai, a law graduate, works as a librarian for a law firm. Minh and Mai live together in an apartment, and everyday Mrs. An comes over to take care of Minh and provide his meals. Minh, now an incapacitated and senile man, suffers from PTSD: "It has been more than thirty years since Vietnam fell. But 1975 is still here, held to enormous scale inside me" (24). The past so haunts him that he is unable to liberate himself from its effects. His mind transports him back to wartime Vietnam, and he struggles psychologically and emotionally with the death of Khanh, with his affection for Quy, and with the intricacies of his experiences in the war. The news on television about the American War in Iraq exacerbates his PTSD. In Northern Virginia, Minh finds solace in Vietnamese songs, food, and stories told by other Vietnamese refugees. He is suffocated by his nostalgia and "longings for things past" (272).

Mai suffers from "dissociative identity disorder" (236), and the voice of her alter ego, Bão, enters the second half of the novel. When Mai was a child, her father often called her Bão, which means *the treasure*. However, in the aftermath of the war, her alter ego becomes Bão, which means *the storm*. The third part of the novel portrays Mai's opposing identities: on the one hand, Bão blames Mai for her Americanness and assimilation; on the other hand, Bão sees Mai "becoming not American but simply un-Vietnamese" (265). Truly, Mai is tormented by traumatic memories, personality disorder, and internal turbulence: "She wants to be freed of memory, its empty shape, its hardened imprints. Vietnam for her is a tragedy of forms, to be sloughed off" (240). Both Minh and Mai live their "half-lives" in the United States, and Mai frequently is haunted by ghosts of the past, her separation from Quy, her mother's incomprehensible decisions, and family secrets.

Due to his physical and mental conditions, Minh is transferred into a nursing home. While there, Minh meets Phong again after more than twenty-five years. Mai gains access to information related to her mother, Phong, Cliff, and postwar Vietnam from letters Phong and Cliff have written to Minh. Surprisingly, Phong admits that, although he worked for the South Vietnamese government during the war, Phong, who now lives in California, had always been a Vietcong operative.

After the communist victory in 1975, Phong and Uncle Number Five tried to protect Quy from mistreatment by government officials due to her former anticommunist background. Postwar life in South Vietnam was unbearable under the communist regime; therefore, Phong, Thu, Quy, and Uncle Number Five found it necessary to escape from Vietnam as boat people only a few years after the war ended. Phong tells Minh that Quy died in 1978, after she had been raped by pirates during her perilous attempt to escape, that Uncle Number Five was beaten to death at a refugee camp in Malaysia because he was discovered to be a Vietcong, and that Thu had committed suicide.

In their conversation at Minh's deathbed, Phong also reveals to Minh that Quy was pregnant in 1975, and her child was born immediately after the fall of Saigon. Minh becomes furious because he knows the child was not his own, because it is a mixed-race Amerasian. Due to discrimination against the Amerasians in postwar Vietnam, the child was sent to an orphanage in Vung Tau. After arriving in the United States, Cliff often wrote to Minh and sent him money, but Minh refused to communicate with Cliff. Minh then dies in the nursing home, and Cliff flies to Virginia to attend his funeral. Mai's questions about the mystery of the past that has shrouded her family history for years are answered: Cliff admits his love for Quy; Cliff saved Phong's life at the Cambodian border because he loved Quy; she sacrificed her life for the well-being of Mai and Minh by entering "into a relationship with Phong, who promised to use his influence with the coup leaders to spare your father" (348); and Cliff fathered Quy's Amerasian child.

The novel ends with Mai's return to Vietnam in 2006 to drop her father's ashes into the ocean and to find her abandoned Amerasian sister. While eating breakfast, she reads a newspaper article about a Catholic orphanage and an American veteran who volunteers there. To Mai's great surprise, the American veteran turns out to be James Baker, who did not die during the war as she had thought. James, now in his mid fifties, tells Mai that his Vietnamese wife and four-year-old Amerasian daughter were captured and imprisoned during their escape as a boat people in 1980, and that he, a war drifter, cannot return to America but now lives with his wife and daughter in Saigon. Vietnam has become James's second home, where "[he] has found love" (370). At Mai's hotel, James and Mai make love, but Mai avoids seeing James again during the final days of her visit. The concluding passage of Cao's novel contains a sense of healing and reconciliation.

Structurally, Cao employs a postmodern narrative approach to writing *The Lotus and the Storm*. The novel blurs the concept of physical time and space as the protagonists travel back and forth between the wartime Vietnam of the 1960s-1970s

and the Virginia of the postwar period. Cao integrates important historical snapshots into her narrative; thus, it is important that the reader know the history of the Vietnam War to appreciate the novel's complexity and profundity fully. The novel is personal, psychological, and historical, simultaneously. On a personal level, it is a saga of a Vietnamese family whose members' lives are shattered by the ravages of war and politics. On a psychological level, it examines how the protagonists must live with PTSD, traumatic memories, and dissociative identity disorder. On an historical level, the novel examines the complexities of South Vietnamese history: the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, the self-immolation of the Buddhist monk Venerable Thich Quang Duc as an act of protest against the Diem government's religious oppression, Diem's successors, the Tet Offensive of 1968, the Paris Peace Accords of 1973, the fall of Saigon, and the boat-people experience.

In the novel, Cao vividly depicts the sounds and scents of various images that are closely attached to the experiences of the characters in Vietnam. It is these sounds and aromas that follow Mai and Minh to Virginia, and they symbolize a time long past, about which the characters are nostalgic. For instance, early in the novel, Minh, while driving his Jeep in Saigon in 1963, saw high school girls floating "in their virgin-white *ao dais*. The acrid smell of diesel and tar lingered in the air, trapped in the earth's steam. [...] A persistent sourness like the odor of damp laundry lifted from the street" (27). Later, in Virginia in 2006, he says, "When the day comes, and it will, when everything, even memory of people, of earth and water, of history, has gone from me, this is what will remain—the dreaming colors of purple evenings, a lavender *ao dai* that flows this way and that, and a rice field that illumines earth and sky in a shimmer of liquid emerald" (53-54). Similarly, the sounds uttered by a street vendor and the images and scents of tamarind trees, star fruits, and coconut palms from childhood are etched in Mai's mind.

Thematically, *The Lotus and the Storm* treats the prospect of assimilation versus the status of remaining a perpetual refugee, loyalty versus betrayal, "the lingering threats of war and loss" (169) versus the possibility of ultimate healing and reconciliation. The novel challenges the American concept of successful assimilation, provided that a refugee or immigrant comes to the United States and forgets the past in order to build a brighter future. Historical amnesia does not apply to the lives of the Vietnamese American refugees. In Northern Virginia, the Vietnamese American community protests against communism, flies the former South Vietnamese flag, and mourns the collapse of Saigon: "It is all about reconstructing and reclaiming what is gone" (272); the Little Saigon established

in Northern Virginia itself “is part of war’s debris. We are here to reminisce and sometimes to denounce. We are here to savage something from the ruinous disorder of defeat” (56). It is a deep-seated anticommunist spirit that solidifies and reunites the Vietnamese American community.

Cao’s novel romanticizes South Vietnam prior to the communist takeover. The characters come from an elite family background, and they had lived a comfortable life under the American presence in Vietnam. The Americans portrayed in the novel represent the goodwill of the United States. For example, both James and Cliff are friendly, courteous, and non-condescending Americans. James brings laughter and joy to Mai and Khanh and becomes part of their family. Their father, Minh, praises Cliff for his “willingness to listen [which] distinguished him from the other Americans advisers and endeared him to me immediately” (115). Cliff comes to Vietnam because he wants to “help” the Vietnamese (120), and he “ate whatever we [Minh and his commander] ate. He had not brought the usual C ration cans provided for the American troops” (149). Both James and Cliff are eager to know of Vietnamese culture and history; they want to learn the Vietnamese language, appreciate Vietnamese cuisine, and become part of Vietnam. On the contrary, the Vietcong are portrayed as bloodthirsty killers and thieves. After April 1975, they sent people who had been affiliated with the former Saigon government and the Americans to reeducation camps, confiscated houses, and generated poverty, fear, and paranoia in the South. In sum, *The Lotus and the Storm* makes an important statement in the corpus of Vietnam War literature. American literature about the Vietnam War has been criticized for its Americentric perspective because it tends to ignore the sufferings of the Vietnamese during and after the war. The Vietnamese remain invisible in most war narratives produced by U.S. writers. Cao’s novel gives the reader a Vietnam that was damaged by war and by the aftermath that saw further suffering both by the Vietnamese nationals who remained to rebuild the nation and by the Vietnamese refugees who escaped but remain haunted by the specters of the past. It is not only U.S. veterans who are victims of PTSD; it is also the Vietnamese nationals and the Vietnamese American refugees who bear the effects of trauma from the period of great violence and destruction. The novel focuses on the story of Vietnamese Americans who, like their co-nationals who remained in Vietnam, are victims the war. However, the Vietnamese Americans could not live peacefully in Vietnam, because the Hanoi regime had labeled them as traitors and reactionaries to be “reeducated” in camps, and they had to flee their homeland. Now they live United States—“the country that both betrays and redeems” (249).

You Are Not Forgotten: The Story of a Lost WWII Pilot and a Twenty-First Century Soldier's Mission to Bring Him Home. Brian Bender. New York: Doubleday, 2013, \$26.95, hardcover, 317 pp.

Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Copeland, United States Air Force Academy

More than 83,000 American servicemen are still missing from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and various American engagements after 1973, and the search for the missing takes center stage in Brian Bender's book, *You Are Not Forgotten: The Story of a Lost WWII Pilot and a Twenty-First Century Soldier's Mission to Bring Him Home*. It is a particularly poignant book in light of the recent controversy surrounding the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (formerly the Joint Personnel Accounting Command, or JPAC), the military organization charged with finding and recovering America's missing war dead.

You Are Not Forgotten is an engaging blend of past and present, told in a way in which the distinction often becomes one—Bender finds that the impulse to serve in America's recent wars was not altogether different from its previous ones. It is a story of two military men who volunteered to fight for similar reasons—common refrains of patriotism, duty, family heritage, and commitment—yet in different wars situated in vastly different eras. Marine Captain Ryan McCown was an F4U Corsair pilot shot down over the skies of present-day Papua New Guinea, as the United States began its island hopping campaign on the heels of victory in the Guadalcanal Campaign during World War II. Army Captain George Eyster is a Kiowa helicopter pilot and veteran of the Iraq war whose service in that country straddled some of the war's toughest years. Both men were fiercely loyal to their mothers, and conversed with them routinely throughout their military careers. Both men's fathers were either aloof, absent, or both, and there is also a hint of a boy still striving to prove something to their fathers in each. Both men's units were inexperienced entering their respective wars, with attendant consequences to be borne. One could not wish for better subjects for a tale such as this.

Bender incorporates some clever subtleties into *You Are Not Forgotten*. The first is a nod to the future of archival research for historians—that is, Bender's use of email and internet chat records from the Eyster family signal a new set of sources now becoming available to historians. Especially in light of recent court cases, in which big tech companies like Facebook and Yahoo have successfully fought to uphold their user agreements stipulating that users' accounts will be terminated upon confirmation of one's death rather than passing to the family as part of an

estate, the seemingly trivial nature of online communication is countered in this book by becoming a critical component of understanding one of its protagonists impetus for finding the other.

In another clever subtlety, Bender offers a critique of the Iraq war by presenting two military men who volunteered to fight but who emerged from their respective conflicts with vastly different opinions of what they were fighting for. Naturally, Ryan, even after ditching his crippled Corsair in the Solomon Sea, nevertheless “insisted that he resume his place in the squadron and not lose a day’s flying time,” (170) evincing an unbending support for a war almost universally considered “good.” He did return to flying shortly after the incident, but failing to return from a raid on a Japanese-held airfield, George is left to pick up Ryan’s story where it left off. George’s experience with combat, meanwhile, left him disillusioned about the purpose of the war and his role in it as enemy attacks convinced him that his presence there would do nothing to change centuries of tribal and ethnic conflict aggravated by American involvement in their country. Desperate for a change, George lands the job with JPAC and ends his foundering, finally excited about his mission in the Army.

This book would benefit from some in-text maps of the South Pacific during World War II and of present-day Papua New Guinea. Even to a reader familiar with that region and theater of WWII, the place names have little significance without some visual aids to illuminate the text. Furthermore, as a C-130 pilot who had the privilege of moving JPAC personnel around Papua New Guinea on one of their expeditions, I was struck at times by Bender’s slip-ups regarding military life and the technicalities of flying. For instance, Bender’s evidence of an Army commander’s “softer side” that rests on calling families of wounded or dead soldiers before they heard it anywhere else or praising his troops for showing restraint when civilians were nearby in Iraq is far from “soft” (135); rather, it is simply evidence of a good leader and commander. Also, one does not push rudder pedals “all the way forward to keep the plane under control” (230). However, Bender’s research was otherwise comprehensive enough to render these foibles quite minor.

The book really hits its stride in the second half, however, where Bender reaps the benefit of following George and his JPAC crews on an expedition in Papua New Guinea in the search for Ryan’s and others’ remains. Here Bender aptly strikes at the heart of the motto posted above JPAC’s headquarters in Hawaii: “A nation that forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten” (175). Indeed, JPAC’s mission to “bring them all home” transcends time and cultures in the book, as Bender notes that even native New Guineans working with JPAC crews on the digs felt a connection

to returning elders to their native land. Furthermore, Bender brilliantly closes the loops for both Ryan and George: on a mission to Vietnam, George is taken to the place where his grandfather rather publicly died; meanwhile, George's JPAC team finally finds evidence of Ryan's remains and another of the 83,000 missing Americans returned home.

This is certainly an important book, especially in light of President Barack Obama's "Pacific Pivot" and the recently increased attention, respect, and even critique Americans are giving our nation's veterans. Bender's engaging feature of the efforts to find and bring home the veterans of our past wars will resonate with any American, even those with no military connections.

The Philosophy of War Films. Ed. David LaRocca. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2014, \$45.00, hardcover, 492 pp.

Reviewed by Tatiana Prorokova, Philipps-University of Marburg, Germany

War as a political event, a historical occurrence, a philosophical phenomenon, and a specific environment generated by humans has always been a considerable research issue in academia. Yet, the problem of representation and reflection of these manifestations of war in film has provoked a substantial investigation among scholars of Film, Media, and Cultural Studies. Along with purely cinematic tactics of depicting wars or war, in its abstract and more general sense, scholars have always been examining such pivotal questions as: What does cinema of war has to tell its audience? How does film tackle the issue of war? Is there a change, a certain development in the portrayal of war over time? What does war do to humans, and what is the role of an individual in the chaotic world of war? How do we deal with morality and amorality in war? Is war an everlasting condition in the history of humankind or is it a process that can be easily interrupted or even stopped for good? Meticulously examining an uncountable number of films, David LaRocca's collection of essays *The Philosophy of War* raises these questions, too. Yet, LaRocca's approach is unique as the scholar analyzes war in film applying such prominent philosophical questions as representation, formation or the making of self, human nature, morality, ethics, and eternity.

LaRocca starts his volume with quite a lengthy introduction that is by no means a disadvantage but, on the contrary, it serves as a rich theoretical tool as it introduces the topic and provides the author's speculation on philosophy of war films. Raising such pivotal questions as "Can war as such be represented by film? What do we think we mean when we speak of a war film?" (2), LaRocca demonstrates that he is interested not only in examining particular wars and their reflection in specific films but also in tackling the problem of war films profoundly. The author explains his fascination for war films by their bifacial nature, namely that "these works exist at the intersection of geopolitical reality and imaginative fiction, where government and corporate investment meet creative endeavor" (4). LaRocca underscores the problem of conventional/unconventional war films. For example, he makes his readers meditate on what content would make a film a *war film*. Can only a film where direct fighting is observed be called a war film? Or is a war film a more complex phenomenon? Does *war* in *war* films presuppose a larger concept that involves the fates and lives of those who are directly or indirectly

involved in a particular war? LaRocca also draws our attention to the fact that a war film is now influenced or, rather, transformed by two main innovations: first, it might be filled with videos from real wars, which makes war on the screen look more authentic and, secondly, it might accumulate certain characteristics of other film genres like, for instance, science fiction, which allows the author to adduce an argument on “the hybridization of . . . genres” (25). Additionally, LaRocca examines the relations between war films and their audience, claiming that there is “the almost unmatched combination of ethical quandaries and aesthetic phenomena they [war films] pose to us as viewers” (38).

Therefore, the first part titled “The Aesthetics of War On-Screen” discloses the problem of “how the nature of visibility, visibility, and hyper-visibility are affected by the technologies of war and the technologies of making movies” (68). Fredric Jameson discusses the complexity of reflecting war in film. For Jameson “war is one among . . . [many] collective realities” (104) that although may easily be considered as beyond representation, still, provides specific ideas, stories, and narrative techniques to enable a certain portrayal. Apart from juxtaposing or even opposing the representation of war from the perspective of an individual and the one of a collective, Jameson also investigates the issue in terms of a visual representation, dealing with the questions of “act” and “scene” (83) and positing that they are crucial when examining the problem of depiction of war (83). Garrett Stewart’s essay touches upon a similar problem, yet, from a different angle. For example, Stewart analyzes Brian De Palma’s *Redacted* (2007) to illustrate the issue of representation of war in the digital era when soldiers have an opportunity to videotape their war experience, and to demonstrate how this authentic war experience becomes part of the film. Additionally, he considers the question of technology in war films that has become most pertinent after 9/11. Hence, Stewart looks over a mix of a war film and science fiction and makes the problem of “high-tech violence” (121) evident. Among many other examples, he analyzes Kathryn Bigelow’s *The Hurt Locker* (2008), D.J. Caruso’s *Eagle Eye* (2008), Duncan Jones’s *Source Code* (2011), and Tony Scott’s *Déjà Vu* (2006). Stacey Peebles’s essay adds to the speculation on the aesthetics of representation. The author argues that “special effects” have always been a substantial part of every war film as they have helped make war look authentic on the screen (133). Like the previous author, Peebles pinpoints a recent tendency to add videos of real combat into films “to make it all real for the viewer” which she coins as “digital vérité” (134) that facilitates our “see[ing], empathiz[ing], and reflect[ing]” on war (153). Among a great number of films that the author thoroughly examines in her essay, it is worth mentioning Paul

Haggis's *In the Valley of Elah* (2007), Brian De Palma's *Redacted* (2007), Kimberly Peirce's *Stop-Loss* (2008), and Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008). Focusing his attention on *In the Valley of Elah* (2007) and *Stop-Loss* (2008) as well as on Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs* (2007), Joshua Gooch argues that the films foreground that "the work of surveiling social relations and the violence of war cohere in a knot of biopolitical and thanatopolitical labor" (162). The last essay in this part by Burke Hilsabeck addresses "the concept of aspect perception, or 'seeing as'" (180) as well as examines the combination of comedy and war in Charlie Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms* (1918). Hilsabeck's essay somewhat stands out due to its focus on both representation of war and the audience's comprehension of it, which underlines the significance of taking into account both sides – the one that decodes war, representing it in a certain way, and the other that encodes it, i.e., viewers. That said, the first part of the book first, unveils possible perspectives of representing war, whether a particular one or, generally, a condition of war and, secondly, showcases the aesthetics of representation as a complex process, arguing that the question of authenticity remains pivotal when dealing with virtually every war. The section, therefore, unfolds the process of representation, aptly displaying the utilized techniques.

The second part of LaRocca's collection – "War as Condition of Self Formation and Self Dissolution" – investigates the influence of war on individuals. Garry L. Hagberg's essay that opens the section provides a very detailed analysis of perhaps the most ambitious war film that has ever been made – Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Inevitably, the author addresses the key problem of the film, i.e., how war changes one psychologically, how it reveals one's good and bad sides that might seem amorphous in peaceful times but awake in the horrors of war. "The dehumanizing and degenerative nature of violence" (252) unveiled in Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) is examined in the next essay by Robert Burgoyne. Additionally, the author looks over a delicate issue of torture that is another form of perverse moral degradation one often suffers from in war. Lawrence F. Rhu discusses Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1985) that narrates the events of the American Civil War, focusing on the tactics of General Sherman that are characterized as "the birth of modern warfare, total war that does not spare the civilian population; rather it, attacks them and strikes terror in their hearts in order to hasten the conflict to an end" (261). Moreover, the author compares those events from the nineteenth century to the nuclear bombing of Japan that took place at the end of WWII. Dwelling on repetitive acts of violence, Rhu, therefore, intensifies the devastating consequences of war. Finally, Inger S.B. Brodey analyzes the works

by John Ford and Akira Kurosawa and argues that the depiction of graves in the films of these directors helps us comprehend the relation between the past and the present and realize whether burying the dead figuratively stands for “burying the past” (301) or whether, on the contrary, graves imprint certain things in our memory, thus, never allowing us to forget. The section is crucial as it touches upon arguably the most pivotal issues that emerge when dealing with the cinema of war, i.e., how to represent the effect and influence war inevitably has on an individual soldier, changing him psychologically and morally; how an individual can avoid the confusion of the good with the evil; how one can remain him/herself in the disastrous conditions of combat. The contributors meticulously analyze all these aspects.

“The Ethical Tribulations of War” is the third part of the volume that to a certain extent continues dealing with the problem raised in the previous section, looking over the issue of war’s influence on morality of those who directly (military men) and indirectly (civilians), voluntarily or involuntarily become part of war. Holger Pötzsch’s essay examines the problem of possible comprehension of relations between the two sides – the enemies – at war. By means of a thorough analysis of Franklin J. Schaffner’s *Patton* (1970) and Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), Andrew Fiala raises, indeed, a significant question that emerges when dealing with, in principle, any war film: “Should our moral evaluation of war focus on the individual or on the collective?” (335) The author claims that while *Patton* undermines the role of an individual soldier in war, *Saving Private Ryan*, contrariwise, underscores it, making the central mission in the film to save *one* soldier. The final essay in this part provides readers with another interpretation of Bigelow’s film that has already been discussed in the book earlier. K.L. Evans claims that “torture [in *Zero Dark Thirty* is depicted] as something of a necessary option” (359), whereas individualism is accentuated as we see Maya (Jessica Chastain) fighting against Osama bin Laden, practically, on her own, “sometimes cross[ing] moral lines” (365). Indeed, the problem of morality and a rather philosophical question “How to remain a human?” are at the heart of this section. Having been provoked multiple times to switch off the emotions and shut down feelings, making one’s own survival the final goal, a soldier, to be more precise, his/her behavior remains the key subject of investigation of many academics. Why do some change tremendously, while others preserve their humanity despite all the hardships and pain? The section, hence, provides a valuable meditation on these issues.

Finally, “War, Nature, and the Absolute” – the fourth and last part of LaRocca’s book – uncovers the relations between the three phenomena mentioned in the title

and a human-being. Expectedly, this part's major focus is, first, Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (1998) that is the central point of discussion in both Robert Pippin's and Elisabeth Bronfen's contributions. While the first essay investigates the issue of killing and dying in war as it is reflected in Malick's film, the second one compares *The Thin Red Line* to Samuel Fuller's *The Big Red One* (1980), arguing that "both draw on the figure of the uncanny double to externalize an inner conflict regarding death in war, ranging from psychic incapacitation, cynicism, and guilt to lethal self-expenditure and an erotic enjoyment of killing" (417). Secondly, and lastly, the fourth part examines the films of Werner Herzog. In his essay, LaRocca argues that in the director's war films "the defining characteristics of war are replaced in the context of nature" (441). Moreover, LaRocca claims that Herzog's war films provoke meditation on "humanity" as well as urge "humanity to think about itself" (442). The author draws parallels between Herzog's war films and *The Thin Red Line* in terms of their understanding and treatment of the role of nature in war. Herzog, according to LaRocca, "focuses on the *human* situation within a natural setting" (456, author's emphasis). The section contributes to the book's major speculation on the role of an individual in war, as well as the impact it has on him/her. However, the perspective the scholars investigate this issue from is quite fascinating as apart from war considered from a philosophical standpoint, they examine the role of nature in war and its influence on it, along with the consequences war might and apparently has on nature. The section is a considerable contribution to the book as the provided analyses help formulate and shape an utmost full image of an individual in a philosophical context of war.

David LaRocca's *The Philosophy of War Films* is a remarkable project that manages to skilfully cover the most pertinent issues in the field of war cinema. However, despite a large number of contributions, the volume's major focus is aptly narrow and can be formulated as the examination of the aesthetics of war films and the investigation of the construction of self, including moral and psychological changes one undergoes in war. LaRocca's collection is thoughtfully structured, which makes it a substantial source as a whole as well as enables scholars to use each of four sections independently, as logically and thematically completed parts. *The Philosophy of War Films* is a valuable scholarship that can serve utmost scholars from Film and Cultural Studies.

Another Great Day at Sea: Life Aboard the USS George H. W. Bush.

Geoff Dyer. New York: Pantheon Books, 2014, \$24.95, hardcover, 191 pp.

Reviewed by Matthew Stewart, Boston University.

This book is a delight. The English essayist, novelist and genre-bending author Geoff Dyer spends two weeks aboard the super carrier *USS George H. W. Bush*, fulfilling a boyhood love of ships and finding much to admire and much to enjoy despite his self-professed unsuitability for life at sea. As this review is being written the *Bush* is fully engaged in combat operations directed against ISIS/ISIL, begun in August 2014. Dyer's visit, however, occurs in October 2011 during the drawdown period of Operation Enduring Freedom, ostensibly a time of more quiet routine; nonetheless, the din of activity, the long work days, and the sense of duty and mission he routinely encounters impress Dyer.

The vessel is huge, noisy, crowded, cramped, and occasionally smelly; 5,000 people are packed together for weeks on end. Dyer sees the *Bush* as the floating equivalent of "a small town in American (albeit one organized along unusually hierarchical line)," where he is "surrounded by American voices, American friendliness, American politeness, American *Americans*" (61). *The Bush* is also a floating industrial site, "crowded as a Bombay slum, with an aircraft factory—the hangar bay—in the middle" (21).

The ship's motto is "Freedom at Work," and Dyer takes obvious pleasure in learning about the jobs done by the enlisted crew and their officers. Warrant Officer Charles Jakes oversees the 112 cooks on board and manages a food inventory clearly worth millions of dollars. A female airplane mechanic—who goes unnamed, it would seem, because Dyer develops a crush on her—works with skill and ease atop the wing of a plane. Petty Officers Heath and Young are in charge of the brig, or *the* brig as Dyer coins it, in a moment where the phrase must have channeled back to his and ship-loving boyhood, but they have no customers, a testimony to the ship's order and to the absence of alcohol first lamented, but then applauded by Dyer. There scarcely seems a person on board who is less than super-committed to his or her job.

In all this we see that Dyer is anything but the condescending anti-American, anti-military European intellectual. While he must find a way to hold his own against an obnoxious Texan beef baron, and thought he has some minor fun at the expense of the ship's drug counselor, for example, and while he demurs, plausibly enough, with the versions of Evangelical Christian theology that he encounters, he

nonetheless eschews easy or unmerited sarcasm. Indeed, in regards to the religious feelings of the crew and the Christian practices that frequent the ship, the avowed atheist happily admits the warm feelings that hymns and simple prayer bring to him, and the reader cannot imagine that in the name of higher rationality he would seek to deprive those who sing and pray out of true belief of their effects. As with religious feeling, so with old-fashioned marshal virtues—indeed more so. Dyer understands, tolerates and enjoys a sort of second-hand, keep-your-distance glow from the religious elements. He openly approves of men and women who speak plainly about duty, patriotism and service. “I had not been on the boat long,” he writes when three pilots declare that their profession is honorable, “but I understood what they meant and believed in it absolutely” (58).

As is typical of his essays, Dyer becomes the central character, and here he plays the oldest, tallest, thinnest, most out of shape, most out of place person on the ship. Also by far the most spoiled and fussiest. He immediately sets himself to work on securing a private room, for he is a man, as he admits early and repeats for effect, who dreads sharing space. The “six-pack” sleeping arrangements for the crew seem Dante-esque to him. Nor can he abide the ordinary chow served to the crew, and is pleased, no, delighted to befriend the Captain’s cook, who supplies him with gourmet meals as the trip winds down. Another professional whose skill the author lauds.

At his most philosophical, Dyer muses on his status as both a visitor and writer. In a situation that would seem to call for him to adopt the role of embedded reporter, he baldly opines that he is the worst reporter imaginable. He cannot remember details; data escapes him; his mind wanders even in the presence of people whom he admires and in situations that he truly finds interesting; his observations are just as often associative as they are sequential or logical, and the associations can be more or less idiosyncratic. Nor can he distance himself from the crew, almost all of whom elicit warm feelings and respect. He can’t even hang on to his laptop on the flight to the ship, leaving it behind for someone else to retrieve. All of this Dyer concedes, summarizing his peculiar position thus: “So there I was: a tourist with a notebook, a marine anthropologist whose data was so thoroughly mixed up with the means of obtaining it that it probably had no value as data, only as a memoir of a collection of camera-less holiday snaps” (134).

Yet, for all that he puts himself at the center of things, and notwithstanding his protestations of his own poor reportage, the reader comes away with much detailed knowledge of life aboard the ship, and, what’s more, with *a feel* for the life and duties of those on board. As for detailed knowledge, how many readers, for example, will

be familiar with the aircraft catapult used aboard the carrier and ably described by the author? How many with the workings of the arresting gear, which—imagine!—brake the aircraft from 140 mph to a dead stop in two seconds? Do readers already know about the Launch Valve Room? (Better take a water bottle if you visit.) As for feel, to state the obvious, the entirety of this skillfully written book brings forth the feel, but there are passages especially worth noting, many of which reveal the finer sensibilities of the men and women aboard the ship.

Another Great Day at Sea takes its title from the inspirational phrase used daily by the ship's captain as he makes his announcement. It is part of the Writers in Residence series founded by the philosopher Alain de Botton and dedicated to supporting the long-form essay and to inspiring collaborations between writers and photojournalists. Each writer-photographer pair chooses an important institution in which to spend a brief residence. Readers can be grateful that Dyer was offered the chance to participate in the series, and without hesitation requested an assignment aboard a US Navy aircraft carrier. The book is testimony to the skill of one of the finest living writers and to so much that is good about America.

A Crisis of Brilliance: Five Young British Artists and the Great War. 2009. David Boyd Haycock. London: Old Street Publishing, 2010 rpt., \$20.00, paper, 386 pp.

Nash, Nevinson, Spencer, Gertler, Carrington, Bomberg: A Crisis of Brilliance, 1908 – 1923. David Boyd Haycock with Frances Spalding, et. al. London: Scala Arts Publishers, 2013, paper, 176 pp. Catalogue published to accompany the special exhibition held at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, June 12-September 22, 2013, London: <http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/about/press-media/press-releases/dulwich-picture-gallery-presents-nash,-nevinson,-spencer,-gertler,-carrington,-bomberg-a-crisis-of-brilliance/>.

Reviewed by Matthew Stewart, Boston University.

David Boyd Haycock's 2009 study of "five young British artists" whose lives and work were affected by the First World War was not much publicized in this country upon its appearance and still does not seem to have been much discussed by war historians or modernist art scholars. Those interested in war and the arts or in the cultural productions of the First World War will want to know of it and of the more recent exhibition of these artists' work at the Dulwich Picture Gallery which has gathered some notice in this country, though slight. The five artists under discussion in the study are Stanley Spencer, Mark Gertler, Dora Carrington, C. R. W. Nevinson and Paul Nash. The 2013 exhibition and its accompanying catalogue add a sixth artist, David Bomberg, whose enormous abstract painting *In the Hold* introduced viewers to the special exhibition space devoted to the "crisis of brilliance."

This title phrase was used by Henry Tonks, well-known and severe professor of drawing at the Slade School of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture in London where these artists spent their young adult years. There they trained, discussed and argued, fell into a variety of relationships with one another, formed bonds with their teachers and mixed in the milieu of the pre-war London art world, eventually discovering the modernist, avant-garde trends just then arriving on British shores. (Readers of this journal will be interested to note that Isaac Rosenberg was also a contemporary student at the Slade, one who makes an interesting case study in how the school could foster artistic growth, but also had to be transcended or left behind by the student. Rosenberg found his own artistic path, of course, gaining more fame as a poet than as a visual artist.) Haycock's strongest suit is biography,

and one gains a good sense of each artist as an individual, and also of the family influences that seem remarkably important in many instances and which follow the artists well into adulthood, often influencing the artworks that each produced. The group dynamics and interactions are complex, sometimes intense and generally bohemian; readers with a sense of Bloomsburyian habits and mores will be familiar with the conduct of personal lives and the nature of the social scene. Fictionalized versions of these artists are the focus of two novels by Pat Barker: *Life Class* (2007) and *Toby's Room* (2012).

There is less pure art history in the volume than one might anticipate; there are few extended discussions of aesthetics per se and little technical analysis of individual paintings. Indeed, the reader is pretty well asked to accept the “brilliance” that is asserted in the title, for the author is not at pains to justify its use. Talent, precocity, technical skill, artistic temperament, aesthetic will—all are evident in the works, which are indeed worthy of extended attention and due admiration, but the word *brilliance* seems close to implying genius, or at the least would seem to be a word applicable to artists of the first rank, those whose works have had profound influence on subsequent artists and which are apt to stand for a long time. Is this the case in regards to all those under discussion in this volume? If so, why? To some, but not to others? I think there is a case to be made for Spencer and Nash as influential and first-rate artists, but it appears to be outside the author’s scope of interest to make their case despite his choice of book title. Interestingly, Haycock shows Spencer, in his view (and mine) the most durable and consistently interesting and talented of the group, to have been the figure kept most by the others on the outside, even to the extent to being the object of their jokes and tricks.

Aside from whether the judgment put forth in the title receives enough attention, the reader does nonetheless gain a reasonably good feel for the currents of modernism that ran, eddied and occasionally swept through pre-war London. Mostly this is accomplished through narrative rather than analysis: the author’s quotation of the artists’ responses to the works of their contemporaries and especially to their reactions to their continental modernist precursors shed the most light. The artists all attended the Slade School between 1908 and 1912, and even a cursory glance at their body of early work reveals little or no influence from the various post-impressionist and modernist schools styles and schools. 1910 and 1912 both saw important exhibitions of groundbreaking continental art staged in England. While “the new” ceased to shock some good while past, and while the modernists’ version of the new is of course now quite old, Haycock does well to describe the relative slowness of modernist developments to penetrate the English

speaking world. In his discussion of the 1910 show *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, Haycock reminds the reader that “although some of these paintings were already twenty or even thirty years old—and four of the five major artists represented were dead—they were new to most Londoners. The show was going to be an eye-opener for an insular audience that had been brought up on the realism of the classical tradition” (84). Even cognoscenti such as Roger Fry and Clive Bell came to such works with a fresh eye. For the Anglo world, the avant-garde was *avant la guerre*, but just, and the artists under discussion here were made to realize that the Slade was far from the cutting edge of the art world.

A Crisis of Brilliance's subtitle promises an analysis of the war's influence on these five artists and not quite half of the color plates included are of war paintings. The general public may be little acquainted with any of the figures at any stage of their development in regards to any dimension of their oeuvre, and will be well served by the inclusion of these illustrations, nicely provided in a reasonably priced paperback volume put out by a smaller press. Readers already interested in war art are most apt to recognize the work of Nash and Nevinson as artists of the Great War; indeed both were appointed Official War Artists by the British War Propaganda Bureau, against whom Nash famously made bitter criticisms. Haycock observes that “Nash's [artistic vision] would be angrily, vigorously emboldened” by his direct acquaintance with the front (276). The works of these two men have been prominently displayed in the Imperial War Museum in London, as has Spencer's *Travoy's* [sic.] *Arriving with the Wounded*. (Readers are referred to the IWM web page devoted to the First World War: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/war-art-schemes-of-the-first-world-war>.) Nash and Nevinson's sardonically titled, large-scale deathscape paintings are probably as well-known as any First World War art emanating from the Anglo countries. So unsparring was it, that The War Office forbade the exhibition of Neville's *Paths of Glory*, and Nash's *The Menin Road* uses geometric stylizations to become something even grimmer than the now-familiar landscape photographs of the war's landscape. While the war doesn't seem to have produced a single iconic painting—not, say, in the sense that Picasso's *Guernica* has become *the* painting of the Spanish Civil War—Nevinson's skillful and futurist-influenced *La Matrailleuse*, here included, has seen its share of reprints and appropriations. Neville was the one artist who went to Paris before the war to meet Picasso and Marinetti, and one sees modernist influences here quite directly. Nash used his anger productively in the end. As early as 1918 he mounted a successful exhibition devoted exclusively to his paintings and drawings of the war.

Chapters seventeen and eighteen, which deal with the war and the armistice respectively, will be of particular interest to readers of this journal, and they are among the best chapters of this clearly written, well-researched book. Once again, the author's strength shows itself in the narration of significant biographical events, the choice of incidents to report and quotations to insert. The analysis of the works of war art themselves is not as extensive as one might expect. Thus the reader learns of the ways in which the war affected lives, and it is obvious that for Nash, Nevinson, and, to a lesser degree, Spencer the war became a subject of their art. While there is some analysis of the war's effects on style, method and technique, the reader is often left to infer that the pre-war avant-garde found its matter in the war pictures. The exact relationship between manner and matter is not explored at length. What Haycock does make clear is his belief that none of the artists could sustain their early brilliance as their youth and the war years receded. Here Nevinson would seem to epitomize the thesis, for, as he moved into middle age, his unsettled pursuits and shifting styles never seemed to coalesce into a full-fledged oeuvre despite his evident talent.

In Carrington's case it is difficult to see that the war had any effect on her art works. She moved to the country, eventually married Lytton Strachey and committed suicide not long after he died. Gertler, who did not want to serve and who was exempted from service on account of poor health, was known for his caustic remarks on the stupidity of the war. In response he produced *The Merry-Go-Round* (included here as a plate), which married figurative abstraction with what has been widely regarded as an anti-military, anti-war stance. He too committed suicide. Both Spencer and Nevinson served in ambulance corps, and Nevinson later in the Royal Army Medical Corps before being named an Official War Artist. Nash initially served with the Artists Rifles, remaining in London for relatively easy duties, but he eventually saw active duty as a second lieutenant in the trenches of the Western Front. One notes the paucity of Nash's large paintings in the exhibition and will have to seek them out in other venues.

A Crisis of Brilliance is a nicely paced, lucidly presented and informative book well-researched by its author, who has written in a fashion that will engage the general reader but will also inform the scholar. He adroitly handles the memoirs and letters from which he draws his material. While the actual events of the First World War do not figure prominently in its pages, and while readers looking for a greater focus on aesthetics may be somewhat disappointed, the study nonetheless provides a fine introduction to the pre-war and wartime lives and work of Britain's most famous artists of the Great War.

Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy. Eri Hotta. New York: Vintage Books, 2014, \$16.95, paper, 323 pp.

Reviewed by John M. Jennings, United States Air Force Academy

The Imperial Japanese Government's decision to initiate hostilities with the United States and its allies has remained a source of historical puzzlement since the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. How could Japan's military and civilian leaders have taken such a monumentally reckless step of launching a war against a vastly more powerful enemy at the same time that the empire was already bogged down in an inconclusive and costly conflict in China? According to the verdict of the postwar Tokyo War Crimes Trial, this decision was the product of a conspiracy to launch a war of aggression in order to conquer an empire in Asia and the Pacific. Yet another narrative that emerged in postwar Japan (with the encouragement of surviving wartime leaders) was that war with the United States became inevitable when the Imperial Japanese Government was backed into a corner by US sanctions, which offered increasingly desperate decision-makers with the stark choice of abjectly surrendering to American demands or risking war. In her riveting account of the fateful year leading up to the war, *1941: Countdown to Infamy*, Eri Hotta convincingly refutes both of these explanations. Far from being a well-oiled conspiracy, the Japanese government's decision-making structure was a tangle of competing bureaucratic centers of power. At the same time, rather than being inevitable, the war was very much a war of choice on the part of Japan's rulers.

Technically, Japan in 1941 was an autocracy headed by the emperor, who was the living embodiment of the state. However, Hotta describes Hirohito, the emperor at the time, as being anything but an absolute ruler. Constrained by custom and by his self-definition as a limited constitutional monarch, Hirohito viewed his role as rubber-stamping decisions once they were presented to him by the government. Consequently, he felt compelled to sanction the decision for war, despite his grave misgivings. As Hotta deftly illustrates, Hirohito expressed these misgivings as he repeatedly and vainly sought his military advisers' assurance of Japan's victory on the eve of the war.

That decision for war presented to the Emperor for sanction was, as Hotta shows, the product of a chaotic patchwork of bureaucratic fiefdoms. Both the army and navy were essentially independent institutions due to the lack of civil control over the military. The Foreign Ministry also tended to pursue its own agenda without necessarily gaining sanction or coordinating, especially under the mercurial Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke, whose advice to take a hard line in

negotiations with United States proved especially disastrous. Moreover, decision-making within each of these organizations was frequently blurry. Even the formal chain of command in the military did not prevent the army and navy was being dominated by cliques of aggressive and insubordinate field grade officers, who then forced flag officers to support their policies or else a risk a total breakdown of discipline.

Nor were Japanese major civilian and military leaders able or willing to rise above the chaos. Konoe Fumimaro, the most significant and longest-serving prime minister during the period from the outbreak of the war in China in 1937 to 1941, was a political chameleon whose admiration of the Nazi totalitarian system played a not insignificant role if Japan's attaching itself to the Axis alliance in 1940, which further antagonized the United States. Hotta's vivid portrayal of Konoe, who craved the absolute power of Hitler but lacked the will to seize similar power for himself, is especially impressive as it is much more challenging to flesh out a historical figure who was essentially a cipher than one with a more dynamic personality.

In the absence of strong leadership at the top to gainsay them, Japan's major decision-makers essentially talked themselves into the idea that with the United States and its allies was inevitable, consequently missing several openings for further negotiations that might have averted war. Hotta reveals that, in contrast to the common view that the military, and especially the army, was responsible for browbeating the government into war, both military and civilian leaders shared the blame for blundering into the decision to start the conflict. Indeed, Hotta indicates that although army leaders were predictably bellicose in their attitude, they were much less of a driving force for war with the United States due to their preoccupation with prosecuting the ongoing conflict with China. On the contrary, the navy, obsessed with parochial bureaucratic turf protection, was seemingly more culpable in this regard. Although naval leaders clearly understood and rightly feared the risk of disaster in any conflict with the materially-superior United States, they more feared that anything less than advocacy of conflict with their number one hypothetical enemy would cause the government to question the navy's *raison d'être* and cut its budget.

1941: Countdown to Infamy is not only a well-researched, skillfully-written and highly-absorbing account of a tension-filled year, but also, in shedding much-welcome light on the frequently opaque nature of decision-making in Japan, it is a cautionary tale of how a multitude of political and personal failings led Japan into a disastrous war of choice. While Hotta is to be commended for her persuasive

depictions of leading Japanese military and political figures, she is less critical of Hirohito than she could have been. While the role of the Emperor in government decision-making was indeed limited by custom and by Hirohito's own narrow definition of his political position, as Hotta herself notes, he could and indeed did intervene forcefully to put down an army mutiny in 1936. What Hotta fails to mention is that he directly intervened a second time in August 1945 to break the government's deadlock and accept the Allies' surrender terms. By that time, of course, it was far too late for Japan, and indeed the world.