

Reviews

The GI Generation: A Memoir. Frank F. Mathias. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2000, xiii + 257 pp., photos, postscript. \$25.00.

The Greatest Generation Speaks. Tom Brokaw. New York: Random House, 1999, xxii + 237 pp., photos. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Stephen Rippon, United States Air Force Academy

The titles are telling: Mathias' stands out for its lack of pretension, perhaps a gentle rebuke to Brokaw. Unfortunately, the University Press of Kentucky's publicists needlessly invoke Brokaw's first work by titling their press release for *The GI Generation*, "The Making of 'The Greatest Generation.'" Mathias, a professor emeritus of history at the University of Dayton, will have none of that. With characteristic candor, he notes, "I have written this book as the historian I am, and not as an 'old-timer' intent on gilding the lily" (xii).

Putting the titles aside temporarily, I must admit that Brokaw opens *The Greatest Generation Speaks* promisingly with a section called "War Stories," where he compares the well-known World War II literature with the array of memoirs by common Americans who fought in the war:

Those memoirs, many of them self-published or simply bound manuscripts, add to the rich body of literature from World War II. The best of that literature—the works of James Jones, Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut, William Manchester, Joseph Heller, and Paul Fussell, for example—is well known. The home-spun books will likely never be read outside the authors' immediate families. Still, the memoirs of infantrymen, fliers, sailors, and chaplains get at the essential truths of war in their own memorable and deeply personal fashion. (3)

To underscore his commitment to bringing out these people's stories, Brokaw adds a few pages in the front of the book for war veterans to inscribe their own memories. It is merely a gesture, though, and one

that helps me realize just why I found this book so unsatisfying. How can one summarize “What I remember most about the war years” in just eight lines, or reminisce about “When the war was over” in just eleven? If Brokaw is trying to adhere to a formalist aesthetic theory of how creativity within fixed limits can actually enhance pleasure and beauty, he is sending an awfully mixed message here.

Would that Brokaw heeded some limits! Instead, he bowls us over with story after story received in the wake of his bestselling 1998 book, *The Greatest Generation*. I could not bear to read more than three or four of these episodes at a time; perhaps this book is best suited for hospital waiting areas and coffee tables. Interestingly enough, Brokaw himself admits the problems of his method:

When I shared some of these stories with a friend, he was moved and then, after a moment, he commented on the nature of the world in which we live: ‘You hear something like that and you’re resolved to keep it in your mind forever, but twenty minutes later you’re wondering what’s for lunch.’ It was a thoughtful and perceptive comment on the pace of modern life and the selfish agendas that preoccupy too many of us. (167)

If Brokaw really sympathizes with his friend’s observation, then why does the method of his book mirror the frenetic “pace of modern life” he laments?

And why does Brokaw stubbornly insist on calling them “The Greatest Generation” when the subjects of his new book are rather ambivalent? Some of those featured in his book attempt to correct the assumption that their generation lives up to his moniker. A former Deputy Secretary of State, John Whitehead, writes Brokaw: “I’ve read your book with great interest. I’m not sure that those of us who served our country in World War II deserve to call ourselves the ‘greatest’ generation. Like any group of Americans, we were a mixed bag” (14). And if Brokaw does not heed feedback from Whitehead, he certainly does not probe the implications of these words from Nancy Keister of South Yarmouth, Massachusetts: “I was not brave like the people in your book and felt very scared and disheartened at being separated from my husband and baby [when she caught scarlet fever and had to be quarantined]” (95). Keister speaks for many honest people who would not identify themselves among the “greatest.” Such comments, however, do not faze Brokaw from using the superlative.

The GI Generation is superior to *The Greatest Generation Speaks* in part because it does not claim greatness; instead, Mathias describes life in Carlisle, Kentucky, in the years between the World Wars. When Mathias needs an outside source to verify his memory, he looks to old friends and to the *Carlisle Mercury*, the newspaper for that town of 1500 located between Lexington and Maysville.

Mathias lets us know from the start that his memoir's focus is not the war itself; he described his own war experiences in a 1982 memoir entitled *G.I. Jive: An Army Bandsman in World War II* (University Press of Kentucky, reprinted in 2000). Instead, Mathias' focus here is on life in the prewar years:

Like Einstein's realization that a falling man feels no force of gravity, we whose youth fell within these disordered decades lived reasonably happy lives, with little or no sense of the ever-mounting gravity of each prewar year. Who was I to know that ten of my playmates or pals would be killed in action just a few years down the road? (x)

The war, retrospectively, casts a shadow over Mathias' entire narrative. Mathias reflects that on the day he left for the war, "I was concerned enough to wish that some sort of 'red mark' would appear above those destined to die. If such marks had hovered over the heads of those boarding the bus, one would have shown itself above my classmate Marion Letcher and another over my older friend Nick Feedback" (266). Mathias supplies those red marks for us throughout the memoir, and also lists in the postscript the names of his friends who were war casualties. For example, in a chapter called "Major and Minor," Mathias explains how his older friend Andy Metcalfe

introduced me to swing, showing me the way as usual. . . . Many of the boys and even some of their parents labeled him as a 'sissy,' but his many girlfriends knew better, as did I and my pals. It made us mad to hear it. But Andrew was to prove himself as one of the finest of the GI Generation.

A decade later, on April 22, 1945, S/Sgt Andrew B. Metcalfe, 349th Infantry, 88th Division, single-handedly attacked two Nazi machine-gun nests with rifle and grenades in the Italian mountains. The German gunners had pinned down his platoon. Metcalfe knocked both guns out but not before the second one shot his life away. (76)

In contrast to the stories falling under Brokaw's hackneyed headings ("War Stories," "Bonds," "Loss," "Faith," "Reunions," "Love Stories," "Appreciation," "Children," "Lessons"), the stories in *The GI Generation*, like that of Andy Metcalfe, emerge naturally from the narrative.

While the references to future war deaths invoke the war overtly, through much of Mathias' memoir the war is a persistent shadow. On a visit to Cincinnati, young Frank visits a friend whose mother requests, "Go up to the corner and get me a loaf of bread from Ben Greenstein the Jew." Mathias qualifies this episode significantly with the phrase, "in perhaps typical pre-Holocaust innocence" (221). Another example of how the war touches the narrative comes when Mathias explains how he got heavily involved in swing music (thanks to his red-marked friend Andy Metcalfe) and played saxophone in local bands. His mother's investment in a top-of-the-line sax may have saved his life because it encouraged him to practice so much that, "just seven years after opening my new sax," he left G Company, 145th Infantry, 37th Division, to serve in an Army band (80). Two-thirds of his former unit was later killed or wounded in Luzon.

Even in the swing music young Frank loved, the shadow of war emerges. At the end of a chapter called "Hammering Catfish" (referring to Frank's childhood practice of stunning and catching fish by hammering on the ice above them), Mathias quotes from a swing tune called "Shantytown": "I'll be just as sassy as Haile Selassie / If I were king, wouldn't mean a thing, / Keep my boots on call, / Read th' writin' on th' wall" referring, as Mathias recounts, to the antifascist hero and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, who resisted when Mussolini invaded in 1935 (59 – 60).

Contrast this episode with a passage from a section of Brokaw's book, "Loss":

The snappy patter of Bob Hope and the soothing baritone of Bing Crosby, the boogie-woogie of the Andrews Sisters, the jazz of Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller's distinctive melodies—all are on the sound track of the memories running across the mind's eye.

However, the stark reality is that 292,131 Americans were killed in action in World War II. (77)

In place of mere adjectives like "snappy" and "soothing" and "stark," followed by a statistic, Mathias gives us song lyrics and characters who are connected to a real place—Carlisle, Kentucky. Mathias populates a

small piece of the world with characters such as his father, Lucky, whose autodidacticism, twisted kidney, and ambivalence towards travel I will remember long after the flurry of stories from Brokaw's book subsides. After reading in Mathias' memoir about the first few war deaths, I tensed in anticipation whenever a new contemporary of Frank's entered the narrative, sensing the anxiety that Frank felt on that day he boarded the bus and wondered who would die. I think the reason for my emotional involvement with the fates of Mathias' friends is that he recreates such a complete and convincing world—the result of working within a limited scope.

A final passage expresses the difference between Brokaw's and Mathias' books. Mathias remembers his red-marked friend Andy Metcalfe, who made candy to give away as Christmas gifts:

He specialized in walnut loaded fudge, caramel rolls, divinity, and various types of cream candy. And he had special concoctions of his own which he named after the people receiving his gift. His gifts, at most, were wrapped either in red, green, or white tissue paper, for the more costly paper designs of later decades had not arrived. We never missed what we did not have.
(64)

The principle Mathias admires in his friend's gift-giving during the Depression is the same principle that makes his memoir more effective than Brokaw's in capturing that generation. Mathias keeps his story simple and local—a Kentucky childhood seen through the lens of the war that ended it. Brokaw, on the other hand, has compiled a book of sound bytes that, in trying to capture an entire generation's voice, leaves the reader with little to remember. Reading through even a section of Brokaw's book is like gorging on penny candy, while reading Mathias's memoir is like savoring an appropriate portion of Andy Metcalfe's divinity.

Zone of the Interior: A Memoir, 1942-1947. Daniel Hoffman. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000, 127pp., \$22.50.

Reviewed by Michael S. Neiberg, United States Air Force Academy

Shortly after the release of *Saving Private Ryan* I had a discussion with a colleague who observed that if one truly wanted to make a movie about the men of World War II, one ought to make a movie about the process of training clerks. To be sure, such a movie would be terrible for popcorn sales, but my colleague had a point. The United States military of the World War II period trained thousands of men to do the unglamorous jobs that nevertheless make significant contributions to victory. Indeed, Allied success was due in no small part to America's dedication to selecting and training talented men and women for work in crucial support functions, even if such work rarely appears heroically on the silver screen.

While you should not expect to see Tom Hanks in the starring role any time soon, Daniel Hoffman's *Zone of the Interior* provides wonderful insight into the wartime experiences of one such clerk. In Daniel Hoffman we have no ordinary clerk. Hoffman served as America's Poet Laureate, then designated Consultant in Poetry of the Library of Congress, from 1973 to 1974. Who else, when asked to write an article on abortive experimental designs for helicopters, would consult the works of Leonardo da Vinci? And who else could have written a form love letter to meet the needs of his tormented and hard-pressed colleagues at Officers Candidate School?

Hoffman is one of a very few writers who could turn his memoir of writing technical and scientific abstracts into a thoroughly enjoyable book. During the course of the war, Hoffman went from a struggling student at Columbia to a private writing technical manuals to an officer to a student once again. But by 1945, Hoffman had acquired confidence in himself and a better understanding of the world and his place in it. As was true for many veterans, Hoffman's return to civilian life, while welcome, left him with a sense of unfulfillment. "To handle responsibilities in civilian life comparable to those I had held in service," he wrote, "would take years and years of apprenticeship" (118). Indeed, many veterans never completed their civilian apprenticeship, leaving them with a strange void and, for some, an unwelcome longing for the war they had once been so happy to leave behind.

Hoffman and the men and women with whom he worked understood the guilt they felt at living safely in the zone of the interior (the Army's term for the continental United States) while peers were fighting and dying across Europe and Asia. But they also understood the importance of the work they were doing, and they handled their guilt by working harder. With a poet's sensitivities, Hoffman captures the drudgery, the occasional excitement, and the ambivalence of a desk job at an Ohio air field in the midst of history's most destructive war.

But even service in Ohio provided opportunities and challenges impossible to experience in civilian life. Near the end of the war, Hoffman was assigned to escort the renowned Hungarian mathematician Theodore von Karman and his top-secret work (handcuffed to Hoffman's wrist) to a two-star general's office at the Pentagon. "Thus it was that a youth who couldn't pass college calculus was courier for the greatest mathematician on the Allied side, perhaps in the world" (113). Where else but in the topsy-turvy world of World War II could that happen? Where else could that same youth engage in a series of political discussions with famed socialist economist Lewis Corey or watch a fellow enlisted man spar with Billy Conn to raise unit morale? The zone of the interior may have lacked the movie-making material of Normandy or Guadalcanal, but Hoffman proves that it nevertheless opened doors to alert and interested young men and women.

Zone of the Interior's most important contribution may well be its demonstration that even a relatively unexciting role in World War II could nevertheless be a life-changing experience. One did not need to storm the beaches at Omaha or fly missions over Tokyo to understand the war as a personal watershed. It is appropriate that Hoffman's memoir ends with the beginning of his career as a poet. His first article in the *Antioch Review* resulted from an Army assignment while in Ohio. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine his career taking the path that it did without the war and what it taught him. So read and enjoy *Zone of the Interior*. Just don't expect it to appear at a theater near you.

Her War Story: Twentieth-Century Women Write about War. Sayre P. Sheldon. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999, 370 pp., bibliography, index. \$55.00.

Reviewed by Kathleen R. Binns, United States Air Force Academy

Although women have always written about war as observers, the literature of war is predominantly male. "The reason," Sayre P. Sheldon explains, "is one of definition: war literature is traditionally about being in war, more precisely about being in combat. Women are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of war" (x). However, as the domain of war in the twentieth century has expanded to include women in greater numbers and wider capacities, war literature has expanded to reflect those changes. In *Her War Story*, Sheldon has assembled a collection of women's war writing that covers World War I, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, and the periods between these wars. The historical and narrative pieces anthologized here include fiction, poetry, journalism, and diaries penned by women of various nationalities. Some of the contributors, like Toni Morrison, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Martha Gellhorn, and Margaret Thatcher, are well known; others are less so. This anthology is not a glorification of women's experiences on the home front or, later, at the war front, nor is it a request for recognition; rather, it is an insightful and compelling record of those experiences.

Each of the four sections begins with an introduction to the war and the women writing about it. The first section, "The Great War," reflects women's entrance into what Sheldon terms a "forbidden zone" for women of the early 1940s: authors such as Wharton, Stein, and Mansfield

wrote about bodies and their hitherto unmentionable functions, about mutilation and appalling suffering, about lice and lack of sanitation, about cleaning the shit and vomit out of ambulances, about being sexually attacked by maddened wounded men. They learned to swear and speak in the language they heard from the men they nursed. To write about all this meant using new language and forms.... Women writers could claim not only a place in the lost generation but in creating its new literature. (6)

Although they weren't fighting, they were near the front covering the war, writing propaganda, and maintaining diaries, and the closer they got to the front, the more graphic their writing became (5). In an excerpt from her novel *The Forbidden Zone*, Mary Borden recounts the appalling, sometimes ludicrous, conditions in a hospital near the front: "We conspire against his right to die. We experiment with his bones, his muscles, his sinews, his blood. We dig into the yawning mouths of his wounds. Helpless openings, they let us into the secret places of his body. To the shame of the havoc of his limbs we add the insult of our curiosity and the curse of our purpose, the purpose to remake him. We lay odds on his chances of escape, and we combat with Death, his saviour" (23).

The writings of the second section, "Between the Wars," reflect the changes not only for women but also for men as a result of women's participation in World War I. Critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have highlighted, for example, "the resentment men felt towards women for surviving and even bettering themselves during the war years" (76). These selections reflect not only the personal and emotional impacts of the war on women, but also the political and social. Jane Addams, like many women, attempted through her war writings and social activities to understand and, she hoped, to prevent war. In helping found the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, she and her co-organizers even went as far as to try to outlaw war (77). In a selection from *Peace and Bread in Time of War*, Addams describes the wretchedness she encountered upon her return to Europe after the war to search for her nephew's grave: "Our experiences in the midst of widespread misery, did not differ from those of thousands of other Americans who were bent upon succor and relief and our vivid and compelling impressions of widespread starvation were confirmed by the highest authorities" (83). Naturally, survivors looked to the recently created League of Nations. As Addams explains,

Could it have considered this multitude of starving children as its concrete problem, feeding them might have been the quickest way to restore the divided European nations to human and kindly relationship. Was all this devastation the result of hypernationalism and might not the very recognition of a human obligation irrespective of national boundaries form the natural beginning of better international relationships? (83, 84)

Not all women, however, were as tactful or optimistic. In "Apostrophe to Man," Edna St. Vincent Millay urges, "Detestable race, continue to expunge yourself, die out. / Breed faster, crowd, encroach, sing hymns, build bombing airplanes; / ... / Put death on the market" (89-90).

Given the size of the armies and the advances in technology in World War II, women were far more active; although still not classified as combatants, their roles broadened to include entertainer, commentator, and spy in addition to nurse and reporter. This third section, "World War Again," contains the largest selection of women's war diaries, including those by Elizabeth Vaughan, an American who was imprisoned in the Philippines when the Japanese invaded; Winifred Ellerman (Bryher), who helped smuggle German Jews into Switzerland; and American Mary Lee Settle, who joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Not surprisingly, "The experience of the German death camps produced a new genre of literature," and that, too, is included in this anthology. However, as the writings of Dutch Jew Etty Hillesum, Polish journalist Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, and French activist Charlotte Delbo attest, "Women's camp experiences differed somewhat from men's. Jewish women of childbearing age were especially targeted for annihilation, and there are indications that more women died than men.... Some Holocaust scholars have suggested that women actually coped better than men, forming 'families' even as their own were destroyed or separated from them—sharing food and celebrating holidays" (133). As Nomberg-Przytyk recalls in "Friendly Meetings,"

In Auschwitz we often organized such friendly get-togethers. I remember that for the first few months of my stay here those get-togethers struck me as being indecent. How was it possible that we could sing while the sky above was red with the flames of the crematoria. "How can you joke, dance, and tell stories," I asked, "when we are enveloped in a sea of suffering, pain, and tears?" "You will get used to it. Then you will understand." So said the old prisoners. (220)

The final section, "The Cold War and Beyond," was, according to Sheldon, "the most difficult to compile as much of the writing is only beginning to emerge along with our historical perspective on the events" (xi). Women involved in the Korean and Vietnam wars "demonstrated their consciousness of the wider effects of war and the inadequacy of

purely military explanations for it" (271), often in their writings blaming men, all men, "for carrying out warfare on innocent populations" (272). Particularly powerful, though, are the selections relating to the children in war. In her poem "One Cannot Kill a Baby Twice," Israeli Dahlia Ravikovitch mourns the 1982 slaughter of Palestinian infants in refugee camps: "Go back to the camp, march!" the soldier commanded / The yelling women from Sabra and Shatila. / He had orders to follow. / And the children were already laid in dung puddles / Their mouths wide open / Calm. / Nobody will hurt them anymore. / One cannot kill a baby twice" (326- 327).

Sheldon perhaps best explains the importance of this anthology:

Many of the small wars in the last decade of this century were fought for a country's independence or for the overthrow of a repressive dictatorship. Women were involved at every level of these grassroots uprisings, often playing crucial roles in their success. The accounts they give show pride at being included. However, at a war or revolution's end, men usually reclaim both the power and the credit for what has happened, hence the importance of preserving these accounts and attempting to give these women a role in the rebuilding of their countries. (273)

Her War Story is comprehensive and powerful, offering a women's perspective on what has traditionally been "men's work."

Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory. Lisa Yoneyama. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, xiii + 217 pp., notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00, cloth; \$19.95, paper.

Reviewed by Max Despain, United States Air Force Academy

Lisa Yoneyama takes on the dialectics of memory about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima with all of her academic guns blazing. Addressing the important role memory plays in the post-war reconstruction of Hiroshima and Japan in *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory*, she describes survivors' memories and the impact those memories have had on rebuilding a new Japan. Her work does not address American responsibility or memories except as a barely present periphery in the emotions of some survivors; however, her ultimate lessons about critical vigilance of our own realities and her warning against complacency are important.

The well-known critics of memory theory such as Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, and Theodor Adorno provide the theoretical basis of Yoneyama's argument. Absent from her effort is any mention of Asian theorists on memory, begging the question whether such theorists exist or were not sought out. What is clear is that her discussion of Asian forms of memory is based entirely on European memory theorists' work. Despite this disconnect, Yoneyama artfully addresses memory within her chosen context.

Yoneyama begins with a discussion of the winning design for Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park, a design that is nearly identical to the plan proposed by the same designer for a pre-war "Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia" (1) celebrating Japan's imperialist efforts. The similarity of the two projects underscores Yoneyama's claim that, whether the majority of Japan remembers Hiroshima's atomic bombing as "victimization experienced by the Japanese" or in a "universalistic narrative... [as] an unprecedented event in the history of humanity" (3), these memories are based on forgetting the imperialist role of the prewar Japanese Empire.

The dialectics of memory about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the self-proclaimed city of peace, emerge in Part One, "Cartographies of Memory," as opposing impulses. The first is toward a "brightness" that seeks to cover up all associations with the bombing; the second dwells on the gloomy memories of devastated Hiroshima and retards the city's movement into the future. In Chapter 2, "Memories in

Ruins,” Yoneyama gives the dialectic concrete embodiment in her outline of the community debate over whether to renovate, destroy, or maintain three different structures that remained standing after the bombing. The arguments for destruction or renovation again indicate a need to move forward while the arguments for maintaining the sites claim the move forward requires forgetting the past.

Part Two: “Storytellers,” serves up the testimony of atomic bomb survivors and is perhaps the most interesting part of Yoneyama’s work. She intends the chapters to “contemplate the nature of knowledge produced through [*hibakushas*’ or atomic bomb survivors] storytellings” (86), a knowledge that turns out to be anything but fixed and stable. A large number of *hibakusha*, she reports in Chapter 3, “On Testimonial Practices,” have been reluctant to tell their stories because of discrimination against atomic bomb survivors. Despite this discrimination, however, and their own dismay at “the incommunicability of their experiences,” the survivors were so “disappointed by both visual and written representations of nuclear holocausts” (89) that they felt compelled to tell their stories. The multiple perspectives represented by the narratives in Chapter 4, “Mnemonic Detours,” Yoneyama suggests, compel “audiences to envision the possibility that the suffering and agony of an enormous number of war victims...might have been averted, that they were never inevitable” (135).

The book’s third and final part, “Memory and Positionality” addresses the memories of people outside the dominant Japanese sphere. In Chapter 5, “Ethnic and Colonial Memories,” once again a physical monument crystallizes the problematic role of the Japanese in the events surrounding the bombing. The memorial for Koreans killed by the atomic bomb, Yoneyama argues, reflects the debate over the current status of Koreans choosing to live in Japan. The memorial has been placed outside the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in a seldom-traveled area, and a portion of the controversial inscription outlining Japan’s colonialism in Korea has been blacked over. Says Yoneyama, the way the Japanese government has handled this memorial raises the question of “how the Japanese government should face its responsibilities for colonialism and the war of invasion” and represents “yet another attempt to contain and domesticate some of the many memories that threaten to disrupt the seemingly self-evident knowledge in contemporary Japan about the nation’s past” (154, 176).

Yoneyama’s final chapter, “The Feminization of Memory,” extends

the previous chapter's analysis revealing the links between Japan's marginalized groups and atomic bomb discourse. As was the case with the various memorials discussed earlier in the book, we see that Japanese women, in the aftermath of the bomb, themselves became the battleground for opposing cultural representations. One version saw them as liberated from the "patriarchal authority of the state, from militarism, and from the prewar household system" (188). On the other hand, women activists developed a platform based on their maternal protective instinct and became associated with the ordinary as housewives. Ultimately, Yoneyama argues that despite the tropes of "peace, statehood, motherhood, anti-imperialism, and the quotidian" placed on Japanese women, female support of imperialist activities in prewar Japan as well as their activity in postwar Japan show them to be not merely "[i]nnocent victims of the prewar and wartime imperial system, of masculine militarism, and the postwar U.S. nuclear dominance in the region" (208).

Yoneyama concludes her detailed work with a statement based on Walter Benjamin's historical materialism, saying "we must also explore the promises and alternative historical trajectories that were never realized" (210). The theme of the unrealized permeates her work. She urges us to critically engage our reality to help prevent things like "the ghastly experience of atomic obliteration" (214) from ever taking place. Instead, we can realize the "promise of alternative historical trajectories" through our own vigilance about our present realities.

I do have one criticism for Yoneyama. Despite her detail and thorough research, her high academic prose makes reading the book more difficult than it might be—a flaw she seems to acknowledge when she thanks her Japanese editors for "constantly reminding me of the scholarly responsibility to reach as broad an audience as possible" (x). She needed to take those reminders more to heart.

As I read this book on August 6, 2000, I caught a short sound bite on CNN discussing the Japanese memorialization of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. A mere 55 years after the fact, the event has nearly disappeared from the American consciousness and warrants only cursory treatment on national television. Fortunately, Yoneyama's talented and thorough discussion of the ever-present effects of the bomb's devastation on Japan, particularly Hiroshima, serves to remind us that the aftershock of one U.S. bomb continues to be felt today.

The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present. Michael Paris, Ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000, 267pp. \$52.00 cloth; \$20.00 paper.

Reviewed by D. A. Boxwell, United States Air Force Academy

While the Great War was not the first conflict to be recorded by the motion picture camera (a distinction that belongs to the Boer War and the Spanish-American War), it was the first war, as Michael Paris tells us, in which “cinema was used as an agent of mass persuasion by the governments of the combatant nations” (1). For this reason, this critical anthology is important, for it is the first such book to really attempt to show how combatant nations have, with varying degrees of efficiency and success, developed national film industries as a direct consequence of the War. Paris has rounded up an impressive international roster of film historians to tell the story of the profound interconnections between film, national identity, and the Great War in Britain, France, the U.S., Canada, Australia, Germany, Russia, Austria, and Poland. The contributors focus on both fictional film narratives and documentary films, in some cases showing how the convenient distinction between the two is blurred when representing (and, even, reconstructing) the experience of war on film.

Reading these twelve essays in sequence, one is struck by how combatant nations’ political and military elites had to be educated about how effective the new medium could be; for most, it wasn’t self-evident. One of the very best contributors, Nicholas Reeves, tells the story of how it wasn’t until the middle of 1916, almost halfway through the war, before the British War Office made an effective propaganda film. Reeves adduces, very plausibly, two main reasons for this unwillingness to exploit the power of moving visual imagery: class snobbery regarding the popular medium and, once the Brits were aware of the power of the medium, fear of what it could show. Thus, the British government in August 1914 put in place strict censorship constraints, and it took several years for filmmakers to learn how to work within them. But once the government realized how effective the medium could be, 240 propaganda films were released, with an additional 152 issues of official newsreel. The Italian film industry, by contrast, independently jumped on the bandwagon almost immediately when the country entered the war in 1915, releasing fictional film romances within 3 months. Giovanni Nobili Vitelleschi’s essay reveals how the industry benefited from a lack

of official interference, popularly expressing the mass audience's desire for fantasies of team spirit and undying patriotism until the end of the war. To tell another contrasting story, in Russia, the 1917 Revolution put an end to Czar Nicholas's efficient deployment of the film industry for patriotic purposes (Denise Youngblood informs us that nearly half of the 103 Russian feature films produced in the latter half of 1914 concerned the war).

The wide-ranging scope of Paris's anthology is useful in demonstrating that while literature influenced the educated elite to "imagine" the First World War after 1918 in certain specific ways, it was the medium of film that influenced the masses. And, as Paris points out in his introduction, "film continues to provide the dominant popular national interpretation of that War for most people" (2). The essays centered on post-1918 fictional film narratives effectively show the War is revisited time and again to forge national identities, but, again, with varying degrees of engagement. The Soviet cinema for 60 years, with very few exceptions, as Youngblood shows, almost completely ignored the Great War as an occasion for fictional narratives. By contrast, Poland's film industry has produced almost 40 feature films thematically centered on the war. An especially interesting essay is Ina Bertrand's critical analysis of the construction of the nationalist myth of the "digger" combatant, a hardy and brash hero who symbolizes the Australian national spirit. Paris's anthology, in sum, succeeds in telling the story of how war and technology gave birth to national cinema, which of all forms of storytelling and representation, most changed how the world imagined war.

What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam? Bill McCloud. 1989. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000, xviii+ 155 pp., \$12.95, paper.

Reviewed by Ross Gresham, United States Air Force Academy

What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam? is a collection of 128 answers to that question by various figures involved with the war. Bill McCloud, a teacher of eighth grade social studies in Pryor, Oklahoma, and a Vietnam veteran himself, originally began to assemble these responses in order to teach his class about the war. His hand-written inquiries elicited replies from a surprisingly illustrious list of people: William Bennett, Robert McNamara, Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter, John McCain, William Westmoreland, Kurt Vonnegut, Allan Ginsberg, George Bush . . . name after famous name. Alongside these are responses from veterans, war protestors, refugees, parents of soldiers who died, and concerned citizens.

The answers vary in length from a short paragraph to several pages. Many of them read like an eighth grade history textbook, laying out historical generalizations. William Colby: "We insisted for many years in fighting a soldier's war, while our enemy was fighting a people's war." This sounds like something junior high students might have to memorize and parrot back on a test. A limitation to these responses is that they *tell* junior high school students what is true, rather than trying to *prove* or *demonstrate* it. They assume the authority of someone who can tell something to children and have it believed. I'm not sure that eighth graders know who Ken Kesey is and why they should listen to what he has to say (though McCloud does provide brief, relevant bios before each entry). Most of the letters suggest what McCloud should teach his class, assuming that he will then do the legwork to assemble the actual history.

But what's exciting about this book is that while the individual entries may present a simple line of history, this line is then contradicted twenty pages later. Peter Braestrup, a correspondent of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, writes "The South Vietnamese ally was caught up in a civil war..." Phillip Davidson Jr., "author of *Vietnam At War: The History, 1946-1975*" wants the eighth graders to know "First, the Vietnam War was *not* a civil war, nor a South Vietnamese insurgency." Jack Foisie, "*Los Angeles Times* Bureau Chief, Saigon, 1964-66" writes: "To those who contend that America could have won the conflict by greater

commitment had it not been for a home-front protesters and a disloyal press in Vietnam, nonsense.” G. Gordon Liddy won’t have any of that: “The American press helped the Communists do in the Vietnam War what the Nazi ‘Fifth Column’ could not do in World War II—destroy the morale and fighting spirit of the American home front.” Veteran and author Larry Heinemann: “...there is nowadays circulating the oddly revised notion that the United States could have won the war. Where did this notion come from?” One answer would be Admiral Stockdale: “First, we lost it. Second, we could have won it easily if from the start we had fought the real enemy.”

There is no moderator to pair these contradictory views, to mediate between them, or even to keep the writers on topic. The letters don’t enter into conversation with each other. Country Joe McDonald follows John McCain alphabetically. Imagine an eighth grader curious about the nobility of the United States’ motives for entering the war. He or she skips through the book and must negotiate between Allen Ginsberg’s claim that “Vietnam was a schizokarmic mistake”; Timothy Leary (identified in his bio as a “Producer of psychedelic celebrations”): “It was a disastrous, insane, imperial invasion of a weirdo Third World country”; and Peter Kann, of the *Wall Street Journal*, “...America’s motives in Vietnam were entirely honorable. To help defend a society under attack.” Of course, McCloud intends the book to be used in conjunction with a class, where the instructor could choose entries, introduce them, and provide context. But it is exciting to imagine a youngster trying to wrestle with these disparate views on his or her own.

McCloud must be a great teacher. Even to thirteen-year olds, history should be taught as it is here, with many voices. Instead of memorizing an answer for a test, the student should decide upon an answer after entertaining different points of view. So while individual entries may have their limitations, the collection itself serves as a primary source for a point that David Dellinger (“antiwar activist”) articulates: “...it is important to remember that honorable people sincerely differ in their opinions and judgements on such matters.”

War, Technology, and Experience Aboard the USS Monitor. David A. Mindell. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, 224 pp., bibliographical essay, index. \$14.95, paper.

Reviewed by William J. Astore, United States Air Force Academy

Growing up in Brockton, Massachusetts, I remember being fascinated by a painting in city hall that memorialized the duel between the USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia*. Since Brockton's main contribution to the war effort was to shoe the feet of Union soldiers, it was unclear to me why the city fathers chose to memorialize the *Monitor*.

Plumbing the depths of the *Monitor's* meaning and influence is precisely the goal of David A. Mindell's fascinating study, *War, Technology, and Experience Aboard the USS Monitor*. The *Monitor's* meaning, Mindell shows, was not defined primarily by its performance in battle, which was ambiguous; rather, it was negotiated within a complex milieu of interested parties that included naval officers, engineers, entrepreneurs, journalists, various publics, and government leaders.

Mindell recounts the experiences of people who came in contact with the *Monitor*, and how they and other commentators symbolically represented the ironclad. His account includes a close reading of William F. Keeler's letters (Keeler served as assistant paymaster aboard the *Monitor*). In these letters, the *Monitor* emerges as a capricious and dangerous vessel. Except for its turret and pilothouse, the *Monitor* was often completely submerged. Totality of enclosure, in an environment hostile to man, was new to sailors. Poor ventilation meant that temperatures reached 156° F below deck. Fumes from the coal-fired engine made breathing difficult. During combat, the crew faced more danger from their ship than from enemy fire (the *Monitor* proved virtually invulnerable to cannons firing shot). As the crew toiled in their "sweltering prison" (Keeler's description), inglorious death by suffocation was the greatest danger they faced. Crew endurance—rather than steadiness under fire—became the new measure of bravery. Yet old measures endured. In well-selected photographs, Mindell shows that crewmembers posed next to dents in the *Monitor's* armor, thereby asserting they had indeed braved enemy fire.

Like the *Mercury* astronauts depicted in *The Right Stuff*, crewmembers' morale and manly self-image suffered the more they perceived themselves as "Spam in a can." For Keeler, reassurance came with rustling petticoats. Female visitors entranced by the *Monitor* restored his sense

of self. Even after their desultory and ultimately inconclusive campaign on the James River in 1862, crewmembers discovered they had retained their luster in the eyes of dignitaries and their ladies. Indeed, in clambering up and down ship's ladders, ladies revealed (inadvertently?) more than a glimpse of petticoats, to the delight of Keeler and crew.

Maintaining public support, Mindell notes, was as important to the Union as the *Monitor's* combat effectiveness. At Lincoln's urging, the navy pursued a "low-risk" strategy for the *Monitor* as Union forces struggled in the field. Union difficulties encouraged sponsors to tout the *Monitor's* putative victory over the *Virginia* to persuade the navy to fund more monitor-class ironclads. Meanwhile, naval officers extolled its technical virtuosity both to intimidate the Confederacy and to impress foreign observers. An issue left unexplored by Mindell is whether the North exploited images of the *Monitor* to persuade the British that intervention in the war would incur undue risk to the Royal Navy.

Representations of the *Monitor*, Mindell concludes, demonstrated dissonance. Often referred to as a coffin by its beleaguered crew, who knew all-too-well its technical flaws and limitations, the *Monitor* was nonetheless portrayed in public as a miracle weapon. Its iconic status was in part carefully constructed and then safeguarded by its inventor, the naval architect John Ericsson, who attributed technical flaws to crew inexperience.

Ericsson had dissenters. Mindell revises conventional narratives that depict naval officers as purblind or hidebound Horatio Nelsons fighting a futile rearguard action against visionary inventors. In fact the "steam generation" of U.S. naval officers supported ironclads and other innovations. Yet it was not obvious which of several technical innovations would prove effective in combat. New machinery, moreover, undermined traditional naval practices while introducing disturbingly new forms of expertise.

Ericsson, Mindell shows, promoted a vision of naval warfare in which machines would supplant sailors, and engineering skill would obviate seamanship and warriors' gallantry. Visionary Ericsson was, but he was also strong-willed, close-minded, and arrogant. By insisting that engineering calculations outweighed first-hand experience at sea, he alienated even those naval officers who sympathized with mechanical expertise and technical knowledge. Small wonder he failed to create an infrastructure within the navy that would sustain the ironclad experiment.

Foreshadowing the postbellum navy's conservatism were ruminations

penned by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. With the *Monitor*, Hawthorne wrote, "All the pomp and splendor of naval warfare are gone by." Melville agreed, writing that sailors were becoming operatives of machines, and sea warfare a passionless struggle between engineers and their creations. Some naval officers doubtless agreed with Hawthorne's description of the *Monitor* as ugly, suspicious, and devilish. Officers with aristocratic pretensions could only see their self-image sinking as they became increasingly beholden to bookish engineers.

Towards the end of his stimulating book, Mindell makes suggestive use of Paul Fussell's concept of irony from *The Great War and Modern Memory* (curiously, Fussell's name is misspelled as Fussel or Fusell). The *Monitor* was in fact a harbinger of mass killing with machines that eroded notions of progress and bravery in Western industrialized society. Mindell's analysis here would have profited from John Ellis's *The Social History of the Machine Gun*. Robert O'Connell's *Of Arms and Men* is also missing from an otherwise useful bibliographic essay that concludes the book, as is a discussion of the *Monitor's* impact on naval doctrine along the lines of I.B. Holley's classic *Ideas and Weapons*. But errors and omissions are minor and do not detract from an original and stimulating study that raises serious questions about relations between warriors and their death-dealing machinery.

Singing the New Nation: How Music Shaped the Confederacy, 1861-1865. E. Lawrence Abel. New York: Stackpole Books, 1999, 352 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Ann Reagan, United States Air Force Academy

Since the mid-nineteenth century, music in the United States has been a curious mix of the European classical tradition and popular styles, including the music of immigrants and slaves, folk and concert, and that of many church denominations. The nineteenth century, with its waves of immigration after the 1848 revolutions in Europe, saw the establishment of orchestras and opera houses across the United States and into the western territories. Concomitant with performances of Wagner's music at the newly founded Metropolitan Opera in New York were the beginnings of jazz, resulting in a unique, complex musical life.

Because the United States is a true melting pot, it is often difficult to draw boundaries between art music and folk idioms and categorize varying styles. After all, even the notation and instruments of jazz had their roots in European music, and the growth of jazz was spurred by a surplus of affordable brass instruments left over after the Civil War, while the rhythms of Africa had freely mixed with European harmonies in the church services of slaves.

Within this milieu, there exists a special category which is rather more a study of sociology than of music per se. In *Singing the New Nation: How Music Shaped the Confederacy, 1861-1865*, E. Lawrence Abel provides a remarkably detailed and in-depth study of the music which accompanied troops into battle and comforted those left behind.

The range of music discussed is quite varied, so if ever there were a case of music reflecting the mores and needs of a society, one finds it here. However, the reader must take into consideration one caveat: this is not a typical musicological work. The author is a professor of psychology whose other publications reflect his interest in American history. There are no musical examples, and no theoretical analyses. In fact, the music itself is quite simple, often based on existing tunes, in simple strophic form, with its most interesting attributes being political and sociological.

Abel's study consists of three major parts. The first, predictably, centers on both the familiar and the obscure songs of the South in their various manifestations. Here is the story of "Dixie," a song written by Daniel Decatur Emmett for a minstrel show in 1859. It quickly

became a popular tune throughout America; to the composer's dismay, Jefferson Davis chose it, at his wife's urging, as the national anthem for the Confederacy. Another familiar example, still heard today, is "Maryland, My Maryland," which was called "the lesser Marseillaise." Abel attributes the popularity of this melody to Southerners' juxtaposition of their rebellion with the French Revolution. Especially popular with Louisiana's French citizens, the "Southern Marseillaise" (Armand Blackmar's lyrics) appeared at the outbreak of the war. By 1862, five editions existed, one even decorated with Confederate and French flags, side by side.

Sons of the South awake to glory
 A thousand voices bid you rise,
 Your children, wives and grandsires hoary;
 Gaze on you now with trusting eyes
 Gaze on you now with trusting eyes,

March on! March on!
 All hearts resolved on victory or death,
 March on! March on!
 All hearts resolved on victory or Death!

Abel also points out that Northern songs did not emphasize brotherhood and country in the same way. Southerners tended to think of the Confederacy as a Mother- or Fatherland, and according to the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Southerners were descended from "persons belonging to the blood and race of the reigning family [in Great Britain], belonging to the race of Cavaliers." Northerners, in contrast, descended from Britons and Saxons defeated by Norman the Conqueror in 1066. Many songs, therefore, extol the honor of Southern gentlemen and the virtues of Southern women. Texts proclaim the relationship between the upper classes and society, their version of courtly behavior, and how their sense of history (and bloodlines) helped fuel the sentiments of the Confederacy. Clearly, they had the sole purpose of defending the status quo, and justifying the continuation of slavery. The "Southerners' Chant of Defiance" is a fine example of such sentiments:

You have no blood such as ours
 For the shedding;

In the veins of Cavaliers
 Was its heading
 You have no such stately men
 In your abolition den.

Not all lyrics were concerned with glory and sacrifice; some clearly intended to perpetuate the notion of racial inferiority. The so-called "Southern Song," published by an anonymous author, went as follows:

To a husband who quietly submits
 To the negro equality sway,
 The true Southern girl will not barter
 Her heart and affections away.

We girls are all for a Union,
 Where a marked distinction is laid
 Between the rights of the mistress,
 And those of the kinky-haired maid.

In the second major part of his book, Abel thoroughly explores the music of the war and the various compositions which had a distinct military purpose: to march, to rise in the morning, to raise morale, enhance camaraderie, or even to entertain. He points out that many of the troops were young, even teenaged, which made the music an even more important aspect of their lives.

Robert E. Lee once proclaimed, "I don't believe we can have an army without music," so it is not surprising that brass bands added to the pageantry of parades and marching in review. Officers even offered bonuses or supplements to talented musicians, urging them to join their units. Patriotic music heralded the entry of victorious troops (on both sides) as they marched into defeated towns. Foreign dignitaries and civilians were impressed; some parades were nothing short of spectacular, including generals at the head, followed by staff officers, with colonels and majors marching behind them. And, when the exhausted soldiers marched to Gettysburg, General Robert Emmett Rhodes ordered that music be played to lift their spirits and enable them to go forward. According to one eyewitness, the effect was "magical."

In the final part, Lawrence examines a lesser-known facet of this history: the music publishers of the Confederacy. Biographical infor-

mation on important publishers in numerous cities is included, as well as details on the lithographic industry and the problems publishers faced. One was the demand for paper, and another was finding engravers and printers. Most citizens in the trade worked for the government, where wages were higher than in private industry and where there was exemption from military service. Confederate music publishers, therefore, sometimes resorted to sailing blockade-runners to England and Scotland to find the expertise they needed.

Readers will also find two thorough appendices; the first includes a complete listing of all the regimental and brigade bands taken from diaries, memoirs, and regimental histories. A second comprehensive appendix lists the imprints of southern music publishers, complete with histories, ownership, locations, and important compositions published. Finally, there is a bibliography, which by itself is a fine contribution to the literature. These alone make the book an invaluable resource for those researching this topic, recommended to anyone interested in music and social history.

The Medic: Life and Death in the Last Days of World War II.
Leo Litwak. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2001, 240 pp. \$22.95.

Reviewed by Ceclia Morris, Washington, DC

Leo Litwak's timing could scarcely have been worse, for he came of age in the midst of the war that signaled a world gone mad on a scale unparalleled in human history. Drafted in February, 1943, just after completing his first year at the University of Michigan, he was sent to train as a medic in South Carolina. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, he'd majored in literature and now was thrown with a mishmash of American boys that included Southern crackers who despised niggers, Jews, and smart-asses, though not necessarily in that order.

At a comparable age, my own generation and I, some 10 years later, had only to deal with the standard problems of late adolescence and the challenges of a big state university: a far wider range of people than we'd known before, unprecedented freedoms, new responsibilities, and so on. Litwak had to come to terms with terror, betrayal, deceit, and devastating failure, along with death at its most raw and hideous. In short, at a time when most American adolescents are simply growing up, Litwak came face to face with Evil.

Based on his World War II experience, *The Medic* is an intriguing variation on the autobiographical form. It grows from a memoir published in May, 1995, in the *New York Times Magazine's* issue celebrating the 50th anniversary of VE Day, but here he appropriates the standard techniques of fiction.

He dramatizes scenes rather than simply describing them; creates characters who are composites of the men and women he knew then; invents dialogue, merges impressions, modifies, compresses. And he does all this to convey more vividly what he calls "the transforming intensity of war—the shellings, the entrenching, the wounded and dying, the Sauer crossing, marching fire, the sex, the loot, the Paris leave, Marishka [a young Parisian prostitute], the encounter with the Russians, the war's end." Without glorifying or sentimentalizing war, he suggests the excitement a motley collection of men feel while banding together to defeat a true and common enemy.

The result seems to me wholly successful. Litwak is a master of the plain style: his sentences tend to be short, his descriptions spare, his words chosen with a diamond-cutter's precision. If one looked for antecedents, the leaner Hemingway might come to mind—the subject war

and its aftermath, all excrescences pared away. But Litwak is far more interested than his great predecessor in exploring the intricacies of the moral life, along with the cruelties of racism, anti-Semitism, and fascism, so that all through the book the reader finds cameo scenes that reflect yet another aspect of one or another of those hard facts of life.

Early on, for example, he has an exchange with a southerner named Cooper to whom he'd complained about their captain. Cooper told him "to pay no mind to the JB."

"What's a JB?"

"A Jew Bastard."

Lucca [the sergeant] said, "Roth's no Jew. He leads us to mass."

"He looks like an MOT," Cooper said.

I asked Cooper what an MOT was.

"Member of the Tribe."

"What do you mean he looks like an MOT?"

"You know. The nose and the big mouth."

"The captain's no Jew," Lucca said again.

"He might as well be," said Cooper.

Later I asked Lucca if Cooper knew I was a Jew.

"What does that redneck know besides rednecks? Don't worry about the captain, Leo. I'll keep him in line."

"Cooper remained my friend," Litwak adds. "It didn't matter to him when I told him I was a Jew. I bullied him and cursed him but couldn't alter his map of the world where the Jews he didn't know were located at the outermost boundary among the serpents and the dragons."

Nor does *The Medic* offer material for a new "Papa" cult—a cool style that signals a sophisticated nod to intractable cruelty and injustice. For Litwak doesn't offer himself as a romantic figure but, on the contrary, unsparingly probes his own vulnerabilities. In the prologue, for instance, he describes a 1960s experience at the Esalen Institute in southern California, where he agreed to drop the usual journalistic distance—he was there to do a magazine piece for *The New York Times*—and during an encounter workshop found himself howling over the memory of a young German he'd watched his buddies wantonly kill. For more than 20 years he'd blotted out his memories of slaughter, and now he knew that this had stunted him emotionally.

As the book progresses, we see the young Leo hanging out with a guy he knew was a crook and con man because he too "wanted to be carefree and pitiless, able to cross into forbidden territory." While struggling

with a young man's sexual confusion, he shows far more sympathy than most male writers with women's special vulnerability in times of war.

The longest literary work I know that powerfully limns the horrors of war is also the oldest: Homer's *The Iliad*. The shortest is Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est," which ends by warning the reader:

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Bitten as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

Leo Litwak's *The Medic* falls between and stands up handsomely to the competition.

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