

Reviews (Books)

Bren, Paulina.

The Barbizon:

The Hotel That Set Women Free.

New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021.

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Paulina Bren, a historian and author of narrative nonfiction, has received many awards for her writings on communism and multiple grants for her dedicated work in the field of humanities. She obtained a Ph.D. in History from New York University, a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan, and a master's from the University of Washington. She teaches international, gender, and media studies at Vassar College and is the director of the Women, Feminist, and Queer Studies Program.

The Barbizon consists of an introduction and nine chapters; each chapter progresses through the historiography of society and the Barbizon Hotel. Paulina Bren also uses famous women as timeline markers for the Barbizon, with the first chapter featuring Molly Brown, who was a Titanic survivor, and the last person of interest being Sylvia Plath. In this narrative framework, each woman serves as a window into a specific era in New York's history, providing insights into the prevailing ideologies of the time. For example, Molly Brown embodies the traditional values of the Edwardian period, which starkly contrasts with the liberated spirits of the flappers and the struggles of the Great Depression. Similarly, Bren uses Sylvia Plath to address the cultural atmosphere and contradictions of the 1950s, the process of magazine edits, the pressures depicted in *The Bell Jar*, and the experience of lone women navigating society. Through this storytelling approach, a new historiography emerges, offering readers a familiar yet nuanced understanding of the historical periods of New York.

Taking center stage in an exhilarating and prolific tale of women's liberation is the Barbizon Hotel at 140 East Sixty-Third Street. Completed in Manhattan in February 1928, it was built exclusively for women during a time when men dominated the landscape of privilege, the workforce, and human rights. The Barbizon came to fruition at the hands of William H. Silk, who also built the Allerton House for Women. His intention for the Barbizon was to appeal to the dreamers, the women who left their small towns for the blinding lights and the glamor of New York City.

While the hotel was Romanesque and Gothic in its architecture and detailing, it was the romantic Italian style that soothed women and made the Barbizon feel like home. In addition to the architecture, the Barbizon catered to every need of its long-term guests. There were shops, recital rooms, a dry-cleaning facility, a pharmacy, a hosiery store, and other amenities. The rate of rooms started at ten dollars and included a radio, a bed, a desk, an armchair, a floor lamp, and floral bedding. To many, this may seem necessity-based, but the women who resided at the Barbizon dreamed of nothing more.

The Barbizon catered to attractive white women who wanted to call the Upper East Side home. Silk had visions of its prospective inhabitants being physicians, lecturers, politicians, decorators, and much more. Notable women at the Barbizon included the likes of Molly Brown, Sylvia Plath, Katherine Gibbs, and Joan Didion.

Ms. Mae Sibley was the visionary behind the front desk as well as the assistant manager and gatekeeper of the Barbizon. She was compared to a hawk; nothing got past her, and no information got out without her seeing it first. She had an age-based grading scale for potential residents of the Barbizon: *As* were women under twenty-eight, *Bs* represented women between twenty-eight and thirty-eight, and *Cs* indicated women exceeding thirty-eight. She looked for presentable white women in their Sunday best, along with recommendations that attested to their upstanding character. Sibley was primarily concerned with the hotel's exclusivity, watching over these young women and hushing media attention.

In the first chapter, "Building the Barbizon," Paulina Bren describes the people and the remarkable origins of this hotel. Bren begins with the story of the "Unsinkable Molly Brown," whose time at the Barbizon began in 1931, years after her miraculous survival of the sinking of the Titanic. Both she and the ideals of the "new woman" floated haphazardly around the hotel and among its first residents. The "new woman" is a concept Bren uses to describe the changing image of women and their role in society. A "new woman" expressed her interest in being more than someone's mother and someone's wife. However, it is imperative to note that the "new woman" ideal only applied to middle- or upper-class, affluent, and white women. This concept combats many preconceived ideas of women in the early twentieth century. As the author defines these changing ideals of women, Bren relies on the historiography of Manhattan to depict the relevance of the Barbizon. Flappers were a facet of the "new woman" ideology, and the first chapter describes the interconnectivity between flappers and traditional values through Molly Brown. Bren leans into this framework by describing the New York prohibition scene, the Great Depression, and World War I.

Bren also mentions Katharine Gibbs, whose invaluable contributions were pivotal to the Barbizon's foundation. Gibbs was a widow with two sons and wanted to create a better life for herself. She founded the Katharine Gibbs School for Secretarial and Executive Training for Educated Women at Brown University. This school taught typing, shorthand, and business classes. As her school expanded, she looked to New York for new opportunities and found the Barbizon. She opened her first classrooms on Park Avenue in New York and utilized three floors of the Barbizon as dormitories. Katharine's newfound excitement for New York died as quickly as it started when the stock market crashed in 1929.

Chapters two and three cover the eras of the Great Depression and World War II. Both events changed perceptions of womanhood and the roles of women in society. In chapter two, Bren continues the narrative of Katharine Gibbs until her death in 1934, using her time at the hotel to illustrate how the Great Depression affected the Barbizon. The Barbizon's business plummeted during the Great

Depression. About one-third of New Yorkers were now unemployed. The Barbizon was foreclosed by Chase Bank and sold for \$460,000 to Lawrence B. Elliman, a shareholder in the Martha Washington Hotel, which was another women-only hotel. With the devastation of the Great Depression, seventy-five thousand women were homeless in New York. Many resorted back to the role of caretaker or turned to sex work to support themselves and their families.

Chapter three follows Betsy Talbot Blackwell, editor-in-chief of *Mademoiselle* magazine. In 1937, she was invited to revamp the magazine for younger generations, and that is exactly what she did. Her magazine provided accessible advice and fashion, focusing on American designers that were relatable to *Mademoiselles* audience. In addition, she created guest editor programs for young women, and those selected would board at the Barbizon. Blackwell directed every woman to the Barbizon; it was a trusted establishment that she held dear.

During World War II, Nanette Emery was selected to write for *Mademoiselle* through the summer guest editorship college program. This young woman was determined to make a difference with her writing at Bryn Mawr College. She held a position on *Mademoiselle's* college board and reported everything she saw, heard, read, and felt about her time as a student at Bryn Mawr. As World War II progressed, so too did Betsy Blackwell's *Mademoiselle* and the Barbizon Hotel. During the Cold War era, employees at *Mademoiselle* engaged in numerous political and social discussions. As American imagery evolved, the magazine began to incorporate and promote these changes.

Bren then continues to provide readers with different narratives of women from *Mademoiselle* and their connection to the Barbizon Hotel, capturing the varied experiences, backgrounds, and futures of women in the 1950s and reflecting the diverse nature of womanhood during the era. In chapter four, Bren mentions Grace Kelly and her friends at the Barbizon, examining how friendship was encouraged at the Barbizon; fundamentally, no woman was meant to feel alone. That is not to say it did not happen; "lone women" were present at the Barbizon and their fates were often hushed by Ms. Sibley.

Sylvia Plath's and Joan Didion's sections are split into the summers they boarded at the Barbizon. Plath was hired as a guest editor for *Mademoiselle* in the summer of 1953 and stayed at the Barbizon Hotel. While there, she wrote *The Bell Jar*. Plath intended to live boldly in New York City: she was fashionable, immersed in work, and inquisitive about life in New York. Bren notes that it is apparent that Plath lied about her feelings when writing to her family about her experiences at *Mademoiselle*. She craved public outings, writing guest fiction, and experiencing New York as an independent entity. Yet, she worked long hours, was alienated from the opportunities of other women at *Mademoiselle*, and did not have time for connection. New York was life-altering for Sylvia Plath; she would never be the same. She would suffer from psychological episodes and deep depression, which led to her death in 1963.

Joan Didion, also a guest editor at *Mademoiselle*, later became a highly regarded writer and journalist, winning multiple awards. Didion's chapter highlights the evolving opportunities that were presented to women in the 1950s. Her work with *Mademoiselle* eventually led her to her very own office at *Vogue*. Bren credits Didion's confidence to her time in New York, which shaped her and her success.

In the final chapters, Bren explores the theme of the "lone woman" narrative, a phrase used in the halls of the Barbizon to express negative experiences. Just as there was the "new woman" at the beginning of Bren's text, the "lone woman" was its opposition. "Lone women" were the guests who committed suicide, felt self-conscious, and thought of themselves as unwanted. Gael Greene, once a *Mademoiselle* guest editor, was assigned to dissect this narrative. She spoke to residents about their experiences with "lone women" and how they suffered.

Mademoiselle carried high praise because the magazine always had the desire to be "the first." For example, in 1956, Barbara Chase was the first woman of color to be chosen as guest editor at *Mademoiselle* and, consequently, the first African American resident at the Barbizon. *Mademoiselle*, at its core, was concerned with its image and production value. For *Mademoiselle*, Chase was symbolic of the desire to appear progressive and be on the cutting edge of modernity; it was the first magazine to select a woman of color to serve in an editorial capacity. Bren mentions that Chase's actual experiences paralleled those of the lone women; she was not visible. Both narratives suggest the antithesis of the 1950s ideal woman. Bren's use of these narratives demonstrates how women were dehumanized in their attempts to differentiate themselves while still conforming to social norms.

The bankruptcy of New York in 1979 was a pivotal turn for the Barbizon. The Katharine Gibbs School moved out, and residents were not flocking to the Barbizon for shelter anymore. With the decline of Women's Liberation in the 1980s, there was little discussion about women-only spaces, especially when it came to lodgings like hotels. In order to survive in a changing world, the Barbizon Hotel became a co-ed facility on Valentine's Day 1981. As the Barbizon made its way through the 1980s, it faced social and political strife. The Barbizon was continuously refurbished in response to the ever-changing New York City landscape. It finally settled as the Barbizon/63 Condominiums in 2007.

The Barbizon is a historical narrative that meshes lived experiences with New York historiography. Paulina Bren beautifully presents the roles and tribulations of women in a changing society through The Barbizon. I recommend this book to anyone curious about feminist and women's history as well as the history of New York. This historiography has a particular newness and ambition to entertain its audience while presenting them with academic information. Bren's book is a short and comprehensive history that is easily digestible and easy to connect with. Her imaginative nature treats historical analysis as a fresh form of entertainment.

An invisible string ties the women of the Barbizon together. It ties them to the Upper East Side of New York City, and it connects them for eternity. *The Barbizon: The Hotel That Set Women Free* is proof of this connection and defines its importance

to U.S. historiography. From Molly Brown to Grace Kelly, the experience of womanhood was shared in the halls of the Barbizon. The women of the Barbizon checked in with the desire to be seen and remembered, full of the desire to start anew. Paulina Bren made this possible with her new work and provided the opportunity for further elaboration on the immortalized guests of the Barbizon.

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Elkins, Caroline.

Legacy of Violence:

A History of the British Empire.

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God save the King! God save the Queen! Such chants can be heard in the background of any social media short or clip featuring King Charles III or the late Queen Elizabeth II waving at the crowds from their balcony at Buckingham Palace. The British are known for their national pride, especially their love for the royal family. The question arises: What led to this type of pride? When considering the nature of British nationalism, one wonders why Brexit happened. In order to address such questions, one must go back to Britain's dark past of violence and diplomacy. According to Caroline Elkins's new work, *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire*, the British have conducted both violence and diplomacy through a form of "legalized lawlessness," in which violence is used to enforce law and order. Legalized lawlessness was "further entrenched in notions of duty, honor, defense of the empire, and with it, defense of the nation." (142) This defense of the nation came along with "liberal imperialism," which was vaguely used when enforcing law and order through violence. Simply put, violence—for the British—was necessary to control their colonial territories, including India and parts of Africa. It was all to preserve their empire and their monarchy.

Elkins's book targets those with a deep interest in British imperialism and nationalism. Keep in mind that this book can be a bit graphic for the casual reader since it contains themes of violence. It consists of 875 pages, 195 of which are dedicated to the bibliography, notes, and index, and while it is extensive, those with an interest in colonial and imperial history will enjoy this read. The book features fourteen chapters, which are divided into three parts: "An Imperial Nation," "Empire at War," and "Trysts with Destiny." Elkins is a professor of history, African studies, and American studies at Harvard University. She is also a founding director of Harvard's Center for African Studies, and her first book, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (2005), won a Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction. Elkins's research focuses on imperialism, empire,

and violence, particularly in Africa. When it comes to learning about empire and violence, Elkins's book dives deep into why violence was used as justification by the British. Elkins argues that her reason for writing *Legacy of Violence* was to answer questions that were raised in her previous book, *Imperial Reckoning*. *Imperial Reckoning* discusses how the British government used mass internment to subdue the Mau Mau uprisings in Kenya. Using archival records from her research for *Imperial Reckoning* along with new material, Elkins addresses British imperial violence and diplomacy in her new work, *Legacy of Violence*.

Elkins provides a crisp overview of the book, arguing that it is not a book about "constitutional reform, political economy, military policy, or comparative empires." (38) Though these topics are incorporated into the text as they are integral to the British Empire, the book is ultimately a "history of how and why exceptional state-directed violence unfolded across the second empire and how these systems unfolded in the colonies and in Britain." (38) The introduction starts off with a story of Black Lives Matter protesters defacing the statues of Winston Churchill and Edward Colston. According to Elkins, this defacing of British monuments gained national attention as these statues "represented a nation that boasted an imperial pride built on the backs of countless enslaved and colonized people across Britain's empire." (4-5) Thus, these defacings triggered conversations about the dark history of Britain's imperialistic past. Churchill and Colston served as examples of the evolution of modernity in Britain's history. Colston symbolized Britain's colonial past and relationship with slavery. Churchill, meanwhile, symbolized Britain's dark imperial past with violence against the British colonies. Churchill believed that "Global Britain is a soft superpower" and urged his fellow "Britons" to "enact their historically informed destiny." (7) This nationalistic and opportunistic view inspired Britain to carry on with its imperial activities. As a "soft superpower," the British Empire, "acted as an agency for imposing free markets, the rule of law, and incorrupt government on a quarter of the world." (14) Britain believed their global presence to be crucial for maintaining balance and preserving their empire. This led to their use of violence, which they deemed necessary to maintain law and order. A similar sentiment steeped in British nationalism emerged during the 2016 Brexit vote, which "won narrowly and memories of empire played a role." (14) Brexit triggered a nostalgic longing for Britain's imperialist past as a powerful empire. The nostalgia, combined with nationalist sentiments, resonated with many "Britons" who voted to exit the European Union, seeking to forge a new path for the country.

The book's first part, "An Imperial Nation," consists of five chapters detailing India's beginning as a new nation and how this came to unfold through violence. Chapter one starts with the 1756 story of the Black Hole of Calcutta, which saw captured British soldiers dying in inhumane conditions in a dungeon at Fort William, Calcutta. The Bengalis, an Indian ethnic group, were in a bitter battle with the British East India Company and had laid siege to Calcutta. Upon capturing Fort Williams, the Bengali forces imprisoned surviving British soldiers, Indian

sepoys, and civilians overnight in conditions so cramped that people died from suffocation and heat exhaustion. According to Elkins, the story was “exaggerated and internalized in a nationalist narrative.” (38) While British prisoners claimed that over one hundred individuals had died during the night, modern historians estimate the number closer to forty-three. The story was used to justify Britain’s imperial expansion, resulting in the 1757 Battle of Plassey, which “reversed Britain’s defeat and aveng[ed] the prisoners fates.” (38) The battle was led by Robert Clive, who came to be seen as “the founder of [the] empire.” (39) George Milner and John Stuart Mill posited that this use of violence was justified as a form of “liberal imperialism” and necessary to maintain world order through democratic and individual rights. Liberal imperialism was portrayed as a “White Man’s Burden,” a racist view that colonization was justified because it was needed to straighten out the “lawless” inhabitants of the rest of the world.

In five chapters, Elkins delves into intricate details concerning the conflicts in India, including the impeachment trial (1787–1795) of Warren Hastings, spearheaded by Edmund Burke. This trial, aimed at scrutinizing Hastings’s role as governor general of British India, sparked debates regarding Britain’s expanding empire. Burke’s attempt to “paint Hastings as the villain” fueled discussions about corruption in British India. (41) Hastings’s trial was significant as it called into question the morality of imperial expansion and prompted calls for greater accountability in colonial administration, which needed checks and balances put in place. Some argued that Hastings and Clive had laid the foundation for the British Empire, perpetuating histories of violence through coercion. This coercion was present in the Morant Bay Rebellion, the South African Wars, the Irish War of Independence, the Arab Revolts, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in British India. Britain’s violent coercion took various forms, including concentration camps, systemized massacres, and diplomatic maneuvers such as the Balfour Declaration and “White Paper” policies in Palestine. In essence, the British were manipulative and relentless when dealing with those they viewed as unruly adversaries. When World War II came around, it was an opportunity for the British to apply their “pro-British” diplomacy to countries being influenced and attacked by the Axis. (33–240)

Part two, “Empire at War,” contains four chapters. During wartime, especially World War II, the British continued their use of violence, citing it as justified through various means such as propaganda, the torture of prisoners by British intelligence, and the suppression of individuals deemed “lawless” both in their colonies and in Britain itself. Propaganda “was carefully loomed by historians and statesmen, which created a tapestry that wrapped the nation and its loyal subjects in myths of Britain imperial nationalism around the globe.” (287) Propaganda was carefully knitted in the sense of convincing the British that their great nation was in danger and that “lawless” animals such as the Nazis and communists were harming Britain’s empire through their violent tactics. Propaganda took the form of British cinema, board games, and their “daily mail” journalism. Turning once

again to India, Elkins discusses how the people of India engaged in forms of resistance such as the Quit India movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose's guerilla warfare with the Indian National Army. Such efforts, especially Bose's involvement with the Nazis, gave the British justification for allowing their empire to continue through violence. The Cold War and Soviet Scare enabled Britain to continue its imperial activities. Meanwhile, Britishness was questioned through the lens of Blackness by people such as George Padmore, a pan-Africanist who "interrogated the white world system and European imperialism." (294) Britain viewed its colonial endeavors as a "partnership" to protect non-British subjects from Hitler's fascism, which is when Jewish Zionists like David Ben-Gurion came into the picture, providing an excuse for the British to intervene in the Middle East. At the same time, the British were in economic decline and carried on Keynesian-style policies to assure their dominance and, as a form of "imperial resurgence," used "monetary policies to profit from the empire." (367) The British also globalized with their own "empire of cotton" through their expansion of raw materials. Their continued violence assured their nationalist propaganda machine was still running. (249-381)

Part three, "Trysts with Destiny," which contains five chapters and an epilogue, is rather a long wrap-up regarding Britain's violence. Elkins relates how India's 1947 partition embarrassed Churchill since "India was a deeply personal issue that stirred his emotions." (390) It was embarrassing due to the religious conflicts happening in India and the fact that the British did not allow a peaceful transition, thus exhibiting their continued nationalistic sentiments toward the former colony. Part three discusses Britain's imperialism through mandates and the creation of states such as Palestine and those found in parts of Southeast Asia and Africa. The Troubles, Zionist lobbying, Jewish revolts, and Muslim revolts occurred as part of British systemized violence. Back in Britain, systemized violence was present on Bloody Sunday in 1972 when British forces attempted to solve the problem that was the "lawless" Irish. Part three is where Elkins answers her questions regarding violence, as she talks about the Mau Mau uprisings and how the British carried out violence through prison methods. According to Elkins, newly found documents show "a chain of evidence connecting officials to Kenya's systematic violence." (647) When it came to censoring British violence, "there were 8800 files from other former colonies that [were] spirited away during decolonization." (649) And while Britain's mission of "empire" has ended, their sphere of influence continues in the form of political lobbying and "friendships." All in all, British pride remains strong, and their legacy of violence still haunts those formerly colonized by Britain.

Legacy of Violence is an eye-opener for those looking to understand Britain's dark past. It is not recommended to read this book in one sitting due to the vast amount of information regarding its history of violence. If you want to learn more about British violence and imperialism, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* by Sven Beckert is a great start as it details the history of British imperialism and capitalism,

but keep in mind that Beckert's book is also a long read. Overall, Elkins's *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* is a recommended read for those interested in British and World history. It's a long read, so buckle up.

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Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell, and L. Fury.

Run:

Book One.

New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2021.

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Graphic novels tell stories of superheroes with otherworldly powers. *Run: Book One* by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, L. Fury, and Nate Powell tells the story of John Lewis as a superhero for civil rights in the United States. Unlike monographs or documentaries, graphic novels are a combined literary and artistic medium that conveys history, such as the Civil Rights Movement, to a broader audience. John Lewis and Andrew Aydin created this series after the massive success of the graphic novel trilogy *March*, which depicts the journey of Lewis and the goal of passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. *Run* recounts the challenges that arose after the passing of the Voting Rights Act and what led John Lewis to run for office. The author intended to expand the history of civil rights and teach readers an overlooked history. There is a growing market for historical graphic novels, including *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes (2020), *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei (2019), *Crude: A Memoir* by Pablo Fajardo and Sophie Tardy-Joubert (2021), and *Queer as All Get Out: 10 People Who've Inspired Me* by Shelby Criswell (2021).

John Lewis (1940–2020) was an American civil rights activist, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) chairman, and later a Georgia representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is most recognized for leading the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. He has written memoirs, *Walking with the Wind* (1998) and the *March* trilogy, and was the focus of the documentary *John Lewis: Good Trouble* (2020). Lewis passed away in 2020, but he finished most of this graphic novel before his passing. Before becoming an author, Andrew Aydin, too, worked in politics, particularly with Lewis as a director and advisor starting in 2007. Illustrator L. Fury started to make comics in 2015 and has worked on several independent projects. Cartoonist Nate Powell has worked on the *March* trilogy, *Come Again* (2018), and *Two Dead* (2019).

The book begins with John Lewis and protestors confronting the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in front of a Baptist church in Americus, Georgia, in 1965. H. K. Henderson, a deacon and fire chief of Americus, tells the protestors to go away, and each person is arrested. The following panels display the Grand Dragon, Calvin Craig, in a speech that reflects the sentiments of many white supremacists who hated

desegregation. After the new law, there was immediate pushback from white supremacist groups and racist individuals, making civil rights a more challenging task and counteracting the idea that the Voting Rights Act had solved the issue of racism in the United States. The opening panels help the reader understand that the Civil Rights Movement's goal for equality and equity was, and still is, a difficult task. The artwork and words demonstrate the upcoming challenges that Lewis, the SNCC, and the movement will face for the sake of freedom. (1-11)

The enactment of the Voting Rights Act was a challenge for Lowndes County, Alabama. The SNCC's Stokely Carmichael led the efforts for voter registration in Lowndes County. Of the people who could register to vote, eighty percent were Black, yet no person of color registered. Carmichael and other SNCC staff members worked on registering as many Black voters as possible; however, this became a difficult task as federal workers were observing them constantly. Many in the community feared to register, and young people wanted to protest. The SNCC helped the demonstrators, leading to a violent reaction from the white authorities. Incidents like this occurred in different parts of the country, providing evidence counter to the notion that civil rights were accomplished after 1965. Such incidents further illustrate how cemented racism prevailed across the country, especially for Black communities. The violence in Lowndes County also reminds readers how resilient the community was in its fight for civil rights. (23-36)

Following the main narrative's focus on the protagonist, John Lewis then faced another challenge for equality and equity: the Vietnam War. Although the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act is a crucial plot line for the graphic novel, the Vietnam War raised the stakes for Lewis. He was a pacifist and saw that a disproportionate number of draftees were Black men. Many members of the SNCC agreed that the organization had to take a stand against the draft. On January 6, 1966, John Lewis spoke to the press about the draft. Organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League denounced his statement, illustrating how the Vietnam War was a sensitive topic for many civil rights organizations and activists. The war was an unexpected barrier for the movement, as the SNCC denounced it due to the organization's belief that any war is terrible. Yet many took the opportunity to criticize and go against them. (40-66)

As tensions grew with the war in Vietnam and at home, the SNCC started to split between two philosophies: nonviolence and integration on the one hand, militantism and separatism on the other hand. Lewis believed in practicing nonviolence for justice and allowing white people to participate in the efforts for civil rights, whereas other SNCC members, such as Carmichael, believed in separatism, as he considered integration a deceitful form of white supremacy. As more incidents against African Americans occurred and the looming Vietnam War weighed heavily, a division emerged within the organization. Lewis did not like the growing differences and felt it was time for him to leave the SNCC. After a vote to remove Lewis as the chairman of the SNCC, Carmichael became the organization's new leader. Lewis's separation from the organization led him to

give up, as he disliked the growing riots and militant tactics that were becoming more common for the movement. However, he reflected that he would not give up and took another approach: running for office. (84–115)

The graphic novel's opening scene creates an impactful moment for the reader, capturing one's attention with the monochrome artwork and the lettering. The illustrations emphasize John Lewis's barriers as chairman of the SNCC and his reasons for leaving the organization. The stylistic decision to use monochrome artwork distinguishes the villainous characters you see in superhero stories—the racist people who pushed back against desegregation. In scholarly monographs, conveying the severity and brutality of racist organizations or individuals is difficult. The graphic novel makes it easy for the reader to visualize that brutality. The illustrators drew inspiration from visual evidence of those incidents. The sources provided at the end of the book demonstrate the research it took to accomplish this novel. Panels such as the ones featuring the KKK, the police officer who hits a gentleman, and other anti-desegregation activists provide insights into how Lewis felt about them. The stylistic choices help the audience understand Lewis's perspective on his lived experiences. They create an avenue for people to realize that fighting white supremacy is challenging.

The topics of racism, white supremacy, and police brutality that are present throughout the graphic novel continue to be incredibly relevant. After the opening scene, there are significant incidents of police brutality and anti-war sentiments that are highlighted. Lewis and the SNCC heard about the incident in California of a Black man brutally hit by the police. This occurred in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, with California Highway Police Officer Lee Minikus questioning Marquette Frye. The following pages illustrate scenes of the argument between them, resulting in the 1965 Watts Riots. (10–17)

All this creates a form of relevance for the reader. Similar to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 and those before, there is a strained relationship between the Black community and the police force. Breanna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Eric Garner, Elijah McClain, and George Floyd are a few names of Black people killed by the police. These names are displayed on the news and are often used as a reminder for the Black Lives Matter movement of those who have died from police brutality. This form of violence is not a new phenomenon. The graphic novel clarifies that this continues to be a problem in the United States. Unlike *March*, which did not highlight this kind of violence quite as much, *Run* assures the reader that police brutality is ongoing.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 remains a relevant topic too. Recently, multiple state legislatures have passed laws to create barriers to free elections, including restrictive and election interference laws. The graphic novel reminds the audience of the difficulty and danger of registering Black voters. It is not a new fight, but a continuous one. *Run* prompts the reader to remember that the battle for voting rights is an ongoing issue that predominantly affects low-income and various

minority groups. The novel highlights the difficulties of enacting the Voting Rights Act of 1965 but does not mention the expansion of voting laws.

The novel's last third features historical vignettes of different people, the historical context of the panels, and the sources used to create this work. Like historical monographs, the illustrations and dialogue are cited at the end. Most illustrations are based on historical photos, newspapers, videos, John Lewis's personal history, and other written works from various civil rights and governmental organizations. John Lewis's perspective is shared through his lived experiences and multiple sources surrounding them, making this graphic novel a type of memoir. Additionally, it is a source for people who want to learn about the effects of the Voting Rights Act, the SNCC, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Graphic novels certainly have a place in academia. *Maus* by Art Spiegelman (1996) and *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (2004) are nonfiction works that illustrate the horrors of war and offer historical context. *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, and Harmony Becker is a memoir about Takei's experience living in an internment camp during World War II. The *March* trilogy demonstrates why Lewis joined the Civil Rights Movement and his involvement in fighting for civil rights. These historical graphic novels present different stories that some may find complicated or challenging to fully comprehend. *Run* highlights an oftentimes overlooked history through the media of art and literature. Graphic novels display an understanding of the historical context needed for these stories to come to life. *Run* deals with multiple historical events, but Lewis makes it easy for the reader to understand them.

Run: Book One by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, L. Fury, and Nate Powell recounts the story after the march on Selma and the enactment of the Voting Rights Act. It is a graphic novel that deserves academic recognition. Too often, people naïvely assume that the fight for equality, equity, and free elections is a fight that was already won in the 1960s. Lewis and Aydin tell readers that the battle continues. Lewis and so many civil rights activists as superheroes make this history accessible for everyone. *Run: Book One* is worthwhile for anyone interested in American, Black, and civil rights history. Although John Lewis is not here with us anymore, his heroic acts and message for peace continue to live on.

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Oun, Leth, and Joe Samuel Starnes.

A Refugee's American Dream:

From the Killing Fields of Cambodia to the U.S. Secret Service.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2023.

278 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781439923368.

Leth Oun's harrowing survival through the Cambodian genocide of 1975 and his rise to serving in one of America's most selective professions are retold in his captivating autobiography, *A Refugee's American Dream: From the Killing Fields of Cambodia to the U.S. Secret Service*. At only nine years old, Oun, along with his mother Sin Chhoeum and his older sister Dy, were forced to leave their home in Battambang City to flee from the Khmer Rouge, a communist rebel group. Given enough time to pack only clothes and a few food items, Oun and his family became displaced within their own country with no means of escaping. Oun retells the events he and his family endured with vivid detail, including his early childhood, close encounters with death and starvation in the Killing Fields, and his life after finding refuge in America. Leth Oun's story reveals not only the Cambodian refugee experience, but it also serves as a morbid reminder that refugees and displaced people around the world endure such tragedy every day. Oun's book is heart-wrenching at times and victorious at others, which provides a sense of the one-of-a-kind journey he experienced. Divided into four main parts, Leth Oun chronicles his life from its beginning to the present day.

Oun (b. 1966) takes the first chapter to describe his early life in Battambang City, Cambodia. His father, Oun Seth—or “pa” as Oun called him—served in the Cambodian army and was frequently away on deployments, while his mother, Sin Chhoeum, worked as a seamstress from their home. (19) Growing up, Leth and his family lived simply yet happily with a wood-fired clay stove, a small porch attached to the house, and hammocks to sleep in. Leth was surrounded by love from his family and neighbors, which he credits with saving his life during his first few years as a young child. (21) When Oun was five years old, his pa gave him a bicycle: “I thought having a bicycle was the greatest thing a boy could have. It seemed to me as if I owned a fancy car.” (23) Oun also enjoyed going to school and collecting scraps of aluminum to help his family when money and food were short at home. Detailing his early life with such clear memory, Oun envelops the reader and provides a sense that life before the Killing Fields was a time of happiness and simplicity for him and his family. (19–32)

Oun spends the next chapter providing a brief overview of Cambodia's recent history. Ranging from the political events that led to the genocide between 1975 and 1979 to the perspectives of everyday people much like himself, this chapter is refreshing to read and provides a unique historical narrative unlike reading a monograph. History from this point of view paints a picture that is less bureaucratic and more personal. Oun does not spend a great deal of time on this section, which is appreciated, though he provides enough context to Cambodia and the surrounding countries for the reader to understand the how and why

behind the genocide. Led by the infamous Pol Pot, the roots of the Khmer Rouge are revealed to the reader, which sets the scene and provides the backstory for Oun's journey and survival as a refugee. Focusing on the poor and rural peoples of Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge ran propaganda campaigns against the government and convinced the people of Cambodia that the Khmer Rouge would be their savior. This led to the civil war that gripped Cambodia and sent Oun and his family through a multitude of life-or-death experiences. (33-42)

By April 1975, Oun's father had been taken by Khmer Rouge soldiers, and a day later, he and the rest of his family were forced to leave their home. With only one hour to pack their belongings before the Khmer Rouge soldiers returned to kill them, the family gathered what they could and set out on foot with no destination or plan to survive. This chapter marks a shift in Oun's writing style. With precision in describing not only his emotions but also his environment, Oun's writing comes to life in a haunting way. From the small details of petting and playing with his dog Dino to the intense heat of the Cambodian sun, Oun captivates the reader. He also begins to write in dialogue, which caters to a sense of story. Learning these details, one begins to understand the power of trauma and the effects it has on refugees, much like Oun. (42-52)

In part two, Oun recounts his life under the direct control of the Khmer Rouge. Joining other refugees at an abandoned rice factory in Chroy Sdao, Oun and his family were now subjected to extreme manual labor with little to no food or items needed to survive. Separated into groups of men and women, Oun worked on tractors needed for farm work while his mother and sister collected rice out in the paddy fields. Recounting events from hunting rats by moonlight to discovering a mass grave of refugees, Oun provides gruesome details of his experience. Eventually joining his mother and sister in harvesting rice, Oun felt a sense of relief to be back with his family. However, the relief was short-lived, as working in the rice fields was tortuous work. Wading in leech-infested water, Oun harvested rice for twelve hours a day. With the hot sun radiating above him and no resting allowed, Oun's physical health worsened as time went on. Narrowly escaping death at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, the worst of the Killing Fields was eventually over for Oun. Yet, his time as a refugee was far from over. (53-138)

In part three, Oun and his family must survive on the road as refugees. Returning to Battambang City, Oun rejoins his grandparents for safety and comfort. With the news that other Cambodian refugees have set up trading camps near the border of Vietnam, Oun and his mother travel seventy-five miles on foot through minefields, fighting to secure food and other items necessary to survive. After completing these risky travels to the trading camps, Oun's mother decides that their chances at survival and escape may be better if they stay at one of these camps. Thus, Oun and his family find shelter in the border camps and are eventually rescued by the United Nations. Arriving at Khao I Dang, Oun has some semblance of peace, knowing that he has made it to a protected camp. After spending time in refugee camps, Oun is able to attend school again and eventually

takes up teaching classes to other refugees. Hoping that one day he and his family will find refuge in a safe country, they wait out their time in the camps until they hear news that they will be relocated to the United States. (139–194)

Part four chronicles Oun's life after his arrival in the United States. Living in Maryland at the age of seventeen, Oun now must learn to survive in a new capacity – living a life that he had never been prepared for. Knowing just enough English to converse, Oun sets out to gain an education while working multiple jobs to help provide for his family. While the survival of the Killing Fields is far beyond Oun's new life, he still experiences troubles adjusting to America and working his way up to achieving his goal of graduating from college. These chapters cover Oun's life from purchasing his first vehicle to meeting Sophy, his eventual wife. The reader experiences the highs and lows alongside Oun and feels a sense of relief knowing that Oun is achieving his dreams. Working his way up through college and government jobs, Oun's life changes as he is offered the opportunity to work in the Secret Service, a high-profile job tasked with protecting the president of the United States. (195–242)

The tail end of Oun's book retells his journey through the training program of the U.S. Secret Service with as much detail as he can provide. Considering the high-profile nature of the job, Oun can only include so much of his experience. Despite some initial troubles with the training program, Oun exceeds expectations and is granted an opportunity few people will achieve in their lifetime. He ends his book by telling readers about his time escorting President Barack Obama to Cambodia as well as relating the lives of both his mother and sister. From living through the Cambodian genocide to achieving the American Dream, Leth Oun's story as a refugee is an incredible story of survival and success. (243–278)

Leth Oun's book is worth reading not only for those interested in refugee experiences but also for the general reader. Even though the book is centered around the Cambodian refugee crisis, researchers in other refugee crises may find this book useful. Drawing conclusions from Oun's book about the overall refugee experience can provide useful references in other refugee research projects. It also serves as a brilliantly written gateway to the Cambodian refugee crisis itself. Without much background knowledge on this specific part of history, I was able to gain an understanding of the events Cambodians experienced during this time. The general reader will also find this book worth reading, as it offers insights into traumatic experiences and provides a glimpse into the life of a refugee during a crisis and after resettlement. With ongoing refugee crises in the present day, Oun's story is a reminder that empathy, compassion, and understanding are needed and that refugees from all over the world should have their voices heard.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Mitchell Granger of Pine City, Minnesota, earned his B.A. in History (2022) at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He also served as an editor for volume 51 (2024) of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."

Park, Eugene Y.
*Korea:
 A History.*

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 414 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 9781503629844.

Most people associate Korea with K-pop, or with their neighboring countries of Japan and China, or the nuclear issues of North Korea. Many overlook the vast history of Korea and how Korea cultivated its current culture. For those who played games like *Civilization VI* and *Civilization V*, Korea gained an insane advantage for their scientific advancement and unique military weaponry. All of those are grounded in different periods of Korean history. Unfortunately, Korean history is a subject that is not readily available in Western education. The most familiar topic is the Korean War, but Eugene Park introduces a good overview of the vast history of Korean history in this new book, *Korea: A History*. Park is an American historian of East Asia, specifically Korean politics and society from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century. He received his education at UCLA and Harvard, and he completed a postdoc with the Council on East Asian Studies at Yale. This work is among the first English-language comprehensive Korean histories. It serves as great introductory material for those with little knowledge of Korea's recorded history, as Park utilizes different sources to trace its history. One of this book's strengths is how it presents a compelling analysis of Korea's modernization, as that is where Park's expertise lies.

Korea's political history starts with the founding of Kojosŏn in 2333 BCE. With that in mind, Park divides Korean history into four major periods: the classical period, the post-classical period, the early modern era, and the late modern era. Each of the different periods played a vital role in establishing Korean identity. For example, the word "Korea" comes from the first united kingdom under the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392 CE). When traced back further, the name Koryŏ derives from one of the Three Kingdoms (391–676), Koguryŏ. Korea also has some notable feats throughout its history. One of the most underrated military feats of Korea is the Koguryŏ-Sui War (598–614 CE). Following the fall of the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), mainland China was thrown into chaos, with many different kingdoms vying for power until it was unified again under the Sui dynasty (581–618 CE). As the first unified dynasty in China after 400 years, Sui exercised unprecedented military might and civic ingenuity to expand its borders. But the main reason for Sui's short reign were the aggressive campaigns against the Korean kingdom of Koguryŏ that started in 598. The biggest campaign in 612 was such a devastating defeat that China would continue to remember this war as a reason to never underestimate Korea's military prowess ever again.

The division of the book into four parts helps a Western audience understand the flow of Korean history through familiar era names in chronological order. Each of the chapters is further divided into the respective kingdoms, which a Korean audience can easily follow. This provides a unique structure to bridge the gap

between how Western and Korean readers understand the flow of history. Each chapter consists of an overview, the military and political background, the economic developments, and the social stature and mobility of each era.

The book's first part, titled "The Classical Period," covers the first three chapters. Chapter 1 relates the origins of Korean civilization through the establishment of the first mythological kingdom of Kojosŏn in 2333 BCE. (24) It traces the early development of Korean civilizations that would form the core of traditional Korean identity. Chapter 2 covers the fundamentals of Korean history through an era known as the Three Kingdoms era. Interestingly, Park decided to start this era in 391 instead of the traditional date in the first century BCE, but I think that this was the right placement because the traditional start of the Three Kingdoms era covers more than the three kingdoms of Koguryŏ (37 BCE–668 CE), Paekche (18 BCE–660 CE), and Silla (57 BCE–935 CE). By starting the period in 391, the three kingdoms are fully situated as the dominant kingdoms. These three kingdoms would compete with one another for a united Korean kingdom. Park opens the Three Kingdom era with King Kwanggaeto (reign 391–412 CE?) of Koguryŏ leading its golden age. (40) Under his rule, the kingdom of Koguryŏ established independent era names to rival the status of the Chinese emperors. (41) This would eventually lead to a clash with the united Chinese dynasties of the Sui and Tang (618–907 CE) in the seventh century. The Sui dynasty would eventually fall after multiple failed campaigns against Koguryŏ. The most disastrous campaign was in 612, when a Sui force of 300,000 was annihilated at the Battle of Salsu. (47) Chapter 3 covers the Northern and Southern eras, which lasted from 676 until 918. Park decided to utilize a more modern era name, as this era was known as the Unified Silla era. The reason for the change was the recent discovery and historical development of the Northern Kingdom of Parhae (698–926 CE). After the collapse of Koguryŏ in 668, Parhae was established in 698 as the successor state, which is evident in the various diplomatic embassies that were sent to Japan and Tang.

The book's second part, titled "The Post-Classical Period," covers the first united kingdom of Korean history since its founding. In Chapter 4, Park emphasizes the importance of lineage for the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392 CE). Koryŏ traces its lineage back to Koguryŏ from the Three Kingdoms era, which was succeeded by Parhae during the Northern and Southern eras. This was strongly reinforced by the first king of Koryŏ, Taejo (reign 918–943 CE), who planned on a northern expansion to regain the territory of the former Koguryŏ kingdom. Besides lineage legitimacy, Koryŏ finally stabilized as a state after multiple invasions from the northern Khitan kingdom of the Liao dynasty (916–1125 CE) between 993 and 1019. The most decisive victory came in 1018/1019 at the Battle of Kwiju, which opened a period of peaceful trilateral balance of power in East Asia. (93–94) There were frequent clashes with the changing dynasties in the north, but Koryŏ was able to defend their borders against any invading forces. Chapter 5 covers the period of political chaos that plagued Koryŏ with military

dictatorship, invasion, and intervention by the Mongol empire of Yuan (1271–1368 CE), and internal reforms that were stalled by political corruption in the last half of their dynasty. Yet, despite of such setbacks, Koryŏ maintained their identity and cultivated their own unique culture. They were not limited to certain ideologies but adopted the changing times accordingly to survive.

The book's third part takes us into "The Early Modern Era," which was during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1897 CE). Chapter 6 covers the transition from the Koryŏ dynasty to the next dynasty, Chosŏn. The early era of Chosŏn was a defining era with flourishing literature and the establishment of traditions that many would associate with modern-day Korea. One of the primary ideologies that informed Chosŏn was Confucianism, which dictated common household traditions and national practices. It was during this era that Korea produced one of their greatest kings, Sejong (reign 1418–1450 CE). His reign is known for his innovation, as many of the traditional Korean inventions were produced during his reign, including the current Korean alphabet, *hangŭl*. (156) Chapter 7 covers the mid-Chosŏn era, which was plagued by invasions from Japan and the Jurchens from the north. After Chosŏn's golden era, a period of peace saw the deterioration of the government system through political factions that started to split the royal court. With political discord engulfing the kingdom, it was a prime opportunity for foreign powers to invade. The biggest crisis came in 1592, when Japan invaded Chosŏn. Park names this the East Asian War, also known as the Imjin War, which ended in 1598. (170) It left Chosŏn devastated, but before they could even recover, they were invaded two more times in 1627 and 1636–1637 by the newly established kingdom of the Jurchens, which was later renamed as the Qing dynasty (1636–1912 CE), from the north. The rampant political discord and foreign threats stalled the development of Chosŏn. Chapter 8 covers the late Chosŏn era and the last set of reforms. After the devastating invasions from Japan and Qing, Chosŏn reformed and revived under King Yŏngjo (reign 1724–1776 CE) and King Chŏngjo (reign 1776–1800 CE). They stabilized the government and expanded the economy. After those two kings, Chosŏn was met with another era of uncertainty as contact with the West started to threaten their tradition and legacy.

The book's fourth and last part, titled "The Late Modern Era," covers the period of imperial rule from Japan to modern Korea. Chapter 9 starts with the many reforms made by Chosŏn's last king, Kojong (reign 1864–1910 CE). These reforms ultimately failed, and the kingdom was ruled by a modernized Japan, which continued to occupy Korea until the conclusion of World War II. Chapter 10 covers the detailed outlook of the Japanese Occupation (1910–1945 CE). The most notable things in this period were the active independence movements against Japan that became the core of many modern Korean ideologies. Chapter 11 is where many readers will find the familiar establishment of the two Koreas. Park covers the establishment of the complex Korean government and its respective parties. Chapter 12 is really where Park shines, as he breaks down the complicated history of modern Korea, including some North Korean trajectory over the years. Chapter

13 is a more comparative narrative between North and South Korea, as their respective economic status has shifted. South Korea is now more economically flourishing compared to the North. Park's book ends with Chapter 14, covering some of the recent developments up until the last presidency. One of Park's greatest strengths is stringing together the complex political background by reminding the readers of where these economic developments stemmed from. For example, Park mentions the reforms started by President Roh Moo-hyun, which were continued by the recent president, Moon Jae-in. (357)

Park's work on a comprehensive Korean history is invaluable to those unfamiliar with the region. This is not a short book, and rightfully so, as it covers over 5,000 years of history. With the lack of existing records, especially on the early periods of Korean history, Park covers more detailed history in the third part. (23) The Chosŏn dynasty is known as a "Kingdom of Record," as there are abundant sources for historians to research. Park fully utilizes this, as his writing goes into much more detail by the time he covers the Chosŏn dynasty. One thing to keep in mind are the citations. Though Park has studied Korean history thoroughly and mentions which primary sources he used in his writing, the lack of an actual citation makes it difficult to utilize his book in a scholarly study. Another unfortunate thing is that Park fails to highlight some of the key figures in Korean history. He mentions important figures like King Sejong and some prominent battles, but the lack of depth and the impact they made is an omission that is hard to overlook. This, however, does not take away the main emphasis of this book, which is to provide a general overview of Korean history. *Korea: A History* goes far beyond the Korean War and creates a means for Western audiences to understand the country's unique culture and its journey as a sovereign state that has stood the test of time. Not only that, but Korea has participated in crucial areas that have shaped East Asian history, which makes this a great read for those interested in looking beyond the surface of this small but significant nation.

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Pike, David L.

Cold War Space and Culture in the 1960s and 1980s:

The Bunkered Decades.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

279 Pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780192846167.

As the Second World War draws to a close with the deployment of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, citizens of the United States come to grasp not only the horrors of war but also the realization that the world would forever be changed by the cataclysmic destruction wrought by nuclear warfare. David L. Pike's new

monograph, *Cold War Space and Culture in the 1960s and 1980s: The Bunkered Decades*, explores American fascination with nuclear bunkers from a social standpoint. From the early 1950s into the 1960s, American citizens experienced a shift in the type of attention paid to nuclear bunkers. Novels, television shows, and comic books fantasized about life after nuclear war. Later, in the 1980s, at the height of the Cold War's nuclear tensions, American citizens were subjected to government appeals for building and investing in nuclear bunkers. Pike discusses the social climates of these decades, as—in these particular moments in American society—citizens saw an explosion of interest around the newly formed concepts of nuclear warfare. Pike's monograph is extensively researched and leaves no stone unturned as he writes about two uncertain and tantalizing times in recent American history.

David L. Pike, who received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at Columbia University, is a professor in the Department of Literature at American University in Washington, D.C. Including the work reviewed here, he has completed five monographs, his first three being, *Passage through Hell: Modernist Descents, Medieval Underworlds* (1997), *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800–1945* (2005), and *Metropolis on the Styx: The Underworlds of Modern Urban Culture, 1800–2001* (2007). He is anticipating the release of his newest work, *After the End: Cold War Culture and Apocalyptic Imaginations of the Twenty-First Century*, in 2024.

Beginning his exploration of the American fascination surrounding nuclear bunkers and, by extension, nuclear war, Pike opens his book with the Rolling Stones's 1969 song, "Gimme Shelter," a dark song depicting the impending doom of nuclear war, especially concerning the Vietnam War. Pike credits the song with the desperate want of shelter and the rejection of the "unacceptable cost of the shelter culture." (1) In order to address the totality of this song and other popular culture artifacts of the time, Pike takes into account how and why nuclear bunkers and the concept of shelter came to be in the American imagination in the first place. His introduction covers the incessant need for shelter that is experienced from a physiological standpoint. Discussing both vertebrate and invertebrate animals—such as tortoises, shellfish, and a myriad of other animals—and their inherent need for shelter, Pike grounds the need and want of security, comfort, and protection in the most instinctual way for humans and other species. This introduction is useful in understanding the primal needs of shelter and how this would aid in seeking to defend oneself from the unimaginable horrors of nuclear war.

Setting the scene with ease, Pike then follows with a discussion on the bunkers themselves from a social standpoint. With its origins in World War II, the term bunker became the preferred shorthand term for shelter and fortifications. (5) Pike writes that he coined the term "bunker fantasy" to "encompass the imaginary surrounding the nuclear condition and the spaces associated with it in a world in which nuclear weapons and nuclear power exist." (6) The bunker fantasy concept allows Pike to write about the social spaces and ways of thinking that surrounded the early days of nuclear weapons and the American condition. After discussing the surrounding research on nuclear bunkers and the ways his work is situated

within it, Pike addresses the evolution of nuclear bunkers and their place in American society. The first part of his book focuses on early science fiction and fantasy works that had difficulty permeating popular culture around the 1960s. Part two of his book discusses the reignition of interest in nuclear bunkers during the 1980s and the fantasy of the nuclear bunker as played out at America's height in the Cold War with Soviet Russia. (1-34)

Pike starts Part I by addressing the newly developed genre of fiction that focused on nuclear war and post-apocalyptic writing. In 1957, Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* was the only novel on nuclear war that made the annual top-ten list for any year from 1950 until the end of the 1970s. (37) Despite this, nuclear fiction would see an uptick in the 1960s as popular culture became infiltrated with comic books discussing super mutant heroes born out of nuclear and/or chemical experiments, much like Spiderman and the Incredible Hulk, both coming to life in 1962. In the wake of Golden Age superheroes, this new fascination with nuclear writing paved the way for all-out nuclear war and shelter in the American imagination. Pike continues to write that, even though fascination within popular culture was blooming, the actual construction of nuclear bunkers remained rare. The high cost, lack of protection, and "troubling moral aspects" of nuclear warfare remained in American thought during this time. (35-43)

Further exploring the psyche of Americans during the 1960s, Pike discusses the actual imagery and fantasy of the bunker itself. Attempting to strike a balance between femininity and masculinity, the nuclear bunker found itself being sold as a household commodity. Attempts to construct femininity by designers such as Jay Swayze and his 1964 construction of the Underground World Home produced concepts for underground nuclear bunkers as extensions of the home. The underground house, consisting of 12,000 square feet, emulated suburban homes of the 1960s. Complete with concrete shutters for all openings, sleeping quarters, washrooms, artificial lighting to replicate sunlight and moonlight, and a multitude of other features, the nuclear bunker was being established as a place to live and raise a family should nuclear war ever strike the United States. (45) Pike notes that during this time the "nuclear condition had been internalized; the traditional home armored for nuclear war had become a space adequate to nuclear war with domesticity as a decorative feature." (45)

Pike also details the masculine features of nuclear bunkers and nuclear warfare. Harkening back to the 1950s, Pike discusses the literature of the time and its effects on the male perception of nuclear culture. Phillip K. Dick's 1955 story "Foster, You're Dead" takes place in the not-so-distant future of the 1970s as a pre-teen boy begs his father to purchase the new top-of-the-line nuclear bunker. Following Dick's story, Pike captures the desperate need of the boy and his father to secure shelter from the impending doom of nuclear bombs. Later in the same chapter, Pike discusses John Cheever's 1961 "The Brigadier and the Golf Widow," which sees a family torn apart by the incessant need for shelter. In analyzing the literature of the time, Pike situates the fantasies of the nuclear bunker well within

the American psyche. He writes further about early depictions of nuclear warfare in films such as Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 *The Birds*, which depicts a family sheltering from avian attacks, akin to sheltering from nuclear warfare. Not only was the nuclear bunker being discussed in literature and science fiction, but it was also being sold as a home necessity of the future, regardless of whether it would be of utmost importance. (45–70)

Continuing his discussion of 1960s depictions of the nuclear bunker, Pike focuses his attention on the nuclear bunker as a cave shelter. This draws on man's inherent need for shelter and the animalistic nature of modern man. Novels such as Robert Heinlein's *Farnhams Freehold* (1964) give readers a look into subterranean living in the new age of nuclear bombs and missiles. Heinlein chronicles the survival of nuclear warfare in the underground bunker and how the newly developed underground space will aid humans to progress with life after the fall of nuclear bombs. Other depictions of American society are showcased by novelist George H. Smith's *The Coming of the Rats* (1961), which follows the fictional character Steve as he triumphantly saves his female love interests from rats that have undergone mutation in the city sewers of Los Angeles after a nuclear event. Much of chapters two and three carry on in this same fashion, as Pike discusses the intricate elements of nuclear fascination in American culture. He later describes the different types of bunkers, such as the private super shelter, in chapter three and the community shelter in chapter four. Chapter five sees a slight departure from this structure, as Pike writes about government super shelters and their construction in the 1960s. Pike's analysis of these bunkers provides a thorough exploration of the social spaces of early nuclear fantasy. (71–142)

Part II takes us into the 1980s and the resurrection of the nuclear bunker for entirely different reasons. In the following four chapters, Pike analyzes the resurgence of nuclear bunkers from a social standpoint. This time, however, the social climate is also impacted by the Reagan administration's nuclear ideology. This decade was engulfed by nuclear threats and the Red Scare of communist Russia. Similar to his approach in Part I, Pike analyzes the literature of the decade as a way to infiltrate the social impacts of the nuclear bunker on the American imagination. Chapter six enters the apocalyptic stage of nuclear fantasization, while chapters seven, eight, and nine discuss three new genres of nuclear fiction: men's action serials, nuclear realism, and feminist science fiction. (143–149)

Covering extensive ground in these chapters, Pike contributes a well-detailed discussion of the 1980s. In chapter six, he discusses the transition from the living conditions of early nuclear war to the full-scale apocalyptic setting after the detonations of nuclear bombs. (151–164) Television movie specials such as ABC's *The Day After* (1983) amassed over 100 million viewers intrigued by life after nuclear devastation. This movie remains the highest-rated television movie in American history. (158) Other cultural artifacts, such as DC superhero comics, highlight a shift from nuclear survival to the complete destruction of Earth and the battle to save humanity from nuclear destruction. In chapter seven (165–190), Pike

introduces men's action fiction, a new genre of nuclear writing that brings forth the perspective of surviving by any means necessary. In James Morrow's 1986 novel *This is the Way the World Ends*, readers in both the 1980s and the present are taken onto a nuclear submarine operated by brave men as they attempt to survive a world that has been ravished by nuclear war. Following the same patterns as the previous chapters, Pike delivers a plethora of literary analysis that explores life from a new social standpoint: nuclear devastation.

Chapters eight and nine read much in the same way as the previous chapters but are situated around nuclear realism and feminist science fiction, respectively. (190–262) Pike covers an exhaustive list of popular culture from the 1980s and does not shy away from the details of his research. In the concluding chapter, Pike draws his overall conclusions and explains why analyzing bunker fantasy has become a gateway into the imagination of Americans living in this newly forged world. (263–279) I would recommend Pike's monograph to researchers diving deep into the world of early American nuclear imaginaries. With no shortage of literature and pop culture references, Pike offers a detailed exploration of the American psyche and nuclear fascination. For general readers, Pike's work may be daunting at first glance. With a multitude of avenues discussed, the book can be hard to digest as a casual read. David Pike's in-depth research into this topic brings light to times of unique American fascination with nuclear warfare, its impacts, and the cost of surviving in such a world that is imaginative yet haunting as the world progresses further in nuclear advancements.

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Proffitt, Aaron P., and Dōhan.
Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism.

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2023.
447 pages. Hardcover. ISBN 9780824893613.

The Pure Land sect is one of the most practiced forms of Buddhism in contemporary Japan. This school originated between the late Heian and early Kamakura periods and continues to play a significant role. Traditional Buddhist historiography has tended to examine Buddhist schools exclusively within their select sects. For example, experts of Zen Buddhism naturally tend to focus on Zen practices and philosophy, while experts of Nichiren Buddhism focus on the same for Nichiren. In *Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism*, Aaron P. Proffitt challenges previous Buddhist scholars by choosing to examine the intersection of two prominent forms of Buddhism, Esoteric and Pure Land. Both of these schools continue to have a strong presence in East Asia, with Pure Land Buddhism having the largest number

of adherents. Proffitt begins this monograph with a discussion of his approach and highlights what sets his work apart from contemporary pieces on Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism, respectively. Where other scholars assert differences, Proffitt identifies commonalities. He does this by centering his analysis on the works of the Japanese scholar-monk Dōhan (1179–1252), who was a contemporary of Shinran, the founder of True Pure Land Buddhism. Aaron Proffitt is a professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Albany where he teaches various courses on East Asian religions, Buddhism, and the academic study of religions.

Dōhan is unique because he followed the Japanese esoteric Buddhist sect known as Shingon, and he also examined the Pure Land Buddhist practices that overlapped with Shingon. The famous Japanese monk Kūkai studied Tantric Buddhist practices during an expedition to study Buddhism in China in 804 and, years later, brought back and founded the first Vajrayana sect of Japanese Buddhism. It is important to note for readers that the words “tantric,” “esoteric,” and “Vajrayana” are all interchangeable and describe the same form of Buddhist practice. Esoteric Buddhism emphasizes vocal mantras, hand symbol mudras, and visual mandalas to evoke enlightenment in the physical world through these set rituals. Proffitt continues at length, discussing the specifics of Shingon Buddhism and Kūkai’s storied founding of the lasting Shingon sect. From here, Proffitt describes Kūkai’s contemporary, Saichō, who also went on an expedition to China and founded a prominent school of Buddhism in Japan. The main difference between the two is that Saichō studied Tendai Buddhism while abroad and brought back the many teachings of this school to Japan.

Both Shingon and Tendai Buddhism were extremely influential during the Heian period (794–1185), as the new Buddhist schools gathered followers from elites and nobles alike. Both religions tended to attract the upper members of society and did not have as many followers among the common people. The school of Tendai Buddhism is so vast that eventually, during the Kamakura period (1185–1333), this prominent school of Buddhism branched off into three major schools. These schools included Zen, which emphasized meditation; Nichiren, which emphasized the absolute authority of the Lotus Sutra; and Pure Land, which emphasized the salvation of Amida’s Western Paradise. Pure Land immediately became popular with the masses for its easy-to-follow practices and saving grace ideology. Proffitt then describes again how Shingon and Pure Land practices tended to stay separated by ideology from the viewpoint of most Buddhist scholars. The works of Dōhan show that Shingon Buddhists also studied and respected the Buddhist existence of the Western Pure Land.

Proffitt does an extraordinary job examining traditional and contemporary Buddhist scholarship and defends his thesis securely. He addresses the viewpoints of different Buddhist philosophies and unites them through their commonalities rather than their differences. Experts in Buddhism will find this book most satisfying, as some specific Buddhist jargon can be hard to follow. This book

invites scholars to reconsider how we examine Buddhist schools of thought and their roles within the societies they influence.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *David Castillo of Garden Grove, California, earned his B.A. in Asian Studies and Japanese (2019) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), and his M.A. in History (2024) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).*

Ramirez, Janina.

Femina:

A New History of the Middle Ages through the Women Written out of It.

Toronto: Hanover Square Press, 2023.

448 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 1335498524.

Popular culture and older medievalist works often feature a male perspective on the Middle Ages. In her new monograph, *Femina: A New History of the Middle Ages Through the Women Written out of It*, Janina Ramirez writes about medieval history from a feminine perspective. She clarifies that the book is not meant to rewrite history but, rather, pivot attention toward women. Her main goal is to show how historical evidence can be used in an inclusive, engaging, and authentic manner that illustrates medieval women as people. Ramirez presents her readers with an interdisciplinary lens about these women while acknowledging how crucial it is to write their often forgotten stories. There are plenty of books with a focus on medieval women and gender, such as *Women's Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* by Emilie Amt (1992), *Medieval Women and Their Objects* by Jenny Adams and Nancy Mason Bradbury (2017), and *Promised Bodies: Time, Language, and Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts* by Patricia Dailey (2013).

Janina Ramirez is a history lecturer at the University of Oxford. She has shared her expertise as a broadcaster, author, and researcher. Her interdisciplinary work illustrates gender studies, medieval history, and cultural history. *Femina* utilizes these themes to understand how to interpret evidence that allows for women's stories to be told. The author establishes each chapter in two ways: themes and chronological order. They maintain a consistent structure, beginning with an object's or site's discovery. Ramirez sets the stage for the location by using spatial history, which invites readers to feel that they are in that location immediately. The evidence is then described in detail as she introduces the protagonist. Ramirez steadily adds more female figures with commentary on gender and sexuality as well. Thus, readers learn about a single woman like Hildegard of Bingen or a group of women like the Vikings. She concludes each chapter with more commentary and reminds readers that women's objects tell history.

Ramirez opens with the story of Emily Davison, a suffragist and medievalist who became a martyr for the British suffrage movement in 1913. Ramirez uses Davison as an avenue for readers to become aware that women are—and have been—interested in the Middle Ages. She then sets the scene how women's stories began to disappear or be ignored. The Reformation becomes a critical component

in the introduction for, according to Ramirez, the Reformation had a profound impact on diminishing the autonomy and authority that women had enjoyed during the Middle Ages. Ramirez showcases evidence of how women have been erased or forgotten by providing more modern examples such as the sexualization of medieval women during the nineteenth century, the practice of overwriting, teaching masculinity with patriotism, and the misappropriation of the Middle Ages. This introduction gives readers a reason to consider women's authority, agency, and autonomy through their belongings.

The first three chapters encompass the early Middle Ages, roughly between the sixth and tenth centuries. Ramirez establishes her analysis through the 2006 discovery of the Loftus Burial Ground in England, which revealed a piece of jewelry and other goods. Discussing briefly the discovery itself, she then transports readers to seventh-century England. The primary evidence she analyzes is the Loftus Jewel, a jewel that provides historical insights into the culture of jeweler workshops, the symbolism behind owning the jewel, and the person wearing it. The storytelling element makes this layered history digestible, but it takes several pages to learn about the protagonists of the chapter: women who participated in the spreading of Christianity. The Loftus Jewel suggests a respected Northumbrian noblewoman, providing Ramirez with an avenue to discuss how women were spiritual and political authority figures. Ramirez offers multiple noblewomen's names: Queen Berth of Kent, Saint Clotilde, and Hild of Whitby. She provides an extensive history of each figure and how jewelry illustrates their respective power. These women's power is conveyed through their role in their contemporaries' conversion to Christianity. Noblewomen were crucial in this process, yet are often underplayed in history books. Ramirez argues that these women shook up the power structures and religious culture in places like Northumbria or the lands of the Franks during the seventh century. (21-57)

The next set of three chapters deals with the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. Ramirez moves to southern France, to *Occitanie*, where the Cathars lived. In 2018, there was an exhibition about this heretic community that discussed respective truths and myths. In prevailing narratives, Cathar women were outlaws and spies. The Church persecuted them, leading to the Albigensian Crusade. Ramirez focuses on how the Cathar sect provided a space for women. The community was appealing due to the spiritual power that was shared between men and women and due to its use of abstinence as a form of bodily autonomy. Catharism focused on the Holy Spirit rather than Jesus, which allowed women to hold spiritual power. Ramirez does not dismiss the misinterpretations of Cathar women. She highlights that those who have written about Catharism disliked the community so much that they referred to Cathar women as concubines. Esclarmonde, Arnaude de Lamothe, and Marquèse de Prouille are the protagonists used by Ramirez to further discuss women's power and influence during the thirteenth century. She shows how medieval women were involved in religious disputes as vigilantes and willing to die for their beliefs. Unlike other chapters that focus on a

singular object or site, Ramirez here relies on various trial records and written work by men. It is a strong contrast, but it demonstrates that names in records have value and allow historians to uncover more gender history. (213–244)

The last set of three chapters illustrates the late fourteenth century, and Margery Kempe is one of the famous medieval women showcased here. Ramirez characterizes Kempe as an entrepreneur due to her guild worker and influencer roles. The *Book of Margery Kempe* was discovered in Chesterfield, England, during the early 1930s. It provides details of ordinary life and of Margery's role as a mystic. Ramirez utilizes this work to provide insights into medieval women's experiences and how people dealt with heresy accusations and trauma. Unlike the previous chapters, which draw examples from wealthy and religious women, Margery's example draws attention to how merchants or ordinary women handled their own lives without the need to read between the lines in evidence made by men. Margery changed careers by becoming a mystic after her businesses had failed. Using Margery as an illustration, Ramirez dismantles stereotypes of medieval women and reveals that women did fight against misogyny. This coincides with the book's overall message that women's belongings provide an in-depth account of medieval women's history. (279–314)

Ramirez concludes the book with examples of working-class and lower-class women. In 2019, a set of bones was found from an African woman who had lived in London. As most of the medieval women discussed in the book are white, this discovery adds to the intersectionality of race and migration. Ramirez uses the location of London to make the educated guess that this individual must have been a working-class woman. The discovery suggests that cities like London were hubs for immigrants. Ramirez's analysis of the African woman thus pertains to themes of racism and migration. The next woman she discusses is a transgender person named Eleanor who appears in the medieval documents of the London Records Office. However, both cases would have deserved a separate chapter rather than being reserved for the conclusion. Ramirez admits that more research needs to be done to lift diverse medieval women's voices out of obscurity. (315–333)

Each chapter relies heavily on the actual discoveries of items, on the historical artifacts themselves, on the spatial history of the protagonists, as well as the interdisciplinary research conducted by various experts. Ramirez's structure allows for the overwhelming amount of evidence to become comprehensive. The endnotes illustrate the large amount of research, from archives to secondary sources, required to make the case. The spatial history of each chapter demonstrates Ramirez's storytelling skills. Chapter four is an excellent example that excels at using different sources: Ramirez here focuses on the Bayeux Tapestry, back on display since 1983. It is a famous tapestry that illustrates the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Ramirez focuses on the female embroiderers and the noblewomen who became patrons. Embroidery was a skill that early medieval women were known for and for which they often played functional roles, as in the case of the Bayeux Tapestry, which had a celebratory role. The culture of female

embroiderers dismantles the stereotype of prudishness that is often tied to medieval Europe. The tapestry shows three women: Aelfgyva, Emma, and Queen Edith. Aelfgyva and Emma are examples of female authority figures, and Ramirez suggests that both are one and the same woman. These women represent sexual liaison or violence, whereas Queen Edith is seen in mourning. Ramirez writes about the queen's high levels of authority and autonomy in England. This history strengthens Ramirez's argument and reassures readers that medieval women had agency. The chapter aptly demonstrates Ramirez's ability to weave and corroborate evidence, making her historical storytelling so effective. (131-168)

As Janina Ramirez admits in her preface, books highlighting medieval women are not new. *Femina* adds refreshing analysis to well-known objects such as the Bayeux Tapestry and introduces new things like materials from Abbess Cynethryth of Berkshire. The use of famous figures and female communities draws attention to diverse backgrounds. There is not enough analysis on trans and working women, but Ramirez tries her best to highlight their stories. I recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in gender and medieval history. Ramirez's storytelling skills capture her readers attention and simply enthrall. Her work counteracts literature that often showcases male perspectives and figures. *Femina: A New History of the Middle Ages through the Women Written out of It* offers readers the assurance that women were never silent in the European Middle Ages. One just needs to look for them.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Mel Vigil of Los Angeles, California, earned their B.A. in History (2019) at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), and their M.A. in Public History (2024) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).*

Renberg, Lynneth Miller.

Women, Dance, and Parish Religion in England, 1300-1640: Negotiating the Steps of Faith.

Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022.

254 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781783277476

In *Women, Dance, and Parish Religion in England, 1300-1640*, Lynneth Miller Renberg explores the transformation of dancers from saints dancing after Christ into sinners dancing with the devil. There was a transformation of dance into sacrilege that started in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and evolved into the sexualization of dance in the English parish, which began in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Dance played an integral role in the lives of medieval and early modern people, where it created and maintained community in English parishes. As theological understandings of sacrilege, sin, and proper holy worship changed, the meaning of dance and gender shifted as well. This book highlights the lives of ordinary men and women regarding the performance of holiness and gender. In addition, Renberg discusses the continuity of patriarchy and the mechanisms by which misogyny became embedded in the church. Miller Renberg

positions dance as a pivotal element in this book, a subject that is often relegated to a minor role within the broader scope of parish life.

Lynneth Miller Renberg is a historian who has published works on religion, gender, performance, and emotion in medieval and early modern Europe. She earned her Ph.D. in medieval history (2018) at Baylor University and is currently an associate professor of European history at Anderson University in South Carolina. Her primary areas of research are Europe in the Middle Ages and the early modern era, as well as nineteenth-century life, which ranges from the Victorian monarchy to Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Renberg has had the privilege of publishing and contributing to scholarly articles about medieval history. Dance has always been an important part of her life. She incorporated dance into her immense admiration for history, which influenced her Ph.D. topic, "Satan Danced in the Person of the Damsel: Dance, Sacrilege, and Gender, 1280–1640." Dance not only influenced her Ph.D., it also led to her first book topic, which highlights dance and religion in medieval and early modern England. Renberg has been deeply passionate about exploring the complexities of dance and how it relates to religion over periods of time.

In "Reforming and Redefining the True Religion," Renberg provides a chronological groundwork that supports the case studies of her following chapters. She intentionally begins her narrative with a broad approach, which will then give her the ability to dive deeper into the case studies outlined later in the text. She highlights continuities in reform from the Fourth Lateran Council through the English Reformations, all the while focusing on both discussions of sacrilege and false religion as well as the structure and function of the parish. Looking through a certain lens of dance, Renberg says that the primary concerns about true worship and creating a truly Christian Europe have remained the same.

Renberg also explores the gendering of sacrilege and how associating dance with it perpetuated the notion of the female body as inherently sacrilegious. She utilizes a case study that centers on a popular medieval sermon tale—the tale of the cursed dancing carolers—which has been told over several centuries. What this tale does is group together female bodies with the sin of sacrilege. Moving further into Renberg's reading, it provides a counterpoint showing sacrilege in the form of sabbath breaking, which remains a concern for early modern sermons. They believed that the sacred place was being disrupted, and the individuals who were doing the disrupting were always women. The combination of women, sin, and sacrilegious dance fostered new narratives, such as witchcraft dances, which tied dancing to the profane. Renberg argues that these chapters connect narrow concerns about dance with larger worries about sacred space, time, bodies, and fear of the profane. What the reader can gather from these chapters is that dance as sacrilege was a foundational concern for late medieval and early modern religious figures that connected to broad changes in theology and practice.

As the narrative continues, chapters four and five concern themselves with sex being layered onto the foundation of sacrilege. Renberg mentions that sexuality

does not intersect with the major theological discussions of either the late medieval or early modern eras. She takes a different approach in these two chapters, solely focusing on case studies instead of the wider theological progression. She goes into depth about the dance of Salome, the young dancing girl from the gospel narratives. The clearest example that Renberg expands on is the transformation and reworking of Salome. This scriptural text remained consistent between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, but there were changing interpretations in glosses and sermons that came from shifting approaches to dance and to women. Renberg concludes that this led to an increasingly gendered representation of the tale of the cursed dancing carolers, which has been mentioned. It was no longer about the sins of both men and women; it was about the sins of women, from sacrilege to sex. Vernacular authors began to connect dance more closely to female bodies. Thus, the sexual potential of those bodies became more important. Not to confuse the reader, but the sexualization of dance took place gradually and has always been a concern. However, it was not until dance became defined as sacrilegious that it became a primary concern. Early modern English sermons connected the narrative of Salome's dance and implicated it as an action facilitating other transgressions. Renberg mentions Thomas Jackson's sermon *An Helpe to the Best Bargaine* as an example of multiple sins connected to a narrative; it directly identifies adultery, false oaths, and murder as sins of the narrative, along with a wanton dancer. Dance constantly appeared near transgressions connected to sin.

In the penultimate chapter, Renberg contends that the perception of dance as sacrilegious and linked to sexuality had already formed a comprehensive theology of gender and dance, where notions of sacrilege and sex were intricately intertwined. She indicates that religious authors treated dancers exclusively as sinful or problematic, with a focus on their bodies and sexuality as indications of their sacrilegious spiritual status. The notion that the devil consorted with not just individual women but all women led to sins being connected to the devil and associating with women. Renberg mentions how dancing and painting "oneself" were defined as a generic female transgression, a transgression that defined the moral character of women both past and present. Compared to early modern sermons, such as those in 1566, dancing women were connected to multiple sins such as vanity, lust, and drunkenness. Renberg highlights the fact that authors believed that women, particularly those who danced, held the power to lead men into great sin. Women were constantly blamed for the sins of men. Virtue was tied to actions, to bodies, and to places. The message that Renberg tries to convey is clear: to have a virtuous society, women needed to stay in their role within the house, and to have a sinful society, women only need to enter the streets or attend a dance. Renberg argues that, by using dance as a lens for closer examination, it becomes very evident that condemning women and their bodies was not an innovation of the early modern era but instead an attribution of agency and a shift between the medieval and early modern eras. Simply by living in a female body, women were subjected to rape, ridicule, and stereotypical characterizations.

Renberg uses dance as a lens to access late medieval and early modern ideas about sex, gender (bodies), and sacrilege. Dance became a gendered action. It was attached to all sorts of sins. Overall, Renberg carefully curates a thought-out book where she traces the diverse ways in which dance transformed. She highlights the progression of dance into a gendered performance and the development of a rhetorical portrayal of female bodies as profane, a theme that recurs throughout the book, specifically in the case of Salome. I would recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in dance and how the interpretation of dance has transformed. This would be a great read for someone interested in learning about the difficulties women faced during the period between 1300 and 1640. Back then, there was a desire to control and confine women's bodies, a notion that is still relevant in the present day. Renberg highlights it all, delving into the portrayal of women's bodies and the idea that they were dancing to their own damnation. She scrutinizes the perception of the female dancing body and explores how women were blamed during the transition as dance became viewed as sacrilege. This focus on bodies, specifically women's bodies, came with a degree of inescapability. Renberg brings up a great question: If holiness was defined by one's body rather than one's actions, what access to holiness could women hope for? Experiences for women within the parish changed dramatically, and patterns of rhetoric, as Renberg highlights, shaped the treatment of women into the modern era. For a similar reading, *Dancing to Transform: How Concert Dance Becomes Religious in American Christianity*, by Emily Wright focuses on the history and importance of dance in forming the American Christian identity.

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Rothera, Evan C.

*Civil Wars and Reconstructions in the Americas:
The United States, Mexico, and Argentina, 1860–1880.*

Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2022. 342 pages. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780807171479.

This monograph focuses on the interconnected civil wars and reconstructions in the United States, Mexico, and Argentina from the 1860s through the 1880s. Rothera uses transnational and comparative methodologies to highlight similarities and differences between the wars and reconstructions. For those interested in Latin American and U.S. history, particularly as it relates to civil wars and conflicts, this book will be of particular interest. For academics, Rothera's text provides valuable insight into a complex historical narrative that reveals the tumultuous forces that shaped Argentina, Mexico, and the United States.

Evan C. Rothera is a historian who has researched and written on topics related to the Americas, particularly in the nineteenth century. Rothera is an assistant history professor at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. He has shown interest in events such as civil wars and reconstructions in various countries. Given the specific mention of his book, which focuses on the United States, Mexico, and Argentina from 1860 to 1880, it is evident he has explored the interconnected histories of these nations during that period.

Rothera's monograph endeavors to shed light on a pivotal era in the history of the Americas by exploring and juxtaposing the civil wars and subsequent reconstruction efforts in three distinct nations. Despite their socio-political contexts, the United States, Mexico, and Argentina encountered internal conflicts during the latter half of the nineteenth century, reshaping their trajectories and national identities. Rothera juxtaposes the American Civil War and the Reconstruction era with the numerous internal conflicts in Mexico and the civil wars in Argentina, illustrating how such profound internal conflicts, born out of social, economic, and political disparities, influenced nation-building governance and societal norms in the post-war periods. The book provides a panoramic view of how civil wars and reconstructions molded the contours of these nations, highlighting their unique challenges, strategies employed in rebuilding, and the long-term ramifications on their societies.

Rothera describes the events of the American Civil War (1861–1865) between the United States and the Confederacy. In the subsequent Reconstruction Era (1865–1877), the nation grappled with the abolition of slavery. It sought to reintegrate the Confederate states, preserving the Union while ensuring rights for newly freed slaves. Rothera explains that, after the war, General Ulysses S. Grant looked south to the border between Texas and Mexico. The U.S. was aware of the French military's activity in Mexico, supporting the Mexican Empire against President Benito Juárez. In response, Grant ordered his trusted General Philip Sheridan to send troops to the border.

Rothera explores Mexico's tumultuous history during the Reform War (1857–1861), which was a civil conflict that pitted Liberals against Conservatives. The war began after the adoption of the 1857 Constitution, which was supported by the Liberals and opposed by the Conservatives. The Liberals, championing a federalist form of governance, sought to diminish the power of the Catholic Church and the military in Mexican politics. At the same time, the Conservatives aimed to maintain a centralized system and the Church's strong influence. The conflict ended with a Liberal victory, leading to significant changes in Mexican society, most notably the separation of church and state. The Second French Intervention in Mexico, which took place between 1861 and 1867, was a military invasion by France, supported initially by Britain and Spain, to establish a pro-European empire in Mexico. Driven by Napoleon III's imperial ambitions and in response to Mexico's refusal to pay foreign debts, the intervention led to the establishment of the short-lived Second Mexican Empire under Emperor

Maximilian I. Resistance by Mexican republicans, led by President Benito Juárez, continued throughout Maximilian's reign. The endeavor ended with the withdrawal of French troops and the execution of Maximilian, reinstating Juárez's leadership and the Mexican Republic.

Rothera then shifts to South America, where the nation of Argentina was embroiled in internal conflicts during this period, notably the Argentine Civil Wars (1814–1880), a series of armed conflicts between unitarian and federalist factions, with the country also facing the challenges of national organization. Argentina had experienced Spanish colonization and later transition to an independent nation as it had been struggling to maintain power in South America. The book mentions key events from 1860 to 1880, when Argentina underwent significant transformations. The 1862 establishment of Bartolomé Mitre as president marked the beginning of more centralized governance, which favored Buenos Aires. This period also saw the end of the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870) against Paraguay, which had significant repercussions for Argentina. By the end of the 1870s, the Conquest of the Desert campaign aimed to expand Argentine territories by displacing Indigenous populations.

Rothera's book describes connections between Europe and the events in the Americas between 1860 and 1880, mainly Europe's economic interests, political interventions, and military and ideological influences. For instance, European powers such as France intervened in Mexico, establishing the Second Mexican Empire under Maximilian I. In the U.S., European states played a role in the Civil War through their potential recognition of the Confederacy and their textile industry's reliance on Southern cotton. In Argentina, European immigration and investment significantly influenced the country's modernization and economic growth during this period. For further reading on transnationalism in the American Civil War, Duncan Campbell and Niels Eichhorn's *The Civil War in the Age of Nationalism* focuses more broadly on the topics analyzed in Rothera's work.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Jeremy Casil of Buena Park, California, earned his A.A. in History (2021) at Cypress College in Cypress, California, and his B.A. in History (2023) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History with a concentration in Public History at CSUF.*

Wilson, Ben.

Metropolis:

A History of the City, Humankind's Greatest Invention.

New York: Anchor Books, 2021.

442 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 9780525436331.

Throughout *Metropolis: A History of the City, Humankind's Greatest Invention*, Ben Wilson takes his readers on a tour of some of the world's most famous megacities, both past and present. What makes *Metropolis* a tantalizing read is that, despite being a nonfiction text, it still appeals to the part of the human brain that craves a

whimsical story with divine characters and breathtaking settings. Books like *Metropolis* allow people with no prior interest in history to explore the past in a more engaging manner. Their presentation style enables readers to immerse themselves in the material, leading to a deeper understanding and experience. Nonfiction works are often stereotyped as boring, but *Metropolis* tramples that stereotype with its captivating style, making it an instant go-to piece of literature.

The genius mind behind *Metropolis* is Ben Wilson. The author is currently under contract with Penguin Random House, which owns the subsidiary Anchor Books, the publishing house that printed *Metropolis*. Wilson received his undergraduate and master's degrees in history at Pembroke College in Cambridge, England, and has written six books. He received the Somerset Maugham Award for his 2009 book *What Price Liberty?*, which focuses on the debates about how to balance liberty and social order through European and American society, with a special focus on British politics. *Empire of the Deep: The Rise and Fall of the British Navy* (2013), which focuses on the story of England as an empire – as well as its culture – and how it managed to become a powerful country with a fierce navy despite only being a tiny island nation, was named a *Sunday Times* bestseller. Wilson has not only authored books but has also written for respectable journals and famous magazines such as *GQ*, *Prospect*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Scotsman*, *The Spectator*, *Men's Health*, *The London Times*, *The Literary Review*, and *The Guardian*. In addition to his work as an author, he is often contacted by television and movie sets to work as a consultant. He has also made radio and television appearances in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States. His knowledge of history shines through all of his work.

Wilson has a deep passion for British history, as is obvious when we look at his past works; however, what makes *Metropolis* stand out when compared to his other books is that much of the history is focused on early civilizations, especially those found in Asia, specifically the Middle East. Wilson sees *Metropolis* as an analysis of civilization and the cultural connective tissues that make cities rise and fall according to how human needs grow and change. What brought about the idea for this book was the 2020 Covid pandemic. Wilson noticed how even through such chaos, densely populated cities still managed to survive and thrive. Throughout the book, he uses a mix of history, mythology, culture, sociology, and psychology to explain why humankind continues to create cities.

Metropolis is broken down into fourteen chapters, all of which build upon what has just been discussed, which makes readers feel like they are immersed in a fictional story; each part helps make sense of the outcome. Each chapter references multiple major cities in the past and present but heavily focuses on one or two examples. When a chapter focuses on two cities, one is usually discussed at the beginning with a few brief inserts regarding other cities. By the second half of the chapter, Wilson usually segues to the second city he plans to discuss in depth. Usually, when two cities are discussed, the author is specifically focusing on one element that both cities share. However, when a chapter only focuses on one city,

Wilson tends to incorporate a lot of that city's culture, be it myths, folklore, music, or food. In chapters centered on a single city, Wilson primarily focuses on that city, although he will reference other cities; however, he consistently returns to the focal city to bring all the various elements together.

The organization of the book is not chronological since Wilson discusses cities that existed in different times in order to compare them. A good example of this is his comparison of the ancient city of Babylon, the biblical city of Babel, and 1800s London when discussing human sexuality, with a clear focus placed on prostitution and the gay community throughout history. While you cannot expect to find a chronologically ordered timeline in *Metropolis*, you can expect that the story will progress according to themes and inventions, whether they be technological or cultural inventions that came about due to city living. Regardless, Wilson details it all in an easy-to-follow manner. Each chapter allows the reader to understand how certain ideas came about and why humanity needed them. A notable example of this is the aqueduct, which is discussed in conjunction with Harappa, the Indus Valley civilization found in modern-day Pakistan. Overall, from afar, the structure of the book may seem like it is all over the place; however, when reading it, you begin to understand why it jumps from different time periods as well as from city to city the way that it does. The structure of *Metropolis* hinges on innovation as opposed to chronological order. It may seem messy, but it helps the reader better absorb the information when grouped together that way.

Metropolis starts out by introducing ideas to the readers, such as how many people head to the city looking for new opportunities and experiences but run from the city at the first sign of danger. Another idea presented by Wilson is how the infrastructure of cities as well as how people living in cities behave have both evolved to survive one another. With this, the author urges us to explore the relationship between infrastructure and humans and how they affect one another. A more negative idea presented is that of cities hurting the environment as their borders begin to expand. China building over mountain ranges as well as American skyscrapers are used as examples when discussing this idea. At the outset of the book, Wilson introduces us to a famous story, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which is one of the oldest surviving works of literature. Throughout *Metropolis*, Wilson makes references to this literary masterpiece. The relationship between Enkidu, a man of nature, and the city of Uruk, which corrupts him, is examined in the first chapter, as Wilson prompts readers to ask themselves if perhaps they are throwing away the essence of what makes them human when they choose to move to a city. A similar idea explored by Wilson throughout this first chapter is that of mental illness being stimulated by city living; this is due to reduced gray matter in the brains of city dwellers as well as city dwellers having difficulty assessing emotions. On a more positive note, Wilson explores the technological advancements city living has brought about, such as the wheel, sila payments, the cylinder seal, and many more. Throughout the book, Wilson explains how empires—and by extension cities—work similarly to animals in that they need to

fill a niche to ensure their survival and have a lack of competition for resources, thereby cutting factors that can take down the city. An interesting idea Wilson explores is the concept of utopias and dystopias. When discussing utopias, Wilson examines Songdo, South Korea, as an example since it is considered a “ubiquitous city” and the closest thing in real life that we have to a true utopia, at least in terms of technology. The author uses Babylon as an example of dystopia and explains that this is only due to the biblical connotations placed on it as a city that wanted to build a tower so tall that they could view more than God.

Wilson does an interesting job of explaining how cities are viewed differently throughout the world. For example, in non-Western civilizations they are seen as a gift from the gods, while in the Western world they are seen as a punishment by the gods, almost as if they are looked down upon and hated. Aside from the innovation and technological advancements brought about by city living, Wilson also discusses how cities have affected the way humans interact with each other. An example he uses is that of public baths in the ancient world and how they were a place where people from all social classes could come together. Wilson compares this to public swimming pools in the 1900s and how, due to racism and classism, these public areas led to a lot of racial and class tension, ultimately resulting in racial and class segregation. Wilson goes beyond discussing technology and architecture in *Metropolis*; he takes the opportunity to discuss the negatives and positives of cities as an invention and how humankind has been involved.

Ben Wilson is an interesting author who makes a lot of creative choices that result in *Metropolis* standing out among other history books. Wilson is exceptionally talented at making the reader feel immersed in his words. When he describes a shopping spree at the ancient Baghdad neighborhood market, you truly feel like you are there. His attention to detail and talent for description are some of the components that can easily lure someone into reading and finishing *Metropolis*. That said, Wilson’s weakness as an author would likely be how he jumps from topic to topic. While he does do a fantastic job at bringing the overarching theme per chapter back to his initial idea, he often jumps from city to city without warning, which can cause serious whiplash for his reader. This can be especially confusing, as sometimes Wilson will not start a new paragraph when turning to discuss a new city; he will just start talking about it halfway through a paragraph. In one sentence, Wilson describes the checkerboard pattern of Greek cities, while the next could easily be about the rivers that connect China and the Indian subcontinent. If you have issues focusing your attention and staying on topic, like me, then the best analogy would be that Wilson’s style of writing is reminiscent of having a conversation with a close friend, by which I mean that you will start the conversation with one initial topic and change the subject multiple times, yet by the end of the conversation you are back to that original topic. That nitpick aside, Wilson is a fantastic writer who has a talent for giving the reader a window into whatever era he is describing; in fact, I would say that this talent, along with how charismatic his writing tends to be, are his greatest strengths as a

writer. Ben Wilson should be given his roses, as he has made a history book that is easy to follow and interesting to read. These are factors that are important since that means *Metropolis* will be of interest to all people, not just those of us with an interest in history. It is important to celebrate nonfiction historical authors such as Wilson, as they aid in spreading valuable insights and information.

As a reader, I was very satisfied with *Metropolis: A History of The City, Humankind's Greatest Invention*. It was a book I could not find myself easily putting down as it was just that interesting. Aside from the compelling writing, it should also be noted that the information provided by Wilson is useful. *Metropolis* includes a refresher for a lot of information I was already aware of, but it also supplies a lot of new information I had not previously encountered. This is a book that is quite easy to read as it does not expect you to have any prior knowledge of history to understand it. Wilson effortlessly guides the reader through all the information presented in *Metropolis*, providing a delightful reading experience. Personally, I enjoyed reading *Metropolis* and would consider it a great piece of literature that everyone should check out at least once.

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