

## Reviews

*King John and the Road to Magna Carta*, by Stephen Church. New York: Basic Books, 2015. 282 pages. \$29.99, cloth.

The caricature of evil Prince John in the Robin Hood stories has long shaped popular and scholarly perceptions concerning England's least liked monarch. Equally, Magna Carta, the great charter of privileges that John conceded to his rebellious barons in 1215, has captured the public imagination as the foundation of Western democracy. Controversial events popularized in the Middle Ages, such as the murder of Arthur of Brittany, continue to reverberate in the modern age and color the king's historical reputation. Indeed, until recently, few historians have portrayed John as anything but a tyrant, while even fewer have questioned the supposedly constitutional motives of the barons. Stephen Church's new biography of John reevaluates the reign of this maligned king, questioning medieval and modern biases to see John and the Magna Carta in thirteenth-century historical context.

Published on the eve of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta, Church's book seeks to introduce John as a human character to educated, lay audiences, as well as undergraduate and advanced high school students. He argues that John, while not a perfect monarch, ruled in ways similar to his royal predecessors—namely, his brother, Richard the Lionhearted, and his father, Henry II. Yet the aforementioned monarchs, unlike John, commanded vast wealth collected from England and continental European territories that permitted these kings to dominate their barons and subjects. John, especially after his inexplicable retreat from Normandy in 1203, and the loss of much of his northwestern French lands at the hands Philip II of France, came to rely ever more on his barons for money and support, while he also increasingly treated them as an exploitable resource instead of partners in leadership. For Church, the abandonment of Normandy set John “on the road to Runnymede and the creation of Magna Carta,” as the king took unprecedented steps in the raising of revenue for winning back his patrimony (p. 119). Seeking baronial money to win back his French lands, John very nearly lost England, but inadvertently fostered constitutional monarchy.

Written more as a narrative account than a historical analysis, Church's book nevertheless draws deeply from the well of Angevin primary sources. Even as

the author occasionally relies on chroniclers, such as Roger of Howden, he more often employs surviving archival sources, including the chancery rolls. These documents—namely, the Close Rolls and the Patent Rolls—offer insights into “the day-to-day correspondence of government,” and even “reveal the king’s very own thoughts” (p. 5). Additionally, Church incorporates previously unpublished charters, such as those enacted by John prior to his ascending the throne, from Nicholas Vincent’s *Angevin Acta Project* at the University of East Anglia.

Through skillful prose and the compelling use of evidence, Church well supports the idea that John occasionally acted with true brilliance. For example, by paying homage to the pope and making England a papal fief, the king “had turned a representative group of barons,” the proponents of the Magna Carta, “into an extremist group of excommunicates with neither the support of the pope nor that of the political community of the realm” (p. 227). Church also underscores John’s political acumen, emphasizing the king’s role in transforming Magna Carta, and its subsequent reissues, from a list of grievances into “a ‘royalist manifesto’,” promoting harmony between the king and the barons, as well as ensuring the very survival of the realm (p. 242).

While Church often depicts John’s life fairly, he on occasion downplays episodes that could potentially undermine his main argument. For instance, the author neglects to mention the massacre of the Evreux garrison in 1194, an event that earned John universal opprobrium. Typographical and editorial issues also crop up frequently enough to muddle Church’s otherwise clear prose. One such instance appears on page 202, where the author has the Poitevin town of Saint-Jean d’Angely as “Saint-Jean d’Andely.” Other small instances occur on pages 42, 231, and elsewhere. As this copy is an advanced uncorrected proof, it is assumed that these issues will be rectified prior to final printing.

Church has provided an interesting and thoroughly readable entry into Plantagenet scholarship. Through subtle analysis, the author has demonstrated that John represented not a caricature of pure evil, but a very real medieval human facing rapidly changing political circumstances, including the resurgence of a powerful French monarchy. Surely, this work will both generate interest from a new generation of scholars and, at the same time, disavow them of a now centuries-laden stereotype concerning England’s least popular king.

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Mark G. Benton Jr.

*The Habsburgs: Dynasty, Culture and Politics*, by Paula Sutter Fichtner. London, United Kingdom: Reaktion Books, 2014. 349 pages. \$39.00, cloth.

If one dates the beginnings of their dynasty to Rudolph I’s (1218-1291) election as German King in 1273, as historians customarily do, the Habsburgs (with the last of their crowned offspring, Emperor Charles I, stepping down only in 1918) ruled over various geographic formations of their holdings in Central and Eastern

Europe for more than six centuries. By the beginning of the twentieth century, they represented one of the oldest dynasties in Europe. Their longtime monopoly over the largely symbolic Emperorship of the Holy Roman German Empire also contributed to the House of Habsburg's overall fame. There are a variety of reasons that enabled this accomplishment. Paula Sutter Fichtner (a well-known scholar of early modern Habsburg history on her own) highlights the Habsburgs' highly successful marital strategies (which enabled them to add more land to their initial possessions), their commitment to and reliance on Catholicism to promote their interests, the paternalistic approach to governing their lands, and their clever use of visual and textual propaganda to solidify their image in the minds and hearts of their subjects.

Instead of focusing only on moments of Habsburg success, Fichtner also discusses the setbacks that the dynasty often suffered. In 1526 and 1683, the Habsburg capital of Vienna was besieged twice by Ottoman armies. The Ottoman threat hang over the Habsburg lands for almost two centuries. During the War for the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), Empress Maria Theresa was forced to give up Silesia, a rich northern province, to her ambitious neighbor, King Frederick II of Prussia. Emperor Francis I of Austria was trounced several times in battle by Napoleon I, being subsequently forced to accept French occupation of Vienna in 1805-1806, and marry off his daughter against his will to the French Emperor in 1809. The 1848 revolutions in Vienna and Budapest deeply challenged the Habsburgs' hold on power. Although their army pacified Bohemia and Austria on its own, the Habsburgs were able to retake Hungary only with Russian military help a year later. In 1866, Austria was again defeated by Prussia, an event that led to the creation of Austria-Hungary (i.e., to the reinvention of the Habsburg monarchy under a federal structure, which gave significant internal autonomy to Hungary).

Throughout the book, Fichtner's narrative of Habsburg successes and failures is enhanced by fine psychological portraits of each ruler. They greatly help to individualize them for a non-specialist reader, who otherwise might get lost in their complex lineage. Her portraits of Rudolph I, Frederick III (1440-1493), Maximilian I (1493-1519), Rudolph II (1576-1612), Leopold I (1658-1705), Maria Theresa (1740-1780), Joseph II (1780-1790), and Francis I (1792-1835), and evaluation of their individual achievements, stand out with their striking acumen. While this is a special strength of the book, the analysis of the history of the dynasty mostly from the perspective of the sovereign's wishes, roles, and specific actions has its own pitfalls. One wonders, for example, why in the author's discussion of Habsburg responses to the rise of Protestantism very little information is given on the nature and content of the latter. Similarly, Fichtner concludes her lengthy discussion of the reign of Joseph II without once mentioning the Enlightenment and the influence that the Emperor's reading of the works of the *philosophes* had both on his mindset and specific policies (the fact that Joseph II's reign is often cited as a case of enlightened despotism is not mentioned either). Such omissions lead to a de-contextualized reading of Habsburg history that emphasizes individual agency at the expense of broader societal developments.

While the author's attempt to provide a history of the different Habsburg rulers in conjunction with the broader forces of history fails on occasion, she is most

successful in creating such a connection in the case of Emperor Franz Joseph's reign (1848-1916). Fichtner's discussion of Franz Joseph's reliance to further the dynasty's interests on Catholicism, the multinational army and bureaucracy, and the ability of primary education to impress and shape the young, is judiciously balanced with an excursus into how the rise of nationalism and ethnic conflict, the progress of secularization, and the dissociation of the monarchy from the artistic movements of its time influenced the overall reception of Habsburg claims over the multi-ethnic and culturally and religiously different lands and societies that made up the empire. Her acknowledgement of these forces makes her discussion of the reasons that led to the fall of the dynasty in the whirlwind unleashed by WWI especially compelling.

While Fichtner's analysis of the history of the Habsburgs is based mostly on her previous publications and a rich corpus of secondary sources, it is to be noted that her discussion of the reasons that led to Franz Ferdinand's assassination in Sarajevo in June 1914 is based on research in relevant primary sources. Her discussion of the erosion of the Habsburgs' image within the context of WWI, and the avatars of the dynasty in literature and public perception after their dethronement in 1918 all the way to the present, are other commendable sections of the book. Together with the ones highlighted earlier, these are strengths that hopefully can make up for a number of major geographical and chronological mistakes that the author makes throughout her text. Given that the narrative requires the familiarity of the reader with Habsburg history, the book would serve well as an assignment in upper-level and graduate courses, but only as a supplement to other readings on the topic.

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*Faithful Bodies: Performing Religion and Race in the Puritan Atlantic*, by Heather Miyano Kopelson. New York: New York University Press, 2014. 416 pages. \$45.00, cloth.

*Faithful Bodies* energetically de-centers people of European descent as the predominant shapers of the early modern Atlantic world. In this study of spirituality, race, and identity, Heather Miyano Kopelson assesses diverse individuals and communities relationally, showing side-by-side how their understandings of bodies and beliefs converged, diverged, and inflected one another. Its case studies span three corners of the puritan Atlantic: the New England colonies of Massachusetts Bay and Rhode Island, and Bermuda. By examining these nodes comparatively, the book probes fundamental questions of order and belonging: Who could be part of the body of Christ, and of the body politic?

Divided into thematic sections—"Defining," "Performing," and "Disciplining"—*Faithful Bodies* revisits how seventeenth-century Atlantic peoples determined membership within religious and social bodies, and how hierarchies evolved

within those groupings. Quakers and Irish Catholics, for example, often seemed to threaten puritan stability with their distinctive worship practices. So, too, did peoples of indigenous and African heritages, who possessed their own longstanding spiritual traditions that appeared “devilish” to puritan neighbors, or otherwise far beyond the bounds of Christian acceptability. Yet as the century proceeded, all of these groups experienced closer contacts. These intimacies resulted in ever more complicated degrees of affiliation, blending, and sometimes incorporation into the puritan “body”—or alternatively, more rigid exclusion from it.

To unfold this multitude of evolving lifeways and worldviews, *Faithful Bodies* pursues an interdisciplinary methodology, drawing upon documents penned by Euro-Americans as well as anthropological and archaeological studies, folklore, material culture, and history of science literature. This range of sources would be instructive for introducing history students to domains of information beyond textual ones. Through these sources, the study recuperates activities and mentalities of actors who rarely appear in historical accountings. While volumes have been dedicated to puritan theology and the male elites who articulated it in manuscripts and print, to take one example, less attention has been paid to the women who undertook the mundane labor of kneading, forming, and baking communion bread. By dwelling on their relationships with sacraments’ tangible qualities, and their variability around the Atlantic (some bakers creatively incorporated New World ingredients like maize and cassava), Kopelson urges more textured accountings of how these women—free, enslaved, indentured—may have derived spiritual meanings from dough beneath their hands (pp. 86-90).

*Faithful Bodies*’ strength lies in its thick descriptions of the everyday lives and sacred practices of heterogeneous populations spanning the puritan Atlantic. It brings an anthropological sensibility to these fine-grained accountings, exploring not only the surface phenomena of how people cooked, ate, worshipped, moved, and pursued intimacy, but also the deeper logics and significances of their conduct. People of the time refrained from overt commentary on many of these meanings, of course. Yet rather than defer to silence, Kopelson assumes a speculative stance to highlight what certain individuals or communities “may have felt,” “may have thought,” and so on. This ruminative quality may try readers’ patience. But it can be a productive narrative technique, particularly for the immense numbers of Atlantic peoples who left behind scant documentary traces. Moreover, this strategy reflects growing interest among certain scholars in posing possibilities to address early modern Atlantic silences: consider Wendy Warren’s querying exploration of sexual violence in Massachusetts Bay Colony, “‘The Cause of Her Grief’: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England” (*Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 [March 2007]).

It is challenging to discern a clear argumentative thread in *Faithful Bodies*, besides the overarching point that disparate communities experienced localized differences in their treatment of “insiders” and “outsiders.” One downside of this rather fugitive argumentation is difficulty perceiving the cumulative effects of European colonization among peoples of indigenous and African descent. Over generations, violence, dispossession, and enslavement intensified or became codified in law, yet by continuously shifting between various colonies,

*Faithful Bodies* masks some of those transformations. The tangled quality of the argumentation and prose may also impede classroom use of the text. Brief selections might be appropriate for upper-level students who already possess basic familiarity with early American history.

Finally, this text may generate discussion about appropriate research practices. Consultations with contemporary Native American descendant communities might have steered Kopelson away from including visual representations of artifacts associated with Native burial sites (Chapter 2). These sensitive items still convey meaning in the twenty-first century, and would not be considered appropriate for reproduction by certain communities and ethnohistorical scholars. In that respect, the powerful ways in which the material world signified to human inhabitants continue to reverberate—a present-day legacy of contested seventeenth-century encounters.

Mount Holyoke College

Christine DeLucia

*The Jew Who Defeated Hitler: Henry Morgenthau Jr., FDR, and How We Won the War*, by Peter Moreira. New York: Prometheus Books, 2014. 348 pages. \$25.00, cloth.

Henry Morgenthau Jr., who served as Secretary of the Treasury in the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1934 to 1945, undoubtedly had a formidable impact on American economic policies from the Great Depression to World War Two and beyond. That being said, he hardly measures up to this book's title, which even the author acknowledges is overstated. Hyperbole aside, *The Jew Who Defeated Hitler* represents a necessary and useful biography of an improbable college drop-out who helped finance New Deal programs, who mobilized American financial resources to defeat the Axis powers in World War II, and who helped shape global financial institutions in the post-war era.

Author Peter Moreira argues that his subject has been largely unappreciated and sets out to demonstrate not only that Morgenthau's contribution to the Allied victory was crucial, but also to correct the widely held view that the Treasury Secretary was a rubber stamp for Roosevelt. Indeed, Morgenthau has received relatively little attention from academia beyond John Morton Blum's condensation of the Morgenthau diaries in *Roosevelt and Morgenthau* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970). But whereas Moreira claims to break new ground by revealing that Morgenthau was not FDR's "yes man," Blum's work more than forty years earlier clearly delineates Morgenthau's disagreements with Roosevelt over numerous issues including tax policies, ideas for retrenchment of relief spending, and over Morgenthau's warning of worsening depression in 1937.

Moreira makes a valuable contribution by presenting a well-researched, detailed, comprehensive, and lucid biography of Morgenthau's rise to power, his efforts to fund New Deal programs, and most significantly, his program of financing the American war effort against Nazi Germany. Specifically, Moreira

reveals Morgenthau's role in championing the Anglo-American partnership on the eve of the U.S. entry into World War II, his critical contribution to the output of wartime aircraft production, and most importantly, his war bonds plan which not only raised some 40 billion dollars, but which also had the effect of forestalling inflation during wartime. The author also presents a fascinating description of how Morgenthau, a secular Jew, gradually transformed to advocate for Jewish causes in World War II, culminating in the creation of the War Refugee Board in 1944 that ultimately rescued up to 200,000 Jewish refugees. While Moreira's description of Morgenthau's plan to de-industrialize and dismember Germany after the war does not add anything new to the historical literature, the author's coverage and analysis of the subject is cogent and persuasive.

Given the title of the book, it is understandable that the focus is on Morgenthau's handling of the wartime economy and his battles with the State Department concerning the victims of Hitler's policies. But instead of *The Jew Who Defeated Hitler*, a more appropriate title might be *The Jew Who Established the New World Economic Order*, in recognition of Morgenthau's work at the Bretton Woods Conference, which established the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and which pegged all international currencies to the dollar, thereby placing the United States at the center of global finance.

Moreira asserts as fact issues that remain subject to debate, such as the guilt of Alger Hiss, and the Nazi production of lampshades made of human skin. Nevertheless, this book can serve as a useful corrective in upper-division U.S. history classes, by highlighting the contributions of a key Roosevelt appointee long overlooked by many historians. As Secretary of the Treasury during America's most critical period in the twentieth century, Henry Morgenthau Jr. was at the center of financing the largest government spending program in history; and while he may not exactly qualify as "the Jew who defeated Hitler," he deserves credit for conceiving financial programs and policies that ultimately contributed to the demise of Nazi Germany in World War II.

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Don Schwartz

*The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s*, by Doug Rossinow. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. 392 pages. \$35.00, cloth.

Historian Doug Rossinow exceeds expectations in his effort to identify and explain how Ronald Reagan and "Reaganism" the movement impacted both the decade of his presidency in the 1980s, as well as how the movement associated with Reagan has impacted American life in the following quarter-century. Reagan's eight years in the White House marked the victory of transformative conservative economic policies at home and a muscular foreign policy abroad. Although the author is never polemical in making his case, he clearly links Reagan's movement with the growing disparity of income among Americans and the demise of the strong economic position of the middle class had established prior to Reagan's



presidency. Students assigned this book will benefit from the clear identification of the major political and economic issues that have divided Americans over the past thirty-five years.

In a sharp departure from half a century of an expanded role for the Federal government, his 1981 inaugural address made clear Reagan's "intention...to curb the size and influence of the Federal government" and to liberate the sleeping giants of American wealth and enterprise (p. 46). Having convinced the electorate to send him to the White House, Reagan and his staff were "highly organized and highly effective" in getting Congress to pass the laws implemented a thoroughly conservative, laissez-faire economic agenda. Significantly large tax cuts were at the core of the change. All taxpayers received some advantage, but the bottom three-quarters of taxpayers received small tax reduction, whereas the wealthy saw an explosion in their savings (p. 65).

Reagan is viewed by the author as a master of the political arts. His success was as an ideologue who understood the realities of political bargaining and knew how to negotiate and when take his gains and move on. An example of his flexibility is seen in the President's latter acceptance of tax increases. Rossinow reminds readers that when Reagan became president, conventional wisdom was that the presidency itself was weakened to the point where the president would have trouble getting anything substantial done. Reagan's adeptness at working well with opposition Democrats allowed him to forge alliances that led to legislation that advanced his economic agenda. He understood that most members of Congress of both parties would vote for politically attractive alternatives, such as voting for tax cuts. Reagan's communication skills in promoting his program with the American public also played a role in his succeeding where other chief executives had failed. Rossinow acknowledges Reagan's role in restoring national confidence (pp. 293-294).

Although seeking radical changes in spending priorities, the President understood that the American public would not accept tampering with the most popular entitlement programs created by liberals—Social Security and Medicare. They were left alone. Military budgeting expanded dramatically. There were losers, such as the 400,000 families of the working poor who lost all welfare benefits, or the million families who lost their food stamps (pp. 59-61). High school students with an interest in American politics and who have the reading and writing capabilities that will serve them well in college or university will gain valuable information as well as enjoy their time with this book.

Carrying the story forward, Rossinow argues that a consequence of Reaganism today is that America has become a "winner-take-more society." From 1946-1976, the average income of the top 1% rose by less than 10%, whereas the bottom 90% increased close to 75%. However, from 1976-2007, the 1% have tripled their income, whereas the bottom 90% increased by 15%. The underlying cause is to be found in the laissez-faire policies implemented in the 1980s (p. 280). Students assigned this book will be provided with explanations of the linking of politics and economics converging to understand the changes and direction of American society.

An interesting element in the book concerns what the author views as the discrepancy between the image that Reagan projected about Americans with



the reality of the nation. The President spoke of a morally upright, conservative Christian American country. In reality, contends Rossinow, the dismantling of the regulatory state unleashed a torrent of corruption, a hedonism that was conservatism's open secret in the realm of culture and values, extremes of rich and poor, and an explosion in the use of cocaine and other illegal drugs fueled by new money at the top (p. 205).

Haynes Johnson, in his 1991 book, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years*, identified 138 Reagan administration personnel who were either convicted, indicted, or officially investigated for corrupt practices, including Reagan's Attorney General and Secretary of Defense. Reagan himself was never implicated, yet his deregulation policies led directly to an ethical quagmire. The president had faith that politicians and business executives would comport themselves with integrity. Yet his creed celebrated individual enrichment. Perhaps the most dramatic example of wide-scale corruption sprang from the deregulation of the Savings and Loan industry. Rolling the dice with their depositor's money, high-risk speculation became rampant on the part of too many financiers running the S&Ls. The consequent crash of these speculative gambits was the massive failure of 1,300 financial institutions. Since the government backs the safety of depositor's money, the American taxpayers wound up paying \$160,000,000 in restitution (pp. 204-205).

Is there a bottom line on the legacy of Reagan and Reaganism? Rossinow concludes that one result is that great damage has been done to the cause of government's ability to assist the less fortunate. Also, government has established itself as a force for leaving inequality in America intact. Reagan and his movement, writes the author, have "reordered the relationships that defines government's essence: whom it taxes, whom it enriches, whom it seeks to protect, and on whom it uses its force. Few leaders or movements in their country's history had secured more" (p. 297).

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John Snetsinger

*The Assassination of Europe, 1918-1942: A Political History*, by Howard M. Sachar. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2015. 461 pages. \$32.95, paper.

Howard M. Sachar's work, *The Assassination of Europe, 1918-1942: A Political History*, gives a unique explanation of Interwar Politics by studying the assassinations of various political figures. His book is part of a larger body of work that examines post-World War I politics, while at the same time, it departs from his works dealing with the history of European Jews. While *The Assassination of Europe* is a creative attempt to explore European Interwar politics through assassination, the result leaves much to be wanting and does not live up to its promise.

In his preface, Sachar paints a picture of Europe in the aftermath of the First World War. He describes Europe as having its image of humanism severely

depleted by the carnage of the Great War. Yet despite its destruction, Sachar argues that European democracy and security could still have survived, had the political will been present among governments and peoples. That was not possible, however, he explains, because the hatreds that ignited the First World War survived: “Germans against Slavs, Roman Catholics against Eastern orthodox, gentiles against Jews, poor against rich, conquerors against conquered.” Thus, the moral leadership that Europeans claimed to have had was eradicated through a series of “political homicides,” as Sachar calls these assassinations. Because of the desperation arising from the chaos of the post-war political order, the governments of the successor states to the toppled Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman, and Romanov empires of central and eastern Europe resorted to the “physical eradication” of their enemies. Sachar includes a wide spectrum of “kings and commoners, civilians and soldiers, military recruits and senior commanders, political legmen and party chairmen, businessmen and academicians, journalists, and *belle lettrist*.” As a result of these assassinations, any chance of democracy in Europe was extinguished, thus leading the way for the rise of totalitarian regimes that would engulf Europe in a larger and more destructive war.

Sachar organizes his book into eleven chapters, with each chapter devoted to one or two historical persons of the Interwar period. The chapter delves into the historical context of the assassination, some background of the person covered, and the events of his or her assassination. The figures he covers are Rosa Luxemburg of the Spartacist movement in Germany; Giacomo Matteoti from Italy; Matthias Erzberger and Walther Rathenau from the Weimar Republic; Sergei Kirov from the Soviet Union; Ernst Röhm of the Nazi Party; Engelbert Dollfuss from Austria; King Alexander of Yugoslavia; Carlo and Nello Rosselli from France; Leon Trotsky; Georges Mandel of the Vichy regime; and humanists Stefan and Lotte Zweig.

Perhaps the main strength of Sachar’s work is how he encapsulates the historical context of each chapter, by describing the political, economic, and social landscape of the Interwar period, regardless of the country, from Weimar Germany to the nascent Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—also known as Yugoslavia. The chapter on the political, religious, and ethnic tensions in post-World War I Yugoslavia in the chapter discussing King Alexander of Yugoslavia, showed a great deal of analysis and aided in the understanding of a topic of which most Americans are usually not aware.

However, the book contains a number of flaws. The first major flaw is the lack of a proper introduction. The author begins with a preface, which does not fully lay out his argument, but rather expects the reader to be able to infer from it. Sachar does not give an explanation for his choice of *these* specific individuals and why their untimely deaths meant the death for democracy in Interwar Europe. The author, while painting a picture of the conditions of post-war society, tends to get bogged down in details before introducing the historical figure to which his chapter is supposed to be devoted. For example, two-thirds of the chapter on Giacomo Matteoti was spent on the rise of Benito Mussolini, giving a very scant description of his background and overall significance to post-World War

I Europe. This can be especially confusing for a layperson, who is not as well versed in twentieth-century European politics.

*The Assassination of Europe, 1918-1942: A Political History*, while it has an intriguing premise of showing Interwar Europe through assassination, is not adept in its application. While the book would not be suitable for a college freshman history course, it might do well as a supplement to an upper-division or a graduate European history course.

University of California, Riverside

Dino E. Buenviaje

*Southern Women Novelists and the Civil War: Trauma and Collective Memory in the American Literary Tradition since 1861*, by Sharon Talley. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2014. 432 pages. \$74.00, cloth.

If asked to name a famous American female novelist who wrote about slavery and the South, students are likely to name Connecticut-born Harriet Beecher Stowe. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Stowe portrayed a barbaric Southern system that ripped children from their mothers, perverted Christianity, and promoted greed above humanity. Lesser-known female novelists in the South responded in the late 1850s and 1860s with counter versions, which reflected a culture of loyal slaves, paternal masters, gracious Southern belles, and fertile plantations. This is the point of departure for Sharon Talley's *Southern Women Novelists and the Civil War*. Divided into five sections that span 1861 to the present, Talley reintroduces seventeen novels and fifteen Southern women writers to a new audience. Aside from Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, the texts and their authors will be unfamiliar to most. Each section begins with an eight- to ten-page introduction. While a bit non-traditional, this format works, providing readers with historical and literary context, background, and analysis for each period. Talley argues that reading and analyzing historical novels comparatively provides a new lens through which to explore Southern female novelists and, subsequently, the significance and multi-layered meanings of their work. The chapters follow a clear but engaging formula that combines the following elements: a summary of the book's characters, setting, and plot; the author's background, motives, and meaning; related historical and cultural context; and the novel's publication, audience, reception, and significance. Part I discusses two novels published during the Civil War. Authors Augusta Jane Evans and Sallie Rochester Ford fervently defended the chivalrous South through romantic novels, replete with daring heroines who supported their fathers, brothers, and beaux in the war for Southern independence. Yet the plots' leading ladies, in many ways, depict Evans' and Rochester's own conflicted views of the role of Southern women in the war and society. Part II explores novels published during the Reconstruction Era. Talley rightly points out that publishing houses and writers were severely affected by the war, and the shortage of paper and ink inflated the price of writing supplies. Wounded by war and scarred by its loss, Southern

literature entered a dark period with fewer writers and published works. Southern female novelists, who published from 1865 to 1877, did so with a different tone. They wrote not of the glory of war, but still glorified Southern patriarchy. This included a feminine mythology “as the pure image of white womanhood in need of protection provided not only a comforting memories of the lost past but also an impetus for racist responses to present realities” (p. 55).

Parts III and IV discuss Civil War novels written by women from 1877 to 1945. Talley’s introductory essays are significant for these sections, as she describes a society on the mend but unsure of its place in the future. Novels continued to perpetuate Southern hegemony, but heroines represented a mix of the traditional Southern belle and the modern woman. Moreover, authors such as Mary Noailles Murfree, Mary Johnston, and Ellen Glasgow offer harsher critiques of the war’s devastation and demystify certain elements of antebellum society. Overall, Talley reveals that authors from 1877 to 1945 continued to struggle with their role to “uphold rather than challenge their society and its traditions,” and these Southern women expressed this frustration through their female protagonists (p. 121).

Mitchell’s classic is included in Part IV, while Part V is dedicated to the deconstruction of *Gone with the Wind* and its “reflection on the traditional binary construction of race and gender in the nineteenth-century South” (p. 161). Alice Randall’s *The Wind Done Gone* and Kaye Gibbons’ *On the Occasion of My Last Afternoon* are two of four books that serve to represent the post-modern period (1945-present). The former tells the story of Cynara, Scarlett O’Hara’s slave, and the latter tells the story of Emma Garnet, a young white woman, and her slave Clarice. The books featured in this section are wholly different in tone and style. Instead of traditional literary conventions, these novels challenge the chronological, linear narrative. Talley’s effort to include novels from the post-modern period is noble, but this section is disjointed from the other featured authors and works. Equally important to be sure, but perhaps better suited for a second volume or stand-alone book.

Aside from the novels in Part V, certain threads run throughout Talley’s literary selections. Southern female novelists had to appeal to Northern publishers while not betraying their Southern heritage. Their books required a Southern audience, but writers had to avoid polarizing their Northern counterparts. Moreover, each featured female writer wrote based on an individualized set of personal experiences including regional geography, historical era, class status, and gender. As such, the authors’ voices reflect mixed messages: a society that desired women to be both confidently strong and cunning while remaining amiably submissive and dependent. Finally, Talley shows that these featured Southern women novelists captured audiences with romantic plots set within a pseudo-romanticized setting—the American South during the Civil War. Talley has provided valuable and insightful work that reveals meticulous research and thoughtful analysis. The text would fit nicely within most social science disciplines in addition to literary studies. The book could be read in full or easily divided among students for fruitful discussion.