Reviews

AIDS in the Heartland: How Unlikely Coalitions Created a Blueprint for LGBTQ Politics, by Katie Batza. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2025. 182 pages. $99.00, cloth. $24.95, paper. $19.99, electronic.

Teaching the history of the AIDS crisis to high-school and college-aged students presents challenges and opportunities. For students born after the mid-1990s, when the release of the Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) made HIV/AIDS a treatable chronic disease instead of a death sentence for many people, AIDS can perhaps seem like a relic of a forgotten past or a minor blip on the progressive road to ever-expanding equality and liberation. Even though students sitting in our classrooms today lived through the COVID-19 pandemic, many nevertheless have a difficult time grasping how politicized AIDS was during the 1980s and early 1990s. This may simply be how most public health crises are destined to be remembered, particularly when scientific and medical breakthroughs like effective prevention and treatment programs dramatically reduce the threat level of the crisis. A generation from now, the COVID-19 crisis might likely be remembered the same way. Once upon a time, there was a life-threatening virus circulating around the globe that exposed festering structural inequalities and exacerbated existing political fissures, but, ultimately, natural evolutionary processes rendered the virus less virulent and medical science discovered ways to tame the most extreme forms of the illness. Yet, having lived through it, students today understand that the way the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded was not inevitable, and they recognize that no one knew how history would unfold during the depths of the crisis. How do we provide opportunities for our students to learn about the realities of the historic AIDS crisis in ways that convey the unpredictability and uncertainty of the era? In other words, can we use the history of the AIDS crisis to teach students about the contingent and contextual nature of history itself?

Historian Katie Batza's *AIDS in the Heartland* offers a helpful and instructive way to think about teaching this important history within the context of the culture wars of the late twentieth century. Batza argues that the ways the AIDS crisis was framed in the American Midwest during the 1980s and 1990s, particularly regarding respectability politics, conceptions of home, and religious ideologies,

had profound effects on the national movement for queer equality—both then and now. Ultimately, this is a political history, as Batza shows us how the AIDS crisis became politicized within the context of the important social, cultural, religious, and medical developments of the time. The narrative Batza tells "is a tragedy but also a story of resilience and power" (p. 2). As this book reveals, nothing was preordained about how the AIDS crisis unfolded in America's heartland.

Across five succinct chapters, Batza relies mostly on oral history interviews, manuscript collections, and periodicals to examine the ways the heartland imaginary shaped knowledge of the region, how the concepts of home and belonging served as catalysts for creation and resistance, the importance of religious institutions in responding to the AIDS crisis, the inadequacies of the heartland's existing medical infrastructure, and the influence of politics on both the regional and national responses to AIDS. The chapter on politics is particularly illuminating because it is here that Batza illustrates how the response to the AIDS crisis in the heartland provided a blueprint for national LGBTQ politics between 1995 and 2015. AIDS activists in Batza's study had to play the game of respectability politics, even as a few voices in the wilderness advocated for a more radical and confrontational brand of activism. The result was a proliferation of homonormativity—the adoption of heterosexual norms within homosexual communities, most clearly exemplified in a myopic focus on marriage equality—and a national movement that, as Batza describes it, was marked by "a drift to the center…in which rights have more meaning than justice" (pp. 118, 121).

AIDS in the Heartland makes an important contribution to existing work on queer history and the history of HIV/AIDS. As Batza rightly points out, much of our knowledge of the early AIDS crisis is based on what occurred on the two coasts in places like New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. This book broadens our knowledge of this public health crisis and reminds us that efforts to provide adequate care in the Midwest also had a significant impact on national LGBTQ politics. While the book's content is perhaps too dense and the language a bit too challenging to assign to students, Batza's study will certainly prove helpful for teachers aiming to incorporate the history of AIDS into their courses and to connect that history to larger themes in U.S. history.

University of North Texas Wesley G. Phelps

Frontier Justice: State, Law, and Society in Patagonia, 1880-1940, by Javier Cikota. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2025. 312 pages. $95.00, cloth. $29.95, paper. $19.99, electronic.

Historical writings on Patagonia are not unknown, although rare by comparison with others addressing other areas of provincial Argentina beyond Buenos Aires. Starting with Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the* Beagle (1839), most studies of Patagonia address the far south of the region, a very large area bordered by the Andes to the west and tapering down to the Straits of Magellan and Tierra del

Fuego. From the early twentieth century, the windswept far-southern area long contained only vast sheep estancias, followed by oil extraction. This book, by contrast, addresses the more temperate, well-watered region northward, also east of the Andes, comprising the provinces of Rio Negro and Neuquén. They lie immediately south of the great semicircle around Buenos Aires formed by the Argentine pampas. Northern Patagonia underwent a first major settlement by Argentines and European immigrants from the early 1880s. This first phase followed the cruel near destruction of indigenous peoples during the so-called Conquest of the Desert in 1879 led by General Julio A. Roca, who soon after became president of Argentina. With their small, scattered towns and very limited population, until the 1930s, Rio Negro and Neuquén remained mere national territories as opposed to fully constituted provinces. Administrative inferiority barred representation in the national congress. It left governors and other leading officials appointed by the federal government alone, while delaying all elections until the eve of World War II.

In addressing the period 1880-1940, Cikota is therefore dealing with a notably underdeveloped region with few people, very small towns, and little government beyond small municipal councils and rudimentary police forces. In this long-term peripheral state, northern Patagonia made few contributions to either national political or economic life. These conditions limited the range and substance of the archival records of the two territories available for historical analysis today. Archives mainly consist of judicial and police data from thousands of small court cases (65,000 in Rio Negro alone) dealing with individuals, families, and small groups. One wonders if there were additional municipal records that might yield at least some data on political issues and property ownership. Who controlled local politics? What advantages and benefits did such people seek or gain from service on local councils? Rather than this wider approach, the book focuses more narrowly on almost exclusively social issues, mostly criminal cases of the sort likely to be brought before the courts.

Among the major topics addressed in this book is a strong emphasis on the mistreatment of women through forced marriage and sexual abuses, euphemistically called "elopements." Abuses affecting runaway juveniles are widely discussed. Infanticide appears prominently in discussion of homicides. *Curanderos*, faith healers or quacks, play their part in the story. Disputes over property mostly concern issues between or among near neighbors that fall short of much wider relevance, but highlight the immediacy and isolation of the frontier. Cikota occasionally unearths abuses practiced against the few native American survivors of the region. The local police, often incompetent and corrupt, rarely emerge very favorably from this narrative. Of course, judicial records primarily focus on issues of conflict and therefore reveal little about the great bulk of this society: standard marriages, the conventional status of women, normal childhood followed by adult careers, or the progress of formerly European families (to which Cikota himself belongs).

The book emphasizes these stories of justice and law rather than the general development of northern Patagonia that later produced a highly successful tourist industry centered on the city of Bariloche. It would be interesting to also consider the Welsh colonies in Chubut, though this is outside the book's area of interest

in the Comahue region. Histories of the Welsh colonies offer valuable insights on issues such as relations between white settlers and indigenous peoples and the integration of settlers visible in vectors of assimilation such as linguistic transitions—in this case, the eventual switch from Welsh to Spanish. This could build on the book's "three broad intellectual conversations" on "state formation and nation building," "the nature of citizenship and belonging," and "the 'new' social history of legal culture" as stated in the introduction.

Instructors could offer assignments on how the social issues in northern Patagonia's frontier compare to that of other regions, whether in Chubut as mentioned, or across larger Patagonia or North and South America. Topics like crime, marriage, medicine, and childhood transcend eras and regions, and are applicable to a variety of courses. The early frontier histories also offer an interesting juxtaposition and jumping-off point to the major industries that would follow. From the 1920s, the Rio Negro valley in Cinco Saltos provided an intriguing example of British settlement carried out by the Great Southern Railway. The company also operated a fruit farm in the province, and became a major apple producer—an important feature of the province's later development.

Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara David Rock

Reformatting Agrarian Life: Urban History from the Countryside in Colonial India, by William J. Glover. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2025. 306 pages. $130.00, cloth. $32.00, paper. $32.00, electronic.

William Glover's *Reformatting Agrarian Life* is a welcome addition to scholarship at the interface of rural and urban South Asia. Taking a cue from policy makers and political commentators interested in the explosion of urbanism in India, Glover attempts "to read agrarian sources in a contrapuntal manner, looking for submerged references to the urban contexts they might be connected with" (p. 17). The question and method are compelling. Glover is candid when he says that at the end of every archival trail, he met the arguments of Neeladri Bhattacharya and David Gilmartin. He might have added to this mix Sushmita Pati's 2022 book *Properties of Rent*, which has radically reshaped the context of urbanizing villages in Punjab, and particularly Gurgaon.

The book is organized in four chapters, along with an introduction and an epilogue. The first chapter, "Reconceptualizing Agriculture," is focused on the second half of the nineteenth century, showing how famines began a new connection across rural and urban areas with the flow of grains, people, and infrastructure. Chapter 2, "An Agrarian Urbanism," is perhaps the most substantive and novel chapter in the book. The initial sections tread familiar waters on the rise of inundation schemes and perennial canals, resulting in the famous canal colonies of Punjab. Where Glover departs from existing scholarship is in the hunt for an idea of the urban that emerged alongside the vast canal colonies. Glover shows how new typologies of mapping and surveying found life in the

canal colonies, relying on Neeladri Bhattacharya's idea of the colonial "regime of squares." Caste segregation followed closely, as Glover argues, and was in-built into these new typologies of the village. *Bastis* or "hutment sites" occupied by Dalits were located often at the periphery of the village. The rise and fall of market towns is also important here; many market towns, where older departments such as the revenue and agricultural departments held power, were transformed into municipalities. However, this was also precisely the reason for their downfall, as rarely could they collect sufficient taxes to sustain. Alongside were the boom-and-bust commodity cycles, which determined the fate of many market towns in the canal colony regions.

Chapter 3, "Boundary Work," explores how rural life entered urban spheres, and vice versa. Glover begins with events like travelling exhibitions. For instance, the Indian National Congress, the primary nationalist opposition to the British colonial government, held several exhibitions showcasing India's "native industrial and agricultural products" at their annual meetings, which rotated across cities. Glover also explores agricultural research institutes, which were started at the turn of the century to provide a scientific basis for Punjab's canal colonies. Glover chronicles the journey of Paul Voelcker, who believed that *knowledge* on South Asia's vast agricultural practices was critical to any project of improvement. The urban, we eventually learn, figured both culturally and literally. Culturally, young men who received agricultural degrees were perceived as urban, with little societal acceptance that they would tend to farms when holding a degree. More literally, many students at agricultural colleges such as the Lyllapur College came from urban backgrounds.

Chapter 4, "The Aesthetics of Rural Reconstruction," is concerned with the aesthetic form of urban life entering the agrarian world. The language that political figures and social scientists of the 1920s and 1930s used was that of "rural reconstruction" and "village improvement." The idea was to preserve people in villages and prevent emigration. More specifically, aspects of the town—such as education, health, and entertainment—had to enter the village in order to prevent people from moving. Efforts of town planners Glover notes, were particularly aimed at "reformatting of fields, roads, and relationships within villages, and between towns and villages" (p. 192). Glover's photographs of maps and plans in this chapter are striking. These are a treasure trove of sources for architectural historians, created by revenue officials, town planners, and administrators of various kinds.

This is a book that seeks traces of the urban fabric, such as markets and town planning, as they emerge in rural and agrarian regions of South Asia. It follows not so much the process and nitty-gritty of urbanization, but rather the urban form. Students have a lot to examine here, and may benefit from engaging with literature from geography, particularly Sushmita Pati's *Properties of Rent* (2022), which is far more interested in the processual nature of urbanization, rather than the form alone. *Reformatting Agrarian Life* is a substantial intervention and new take on scholarship on agrarian history, urban history, and colonial history at large.

University of Washington Aditya Ramesh

Essential Soldiers: Women Activists and Black Power Movement Leadership, by Kenja McCray. New York: New York University Press, 2025. 264 pages. $35.00, cloth. $25.00, electronic.

Kenja McCray's *Essential Soldiers* begins from a seemingly simple question: who sustained the Black Power movement when the cameras turned elsewhere? Challenging a historiography long dominated by charismatic male leadership and organizational ideology, McCray re-centers the movement around the women whose labor built, maintained, and transformed Kawaida-influenced cultural nationalist organizations. In doing so, she re-conceptualizes leadership itself through what she terms "kazi leadership," a collective, service-oriented model grounded in sustained community work rather than public visibility or formal authority (p. 3). This framework privileges dedication to community work over the desire to be "in charge," emphasizing cooperative leadership across gender and generation, and the cultivation of political consciousness through shared cultural knowledge and struggle (pp. 8-9).

Drawing primarily on oral histories, McCray reconstructs the intellectual, institutional, and political labor of women in organizations including the Us Organization (Los Angeles), the Committee for a Unified Newark and the Congress of African People (Newark), The East (Brooklyn), and Ahidiana (New Orleans). The book's purpose is both recovery and reinterpretation as it seeks not merely to add women to existing narratives of Black Power, but to reconsider how leadership, ideology, and movement sustainability are understood within the long Black freedom struggle. Historiographically, the book situates itself alongside scholarship that re-examines Black Power through gendered analysis, particularly works by Ashley D. Farmer and Russell Rickford. Yet McCray departs from intellectual histories by foregrounding collective memory and lived experience. She argues that earlier scholarship has treated women as peripheral actors of male-led movements, despite their central role in organizational survival and ideological evolution.

Each chapter develops this argument through concrete institutional contexts. Chapter 1 traces women's motivations for entering cultural nationalism, linking their political awakening to urban rebellions and the broader radicalization of the 1960s. Chapter 2 examines grassroots organizing, showing women as producers of knowledge through newspapers, organizers of neighborhood campaigns, and architects of political education initiatives. Chapter 3 shifts attention to institution building, revealing how women sustained bookstores, cooperative enterprises, and community programs that embodied Kawaida principles. Lastly, Chapter 4, arguably the book's strongest contribution, analyzes independent Black institutions as sites where women exercised authority as teachers, administrators, and nation builders, transforming gendered expectations into avenues for political leadership.

McCray's central contribution lies in redefining leadership itself. Rather than measuring influence by visibility or formal titles, she shows that movements depended on continuous labor, often performed by women. The concept of "kazi leadership" provides a useful analytical framework for historians seeking to understand grassroots authority beyond charismatic leadership models.

Unexpectedly, the book also complicates assumptions about cultural nationalism as uniformly patriarchal, showing how women reshaped ideology from within rather than simply opposing it from the outside.

For educators, *Essential Soldiers* offers substantial teaching value. The book is especially effective for courses on the Black Power movement, African American history, women's history, and social movements. Its thematic organization and vivid oral narratives make selected chapters highly adaptable for classroom use. Chapter 1 works well in undergraduate surveys to challenge simplified narratives of Black Power militancy, while Chapter 4 provides an accessible entry point for discussions of community-based education and liberation pedagogy. Advanced high school courses such as AP U.S. History or ethnic studies curricula could assign excerpts to broaden students' understanding of activism beyond protest imagery. Because the book relies heavily on oral testimony, instructors should encourage students to consider questions of memory, subjectivity, and historical methodology alongside content. Used in part rather than in full, the text pairs effectively with canonical readings on SNCC or the Black Panther Party, expanding rather than replacing existing course materials.

From a professional standpoint, McCray's work is a significant and welcome contribution. Her methodological transparency about archival scarcity strengthens the study, and her emphasis on institutional labor offers an important corrective to leader-centered histories. Ultimately, *Essential Soldiers* succeeds on its own terms. It delivers a persuasive reinterpretation of Black Power activism while providing educators with a resource that deepens students' understanding of leadership, gender, and community organizing. Teachers should strongly consider adopting portions of the book for undergraduate and advanced secondary instruction, particularly where the goal is to complicate dominant narratives of the 1960s and 1970s. McCray demonstrates convincingly that the history of Black Power cannot be understood without recognizing the women whose labor sustained it.

Syracuse University Semaj Campbell-Blakes

Belonging on Both Shores: Mobility, Migration, and the Bordering of the Persian Gulf, by Lindsey R. Stephenson. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2026. 196 pages. $70.00, cloth. $70.00, electronic.

What does it mean to belong? In *Belonging on Both Shores*, Lindsey Stephenson traces how belonging in the Persian Gulf became increasingly territorially fixed in the first half of the twentieth century, disrupting the region's quotidian oceanic mobility. The book begins by examining what mobility looked like in practice in the early twentieth century, describing how repeated movement across short distances created "societies of woven difference" (p. 2). It then traces how competing state-building projects in Pahlavi Iran and in the British imperial territories of Kuwait and Bahrain gradually rendered difference illegitimate and movement illegal.

Stephenson's work builds on an existing body of work on connection and trade across the Indian Ocean, but where most scholars have emphasized the broad strokes of connection across long distances, Stephenson focuses on mundane short-range movements. That means, in particular, "writing the Iranian coast" (p. 12) back into the literature by recovering the histories of mobile Iranians who "navigated this interconnected space as it was becoming a bordered one" (p. 15). Stephenson theorizes four microregions in which travel and connection were especially dense, showing how these "webs" encompassed mercantile as well as social links. Those connections actually intensified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as heavier Qajar taxation drove an immigration wave and the development of new smuggling routes. The abolition of slavery also created gaps filled by Iranian migrant bodies.

Stephenson draws on a range of primary source material, including British archival material, interviews, and "heritage" sources to show how Iranian immigrants shaped the urban fabric and daily life of Kuwait and Bahrain. Immigrants staffed and sourced commercial bread ovens and imported fresh water. They worked on infrastructure projects and for the police and other new state institutions. But even as Iranians were central to social and institutional life around the "Arab" Gulf, they increasingly came to be defined as foreigners.

Building on the work of Lauren Benton, Stephenson argues that the creation of borders and the new category of "foreigner" helped create new ideas about territory and belonging in a competitive and escalating process of territorialization. Particularly after World War I, centralized and centralizing states on both sides of the Gulf challenged existing models of layered sovereignty, aiming to restrict the movement of both people and goods and, later, to impose conditions on property ownership. In tracing both the new restrictions and how individual migrants resisted and worked around them, Stephenson contributes to an expanding literature on extraterritoriality and sovereignty in the Gulf and around the Middle East. The book is particularly valuable—and relatively unusual—in its focus on the ordinary Iranians who traveled frequently across the water, and whose lives and identities were transformed by twentieth-century state territorialization.

This book may be useful to educators in a few ways. First, the current U.S. and Israeli war on Iran means that the Gulf is very much in the news. For the most part, that coverage reflects the view that "Arabs" and "Persians" (sometimes glossed as "Sunnis" and "Shia") have always been enemies. This book can help put the national and ethno-religious composition of the contemporary Gulf into perspective. Less than a century ago, this was a connected space in which travel was normal and Iranians helped build the culture and institutions of many Gulf states. Second, this book can help teachers offer comparative perspective on topics like borders and immigration. In the Southwest United States, like in the Persian Gulf, temporary, quotidian immigration was once taken for granted and largely unregulated. The notion that "foreigners" are easily identifiable and ought to be excluded is a relatively modern one that nonetheless resonates globally. Thinking about borders and immigration comparatively can push back against an idea of American exceptionalism while also showing how historically unusual modern states and their preoccupations really are.

While I think this material could be used in a high school classroom, I would not suggest that teachers assign the book to students directly. Instead, teachers might incorporate some of the concepts and examples into the information they offer students. Some of Stephenson's primary sources are likely freely available online via the Qatar Digital Library (qdl.qa), so teachers with particularly advanced or adventurous students might pair these concepts with primary source material from the archive. While likely unfamiliar to students, these histories and concepts can be made accessible to high schoolers and would certainly enrich a lesson on the origin of modern border and immigration regimes.

Illinois State University Camille Lyans Cole

Reclaiming Clio: Making American Women's History, 1900-2000, by Jennifer Banning Tomás. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2025. 474 pages. $120.00, cloth. $44.95, paper. $29.99, electronic.

For any historian who, like me, felt the call of women's history in the early 1970s, *Reclaiming Clio: Making American Women's History, 1900-2000* will bring back vivid memories of the thrill of participating in a collective effort for a worthy cause. For, as Jennifer Banning Tomás makes clear, attempts to legitimize women's history in the academy went hand in hand with contemporary efforts to end gender discrimination. Tomás closely follows the institutional developments that launched the women's history movement between 1969-1973. Beginning with the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession at the December 1969 meeting of the American Historical Association, activists established a host of national, regional, and local organizations that challenged sexism in professional organizations, in university hiring, and in the curriculum. The AHA responded by creating a women's committee charged with finding ways to challenge the old boys' hiring network; other organizations also began addressing discriminatory practices. Tomás pays special attention to the efforts of Black women—who were often excluded from "mainstream" networks—to establish their own associations.

The real boost to women's history came with the revitalization of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, an organization founded decades earlier to provide camaraderie for women who felt isolated in the profession. Initiated by younger members, the group hosted a two-day conference on women's history at Douglass College in 1973; it was attended by an estimated 600 individuals and featured 40 papers. The following year, over 2,000 people registered for the Radcliffe conference—more than attended the AHA.

Women's history's moment had arrived. An ad hoc survey identified 115 undergraduate courses on the subject in 1973, up from 38 two years earlier. Pathbreaking scholarship, graduate programs, and a journal followed. In 1982, March was designated Women's History Month, and by 2005, women's and

gender history constituted the largest professional specialty. By this time, as Tomás demonstrates, women's history had also moved beyond the academy into museums, parks, and other public spaces.

The story of the meteoric rise of women's history is dramatic. But the author's larger point is that the ground for the movement was prepared during the first two-thirds of the century (the subject of almost half the book). Her discussion of historians who wrote about women before 1960 is inconclusive in this context, since, as she acknowledges, they were unable to challenge reigning professional conventions or conceptualize women's history as a field. By the 1960s, however, there were a number of established feminist scholars as well as male professors who served as mentors to the younger generation.

Tomás's analysis of the ways in which the creation of women's archives provided building blocks, audiences, and potential participants for women's history is eye-opening. Encouraged by Mary Ritter Beard, a fervent advocate of women's historical importance, Smith and Radcliffe Colleges established collections of materials by and about women in 1943; both archives evolved into major research sites. Tomás also attends to the difficulties Black women had in establishing their own archives. Institutional and individual support also came from the 1971 publication of *Notable American Women, 1607-1950*, a three-volume biographical dictionary that included 1,359 American women, many of them not widely known. Sponsored by Radcliffe, the project provided both a starting point for further research and opportunities for young scholars.

Reclaiming Clio is a thoughtful and well-researched account of the coming of age of women's history. Maintaining a tight focus, Tomás makes excellent use of minutes, organizational papers, memoirs, and oral histories to capture the excitement of the period and the trajectories of major proponents. She addresses some of the conflicts that followed in the wake of women's history, particularly its incorporation into elementary and high schools. Readers would need to look elsewhere to learn about the intellectual content of the field and how it changed (by 2000, women's studies programs were beginning to evolve into women, gender, and sexuality programs). It would also have been helpful to learn more about relevant changes in the historical profession that fostered acceptance (such as the prominence of social history) and in higher education (scant mention is made of women's studies, the umbrella for the many academic disciplines that sought curricular change).

Reclaiming Clio is a valuable sourcebook and a starting place for study of the early women's history movement. It is probably too detailed for the average undergraduate. But advanced undergraduate and graduate students interested in reform movements (especially feminism), higher education, or the professions should find it useful. It would be invaluable for teachers to use in course preparation or for assigning biographical or other research projects.

Emerita, Trinity College Barbara Sicherman

Mission Europe: The Secret History of the Women of SOE, by Kate Vigurs. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2026. 368 pages. $32.50, cloth. $24.00, paper. $32.50, electronic.

Kate Vigurs's *Mission Europe* is a remarkable, ranging account of the female side of British intelligence's operations during the Second World War. It follows her *Mission France: The True History of the Women of SOE* (2021), which focused solely on the "F section" of the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE was created by Winston Churchill in June 1940, after the fall of France, to penetrate German-occupied Europe. This time, Vigurs expands her focus, dedicating eleven chapters to various countries, including Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Each account starts with a compelling story about one of the SOE women or a brief overview of the country's invasion, a narrative structure that makes *Mission Europe* instantly accessible and appealing to a more-than-specialist audience.

Vigurs's writing vividly brings her SOE characters to life. What makes the book especially compelling are their stories, showcasing women's bravery in resisting both German forces and domestic fascists. Aside from a few well-known figures, most of these women were largely forgotten before Vigurs recovered them; her primary aim was to "[bring] to light lesser-known women" (p. 308). For example, we meet Jeanne Bohec, code-named Râteau, a "fiercely proud twenty-one-year-old Breton" (p. 81), who participated in sabotage missions in France and even trained male colleagues in explosives. We also encounter the Belgian Elaine Madden, who received training in London and was later parachuted back into Belgium in August 1944, tasked with gathering intelligence on the V1 and V2 rocket launch sites. She also arranged the escape of King Leopold's younger brother, Prince Charles (p. 144). Moreover, resistance could be a family affair. The Danish Monica Wichfeld offered her estate as a drop zone for parachutists and was the first woman in Denmark to face a death sentence for resistance (she successfully argued it down to imprisonment). Her daughter, Varinka Wichfeld Muus, was married to the chief SOE agent for Denmark, and when he had to relocate, Varinka was tasked with transmitting messages to London, for she alone knew the secret codes.

Other women rescued downed pilots and escaped prisoners, helped wireless operators, and encouraged desertion among German soldiers. They contributed to underground publications and shared intelligence on U-Boat positions, V1 and V2 rockets, German troop movements, escape routes, and weapons factories. As the war ended, women also helped locate and liberate surviving agents, prisoners, and Jewish people. However, Vigurs does not claim that all women were heroines. For example, she spends several pages (pp. 72-81) discussing Mathilde Carré, who betrayed her resistance organization—the Franco-Polish *Interallié* network—and gave up many of her fellow members to the Nazis.

Students and non-specialists could have benefited from more analytical space on the specificity of female experience in the Resistance. While the author illustrates gender issues through her portrayal of individual lives, she does not offer an

overarching assessment that draws out general lessons for those unfamiliar with the subject. My own research into the French Resistance, for example, shows that women's involvement arose out of a conscious desire to gain autonomy and reject social expectations of passivity. Margaret Collins Weitz, in *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (1995), asserts that women adapted more quickly than men to the demands of underground life. Weitz also notes that women were more flexible, demonstrating greater imagination and initiative. Female agents tended to be somewhat more selfless than men. They were generally less interested in leading a network or holding higher responsibilities; aside from a few exceptions, they were content to serve as hostesses, couriers, or liaisons. Women were also less interested than men in gaining recognition for their efforts: they resisted because they felt compelled to do so and saw little point in filling out the paperwork necessary for state-awarded decorations.

However, Vigurs skillfully uses these women's stories to highlight other issues, such as the nature of British intelligence operations during the war. The chapters in *Mission Europe* capture SOE's extensive reach across Europe, achieved in spite of turf wars with MI9 (specializing in escapes), SIS (Special Intelligence Service), and various resistance groups. Although mostly successful, SOE made critical mistakes, especially the "Englandspiel" deception in Holland. Vigurs expertly relates the organization's failure to detect a security breach, a vulnerability ruthlessly exploited by German spies. Fifty-nine agents were captured, and only five survived the war, though that number included Trix Terwindt, the subject of one of Vigurs's sparkling character studies (p. 179). In sum, *Mission Europe* is an exceptionally well-researched book and a pleasure to read.

University of South Florida Benedetta Carnaghi