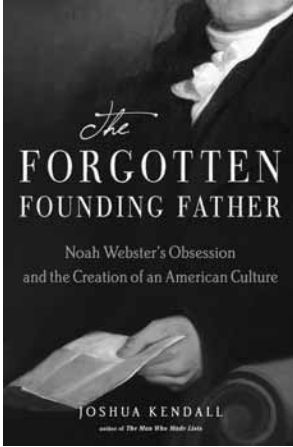


## Book Reviews

*The Forgotten Founding Father: Noah Webster's Obsession and the Creation of an American Culture.* By Joshua Kendall. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2010. 355 pages. \$26.95 (hardcover).



Everyone associates Webster with the dictionary, but few can recall anything else about the man. Many confuse him with his famous cousin Daniel, and perhaps attribute some of Daniel's accomplishments to Noah. A majority of people would never consider Noah Webster to be a Founding Father, nor could they name a single accomplishment of his not related to the dictionary, yet he was a primary figure in many of the major dramas that unfolded during his time. He was a friend and ally of Franklin and Washington, a chief player in the mudslinging newspaper wars, and a marketing genius who pioneered techniques in use on Madison Avenue to this day. Kendall's fascinating and entertaining volume goes a long way toward rectifying these omissions. He provides a fresh view on early American times through the eyes of a previously ignored actor. In addition, he dispels the reader's apprehension that reading a book about the man who compiled the dictionary would be as dry and boring as the actual act of compilation itself.

Kendall's narrative of the life of Noah Webster documents the path of a driven intellectual with an intense desire to succeed and leave a permanent mark for posterity. The hidden darkness associated with this drive shows an obsessive-compulsive man striving always to keep his depression and demons in check by remaining constantly active. To relax and pause his compiling or writing would invite his mental illness to, once again, take control. Noah Webster always strove to be great for fear that if he was not he would be less than nothing. His deep-seated social anxiety drove him towards public speaking as a way to compensate and conquer rather than give in and hide. This anxiety, unfortunately, also tinged much of his speaking and writing with an arrogance and assumption of superiority that provided easy targets for his critics. Thus, his talent was also his curse, but for the most part his talent won out, which is the story of his life and Kendall's insightful book.

Few people realize that well before Webster authored his career-defining masterpiece, the *Dictionary*, he was already world-famous for producing the essential *American Speller*. For decades, this volume stood second only to the Bible in domestic sales. Webster's *Dictionary* featured American, not British spelling, and marked Webster as a leading proponent of a separate American language and culture. It was the standard textbook that taught generations of American students and sold millions of copies during and after his lifetime. This achievement would have made him extremely wealthy if his financial situation at the time had not dictated that he sell his rights outright in lieu of collecting future royalties. Nonetheless, the amount he garnered for those rights made him the recipient of the first American "blockbuster book deal." The story of the speller involves much more than its compilation and publication. After publishing the speller, Webster promoted and fought tenaciously for laws designed to protect his intellectual property, thus becoming the Father of American Copyright Law. One of the earliest and most prominent proponents of the idea of American exceptionalism long before the term was coined, he was an ally of, and the intellectual heir to, his good friend Benjamin Franklin.

Additionally, Webster pioneered a number of marketing initiatives still in use today. He originated the first national book tours by an author to promote sales, becoming the first native born American celebrity speaker. He placed advertisements and wrote anonymous articles promoting his book in major publications. He also offered bulk discounts to schools and helped to popularize a new form of emerging entertainment -- the spelling bee -- further increasing sales of his book. Kendall notes that Webster's marketing efforts involved intense self-promotion combined with outright public attacks upon literary critics. A negative review would invite retaliatory abuse from the author, occasionally erupting into a multi-article exchange between author and critic. Webster, for all his genius, was a thin-skinned man with a talent for vituperation, and critics often found themselves the target of a skilled and talented adversary. These attacks, of course, fueled further criticism, which in turn increased publicity and drove sales ever higher.

Webster's talent for written promotion was not limited to mere self. Long before the Federalist Papers were conceived, he rushed into print with articles praising the new Constitution which garnered wide praise from supporters including General George Washington. Washington himself asked Webster to publish the first daily newspaper in New York City to counteract the growing influence of Citizen Genet and the French sympathizers who were promoting an open alliance with France and another war with Great Britain. Webster was a prominent participant in the newspaper battles of the time,

crossing metaphorical swords with Hamilton (first an ally, later as antagonist), Madison, and Jefferson.

Webster's obsessive nature also drove him to compile many useful statistics. During his extensive travels, he always found time to compile a count and itemization of all of the houses of every city he visited, no matter the size. Before the first government censuses were published, his observations were extremely useful not only for his contemporaries, but for future historians. Webster also queried doctors from multiple cities concerning the scourge of yellow fever, initiating the world's first scientific survey. Ironically, his conclusion, that filth and open sewage was the principal cause of disease, was correct for almost all diseases except yellow fever, where the primary culprit, the mosquito, was not discovered for generations.

Other accomplishments of Noah Webster include founding the Hartford Charitable Society, co-founding Amherst College, serving as a Massachusetts state representative, and acting as a proponent of the Hartford Convention against the War of 1812.

The signal achievement of Webster's life was his massive compilation of the *Dictionary of the American language*. The man spent twenty-seven obsessive-compulsive years producing this work, which has forever since been associated with his name. This labor of love kept him sane (although sometimes just barely) and won him the contemporary plaudits that he so craved in life. He is justly immortal for this crowning work, but as this highly readable, carefully researched, and fascinating biography illustrates, he deserves to be known for so much more.

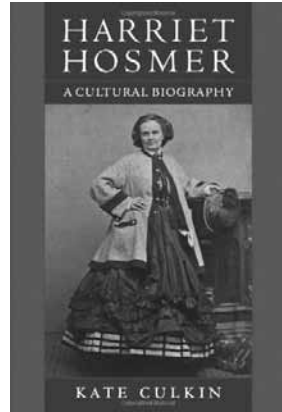
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***Harriet Hosmer: A Cultural Biography.* By Kate Culkin. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. 219 pages. \$26.95 (paperback).**

Far from writing a traditional biography of her subject, Kate Culkin has produced a broad cultural study. Not only has she presented the story of Harriet Hosmer's life and works as a sculptor, but she has linked the place of art in mid-nineteenth century America with the role of women's rights and changing views of women's sexuality.

Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908) had close ties to Massachusetts. Born in 1830, she was brought up in Watertown, near Boston, considered by many to

be the center for American art in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Her father, a doctor, brought her up to excel in the outdoor life, including hiking and hunting, swimming and rowing. After her mother died, Harriet was sent to the Sedgwick School in Lenox, Massachusetts, run by Elizabeth Buckminster Dwight Sedgwick, a member of an old New England family. There, Harriet learned to think for herself and made deep and lasting friendships with women, including Cornelia Crow (later Carr) from St. Louis, who provided emotional support and good contacts. Connections with the Crow family, combined with her new-found interest in sculpture, led her to study anatomy in the medical department of the University of Missouri. She received much attention for her first sculpture, a medallion of her medical professor, Dr. Joseph McDowell.



When Harriet returned to Boston, it was another encounter with an influential woman that changed the course of her life. This woman was actress Charlotte Cushman, who was about to retire to Rome with British journalist, Matilda Hays. With these evolving contacts, the stage was set for Harriet's career as one of the most renowned neo-classic American sculptors in her time. She soon became a member of the group of American women sculptors who joined Cushman in Rome. This group included Edmonia Lewis and Anne Whitney, both from Boston.

Although described dismissively by Henry James in 1903 as a part of the "white marmorean flock" surrounding actress Charlotte Cushman in Rome (163), Hosmer was indeed her own person. Her works still exist and a copy of her *Sleeping Faun* recently sold at auction for \$48,000 (Harriet Goodhue Hosmer Online). Hosmer copies are still in demand and replicas of one of her most popular small works, *The Clasped Hands of Robert and Elizabeth Barret Browning*, are sold in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Hosmer's *Zenobia in Chains*, thought to be lost, is now displayed prominently in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

Culkin demonstrates how Hosmer's topics often reflected the power of women. She presents as an important example Hosmer's interpretation of Zenobia, supposedly a disgraced queen bowed down as she was led through the streets of Rome in chains. Hosmer instead chose to portray the chains as draped loosely around Zenobia who even held chains in one arm as if under her control. Modern feminists in St. Louis used Harriet's *Zenobia* when they

celebrated Hosmer's life and works with exhibitions and a play called *Zenobia Unchained: The Life and Works of Harriet Hosmer*. Hosmer's statue of another prominent historic woman did not fare as well.

The Queen Isabella Association commissioned Hosmer to create a statue of the woman who sent Columbus to the new world as a show piece for the Columbian Exposition of 1893, held in Chicago a year after the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's journey. After the exposition, the Isabella statue was to be placed in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. A photograph of a model of the statue shows the queen stepping forward representing the progress of women. It apparently was not completed or installed because it caused such a controversy among members of the San Francisco Jewish community due to the queen's role in the Spanish Inquisition.

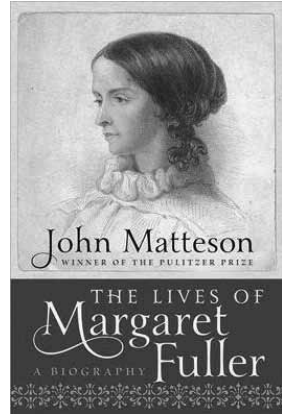
Culkin emphasizes the support of close relationships with particular women on whom Harriet depended over her entire life time. They included her patron Lady Louisa Ashburton as well as Charlotte Cushman, though in the end it was her first close relationship that continued the longest. After Harriet's death, Cornelia Crow Carr inherited Harriet's estate including her letters. By 1908, expressed warm feelings between women had been labeled as signs of sexual perversion by those who the author terms as "sexologists." Anxious to preserve Harriet's reputation by what she believed were modern standards, Cornelia took it upon herself to edit Harriet's correspondence, eliminating any intimations of expressed sexuality between women in a published edition. In recent times, however, Carr's granddaughter donated the original letters to the Schlesinger Library where the reader can view Harriet's true statements of passion.

Kate Culkin's study of Harriet Hosmer, her life, her work, and her times truly restores the place of Harriet Hosmer as a significant woman sculptor in the history of American art.

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*The Lives of Margaret Fuller: A Biography.* By John Matteson. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. 510 pages. Illustrations. \$32.95 (hardcover).

This thoroughly researched and well-written new biography of Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) takes a thematic rather than a strictly chronological approach, describing and assessing, chapter by chapter, the roles, concerns, and stances that characterized the multifaceted life of a fascinatingly complex woman. Fuller was, in her day, the best-read woman in the U.S. and perhaps the most outspoken and influential. The book ambitiously invites readers “to observe Fuller’s time on earth...as a succession of lives, each one building on those previously lived, each one preserving the markings and conditionings of its predecessors, and each one lived in anticipation of further incarnations” (xv).



One of the keys to Fuller’s life (or “lives,” as Matteson puts it) was the rigorous upbringing to which she was subjected from an early age, serving as an experimental subject in her father’s attempt to overturn sexual stereotypes about child rearing. Margaret’s early home-schooling in Cambridge, Massachusetts, consisted of a rigorous classical education in Greek, Latin, French, English literature, philosophy, mathematics, and natural science. Her daily diet of reading (and exacting oral examinations) would have exhausted a precocious adult. The result of this upbringing was a child prodigy destined eventually to hold her own with the leading male intellectuals of her era, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, but the toll on her personal life was devastating. Her life-long pursuit of ever-higher levels of intellectual excellence wore down her physical health. The demands she placed on other people made it difficult for her to find love or to be comfortably accepted in society. She was exceptional, and often alone.

Fuller’s scholarly relationship with Emerson and others led to her editorship of *The Dial*, a periodical (1840-1844) associated with the Transcendentalist movement in Concord, Massachusetts. Around the same time, she hosted a series of “conversations” for women, who paid for the privilege of attending. These seminars were intended to expose women to a variety of subjects, encouraging them to think on their own and to express well-reasoned opinions. She also taught classes at Bronson Alcott’s Temple

School in Boston. Eventually tiring of what she perceived to be Bostonian provincialism, Fuller moved to New York to write for Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune* as the paper's first female employee. She authored the first feminist book in America, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), based on articles first published in *The Dial*. The book demanded legal equality for women, became a best seller, and made Fuller famous (as well as notorious, because her research included interviews with prostitutes as well as women leading more conventional lives). In 1846, Greeley offered her the opportunity to travel in Europe as his only foreign correspondent.

In Italy, an impoverished and uneducated Italian nobleman, Giovanni Ossoli, courted Fuller's attentions, and she fell in love. In Rome, she reported on (and became involved in) the Italian fight for reunification and democracy. When Ossoli was wounded while manning an insurgent barricade, she nursed him back to health. Fuller and Ossoli may or may not have been legally married, although she spoke of him as her husband, took his name, and gave birth to his son. After the uprising fizzled, the family fled Rome for Florence, where Fuller drafted a history of the failed revolution. They embarked for New York in 1850, but drowned within sight of land during a hurricane off Fire Island. The unpublished manuscript about the Italian revolution was never found. Fuller is most often remembered today not for her groundbreaking thinking, but rather for her tragic death at the age of forty.

If Fuller had lived longer, what role would she have played in American history? We can only speculate about what activist causes she might have embraced, or what she might have accomplished if her life had not been cut short. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 advocating women's rights, including suffrage, took place while Fuller was in Italy. The Fugitive Slave Act, which galvanized anti-slavery sentiment and activism in the North, was not enacted until 1850, the year of her death. Fuller had little to say about the abolitionist movement before she departed from Massachusetts and New York for her sojourn in Europe, but the oppression she witnessed at first hand in Italy might well have re-focused her attention toward the plight of American slaves. Matteson writes that she "possessed a genius for the reinvention of self [and] her life [was] an ongoing occasion for growth and change" (xiii).

Fuller was a staunch advocate for equality and freedom. For her, freedom was linked to education and the amelioration of poverty. She believed that an important aspect of freedom for women was the ability to lead a morally upright life. Her ability to speak was widely praised, but her ability to write lacked the polish that might have raised her literary status to that of her male

contemporaries. Had she been born a male, she would have been allowed to attend Harvard College and would have benefitted from formal training in composition. It may be, however, that a college education would have confined her wide-ranging and inventive intellect, shaping her insights into more conventional molds.

The first “biography” of Fuller was penned shortly after her death by three men who knew her well: Emerson, William Henry Channing, and James Freeman Clarke. Their *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (1852) glorifies their subject by creating a “distorting halo” (xv) at the expense of objectivity. Some of the highlights of Matteson’s meatier and more balanced biography include descriptions of Fuller’s troubled childhood, in chapters entitled “Prodigy” and “Misfit” (1-60); her awe-struck and awkward first meetings with Emerson (110-117); her thwarted romance with Samuel Ward, who emphatically did not return her affection (148-152); Hawthorne’s opinions about her “strong and coarse nature” (201-202); and her frequent visits to the Utopian colony at Brook Farm, which she was reluctant to join (213-219).

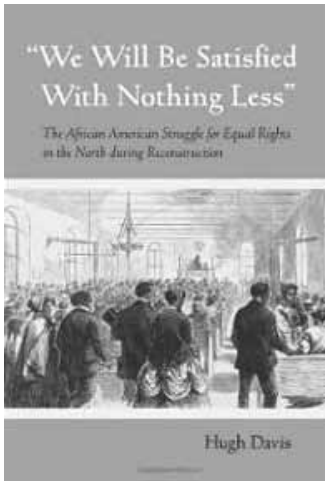
Matteson’s excellent book is not a hagiography. Fuller was brilliant, bold, and sincere; but she could also be arrogant and condescending. She was without parallel when it came to critiquing texts, but her understanding of people was limited by her own unrounded existence. The book does much to humanize and explain Fuller in addition to confirming her position as a salient nineteenth-century intellectual and a tireless advocate for women’s equality.

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***“We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less”: The African American Struggle for Equal Rights in the North during Reconstruction.* By Hugh Davis. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 232 pages. \$45 (cloth).**

The conventional Reconstruction historiography focuses on the struggles of African Americans to realize equal rights in the South in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. However, Hugh Davis—a Professor Emeritus of history at Southern Connecticut State University—sheds considerable light on the lesser known African American battle for male suffrage rights in northern and western states. In *We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less*, Davis provocatively claims that “Reconstruction began in the North” where





the relatively small number of northern African Americans placed political pressure on reluctant white Republicans to live up to the ideals and rhetoric espoused by the party of Lincoln. Davis's work tracks the initial success of northern and western African Americans from the late-1860s to the mid-1870s in their drive for political equality, accessibility to public schools and the beginning of their downward political and social trajectory from the mid-1870s onwards as the reactionary politics of Reconstruction began the reversal of many gains.

*We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less* is organized thematically around two issues: black male suffrage and equal access to public schools within the context of political machinations of various African American groups as they navigated awkward partnerships with white Republicans, many of whom were reactionary and racist. The first chapter chronicles the struggle of northern African Americans before and during the Civil War with the introduction of organizations such as the National Equal Rights League and the Pennsylvania Equal rights League, both created in the 1850s. Davis also provides evidence that “race pride and consciousness” predated the Civil War, in part, by showing the nascent political activism of individuals such as Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany (7). Indeed, there was a vibrant and dynamic African American community that either proselytized emigration (a return to Africa) or those that had faith in the founding democratic principles of the United States. African American political organizations at the national level or in the form of state auxiliaries were primarily run by middle class African American men, though the author posits that the leadership did reach out “to the black Masses (28).” Interestingly, Davis asserts that African American women were more likely than African American men to legally challenge segregation and discrimination in public areas due to their greater interaction with whites in the workplace.

In the aftermath of the Civil War the political focus on manhood suffrage shifted from the state level – because the political ethos was such that states had “sole authority” to determine political rights – to lobbying Washington (47). According to Davis, establishment African Americans also framed their push for manhood suffrage around service to the union during the Civil War and the fact that the struggle for political rights was not a demand for equal social rights, the latter an answer to racists’ fear of miscegenation (42). The

struggle for political equality in the 1860s was marked by the ambivalence of white Republicans – who believed there was little to gain politically by supporting the suffrage goals of two percent of the northern population – and Democrats who had much to gain from the political support of recent immigrants from Europe (53).

A revealing sub-text in this volume was the dichotomy in the civil rights movement of the late 1860s and 1870s: black manhood suffrage versus women's (white) suffrage, and the social cleavages that these political battles exposed. Davis observes that white suffragists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed that white women deserved the vote more than black men. Frederick Douglass believed that the suffrage rights for white women were a "desirable matter," yet he believed that political rights for black men, especially in the south, was a "question of life and death" (68). Caught in the middle were African American women such as Sojourner Truth who opposed the Fifteenth Amendment because she feared more power in the hands of black men. She was equally troubled by the attitudes of Anthony and Stanton who, in the impetus for women's rights, did not include black women in their exhortations. According to Davis, however, Truth's opinion was in the minority among black women as Frances Ellen Harper, mistrustful of white suffragists, believed that if African American men had no rights that the African American women's cause "was meaningless" (69).

The role of Peter H. Clark, an African American school administrator, is a highlight of Davis's work as it emphasizes starkly the push-and-pull dynamics of black self-help versus integration for both professional and community leaders. In the north the majority of teachers working in segregated black schools were white and many intimidated or ridiculed black students. At the same time, as integrated staff under the aegis of white administrators and school board, African American teachers were invariably the last employed and first removed from teaching positions. Davis asserts that most black teachers lived and worked in the communities in which they taught, thus living with and empathizing with their students and parents. Clark, an Ohio resident and figure lost to history, proselytized for integrated schools from the pragmatic position that there were not enough black students in many northern communities to make it economically feasible to have segregation—therefore, integration was both fiscally prudent and socially progressive (86). Such a stance by a school administrator (and Clark was not an anomaly) risked the opprobrium of his community and his colleagues.

By the early 1870s, northern blacks were dismayed by the defections of previously supportive white Republicans, including that of the venerable Charles Sumner. These defections tested many African Americans' support

for the GOP and presaged a “retreat from Reconstruction.” Indeed, this shift by former white Republican supporters resulted in many African Americans’ questioning their political loyalty to the Republican Party. Davis provides evidence of political leaders such as William Still and Robert Purvis trumpeting a break from the Republican Party and supporting independent candidates or (the height of apostasy!) backing a Democrat—a position which provoked a violent reaction from African Americans in the case of Still, who had to request police protection. Even Frederick Douglass vacillated between supporting blacks’ right to vote as they pleased to calling a contemporary a “Judas Iscariot” for voting for a Democrat (129). In the final analysis, posits the author, president Rutherford B. Hayes’s strategy of silent acquiescence in the face of southern violence perpetrated against African Americans after originally supporting black political rights provided proof that Reconstruction was over for the sake of political and social unity of the United States.

*We Will Be Satisfied With Nothing Less* sheds light on Reconstruction history from the perspective of northern and western African Americans, a rare scholarly effort in recent historiography. In this clearly written and highly readable work, the author rightly focuses on the twin struggles of black political rights and quality education for African American youth. All the same, in his attempt at scholarly balance near the end of this book, Davis appears to be a bit sanguine on the progress of the struggle for African Americans. This reader wished for a work that went beyond the 1870s so that evidence could be presented to support the contention that African Americans (in the 1880s) were able to convince the majority of northern legislatures to enact legislation even before the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In the South during the 1870s and 1880s the lives of African Americans—in the trenchant words of historian Rayford Logan—spiraled towards “the nadir.” Nevertheless, Davis’s accessible book addresses the paucity of Reconstruction history outside the South.

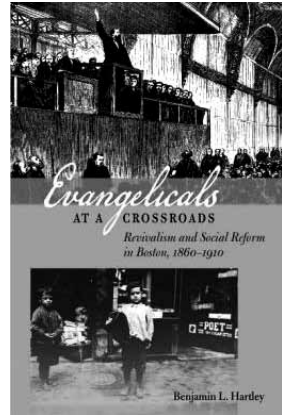
*Kam Teo is a Librarian at the Weyburn Public Library, Saskatchewan, Canada.*

*Evangelicals at a Crossroads: Revivalism and Social Reform in Boston, 1860-1910.* By Benjamin L. Hartley. Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011. 296 pp. \$85.00 (cloth), \$39.95 (paper), \$37.99 (e-book).

New England is stereotyped as Congregationalist, since New England and Boston are, after all, the site of the Puritan founders and their religious legacy. Concurrently, Boston is also recognized as Catholic, owing to the massive influx in the early nineteenth century of Irish to Boston and surrounding areas.

While stereotypes exist because they contain at least a kernel of truth, generally life and the world are more complex, more nuanced, and perhaps of a different nature altogether. In the case of New England in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the decades after the Civil War and before World War I, the stereotypes remained somewhat valid while strongly different religious groups of major significance emerged and became a significant, if not overwhelming, force in the evolution of Boston. Benjamin Hartley's well developed study of evangelicals during the period illustrates their impact on a city undergoing major political and structural change, in a religious environment that was changing dynamically as well.

Evangelicals, regardless of denomination, believe in the need to be born again, to have an emotional experience of conversion rather than just an intellectual acceptance of the faith. They feel obligated to proselytize, to spread the faith to others, both the unchurched and those of competing faiths. They are not fundamentalists necessarily, although fundamentalists tend to be evangelical. Evangelicals belong to no particular denomination, and denominations routinely encompass both evangelical and non-evangelical believers. In Boston, evangelicals were strong in the Salvationist and Baptist denominations, but the largest evangelical contingents, and the most addressed in Hartley's work, were Methodists, leaders of the non-denominational open church, or social reformers of various types. Revivals were popular in the period. In fact, the author frames his work beginning with a massive revival by Dwight Moody in 1877 and ending with a more subdued revival by a lesser-known revivalist thirty years later.



Methodists are representative of the flux of the era because they most clearly had to decide whether to maintain their somewhat primitive emotionalism in the face of newly emerging social stances. Methodism in the late nineteenth century was redefined from historical emotionalism and individualism to the more structured and formal approximation of a socially involved high church that, later, defined Methodism in the twentieth century.

Not just in Boston but across the nation, religious turbulence affected both the old denominations and the new, evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike. There was the rise of the premillennial movement, whose tenet was that the world was not going to get any better until after the second coming. Premillennialism created disarray for those who believed in social progress and caused a disturbance of the long-accepted postmillennial beliefs of most organized groups. Also disruptive was the higher criticism of the progressive academics, a scholarly exegesis on the historical development of the Bible that upset the long held belief in the divinely written and infallible Bible. Another controversial movement was the social gospel, which sought to ameliorate and reform the undesirable aspects of urban life. This “social gospel” clashed with both the long-held emphasis on individual salvation as more valid than good works and with the premillennial expectation that the world would get better only after the second coming and the millennial struggle.

In the midst of this religious ferment, Boston was also changing demographically, with newcomers from the rural hinterlands, immigrants from Canada and southeast Europe, and movement of the old-style Congregationalists to the newly available suburbs. The urban population needed more support than had been the custom. Evangelicals and the old guard Episcopalians and other Brahmin institutions worked together to improve the city.

The evangelical-affected denominations had more difficulty than the older high churches in accepting the social gospel; believing in the primacy of individual salvation, evangelicals twisted and turned before finally turning to social work. Through the era, freelance evangelical revivalists and non-denominational churches came and went, the Salvation Army and other reform groups formed and spread, and Boston evolved into a much more complex religious environment than is customarily recognized. The period saw the rise of deaconesses, charity facilities, church-based social services of a scope nearing those of the present-day megachurch, institutions of higher education including Boston University, and Americanization efforts. The undercurrent of anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and so on remained a factor, but it lessened to an extent. More importantly, the reforms persisted.

Hartley's book deals with complex and potentially confusing religious concepts, shades of belief and doctrine, with easy-to-follow succinctness. It provides examples, referring to the people and the institutions in a social/cultural context, tying them to national and international movements as well as grounding them in the local scene. Because it retrieves a previously neglected aspect of New England religious and social history, it is an important addition to the scholar's bookshelf. As well as being informative, it is also interesting to read.

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***Extravaganza King: Robert Barnet and Boston Musical Theater.* By Anne Alison Barnet. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2004. 190. \$18.95 (Hardcover)**

The author, the great granddaughter of Robert Barnet, tells the story of the stage productions of Cadet Theatricals or Extravaganzas, written, directed, and produced by Barnet in the very late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The "cadets" were members of the First Corps of Cadets, a volunteer militia made up primarily of Harvard graduates and connected solidly to Boston Brahmin society. The theatricals were increasingly elaborate musicals in which all parts were played by the male cadets. They were staged to raise money to build an armory so the Corps could easily defend Boston from an immigrant uprising.



The author's purpose was to tell the story of her great-grandfather's involvement in musical theater as indicated by the sub-title, "Robert Barnet and Boston Musical Theater." Although the book details his work, this sub-title is misleading for several reasons. First, it indicates that Barnet was a major player in Boston Musical Theater from the 1880s through the turn of the century. This is not the case. It would also seem that one would get a detailed, or at least broad, overview of what was going on in Boston Musical Theater during this time period. This is also not the case. Rather, the book is

a piece of “little-known Boston history,” as stated in its introduction (xiii). It provides detailed research showing the results of Barnet’s work on planning, writing, managing, and directing these musical extravaganzas. Although the story has a number of possibly interesting narratives, the author does not focus or develop these, and so the book becomes a detailed, sometimes tedious, look at a small subsection of amateur Boston musical theater from 1889 through 1906.

The book begins by briefly explaining the origins of Boston’s First Corp of Cadets, and their connection to the city, Harvard University, and the Boston Brahmins. The focus is their plans to build an armory. It only minimally introduces Robert Barnet, at the time a prosperous sugar merchant, and describes how he became involved in the First Corps’ efforts to raise funds by putting on elaborate shows with the cadets as performers. Barnet, who was neither a member of the Corps nor a Boston Brahmin, became the primary author, lyricist, director, and stage manager for these elaborate productions that contributed a substantial amount of money toward building the armory. All told, the “theatricals” raised more than \$245,000 for the building, which is currently known to Bostonians as the Park Plaza Castle.

The book then progresses chronologically through each of the thirteen shows, staged between 1889 and 1906. It provides much detail on the early, most successful extravaganzas, a few of which did wind up on the professional stage. However, for every production, the book documents challenges and success, provides pictures, and describes in great detail music, lyrics, and comedic dialogue. Interwoven in a very small way is Barnet’s life as his regular business collapses and he sees himself primarily as an author and producer of musical plays. The book ends with a coda describing how Barnet’s theatrical career eventually died in New York between 1908 and 1912, leaving him to live the rest of his life in obscurity until his death in 1933.

Although the book offers a number of facts of the personal and business life of Barnet, the author is left to modestly speculate on what Barnet was truly like as a person. This leaves the reader wanting more information about his motivations. Although the book’s jacket blurb seems to promise that the subject’s great-granddaughter would bring Barnet’s persona to life by “drawing upon a trove of photographs, scrapbooks, and family memorabilia,” this is not the case. The author does not give the reader any real biographical background of Barnet until page 50. We know some of the facts about his businesses, but there is very little insight into Barnet’s character other than some conclusions made by the author from secondhand observations. This made the Cadet Theatricals the major focus of the book, and it was primarily

a dry one, filled with tedious detail and lacking an overriding “story” or narrative that would draw the reader’s interest to read the next chapter.

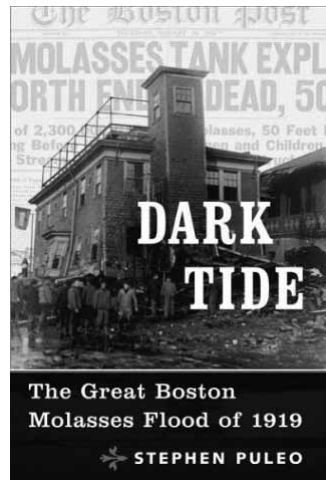
It is for these reasons that *Extravaganza King* is primarily useful as a piece of history research to add to one’s knowledge of this small slice of Boston Musical Theater history. For those with a particular interest in Cadet Theatricals, this book would be a very useful source.

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***Dark Tide: The Great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919.* By Stephen Puleo. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004. 273 pages. \$15.00 (paperback).**

The most inspiring quality of Stephen Puleo’s book *Dark Tide*, is evidence of his intensive research apparent throughout the entire text. Carefully-chosen details reveal the influence of national events on the citizens of Boston as well as the horrors and long-term impact surrounding the molasses flood found in the community during the years 1915 through 1927. Puleo incorporates personal sentiments of those affected by the flood through direct quotes and story-telling strategies, propelling the reader quickly to the end of the book. While there are no endnotes, several pages of bibliographic essays provide the reader with more sources to pursue about various topics presented.

The horrific nature of the flood comes to life in Puleo’s book, silencing the giggles and comments that suggest a “molasses flood” was a silly or comic event. Puleo follows several key people who were part of the flood - Arthur Jell, responsible for the tank holding the molasses, William Connor, a firefighter trapped by the flood, Martin Clougherty, a bartender who lost family members to the flood, Hugh Ogden, who found the company liable for the disaster, and Charles Choate, Jr., who defended United States Industrial Alcohol (USIA) from charges of negligence. The personalities and





motivations of these and other individuals become readily apparent in Puleo's explanations of the importance of anarchists and the need for industrial alcohol during the war years. The movement toward Prohibition, economic challenges and labor union strikes such as the Boston Police strike help the reader understand how the defense of USIA could focus on external reasons for the failure of the molasses tank rather than solely on company liability.

Puleo explains why the molasses tank was placed on Commercial Street in a highly populated region of Boston - many Italian immigrants lived in the area and would remain silent rather than be accused of being anarchists or troublemakers. There was a great deal of money to be made from industrial alcohol during the war. The job of building the tank was rushed and safety not checked in order to be prepared for an incoming load of molasses. Puleo discusses the consistency of molasses in various temperatures, enabling the reader to understand how molasses changes during warm and cold weather, thus causing the stressed tank to eventually fail. Puleo provides some history of the molasses trade in Boston, describing the first ship to visit Salem and the importation of slaves intertwined with the molasses and rum trade. The impact of various explosions around the country at other munitions companies, the actions and trial of Sacco & Vanzetti and bombings at leading citizens' homes further serve as evidence to support the belief that anarchists caused the failure of the tank in Boston.

Puleo successfully links these details together in an engaging fashion without confusing the reader or straying too far away from the book's purpose. Hugh Ogden's personality also plays an important role in Puleo's work and Ogden is portrayed as a very upstanding, thoughtful and deliberate individual who takes his role as auditor very seriously during the trial. If Ogden had not been the auditor, this case might have been decided in favor of USIA and the lives of those swallowed by the molasses would have been lost for nothing. Many of these points as well as the people who either died or survived the flood are introduced in the first third of the book, thus causing the reader to care about those who suffered and to understand why so many believe that the tank's failure was due to anarchy.

The horror on the day of the flood was unspeakable. Parents saw their children swept away, many people were crushed to death, some swept into the harbor. Others survived by floating on beds or sheltered under rubble long enough to be found and yet high enough off the ground to breathe. Puleo writes about these people as if he knows them. He carries his reader along with the flood into caring for those who cry out for their children, call to the trapped, find the dead. He describes how one man chose to have lunch with his wife, rather than remain on site and thus his life was spared—

this is the level of detail Puleo provides, satisfying the reader immensely. Accompanying the description are many photographs of the event that evoke more recent horrors of death and destruction.

The last third of the book is dedicated to the court case and includes transcripts with evidence of the damage caused by the molasses which could only have been due to tank failure, not to an explosion. Unfortunately, during this time, the Palmer bombing occurred leading to Palmer's raids in the spring of 1919 which only fueled the belief that anarchists had bombed the molasses tank in Boston months before. Puleo uses this information to increase the tension of the reader before he writes of the trial and results of the trial which could have been dull in less-skilled hands.

*Dark Tide* is an emotionally engaging book that leaves the reader with a far greater understanding of life in Boston and the struggles faced by the country during 1915 through 1927. This would be a highly engaging text to bring into a high school or college classroom since the intensity of the snapshot of this era would remind students that real people make history and that actions and character do matter. This text would also allow students to understand the interconnectedness of national events on local perceptions and actions. That said, Puleo's book would also make a great beach read, with his engaging style and fast-paced presentation of events.

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***The Given Day: A Novel.* By Dennis Lehane. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2008. 720 pages. \$16.99 (paperback).**

In his 2008 epic, *The Given Day*, bestselling crime author Dennis Lehane ventures into the realm of historical fiction, recreating the social, cultural, and political forces of 1918-1919 that led to the 1919 Boston police force strike and the rise of "Black Wall Street" in Tulsa's Greenwood district. Lehane weaves many memorable real-life characters into the narrative, including Red Sox pitcher and soon-to-be Yankee Babe Ruth, American Communist Party founder Louis C. Fraina, FBI agent and uncompromising "patriot" Rayme Finch, and then-governor Calvin Coolidge, among others. In addition to creating memorable



characters, Lehane draws parallels between the prevailing early twentieth-century attitude towards labor activists and non-whites with the mindset created by the current political climate, providing readers with a much more personal connection to *The Given Day* than is often experienced reading a work of historical fiction.

Lehane's narrative centers around Danny Coughlin, a police officer and emerging activist born into privilege, and Luther Laurence, an African-American baseball talent who is also soon to be a father. When Luther leaves Tulsa to escape a life of crime, which has left him a wanted man, he relocates to Boston and forms a most unlikely pairing with Danny. Lehane elicits a sense of empathy for many of the major players in this story, which shows that even in cases that presume to pit good against evil, it is almost never quite that simple. Danny and Luther both have their own glaring flaws. These do not override their good intentions, but they certainly complicate their roles as "heroes" in the narrative, and perhaps make us reconsider our own perceptions of the word as well.

Lehane is similarly able to create empathy for characters on all sides of the issues presented in his work. Danny's father, police Captain Thomas Coughlin, manipulates many of Boston's inner business and security. And he sells radicals' personal information to business leaders in the community. However, he is also a family man and a believer in the American Dream, and appears thoroughly convinced that he moves his commonwealth in a positive direction by tugging on the strings behind the city's curtain.

Likewise, Lehane paints Nathan Bishop, a regular at meetings of the Socialist organization the Roxbury Lettish Workingman's Society, with strokes that match Nathan's own description of his hometown of Manchester, England: "A palette of grays and the occasional brown" (246). Nathan is a doctor who allegedly performs surgical work on radicals whose acts of terrorism have left them wounded, and many of his affiliates do indeed prove violent and even bloodthirsty as the narrative progresses. However, Nathan holds dear the notion that every individual is capable of helping mankind in some way, and his nonviolent acts of heroism during a fight between members of the police force and the Lettish Workingman's Society ultimately save Danny's life. The confrontation itself forces readers to question the lack of discernment city leaders demonstrate by attacking any individual that could potentially be called a "red," "Bolshie," or "radical."

Despite the book's early-twentieth-century setting, the words and actions of many local and national authority figures portrayed in it bring to mind rhetoric and attitudes witnessed in the buildup to Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the opening of the detention camp

at Guantanamo Bay. In an interview with *Bookpage*, in fact, Lehane states that even though he “didn’t set out to write a book with parallels, they just happened.” For example, when Danny and his younger brother go out for frankfurters, which have been redubbed “Liberty Sausages” due to the war, it is impossible not to smile at the memory of twenty-first century restaurant-goers ordering “Freedom Fries.”

Predictably, not all of the parallels that Lehane creates—or discovers, as the case may be—between post-World War I Boston and post-9/11 America are quite as lighthearted. In one speech, police Lieutenant Eddie McKenna promises to “subdue, without quarter, our common enemy,” leaving the police force “Spartan, utile, so fused to their sense of duty that they were indistinguishable from it” (456). The lieutenant’s words spark a widespread, indiscriminate slaughter of anyone resembling a Bolshevik. McKenna’s speech parallels President George W. Bush’s call to “hunt the killers one by one and bring them to justice,” which preceded the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, McKenna’s call to action distracts officers from their own struggle to secure fair working wages, reasonable hours, and sanitary station houses. Some readers might find a parallel between this dynamic and passage of the Patriot Act, which took away individual rights on a level that would have been impossible in times of peace.

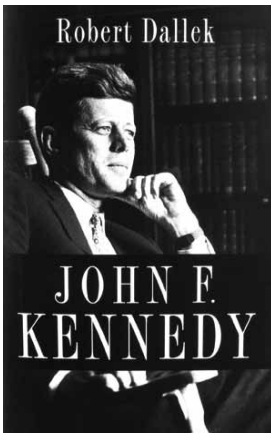
*The Given Day* is recommended for historians and lovers of literature alike, as it is well-researched, engrossing, and as highly readable as the author’s previous crime fiction. As with any good work of historical fiction, it leaves readers hungry to delve deeper into many of its non-fiction elements, from the Great Boston Molasses Tragedy of 1919, to the police force strike later that same year, and even to Babe Ruth’s antagonistic relationship with Boston Red Sox owner Harry Frazee. While the narrative does provide closure to many of its largest subplots and conflicts, it also leaves plenty of loose ends for subsequent follow-ups, one of which, *Live by Night*, was published in 2012.

Loose ends aside, the overwhelming sense of triumph that the work leaves with the reader makes it feel complete in its own right. Perhaps Lehane’s greatest accomplishment with *The Given Day* lies in an unwavering belief in the human spirit and the power of the individual to shift the current of any situation. In an obscenity-filled rant directed at Danny in a pub, Nathan Bishop addresses those who assuage their guilt with a guise of helplessness by asking, “What can *I* do?” Bishop’s answer to the question reveals one of the work’s major themes in microcosm: “What can you *do*? What *can’t* you do?” (252). Because the troubles evoked in the narrative so closely resemble those of the present day, readers feel like they have a personal stake in each

character's ability to rise above his or her unique circumstances, and the spirit of Bishop's sentiment, exemplified liberally throughout its pages, make *The Given Day* a decidedly uplifting work.

*Ryan Bell is a former editorial assistant for the Historical Journal of Massachusetts and currently works in the security industry.*

***John F. Kennedy.* By Robert Dallek. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003. 78 pages. \$12.95 (hardcover).**



Common queries greet a new biography about historical icons such as Washington, Lincoln, or JFK—is this book really necessary? Does it bring new insights? Present a new view? Make us think any differently about the subject? Unfortunately, in the case of *John F. Kennedy* by Robert Dallek, the answer is “no” on all counts.

The book is clear, precise, and well written. In seventy-three short pages (five pages of the book are reserved for the Source list) Dallek presents a concise overview of the life of JFK, focusing mostly on the pursuit and management of his presidency. For someone unfamiliar with that life, this book would make a fine introduction.

However, anyone already familiar with the story would be far better off reading any number of JFK biographies, including the author's own, *John F. Kennedy, An Unfinished Life*, which this volume was distilled from. One can only think that the smaller book was written as a teaser for the larger tome, enticing readers to later editions.

Compression of a monumental life into such a small volume naturally leads to painful choices regarding what to include and exclude. One glaring example is that there is no mention in this book of Kennedy's run for the vice-presidency in 1956. This was a crucial event in the early political life of JFK which thrust him into the national spotlight, and is certainly worth a mention in an overview history.

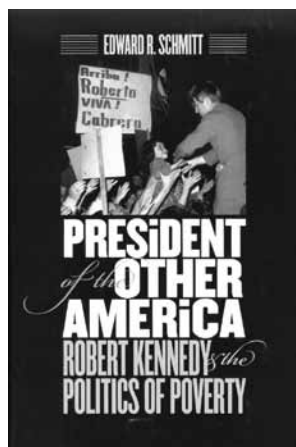
Seasoned JFK historians will glean nothing new from this biography. Kennedy novices will receive a well written view from thirty thousand feet. However, they should be able to find similar material in the archives of

*American Heritage Magazine* or elsewhere on the internet without paying an inflated price for a meager hardcover book not much longer than a magazine article.

*Stephen Donnelly is a consultant for the insurance industry and a Westfield State University alumnus.*

***President of the Other America: Robert Kennedy & the Politics of Poverty.***  
By Edward R. Schmitt. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. 324 pages. \$26.95 (paperback), \$39.95 (cloth).

The Kennedy mystique fell unevenly on the boys, with Robert falling short of the others, especially John. Robert was the scrawny little brother, the scrappy and totally loyal brother to the dynamic and charismatic John. Without John, Robert floundered. According to Schmitt, Robert finally began to come into his own when he found an issue, a cause, almost a crusade—and it was not opposition to the war in Vietnam. The college kids protesting the war had other heroes, and Robert Kennedy was a second choice, but for those in Michael Harrington's *Other America*, Robert Kennedy was the one shining hope whose loss was sorely felt.



Poverty, before Lyndon Johnson declared war on it, existed at levels almost unimaginable today. Society still has the safety net of the sixties, however frayed. Lyndon Johnson rightly receives credit for committing the nation to his Great Society, but Robert Kennedy also earned credit for making poverty a prominent issue, even in a time dominated by an unpopular war and a generational crisis. The book highlights Robert Kennedy's role in making the elimination of poverty a national issue.

To lay the groundwork for the Kennedy anti-poverty effort, the author has to put Kennedy into context. A fairly significant share of the volume is taken up by family history and the early political career of Bobby Kennedy. The information is standard: Robert as lesser brother in an aggressive family with a couple of war hero brothers whose shadows are large. Too young for the war, Robert established his early career in the political background,

including unsavory ties to McCarthy and the witch hunt. He developed a stronger profile against crime, proved mediocre on civil rights at a time when most major politicians were mediocre on civil rights. Then came the assassination, the stepping away, the carpetbag Senate seat in New York. Finally, Robert Kennedys became aroused by poverty as an issue.

Robert Kennedy was busy opposing Lyndon Johnson, drifting into a race for the presidency, and not particularly involved in heavy lifting as the Senator from poverty. Throughout his Senatorial career, Kennedy seemed less interested in the process of lining up votes, creating and collecting chits, than being an effective national legislator. He was the traditional upper class gentleman, dabbling in politics as part of his class obligation, in the Senate only because he had nothing better to do.

It was a family failing. John tended to be a dilettante too, unwilling to enter into the legislative fray. Neither John nor Robert Kennedy had the stamina; that all came to Teddy once he realized that the Senate was where his destiny lay. Teddy had the Kennedy zeal and the Johnson legislative moxie. Perhaps Bobby would have grown into a comparable posture. We will never know.

Schmitt has worked hard to develop poverty as the driving passion of Robert Kennedy after the loss of John. His study reveals Robert as misplaced in the Senate, inept at the hard work to bring an idea into law. The study also establishes that Robert Kennedy undoubtedly felt a sincere concern for the plight of the poor he encountered, though his legislative contribution was relatively small.

What Kennedy did have was the Kennedy mystique and he had the Kennedy connections. Moreover, he had the willingness to enter the world of the poor, first as a patron, later as an advocate. He was more effective with immediate social contact, in the rundown inner cities, in personal relations not only with anti-poverty leaders but also the average citizen. Over time Kennedy developed more than a patrician patronizing of the poor. He became an advocate and a popular leader, but his performance was inconsistent at best because of his personality and his competing interests – the war, the campaign, Lyndon Johnson.

Schmitt has created a nice little book on a neglected aspect of Robert Kennedy. He is clearly a Kennedy sympathizer, not one of the many who revel in the sordid aspects of the Kennedy brothers. Rather, Schmitt reveals a side to Kennedy that is often lost in the clutter of his roles within the Kennedy and against the Johnson administration. He shows Kennedy growing, maturing, becoming a bringer of hope if little more tangible to the

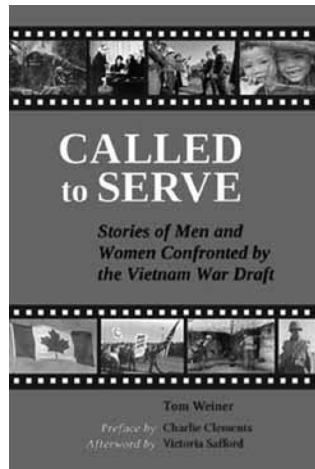
downtrodden of the nation. It's well researched, nicely written, worth the time to read it.

*John H. Barnhill, Ph.D., is a retired federal civil servant and an independent scholar in Houston, Texas.*

***Called to Serve: Stories of Men and Women Confronted by the Vietnam War Draft.* By Tom Weiner. Amherst and Florence, MA: Levellers Press, 2011. 360 pages. \$22.50 (paperback).**

In *Called to Serve: Stories of Men and Women Confronted by the Vietnam War Draft*, Tom Weiner has brought together what amounts to some thirty mini-biographies, each fascinating in their own right, under the unifying umbrella of how each individual reacted when faced with involuntary conscription into military service. With sections titled Those Who Served, Those Who Left, Those Who Refused, Those Who Found Ways to Beat the Draft, and Those Who Chose Conscientious Objection, we can see that a number of alternative actions could be taken. Faced with conscription, each individual made their choice based on education, finances, social class and the support of others. The final chapter, "Those Who Loved, Supported, and Counseled," tells the stories of four women who also served, though not in the military. It is about women's perspective of the war from those who had loved one's conscripted to those who worked aggressively against the draft.

In addition to these absorbing stories, there is an important chapter entitled *The Draft in America: a Brief History*, which is a valuable overview. It reminds us that military service has always drawn disproportionately from the poorer classes where options and resources are fewer. Several of the book's subjects wrestled with the guilt of knowing that being white, wealthy enough to have access to sympathetic doctors (and for a while, being in college), made it much easier for them to avoid service. Indeed, African Americans made up only 11% of the population but accounted for 17% of the Army's casualties in Vietnam in 1967.





A key event for so many of those whose stories are told here was the Draft Lottery on the evening of December 1, 1969. In many of these accounts, such as that of Diane Clancy, that night is still a vivid memory as friends gathered around and listened as one after another birthday was announced. Designed to equalize the inequalities of who would be drafted and who wouldn't, the lottery created a sort of surreal experience where getting a high number meant you might be spared and getting a low number could feel like a death sentence. While in reality whiteness, wealth and connections still kept many from being inducted, the lottery did give people a chance to more fully plan for the next steps, including the option of joining before getting drafted. There was incentive for this. As Weiner writes "Although draftees made up only 16% of the American armed forces, by 1969, they accounted for 88% of the infantry rifleman in Vietnam and accounted for more than half of the Army's battle deaths." Having a low number meant you not only had time to act, you had to act.

The choices these stories illustrate were often not easy to make or execute. For Chuck Hommes, agreeing to conscription meant going to war and learning to kill or be killed, as well as bouts with drug addiction and depression. Some, like Craig Dreeszen, found that leaving the country disrupted lives, marriages and families. Achieving conscientious objector status meant endless legal battles and struggle for Tom Gardner, as he directly confronted the powers that could (and did) throw him in jail even as he continued to work in the antiwar and civil rights movements. Steve Trudel knew that refusing could mean jail time and the criminal record that would come with it, or years of anxiety wondering if the next knock on the door would be the authorities coming to arrest him. And, of course, for so many, like George Laye, beating the draft often left a sense of shame—that because you didn't go, someone else, someone with less privilege perhaps, would go to fight and possibly die in your place.

Almost incredibly, there is a noticeable absence of regret in these stories. The hard choices that were made had to be made and there is a sense that given the same circumstances, most of these individuals would do it again, with minor tweaks based on hindsight. These are not the tales of cowards or traitors, although they were seen that way at the time by many of their communities or even their families and friends. (Although fear is understandably a part of many stories.) Instead, it is a collection of stories from principled and thoughtful people, heroic people really, who took a stand against the full power of the U.S. government and much of society. It is interesting to note how many of those profiled have gone on to work in non-profits, education, social services and other professions that focus on

helping others. They've gone on to embody the idea that serving is not only for those in the military, even as they rejected the idea that being a patriot meant you had to obediently kill for your country. These men and women truly were called to serve, and have answered with compassion and courage.

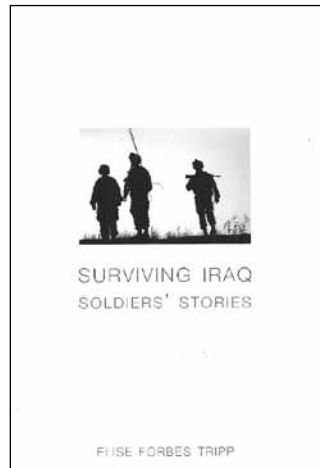
*Nigel Dobereiner is an assistant professor of communication at Westfield State University.*

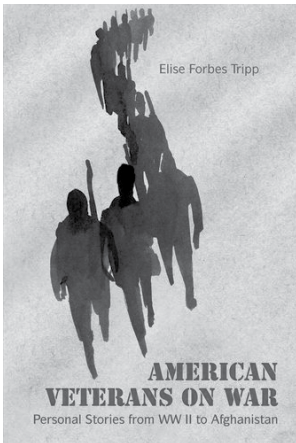
***Surviving Iraq: Soldiers' Stories.* By Elise Forbes Tripp. Charles City, VA: Olive Branch Press, 2007. 274 pages. \$17.99 (paperback).**

***American Veterans on War: Personal Stories from WW II to Afghanistan.* By Elise Forbes Tripp. Charles City, VA: Olive Branch Press, 2011. 460 pages. \$14.95 (paperback).**

Two recent books by Elise Forbes Tripp document the experiences of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Similar to Tom Weiner's subjects in *Called to Serve: Stories of Men and Women Confronted by the Vietnam War Draft* (excerpted in this issue's Editor's Choice selection), a majority of Tripp's oral interviewees were also from Massachusetts, particularly from the Pioneer Valley. In her first book, *Surviving Iraq: Soldiers' Stories* (2007), many of her subjects were students at Holyoke Community College (HCC), UMass Amherst, and other colleges in Western Massachusetts at the time Tripp conducted her interviews. (At the time, Tripp was an adjunct instructor at HCC.) Unlike Tom Weiner's subjects from the Vietnam era, however, all of her interviewees volunteered for the armed services and all of their accounts focus on their experiences of modern warfare.

In *Surviving Iraq: Soldiers' Stories* (2007), Tripp provides interviews with thirty men and women. She conceived of the idea of the book when her nephew was deployed to Iraq in 2003. Divided into six sections, each focuses on a different aspect of the conflict. They are titled: Invasion, Winning Hearts and Minds, Boots on the Ground, Women in the War Zone, War's Lasting Impact, and The Ultimate Loss. The narratives testify to Tripp's skills as an





interviewer. Both Tripp and Weiner allow their subjects to speak for themselves; 95% of their text is direct transcriptions from their one-on-one interviews.

Unlike Vietnam, however, the Iraq war was fought by an all-volunteer army. At the time of their service, Tripp's subjects ranged from age eighteen to sixty. They had enlisted for diverse reasons: adventure, patriotism, extra income, paying for college, defending their country and defeating a declared enemy, as well as "to please their families and to find themselves." Olive Branch Press offers this cogent summary from its book jacket:

These thirty in-depth narratives belong to the national dialogue on the war and also to a people's history of the war. We find unvarnished views of the war's conduct and its rationales, as well as of its commander in chief and his administration. Soldiers' individual experiences range from the harrowing to the hilarious: all the indelible human detail of war. As fighters, soldiers must face urban warfare against an unidentifiable enemy; as women they must guard against assault from their male comrades; as military personnel they live on bases that have modern movie theaters, gyms, the internet and phones, Burger Kings and Pizza Huts, all in the midst of a dangerous conflict. Almost a half a million soldiers have served in the four years of this war, but each story is unique, telling us what it is like to serve in war, and to survive it.

Along with historians Andrew Carroll and Howard Zinn, documentary filmmaker Ken Burns gave *Surviving Iraq* high praise: "This is a 'bottom-up' celebration of the trials and terrors of so-called ordinary soldiers brought to that most terrible and transcendent of all moments – combat . . . What emerges is a shocking, moving and utterly heroic portrait of young men and women in impossible situations."<sup>1</sup>

Oral histories offer powerful teaching tools in the classroom, both at the high school and college levels. First-hand accounts provide an immediacy and vividness that is often lacking in textbooks. Moreover, when soldiers

<sup>1</sup> Ken Burns, quoted in Interlink Press's publicity materials and the book jacket.

are the same age as college students, their words may resonate at a deeper level. I have often used oral histories in introductory U.S. history survey classes. Andrew Carroll's *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars* (NY: Scriber and Sons, 2002) offers an alternate lens through letters rather than interviews. His collection brings together hundreds of soldiers' letters from the Civil War to the first Persian Gulf War. Both genres, letters and oral histories, offer readers uncensored, unvarnished, and often unsettling glimpses into the reality of war.

The power of oral histories propelled Tripps into a second research project. In *American Veterans on War: Personal Stories from WW II to Afghanistan* (2011), Tripp expanded her focus to include fifty-five veterans aged twenty to ninety years old. The Vietnam War is central and is represented by twenty-three narratives. A full 85% of the veterans hail from Massachusetts. As a result, *American Veterans on War* offers a unique perspective on seventy years of American warfare from a diverse group of the state's residents. Common themes resonate across wars and across generations. The book jacket notes:

The veterans raise questions about when wars are worth fighting, what missions can and can't be won, and the costs and benefits of US intervention, both around the world and domestically. Veterans tell wrenching stories of coping with hostile forces without uniforms, of not knowing who is friend or foe, and of the lasting traces of combat once they have returned home.

Reviewer Robert Emmet Meagher, author of *Herakles Gone Mad: Rethinking Heroism in an Age of Endless War*, perceptively observes:

There is never one war or one true history of it. Every war is countless, in the lives it touches and in the stories it spawns; and the truth of any war is finally out and safe only once all of its stories have been told and listened to and preserved. Stories are a matter of life and death for war veterans, a road to healing, a road to be traveled by us all. Elise Forbes Tripp has done us all a great service by taking in and passing on to us the resonant voices and stories of fifty-five men and women whose collective military service spans our nation's major wars of the last seventy years. They cannot possibly offer the whole truth, but they bring us closer to it. Every shard is precious and indispensable."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Robert Emmet Meagher, Professor of Humanities, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA, quoted in Interlink Press's publicity materials and the book jacket.

A native of Milton, Massachusetts, Elise Forbes Tripp graduated from Harvard University and has a Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. A former international relations counselor for United Nations Affairs at the World Bank, she was an adjunct professor of American History at Holyoke Community College when she conducted many of the interviews. Her varied professional background in international affairs gave her a unique lens through which to analyze the events recounted by her subjects. Read together, these two books offer a searing glimpse into modern warfare and the experiences and views of the men and women who fight our nation's wars.

*L. Mara Dodge is a professor of history at Westfield State University and the editor of the Historical Journal of Massachusetts.*

***Farewell to Factory Towns?* A film by Maynard Seider (Produced by Seider & Amherstmedia.org, 2012)**



Retired Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts sociology professor Maynard Seider has written and directed a film that explores both the history of North Adams and the city's complex relationship with the Sprague factory complex. Using strong images and an often powerful narrative, Seider has crafted a highly watchable documentary about the rise and fall of a factory town. Throughout the film, Seider asks serious questions about the economic history of Sprague, an electrical capacitor factory that arrived in the 1930s, and its replacement, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), which opened in the Sprague factory space in 1999.

*Farewell to Factory Towns?* is divided into three parts exploring the history of North Adams, the rise and fall of the Sprague factory, and the lobbying efforts that led to the creation and opening of MASS MoCA. Interviews with older residents and archival footage combine to situate North Adams among Massachusetts mill towns and tell the story of how economic boom and bust cycles impacted this community of working-class immigrants and native-born citizens. At the Sprague factory, while salaries were often low, the

jobs were steady, and downtown North Adams bustled with shops, theaters, and train service that ran citizens to and from New York City or Boston until 1958.

Robert Sprague, the founder of the factory, envisioned himself as the corporate father type, providing work for many residents but holding national union movements at bay for many years. By the early 1960s, the corporation was quite successful and began moving portions of its manufacturing to Mexico and the Caribbean. Meanwhile, workers in North Adams were still experiencing low wages and other challenges. Even after a successful strike in the early 1970s that addressed grievance arbitration and salaries, the end for Sprague was drawing near. By the mid 1980s, Sprague had been sold, shrunk, and finally closed down. Seider explains these transitions in the context of growing deindustrialization in the United States and the economic stagflation of the 1970s.

When the idea of opening MASS MoCA was introduced by Thomas Krens of Williams College and North Adams Mayor John Barrett, the question of the creative economy or “museum as savior” was broached. It is in parts two and three of the film that Seider focuses on the hard choices communities make in the wake of economic challenges and on the solutions they seek when looking for any and all answers in attempts to revive a town.

Most quibbles with this film are style and organizational issues that I wish Seider had more carefully addressed. For example, at times in the opening narrative, labels could be added so that the viewer understands who is speaking. These individuals are identified later in the film. In other instances, critiques of both Reagan- and Clinton-administration policies, while generally related to commentary on economic concerns of their eras, are not as directly related to the fate of North Adams and Sprague as they might have been. In the end, however, Seider has poured a tremendous amount of love and affection into this documentary. Seider has also demanded that viewers and policy makers alike reconsider the often disastrous and self-interested decisions made by corporate industry as well as the occasionally naive hopes and dreams for salvation communities place on the backs of a single entity.

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