

*Reviews (Films / Documentaries / TV Shows)*

*6 Days* [film].

Directed by Toa Fraser. 2017.

General Film Corporation; XYZ Films; New Zealand Film Commission. 94 minutes.

The 1979 Iran hostage crisis dominated much of the political discourse during the opening years of both the Margaret Thatcher as well as the Ronald Reagan administrations. The Iranian Revolution set the tone for contemporary diplomatic relations between the West and the Middle East. These events overshadowed popular knowledge of the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege that occurred over a six-day period in London, largely publicized and responsible for thrusting British Special Forces units into the public sphere, as well as bolstering the public's opinion for Thatcher's relatively new administration. The siege came to a climactic end when two Special Air Services (SAS) teams undertook what was classified as "Operation Nimrod," the assault on the embassy and rescue of the hostages being held by the terrorists. Ben Affleck proved with *Argo* (2012) that the tumultuous historical events following the Iranian Revolution could be effectively dramatized and also be well received by audiences. Toa Fraser's response comes from the UK's 1980 hostage crisis in its own capital city. The film *6 Days* creates a competent hostage thriller that dramatizes "Operation Nimrod" but falters due to its lack of creative direction and its collapsing of complex politics into a West-versus-Middle East conflict.

On April 30, 1980, Salim, played by actor Ben Turner, leads five other gunmen in a siege of the Iranian Embassy in London. The group demands the release of Khuzestani prisoners. These captives are members of an Arabic-speaking minority in Iran and belong to an armed resistance movement seeking sovereignty for their region. Salim's group threatens to kill one of the twenty-six hostages held in the embassy if their demands are not met. Metropolitan Police Chief Inspector Max Vernon, played by Mark Strong, handles negotiations with Salim as the standoff extends to six days. This situation prompts the newly elected Margaret Thatcher to summon SAS in a public spectacle, showing her absolute unwillingness to heed the terrorists' demands or coercion. Actor Jamie Bell portrays Lance Corporal Rusty Firman as he leads the two SAS teams during the constant change of intelligence and implementation of reconnaissance to the regiment's plans for ingress. Outside the embassy, as tension mounts on the final day of the standoff, BBC reporter Kate Adie, performed by Abbie Cornish, reports a gunshot before visually confirming the death of a hostage. The shooting compels the civil authorities to turn over control to SAS who quickly take action by infiltrating the embassy, releasing the hostages, and killing the terrorists.

The opening sequence sets the film up, unfairly, to feel like a documentary rather than a drama. The first shot opens simply with the announcement "based on true events." Immediately following, archival news footage plays: an airplane

on a runway explodes as a news anchor reports that the previous decade has led to “a Renaissance for international terrorism.” The voice affirms that this uptick in violence has been due to “a status quo of negotiation and concession.” Immediately the film establishes the events within its hour-and-a-half run time as inevitable, given the hard line Thatcher maintains in refusing to negotiate. Subtitles tell the viewer the date and location as the events start to play out on screen. Finally, with the locking of the embassy gates, subtitles inform the audience the clock has begun ticking, labeling the events they have just seen as “Day One.” However, this greatly misleads the viewer, giving the film the atmosphere of a documentary rather than the drama that follows.

The events of the film begin as six Arab gunmen kick in the front door of London’s Iranian Embassy and take those inside hostage. These brief sections of action are easily the most impressive ones in this film. The storming of the embassy deftly sets up the hostage situation and briefly develops the terrorist leader and key prisoners. The bassy punch of the electronic synthesizer score establishes and accentuates the nervous tension that characterizes the tone for the rest of the film. Once garrisoned within the embassy, the terrorists seal the gates, subtly signaling that the viewer, too, will be barred from the building for most of film’s running time. From there, *6 Days* establishes Kate Adie’s eyewitness reporting, the summoning of the SAS regiment, and the civil authorities beginning negotiation proceedings not just with the terrorists, but also with the Thatcher government that was eager to shut down the crisis to show the strength of the year-old administration. In an unusual narrative direction, the story develops through the events outside the embassy.

The only news heard from the inside stems from the curt, charged negotiations between Max Vernon and Salim. The terse phone calls between Max and Salim ratchet up the nervous tension. For most of the film, those brief discussions are all the audience sees or hears from inside the embassy. The cultural misunderstandings and tight London bureaucracy lead to a prolonged standoff. As Max builds trust and urges a non-violent resolution to the conflict, municipal authorities discuss a military takeover in the event the Arab gunmen execute a hostage. Meanwhile, the SAS practice their assault on the building. Several times the teams are almost deployed, breaching charge in hand, finger on the trigger, before being called off at the last second by regimental command.

In a more artistically driven film, this setup could have led the viewer through the political motives and cultural misunderstandings that halt negotiations before slowly realizing that the gunmen were used as political pawns. The Iraqi government planned and funded the embassy siege, sneaking soviet-made guns and grenades into the UK through diplomatic bags in an attempt to politically embarrass its neighbor. Once the siege was initiated, both Iraq and Iran refused to negotiate, leaving the six men to die as “martyrs for the Iranian Revolution.” Instead, the film falters as it makes baffling choices in the story development. The terrorists do not come into focus until halfway through

the film. They are mostly seen during negotiations with police, brief moments of surveying their surroundings through curtains, or caught on the news cameras waving their firearms as they shout their demands from the balcony. Then, the film shifts to linger on the embassy's interior and the infighting among the six gunmen. Suddenly, the film attempts to establish their cause and build audience sympathy. While the film does little of both, it suffers greatly for it. The gunmen's nuanced cause is skimmed over and barely developed. The audience is left with little but a general sense of grievance. Subtle politics are swept aside for the larger idea of Iran using the situation to create martyrs for the Iranian Revolution.

With its rough and awkward handling of politics, the film even rushes its attempt to garner sympathy for the gunmen. Of the gunmen, Salim receives the most screen time. He is portrayed as an intelligent, mostly even-tempered man. Though he is taking actions that most of the audience would not take, he is portrayed almost as an every-man. The film stresses his position as a minority Arab-speaker in Iran. His exchanges with Max show that he is willing to negotiate and give the police time, but he is stuck in a difficult situation with guns pointing at him even inside the embassy as his own team wants results and is willing to circumvent Salim's orders if necessary. As his team grows frustrated with London's constant stalling, he remains the only person sensible enough to realize that if his team starts shooting hostages, this will halt their progress and invite swift retribution. Compare that development with the team's second-in-command, Faisal. He receives just a few minutes of screen time, most of which involves him screaming or otherwise arguing with Salim. Faisal's rash action, shooting a man he claims is an Iraqi spy, triggers the SAS assault. This execution takes place in the heat of an argument and despite Salim's protests. Faisal receives little more development than a caricature; he plays the angry and brash Arab extremist against Salim's balanced temperament.

The film makes choices in development that stifle plot progression and pad its already short running time with unnecessary characters and tangents. While the cuts between negotiator Max Vernon, SAS team leader Lance Corporal Rusty Firman, and Salim build the nervous tension in a series of close calls and last-second commands to stand down, director Toa Fraser inexplicably chooses to include two completely unnecessary and irrelevant characters. For reasons of clichéd tension and melodrama, Max Vernon's wife appears several times. Her character does nothing to forward the plot or add tension to an already tense sequence of events. She only appears a handful of times, but each time she does the scene evokes unnecessary emotional manipulation. The film's last scene with Max results in his speechlessness when his wife asks him if he is alright. In an obvious juxtaposition to the inspector's masterful distraction of Salim and the hostage takers via phone conversation and fake negotiations, Max's quick wit fails as he stands in emotional shock after the trying events of the previous six days. Instead, the scene fails and the audience feels the forced attempt at easy

emotional manipulation on the filmmaker's part. However, Mrs. Vernon, with her screen time that lasts just a few minutes, can be compared almost favorably with the BBC reporters stationed outside the embassy.

Occasionally the film cuts to Kate Adie, a newspaper reporter whose reporting of the siege launched her well-respected career in the BBC. While based on the real events, the inclusion of her and her cameraman is superfluous to the story. She does nothing to progress the plot or increase the tension. The film hints that she may be influencing the story: when she sees the plainclothes SAS soldiers enter the quarantine after driving up in windowless black vans, the film hints she may have seen through the clandestine ingress of the Special Forces and might be reporting the event to the public. Yet, nothing ever comes out of these sequences. The little reporting the audience sees her do comes at the end with her narration of the beginning of the siege, which the audience has already seen in progress, with black-clad figures abseiling down the embassy's bright white façade, so her narration is out of place and seems to be for an audience other than the one watching the film. This moment is a missed opportunity, as the beginning of the siege could have been treated like the film's initial setup: a recreation of events captured on news reels. It is unfortunate that this character was not developed further and that the influence of Kate Adie's groundbreaking reporting is not felt through the narrative.

Whenever Kate gets screen time, the film's progression screeches to a halt. She adds no new information that is narratively relevant. Rather, her exploits in Prince's Gate (the embassy's Kensington location) distract the viewer from the events occurring just down the street from her supposed reporting. Instead, the film chooses to focus on Kate and the cameraman's petty squabbling with other news crews. The tonal shifts effectively remove audience members from the tension building during the other scenes in the film, practically undoing the mounting stress. Though Kate reported on the events and kept the public informed, the brief recreations of BBC live coverage do little to add any new information to the film. Instead, the film cuts immediately away from the filmed re-enactments, directly to the events being shown during the broadcasts. Why would the film makers include a newswoman when they had no intention of using her reports, like those shown at the beginning, to add to the audience's knowledge or understanding of the events unfolding through the rest of the film? This decision is baffling, and Kate's scenes could be entirely removed with no harm to the narrative.

Despite the narrative shortcomings and lack of artistic direction, the final assault by the SAS, like the opening siege, remains an excellently executed feat of cinematography. Though it deviates from official accounts of the raid, *6 Days* can be forgiven for the tightness and choreographic direction. The beginning, before the SAS breach, ratchets up the tension to have it climax in silence with only the sound of a single pane of breaking glass. During the abseiling of the Special Forces soldiers, one soldier's harness gets caught in the rope. In his struggles to

free himself, he loses his footing. The film cuts the building electric synthesizer score as the soldier's foot breaks a window, ruining the necessary element of surprise for the not-yet positioned SAS forces. In a moment, all this tension is released in an emotional climax. I remember watching the film in the theater, and in a single moment there was sudden quiet, only punctuated by one viewer's quiet gasp. Very rarely do modern films gamble with punctuating the climax of their film with build-up to silence, and even fewer films can draw the audience in so completely to have pin-drop silence. The action-filled assault that follows has viewers heart-in-mouth. An emotional denouement follows as a fire rages, and the terrorists are systematically put down in a room-by-room sweep as the building fills with blue-tinged smoke. Despite the fog of war descending, the blue tones lend a surgical quality that underscores the SAS's systematic, rehearsed plan. Even Salim is dispatched with no fanfare as part of the operative efficiency of the UK's counter-terrorism unit. This sequence alone makes the film worth viewing, despite its otherwise often baffling narrative choices.

The ending may leave some viewers sickened or upset. The ending cards state that the five gunmen who died in the siege lie in unmarked graves in East London, failing to act on the audience's built-up sympathy for the Arabs' cause. The ending tone makes the film resonate as almost jingoistic. Despite the flaws, *6 Days* is a competent thriller that captures the essence of the Iranian Embassy Siege even with its confusing tonal shifts and incomprehensible narrative choices. While not for everyone, I recommend *6 Days* for those with only a passing knowledge of conflict in the Middle East, those interested in thrillers, and those who want to see a dramatization of one of the rare instances the SAS was deployed on UK soil, with the operation broadcast live on television.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Gareth O'Neal of Anaheim, California, earned two B.A. degrees in French and Comparative Literature (2015), as well as an M.A. in English at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2018), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). His English M.A. thesis applied Albert Camus's absurdism to H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF with a thesis/project on the brass rubbings in CSUF's Roberta "Bobbe" Browning Collection. He is a 2019 recipient of CSUF's Hansen Fellowship in Oral and Public History. He also served as an editor for this volume of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."*

*Bisbee '17 [documentary].*

*Directed by Robert Greene. 2018.*

Impact Partners; 4th Row Films; Concordia Studio/Artemis Rising Foundation/Doc Society Circle. 112 minutes.

I went to see *Bisbee '17* expecting to learn solely about the 1917 Bisbee Deportation, the way it happened, why it happened, and the things historians research and write about; but the film is so much more. Through the centennial recreation of the Bisbee Deportation, the viewer learns not only about the history of the deportation, but how that incident continues to impact the lives of Bisbee's

residents one hundred years later. By telling the story about this specific moment in history, *Bisbee '17* also gives us insight into historical memory, the psychological impact of history, and how historical events continue to have power over lives long after these events have transpired. Director Robert Greene, a documentary filmmaker and professor of convergence journalism at the University of Missouri, balances the historical narrative against the backdrop of the town commemorating the centennial anniversary of the deportation. What the viewer learns from this is not just the history behind the deportation, but the lasting influence specific incidents have on community.

The film begins with a wide-angle shot of Bisbee's local high school, the everlasting symbol of small-town America. The camera zooms in on a lone white man who begins to talk about the high school and how the Copper Queen Mining Company, owned by the Phelps Dodge Corporation since 1885, built the school to educate 900 students, but today less than 400 attend. The closing of the mine in 1975 reduced this once prosperous mining town to just another relic in the desert. But it would be wrong to identify Bisbee, Arizona as just another ghost town where the employment dried up and the residents moved on. The ghosts here occupy more than just the closed mine: the ghosts are in the secrets the town still keeps.

The trouble started in Bisbee long before the night of July 12, 1917. Bisbee was what was then called a "white man's camp." Racial strife and labor issues at the Copper Queen mines had led the miners to go on strike in 1907 when they unionized under the Western Federation of Miners. Arizona's 1912 statehood and the subsequent creation of laws governing workplace safety only strengthened the divide between native-born and immigrant miners. State laws were passed that governed wages, eight-hour work days, employer liability, and workman's compensation, but these laws only applied to native-born or naturalized citizens of the United States. Immigrant miners in Arizona still had no protection.

By 1917, the United States had joined World War I, and the demand for copper to produce munitions surged. It seemed that the high demand for this product would be the perfect time to ask for the protections and wage increases workers had been seeking. But hyper-patriotism and xenophobia conspired to turn what could have been a simple change into a perceived assault on the white man's rightful place at the top of the food chain. Far from seeing an increase in wages due to wartime production, the immigrant miners were seeing their wages stagnate, mostly due to the forced deductions taken out of their paychecks by the Phelps Dodge Corporation. The miners were paying for ground retention, water, power, lights, insurance, YMCA fees, and library costs. Meanwhile, the local mercantile that the miners relied on for food and supplies raised its prices.

The arrival of the International Workers of the World Union at the same time increased financial and work pressures on the miners and created an explosive situation. As the miners prepared to strike, the town's population saw this not

just as a work action but as a threat to the power structure of American life. On the evening of July 12, 1917, as the miners prepared to strike, Sheriff Harry Wheeler deputized 2,000 residents of the town of Bisbee. Armed and angry, these men went to the homes of miners, forcefully removed them, and marched them four miles from the town proper to the baseball field (the same baseball field the town is so proud of today). Built in 1909, it is the oldest continuously running community field in America, but that day it was a scene of terror and confusion, a scene where 1,200 men were held before being loaded onto train cars, with no food and no water in the July heat, and before being dumped 175 miles away in the New Mexico desert.

Many of the residents did not see the deportation as breaking the strike, but as preserving the American way of life. The International Workers of the World Union was characterized as a violent, communist organization. There were worries that there were German infiltrators in the union, and that they had amassed weapons and dynamite. The miners were portrayed as alien enemies, and the strike as something that would cause violence in the town and threaten the safety of women and children. Many in Bisbee still feel that Sheriff Henry Walker has been demonized for his role in the deportation and are quick to point out that what he did was for the best. But even one hundred years later, Bisbee has stories about relatives who were caught up in the deportation, brothers who arrested brothers, and families torn apart. There is a palpable sense that, for Bisbee, the memory of the deportation is as fresh as if it had just happened.

Throughout the film, Greene interviews citizens who took part in this cinematic reenactment. Many are descendants of the people who lived in Bisbee during the deportation. I was struck by the way Greene uses silence as part of the story. He focuses the camera on one of his narrators and then allows the silence to stretch out before the person starts to tell the story. This is important in the narrative because the deportation, and life in Bisbee after the deportation has been all about secrets and silence. The Phelps Dodge Company did not want the Bisbee residents to talk about what happened, and the residents complied.

There is no sense of the amount of time that passes in the film. We see residents preparing in various ways for the reenactment taking place, leading up to the hundredth anniversary of the deportation; one making name cards with a 1917 penny emblazoned on them, 1,200 of them, one for each of the deported miners; and another researching what happened to the deportees after they were forced from Bisbee. There are committee meetings, and casting sessions, recreations of a rowdy International Workers of the World meeting, and tours of the town. Early in the film, viewers are introduced to Fernando Serrano who will play one of the deportees. Viewers quickly realize that he will be one of very few Hispanic faces you will see in the film, in what seems like an intentional choice by the director to highlight the immigrant miners' isolation.

Serrano's modern life story is not so different from that of the immigrant miners who had come to Bisbee over a century ago. He is in many ways an

outsider, born in the United States but raised in Mexico, not necessarily someone who has no one in the town, but definitely a solitary character, both in the reenactment and in the town. Greene spends a lot of time focusing on Serrano. We see him running his lines, and singing World War I labor songs. His presence is a unifying element in the film. It also symbolizes everything that went wrong in Bisbee and everything that is still simmering just under the surface.

The way Greene blends history with the modern lives of the residents is brilliant, and the modern recreation demonstrates just how long the fear, resentment, and anger over an incident can linger. In Bisbee, so far, that encompasses one hundred years of history. During that time Bisbee has seen its population drop from nearly 10,000 during the heyday of the mine to 5,000 full-time residents in 2018. After the closing of the mine in 1975, Bisbee could have disappeared like so many other former mining towns, but it reinvented itself as a destination for artists. It is a progressive modern town with a thriving art scene, restaurants, and shops. What is under the surface here, the ghosts of the deportation, no one ever talks about, but it is all in the open now. I left the theater wondering if through the act of recreating that horrible day the people find peace with the past of their town.

*Bisbee '17* shows that it is not just that the past informs the present, but that the past of this town and the deportation in particular is still a part of everyday life. The film is an important lesson in how we perceive history, what we learn from it, and how history repeats itself. This story resonates in today's world with important lessons on immigration and the way the United States uses and discards immigrant labor. *Bisbee '17* is available for purchase on DVD and Blu-ray, and to stream or rent on Apple iTunes.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Kate Tello of Corona, California, earned her B.A. in History from California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2014), where she is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). She is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF, working on comprehensive examinations on the history of immigration and labor in the American West.*

*Dunkirk [film].*

*Directed by Christopher Nolan. 2017.*

Syncopy Inc.; Warner Bros.; Dombey Street Productions; Kaap Holland Film; Canal+; Ciné+; RatPac-Dune Entertainment. 106 minutes.

People have a fascination with war. We can see this is the endless number of films and books created and devoted to the topic. Every year, there are new blockbuster war films, many of them focusing on World War II. Movies from *Patton* to *Saving Private Ryan* have led the way for successful World War II movies. Out of the hundreds of World War II movies, only a handful focus on the events of "Operation Dynamo," also known as the "Miracle of Dunkirk." Before Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk*, the small number of films dedicated to this event were made from the 1940s to the 1960s, and all dealt with some sort of romantic drama. Moviegoers are familiar with the classical war-romance story of



a soldier missing a woman back home and doing what he can to get back to her. The last attempt at making a film that at least somewhat resembled what happened on the beaches of Dunkirk was a 1958 film, also titled *Dunkirk*. This is a contributing factor to Nolan's success with the new *Dunkirk* (2017). He is not making another film on Hitler, D-Day, or Pearl Harbor, topics that already have a plethora of films dedicated to them. Rather, he focuses on what happened on the beaches of Dunkirk, a story that many have forgotten. "Operation Dynamo" was the evacuation of Allied soldiers during World War II on the beaches of Dunkirk, France. The soldiers (mainly British, some French) were being chased out of continental Europe by the Germans. They lacked the proper number of boats to escape the shores of France and to get to safety in England. This is where the film starts, in the middle of chaos, with soldiers trying to escape and survive.

Christopher Nolan is an accomplished director, screenwriter, and producer, known for films like *The Dark Knight*, *Interstellar*, and *Inception*. In *Dunkirk*, Nolan casts Harry Styles and Tom Hardy as the film's most notable actors. The film was released in 2017 and was a winner, receiving 92% on Rotten Tomatoes and 94% on Metacritic, and hitting \$527.3 million at the Box Office, balancing the film's \$100-\$150 million production budget rather nicely. *Dunkirk* runs one hour and forty-six minutes and won three academy awards (film editing, sound mixing, and sound editing). Nolan teamed-up with composer Hans Zimmer for the music of this film. This duo has worked together before for the films *Inception* and *Interstellar*. In an interview with *Business Insider*, Nolan explained the genesis for the music of this film: "Very early on I sent Hans a recording that I made of a watch that I own, with a particularly insistent ticking, and we started to build the track out of that sound. And then working from that sound, we built the music as we built the picture." The music is ominous; it increases the intensity of the movie and captures the dramatic tone for this important event.

*Dunkirk* is extremely immersive. It draws in the audience and keeps their attention. The use of actual planes and boats in the film is paramount. Nothing can take one out of a film like seeing an obviously computer-generated boat, plane, or person. Nolan spared no expense and hired hundreds of extras for the dramatic scenes on the beach. The lack of CGI (computer generated images) keeps the audience engaged and focused. The extra effort of the production team to maintain realism pays off. Another reason the audience feels so drawn into the film is the lack of a big-picture story. Nolan does not "zoom out" and tell the story of World War II. He does not reference anything outside of the beaches of Dunkirk. The focus is on these men trying to escape and survive.

One aspect that typical World War II films concentrate on is extreme and graphic violence. *Dunkirk*, however, does not force blood, guts, and exploded limbs at the audience like many war movies do. The movie is not about the violence men are capable of, but about what they can endure. When faced with life-threatening danger and the odds stacked against them, many of the men

suppressed their personal fears and emotions for the greater good, namely, to get everybody off those beaches and out of the enemy's reach.

The film's opening immediately throws the audience into the chaos of the war, there is no romantic story or extensive character build-up that we are so used to with Hollywood. We are introduced to one of the main characters as he flees from the Germans. We do not know his name or much about him. We do not even hear this character speak until halfway through the film. In the movie, characters are not talking the entire time, trying to crack jokes, or narrating the movie. This absence of permanent dialogue allows the ominous music and well produced scenes to have their own impact on the audience. The characters do not tell you what to feel or what is happening. There are no moments in the movie where soldiers share a stereotypical story about having a wife and young family at home. There is no romance and no slap-on-the-knee laughter. This is war. These soldiers are scared and in survival mode from start to finish. The film is authentic. There are no over-the-top fake accents, no poorly done uniforms, and no unrealistic battle scenes. One is kept in the mindset of Dunkirk in 1940.

The film's storyline seems simplistic at first glance: it simply starts in a battle and ends in a battle. The "good guys" are trying to escape and survive, and that is all. But an observant spectator or someone watching it for the second or third time will notice that the story line is not as simple as it seems to be.

Some of the most dramatic scenes in Dunkirk feature Tom Hardy as a pilot engaging with the enemy in aerial combat. There are many dogfight scenes in World War II films, and Nolan's rendition can be counted among the best. Tom Hardy does an excellent job playing a determined fighter pilot, combating not just enemies but also his plane's failing instrumentation. The fighter pilot's uniform (helmet and oxygen mask included) muffles voices and makes facial expressions hard to read. Tom Hardy acts brilliantly from a limiting costume, communicating comradery, drama, danger, violence, and terror to the audience, mainly through his eyes. *Dunkirk* follows three main characters, giving us three different perspectives. It shows us aerial combat with Tom Hardy but focuses on a group of young British and French soldiers on the ground, trying to survive. These soldiers show the audience just how desperate and grim their situation is, from ducking for cover from enemy bombs to stealing boots off of dead soldiers. They eventually make it off the beach and onto a boat, only for the boat to go up in flames and sink, whereupon they have to swim back to the shores of Dunkirk and return to the war.

The one sign of hope that Nolan provides for us in this film comes on the water. On May 19, 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered a fleet of over a thousand vessels to rescue the soldiers across the Channel. This fleet included civilian crews manning their private boats. *Dunkirk* follows an Englishman, his young son, and another young family friend as they make the trek across the Channel and into chaos. Risking their lives, they embark on their own private family boat to save as many soldiers as they can.

Nolan devotes his film to these three separate levels: land, air, and sea. As the story evolves, these three separate theaters intertwine. When the soldiers trying to escape the beach make it onto the boat, they are led by a confident leader, portrayed by the actor Cillian Murphy. After the boat goes up in flames and starts to sink, we see this character start to break. Later in the film, we see him stranded in the sea, only to be rescued by the Englishman, his son, and family friend on their private boat. Once the soldier is on the boat, he is no longer the confident leader he had been before. He is suffering from PTSD and becomes so paranoid that he accidentally kills one of his rescuers.

As Tom Hardy's character continues to fight in the air, he eventually makes it to the beaches of Dunkirk. When the plane soars over the beach, the soldiers realize how important the fighter pilot has been to their survival. In one of the most memorable scenes in the film, he saves the soldiers on the ground and glides over the beaches to hear a roaring ovation from the soldiers below. The intertwining of the three theaters (air, land, and sea) provides the film with depth and continuity. *Dunkirk* may seem like a simple story at first, but it is, in fact, very nuanced and well structured.

If someone asked me whether he or she should see the film, my response would depend on who is asking. Anyone with an interest in history and World War II should watch this film. Anyone with a family history associated with World War II should watch this film. Those interested in seeing the film should find a large-screen TV with a great sound system, close the blinds, lock the doors, and block everything out. They are in for a ride. Nolan captures the audience and brings them into an immersive and dramatic story of soldiers persevering and surviving. The film is not about violence, gore, or romance. It is simply about the mettle of man and survival at all costs.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Andrew Cordes of Orange, California, earned his B.A. in History (2016) and his Teaching Credential in Social Sciences (2017) from California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF, focusing on World War II along with the Viking Age. He works as a substitute teacher in the Fullerton Joint Union High School District.*

*Knightfall* [TV series]. Season 1.

Directed by Douglas Mackinnon, David Petrarca, and Metin Hüseyin. 2017-2018.

The History Channel (A+E Studios); et al. 10 episodes (40-45 minutes each).

What is a king without a kingdom, or what are the Templar Knights without the Holy Land to protect? That is where the Order of the Temple finds itself in the History Channel series *Knightfall*, a story of the Templar Knights after the fall of Acre in 1291 when the Franks were driven out of the Holy Land. The Templars end up in France with nothing to protect, unable to get involved in local affairs, and a mounting financial debt without a way to pay for it. Yet, the story shifts drastically when one of the Templars, upon cleaning the sword of a fallen knight,

finds a picture of the Holy Grail mysteriously beckoning them to find it, the pursuit of which ensues.

*Knightfall* was produced by the History Channel, and its first season premiered on December 6, 2017. The series was created by Don Handfield and Richard Rayner, both writers and producers in the Television and film industry, though neither appear to be historians. The first episode's opening features the following disclaimer: "Although many characters in the following story are based on actual historical figures, and some events are a matter of record, *Knightfall* is a fictional account of the Order of the Temple of Solomon, otherwise known as the Knights Templar." The series clarifies from the beginning that it is fiction but set within historical events; thus, it is historical fiction.

The series focuses on the final years of the Order of the Temple Order, a community originally founded in 1119/1120 to help protect those traveling in the Holy Land. However, it eventually received papal protection and privileges, and it grew in prestige, wealth, and responsibility until its dissolution in 1312. Within the historical setting of the depiction of the Templar Knights appears the fictional mission to find the Holy Grail. Woven into this tale are additional historical figures and events, including Pope Boniface VIII, King Philip IV of France, and the latter's advisor Guillaume de Nogaret, and events such as the fall of Acre in 1291 and the ongoing tensions between France and England.

Because the storyline reflects historical fiction, the narrative borrows the characters from history but does not stay in line with historical dates. For example, the story picks up fifteen years after the 1291 fall of Acre, in 1306, with the knights in Paris, and it references historical figures like Pope Boniface VIII. However, in 1306, this pope had been dead for three years (after being insulted and temporarily detained in Anagni by Nogaret, Philip IV's advisor). Even though *Knightfall* includes Nogaret's attempt to capture Boniface, that attempt is unsuccessful, the pope eludes capture, and his character continues to be a presence in the series, providing further tension in the relationship between him and Nogaret. Additionally, perhaps to create a feeling of authenticity, the series uses names like Godfrey and Tancred, individuals associated with the Crusades, but long dead in 1306.

The inclusion of a subplot on the Holy Grail, the cup that Jesus had used at the Last Supper, adds to the fiction of the story. This chalice has long been the stuff of legend, though it seems to have emerged as a mythical focus in the late twelfth century in an unfinished romance story, *Perceval ou Le conte du Graal*, written by Chrétien de Troyes at the behest of Count Philip I of Flanders who was a Crusader knight. *Knightfall* further taps into the mythical narrative of the Grail and interweaves it with the historical accounts of the Templar Knights by inserting a character named "Parsifal," a seeming play on the name "Perceval," the title character in Chrétien's original story on the Grail. In *Knightfall*, Parsifal joins the Templar Knights after bandits kill his fiancée, which sets him on an initial path of revenge. Another fictional character that appears in later iterations

of the original Grail story, Gawain, is inserted into the *Knightfall* narrative. Gawain is a Templar Knight struggling with inner angst and frustration after being injured while saving the life of another knight, Landry, at Acre in 1291. The mythical desire to find the Holy Grail goes beyond religious devotion, as the cup is said to offer special benefits such as renewed or sustained life, as suggested in the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989). This movie connects with the myth that the cup holds the power to heal or give someone eternal life and is used to heal Indiana's father, played by the eminent Sean Connery. In this case, the search for the Grail ends in a cave where Jones and his crew must select the correct chalice from among many lookalikes which are guarded by an aged Templar Knight who encourages them to "choose wisely." However, one of the major differences between a movie like *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and a History Channel show like *Knightfall* is that most people probably understand that the former is fiction. In *Knightfall*, some people might not understand where history ends and fiction begins, at least not without additional aid or prompting. It is possible that people will simply assume that what they see on the show reflects accurate historical accounts, the opening disclaimer about the events notwithstanding. Television shows such as *Knightfall*, particularly on channels that claim "History" in their title, will continue to challenge the debate of how much fiction should be allowed in the retelling of history.

While replete with fictional events, *Knightfall* does at times mirror the medieval period rather well (or in some cases at least the prevailing stereotypes), for example in an instance of savage violence when a man is killed by a wooden cross that is being pounded into his mouth while he is laying on the floor; the (actually historical) persecution and mistreatment of the Jews; the use of illicit magic and superstition; physical acts of violence to purge souls of sin; and political intrigue and subterfuge, particularly involving the politics of the Church and the Crown. Additionally, the scene in which one knight carries a large wooden cross and is beaten by his fellow knights as penance is not only a powerful reference to the crucifixion story of Jesus carrying his cross toward death, it also reflects the era's religious beliefs with regard to purifying the soul. Such religious beliefs helped to define the understanding of God, the Church, and sin during the medieval period. The first episode's opening scene, the battle for Acre, is also visually gripping and suggests what some of the battles may have looked like during the Crusades.

Yet, what is most impactful, though not always the most convincing, are the show's human relationships, both good and bad, such as that between Landry (the Templar Master) and Queen Joan; that between the Templar brothers; that between King Philip and Landry; and that between Boniface and Nogaret. The political maneuvering illustrated through these relationships is true to form in the ever-changing landscape of the medieval period with its alliances, arranged marriages ensuring treaties between kingdoms, and assassinations of leaders. The Templar Knights are caught in the political tug of war, and their loyalty is

questioned as to whether they are more loyal to the pope or to France, despite the fictional friendship between Landry and King Philip. These relationships help to ground the series and transport modern viewers into the lives of the medieval period. However, these same relationships at times appear contrived and almost seem to belong to a soap opera (for example, Nogaret's obsession with Princess Isabella, and Landry's affair with Queen Joan) rather than a nuanced effort to understand complex historical characters. These historical figures were deeply flawed but also deeply committed to the causes they believed in (and to their own self-preservation). As with all history, what makes the past come alive is each person's unique and compelling story.

*Knightfall*, a series appropriating historical events and figures to weave a mythical medieval tale regarding the intoxication of love, the pull of power, and the insatiable desire for revenge, not to mention illogical and frenetic but also passionate and deeply held religious beliefs, aims high, but sometimes misses the mark through overkill. It contributes more backstory to the enigmatic Templar Knights, as well as the medieval period overall, which is to its credit. However, the story works best when it sticks to the historical account because, as the saying goes, truth is often stranger and certainly much more interesting than fiction.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Sanejo I. Leonard of Fullerton, California, earned her B.A. in Religion from Vanguard University (1999); her M.Div. (2008) and her D.Min. with a concentration in Spirituality and Leadership (2014; dissertation: "The Role and Effect of Faith Crises on Spiritual Formation in Postmodern Christianity") from Azusa Pacific University; and her M.A. in History (2019; with comprehensive examinations on Umayyad-Abbasid era Middle Eastern history, as well as modern Jewish history) from California State University, Fullerton. She works as an associate faculty member in Religious Studies at Victor Valley College in Victorville, California.

*The Last Kingdom* [TV series]. Season 2.

Directed by Peter Hoar, Jon East, Jamie Donoughue, and Richard Senior. 2017.

Carnival; BBC Two; BBC America. 8 episodes (58-59 minutes each).

Imagine living in a country that has been invaded by fierce warriors who raid, pillage, and kill everything in their path. Only one kingdom stands in these warriors' way. This is the reality of ninth-century England where the TV series *The Last Kingdom* takes place. Based on the historical fiction books by English author Bernard Cornwell, *The Last Kingdom* follows the story of Uhtred, a Saxon raised by Danes, who serves King Alfred of Wessex. Alfred was an actual, historical king and the only king in England's history to be called "the Great," namely, due to his dream of a unified "Angle-Land" (England), a dream that his son and grandson would realize. Uhtred is a fictional character, but he is loosely based on a real Uhtred, Uhtred the Bold, who lived in the eleventh century. *The Last Kingdom* has aired on the BBC and is available for streaming on Netflix. As of fall 2018, there have been two seasons, with a third season to be released on November 19, 2018; and a fourth season is in the works. The first season of the show covered Cornwell's books one and two (*The Last Kingdom*, 2004, and *The*

*Pale Horseman*, 2005), while the second season covered two more of Cornwell's books (*The Burning Land*, 2009, and *The Death of Kings*, 2011). Both seasons have eight episodes, so much of the material from the books is jam-packed into these.

*Season 1* of *The Last Kingdom* introduced viewers to the main character Uhtred (played by Alexander Dreymon) and followed his journey from Northumbria to Wessex where he served King Alfred (played by David Dawson) as a warrior. Danes were invading the country, and it was up to Wessex to stop them. The first season covered quite a few historical events, including the 878 Battle of Edington, and focused on themes like loyalty, identity, and hope. *Season 2*, which is the subject of this review, continues Uhtred's story, but this time Alfred is more cautious of using him to achieve his goals. Alfred's main aim is to maintain the peace, negotiate with the Danes, and leave war as a last resort. He is less trusting of Uhtred because Uhtred is a pagan and constantly tries to overstep or disobey Alfred's commands. Each episode of *Season 2* gives viewers a summary of what has happened in the previous episode. This is helpful as each show is about an hour long, and if one does not watch more than one show a day it is a useful feature to get viewers back into the series. In *Season 2*, Uhtred is more determined to take revenge on the man who had killed his father and had taken his sister, and to finally return to his home of Bebbanburg (modern-day Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland, England) where he wishes to retake his rightful place as the local ruler. Uhtred is able to achieve the first two of these goals despite many setbacks, such as being sold into slavery, escaping, and serving Alfred yet again. The majority of the season is set in Northumbria in York, Benfleet, and Cumberland, but also in Mercia and Wessex. During *Season 2*, Alfred marries off his daughter, Aethelflaed (played by Millie Brady), to Aethelred, lord of Mercia. Alfred uses this marriage as a way to gain a foothold in Mercia to try and bring the two kingdoms (Wessex and Mercia) together in order to move his dream of a unified kingdom closer to reality. Uhtred assists in saving a slave and making him king in Cumberland. This king, Guthred (played by Thure Lindhardt), is portrayed as weak and easily swayed. The abbot in Cumberland is constantly at Guthred's side and questions his actions, Guthred's trust in Uhtred, and Uhtred's loyalty. Alfred wishes to use Guthred to secure Northumbria and the city of York for his goal of peace and unification.

The main antagonists in *Season 2* are the two Danish brothers Erik and Sigefrid (played by Christian Hillborg and Björn Bengtsson). They have come to England to seek riches and battles. They first capture the town of York, then make their way to London, and then to Benfleet. They are a nuisance to Uhtred, Guthred, and Alfred. During the first half of the season, the brothers appear to be only there to get rich and leave, but encounters with Guthred and Uhtred fuel their rage to return, this time with the goal of taking over the land and vanquishing Wessex. They almost achieve their goal by capturing Aethelflaed and demanding an enormous ransom, but this does not go as planned for Erik

falls in love with her. The season ends with Alfred and his forces, alongside Uhtred, recapturing Benfleet and driving out the rest of the Danes.

Bernard Cornwell, the creator of *The Last Kingdom*, has done his homework with regard to writing a historical-fiction book series turned TV series. He utilizes historical primary sources in his novels, including the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Asser even makes an appearance in *Season 1* and is played by Nicholas Rowe), as well as the works of Symeon of Durham and Roger of Wendover. This enables him to create an accurate setting in ninth-century England to which he adds Uhtred as a fictional character. Cornwell has ancestry in the area of Bamburgh Castle, with some members of this family bearing the name Uhtred (though they are recorded in a later period of time), so he decided to use Uhtred as a homage to his family.

*The Last Kingdom* is clearly thought out. There are several directors for *Season 2*, including Peter Hoar, Jon East, Jamie Donoughue, and Richard Senior. Despite the different directors, the episodes blend well together, making the show evenly paced. The content in *Season 2* is rich and tells a vivid story that keeps you on the edge of your seat, and when an episode ends, you will want to watch the next one. The costumes, weapons, and sets are spectacular. Each piece of armor and weaponry looks genuine, as if it has been taken through an actual battle. The towns and architecture are simple, and the main halls and castles are extraordinary. The landscapes are beautiful, whether it be forests, fields, or rivers, but what is actually being shown is Hungary, not the United Kingdom, as most of the filming is done near Budapest. The directors and screenwriters make viewers feel as if they have been taken to ninth-century England. Both the story and the characters invest viewers into the series.

The series follows actual historical chronology and is based on medieval primary sources. Many of the events in the show are based on actual events, save for the love story between Aethelflaed and Erik, as well as the poor treatment of Aethelfaed by Aethelred. The show provides insight into Aethelflaed and her interests in the politics of the kingdoms. This is accurate, as both primary sources and scholars tell us that she later supported military campaigns and, after her husband had died, continued to campaign to help achieve her father's goal of a united land. Another example of using primary sources is the vision the abbot had about Guthred becoming king. This incident was chronicled by Symeon of Durham in his *History of the Church of Durham*. Comparing *The Last Kingdom* to the History Channel's show *Vikings*, from a historical perspective, one finds that *Vikings* is not really historically accurate as it jumps in time, and certain events did not actually take place until much later or earlier in history. Also, *Vikings* seems to use quite a bit more mysticism and sorcery, while *The Last Kingdom* grounds itself in a more realistic approach to the events, although there is some type of sorcery in *Season 1*. Both shows are quite graphic in content with a rating of TV-MA (mature audience), although *Vikings* is decidedly more graphic.



*The Last Kingdom* is of historical interest because of the topic of the show, namely, the unification of the different kingdoms into one that will eventually be called England. It is one of the few shows that depict England's origins and highlight the creation of the country itself. *The Last Kingdom* is a must-watch show, and it appeals not only to the general public, but to historians as well. The story is well written, and the actors and actresses give wonderful performances in their respective roles. The series is becoming more and more popular as evidenced by a third and (soon) fourth season. The way in which it ties fictional characters into real history is fascinating. Picking up on the names of the various characters may be a little difficult and confusing at first, but it becomes easier as the series progresses. In sum, *The Last Kingdom* is a "binge-worthy" TV show. It is riveting, it leaves the viewer wanting more, and is highly recommended.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Geoffrey Gue of Yorba Linda, California, completed his B.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2018), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He is currently enrolled in CSUF's Teaching Credential program, pursuing a Single Subject Credential in Social Science. He is conducting research for an M.A. thesis in History that analyzes the role of medieval battles in the formation of English nationhood. In addition, he is working as a student teacher in the Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District. He also served as an editor for this volume of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."*

*Operation Finale* [film].

Directed by Chris Weitz. 2018.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM); Automatik Entertainment. 122 minutes.

In a world where CGI (computer generated images) and loud, in-your-face films reign supreme at the box office, it is nice to take a break from the noise and sensory overload with Chris Weitz's *Operation Finale*. *Operation Finale* is a beautifully scripted and directed movie about the capture and first publicly televised trial of a S.S. officer. It is more of a psychological thriller in the style of Alfred Hitchcock. We are introduced to the reasons and mindset of why and how the slaughter of millions of people happened, as well as why people engaged in a relentless pursuit of S.S. officers after World War II. There is action, good acting, historical accuracy, and beautiful dialogue. The film is well balanced and well worth the viewing for movie buffs and historians alike.

The story begins after World War II. We follow Peter Malkin (played by Oscar Isaac), an agent of Mossad (the Israeli Secret Service), to Austria in 1945. Not only have refugees and victims of internment camps fled Germany, but many high-ranking S.S. officers and other Nazis have flocked to safety as well, a point which is subtly told by Weitz with guiding moments scripted between scenes. Adolf Eichmann (played by Ben Kingsley) is one such high-ranking officer who has fled Germany. Eichmann, the architect of "The Final Solution," is thought to be in a certain house that Malkin and his team have discovered. Yet, Malkin and his men kill the wrong man. Eichmann gets word of this incident so he, with falsified documents, escapes to Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1950. Two

years later, Eichmann smuggles his wife and family into their new country. All this happens within the first fifteen minutes of the movie. *Operation Finale* is quick when it needs to be and slow at the right moments. It is almost a song. There are beautiful crescendos and diminuendos throughout this movie that keep the audience entranced. The beautiful score by Alexandre Desplat feeds into these peaks and valleys throughout the film.

Case in point, with the help of the musical score, we quickly arrive in 1960. Chatter has reached the offices of the Mossad that Eichmann has been spotted in Argentina under an alias, Ricardo Klement. These rumors turn out to be true. Malkin has his chance at redemption. The Israeli government does not authorize the killing of Eichmann, only the capture and return to Israel to face charges of war crimes against the Jewish people. Malkin and a team of seven Mossad agents travel to Buenos Aires to implement what they call "Operation Finale." The details of planning the operation are not divulged. Some military or military-type movies spend much of their time going over extrication plans: *Argo* (2012) does just that with regard to rescuing six American hostages from Iran in 1979. This, at times, can be tedious. *Operation Finale* does not fall into this trap. So, if you love strategic planning, this point in the film might irk you. The plans are given just enough screen time for us, the audience, to stay clued into the inner workings of *Operation Finale*.

Ostensibly, the Mossad team travels to Argentina to help celebrate the 150th anniversary of the country's independence. Each member travels under an alias and from a different country to avoid suspicion. Argentina's government would have not sanctioned Eichmann's extradition. Weitz shows that there are several Nazis and Nazi sympathizers, including government officials, in Argentina at this time, and that Eichmann is still, albeit to a lesser degree, involved with these people. Therefore, the Mossad team must be very careful. This group of highly trained men and women sets up a safe house in Buenos Aires in preparation for kidnapping Eichmann and holding him hostage until they can all safely leave the country by plane. They plan to dress themselves and Eichmann as pilots and crew members. After a night of celebrating Independence Day, the agents plan to drug Eichmann and make it appear as if he is a pilot who has celebrated a bit too hard. Basically, they plan to smuggle Eichmann out of the country.

The phrase, "The best laid plans go awry," comes to mind as the plot develops. Eichmann is kidnapped and brought to the safe house. This is the most fascinating part of the movie. Well over an hour of this film shows Eichmann trapped in this house with his captors while they wait for their plane, which is scheduled to take off seven days after Eichmann's initial capture. Unforeseen circumstances ground the team for a total of three weeks. Naturally, Eichmann's family reports him missing, but the search for him is at best in the film's periphery. The focus now is of Eichmann signing a piece of paper, stating that he will willingly go to trial in Israel. No member of the Mossad team can get Eichmann to sign this piece of paper except for Malkin. It is here that we get to

watch a mesmerizing back and forth between Eichmann and Malkin. Malkin is the only person piercing the veil of Eichmann's psyche. Malkin treats Eichmann with human decency, which resonates with Eichmann, as Eichmann thinks of himself as a gentleman. Manners matter. Malkin understands this mentality. Eichmann believes that he was just doing a job for the country he loved. Malkin does not agree with Eichmann's view, but he understands it. The two begin to share their childhood and family stories, and break down barriers and walls. They are by no means bosom buddies, but they understand each other on a psychological level. If you understand a person on that level, you can get him or her to bend to your ideals or will. If they cannot be bent, then there remains at least a grudging respect. The takeaway from their tête-à-tête is Eichmann's grudging respect toward Malkin. This is why Eichmann signs the agreement. Malkin now understands better how Eichmann was able to convince others to engage in genocide. There is a reason Eichmann was put in charge of "The Final Solution." This part of the story is perfectly timed. The audience can process what is happening and see the true horror of this complicated villain.

Much of Eichmann's dialogue and story is accurate. Eichmann's actual writings and dossier were found among his possessions. They confirm his attitudes and the atrocities he committed. Many books have been written about Eichmann, including those about the Mossad members that captured him. In 1996, *The Man Who Captured Eichmann* (starring Robert Duvall as Eichmann) was made from these primary sources. *Operation Finale* follows suit, examining and showing the psychology of Eichmann and of the man who caught him.

We all know how the story ends: Eichmann was found guilty and hanged in 1962. But in the film, before Eichmann leaves Argentina, there is a dramatic build and a harrowing chase scene which left myself and my fellow moviegoers wondering whether Eichmann would ever make it to Israel, a great credit to the director and the style of the film. Not much time is spent on the actual trial at the end of this story. Weitz does mingle actual footage of the trial with his filmed version. At the beginning of the end credits, the reel of the actual trial continues to play. The fact that this was the first major televised trial and the first trial of an S.S. officer to be held in Israel, not Germany, really opened the world's eyes to "The Final Solution." Several characters in this script state that it is important for the world to see this trial, so the world will not forget or let this type of hatred boil over and destroy humanity again. Weitz has succeeded in sending that message in a very real and human way. If you are someone who wants to watch another intense, loud war movie, this is not the movie for you. If you want a historically accurate, psychological thriller, this is the film to go see.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Kelsey Anne Pierce of Carson City, Nevada, earned her B.A. in Theatre with an emphasis in Writing and Speech from the University of Nevada, Reno (2007). She is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), focusing on Medieval and Public History. She is a member of CSUF's Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society) and served as an editor for this volume of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."*

*Outlaw King* [film].

Directed by David Mackenzie. 2018.

Sigma Films; Anonymous Content; Clockwork Sessions. 121 minutes.

*Outlaw King* portrays the epic struggle by Robert the Bruce in the early fourteenth century to free Scotland from the villainous King Edward I of England. Following the rebellion of William Wallace who had fought against the English a few years earlier, Robert seeks to be king of Scots, as he declares in the film to a group of Scottish, "not of the land, but of the people." It is a powerful statement that Robert is breaking from the typical spoils that a king would take when receiving power. He fights for the people of Scotland, which will provide him with the strength to combat the horrors that will present themselves. Formerly loyal to the English king, Robert the Bruce undergoes a massive transformation when he sees William Wallace's limbs posted as a deterrent. *Outlaw King* has received a mixed reception, but its story is compelling and makes viewers passionately side with the hero to pull off the unimaginable.

*Outlaw King* was directed by David Mackenzie who is known for films like *Perfect Sense* (2011), *Starred Up* (2013), and *Hell or High Water* (2016). The Scottish-born director takes on the challenging task of following Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* story. Released directly on Netflix on November 9, 2018, *Outlaw King* stars actors such as Chris Pine (Robert the Bruce), Stephen Dillane (King Edward I of England), and Rebecca Robin (Queen Margaret of England). Many of the scenes were filmed in and around Glasgow and Edinburgh, in areas that the historical Robert the Bruce would have covered. Mackenzie allows viewers to admire the Scottish landscapes in vivid 4k format.

Following the typical historical action-packed Hollywood story line, *Outlaw King* sets the stage for a hero-and-villain showdown. Robert is portrayed as a leader who relates to the people and who will be the heroic figure that the peasants of Scotland can support, whereas his antagonist, Edward Prince of Wales, is portrayed as a villain who is willing to kill and torture in order to prove to his father that he is ready for the throne. The English are seen as lusting for tax and land gain, while the Scottish are shown as trying to make ends meet in an oppressive situation. While the story is dramatized and shot to make viewers side with the oppressed Scots, there is historical accuracy to the English oppressive presence in Scotland (as well as Ireland). Inspired by the execution of William Wallace, Robert feels compelled to start a resistance against the English control over the Scottish realms.

Robert's character is altered when an ambush attack by Edward Prince of Wales and his army forces him to flee. Prior to the ambush, Edward and Robert had been set to have a one-on-one showdown to determine the fate of their disagreement. When this chivalrous pact is broken, Robert states that he will no longer hide. The Scottish inflict brutal guerilla warfare on the English to incite in them the same fear that the English had been inflicting on the Scottish for so

long. This film does not shy away from providing the viewer with a realistic portrayal of the ruthlessness of medieval battle scenes. Blood and violence are vital elements in *Outlaw King*. By utilizing their knowledge of the land, the Scots are able to build trenches and mud pits which cripple the English cavalry. There are a few questions that arise during the battle scenes in this film. Did the Scottish actually utilize such guerilla tactics to provoke a formal battle with the English? And, at end of Battle of Loudoun Hill (1307), did Robert have an individual fight against Edward Prince of Wales? Both questions illustrate the film straying from historical accuracy in order to dramatize its plot.

Robert's "hero" story, as well as the battle scenes, contribute to a vibe of nationalism in this film. Robert is portrayed as an every-man who is seeking power to liberate the "people" of Scotland. Nevertheless, who are these people that Robert is supposedly fighting to save? The film does not follow the people who are behind Robert, or those he is fighting to protect. While there is some interaction between Robert and the "common" people, this film, for the most part, features Robert's interaction with men who are willing to fight and die with him in battle, or with his enemies. The film utilizes Benedict Anderson's idea that the nation is "imagined." The film does not need to show who the people are because, according to the modern idea of the nation, the people communally follow the ideas that are constructed in the nation. Anderson states with regard to the nation, "it is imagined because the members in even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." This idea of the community coming together without its members knowing each other is reflected in Robert the Bruce's idea of being "king of Scots."

*Outlaw King* uses the idea of a primordial ethnic nationalism that unites the people of Scotland based on their Scottish roots. In addition to their Scottish heritage, they are united because they are all fighting against the colonization efforts of their English oppressors. With the modern nationalist movements that are presenting themselves on a global scale, this film touches on many unknown variables. For example, if Brexit indeed happens, will the Scottish people choose to leave the United Kingdom in order to stay in the European Union? Using historical stories of struggles against oppressors and the unifying power of nationalist ideology, modern viewers can relate to the stories and side with the heroes of the film. This film does an excellent job of stirring nationalist fervor and upholds the unifying characteristics of freedom within a group of people.

A comparison between the movies *Braveheart* and *Outlaw King* was to be expected because they both cover the topic of Scottish rebellion that ultimately leads to Scottish independence. Since its release in 1995, *Braveheart* has withstood a barrage of criticism for its historical inaccuracies. This is not to say that *Outlaw King* is a perfectly historically accurate film, however, it does present many factual key events until the Battle of Loudoun Hill. Granted, the sequence of events is altered to a certain degree, but *Outlaw King* makes a more sincere

attempt than *Braveheart* to be historically accurate. *Outlaw King* might have gained a much stronger reputation from a historical standpoint if it had taken the events all the way up to the Battle of Bannockburn (1314). This would have afforded the opportunity to give a more accurate depiction of the major campaigns of the Scottish against the English army. Aside from their historical depiction, both films place a large emphasis on the memory of history and on relating it to people that may not know about the epic conflicts of the past.

Both *Braveheart* and *Outlaw King* hint at the struggles that heroes face with regard to keeping their families together. In *Braveheart*, Mel Gibson's William Wallace loses his wife during his fight against the English. The murder of his wife is a driving factor for William Wallace to pursue and kill the men who once killed his wife. *Outlaw King's* story follows a similar script in that Chris Pine's Robert the Bruce sees his wife and daughter kidnapped and held captive by Edward Prince of Wales. While the English did indeed hold Robert's wife captive, this part of the story is used to make viewers relate to the hero. It is a powerful way to connect viewers to historical memory from a nationalist standpoint and to the way in which families were involved in and affected by these struggles.

*Outlaw King* offers an excellent opportunity for people who are interested in historical struggles for freedom and who enjoy the heroic actions of individuals throughout history. Amazing shots of the Scottish landscape and epic battle scenes keep viewers on the edge of their seats. The evident historical inaccuracies can be set aside once one understands what the film seeks to do. Viewers will not be disappointed when following the story of Robert the Bruce and how he navigated the political and military landscapes of early-fourteenth-century Scotland and England.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Patrick O'Brien of Palo Alto, California, earned his B.A. in History from Vanguard University (2011) and his M.A. in History from California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2018), the latter with comprehensive examinations on medieval Europe (religious military orders) and the British Empire (gender, race, and violence). He is a member of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society).

*Silence* [film].

Directed by Martin Scorsese. 2016.

SharpSword Films; AI-Film; CatchPlay; IM Global; Verdi Productions; et al.  
161 minutes.

Martin Scorsese's film *Silence* (2016) depicts the intimate struggles of a Jesuit priest with faith and humanity in the face of cruelty while witnessing the persecution of Japanese Christians at the hands of the shogunate in mid-seventeenth-century Japan. The beautiful cinematography reflects Scorsese's passion for bringing the 1966 novel of the same name by Shusaku Endo (1923-1996) to the silver screen. *Silence* starkly contrasts with Scorsese's immediately preceding film, *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), a black comedy steeped in the materialism, hedonism, and even sadism of the ultra-rich in the 1980s. *Silence's*

sparing use of an unorthodox, Zen-like score, its emphasis on the natural world, and the minimalist simplicity of early-modern Japanese architecture convey resplendence even when the film's characters suffer unfathomable brutality. However, while the cinematographic elements create a beautiful film, even when depicting grotesque cruelty, the story flounders and leaves viewers with an upsettingly contradictory ending.

*Silence* follows two seventeenth-century Jesuit priests, Sebastião Rodrigues (played by Andrew Garfield) and Francisco Garupe (played by Adam Driver), who travel to Japan to find their mentor, Cristóvão Ferreira (played by Liam Neeson), who is rumored to have apostatized. A Japanese fisherman called Kichijiro (played by Yōsuke Kubozuka) smuggles them into the country, and Tomogi, a village of persecuted *Kakure Kirishitans* ("hidden Christians"), hides them. "Inquisitor" Inoue (played by Issei Ogata) discovers the villagers' secret Christian beliefs and executes three of them. The priests then leave Tomogu, which they believe is being targeted due to their presence, and part ways.

Kichijiro betrays Rodrigues and turns him in to the authorities. After the authorities attempt to have Rodrigues renounce his faith, he is brought to the shoreline where he sees Garupe in the distance being escorted along with other prisoners. The prisoners are taken on a boat offshore where they are to be drowned unless Garupe apostatizes. Rodrigues watches as Garupe refuses, drowning instead as he swims offshore in an attempt to rescue the last prisoner.

Rodrigues is taken to meet Ferreira who now serves the government and has adopted a Japanese name and lifestyle. Ferreira tries to convince Rodrigues that Christianity is futile in Japan and that the local converts practice not true Catholicism but instead a form of half-remembered rites and untranslated cultural misunderstandings. That night, Rodrigues is shown Japanese apostates as they are being tortured. He is told that they will die unless Rodrigues apostatizes. He hears a voice giving him permission to step on the image, which Rodrigues does. In the years that follow, Ferreira and Rodrigues both act as agents of the state and inspect Dutch imports to ensure no hidden Christian symbols enter the country. Many years later Rodrigues dies, and his body is placed in a wooden barrel for cremation. Hidden in his hand is the handmade crucifix gifted to him by one of the Japanese converts from his first days in Japan.

The film's first frame shows a man with a staff standing guard by a wooden frame with two heads impaled on the top and another spike seemingly waiting for one more victim. The camera focuses on this shot for several seconds despite the guard not moving and the mist obscuring most fine details, which leaves the viewer with a sense of foreboding. Father Ferreira is thrust into the left foreground, a guard shoving him forward, and the scene is composed with the horrified priest framing the slightly obscured figures out at a distance in the foreboding mist. A Japanese guard steps forward, dipping a long-handled sieve into the water before bringing it up to the face of a man dressed in Jesuit robes. The priest recoils as the water sizzles and burns the man's face, and as the priest

steps back into what is now evidently steam, he becomes more difficult to see. Only then does Ferreira's narration begin, the voiceover of a letter smuggled out of Japan and delivered to St. Paul's College in Macau (China), as the priests are stripped and slowly tortured with "each drop water like a burning coal" against their blistering flesh, some enduring the torture for thirty-three days.

This is the viewer's introduction to the country of Japan and the violent repression of Christians on its isolated shores. In a nod to Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, mist plays a prominent part in the shot composition of this opening segment, but also in much of the first half of the film prior to Rodrigues's capture by Inoue. The mist in the film obscures the actions of Japan to the outside world. Like the Tokugawa shogunate's forced isolation of the island, smoke and mist isolate both the characters and the viewer. They hide the truth and put the characters in a position in which they must assume the mist hides great danger which they cannot see. As Ferreira looks at the men obscured by volcanic steam, he cannot help but be horrified, if not by the sight, then by the screams of the priests he hears. The priest cannot relate the news to the outside world, as the coasts of Japan are shrouded in the same mist, protecting the island from foreign prying eyes.

From the fog concealing the cruelty of the Japanese authorities, or its use in obscuring the dangers that exist in the countryside and along coast, the film emphasizes the island's harsh beauty. This use of the natural world underscores the brutality of the lives of the *Kakure Kirishitans* ("hidden Christians") that Rodrigues and Garupe find in their clandestine quest. Finally reaching the shore in the dead of night, the priests are welcomed into the village of Tomogi. The villagers live in huts and are so impoverished that they can afford only a small bowl of food for each of the priests while they themselves have nothing. Later, when the priests hide in a cabin in the mountains, men from another village come to ask the priests to give them the sacraments. The camera pans down to the two men's feet bloody as their rope sandals are half broken. Nature barely provides for the villagers. The land proves hostile and inflicts these injuries despite the film's depiction of Japan's natural beauty of the early summer mountains and the forests Rodrigues travels. The country itself is an antagonist as much as the shogunate. This antagonism is something that Inquisitor Inoue uses to his advantage in the persecution of the *Kakuri Kirishitans*.

The land proves so aggressive to the Jesuit priests and the converts that the authorities use Japan itself for the torturing and execution of Christians. The opening scene of the film is the viewer's first experience of the dangerous landscape in which the Christians find themselves. Ferreira watches as the priests are burned by the volcanic hot spring. In a later scene, one of the most harrowing in the film, the three Christian leaders of Tomogi are taken under guard to the rocky shorelines where they are tied to wooden crosses. The villagers watch as the tide comes in and drowns the three, some going quickly, but the last one dying over several agonizing days. This horrific act is contrasted



against the powerful image of the rocky outcropping and the light turquoise and foamy white of the waves barely taking their martyrs' heads under water as each wave comes rolling over them. These moments of violence and the weaponization of nature, though beautiful in the shot composition and vivid colors of the Japanese coast, show that the land itself is inhospitable to the plight of the hidden Christians. This subtly warns the viewer that what Inquisitor Inoue says to Rodrigues is true, that Christianity is anathema to Japan and that the land refuses to nourish the Jesuits' planted seeds.

The highlight of the film comes during Rodrigues's interaction with Inoue. Issei Ogata masterfully plays the charismatic and seemingly kind *samurai* magistrate. When first introduced, both Rodrigues and the viewer find it hard to believe that this old and slightly tottering man could be the enigmatic and powerful inquisitor the Japanese villagers speak of only in hushed tones. Issei Ogata portrays the inquisitor with such charm that the character remains alluring even after the cruelty he inflicts on the "hidden Christians." Rodrigues's interaction with Inoue always draws interest. Thanks to Endo's dialogue, from which the film draws directly in most parts, Inoue's verbal sparring carries a clever and sardonic tone. In a 1967 article, Endo famously described his Christianity as an "ill-fitting [Western-style] suit," one which he tried to remove several times "but in the end [he] was unable to do so." Endo ends his metaphor by stating he had to "refashion" the suit into a wrap-around kimono made for his body and his Japanese customs.

For Endo, Christianity is an import from the West, one that must not only be adapted to Japan to accommodate its traditions but also to the individual. Inoue acts as the speaker for many of Endo's difficulties with his struggles as a Japanese Catholic as well as his grievances with aspects of Christianity in general. Endo's depiction of Japan itself proving inhospitable to Christianity is expressed by Inoue. The magistrate calls his homeland a "swamp" that will never let the seeds of Christianity planted by the Jesuits take root. Inoue describes Spain, Portugal, Holland, and England like the "four concubines ... all beautiful ... all jealous" who vied for the *daimyo's* (i.e., the lord's) attention and fought constantly, each trying to gain advantage against the other and "destroy the house in the process." Once the jealous women were turned away from the castle, peace reigned. Rodrigues is unfazed by the uncharitable simile, countering that "our Church teaches monogamy," and asking what if Japan chooses the Church as its one "wife?" Inoue chuckles and compares the Church's missions to Japan to the "persistent love of an ugly woman ... a barren woman [who] should never be a wife." The shogunate sees the Western import as ill-fitting and even counter to Japan's needs. According to the shogunate, Christianity will never be fruitful in the context of Japan's traditions. It is, in Inoue's words, "dangerous" and threatens the metaphorical home that is Japan.

These scenes of barbed words and witty retorts between Inoue and Rodrigues are some of the few moments where the viewer is exposed to the reasoning

behind the magistrate's actions. These moments could also have been utilized to insert the context that brought about the shogunate's persecution of Christians at this time. Japan's *bakufu* (military government) had much reason to fear violent Western influence and the destabilizing political effects that had befallen the Philippines and New Spain. The *shogun* banned the practice of Christianity out of fear that Japan would be the next country to come under European sway. The *sakoku* (isolationist policy and laws) were an extension of that fear. However, the shogunate never forced complete isolation. By allowing the Dutch to trade in Deshima, Japan was open to some aspects of the world outside its shores, but the authorities could limit what goods and information would be allowed to affect the political and cultural spheres. Inoue's conversations with Rodrigues, though allowing viewers some understanding of the shogunate's reasoning, leaves out much of the context. These scenes could have been developed for a better understanding of the Tokugawa shogunate. Though the actions of the shogunate were horrific, placing the violence within the appropriate political context would have greatly benefited the viewer's comprehension of the crisis in which Rodrigues finds himself.

Despite the search for Ferreira, the driving force of Rodrigues's quest, the confrontation between the two comes later in the film than it should. The introduction of Ferreira, the apostate priest, ratchets up the tension for Rodrigues's crisis of faith. Having the words of a beloved teacher act as temptation would benefit from several prolonged attempts to persuade the priest. If instead Ferreira subtly manipulated Rodrigues by acting as a teacher to his new way of life in Japan and acted as a kindly, soft-spoken advocate, the proverbial "good cop" to Inoue's "bad cop," the film would build a sense of betrayal through the slow wearing down of Rodrigues's resolve. Instead, Scorsese chooses to have Rodrigues witness Garupe's death prior to Ferreira's introduction, which makes the subtlety of an intellectual argument, as well as the temptation of adopting a Japanese life full the indulgences banned by Jesuit vows, a moot point this late in the film. Ferreira's introduction arrives just thirty minutes before the end of the film and rushes what has been an erosion of Rodrigues's will, hastening the renouncement of his faith to occur just hours after the reunion of teacher and pupil.

While Ferreira's introduction to his Japanese life appears somewhat rushed against the slowness of the rest of the film, the first two hours suffer from pacing issues. Despite Scorsese's exceptional cinematography, the story often stalls and stutters. The 161-minute running time is certainly felt, as story points are repeated frequently. Travel between locations often seems unnecessary and provides little for plot development. The repetitive elements, combined with the minimalist score mostly comprised of nature sounds, though a bold choice for the large scope of the film, do little to relieve the long periods that neither add to the tension the priests feel in hiding nor to engage viewers in their plight.

The most egregious of these repetitive elements is the fickle Kichijiro. The character's introduction portrays him as an untrustworthy drunk who refuses to call himself Christian despite his obvious connection to the Jesuits (he is able to converse with Rodrigues and Garupe in their native Portuguese). The two voice their distrust of the Japanese fisherman stranded from his native shores, but they are forced to trust him to smuggle them onto the island. Once he gets them into Japan, however, he continually betrays Rodrigues. First, he endangers the priests by telling other villages of their location. He requests absolution and tells Rodrigues that he had renounced his faith previously. When Kichijiro is taken captive, he renounces his faith again, first by stepping on the *fumi-e* (a picture of Christ or Mary) and then by spitting on the cross. Once again, he returns for absolution, which Rodrigues grants, whereupon Kichijiro sells the priest to Inoue for 300 pieces of silver. Kichijiro represents Judas, but the way the film goes about the fickleness of the character, the constant betrayal, and the entirely predictable capture of Rodrigues leaves the viewer in a holding pattern, waiting for something different to happen to change the story pacing already an hour and a half into the film.

Of course, if Kichijiro represents Judas, that makes Rodrigues, the man he betrays, a Christ figure. The film indicates that Rodrigues certainly sees himself as having elements of Christ. Before he leaves Macau for his trying journey in Japan, there is a close-up of Rodrigues in bed, thinking of a portrait of Jesus he had seen as a kid, and the camera cuts to that painted portrait of Christ with the crown of thorns. The two images parallel each other, the face of each man taking up the center of the frame as the camera immediately cuts from the image of Jesus to Rodrigues, already setting up the Savior imagery for the priest. He even repeats Jesus's words outside of a context of preaching. When Kichijiro leads Rodrigues through the forest en route to the ambush, the priest stops, whispering "I thirst," and Kichijiro comments that the Savior also said that. This becomes more literal as Rodrigues, when drinking from the stream to which Kichijiro has led him to quench his thirst, looks upon his reflection only to literally see himself as Jesus, the earlier shown portrait of Christ superimposed over Rodrigues's face. Even Kichijiro's betrayal is paralleled. When Rodrigues learns that he was sold for 300 pieces of silver, he comments that he was sold for ten times the amount for which Jesus had been sold, signifying that he now sees himself as Christ-like which makes Kichijiro his Judas.

This Christ imagery would be more palatable had the priest acted in imitation of Christ. Rodrigues's deeply flawed nature and unpriestly behavior paints him less deserving of the association with Christ than the Japanese converts around him. During his and Garupe's first night in Japan, the two are given food while the villagers have nothing to eat. To Rodrigues's embarrassment, he greedily scoops the food into his mouth while the villagers and even Garupe behind him bow their heads, saying grace. Rodrigues spits the food back out while everyone else is distracted by their prayer. While in Japan, Rodrigues questions the

expression of his faith and occasionally fights with Garupe who adamantly adheres to his more mainline Jesuit view of their teachings to the Japanese converts. When the Tomogi villagers ask the priests what they should do if the Japanese authorities capture them and test them with the *fumi-e*, Garupe responds that they “should pray for courage.” Rodrigues cuts in, saying emphatically that the villagers should “trample, trample, it is alright to trample” (despite his own reluctance to follow his own advice during the climax of the film), and Garrupe is horrified. Despite the villagers’ fear that it will not only be those who are caught, but rather the entire village that will suffer, Garrupe refuses to back down from his Jesuit teachings, telling the villagers simply “you can’t.” While Rodrigues is able to compromise his moral guidance, or at least lead his flock to commit blasphemy, it is Garrupe who maintains the military-like discipline of his Jesuit Order. During the *samurai*’s inquisition in Tomogi village, the villagers pay the price for the priests’ clandestine actions, and they become martyrs. When captured, Rodrigues breaks down in front of imprisoned Japanese converts. He half-shouts at them for their calm reaction to being held prisoner. His anger flares, as he tells them that both they and he will die. The converts respond calmly and with a bit of confusion, asking that, since they will be in Paradise, would it not be better for them to be martyred. As Rodrigues continues to see himself as a Christ figure, the viewer must wonder if he is the appropriate Savior or whether the Japanese martyrs would be better suited.

The climax of the film proves especially troubling for the presentation of Rodrigues as a Christ figure. Set amidst the torture of five apostatized converts, Ferreira tells the priest that the captives will be killed unless Rodrigues renounces his faith. Rodrigues struggles with the decision, looking at the *fumi-e* carved with Christ’s image, and he hears a voice which tells him to step on the metal plate. Rodrigues agonizes over God’s silence, but the image says that He is not silent, He is suffering alongside the priest during his journey. Rodrigues steps on the carving, collapsing in his anguish. While the voice Rodrigues hears could have been left ambiguous (whether it was the voice of God, the voice of the Devil, or Rodrigues’s own desire), the film leaves attentive viewers with no ambiguity. As the camera leaves Rodrigues on the ground, it cuts to the captives being released. The first rays of dawn appear, and a rooster is heard crowing thrice. Alluding to the denial of Peter, the disciple of Christ, this removes doubt that Rodrigues’s actions were anything other than a betrayal.

The last ten minutes of the film follow Rodrigues’s life in Japan until his death. He is now a productive member of the Japanese government, ensuring that the persecution of Christians continues by inspecting imports for hidden Christian images. By his death in his sixties, the viewers see he has truly changed, annually renouncing his Christian faith and inheriting the wife and property of an executed man. Kichijiro even comes to Rodrigues once more, asking for absolution. Rodrigues denies this, saying he is no longer a priest. So, when Rodrigues’s body is being cremated and the camera pulls in to show a

small crucifix, one gifted to him by a villager during his first days in Japan, the sentiments of the complexity of Rodrigues's inner faith rings hollow. This ending is especially problematic since Endo's novel has no such ending. The addition of the hidden crucifix was a liberty taken by Scorsese. In Endo's version, Rodrigues's faith has actions to back up the sentiment. Rodrigues agrees to hear Kichihiro's last confession and grants him absolution. In addition, though he continues to serve the shogunate under the given name Okada San'emon, he asks the authorities for mercy for those who are found with contraband. Rodrigues's narration ends with the much more satisfying declaration of his faith: "He loved Him now in a different way from before." While one of Scorsese's best films and one of impeccable shot composition and bold stylistic choices, this final shot falls flat in tying together an already weak character development, leaving *Silence* a very beautiful, but deeply flawed film.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Gareth O'Neal of Anaheim, California, earned two B.A. degrees in French and Comparative Literature (2015), as well as an M.A. in English at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2018), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). His English M.A. thesis applied Albert Camus's absurdism to H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF with a thesis/project on the brass rubbings in CSUF's Roberta "Bobbe" Browning Collection. He is a 2019 recipient of CSUF's Hansen Fellowship in Oral and Public History. He also served as an editor for this volume of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."

*The Vietnam War* [TV documentary series].  
Directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. 2017.

Florentine Films; WETA-TV (PBS). 10 episodes (ca. 18 hours total).

Winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people was not easy for the men and women in the uniform of the United States, as well as for their loved ones that supported them back home while they fought their battles in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Although the war itself was the most difficult part in a nearly thirty-year-long attempt to counter the communist struggle for a unified Vietnam, living with the weight of its memory would prove to be a most hellacious effort for the people of the United States and the then separate nations of North and South Vietnam. Ken Burns's and Lynn Novick's documentary series, *The Vietnam War* (2017), situates itself on the periphery of being a film, as video and audio have been prominently enhanced to make it appear more theatrical. However, principally, *The Vietnam War* is a documentary series (in spite of the directors' subtitle: *A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*). *The Vietnam War* dramatically chronicles the stories of those who were directly and deeply involved in the Vietnam War by focusing on interviews of participants in the war in ten separate episodes that span approximately 18 hours. Each episode intricately captures the political, social, cultural, and military atmosphere that the United States and both Vietnams experienced during the tumultuous war years.

Burns and Novick scouted for American soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors who fought in the war (including those who opposed the war), American prisoners of war as well as their loved ones, and those who lost family members in combat. To circumvent bias from the American perspective, Burns and Novick include combatants and civilians from both North and South Vietnam to attain a comprehensive viewpoint from all sides of the war. The directors presumably did this to give those that contributed to *The Vietnam War* an added mutual connection through their participation in the battles and social undercurrents that the documentary presents, as well as to signify that American, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese service members all fought equally and valiantly for what they and their nations believed in. This goes against the anti-communist rhetoric that one normally finds in predisposed American media that follow the trend that the United States fought for a justified and moral cause, while the North Vietnamese, backed by Soviet and Chinese communists, were evil in bringing about calamitous destruction in the wake of their virulent goal to unify one nation under communism. Burns and Novick appear to do this to demonstrate that in war there truly is no winner on either side of a conflict.

Lynn Novick is most prominent for her association with producing many of Ken Burns's recent documentaries and miniseries. Ken Burns is most recognized for distinguishing himself as a renowned filmmaker with a penchant for history to convey his body of work. Those who are familiar with Burns's other work, particularly his most famous documentary, *The Civil War* (1990), relish his iconic style of slow and steady panning and zooming into photographs (also known as the "Ken Burns effect") with historians' commentary in the background. In a similar fashion, although slightly different manner, Burns and Novick present *The Vietnam War* with its "boots on the ground" stylistic interpretation through photograph, film, and U.S. presidential reel-to-reel depiction, combined with personal narratives from civilians and former military personnel of the armed services of the U.S., South Vietnam, and North Vietnam and their revolutionary allies, the Viet Cong and Viet Minh. The directors apparently opt for this method of storytelling, instead of using high-ranking politicians or generals who served during this era, to present a more personal approach to everyday viewers and describe the situation of what was going on in their country during the war.

Nearly every episode of *The Vietnam War* begins with a brief overview of an individual's story that introduces and establishes the Vietnam War in context and arranges the war in chronological order. The initial episode sets up a succinct story of the First Indochina War (1946-1954) that portrays the reasons for North Vietnamese President Ho Chi Minh's desire to oust the colonial French and secure Vietnam as an independent nation. This led to the Second Indochina War (1955-1975, also known as the Vietnam War). Yet, within the episodes, Burns and Novick seem to maintain their own respective version of events and ignore certain elements of history. *Episode 1* briefly mentions the United States' rationale for originally sending advisors to help guide South Vietnam's ARVN forces

(Army of the Republic of Vietnam), and then over time building up its military forces until the U.S. government could no longer hide the massive troop accumulation taking place in Southeast Asia. The “Domino Theory,” as it was referred to by President Eisenhower, was the justification for quarantining the spread of communism in South Vietnam: if one nation were to fall to the “Reds” then the next more vitally strategic nation to the U.S. would topple like a row of dominoes. This was a key reason why the United States entered the Vietnam War to begin with, other than retaliation for the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964). The “Domino Theory” is only mentioned in passing. Burns and Novick could have reminded viewers from time to time of its importance in U.S. policy, but chose not to do so. The directors also focus on a handful of decisive battles that resulted in defeats for the United States. Yet, even though America had “lost” the war by 1973, the tactical defeat the U.S. suffered allowed other nations to secure their own defenses against communist advances in the region. While Burns and Novick point out the importance of losing these battles, there were also victories during this same time frame that they do not mention, giving the impression of an imbalanced narrative. Burns and Novick imply that their narrative of the war is what actually happened; in fact, they merely give an academic interpretation.

*Episode 2* delves into the political strategies between the Kennedy administration and South Vietnam’s Ngo Dinh Diem regime, and how deeply involved the U.S. military would find itself bogged down over time in the quagmire that the Vietnam War became. *Episode 3* revolves around the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and the subsequent bombing and troop deployment that initiated the portion of the war that involved the United States. Eventually, the first major battle between the U.S. and North Vietnam was fought in the Ia Drang valley (1965) with both sides claiming victory. In *Episode 4*, viewers are treated to the famous “Ho Chi Minh Trail,” which supplied the Viet Cong in the south with vital provisions to fight their guerrilla war against the U.S. (whom they saw as an occupying force). *Episode 5* deals with the psychological effects suffered by many of the veterans and the impact of the war by winter 1967. *Episode 6* details the Tet Offensive (1968) which was coordinated to coincide with the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. The North Vietnamese Army, along with the Viet Cong disguised as civilians prior to the assault, attacked 36 of South Vietnam’s 44 provincial capitals. After weapons were smuggled in on trucks containing firework boxes for the New Year’s celebration, communist commanders orchestrated the battle so their troops would “Crack the sky, and shake the Earth,” and break the essence of U.S. military invincibility. The Tet Offensive failed, but it proved to be the beginning of the end of a war once seen as winnable for the United States. *Episode 7* probes into lost battles, the war of attrition, the stalemate the war became, and Richard Nixon taking the helm of the U.S. presidency. *Episode 8* showcases the anti-war movement at its height by mid-1969, as well as President Nixon beginning troop withdrawal from South Vietnam and initiating “Vietnamization” (the process of handing responsibility to the South Vietnamese

government and leaving the fighting increasingly to ARVN forces). *Episode 9* covers a three-year time span from 1970 to 1973, including the Kent State shootings (1970), the U.S.-North Vietnamese Peace Agreements (1973), and the return of hundreds of American prisoners of war from North Vietnam. Finally, *Episode 10* emotionally relates the fate of the South Vietnamese government, of the thousands of Vietnamese who became American citizens after the war, and of the millions forced to live under communist rule in a now united Vietnam.

Throughout *The Vietnam War*, Burns and Novick rely heavily on combat veterans' experiences from all three nations as part of their primary source material. Their experiences are genuine, sincere, and bring a human and emotional quality to the war. The many interviews and oral narratives humanize the many individuals interviewed, despite the dehumanization they may have undergone from the trauma of war. One North Vietnamese soldier, who gallantly performed his duty for his nation, maintains how sympathy and hatred were interwoven on the battlefield, but that hatred was always the dominant sensation as it was needed to fend off any compassion for the enemy in order to destroy them. Likewise, in *Episode 5*, U.S. Marine John Musgrave, after feeling the guilt of killing a man in Vietnam, claims that he made his deal with the devil by saying, "I will never kill another human being as long as I'm in Vietnam. However, I will waste as many gooks as I can find. I'll wax as many dinks as I can find. I'll smoke as many zips as I can find. But I ain't gonna kill anybody, you know? Turn the subject into an object. It's racism 101. It turns out to be a very necessary tool when you have children fighting your wars, for them to stay sane doing their work." This may come as a shock to viewers, but it is an important part of the story of the Vietnam War and, perhaps, war in general. Burns and Novick maintain that a level of dehumanization of the enemy was a clear necessity for the fighting men of either side's military to counter the opposing nation. Nonetheless, it sometimes seems as if Burns and Novick only interviewed those U.S. veterans of the war, as well as family members of slain veterans, who were not in favor of the United States fighting the war. They interviewed those who became anti-war activists, such as Musgrave and author Tim O'Brien (who wrote about the gruesomeness and anguish the Vietnam War caused him). Ostensibly, the directors did not bother to seek out veterans who were proud of the fight they considered to be a righteous cause, namely, to halt the immorality of communism. Thus, Burns and Novick sideline any attempt to display a sense of pride and camaraderie between veterans.

The staggering attention to detail that went into this documentary, as well as the collection of war photographs and film footage that is accompanied by old-timey music reminiscent of the era, truly shows the impressive lengths Burns and Novick went to accumulate the sources necessary to accomplish *The Vietnam War*. Even though Burns and Novick display their own views of U.S. strategy and how the war was fought (such as periodic reminders of the usage of Agent Orange, white phosphorous munitions, and napalm strikes on innocent



civilians), they scarcely mention massacres committed by North Vietnam, except for calculated offenses to overrun South Vietnam. Yet, as Bao Ninh, a North Vietnamese Army soldier, proclaims in *Episode 1*: “In war, no one wins or loses. There is only destruction. Only those who have never fought like to argue about who won and who lost.” Despite its flaws, this documentary, like any of Ken Burns’s documentaries, provides viewers with a sensation as if they have lived through the era and actively participated in the Vietnam War. No other documentary series (to date) will give the same level of understanding and emotional empathy to its viewers.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: Brian A. Pitchford of Fullerton, California, earned two A.A. degrees, one in General Education and one in History, at Fullerton College (2015 and 2017), and is currently working on a B.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). Having joined the United States Air Force immediately after graduating from High School (2007), he served a tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2009.

*The Wind Rises/Kaze Tachinu* [animated film].

Directed by Hayao Miyazaki. 2013.

Studio Ghibli; Buena Vista Home Entertainment; et al.; 126 minutes.

There are times when a film requires the kind of dynamic imagery that can be presented by animation alone to deliver a surreal illustration of the imagination of the human mind. *The Wind Rises* is an animation film directed and written by Hayao Miyazaki, a legend among animation directors, who is responsible for works such as *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Spirited Away* (2001), and *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004). *The Wind Rises* is presumably Miyazaki’s final directed and written work, nominated for over twenty-six awards and receiving seventeen awards, including Japan’s 2014 Academy Prize for Animation of the Year. I believe that the overall success of the film is due to the romantic and tragic nature of the plot’s historical context, which guides its audience through Japan’s history before World War II by means of the protagonist’s narrative, illustrating beautifully interaction with Germany and Italy and the economic and social state of Japan, while revealing Miyazaki’s disapproval of Japan’s involvement in World War II.

The opening scene encapsulates the film’s overall romantic and tragic tone: a boy sleeping and dreaming of flying. The dream features Italian music in the background as the boy climbs into his bird-like plane, launches, and glides silently over the crisp morning air of the countryside, while Japanese people cheer him on from below. The dream, however, is abruptly cut short by a giant squid-like blimp, bearing the Iron Cross of the German Luftwaffe. The blimp releases its bombs, destroys the boy’s plane, and sends him back down to earth.

The boy is Jiro Horikoshi (1903-1982), the protagonist of the film and future designer of the Mitsubishi A5M fighter plane used by Japan during World War II. Hayao Miyazaki wished to create a fictionalized biopic of Hirokoshi by reimagining his life; he was inspired to create the film after reading a quote by Horikoshi: “All I wanted to do was to make something beautiful.” This quote is

the driving theme for the film's main character, as Horikoshi consistently has additional dreams of flying that almost always feature an Italian aircraft designer by the name of Count Caproni, otherwise known as Giovanni Battista Caproni (1886-1957), first Count of Taliedo, an Italian aeronautical engineer. Caproni shares a similar dream, the dream of creating beautiful planes that everyone can enjoy. However, because their respective nations are only interested in an aircraft that can be utilized in war, both are forced to create fighters or bombers. In the film, Caproni tells Horikoshi, "But remember this, Japanese boy, airplanes are not tools for war. They are not for making money. Airplanes are beautiful dreams. Engineers turn dreams into reality." [00:12:00] Unlike western cinema, the film has a habit of not presenting time skips, so many moments of the film require the viewer to pay attention to the contextual background of scenes.

During the first half of the film, Horikoshi appears to have grown up and heads to Tokyo University. This is when the audience is introduced to the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, 7.9 on the magnitude scale. The animation used to depict the earthquake is ominous and hushed. You would expect the crashing sound of ground cracking, buildings falling apart, and explosions occurring. Instead, the quake is illustrated by the sound of rushing wind, a brilliant addition to the manner in which the city rattles and rolls. It is a quiet terror. It is during the aftermath of the tremor that Horikoshi recalls the success associated with the creation of Caproni's seaplane which, although built precisely like in the dream they had shared years prior, failed to fly. Caproni then asks out loud, "What do you think, Japanese boy, is the wind still rising?", to which Horikoshi replies, "Yes, it is a gale." [00:24:12] The film continues with its romantic and tragic storyline, an earthquake devastating Tokyo, and then the rapid recovery of Tokyo, accompanied by that familiar Italian music and the romantic, picturesque scenery of the city rebuilding. Japan is now entering the 1930s, and thus the film presents Japan's Showa Depression (1930-1932) to illustrate the severity of the country's economic and social state during that time.

Soon thereafter, Horikoshi has graduated and is traveling to meet his employer, Mitsubishi's aeronautical engineer division. Upon arriving by train, Horikoshi witnesses the countless unemployed people walking alongside railroads, heading to the city to look for work. In the town, Horikoshi sees people rushing a bank that has recently been closed due to bankruptcy. Horikoshi's friend Honjo remarks, "The economy is in the tank, and I hate to break it to you, Jiro, but so is our new employer." [00:31:55] The Mitsubishi headquarters represented in the film are dirt roads, poorly equipped, and a depressingly rundown base of operation. The running gag in the movie is that Japan still needs to tow their fighter planes out into the field with oxen, which takes them two whole days to accomplish. The first plane, Falcon-1, to the construction of which Jiro contributes, ends in utter failure, as the fighter cannot break 200 knots, tearing apart midair. The army decides then to go with a competing design, and Mitsubishi has to collaborate on behalf of the Japanese military with Germany to

build a new bomber. Thus, Horikoshi leaves for Germany to study the design of German bombers.

In this segment, Jiro witnesses firsthand the gap between Japanese and German technology, and perhaps the world. The behemoth bomber presented to Horikoshi is beyond anything he could have ever dreamed of; its full metal body and frame is visually frightening and elegant. The interaction between the German soldier who attempts to prevent Horikoshi and Honjo from examining German technology is an example of the animosity between these two nations. However, Hugo Junkers, the German aircraft engineer in charge, allows Horikoshi to study his work out of respect for fellow engineers. Later, when Honjo is examining the documents on the bomber, he addresses the difficulty of learning anything from the specs given to him, because the Germans have crossed out any useful information. Horikoshi replies that it is perhaps not necessary to make a bomber out of metal; wood and canvas are just fine. Honjo angrily states that Japan cannot fall behind any further, and that Japanese technology is already twenty years behind everyone. After a run-in with the German secret police who are chasing down people, Jiro has a dream in which he witnesses a Japanese bomber on fire, exploding midair before crashing onto the ground. In the dream, Jiro once again encounters Caproni who asks Jiro, "Is the wind still rising?", and Jiro replies: "It is." [00:54:58] Caproni then welcomes Horikoshi to embark with him on his final flight. There is a subtle transition from a winter scenery to one of spring, and Jiro is once again dreaming alongside Caproni of an aircraft that is designed for passengers, not as a tool of war. Jiro remarks that "Japan could never build anything as grand and beautiful as this. The country is too poor and backwards." [00:56:28] Caproni replies that inspiration is all an engineer needs; that technology eventually catches up because of inspiration; and that a world with planes, even if they are used as tools for slaughter, is still a better world than one without planes. Jiro tells Caproni, "I just want to create beautiful aeroplanes." [00:57:48] At this point, a rough version of the A5M glides past Jiro and Caproni. The scene is gorgeous, and a simple paper airplane modeled to look like the future A5M flies elegantly against the colorful horizon and onto Jiro's hand who then pushes it off as if it really is a paper airplane. With Caproni retiring, Horikoshi is determined to make his dream come true.

Jiro arrives back in Japan and is immediately given the task to create a new fighter plane; however, his creation, which mimics the A5M significantly, ends up in failure. Suffering from a depressing defeat, Jiro is told to travel to Hotel Kusakaru to relax, a hotel inspired by the Kamikochi Imperial Hotel located near the Japanese Alps. It is here that Jiro is reunited with Satomi, a young woman he had helped during the 1923 earthquake, and he eventually falls in love with her. This segment of the film, according to Miyazaki, was inspired by the novel *The Wind Has Risen/Kaze Tachinu* (1936-1937) by Tatsuo Hori (1904-1953) who wrote about his life experience with his ill fiancée who eventually passed away from

tuberculosis. Similarly, Jiro falls in love and has to deal with the hardships of following his dream to build his plane and attend to his ill wife. There are many beautiful and memorable moments that one could share from this passionate romance, however, it is a romantic tale worthy of being experienced firsthand.

Jiro continues by bringing life to the A5M, while caring for Satomi whenever possible. During his research, Jiro discovers flush riveting and implements it into his design for a new fighter plane. The day before the unveiling of the A5M, Honjo speaks to Jiro, requesting the use of his rivet and various other plans. Jiro agrees and asks how the bomber project is coming along. Honjo reveals that Japan will soon be at war with just about everyone and that the bombers especially are still inadequate. Honjo concludes the conversation by saying, "We aren't arms merchants, we just want to build good aircraft." [01:51:30] I believe that it is in this moment that all those years with Jiro pushing his beautiful-planes ideology finally have an impact on Honjo. This is the final exchange between the two in the film and embodies the true spirit of an engineer.

The film's ending revisits the romantic and tragic scene from the beginning of the movie. The A5M is flying in the sky above the country landscape with that familiar Italian music playing. All the while, Jiro is unaware that his wife has left the house to die in peace at a sanatorium. There is a moment in which Jiro realizes something is wrong, ignores his creation completely, and the music is replaced with silence: only the faint sound of wind is present. There is a sophisticated element throughout the film: the wind rises, carrying Jiro upwards; however, whenever the wind rises, tragedy cuts Jiro off and returns him back down to earth. Mayazaki's film is not merely an overly romantic, patriotic story about a Japanese engineer and his glorious contribution to Japan's World-War II effort, but also an anti-war message. I would recommend this film to virtually anyone. It is animated beautifully, easily capturing the imagination and attention of children. It is also intelligently written so that any adult will admire its emotional complexity. History compacted in an entertaining and creative manner, with a romantic and tragic backstory, all the while being visually stunning, *The Wind Rises* is a must see. The last few minutes of the film cut to a final horrid dream: Japan on fire, the landscape littered with Japanese planes, and Caproni once again present. Jiro remarks on what this landscape used to be like when he first met Caproni, but now it is a land of the dead. Caproni praises Jiro for his successful A5M planes, but Jiro states that it all fell apart in the end. There is an exquisite scene in which Jiro's A5M fighter planes glide past them and join innumerable planes represented by stars. Caproni declares, "truly a masterful design," [02:01:17] to which Jiro dismally replies, "Not a single one returned."

ABOUT THE REVIEWER: *Christopher Saravia of Orange, California, earned his B.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2017), where he is also a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at CSUF, working on Spanish-English relations in the late medieval and early modern era.*