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Women warriors: an unexpected history, Pamela D. Toler (book review)

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from *Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War*) avoids a narrow focus on the minutiae of warfare, employing descriptions of the logistical nightmares that came along with a campaign near the Arctic Circle as well as the political entanglements the U.S. forces experienced. Interestingly, it was upon their return to the United States that the 5,000-team unit adopted the moniker the Polar Bears; unfortunately, nearly 200 died owing to harsh weather conditions before their withdrawal. While Nelson mined memoirs written by the Polar Bears, the bibliography is rather sparse on the most recent historiography of the war. **VERDICT** Nelson adeptly integrates the individual experiences of the regiment with the wider events of the expedition, though sometimes the narrative is overdramatized. Still, this largely overlooked event will interest readers of military history.—**Frederic Krome, Univ. of Cincinnati Clermont Coll.**

Spawforth, Tony. *The Story of Greece and Rome*. Yale Univ. Nov. 2018. 392p. illus. maps. notes. index. ISBN 9780300217117. \$30; ebk. ISBN 9780300241105. HIST

In this ambitious, entertaining, and fleet-footed survey, Spawforth (ancient history, Newcastle Univ., UK; *The Complete Greek Temples*) recounts the developments of what is now called classical civilization. The author's objective is to introduce these societies to novice readers of the period, beginning with Neolithic Greece (7,000 BCE) and concluding some 8,000 years later with the rise of the first Islamic Caliphate. The work traverses this substantial period mostly successfully, visiting key figures, developments, and major archaeological discoveries while only occasionally being too oblique in references. Given this breadth, a few errors invariably creep in (e.g., referring to Pompey as younger than Julius Caesar), and parts of the narrative frenetically scamper across both centuries and regions, in litanies of rulers, wars, and reversals, particularly in the concluding chapter. Lastly, the abundant personal anecdotes about Spawforth's own academic development and archaeological experiences frequently consume too much time but do enhance the author's authority. **VERDICT** While the pacing might overwhelm at times, this is overall a worthy and enjoyable introduction for readers seeking a general sense of the interwoven world of ancient Greece and Rome.—**Evan M. Anderson, Kirkendall P.L., Ankeny, IA**

Toler, Pamela D. *Women Warriors: An Unexpected History*. Beacon. Feb. 2019. 240p. illus. notes. index. ISBN 9780807064320. \$28.95; ebk. ISBN 9780807064641. HIST

More women, Toler (*The Heroines of Mercy Street*) wants her readers to understand, have fought in battles than we'll ever know. By the author's own account, the women featured in this book are the results of a trimmed list of thousands, grouped by categories: mothers fighting for children; daughters inspired by fathers; queens and widows defending their lands or husbands; women who disguised themselves as men or fought openly with no cover up at all. The scope of subjects limits the depth of individual coverage, with most of the women getting a few pages that summarizes their life, actions, and legacy through the discussion of historical sources. Toler's concentrated effort to include lesser-known figures from non-Western countries—Arabic queen Mavia and Vietnam's Trung sisters sit alongside Celtic queen Boudica and Joan of Arc—are significant points in the work's favor. The author's passion for her subjects carries through to her commentary, which, while casual in tone, provides a clear (if occasionally repetitive) criticism of the historical trends of sexist dismissal these women faced in their own time and today. **VERDICT** This strong-voiced treatment nicely introduces readers to the lives of less-familiar historical women.—**Kathleen McCallister, William & Mary Libs., Williamsburg, VA**

Vuic, Kara Dixon. *The Girls Next Door: Bringing the Home Front to the Front Lines*. Harvard Univ. Feb. 2019. 340p. illus. notes. index. ISBN 9780674986381. \$29.95. HIST

In her latest work, Vuic (history, Texas Christian Univ.; *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War*) focuses her attention on women entertainers who have served U.S. military personnel since World War I, from those who ran service clubs and canteens for the Red Cross or YMCA to those who toured with the United Services Organizations (USO). The author notes that “[m]ilitary entertainment highlights the central role gender and sexuality played in GI culture and masculinity.” Indeed, as the history of this phenomenon unfolds within the book, the tensions, contrasts, and changing nature of gender roles in the United States becomes starkly apparent, to the point that the female entertainers who were once a welcomed reminder of home are now considered inappropriate and out-of-step with the evolving makeup of military personnel. **VERDICT** This well-researched and well-written work delves into an aspect of women's service in wartime that is not often portrayed, resulting in a refreshingly critical narrative that might appeal more to scholars than armchair historians.—**Crystal Goldman, Univ. of California, San Diego Lib.**

★**Zia, Helen. *Last Boat Out of Shanghai: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Fled Mao's Revolution*. Ballantine. Jan. 2019. 528p. illus. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780345522320. \$28; ebk. ISBN 9780525618867. HIST**

Journalist Zia (*Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*) writes a compelling history of five individuals and their families who escaped Shanghai during the Chinese Civil War (1946–50). The chapters alternate among accounts of Benny, Ho, Bing, Annuo, and Doreen, beginning when they were children on the eve of the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s. The book concludes in the 1950s, when they are young adults scattered across the globe in Nanjing, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States. They each come from very different backgrounds and either begin their lives in Shanghai or end up there during the course of World War II. After Japan's defeat, elation was replaced with fear as the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists resumed. When a Communist victory becomes certain, these families are forced to make difficult decisions about whether to leave the country. **VERDICT** The stories of these refugees offer a window into Chinese culture, family life, and the history of this tumultuous period, resulting in a beautiful and emotional work that should be essential reading for those interested in 20th-century Chinese history.—**Joshua Wallace, Tarleton State Univ. Lib. Stephenville, TX**

LAW & CRIME

Chemerinsky, Erwin. *We the People: A Progressive Reading of the Constitution for the Twenty-First Century*. Picador. Nov. 2018. 320p. notes. ISBN 9781250166005. \$16; ebk. ISBN 9781250165992. LAW

With Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court in October 2018, the Court now solidly represents the conservative legal view. For Chemerinsky, a leading U.S. legal scholar and currently dean of the Berkeley School of Law, there exists an alternative perspective, one that reflects a progressive outlook on the law. Chemerinsky takes issue with the “originalist” ideals of the late Justice Antonin Scalia and others who argue that the Constitution must be interpreted only in the light of what was allegedly the mind-set of the Founding Fathers. Instead, the author believes that the Constitution is a living document that can only best be interpreted through the lens of contemporary thought and culture. He also places a great deal of importance on the Preamble to the Constitution, which inspired the title of this book, and its focus on liberty and justice. **VERDICT** Those troubled by the

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