

Robert Garson and Christopher J. Bailey. *The Uncertain Power: A Political History of the United States since 1929*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 162. Cloth, \$29.95.

Robert D. Marcus and David Burner, eds. *America Since 1945*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. Fifth edition. Pp. viii, 413. Paper, \$19.35.

Robert Garson and Christopher Bailey explain in their introduction that they are writing primarily for an audience of British university students. They acknowledge that they have not written a comprehensive volume. Rather they have chosen to focus on political history, limiting detailed treatment to "those issues that lingered and molded public policy in future years." *The Uncertain Power* is indeed a short survey. The era of the New Deal is covered in a mere eleven pages, and other topics are similarly briefly addressed. One must hope that British students are better versed in general history than American students for there are many overgeneralizations, and few footnotes are provided to assist the reader in understanding the material.

There are some sections of the book with which an American reader might take issue. One might argue, for example, with the contention that a "major change" that emerged during the Presidency of Franklin Roosevelt was "the growth of executive power in the conduct of foreign policy." The authors understate both Eisenhower's and Kennedy's roles in bringing the U.S. into the conflict in Viet Nam and leave Kennedy with the full responsibility for the Bay of Pigs debacle. On the other hand, their comparison of the U.S. response to the Soviet entrance into the nuclear arena (questioning the loyalty of scientists) and the U.S. response to the launching of *Sputnik* (questioning the system of higher education) provides a useful insight into changes in the political climate during the 1950s.

Marcus and Burner have edited a collection of readings. Their volume contains a potpourri of items ranging from Kennedy's inaugural address to letters to the editor of *Ms.* magazine. The arrangement of the articles is by time period (Part One contains selections on the period 1945-1952 and so on). However, two readings dealing with the Kennedy years do not follow one another sequentially, and while articles on the Great Society and Johnson's decision not to run for reelection are in Part Three, an article on the Tet Offensive is included in Part Four. No theme seems to have dictated the choice of material. The authors have included selections from literature (Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*), politics (for example, Kennedy's Inaugural Address, Barry Goldwater's Acceptance Speech in 1964, etc.), feminism (a section from Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*), law (selections from *Roe v. Wade* and *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*), race relations (Martin Luther King's letter from the Birmingham jail), and other topics. The selections vary in readability and potential interest to students. Although each selection contains an introduction, footnotes are not provided, thus leaving many items in the text potentially unclear to students without a fairly broad background in U.S. History.

Both books contain reading lists. The one provided by Marcus and Burner is considerably more extensive than that provided by Garson and Bailey, although both leave out some well-known studies (Sorensen's *Kennedy*, for example). Both are marred by a number of printing errors.

Each of these books has something to recommend it. *The Uncertain Power* could be quite useful in a twentieth-century U.S. course if used with a more detailed reader. The British perspective on what is most important in recent U.S. history is an interesting change from the usual American view and could make for some good classroom discussions. I would not recommend coupling this book with *America Since 1945*, however, as the combination would make for a somewhat disjointed and incomplete view of U.S. history. On the other hand, the non-political readings of the Marcus and Burner book are likely to generate considerable

student interest and classroom discussion. Today's students may relate less enthusiastically to the more overtly political sections. In any case, neither book is sufficient alone.

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Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black. *Hollywood Goes To War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990. Pp. x, 374. Paper, \$12.95.

We, and especially our students, are living in an increasingly visual age. Film and television, entertainment videos and those for instruction, video games, computer displays, and virtual reality simulations are almost a natural part of our high-tech daily lives in this last decade of the twentieth century. Naively, we have accepted this mediation of our existence without any real preparation or critical evaluation of its growing impact. It has become a significant aspect of our evolution into post-modernism. Yet, we often look without seeing, watch without comprehending, and, consequently, react without thinking.

Although there has been considerable historical scholarship on the uses of media for the support of totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Maoist China, there has been comparatively little done on the utilizations and effect of this media in freer societies. One such recent work which has now appeared in a paperback edition is *Hollywood Goes To War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* by Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black. The authors are well-qualified to treat this important topic: Koppes is an endowed professor of history and humanities at Oberlin College, and Black is a professor of communications at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

As its subtitle indicates, this book is more than a film history. It is a thorough consideration of the impact of government influence plus industry self-censorship on American filmmaking during the Second World War (1939-1945) when Hollywood produced an estimated 2,500 pictures. After reading this fascinating volume, it becomes clear that the film industry's efforts during these years were fully integrated into the American war effort.

With strong government urging and strict censorship, developed and enforced by a "tight corporate oligarchy," wartime films quickly went beyond merely boosting morale and stimulating patriotism to blatant propaganda. While this was done largely in response to the demands of an all-out war, the Hollywood moguls never lost sight of the bottom line, grasping the opportunity to expand their vertical control over the industry and to increase their profits by giving the viewing public what it wanted to see and eventually came to expect.

The authors begin with the state of the industry in 1939 and trace the unfolding of these trends to the war's conclusion. In the process, many now-classic films from early efforts like *The Great Dictator* and *Sergeant York* to later ones like *Mrs. Miniver* and *Guadalcanal Diary* are discussed in detail. Such films darkly sharpened the images of the German and Japanese enemies while remaking those of America's British, Soviet, and Chinese partners in the name of Allied solidarity.

Hollywood Goes To War is clearly and concisely written, making it a very readable mix of American wartime, corporate, and film history. Although it is thoroughly researched and documented in notes and a bibliographical essay, an appendix, containing a chronological listing of the major films discussed would nevertheless be helpful. This book will appeal to anyone interested in the American homefront effort during World War II and in war films. It can be particularly useful for teachers who wish to understand better the effects of propaganda on a free society during times of crises. It will help them explain some of those vintage films they