

Film is Like a Battleground: Sam Fuller's War Movies. By Marsha Gordon. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN 978-0-19-026975-3. Acknowledgments. Abbreviations. Notes. Selected filmography. Bibliography. Index. Pp. vii, 314. \$29.93.

No one is in a better position to describe war than those who have experienced it. We tend to associate this axiom with veterans who use the written or spoken word to communicate something of their experiences, but it is no less true for filmmakers. At a time when few of Hollywood's leading lights have any personal association with war or even the military, it is easy to overlook how deeply affected many directors, actors, photographers, and screenwriters were by World War II. John Ford was a naval officer who participated in the Normandy invasion and was wounded as he filmed the Battle of Midway. Frank Capra joined the army after Pearl Harbor and made the *Why We Fight* series to inform Americans about the war's great issues. Jimmy Stewart famously served as a bomber pilot in the Eighth Air Force. As an army captain, John Huston masterminded such gritty documentaries as *The Battle of San Pietro* and *Let There Be Light*.

No filmmaker of the World War II generation was more profoundly affected—one might say traumatized—by his wartime experiences than Sam Fuller, who served as an enlisted combat soldier with the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, from North Africa through the end of the war. Fuller spent the rest of his screenwriting and directing career attempting to come to grips with war and its effect on participants. In this beautifully researched volume, Marsha Gordon, an associate professor of English at North Carolina State University, argues convincingly that Fuller was a more important figure than we have previously realized and that his war experiences infused nearly every aspect of his work. Gordon's focus is exclusively on Fuller's war films, of which there were eleven, beginning with the footage Fuller shot at the newly liberated Falkenau concentration camp in 1945 and concluding in 1980 with *The Big Red One*, Fuller's semi-autobiographical attempt to convey his wartime experiences and those of his comrades in the storied 1st Infantry Division.

The chapters are organized in chronological order with considerable background on the making and marketing of each film, as well as some penetrating analysis of plots and themes. In a larger sense, the book is based on an impressive blend of primary source research at such venues as the Academy Film Archives, the Warner Brothers Archives, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Department of Defense records, UCLA's Special Collections Library, congressional records, military records at the National Archives, and Fuller's original 16-millimeter footage of Falkenau.

Gordon's writing is lively and authoritative, packed with keen insights and penetrating interpretations. She clearly has a strong grasp of Fuller's complex personality and his innovative film techniques, so much so that one might conclude she knew him well. In truth, she never met him, and this makes her understanding of Fuller all the more impressive. The cigar-chomping, colorful director comes to life in these

pages. What's more, Gordon has shed new light on his origins, proving that he was an immigrant born in Russia. Gordon also delves deeply into the federal government's view of Fuller as his postwar career unfolded. Fuller's FBI files illuminate the bureau's early Cold War paranoia about communist influence in movies. Fuller attempted to secure Defense Department and army cooperation in the making of several films. As the records reveal, this process was usually contentious and problematic, so much so that the reader cannot escape wondering why he even bothered.

While Gordon's understanding of Fuller's personal and professional sides are first-rate, her grasp of military organization and terminology is less sure. Occasionally her prose is marred with minor errors—16th Infantry Division instead of 16th Infantry Regiment, machine gun instead of submachine gun, and squadron instead of squad. None of these quibbling mistakes seriously detracts from an otherwise excellent, insightful, and original work. *Film Is Like a Battleground* is an important contribution to our understanding of World War II's impact on American cinema and the many ways in which veterans are affected forever by war.

John C. McManus

Missouri University of Science and Technology
Rolla, Missouri

Churchill and the Bomb in War and Cold War. By Kevin Ruane. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. ISBN 978-1-4725-2338-9. Notes. Bibliography. Pp. xxii, 402. \$34.00.

With the 2017 Doomsday clock announcement, missile testing, civil wars, and refugee numbers mounting, the world seems almost as dangerous as it was when Sir Winston Churchill finally stepped down as British prime minister in April 1955. The subject of uncountable biographies and specialized studies, Churchill continues to attract talented historians and to dazzle their readers. Churchill's life spanned the great wars of the twentieth century, and Ruane contends that his involvement in the nuclear bomb's development was more crucial than most of the historiography on the bomb itself suggests. Other works on Churchill and the bomb, most recently Graham Farmelo's *Churchill's Bomb: A Hidden History of Science, War, and Politics* (Basic Books, 2013), cover the same ground, albeit with differing emphases. Farmelo, the award-winning scientific biographer, condemns Churchill for relying too heavily upon his unpopular scientific advisor, Frederick Lindemann, and for failing to negotiate a nuclear partnership as an equal with the Americans early on in the development of the A-bomb. Although Ruane acknowledges these and other faults, along with added nuances, his work establishes that as Churchill slowly realized the importance of the bomb, he attempted to use it to maximize the American-British special relationship and to shore up dwindling British influence in the world.

Ruane identifies and describes three separate stages of Churchill's atomic career: the bomb-maker, the atomic diplomatist, and, finally, the nuclear peace-maker. His book is most notable for its emphasis upon this last role, an inherently

Copyright of Journal of Military History is the property of Society for Military History and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.