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## **Intelligence Officer's Bookshelf—September 2022\***

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*A State of Secrecy: Stasi Informers and the Culture of Surveillance*, by Alison Lewis

### **FICTION**

*Damascus Station*, by David McCloskey. Reviewed by Graham Alexander

*Gray Man* (Film), reviewed by Mike R.

*Silverview* by John le Carré. Reviewed by Mike R.

*Spies in Canaan* by David Park. Reviewed by J. E. Leonardson

\* Unless otherwise noted, reviews are by Hayden Peake.



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## ***Intelligence Process/Tradecraft***

***Intelligence and the State: Analysts and Decision Makers***, by Jonathan House (Naval Institute Press, 2022) 232 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index.

The subtitle of this book reveals its true subject. Author and historian Colonel Jonathan House (US Army, retired), is professor emeritus of military history at the Army Command and General Staff College. He has also published a two-volume military history of the Cold War and served as an intelligence analyst for the Joint Chiefs of Staff during both the 1991 and 2003 Iraq conflicts.<sup>a</sup>

In *Intelligence and the State*, House discusses a wide range of background subjects including the nature of the intelligence profession, its history since the war for independence, its basic elements and functions, its European antecedents, the pitfalls of mirror imaging, and the risk of confirmation bias.

But the principal thrust of the book is on three issues: (1) the relationship between senior political leaders and policymakers who believe they are better analysts than the professionals; (2) the problems that result when senior managers rather than expert analysts brief high-level policy- and decisionmakers; and (3) the rapid turnover and intelligence qualifications of the heads of intelligence services and their inspectors general.

In support of the first issue he offers historical examples. His position on the value of analysts briefing

decisionmakers, if possible, is that it protects the managers from echoing the perceived views of their principals and thus helps assure objectivity. (138)

House also suggests that the heads of intelligence community agencies and their inspectors general should have more analytic experience. Historically, too few have been experienced practitioners of the craft. This policy coupled with less turnover would create greater organizational stability and consistency of operations. These position are mitigated, however, by his own discussions of the performance of CIA Directors Robert Gates, James Woolsey, and George Tenet. (127–28)

Colonel House generally avoids political judgments, he does warn that an inexperienced administration can view intelligence as a “deep state... or partisan conspiracy” working “to thwart the executive” even when it is actually following “the laws without partisanship or prejudice.” (163)

*Intelligence and the State* is well documented and presents an uncommon but valuable perspective on the intelligence profession.

## ***Contemporary Issues***

***The Perfect Police State: An Undercover Odyssey Into China's Terrifying Surveillance Dystopia of the Future***, by Geoffrey Cain (PublicAffairs, 2021) 287 pages, endnotes, index.

Geoffrey Cain was a Fulbright scholar at London's School of Oriental and African Studies before spending 12 years as an investigative journalist reporting from Asia and the Middle East. *The Perfect Police State* is based on his travels in China during August 2017 to September 2020. While there he interviewed “168 Uyghur refugees, technology workers, government officials, researchers, academics, activists, and a former Chinese spy who was

preparing to defect.” After acknowledging he has used pseudonyms to protect his sources, he explains the extensive steps taken to verify their statements. (ix–x) The result is worth reading.

In the Xinjiang region of western China, the local Uyghurs call the pervasive surveillance they endure, “The Situation.” (1) Cain describes how modern technology

a. *A Military History of the Cold War, 1944–1962*, Volume 1 (University of Oklahoma Press, 2012) and Volume 2, *A Military History of the Cold War 1962–1991* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).

is used to monitor every aspect of a citizen's behavior. The methods used include electronic ID cards, "cameras, artificial intelligence, and facial and voice scanners" that turn the "country into a panopticon." (17) Those found "untrustworthy" are sent to reeducation camps if they are lucky, prison camps if they are not. Foreigners with visas are treated less severely. Cain's own introduction to "the Situation" occurred in 2017, when the security police deleted the photos on his phone and detained him for two days.

The protagonist of Cain's story is called Maysem, and he presents her account of Uyghur existence before and after the Situation was implemented. Broader descriptions of China's burgeoning surveillance state, often effected by Western technology, are interspersed between Maysem's interviews.

Currently in Turkey, Maysem grew up when it was possible for Uyghurs to attend Beijing University, where she received her bachelor's degree. Subsequently she was even permitted to began work on a master's in Ankara, Turkey. Then while home for summer vacation she encountered the Situation when a scan of her ID card flashed social ranking: Untrustworthy. After interrogation, she was sent to the camps where among the indignities she suffered, "the guards picked Maysem up and dragged her to an iron chair fitted with cuffs and restraints" and left her in the sun for more than eight hours. (28) Cain describes her re-education in great detail before telling how Maysem's mother managed to secure her freedom and eventual stressful return to her studies in Ankara.

*The Perfect Police State* also provides examples of China's growing nationwide surveillance. In addition to a 24/7 intrusive neighborhood-watch system, the use of artificial intelligence to control CCTV cameras that flag suspicious behavior and provide facial recognition capabilities is pervasive. (110) Cameras are positioned in entertainment venues, supermarkets, schools, and homes of religious figures. Maysem's family was required to install a government camera in their living room. (114) And then there are the "wifi sniffers," which collect the unique identifying addresses of computers, smart phones, and other networked devices. (125) Cain documents China's progress that drew heavily and unashamedly on Western software technology.

In an illustration of China's reaction to those who deviate from the rule, Cain tells the story of Yusuf Amet whom he interviewed in Turkey. Coerced by the security forces to spy on his family and then on Uyghurs in Pakistan, he escaped to Turkey where he felt safe enough to tell his story on public TV. To no one's surprise he was quickly tracked down and shot. (227)

*The Perfect Police State* concludes that the surveillance state cannot be blamed on technological advances, but on the decision to use the technology oppressively without due restraint or care. The Situation, he suggests, is the greatest humanitarian disaster of our century so far and a harbinger of what is to come if we don't learn to cope with the rapid advance of technology. (229) A well documented admonition of the problem with no solution in sight.

## **Memoir**

***Black Ops: The Life of a CIA Shadow Warrior***, by Ric Prado (St. Martin's Press, 2022) 384 pages, photos, index.

The 1959 Cuban revolution disrupted Ric Prado's comfortable middle-class life in the Cuban mountain-side town of Manicaragua. Gradually a combination of events, including Marxist indoctrination, "dominated every aspect" of his school life. (12) Then his father lost his business, and Ric was warned that he was in line to be sent to the Soviet Union for further "education." He avoided the honor with the help of friend. Circumstances worsened after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961, and the Prado family prepared to leave Cuba, a feat still possible when money crossed the right palms. Ric was sent to the United States first, where he spent some months in a

Catholic orphanage until his family followed. *Black Ops* is his account of growing up in the streets of Miami, serving in the Air Force as a pararescueman, and joining CIA, where he would eventually become chief of operations in the Counterterrorism Center (CTC).

His entry into CIA took some time and effort. After he made some inconclusive attempts to join, CIA, in need of a Spanish-speaking medic, contacted Prado and offered him a short-term contract to work in the Special Activities Division (SAD), which conducted paramilitary operations. Soon he was hired full time, working with

the Contras, who were then operating out of Honduras against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Prado's firsthand positive descriptions of their operations against the Sandinistas provides a perspective that differs greatly from the press coverage of the day.

After three years supporting the Contras, Prado returned to CIA Headquarters and entered George Mason University, where he wrote a senior thesis on counterterrorism. That was followed by training to become an operations officer. His first assignments were in Latin America, the Philippines, and East Asia. One of his more interesting assignments was countering North Korean operations. Much of the detail is blocked out but he does acknowledge that North Koreans are "exceptionally difficult to penetrate or turn." (223) Prado gives one example of their operations that involved "legal and undocumented immigrants from Latin America." Using a combination of cash and coercion they were recruited before they were sent to the United States, some became to become sleeper agents, others bought high-tech electronic items that were then smuggled to North Korea. (226)

In 1995, Prado was assigned to the Counterterrorism Center as deputy chief of Alec Station, a group formed to track the then little-known Usama bin Laden. Aside from a special assignment in an African country he identifies only as "Shangri-La," Prado would spend the balance of his career in the CTC as Chief of Operations. From that perspective he outlines the CTC's organization, identifies its key players, describes their reaction to 9/11 and the operations that led to the location and of death of bin Laden.

Despite his obvious respect and admiration for CIA, its staff, and leaders, Prado's designation of William Donovan—his childhood hero—as a former DCI will not result in a revision of agency history (Donovan was director of the Office of Strategic Services [OSS]). (87)

After retiring, Prado worked for private security firms before settling down as an instructor at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg. His memoir is a stirring, informative contribution from an author with a singular background.

## History

***Chile, the CIA and the Cold War: A Transatlantic Perspective***, by James Lockhart (Edinburgh University Press, 2019) 282 pages, end of chapter notes, bibliography, index.

James Lockhart is an associate professor of history at the American University in Dubai. In *Chile, the CIA and the Cold War* he takes a revisionist view of the topic.

His account begins with the kidnapping and death of General René Schneider in 1970. He is quick to point out that although the CIA had known "some of the plans" and offered "financial support," when asked to tell the Chilean president the Soviets were behind the act, the CIA refused. Nevertheless, "historians have tended to focus on the Nixon administration and the Agency when reconstructing Chile's Cold War experience, particularly the coup that overthrew the [Salvador] Allende government on 11 September 1973." (2)

Lockhart acknowledges that while the US intervention in the coup "exacerbated the human suffering," (3) the primary causes of the coup sprang from the Spanish Civil War and were strongly influenced by the Castro revolution in Cuba and other inter-American factors. He goes on to quote historian Tanya Harmer who wrote that "it was the Chilean military leaders who launched the coup with

the help of sympathetic Brazilian friends, not the United States." (4)

*Chile, the CIA and the Cold War* analyzes these and other historical factors as effected by various governments and political movements until Augusto Pinochet stepped down after losing a referendum on October 5, 1988. Lockhart shows that the Allende coup was different because it "presented the spectre of a Marxist administration that would invite Chilean Communists, who had long cultivated Soviet ties, into government," an outcome resisted since the 1920s. (187–88)

Lockhart concludes by stating that he has attempted to divert the focus from the "United States and its intelligence services" to the far more complex story that finds Chileans, above all others, in the centre of their own politics and history." (259) It is a different approach to the usual Allende narrative. Well written and documented, *Chile, the CIA and the Cold War* is worth serious attention.

***How To Stage A Coup: And Ten Other Lessons From the World of Secret Statecraft***, by Rory Cormac (Atlantic Books, Ltd., 2022) 375 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index.

The title of each of the 11 numbered chapters in this book begins with “How To” and is succeeded respectively by one of the following terms: assassinate, get away with murder, influence, subvert, wage secret war, rig an election, stage a coup, pick your rebels, sabotage, cyberattack, and wield a hidden hand. But the chapters stress “what” can be done, not “how to” do it. This book is about covert action.

Author Rory Cormac, professor of international relations at the University of Nottingham, first establishes that covert action is not the stuff of 007 or Jason Bourne. Then he compares the definitions adopted, at least in practice, by the United States, Britain, Russia, and China and Israel. The balance of the book addresses the chapter topics listed above with examples of their implementation and thoughtful reflection about the political and ethical considerations involved.

Some of the operations discussed fall in more than one category. For example, Iranian Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani was killed by a US drone strike and Russian intelligence poisoned Alexei Navalny. Cormac places each case in the “assassinate” chapter, recognizing Navalny survived. The death of Usama bin Laden, on the other hand, is described in the “murder” chapter. All three make the point that powerful states can conduct such operations and some acknowledge their role, while others do not. Cormac places Russia in the latter category, especially the GRU (military intelligence), which is “willing to embrace implausible deniability.” (22)

The chapter on “cyberattack” not only overlaps with the “influence” and “sabotage,” it is a relatively new and novel form of covert action practiced by many actors. Cormac illustrates this point with the Stuxnet operation against Iran, noting that it was the first time a cyberattack had caused major physical destruction. (238) Considering the implications involved, he warns about “the potentially devastating effects of “cyberwar” or a “cyber 9/11,” adding that the effects of a cyber Pearl Harbor would dwarf those of disruptive sabotage. (235)

The remaining chapters cover the more traditional forms of covert action, and Cormac provides examples in each case. In the process he makes several interesting observations. For example, he notes that while covert action is a term commonly associated with the United States, “the British have been doing this since before the United States existed,” and Russia has a broader approach in what it calls “active measures.” (24) He also raises the possibility of outsourcing covert action to private companies as a complicating factor. (301)

Finally, Cormac’s views on US covert action are worth noting. In fairness he acknowledges that “Historians associate plotting against Salvador Allende’s socialist government in Chile almost exclusively with the CIA, but documents recently unearthed in local archives reveal the hidden hand of others. We now know that the Brazilian military played a covert role in abetting the coup.” (159) And he says “It is misleading to overplay the CIA hand when thinking about covert actions. Other intelligence agencies, including those of regional powers, have hands of their own.” (160)

More broadly, however, he is critical of covert action in general and US actions in particular. He warns that “Universally applying the clinically bureaucratic approach of the Americans risks misunderstanding the more fluid thinking of the Russians—or even the British for that matter.” (258) He subsequently concludes that “If a whole of government approach is essential, it is unfortunate that the US response has so far been incoherent and uncoordinated. It is not even clear who is responsible for combating foreign disinformation on social media, and how they measure their effectiveness beyond trumpeting the number of initiatives under way.” (296) These rather strong judgments are not illustrated in the text or in the excellent endnotes that include an impressive range of sources. On balance, though, Professor Cormac has produced a valuable and thought-provoking work, the most thorough treatment of the topic to date.

***The Girls Who Stepped Out of Line: Untold Stories of the Women Who Changed the Course of World War II***, by Major General Marie K. Eder, US Army (retired), (Sourcebooks, 2021) 378 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, no index.

Marie Eder opens the book with a story actor Alex Borstein told in her 2019 Emmy Award acceptance speech.<sup>a</sup> In it she told about her Holocaust-survivor grandmother, who asked her guard as she was standing in line on the way to being shot at the edge of a pit, “What happens if I step out of line?” The guard replied, “I don’t have the heart to shoot you but somebody will.” So she stepped out of line and survived.

Early in World War II, a common perception of a woman’s contribution was as a secretary “or a teaching career...at least until they married and had children.” But there were exceptions: those who chose to ignore convention, disregard established roles, and step out of line. (2) Eder has selected 18 stories of women whose wartime service during exemplifies that principle.

Eder’s first story about tennis star Alice Marble is something of a surprise, as well as a disappointment. Marble had won 18 Grand Slam championships between 1936 and 1940. She continued playing and coaching during war. Recruited to spy for the US Army, she provided “information that was used to convict Nazi war criminals in the Nuremberg trials.” (26) And that is where the surprise surfaces. Having depended heavily for material on Marble’s memoir published in 1991, a year after her death, Eder acknowledges, “Those who have tried to dig deeper and confirm the details of her marriage to a handsome pilot or her role as a spy have been unable to find records that would corroborate her claims.” (27)

The other stories, some well known, are more deserving of inclusion. Virginia Hall, who served in the Special Operations Executive, the OSS, and after the war in the

CIA is a fine example. Others like Stephanie Raider was a member of X-2, the OSS counterintelligence branch, an experience she kept secret until 2008. In August 2022, marking its 75th anniversary, CIA inducted Virginia Hall into its group of honored trailblazers.

And then there was Ruth Gruber, a talented journalist who received a temporary rank of Army general, which meant she would have received Geneva Convention protections if her secret mission to bring a thousand Jewish refugees to the United States was discovered. (126)

One of the more unusual cases involved the British opera-loving Cook sisters, who spent three years “escorting” Jewish citizens out of Germany. Another was the story of American Ola ‘Millie’ MacDonald, who overcame considerable odds to become a pilot in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

Perhaps the most astonishing account deals with Lieutenant Colonel Charity Adams, the highest-ranking Black female officer during World War II. She commanded the first all-Black Women’s Army Corps unit, the 6888th Central Postal Battalion. The “Six Triple Eight,” as it was called, had 855 women who eventually operated out of Birmingham, England. Their mission: eliminate the monumental backlog of more than a million pieces of rat-infested military mail awaiting distribution. They accomplished the task in half the time allotted. Beyond that team accomplishment, Adam’s personal story is inspiring.

Setting aside the Marble story, *The Girls Who Stepped Out of Line* is, a valuable and well documented contribution to the history of women in prosecuting WWII.

***The Man Who Knew Too Much: An Ex-CIA Officer’s Quest Through a Legend of Betrayal***, by Howard Blum (Harper, 2022) 325 pages, photos, index.

The central character in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is former CIA case officer Tennent (Pete) Bagley. The central theme, as envisaged by author Howard Blum, is Bagley’s long search for a high-level KGB mole in

the CIA who protects other KGB penetrations while simul-taneously furnishing Moscow with Intelligence Community secrets. The basis for Bagley’s mole theory is his well-known controversial belief that KGB officer Yuri

a. YouTube, “71st Emmy Awards: Alex Borstein Wins For Outstanding Supporting Actress In A Comedy Series,” October 21, 2019.

Nosenko was not the bona fide defector he claimed to be. Rather, he was dispatched by the KGB to deflect attention from the high-level mole and cast doubt on the reporting of other defectors and agents. After multiple investigations and often bitter internal controversies that Blum summarizes, these views were ultimately rejected by the CIA but not by Bagley, who in retirement he would write about them in two books.<sup>a</sup>

The prime argument of Blum's attention-grabbing story is that after retiring in Brussels, Bagley learned of three CIA related events that convinced him the mole was still active and he began an investigation to identify him. "It would be," Blum writes, "his final mission." (5)

The first event was the arrest and execution in 1977 of KGB officer and CIA agent Alexander Ogorodnik (code-name TRIGON) in Moscow. Blum suggests that Bagley suspected a KGB penetration compromised TRIGON as opposed to the reasons put forth by the KGB. The second event involved a retired CIA officer, John Paisley, an apparent suicide in 1978, found floating in Chesapeake Bay under suspicious, if not bizarre, circumstances that Blum describes in great detail.<sup>b</sup> That same year, CIA analyst David Sullivan reported his view that Paisley was a mole. (265) But it is not clear when Bagley learned of his conclusion. The third event was the 1984 arrest of Czech spy (Karl Koecher), who had penetrated the CIA in 1972 and was later shown to have betrayed TRIGON to the KGB.<sup>c</sup> Blum argues that while Bagley realized neither Nosenko nor Koecher had held a high enough position inside the CIA to be the high-level mole, Bagley "had no doubt that Paisley was the mole he'd been pursuing." (271)

This conclusion is Blum's alone and that raises a fundamental problem with the book—sourcing. Blum writes that every fact and quotation is documented and implies the reader should trust him. But nothing in the book explains what led Bagley to link the three CIA-related events or the Paisley conclusion. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* just offers undocumented speculation. For example,

Blum states that Paisley interrogated Nosenko and they later became close friends. (188) As for Koecher, Blum suggests that Bagley concluded it "makes perfect operational sense for Koecher to be working hand in hand with Paisley," (230) citing their common interest in sex clubs—Paisley owned one—while Koecher and his wife hosted sex parties that provided good cover. But Bagley never mentioned Paisley or Koecher in his books or articles and Blum does not cite any other sources.

Blum goes on to suggest that Bagley realized that the only proof of these relationships resided in a KGB vault and put his investigation on hold until the Berlin Wall came down. Then he decided "to try and convince these gray-faced former Soviet Bloc intelligence and counter-intelligence officers that the time had come to talk." (276) He was successful in part with one, retired KGB Lieutenant General Sergei Kondrashev. At their meeting in Prenden Germany, he told Bagley about a KGB officer dispatched to the CIA: "His name was Yuri Nosenko. His mission was to protect the source we had in America." (291) Kondrashev did not identify that source.

Blum sets the penultimate events of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in snowy Moscow and its Novodevichy Cemetery. (293) Here, writes Blum, Bagley asks Kondrashev about Paisley: "Tell me was he the mole? You know who was Nosenko's control." (293–4) Bagley never revealed Kondrashev's response because, Blum suggests, he "understood the indefinite quality of the proof he'd found at the Novodevichy Cemetery would never sway unreasonable, predetermined minds." (298) This assessment is imaginative and disingenuous if not fabricated. Bagley only visited Moscow once in the summer in the 1990s, as described in his book *Spy Wars*.<sup>d</sup> He did meet with Kondrashev later as explained in his second book *Spymaster*, but not in Moscow. As Bagley wrote, "From 2000 through 2006, we met about twice a year... in Brussels. We worked in my personal study.... When not together, we exchanged drafts and comments via mail, email, and telephone between Brussels and Moscow."<sup>e</sup>

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a. Tennent H. Bagley, *Spy Wars: Moles, Mysteries, and Deadly Games* (Yale University Press, 2007). David Ignatius wrote of book, quoted in Bagley's *Washington Post* obituary February 24, 2014, "It is a stunner. It's impossible to read this book without developing doubts about Nosenko's bona fides. Many readers will conclude that Angleton was right all along — that Nosenko was a phony, sent by the KGB to deceive a gullible CIA."

b. William R. Corson, Susan B. Trento and Joseph E. Trento, *Widows: Four American Spies, the Wives They Left Behind and the KGB's Crippling of Western Intelligence* (Crown Publishers, 1989), 31.

c. Martha Peterson, *The Widow Spy: My CIA Journey from the Jungles of Laos to Prison in Moscow* (Red Canary Press, 2012).

d. Bagley, *Spy Wars*, viii.

e. Tennent H. Bagley, *Spymaster: Startling Cold War Revelations of Soviet KGB Chief* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2013), xvi–xvii.

Besides the atrocious sourcing issues, two other features of the book deserve attention. First there is Blum's frequent inclusion of imaginary assumptions. For example, Blum says Bagley "sat in his book-lined study and tried to sort it all out." (14) In the same vein is the comment about a Bagley trip to nearby Waterloo battlefield: "there was no witness to his peregrination on the morning in the icy winter of 1980 when Pete, with the careful introspection of a born case man, pondered the decision he knew he had to make." (36) And later, "At first his musings were vague and mawkish, a senior citizen waxing sentimental about living long enough to see everything. But Pete's thoughts soon hardened." (275) Blum never met Pete Bagley, and descriptions like these imply a nonexistent intimacy with the subject. They may serve Blum's literary goal, "to

shape this tale as a nonfiction narrative mirroring the actual adventure Bagley had lived," (306) but they are pure speculation if not deception.

The second feature concerns factual errors. For example, Nosenko was not a KGB lieutenant colonel; David Murphy was chief of base not chief of station in Berlin; the intelligence from the Berlin Tunnel was not tainted; Vitali Yurchenko was never a general; and Blum's description of Martha Peterson's capture by the KGB is only partially accurate even though he references her book, which contains the correct version. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is a deeply flawed account by an author who doesn't know enough.

***Secret City: The Hidden History of Gay Washington***, by James Kirchick (Henry Holt, 2022) 823 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

*Secret City* is a look at the experiences of gay and lesbian public figures and government employees in Washington, D.C., from the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration to the present. Author James Kirchick introduces the topic with two examples from America's Revolutionary period. Baron von Steuben, who served with General Washington at Valley Forge, and Pierre L'Enfant, who designed the nation's capital, were among those who concealed their sexuality. (7) And he mentions other 19th and early 20th century figures—presidents, generals, advisers, and professional colleagues—who may have done the same. His important point being that although condemned by the clergy and government institutions of the day, they could have a career while closeted if they exercised vigilance and discretion—until World War II.

Kirchick discusses two groups of gays and lesbians in *Secret City*: Washington high society and government employees. While the society figures are covered in detail, this review concentrates on those who were linked to the State Department and the intelligence services. *Secret City* shows how "from the Second World War to the end of the Cold War that followed, the specter of homosexuality haunted Washington." Nothing posed a more potent threat to a political or government career than accusations of homosexuality. (6)

The justification for denying employment to government employees—including the military—was that their

sexual orientation left them vulnerable to blackmail and Communist recruitment. Toward that end, President Eisenhower on April 27, 1953, issued Executive Order 10450 prohibiting those guilty of "sexual perversion" from holding any job in the federal government. (179) Kirchick writes that "Even at the height of the Cold War, it was safer to be a Communist than a homosexual. A Communist could break with the party. A homosexual was forever tainted." (7)

Kirchick digresses to tell the story of DCI Allen Dulles's search for a Northern Virginia location for a new headquarters building in the late 1950s. When he settled on its present location he was advised that "You'll have to go around Miss Scattergood," (210) who lived with her companion Florence Thorne in a house—now the Scattergood-Thorne Conference Center—on the desired property. Kirchick tells how Dulles gained her support.

Kirchick highlights several cases that show the gradual change in attitudes toward and treatment of gays and lesbians in government. The career of OSS officer Cora Du Bois, a University of California–Berkeley-trained cultural anthropologist, was unaffected during her OSS service. By war's end, she headed the research and analysis branch in Sri Lanka, where she began a relationship with fellow OSS employee Jeanne Taylor. After the war, Du Bois, now with the State Department, was targeted by the FBI and left government in 1950. (65) In 1953, Princeton graduate and Finland desk officer John C. Montgomery,

faced with a background investigation, hanged himself. (164) By late 1980, however, Jamie Shoemaker, an NSA officer who was outed as gay and threatened with

dismissal, successfully challenged his firing and set a precedent. (479) *Secret City* is a valuable, enlightening contribution.

***The Secret Royals: Spying and the Crown From Victoria to Diana***, by Richard J. Aldrich and Rory Cormac (Atlantic Books, 2022) 725 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

The British fascination with James Bond and Queen Elizabeth II was evident to the world when they seemed to parachute into the Olympic stadium to open the 2012 Games. “A masterpiece of deception,” according to University of Nottingham historians Richard Aldrich and Rory Cormac in their new book, *The Secret Royals*. (1) But it is also powerful metaphor that reflects the level of interest between the intelligence services and the royals, at least most of them.

Despite the implications of the subtitle, the authors begin their tale with Elizabeth I and her active involvement with the clandestine operations of Sir Francis Walsingham. They continue by commenting briefly on events of the next two centuries until the reign of Queen Victoria when new countries had formed in Europe and technological advancements changed communications.

Queen Victoria's uncle, King Leopold I of the Belgians, counseled her on the importance of foreign affairs and in the tradecraft of counterintelligence. She learned how to open and reseal intercepted letters and to write them with deceptive messages when she knew they would be intercepted in turn. (47) Because her government had no formal intelligence service, she developed her own agents, mainly family members in Europe, and shared their reporting with her government. She corresponded with daughter Vicky by cipher. Vicky took huge risks and concealed her communications. After the World War II, Anthony Blunt, paradoxically loyal to the king but also a Soviet agent, visited her ancestral home in Germany and smuggled Vicky's personal papers back to Windsor.

Security was also constant problem for Victoria and she survived several assassination attempts, fortunately by amateurs. (49) In response to Irish terror attacks in the 1880s, she saw to it that Special Branch was created in the Metropolitan Police. And she approved of the creation

of the war office's special duties sections in 1909 that later became MI5 and MI6. As the authors would have it, Victoria became an early version of Dame Judi Dench's character M in several James Bond movies.

Edward VIII, the Duke of Windsor, also receives considerable attention in *The Secret Royals*. His involvement with intelligence operations was as a security risk. His marriage to an American divorcee and his pro-Nazi links raised many questions. His father placed him under almost constant surveillance by Special Branch. An MI5 officer, Thomas Robertson, tapped his phone in Buckingham Palace and became the first outsider to hear of the pending abdication. (220) The couple endured surveillance during the war and for most of their lives.

*The Secret Royals* naturally deals with the present royal family and the late Princess Diana. For example, after her divorce, Diana was worried there were hidden microphones in her Kensington apartment and tore up floor boards looking for them. She also “worried about devices being placed in plug sockets, light switches or lamps.” In each case nothing was found. (570) The circumstances of her death are reviewed but nothing new is added.

Queen Elizabeth II (who died September 8, 2022) is depicted as fully aware of secret service business but not as directly involved as Victoria. Along with other members of the Royal Family, she performed diplomatic services on government missions to improve foreign relations, and the comments on her links to the intelligence and security services are meager. But as the authors point out in their remarks on sources, the answers to many of their questions remain in the tightly restricted in the Royal Archives. Thus Aldrich and Cormac conclude that intelligence services and the royals have secrecy in common. Still, *The Secret Royals* is an interesting, well documented contribution.

***A Spy Called Cynthia: And a Life in Intelligence***, by Anonymous (Biteback Publishing, 2021) 160 pages.

Amy Elizabeth Pack (née Thorpe) was an American who became an agent for British Security Coordination (BSC), the awkwardly titled headquarters in New York City that represented MI6, MI5, and SOE during much of World War II. The source that describes her participation and assigned the codename Cynthia is BSC's official history published in 1998.<sup>a</sup>

Cynthia's BSC's case officer and self-admitted lover, historian Hartford Montgomery Hyde, wrote a book about her after the war called *Cynthia: The Spy Who Changed the Course of the War*. Hyde later acknowledged he had exaggerated her exploits.<sup>b</sup> In 1992 Mary Lovell published a respected biography of Pack that set her record straight.<sup>c</sup> Then came *A Spy Called Cynthia*.

Books by anonymous authors are generally suspect and *A Spy Called Cynthia* is no exception. The manuscript was surfaced by a former British ambassador to Washington, Robin Renwick, who promised the author, a

close friend, not to publish it until all the participants were dead. Renwick refuses to identify the author but does say that he was a "British spymaster" who was involved with "Kim Philby and the Cambridge spies," had "friendships with counterparts in the CIA," and handled Cynthia during World War II. Then he adds the qualifier that he cannot "guarantee [the book's] entire authenticity." (1)

There are several other aspects of the book that Renwick inexplicably did not mention. Fore-most among them is that the book barely mentions Cynthia! "Anonymous" gives a version of her wartime exploits in just three pages. The balance of the book is his memoir of MI6 service. With occasional brief mentions of their pre- and post-war relationship, he devotes more space to the CIA, the Cambridge spies, French intelligence, and other well-known Soviet espionage cases than to Cynthia. There are no source notes. Those interested in Cynthia's espionage career should read Lovell.

***The Woman All Spies Fear: Code breaker Elizebeth Smith Friedman and her hidden life***, by Amy Butler Greenfield (Random House Studio, 2021) 328 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

There is a documentary about Elizebeth Smith Friedman.<sup>d</sup> But as is often the case, for the full story, read the book. Historian Amy Greenfield's contribution offers more and much new detail about Friedman's challenging early life, her controversy with millionaire George Fabyan, her government service, and her relationship with her famous husband, William Friedman. And she includes short tutorials on cryptography.

Born on August 26, 1892, near Huntington, Indiana, Elizebeth was the youngest of nine children. Greenfield describes the bumpy path Elizebeth followed to get an education at Hillsdale College, before joining eccentric Col. George Fabyan, who tasked her with helping to decipher the alleged code in Shakespeare's First Folio. William Friedman was later assigned to the problem, and they soon agreed it was a fool's errand. A displeased Fabyan

grumbled, but with World War I under way he asked them to set up a Department of Ciphers on his campus called Riverbank. They were soon training military codebreakers and decrypting secret messages for the War, Navy, and State Departments, and even the post office. They became a well-known and valuable team that inevitably evolved into mixed-religion marriage that shocked both families.

When William joined the Army and was sent to France where he worked on codebreaking, Elizebeth stayed at Riverbank for a while before leaving and returning home to wait for William. After his discharge, they accepted positions—over the heated objections of Fabyan—in the War Department. Happy to be in Washington, Elizebeth discovered she was to be William's assistant at half his pay. She soon quit. Greenfield provides other examples

a. *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940–1945* (Fromm International, 1998), 194.

b. H. Montgomery Hyde, *Cynthia: The Spy Who Changed the Course of the War* (Farrar Straus, 1963).

c. Mary S. Lovell, *Cast No Shadow* (Pantheon, 1992).

d. *The Codebreaker* (PBS, January 11, 2021) is reviewed by David Welker, page 83.

of the persistent gender discrimination Elizebeth encountered in her career.

She soon accepted a job with the navy but it didn't last long due to a pregnancy. After returning to work, this time with the Coast Guard, her codebreaking career blossomed. She broke smugglers and bootleggers codes and helped the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on a drug case. Shortly before Pearl Harbor, Elizebeth was made "cryptanalyst in charge" of a unit in the Treasury Department and loaned briefly to Col. William Donovan, the Coordinator of Information. (186)

Elizebeth's most impressive contributions came during World War II. She helped the FBI solve the Doll Shop espionage case (Velvalee Dickinson, a doll shop owner in New York, attempted to pass details about US naval forces to Japan), though the bureau didn't acknowledge her contribution. Her reputation grew nonetheless when her unit broke the cipher traffic from German agents in South America. Great personal satisfaction followed her subsequent solution of ENIGMA traffic. She even broke codes for the FBI again, although they took the official credit. As the war drew down and men returned to take management positions, Elizebeth was gradually eased out of the most demanding work. After the war she helped write the unit history and then returned to the Coast Guard before

demobilizing. But only two months later, she was hired by the brand-new International Monetary Fund where she remained until September 1949. William remained with what became the National Security Agency (NSA) until his retirement.

Their retirement years, Greenfield discovered, are not well documented. The Friedmans did write a book that analyzed the Shakespearean Ciphers controversy.<sup>a</sup> Then in 1958, to their alarm and consternation, the NSA confiscated much of their personal library. Greenfield notes that NSA eventually returned some of the material and named its main auditorium after William in 1975.

After William's death on November 2, 1969, Elizebeth arranged to send their books and papers to the Marshall Library at the Virginia Military Institute, on the condition that she would catalogue them first. That task consumed much of her remaining life. She died on October 31, 1980.

Aimed at young adults and teens, *The Woman All Spies Fear* is a very positive, poignant and important contribution to the intelligence literature.

See also Randy Burkett's review of the PBS documentary *The Codebreaker* beginning on p" "The Codebreaker" on page 51.

## Intelligence Abroad

**Russian Intelligence: A Case-Based Study of Russian Services and Missions Past and Present**, by Kevin P. Riehle (National Intelligence Press, 2022) 368 pages, endnotes, bibliography, index.

Before joining the National Intelligence University (NIU) as an associate professor of strategic intelligence, Kevin Riehle served more than 30 years as a counterintelligence analyst assigned to various elements of the US government and ending at DIA.

During the COVID-19 period of virtual attendance at NIU, subjects were adapted for unclassified presentation. As Riehle revamped his Russian security services course, he realized that "no single volume existed that credibly presented a complete, unbiased picture of Russian intelligence." (8) Even *Russian Intelligence* does not quite meet

his criterion. The historical period covered is from 1881 when Tsar Aleksandr III created the Okhrana, or security force, to the Putin era. Ronald Hingley's *The Russian Secret Police*<sup>b</sup> begins with the Oprichnina under Ivan the Terrible, in 1565, but ends much earlier. That anomaly does not detract from the value of the work.

*Russian Intelligence* begins with an essay on the extensive sources available in English, Russian, the former Warsaw Pact nations, many of which appear in the endnotes. The balance of the book is divided into three sections (although inexplicably the text says four).

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a. William and Elizebeth Friedman, *The Shakespearean Ciphers Examined: An Analysis of Cryptographic Systems Used as Evidence That Some Author Other Than William Shakespeare Wrote the Plays Commonly Attributed to Him* (Cambridge University Press, 1957).

b. Ronald Hingley, *The Russian Secret Police* (Hutchinson, 1970).

Section one “answers the question who is Russian intelligence.” (9) Its focus is on the identification and history of security service organizations beginning with the Okhrana and continuing with its Soviet successors from the Cheka to the KGB. He explains how the post-Soviet services—the SVR, FSB, and FSO—are related to their Soviet predecessors. The military intelligence designation, GRU, was the same in both periods. But according to Riehle, its name was recently changed to RU (Main Directorate). Its present status is unclear, however, because President Putin expressed doubt that the change was a good idea. (54) The history described in this section identifies patterns that are found in today's intelligence and security activities.

The second section “answers the question, why, explaining the primary directions of Russian intelligence” (9) from the Soviet era to the present. Here the focus is in

part on the functional missions performed by the security services. These include internal security, foreign intelligence collection, counterintelligence and counterterrorism. Riehle devotes a separate chapter to military intelligence noting that its operations sometimes overlap with the SVR.

The final section addresses “how” Russian intelligence services conduct political, economic, S&T, and military collection and covert operations. Human intelligence methods are treated first followed by technical means from SIGINT, satellites, and various forms of cyber operations. Riehle also adds an equation developed earlier, with comments on its use, to aid analysts: threat = intent x capability x opportunity.<sup>a</sup>

*Russian Intelligence* is a impressive contribution to the intelligence literature.

***Spies, Spin and the Fourth Estate: British Intelligence and the Media***, by Paul Lashmar (Edinburgh University Press, 2020) 296 pages, end of chapter notes, references, index.

Paul Lashmar is currently head of journalism at City, University of London. Before entering academia, he had a distinguished forty-year career as an investigative journalist often covering intelligence. He may also be remembered for his earlier book *Spy Flights of the Cold War*.<sup>b</sup> In *Spies, Spin and the Fourth Estate* he examines the intertwined “worlds of spying and journalism” that he finds “sometimes intimate and sometimes confrontational.” (viii) His goal is to provide an “insider's perspective of intelligence and the media.” (ix) His bold underlying assumptions are that the task of making sense “of the intelligence community has largely fallen to journalists.” And when necessary, “it has been the journalist's job to bring wayward spies to account.” (7)

Lashmar's approach is chronological, beginning with Sun Tsu and ending with the war on terror. In the early 20th century his focus is British press reaction to charges of German spying and how this affected the formation of Britain's modern intelligence and security services. He goes on to discuss the elements of “the huge U.S. intelligence community” and their relationship to American media.(xi)

The close links of the British intelligence services with journalists gets vigorous attention. Lashmar points out that many wartime intelligence officers were journalists and later were regarded with caution by their peers. Journalist Phillip Knightley “warned that MI5 had agents in most newspaper offices.” (74) He also wrote that MI6 maintained continuing close contacts with journalists and used journalist cover after the war. Lashmar does not favor such close links.

In the Thatcher years, Lashmar notes that “revelation after revelation over intelligence failures” and book exposés kept them busy. (152) One example is the hoax taped conversation between President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher that was exposed by the press. Another is the case of MI5 whistleblower Cathy Massiter, when the government attempted to prevent publication of her revelations. In the book category, the Spycatcher trial in Australia gained worldwide attention when the press reported the British government admitted to being “economical with the truth.” Sometimes the press plays catch-up. Lashmar gives the example of then Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who lied when he denied British intelligence was involved with the US “rendition and

a. Kevin P. Riehle, “Assessing Foreign Intelligence Threats,” in *American Intelligence Journal* 31, no. 1 (2013): 96–101,

b. Paul Lashmar, *Flights of the Cold War* (Naval Institute Press, 1997).

torture” program. His story stood for years until the truth was revealed by a Parliamentary committee. (251)

The controversy surrounding the documents leaked by Edward Snowden involved journalists from several countries. Lashmar comments that the *Guardian* newspaper acted responsibly by only publishing those documents that didn't put lives in danger. He is absolutely certain that it was their call to make.

Lashmar concludes with mostly insightful observations about the media's new challenging digital world. But one example he gives is questionable. He writes that the Bush administration allowed “the CIA to illegally

wiretap targeted American citizens. It is estimated that up to 200,000 intelligence staff knew about this.” (262) Fact checking failed him in this instance.

*Spies, Spin and the Fourth Estate* gives interesting examples of the press informing the public about alleged wrong doing that spurred or monitored official oversight investigations. Whether the same results would have been obtained using other oversight mechanisms is not discussed, but Lashmar implies they would not when he recommends “a proactive accountability investigative capability over” these oversight bodies. (266) Finally, the assumption that it is “the journalist's job to bring wayward spies to account” is left unproved.

**A *State of Secrecy: Stasi Informers and the Culture of Surveillance***, by Alison Lewis (University of Nebraska Press, Potomac Books, 2021) 275 pages, endnotes, bibliography, photos, index.

Alison Lewis is a professor of German at the University of Melbourne. In a recent book chapter, “The Stasi's Secret War on Books,” she discussed the case of a one-time Stasi unofficial collaborator whose website made no mention of her Stasi connection.<sup>a</sup> *A State of Secrecy* takes a different approach. Its basic thesis is that the East German Secret Police, the Stasi, recruited virtually every writer and literary figure in the country as informants. The Stasi considered the writers part of the political elite needed to support the socialist cause. Lewis uses their Stasi files to identify them and demonstrate the nature of their “cooperation.” The number of informants involved in this groups is not known, but Lewis suggests it was small compared to the 90,000 official Stasi employees who controlled 189,000 informants when East Germany collapsed in 1989.

To illustrate this situation, Lewis presents five in-depth case studies of informant writers—two women and three men—recruited by the Stasi. Each examines motivation and performance from the earliest recruitment in 1949 through 1989. In general, she shows that motivation was a mix of the thrills of secrecy, the excitement of role-playing, the desire for money, the drive for power, and at times the result of coercion. The exception was the one dedicated Communist and true believer. In the other four case studies Lewis concludes “the promise of the secret life of a Stasi agent was, at least initially, attractive and

compelling to the new recruits.” (203) In these cases, she shows that informants also had secondary motives—to be allowed to publish—in addition to the nominally expressed political-ideological conviction.

In terms of their performance, the results are surprising. In one case, the informant quit, left the country and later was permitted to return. In another the informant refused incentives and defied intimidation before successfully breaking his pledge to work for the Stasi without further penalty. Others stayed until the end although with dwindling cooperation while missing assigned meetings and report deadlines. Lewis ascribes the Stasi's tolerant attitude to belief that writers had great influence in a society that was teeming with secrets that the communist regime was desperate to know. And informants had several advantages over high-tech paraphernalia such as hidden cameras, telephone wiretaps, and mail intercepts. Not only could they evaluate information in ways that machines could not, they could get close to sources.

*A State of Secrecy* depicts an unexpectedly tolerant Stasi-informant relationship based on expediency. While it allowed the informants some opportunity to pursue their careers, the level of stress was high, the cooperation reluctant, and few were disappointed when the Stasi was no more.

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a. “The Stasi's Secret War on Books: Uwe Berger and the Cold War Spy as Informant and Book Reviewer” in: Valentina Glajar, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu (eds.), *Cold War Spy Stories from Eastern Europe* (Potomac Books, 2019). See also J.E. Leonardson's review of Philip Otterman, *The Stasi Poetry Circle: The Creative Writing Class that Tried To Win the Cold War*, *Studies* 66, no. 2 (June 2022).

## **Fiction**

***Damascus Station*** by David McCloskey (W.W. Norton and Company, 2021), 419 pages. Reviewed by Graham Alexander.

Former CIA analyst David McCloskey has made his first foray into the intelligence thriller genre with laudable panache. *Damascus Station* is a taut thriller that borrows generously from firsthand experience, with three-dimensional characters and page-turning plot twists. *Damascus Station* sets these elements inside the Syrian civil war where bomb blasts are never far away and the intelligence game is played with the highest of stakes. Its protagonist is Samuel Joseph, an experienced Arabic-speaking officer with no less than 15 recruitments (who somehow remains a GS-12), who travels to Paris to bump (orchestrate a meeting) Mariam Haddad, a Syrian government official.

What follows is an espionage case that drives to the heart of Syria's chemical weapons program and the regime's effort to crush internal opposition in a protracted civil war. McCloskey's narrative suffers only occasionally from implausible twists and trivial errors that stretch the credulity of an experienced intelligence officer to the breaking point. The reviewer was ultimately willing to forgive these venial sins as the price of admission to a ride that does not cease accelerating until the final pages.

McCloskey's narrative is the obvious product of insider knowledge used skillfully in the service of the story. Certain details are resoundingly right. Joseph reviews a targeting package for Haddad that includes personal information. He moves to bump her during a diplomatic event after noticing she is trapped in a boring discussion with a Bulgarian diplomat. Plausibly, Joseph succeeds in extricating Haddad by pretending they are long-lost friends renewing acquaintances. The rapport-building discussions are abbreviated but ring true enough, especially because the reader knows Haddad harbors serious doubts about her loyalty to the Assad government.

Later, McCloskey masterfully depicts Joseph's eight-hour marathon surveillance detection route through Damascus by juxtaposing his growing suspicion against the bloodlust of adversaries who follow him on cameras and communicate to a large team relaying his movement across the city. Needed levity arrives during a passage depicting Joseph's visit to the basement in CIA's headquarters to sample the fare from a now notorious automatic hot dog machine.

This arresting authenticity is set against sometimes sensational or "movie-made" plot points that belie the tedious, bureaucratic grind of intelligence operations. For example, McCloskey asks the reader to believe on no less than three occasions that armed villains successfully ambush and outnumber the protagonists but yet are all killed without even inflicting serious injury.

As noted, Joseph's meeting with Mariam is authentic. Less believable are details surrounding his near immediate, premeditated willingness to risk his career by having an affair with her. There are also serious questions about the CIA's agreement to issue Mariam a proprietary communications system and to base missile strikes on her uncorroborated information despite the fact that Joseph does not even formally recruit her. All requests to headquarters are granted almost immediately, and support assets with luxurious safehouses stocked with food abound. Joseph is apparently free from the onerous burden of documenting his case and winning stakeholder approval for recruitment or operational strategy.

More puzzling than McCloskey's predilection for the sensational are inconsequential mistakes or brow-raising plot points seemingly superfluous to the overall story. Mariam does not receive her cryptonym until the operation is well under way. Analysts in headquarters listen to noise-canceling headphones while reviewing intelligence reports. Canadian intelligence has a safe house rented in downtown Damascus. Sam demands, and is immediately granted, a reassignment to Syria over beers at his division chief's house. Inside the station, he is apparently the only core collector despite the high priority of the Syrian target and works only with the assistance of a temporary-duty analyst and a headstrong chief of station. Besides her sensitive communications equipment, Mariam conducts computer-implant and surreptitious-camera operations in rapid succession, none of which is essential to the overall story.

Demerits aside, the primary task for any fictional espionage work is less authenticity than white-knuckle suspense and characters whose loyalties and motivations shift and move across the pages like mercury. This is where *Damascus Station* succeeds most emphatically and why

its shortcomings are ultimately forgivable. From the opening pages, Joseph has a clear motive for revenge against the Syrians and the target seems clear—until it is not. Mariam makes the fateful choice to enter a secret relationship with the CIA and her commitment seems clear—until it is not. Joseph and his station chief in Damascus forge a plan skillfully concealed from the reader until the climax of the story.

***The Gray Man***, Film directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo (Netflix, 2022) 129 minutes. Reviewed by Mike R.

Talk about playing against type. Chris Evans, known worldwide to *Avengers* fans for his portrayal of Captain America, a paragon of American virtue and justice, plays the villain in this film: Lloyd Hansen, a sociopathic CIA washout operating as a mercenary for his former employer. Over the top probably understates both Evans's acting and the destruction his character leaves in his wake. His cheesiness, from his mustache to his swagger, could even have been comical—in a good sense—had it fit in with the rest of the acting. But not everyone got the same memo; when one person hams it up far more than the others, it underscores the differences and calls into question the integrity of the whole effort.

*The Gray Man*, adapted from the eponymous 2009 novel by Mark Greaney, increasingly gives itself over to the mayhem and carnage that ensue in virtually any scene with Evans. It is not just that his character revels in this and has no moral balance—he has no qualms about collateral damage or using innocent family members as bargaining chips—but we are expected to believe that military-style engagements in the middle of a European capital can take place without much in the way of consequence. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the film's direction by the Russo brothers, famous for several *Captain America* and *Avengers* films sporting big budgets and huge set pieces.

Hansen's opposite number is the protagonist Sierra Six played by Ryan Gosling, the "gray man" of the title. Six and Hansen are not that different on the surface. Gosling is part of "Sierra," a compartmented CIA program that took people out of prison and turned them into hit men for their country. Things then go awry, and the hunter becomes the hunted as Hansen tries to eliminate Six while securing a flash drive in Six's possession containing

After Sam finds himself under arrest and in Syrian custody, it seems impossible to believe that they are succeeding. The best testament to McCloskey's skill as a writer is that most of the hanging threads are neatly tied by the end of the story while those left dangling likely will provide the fabric for a sequel. That book, and a Hollywood depiction, seem destined for an eager audience upon arrival.

evidence of corruption among the upper reaches of the Sierra program. Does any of this sound familiar?

*La Femme Nikita* by French director Luc Besson showed the way in 1990 with its evocative tale of a woman pulled out of what would have been life in prison in exchange for a faked death and a career as a government assassin under a new name. American audiences may be more familiar with its inferior remake, *Point of No Return* (1993), and multiple follow-on TV series, including *Nikita*, with star Maggie Q, in the early 2010s. It was at about this time that people started considering turning Greaney's *The Gray Man* into a film.

Rather than *Nikita*, what may first come to audience's minds, however, is Jason Bourne, particularly the series of movies starring Matt Damon beginning in 2002 based on Robert Ludlum's 1980s-era *Bourne* novels. Swapping out the prison backdrop for volunteer recruits, the "Treadstone" program trained and deployed an elite group of individuals across the globe to covertly do the CIA's bidding. Many other parallels appear between *Sierra* and *Treadstone*. Operatives are turned loose upon other operatives. Program managers are not immune from danger. Intrigue and internal power struggles run rampant. Officials are called to account, yet somehow the program carries on.

For all the action, *The Gray Man* does make a nod toward sentimentality. Just as *Nikita* found a husband and Bourne a girlfriend, Six forms a bond with a young girl (well played by 13-year-old Julia Butters) he is asked to look after—the niece of his CIA mentor. This aspect invokes comparisons with *The Professional*, another film by Luc Besson from 1994 in which Jean Reno's assassin Léon takes under his wings the recently orphaned girl next door played by a young Natalie Portman. Reno

played his character in the strong and silent manner as well and was pitted against a semi-maniacal crooked cop played to the hilt by Gary Oldman.

Netflix is betting big on *The Gray Man*, hoping it becomes a major hit and an action vehicle for its lead. Already there is talk of a sequel. Gosling/Six is no Damon/Bourne, however. In *The Bourne Supremacy*, there is a scene where the title character appears almost catatonic while detained in a Naples airport holding room until he suddenly comes alive and overpowers his minders. For too much of this movie, it feels as if Gosling is similarly lethargic and we are left waiting for him to break out of his haze. Perhaps Gosling is channeling his inner Keanu Reeves as Neo in *The Matrix*, who could hold off opponents with one hand, but the more apropos Reeves analogy would be the recent *John Wick* movies. This is especially the case as Hansen sends out word to numerous fellow hit men to all converge on Six to take him out, just like when a bounty notice is distributed on Wick and people come out of the woodwork to try to collect. *The Gray Man* is a high-octane action flick that lets the body count do the talking; many scenes feel like they could have been plucked out of the latest *Fast and Furious* movie with Vin Diesel and Dwayne Johnson.

Perhaps *The Gray Man*'s greatest flaw is simply that we have seen it all before, and better done. That said,

those looking for action will not be disappointed, and it appeals to one's globe-trotting inclinations by hop-scotching in quick succession to half a dozen or so world capitals. The massive budget also shines through; it feels as if the studio spared no expense in securing some of these locations and then blowing them up. In addition, the movie features a top-notch cast, including a well-cast Billy Bob Thornton as the man who hired Six and an under-utilized Alfre Woodard as a former CIA chief. Ana de Armas stands out in what seems a reprise of her brief gun-toting appearance alongside Daniel Craig in his final James Bond installment *No Time to Die* (2021). *Bridgerton* star Regé-Jean Page and *The Matrix Resurrections*' Jessica Henwick similarly deliver strong performances as CIA managers with questionable ethics.

In the end, gray is an apt word for the movie title. The true color of espionage, it occupies a middle ground between dark and light, black and white. Gosling has a gray demeanor, not conveying a broad range of emotion: a raised eyebrow here, a slight pause in cadence there are all that signal a deviation from his even-keeled demeanor. And most moviegoers will see *The Gray Man* as middle-of-the-road fare—enjoyable escapism yet quickly forgettable, just as the colors of our wardrobe blend into gray lint to be thrown out at the end of the dryer cycle. At least until the sequel comes out.

**Silverview**, John le Carré (Viking, 2021), 208 pages—Reviewed by Mike R.

*Silverview* is a throwback, shorter and starker than most John le Carré novels. Longer only than his inaugural efforts *Call for the Dead* and *A Murder of Quality*, its 208 pages are a refreshing change; the economy of language helps keep a tight focus and captures his essence in concentrated form. *Silverview* reflects a back-to-basics approach mated with a no-holds-barred attitude. The novel hearkens to his earlier days as an author, makes use of a Cold War-era back story, and embraces the nuts and bolts of the espionage business. Although not his finest creation, it is firmly in his upper tier, as much for the traditional elements that readers have come to expect as for the many ways in which it stands apart.

Le Carré, pen name of David Cornwell (b. October 19, 1931, d. December 12, 2020), rose to prominence as a spy novelist in the 1960s. The *Spy Who Came in from the Cold* set the standard, first in print (1963) and then on the

big screen (1965)—but his novels over the years have become more explorations of the human condition and less explicitly the stuff of spycraft. To be sure, all of his novels involve espionage, but the profession is a means to an end. It would seem that le Carré, who served with MI5 and MI6 in the late 1950s and early 1960s, came away with more than a bit of disillusionment from his experience. He perpetually accentuates the glass-half-empty side of the trade and focuses on its personal toll. Government machinations and international politics provide context, but the focus is as if looking through a soda straw; nothing else matters but those two or three characters and the all-enveloping issues that take over their lives. Such single-mindedness comes to the fore as well in *Silverview*.

*Silverview*, largely written a decade before its 2021 release, was brought to publication by le Carré's son Nick Cornwell—per the father's wishes that Nick see through

to completion any unpublished manuscript at the time of his death. In an afterword, Cornwell claims little editing was necessary; we are reading it largely as he found it. Why the wait? Cornwell suggests le Carré may have held on to it because “it cut too close to the bone” (215) and chipped away at the image of British intelligence, which he had taken great pains to uphold. Cornwell believed that just as le Carré had tried to maintain a stiff upper lip about his real-life exploits in intelligence, he also had certain lines he chose not to cross in the fictional world. Whatever the reason, there can be little doubt as to its authenticity. Le Carré has a style all his own that few could replicate. *Silverview* is distinctly his and his alone.

The author draws inspiration from Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th century philosopher famous for proclaiming “God is dead.” Nietzsche lived out his final years in a state of severe mental and physical decline at Villa Silberblick in Weimar. Le Carré, a lifelong admirer of German culture, places an anglicized version of this abode at the center of the eponymously titled novel. He hails Nietzsche as “our most fearless advocate of individual freedom” and links him and a central character as practitioners of the “‘Do what you think,’ not ‘Think what you do’” school (128), an undercurrent in many le Carré novels. He then invites comparisons between the enfeebled Prussian and the course of British intelligence and society writ large. *Silverview* is an unusually pointed title for the author, cutting to the core of the narrative and expressing deep-seated feelings amassed over a lifetime.

*Silverview* fires broadsides at the role and relevancy of Her Majesty's Government. It feels as if the author is vicariously communicating long-held criticism through the voices of his characters: “if Head Office is working your joes to death, don't say yes, sir, no, sir, three bags full, tell them to go to hell.” (98) And “Did [he] see the Service as the problem rather than the solution?” (199) The novel serves as a vehicle for le Carré to assess the trajectory of modern England and her intelligence servants, acknowledging past prominence but leaving no doubt that times have shifted. The narrative advances from a once-prideful historic sense of place—“Like all families of its kind, [they] knew from birth that the spiritual sanctum of Britain's ruling classes was its secret services” (30)—to an acknowledgment of failure—“we didn't do much to alter the course of human history, did we? .... As one old spy to another, I reckon I'd have been more use running a boys' club.” (111)—to a call for a changing of the guard: “[He] harbours the refreshing notion that Britain requires a new élite.” (126)

Little can be said of the plot without giving too much away, but there are three distinct strands. The ostensible protagonist is a young Englishman, Julian Lawndsley, making a fresh start as a bookstore owner in a small seaside town after leaving London behind. Edward Avon, an elder visitor to his shop, insinuates himself into his life in surprisingly quick fashion, and we increasingly turn our attention to this second character, a self-described “British mongrel, retired, a former academic of no merit and one of life's odd-job men.” (16) He takes on numerous names, and a web of intrigue emerges with everything he touches, as his life in the shadows is revealed. Yet while the reader is focused on these two men, le Carré has been expertly weaving in a third element in the form of MI6's lead “bloodhound,” Stewart Proctor, pursuing an internal security investigation that helps tie things all together in the end. *Silverview* plays up the security angle in ways reminiscent of the detective work exhibited by le Carré's George Smiley in his earliest outings, and the MI6 sleuth threatens to upstage his rivals and reflect the real soul of this novel.

*Silverview* largely unfolds in England, with prominent flashbacks to other European locales, particularly the Balkans conflicts of the 1990s. The historical distance of such events deprives the story of some of its immediacy. However, the venues serve their purpose well, and it is easy to see how le Carré would have been drawn to the first outbreak of war on the continent in 50 years that reopened old wounds and created new ones aplenty – a breeding ground for le Carré characters if ever there were one.

Like so many of the author's novels, *Silverview* revolves around deception. When Lawndsley thinks of Avon, he believes “he has met two irreconcilable versions of the man. He wonders how many more there are to come.” (28) Proctor later questions “who are you, Edward – you who have been so many people and pretended to be still others? Who do we find when we've pulled away the layers of disguise? Or were you ever only the sum of your disguises?” (197)

Le Carré is no stranger to invoking autobiographical elements, but *Silverview* even incorporates what might be a veiled reference to his own legacy. When Avon pitches an idea to Lawndsley for a “Republic of Literature,”—a “shrine to the most challenging minds of our time” (23)—as a special section within the bookstore, might the author have been tacitly carving out the possibility of his own inclusion in such an honor even while he largely

refused such recognition for most of his life? He certainly deserves consideration. Le Carré has done as much as anyone to popularize the modern espionage novel and in the process became one of the most admired writers in the English language. Fellow novelist Philip Roth called *A Perfect Spy* (1986) “the best English novel since the war” – and that came only part way into le Carré’s run of some two dozen books.

Cinema has taken a liking to le Carré over the years, and in that respect he could perhaps best be seen as a spiritual cousin of the stereotypical French tragedy in contrast to the Hollywood preference for a blockbuster with a happy ending; that optic could even help explain his adoption of a French-sounding pseudonym. Le Carré novels tend to revolve around betrayal, heartbreak, and disappointment. *Silverview*, his presumed final work, does not disappoint and is a fitting coda to a career that has elevated intelligence literature to new heights.

***Spies in Canaan***, by David Park (Bloomsbury, 2022) 188 pages. Reviewed by J.E. Leonardson.

The retired intelligence officer contacted by someone from his past is an old plot device for starting a spy novel, one that usually plunges the protagonist into a quest to resolve a lingering mystery from years ago. Thus, when a DVD and short note arrive in former CIA officer Michael Miller’s mail, you immediately assume that *Spies in Canaan* will center on some unfinished business from the old days. You would be wrong, however, as this short novel goes off in unexpected directions.

an office-bound intelligence functionary, albeit in the last few, uninspiring days of the US effort in Vietnam.

In the last third of the book, set some 40 years later, the DVD leads Miller to find Donovan, who now has cancer and is living his final days on a ranch in the desert Southwest. A few answers to lingering personal questions from the Saigon days, another unusual errand and, again, a wrapping of beautiful writing.

Most of the story relates Miller’s time in Saigon, serving as a CIA linguist in the months before South Vietnam’s collapse in April 1975. This is the tale of a thoughtful man whose job is to translate documents, but who gets sucked into doing some questionable side jobs for Ignatius Donovan, a senior officer in the CIA station. Park provides a lot of atmospherics and introspection, all wrapped up in elegant literary prose, but almost no espionage. Rather, much of the book about is the routine of

What Park is trying to say is unclear. Does Miller seek redemption for US behavior or his own (relatively mild) transgressions in Saigon? Is the reader supposed to meditate on what we do for loyalty and love? Are we victims of fate, with only our faith to sustain us? Is intelligence work just the drudgery of routine? *Spies in Canaan* will have you wondering about these and other questions but won’t give you answers. No doubt, that is the point.

