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The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant

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Obama, and his only role in the new administration was as a special adviser for Afghanistan and Pakistan to Hillary Clinton, the new Secretary of State—the job Holbrooke really wanted. Packer chronicles Holbrooke’s failing health and his tragic death after having a coronary incident in the Secretary of State’s office.

While we only are starting to put America’s post–Vietnam War foreign policy into context, Richard Holbrooke and his story provide one narrative looking at a flawed policy through the prism of a flawed, but great, man.

EDWARD SALO



The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, ed. Elizabeth D. Samet. New York: Liveright, 2019. 1,068 pages. \$45.

Arguably, the editor of an annotated work of significant size has one of the more difficult jobs in the field of literature, especially when the work being annotated is well-known, such as the Bible, the collected Sherlock Holmes stories, or the complete works of William Shakespeare. The editor needs to provide historical background; increase the reader’s understanding of the author’s personal and professional motivations and influences; and provide definitions of words, phrases, and concepts that are now forgotten, out of fashion, or greatly changed in meaning. Finding appropriate maps, illustrations, and the like also is a requirement. Despite these challenges, Dr. Elizabeth Samet, a professor of English at the U.S. Military Academy, has created a welcome addition to the field of military history and biography.

Samet’s introduction to this volume is worth reading in itself. She freely admits

her profound admiration for Grant since first encountering his *Memoirs* as a graduate student, and credits him with having as significant an influence on her life as “Virgil, Plutarch, Li Po, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Leo Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf, and Joan Didion” (p. xx). This is high praise from an English professor. She notes that Grant’s other admirers are as varied as Theodore Roosevelt and Ta-Nehisi Coates. For Samet, annotating this work clearly was a labor of love, as well as a chance to rehabilitate Grant’s image, which, she points out, long has been intentionally tarnished by political opponents, jealous military contemporaries, and Southern leaders building the myth of the “Lost Cause.” Taking on Grant also means taking on the questions whether he was an alcoholic, drunk and disoriented at Shiloh, and a brutal, unimaginative general who defeated the Confederacy with tactics that boiled down simply to killing more Confederate soldiers than the South could replace.

While Samet does much that is praiseworthy, there are not enough maps, although the majority used are from the Army’s exceptional *West Point Atlas of the Mexican War* and its counterpart the *West Point Atlas of the Civil War*. Other illustrations include photos of notable figures, scenes of the war, and contemporary political cartoons; readers wishing to take a hard look at the latter are advised to have a powerful magnifying glass close to hand.

Samet is not afraid to take a stand on issues on which the Army and the U.S. military at large traditionally have displayed a studied neutrality. She views Confederate civil-military leaders as traitors. She holds no truck with the stainless reputation of the

reinvented Robert E. Lee. She clearly disapproves of the reconciliation efforts that saw U.S. military installations named for Confederate generals.

Samet does have a tendency to focus on the human condition as revealed through Grant's writing, rather than staying focused solely on the Civil War. She includes observations from Stephen Crane, Ambrose Bierce, and even Henry Morton Stanley. When Grant discusses the Navy's running of Confederate batteries at Vicksburg, Samet supplies a lengthy account of a sea battle from Frederick Marryat, a once-noted nautical writer and author of *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. The siege of Vicksburg is illuminated with an account of the Roman siege of Jerusalem in AD 70. There are descriptions by soldiers of being under fire in the Hürtgen Forest, and stories penned by Marines in World War II. The inner workings and dangers associated with Colt's revolving rifle are not discussed, but the impact of technology as expressed in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is included. While these insights are interesting and at times moving, their utility in helping to understand Grant seems, at times, limited. This is not to imply that an annotated *Memoirs* dedicated to technical detail or uniform minutiae would be superior; it would not, by a long shot. The challenge is in finding the correct balance.

Surprisingly, Samet's annotated *Memoirs* does not open a door into Grant's private life to any great degree. In a day when the importance of family influences on a leader's personality, style, and emotional intelligence is understood to be significant, there is relatively little information provided in this annotated volume. Such information would need to be brought to the reader by the editor, for Grant himself rarely spoke of such matters.

Another area Samet could have explored in greater detail is the degree to which Grant the general was aware of and acted to influence civil-military relations. The *Memoirs* indicates that Grant was well aware of the political currents sweeping the country, and at times acted in accordance with that knowledge. Additionally, there were episodes Grant does not bring up in his memoirs that an editor could have explored. To her credit, Samet looks at some of these, including Grant's General Order 11, which expelled Jews suspected of war profiteering from portions of Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Grant himself did not discuss this event, just as he did not address accusations that he was drunk at Shiloh, and the volume is improved by Samet's editorial contribution on this subject.

As it should be—indeed, as it must be—Grant's remains the primary voice in this volume. Readers who have not read his *Memoirs* will find a very pleasant discovery waiting for them. Those for whom this will not be a first encounter will find that the book's reputation as perhaps the best military memoir ever published still has merit. It is easy to see why Samet listed Grant among those writers who exercised a profound influence on her. In turn she has, when all is said and done, done her subject justice.

RICHARD NORTON



War and Political Theory, by Brian Orend. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2019. 211 pages. \$22.95.

In the latest of his contributions to scholarship on warfare, Brian Orend, professor of philosophy at the University of Waterloo (Ontario, Canada), has published *War and Political Theory*,