

them. The national and international dimensions of UFA/UFWA agrarianism merit further study in their own right: UFA culture drew on traditions of Rochdale and Danish co-operativism, the folk-school movement, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy, Ontario Clear Grit radicalism, socialism, single-tax economics, American Populism, the Garden City and Country Life movements, and many others. Alberta agrarianism also had a national dimension: United Farmer or equivalent organizations existed from the Maritimes to British Columbia, forming governments in three provinces. Movement ideas and organizers circulated freely across the country, and, though organizational co-ordination was less successful, the national dimension was important ideologically. A further historiographical possibility, then, is to see agrarianism as an alternative civic narrative in the cultural formation of the modern Canadian nation state.

Rennie's evocative conclusion, a meditation on an abandoned UFA local hall, begs the question of the fate of the movement culture whose genesis he charts and the transmutation of its elements. The Reform Party claimed agrarian direct democracy as part of its heritage, and the CCF had its own agrarian roots (the term "Co-operative Commonwealth" was long embedded in United Farmer discourse). The effects of the agrarian Social Gospel on Canadian politics and culture, the survival of adult education, extension and community-development initiatives, and the cooperative movement all merit further study. There is no simple continuity between the world of the UFA/UFWA and modern agricultural, trade, or political concerns. But other genealogies — interesting ones, in interesting places — remain to be traced.

This is a well-written book: only an occasional stylistic awkwardness betrays its origins as a dissertation. It is also an important work. Along with recent studies like Kerry Badgley's *Ringing In the Common Love of Good*, one may hope that it will spark a new and well-deserved historiography of Canadian agrarianism.

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Michael Seidman — *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War*.  
Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.

It would be reasonable to think that, after more than 20,000 books (p. 3) on the subject, we now know enough about the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939. We might also consider that, for such a low-tech war in a third-rate power in a corner of Europe, those books are a few thousand too many. But in the stories of the Civil War we can find idealism and betrayal, Fascism and Stalinism, Appeasement and International Brigades, revolution and reaction, clerical obscurantism and religious suffering.... This is enough inspiration not just for 20,000 books on the Civil War, but for an understanding of most of Europe's violent, ideologically deadly twentieth century. The problem is that the big issues have often obscured the reality of the little people, precisely those who fought, suffered, lost, or won that war.

Michael Seidman is an original historian with a keen eye to expose ideological

preconceptions passing as analysis of reality. This has always been one of the main sources of strength in his works, though sometimes a weaker aspect as well. This stress can be seen again in his latest book — which is an exploration of almost exclusively (despite the title) the Republican side during the war — in which Seidman effectively undermines some of the most cherished myths surrounding the “democratic” warring faction. The result is a compelling work, because those myths — especially that the majority of Spaniards resisted Fascism until the very end — end up in a situation of near bankruptcy. The overall balance is at times uneven, however. By pursuing his argument too far, Seidman presents a vision of the Republicans that is not only unfair, but at times too close to a caricature — and such a “caricature” could not have withstood for three years the assaults of the more professional rebel army and its allies, including tens of thousands of combat-ready Italian and German soldiers.

Seidman’s main concern is to demonstrate that most people did not want to fight, and he makes a compelling case. The heroic, popular Republican militiamen are presented, rightly, as the ephemeral product of the euphoria after the initial defeat of the rebels in some of the most important towns of Spain, particularly in Madrid and Barcelona. The Summer-Fall of 1936 is the ecstatic period of Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, his revolution on Earth, of defiant Madrid defended by the heart of its people, and also, of course, the moment of highest glory of the International Brigades, the pride of every Leftist cause. However, Spain, as we know, did not become the “tomb of Fascism”, in part because Hitler and Mussolini pushed hard to avoid that, while Stalin played games with the supply of weapons for the Republic and France and England feigned virginal ignorance, but also because the people who had to fight, or were told to, did not act according to the preconceived roles that we often have assumed.

Seidman goes beyond the ephemeral images of 1936 and the debate around the big historical issues, aiming instead at analysing what people in the Republican side thought and did. His conclusions are an indictment of both the Republican leaders’ incapacity to organize effective resistance and the inability of the often-glorified “people” to follow the directions that government, parties, and unions gave them. However, the issue is exploited to such an extent that at one point the book becomes a mere account of the individualistic actions and feelings that undermined the Republican war effort. Using a vast amount of archival sources, Seidman presents a situation in which chaos, corruption, pettiness, and sheer ignorance were so rampant that they eventually doomed the course of the war. The Republican soldiers, poorly led and equipped, imitated the actions of their superiors and became more attentive to survive, run, and thrive than to fight (pp. 35, 36–37, 94–94, 217–218). In contrast, while not too efficient either, the rebel side is presented as disciplined enough to win (pp. 165–167). As the author portrays it, behind the glorious images, expectations, and myths, the Republican war effort was at times farcical, a sham obscured by big words in which people either avoided politics or used them shamelessly for their own profit. This latter idea can be very attractive for the exploration of popular attitudes during the ensuing dictatorship.

The use of original documents is a double-edged tool for the historian. Such doc-

uments give us an invaluable opportunity to glimpse the past, but they also tend to present an imbalanced view in which problems are over-represented, while normality is often not recorded. In this sense, the reports from the defeated Republican officers are bound to show the criticism and the bitter recriminations of any mauled army in retreat. At the same time, the tone among the almost always victorious Francoist is going to be optimistic. This perspective seems to be missing in this book, perhaps because Seidman, in his desire to debunk pro-Republican myths, not only uses uncritically those military reports, but also the works of Francoist historiography, especially those produced by two Francoist officers, J. M. Martínez Bande and R. Salas Larrzábal. They are competent but heavily biased historians who, in line with the Francoist mythology, present the war of 1936–1939 as the fight between Christian order and Marxist chaos, or as genuine, gentlemanly Spanishness pitted against the worst spurious foreign and local mobs.

The Republic had serious internal problems during the war and it did not overcome them; in fact, many became worse. To present those problems, as Seidman does, without an attempt to establish a link to the unfolding process of military defeat, can lead to visions that reflect mostly the situation at the end of the conflict but poorly earlier moments of the struggle. The Republic ended in chaos and despair, no doubt. But was that fact the cause or the consequence of defeats on the battlefield? Seidman seems to assume it to be the cause, but there are reasons to be cautious about this. From a military point of view, the main serious problem of the Republic was that (unlike, for example, the North during the American Civil War) it never had time to create and deploy an army of manoeuvre capable of taking the initiative. Was this because of the people's lack of fighting spirit or their leaders' incompetence (accusations of this in the North were frequent until Grant took command), or rather because the rebels (unlike the South) got the right foreign assistance at the right time? The growth of defeatism and individualism in Republican Spain cannot be separated from the unavoidable reality of defeat. In a civil war especially, military and social forces never work in one direction alone. This is the missing element of complexity in this excellent, irreverent, but uneven book: an explanation not only of why the (true or not) defiant Republican Spain of 1936 was defeated, but also of how three years of defeats changed Republican Spain.

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Robert Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf, eds. — *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. Pp. viii, 266.

The religious function of art objects within the context of early medieval Japanese Buddhism forms the crux of this book edited by Robert Sharf, a Buddhologist, and Elizabeth Horton Sharf, an art historian. This volume demonstrates the successful marriage of distinct disciplines coming together to arrive at a deeper understanding of the human regard for images, particularly religious ones. Japanese art history, an