Schrad laments that "few, if any" historians have sought to inquire why Nicholas II proclaimed prohibition (170). Yet he assiduously mined the analyses of at least three works specifically treating the subject: a doctoral dissertation by Marc Lee Schulkin, an article by David Christian, and a book by this reviewer. To be sure, the titles are scattered in his notes, but he neglects to give due credit to the authors for various ideas that he presents as his own. For example, he claims that "no historical study has explicitly considered the role of vodka politics in felling the once mighty Romanov empire" (189). I drew a direct link between vodka politics and the outbreak of the Russian revolution in my book *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia* (2002).

One senses that the breezy colloquial prose, which includes numerous redundancies, grammatical errors, and slang, is intended to hold the reader's interest. So too, perhaps, is the stereotypical treatment of Russians, who are invariably portrayed as drunken buffoons, knaves, and tyrants—if not straitlaced teetotalers. Yet many readers are likely to find his lax approach misguided, distorted, and even offensive.

Schrad has done a lot of reading in the field. And although this work lacks a bibliography, his summary of recent publications on Russia's demographic crisis provides a valuable scholarly resource. His own analysis of the serious problem of addiction, however, fails to satisfy. If Schrad does indeed view Russian history, as his publisher proclaims, "from the bottom of a vodka bottle," one must sadly conclude that the glass is rather opaque.

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Russian Monarchy: Representation and Rule; Collected Articles. By Richard Wortman. Imperial Encounters in Russian History. Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2013. xxvi, 332 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Hard bound.

This volume brings together twelve previously published essays by Richard Wortman on the representation, character, and contradictions of monarchical rule in imperial Russia. Most appeared within the last fifteen years and further develop the main theses advanced in Wortman's seminal two-volume study, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (1995–2000). Whereas the latter work is structured chronologically, the essays in the present collection have a thematic focus and consequently trace trends across the reigns of several rulers. The essays are organized in four broadly thematic parts: "Russian Monarchy and Law," "Scenarios of Family and Nation," "Narratives of Monarch and Nation," and "Russian Monarchy and the Imperial State."

Most of the essays concentrate on critical shifts in monarchical representation that Wortman demonstrates took place during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wortman argues that during this period, Russian monarchs, in response to both domestic and international developments, modified their sustaining myths and symbolism in ways that were intended to preserve their supreme power and the integrity of the empire but ultimately undermined both. A brief review cannot do justice to the richness, subtleties, and nuances of Wortman's arguments. But essentially, he uses a skillful analysis of the narratives, ceremonies, rituals, portraiture, architectural monuments, and similar symbolic media through which Russian monarchs endeavored to justify and effectuate their rule to advance two main theses.

First, Wortman contends that the political culture of personalized and discretionary rule deriving from Russian rulers' conception and representation of their power as supreme and unlimited conflicted irreconcilably with their attempts to promote legality and to establish a regularized administrative order. Though present from the reign of Peter I, this fundamental conflict intensified over time as a more professionalized state bureaucracy and social groups with civic and political aspirations emerged. The conflict grew acute in the last decades of the imperial regime, and Wortman argues that Nicholas II's efforts to resolve it by asserting an extreme form of personalized rule based on an idealization of the pre-Petrine past merely resulted in serious governmental dysfunction and the alienation not only of much of society but also of much of state officialdom from the autocracy. Second, Wortman argues that the nationalization of the monarchical myth and image under the last four emperors had similar effects. While, according to Wortman, Nicholas I and Alexander II managed to develop narratives and representations of the monarchy that combined a new assertion of national character with a continued image of the autocracy as a source of beneficent reform derived from European models, the rejection of association with Europe and the monarchy's identification with Russian ethnicity and Orthodoxy under Alexander III and especially Nicholas II both undermined the symbolic mechanisms through which non-Russian elites had been integrated into the monarchical political system and contributed to the rise of nationalist disaffection and conflict. This appropriation of Russian national identity by the monarchy, moreover, inhibited the development of civic or democratic forms of Russian nationalism and blurred Russian identity itself by associating it with empire.

Wortman thus presents the monarchy and monarchical political culture as active agents in imperial Russian history and, in their ultimate iterations, as primary causes of the crises that led to the old regime's demise. Where he disagrees explicitly with the arguments of other scholars—for example, Jörg Baberowski and Boris Mironov with regard to Russian legal development and Geoffrey Hosking with regard to the development of Russian nationalism—his criticisms concern the failure to take the monarchy's agency into account. Nor does Wortman characterize the monarchy and political culture as static during this period, despite important continuities in the conception of monarchical power and status. Rather, he demonstrates how, at least until Nicholas II, successive rulers successfully preserved their power and expanded the empire by consciously reshaping representations of the monarchy and thus the operation of monarchical political culture in response to the challenges and situations they confronted. In doing so, they borrowed concepts and images from Europe as well as drawing on domestic sources. Despite such borrowings and extensive involvement as well as marital ties with Europe, Wortman argues, the Russian monarchy developed along a fundamentally different path during the imperial period than its contemporary European counterparts with regard to both its pretensions to power and its ability to exercise it, a difference that helps explain the distinctive course of modern Russian history (on this particularity, see especially Wortman's exchange with the editors of *Ab Imperio* at the end of chapter 11). Elegantly written and theoretically well informed, Wortman's essays taken together thus provide a compelling interpretation of the political heart of imperial Russia.

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