institutions than in probing its intellectual history, investigating the inevitable conflicts and tensions in depth, or setting it into a larger context of science and social attitudes, not to mention academic, philanthropic, or governmental issues, conflicts, and the like. Thus her interesting chapter on Arnold Gesell misses the methodological criticism of Gesell's successor, Milton J. E. Senn, that Gesell used the same few individual children to set his norms, for he had no understanding of what a random sample was. This is not to be critical of Smuts; she has written a fine, useful book that needs no defense. It is just that she has made some choices about what to include and what not to include. That is fair enough.

The William Howard Taft Presidency, by Lewis L. Gould. American Presidency Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009. xv, 269 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. $34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Karen A. J. Miller is associate professor of history at Oakland University. She is the author of *Populist Nationalism: Republican Insurgency and American Foreign Policy Making, 1918–1925* (1999).

In an effort to "refresh" volumes in its American presidency series, the University Press of Kansas is replacing some of its earliest studies with new ones that reflect contemporary directions in scholarship. As one of the foremost scholars of politics at the beginning of the twentieth century, Lewis Gould is well positioned to write this concise yet authoritative account of William Howard Taft's presidency.

Gould has set out to explain why Taft was a lesser light of the Progressive Era. Abandoning the dismissive language that pervades some of the older scholarship, Gould does not blame Taft's failings on a lethargic sensibility, the absence of a brilliant intellect, or a lack of interest in the presidency. Instead, he views Taft as a politician who did a creditable job but failed to negotiate the political turmoil of his time.

In 1908 William Howard Taft's political career seemed blessed. A confidant of Theodore Roosevelt, he had secured the president's support for the Republican presidential nomination. Roosevelt's efforts on behalf of Taft were an extraordinary asset to his campaign. From the moment of his election, however, Taft's charmed political life began to slip away.

Taft inherited a party that was torn by dissension. Congressional progressives from the Midwest were already challenging conservative party leadership. The first legislative battle facing Taft was tariff reform. Gould regards the Payne-Aldrich Tariff debates as "a self-inflicted wound that shaped the rest of the presidency" (51). His description

of the Payne-Aldrich debates points to glaring failures to placate the sensibilities of progressives in rebellion. During the course of the tariff debates, Taft consistently defended the prerogatives of Speaker of the House Joe Cannon and Senate Majority Leader Nelson Aldrich; he endorsed a corporation tax rather than siding with the progressive call for an income tax. Taft even failed to use the tool of political patronage to regain the loyalty of maverick western progressives. By the end of the process, Taft had alienated insurgent Republican congressmen and angered the progressive press.

This began a spiral downward, as Taft continued to enrage progressive politicians in his decision to support Secretary of the Interior Richard Ballinger in his efforts to tighten procedural rules over land use. Further controversies arose over presidential appointments. By 1910, as the party prepared for the congressional elections, relations between insurgent Republicans and the president had deteriorated completely. Taft went so far as to work with conservatives in Iowa to attempt to unseat the popular senators Jonathan Dolliver and Albert Cummins.

As Gould points out, however, the real problem for the administration was the breakdown of relations between Taft and former president Roosevelt. Ideological differences between the two quickly emerged, as Taft's commitment to process, his desire to balance the budget, and his willingness to ally himself with powerful conservatives began to alter public policy established by Roosevelt. Taft's poor choices in political advisers combined with his tendency to make rash decisions heightened tensions with his former mentor.

The inability of Roosevelt and Taft to reconcile their differences led to the party split in 1912. Both men were too proud to concede to the other. Their ideological differences were real. The result was that neither would be returned to the White House.

Gould acknowledges several important transformations initiated during the Taft presidency. Taft made the federal bureaucracy more efficient, particularly in the area of budgeting. His court appointments shifted the judiciary to the right, a change that would still have force in the 1930s. In the end, Gould argues, Taft's presidency was marked by "a pervasive sense of lost opportunity" (214).

Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture, edited by Pearl James. Studies in War, Society, and the Military. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. xi, 398 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $30.00 paper.

Reviewer Barbara Steinson is professor of history at DePauw University. She is the author of *American Women's Activism in World War I* (1982).