Suddenly, just when you think that university presses have come up with every twist and turn in the book, Yale University Press invents a new one: a scholarly book obviously intended for specialists published without a single footnote. Wrightson’s *Earthly Necessities* possesses nary a note, and the reviewer is left asking, why? For whom could this book have been intended? It dwells at great length and with much learned detail on the early to mid-sixteenth century where much change also presents considerable confusion. The period began with a gentle improvement of household economies, only to be buffeted by inflationary price increases at mid-century. By the end of the century, the already landed and prosperous had grown fatter while survival at the bottom of society had become more precarious. So far we have learned fairly straightforward economic history, complete with an opening survey of the historiography that would leave bored all but the truly specialized. The “Lives” promised in the title are few and far between, but the book does pay attention to the labor of women and children. Scotland and Wales also get their due. But the thought of assigning this book to a class of undergraduates should be firmly resisted.

The specialists at whom the book is aimed must also share some of its working assumptions. They must assume that the central political transformation of the age, the revolution that began in 1640 and was finally settled in 1688/89, has basically nothing to do with the economic history here recounted. Banished from the historiography are major works by Hill and Brenner. It is one thing to disagree with their reading of the intimate link between economic developments and the causes and the outcome of the English Civil Wars; it is another to write as if they had never written. Wright seems to think that out of the left-liberal historiography of the last century, only Tawney, the socialist historian, deserves to be cited, but of course Hill wrote under his mantle. In Wrightson’s account, the wars of the 1640s simply appeared, and they had no noticeable effect on economic institutions. Few specialists will buy into this account. The eighteenth century is treated as an extension of long-term developments in coal mining, manufacturing, and trade. That is a good perspective, provided that it does not ignore the enormous potential of the new power technology introduced by James Watt and others by the late 1770s. Amid a framework that eschews links between the political and the economic, there are some very good parts on


the social experience of the age, in particular Chapter 13 on the “middling sort,” which could be put into any good course reader. As a book-length read for the undergraduate, it fails, and, not least, many specialists will not accept that early modern British economic history can be taught as if Hill had never lived.

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By Peter Clark (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000) 516 pp. $48.00

According to current apprehensive observations, Americans are now bowling alone—that is, Americans are ceasing to create the voluntary associations that constitute civil society. Perhaps it is because the continued vitality of England’s associational life distinguishes the English from Americans, and because the extent to which associational life is ingrained in their society distinguishes the English from other members of the European Economic Community, that Clark’s *British Clubs and Societies* focuses on the ecology of voluntary associations—on the environmental conditions and organizational structures that enabled these associations to appear and then flourish.

As an ecological study, *Clubs and Societies* pays close attention to the places in which clubs appear. Indeed, Clark tests every generalization about these clubs for variation not only among England’s regions but also in Scotland, Ireland, and Britain’s eighteenth-century empire. Similarly, *Clubs and Societies* presents a chronology of most of the phenomena that it examines. As a result, this book rests on an amazingly wide-ranging investigation of sources, and not only of printed sources—of newspapers, pamphlets, county histories, and sermons—but also of manuscript diaries, letters, and submissions to the central government. Clark establishes that these associations were mostly urban phenomena, and that, while the first association—the Society of Antiquaries—appeared in 1586, associations did not flourish until after the civil war. After the glorious revolution, they multiplied exponentially. By 1800, Clark estimates, one in three of the adult male residents of England’s towns was a member of a club or society.

Clark therefore emphasizes these associations’ function in an urban environment: They integrated visiting landowners into urban society; they enabled urban residents to construct the networks essential to establishing their trade; and they assimilated newcomers, both youths and immigrants, to adult urban society. Although many clubs and societies proclaimed themselves to be dedicated to philanthropy or to social improvement, Clark does not believe that they appreciably altered the conditions that they sought to alleviate. Nonetheless, he concludes that all associations effected political development through the organizational experience that they provided to their members. As their members be-