
The potential for pandemic disaster in an overpopulated, overglobalized, and overexploitive human world has provided inspiration for popular science writers since the early 1990s. Such works typically combine microbiology with storytelling and may also, as in Wolfe’s The Viral Storm, draw on such relevant disciplines as anthropology, entomology, zoology, and history to enrich their doomsday scenarios. In these accounts, the interdisciplinary components are clearly visible.

Contagion takes a different approach. Praised by William J. Bernstein on the jacket for its seamless synthesis of “pathophysiology, propulsion technology and political economy,” Contagion offers a methodology that is less evidently pluralistic and more that of a historian using accepted historical approaches—principally political and economic—to answer the questions that he raises: How has long-distance trade spread epidemic disease (in humans, animals, and plants) in the past, and what measures have been taken to prevent such spread? In Harrison’s accounts of most diseases, however, the pathophysiology is lightly in evidence, and “propulsion technology” might better be understood as an economic historian’s normal alertness to the effects of changing methods of transport. Unlike the popular science writers, Harrison has no interest in the genesis of new diseases or of virulent disease strains, and so no need to make use of anthropology, biology, or even epidemiology in constructing his analysis. His aim is less to shock popular awareness of danger than to provide a historically rich analysis that will act as a wake up call to politicians and planners.

Harrison’s story begins with the Black Death in the 1340s and continues through to SARS and avian influenza in the twenty-first century. Between the Plague of Justinian (541–762 AD) and the Black Death, he reminds us, the world was notably free from pandemic infections. Not until the thirteenth century did populations and trade networks recover sufficiently from Dark Age depression to provide transport and fodder for opportunistic pathogens. Quarantine—the historical approach to wildfire infections—is a central player around which Harrison traces the shifting political and economic repercussions of policy.

Plague dominates the earlier centuries; successive cholera epidemics in the later nineteenth century, and the resurgence of pandemic yellow fever and plague, mark the points at which both disease and commerce became “truly global” (xv). Indeed, the first remotely coherent international response to plague was devised in response to the third plague pandemic of the 1890s, which caused significant commercial disruption and political disagreement. Surveillance and containment were the essence of this response. Harrison meticulously charts the political and economic pressures that enmeshed such disease episodes. Self-interest,
whether of individuals, industries, or countries, lies at the heart of these negotiations.

The crux of the political message comes in Harrison’s brief conclusion. History, he observes, indicates a range of preventive measures: “Unless we get the balance right, it is unlikely that we will enjoy either the security we crave or the commercial freedom essential to our prosperity” (281). The science of epidemic prediction is uncertain, and recent responses to plague, sars, and swine flu suggest that human-containment strategies can work. But, as Harrison makes clear, science indicates in this instance that the price of security is eternal vigilance. Political balance is essential for effective action, and Harrison is emphatic that no particular political interest should be allowed to dominate collective responses to emerging pandemics.

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Consuming Pleasures: Intellectuals and Popular Culture in the Postwar World.  
By Daniel Horowitz (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) 491 pp. $34.95

In two previous books—The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consuming Society in America, 1875–1940 (Lanham, Md., 1985) and The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939–1979 (Amherst, Mass., 2004)—Horowitz explored the evolution of American intellectuals’ critiques of consumer society between the 1870s and the 1970s. Together, these works provide among the most comprehensive and insightful chronicles of the patterns of resistance that accompanied new modes of consumption. In Consuming Pleasures, Horowitz’s work turns to the ideas of postwar intellectuals who embraced, rather than excoriated, the rise of consumerism. Shedding the moralistic language of their predecessors, these writers drew attention to the pleasures of consumption, its capacities to empower individuals, and the symbolic expressions that it enabled. According to Horowitz, the moral censures documented in his earlier work gradually eroded as a celebratory approach to consumer society began to emerge.

Horowitz charts this story through a close focus on texts written by critical intellectuals. The book unfolds as a succession of brief intellectual biographies followed by skillful synthetic condensations of the authors’ arguments. Horowitz emphasizes the early periods of his subjects’ careers in order to capture the moments of experimentation and innovation that contributed to the development of their mature views. Although the book identifies some mutual conversations and patterns of influence, Horowitz is clear that his subjects did not form a coherent or self-conscious movement and often were only vaguely aware of one another’s ideas. The virtues of this line of analysis include its capacity to
subsume many different kinds of texts within a common framework. Thus, Consuming Pleasures ventures outside the United States to examine intellectual developments in Germany, France, and especially Britain, devoting close attention to authors ranging from Jürgen Habermas to Tom Wolfe to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. This expansive, interdisciplinary approach makes the book an invaluable account of the evolving critical response to mass culture.

Horowitz’s focus on what he describes as “discourse without community,” however, carries certain limitations. Many layers of context receive only glancing treatment in this study; readers learn little about institutional settings, disciplinary conversations, networks of communication, or means of popularization or dissemination. Although the historiography is rapidly growing, Horowitz says almost nothing about changing conceptions of consumption among consumers who were not critical intellectuals, or changing practices within the advertising industry itself. Horowitz defines his project at the outset, in part, as one of identifying processes of “causation and change,” but these absences limit his ability to relate the observations of critical intellectuals to broader historical narratives. What social, technological, or political shifts inspired this reassessment of the merits of consumption? Did his subjects’ increasing credulousness toward consumer society merely reflect a broader popular shift, or was it a precipitating factor? Consuming Pleasures largely bypasses these broad questions, instead favoring a close textual analysis in which influence is monitored primarily through intellectuals reading one another.

Nearly all of the intellectuals discussed in Consuming Pleasures were responding to a dominant cultural discourse that portrayed consumption as morally abhorrent. The book, however, largely bypasses those arguments, choosing to focus instead on moments of dissonance and rupture. The reason for this narrowed focus is understandable: The Anxieties of Affluence explored criticisms of consumer culture in great detail, whereas Horowitz’s focus in Consuming Pleasures is on a contrary line of argumentation. But for readers who have not encountered the previous book, the discursive context that made these contributions innovative and disruptive is insufficiently conveyed. Expressions of enthusiasm for popular culture seem much less seditious and original when they are not encountered as deeply embedded within countervailing trends. Despite the author’s occasional caveats to the contrary, readers of Consuming Pleasures could be forgiven for developing the impression that they are encountering a broad transformation in cultural understandings of consumption rather than a few outlying expressions of dissent.

By focusing on early celebrations of consumer culture, Horowitz also creates a peculiar disparity with his earlier work. The Anxieties of Affluence identified the emergence of an “appreciative yet analytic” post-moralist perspective only in the 1970s, arguing that the “gatekeepers” of “serious public discussion” had previously refused to countenance appreciations of consumer culture. But Consuming Pleasures finds most of
the strains of this argument emerging in the preceding decades; later figures were merely traveling along a road that had already been paved. Horowitz represents the books as connected forays into a shared line of inquiry, but their varying periodizations throw the broader framework of Consuming Pleasures into some doubt. Is it possible that consumer culture has produced a persistent ambivalence since its earliest emergence? Horowitz himself acknowledges pronounced notes of celebration in earlier writers, ranging from Walt Whitman to Walter Benjamin; he also recognizes that critiques of consumer culture have continued to maintain a powerful hold on the public imagination in the years since a postmoralist perspective became widespread.

Historians such as Cohen and Jacobs have chronicled the various ways in which consumption became a lever for democratic access and claims to citizenship in movements dating back to the progressive era; others, including Lasch, have continued to rail against consumer society into the final decades of the twentieth century. The focus in Consuming Pleasures on a certain form of cultural critique, and its adoption of a model in which consumption is first broadly pilloried and then gradually embraced, at times represents a thickly contested problem in excessively schematic terms.

These reservations about methodology and narrative structure, however, should not obscure Horowitz’s achievement with this book. Consuming Pleasures presents rich accounts of a broad range of major critics following World War II, many of whom have not received such subtle and deeply researched treatments before. The book demonstrates convincingly that celebrations of consumption have held a substantial, if sometimes suppressed, role in public discussion since at least the 1950s, complicating a historical narrative that at times overemphasizes contrary trends. Future historians can build on Horowitz’s account by connecting it to popular and political histories of consumption in the postwar years, thereby clarifying how abstract debates about consumer society both helped to shape, and were shaped by, the rapidly changing subject that they explored.

Angus Burgin
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This book, which “examine[s] the impact of wealth on the Christian churches of the Latin West” between 350 and 550 A.D. (xix), is orga-

nized into five parts. Part I describes in four chapters the situation at the start of the period—the privileged position that Constantine granted the Christian churches and their clergy in the Roman Empire and the different traditions and practices of giving. Part II comprises thirteen chapters that describe how well-known figures at the end of the fourth century engaged with wealth—the Roman aristocrat Symmachus, his Christian contemporary Ambrose of Milan, Augustine before his election as bishop of Hippo, Ausonius, Paulinus of Nola, and Jerome. Part III considers in seven chapters the “age of crisis” that began in 410, contrasting, on the one hand, the ideal of renunciation held by Pelagius and his supporters and, on the other, Augustine’s notion that Christians could expiate their sins by giving their wealth to the churches. Part IV dedicates two chapters to Gaul and one to Italy in the fifth century. Part V delineates in two chapters how the churches, now the “truly wealthy” in the West, used their riches.

One of Brown’s claims is that “it was the entry of new wealth and talent into the churches from around the year 370 onward, rather than the conversion of Constantine in 312, which marks the turning point in the Christianization of Europe” (528; see also 32). Indeed, the chapters of the second part contain many statements anticipating further developments: “Ambrose had begun a work that would be continued” (147). “Little did they know it at the time, but the monastery Augustine founded in Hippo . . . was destined to become the template for an experiment in communal living that condensed some of the highest aspirations of the medieval Catholic Church in its attitudes toward both wealth and society as a whole” (149). “Paulinus sketched out unwittingly the future of Christian Rome” (235). But Brown at the same time insists that what allowed these developments was a set of social and economic conditions that did not exist before the end of the fifth century (70, 90, 122, 146, etc.).

Thus, something of an unresolved tension haunts Brown’s narrative strategy. He states in the conclusion that he wants to help readers to “make the journey back to a world before our world,” a world that produced “the conglomerate of ideas that medieval persons took for granted” (530). But does this “journey back” not give, to some extent, a teleological taste to the powerful narrative that Brown proposes? Be that as it may, there is great subtlety in Brown’s narrative. In contextualizing his close reading of texts within an up-to-date picture of the economic and social realities of the world in which they were produced and read, he has created an undeniable tour de force.

Eric Rebillard
Cornell University

The recent “material turn” in the social sciences and humanities has witnessed a widespread acknowledgment that the detailed study of objects, in their appropriate historical contexts, can open new windows onto the lived experience of past populations. Such object-led research is an inherently interdisciplinary undertaking, since recreating the historical contexts from which things took their meaning requires careful attention to the widest possible array of source materials. Historical archaeologists are ideally placed to compare the physical remains of the past with the well-documented periods that they study, and Gilchrist is a renowned master of the field for the Middle Ages. She previously explored the spatial arrangement of female religious communities in the ground-breaking Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women (London, 1994), as well as embodiment and burial practice in Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain (London, 2005). In this new book, she turns her attention from elites and ecclesiasts to the material practices of daily life among the “ordinary folk of medieval England” (xii). The result is a vital and innovative contribution to our understanding of how medieval people interacted with and comprehended the world that they inhabited.

The book’s organizing framework is the sociological model of the “life course,” which connects the successive stages of life from infancy to old age on a single continuum, stressing the rituals, social customs, and institutions that create linkages between different phases of the life cycle. Through four detailed case studies, Gilchrist argues persuasively that medieval people conceived of an “extended life course,” which began before birth with the material practices surrounding conception and pregnancy and ended well after death, encompassing “the myriad strategies that aimed to ensure memory of the dead and their well-being in the afterlife” as they awaited eventual resurrection at the end of time (1). Gilchrist’s methodology—which combines her detailed knowledge of the archaeological evidence with a critical reading of the sources and secondary literature from fields as diverse as history, art history, literary studies, and anthropology—yields striking new insights into the substance of medieval life on nearly every page. We learn, for instance, how pregnant women combated fears of death in childbirth by wearing religious amulets, apotropaic rings, and even relic girdles that were borrowed (for a fee) from a saint’s statue at the local church (137–138). We encounter industrious children who made their own toys out of animal bones and worked from a young age, carrying wet clay pots to the kiln and leaving their small, telltale fingerprint impressions on the finished products (149, 147). In Gilchrist’s hands, the remarkable evidence of surviving leather shoes testifies to everything from the libido of young men (who stuffed their long pointed toes with moss to keep them erect), to the infirmities of the elderly (who alleviated their bunions by slashing...
holes in their shoes), to domestic protection rituals in which the shoes of dead relatives were deliberately concealed in the home to safeguard vulnerable spots like chimneys and windows (101, 64–65, 229–230).

Medieval Life is at its most original when discussing the agency of such “biographical objects” as wedding rings and birthing girdles, which were often curated as family heirlooms or donated to churches due to their association with the life-course rituals of specific individuals (Chapter 6). By connecting the biographies of people and their things, Gilchrist reveals medieval Europe as a world animated by powerful objects at every social scale—a world in which the well-known cult of saints’ relics suddenly makes much more sense. Well-illustrated and indexed, with fourteen helpful appendixes and an extensive, up-to-date bibliography, this book is an exemplary model of interdisciplinary history that successfully integrates the theories of numerous social sciences with the textual, visual, and material evidence of the past in order to shed new light on the lived experience of the Middle Ages.

Austin Mason
University of Minnesota


A bland title obscures Epstein’s intriguing contribution to the cultural history of “nature.” In this book, Epstein offers no replay of the familiar (if still valuable) historiographical theme that nature (Latin natura) resurfaced in medieval thought and literature during the so-called Renaissance of the twelfth century but rather an original exploration of what some medieval writers found in nature. What makes the enterprise puzzling is why Epstein raises the very question “What did they discover?” since his book gives no concerted attention to how medieval people learned to make actual use of the natural world. His is a history neither of natural science, of technology, nor of resource exploitation, though natural science weaves in and out of his story.

Five contingently related case studies spotlight aspects of medieval Europeans’ cultural grasp of the natural. Epstein astutely argues that although dominant medieval cultural traits discouraged human interest in nature as anything other than given by divine creation, some people’s experiences led them to recognize change in nature or find human comfort with it. Epstein begins with discovery, exemplified in texts that recognized in the grafting of plants (a much older horticultural technique) the human creation of something new but still somehow natural and fecund. This finding leads him to examine medieval writings about mules, hybrids of human creation, deemed by medieval authors as unnatural and therefore sterile. Following the thread of the axiom that in nature “like produces like,” brings Epstein to discussions of how original sin
could be inherited by the descendants of Adam, whence he segues into questions of inheritability connected to property. How people possessed and transferred claims to material possessions necessarily raises the problematical naturalness of money, usury, and human slavery, topics that Epstein has treated elsewhere.

The final chapter investigates medieval views of natural disasters, increasingly seen as manifestations of nature’s agency (in service of God’s wrath); humans had to answer for their own responses. The recognition of nature’s action permitted, among other results, development of insurance against risk. Overall, Epstein detects a pattern of late antique and early medieval Christian (and other monotheistic) cultures blocking certain possible queries or understandings of nature—a tendency that did not end until Europe’s scholastic revival of the twelfth century and the Aristotelian challenge of the thirteenth century opened new possibilities for investigation and interpretation of a no-longer abstract and unchanging entity.

Epstein is a deeply erudite scholar, at home in the main medieval canon of theology, natural philosophy, literature, and law, as well as in obscure but illuminating texts from later medieval Italy, especially Genoa. More sparing are references from Spain, the Empire, Low Countries, British Isles, and nonscholastic France. He takes interpretive guidance from pragmatics, the branch of linguistics relating meaning to context, as articulated in the recent work of Verschueren. Although Epstein’s narrative may tacitly exploit the diverse ambiguity of “nature” as physical place, everything nonhuman, an innate quality, a source of authority, or simply the opposite of culture, he declines to set his findings into that conceptual frame—an approach unlike that of Peter Coates, Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998).

The medieval “discoveries” that Epstein reveals concern certain natural phenomena, the effects of human action, the limits of the natural order, natural continuity, and responses to variability. The fact that nearly all of them, according to Epstein, were “discovered” by literate, notably male clerical, elites makes this book, at one level, a congeries of certain learned ideas bearing upon the natural world in diverse ways. Epstein acknowledges that nonelite, nonliterate, medieval people knew much more about the natural world and its manipulation, but he refrains from discussing them. To this reader’s disappointment, the concept of “traditional ecological knowledge” does not emerge from Epstein’s interdisciplinary tool kit to explicate this conundrum.

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York University

1 See, for example, Jef Verschueren, Ideology in Language Use: Pragmatic Guidelines for Empirical Research (New York, 2012).

This multifaceted collection sets out to explore the “interactions across boundaries and borders” in Europe during late medieval times (2). The range of the volume is therefore extremely broad, though tapered to some extent by its dual (secondary?) objective of respecting the distinguished work of Vale, whose many well-received books and articles have focused on “courts, chivalric culture, and warfare” in the intertwined societies of northwestern Europe (2). The result is an interesting array of scholarly ideas about perceiving frontiers in new or unusual ways, but the assortment does not always achieve congruity.

The volume is divided into two parts; its first half deals with “the variety of boundaries” and its second with “different practices of exchange” (11). Preceding these units is a brief yet informative survey of Vale’s academic life and major contributions as well as a general introduction that lays out not only the general goals of the book but also a short description of intellectual trends in the field toward global, transnational, and entangled (histoire croisée) approaches to historical interpretation. These opening sections provide a useful and dynamic discussion around the intriguing possibilities of imagining a new map of Europe, one based on interrelated networks and webs of communication that have little to do with accustomed state (or proto-state) boundaries in the late medieval era.

Some of the volume’s essays fulfill its outlined aims better than others, and occasionally the work as a whole feels out of balance. In the first half, for example, three of the essays in sequential order center on linguistic concerns. Guilhem Pépin’s examination of language, allegiance, and identity in Brittany and Gascony makes for a fascinating narrative about the blend, or non-blend, of politics and culture in those provinces. Erik Spindler’s disturbing look at the fate of many Flemings during the Peasant Revolt of 1381 suggests that a simple desire for enhanced solidarity among the English led to attacks on the pronunciation-challenged, and Maria João Violante Branco argues for a new political-linguistic view of translations in Spain. All three chapters have interesting points, but together they come off as an unexpected and perhaps unwarranted cluster in the book.

The volume recovers its broader approach after this digression, however, reaching several high points of analysis. Maurice Keen’s discussion of continued political connections between the emerging states of France and England following the Wars of the Roses (following the Hundred Years’ War) aptly demonstrates abiding international bonds being fueled rather than extinguished by domestic discord. Similarly, Rita Costa-Gomes furnishes the most interdisciplinary essay of the book with her captivating investigation of “princely gifts” crafted by African artists for Portuguese nobles, specifically a fifteenth-century ivory olifant.
(a medieval hunting horn) with European hunting scenes carved on it (174). The mix of art, politics, and trade in her work fits the stated subject of the volume superbly. Also, Mario Damen’s exploration of the Low Countries’ distinct approach to tournament participation in the 1400s reminds us that regional links could be exaggerated.

Some of the pieces such as Paul Booth’s study of the Black Prince’s dying wish to reward the denizens of Wirral or Jean Dunbabin’s perspective on Philip Chieti’s expatriate difficulties could ultimately have been more convincing in their arguments, but they nonetheless challenge assumptions about nobles and their wide nexus of influence. A sense of imbalance returns in John Watts’ closing to the collection. After praising the volume, he proceeds to question whether notions of entangled history could go (or have gone) too far and become unworkable, unneeded, or unintelligible. Has a tipping point been reached? His question is a worthwhile one for the field, and if Watts jars the intellectual balance of the book as a last word, he does so in a beneficial way to keep the conversation both going and real.

Paul Dingman  
Alfred University


Pal offers a lively analysis of the intellectual dynamism evident at the exiled court of the Bohemian royal family at The Hague, which under the influence of the erudite Princess Elizabeth became the center of a tightly knit learned society from the 1630s to the 1680s. In these decades, personal and epistolary networks connected women intellectuals to each other and to their male colleagues, spanning confessional and geopolitical boundaries and encompassing interests as seemingly diverse as feminism, mathematics and philosophy, practical medicine, high politics, Hebrew studies, pedagogical reform, and Pietism.

Drawing upon an impressive roster of sources—including archival material unearthed from repositories in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States—Pal crafts riveting individual and collective biographies of her main protagonists—Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Anna Maria van Schurman, Marie de Gournay, Marie du Moulin, Dorothy Moore, Bathsua Makin, and Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh. These biographies emerge from a minute examination of the correspondence between members of this inner circle and its many satellite members incorporated through bonds of kinship, friendship, and patronage. The letter trails also reveal a close collaboration between the core protagonists and intellectual men, among them René Descartes, Samuel Hartlib, Constantijn Huygens, and André Rivet. The evidence
certainly substantiates Pal’s argument that the influential and productive “Republic of Women” aptly showcases the diversity and complexity of the seventeenth-century republic of letters.

Methodologically, this book primarily uses the tools of intellectual history, but political, religious, and, above all, social contexts receive careful attention. Pal’s acknowledged model for her approach to social networks is Anne Goldgar’s Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750 (New Haven, 1995), which served as the springboard for Pal’s combined analysis of correspondence, networking, publication, and mentorship practices. Given its emphasis on the collaboration between men and women, Republic of Women should also be read in conjunction with two other studies that paved the way for this approach—Julie Campbell’s Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe (Aldershot, 2006) and Diana Robin’s Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses and the Counter-Reformation in Italy (Chicago, 2007).

Gender historians will find considerable substance in this book, particularly those in the growing republic of scholars who are interested in women writers’ rhetorical strategies and the cultural scripts of intellectual kinship. Pal underscores the ways in which women feminized these scripts to create not only discursive fathers and brothers but also discursive mothers and sisters. Chapter 3 provides a compelling excursus on this topic in its interrogation of the relationships between Anna Maria van Schurman, Marie de Gournay, and Marie du Moulin. Yet gender, though important in Pal’s account, constitutes only one among several factors, including social rank and economic constraints, that ambitious people worked through and around as they joined their era’s prominent conversations and debates.

Scholars of literary culture—to say nothing of visual and musical culture—in different places and times may question the notion that The Hague in the middle of the seventeenth century represented an especially (if not uniquely) propitious environment for the formation of female communities. But this is another way in which Pal’s engaging study will help to keep the conversation vibrant.

Sarah Gwyneth Ross
Boston College


In 1612, Susan Perry and Robert Watson of Westminster, England, were arrested, imprisoned, stripped, tied to a cart, flogged, unceremoniously dumped at the edge of town, and banished for life. Their crime? Sex out of wedlock and the conception of a bastard child. Such punishments were routine in the premodern world.
Modern attitudes toward sexual freedom and privacy were born in the Age of Enlightenment. This, in a nutshell, is the central claim of Dabhiowala’s bold, expansive new history of what he calls “The First Sexual Revolution.” Today, Dabhiowala argues, we take sexual freedom for granted. Yet, until recently (the eighteenth century, to be precise), the forms of sexual oppression that we in the West often now associate with religious fundamentalism—from the mistreatment of women to the execution of adulterers and the punishment of homosexuals—were commonplaces of our own society. The Origins of Sex seeks to explain this dramatic transformation.

Dabhiowala begins by establishing the parameters of a medieval culture of discipline in which ideals of sexual, social, and religious conformity were readily—if not entirely—enforced. Familial and neighborly intimacy in rural towns and villages facilitated community policing. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, rapid urbanization meant that such local surveillance was no longer effective. London, for example (the largest city in the world by 1800 and the unabashed focus of Dabhiowala’s attentions), offered unprecedented opportunities for sexual pleasure. Religious pluralism, a growing faith in individual reason, new notions of the natural, and the re-evaluation of pleasure as a “positive good” all enhanced the primacy of the private sphere and legitimized the value of personal conscience in matters of sexual morality.

Dabhiowala is quick to note that the new sexual liberty did not affect all members of society equally. Unsurprisingly, white, heterosexual, propertied males—now understood as rapaciously lustful—benefited most. Upper- and middle-class women, previously presumed (as were all females) to be more vulnerable to the passions, were reconceived as chaste and asexual—an image from which they later derived authority within the women’s movement. Heterosexuality reigned, since emphasis on the “natural” led to a new abhorrence for behaviors couched “unnatural.”

Nonetheless, the notion that sex was a private matter between consenting adults also provided justification for more controversial claims. It was used to defend homosexuality (by no less than Jeremy Bentham), free love (by Mary Wollstonecraft and others), and even polygamy. Prostitutes, once viewed as wicked lusty wenches, were re-imagined as the hapless victims of male seduction. Indeed, the theme of the female innocent besieged by the male libertine became a key motif in English novels of the time (Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa, the History of a Young Lady [London, 1748] comes to mind). Meanwhile, the burgeoning mass media and explosion in print culture gave rise, via coverage of courtesans like Kitty Fisher, to the modern concept of sexual celebrity.

The book is unrepentantly Anglophile, making broad generalizations about the sexual revolution in the West on the basis of an encyclopedic range of almost exclusively British sources. One wonders what a more postcolonial, transnational and global perspective—in which the flows of influence, culture, and information between metropole,
Europe, America, the British colonies, and the world beyond were understood as more multidirectional, messy, and contested—might add to this account.

That said, as an ambitious synthetic work that draws on history, literature, poetry, philosophy, political theory, and religion as well as legal texts, broadsheets, paintings, prints, and material culture, and which is written in a lively style punctuated throughout with juicy vignettes, *The Origins of Sex* makes for responsible—and racy—reading.

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*Venice: A New History.* By Thomas F. Madden (New York, Viking, 2012) 446 pp. $35.00

The historian who decides to write a history of Venice faces a number of daunting choices. Does she or he write what is essentially an urban history, focusing on the physical development of the city and the makeup of its inhabitants or instead write a history of the Venetian Republic, which encompassed not only the city itself and its lagoon but also an extensive overseas empire and a large territorial state on the Italian mainland? Assuming the latter approach, what does he or she do with the period from the fall of the Republic in 1797 to the present? Finally, what themes deserve emphasis?

When Frederic C. Lane published his monumental history of Venice forty years ago—*Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973)—he opted to write what was essentially a history of the Republic, with only a few pages dedicated to the post-1797 period. What made Lane’s work so powerful and useful even today was the meaning that he imposed on his material. For Lane, the significance of Venice lay in its commercial and naval prowess and its tradition of republican government. When it came out in 1973, the great revolution in social and cultural history was just beginning: Pullan’s study of welfare and Venetian confraternities had appeared only two years before, and Chojnacki would not publish his first article on patrician women until 1974.¹ Brown’s study of confraternities and Venetian narrative painting would not be published until 1988.² Since that time, a veritable flood of research has been carried out and published on nearly all aspects of Venetian social and cultural life.

The great merit of Ferraro’s history of Venice is her synthesis and

incorporation of much of that material into what is essentially a history of the Republic. She devotes only one short chapter to the period post-1797. Furthermore, to her great credit, Ferraro, like Lane, seeks to impose some meaning on the material. She weaves four themes or subjects throughout her account: the creation of Venetian identities, material culture and multiculturalism, society and social hierarchies, and gender. Ferraro, who has published extensively on family and gender in early modern Venice, does a particularly good job of tracing the role of family life in the evolution of the Venetian ruling class and of bringing Venetian women forthrightly into the narrative, especially in the early modern period. Likewise, she pays serious attention to music and its role in Venetian society and culture. But her account of the Middle Ages, especially of Venice’s urban development, is something of a muddle, and her attempts to argue for a cosmopolitan and multicultural Venice seem, at times, forced. Her account of politics and economics makes few advances over what Lane told us; it is unfortunate that she did not choose to show how the themes that she emphasizes (and well understands) played out in the political sphere. For example, how did the inevitable tension between provincialism and cosmopolitanism shape debates about citizenship and guild membership?

In contrast, Madden’s history reads as if it could have been written at the same time as Lane’s. Madden, who has published an important book on Doge Enrico Dandolo and much on the Crusades, offers an old-fashioned narrative of high politics and international affairs, with a couple of chapters devoted to the post-1797 period. Women, except for the inevitable nod toward the courtesan Veronica Franco and an account of Lord Byron’s mistresses, and non-nobles, except oarsmen, hardly have a role to play in Madden’s Venice. Even his account of high politics is overly skewed toward the eastern Mediterranean. He offers detailed accounts of the Fourth Crusade and wars with the Turks but tells his readers that the wars that Venice fought to create its mainland state and that had a major impact on the evolution of the patriciate and on public finances “need not detain us here” (234). Similarly, the Interdict Crisis of 1607 in which Venice, in Bouwsma’s words, served as the political educator of Europe, receives only a half-paragraph treatment. More positively, Madden offers good accounts of the shifting international balances of power in the Mediterranean in a lively prose style. By contrast, his accounts of Venetian art and music are perfunctory at best.

In the end, it is difficult to know who the intended audience is for these books. Madden’s seems aimed at a popular audience (indeed, he laments that Lane and others are not “an easy read” [5]), whereas Ferraro’s—with its sidebars, chronology, and glossary—seems aimed primarily at students. In many ways, the best advice for those wanting to know more about Venice is to read the chapters in Madden focusing on

the Middle Ages and Ferraro’s illuminating chapters about the early modern period. But it is still a good idea to keep Lane’s volume handy as well.

Dennis Romano
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In the history of science, the tide may be turning against the explanatory power once accorded concepts like power and ideology. Phillips’ book about the “acolytes of nature,” the multiple and varying ways by which German advocates of learning about, or of examining, nature explained the slippery term “science,” enlists passion, pleasure, curiosity, and social hierarchies as explanatory categories (258). The approach is a breath of fresh air, though at times a confusing one.

There is nothing simple or easy about the uses of the German words naturwissenschaft and wissenschaft. Much of this book centers on the evolution of these terms from roughly the 1770s to the 1850s. Throughout, the author looks over her shoulder at the meaning of English and French equivalents, but her lack of in-depth knowledge of those other national histories clouds her discussion. She suggests that the term “science” possessed a similar instability in English well into the nineteenth century, but on the whole, such is not the case. In the 1780s, James Watt could casually refer to himself as a “man of science,” similar to Antoine Lavoisier, apparently without the least discomfort. It is a mystery to this reviewer as to why the language of comparison with German would not be Dutch instead of either French or English.

One of the great strengths of the book rests on the bridge that it creates between the enlightened republic of letters of the eighteenth century and the vast expansion of print culture and scientistic and naturalist associations after 1815. In this complex social universe, “science” gradually shed “its earlier status as a vague neologism and [became] an indispensable intellectual reference point for educated German speakers” (10). In other words, by 1800 naturwissenschaft emerged as the term covering all of the disciplines that studied nature. Wissenschaft had lost any Baconian associations that it once had; it was now pure, referring to any discipline that was creative and generative of novelty.

Indeed, Phillips argues that science, more than any other activity, even more than classical learning or industrial prowess, defined membership in the learned public. The learned elites with their foundation in university-based academic training retained their preeminence; they were now central stars within galaxies of admirers who shared their values and even, on occasion, married into their ranks. Decade by decade, a
schooling revolution that began late in the eighteenth century expanded the learned public, and by the 1790s (just as in the Dutch Republic), its goals combined the study of nature with patriotism and practical economic reforms. As philosophical idealism and the integrated personality of the gebildeten came to dominate, the utilitarian focus of the learned persona melted away. By 1830, a scientific elite dedicated to academic publication and research occupied pride of place in German intellectual life. As a consequence, the skilled artisan had been displaced from learned society.

Acolytes of Nature concentrates upon local journals and societies, as represented by a few individuals and their writings, paying particular attention to Dresden and Berlin and never discussing the science actually practiced by any of the learned people who appear in its pages. Since its analysis is entirely linguistic, every statement must be nuanced and qualified: Learned societies could be both local and cosmopolitan (145); natural history societies belonged to a lower place in the social hierarchy, though they represented true science and “were important precursors of the later nineteenth-century Heimat (homeland) movement” (179–182). The notion that two cultures coexisted in Germany by 1850, one classical and philological and the other scientific and centered in the laboratory, has been vastly overstated (250–251). In fact, both of them shared a common set of academic values and, on the level of families and individual lives, belonged to the same social universe.

Reading explications of texts and finding in them a way of establishing the status of something as concrete, yet complex, as science seems a methodology destined to distance the reviewer from the subject. German science receives definition from dozens of journals, orations, or dictionaries aimed at audiences differentiated by locale, class, and gender with seldom any perfect agreement among them. Yet almost all of the truisms that we might have taken out of German historiography about science and technology are questioned by Phillips’ account. Although Phillips’ book might not make for scintillating reading, it is a worthwhile achievement for which she deserves considerable praise. The excessive wordiness of many chapters is redeemed by excellent concluding remarks that give a hurried reader a good summation of the major points being covered, providing an outline of the emerging importance accorded to science as the center piece of German intellectual life.

Margaret C. Jacob
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_A Small Town Near Auschwitz: Ordinary Nazis and the Holocaust._ By Mary Fulbrook (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012) 421 pp. $34.95 cloth $21.95 paper

_A Small Town Near Auschwitz_ is infuriating on the one hand and redemptive on the other. Fulbrook sets herself an impossible task—to be an ob-
jective historian trying to make sense of the lies told by her godmother’s husband. Her research is impeccable; she spent years studying the testimony of perpetrators in the archives of the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg, as well as the testimony of Holocaust victims in the archives of Katowice and Warsaw. She interviewed Polish and Jewish survivors whenever possible, gathering a massive armory of information. The initial result was a prior book, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (New York, 2011). But when she realized that the documents that she had uncovered deserved to be discussed separately and on their own terms, she wrote this new book.

As Fulbrook notes, the German *Landrat* (district manager) is a respectable civil-service position that is not generally considered to be controversial. The *Landratsamt*, the office that the Landrat supervises, is the link between any given district (Kreis) in Germany to the land, or state, within which the district is located. It transmits orders from the state to the towns and villages within its jurisdiction and collects information from its district, eventually to redistribute it in one processed form or another. In *A Small Town Near Auschwitz*, Fulbrook painstakingly traces the function of a particular Landrat during the Nazi years—Udo Klausa, in whose wife’s company she spent her childhood years, totally oblivious to his terrible past. As Fulbrook carefully shows, Klausa and, by inference, many other Landräte and civil servants in general became devil’s accomplices during the Third Reich.

Klausa was ambitious, ostensibly too young for the coveted position that his family’s connections won for him; his father had been a Landrat, too. Putatively ill-informed about the Nazis’ devious plan to murder all of the Jews of Europe, he eagerly accepted the post in the annexed town of Bedzin, Silesia, twenty-five miles from Auschwitz and close to Sosnowiec and Bielitz—the hometown of Gerda Weismann, author of *All but My Life: A Memoir* (New York, 1957). Fulbrook convincingly shows how indispensable even pencil pushers such as Klausa were to the Final Solution. Fulbrook calls them “desk perpetrators,” who acted “as loyal servants of the Reich,” forming and implementing policies (65, x). As Fulbook correctly states, their administrative policies included the “ousting of Jews from their home, the expropriation of their property and means of livelihood, the rounding-up and deportation of able-bodied adults to forced labor, the break-up of families, restrictions on freedom of movement, reduction of rations, maltreatment of those transgressing newly imposed regulations, and the spreading of a general atmosphere of terror in the face of unpredictable brutality” (123). The perceived harmlessness of “simply obeying orders” led to the murder of millions of innocent victims (97). Without Klausa, and others in the civil-service hierarchy, the Holocaust could not have happened.

Fulbrook’s evidence—numerous documents, depositions, and interviews—is as damning as Klausa’s insistence on his own innocence is brazen. When he testified before the Ludwigsburg commission on war crimes, he walked away with a clean shirt, eventually writing a memoir
that cemented the fiction that he had fabricated. As a result, he died a free man with a good name.

Fulbrook bravely published her dissenting account with the full knowledge and support of Klausa’s son, with whom she discussed the project extensively. Her mission was not to seek revenge or retribution but to expose the lies of a Nazi functionary and recount the tragic experiences of his victims. Her overwhelming evidence overturns Klausa’s exoneration, showing that the real innocent victims were those whom he helped to trap in the Nazi dragnet of deportation and murder, guilty only of their ethnicity.

Gilya Gerda Schmidt
University of Tennessee, Knoxville


Tsygankov’s ambitious study of Russian foreign policy seeks to explain and assess three patterns in Russia’s relations with the West that reappear throughout Russian history—cooperation, defensiveness, and assertiveness. Following Reus-Smit, Tsygankov argues that states have a moral purpose that drives their behavior, best captured by the concept of honor.

Russia’s honor has “two essential dimensions—European and local” (5). Tsygankov is interested in correcting Western perceptions of Russia as anti-Western. He focuses on Russia’s “honor as loyalty to the West,” or “Europeanness,” as the motive for cooperation (40). The “local” element is the stumbling block to cooperation; it consists of what makes Russians feel distinctive—allegiance to Slavs and Orthodox Christians during the nineteenth century, to communist regimes during the next century, and presently to Slavs in the post-communist Balkans and Russian speakers in the former Soviet Union, as well as a commitment to statism and great power status.

According to Tsygankov, “Russia may only act on its Europeanness [that is, cooperate with the West] when the West does not principally challenge the distinctive aspects of Russia’s honor” (5). Russia’s efforts to cooperate with the West in his book are the Holy Alliance (1815–1853), the Triple Entente (1907–1917), Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov’s collective security policy from 1933 to 1939, and the War on Terror (2001–2005). Tsygankov argues that Russo-Western cooperation can be successful only when the West recognizes and respects Russia’s special obligations to protect the “local” component of its honor. Otherwise, domestic proponents of cooperating with the West either fail in

steering state policy or change their minds about the wisdom of cooperation.

The foreign-policy choice between defensiveness and assertiveness is a function of “internal confidence,” which translates into domestic perceptions of Russia’s material capabilities. Defensiveness occurs after foreign-policy setbacks and the West’s refusal to recognize Russia’s honor obligations. Tsygankov presents as cases of defensiveness Alexander Gorchakov’s policy of *recueillement* after defeat in the Crimean War, the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence with the West from 1921 to 1939 after the Bolshevik Revolution and World War I, and Yevgenii Primakov’s policy of containing NATO expansion from 1995 to 2000. Russia’s assertiveness is demonstrated by the promotion of Russia’s non-Western values during the Crimean War, the early Cold War (1946–1949), and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, all of which occurred when the West disregarded Russia’s honor and Russia was confident enough in its strength to advance its own ends.

Methodologically, the brief case studies vary in their depth, relying heavily on Western and Russian secondary accounts, probably because Tsygankov has three goals in each empirical chapter—to prove that realist theories of international relations are inadequate as an explanation, to evaluate the success or failure of each policy episode, and to explain why each policy was chosen. The historical analysis has a geographical focus on events within Europe and scarcely mentions Russia’s long march into Asia or the geopolitical and intellectual currents that shaped much of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history. This constricted view deprives readers of the broader geopolitical and ideational context of Western-Russian suspicion.

Tsygankov emphasizes that Western lack of recognition of Russia’s distinctive values (and of its Westernness) is in good measure responsible for the failure of Russia’s cooperative overtures and its choice of non-cooperative policies. Although his argument certainly has merit, Western policymakers are just as likely to defend their interests as are Russia’s; the two sides’ interaction is often a conflict of interests rooted in different values. Even if Western countries and Russia shared similar values, their interests might not have coincided in some of the cases that Tsygankov presents, such as the issue of republicanism versus absolutism, Adolf Hitler’s expansionism, or the United States’ role in post–Cold War Europe.

Notwithstanding Tsygankov’s compelling points about Russian’s Westernness and non-Westernness, his argument that honor drives Russian foreign policy is only partly convincing. The case studies do not clearly establish the precise role that honor, with its sense of obligation and emotional power, played in Russia’s foreign affairs.

Anne Clunan
Naval Postgraduate School
A Shark Going Inland Is My Chief: The Island Civilization of Ancient Hawai‘i. By Patrick Vinton Kirch (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012) 368 pp. $45.00

In a mix of archaeology, anthropology, and history, Kirch endeavors to answer questions that have perplexed explorers and scholars of the Pacific alike, even into the twentieth century, including how the islands of Polynesia and Hawai‘i were settled, how Hawaiian society grew and developed, and how the Polynesian chiefs became divine kings (16). Interweaving personal experiences, travels, and research into Hawaiian history, Kirch presents this work as his attempt to “trace the big themes of Hawaiian history” in an accessible manner (xiii).

In Part I, Kirch discusses Lapita’s place in the larger saga of human migration, Austronesian migrations, and the Polynesian homeland Hawaiki—from which Polynesian voyagers departed “in a great diaspora that led them to discover, explore, and settle virtually every speck of land in the far-flung eastern Pacific, including Hawai‘i” (46). He highlights the impact of the Hōkūle‘a, the Hawaiian double-hulled canoe, in displacing drift-theory explanations for the settlement of Polynesia, and even attempts to reconstruct the first voyage of settlers from the Marquesas to Hawai‘i with “a certain degree of narrative license” (319). After a discussion of the role of archaeology in reconstructing the past, Kirch explains early settlement patterns in the islands.

In the second part of the book, Kirch examines the history of Hawaiian plant and animal life, offering a glimpse into the astounding “world of ancient Hawai‘i that has emerged from the collaborative, interdisciplinary work of archaeologists and natural scientists” (110). With a focus on Mā‘ilikūkahi, an innovative chief of the island of O‘ahu in the fifteenth century, Kirch explains the transition from the ancient system of Polynesian chiefship to that of kingship through the introduction of the ahupua‘a system. In Mā‘ilikūkahi’s new hierarchical order, “the land tenure system became one of chiefly territories, in which the common people’s rights to land depended on their relationship with their chief” (139). Following explanations of Hawaiian agriculture and cultivation practices, specifically concerning taro, Kirch uses the notion of balance between a population and its resources to enter into a discussion of the debates surrounding Hawaiian population history.

Part III of the book introduces the mo‘olelo (histories) of the chiefs ‘Umi-a-Liloa, of Hawai‘i Island, and Pi‘ilani, of Maui. In this context, Kirch expounds upon the key role of Hawaiian dryland field systems in the rise of archaic states in the islands of Hawai‘i and Maui, explaining how they nourished and fed the population and supported the political economy of the time. Once agricultural production had reached its limit, political futures lay in the conquest of other islands, which furthered state development. In crossing the threshold from polities ruled by chiefs who were considered the commoners’ kinsmen to states ruled by divine kings, Kirch asserts that “Hawai‘i had discovered what it was
to be a civilization” (225). Most significantly, Kirch asserts, this development was endogenous, but it had multiple “causations that helped to move Hawaiian society along the path from chiefdom to state” (228).

Kirch ends with a recounting of the history of the ruling chiefs of Hawai‘i Island and Maui, their wars and manipulations, their encounter with Captain James Cook and with other foreigners, and the rise of Kamehameha I. In his epilogue, he offers an analysis of the history of Hawai‘i as a “microcosm of the development of civil society” (288), arguing that “Hawai‘i is at once both unique and typical on the stage of world history” (290).

In hopes of complementing the archaeological record, Kirch utilizes oral traditions that were translated into written form in the nineteenth century by such native Hawaiian scholars as Fornander, Kamakau, ‘Ī‘i, and Malo “to tell the tales of Hawaiian history” (68). However, although he makes use of the work of these and other scholars in the field, he privileges archaeology, the “science of the past” (79), in his methodology. Nonetheless, audiences will appreciate this approach, which offers a basic understanding of the history of archaeology, especially as it pertains to Hawai‘i and the Pacific, as well as an introduction to Hawai‘i’s rich history.

Kerri A. Inglis
University of Hawai‘i, Hilo


Like many modern consumers, eighteenth-century English and American buyers did not ask many questions about the origins of the objects of desire. As Atlantic commerce expanded during the early modern period, consumers broadcast their good taste and wealth through the acquisition of mahogany furniture, the kind of highly polished pieces that one encounters in the paintings of John Singleton Copley. The richly grained wood suddenly became fashionable. According to The Times (London) in 1787, “Modern refinement has substituted mahogany instead of walnut timber, for the purposes of furniture in the houses of the rich, and even the middling orders of people” (19).

As Anderson documents in this impressive study, cosmopolitan demand for mahogany took a terrible environmental and social toll. The pleasures of possession came at the expense of dependent Caribbean laborers, struggling to survive on the margins of European empires. Anderson reconstructs the complex links that brought mahogany to the marketplace, describing a process that included enslaved loggers, colonial merchants, skilled furniture makers, and, finally, customers who insisted on wood of the highest quality.

The first Europeans who flooded into the Caribbean looking for
new sources of wealth did not appreciate mahogany. They cleared magnificent trees, some of them well over 100 feet in height, to make way for sugar production. It was not long, however, before the craze for mahogany sparked a frenzy of cutting, and by the middle of the eighteenth century, most mature trees had been harvested. In 1748, Pehr Kalm, a respected Swedish naturalist, reported, “True mahogany, which grows in Jamaica is at present almost all cut down” (1). Since no one then had the slightest idea about how the trees reproduced at the time, once the mahogany had been destroyed in Jamaica—the source of the best timber—merchants turned to other Caribbean sites to supply increasing demand.

The mahogany boom transformed the Bay of Honduras (Belize). Almost overnight, adventurers flocked to the area in search of the last great trees. The winners in the competition for mahogany controlled gangs of dependent woodcutters, African American and Native American slaves, and, in the rush for quick riches, a small group of elite, highly unscrupulous Baymen came to monopolize the fragile mahogany forests. It is a story out of the heart of darkness. According to Anderson, “the realization that mahogany supplies were finite encouraged a ‘wild west’ mentality throughout the circum-Caribbean as people hastened to seize a one-time bounty.”

Mahogany merchants such as Aaron Lopez of Rhode Island cared not at all about the human and environmental exploitation. They too sailed to the Caribbean in search of profit, sometimes trading in slaves as well as mahogany wood. A single tree was worth a fortune, Lopez knew, however, how corrupting the Bay could be. He complained about an agent that he had dispatched to Honduras becoming “as much a Bayman as the most abandon’d wretch living there and I assure you they are as wicked there as any people can be on this side of Hell” (142).

Anderson joins other scholars such as Hancock and Mintz, who have explored how consumer demand shaped the character of production in places far distant from such cosmopolitan centers as Philadelphia and London.1 No matter whether the product was sugar, tobacco, or mahogany, the story seemed depressingly similar, a repetitious tale of pleasure and exploitation.

T. H. Breen
University of Vermont

Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition
By Aaron Sachs (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013) 484 pp. $35.00

Sachs offers an intellectual history of environmental thought in America since 1800 that highlights underappreciated themes and figures. The

1 See, for example, David Hancock, Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste (New Haven, 2009); Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History (New York, 1985).
well-known writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, and Aldo Leopold receive little attention, whereas little-noticed environmental themes in the works of William Cullen Bryant, Margaret Fuller, H. W. S. Cleveland, Henry George, and Hamlin Garland are explored in depth. Sachs emphasizes the theme of “repose”—a conception of nature imbued with a profound sense of mortality, difficulty, and loss. From this launching point, nineteenth-century nature writing and landscapes highlighted notions of remembrance, reconciliation, and healing. The book opens with a study of cemeteries, especially Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Mass., which Sachs sees as formative for a trend that was both pervasive and characteristic of its time.

Sachs presents his counter-history of repose less as a revision than as a complement to the more widely known themes of wilderness and empire building. He presents repose as an idea that is largely lost to contemporary consciousness. The epigraph to Arcadian America’s epilogue, by Walter Benjamin, sounds the theme: “In the course of modern time dying has been pushed further and further out of the perceptual world of the living. . . . Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death. In other words, it is a natural history to which his stories refer back” (347).

The centerpiece in Sachs’ story is a long chapter entitled “Stumps,” which refers on the surface to the denuded New England landscapes of the cutover and to the emaciated bodies of Civil War amputees but, more profoundly, to the embittered spirit of postwar Americans. Sachs explores this theme through a sensitive analysis of postwar landscape painting and an insightful reading of Walt Whitman’s transition from the poet of “the body electric” to the shattered author of “Specimen Days,” which appeared in the volume Specimen Days & Collect (Philadelphia, 1882). Any serious scholar of nineteenth-century American ideas will want to consider how Sachs has reconfigured and repositioned key elements in America’s narrative.

Sachs includes numerous autobiographical passages, some of which seem pointless and trivial (such as his distaste for zucchini) and some of which are more meaningful. For example, his lengthy discussions of personal encounters with mortality through the death of friends and family members bring a story that would otherwise end around World War I into the twenty-first century. His personal reflections not only allow him to serve as a test case for Benjamin’s observation; they also introduce discussions of such contemporary poets and authors as Donald Hall and Deborah Tall. More broadly, Sachs’ highly experimental passages about family gatherings or about taking his children to visit the cemeteries that he was researching are meant to represent a new direction in narrative history. Most poignantly, Sachs recounts the frustration that his ailing father (Murray Sachs, Professor Emeritus of French and Comparative Literature at Brandeis University) endured when academic reviewers were unwilling to take his experimental narrative of the Dreyfus affair seriously.
Though Sachs’ shows great daring in his variegated approach, the results are not always successful. The book is substantially longer than it might have been without the personal element; its subtlety and complexity do not completely mitigate its sense of self-indulgence. Nonetheless, whatever readers’ reactions to Sachs’ insertion of the first-person voice might be, the book certainly has considerable merit.

Paul B. Thompson
Michigan State University

Jackson’s Sword: The Army Officer Corps on the American Frontier, 1810–1821. By Samuel J. Watson (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2012) 460 pp. $35.69

This book, the first of two volumes, is a challenging study of professionalization, state-formation, and civil-military relations; its specific subject matter is the officer corps of the American army in the febrile atmosphere of the young republic’s frontier zones. The initial volume, which focuses on the years 1810 to 1821, draws on detailed archival research, an impressive mastery of the secondary literature, and on the application of theoretical models familiar from political science and sociology (in particular, Weberian principles of bureaucracy). Watson’s central thesis is that an officer corps initially characterized by a politically partisan military adventurism matured into a professional body, mindful of its subordination to civil authority and socialized primarily through the growing influence of West Point, as nationalist and statist. As this case unfolds, Watson places the development of the officer corps into the wider context of national expansion, broadly arguing that the central state was stronger during this period than is often allowed but noting carefully the friction that the rise of libertarian Jacksonian democracy sometimes generated within an officer corps that became increasingly “Whiggish.”

The bulk of the book is devoted to the contest for Florida and hegemony in the Mexican Gulf region. Against the backdrop of the collapse of Spanish imperial authority and the reluctance of Britain after 1815 to risk another conflict with the United States, opportunities existed for independent agents—a motley collection of freebooters, filibusters (some of them ex-army officers), and corsairs—to profit through smuggling, piracy, and land grabs in the borderlands of the young republic and the old empires. At the same time, other people outside the state apparatus—Native Americans such as the Seminoles and their Maroon (fugitive slave) allies—resisted American aggression. Watson skillfully traces the often ambivalent relationship between army officers and these groups, whom the military either coerced, protected, or restrained, depending on the circumstances. Inevitably, the shadow of President Jackson looms large in this narrative, but the author is careful, while acknowledging Jackson’s particular significance, to note that his broad
views concerning territorial expansion and white supremacy were widely reflected in civil society and national politics. In some ways, Jackson represents the extreme type of the military adventurer characteristic of the office corps before 1820—a partisan slave-holding southerner, disdainful of civil authority and embodying contemporary masculine ideals of physical courage and prowess.

Such well-known and well-documented figures are not allowed to dominate the narrative. The author makes good use of quantitative data, such as retirement rates, to draw wider conclusions about the officer corps as a whole. When he turns his attention to the consolidation of American hegemony on the (then) western frontier (modern Illinois and Wisconsin) of the 1820s, he describes a more dutiful (and cerebral) officer corps in action, effectively fulfilling its constabulary role. By this stage, West Point (treated in some detail in the final chapter) was molding a professional officer corps, becoming a broader, if often overlooked, proponent of statism. Watson stresses, among other things, the widespread contribution of military specialists to programs of internal improvement, such as land surveying and river and harbor clearance.

Overall, Watson makes a persuasive case for the evolution of the officer corps, although he leaves a few lingering questions—for example, if, by the 1820s, West Point had become an effective school of nationalism, why did so many of its southern graduates choose section over nation in 1861? The second volume, which promises to take the story into the 1830s, should be eagerly anticipated by historians of the early republic.

Gervase Phillips
Manchester Metropolitan University


Freaks of Fortune may well be the most important book on American capitalism to appear in recent years. Historians of capitalism once focused on the means and social relations of production. Now they are concerned with finance and the commodification of goods and relationships. Levy’s subject is the resultant radical instability of capitalist culture and the means by which nineteenth-century Americans sought to counterbalance it.

Central to his argument is the principle, linked to the notion of individual self-ownership, that “risk” could be commodified; indeed, he calls his book a “history of risk.” Originating in maritime insurance, the concept of risk evolved in the early nineteenth century to become distinguishable from the “perils” that gave rise to it, and so capable of being measured and valued. The consequent methods and practices helped to transform the economic world in a matter of decades. Levy discusses ac-
tuarial practice and the insurance principle, savings banks, the rise and fall of the market in western farm mortgages, fraternal societies’ efforts to provide security to their members, developments in commodity futures markets, and the turn-of-the-century debate about corporate monopolies or “trusts.”

Much more than a survey of new institutions, *Freaks of Fortune* provides a rich, dialectically powerful account of the emergence of capitalist ways of thinking and doing. It touches on capital formation and the growth of corporations, but it particularly addresses the growth of a “culture of corporate risk management” that became characteristic of finance capitalism. Discussing market insecurity, contemporaries often invoked maritime metaphors: A ship adrift on a storm-tossed ocean was an appropriate image for a system in which fixed points of reference had evaporated into uncertainty.

Following Polanyi, Levy addresses “countermovements” that seemed to offer shelter from the vagaries of “capitalist uncertainty.”1 Some of them, like chattel slavery or the ideal of landed independence, were destroyed or weakened in the process of capitalist development. Others, such as risk management itself, or voluntary organizations’ efforts to offer security outside the insurance principle, grew in response to it. While countermovements like fraternalism or populism opposed capitalist practices, others emerged from within the system itself, generating self-doubt and efforts at reform. Yet the outcomes were never neutral. Insurance companies amassed capital from the retained premiums of customers who ceased paying and used the political influence that it purchased to keep favorable laws on the books. Corporate consolidators sought to neutralize risk by creating monopolies. Courts favoring organized futures exchanges over outside “bucket shops” made invidious distinctions between behaviors that were essentially similar. Businessmen asserted that “risk” justified their profits, but frequently the downside costs were borne by others.

The focus on capitalism as finance doubtless owes much to our current reprise of Gilded Age inequalities, booms and busts, and unregulated shenanigans. Superficial similarities between past and present can tempt historians to draw too-direct analogies between them. Levy avoids this trap, locating his examples firmly in their contexts, telling his story partly through key individuals, and suggesting how corporate management and reliance on the state became elements of the countermovement to capitalist excess between the 1910s and the 1970s. He has given us a lively, sophisticated study that (other than in the proofreading, which is slipshod in places) sets a high standard for others to follow.

Christopher Clark
University of Connecticut

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This book, large both in the Newfoundland sense of goodness and promise and in the depth of its research, attempts to reconcile (or not) the attitudes and actions of fishermen with the emerging fisheries science of the nineteenth century. After a general introduction, it more or less follows a chronological path from the first exploitation of the northwest Atlantic by European fishermen through the onset of rampant industrialized and mechanized fisheries. As a historian with much experience at sea, Bolster is well positioned to address most aspects of this multidisciplinary story (although some of the biological content in the book is questionable and in some cases incorrect).

One central theme of the work is that over-exploitation and, in some cases, habitat destruction was part and parcel of the fisheries from the earliest times. To a large extent, this argument holds; few ocean scientists today would contest Bolster’s account of dire human influence, although many of them, including this reviewer, would recognize that the scale of the damage, and the potential for further damage, became much greater during the second half of the twentieth century. In addition, as Bolster acknowledges, certain effects of maritime changes are not directly attributable to human causes. Nonetheless, the extirpation of the great auk and the southern populations of walrus testify to the damage that overharvesting by humans can cause, as do its consequences for the populations of Atlantic halibut and herring, and even the Atlantic cod and mackerel.

A deeper and more salient theme, however, owes its cogency to the multidisciplinary approach of this work. By addressing the commentaries of the people associated with the fisheries, and what is basically catch data, Bolster shows that the greed, short-term economic interests, and base human exploitation of the oceans—attitudes that have remained the same for centuries—turned what might have been a sustainable approach to fisheries into something more like a mining operation. As the number of fishermen and the types of tools in the fishing industry increased nearly exponentially after the age of sail, the devastation continued to escalate.

Invaluable as this book is to anyone interested in the fisheries, any recommendation must be qualified by a few weaknesses and areas open to misinterpretation, which likely stem from the breadth of the topic and the author’s background. For one thing, the book is too dismissive of science and too friendly to traditional and local knowledge. Bolster sometimes appears to suggest that fishermen would be on perfectly good terms with the sea if science would just get out of the way. Although fishermen undoubtedly had, and still have, important inside knowledge, they are no less fallible than the scientists are. Leslie Harris, in Independent Review of the State of the Northern Cod Stock (Ottawa, 1990), debunks once and for all the myth of the all-knowing small-boat fisherman. Moreover,
even when fishermen are aware of the most environmentally safe procedures, they do not necessarily follow them.

The biological information in the book’s glossary is disappointing—not so much for its brevity as for its inaccuracy, which might attract unfounded skepticism about the whole work. As a case in point, cod are not “bottom feeders” (339). In fact, the cod diet varies extensively, but most often, pelagic fishes are its staple. Furthermore, contrary to Bolster’s description, cod—at least a good many of them—eat and take baited hooks even while spawning.1 Haddock are not rare off Newfoundland; they are, in fact, common on the southern Grand Banks and St. Pierre Bank of Newfoundland. Although the historical levels of haddock in these waters are unknown, haddock were one of the main catches there during the 1950s and 1960s.2 One important error of omission is the vaunted codtrap, which forever changed the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries. For biological information about the fisheries of the Atlantic Northwest, readers would do well to consult, for example, Wade Kearley, Here’s the Catch: The Fish We Harvest from the Northwest Atlantic (St. John’s, 2012).

The absence of the codtrap from these pages is symptomatic of a geographical scale of narrative that varies greatly from chapter to chapter. The early chapters create the impression that Bolster intends to cover the fisheries of the entire northwest Atlantic. But the book is really about the waters of New England and Nova Scotia, where ecosystems and fisheries differ considerably from those located further north, centered on the island of Newfoundland and mainland Labrador. Those more northerly and, from many standpoints, larger fisheries enter the story only episodically and incompletely, mostly when New England fishermen sought new grounds to replace depleted stocks nearer home. But the story of the northern fisheries is much more involved than what Bolster appears to imply.3 Although the book could hardly be expected to go into detail about what are fundamentally different systems, unknowing readers may assume that it does. This type of false impression is a common occurrence in both the popular and scientific literature about the northwest Atlantic fisheries, potentially leading to faulty conclusions. Georges Bank is not identical to Hamilton Bank, neither in its ocean climate, its species, nor its fisheries, even though certain elements in each case are the same—most notably, its treatment by the fishing industry (although this case is not well made in the book).

These criticisms aside, this important multidisciplinary work is certainly correct about the big picture—the long-standing destructive attitude toward oceans in general and fisheries in particular, which modern tools have exacerbated. As Bolster says, if former explorers, fishermen,
and scientists “were . . . to return now . . . they would be devastated by the catastrophic changes in the sea they knew” (282). But hope remains; some marine ecosystems and fisheries still thrive. The evidence demonstrates that we can do better; surely we must.

George A. Rose
Memorial University


Scholars who have dismissed as unfounded (as many have) charges that antebellum slaveholders deliberately bred slaves for financial gain should think again. Smithers argues that slave breeding not only occurred but also remains a legacy of slavery because its memory lives on in the minds of African Americans whose ancestors were violently and sexually exploited. Smithers gives the phrase “slave breeding” a “broad interpretive significance” by showing how it has served “as an historical trope” for understanding past and present-day racial and sexual violence (2, 3).

In the first chapter, Smithers demonstrates that black abolitionists in the antebellum era used the trope to gain sympathy for enslaved people and to argue for the end of the institution within the United States. While white abolitionists focused on preventing the westward expansion of slavery into newly acquired territories, black people were more intent on using the imagery of slave breeding—including the separation of families—to move public opinion beyond this limited objective. “Slave breeding discourse” became a staple of the arguments about the place of slavery in the nation, a dispute that drove the country toward Civil War (24). Smithers takes senior historians (whom he describes as overwhelmingly male and white) to task for failing to take this discourse seriously. The language used by black abolitionists was “not simply a narrative device” but also a collective understanding of “real experiences and memories of life in slavery” (42).

The memories of slave breeding may have persisted in black America, but not in historical narratives produced by professional historians. Chapter 2 argues that the seemingly scientific approach to understanding the past taken by professional historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presented a “grotesquely misleading” picture of slavery as benign, even educational (46). Historians and other scholars (particularly economists and sociologists) discounted the oral histories of slaves and the work of black scholars like W. E. B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson in favor of documents produced by current and former slaveholders.

Smithers moves beyond a historical framework to explore the trope of slave breeding in music, literature, and political rhetoric. Separate
chapters address how slave breeding has been depicted in theatrical plays, in oral interviews conducted during the Great Depression by government agents of the Works Progress Administration, and in film and the new media. At times, these chapters read more like a laundry list of writers and filmmakers than a true analysis of how Americans (black or white) have understood the place of racial violence and sexual exploitation in the country’s past, but the message is loud and clear: Black people have tended to depict slave breeding in starker terms than have white people.

Slave Breeding is sure to have critics. One problem is that Smithers’ definition of slave breeding can mean anything from the rape of black women and the genetic breeding of people (like livestock) to any manipulation of family life (as in the encouragement of marriage and the separation of family members). Later chapters at times lose focus, and the author produces little evidence to show that ideas contained in poems, plays, and movies were widely embraced within the black community. Although the book jacket maintains that Slave Breeding helps to explain “America’s history of . . . gender discrimination,” women’s experiences and voices are not well represented in the book’s pages. Despite these shortcomings, the book deserves a wide readership because it boldly and persuasively challenges received wisdom about the American narrative during the last two centuries as depicted by professionals in the arts, social sciences, and humanities.

Marie Jenkins Schwartz
University of Rhode Island, Kingston

Reconstructing the Campus: Higher Education and the American Civil War. By Michael David Cohen (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2012) 273 pp. $45.00

Reconstructing the Campus is a focused study of institutional change in American higher education during the “long Civil War,” from 1861 until the end of Reconstruction in 1877. Its findings, based on case studies of seven diverse schools (Harvard, the University of California, Cornell College, Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, the University of Missouri, the University of South Carolina, and Wesleyan Female College), offer a portrait of change on a national scale, tracing the impact of war on each institution as well as the growing presence of the federal government in American higher education. In every region of the country, Cohen argues, the war transformed what colleges taught, whom they enrolled, and how they conceived of their obligations to community, state, and nation. Yet in no region of the country was the war’s impact more dramatic than in the South, where the destructiveness of war and the politics of Reconstruction rendered some institutions unrecognizable from their antebellum form. Like the young men who fought for the Union
or the Confederacy, most Civil War colleges and universities were forced to confront their own mortality; institutional survival became the impetus for lasting reform.

The book is organized into five chronological and topical chapters, a welcome design that allows Cohen to synthesize his wide-ranging research into a broader historical narrative. The first four chapters describe the experiences of colleges and universities during wartime, as well as changes in curriculum and admissions (two chapters) that developed in the war’s aftermath. During the war, as students left campuses to enlist, private donations dwindled, and some campuses were seized or appropriated for military use. Many institutions faced the prospect of closure. When the fighting subsided, these schools had to find a way to win back students—and their tuition revenue. Most did so by creating, with the support of the federal government, a more “practical” curriculum based on training in agriculture, engineering, and military preparedness, and by lowering barriers to admission for middle-class and poor students, women, and, in fewer cases, students of color. Within a generation, wartime innovations had revealed the foundations of modern higher education: “multicollegiate universities, practical curricula, military training, more diverse student populations, expanded financial aid, closer relationships with governments, and outreach to the local and national communities” (17).

In the final chapter, “College, Community, and Nation,” Cohen elucidates his central claim—that the development of modern higher education was integral to the rise of the modern bureaucratic state. Highlighting recent work by Nemec and Hoffer, Cohen argues that the Civil War marked the beginning of a lasting partnership between higher education and the federal government, centered on the collection of information and bureaucratic regulation. Universities and their faculties provided intellectual authority for legions of experts in new federal regulatory agencies, including the Bureau of Education. In return, federal largesse afforded opportunities for professors and institutions to serve their country and increase their visibility.

_Reconstructing the Campus_ prefigures, if it does not directly address, a range of themes in the social, cultural, and political history of the United States in the late nineteenth century. Nonetheless, Cohen could have drawn brighter lines between elements of his story and pressing topics in American history and educational policy, particularly with regard to the implications of university–state collaboration about issues ranging from notions of citizenship to questions of educational access and equity. Unfortunately, Cohen did not have the opportunity to make use of recent work by Christopher Loss, _Between Citizens and the State_ (Princeton,

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2012), about the relationship between higher education and the federal government during the twentieth-century. Moreover, Cohen explores only in a limited way the sometimes paradoxical connection between expanded educational access and increasing stratification in higher education, a topic explored by Scott Gelber in his history of the Populist movement and American higher education—The University and the People (Madison, 2011). Nevertheless, Cohen’s study is a valuable addition to the history of American higher education in the mid-nineteenth century—an understudied era—and a welcome complement to a historiography that has given outsized attention to the history of elite research universities.

Nicholas M. Strohl
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This Is Not Civil Rights: Discovering Rights Talk in 1939 America. By George I. Lovell (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012) 280 pp. $85.00 cloth $27.50 paper

In This Is Not Civil Rights, Lovell looks beyond the courts to explore how individual Americans understand law and rights. Lovell’s study is based on a sample of letters found in the files of the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Section (crs) between 1939 (when the crs was created) and 1941—a period marked by the New Deal–era growth of federal responsibilities but preceding the federal courts’ expanded commitment to individual rights. In these letters, individual Americans demonstrated a capacious understanding of “civil rights” in describing their grievances with local and state officials in matters including labor disputes, law enforcement, and economic justice. Lovell is particularly interested in how the letters challenge contemporary sociolegal scholarship critical of “rights talk.” According to this critique, the powerful ideological function of legal discourse leads Americans to trust law’s ability to solve problems, to accept existing legal limits, and to think in terms of individual rights to the exclusion of communitarian possibilities. Unfortunately, scholars argue, law promises more than it delivers; it limits Americans’ imagination to legal remedies endorsed by elite actors; and it steers Americans away from group mobilization.

In contrast to such claims, Lovell argues that those who wrote to the crs were skeptical of law’s capacities. Although writers repeatedly couched their claims in legal form, Lovell makes clear that they did so instrumentally. They used legal arguments not to articulate their trust in law but to make the kinds of arguments that they thought federal officials wanted to hear. Nor did writers assume legal arguments to be sufficient; they routinely included extralegal arguments alongside legal ones in the hopes of persuading federal officials to act. Furthermore, rather than acquiesce in existing doctrinal limits, writers repeatedly artic-
ulated ideas of rights that went far beyond contemporary understandings of what the federal government could do for its citizens. Thus, Lovell concludes, scholars interested in group mobilization should focus less on legal ideology and more on other obstacles driving Americans toward the law.

Lovell is careful to note the wide variation in how writers used and understood law, and he is clear about the assumptions that he makes, and does not make, about the authors themselves. He focuses on themes seen throughout the letters, but future scholars might fruitfully return to these documents to analyze how race, class, gender, and region figured into who complained, and why. Overall, Lovell’s focus on the argumentative strategies of letter writers is persuasive, and his argument about these particular Americans’ engagement with law is strongly supported. However, it is less clear that these historical sources, rooted in a particular context, support broader conclusions about law’s ideology across time. Lovell correctly notes that Americans’ understanding of what “civil rights” means has changed drastically since 1941, but he does not explore how the ideological power of law might work differently in the present (especially given the links between “rights talk” and the more recent phenomenon of individuals looking to the courts for relief).

Joanna L. Grisinger
Northwestern University

Truman’s Triumphs: The 1948 Election and the Making of Postwar America.
By Andrew E. Busch (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2012) 272 pp. $37.50 cloth $19.95 paper

This careful, insightful account of the 1948 election persuasively investigates Harry Truman’s effort of that year to revitalize the Democrats’ New Deal coalition, first mobilized by President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. According to Busch, that effort was successful in securing victory not only for Truman but also for the Democratic Party at large. The campaign, however, exposed the coalition’s weaknesses as well as its strengths. On this note, Busch’s account does not straightforwardly support Burns’ contention that the election of 1948 was a “maintaining election”; it was instead a turbulent one that featured change together with continuity. The breakaway candidacies of Henry Wallace for the Progressive Party and, more significantly, Strom Thurmond for the “Dixiecrats” starkly demonstrated intraparty divisions, but Truman skillfully crafted policy appeals to shore up the support of key groups within the coalition, notably including African Americans and labor members. Paradoxically, though a greater degree of ideological unity existed among Republicans, divisions about candid-
dates, issues, and strategies undermined the GOP’s effort more significantly than they did that of the Democrats.

Busch’s analysis of politics in 1948 authoritatively draws on secondary material and on newspapers and magazines, and the findings of contemporary polls inform his powerful exploration of public opinion. Polls notoriously predicted defeat for Truman; though embarrassing for the pollsters, the predictions captured the volatility of voting intentions in 1948, shaped particularly by popular indecision about the Fair Deal agenda. Polls suggested both general support for the New Deal’s liberalism and doubts about its wastefulness and even its effectiveness. That summer, poll respondents had similar levels of confidence in the Republican and Democratic parties’ ability to tackle a new depression. They preferred the GOP’s Thomas E. Dewey to Truman in this regard.

The methodologies of political science and history create the scholarly framework for Busch’s analysis. Not only does he offer a fresh contribution to the literature about realignment and electoral orders, but Busch also insightfully assesses how the “mixed system” that comprised the contemporary presidential nomination process shaped political debate, fostering fluidity in the competition among party rivals while party leaders, playing an important role, emphasized concerns about electability.

Busch shows that the campaign marked a turning point in electoral politics—away from whistle-stop tours and toward television, as well as away from close cooperation between national committee and candidate and toward personalized campaign operations. The results showed an uptick in split-ticket voting, which remained an enduring feature in American elections. For the next sixty years, the party winning the presidency was unable to achieve congressional gains of such magnitude. For Busch, the campaign’s significance stems mainly from the ongoing debates about foreign policy, civil rights, and programmatic activism that it established. Vividly recreating the political storms that followed World War II, Busch compellingly shows that Truman’s triumphs did not so much signal the revitalization of the New Deal coalition as it marked the start of a new era in American politics.

Robert Mason
University of Edinburgh


*Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective.* Edited by Philip E. Muehlenbeck (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2012) 288 pp. $65.95 cloth $27.95 paper

Preston’s ambitious and highly recommended *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* examines “how” religion influenced U.S. foreign relations from
the early colonial period to the Obama administration. Preston contends that religion is the “missing link, a vital but unrecognized, even undiscovered” aspect of the history of U.S. foreign relations (7). Although the subtitle suggests a focus on high-level politics and policy, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* is not limited to the Oval Office and the State Department. Preston explores the beliefs and actions of U.S. presidents and public officials as well as private citizens and nongovernmental organizations. In doing so, he is careful to distinguish between foreign policy and foreign relations, defining the latter to include policy formation and “a wider array of American interactions with the world, from missionaries to voluntarist and philanthropic initiatives to corporate and economic interests” (6).

Drawing on a wide and diverse range of archival and secondary sources, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* is a sweeping work that is often engaging and beautifully written. Preston argues that religion “acted as the conscience of American foreign relations.” Popular religious pressure, he contends, led policymakers to “merge the moralism and progressivism of religion with the normally realist mindset of international politics” (7). Underlying the moralism was a shared belief in “Protestant exceptionalism,” which he states “helped breed American exceptionalism and led to a consistent belief in America as a chosen nation and in Americans as a chosen people” (13). These notions inspired and served to justify American imperialism and interventions abroad.

*Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* offers a number of telling insights and anecdotes. From William McKinley’s evangelism to the “unorthodox spiritualism” of Ronald Reagan, Preston reveals that religion—or the political use of it—was a key consideration for American presidents. However, the connection between religion and foreign policy can be difficult to demonstrate. Although Preston’s attempt to give equal weight to the activities of private individuals and groups is admirable, at times it appears tangential. For example, Chapter 26 provides an informative discussion of opposition to the Vietnam War by religious groups and figures. Yet Preston concedes, “It is impossible to know definitively whether their religious opposition to the war had an effect on policy. Perhaps it limited President Lyndon B. Johnson’s options by making further escalation too controversial. But most likely it did not, at least not directly” (530).

Preston also discusses the actions of Cardinal Francis Spellman and Rev. Billy Graham in support of the Vietnam War. While their commitment to the war effort may have been sincere, Spellman and Graham appear to have provided moral cover—if not absolution—for the actions of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Yet even this had its limits. As Graham eventually “came to doubt the depth, even the sincerity, of Nixon’s faith” (541). Thus, it remains unclear if religion had a significant influence on U.S. policy in Vietnam or elsewhere.

Although it is an admirable work, *Sword of the Spirit* is not flawless. In spite of its considerable (and unnecessary) heft, there are notable omissions. For example, Preston offers an interesting discussion of Presi-
dent Eisenhower’s religious beliefs and carefully crafted public image. However, the overview of Eisenhower’s foreign policy does not mention the failed attempt to promote King Saud of Saudi Arabia as a “Muslim Pope” and a counterweight to the Arab nationalism and socialism espoused by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Preston’s analysis is often thoughtful and nuanced. However, his discussion of the Arab–Israeli conflict suffers from a narrow focus and a key oversight. Preston asserts that in his deliberations on Palestine, President Truman was “predisposed to seeing the world through a Judeo-Christian lens that either obscured Islamic concerns or refracted them beyond all recognition” (437). Yet the conflict over Palestine was (and is) not merely between Muslims and Jews. Indeed, a sizable and influential number of Arab Christians in Palestine and around the region were opposed to the Zionist movement (and to Israel’s policies today). In addition, prominent Arab Americans (mostly Christians), including Princeton University’s Philip K. Hitti, sought to sway the State Department and the White House on the Palestine question, to no avail.

While these facts may not have influenced President Truman’s decision, more clarity was needed in Preston’s treatment. In addition, when discussing U.S. policy toward Palestine, Preston makes the unfortunate prominent error of repeatedly referring to Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, the founding monarch of Saudi Arabia, as King Saud (his son and successor).

Although Preston acknowledges that the policies of the George W. Bush administration inspired the book (ix–xi), his discussion of the post-9/11 period is too brief and perfunctory. Moreover, his claim that due to “the growth of conservative and fundamentalist faith... the world had become defined not only by George W. Bush, but also Osama bin Laden” vastly understates the power and influence of the former and exaggerates that of the latter (610). Indeed, even before bin Laden was killed by U.S. Special Forces in May 2011, Al-Qaeda never had more than a few thousand fighters and a narrow base of supporters; nor was it representative of Islamist politics and parties.

The edited volume, *Religion and the Cold War*, ventures beyond the borders of the United States in a truly transnational and global approach. Muehlenback asserts that “religion played a significant role in determining the scope and stratagems of the Global Cold War,” though he is careful to add that “it was a factor in the Cold War, not the factor” (viii). Preston explains in the volume’s introduction, “Both the United States and the Soviet Union perceived each other through a religious lens”

1 See Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill, 2006).
(xiii). From cartoon posters of a “greedy red pig” in 1950s Iraq to balloons containing Bible verses floating above the skies of Eastern Europe or the “institutionalized atheism” of Poland’s security services, the collection demonstrates that religion was a key feature of the Cold War competition between Washington and Moscow.

Religion and the Cold War benefits from an impressive range of archives and research conducted on multiple continents. It also boasts a number of insightful chapters, particularly with regard to Islam and the Cold War. Ahmad Khalid al-Rawi discusses Washington’s failed attempts to use propaganda to convince Iraqis of Moscow’s antipathy toward Muslims. In contrast, Eren Murat Tasar examines the evolution of Soviet policy toward Islam, particularly Joseph Stalin’s creation of the Religious Board of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (sadum) as part of his religious reforms during World War II. These efforts would be promoted abroad as the Kremlin attempted to demonstrate its support for the anticolonial struggles in Asia and Africa. Similarly, Aydin Babuna demonstrates that in order to maintain his leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement, Josip Broz Tito “had to show that in Yugoslavia, Muslims were not only tolerated but also valued” (193). While the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan damaged Moscow’s standing internationally, Zahid Shahab Ahmed argues that it also improved strained relations between Islamabad and Washington and served to transform Pakistan’s Islamic parties from mainstream to militancy.

Like Islam, Christianity was also a point of Cold War contention and competition. David Ayers asserts that Hewlett Johnson, Britain’s “Red Dean,” offered an early version of liberation theology for English and American audiences for over three decades. By the mid-1970s, Iain S. Maclean demonstrates that Brazil’s Roman Catholic Church espoused liberation theology and was openly critical of the state.

Religion and the Cold War is an admirable collection, but there are minor issues with some of the essays. For example, although al-Riawai provides an interesting discussion of early U.S. propaganda efforts in Iraq, he ignores the Orientalist perceptions of Islam and of Arabs that were evident in the statements of American policymakers and diplomats. Meanwhile, Wudu Tafete Kassu overstates the role of religion in Nasser’s policies toward Ethiopia, mischaracterizing them as “pan-Islamist” and referring to his secular, socialist government as “Islamic” (140, 147, 149). Finally, in an otherwise fine chapter, Jonathan Herzog diminishes the detrimental effect of the Bush administration’s policies and rhetoric toward Arabs and Muslims at home and abroad post-9/11.4

Both Sword of the Spirit and Religion and the Cold War make significant contributions to the fields of religious, diplomatic, and Cold War history. More importantly, they ensure that future scholarship of

4 See Mustafa Bayoumi, How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America (New York, 2008).
U.S. foreign policy, especially the Cold War, must consider the role of religion.

Osamah F. Khalil
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*Malcontents, Rebels, and Pronunciamdos: The Politics of Insurrection in Nineteenth-Century Mexico.* Edited by Will Fowler (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2012) 299 pp. $40.00

In this second of three projected volumes, Fowler and a group of well-known senior historians of Mexico have given us a coherent set of relatively short essays analyzing the *pronunciamiento* in nineteenth-century Mexico, a type of political uprising, about 1,500 of which occurred between 1821 and 1876. These typically short-lived, regionally limited, and only schematically programmatic episodes were sometimes violent. They were usually headed by military men of high rank and seen by Mexicans as one of the most important means, destabilizing as they were, of carrying out politics in an aggressive, extra-constitutional fashion. Initially of an exclusively military character in the immediate post-independence period, they came increasingly to be endorsed, and even initiated, on a variety of political fronts by civilians, priests, indigenous communities, etc. They constituted a sort of lobbying by bayonet, a means of furthering individual careers, calling upon the government to change its policies, and dislodging discredited power holders.

Each of the dozen chapters in the volume has something interesting to tell us. Some of them are more focused and biographical in approach—notably that by Catherine Andrews about Felipe de la Garza, whose failed 1822 movement was less important in and of itself than as a point along the career trajectory of a man who eventually became an important military politician. Other chapters in this category are Linda Arnold’s about José Ramón García Ugarte; Josefa Vazquez’s about the “insatiable general” Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga; Fowler’s broader chronicle of Antonio López de Santa Anna’s perennial military interventions, despite his own condemnation of them; and Eduardo Flores Clair’s treatment of the 1868 uprising of Julio López Chávez in Chalco, which presents the social anatomy of a movement singularly dedicated to pressing the claims of popular agrarian and labor groups. Other chapters take a more regional approach: Terry Rugeley’s focuses on a half-century of disturbances in southeastern Mexico; Juan Ortiz Escamilla’s provides an “ecological view” of incidents in the strategically pivotal province of Veracruz, buttressed by interesting quantitative data; and Raymond Buve’s looks at uprisings in Tlaxcala throughout much of the nineteenth century.

The continuing role of religious ideology in the pronunciamiento is given eloquent treatment by Guy Thomson’s chapter about the ever-pious Puebla, and by Anne Staples’ contribution, which explores for the
country as a whole the festive and celebratory elements of uprisings associated with the participation and support of secular clergy. Sergio Cañedo Gamboa’s chapter points to the role of intellectuals in its account of the radical federalist Ponciano Arriaga in 1837 San Luis Potosí, and Erika Pani’s discussion of the French Intervention of the 1860s provides a brief but provocative discussion of ideas about sovereignty as embodied explicitly or implicitly in the pronunciamiento as a political form. Concise as the chapters are, they expose the pronunciamiento in prismatic fashion to illumination from a rich variety of approaches—biographical, regional, and sociological.

Eric Van Young
University of California, San Diego

Gender, State and Medicine in Highland Ecuador: Modernizing Women, Modernizing the State, 1895–1950. By A. Kim Clark (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012) 255 pp. $27.95

Gender, State and Medicine in Highland Ecuador is a significant contribution to recent scholarship about state formation in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Latin America. Like much of that scholarship, which has tended to focus on countries of the southern cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay), Clark’s study focuses on the gendered nature of state formation—specifically, on the ways in which women were both objects and agents of state projects. But it also focuses on the much-less studied country of Ecuador, especially highland Ecuador and the capital city of Quito. As such, the book adds a particularly useful arrow to the quiver of historical studies of state formation in Latin America.

Clark’s book is divided into five chapters. With the exception of the introductory first chapter, the chapters are distinct but connected case studies of the gendered nature of state policy, particularly as related to public health, in the period under study. Chapter 1 sets out the broad historical context for the study (focusing on the employment opportunities available to Ecuadorian women) and, of special interest to readers of this journal, explains the theoretical and methodological perspectives that informed the research. Like much of the state formation literature in Latin America, Clark’s draws on sociological and anthropological approaches to the state as a cultural formation, following the work of such scholars as Abrams, Corrigan and Sayer, and Foucault, who, all, in different ways, frame state formation as a cultural process rather than a mere bureaucratic/administrative one.1

Such a perspective always proves fruitful. It enables Clark to discuss

child protection programs in Chapter 2 as expressive of the varied assumptions, and conflicting views, about gendered female roles or, indeed, as expressive of the disputed fields of state action (and social policy) or of charitable institutions (and private philanthropy) vis-à-vis vulnerable children. Similarly, it also enables Clark to explore state policy toward venereal disease, as well as how the women targeted by this policy sought to navigate its regulatory and medical framework, as a reflection of gendered orders and assumptions. In Chapters 4 and 5, Clark turns her attention to women trained as agents of the state, either as midwives or nurses, who were forced to negotiate rigid moral structures based on gendered assumptions that limited their field of action.

Clark draws on rich archival documentation in all of her case studies and injects some oral-history interviews. She shows how gendered social policy in Ecuador permitted women, at least some of them, to enter new areas of employment that challenged rigid gendered norms. But she also shows that professions such as midwifery and nursing also reinforced gendered norms and limited the emancipatory potential that the professionalization of female employment could otherwise bring. Clark demonstrates in this important contribution that gendered social policy in Ecuador, as elsewhere in Latin America, was a process that both reflected and shaped that country’s cultural formation.

Paulo Drinot
University College London


The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has played a controversial role in the modern history of Argentina, even before Argentina joined the Fund in 1956. Always at issue stood the question of whether Argentina ought to enter into a relationship that many critics considered a Faustian bargain: Funding by the IMF required orthodox liberal policies leading to radical and disruptive change. The IMF preconditions for loans typically required measures aimed at producing price stabilization and promoting private ownership to replace public ownership. The main objection to such measures concerned their negative impact on the level of employment. IMF prescriptions required steep reductions of government spending and the privatization of public companies. Critics questioned the value of stemming inflation, for example, when it provoked high levels of unemployment, severe social dislocation and downward mobility, and the expansion of marginal, excluded sectors of the population. They charged that the IMF promoted the loss of national control over the economy, as foreigners seized key sectors and imposed high levels of foreign indebtedness.
The most interesting part of the book links the role of the IMF to the issue of external control over Argentina by the United States. In defining this asymmetrical relationship, Kedar advances the notions of “the routine of dependency” and “the epistemic community.” She means the institutionalized physical presence of the IMF in Argentina leading to the formation of an inbred interactive community of technocrats, some of them entrenched in the government, sharing the IMF’s outlook and purveying its prescriptions. Its development enabled the IMF to create forms of permanent surveillance and structures of invisible indoctrination facilitating the assimilation of its values. Described in such terms, Kedar’s analytical concepts might appear to invoke a form of conspiracy theory, although she emphasizes many situations in which Argentine governments rejected or ignored the IMF’s policy preferences. The IMF therefore sought to establish an ideological straitjacket through the so-called routine of dependency but never fully succeeded. The strength of Kedar’s book derives from her success in clarifying the objectives of the IMF, while describing the conditions under which they were adopted or rejected.

The bulk of this book narrates the modern economic history of Argentina from the perspective of the fluctuating influence of the IMF. Periods of strong IMF influence included the late 1950s, the late 1960s, the late 1970s, and the entire period from the early 1990s until 2001, the neo-liberal era. In other periods, such the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, for example, the IMF remained in the background. The narrative description covering an array of administrations and short-term policies is based substantially on primary sources. It is well written, exhaustive, and contains many sound judgments. Kedar has interdisciplinary abilities as a historian and an economist, although certain periods, like the presidencies of Carlos Menem in the 1990s, have already been widely covered, making it difficult to offer anything new. The most novel parts of the book concern the late 1950s, mostly during the presidency of Arturo Frondizi, and the creation of the “routine of dependency.”

David Rock
University of California, Santa Barbara


In this striking and innovative study, Moin explores the central ideas that informed the articulation of royal power across Central Asia, Iran, and north India between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. The author argues that claims to royal power involved a fusion of two institutionalized ideas—sacred kingship and charismatic sainthood. Importantly, these ideas were not imposed from above. Rather, rulers fashioned their
imperial identity to conform to expectations that were already deeply embedded in the popular culture of the Persianate world.

The book employs a variety of disciplinary approaches to investigating these self-fashionings. First, it focuses less on textual traditions and more on social processes, especially “the ritual process by which ordinary humans become sacred sovereigns” (17). Second, when the author does use texts, he reads them “against the grain,” with a view to teasing out rumors, slurs, or innuendo about behavior that contemporary observers might have found transgressive. Third, the author rejects the conventions of modern area-studies disciplines that sharply separate the Iranian plateau from South Asia. Arguing that Mughal claims to power had incubated in lands beyond the Khyber Pass, Moin gives nearly as much attention to Safavid Iran and Timurid Central Asia as he does to his main story, Mughal India.

The study’s first chapter examines the ruling ideology of Timur (d. 1405), or “Tamerlane,” the great Central Asian warlord and empire builder who briefly brought nearly the entire eastern Muslim world under his sovereign rule. Moin shows that, although Timur himself never acknowledged the title, common people construed the warlord as the “Lord of Conjunction” (sahib qirani), so-called because astrologers of the day used the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter to order historical events and predict the future. In popular culture, such a figure denoted a millennial savior figure thought to have come to cleanse the world of injustice and corruption. Fifteenth-century Iran was alive with such figures, especially those who were descended from, or associated with, ‘Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad.

A century after Timur, this same sociocultural milieu—one that teemed with millennial expectation; charismatic Sufism; and all sorts of magic, astrology, and claims of direct, active intercession with the divine—produced Shah Isma’il, the charismatic leader of the Safavi Sufi order and founder of Iran’s Safavid dynasty. Embodying both hereditary sainthood and millennial sovereignty, Isma’il, like Timur, was also perceived as the Lord of Conjunction, and he acted the part. Between 1501, when he seized Tabriz in Iran’s northwest, and 1510 when he conquered Herat in Afghanistan, Isma’il seemed invincible, if not divinely guided, or even divine.

The heart of Moin’s study is devoted to showing how thoroughly the first five Mughal dynasts, like Iran’s early Safavid rulers, were steeped in the potent ideological brew of millennial sovereignty. Yet they all manifested this sort of sovereignty in different ways. As a descendant of Timur, Babur, the dynasty’s founder, had inherited his forebear’s charismatic authority, augmented by a personal devotion to Sufi orders in both Central Asia and India. By contrast, his son Humayun aligned his courtly schedule, and even his daily attire, to whichever planet dominated a given day of the week, while in other respects imitating the Safavids’ model of millennial sovereignty. In 1579, Akbar, the third Mughal, usurped juristic authority by declaring himself the imam and
mujtahid of the age. Three years later, there was an actual conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, and since this event occurred ten lunar years before the dawning of Islam’s second millennium, Akbar began issuing coins stamped with the word alfi (“thousand”). He also commissioned the writing of a millennial history (Tarikh-i Alfi), in which he was identified as the “Renewer of the Second Millennium.”

The fourth Mughal emperor, Jahangir, is often said to have fashioned his court after a stricter understanding of Islamic Law, but the art that he patronized speaks otherwise. On this score, Moin employs visual data to great effect. Jahangir commissioned a pair of miniature paintings conveying the impression that Mu’in al-Din Chishti (d. 1230), one of India’s foundational Sufis, literally handed worldly dominion to him. In another painting, the emperor is depicted as enveloped by the sun and the moon—emblematic of both Indian royal iconography and Illuminationist mystical philosophy—and occupying a position above both kings and Sufis. The fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan, not only styled himself the “Second Lord of Conjunction,” but unlike his predecessors, he asserted his link with Timur by launching a massive military campaign on Central Asia in 1647 with the aim of actually recovering the great warlord’s homeland.

Moin brings a wide range of disciplinary approaches to exploring the Mughals’ sustained efforts to follow the script of the millennial sovereign. One cannot help but wonder, however, why this script was ignored from the early eighteenth century onward, well before the advent of effective British power would diminish the luster of Mughal empire. Moin is aware that the long and controversial reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707) badly needs critical re-evaluation. Yet he also seems equivocal about Aurangzeb’s role in the empire’s gradual rejection of the millennial-sovereign model. In any event, he has thrown an entirely new light on how early monarchs of India’s greatest dynastic house asserted their claims to royal authority. His book should be read not just by historians of South Asia but equally by those of Central Asia and Iran, as well as by specialists in Islamic studies.

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Brennan, one of a recent generation of historians of East Africa who focus on urban and political history, has produced in _Taifa_ a study of the political culture of Dar es Salaam, the colonial capital and commercial hub of what was Tanganyika and is now mainland Tanzania. Brennan explains the “success” and limitations of the creation of Tanzanian nationalism during the late colonial and postcolonial era by shifting the fo-
cus away from Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanganyika and the architect of the union with Zanzibar. Nyerere’s articulation of Ujamaa—meaning literally “familyhood” but, in this case, African socialism—is often credited with fostering a relatively stable and harmonious society in a region where such a society is rare. Brennan, building on the work of a number of scholars—including Said, Geiger, and others—argues that the “intellectual labor” that created what would become Tanzanian nationalism was not Nyerere’s alone; it did not necessarily closely track Nyerere’s idealization of the nation as African family.¹

Brennan contends that Africans in Dar es Salaam began to create what would become the Tanzanian nation in the 1920s after the British assumed control of German East Africa and renamed it Tanganyika. He seeks to demonstrate that race animated the intellectual foundation of nationalism, arguing that beginning in the interwar years but especially after World War II, literate Swahili speakers defined the nation in racial terms and even used the word taifa to mean race/nation. Nationalists in Dar es Salaam developed this definition not just in retaliation against the explicit and implicit racial justifications of colonial rule by the British but also in retaliation against the domination of commercial activity by immigrants from South Asia and, to a lesser extent, the Arabic-speaking Middle East. For Africans in Dar es Salaam, Wahindi (South Asians of any religion) more than Wazungu (Europeans) became the “other” against which Africans defined themselves.

Brennan mines the colonial archive; records from the Asian community; the many newspapers published in English and Swahili by both private publishers and the colonial government; and, in a limited way, oral sources to construct his argument. He gives an overview of the history of the Asian communities of Tanganyika and the ways in which they developed solidarity across communal divisions, becoming in East African English usage, “Asians.” He uses oral sources sparingly, since, in his view, later government discourse that emphasized the “nonracial” nature of Tanzanian society brought the general sense of taifa closer to what English speakers mean by “nation,” while de-emphasizing (but not totally eliminating) its racial connotations. This change, he posits, colors modern memories.

In the final section of the book, Brennan argues that Nyerere’s nationalist movement eventually managed to transform the liberation struggle from a racially defined one to one based on eliminating exploitation. As the Tanzanian government moved “left” during the 1960s, it adopted policies that expropriated Asian-owned properties and “Africanized” the civil service. Government rhetoric responded to the demands of urbanites for a restoration of honor, yet carefully, and at times

forcefully, controlled the discourse by emphasizing exploitation rather than race or community. In this rhetorical shift, government and everyday language framed the problem of exploitation through older discourses about the eradication of witchcraft. In short, Nyerere and the government bowed to the popular pressure for racial restitution but attempted to strip its actions of racial motivation.

How convincing is this argument? Brennan explicitly privileges Dar es Salaam as the site of this intellectual labor and Swahili as its language. Both attributions can be questioned. Certainly the task of mobilizing support for independence outside of Dar es Salaam had much to do with the emphasis on uniting the *taifa* despite the existence of numerous *kabila*, or tribes. Brennan’s insistence on the development of the term *taifa* to represent nation/race in contrast to *kabila* as “tribe” seems a particularly urban conceit. Outside of Dar es Salaam, the concept of *taifa* includes many *kabila*; even Asians and Europeans are perceived as members of different “tribes.”

Brennan correctly maintains that the Western concept of race has no exact linguistic equivalent in Swahili (and other East African languages). His focus on how Western ideas of race influenced Tanzanians’ conception of nation, however, de-emphasizes the critical discursive breakthrough of construing the term *taifa* with a much more unified connotation than the term *kabila* could provide. Likewise, although Brennan linguistically links struggle against exploitation by Asian commercial interests and landlords with concepts of witchcraft eradication, he relies too much on the origins of the terms involved and not enough on their actual content. Most people probably meant just “exploitation” when they described the object of their struggle as *unyonyaji*.

Brennan’s provocative and important work builds on his impressive range of publications on political culture in Dar es Salaam. It will stimulate others to test his conclusions across Tanzania and Africa.

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*The Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India*. By Robert A. Yelle (New York, Oxford University Press, 2013) 298 pp. $99.00 cloth $35.00 paper

This volume contends that British rule in India was profoundly shaped by a Protestant framework, aimed at ridding India of its magic, mantras, and abundance of rituals and vernacular traditions. This commitment to disenchanting India expressed itself in critiques of Indian “idolatry,” linguistic reform, and the codification of laws. The case for a singular Protestant episteme that pervades these sites of colonial and missionary engagement is ambitious in its scope and crosses the disciplines of linguistics, theology, and history.
Although it makes a unique contribution to the intellectual history of colonialism, the book is more effective at tracing the lineage of particular threads of European discourse than it is in explaining Indian institutions or Indian responses to Europeans. In spite of embracing Chakrabarty’s project of “provincializing Europe,” this book is essentially about Europeans and their critiques of Indian society.\footnote{See Dipesh Chakrabarty, \textit{Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference} (Princeton, 2000).
} Though joining the ranks of those who, following Edward Said, have made European universalism more contingent and contextually motivated, the book strains to demonstrate a common soteriology that links, for instance, Alexander Duff’s promotion of English medium education and the secularization of Hindu law.

At the heart of Yelle’s argument is the claim that the British did to India what ancient Christianity did to Judaism and Protestantism did to Catholicism. Christianity made the observance of the Jewish law (along with the magic, superstitions, and oracles of the pagan world) ineffective for salvation. By sidelifing the role of the Torah, especially its ritual component, early Christianity made the first historical push toward the disenchantment of the world (17–22). The next important moment was the Protestant Reformation, which critiqued the ritualism of Catholicism. “Protestant literalism” stressed the primacy of the sacred text over ritual and tradition. Moreover, literalism introduced a new theory of language, which assigned to words a representational purpose, as distinct from their earlier possession of “powers in their own right” (27). The British imported this conceptual heritage into their critiques of India’s linguistic and religious traditions.

Yelle reads Weber’s notion of disenchantment into various theories of secularism (that of Asad, Anidjar, Balagangadhara, et al.) before applying the lens to reformist activity in colonial India.\footnote{See, for example, Max Weber (trans. Ephraim Fischoff), \textit{The Sociology of Religion} (Boston, 1993; orig. pub., in German, 1922); Talal Asad, \textit{Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity} (Stanford, 2003); Gil Anidjar, \textit{Semites: Race, Religion, Literature} (Stanford, 2007); S. N. Balagangadhara, \textit{The “Heathen in His Blindness . . .”: Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion} (Boston, 1994).
} Whereas Indians emphasized the performative or pragmatic role of language (especially in Vedic or tantric practices, 37), Protestant literalism decried the conflation of “words for things” and so “redrew the boundaries of and relations of language, thought and reality” (87, 41). The same sanitizing literalism underlay the promotion of English medium education, linguistic reform, and the critique of repetitious prayers in Catholicism and Hinduism.

The book’s theoretical apparatus and lucid prose are commendable, as is the author’s command of wide ranging sources. The book’s primordialist argument, however, ultimately portrays British rule in India as being guided by a single agency and ideology, when in fact it had many. Yelle renders the shared Protestant heritage of codification, the critique
of “verbal idolatry,” English medium education, and legal reform in words and phrases that suggest more tenuous connections—for instance, “seem to have originated” (50), “striking resemblance” (140), “metaphor” (87), “appears to coincide” (40), “may have affected” (129) and, most often, “echoes” (17, 70, 119, 134, 138, 140). Leaving aside this presumption of coherence, readers will find in this study an intriguing sounding out of Weberian ideas within a particular colonial context.

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In this volume, Gottschalk sets out to assess the development of the varied categories by which the British came to know and understand India, and Indians, during the colonial era. Interdisciplinary by its very nature, the book addresses, in turn, the different “ways of knowing” that became the disciplines of cartography, statistics, ethnology, and archeology, among others. Gottschalk claims that these disciplines grew up within the empire, and that, although purporting to be impartial and all-encompassing, they were in fact products of a discourse in which the modern West used “the cultural authority of science” to buttress its assertions of superiority (35). Gottschalk calls the making of such claims “scientism” to differentiate this style of analysis from an accepted empirical truth (33, 35).

Gottschalk insists that religion is the single organizing category underlying all of the varied disciplines devised to comprehend Indian society. For the British, religion “represented the fundamental quality of every Indian”; as a result, it featured centrally as “the primary category of interpretation” for all “knowledge projects” (18, 183, 185, 191). According to Gottschalk, even in such apparently disparate activities as revenue surveys, census enumerations, folklore collections, and the like, nothing mattered more to the British than an Indian’s religious affiliation, above all as Hindu or as Muslim.

Overlapping practices and local variants had to be rigorously discounted even when their existence was acknowledged by district officials. Gottschalk demonstrates his larger argument from a close scrutiny of Indian archival records, but in each chapter, he also attempts to show how these various “scientistic” discourses informed British understandings of a single village, Chainpur in Bihar. To accomplish this objective was no easy task, given the paucity of village records, but the endeavor gives the book a refreshingly original focus. Gottschalk concludes with a chapter about “Chainpur Today” in which, by observation and conver-
sation with villagers, he attempts to assess the extent to which British social categories have been adopted by Indians, even to the present day.

Much in this work is exciting; it will force readers to reconsider the relationship between science and empire. Much in it is also familiar to scholars of colonial India. Ever since Cohn’s pioneering work in the 1980s, the way in which the British constructed their knowledge of India has become a staple of historical scholarship about the region.¹ No one can dispute the importance of religious identity as an explanatory category for the British of the Raj. Gottschalk tends, however, to push its importance to the very edge of credibility, thereby displacing other modes of colonial knowledge. He dismisses caste, for instance, the subject of several major recent studies, as simply a “metonym for ‘Hindu’” (201). He even cites the appearance of signs that designate temples and mosques on a 1845 map of Chainpur, though not of those that designate such other sites as sufi tombs, as evidence of the enduring British insistence upon fixed “religious categories” (76–77). In the end, Gottschalk acknowledges that “scientistic hegemony,” now pervasive and persuasive, “is secure in Chainpur, and in India” (335). One wonders how it could ever have been otherwise. In the secular modern world, “seeing like a state,” with its claims to authoritative knowledge, is surely to be found everywhere.

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