
In this fresh, provocative, and profound book, LeCain presents a cogent explication of neo-materialist history, an approach that regards all organic and inorganic things as historical actors. He first offers his own neo-materialist theory and then shows us what it looks like in practice. Arguing against anthropocentric thinking that sets humans apart from or against nature, LeCain asserts that a dynamic, creative, powerful material environment of nonliving elements and other organisms has “helped to create humans and their thoughts, ideas, culture and history” (11).

LeCain opens by considering the Human Microbiome Project’s findings that much of the human body consists of independent bacteria, microbes, and viruses in constant interaction with the surrounding environment, leading some scholars to suggest that humans are not unitary beings but a collection of organisms that resemble a coral reef. He develops these and other findings to contend that humans are “thoroughly and entirely natural” (17), embedded in the environment with embodied minds. The next chapter explores the roots of the opposing concept of the immaterial mind and human exceptionalism. LeCain examines how materialism has been problematical in the past, explains how neo-materialism differs from Marxian determinism as well as, importantly, biological, environmental, and technological determinism, and critiques the abstractions of modernist and postmodernist thought. He reviews the work of environmental historians, historians of technology, animal historians, anthropologists, evolutionary biologists, philosophers, and others in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. The third chapter provides what he considers the key concepts for this methodology—the centrality of the natural environment, the power of things, the proper place of culture, and the rejection of anthropocentrism.

In the following three chapters, LeCain sets neo-materialist history in motion by means of three impressive case studies. He examines cattle ranching and copper mining in Montana, and sericulture and copper mining in Japan, considering along the way geology, grass, biochemistry, the physiology of human touch, the molecular structure of silk, the Silk Road, the biochemistry of arctic cod and spiders, the chemistry of copper pollution, and the deep co-evolutionary history of cattle, silkworms, and humans. The third chapter in this group intertwines these two histories as he discusses the material worlds from which Japanese and American industrial societies emerged so that they became “copper people” (272). LeCain demonstrates how neo-materialist methodology reinterprets historical events and problems. It is also a demanding interdisciplinary methodology, as LeCain ranges through a wide array of topics and draws on many disciplines.

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In the seventh chapter, LeCain concludes his argument by bringing his theory to bear on the problem that is the subtext of this book—the global changes of what some name the Anthropocene. Far from questioning the reality or gravity of these changes, LeCain instead rejects the term on the grounds that it expresses the same anthropocentric thinking that led to these changes in the first place. He offers “the Carbocene” as an alternative, since humans did not become powerful by dominating the material world but by allying with powerful material things like coal and oil. In LeCain’s view, humans are neither culprits nor saviors but family members of a material world. It is not a case of having the correct environmentalist beliefs. LeCain suggests that by understanding “that the earth is not in human hands so much as humans are in the earth’s hands—and that those hands are not necessarily benevolent”—we might come to better ways of living on this planet (315).

This important book pushes environmental-history methodology to a new level of engagement with all actors of the material world. It should also be of interest to historians of science, technology, and medicine, and to all who are interested in the environmental humanities and engagement with the natural sciences. Finally, LeCain raises critical and compelling questions. If humans emerged from the material environment of the Holocene, what would the meaning of human be if the planet changes to something different from what made us human in the first place?

Ann Norton Greene
University of Pennsylvania

*Debating New Approaches to History.* Edited by Marek Tamm and Peter Burke (New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018) 392 pp. $94.00 cloth $31.33 paper

This book’s self-styled framework for debating new approaches to history is to be applauded. Historians are very good, by and large, at debating the nature of the past in terms of “competing histories.” Certainly, and maybe unfortunately, however, “the past” is always secondary to “its history” and historians. In the absence of the past, all we can have in terms of engaging with the past, is “the history” that we regularly and constantly “author into a new version of past existence.”

An old postmodernist (as this reviewer happens to be) is undoubtedly the worst kind of reviewer for *Debating New Approaches to History,* earnest as it is. This collection’s proposal that we trudge through the notion of the “anthropocene and more-than-human-history” to recover the past (oddly the index makes no reference to “the past”) is hardly persuasive (6).

Contrary to expectation, the notion of debating new approaches to “doing history” turns out to be neither exciting nor useful. In twelve chapters, we are offered a survey of the debates on new approaches
to, and updates on, the past. Aside from the difficulty of defining what postmodern history is, we now have posthumanism, which seems to be an effort at turning the past into yet another “future past.” Is digital history a new way to present the future past beyond words? Where is Hayden White in this scheme of things?

One distinct flaw in this vociferous and somewhat noisy text is its minimal mention of the “p” word (the past). Yes, it delves into posthumanism, posthumanities, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. Obviously, there is never enough space for every form of historical representation in any text, but pruning the most significant intellectual debate of the past fifty years is not cost-free. Presumably, however, historians will continue to debate and confront and argue about the “the-past-as-history.”

Despite my overall critique, this volume offers much that is useful to read. Ewa Domanska’s excursion into posthumanist history (Chapter 12) is a case in point, especially her section entitled “Animal History as Non-Anthropocentric History.” Despite its lapses, Debating New Approaches to History is competent, skilled, and comprehensive.

Alun Munslow
Stratfordshire University

The ABC of Modern Biography. By Nigel Hamilton and Hans Renders (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2018) 249 pp. $35.00

The stated goal of Hamilton and Renders’ “ABC” volume is to provide readers with an overview of modern biography as it is practiced today, but the real agenda is broader—“ensuring biography’s valorization in the academy and in public discourse” as “a lynchpin in the defence of civilized society” (184). Key to that valorization is biography’s commitment to truth and verifiable facts—an increasingly steep challenge in our contemporary world where “fake news” trumps all and facts are under siege.

Hamilton and Renders have chosen an unusual and not entirely successful methodology to make their case for biography—A through Z chapters in which they range widely on a variety of topics over a wide swath of history. Most readers will probably skip around rather than read the volume straight through, but inevitably there is a certain amount of repetition and overlap. In many cases, the alphabet is their friend, providing an excuse for mini-essays on biography, facts, history, obituary, sex (of course), and theory that can stand on their own or be read in conversation with the rest of the book. In other cases, the authors strain to make their conceit work, such as designating the letter U as “U-turn,” but then using that section to write about turning points in subjects’ lives, or Z, as in “zigzagging to the end,” which is really a meditation about the role of death in the biographical project. Poor X settles for “Xanadu” as a jumping-off point for a discussion of its place in literary
and film studies, with special focus on Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*. Another quibble is that rather than “group biography,” the letter G might have been better deployed for a discussion of gender, which is seriously under-theorized in the volume.

Hamilton and Renders are passionately opinionated about their subject. They are no friends of the term “life writing,” amazed at the toehold that it has gained as an academic discipline. They dismiss memoir as “four parts entertainment, four parts narcissism, two parts self-help” (111). Furthermore, they continually bemoan how their beloved biography, which is by definition deeply interdisciplinary—drawing from fields as disparate as journalism, history, psychology, literary studies, film, and television—is almost universally absent from university programs.

Working their way through the alphabet, general readers will experience a broad but eclectic selection of material about biography, some of which will interest them and some of which they may simply want to skip. Practitioners of biography will quickly realize that this book is not a “how to” guide to writing biography, although they will probably nod in agreement at the statement about how addictive biography is, not just for readers but for biographers themselves. Probably the best way to envision this volume is as an introductory text for one of those hypothetical courses in the theory and practice of modern biography that Hamilton and Renders fervently hope will soon be part of the university curriculum.

Susan Ware  
Schlesinger Library  
Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study


Directed at an audience of students and non-specialists, this book offers a broad introduction to the scholarly debates among economists and historians about a multitude of processes triggered by transoceanic trade across the planet between 1500 and 1800. In that era, northwestern Europe (and northeastern America) attained better living standards than the rest of the world, including the most developed areas of Asia and other parts of Europe. These changes, dubbed the Great (and the Little) Divergence, happened while Europe came to control a large portion of intercontinental trade and maritime transportation and started to colonize a large extent of the globe.

The authors examine these changes comparing three types of indicators across the globe: GDP per capita, real wages, and urbanization...
ratios. Most data derive from estimates of GDP per capita and long-term economic performance in the Maddison Project. The book would have strengthened immensely if the methodologies in the cited works were made transparent and compared. The authors often acknowledge limitations in the data, in terms of time, area, groups, and completeness. Yet readers unfamiliar with the cited studies can only wonder about the kind of sources consulted, their biases and gaps, their processing of information, the significance and representativeness of their data, the underlying assumptions and proxies of their estimates, etc.

To explain diverging trends in those indicators, the book resorts mostly to economists’ studies of development and institutions, this century’s main topics in economic history. This preference comes at the expense of the vast body of empirical work that historians have provided. The authors ambiguously privilege a group of economic institutionalists, particularly Acemoglu and his co-authors, whom the authors mention in most chapters of the book, together with some of the considerable criticism that historians and economists alike have leveled at these works for oversimplification and teleology (for instance, 19, 26–28, 61, 66, 103, 111, 114, 135–136, 254–255, 281).

The authors’ attempt to summarize so substantial a body of literature inevitably results in some mistakes. For example, when the authors refer to an increasing production of gold in Brazil after 1550 (72), they misread the cited literature, which maintains that Brazilian gold exports started in the last years of the seventeenth century. Inadvertently biased, the authors also claim that after wresting Brazil from the Portuguese, the “Dutch also modernized the [sugar] production processes” (82). The sources agree, however, that the Dutch had trouble mastering the sugar-production techniques, and either sold out their mills to the Portuguese or hired Portuguese technicians.

Nonetheless, the book makes an important contribution to the recent group of studies that reinstate the importance of long-distance trade

5 John J. TePaske, A New World of Gold and Silver (Leiden, 2010), 46.
in forging global connections and processes before industrialization. It also makes a keen effort to provide a more nuanced picture of globalization beyond the traditional dichotomy between “hard” and “soft.” It shows how the world became increasingly dependent on silver currency, the market for silver integrated globally, and its prices converged. It also reveals how the prices of some other commodities converged intercontinentally, although not globally, thanks to the increase of supply and the competition between commercial powers. Although most of the trade tended not to be in necessities, the volume of trade grew faster globally than the world’s population and GDP. Nonetheless, in almost all of Asia, where most of the world population lived, long-distance maritime trade had a small share in the economy.

The effects of trade were greater in “soft globalization.” The introduction of American maize and potatoes elsewhere spurred population growth. Empires drove intercontinental migration, including indentured labor and slave trade, alongside the decimation of native Americans through violence and disease. The authors conjecture that “the rise of the world trade led to more free and unfree labour for the market, at the expense of subsistence work and unemployment or leisure” (274). Certain areas and groups, notably free people in the Americas, benefited from privileged relations with the European-led globalization. Interestingly, the authors point out that the only “non-Western” region that achieved gains in the long-run during early modern times was Japan, given its strict restrictions on international trade and the flow of bullion. They conclude that “openness did not really pay off and keeping the world market at arm’s length may have been the better strategy” (236). The upshot is that early globalization changed the world, but possibly not for the better.

Daniel Strum
University of São Paulo


Starting as a book “founded on errors,” most notably the common misconception that early modern societies “were highly preoccupied with issues of what we would now call ‘sustainability,’” Warde’s most recent monograph quickly evolves into a thorough study centered on the idea of sustainability (1). It calls for a more thorough type of history that takes an expansive view of how ideas are created and mature. As Helgerson argued in Forms of Nationhood, “Texts, nations, individual authors, particular discursive communities—all are both produced and productive, productive of that by which they are produced.”1 Possessed of a similar

outlook, Warde interrogates the contextual construction of “sustainability” from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. Recognizing that a search for the heritage of our impulses toward sustainability opens the door to a hagiographical construction of our environmental history, Warde is careful to employ the term *invention* rather than *origin*. Throughout the text, he reiterates that invention is a constantly occurring process, arguing that continuous debates about what constitutes sustainability are productive precisely because they juxtapose “different responses to a similarly shared problem” (358).

Rather than focusing on sustainability as a movement or practice, Warde, who has authored dozens of monographs, chapters, and articles about early modern European environmental history, researches how the more complex, discursive field of sustainability emerged. He details how sustainability became “a theme to argue about, was bound to particular social and territorial units, and especially the idea of the state as a unit of political, economic and environmental management” (6). Uniting environmental, economic, political, demographic, and agrarian history from an era of national warfare, industrialization, and expansion, Warde probes the political and socioeconomic context of early modern thought about humans and the natural world.

*The Invention of Sustainability* examines agriculture and forest management, especially how scholarly conversations and debates evolved around improvements related to both of those subjects and the broader European public. Cultivators had long understood that land could decrease in productivity based on poor management, and governments had long believed that products of the “organic economy” were needed to maintain social order. Few of them, however, supposed that individual mismanagement could be linked to more pervasive problems of national degradation. Given changes in scientific understanding and state-driven aspirations, forest management increasingly became dominated by educated men who believed they “had the capacity to plan the most desirable—and sustainable—woodlands far into the future” (216). Similarly, by the eighteenth century, agricultural reformers advocated a “new husbandry,” using a tested and circulated chemical understanding of soil, along with a healthy dose of manure, to improve national crop yields. New husbandry and new forest management synthesized to form the precursor to modern conceptions of sustainability.

Warde’s clear exposition of the necessary shortcomings of such an ambitious, broad, and interdisciplinary project is just as significant as his analysis of the invention of sustainability. Conscious that his book cannot “do justice to the complex history” of the power and truth of sustainability, “especially in the interaction between socio-economic life and argument,” Warde presents his history as an opportunity to stimulate more debate and research (357). Throughout the entirety of the text he maintains that “knowledge is a vast, shifting and collective endeavor [and] that the question of sustainability may not actually have an answer, but that there may be nevertheless good reasons for asking it over, and
over” (16). He regularly calls for his “arguments to be tested much further both in the crucible of empirical case studies, and [for the story of sustainability to be set] against other narratives of change over the period, to do with knowledge, class, gender, and authority” (14). Similar to his earlier arguments for a more nuanced, localized, and complicated picture of “improvement,” Warde’s gathering of the many scattered seeds of sustainability in this book will provide scholarly fodder for historians eager to ruminate on the history of ideas and the intersection of the environment, politics, economics, science, and culture in the early modern period.

Tim Daniels
Ferrum College


Although widespread use of fossil fuels began in the nineteenth century, more than half of all the fossil fuels ever consumed have been burned in the period since 1950. This growth has continued and increased despite widespread scientific consensus that current levels of fossil-fuel consumption threaten the environment with a dangerous degree of global warming. How did we get here?

Burning Up, as its subtitle accurately indicates, provides a global history of fossil-fuel consumption since 1950. The first section surveys fossil-fuel consumption before 1950, briefly examines energy technologies and energy’s role in society and the economy and presents a statistical picture of fossil-fuel consumption since 1950. The heart of the book consists of chapters about each decade since 1950, plus an overview chapter about electrification. In the third section, Pirani discusses the sources of his views, examines the possibilities for changing mankind’s increasingly dangerous dependence on fossil fuels, and summarizes his conclusions. A brief but useful appendix discusses the complexities involved in measuring energy consumption, and a second appendix contains additional statistics.

Pirani’s main message is that people consume energy, including fossil fuels, through technological systems that are embedded in social and economic systems. Rather than assuming that aggregate economic development and population increase have been the primary causes of the staggering growth in fossil-fuel consumption since 1950, Pirani analyzes the political, economic, and social factors that help to determine levels of fossil-fuel consumption. In particular, he examines industrialization, especially the expansion of energy-intensive industries such as steel and cement production, changes in the labor process, electrification, urbanization, motorization, and the rise of consumerism.
Although he agrees that economic growth has been the main source of the relentless rise in the use of fossil fuels, he demonstrates that the manner in which societies are organized significantly shapes their levels of energy consumption. Individuals directly consume only relatively small quantities of coal, oil, and natural gas, for example, to heat and cool their homes or to power their automobiles. Most fossil fuels indirectly enter into the production of food, electricity, building materials, machines, and consumer goods; societies differ considerably in how they produce and consume these products. Even when individuals consume fossil fuels directly, they do so in a social, economic, and technological context over which they often have little control. Pirani further argues, “The historical record shows that the relationship between population growth and fuel consumption levels is indirect and mediated through [social and economic] systems” (193).

In addition to his insistence that socioeconomic systems have to be taken into account when studying this matter, Pirani admirably explains the shortcomings of the most commonly used statistics about energy consumption, revealing the unspoken assumptions behind them. Since historians and other non-specialists cite these statistics, exposing the often-hidden premises that shape their deployment and interpretation is a valuable service.

Pirani also introduces non-specialists to important alternative approaches to monitoring fossil-fuel consumption. Consumption-based accounting of CO$_2$ emissions, for example, calculates the emissions associated with goods and services in the country where they are consumed rather than the one in which they are produced. This approach, which takes into account shifts in the world economy, reveals that the apparent decline in emissions for many developed countries is a result of the relocation of fossil-fuel intensive industries to developing countries rather than conservation or increased efficiency.

David S. Painter
Georgetown University

Secret Wars: Covert Conflicts in International Politics. By Austin Carson (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018) 325 pp. $35.00

This interesting, original, study describes how covert (and not so covert) war signals national intentions, if it can be communicated effectively and if an adversary can read such coded communications. Although based in the field of international relations, this book will appeal to historians as well as political scientists. Carson sets up international politics as a theater with the stage visible to all; backstage, hidden from view, is where the

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1 Steven J. Davis and Ken Caldeira, “Consumption-Based Accounting of CO$_2$ Emissions,” PNAS, 107 (March 2010), 5687–5692.
actors prepare for their roles. Carson is interested in how this unseen (or partially visible) world is related to the overall theater of international politics. By looking at what states conceal behind the curtain, Carson sheds light on the production of the cohesive front-stage performance.

This book senses the tension between what is presented and what is hidden in international relations through an analysis of four key historical episodes of covert conflict and diplomacy that test his theory about the power of war behind the scenes: the Spanish Civil War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (and America’s covert war there under President Reagan). The idea is that the mishandled escalation of July 1914 that tipped Europe into World War I resulted in the great powers looking for other ways of managing conflicts after 1918 in an attempt to bypass dangerous appeals to their (often hawkish) domestic populace. Carson points to “newness” after World War I with regard to how states handled conflicts directly and indirectly, though recognizing that piracy, say, in the early modern period fulfilled a similar function between warring European states.

Carson’s intriguing conclusion is that covert action, paradoxically, usually limited war, helpfully managed escalation, and stymied hawkish domestic lobbies. Secret actions and communication channels blocked those who wanted to escalate war as much as they deceived anti-war protestors. President Nixon resorted to secrecy to minimize anti-Vietnam war protests; President Lyndon Johnson before him also resorted to secrecy but in his case to keep the war localized in Vietnam. The empirical case studies build on useful new primary research (as well as treading on more well-worn history) to show how covert action shades into “visible covert” before becoming entirely overt. Adversaries with knowledge of opponents’ domestic politics can and will treat covert wars as “open secrets.” This book is about the non-acknowledgement of an opponent’s strategy while also wanting that opponent to know that you are not in the dark. In short, it creates a puzzle of enemies colluding over open secrets, some of which are so open that they are known to the general public. Carson challenges the idea that “secrecy is a plague on peace” (309), leading to unnecessary wars and feeding escalation. Instead, curtailment of public knowledge can serve to control dangerous escalation. Public knowledge fuels escalation, whereas covertureness and collusion help adversaries reach a better understanding, “in part because it is observable to the adversary” (13). Put simply, secret wars limit bigger wars. The book argues that authoritarian leaders from Adolf Hitler to Joseph Stalin exercised a surprising degree of cautious statecraft through the covert sphere. For democratic states, covert action is a problem for domestic accountability, as the Pentagon Papers proved.

New technologies after World War I, such as aircraft and submarines, prompted states that already tended toward covert action to limit escalatory urges. Airpower and submarines could hide the national origins of the personnel involved in covert operations. Secrecy and non-acknowledgment were key in keeping the Spanish civil war confined
to Spain. President Truman, anxious to get public support for the war in Korea without succumbing to hawkish demands for an early attack on China or the Soviet Union, launched an air war over Korea that, according to Carson, was a major unacknowledged confrontation between U.S. and Soviet pilots. The communists knew what Truman was doing, proving that knowledge of the enemy’s domestic-politic space was crucial for effective communication and crisis management. In Carson’s view, covertsness and collusion also helped to limit the war in Vietnam.

The book ends with the question of whether social media may now make keeping secrets impossible, creating what has been called “extreme Glasnost.” After all, local Pakistanis were playing battle noises from the Navy SEALs’ attack on Osama bin Laden in real time. Not so, argues Carson, pointing instead to how states can adapt and move to open secrecy, or “widely visible covert action” (303). Carson is to be congratulated for a scholarly study with broad appeal that presents a new perspective on international politics that overturns many commonly held assumptions about information, power, and wartime escalation, not the least of which is that diplomacy is most effective when it is out in the open.

Matthew Hughes
Brunel University

The First Farmers of Europe: An Evolutionary Perspective. By Stephen Shennan (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018) 253 pp. $105.00 cloth, $34.99 paper

The Neolithic transition in Southwest Asia and its subsequent spread toward Europe poses some of the most relevant questions in human history. Shennan proposes a Darwinian approach to the origin and spread of farming by locating fertility and child survival at the center of the system, linking them to farming as the main source of calorie income. The translation from this theoretical background to the interpretation of archaeological data is not explicit in this book, but it can be extracted from its consistent structure. Shennan considers genetic data—together with a (debated) population proxy (namely, summed radiocarbon probability distributions)—combining them with archaeobotanical and archaeozoological data in order to formulate theories about the peaks and troughs of the radiocarbon curve in each particular region. Thus, the book synthetically integrates with admirable command diverse types of data and methodologies.

The book is structured chronologically and geographically, starting with the beginnings of farming in southwest Asia (c. 10,000 B.C.E.), and ending with the British Isles (c. 4000 B.C.E.). Shennan concludes that the spread of farming was under a constant process of selection that affected
its rhythm and nature. He proposes a cyclical phenomenon after the arrival of farming into a new region—a sudden population growth followed by an abrupt drop—arguing that the latter might be due to farming failure. He also dismantles most of the existing arguments in favor of a significant degree of interaction between Mesolithic and Neolithic groups in most areas of Mediterranean and central Europe. The proposal is interesting to read and often succeeds in transmitting the broad-scale view, despite the nuances of each region, that such a process requires.

The lack of methodological discussion is a problem within the book. Although it certainly makes reading easier, it renders the interpretations more obscure, because they are not questioned. This observation applies to all the different disciplines considered in this work but especially the use of radiocarbon dates as population proxy. Any archaeobotanist (including this reviewer) can show how this lack of critical evaluation of the sources undermines the arguments for permanent garden-type farming and shifting agriculture models (for which no direct evidence exists).

An additional problem concerns the main line of argumentation of the work. Shennan ties the fate of populations to the ability of a household or a village to produce enough food for its members. He treats episodes of apparent population growth as linked to favorable farming conditions (good soils, appropriate climate, etc.). Hence, declines in population must be a consequence of climatic changes or soil depletion. While the identification of a general pattern of initial population growth followed by a sudden population crisis might be plausible, the causes for the drop do not receive proper discussion. It is hard to believe that the main problem of early farmers was soil depletion, and it has already been proven that people availed themselves of other strategies (for example, hunting and gathering) to cope with difficulties.

On the semantic level, some of the author’s word choices are puzzling, such as when he explains expansion phenomena as probably due more to population increase than to the movement of “refugees” (77). The use of this term at all with regard to conditions in the Neolithic period is highly suspect, particularly considering what it signifies in the current planetary situation. The text repetition on the site of Chalain 3 is another editorial glitch (119, 136).

Notwithstanding the tolerable sacrifices that it makes for the sake of the grand narrative, this contribution to the understanding of Neolithic Europe should prove valuable to archaeologists, even into the next generation, for its integration of multiple disciplines. If archaeologists are to take control of the discourse about human past, they must face, as Shennan puts it, important questions that matter to people. This book is proof that archaeologists are up to the task.

Ferran Antolín  
University of Basel
War and Religion: Europe and the Mediterranean from the First through the Twenty-First Centuries. By Arnaud Blin (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2019) 351 pp. $34.95

What preconceptions and resources undergird a survey of the intimate intersections between two such vast topics over the past 2,000 years by an American-educated Frenchman? A little history proves helpful. In 2007, the same academic press translated Blin’s jointly authored examination, in French, of terrorism’s long and complex history, beginning with the Jewish Zealots—The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to al-Qaeda. Twelve years later, in this sequel, which needs no translator, Gérard Chaliand, Blin’s former senior co-editor, copiously thanked in the acknowledgements, reappears on the back-cover blurb, and the Zealots again dominate the first chapter.

This time, religion rather than terrorism drives the narrative; the usual “big three” Abrahamic monotheistic suspects hold center stage. Buddhism gets passing mention for its “penetrating discussion of the ethics of war” in the Bhagavad Gita (18). Meanwhile, the 20 percent of humanity living in the Chinese Middle Kingdom, where “religious identity has been much less robust” (18), saw plenty of armed conflict but seem to have been exempt from the horrors of religious warfare—until a Chinese Christian who failed his civil-service exam reinvented himself as Jesus’ younger brother and launched the Taiping Rebellion of 1852–1864, “one of the most devastating wars of all time, leaving at least twenty million dead” (281–83).

Blin observes that Judaism’s scriptural canon is far more violent than those of their successors; its God of War even commands ethnic cleansing (46). It contrasts vividly with the almost unrelieved pacifism of the Christian New Testament, seeming even more consistently bellicose than the “vague and often conflicting passages on war and jihad” in the Koran (47–48). Nevertheless, Judaism disappears from this account after Masada, although “religion remained inescapable along the fault lines where the [other] great monotheistic religions repeatedly clashed” (23). Considering what Christians did, despite their pacifist New Testament, after taking over the Roman Empire, and the amazing military record of Islam in its first century, we can only be relieved that a dispersed Judaism lacked armies for almost nineteen centuries after Masada.

Blin’s survey is unusual in its emphasis on the remote rather than recent history of this “Clash of Civilizations” (Chapter 4) centered in the Mediterranean. His central fulcrum—covered earlier by Henri Pirenne’s classic Mohammed and Charlemagne (London, 1954) (still in print after 80 years!)—is the Christian crusades and the Muslim response to it, mainly by Saladin, its major protagonist, to whom Blin gives admiring attention (167–178). Blin’s account features a peculiar mixture of Christian justifications for warfare and descriptions of military tactics, paying less attention to the major schism in Christianity of 1054 A.D., which permanently separated
those whom Muslim sources call “Franks” from the “Romans” of Byzantium, than to the ongoing Sunni–Shiite schism in Islamic domains.

Frictions within the Abode of Islam pale alongside the frictions within Christianity. Twenty years before the first Crusade, the “Frankish” Pope Gregory VII proposed an armed “pilgrimage” to Jerusalem in order to protect Byzantium and its rival Patriarch (146). However, cooperation proved elusive. Fewer than twenty years after Saladin’s truce with the “Romans” helped him to recapture Jerusalem, the fourth papally instigated “armed pilgrimage” preferred to conquer and plunder Constantinople rather than reconquer Jerusalem (178–180). Not for another 250 years did a Muslim ruler conquer Constantinople. At that point, Mehmed II retained the city’s Christian Patriarch while making himself a Muslim Caliph, a major development that is overlooked in Blin’s account.

A long detour from the Mediterranean basin follows, as Blin meanders through the numerous military conflicts among the Latin “Franks” starting in 1524. His final chapter, “Religious Violence in a Secular World,” contrasts the great-power diplomatic comedy that officially provoked the Crimean War with the pragmatic local arrangements in Jerusalem. In it, Blin notes the war’s effect on Leo Tolstoy but not on Florence Nightingale (280–281). His conclusion reminds us that groups like ISIS today represent only a “pale, distorted imitation of the great jihadist movement of the Golden Age of Islam” (289), but it overlooks the pale and perhaps distorted relics from the Crusades in today’s Europe. For example, today’s Hospitallers, better known as Knights of Malta, whose predecessors heroically resisted a massive Ottoman siege in 1565 (an event unnoticed in this book), enjoy ornate special license plates in Rome, and today’s Teutonic Knights (co-educational since 1929) host occasional cultural events in their tranquil Viennese courtyard.

William Monter
Northwestern University


Goeschel’s fine monograph adds significantly to our understanding of the fatal attraction that paved the way to World War II. Goeschel asks a fundamental question, What drew the two dictators together, strategic requirements, ideological affinity, or friendship? Goeschel sees the connection between Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler as an “instrumental union and politically constructed relationship rather than an ideologically inevitable pact or real friendship” (3), although he concedes that the two shared some common ideological elements. Notwithstanding its internal stresses and inequalities, the regimes carefully constructed this friendship from elements both mythic and real. Goeschel’s work seeks to explain the relationship in its rich complexity, focusing on
“the rituals, ceremonies, emotions, gestures and other socio-political aspects of diplomacy” (7). Goeschel roots his argument in the current historiography that sees Hitler as a weak dictator, in the sense that he often expressed vague overarching goals that diverse factions within the Nazi leadership and bureaucracy competed to implement even without direct orders. Goeschel’s approach, however, seems much more problematical when applied to Mussolini, and he does not thoroughly argue that point.

Goeschel researched in a wide array of German and Italian archives and performed a comprehensive reading in the secondary literature. The resulting evidence covers the development of the Hitler–Mussolini relationship from the first, almost disastrous, encounter between the two in Venice (1934) to their last meetings during World War II. Goeschel chronicles the many meetings, the international and domestic context surrounding them, and the areas of common interest and conflict that animated them. The story covers both regimes’ attempts to overturn the interwar order. Germany landed in a premature war with Great Britain and France. Italy, for its part, initially reneged on its commitment to join forces with Germany, opting instead to launch a parallel war in 1940. After the German triumphs during the early war years, the two regimes suffered ever-more disastrous turns as the war progressed.

Goeschel’s main addition to the usual treatment of this subject is to wed traditional approaches to diplomatic history with techniques drawn from social history. Beyond the relationship between Mussolini and Hitler, Goeschel demonstrates that the public performance of their bond helped to develop an increasingly deep network of cultural, economic, and political ties between Germany and Italy. In short, the political performance art of fascist summit diplomacy had far more resonance than the decisions taken by the two leaders. This deeper reading of the Hitler–Mussolini relationship adds insightful nuance to it.

Despite its many accomplishments, the book does have some flaws. When Mussolini and Hitler met in May 1938, for example, the Anschluss had created serious cracks in the relationship. Ethnic Germans in the Sud Tyrol carried out anti-Italian activities in hopes of a re-unification with the Reich. Mussolini complained bitterly to his foreign minister that German aspirations could force the Italians to turn toward France as a counterweight to Germany—a bitter pill for Mussolini given the ideological divide between the Fascist regime and the French Republic and the two nations’ proxy war in Spain. At the pivotal meeting, Hitler gave Mussolini complete assurance that he saw the Brenner frontier as inviolable, and the two regimes eventually undertook talks to relocate ethnic Germans from the region to the Reich. With that crisis behind them, the two leaders proceeded down the twisting path to the Pact of Steel and eventual war. Although Goeschel pays considerable attention to the tortuous relations between the two powers regarding Austria, his analysis overlooked the importance of overcoming the problem of ethnic Germans in the Sud Tyrol in clearing the way for the development of the German–Italian relationship and the signing of the Pact of Steel in 1939.
On a larger plane, Goeschel argues that the “ideological parallels [between the two dictators] remained largely superficial,” and that the two regimes competed for control of the ultimate goals of the revolution in the world order that each, in his own way, strove to achieve. This characterization is reasonable—to a point. Nevertheless, the two leaders shared some remarkably similar ways of viewing the world. Both rooted their ideology in social Darwinism, and both saw expansion through military conquest as necessary for national health and a worthy aim in its own right to promote unity within their respective race-nations. As ultra-nationalists, they could never have had genuinely parallel goals, but their world views had far more in common than contingent events could undermine. Part of their relationship surely rested on a mutual recognition of similar frames of reference.

These caveats do not undermine Goeschel’s excellent research and his interesting, complex, argument. His methodology enriches our understanding of the diplomacy and pageantry of the 1930s. This work is essential reading for those trying to comprehend the sordid world that gave birth to World War II.

G. Bruce Strang
Brandon University

German Foreign Intelligence from Hitler’s War to the Cold War: Flawed Assumptions and Faulty Analysis. By Robert Hutchinson (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 2019) 341 pp. $34.95

In this carefully researched and well-written book, Hutchinson demonstrates how various German intelligence agencies misread, in basic ways, the major countries against which Germany fought in World War II—Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Instead of concentrating on these agencies’ endless rivalries, Hutchinson points to the misperceptions that they had in common. Furthermore, by contrast with much of the literature on the subject, he stresses the similarity between the ideological preconceptions of Germany’s intelligence agencies’ personnel and those of Adolf Hitler.

After a brief survey of Germany’s intelligence agencies, the book provides a thoughtful analysis of the erroneous perceptions that influenced their reports on Great Britain before the war and during its first years. Notwithstanding the London government’s insistence that Britain would go to war if Germany attacked Poland, Germany’s intelligence agencies doubted that Britain would do so. The Germans thought that Britain entered the war only because of Jewish influence. Given this misconstrual, the intelligence experts never grasped the London government’s determination to see the conflict through to complete victory.

The chapter about Germany’s assessment of the Soviet Union correctly stresses that prior anti-Russian and anti-Slavic prejudices substantially distorted the views and expectations of German intelligence
agencies in planning and executing the German invasion. These prejudices were reinforced by the intelligence community’s antisemitic views that both justified its participation in the Holocaust and prevented a realistic reconsideration of its erroneous views of Soviet military possibilities. The one point missing is any reference to the failure of many German commanders on the Eastern Front to develop an understanding of the great distances in the Soviet Union relative to what most of them had experienced on the Western Front in World War I.

The chapter about the German intelligence agencies’ dismissal of the potential military significance of the United States stresses the overestimation of Jewish influence on American policy. German civilian and military observers were convinced of a Jewish domination in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration. Colonel Frank Knox, the 1940 Republican candidate for Vice-President, had even engaged a local rabbi to bless a political rally (85). Friedrich von Bötticher, the German military attaché in Washington, who had direct access to Hitler, reported back to Germany in what can only be called hopeless inaccuracy. Hutchinson also should have stressed the legacy of the German political and military leadership’s refusal to give proper credit to America’s decisive military contribution to the victory on the Western Front in World War I.

Hutchinson offers a detailed account of the participation of German intelligence personnel in the atrocities of the racial war against Slavs and Jews on the Eastern Front; this part of the story will surprise most readers, since it has generally been absent from the literature on the fighting and the Holocaust. Members of Reinhard Gehlen’s Organization, the intelligence group that helped to carry out these atrocities, later became subject to Soviet blackmail and prosecution for war crimes after they began working for the Allies and the West German government. The material about this organization and the penetration of former high-ranking German officers into the American army’s postwar intelligence and historical work is largely new and instructive. These aspects of the Cold War and the early development of the West German Republic are rarely included in the existing literature. Wartime distortions affected the accounts of the war that were written just after it ended; at that time, thinking and planning for military conflict with the Soviet Union became paramount. It would not be unfair to suggest that the large Gehlen organization—paid first by Washington and then by Bonn—eventually fell under Moscow’s control, as the trial of one of its key members suggests.

The author’s important findings are grounded in extensive and detailed notes and a bibliography helpful for anyone interested in World War II and the early years of the Cold War. The book will also assist scholars of the Holocaust and any inclined to believe the fairytales filling the memoirs of German World War II military leaders.

Gerhard L. Weinberg
University of North Carolina

At the beginning of The Dyer’s Hand and Other Essays (New York, 1962), W. H. Auden states, “so long as a man writes poetry or fiction, his dream of Eden is his own business, but the moment he starts writing literary criticism, honesty demands that he describe it to his readers, so that they may be in the position to judge his judgments.” He then goes on to answer a questionnaire devised by himself with a view to doing exactly that. Although a blow-by-blow description of any particular dream of Eden is hardly necessary to ground a judgment on Elliott’s book, it will not be out of place to say that this reviewer supports the Catalan pacifist pro-independence movement and is in favor of an independent Catalan republic. After all, as Auden pointed out, “All the judgments, aesthetic or moral, that we pass, however objective we try to make them, are in part a rationalization and in part a corrective discipline of our subjective wishes.”

In Elliott’s words, Scots and Catalans is “the story of two self-proclaimed nations which, at least at the time of writing, do not have states of their own” (1), “an attempt to explore the origins and fluctuating trajectories of national sentiment in Scotland and Catalonia, and of the separatist movements to which it is currently giving rise” (4). Elliott’s comparative study of the political trajectories of Scotland and Catalonia from the end of the fifteenth century to the present day is both extremely useful and highly successful, insofar as it analyzes a wealth of historical detail in an agile, elegant prose. Besides, it could not be timelier. After all, it appears only four years after the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and at the precise moment when nine members of a former democratically elected Catalan government, a president of the Catalan parliament, and the leaders of two Catalan civil society organizations—Òmnium Cultural and the Assemblea Nacional de Catalunya—are in prison and on trial for organizing the so-called “unilateral” referendum on Catalan independence held on October 1, 2017.

Elliott’s account of Scotland’s relations with the rest of the United Kingdom and, more specifically, with England, as well as Catalonia’s relation with Spain or, more specifically, Castile, will leave no one in any doubt as to why today the Scots can decide their future as a nation whereas the Catalans cannot. There is a caveat, however. British Hispanism tends to see Spanish politics through the prism of Spanish nationalism, and Elliott’s book, particularly its last chapter—“Breaking Away? 1975–2017”—is a case in point. Granted, the Jordi Pujol governments in Catalonia (1980–2003) can be criticized for a variety of reasons, including “clientage and corruption” (234). That being said, to suggest that “the programme of Catalanization” initiated by Pujol was tantamount to “outright indoctrination” is as mistaken as to believe that Catalan academics and intellectuals who are not in favor of independence were being harassed and intimidated in the weeks leading up to the referendum (242, 255), or to regard the 1978 Spanish constitution as sacrosanct
Elliott himself reminds his readers, “Spain had lived under eight Constitutions between 1812 and 1931” (227). Granted, some of the (in)decisions made by Catalan pro-independence politicians both before and after the 2017 referendum are at least questionable, but to turn them into an object of scorn because they infringed Spanish legality is unjustified. One would expect a scholar of Elliott’s stature to be wary of the views about the “procés” (process) toward Catalan independence disseminated by El País, a prominent mouthpiece of Spanish nationalism, as well as a leading Castillian newspaper.

José Ortega y Gasset’s España invertebrada (1922) is a brutal apology for imperialism and a seminal text of Spanish nationalism. Even though Elliott mentions Ortega only once (209), the concepts of “incorporación histórica” and “particularismo” (particularism) as expounded in España invertebrada permeate his book. (Ortega borrows “incorporación histórica” from Theodore Mommsen’s synoikismos, that is, the amalgamation of two or more collectives into a higher unity.) In the 1930s, España invertebrada provided intellectual ammunition to the Falange, the Spanish fascist party, and its leader, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Henceforth, it has underpinned the Spanish nationalism espoused by intellectuals of all political hues.

As expected, Elliott uses an impressive variety of sources, but it is a pity that he has not taken the trouble to contrast the views disseminated by El País with those that can be read daily in VilaWeb, for example, or to reflect on the concepts of “incorporation” or “particularism” in the light of Josep Benet’s L’intent franquista de genocidi cultural contra Catalunya (Barcelona, 1995), which is not listed in the bibliography. Had he done so, the general tenor of his last chapter might have been less sympathetic to the Spanish political establishment.

Jordi Larios
University of St. Andrews

The National Debt: A Short History. By Martin Slater (New York, Oxford University Press, 2018) 321 pp. $34.95

This book is a welcome, concise, and informative study of the history of the national debt in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Formally, the national-debt story begins with the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694, but Slater discusses government borrowing before that date. Rich in detail but always clearly and accessibly written, the book focuses on such key issues as the rise and fall of national debt as a proportion of GDP, the redemption structure of the debt, its servicing costs, and the question of when debt should, and should not, be incurred. The book is interspersed with sections that analyze the views of economists about the national debt—David Hume, Adam Smith, James Maitland (eighth earl of Lauderdale), David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, and Robert Barro.
The main increases in debt were caused by the financial demands of war. The eighteenth century was aggressively expensive, the nineteenth comparatively quiescent. Wars usually cost more and lasted longer than expected. Over time, the cost of war rose; with each war, the national debt roughly doubled. Having been close to zero at the end of the seventeenth century, the national debt to GDP rose to reach more than 200 percent by the 1820s. It then steadily descended to about 25 percent in 1914, but by 1945, following two world wars, it stood at an unprecedented 240 percent of GDP. In 2018, it was around 85 per cent. Today, much of the national debt has long-term redemption dates, and existing low real interest rates mean that servicing costs are low. Indeed in 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron’s British government took advantage of the extraordinarily low interest rates to redeem and convert all of the outstanding perpetuities. Earlier generations were not so fortunate.

The book is particularly strong regarding the efforts to convert expensive debt raised in war into more manageable debt in the lower-interest environment following war. Just as Thomas Piketty (trans. Arthur Goldhammer), Capital in the Twenty-First Century (Cambridge, Mass., 2017) blended Honoré de Balzac and Jane Austen with a discussion of returns on capital, so too this book finds Austen amid consols and South Sea annuities. Slater’s discussion of these normally dry aspects of the structure and terms of debt is engaging and witty, as are the familiar stories of efforts to pay off debt through sinking funds being bedeviled by politicians dipping their sticky fingers into the pot. Slater takes up the question of whether debt should be used to pay for war at all in the context of World War I, although sometimes he seems to understate the political benefits of winning a war and choosing the political system under which future generations live. The cost of the two world wars far outstripped any previous expense, and the deleterious effects of these wars on the United Kingdom’s international assets was profound. Steadily, the post–World War II debt of 240 per cent of GDP was paid down, though the recent trend increase in the national debt is a new cause for concern. Slater rightly notes the GDP ratio in times of peace.

This thoroughly enjoyable book will benefit both academics and their students. It is also likely to interest a wider audience. It comes highly recommended.

Martin Chick
University of Edinburgh


Mawani’s Across Oceans of Law is an ambitious and sweeping look at South Asian migration and restriction that represents a critical intervention into historiographies of the British Empire and South Asian
radicalism. It centers on the story of the Komagata Maru—a ship that carried 376 South Asian passengers into the Vancouver harbor in May 1914, determined to challenge their exclusion from Canada. It asks, first, how foregrounding the ship and the sea as juridical forms reshapes our understandings of immigration restrictions and South Asian radicalism and, second, what is at stake, historically and conceptually, when histories of South Asian migration are situated within maritime worlds.

Other scholars have highlighted how the Komagata Maru led to the expansion of immigration controls and unleashed a series of repressive laws in Canada, India, the United States, and British white-settler countries across the world. Mawani, however, demonstrates that this story was not just about a ship seeking entry into Canada; it was also about how Britain’s “juridification of the sea” was advanced by legislation, treaties, agreements, and legal restrictions imposed on ships, passengers, and cargos. The book considers how a shift from the familiar narratives of arrival and territoriality to a maritime view of South Asian travel and migration opens additional vantage points from which to examine British and colonial law and anticolonialism.

One of Mawani’s interventions is the development of the idea of “oceans as a method.” Mawani’s engagement with the vast, dynamic, and ungovernable force of oceans methodologically reorients histories of South Asian migration in a number of ways. Rather than writing of the land and sea as discrete categories, Mawani views them as interconnected spaces of colonial history and anticolonial struggle. In doing so, she challenges the historical accounts of South Asian migration that have long privileged land/territory and region/nation, thereby diminishing the oceanic imaginaries of South Asian radicals and their circuitous and multidirectional journeys. Indeed, Mawani’s reading of the Komagata Maru through an oceanic framework challenges the nationalist and territorial focus of South Asian migration histories and even the ways in which transnational histories remain tied to borders and territoriality.

In centering oceans and ships as prominent sites of inquiry, Mawani rewrites the Komagata Maru’s voyage as a global and maritime legal history shaped by long-standing legacies of transatlantic slavery and indigenous dispossession. In her telling, the ship’s voyage exceeds the familiar narratives of immigration controls, dominion sovereignty, and white nationalism. As juridical formations, ships were embedded in wider structures of European conquest, territorial expansion, and resource/labor extraction and operated as technologies of British imperial rule.

One of Mawani’s most important contributions is her engagement with indigeneity and transatlantic slavery to argue that the free sea “was a racial and legal space marked by overlapping histories of colonial and racial dispossession” (33). She offers a brilliant reading of how the territorial dispossession of indigenous peoples in Canada, South Africa, Australia, and elsewhere figured in jurisdictional struggles over the Komagata Maru by demonstrating how South Asians evoked indigeneity to
reify racial hierarchies that differentiated “indigenous” from “migrant” and to utilize indigenous dispossession to challenge British domination. South Asian migrants and travelers thus deployed indigeneity in contradictory ways that could at times contest racial, temporal, and territorial divisions and at other times reproduce and reinforce them.

*Across Oceans of Law* is a capacious, global history that demonstrates how the construction of the “free sea” for Europeans depended upon the lack of freedom given to slaves, indentured laborers, indigenous peoples, and so-called free migrants. The *Komagata Maru* affords Mawani the opportunity to demonstrate how South Asian efforts to circumvent prohibitions to immigration posed a challenge not only to restrictive immigration laws but to Britain’s global, imperial, and racial order. This impressively researched and theoretically sophisticated book will profoundly transform the ways in which scholars of migration, empire, and anticolonialism approach their work.

Seema Sohi
University of Colorado

*Engineering the Eternal City: Infrastructure, Topography, and the Culture of Knowledge in Late Sixteenth-Century Rome.* By Pamela O. Long (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2018) 369 pp. $45.00

Between 1560 and 1590, the tumbledown flood-prone Rome of ancient ruins, clogged streets, and water shortages was re-imagined and re-engineered into a city much closer to what it is today. Through the initiatives of four popes, including the great builder Sixtus V, and a host of architect/engineers, noted artists, simple artisans, map makers, cardinals, civic officials, and private citizens, the city enjoyed a remarkable imaginative moment. One of the surprising and previously unknown (at least to me) stories that Long uncovers was a proposal from Sixtus V to rebuild the Colosseum by turning it into a woolen-cloth factory, complete with housing for poor workers. This was just one of the revitalizing projects, many of which succeeded. The repairs on two ancient aqueducts made possible the famous fountains of Rome and an abundant water supply for the parched inhabitants, especially those who could not afford water delivered by water carriers. Large-scale engineering kept the city in a flurry of activity: Masons repaired the ancient walls, built new palaces and churches; sewers were cleared; streets were redesigned, straightened, widened, and paved; popes had obelisks transported from their ancient sites to more propitious ones that celebrated the universal church; and physicians attempted to evaluate the healthfulness of Tiber water. Cartographers and lithographers relied on surveys to represent these renovations and to imagine new ones, fulfilling a growing demand for images of the ancient and modern city. “Reenvisioning Rome on paper and remaking Rome as a physical entity,” as Long puts it, “went hand in hand” (162).
Long’s approach reveals much about urban history because she works outside the usual disciplinary boundaries. The history of the engineering in the Renaissance does not fit into the history of science or architecture or urban planning. Although huge engineering projects were undertaken in the period, there were no engineers, engineering guilds, or engineering courses in the universities and no concept of an autonomous profession that adhered to commonly accepted principles and technologies. Long has become well-known among scholars of the Renaissance for identifying vital intellectual and practical endeavours that occurred without the support of any ostensible institutional structures and that do not fit well within the concerns of the modern disciplines. She calls these “‘trading zones’—arenas in which substantive communication occurred between university-educated people and those trained in artisanal workshops or in other practical/technical venues” (4). Expertise was unlicensed, even untutored, the result of discussions, arguments, and provisional planning among practitioners from a variety of backgrounds.

These debates and interactions among artisans and the learned produced the crucial foundation for the empirical sciences that evolved in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The refurbished infrastructure of sixteenth-century Rome exemplified a process of creative inquiry dependent more on interpersonal interactions than on freedom of publication and conscience. There is no little irony in the fact that papal Rome silenced Galileo, but that same Rome produced one of the most vital trading zones, anticipating the melding of theory and practice characteristic of modern science. Long’s thesis in this book and her previous works forces scholars to rethink the very origins of science as an endeavor that first thrived outside of the universities, academies, and scientific societies.

To make her case about the power of interpersonal interactions, Long’s brilliant research allows her to populate her book with fascinating stories about friends and rivals. One of the great debates of the period involved the location of the ancient Roman forum, known from literature but lost among the ruins. Trained as a painter, Pirro Ligorio became an expert on Roman antiquities by training his eye to see what others missed. Ligorio joined forces with Benedetto Egio, a priest and humanist who knew the Latin sources. Their rival was Bartolomeo Marliani, the author of a popular guidebook to Rome. The fierce mutual antagonism between the two camps expressed in printed texts and maps became a virtual primer on method, an example of the vigorous engineering culture of late sixteenth-century Rome.

Edward Muir
Northwestern University

1 Long, Artisan/Practitioners and the Rise of the New Sciences, 1400–1600 (Corvallis, 2011).
This edited collection picks up effectively on a range of trends that have emerged within Russian/Soviet environmental history and cognate areas during the last decade or so. At a general level, it aims to move away from the relatively restricted interpretations of Soviet environmental history that tended to dominate Western scholarship during the 1990s and early 2000s. In doing so, it showcases a range of alternative avenues for investigation and further analysis, gathering an internationally diverse group of academics to explore nature–society interactions and associated conceptualizations within imperial Russia and the Soviet Union.

In his introduction, Breyfogle suggests that the various contributions help to contextualize and analyze the changing character of nature–society interactions during the last 200 years or more of Russian and Soviet history. Furthermore, he argues that they also assist in highlighting the associated shifts in “understandings of ‘nature’” during this period. As in any edited collection, the various contributions differ in style and effectiveness. Nevertheless, taken together, the fourteen substantive chapters ably advance a nuanced and at times divergent picture of the multiple ways in which Russian and Soviet society mingled with the natural world. In order to further this agenda, the volume is divided into five main parts structured by the region’s main biophysical features and environments, in addition to a section dedicated to the interplay between health and disease.

A number of interesting themes can be distilled from the various contributions. First is a moderated and critical approach to the long-standing scholarly interest in Soviet prometheanism. Although the scale and destructive power of the Soviet project is clearly evident within many of the chapters, the authors generally acknowledge that it was not part of a blind descent into the ecological abyss but a consequence of the complex interplay between society–nature factors. Moreover, the Soviet regime was not devoid of its own environmental reflexivity, elements of which emerge repeatedly and in different forms within the different chapters. Second, many of the contributions emphasize the ongoing process during the last couple of centuries of “getting to know” the Russian and Soviet environments and the complexity of the natural processes at work across the vast Russian landmass.

Third, several of the chapters draw attention to the negotiated process at the heart of nature–society interaction. The chapters by Andy Bruno and Pey-Yi Chu are particularly effective in this regard. Bruno dwells on industrial development in northeastern Russia during the early Soviet period, and Chu reflects on Soviet engagement with the country’s extensive permafrost regions. What emerges from their analysis is, among other things, the multiple ways in which Soviet nature forced adaptive measures within Soviet society to permit production and construction activities to progress. As Christian Teichman and Lisa K.
Walker underline in their respective chapters about water issues and mosquitoes in modern-day Central Asia, openness to the persistent agency of the natural world helps to highlight the often “improvisational nature of the Soviet project” (282).

Fourth, a number of the chapters highlight the tensions between the Russian/Soviet state and the local population in the pursuit of a management system for environmental resources. Such tensions were observable most clearly in the Central Asian region where the large-scale water management efforts of the state met the seemingly petty resistance of local peoples (for example, the chapters by Teichmann and Julia Obertreis). They were also apparent in the Russian north where local knowledge of fisheries repeatedly intermingled with, and undermined, the scientific approach of the state. Julia Lajus’ chapter concerning the northern fisheries highlights the problems of championing differing knowledges, regardless of their origin, given the pressures in a rapidly developing country that can demand a melding of insights and understandings in order to manage a given resource.

In short, the volume has significant value in pushing ahead the noted broader agenda linked to the advancement of a critical Russian environmental history. The opening and closing chapters aptly situate the individual chapters within aspects of this agenda. Furthermore, taken as a whole, the various contributions provide interesting empirical data and invite nuanced interpretations of Russian/Soviet environmental history that will be of value in shaping further developments in the field.

Jonathan D. Oldfield
University of Birmingham

*Braided Waters: Environment and Society in Molokai, Hawai’i.* By Wade Graham (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2018) 262 pp. $70.00

Graham’s emphasis on the importance of the availability and control of water in shaping Molokai—and the Hawaiian islands in general—brings to mind debates about Karl Wittfogel’s theory of hydraulic despotism in *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York, 1957). It is also redolent of the influential lineage of ecologically oriented anthropologists—Steward, Rappaport, Netting, and Sahlins, among others—whose theories of socio-ecological change helped to shape the work of early environmental historians such as Worster.¹ Little wonder that Worster enthusiastically praises Graham’s work in his foreword.

*Braided Waters* offers a broadly chronological environmental history of the Hawaiian Islands, and Molokai in particular, beginning with the first 800 or so years of Polynesian settlement, followed by a series of chapters organized around important demarcations in Hawaiian ecological and economic history. By the time the first humans arrived on the islands, several million years of isolated evolution had produced stunning levels of biodiversity and endemism. For example, compared to Hawaii’s dozens of specialized honeycreeper species—all likely evolved from a wayward flock of Eurasian rosefinches—Charles Darwin’s Galapagos finches would have seemed about as interesting as Hyde Park starlings.

Polynesian settlement, which likely occurred in at least two waves, resulted from the same forces that pushed Norse settlers across the north Atlantic: Limited arable land combined with primogeniture meant that “oceanic expansion was a farmer’s imperative” (15). On board their vessels, these wayfarers packed their staples—taro, yam, and sweet potato (the latter indicating trade between Polynesians and South Americans)—along with various vegetables, fruits, and animals. Some they brought intentionally (chickens and pigs), and others presumably not (rats). Settling first in the well-watered valleys that favored irrigated taro farming—the most efficient form of agriculture on the islands—population growth gradually forced expansion into dryer leeward regions more suited to sweet potato and yam. Leeward agriculture was less stable and more labor-intensive, unsurprisingly spurring warfare among leeward chiefs eager to conquer the taro valleys of their windward rivals.

Graham’s history of pre-colonial Hawai‘i is heavily indebted to Kirch, an archeologist, particularly his collaborative work with Sahlins. Their fine-grained studies of Hawaiian material culture and ecological change in Oahu’s Anahulu river valley inform Graham’s theorizing throughout. Resource “thickness” or “thinness,” he argues, correlates with social “bigness,” and although the historical mechanism is at base environmental, it is not so much a deterministic and linear relation as it is a circular one: “Social bigness thrives on physical bigness and makes more of it through intensified land use to obtain more surplus, thereby making more social bigness through stratification.” The result is that frequently, although not inevitably, “social stratification and environmental degradation will tend to produce one another reciprocally” (42). This conclusion is similar to the one that Worster—heavily informed by Wittfogel and Steward—reached in his analysis of California’s hydraulic history. In Hawai‘i, Graham argues, regardless of whether the mode of production was primarily wet or dry, “Bigness constitutes itself, at least in part, on the destruction of the environmental basis of small community

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reproduction and by seizing control over the common resources that remain,” thereby expanding “into new areas with capital-intensive infrastructure and labor-intensive production” (43).

Graham demonstrates that the environmental and cultural imperatives that shaped life in pre-colonial Hawai‘i subsequently continued to do so, albeit within a different political and economic framework. “Thickness” increasingly came to mean an environment’s ability to support crop production for a global market, and in Hawai‘i that meant sugar cane, which further intensified the importance of water management, subordinating virtually all hydraulic projects to the needs of the sugar industry. In one of the most fascinating sections of the book, Graham details the work of Harold Lyon, a plant pathologist hired by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association to manage the territory’s upland forests in order to maximize water supply.

Since Hawai‘i was essentially a sugar colony by the late nineteenth century, Lyon effectively became the equivalent of a state forester. For the first decades of the twentieth century, he applied his eclectic blend of eugenics, utilitarian conservation, and sugar boosterism to forest management. Native plants, like native peoples, were destined to make way for the coming of American civilization. Lyon oversaw a massive re-planting program emphasizing hardy and fast-growing species—such as eucalypts, figs, bamboo, and guava—that he thought would stabilize the soil and create an optimal watershed for the sugar plains below. Today’s upland forests remain a legacy of Lyon’s “mad science,” as Graham calls it, not least in the back of the Mānoa Valley, site of the Harold Lyon Arboretum (151). Graham does not use the term, but one may as well call Lyon’s creation a “sugar forest,” the management of which largely obliterated the native upland ecosystem.

A smaller island with a large dry plain and many narrow valleys unsuited to sugar growing or large population centers, Molokai, both during its Polynesian and colonial phases, was always on the “thin” side compared to Oahu and Maui. Pineapple became its most successful export. Otherwise, the dryer sections of the island were used for cattle ranching, and the wet valleys continued to support populations growing traditional Polynesian crops augmented by various imports. Ecologically, cattle and pineapple decimated the dry side of the island. Politically, Molokai has always been torn between those who wish to preserve as many pre-contact lifeways as possible and those who have sought to create export-oriented economic-growth schemes—best represented by the Molokai Project, an expensive publicly subsidized venture designed to move water to the dry eastern half of the island to benefit pineapple growers. However, the Project was completed just as pineapple corporations like Dole began taking advantage of lower labor costs in Central America and Southeast Asia. Costly, ecologically problematic, and ultimately unnecessary, it was a testament to ill-conceived development, a poorly planned attempt to “thicken” and “make big” a place that was always characterized by thinness and smallness.
Compellingly argued, theoretically robust, and deeply researched, *Braided Waters* is an invaluable contribution to the historical literature about Molokai and the Hawaiian Islands in general that deserves a wide readership. Hopefully, it will spark more research into the environmental history of these stunningly beautiful and ecologically ravaged islands.

Frank Zelko
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How many readers of this journal consider winter’s short days, snow mounds, icy paths, piercing winds, and polar air as hazardous inconveniences, making for an annual ordeal alleviated only by tropical vacation and spring’s arrival? In his remarkable book, Wickman identifies this altogether negative attitude as a deeply ingrained tendency—what he ingeniously calls a “vernal bias”—of settled agricultural societies (13). The preference for planting and harvesting seasons is so pervasive, Wickman contends, that even scholars interested in the environmental history and political ecology of places with long winters have largely failed to appreciate the variety and complexity of cultural approaches to living through the coldest months of the year. As a result, they have underestimated “the many worlds that cold created,” none more so than the dynamic winter cultures of Native communities (1). By focusing on the interface between indigenous nations and European colonists in northeastern North America in terms of their competing adaptations to the especially cold decades of the Little Ice Age’s Late Maunder Minimum (the 1670s through the 1720s), *Snowshoe Country* offers a beautifully written and startlingly original analysis of early New England.

For all indigenous groups in the region, winter had long been a season of vigorous economic and social activity, including subsistence hunting and fishing. The opening four chapters show that, throughout the seventeenth century, the coincidence of lasting Little Ice Age conditions with the onslaught of English, French, and Dutch colonization created an imperative for Native peoples: Either improve their traditional forms of winter knowledge and maintain seasonal sovereignty further in the interior or suffer from disenfranchisement in colonial centers of power, such as Boston.

Snowshoes proved to be a key indigenous, wearable technology for mediating contests over territory in this period. Used skillfully, snowshoes’ advantages were numerous. Depending on their design, they enabled swift, silent, and energy-efficient travel atop snowfields. But, despite the book’s title, this is no simple history of a single object. Wickman draws from a wide range of scholarship in the environmental
humanities, postcolonial literary criticism, historical linguistics, and indigenous theory. He deftly integrates material evidence—the few relics of specialized footgear made before the nineteenth century and the quantitative climate data from ongoing scientific research—with his interpretation of such textual sources as colonial records, captivity narratives of hypothermia and frostbite, dictionaries, oral history, and poetry. As a result, he offers bracing reappraisals of the Pequot War (Chapter 2), King Philip’s War (Chapter 3), and the four Anglo-Wabanaki Wars (Chapters 5 and 6).

One of the most salient examples of Wickman’s interdisciplinary approach, is the use of Nixon’s notion of “slow violence” to characterize English settlers’ piecemeal encroachment into the Northeast’s western and northern uplands, which remained Native ground for more than a century.1 Not until the 1710s did colonial governments finally began to equip militiamen with snowshoes to patrol and attack places where Native groups overwintered. Afterward, nations like the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Wabanaki began to experience settler colonialism increasingly throughout the year, and winter became “a season of want” (3, 160, 225). These prolonged conflicts over winter lands were conspicuously absent from contemporaneous English publications—such as Cotton Mather’s Winter Meditations (1693) and Winter Piety (1712)—which, as Wickman details in Chapter 7, constituted a new subgenre of colonial literature that assumed the permanence of English settlement and the primacy of their ideas about seasonal weather.

The book is focused on the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century but reaches into the twenty-first. The penultimate chapter and conclusion borrow Anishinaabe poet Gerald Vizenor’s neologism “survivance” (combining survival and endurance) to frame a Maliseet story recorded in the twentieth century about a blizzard that saved Rabbit from predation by Lynx. This fable explains what at first glance seems to be an inappropriate choice for the book’s cover image—a photograph of a Canada lynx chasing a snowshoe hare across frozen ground. Wickman describes the “measured optimism” with which Native peoples in the region came to think of figures like the hare and of winter itself as metaphors for their 400-year collective experience of settler colonialism. In some ways, they adopted settlers’ view of winter as a time of peril to be endured with patience and fortitude until it cedes to spring (273). The cruel irony is that this metaphor—the diminution of winter-time signaling indigenous resurgence—is coming to be realized amid the radical climatic changes of the present, including New England’s increasingly warmer, abbreviated winters.

Anya Zilberstein
Concordia University

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In Jim Crow Capital, Murphy fuses social history’s fine-grained examinations with political history’s grand narratives. The result is a welcome contribution to black women’s history that reveals the pivotal role that the nation’s capital played in the long civil-rights movement. By combining formal and informal political action, Murphy adeptly switches between the terrain of local politics and a more national perspective. Indeed, particularly in her early chapters, Murphy is attentive to the spatial and symbolic elements of activism. She opens with a map of black women’s organizations and a description of an anti-lynching parade’s route around Washington’s famous monuments. Murphy demonstrates that public commemoration was itself a terrain of struggle as activists championed black leaders such as Frederick Douglass while deriding a proposed “mammy” memorial.

Murphy’s most innovative findings are about police brutality, a growing problem in the early years of the Great Depression. Documenting police brutality against black women is a notoriously difficult task because most cases of brutality and sexual harassment went unreported. Tracing protests led by black women, in mass meetings and marches against the white police force, allows Murphy to uncover the iceberg of violence below the surface of the few brutality cases documented in the black press. Many women leading these protests had cut their teeth on anti-lynching activism and applied the lessons that they learned to police brutality. The 1934 anti-lynching protests, for example, generated the indelible image of activists standing in front of the White House with ropes draped around their necks. Similarly, black women staged a mass march against police brutality in 1938. Their work resulted in the appointment of a new police commissioner and increased attention to the issue. In this instance, Murphy’s linking of political and social history yields significant findings that are directly relevant to the present.

Similarly, Murphy’s description of the economic justice demanded by black women helpfully expands labor activism beyond unionization and male unemployment. Because domestic service was the primary occupation for black women, the exclusion of domestics from New Deal programs and the degradation of their work was particularly problematic. Murphy interweaves formal political organizations, which led economic boycotts and demanded better employment opportunities, with more informal activism. Given black women’s inability to exert much influence on legislation such as the Social Security Act, this informal activism assumed a significant role. Relief cooperatives, for example, offered working-class women an opportunity to escape the low wages of domestic service and to exchange services for goods. More dramatically, black women seeking work as charwomen for the federal government rioted when overwhelming numbers showed up hoping to obtain government jobs.
The symbolic and strategic location of Washington, D.C., helped to mobilize African Americans to seek their legal equality in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1940s, the struggle for racial integration took center stage in Washington, D.C., amid the the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) and Double V campaigns. Murphy helpfully gives the 1943 Howard University sit-in movement its appropriate context as part of the interlocking campaigns for federal legislation and local control. Voting rights, full access to public accommodations, and representation in local and federal governments galvanized black women activists. Black women connected their campaign for voting rights to the historical legacy of Douglass and other nineteenth-century activists and the legacy of Reconstruction. This politicized atmosphere brings new life to the familiar story of Marian Anderson’s famous concert at the Lincoln Memorial, which provided a powerful image of black presence in the capital city.

Throughout her book, Murphy eschews class conflict in favor of tracing black women’s networks. Because at least some of this class conflict involved the terrain of culture, which Murphy explicitly chooses not to explore, this analysis generally works well. The question remains, however, about the extent to which reformers efforts to “professionalize” domestic service or to police working-class women’s lives attracted resentment. Overall, Murphy’s careful mining of archival sources and black newspapers reveal the sometimes-surprising lobbying work of black women activists and their innovative direct-action strategies. In churches, YWCAs, and Washington’s streetscapes, the collective political and social lives of black women created a powerful social movement.

Victoria W. Wolcott
University at Buffalo


*Fight the Power* might strike one as a timely book, though Taylor’s primary objective is to demonstrate that resistance to police power has a long history spanning much of the twentieth century. The book catalogs decades of leftist activism to defend African Americans, humanize victims of police brutality, and place restraints on police authority. Taylor views the Black Lives Matter Movement, which he briefly discusses in the final chapter, as only the most recent incarnation of a protracted campaign to publicize police abuse and protect African Americans from targeted violence.

The narrative begins with a survey of exposés on police brutality published in the *People’s Voice*—Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell’s progressive newspaper published between 1942 and 1948.
Taylor aptly views this publication as tied to the frustration about the Harlem Riots of 1935 and 1943, each of which was sparked by police assaults on people of color. The *People’s Voice*—unlike the popular press, which demonized rioters as criminals and rabble-rousers—documented multiple cases of police violence against innocent black victims.

The next three chapters take a similar approach in contrasting white-owned media reports about crime and disorder with the alternative versions provided by the Communist Party, the Nation of Islam, and the mainstream civil-rights movement. The middle chapters document the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant Riots of 1964, the contrasting strategies of mainstream and militant civil-rights organizations, the establishment of a temporary Civilian Complaint Review Board (*CCRB*), and the backlash of the Policemen’s Benevolent Association (*PBA*). Taylor compares Mayor John Lindsay’s police-reform initiatives favorably with the intransigence of his predecessor, Robert F. Wagner, Jr., but ultimately sees Lindsay’s agenda as undercut by *PBA* racism. *Fight the Power* is especially good at documenting the ways in which the *PBA* tapped into white anger, blaming blacks and Latinos for rising crime rates and “help [ing] to foster a false narrative that the interests of black people were diametrically opposed to those of whites” (190).

At this juncture, *Fight the Power* takes a curious chronological leap from the 1966 referendum defeat of the *CCRB* to the 1994 mayoralty of Rudolph Giuliani. This lengthy gap includes several seminal events in New York City law enforcement: the 1968 police beating of student protestors at Columbia University; the 1969 Stonewall riots; the police-abetted 1970 construction workers’ riot; the 1972 police raid and shootout at Harlem Mosque No. 7; the 1970s fiscal crisis resulting in a climate of racial fear and the layoffs of thousands of police officers; the tenure of the Benjamin Ward (1984–1989), the city’s first black police commissioner; and the 1991 Crown Heights riot. The Giuliani chapters briefly mention the all-civilian review board established in 1993 by David Dinkins, the city’s first African-American mayor, but its primary focus is on how Giuliani gutted the board’s power. The next chapters cover a familiar story of aggressive policing, including the “broken windows” theory, the “zero tolerance” campaign, the Street Crimes Unit, “stop and frisk,” and the high-profile police assault of Abner Louima and the murder of Amadou Diallo.

*Fight the Power* provides a favorable view of the restraints placed upon aggressive policing during Michael Bloomberg’s and especially Bill de Blasio’s administrations. Taylor commends de Blasio for banning racial profiling, passing “right to know” legislation, implementing police-sensitivity training, and decriminalizing marijuana possession, but he depicts his reform agenda as incomplete due to de Blasio’s unwavering support for the “broken windows” approach. The overall tone of the final chapter is one of partial triumph, including a minority-majority police force and “policies that could not have been imagined in the 1970s and 1980s” (248). Taylor’s enthusiasm is tempered by the continued criminalization
of African Americans and Latinos and the disproportionate spending on law enforcement and incarceration.

Andrew Darien
Salem State University

King and the Other America: The Poor People’s Campaign and the Quest for Economic Equality. By Sylvie Laurent (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2018) 318 pp. $85.00 cloth $29.95 paper

Every year around the time of Martin Luther King’s birthday, we hear that the revered civil-rights leader came to understand late in his life that sweeping economic reform was essential for racial progress, but that this “radical” King has been obscured by the antiseptic apostle of brotherhood favored by the media. Since we hear this theme every year, we may ask just how deeply suppressed it can be. King as economic thinker and activist is nonetheless an undeniably neglected topic. Laurent addresses it in this new book, focusing particularly on the Poor People’s Campaign of 1967/8, King’s ambitious last political initiative.

Laurent first shows, following the lead of Jackson and Birt, that King had a deep background in social-democratic thought, having stressed inequality and economic justice for decades. She thus firmly rejects the “radicalization” thesis, arguing instead that the Poor People’s Campaign was “the culmination of King’s lifelong thinking on the nature of justice” (13). Laurent portrays the campaign as a link in a “long chain” of black progressive intellectuals, including Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and King contemporaries A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin.

The next major section tells the story of the Campaign, though Laurent acknowledges that she “does not describe in depth the fine details,” instead using the history to illustrate King’s “understanding that racial inequality was embedded in class” (98). An important turning point was King’s traumatic experience with the Chicago Freedom Movement of 1965–1967. Exposure to entrenched segregation and powerlessness in a northern city “left an indelible impression on King” (123). Worse yet, he found that his message of nonviolence and interracialism was no match for Stokely Carmichael’s “black power” slogan in its appeal to urban black youth. King may not have been “radicalized” by his Chicago experience, but his interest in sweeping economic reform also responded to political competition on his left flank. Support for the sanitation workers of Memphis in 1968 reflected King’s plans for a new

1 Thomas F. Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice (Philadelphia, 2006); Robert Birt, The Liberatory Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.: Critical Essays on the Philosopher King (Lanham, 2012).
phase of the movement, more oriented toward progressive economic goals.

The account of the rise and fall of Resurrection City, the six-week poor people’s live-in on the National Mall in 1968, is one of the most interesting parts of the book, but it conveys the sinking feeling that failure was preordained. Amid intense planning for the event, King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4. The organizers carried on, but the project was beset with media skepticism, FBI hostility, political fragmentation, and the absence of well-defined achievable goals. Bayard Rustin, who was recruited as national coordinator on May 24, counseled pragmatism. He published an updated version of the Economic Bill of Rights on June 5, advancing a specific legislative agenda. His reward was dismissal for insubordination by Ralph Abernathy on June 7. Robert Kennedy, by then a presidential candidate and a strong supporter of the Campaign, was himself assassinated on June 6. Resurrection City was razed by district police on June 24.

In the last section, Laurent attempts to salvage a legacy from this fiasco by maintaining that King and the Campaign “echoed and anticipated many academic works on urban poverty and structural inequalities” (219), highlighting the work of Wilson (who contributes a brief foreword) and other scholars. This attempt is a stretch. King tried to make sense of the turbulent world in which he lived, while remaining true to his own deepest values, including a willingness to advance radical economic proposals. In doing so, he drew from, and worked with, many of the leading thinkers of the times. But neither King nor the experts could have foreseen the economic world in which we now find ourselves, and none of them truly cracked the code of race–class interaction in American society. Laurent deserves credit for elucidating the “real” Martin Luther King over the sanitized icon, but we should look to the man for inspiration and values, not particularly for an economic policy agenda.

Gavin Wright
Stanford University


A short film made in 1951 showed the failed uses of petroleum by “primitive” preindustrial societies to American audiences. Alongside Babylonians and Chinese were half-naked and feather-adorned Native Americans—actually, white men dressed as Indians—who used the precious

2 See, for example, William Julius Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy (Chicago, 1987).
substance as skin lubricant. Such unworldly crudeness was set against the exalted technological breakthroughs of modern industry, which had discovered the true value of oil as energy and thus gave proof of mankind’s “unconquerable urge to improve his lot” (133).

The film was jointly produced by the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Sinclair Refining Company. In its combination of the tropes of “resource primitivism” and “extractive supremacy,” as well as the close tie that it reveals between government and business, this piece of Technicolor propaganda encapsulates the unsettling larger story that Black tells about Interior and its foreign policy. Because the United States had harnessed the power of oil and other strategic minerals, it claimed the right to exploit oil and other natural resources on a vast geographical scale during the second half of the twentieth century. “Minerals were . . . not just a straightforward motive for expansion,” Black says, “they were also a vital means for it” (6).

_The Global Interior_ reveals that the Department of the Interior was much more than the inward-facing maker of domestic policies about public land. Through a series of deeply researched chapters, Black argues that after Interior began its foreign policies of expansion in the American West, it succumbed to the allure of projects in the Global South, the mineral-rich floors of the world’s oceans, and even outer space. The nineteenth-century history of American settler colonialism and the twentieth-century history of American global expansion are connected through the work of Interior officials to capture and use the physical bounty of the nation’s and then the world’s raw materials.

Black excavates several of Interior’s policies of national and international resource control, from oil and coal leasing on Native American reservations to mineral surveys in Latin America and South Asia and the prospecting of natural resources by the Landsat satellite. These and other policies had the common purpose of expanding the United States’ global reach and ensuring national security. They were also grounded in the same ideology, through which Interior refined its image as a civilized and expert warden of natural resources. This view served to soften critiques of the nation’s hard power, to replace naked visions of imperial resource hunger with the more cooperative technical language of environmental management and international development. The cultural production of such foundational ideas of American proficiency and superiority are central to understanding the advance of U.S. power in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the deeply entrenched belief in the benevolence of that advance.

Other aspects of the history merit attention. Throughout the twentieth century, Interior joined forces with the private sector in a corporatist model of national expansion. Government officials and corporate executives consistently welded the logic of national security and national wealth in the process. In the cases of the Landsat earth-resource satellite and offshore oil leases, Interior worked closely with the world’s wealthiest oil companies to pursue the national interest in pushing resource extraction to its technological and spatial limits.
Black’s book also clearly identifies the losers in this story. *The Global Interior* provides enthralling detail about the legal and economic means by which Interior and other parts of the U.S. government, especially in the executive and legislative branches, undermined indigenous and so-called “Third World” resource sovereignty. The example of the political convergence of OPEC and the Council of Energy Resource Tribes in the 1970s is particularly telling. Environmentalists, too, were frustrated by the failures of Interior to regulate industry. Indeed, the technocratic capitalism of Interior’s expansion to the exterior consistently was characterized by lopsided benefits for the few to the detriment of the many.

*The Global Interior* is a highly recommended history of the causes and consequences of mineral exploitation in the development of twentieth-century American power. Based on the deep knowledge that comes from rigorous research, it plots a fresh narrative of the United States’ place in the world.

Christopher Dietrich
Fordham University

*Profit and Passion: Transactional Sex in Colonial Mexico.* By Nicole von Germeten (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2018) 235 pp. $85.00 cloth $34.95 paper

Despite the ubiquitousness of prostitution, the history of prostitution can be elusive; literary and archival sources that record transactional sex can be ambiguous and slippery to interpret. Von Germeten argues that despite the effacement of written records regarding transactional sex in the early Latin American colonial archives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sexuality and gender lay at the heart of the Spanish imperial enterprise, and indeed of the rise of global imperialism. By the eighteenth century, legal records in the Spanish viceroyalties became more extensive with the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus. Yet in contrast to historians’ research of Spain, the interrogation of records of women accused of commercial sex in Mexico’s viceregal era (1492–1824) has been marginalized, or even suppressed, by historians in favor of repeating the repressive rhetoric of prescriptive sources.

Von Germeten proposes to restore women’s voices to the historical record and to trace the evolution of discourses in the colonial archives regarding “public women”—whores, bawds, and prostitutes (*mujer pública*, *ramera*, *alcahueta*, *puta*, *prostituta*, *escandalosa*, and *mujer mala*). She examines these terms in pre-1824 legal proceedings in which accused women attempted to defend themselves and their dignity and to characterize their behaviors rhetorically. Von Germeten takes an interdisciplinary approach by comparing literary discourses of bawds, panderers, and whores from the Middle Ages through the early modern era in such foundational texts of Spanish literature as *El libro de Buen Amor* (1330, 1343), *La Celestina* (1499), and *La Lozana andaluza* (1528) with the legal
discourses of prosecutions of women engaged in public sexual commerce and to official decrees and regulations of brothels. She observes that not even the shift during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from regarding commercial sex as a moral sin to its being considered a criminal offense could remove the stigma from the term *whore* (*puta* or *ramera*).

Methodologically, von Germeten claims that the composition and politics of the archives must be examined and the mediated nature of the records taken into account just as in the interpretation of literary sources. After all, both the accusations against the women and the women’s legal defenses entered the record through the mediation of scribes. The records merely represent an inexact echo of a voice, and the “textualizing of the body” involved several people (3). Rather than attempting to narrate a coherent, definitive story for these women’s self-characterizations and defenses, von Germeten highlights the elusive nature of their meaning, self-consciously resisting the alluring closure suggested by narrative trajectories of these women’s stories as either triumphant self-determination or tragic victimization.

After discussing her methodological concerns in the introduction, von Germeten lays out the legal and historical background of the category “prostitute” in the first two chapters. Each of the five following chapters analyzes a different set of legal discourses in roughly chronological order: mistresses or “kept women” in Chapter 3; courtesans in Chapter 4; poor, disruptive women in Chapter 5; poor women characterizing themselves as respectable ladies in Chapter 6; and late-viceregal cases of mothers prostituting their daughters and family-run brothels that cast young women as innocent victims in Chapter 7. In the conclusion, von Germeten broadens her perspective, placing these cases in the context of the history of prostitution on a global scale from the nineteenth century to the present.

*Profit and Passion* offers a fascinating glimpse into the colonial archives that is useful and informative for historians and literary scholars alike. Von Germeten restores these women’s voices to historical accounts of their identity, and her nuanced approach to the mediated nature of the discourses will help to bring much-needed caution to our reading of these types of records.

Catherine M. Jaffe
Texas State University

*Sexuality and the Unnatural in Colonial Latin America*. Edited by Zeb Tortoricci (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2016) 256 pp. $70.00 cloth $29.95 paper

The saddest of the many sad stories explored in this collection is the case of José Mariano—a young indigenous boy spotted “fornicating with [a mare]” near the town of Puebla, central Mexico, in 1803 (201). Witnesses reported that he had tied the mare’s hind legs to a tree and
on discovery, quickly covered his genitals with his long cotton shirt. Convicted of the nefarious crime of bestiality, Mariano remained in prison for thirty years.

*Sexuality and the Unnatural in Colonial Latin America* explores many poignant cases of sexual practice deemed unacceptable by contemporaries, as well as many cases that today’s readers might expect to have been considered deviant. Besides bestiality, incest, sodomy, same-sex relationships of various sorts, and masturbation make an appearance, as do solicitation in the confessional and other clerical abuses of power. The volume has a foreword by Asunción Lavrin and an epilogue by Pete Sigal, two pioneering scholars of colonial sexuality, and includes an introduction by Tortoricci.

Thankfully, the harsh punishment meted out to Mariano was not typical. Among the most striking conclusions that readers will draw from this volume is that some sexual activities that we might imagine to have attracted punitive sanctions were dismissed as trivial. Jacqueline Holler and Nora Jaffary contribute excellent chapters that use Inquisition records to explore the cases of Mexican women who inserted religious images and communion wafers into their vaginas or reported ongoing sexual relationships with the devil. The religious authorities to whom these women confessed their activities were unimpressed. They made discreet enquiries about the women’s mental stability and encouraged the women to go away. María Getrudis Arévalo was obliged to denounce herself four times before inquisitors took action. Ronaldo Vainfas, Tortoricci, and Chad Thomas Black find similar situations in colonial Brazil and Ecuador, where officials showed little zeal for prosecuting women who engaged in sex with demons, or other women.

A number of contributions make clear that the Catholic church has a long history of prioritizing its reputation over protecting the public from predatory priests. Alongside these accounts of youths abused by priests, a chapter by Martín Bowen Silva explores the sexual lives of children in late colonial Chile through an examination of the “confessions” of José Ignacio Eyzaguirre, a member of an elite Chilean family, who carefully detailed his youthful quest for sexual knowledge in a series of notebooks.

Bowen Silva’s interesting chapter seems to be as much about the Enlightenment’s emphasis on (self-) experimentation as a source of knowledge as it is about the relationship between sexuality and the unnatural. For some contributors, the unnatural provides an effective route to understanding the meanings that historical actors ascribed (for example) to sodomy or bestiality, but for others, it appears to be an etic category fastened onto their analysis in a laudable, if not entirely successful, attempt to unite all chapters under a common theme. Although the introduction makes an effort to frame the chapters in terms of the nebulous division between the natural and the unnatural, the volume does not offer a clear explanation of why this term is the best way to frame the varied activities explored in the individual chapters.
Nor is sexuality necessarily the key concept in all these cases. As several contributors explain, many of the behaviors that they analyze attracted concern because they reflected possible doctrinal lapses or violated broader social norms, not because they were viewed as sexually deviant. Arguably, therefore, the two concepts framing this collection are not necessarily the most helpful; the collection stops short of fulfilling its ostensible aim of showing that “the unnatural” was “a fundamental category of difference” (6). The collection functions best as a set of interesting case studies rather than as a sustained exploration of how the category of natural/unnatural illuminates our understanding of sexuality in colonial Latin America.

When viewed from this alternate perspective the volume is an absolute success. The chapters are rich in detail culled from archives across the hemisphere; readers interested in the intimate lives of the men, women, and children who peopled colonial Latin America will learn much from them. Along with Mariano’s tragic tale are accounts of the Peruvian official Damián de Morales, who dressed up as an indigenous housemaid (complete with face paint) in an effort to arouse Antón del Tierra del Congo; Quiteñas Josefa Lara and Manuela Palis, arrested for carousing, rowing in public, and maintaining an “illicit friendship” (123); and many others. Tortorici has brought together an excellent array of scholars and scholarship, making Sexuality and the Unnatural a welcome addition to the literature about colonial Latin America.

Rebecca Earle
University of Warwick

Mexico City, 1808: Power, Sovereignty, and Silver in an Age of War and Revolution. By John Tutino (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2018) 296 pp. $95.00 cloth $29.95 paper and e-book

Tutino conceived this study in dialogue with global and Atlantic history, and he developed it with tools, categories, and arguments from fiscal and economic history, as well as the history of political culture, social history, and even prosopography. He examines not only the functioning of the Hispanic monarchy and the crisis that led to its collapse but also the articulation of world capitalism and the construction of nation-states and liberal regimes. Tutino chooses the juncture of 1808 in Mexico City to analyze the transformations of global markets and their foundations in the so-called age of revolutions. Therefore, the intention of the study is to link the explanations of “silver capitalism” and the “pivotal importance of New Spain’s silver”—regarding both Spain and the global trades—with the emergence of modern politics and its diverse notions and articulations of popular sovereignty.
The book proposes to understand the Spanish monarchy in America as a noncoercive regime of corporate negotiations, that is, of mediation dependent on its capacity to administer justice and negotiate. From this perspective, Tutino explains the political crisis of 1808 as the erosion of the legitimacy of a system that was essentially judicial. The historical laboratory in which Tutino examines this hypothesis is Mexico City, assumed as the capital of silver globalization. In this context, the regime of mediation becomes visible thanks to a delicate balance between dependence, social fragmentation, charity, and exploitation. In the passages of the book in which the social vision is more determinant, Mexico City appears as a fascinating (and fragmented) ethnic, economic, and political-judicial mural in which oligarchs, bureaucrats, merchants, artisans, weavers, saddlers, masons, shoemakers, and Indians coexist. For Tutino, the abdications of the Spanish Bourbons in favor of Napoleon fractured the regime’s coalition between oligarchs (great financiers, mining entrepreneurs, and agrarian capitalists) provincial elites, and professionals.

In this sense, Tutino views the 1808 coup against the Viceroy of New Spain as an attempt to preserve silver capitalism in favor of leading merchant financiers, top mining entrepreneurs, and great landlords. Judging from the 1821 Independence Act, this alliance did not appear to lose. The military and political maneuver of 1808 kept New Spain’s silver tied to the Spanish patriotic resistance of Seville and guaranteed that Mexico’s “immigrant Spaniards” would remain at the head of the government. But it also opened the doors to popular mobilization, conspiracy, and a gradual militarization of justice. The 1808 coup constrained politics; the 1810 rebellion opened it exponentially: Throng of people sought food, social justice, and independence in the countryside, thus beginning a decade of “armed political and social conflicts” that destroyed silver capitalism and exalted military power in the name of popular sovereignty.

This book has a thematic connection with Tutino’s The Mexican Heartland: How Communities Shaped Capitalism, a Nation, and World History, 1500–2000 (Princeton, 2017), his Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America (Durham, 2011), and many other works. However, it fails to make reference to various other studies that in 2008 analyzed the bicentennial of the Hispanic crisis in

1 See, for example, John Kicza and Rebecca Horn, Resilient Cultures: America’s Native Peoples Confront European Colonization, 1500–1800 (New York, 2003); Doris M. Ladd, The Making of a Strike: Mexican Silver Workers’ Struggles in Real Del Monte, 1766–1775 (Lincoln, 1988); Carlos Marichal, From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000 (Durham, 2006); Felipe Castro, La rebelión de los indios y la paz de los españoles (Historia de los pueblos indígenas de Mexico) (Mexico City, 1996); above all, Barbara and Stanley Stein, Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe (Baltimore, 2000).
America, as well as to the flourishing conceptual history of the Ibero-American world for this period.\(^2\)

The book may leave readers with a relatively idyllic view of the regime of mediation in which everything seems to have worked through institutional and corporate channels of negotiation and nothing or almost nothing through force and coercion. The perception of a rich, stable, and functional New Spain destroyed by the independence war to become a politically and socially violent Mexico evokes the conservative vision of Alamán.\(^3\) Moreover, the absence of the necessary Hispanic–American context (Caracas and Montevideo, 1808, and Quito and Upper Peru, 1809) weakens the book’s global pretensions. Emphasis on Mexico’s economic and fiscal link with Seville, for example, contrasts with current more polycentric interpretations of empires. Finally, although the book recognizes the importance of militias and militarization, it does not explore the political and social particularities of this armed universe.

Rodrigo Moreno Gutiérrez
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Feeding the World: Brazil’s Transformation into a Modern Agricultural Economy. By Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2019) 413 pp. $94.99 cloth $32.99 paper

Esteemed co-authors Klein and Vidal Luna have added one more outstanding book to their previous important volumes that exhaustively explored the economic and demographic history of Brazil, slavery, the Cold War, and the period of the military dictatorship, 1964–1985. Feeding the World traces the change in Brazilian agriculture from a long-standing colonial legacy of reliance on single exports (sugar and coffee), based on low-technology and the continuing incorporation of new lands on the internal frontier, using unskilled labor and few agricultural inputs. By contrast, today Brazil is one of the top five world producers of thirty-six agricultural products, and the first- or second-largest exporter of dozens of crops including oranges, sugar, beef, chicken, corn, and soy, using highly mechanized production techniques, advanced

\(^2\) See, for example, Alfredo Ávila y Pedro Pérez Herrero (comps.), Las experiencias de 1808 en Iberoamérica (Mexico City, 2008); Manuel Chust (coord.), 1808: La elusión juntera en el mundo hispano (México City 2007); the special issue “1808: una coyuntura germinal” in Historia Mexicana, LVIII, no. 1 (229) (July–September 2008), 1–486; and the special issue “Soberanía, lealtad e igualdad: las respuestas americanas a la crisis imperial hispana, 1808–1810” in Secuencia, commemorative number (2008), 1–287. For conceptual history, see Javier Fernández Sebastián (dir.), Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano 1750–1850 [Iberconceptos-I] (Madrid, 2009); idem (dir.), Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano: Conceptos políticos fundamentales, 1770–1870 [Iberconceptos-II] (Madrid, 2014).

\(^3\) Lucas Alamán, Historia de México (Mexico City, 1849–1852).
agricultural research, and highly developed systems for agricultural credit and inputs.

How did this thoroughgoing transformation happen over the past fifty years? The aim of the book is to provide an explanation, particularly given the contrasting failure of Brazil’s efforts to modernize its industrial sector. The authors argue that the transformation of Brazilian commercial agriculture was due to “the introduction of new products, the occupation of new spaces, and the utilization of the most modern technology available in the market” (2). EMBRAPA, Brazil’s outstanding agricultural research institute, emerged during this period to develop and promote a number of innovations in tropical agriculture. Reorganization and integration of the systems of agricultural credit and marketing led to an impressive growth in production and agricultural exports. The strategy adopted to modernize Brazilian agriculture avoided land-reform initiatives such as those undertaken by many other Latin American nations to address the persistent concentration of landownership. Instead, Brazil’s military government undertook a “conservative agricultural revolution,” providing incentives for traditional landowners to become modern farmers, while leaving traditional land tenure systems intact.

Under the military dictatorship of the 1960s and 1970s, agricultural development became a priority to keep urban food costs low and overcome the concentrated structure of power and land in rural areas that was an impediment to agricultural development. The regime introduced subsidized credit, minimum pricing policies, and government purchase of agricultural stocks. The military regime also initiated EMBRAPA’s sophisticated agricultural-research program, the factor that “best explains agricultural productivity gains over the past 20 years” through the development of new seed and cattle varieties as well as other technologies implemented on the acidic soils of the cerrado region, primarily in Mato Grosso (41). During the economic crisis of the 1980s, these agricultural-support policies were largely eliminated in favor of the adoption of neoliberal policies, leading market actors to develop integrated systems that would become the principal source of commercial agricultural credit. These changes allowed Brazilian commercial farmers to compete successfully on the world market because of the high productivity of its agriculture.

This well-written and data-rich economic history combines a broad understanding of social history with painstaking quantitative analysis from multiple official sources to demonstrate key points and paint a thorough picture of the historical trends. The book, which is organized into nine chapters plus an introduction and conclusions, presents voluminous data—21 maps, 62 graphs, and 107 tables meticulously support its findings and conclusions regarding how and why Brazil became the world’s largest food exporter.

The first chapter, “Antecedents,” discusses the evolution of Brazilian agriculture from the colonial period until the 1960s, and the second
chapter provides a detailed portrait of the post-1960 “new agricultural economy.” The third chapter reviews the many causes that contributed to this dramatic transformation. The fourth chapter focuses more specifically on the inputs, technology, productivity, and sustainability of Brazilian commercial agriculture. Chapter 5 discusses the important regional differences in wealth, rural well-being, and farm size, and Chapters 6, 7, and 8 focus, respectively, on the states of Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul, and São Paulo to demonstrate the important regional variations in the evolution of commercial agriculture over the last half-century. Chapter 9 focuses on the “Agrarian Question” and the fate of Brazil’s noncommercial farmers, who were largely left out of the conservative modernization approach adopted in Brazil, leading to persistent violent land conflicts and deforestation, especially in the northern and northeastern regions. In these regions, the authors show that even in official colonization areas, poor living conditions and educational levels, as well as low incomes, prevail among farmers largely relegated to the traditional agricultural practices of a century ago.

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The main intent of this engaging and deeply informed book is to highlight the hybrid character of certain encounters between Aborigines and Europeans on the Australian frontier. Each chapter’s point of departure is a particular, usually obscure, artifact from a museum collection that embodies this hybridity in material form. The circumstances that led to the creation of these artefacts provide the narrative framework for what proves to be a compelling and powerful study that addresses a wide range of issues, including the sources of ethnographic knowledge, the premises of museum practices, the impact of missionary endeavors, the roots of artistic innovations, and more.

Jones, a senior curator at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, brings to this project an interdisciplinary expertise in history, anthropology, and art, as well as a keen appreciation for the insights that can be gleaned from material objects themselves. The first artifact that he examines is a cat o’ nine tails–style whip that a British naval officer who accompanied the first fleet to Australia crafted from an Aboriginal club. How the officer may have acquired the club leads to a broader examination of the improvisatory nature of early encounters between Europeans and Aborigines. Subsequent chapters use a shield, an ax, a firestick, a string bag, a dress, and other objects to trace cultural interactions and exchanges in various frontier zones from the late eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century.
Several larger agendas undergird these meticulously researched, richly detailed case studies. One is to challenge the conventional view among anthropologists and museum curators that the Aboriginal objects of greatest interest and value are those that are culturally uncontaminated by Western influences. Jones makes a compelling case for the historical and cultural significance of the hybrid objects that he examines. Another agenda is to demonstrate that the frontier was often a zone of “mutual acculturation” between Aborigines and Europeans where “genuine communication and exchange” took place (245, 246). This argument stands in studied contrast to one of Australian historians’ central concerns over the past few decades—the violent clashes that broke out along the colonial frontier between Europeans and Aborigines, which often resulted in the massacre of Aboriginal men, women, and children.

Jones is certainly right to insist that some Europeans brought a genuine sense of curiosity and good will to their encounters with Aborigines, thereby working to bridge the gulf between the two peoples and cultures. However, he does not place as much emphasis as he might on the fact that almost all of the Europeans that he studies were explorers and missionaries who had to achieve some understanding of, and accommodation with, Aborigines in order to achieve their objectives. This strategy was far less common among the pastoralists, miners, and other settlers who pushed into Australia’s frontier zones.

Specialists in Australian history, anthropology, art, and museology are likely to be most attentive to this book. Still, its concerns are relevant to anyone who studies cultural encounters on colonial frontiers. Moreover, its approach is impressively interdisciplinary. Engagingly written, meticulously documented, and richly illustrated, it is a work that deserves a broad readership.

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Qing Travelers to the Far West: Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China. By Jennifer Huangfu Day (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018) 282 pp. $105.00

The nineteenth century is a current focus of revision for historians of the Qing, and this book is an effective addition to the general refresh of the literature. It draws from the travel and observation writings, whether compiled or incidental, of a set of Qing scholars who found a role in the development of late Qing international relations as diplomats, translators, or both—Binchun (1804–1871), Zhigang (f. 1867–c.1880), Zhang Deyi (1847–1918), Guo Songtao (1818–1891), Zeng Jize (1839–1890), and Xue Fucheng (1838–1894). Although each is the linchpin of a chapter, they are used to connect a wide range of foreign and Chinese men
whose relationships revolved around the struggle of China and “the West” to assess and understand each other in rapidly changing technological and political conditions after the Taiping War.

A great virtue of the book is the meticulous reading of the Chinese sources and their introduction to English readers in a clear, efficient, framework. The chapters are not in any sense biographical studies. In some cases, they are portraits of collaborations—as between Binchun and Robert Hart, or Zhigang and Anson Burlingame—that allow the Chinese side to be much better illuminated. Day conveys the close observations of Europe and America by such well-known men as Zhang, Guo, Zeng, and Xue with excellent color and immediacy.

The mosaic structure of the book permits serial intimacy with critical points in late nineteenth-century global history but creates challenges for the author to bring sustained consideration to some of the most intriguing material in the book. Each chapter is broken into smaller sections, redolent of the quality of the “notes” compositions of late nineteenth-century China, but this framework does not allow a textured and convincing analysis of the many complex ideas that a few of these men worked into their writings. In seeking the sources for the preconceptions of the Chinese and Manchu writers, far-flung and tenuous lines of reasoning lead backward to figures such as Sima Qian and Wang Fuzhi, and forward to Zhou Enlai. Yet the book effectively suggests the potential rewards of lingering on the insights of a figure such as Zeng Jize, whose carefully reasoned and profound confidence in the basic stability and potential of China predicted the status of China in the twenty-first century more accurately than did the ideas of most other nineteenth-century figures.

Despite the book’s modest length, its ambitions to restructure the narrative about the emergence of modern China are vast. At the outset, Day tells readers that she will present a new picture of the 1880s, particularly through the use of concepts from communications studies, to break up the entrenched dichotomies of traditionalist/revisionist and progressive/reactionary views. When the telling is done and the show begins, the material indeed has the desired effect. But the structure of the book sacrifices an ability to trace long and wide structural changes in the network of communications. For instance, Day refers to telegraphs and newspapers only incidentally. She provides little discussion of the larger picture involving the introduction of true telecommunications, for instance, despite its importance to the overall story. The chapter featuring Guo Songtao, when contrasted to the chapter featuring Zeng Jize, anecdotally suggests the role of telegraphs and newspapers in creating true diplomats from the envoys who had previously been encumbered by the need to wait months for instructions—instructions that would likely have been irrelevant if the envoys ever received them. But the elaboration of rail lines, the angiogenesis of telegraphy, and even the laying of transoceanic cables happens hazily and discontinuously in the book’s background.
Qing Travelers to the Far West is an original and effective contribution to the ongoing revision of the last decades of the Qing. As is often the case, the book suggests more than it can actually deliver, but it opens the way to a serious review of documents that are in many cases long known but underappreciated for their potential to elicit insights of the sort that Day offers.

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In Thought Crime, Ward traces the history of Japan’s 1925 Peace Preservation Law (PPL), designed “to suppress communism and anticolonial nationalism” and explores the program of rehabilitation of political criminals (“thought criminals”) to which it gave birth (ix). The phenomenon of state-induced ideological conversion (tenkō) from the 1930s to the 1940s has been studied widely in Japan and by a number of Anglophone scholars. Rather than continue to treat it as a problem of Japanese culture (coded as premodern or irrational) or as a matter of individuals’ intellectual and moral choices, Ward focuses on what this history tells us about the nature of modern state power in Japan and, importantly, more generally. (His opening discussion of the judicial treatment of Somali Americans who attempted to join the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant [ISIL] makes the comparative case effectively.) He argues that the law and its ancillary agencies constituted an apparatus through which different modalities of power could be applied, according to changing conditions and the needs of the state, to individuals who represented “foreign” ideological threats to imperial sovereignty.

Drawing on Althusser’s concepts of repressive and ideological state apparatuses, Ward shows how—in response to the phenomenon of “mass tenkō” triggered by the conversion of Japanese Communist Party leaders Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika in 1933—the PPL apparatus shifted from a punitive emphasis on detention to a focus on rehabilitation via individualized guidance and family interventions using a network of agencies outside the formal institutions of the state.1 Ward asserts that this apparatus gave substance to the legally nebulous ideology of the emperor-centered “national polity” (kokutai) that the PPL was written to defend, and to its corollary, the “loyal imperial subject,” formed through concrete practices such as writing reflective memoirs according to specific narrative conventions. In Foucauldian terms, Ward sees power working through sovereign/juridical, disciplinary, and

The passage of the 1936 Thought Criminal Protection and Supervision Law extended this system across the Japanese empire. Moreover, leading figures in the PPL apparatus came to envision tenkō as a model for the national spiritual-mobilization campaign that followed the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937—a process through which all Japanese were to “convert” to “national thought” or “Japanese spirit” and offer themselves up selflessly to the defense of the kokutai and the advancement of Japan’s aims. The apparatus evolved differently under colonial conditions, however. In Korea, state efforts tended more toward repression than ideological reform, since authorities believed that even if colonial activists could be induced to abandon Marxism, they could never truly abandon the goal of colonial independence and that, in any case, their Korean-ness prevented them from converting to true Japanese imperial subjecthood. Nonetheless, by the mid-to-late 1930s, officials did seek to produce more ideological converts; Korean converts did mobilize in support of the war effort (though their motivations require further analysis); and Japanese officials publicized their endeavors.  

Thought Crime offers a lucid reflection on theories of power and the modern state while refusing to fetishize the particularities of the Japanese case. Some engagement with Stoler’s concept of imperial formations might have enabled more comparative reflections on colonial power. Moreover, the concluding discussion of the afterlife of prewar and wartime PPL apparatus under Cold War “democracy” could have been connected to the theorization of 1930s–1970s “total war systems” by historical sociologists such as Yamanouchi. Scaling down, whether or not the much-vaunted low-recidivism rates among converts had any validity beyond their value on paper (that is, as justifications for the apparatus to reproduce itself) remains an open question, as does the extent of rehabilitation organizations’ actual surveillance capabilities and the nature of their interaction with systems of local police power/violence or family structures. Greater attention to the social composition of those subjected to the PPL apparatus inside Japan might also have offered opportunities to reflect on how repressive and rehabilitative projects articulated differently across categories such as class, occupation, gender, or age, and what these dynamics might suggest for comparative, interdisciplinary inquiry.

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3 Yasushi Yamanouchi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryūichi Narita (eds.), Total War and “Modernization” (Ithaca, 1998).

Around 1690, a few officers of the British East India Company in Bengal decided to find a convenient and safe settlement for trade; they chose the spot where the city of Calcutta would emerge. They needed to be near enough to the sea and far enough away from the Mughal provincial capital and administration in the interior, with which the Company maintained an awkward relationship. The chosen location had the advantages of being on the right bank of the Hooghly (the more navigable part) and suitably distant from the Mughal bureaucracy. It was also sufficiently inland to be sheltered from the tsunamis for which the northern Bay of Bengal was famous.

A hundred years later, this place did not seem so great. The founders of Calcutta almost certainly did not imagine that the settlement would grow into a city of more than 100,000 people in 1750, and 500,000 in 1850. Between these dates, the Company had become a government, first of a few districts in Bengal; then of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa; and after the conclusion of the Anglo–Maratha conflict in 1818, of a vast swathe of territory in northern and southern India. Calcutta was the capital of British India. Managing population growth, settlement, trade, and the military and naval infrastructure in and around the city was the state’s primary concern. These state endeavors repeatedly hit a geographical obstacle.

The area that comprised Calcutta was formed of salt marshes, swamps, and land exposed to annual flooding due to monsoon rains and overflowing rivers. Land suitable for urban development did not appear as a fixed area on the map but as a seasonally changeable one. The waterways of the lower Bengal delta followed no fixed track either. They changed course and produced sandbanks from silt deposits. Thanks to undercurrents, seasonal variation in water flow, and siltation, navigating these rivers was a challenge. Making a capital city in such a place required the colonial state to understand its geography and, when possible, to modify it by technology and law to make it suitable for the expanding population and private enterprise to flourish. Such intervention was an interactive process of gathering knowledge, regulating land use, and promoting commerce that has continued into the present, using different tools but frequently drawing from the knowledge accumulated during the colonial times.

This dimension of state intervention remained underexplored in the many histories of the city until the publication of this book. Bhattacharyya credibly argues that geographical knowledge contributed to the capacity of the colonial power to manage its capital city, illustrating her case with several occasions or “moments” when the tools then available met with a challenge (37)—the construction of a harbor, the changing uses of the riverbank near the city, and the draining of the marshlands, to name three. The book effectively combines archival research with different
fields of analysis (scientific/technical and legal/administrative). The analytical narrative has few parallels in imperial or economic history.

The introduction explains the project—“[s]tudying the political economy and the legal processes of converting marshes into a propertied geography in Calcutta”—and proclaims the need for “new methods for understanding mobile landscapes” (23). One of these methods involves examining how a concept of land as property emerged in a “watery terrain” (32). The rest of the book contains five substantive chapters. Chapter 1 describes Benjamin Lacam’s failure to construct a harbor on the river in the 1770s because of the Company’s withdrawal of its offer to give him land and permission. A long court case followed Lacam’s petition for compensation. According to Bhattacharyya, the case dragged on for so long because the judges and administrators disputed Lacam’s claim that his geographical data supported the viability of a harbor. At stake was an almost intractable question: “Was geography an unstable and an unreliable form of evidence; or was it a matter of human miscalculation?” (51).

A similar uncertainty reappears in Chapter 2 with the Territories Department’s attempt in the early nineteenth century to devise a good legal definition of drained land. The attempt led to the “transfiguration of heterogenous communal spaces into clearly demarcated public spaces” (102). Using two court cases concerning private land in the mid-nineteenth century, Chapter 3 shows the “maturation” of an eminent-domain principle regarding lands recovered from marshes and water. Chapter 4 considers the emergence of a land market through the combined actions of law, drainage, and taxation. Chapter 5 takes this story forward to the twentieth century by looking at urban rent regulation, among other interventions. The concluding chapter claims that “the foregoing chapters tried to remember that which has been forgotten,” that is, Calcutta’s watery past (201).

The book is a novel contribution to imperial and urban history at many levels. The emphasis on colonialism and colonial power, however, is a little overdone. Power is always everywhere constrained. In this case, it was limited not just by knowledge but also by the vagaries of migration. The city’s success depended on population and, in turn, an ability to provide jobs and businesses like other thriving cities, not just a spot in the Bengal delta. By this benchmark, eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Calcutta was a dramatically successful city. Its extraordinary population growth placed enormous pressure on the state. The average migrant would have had no organic link with the region’s geographical past. The book does not sufficiently acknowledge drivers like demography and occupational shifts that contributed to the “forgetting” that it discusses. That oversight, however, does not affect the originality of its contribution.

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Drawing from the disciplines of labor, law, environmental history, and political economy, Dey has produced an excellent, century-long, agro-ecological history of tea production in India’s hilly northeast province of Assam. Throughout his well-researched, insightful, and clearly written chapters, he analyzes the self-serving discourses and ideologies of British land speculators and tea-plantation owners and of British colonial officials. Dey consistently argues that “imperial disarray” resulted from, and characterized, the eco-social-legal system of tea plantations: “The analytics of ‘disarray’ or unkemptness in this book . . . is used as a heuristic framework to highlight ideological, material, and discursive inconsistencies, consequences, and contradictions of this plantation form and its purported mandate of agrarian development in the region” (19). His study integrates extensive archival research with strong control over the relevant scholarly theories.

Dey provides the historical context and sequence of events from the English East India Company’s annexation of Assam’s Brahmaputra River region in 1826 to the last decade of the British Raj (1858–1947). However, his central chapters are thematic. He sequentially analyzes the contentious argumentation produced by the colonial government of India, which sought to raise revenues by classifying the tea industry as “manufacturing,” and by the planters, who asserted both that they should be lower-taxed “agriculturalists” and that they were modernizing improvers using the latest production technology. Dey next demonstrates how competing European scientific and medical theories and policies about the health of the tea plants and of the poorly paid and badly treated “coolie” laborers often led to adverse results, since the “plant capitalism” of the tea industry was (and is) inherently exploitive of the environment and its labor (22).

Indeed, due to high mortality rates from endemic diseases and debilitating working conditions, tea plantations depended on a massive and constant supply of millions of imported laborers from the impoverished regions of central India. Hence, government policies and regulations, Dey shows, often only made conditions for people and plants worse. Planters convinced the government to allocate land at minimal prices and then cleared away the forests and eliminated the indigenous tea trees, sometimes by hybridizing them with Chinese varieties—a strategy that pitted them against the government’s emerging Forest Department and its conservation policies. Finally, the plantation labor walkouts of 1920/1, Dey asserts, resulted not primarily from the Mohandas Gandhi–led independence movement but rather more from the “peculiar culture of commerce in the Assam plantations—centered on law, crop agronomics, and work structure” (178).

In Dey’s analysis of the “illegal and unseen market logics that ran the Assam plantation industry” (166), he had to depend primarily on official
government records and reports, English-language newspapers, and documentation produced by the British planters. The voices of the workers themselves remain obscured. Dey also remains closely focused on Assam’s tea industry. Early in the book, he discusses the origins of tea culture in China, but he largely refrains from explicit comparative analysis of Assam’s plantation systems with those elsewhere in the world.

Dey engages with the relevant theories produced by Marxists; cultural critics (including actor–network theorists); and historians of the environment, science, medicine, labor, and the British Empire. He provides sufficient background and context for readers less familiar with the history of British colonial India. Throughout his book and especially in his introduction and conclusion, he suggests how some of the many consequences of the Assam tea industry’s inherent contradictions, conflicts, and exploitations of the environment and people still echo in that restive region of a now-independent India.

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