Since Edney—the co-editor, with Mary Pedley, of *The History of Cartography. IV. Cartography in the European Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2019)—is one of the leading names in the field, readers might be misled into thinking that the book under review is a history of cartography. However, unlike Norman Thrower’s *Maps and Civilization: Cartography in Culture and Society* (Chicago, 1972), this book is not a history of cartography but a history of the *ideal* of cartography. Edney shifts the view because cartography—as an autonomous field of study—does not exist in his view. Indeed, the epigraph for Chapter 1 says, “There is no such thing as cartography and this is a book about it” (1).

*Cartography: The Ideal and Its History* is a provocative analysis of the history of cartography’s epistemology and specifically a call for the abandonment of the term *cartography* and the conception of *maps* as an undifferentiated group of objects all of which can be studied in the same manner. Edney rejects the idea of the normative map—which in the mid-twentieth century was defined as a graphic representation of all or a part of the earth drawn to scale upon a plane—and he criticizes normative and sociocultural approaches to the study of the history of mapping. Instead, he advances a processual approach that focuses on the ways in which people produce, circulate, and consume maps. He believes that the process that gave rise to maps is more the proper subject of analysis than the maps themselves.

The book’s six chapters lay out his arguments in detail: Chapter 1 introduces the ideal; Chapter 2 explains the processual approach; Chapter 3, the most provocative, lists and examines the preconceptions of the cartographic ideal before rejecting them all; Chapter 4 looks at the development of the ideal; Chapter 5 examines map scale and the misconceptions that it begets; and Chapter 6 promotes the death of the ideal of cartography.

Edney’s philosophical salvo across the bow of cartography is not a one-shot warning; he intends to follow it with two other books that will examine the processual approach and the way in which map histories have been written to further the ideal of cartography. The book is not a fast read, but is one that will undoubtedly generate lively discussion in the community of map historians.

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It is interesting and at first blush ironic that in a time of unparalleled abundance when the proportion of the world’s population that lives in “extreme poverty” is at an all-time low, concerns about scarcity have become increasingly prominent. A little reflection reveals that the new prominence accorded the issue of scarcity is related in complicated but powerful ways to other contemporary concerns, particularly population growth, rising living standards worldwide, climate change, the earth’s carrying capacity, etc. One of the virtues of Scarcity in the Modern World is that the editors and authors generally adhere to the position that abundance and scarcity are subjective and contextual concepts that are linked logically rather than ironically and perforce should be examined and analyzed together. This important insight is but one of many in this challenging but rewarding interdisciplinary collection.

Scarcity in the Modern World is premised on boundary crossing of a particularly broad nature, bringing historians, social scientists, engineers, and natural scientists into the mix. As the volume’s subtitle suggests, the project’s principals adhered to a second major premise as well—that scarcity should be studied in a historical manner, in this case going back to 1800. One other premise worthy of mention is that scarcity can manifest itself at different, often overlapping, levels—local, regional, and global—and over varying periods of duration. The appropriate level of analysis and time frame must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Scarcity in the Modern World comprises an orienting introduction by the four editors, followed by four multiple-chapter sections. Part I (“Making Scarcity”) consists of four chapters wherein scholars from different fields—economics, development, anthropology, and environmental studies—present different disciplinary definitions and explanations of, as well as approaches to, “scarcity” of various kinds. Despite their disciplinary differences, none of the authors views scarcity purely in physical terms but in relation to, if not as a function of, broader historical, political, and institutional forces.

Part II (“The Power of Projection”) comprises three chapters, each the work of a scholar using a different disciplinary lens to offer distinctive projections about how scarcities of varying kinds are likely to play out in the future. The role of differing perceptions in the analysis of resource availability, abundance, or scarcity is clear in these chapters.

The authors of the various chapters in Parts III and IV delve deeply into specific historical examples of various kinds of scarcity. Each of the four chapters in Part III (“Coping, Managing, Innovating at Different Scales”) offers a case study involving a response to some form of scarcity, by a different type of entity—a state, an industry, or a household—at a different scale. Not only do scarcities and scales vary in the section; so do
the disciplinary orientations. Economists wrote two of the chapters; a historian and a geographer wrote the other two. The four chapters in Section IV ("Dynamics of Distribution") all deal, in one way or another, with the role of various types of power in shaping, even determining, the manner in which scarcity manifests in different situations. All of the authors deal, explicitly or implicitly, with ideas and insights generally associated with Sen’s studies about famines.1

At the end of day, what does one make of Scarcity in the Modern World? It is a dense volume, involving multiple voices, disciplines, approaches, and perspectives. Its case studies range widely from electricity shortages in India in the early twentieth century to sanitation problems in Lagos, Nigeria, at roughly the same time, and from food shortages in China during the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) to the famine in the Sahel in 2012. As a result, different readers will likely be drawn to different chapters, but the overall quality of the chapters is high. Even though the relentlessness of the interrogation of “scarcity” and the intensity of the detail can be overwhelming, and the book’s good questions definitely outnumber its answers, the time expended in reading The Making of Scarcity is certainly justified.

Peter A. Coclanis
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It has been nearly two decades since Brian Fagan’s The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History (New York, 2001) last synthesized that topic for a popular audience. In the meantime, research in climate history has made major strides. Paleoclimatology and historical climatology have added new methods. Climate history has extended to new regions and periods, and its specialists have posed novel arguments about climate impacts, perceptions, and adaptations. The field has been waiting for the book that can fuse these insights and meet a public need for historical perspective on climate change.

Nature’s Mutiny is not that book. Despite the title, Blom has only used the Little Ice Age (LIA) as a quick backdrop for vignettes about seventeenth-century European culture. Whatever the merits of this approach for dramatizing a period of European intellectual transformation, readers of the Journal of Interdisciplinary History will come away disappointed.

The prologue sets the scene with a discussion of winter landscape paintings as a glimpse into the world of the LIA and “the new social order

1 See, for example, Amartya Sen, Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation (New York, 1981).
that would emerge from it” (9). This beginning leads Blom to a “simple question”: “Do societies change when the climate changes? And if so, how?” (10). Yet right from the start, Blom announces the limits of his approach. After a brief nod to global events, the scope narrows exclusively to a few European nations during the period from 1570 to 1690. Blom handles the details of climatic change hastily and hardly acknowledges recent quantitative and qualitative studies about societal impacts from, and adaptations to, past climate variability and change. Instead, *Nature’s Mutiny* ponders the role of the LIA, loosely defined, in Europe’s cultural and intellectual modernization. Given the challenging and contested nature of that question, it is no surprise that Blom fails to provide a satisfying answer.

The first of the book’s three chapters (“God has Abandoned Us”) portrays a sixteenth-century Europe mired in superstitious dread, with peasants standing by helplessly as extreme weather devours their crops. Along the way, the story digresses into the life of eccentric polymath John Dee, as well as the lives of Giordano Bruno, Montaigne, and various others. Chapter 2 (“The Age of Iron”) turns to a struggling but now modernizing Europe during the seventeenth-century “general crisis,” along with further vignettes of early modern daily life and mini-biographies of artists and writers. Early in this chapter, Blom comes closest to delivering a thesis about climate and cultural change. Drawing from the work of Polanyi, he proposes a “great transformation” as the LIA undermined “feudal” societies based on grain production, and he concludes, “Europeans were forced to think of alternative ways of organizing themselves” (105). Yet Blom’s own examples have already undermined his argument. Countries that experienced the worst subsistence crises provide the fewest examples of artists and intellectuals selected to illustrate modernization, whereas Blom’s hotbeds of scientific and philosophical change—particularly the Netherlands—already possessed the most commercialized and adaptable food production and economies.

Climate then fades from the story altogether, apart from the odd mention of a cold winter or storm. Chapter 3 (“On Comets and Other Celestial Lights”) is devoted entirely to short biographies and anecdotes of European writers and religious figures, from Baruch Spinoza to John Locke. The epilogue proposes historical lessons for global warming, but without much historical insight.

Blom’s prose is often engaging and his anecdotes interesting, if hardly original. Even for a popular history, however, *Nature’s Mutiny* lacks rigor and editing. English colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, are mislabeled as “Pilgrims,” and Blom conflates their experiences during the summer of 1607 with those of the “starving time” of 1610. He identifies Geoffrey Parker as “Geoffrey Palmer,” while ignoring Parker’s findings and theories (as he does those of most other climate historians).

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Readers of *Nature’s Mutiny* may come away with a little seventeenth-century European cultural history, or at least a few good vignettes about its protagonists. They will not, however, learn much about the LIA or its lessons for global warming. Although climate historians can celebrate the recent growth of their field, their research has grown too varied and complex for casual treatment by a non-specialist to do it much justice anymore. The wait will continue for a satisfying new synthesis on the LIA.

Sam White
Ohio State University

*Empires of the Weak: The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order.* By J. C. Sharman (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019) 216 pp. $27.95

In this book, Sharman attacks the view of Europe’s early modern expansion that seeks to explain Europe’s pre–1750 overseas empires as a result of improved European technology, naval abilities, and military tactics, systematically undermining the relevance of the European “military revolution,” as articulated by Roberts and Parker.¹ The central elements of their model include (1) linear infantry formation combined with volley fire and light artillery; (2) larger armies; (3) larger, more expensive, fortifications that could resist artillery sieges; (4) and larger, more expensive, ships with bigger guns and longer ranges of activity. According to this view, more expensive warfare favored more elaborate, centralized states with extensive tax bases. Sharman considers this model selectively Eurocentric, pointing out that the rest of the world adopted most of its elements at different times in various places.

Sharman points out that almost none of the elements in the military revolution came into play in early modern European expansion. Overseas military ventures were small affairs, depending on ad hoc local alliances and avoiding conflict with the larger, better integrated, non-European states. Asian and African states, oriented toward land-based empires, tolerated the assorted enclaves that Europeans created and took advantage of European maritime commerce. Meanwhile, the European enclaves scuffled with each other as much as with indigenous states. The battles that they fought against Asian polities were with small armies, old tactics, and the collaboration of indigenous allies. Most European enclaves survived because they collaborated with indigenous forces; few of Europe’s early colonial wars were won or lost within the purview of a European military revolution. Rather than being the result of “modernized” conquest, Europe’s early modern overseas empires existed by the sufferance of larger African

and Asian states, although Sharman does not tell us much about how these colonial enclaves actually functioned.

Sharman further questions the relevance of the military revolution as a way of explaining the warfare that took place in Europe’s nineteenth-century imperialism. As in the earlier centuries, these conquests depended on relatively small European forces and on alliances with local factions. Finally, he challenges the usefulness of the military revolution as a model for analyzing military conflict in modern Europe. In practice, even when one country employed these new tactics to defeat another one, poor internal communication often led conservative military elites of defeated states to misunderstand what they had confronted and to reject new tactics and technology.

Sharman shows at length that the best example of the military revolution, so defined, in action actually involved the Ottoman Empire. The Turks regularly used large armies, modern muskets and artillery, and volley fire on the battlefield. They also had Europe’s most effective centralized bureaucracy and revenue system. He ends with the observation that the current emergence of “asymmetrical warfare” has created another kind of military revolution. The wars of decolonization have led to a situation in which expensive, technologically advanced armies cannot defeat well-organized guerilla forces. Guerilla armies do not have to win; they just have to make enough trouble not to lose, a strategy that tends to confound modern governments.

David Ringrose
Maritime Museum of San Diego


Drawing together information from numerous seventeenth-century texts and the findings of modern archaeological research, Orser examines the historical meaning of artifacts excavated throughout the seventeenth-century English Atlantic world. The coverage encompasses England, Ireland, western Africa, the Caribbean, and native North America. Where appropriate, he also makes forays into the non-Anglophone world, including a section dealing with the impact of the Portuguese on west central Africa. He places the archaeological evidence about housing, fortifications, delftware, and stoneware in its context through consideration of the networks of people and their skills that shaped English connections with the Atlantic’s diverse seaboards. Orser is as concerned with evidence associated with those people who were disadvantaged by colonial expansion, such as Native Americans and black Africans, as he is with material generated by English craftsmen, builders, and planners. He acknowledges that archaeological findings for some areas of the English Atlantic world are underdeveloped, which is why only a few pages are devoted to the Caribbean.
The book is divided into two parts. Part I focuses on the foundations of the seventeenth-century English Atlantic. Conceptual and interpretive ways of examining archaeological findings in relation to this geographical space are followed by a chapter devoted to the landscape, regional zones, population, farming areas, and hierarchical social structure of England between 1600 and 1700. The next chapter concentrates on the disparate and geographically diverse spread of English colonization to Ireland, coastal west Africa, and North America’s east coast.

Part II is comprised of four chapters. A chapter about the material culture of boats and ships ranges widely within a few pages to deal with dugout canoes in North America and the construction of merchant and navy vessels. Other chapters in Part II focus on the philosophical attitudes of selected seventeenth-century writers dealing with themes of glory, wealth, and capital accumulation, as well as on fixed and portable material worlds. The fixed material artifacts that Orser examines include fortifications and housing; ceramics and commodities are the main portable materials that he discusses. The chapter about portable materials contains interesting reconstructions of commodity chains from producers in England to consumers in North America, as well as a section dealing with peddlers active in smaller commodity chains.

The book misses some opportunities, and some sections stray from the book’s evidential base. Chapters 2 and 3 have illuminating sections about the differential progress of delftware in England and Ireland, but they would have benefited from comparative analysis about the reasons for the much swifter development of this form of ceramics in England than in Ireland. The treatment of housing and fortifications could have built upon Fischer’s concept of “building ways” to analyze the persistence of architectural forms in comparative settings.1 The discussion of navigation in Chapter 4, which considers the Atlantic’s winds and currents—providing information about the circular patterns of gyres, the problem of the doldrums, and the regular threat of hurricanes in the western Atlantic—may hold interest for maritime historians but has little to do with archaeology or material culture. Chapter 5, focusing on Eurocentrism and what Orser terms the “racialization” of thought, is a disquisition on political and social thinking rather than an analysis of archaeological evidence. Orser justifies it by stating that its ideas inform Chapters 6 and 7, but its main points could have been condensed and included in those chapters in relation to material evidence.

Nevertheless, Orser has produced a capable, well-informed book that will prove useful as an up-to-date consideration of central issues pertaining to the seventeenth-century Atlantic’s material world. Historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and sociologists will all find thoughtful sections in this interdisciplinary book. In Orser’s book, scholars will find a skillful synthesis of much archaeological research that explains the

1 David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York, 1989).
evolution of networks and social chains throughout the seventeenth-century Anglophone Atlantic world.

Kenneth Morgan
Brunel University London

Red Round Globe Hot Burning: A Tale at the Crossroads of Commons & Closure, of Love & Terror, of Race & Class, and of Kate & Ned Despard. By Peter Linebaugh (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2019) 462 pp. $34.95

Linebaugh attempts to re-capture the mental universe and social context of British radicals Edward and Catherine Despard at the turn of the nineteenth century, as they sought to contest the onslaught of capitalism, defend the commons, and define “the interests of the human race” (407). Expanding an earlier chapter about the Despards in the Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic (Boston, 2000), which he co-wrote with Marcus Rediker, Linebaugh seeks to recapture radical voices at a moment of brutal state repression and economic exploitation. His attempt to save dissidents from the condescension of history consciously builds from the work of Thompson.¹

He treats the story of the Despards—Edward a minor member of the Irish gentry and administrator in British Honduras turned convicted would-be royal assassin, and Catherine a woman of color who became a prominent prison reformer—as a point of departure; his is no conventional biography. Indeed, the Despards are only a small portion of what follows: Linebaugh spends most of the work discussing vast webs of radical Atlantic World connections. A central animating theme involves the escalating attacks on “commons” as capitalism gathered force through enclosure and expropriation, displacing and impoverishing commoners and leading diverse individuals and groups to new acts of creativity in their desperation. Amid a world burning from the twin onslaughts of political and industrial revolution, Linebaugh brings together diverse thinkers and activists who attempted to formulate dynamic alternatives that could set Atlantic society on another basis.

Linebaugh’s Atlantic Revolution is a révolution manquée, glimpsed in communitarian events like the Tupac Amaru revolt and Haitian Revolution, but betrayed by both the Old Regimes and liberal revolutions of the era; “America! Utopia! Equality! Crap” is one memorable chapter title (137). Yet Linebaugh’s sharp focus on the intellectual origins of agrarian communism incompletely fits with the pre-ideological nature of the era chronicled, in which many revolutionaries could be significantly more radical on some issues (and at some moments) than on others.

An erudite work by a scholar who adapted classic “history from below” to more diverse subjects, while integrating environmental history and literary studies (the book’s title comes from a William Blake poem), *Red Round Globe Hot Burning* will hold the interest of a wide array of historians. The vignettes collected in the book display the burning power of ideas in a period of tumultuous change. In an era of brutal reaction across the British Empire, the Despards provided a glimpse of an alternative history based on racial equality, popular alliances among the Atlantic workers who “constituted the vanguard of the proletariat (65),” and the fierce defense of communal property.

Linebaugh’s perspective will draw criticism, however, from those wanting more stringent approaches to Atlantic history. Although Linebaugh shows far-flung connections between individuals and asserts likely connections, he does not go into sufficient detail about the nature of those connections. The influence of the Despards and their radical contemporaries is more asserted than demonstrated. Whereas the last generation of Atlantic history has largely remained content with finding the existence of transnational linkages, the generation to come will need to interpret the strength of such influences more precisely.

Micah Alpaugh
University of Central Missouri


*Women of Fortune* charts the story of the social mobility of two provincial gentry families, the Bennets and the Morewoods, who made their fortunes in London during the seventeenth century. Levy Peck shows how economic and social change had implications for gender relations among the gentry and what the rise of the gentry looks like when we place women at the center of the story. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the two families who are the focus of Levy Peck’s study and explain how the family fortune was generated—through the mercery and grocery trades, moneylending, property holding, international commerce, and investment.

Levy Peck expends seventy-five pages before discussing the female members of the family, but they are worth the wait. Her protagonists are a group of fascinating women who seem to leap from the pages of a novel or streaming miniseries. After inheriting the family wealth, these women actively began the project of managing, protecting, and spending it. The second generation of the Bennet–Morewoods included women such as Elizabeth (Cradock) Bennet, the daughter of a Staffordshire wool merchant who became Lady Finch by her second marriage and who was involved in developing Kensington House (later Palace). Her daughter
Anne married Viscount Conway and became known as a published philosopher.

One of Levy Peck’s major contributions is to present heiresses as subjects of a family story rather than as merely passive objects of familial strategies. Chapter 5 provides an entertaining look at the marriage negotiations for two Bennet heiresses. Levy Peck cleverly positions these two sisters’ experiences alongside the marital dramas of two other sets of heiresses, their female Clifton cousins and the Duke of Newcastle’s daughters, illustrating the small world of the British elite. Although Levy Peck does not deny that young rich women had to follow their family’s wishes (in fact, Grace and Frances Bennet both married in their early to mid-teens, and their parents chose their spouses), she does not convey that these women were passive. For instance, Frances, whose parents orchestrated her marriage to the 4th Earl of Salisbury at age thirteen, chose never to remarry once she became widowed in her early twenties. Instead, she used her fortune to travel Europe for four years, creating her own female version of the Grand Tour. Leaving her son in Britain, Frances traversed the continent, imbibing culture, catching smallpox, socializing with Jacobites, and trying to outrun a persistent suitor. She was just one of the many Bennet–Morewood women who “became strong advocates for themselves, and their property…[and] developed a strong sense of independence” (119–120).

Part III of the book is entitled “Murder”; along with money and sex (or at least marriage), the story of the Bennet women also includes a grisly death. The victim was the elderly Grace Bennet, who secluded herself at a Buckinghamshire manor house where she hoarded the family wealth—the rumor being that the widow had hidden £60,000 in gold and silver in the house or garden. Temptation proved too much for a local butcher who stole onto the property, broke Grace Bennet’s neck, and fled with some of the gold. Levy Peck notes the rarity of this crime—Bennet may have been the only female relative of a peer to have been murdered throughout the entire seventeenth century—and proceeds to a fascinating analysis of why. She argues that contemporaries thought Grace Bennet was at fault for her own murder because she transgressed norms around money and property. Not only did Bennet hoard her money, rather than exhibiting her genteel status through consumption and hospitality, she also refused to pay tithes and poor rates or to hire laborers to work her land. Bennet let her land lie fallow, rather than keeping it productive. Levy Peck says she did the same thing with her money, letting it lay hidden and unproductive rather than spending or investing it—a “misuse of capital” (175). In Levy Peck’s tale, even murder can be explained by changing seventeenth-century notions of property and wealth.

By the end of the 1600s and into the beginning decades of the 1700s, keeping and managing the Bennet family fortune meant investing in the nascent stock market. Earlier Bennet men had loaned money, bought mortgages, and dabbled in Crown finance. But Frances, dowager Countess of Salisbury, and the widowed Grace Bennet made their
contribution to the family’s wealth by investing in joint stock companies, the Bank of England, and lottery tickets. Their money helped them to maintain fine townhouses in the capital as well as leave considerable bequests to friends and family, including the Earls of Salisbury (who enjoyed sound financial footing thanks to money originally generated by commerce and trade).

Although Levy Peck’s primary interest is the financial knowledge and agency of these elite women, a subsidiary theme is the Bennet–Morewood women’s legal knowledge and ability. These women drafted prenuptial contracts, served as executors and guardians, and sued to gain jointures and protect their inheritances. Both male and female family members regularly tried to circumvent coverture and leave property directly to married daughters. Pin money is a continual theme (getting it and keeping it). In one particularly horrific anecdote, when Frances, Countess of Salisbury, gave birth to a stillborn daughter, the charge for the midwife was placed on her pin money account, “but she refused to allow the same or . . . pay it” (185). Frances’ sister was equally steely. When her husband was imprisoned for debt, she sued him in Chancery for the right to collect the rents from the inheritance that she had brought to the marriage so that she might maintain herself. The Bennet women knew their legal rights.

Levy Peck does a meticulous job of mining her sources, which include family papers, accounts, correspondence, company records, probate, and court documents. What is striking is that the Bennet–Morewood women emerge fully formed from the pages despite the fact that few to none of the sources are in their own words or voices. This book is a primer in how to bring women into a story even when that story was told and dominated by men.

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*Writing the Lives of the English Poor 1750s–1830s*. By Steven King (Montreal, McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2019) 463 pp. $120.00 cloth $36.99 paper

King has been studying poverty and poor relief in England for several decades. It is no surprise that *Writing the Lives of the English Poor* shows an impressive breadth and depth of knowledge of the social-welfare policies and practices of the long eighteenth century. In this book, such knowledge serves as a base for a focused, empathetic exploration of the writings of the poor who sought assistance from their parishes. King mixes the traditional methodology of a social historian—adept at categorizing and quantifying sources about poverty—with that of a literary

1 See also, for example, King, *On Life and Death* (New York, 2018); idem, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor 1750–1834* (Manchester, 2018).
scholar concerned to parse epistolary rhetoric. The result is a work that offers significant new insight, particularly in its insistence that poor-law historians must focus not on account books and policies but on sources that reveal the process of negotiation that resulted in the obtaining of poor relief.

The source base for this work is extraordinary—a corpus of more than 25,000 items by, for, or about the poor, which comes from a wide range of parishes. A team of researchers transcribed “most surviving manuscript collections of pauper narratives and surrounding advocate and overseers correspondence for every county in England and Wales” (23). From this corpus, King creates a typology of pauper letters that identifies the function, tone, and characteristics for seven distinct forms of correspondence. The table in which he outlines this typology is clear, concise, and genuinely useful not only as a tool for understanding this work but also as a framework for any future studies of this genre.

In an unexpected move for a social and economic historian, King chooses to deploy his database lightly, usually dropping quantitative information sparingly into the text rather than making the data available in table or graph format. The absence of such material, although a little disappointing for quantitative historians, allows King plenty of space to include long excerpts from letters, which he unpacks meticulously to offer a clear analysis of the rhetorical strategies available to the poor under the Old Poor Law.

King’s letters demonstrate that because the Old Poor Law was discretionary, malleable, and fluid, poor relief came through a process of negotiation among parish officials, the poor, and their advocates (which King assiduously displays in a tripartite world of parish letters). Letters from and about the poor drew from the same pool of language and values, and show that “common experiences and structures generated a shared linguistic register for both applicants and recipients” (117). Given the widespread availability of the material objects needed for writing, and strong evidence that the poor authored their own letters, King argues that “the timing of mass literacy . . . must be reined back firmly into the 1820s at the latest” (344). Engaging in processes of negotiation in which they used both stock images of deserving poverty and highly individualized life stories, paupers through their letters suggest that they, like their counterparts among the middling sort, were developing a more assertive and interior sense of self by the early nineteenth century.

Unlike his earlier work, which emphasized disparities among regional regimes in poor relief, King in this book shows broad consistencies across space and time, arguing against the current historiography that suggests a “crisis” in poor relief from the 1790s. Although not primarily focused on demographic, gender, or family history, King shows that old people were especially prominent in the corpus; 42 percent of the letters were written by people who were old or implied that they were. Older paupers were adept at using the many tropes that clearly demonstrated parish obligations to support the aged. Making good use of the considerable body of work
on eighteenth-century women’s letter writing, King also demonstrates that correspondence from women—especially the 494 cases of wives deserted by husbands—used rhetorical vehicles that gave a “gendered colour” to their letters (292).

This important book will be valuable not only to scholars of the poor but also those who are new to the field, thanks to its engaging and accessible style. All concerned are to be congratulated for a book that is beautifully produced and edited.

Susannah Ottaway
Carleton College

_Figures of Speech: Six Histories of Language and Identity in the Age of Revolutions._ By Tim Cassedy (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2018) 309 pp. $40.00

Cassedy’s _Figures of Speech_ is framed as a “recovery project . . . [for] a lost disciplinary moment when language served as a framework for understanding selves and a tool for refashioning selves” (5). It focuses on six unique late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century linguistic figures, five of whom are men closely connected with the study and teaching of languages: Nicolas Gouin du Fief, a refugee of the French Revolution and author of a well-known series of French textbooks; Duncan Mackintosh, a Scottish–Caribbean type designer; Noah Webster, inventor of the phonetic alphabet and author of the canonical _Blue Back Speller_ (New York, 1824) and a well-known dictionary; John Gilchrist, British chronicler of Indian sub-continent languages and developer of a universal alphabet that pre-dated the international phonetic alphabet; and Edmund Fry, another type designer and author of _Pantographia_ (London, 1799), a compilation of language samples from around the world. The sixth figure is an indigent British woman named Mary Willcocks, who invented an undecipherable babble of a language and called herself Princess Cariboo in order to avoid being arrested for vagrancy.

This reviewer, a linguistic anthropologist and historian from a family of historians (E. Jennifer Monaghan, my mother, is cited in the book for her work on Webster), was delighted to see Cassedy emphasizing the importance of language in constructing both the culture of historical epochs and individual identity. He correctly identifies the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a time of international turmoil and linguistic mixing: France was in revolution, and Europeans were colonizing the Americas, India, and elsewhere. Cassedy presents his case studies as reactions to an era of great linguistic shifting. Dufief, after his exile from France, spent his life teaching French to others and developing methods to teach large numbers of people in a systematic fashion. Webster tried to develop a new form of English for a new nation. Gilchrist taught Urdu to new British employees of the East India Company, invented a new
alphabet to capture the intricacies of English, Urdu, and every other language he encountered, and tried to invent a speaking clock to pronounce these varying sounds. The strength of the book is in the intricate and often delightful details of new teaching methods, new typefaces, and new ways of trying to understand and catalog the ever-growing number of recognized languages in the world. Fry not only compiled language examples in his *Pantographia* but also hand-cut “about two hundred different typographic alphabets” (146). The smaller case studies between the longer ones are also fascinating—for example, Cassedy’s discussion of the development of the historic 1730s Caslon typeface, which *The New Yorker* still uses today.

The story of Mary Willcocks reflects Cassedy’s strength as a chronicler of small details. Willcocks was living hand-to-mouth when she began identifying herself as an exotic princess, only later to be revealed as a fraud. Later, in Philadelphia, she was celebrated again for having duped the British. Cassedy captures the odd history of a working-class woman fighting against the restricted roles of the early nineteenth century by reinventing herself through a new language. But the disconnectedness of Willcocks’ story from the other case studies also reflects the weakness of the book; it is more a fascinating grab bag rather than a well-sustained general argument about a framework in which to discuss language experimentation. At the beginning of the book, Cassedy briefly mentions the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis in its connection to cognitive psychology and neurolinguists, but he does not discuss its central position in the field of linguistic anthropology. The omission of the connection to anthropology is unfortunate. Attention to the ideologies from an anthropological perspective would have strengthened Cassedy’s arguments and provided more ways to tie together his rich case studies.

Leila Monaghan
Northern Arizona University

_The Perraults: A Family of Letters in Early Modern France._ By Oded Rabinovitch (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2018), 233 pp. $57.95

With a nicely judged show of bravura, Rabinovitch starts each of the chapters in this impressive monograph by citing one of Claude Perrault’s famous fairytales. He neatly demonstrates that these episodes from “Puss in Boots,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and the rest revolve as much around issues in family relationships as did the life of their author and his brothers. The history of this distinguished family may well have been told as an assemblage of fascinating and divergent life-courses. Rabinovitch argues that

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their lives and careers make better sense if seen as playing out the family strategy for social advancement initiated by their father, Pierre Senior (?–1652), the son of a royal embroiderer from Tours who arrived in Paris in the early seventeenth century.

Pierre Senior advanced two of his sons—Pierre and Charles—through legal training. Claude moved into medicine and Nicholas into the church. Nicholas was less involved in the family strategy, though his specialism in Jansenist theology gave him a vision of grace that eerily echoes the issues of patronage in which his brothers were immersed. Pierre, the elder brother, used his legal training to connect with the world of finance, with considerable success until the early 1660s, when he suffered solvency problems caused by the bad faith of some of Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s minions. Not even the entreaties of brother Charles—by this time well ensconced in Colbert’s employ—could win him grace or favor.

Rabinovitch suggests that Charles’ career had thus far been subordinated to that of his brother. For example, Charles devised his literary pursuits, which he focused on the salon–like atmosphere that the brothers cultivated in their country seat at Viry from the 1630s until the 1660s, to offer his brother some of the cultural trappings of the aristocratic lifestyle that high financiers appreciated. Pierre’s financial fiasco, however, necessitated a re-setting of the family strategy; Pierre now had to subordinate his ambitions to Charles and Claude’s more cultural and intellectual pursuits. Charles’ competence as “protobureaucrat” (Rabinovitch’s term, though “project manager” might have been more apt) in the service of Colbert’s cultural campaigns in glorification of Louis XIV recalibrated the family strategy. Claude’s similarly impressive competence within the Academy of Sciences, of which he was a founding member, to say nothing of his architectural work on the Louvre, provided added éclat.

Rabinovitch interweaves into his story a subtle and insightful consideration of the changing nature of authorship taking place in the period when his polymathic subjects lived, but he makes the family-strategy approach the heart of his book. He shows, moreover, that although the Perrauds’ engagement in the court, the Académie française, and the Academy of Sciences could be seen as collective self-effacement before the imperatives of the monarchical state, the brothers, in fact, were able to use their engagements with these institutions to further their family and individual goals.

Although no smoking gun proves that the actors in this family drama consciously held the views that he ascribes to them, Rabinovitch’s approach is highly plausible. It gains added traction from the fact that the promotional strategies that he describes mirror those mapped out in Marraud’s fine work about the Parisian bourgeoisie, which surprisingly Rabinovitch does not cite.  

comes as a bonus. But the underlying dynastic scripts are strikingly similar.

The brothers’ apparent steering of their children’s future away from finance, law, medicine, and literature toward service at court and in the army may not have been well-advised: The families in Marraud’s study who chose to stake the next generation’s futures on the state invariably did worse than those who stayed within the bourgeois world. In the Perraud case, the fates intervened, anyway. Virtually all Pierre’s seven children were dead by the 1680s, and only one of Charles’ progeny survived long after 1700. Given the adventitiously high mortality and the lack of the influence provided by kinship, the Perraults disappeared from the scene even more swiftly than they had arrived.

Colin Jones
Queen Mary University of London


When Monnet started working on this research project in 2008, hardly any monetary historian displayed much interest in the postwar years—an epoch so strongly characterized by capital controls and “financial repression” that its study seemed to bear no relevance from a contemporaneous perspective. By the time Monnet had completed his Ph.D. in 2012, the world had changed completely: Post-crisis management had spectacularly widened the scale and scope of central banks’ interventions, and many started to wonder whether the high times of state control over the financial system were not about to return. Also thanks to this first-mover advantage, Monnet’s dissertation about France received considerable attention internationally and was awarded several prizes. Controlling Credit is a substantially revised and augmented version of that work; some of its chapters have already appeared in academic journals.

The book is fundamentally intended as a rehabilitation of credit policy. According to the pre-crisis consensus, monetary policy should be neutral—that is, it should not affect the private sector’s allocation of credit. Credit policy, the aim of which is precisely to reallocate capital in favor of some borrowers, should therefore be discarded. What Monnet wants to argue is that credit policy does not deserve such a bad reputation. In postwar France, credit policy contributed to spectacular economic growth, only losing its clout when the first attempts at financial liberalization deprived it of the means to pursue its goals.

The volume is structured in two uneven parts. Part I is a “book within the book,” arguing that a consistent framework for the implementation of credit policy emerged before World War II (Chapter 1), reached
perfection after the conflict (Chapter 2), and then started to be demolished in the 1960s (Chapter 3). Monnet’s focus is on what he calls the “institutionalization of credit.” Borrowing from an impressively wide range of literatures (including economic anthropology, legal history, economic history, political science, new institutional economics, and the theory of incentives), Monnet tailors his own definition of institutionalization as the construction of a system of legal, social, and ideological norms guiding individual action and preventing it from subverting the system itself. According to him, credit was “institutionalized” in France since the 1930s; its “deinstitutionalization” since the 1960s undermined the usefulness of credit policy. Compared to Part I, Part II is a less homogeneous collection of studies focusing on monetary policy transmission (Chapter 4), the monetization of public debt (Chapter 5), and capital allocation (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 sketches some comparative perspectives on credit policy across postwar Europe.

Monnet’s attempt at weaving a dialogue between different branches of the social sciences is undoubtedly laudable. However, readers might be perplexed by the long list of authors who reportedly inspired his approach—featuring such diverse scholars as Polanyi, Thomas, Gerschenkron, Hall, Greif, and Tirole. This sort of “methodological cherry-picking” does not serve Monnet’s purpose very well; the resulting concept of institutionalization lacks clarity. Apart from this reviewer’s personal bias in favor of “functional” approaches (especially to central banking), Monnet’s “institutional” approach arguably runs into circularity problems as he enumerates his ideal types (the “dirigiste system,” the “market system,” etc.) and then equates failure to hybridization (the French dirigiste credit system lost its proficiency because it lost its original “purity”). Self-declared as fiercely positive (he explicitly acknowledges a lack of interest in the question of efficiency), Monnet’s stance thus paradoxically ends up being astonishingly normative—without, however, being able to draw clear implications for the present.

Unfortunately, Monnet’s strict “institutional” approach also prevents him from focusing on the most intriguing aspect of credit policy, its political economy. Authors like Morin have provided extensive evidence about the private interests that stood behind France’s alleged “state capitalism.” It would have been interesting for Monnet to link state-induced credit allocation to private rent-seeking. At any rate, this issue might prove a great avenue for future research. Despite these limitations,


Controlling Credit is a valuable book and will remain an inescapable reference in the emerging literature about postwar central banking.

Stefano Ugolini
University of Toulouse

Mussolini’s Nation-Empire: Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy’s Borderlands, 1922–1943. By Roberta Pergher (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2018) 286 pp. $104.00 cloth $29.05 paper

Ettore Tolomei, a Fascist senator whose lifelong goal was to “Italianize” the Alto Adige or South Tyrol region around Bolzano that was incorporated into Italy after World War I, provides the leitmotif for this book and its innovative questioning of the typical rendition of state sovereignty as the simple and easy matching of nation with state. In 1938, Tolomei framed the Italian settlement of Libya in terms remarkably similar to that of its new northern territories as being a legitimation of their essential Italian character. He thus argued for a similar effort in moving Italians northward to that expended in planting Italian settlers in coastal Libya. A classically territorial claim to a previously unredeemed portion of the “homeland” was thus conjoined with a colonial claim to rule at some distance from anything conceivably Italian by conventional naming. It would be the bordering of a “Greater Italy” in terms of ethnic Italian settlement that would ground the sovereignty of the expanded enterprise as legitimate in the eyes of Italians and the world.

Pergher develops this conjoined focus on sovereignty and settlement into a book that questions both conventional wisdom about Italian colonial settlement policy—that it was about relieving “overpopulation”—and the simple opposition between national and colonial bordering that has long bedeviled not just Italian but all understandings of sovereignty until recently. In drawing from writers such as Cooper, Stoler, and Maier, Pergher exposes the clear but misleading distinction between national and colonial sovereignties that nationalist historiography has posited as fundamental to modern political history. The contested character of a key set of borders is the terrain that the argument first encounters and then exploits to make its case.

Pergher proceeds by showing for the case of Fascist Italy that “population settlement emerged as the obvious answer to a perceived crisis of sovereignty in the borderlands” (70), regardless of whether the area in question was a nominal province of Italy proper or a colony beyond its immediate confines. The historical logic in both South Tyrol/northeast Italy and Libya was that of claims from empires past: “Nationalists . . . used empires past to lay claim to foreign territories in the name of the

nation. But in integrating others into what was supposedly a homogeneous nation-state, they also inevitably became imperialists against the new citizens’ own nationalist assertions” (58). The tenor of the times played a role in making ethnic settlement the method of legitimation. Planting the flag was no longer enough in the post-Versailles world. Settlers were central to both establishing a renewed Italian nationhood and potentially expanding its scope, thus conjoining the national with the imperial dimensions of statehood. In exploring the tensions between the two political formations, the book shows in the end that “in Mussolini’s nation-empire citizenship itself became diluted and hierarchical, a means to smuggle back imperial distinctions in an era that prized minority rights and colonial emancipation” (253).

The book proceeds in a clear path from an introduction that provides an overview of the argument to a set of chapters organized thematically and not chronologically. This thematic organization is a real strength of the book from a methodological viewpoint. Chapter 1 considers the entire question of sovereignty in borderlands and how Fascist Italy came to use ethnic settlement as a bordering strategy. Chapter 2 examines the demographic “escape valve” claim often associated with Italian colonialism, suggesting that it was more an expedient for planting co-nationals in contested places. The best parts of the book empirically are Chapters 3 and 4, in which Pergher examines in sequence the ways by which settlers were selected and how their, and their functionaries’, visions overlapped and differed and the extent to which the natives could be turned into “Italians.” Chapter 5 offers a critical review of the 1939 option agreement between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in which South Tyrol was to be more or less ceded to Italy but with German-speakers being encouraged to move to Germany. The conclusion shows how much in the end these efforts were undermined by the onset and outcome of World War II.

Rather than consolidating the nation, “Fascist policies of national transformation in the borderlands began to eat away at the foundations of the nation itself” (22). This brilliant book is well worth reading by anyone who wants to understand why we should never take the world political map as self-evident and unproblematical. The book also has lessons that go well beyond Italian shores—for example, to Spain and the United Kingdom.

John Agnew
University of California, Los Angeles

_Hawai‘i: Eight Hundred Years of Political and Economic Change_. By Sumner La Croix (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019) 376 pp. $60.00 cloth $10.00 to $60.00 e-book

La Croix explores change and evolution in Hawaii’s fundamental political, legal, and economic institutions over eight centuries. To the average reader, these topics are unfamiliar and not well explored. Historians,
anthropologists, and scholars in ethnic studies have conducted some work in this area, but to my knowledge, this is the first endeavor by an economist to account for political and economic change and outcomes in Hawaii. Thus, this book is novel in perspective and analytical methods.

La Croix starts by providing a good overview of Hawaii in the pre-contact era from an archaeological, anthropological, and demographic viewpoint, using the extensive research in these areas to inform readers about settlement, family, and early political structures. He also explores the environmental transformation that occurred during the settling of the Hawaiian Islands by its first peoples. He relies to some extent on Native Hawaiian cultural and historical perspectives but only from sources that have been translated into English. Large repositories of written documents in Hawaiian have yet to be consulted in exploring these topics. A recent example of work using primarily Hawaiian sources is Noelani Arista’s *The Kingdom and the Republic: Sovereign Hawai‘i and the Early United States* (Philadelphia, 2018), which provides the insight that the traditional system of religion was replaced not for religious purposes but for political ones—a nuanced and convincing argument based on extensive Hawaiian language letters, journals, and other texts.

Notwithstanding that La Croix does not use these Hawaiian language sources, he explores the pre-contact phase of Hawai‘i and the settlement of the islands with existing research and scholarship, tracing the evolution of smaller political units into a much more elaborate and hierarchical organization as agricultural advances increased productivity. Most of the discussion focuses on the land-based agriculture, but the aquacultural activities that lined the shores of most islands produced significant amounts of protein sources for the population. The absence of any mention of this important economic activity is regrettable.

The book follows the evolution of the nascent Kingdom of Hawaii into a fully international political actor during the period of contact. The influx of missionaries and sailors created novel issues for the new government, which attempted to forge exclusive trading (and military) relationships with Japan, China, Britain, and the United States. La Croix describes the next era of trade in sandalwood and sugar in relation to the transformation of property ownership called the Great Mahele, which divided the lands and allowed for private land ownership. This era led to the sugar and pineapple period in Hawaii’s history and to an influx of foreign workers, primarily from Asia. The end of the nineteenth century brought the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii by an elite band of U.S. citizens and assistance from the U.S. military.

The chapters covering the history of Hawaii in the twentieth century comprise the best part of this book. They rely on research conducted by La Croix and his team. This section covers such important topics as policies for leasehold land ownership, labor prices in the sugar industry, and the rise of labor unions in democratizing politics in the former territory, which helped in shaping the path of Hawaii from kingdom to territory to
statehood. La Croix’s analysis of these changes from the perspective of an economic historian offers a new understanding of these fundamental changes to Hawaii’s economy and political landscape and suggests possibilities for further research in this time period. This book is a useful foundation for other aspiring economists to build upon.

Randall Akee
University of California, Los Angeles

_African Americans and Africa: A New History._ By Nemata Amelia Ibitayo Blyden (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2019) 266 pp. $28.00

Much has been written about the relationship between African Americans and Africa—both Africa’s symbolic meaning to American blacks and its significance as a goal of travel and emigration. Blyden’s aim is less to uncover significant new material or propose a new thesis than to provide an overview of the ups and downs of this relationship from the beginnings of the transatlantic slave trade to the twenty-first century. Her method fits the purpose, as she blends historical summaries with short biographies and extensive quotation. The result is a little like a textbook, but it is a highly readable and informative account.

Blyden’s main goal is to show that African-American attitudes toward Africa have often mirrored the American racial situation. Mostly, the focus is on pride, engagement, and interest. One chapter emphasizes African cultural retentions during slavery. As the free black community asserted itself at the end of the eighteenth century, it created institutions that it proudly labeled “African.” Emigration and colonization movements emerged in the course of the nineteenth century, as a response to a dire racial situation at home, emphasizing historical and emotional ties to the continent. In the early twentieth century, the Harlem Renaissance promoted a rediscovery and celebration of African roots. Throughout the centuries, the discourse on Africa has reflected African-American cultural, social, and political aspirations.

Such engagements were often ideologically problematic, however, since many African-American travelers and writers promoted preconceived ideas about Africa, romanticizing it or reviling it in order to portray themselves as providential redeemers. Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, for example, one of the most outspoken proponents of emigration to Africa in the nineteenth century, presented the continent as in dire need of civilization, Christianity, and economic development. He was not the only black emigrationist to reproduce typical tropes of European imperialism. Blyden acknowledges these tendencies, though she often presents them as good-faith efforts at “uplift” and “elevation.”

Blyden might have pushed the biographical and textual analysis further. She regularly follows long quotations with perfunctory statements. Many of the figures mentioned in the book find a deeper analysis in

But the book shows its strength in the few figures about whom Blyden did archival research. Using personal documents and contemporary newspaper accounts, she tells the heartbreaking story of George Erskine, a former slave turned Presbyterian minister who managed to purchase the freedom of his wife and children but who died within a year of the family’s emigration to Liberia in 1830. His son Hopkins (whose photograph is reproduced in the book) became a minister and a politician, and his daughter (also photographed) met Queen Victoria in her old age (the Queen’s journal contains a detailed description of the encounter). Although Erskine thought of himself as a civilizer of savage Africans in great need of the gospel, the humanity of his story is evident in this mix of history, biography, and ideological analysis.

The last two chapters—about the Cold War, anti-colonialism, and African visitors to the United States—are also highly informative. Blyden tells the stories of numerous Africans who came to the United States, studied, and graduated, before either remaining to teach or serve as missionaries or returning to their countries. A number of American-educated Africans eventually launched nationalist and anticolonial movements. African-American organizations—such as the Council on African Affairs, founded by Paul Robeson—contributed to the rise of black internationalism and anti-colonialism. Blyden’s overview highlights how relationships between African Americans and Africa have not just been about personal choice; they have also reflected global and geopolitical concerns. The infusion of political thought into these last two chapters considerably enriches the discussion.

Christine Levecq
Kettering University

*Inn Civility: Urban Taverns and Early American Civil Society*. By Vaughn Scribner (New York, New York University Press, 2019) 304 pp. $35.00 cloth

Think Al Swearengen in *Deadwood*, downing booze as if it were water, seemingly unaffected by his epic consumption. Early Americans drank like that. Their daily intake dwarfed ours. They probably passed their lives in an alcoholic haze. Although the city dwellers among them surely drank heavily at home, they drank even more at taverns.

The numbers vary from city to city, but only a little. There was one licensed tavern for every 100 or 150 inhabitants, and a swarm of unlicensed taverns besides. A contemporary estimated that one of every eight buildings in eighteenth-century Boston was a tavern. A modern
scholar calculated that virtually all the residents of colonial Philadelphia lived within a block of a tavern.

Taverns were not just the preeminent public places of early America. They were very nearly the only such places. There were dozens of them for every church and hundreds for every public market or court house or school, and their influence was pervasive and profound. They were not only where colonists did business and politics. They were also, as Scribner shows in a superb reconnaissance of their expansive functions, sites of libraries, postal centers, shipping offices, auction houses, slave sales, wax museums, exhibition halls, and trade in sex and stolen goods.

In addition, Scribner argues, they were centers of considerable contestation over the sort of social order that would prevail in the cities of the British colonies. In a country without a resident monarch or any semblance of a nobility, some men feared that the settlers would lapse into a savagery not very different from that of the Indians beyond their clearings. Scribner calls those fearful ones elitists, because he rightly recognizes that they were nothing like the elites of the Old World.

His elitists fancied themselves instructing their inferiors about a British liberty that they defined by order, hierarchy, and refinement in urban places without much order, hierarchy, or refinement of their own. Their self-appointed civilizing project was riddled with contradictions—between cosmopolitanism and parochialism and between a keenness to set themselves apart and an aspiration to instruct—but the illogic of their endeavor was not nearly as fatal to their design for dominance as its fatuousness.

The elitists simply could not command subordination from those that they thought beneath them. They were too recently risen from the motley masses. Their demands for deference were, as Scribner says repeatedly, a pipe dream. The places where their fantasies of teaching the lower echelons manners emerged were the taverns, because the arenas of public life in British North American cities were the taverns.

By combing conventional sources—newspapers, letters, diaries, travel journals, and memoirs—Scribner brings those taverns compellingly to life. His history is not so much interdisciplinary as inter-sub-disciplinary—a seamless synthesis of social, political, intellectual, emotional, and material-culture history, enhanced by telling comparisons with the history of taverns in England and Europe. He also engages other disciplines but in a casual way, especially those that contribute to the scholarly conversation about the civilizing process that began with Elias. Nonetheless, he is ultimately a historian of the public sphere. He studies taverns as a social historical means to a political historical end.

Scribner even seeks to tell a story, one that turns on a purely political hinge. He treats the taverns as contested terrain before 1765—the elitists attempting to impose civility and everyone else resisting their efforts—and then taken over by crowds of commoners in and after the Stamp Act

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protests. His story line is not as clear as it might be. Sometimes he sees the Stamp Act as transformative. Sometimes he sees that the taverns were already more republican by mid-century than the elitists could admit to themselves. Sometimes he argues that post-Revolutionary America was more attached to pre-war ideals of civility than republicans were comfortable acknowledging. He does not help his cause when he badly misreads both of his leading elitists, Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton of Annapolis. But his story is, for all that, suggestive, and his insistence that taverns were at the center of colonial city life is well-taken. Interdisciplinary historians will find much to learn and much more to ponder in this splendidly playful, deeply serious, and unfailingly delightful work.

Michael Zuckerman
University of Pennsylvania

Power and the People: Thucydides’ History and the American Founding. Edited by Charlotte C. S. Thomas (Macon, Mercer University Press, 2019) 207 pp. $24.00

This is an odd, yet oddly fascinating volume. In most chapters, the American founders appear as an afterthought, and the select men who qualify as founders reveal little about Thucydides’ influence on their political philosophies. Karl Walling engages the metaphor of medicine, comparing the method of Thucydides to that of the three authors of the Federalist Papers, who can be regarded as “political pathologists, students of political disease” (31, 33). Devin Stauffer launches “a brief surgical strike” upon one of Alexander Hamilton’s Federalist numbers. Yet even he otherwise lumps the designated founders together as men of “gravity, humanity, and sobriety”—like the celebrated Greek historian (153). Added references to the much later French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville further signifies the limited number of authorities from whom the ten contributors could draw.

Setting aside a crucial fact that all historians are obliged to consider—that America’s founders schemed, prevaricated, and conducted politics with complex motives that changed over post-Revolutionary decades—and noting that The Federalist itself is a snapshot of a moment in time, designed to influence a couple of state ratifying conventions while having no appreciable effect on the outcome of those conventions, this collection by close students of Thucydides is nonetheless intellectually rich and consistently readable. The assembled scholars re-encounter the ancient Greek historian amid suspicions about human impulses and descriptions of social mores that serve to bring out the real and rhetorical character of the American republic.

Among the more provocative essays is Steven Forde’s “The Virtues and Vices of Individualism.” Forde’s argument cleverly contrasts Athenian individualism with anti-individualistic Sparta, presenting these traits as analogues to the conflicted nature of modern Americans’ self-regard. A national predisposition, like that of the ancient Athenians, is revealed in
sociability more than in laws, and the power and dynamism seen in an aggressive foreign policy could be linked to what Pericles saw in “innovative” appetites and an “unconstrained way of life” (70). Athenians suffered from an illusory form of patriotism or “self-deception,” which allowed them to see empire as something “noble.” They “abhorred tyranny. . . . Yet they tyrannized others” (76). Spartans were, in individual terms, a duller breed, but their policies in favor of restraint dictated that everyone “sacrifice for the common good.” Drawing near his conclusion, Forde states, “The American Founders were more likely to regard Greek history in general as a model cautionary tale than an object of imitation” (79). Then he writes, “Athenians led their citizens down paths that benefited private individuals at the expense of the public” (81). The moral is irresistible.

Bernard J. Dobski studies the separation of powers principle by way of differences in the oligarchic and democratic experiences. In a Greek-inflected understanding, the ideal of political moderation requires a side-by-side examination of two concepts, metrios and sophrosune. The first is “proportionate” or “reasonable”; the second is “soundness of mind” or “civilizing restraint” (136–137). What is measured conduct and where does cold self-interest lie, and how are they to be fairly evaluated? By breaking down metrios and sophrosune, components of political ethics too easily conflated, Dobski makes cogent distinctions. He extends the analysis, as others in this volume do, to the irresistibility of power in any political system: “Thucydides shows us that measuredness means coming to grips with the real and insistent moral demands that we make on others and the world when we try to make evident to others our superior worthiness to rule (151).”

The final two chapters are worthwhile ruminations, the first by Sarah E. Gardner on the Confederate officer and Princeton-educated philologist Basil Gildersleeve and the second, kinetically composed by Laurie M. Johnson, “Why Our Democracy Needs Thucydides Now More Than Ever.” The Civil War may be out of place in this volume, but Gardner puts Hellenism precisely where it belongs. Johnson, for her part, takes the Greek word στάσις in its two meanings, “civil war” and “paralysis,” and relates Corcyraean civil war to the extreme divisiveness of our political present. In all, this is an inviting, substantive volume.

Andrew Burstein
Louisiana State University

Slavery in the North: Forgetting History and Recovering Memory. By Marc Howard Ross (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018)
320 pp. $39.95

Ross’s decade-long exploration of slavery, memory, and forgetting began with the rediscovery of the slave quarters at Independence National
Historical Park (INHP), debates about interpreting President George Washington’s enslaved laborers at the site’s President House, and the creation of the Avenging the Ancestors Coalition (ATAC). These overlapping events prompted Ross to ask why the collective forgetting of northern enslavement in the public and commemorative landscape occurred. By answering this question from the perspective of political psychology, he corrects previous neglect, amplifies recent recovery efforts, and deepens scholarly understandings of the real consequences of the exclusion of this history from the cultural landscape.

The first three chapters define terminology, review the existing literature, and debunk assumptions. Ross methodically shows how the collective memory of northern enslavement could not be sustained in a landscape devoid of memory prompts. The extensive published history of northern enslavement did not stop the widespread collective forgetting. Ross surmises that although African Americans “did speak out, few whites had any interest in listening” (86). In his crucial third chapter, Ross reveals how the intentional forgetting had larger political implications for defining “who matters within a community, who should matter, and who can be ignored” (94). He carefully considers six plausible reasons for the collective forgetting of northern slavery—racism, destruction of sites connected to slavery, incentives to forget, shame and guilt, fear of discovery, and repressions through reframing narratives. By breaking the active erasure, Ross explains that the rediscovery process brought new narratives, new visibility, and new connections necessary for overcoming the collective forgetting.

Beginning with Chapter 4, case studies reveal the recovery of “collective narratives that had all but disappeared” (120). Ross contrasts the recovery and reinterpretation efforts at the President’s House and slave quarters at INHP. Invisibility ceased when a major conflict erupted over the 2002 redesign of the National Park Service (NPS) that fully acknowledged the slavery and freedom paradox. The newly formed ATAC demanded the inclusion of the history of the nine enslaved people brought by Washington to Philadelphia. Others demanded the continued absence. The NPS wavered, and meetings became fraught. Site excavation fueled the debates. The ATAC prevented the reburying of the archaeological findings by eulogizing the known enslaved laborers in a public funeral. Ultimately, the redesigned site included the history, the full text of which Ross reprints.

INHP’s “Freedom and Slavery in the Making a New Nation” exhibit also encouraged heated debate, a failed set of interpretive panels, and the hiring of a second firm for developing the final exhibit. Using personal ethnographic observations, Ross reveals that unlike some visitors, others still ignore the exhibit by walking purposefully to the Liberty Bell. These two case studies highlight both the challenges and possible lessons for other sites. In connecting individuals to specific sites, Ross contends that visible places, objects, and compelling narratives remain essential components for recovering memory.

The next two chapters reveal the role of rediscovered places, objects, and interpretive narratives in redressing African-American absence in the
commemorative landscape. The combination of historical markers, rituals, and other memory prompts allow for a sustained recollection of northern enslavement. Moreover, burial grounds “can foster connections to the hidden and forgotten past of enslaved and free Blacks that many never imagined” (209). Collectively, these rediscovered sites validate history and show the power of memory by centering previously silenced communities.

Although the book provides no definitive explanation for the collective forgetting of northern enslavement, Ross’s final chapter outlines the necessary components for overcoming collective forgetting. Places, objects, and rituals remain vital for the development, retention, and transmission of recovered collective memories. Ross concludes that without these reminders, recovered memories will be difficult to sustain; however, he remains hopeful that the current recovery work will succeed.

This work is a valuable addition. Ross’s approach will appeal to scholars and practitioners of public history interested in the forgetting and recovery of the history and experiences of northern enslavement.

Hilary Green
University of Alabama


In this book, Fox-Amato argues that photography played a significant role in the history of slavery, abolition, and the Civil War. He focuses on the daguerreotype, pioneered by Louis Daguerre in 1839, whereupon the technology spread quickly to all parts of the United States. Readers will encounter many photographs familiar to scholars, such as images of the Manigault slaves from South Carolina, and others rarely seen before in print. Fox-Amato discusses how daguerrotypes were made, advertised, exhibited, and marketed, as well as the cultural messages that they conveyed. The book is based on research in manuscripts, printed sources, and the images themselves. The resulting work is clearly written, perceptive, thoughtful, and enjoyable to read.

Fox-Amato examines bondage in the South but does not treat slavery in the North, which persisted in some states into the age of the daguerreotype. He concentrates on photographs of Southern slaveowners and slaves, some of them whites with house slaves; many of these house slaves were female. In those images, everyone is well-dressed, seated together, and posed to confirm racial hierarchies; slaves appear to be devoted to their owners. Slaveholders deployed these visuals to portray bondage as familial and personal, not cruel and harsh. Daguerrotypes therefore served a political function in the pro-slavery argument in the antebellum era.

The author has made some surprising discoveries about slaves who had the money and opportunity to buy their own daguerrotypes, with
no interference from whites. These individuals, who seem to have been few in number, managed to utilize photography to forge a strong sense of personhood. Fox-Amato also reveals new information about itinerant daguerrotypists who created thousands of images as they traveled, selling them at cheap prices. He notes how abolitionists exchanged photographs of activists both to build community within their ranks and refute prejudice in the country at large. Frederick Douglass, the subject of more than 160 images, deliberately presented a serious, bourgeois demeanor to counter bigoted stereotypes of African Americans.

When the Union blockade halted imports during the Civil War, it also undermined Confederate photography, but daguerrotypists visited Union army camps and produced many images. Anti-slavery figures circulated the now-famous photograph of the fugitive Gordon (also known as Peter) with a scarred back, thus illuminating, as only images could, the abuses of bondage. The military camps, depicted as “haphazard, biracial communities” (161), contained white troops who had photographs taken with a variety of motives. Because some of them were against slavery and others not, some of the images challenged white supremacy (showing dignified black troops in uniform) whereas others upheld it (blacks kneeling or serving whites). Black soldiers posed for their photographs holding weapons or standing before a U.S. flag, communicating their dedication to the federal cause.

For all its merits, Exposing Slavery raises some questions about methodology and historiography. Fox-Amato often describes photographs as material objects, but he neglects influential work on material culture by historians and specialists in anthropology and archaeology. Some of the evidence supports the theory of object agency advanced by Latour, but Fox-Amato does not refer to that concept. The volume would have benefited from wider reading about the history of Southern slavery, such as Boster’s important book on disabled slaves, including the Manigault slaves, and Weiner’s excellent monograph on slavery and gender. Melish and Gigantino have published superb books about Northern slavery that might have shed some light on whether whites and blacks made the same use of daguerrotypes as their counterparts in the South.

This book nevertheless provides fresh perspectives on slavery and photography, and historians will learn a great deal from reading it.

Joan E. Cashin
Ohio State University

Coming Full Circle: The Seneca Nation of Indians, 1848–1934. By Laurence M. Hauptman (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2019) 294 pp. $34.95

Hauptman has published so many books about Iroquois history that it is now reaching the point where it is difficult to keep track of them all and their differences from each other. As he remarks in the preface, this book fills the chronological gap in his oeuvre between Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State (Syracuse, 1999) and In the Shadow of Kinzua: The Seneca Nation of Indians since World War II (Syracuse, 2014). The preface also states that this book draws from “a massive, 933-page report” on government and leadership, which he wrote at the request of the Seneca Nation (xi). That provenance might explain why at times the book seems more like a report intent on documenting all the information found in a research process than a broad historical analysis emerging from an engagement with the historiography on nineteenth- and twentieth-century tribal histories.

Coming Full Circle complements Hauptman’s other books in its institutional approach, but, unlike the others, it seems more like a collection of articles than a book that revolves around a single theme. Each chapter zeroes in on one or two issues, such as the impact of the 1848 revolution in Seneca Nation politics, which resulted in a restructured, written constitutional government; the internationally recognized runner Lewis Bennett, aka Deerfoot; the Thomas Orphan Asylum, later Thomas Indian School; the Seneca students who attended Hampton Institute in Virginia; and various legal cases involving Senecas and the Seneca Nation in the first half of the twentieth century. The one issue that Hauptman treats in a thread, though it is not consistently addressed in all the chapters, is that Seneca Nation politics were fraught with disagreeing visions for the nation. Another frequent issue is the ambiguity among the three political entities—the federal government, New York State government, and the Seneca Nation itself—about who had a say in the nation’s operations, relations with outsiders, and resources. Though Hauptman does not explicitly discuss the problems posed by this ambiguity, he has done so extensively in his other work.

The book covers many different topics, sometimes in extraordinary detail. It will be a valuable reference for any historian working on nineteenth- or twentieth-century Iroquois history, whereas other readers will view discrete sections of the book as more useful than the book as a whole. Someone interested in Indian athletes, for instance, would find the section on Bennett important. Another reader seeking information about Indian boarding schools would lean toward Hauptman’s carefully researched material on that subject, which includes a six-page chart listing the students at Hampton, their years of attendance, their occupations, and other information about them. Hauptman’s decades of archival research and many conversations with tribal members have made him one of the foremost authorities on Iroquois history, and although the
writings in this book do not always cohere thematically, it is worthwhile to have this material accessible in print.

Nancy Shoemaker
University of Connecticut

Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad. By Manu Karuka (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2019) 318 pp. $85.00 cloth $29.95 paper

Throughout the nineteenth century, many Americans regarded the railroad as a potentially valuable tool of empire. Early advocates claimed that the railroads would be useful in suppressing Native American uprisings. Heads of the frontier army worked closely with railroad companies to impose their vision of civilization across the plains. Yet few railroad histories have looked in any depth at the effects of railroads on Native Americans and other cultural groups. In his broad, well-researched, but overly strident work, Karuka corrects this omission by detailing the impact of the transcontinental railroad on the Lakota, Pawnee, and Cheyenne nations and the Chinese workers who helped build the railroad.

Karuka organizes the book into three sections. The first section includes three chapters, each of which introduces one of the major themes of the book—counter-sovereignty, modes of relationship, and railroad colonialism. The second section contains four chapters, each of which focuses on how the transcontinental railroad affected the groups listed above. The third section consists of two chapters that examine concepts—shareholder whiteness and continental imperialism—that, according to Karuka, apply to the history of both the transcontinental railroad and, more broadly, the United States.

Karuka claims that, contrary to triumphalist accounts that portray the transcontinental railroad as a unique symbol of vibrant American capitalism, it was an unexceptional manifestation of railroad colonialism. Government, military, and business leaders, who collectively formed what Karuka calls “the war-finance nexus,” ignored indigenous land claims as they built the railroad and transformed the interior of the United States into a capitalist empire (173). The railroad was not, according to Karuka, an infrastructure of connection joining the people of the United States together, but a core infrastructure of continental imperialism used to oppress Native Americans and exclude Chinese workers who helped to build it.

The book is extraordinarily well researched, incorporating a wide range of rarely used sources, including indigenous oral histories, ethnographic and anthropological studies, archaeological reports, indigenous art, and written histories of indigenous Nations, as well as more traditional sources, such as government documents, daily newspapers, corporate reports, and personal papers. The indigenous sources provide a perspective frequently missing from more traditional accounts.
The book is also broadly conceived. Although it focuses on the period of the transcontinental railroad’s greatest activity, 1862 to 1869, it also examines the history of indigenous peoples on the plains before the railroad, the evolution of legal thought regarding corporations in the antebellum era, the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, and mobilization for the Spanish–American War. Its geographical coverage extends to not only the American West but also the American South during Reconstruction, as well as to Africa, Australia, Brazil, China, India, and the Ottoman Empire during the colonial era. The book’s breadth, however, sometimes interferes with narrative coherence. The early chapters that lay out key themes and serve as a literature review posit broad generalities but provide little discussion of people, places, or things. Karuka argues that rumors can serve as valuable historical evidence but never explains the rumors in question. In later chapters, he often presents so much background material that the transcontinental railroad itself receives little attention.

More troublesome is that the book’s forceful and repetitious advocacy of a Marxist interpretation of the transcontinental railroad and U.S. history interferes with rigorous analysis and raises doubts about its objectivity. The chapter on railroad colonialism jumps from country to country in describing the phenomenon and declaring it imperialist without explaining the underlying mechanisms that could account for similarities and differences in the character and timing of events. The frequent use of the term “war-finance nexus” substitutes for more thoughtful discussion of how changes in the relationships between the government, the military, and the private sector affected the transcontinental railroad. The epilogue argues that capitalism is synonymous with imperialism and that imperialism has increased since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but it does not consider democratic peace theory or examine the distinctly undemocratic and authoritarian actions that Soviet leaders took in the name of Marxism–Leninism. The danger is that the book’s strident, repetitious tone may cause readers to ignore or dismiss the unique and important insights that it offers regarding the effects of the transcontinental railroad on Native Americans and Chinese workers.

Robert G. Angevine
George Washington University


In this well-written study, Sturkey aims “to tell the story of the rise and fall of Jim Crow in Hattiesburg, Mississippi” by discussing the experiences of whites and African Americans in alternating chapters (7). Drawing from the papers of prominent individuals, civil-rights organizations, and activists; oral histories and interviews; institutional records; and
newspapers, Sturkey focuses on white political and economic leaders and the African-American Smith family, who were “heavily involved in local black business, religious, educational, and civic organizations” (6). To a lesser extent, he also considers trends in the everyday experience of the mass of Hattiesburg’s people, especially African Americans. Neither his sources nor his methodology venture outside the discipline of history.

Founded in 1880, Hattiesburg’s prosperity centered on lumber, railroads, manufacturing, and the military, and it depended on northern investment and federal government support, which “often resulted in subtler alterations to Jim Crow” (8). Migration to segregated Hattiesburg from rural Mississippi and other southern states enabled African Americans “to develop their own societies and institutions that enriched black life” and afforded them some degree of autonomy, despite underfunded black public schools, exclusion, disfranchisement, lynching, and widespread economic dependence on whites (9). Blacks shared “communal values of racial uplift and self-help” that sustained them (186). Eventually, many of them sought to escape new forms of racial oppression that had accompanied modernization, such as segregation and lynching, by moving to northern cities, sometimes migrating in organized groups.

Beginning in the late 1940s, an increasing northern black vote put pressure on the “federal government whose authority rapidly expanded between the 1930s and 1960s” to dismantle Jim Crow (8). A more favorable federal climate encouraged Africans Americans in Hattiesburg to move from seeking improvements within segregation to challenging discrimination outright. When outside civil-rights activists arrived in the early 1960s, they stimulated a distinctive movement that was characterized by direct action and organized through black institutions and networks that were by-products of segregation.

Sturkey is refreshingly frank in his analysis. The Lost Cause of the Confederacy served to assuage damaged southern white pride but paid “homage to a failed nation whose primary objective was the maintenance of black slavery” (77). Segregation led to the creation of black middle-class leadership rooted in business, schools, and churches and of African-Americans institutions that improved black education, employment, and prospects, while insulating some blacks from many of the worst features of white oppression. Yet, life for many African Americans in Hattiesburg, although better than sharecropping or tenancy, was often limiting, humiliating, harsh, insecure, and dependant. White leaders courted northern and federal investment but appealed to states’ rights whenever such aid threatened to undermine white supremacy. Segregationists lambasted federal civil-rights support as an abuse of power but urged the Federal Bureau of Investigation to examine the tax-exempt status of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund, Inc.

Readers familiar with the racial history of the New South will not find any new revelations in this book, and Sturkey rarely contextualizes
his findings within historiography. He argues for a short civil-rights movement confined to the 1960s but does not link it to the debate among civil-rights historians about the movement’s longevity, composition, and goals. He devotes only one of his twelve chapters to the movement and ends with Freedom Summer in 1964. His conclusion briefly considers subsequent developments, and he admits that “this book is far more concerned with Jim Crow itself than with the more widely celebrated history of the civil rights movement” (5).

Although Sturkey claims to have selected “representative individuals,” the lives of local leaders in the black and white communities were by their nature atypical (5). Without explanation, he argues, unconvincingly, that “this very exceptionalism and the historical documentation that they left behind . . . makes the Smith family such an ideal lens through which to document black life” (6). Alternating chapters between whites and African Americans produces some probably unavoidable repetition, but sometimes it is unnecessary. For example, the same quotation from Theodore Bilbo appears on pages 209 and 228. Nevertheless, Sturkey has written an absorbing study that is judicious in its analysis and, most likely, as inclusive as the sources allow.

Mark Newman
University of Edinburgh

Capturing the South: Imagining America’s Most Documented Region. By Scott L. Matthews (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2018) 328 pp. $90.00 cloth $29.95 paper

At its core, Matthews’ Capturing the South speaks to the asymmetries of documentary power around histories of well-meaning (often self-serving) intentions, cultural exploitation, and subject resistance. Matthews states his overarching goal: “I try to bring to life the ‘interactional history’ of the documentary process, including the negotiations and concessions each side often made, and the forms of resistance the documented often used against the power of the documentarian” (7). To accomplish his goal, Matthews presents a succession of case studies built around the ideologies of key documentarians—Howard Odum, Jack Delano, John Cohen, and Danny Lyon—and their subjects, some named and others not, who pushed back—John Wesley Gordon, Tony Thompson, Roscoe Holcomb, and Robert Moses.

Matthews sequences his examination along a historical arc that spans the twentieth century, framing each of his chapters around the documentary ideologies of a critical moment, ranging from the recuperative to the redemptive. Overall, Matthews’ arguments are meticulously researched and thoughtfully considered. His narrative, however, bends toward formulaic explorations of the South as the most documented
region in the United States, assumes the form of a linear narrative that constructs and traces the frailties of documentary politics that leads eventually, through various forms of social and cultural blindness, to enlightened understanding. The fact of the matter, however, is that documentary methodologies are always in flux and that the very idea of documentary is confounded by an underlying dialog between ethnography, journalism, and art.

The provocation underpinning Matthews’ work orbits around the core question of the extent to which documentarians trade in clichés and stereotypes through a reification of alterity in image, text, and sound. Matthews not only exposes and explores this dilemma in its historic contexts; he also implicitly challenges the practices of contemporary documentary and ethnographic work in ways that speak to the larger question of who gets to choose and tell the story and to what purpose. Concerns with self-reflexivity and subject position are nothing new in these fields, but Matthews helps us to see the broader contexts in which they unfold. Those concerns rely on an engagement with shifting southern imaginaries understood and experienced around factors of race, class, gender, ideology, intention, and circumstance. Those concerns also touch on other forms of cultural exchange in a larger universe of descriptive and ascriptive practices, represented, for example, in the contemporary connoisseurship, interpretation, and valuation of vernacular foodways and outsider art.

Matthews’ tracing of the documentary arc achieves its most compelling iteration in his penultimate chapter about Hale County, Alabama, the setting of James Agee and Walker Evans’ Let us Now Praise Famous Men (Boston, 1939). Reprising both the prequels and sequels to that iconic work, Matthews gives voice to the documented people and their descendants. What emerges from the inheritors of Agee and Evans’ work is the subjects’ almost palpable expression of frustration, resentment, and even rage. Positioned as the capstone to Matthews’ chronicle, the Hale County chapter would be more effective if read first. The energy of Matthews’ argument establishes the ethical ambitions of his study in ways that persuasively invite the reader into a consideration about the historical arc and the fieldwork ethics that arguably render the South the most documented American region.

Bernard L. Herman
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

_Hurtin’ Words: Debating Family Problems in the Twentieth-Century South._ By Ted Ownby (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2018) 352 pp. $90.00 cloth $29.95 paper

The title of Ownby’s excellent new book comes from a 1968 song by country singer Tammy Wynette. In “D-I-V-O-R-C-E,” she sings of parents who spell out “hurtin words” like “divorce” and “custody” to
spare their child’s innocence. *Hurtin’ Words*, as Ownby notes, is an appropriate title for a book that “dramatizes how difficult the subject of family problems can be” and analyses the words that southerners used to debate those problems during the twentieth century (9). Even though, as he argues, the southern family was not a uniform entity, black and white southerners nevertheless talked, wrote, and sang about family problems with uncommon passion and creativity. They were motivated in part by social and cultural upheavals centered in the South, including the civil-rights movement and the relaxing of the region’s once distinctly restrictive divorce policies, which threatened racial and gender hierarchies outside and inside the family.

For black southerners, and some liberal whites, the civil-rights movement inspired new ways of thinking about family that bypassed demeaning stereotypes of black family crisis and conceived bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood forged by a shared humanity or a common experience of oppression or resilience. For conservative white southerners, fears of federally mandated school integration and, later, rising divorce rates, inspired screeds, jeremiads, and calls to protect the authority and sanctity of the (white) family. How a group talked about family problems revealed its vision of the ideal life and how to live it.

To uncover these and other debates about family problems, Ownby deftly examines a wide array of sources, including popular music, novels, memoirs, and the television series *Roots*, along with sociological studies, court cases, and the papers of politicians, activists, scholars, civil-rights organizations and church denominations. The breadth and depth of his archival research is particularly impressive. In Chapter 2, which explores the meaning and uses of the religious concept of brotherhood in interracial work and civil-rights activism between the 1930s and 1960s, Ownby plumbs the papers of black and white activists and organizations to reveal how they deconstructed the idea of race to create an egalitarian human family. In the following chapter, he shows how massive resistance to federally mandated school desegregation unleashed a white backlash not only against government authority but also against the concept of worldly “brotherhood.” From the papers of the White Citizens’ Council and the passionate letters sent to southern governors and U.S. Senators by their constituents, Ownby captures the panic of segregationists eager to protect the white family, particularly young children, from perceived pathologies of black family life. His expert analysis of these sources reveals how this massive resistance, at bottom, was a movement rooted in sexual and family fears rather than constitutional principles.

Ownby’s treatment of cultural expression, particularly music, does not always have the same revelatory power. Although he correctly notes in Chapter 1 that the commercialization of genres like the blues and country music allowed records to become the voices of performers and their audiences, he does not explore this phenomenon enough to reinforce his arguments about how southerners narrated family life. His discussion of Wynette and southern rock in Chapter 5 is much stronger and more
expansive, but the connections that he draws between male lyrics about wanderlust and individualism and the loosening of divorce laws and mores in the South in the 1970s are still not entirely persuasive.

Despite an unduly modest statement in the introduction about avoiding too much literary analysis because of a lack of training, Ownby provides insightful readings of how novels by southern women in the late twentieth century undermined patriarchy and envisioned more liberating ways of conceiving family. His decision to leave out the “canonical” works by William Faulkner and other southern authors from the first half of the twentieth century for fear that they “might dominate the narrative” is regrettable (9). Examples of how Faulkner and others, such as Ellen Glasgow, wrote about patriarchy would have deepened the historical and cultural significance of his conclusions about the work of Dorothy Allison, Kaye Gibbons, and others from the 1980s and 1990s.

None of this criticism detracts from a superb book that further solidifies Ownby’s reputation as one of the most perceptive historians of the twentieth-century South. The history that he reveals in this book has particular relevance today, as he states in his introduction and afterword. Indeed, the striking parallels between today’s fears of same-sex, immigrant, and refugee families and those directed toward black families throughout American history highlight how debates about family remain fundamental to our contemporary movements for civil and human rights.

Scott L. Matthews
Florida State College, Jacksonville

*Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History.* By Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2017) 272 pp. $45.00 cloth $19.95 paper

An exhibit at Saskatoon’s Western Development Museum calls the Canadian homesteading experience “Winning the Prairie Gamble.” Despite the many obstacles that homesteaders faced—including their own inexperience—settling and cultivating the land was generally a success. Tens of thousands gambled on the prairie and won. The American homesteading experience was another story altogether—at least according to standard historical accounts. What was a success story on the northern Canadian prairies was rife with problems on the Great Plains: Most farmers purchased their land holdings rather than staking a homestead claim; the homestead system was subject to abuse; most homesteaders failed to prove up; and homesteading conflicted with Indian settlement.

So, why the contrast? Maybe Canada learned from American mistakes, especially since homesteading in the three Canadian prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) did not boom until the American settlement frontier had closed in the 1890s. Maybe many of
those who settled the Canadian prairies came north from the United States with several years of practical experience trying to carve out a livelihood on the semi-arid plains. Or maybe the Canadian system allowed for expansion because the land initially reserved for railways, the Hudson’s Bay Company, or schools was ultimately sold to homesteaders who found that a quarter-section was not large enough for commercial farming. Whatever the explanation, the accepted historical wisdom is that the American homesteading was largely a failure.

*Homesteading the Plains* challenges this negative assessment. Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo argue that the American experience between 1863 and 1900 was actually positive and that the popular memory of settling the plains is more accurate. They reach this conclusion through a renewed statistical analysis of homestead records (now that the files have been digitized), supplemented by anecdotal information. What the new data reveal does not match what scholars have been saying for decades. Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo found that roughly 60 percent of homesteaders succeeded in securing title to their land; homesteading was a major settlement activity (this statistic generally matches that for the Canadian experience). A related finding is that prior studies greatly exaggerated the level of homestead fraud; more than 90 percent of homestead patents were secured through valid applications.

The dispossession of Indian lands, however, is neither a simple nor a straightforward story. The authors offer contingent conclusions for the U.S. situation, depending on the state/territory and the timing of homestead entry on the land. In Canada, the federal government pressured Indian groups in the early twentieth century to reduce or surrender their reserve holdings to satisfy the demands of white newcomers for land.

*Homesteading the Plains* reads more like a scientific paper than a work of history. The writing is repetitive, if not pedantic. No sense of appreciation for the great human enterprise of homesteading enlivens the prose. Rather, the authors seem more intent on driving home their conclusions throughout the text, as if repeating them will give them greater currency.

What is evident in the pages of this book is a need for more work at the micro-level. The book has little to say about the range of factors—besides location, soil quality, and climate—that determined homesteaders’ success in turning primitive farms into a commercial operation. Agricultural experience was obviously crucial, but how important were timing and capital? Did the isolation of settlers on individual homesteads make their pioneering challenges loom larger and lead to failure, especially if it meant no family support, and was the standard homestead grant too small for a successful, long-term operation? Answers to these and other questions will help to write “a new history” of homesteading.

Bill Waiser
University of Saskatchewan
No Surrender: The Land Remains Indigenous. By Sheldon Krasowski (Regina, University of Regina Press, 2019) 368 pp. $27.95

Canada likes to obscure its historical relationship with Indigenous peoples. During the 1950s, few Canadians in Ottawa (where this reviewer lived) were aware of an Indigenous presence in Canada. Yet, not far from the city were several Algonquin and Mohawk reserve communities. Ironically, Canada’s capital sat and remains on unceded Algonquin territory. The national museum portrayed Indigenous peoples in dioramas gathered around a campfire, perpetually frozen in time. In history lessons, they were scarcely mentioned. Krasowski grew up in Saskatoon, located in a part of western Canada known among First Nations as Treaty 6—a term that he was never taught—one of the eleven numbered treaties, together with many previous pre-confederation peace and friendship treaties, that formed the political and geographical foundation upon which Canada could emerge as a nation. Indeed, Canada is really a country of three founding peoples (the English, French, and Indigenous nations) that developed from a partnership between the European fur traders and the Indigenous occupants of the land. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 that followed the end of the Seven Years’ War recognized the Indigenous title and established the terms only by which their lands could be ceded for settlement.

The numbered treaties established after confederation in 1867 and based on those terms of cession came in two periods: Treaties 1 to 7 were negotiated between 1871 and 1877 and Treaties 8 to 11 between 1899 and 1921. As the book’s title implies, Kaslowski’s thesis is that the indigenous people never surrendered their land; they agreed only to share it. Nevertheless, until recently, the dominant historical narrative is that because of a cultural misunderstanding of the terms of treaty, the First Nations did not fully realize that they had surrendered the land. Krasowski argues instead that the evidence clearly suggests that the negotiated agreement was not accurately reflected in the final treaty texts. He also argues that the tendency of previous historians to discuss the treaties separately is mistaken; the treaties were more like bundles. What he means is that Treaties 1–7 must be understood as a single process based on federal policy to promote Canadian expansion and settlement westward and that their logic was perfectly clear to the affected First Nations.

Krasowski’s methodology is straightforward in principle but complex in execution. For each treaty he attempts to recreate the negotiations by first setting the immediate context that impelled both parties—the Crown and the affected tribes—to produce a treaty. He then examines archival records—including the treaty texts, government documents, newspaper accounts, private diaries, written recollections of the interpreters and witnesses present, and, importantly, the oral histories of the descendant elders and knowledge holders. Through this examination, he identifies inconsistencies between the official treaty text and the documented
understandings of those who witnessed and/or had knowledge of the proceedings. Even without a smoking gun, plenty of evidence suggests that no agreements to surrender the land ever occurred. Rather, the agreements permitted settlement only on the condition that lands be set aside for the exclusive use of First Nations, for the preservation of their hunting and fishing rights, and for assistance, as might be requested, for their adjustment to European ways. Indeed, the Selkirk Treaty (1817) established a principle that implicitly runs throughout this history—that small tracts of land would be reserved for settlers and the remaining land would be the exclusive jurisdiction of the Cree and Saulteaux. This early treaty set the stage for how First Nations chiefs anticipated the tenor of subsequent treaties, delineating reserves for settlers, not for Indigenous people.

Krasowski’s work is an extraordinarily thorough examination of the available documentation related to Treaties 1–7, the negotiations and final texts. His diligent attention to the ceremony and ritual of the treaty process, the conflicting views of participants and witnesses to the negotiations, and the wording of the final texts is admirable. He has made an invaluable contribution to our knowledge and appreciation of how important these treaties are to determining the legal basis of Canada’s existence. Nevertheless, although Krasowski has methodically presented vast amounts of evidence to suggest that the Indigenous lands were never surrendered, he does not make as compelling a case as he could. Although he has sufficient evidence, he does not guide the reader through it with cogent analysis and discussion, neither at each chapter’s end nor at the book’s conclusion. Nor does he explore how the treaties—as one nation dealing with another—were subsequently administered and how the Department of Indian Affairs, through the Indian Act, became an oppressive omnipresence in the lives of Canada’s First Nations.

This important book is relevant to many disciplines, including legal studies, political science, history, public policy, anthropology, and sociology, as well as to Indigenous studies. Krasowski has given scholars in all settler states, especially Canada, much to consider as their colonial pasts unravel and their constitutional futures become uncertain.

Hugh Shewell
Carleton University


Gonzales’ ambitious work demands the attention of scholars who study Atlantic revolutions, environmental history, and those interested in the growing field of global history. At the most general level, Maroon Nation widens the category of Maroons to include ex-slaves who defied oppressive, but disunited, military elites even after the abolition of slavery. Hundreds resisted a return to plantation work by running away. Others
launched rebellions, setting fire to slave huts, sugar mills, and other essential components of the plantation infrastructure. The majority, however, sought escape in rural hillsides to stay independent of the new military state, depending primarily on their households and neighbors for subsistence. Some claimed land by squatting; some bought land; and others were gifted land for military loyalty. Villagers depended on West African Vodou and secret societies to satisfy spiritual needs and to establish new hierarchies. Indeed, in their patterns of settlement and culture, they may have recreated a New World iteration of a West African world.

Wholesale agricultural escape was possible in Haiti because the ex-slave population was small, and available land was nearby, plentiful, affordable, and productive. “Tropical sunshine” was free (232). The ex-slaves could grow and gather not only sugar but also coffee, corn, and other produce without heavy expense in labor or infrastructure; they could even export those crops. The terrain in Haiti mattered: It allowed cultivated land to remain “hidden” in forested areas, not readily discoverable, and therefore protected from elites who were determined to drive laborers back onto plantations. An island-wide “cryptoculture” emerged, consisting of shifting systems of farms intentionally designed to conceal settlement from outsiders (236).

Gonzales credits the Haitian “masses” for destroying the repressive regime of plantations and persisting as revolutionaries beyond the military years. The willful escape of thousands of ex-slave families into the hillsides denied elites such as Toussaint L’Ouverture much-needed workers and shattered the plantation structure. The Haitian runaway peasantry achieved an independence free from direct labor exploitation that was not possible anywhere else for ex-slaves in the early nineteenth-century Americas. Gonzales stops short of presenting this time as a “golden era” for ex-slaves; he acknowledges that self-sufficient farms or the ex-slaves “strategic nonparticipation” in plantation life led to nothing like a democratic society (200). Rural communities remained poor, illiterate, and without access to education, finances, or other institutional mechanisms to participate in a modernizing world.

The analytical ambition of this project requires Gonzales to go beyond traditional archival and oral sources. For a work of this kind, the sources are often songs and proverbs as well as military correspondence, but the range of concepts that Gonzales distills from a diverse secondary literature are unusual and, indeed, inspiring. Gonzales asks what it meant for Haitian slaves to be emancipated in a world where the “ideology of free labor, wage relations and contractual arrangements” was not yet widespread (127). Drawing from James C. Scott’s The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Anarchist Southeast Asia (New Haven, 2009), he depicts Haiti’s ex-slaves as practicing a “deliberate and reactive statelessness” (237). Gonzales likens ex-slaves to Luddites in their refusal to work in the plantation-industrial complex. He compares the Haitian state’s attempts to track peasants using a surveillance system to an early
passport scheme. Gonzales even considers Haitian peasants’ similarities to Native Americans, another group who maintained their distance for generations despite aggressive encroachment.

Most of Gonzales’ work focuses on the period between 1791 and 1820s. In the last chapter, he surges forward to the present to argue that the Haitian state today owes some of its characteristics, its complexity, and its volatility to the ex-slaves’ agricultural revolution of the early nineteenth century. Migration into the cities in the twentieth century, for instance, did not modernize rural people as it did in other parts of the world; it “ruralized” the cities instead. Port-au-Prince, he insists, is as much a “maroon territory” as are the most faraway villages. These connections across time are suggestive; they provide an example of the work that is needed if historians will make the leap between an earlier global world to the current one.

Ruma Chopra
San Jose State University


When Al-Hac Mehmed, resident of Kasım Paşa, Istanbul, died onboard ship in the Mediterranean, his estate was registered in the court of the Galata kadi in 1606. He owned stakes in several shops across Istanbul, including a confectionary shop in Galata. He had clearly been trading in Egypt in spices, dyes, coffee, and sugar. Among his movable belongings were fine textiles alongside European watches. He had borrowed money from two charitable endowments, and he owed money to a man with whom he had perhaps gone into partnership. He had also lent money and received collateral. His portfolio spanned long-distance trade, retail, property, and banking. In the inventory of his estate, the topography of Istanbul and its environs meets the wider Mediterranean, and the Ottoman world meets the European. He exemplifies the teeming cast of characters in Zarinebaf’s excellent new study of Galata, the European port of Istanbul on the other side of the Golden Horn, and its hinterland of Pera to the north.

Evliya Çelebi saw Galata, with its taverns and brothels, as “sin city.” Visiting Europeans would later see it as an enclave of Western modernity. Zarinebaf dispels both stereotypes, by examining the local history of Galata and by placing Istanbul’s Mediterranean trade (much of which passed through Galata) within a wider Mediterranean and Black Sea frame.

To pursue Galata’s trade in every direction within the larger Mediterranean world right through the early modern period would be a task of Braudellian scale. Sensibly, Zarinebaf’s emphasis is on the trade with
France via Marseilles in the long eighteenth century. The book has three parts. Part I starts with the twelfth-century Genoese enclave and runs through the Ottoman conquest (which Zarinebaf sees as only temporarily disruptive) to the limited subsequent Islamization, which did not hinder Galata’s development as a European port, before moving north to Pera and its transformation from necropolis to diplomatic center.

Part II is a discussion, spanning the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of the regime of adhnames, commercial and diplomatic treaties. Especially for the earlier part of the period in question, Zarinebaf presents them as far more bilateral than has often been supposed. They were not symptoms of Ottoman decline but evidence of a continuing international legal and economic order around the Mediterranean, in which ports such as Galata enjoyed considerable autonomy.

Part III, the most substantial, shows how this legal regime manifested itself in Ottoman–Latin relations, particularly in local trade and the provisioning of the capital. Earlier chapters touched on trade in an extensive range of goods, but this final section brings textiles, coffee, and sugar to the fore. It also fully tackles the question of whether the Ottoman sultans oversaw a sclerotic command economy with limited scope for private initiative or, as Zarinebaf argues in this book, an economy of often large-scale merchant partnerships with ready access to credit. The final section also discusses interfaith (sexual) relations, violence, and dragomans.

In place of a conclusion, Zarinebaf offers an epilogue that covers the unraveling of the system that she described as a consequence of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt. A new era of free trade replaced monopolies, and for the first time, European ports were opened to Ottoman merchants who previously were forced to charter Dutch or Swedish ships. A concluding summary would have helped.

The chapters are each long and detailed, grounded in archival detail, and often threading together several related but distinct topics. Mastery of an immense secondary bibliography is everywhere apparent, but Zarinebaf tends to re-present current debates in it without always making her own sympathies clear. Moreover, even though she invokes models to follow from the historiography, she does not explicitly embrace any particular methodology.

What might Zarinebaf have claimed in her conclusion? She could legitimately have laid claim to five achievements: (1) a study of a neglected sub-region of a Mediterranean city that refuses to treat the entire city as a monolith; (2) a view of international trade through the prism of the Ottoman archives rather than the usual European sources; (3) a presentation of the Ottoman economic world as just one part (albeit a major part) of an entangled Mediterranean that does not presuppose decline or divergence from some abstract model of nascent capitalism; (4) a glimpse at the limits of cosmopolitanism in a Mediterranean city through an examination of the punishments for religious and sexual transgression; and (5) a successful attempt to meet the historiographical challenge of
relating the global and the highly local. The book is a worthy successor to the pioneering works about Pera, the Ottoman economy, and especially the Black Sea trade, written by the late Halil İnalcık.¹

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Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation. By Fredrik Meiton (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2018) 312 pp. $85.00 cloth $29.95 paper

Meiton has written an elegant and original history of mandatory Palestine. There are two ways to look at this refreshing view of the early history of the Zionist colonization of Palestine. One is to appreciate the brilliance of correlating the flow of electricity with the trajectory of colonization and modernization in Palestine and beyond. The other is to engage more critically with the assumption of the book that the electrification of Palestine in the mandatory period was almost the singular factor determining the future of the country.

This intriguing, and beautifully written tract shows that Pinchas Rutenberg’s project of electrifying Palestine affected not only the country’s future but also Western discourse about modernization and civilization in the first half of the twentieth century. It is also a fascinating study of Palestine’s material history and how it shaped the local economy, politics, and society. It begins with the discourse about electrifying Palestine, which the Zionist leaders in the early years of the movement were able to commodify as the ultimate proof that their venture in Palestine would turn a desert into civilization. In practice, the Zionist project forever turned much of civilized Palestine into a desert after 1948. Quite a few British officials in London and on the ground bought into this vision of an electrified, hence Westernized and modernized, Zionist Palestine.

Meiton provides a fresh explanation for the Zionist success in creating a state within a wider discourse about modernization and its impact in the world. He adds an intriguing dimension to an already impressive literature about this topic, describing a material regime that mediated human thought and action and distributed costs and benefits. A fine but generally unknown example of this mediation is the connection between the Zionist attempt to retain all the high-tension mains and the way the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) delineated the 1947 partition plan.

Electrification undoubtedly played a crucial role in ridding Palestine of Arabs but by no means does it provide a singular explanation for the Zionist success, motivated by what Wolfe termed the “logic of the

¹ See, for example, Halil İnalcık, “Ottoman Galata,” in idem, Essays in Ottoman History (Istanbul, 1998), 275–376.
elimination of the native,” which he defined as a typical motivation for settler colonial movements such as Zionism. Similarly, although Rutenberg was one of Palestine’s chief modernizers, he was not a member of the Zionist elite that planned and executed the gradual removal of the indigenous people of Palestine that continues to this day. Focusing on the electrification of Palestine should not sanitize the brutality and inhumanity that accompanied the dispossession of Palestine. The presence of people like Rutenberg, and enterprises like his, gave the elimination a particular colour and charted the unique trajectory of the colonial project on the ground.

The book shows convincingly that the electric grid and the Jewish state evolved through mutual dependency. However, singling out the grid, even granting it a dominant role in relation to other features of Zionist state-building (based mainly on eliminating Arabs), is a bold and, some would say, overstated assertion. The gap between the industrial growth of the settler community and that of the native population was huge, as the book shows. The local Palestinians were unable to build an indigenous infrastructure due to Zionist land purchases in the 1920s and the eviction of the Palestinian tenants from them, as well as the Zionist settlers’ incremental removal of them from the labor market. The local community was unable to defend itself, particularly after 1936, when the British forces killed, wounded, or exiled most of its military and political elite. These factors are no less important in explaining the catastrophic presence of Zionism in Palestine.

All these economic and political developments, including the electrification of the country that produced an accelerated industrialization and accentuated the gulf between the two communities, would have been meaningless had the world not allowed the Zionist movement to displace Arabs from what became Jewish-conquered territory. After all, the most important target of Zionism was acquiring land; without it, electrified or not, the Jewish state would never have formed. When the mandate ended, the Zionist community possessed less than 7 percent of the land. It obtained almost 50 percent from the United Nations partition resolution and eventually took 78 percent of the land by force in 1948.

The economic dynamics that propelled the Zionist project were the result of ideology, international balances of power, and Western priorities (informed by antisemitism, islamophobia, and orientalism). This incisive book shows that understanding the success of the settler colonial project of Zionism requires a close look at the dialectical relationship between all these factors and the material infrastructure, such as electrification, which together laid the foundation to the making of Israel and the unmaking of Palestine.

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Rapid advances in the study of climate, in counterpoint with onrushing climate distortions, are being reflected in transformations of traditional historiography, with new dimensions of insight. Today’s challenge is to integrate traditional archive-based studies into more multidimensional narratives that speak to rapidly destabilizing climate patterns, their anthropogenic causes and consequences, and the often grossly inappropriate trends in political economy.

Climate history is emerging as a major segment of environmental historiography, in recognition of the world’s onrushing double crisis of declining clean fresh water and rising sea levels. Water history has a rich heritage, but recent technological developments, especially in climatology, have enabled far better integration of human and natural dynamics, notably for monsoon Asia. Across the monsoon arc of Asia, the history of water management has long been narrated in detail. Regimes, societies, and cultures have perennially adapted to and managed their rivers. China’s immemorial efforts to manage the rivers that flow from Tibet and central Asia are at the center of its history. It has now become possible to write multidisciplinary syntheses of that ecological region as a whole.

Unruly Waters, Amrith’s first major foray into climate history, is an impressive step in that project. His previous books have provided important dimensions of the human story, exploring public health and mass labor migration, in the context of European colonialism and the post-1945 transition to independent or fully autonomous regimes. As he defines this book’s theme, “Unruly Waters tells the story of how the schemes of empire builders, the visions of freedom fighters, the designs of engineers—and the cumulative, dispersed actions of hundreds of millions of people across generations—have transformed Asia’s waters over the past two hundred years” (6).

This book is innovatively anchored in the new era of climate science, made possible by satellite imagery and the technology of massive data management. Using hydrological cycles as his fulcrum, Amrith integrates a region-wide perspective from the Tibetan highlands to melting Himalayan glaciers, the great river basins’ depleting ground water, and coastal zones with rising sea levels, from Pakistan to China. Throughout the major river basins, he writes, “the quality as well as the quantity of water is under strain from a multiplicity of new demands and uses. Asia’s rivers are choked by pollutants and impounded by large dams. An estimated 80 percent of China’s wells contain water unsafe for human consumption; in India, groundwater is poisoned by fluoride and arsenic, or made undrinkable and unhealthy by salinity” (3). Along coastal zones, rising waters cause flooding, erosion, and degradation of wetlands. Coastal fishing is depleted, and villagers are forced to migrate to urban areas. Massive pollution and rising sea levels threaten coastal cities (many dating from early global, colonial, capitalist times). Yet hundreds of expanded coastal cities and towns further distort coastal-zone dynamics across the region.
Amrith’s narrative centers on the Indian subcontinent and the “crucible of the monsoon” (13), one of the determining regions of global climate. The book’s long historical perspective is also enriched by recent advances in archeology, ecosystem dynamics, and toxics chemistry. Amrith’s reports of extensive travel and interviews with everyone from scientists and urban planners to farmers, fisherfolk, and environmental activists, add vivid and intimate detail to the story. These reports illustrate the social and economic impacts of accelerating change on regional institutions and socioeconomic elites, and on village-level farmers and fishermen and women who struggle to adapt to the consequences.

Unruly Waters establishes Amrith as a major environmental historian, presenting an environmental challenge to Asian and especially Indian historians, as well as introducing a range of Indian scholars to Western environmental historians and activists. More broadly, this engaging narrative is forceful, vivid prose for the intelligent reader. “The history of how Indians have understood and coped with the monsoon may have wider lessons at a moment when climate can no longer be ignored, anywhere in the world” (15).

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Footbinding as Fashion: Ethnicity, Labor, and Status in Traditional China. By John Robert Shepherd (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2018) 272 pp. $95.00 cloth $30.00 paper

Footbinding has offered scholars a platform to explore the political, economic, social, and cultural landscape of China. A historical account might trace its origin to the Song dynasty (960–1279) and follow its spread to the literati, eventually trickling down to commoners. An ethnographic survey might analyze footbinding as a practice among the ethnic Chinese. A sociological perspective might explore the influence of footbinding on marriage patterns. An economic approach might link footbinding to particular household or agricultural economies. Shepherd’s study engages with all these approaches. Drawing from palace memorials, literati writings, census data, surveys of agriculture and handicrafts, missionary reports, and ethnographies, Shepherd questions some long-standing explanations for the persistence of footbinding, proposing instead an interpretation that emphasizes the role of social pressure.

The book is divided into eight main chapters, surrounded by an introduction and conclusion. Chapter 1 starts with the early decades of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Shepherd challenges the notion that footbinding became politicized in the transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty. His analysis of Qing memorials and literati writings shows no evidence of a 1645 ban on footbinding or of the use of footbinding as an ethnic marker of Han identity that symbolized political opposition to
the Manchu rulers of the Qing. Hence, the spread of footbinding throughout the Qing should not be interpreted as an expression of anti-Manchu sentiment.

Shepherd continues to contest the “ethnic marker hypothesis” in Chapters 2 through 5, which focus on Hoklo–Hakka relations in early twentieth-century Taiwan, and Chapter 8, which focuses on Han–Manchu relations in northeastern China, also in the early twentieth century. The Hoklo and Han practiced footbinding, whereas the Hakka and Manchu did not. The ethnic marker hypothesis holds that footbinding would be most pronounced in ethnic communities that had frequent contact with other ethnicities that did not practice footbinding. Therefore, higher rates of footbinding would be expected in communities that bordered other ethnic groups. Shepherd argues, however, that in Taiwan, intra-ethnic competition contributed to the persistence of footbinding within Hoklo communities and that rates of footbinding were lower in Hoklo communities adjacent to Hakka communities. In northeastern China, Han–Manchu interactions led to the decline of footbinding among the Han population. Dismissing the relevance of the ethnic marker hypothesis, Shepherd states instead that social pressure played the key role in maintaining the practice of footbinding. The judgment of peers was strongest within the Hoklo communities, where footbinding was accepted as normative, desirable, and even necessary, to be respectable.

Chapters 6 and 7 counter economic explanations for the geographical distribution of footbinding. The general assumption is that footbinding was more common in areas where dry agriculture was practiced; wet agriculture made it difficult for women with bound feet to engage in farmwork. Shepherd uses Taiwan as a counter-example, finding rates of footbinding unaffected not only by farming practice but also by tenancy rates and degrees of urbanization. He also disputes the “labor discipline hypothesis” that views footbinding as not only compatible with, but also necessary for, female textile work. Mining the economic data about handicrafts, Shepherd finds no correlation between footbinding and handicraft production that would confirm an economic explanation for the persistence of footbinding.

Shepherd’s interpretations of the data to counter conventional views of footbinding is commendable. However, the data do not support a monocausal explanation centered on social pressure to have small feet, making Shepherd’s conclusion more suggestive than definitive. Moreover, given that the majority of the book focuses on Japanese-occupied Taiwan and frontier zones in northeastern China in the early twentieth century, the application of its conclusions to the rest of China or to the period conventionally considered “traditional,” which would predate the twentieth century, is suspect. That aside, Shepherd has presented data and posed arguments that are sure to attract specialists and stimulate debate.

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Using archival documents and printed materials (in English, Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali), Siegel clearly demonstrates how newly independent India’s planners, politicians, and literate citizens extensively discussed the vital national issues of inadequate production and inequitable distribution of food. Siegel argues that the pressing problem of feeding the people, and the often-heated Indian debates about the shape of policies and programs to ameliorate widespread hunger, shaped the emergence of the new nation. His work addresses the period from the Bengal famine (1943) through the start of the Green Revolution (late 1960s). His conclusion brings these continuing themes to the present, when about 15 percent of the population remains hungry and when widespread malnourishment is joined by increasing obesity among India’s substantial middle and expanding upper classes. In the course of this fine book, Siegel refers to a range of disciplines, including agricultural, economic, political, and environmental history; however, he concentrates on a thoughtful analysis of the discourse and programs advocated by India’s planners, politicians, and citizens.

As a baseline, Siegel briefly describes how the British Raj (1858–1947) presided over a series of tragic famines due to natural causes but with massive Indian death totals exacerbated by inhumane government policies. The final of these major disasters was the 1943/4 famine in India’s eastern province of Bengal where 3.5 million died, largely due to Britain’s extraction of rice from the countryside for its own wartime purposes. These destructive and demoralizing famines scarred postcolonial India’s policymakers and citizens. Furthermore, Britain’s 1947 partition of India made feeding the hungry nation even more difficult by allotting many of the most productive agricultural regions to Pakistan. The subsequent Cold War’s ideological conflicts constrained India’s access to international food aid and its willingness to accept outside influences on its nation-building. Centrally, political and popular aspirations for equity in landholding and access to food often conflicted with official efforts to maximize production; the Green Revolution’s programs eventually tilted toward the official program to the detriment of the poor and landless. Indeed, chronic food-production shortages and distribution problems remained central to the postcolonial development of this new nation.

Siegel supports his discourse and public-policy analysis with extensive research in official government records in India, the United Kingdom, and the United States. He also draws effectively from thirty-three newspapers and many non-fiction and fiction books and articles in English and several Indian languages. He includes a dozen published cartoons, posters, photographs, and other images to show public sentiment, using them descriptively rather than analytically. Although Siegel shows mastery of the
relevant secondary scholarly literature, he highlights his own narrative of the debates among India’s planners and citizens rather than engaging in deep theoretical discussion. He repeatedly and correctly acknowledges the “restraints”/“constraints” on his chosen methodology imposed by the “patchy” nature of the archives (4, 16, 20). In many ways, his work complements the extensive and rapidly growing scholarly literature on these issues that feature one or more other scholarly disciplines.

Siegel writes in an effective and engaging style. He provides extensive but not intrusive references to his own sources and to the relevant secondary scholarship in English that approach these issues from other social-science methodologies. Scholars, advanced students, and general readers interested in the first three decades of the development of modern India will gain much from this valuable volume.

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