

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

PAUL CAVILL, *A new dictionary of English field-names*, with an introduction by REBECCA GREGORY (English Place-Name Society, 2018). 495 pp. £30.

Many scholars and researchers, both amateur and professional, working on a project which involves the landscape, will turn to field names as a source of information. The first question to ask of this book is: 'does it provide information and guidance about field names and their use as data?' The answer is certainly 'yes'. The late John Field's excellent *English Field Names: A Dictionary* (1972) is a book which has been recommended to countless students. This new dictionary will supersede it. It is essentially two books. The first part is an introduction to the study of field-names by Rebecca Gregory, which provides a comprehensive introduction to the subject.

Gregory begins by discussing the way in which field-names can convey so much information about the landscape history of an area or even a particular piece of land, and in addition give us insight into local farming practice, industries, buildings and into language and usage. She follows this with a long and well-illustrated discussion of the content of field-names, demonstrating just how complicated they can be in structure and how much they can convey, for instance, about their position relative to the community which used them, what the land they named was like to use or how their user felt about it (Zululand!). She also points out how field-names can convey information about belief in magic and spirits – 'elf hall' (p. xi) – as well as references to executions as in 'gibbet', or the presence of finds of ancient hoards – 'goldhord'. As she makes clear, field-names can be complicated and convey much disparate information in a short form, as well as varying enormously in the date at which they originated.

Under the heading 'Using field-names' Gregory discusses how to collect them and continues with a comprehensive and very useful survey of recent work in field-name research, which clearly links the study to the wider work of the English Place-Name Society in

its county place-name surveys. The material referenced in the footnotes here will be of the greatest use to anyone setting out on collection and on a survey of their own. A later section on 'Additional sources of field-names' provides an important pointer to printed and manuscript sources as well as information now available online.

There is a useful discussion of the survival of field-names and a reminder that 'we can prove that names survived, but we cannot prove they did not'. We do not know how much information we have lost about farming practices, social organization and landscapes. However, recent studies show that field-names have a much better survival rate than was hitherto imagined, so that they can often be used to aid in a reconstruction of past practices and landscapes, provided that the evidence is not pushed too far. In practice of course, it is not unusual to find a parish or estate within which there is little surviving field-name evidence prior to the commencement of the nineteenth century, while estates with a long history of ownership by a powerful figure or more probably a monastery, can retain a wealth of information stretching back into the fourteenth century or earlier. We need to remember that the social, economic and landscape history of such places may not be much like the history of some much less well documented settlements.

There is also a sharp reminder for southerners that languages other than English also had an influence on field-names. Norse, in particular, clearly had a strong impact on the naming of parts of the late Old English landscape and a useful summary of work on the topic is included. English also, even in the later middle ages was far from uniform across England and field-names reflect that. The sheer volume of available material provides an enormous reservoir for the study of the history and archaeology of landscape as well as providing a source for lexicographic and onomastic studies.

The second part, by Paul Cavill, with 45,000 attestations in the dictionary is almost twice the size of John Field's work. These field-names are grouped under 2,500 headwords and this provides the opportunity to show methodically the relationship between different

surviving forms of the same root-word. The entry 'Quiddams' is a good example, found at Grafton and Radcot in Oxfordshire with a form *Quedham* of 1278-9. The variants 'Quidham' in Shrivenham, Berkshire and 'Great and Little Quidmore' at Great Horksley in Essex as well as other examples lead to the OE word *cwead*, dirty or muddy land. This suggests that 'Quab lane' in the reviewer's parish contains the same element. The references to Old English, Middle English and Old Norse roots found in field-names is then aided by a glossary of field-name elements. For example, the headword 'Wrang' leads us to a long sequence of field-names which include the word. Wranglands, in Bardsey (West Riding), Ringlands in Warter (East Riding) and Wrongway Field, in Wesham, Lancs, all contain the Old English *wrang*, 'crooked' or Old Norse *vrangr*, with the same meaning. Kindly, on the next page, under the heading 'The Wrong', we are directed to 'Wrang'.

There is no doubt that a strength of this dictionary is that the examples quoted are drawn widely from all over England. The parish for each example and its county are clearly indicated and examples are drawn from Cornwall, Kestles in Tintagel, 'land with or near a castle, village or tor', to 'Delf,' in Newbottle, Durham, 'a quarry', OE (*ge*)*delf*. The many examples following this last headword illustrate the frequency with which of some of the field-names listed occur: no less than 25 are given.

There is, of course, a major problem faced by the dictionary compiler. When to stop? The volume of field-names available in the sources discussed earlier in the book is vast and much of it is still unexplored, so an enquirer should not be too disappointed if the field-name they wish to elucidate is not offered. No doubt another edition will extend and amplify the corpus.

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TREVOR DEAN, GLYN PARRY and EDWARD VALLANCE (eds), *Faith, place and people in early modern England: Essays in honour of Margaret Spufford* (Boydell, 2018). 233 pp. 15 illus. £60.

Faith, place and people in early modern England honours the life and work of Margaret Spufford, a pathbreaking social historian of dissent, rural communities, mobility and microhistory. From *Contrasting communities* through *Small books and pleasant histories*, to *The world of rural dissenters*, Spufford's every contribution proved her a meticulous, archivally grounded, and insightful scholar, whose life experiences encouraged in her an enduring sympathy with 'the poor and obscure' (p. 10). The collection begins with a heart-

warming essay by her husband Peter Spufford, titled only 'Margaret', which recounts her remarkable career and the challenges she overcame, including illness at several stages of life. We are painted a picture of a very different academic world for the Spuffords, in which it was possible to spend days per week in the archives for years at a time, teach a night class to engaged mature students, receive Cavendish College research support, and access to research and travel grant support from Keele as an honorary lecturer in 1974. It is a world that enabled Margaret Spufford to produce several impressive books in a row, and a world we have clearly lost; one imagines that today her trajectory through higher education would be functionally impossible to achieve, and that the academy is poorer for it.

The collection divides into three sections, each corresponding one of the main arenas which dominated Spufford's scholarly inquiries: 'faith', 'place' (particularly the definitive unit of the rural locality, the parish), and 'people'. Examining faith by way of fascinating parish vicars and Catholic nonconformists, chapters by William Shiels, Henry French and Steve Hindle open the volume. Shiels contrasts the recusant communities of the Stour valley, Essex, and Lancashire, principally through an investigation of first Thomas Tresham, and second the Montague family. He challenges the 'mainly positive view of denominational relations at the parochial level' extent in our existing scholarship (p. 31). French returns us to Earls Colne and to the entirely mediocre precursor to early modern England's most posthumously famous pastor, Ralph Josselin. We learn about the ministry of William Adams, vicar of Earls Colne between 1573 and 1610, when he was deprived. By looking at Adams, apparently content as he was to 'let the spiritual weeds grow', French excavates the 'men indifferent', those who were 'readie for any coate' of religion to be placed upon them (p. 47). Steve Hindle's following chapter on the 'sad fortunes' of the Rev. John Perkins, of the Warwickshire parish of Chilvers Coton, follows on excellently from French's. We learn about the spatial arrangements of rather crowded pews, and about how the silences of the parish's voluminous record-keeping speak volumes about the marginality of Perkins, a figure apparently at both the spatial and social edges of the parish he was meant to tend. We discover at the end of this chapter that the *Sad fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton* was based on Chilvers Coton, in an excellent piece of narrative revelation (p. 91). The 'faith' section holds together well and provides a series of insightful and archivally rich case studies of marginality, the 'mud' of everyday religion, and dissent.

The second and third sections concentrate on 'place' and 'people'. Ailes provides an interesting look at how

'that great antiquary' William Dugdale, his 'compulsive cataloguer' friend Ashmole, and the 'numeracy nut' Gregory King each contributed in novel fashion to both Restoration Heraldry work and to statistical use of the Hearth Tax (p. 99). Ferguson examines Hearth Tax receipts and overseer's accounts in Restoration Woking and provides a very useful table of tax exemptions (p. 122) as part of her reconstruction. It seems significant how robust the medical provision for the poor in Woking was as early as the 1670s, for example the £1 7s. 6d. spent on the lying-in of Susan Slatt, who bore a bastard child in a Woking barn in 1673 (p. 125). Slatt must have been very ill in the immediate aftermath. I confess I do not understand the parting shots fired at 'the more cynical' (p. 131) interpretations of Hindle with respect to the old poor law, since *On the parish?* quite clearly demarcates an enormous range of compassionate treatment by individuals, against a *backdrop* of systemic and institutional parsimony. Wylie examines the 'long prehistory' (p. 149) of credit relationships in probate materials, with as much as 47 per cent of one surveyed parish's probates featuring 'formal credit' by 1755. The final section on 'people' begins with a chapter by Danae Tankard, looking at men's fashion and the centrality of the London clothing market. While Tankard nods at Spufford's *Great reclothing of rural England* in her introduction, the chapter mainly focuses on the spending and dress habits of three middling and upper-class men and it is visually rich with several great examples of surviving apparel (p. 153). This is followed by an excellent chapter from Christopher Marsh, on the 'ballading' of the London cuckhold Stephen Seager, who tried to separate from his wife Grace in the Court of Arches in 1669. Marsh combines masterful readings of the unique surviving ballad 'The Joyner's Job Finished' which comments salaciously on the entire affair, and in particular on Seager's infertility and foolishness, revealing to his neighbourhood that (in Marsh's memorable phrase) 'the cuckhold's home was a house of cards' (p. 178). Wonderfully written and rich in detail, this chapter proves a real highlight of the volume. David Cressy concludes the volume with a survey of debates around the origins and cultural composition of Gypsy communities in England, 'marginal people in a stressful culture' (p. 202). The chapter departs from the temporal consistency of the rest of the volume to examine a debate over the authenticity of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller ancestry over a chronological distance rather away from 'Margaret Spufford's England'.

Readers of the *Agricultural History Review* will find no significant interventions in this volume to do with agrarian, agricultural, or indeed environmental history. However, if they seek well-researched and tightly argued

case studies of the local and generally rural parish, and wish to flesh out an understanding of the intersections between religious practice, social marginality, space and place, and everyday life, than *Faith, place and people in early modern England: Essays in honour of Margaret Spufford* certainly has much to offer.

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CARL J. GRIFFIN and BRIONY MCDONAGH (eds),
Remembering protest in Britain since 1500: memory, materiality and the landscape (Palgrave, 2018).
267 pp. 6 illus. £79.99.

This illuminating collection of essays will be enjoyed by readers of the *Review*. It offers a series of thoughtful studies of the aftermath of protest, considering how protests were remembered, and particularly how those memories were underpinned by material culture and the landscape. The essays are conceptually aware, but based on rich archival work. The voices and ideologies of ordinary protestors are once more rescued from the fog of condescension. In short, it is a book of which Edward Thompson would have approved most heartily. The focus is on agrarian protests, though there is also room for chapters relating to Peterloo and the political radicals of the French Revolutionary era.

Subjects range from the Commotion Time of 1549 up to the Chartists, with occasional nods to more modern memories of historical protests. One cluster of essays centres on some of the best known English rural riots and rebellions. Nicola Whyte, opening the collection, looks at the history of Mousehold Heath, the epicentre of Kett's Rebellion (1549). Even as memories faded, the heath maintained a position as a 'counter space' for resistance, where people 'drew meaning from the landscape as it had been inhabited by former generations, the traces of which could be seen on the ground'. Briony McDonagh and Joshua Rodda then look for the rural preconditions leading up to the 'Midland Rising' of 1607, and consider the aftermath in which allegations of fomenting a new insurrection were used to denigrate rural protestors. The article is particularly important in its use of the Elizabethan Star Chamber material, which shows that enclosure was nothing new in Northamptonshire. Indeed, they make the fascinating observation that many of the sites of protest in 1607 had also seen earlier conflict. They question John Martin's assertion that there was an unusual spike in enclosure in the run up to the rebellion, but in doing so I think they do rather underplay the difficulties in making quantitative statements based on Star Chamber records. It is perfectly possible for there to have been a long history of enclosure in Northamptonshire and a major spike in the

years before the revolt. Indeed, this is what was argued by Edwin Gay in an important article on the subject (not cited here) that was published back in 1905.

Agrarian protest is also covered by fine articles on the Forest of Dean by Simon Sandall and on early nineteenth-century protest in Norfolk by Rose Wallis. In Dean, memories of the 'Book of Dennis' and the Mine Law Courts influenced later rural conflict, while in Norfolk the prosecution of protest in 1816, 1822 and 1830 was a 'calculated act of local government' informed partly what had gone before. Carl Griffin, meanwhile, offers a stimulating discussion of how rural communities might try to forget those protests where they had suffered defeats, pointing out – though – that 'nothing is ever truly lost'. Moving away from agrarian protest, Steve Poole shows how the London radicals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries knew that memory was 'an ideological field of conflict'. Alas though, attempts at memorializing radicals, rather than the generals and politicians of the establishment, were always hard to pull off.

The standout contributions are those by Ruth Mather and Heather Falvey. Mather considers the materiality and domesticity of protest in the aftermath of Peterloo, showing how women and men attempted to 'live' their radicalism by naming their children after, say, Henry Hunt, or by filling their houses with radical memorabilia. Falvey, meanwhile, is the only contributor to peer closely at the actual sources available for reconstructing protest. She uses some unusually detailed material relating to lawsuits in the Duchy of Lancaster's equity court to show that interrogatories (the leading questions put by the court to witnesses) could introduce reliable information about events 'on the ground' that was later papered over in the final depositions. It is a chapter that should be read by any historian who makes use of those courts (notably Star Chamber and Chancery) that used 'English Bill' procedure.

The book is well produced, the articles well written and there are few factual errors (although it is rather misleading to see a crucial Edward Coke quotation dated to 1641, by which time he had been dead several years). I was unsure about the statement, made in the introduction, that '[B]efore the advent of protest history there was nothing, just condescension'. It is nice and pithy, but it would surprise, say, Madeleine and Ruth Dodds. There is at times a certain slipperiness as to exactly whose memory is being recovered. This is neatly encapsulated by the discussion in the introduction of the problems of the 'archive of protest memory' and specifically Falvey's chapter on depositions. To the editors, this cautions us of our reliance 'on reading the scripts of elites'. But society was more complex than

just patrician and pleb. Much of the evidence we have for the early modern period in particular comes from the 'middling sorts': depositions, so crucial to studies of memory, tended to be taken from the established farmers of the community. But recent work, notably by Alex Shepard, has shown just how distant this group had become from their poorer neighbours. Historians need, surely, to be much more attentive to the memory of the poor, the labourers, the unsettled. Casual talk of the 'elites' and 'working people' is not really enough.

The coverage, too, is not as 'systematic' as the publicity claims. The title proclaims the book to cover Britain, but every single chapter is on England. Mather's splendid essay aside, it is a book mostly about men (and surely it is to be regretted that the chief discussion of women as protesters is in a 'domestic' context). Moreover, the focus remains squarely on agrarian protest, which is fine of course, but one might argue that to properly understand protest in the sixteenth and seventeenth century you really cannot avoid religion, from the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Prayer Book Rebellion and the Northern Rising, to the Covenanter Rising of 1637, iconoclasm, Quakerism and the Fifth Monarchists.

Perhaps, indeed, the book itself is part of that process of remembering (and forgetting) protest. Griffin makes two very pertinent points. He notes that '[t]here is a tendency in protest studies to valorise and glorify *all* acts of social protest' [emphasis added], whilst also reminding us that 'memory is not a given, rather it is something created, staged, performed and mediated'. Very true. Indeed, it is mediated by historians, and staged in books like this. *Remembering Protest* is dedicated 'To the memory of the wage labourer, the threshing machine breaker, the "obsolete" commoner, the radical housewife, the "utopian" Chartist, and "stowte" John Bussey'. But the history of protest is more than just these evident good guys. It also has to encompass the xenophobic Londoners who murdered immigrants on 'Evil May Day' 1517, the brutally misogynist apprentices who made Shrove Tuesday a regular hell for seventeenth-century sex workers, and the bigoted anti-Catholic rioters of 1780. Selecting particular forms of protest for historical study and neglecting other, more distasteful ones, could itself be seen as an attempt to forget crucial aspects England's troubling past.

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MARTIN EMPSON, *'Kill all the Gentlemen'. Class struggle and change in the English countryside* (Bookmarks, 2018). 320 pp. £14.99.

'Kill all the Gentlemen' is a book born from current ecological and societal crises. Issues such as low wages

and temporary employment plague Britain's rural population, whilst the environmental impact of modern farming continues to be a point of concern. For Martin Empson, the origin of present-day worries is clear: 'capitalism puts profits before people and the planet'. Subsequently, by exploring the contested development of capitalism in the English countryside Empson aims to trace current conflicts back to their historical source. Yet Empson seeks to do more than simply document history, indeed he 'celebrates the rural class struggle for equality, justice and a better life and through this hopes to inspire people today'. As a socialist and an environmental activist, he dedicates his work to reasserting 'the approach of Karl Marx' into English rural protest history (p. 7). This book, consequently, provides a thought-provoking revival of socio-economic approaches that have been overlooked in recent years.

This ambitious monograph attempts to provide an overview of English rural protest from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 to the Countryside Alliance March of 1997. Of the ten chapters, eight concern themselves with case studies ranging from Jack Cade's Revolt and the Pilgrimage of Grace to Captain Swing and Joseph Arch's Agricultural Union. The remaining two chapters are thematic; examining the ideological and material transition from feudalism to capitalism that occurred in the years surrounding the English Civil War. Commencing his study in the medieval period, Empson argues that following the Black Death feudalism was in turmoil. Reacting to widespread poverty and corruption, rebellions such as the Peasants' Revolt were thus attempting to found a 'new social order' where the exploitative nobility could be entirely eliminated (p. 57). Empson repeatedly implores historians to acknowledge the 'radical nature' of these revolts, stressing their ability to organize a 'cross section of medieval society' and their visions of 'a land held in common' (p. 84). These beliefs continued into the 'Tudor Rebellions', where Empson reinforces the primacy of socio-economic causes. It was not the Reformation's religious alterations alone that led to rebellions such as the Pilgrimage of Grace or Western Rising. Instead, these protests were caused by the emergence of capitalist relations, with landowners using religious upheaval as an opportunity to assault traditional village institutions and the poor's material well-being. Indeed, Empson argues that it was the small cadre of gentry who led Tudor uprisings that dragged the poor away from 'agrarian warfare' and back to religious issues (p. 113).

By the seventeenth century, the farming class has supposedly undergone an ideological transformation. They were now isolated from their communities and 'individually minded'; agrarian capitalism having firmly

established itself with 'farming for profit' replacing the old feudal systems. The English Civil War, subsequently, was a 'class war' driven by capitalist farmers seeking representation and influence within national institutions. Attempts by the rural poor to prevent these changes, such as enclosure riots, were inevitably crushed by the military and legal might of the new capitalist order. By the late-eighteenth century, Empson argues, the poor had been similarly remodelled into a 'rural proletariat' yet still 'the development of capitalist agriculture and capitalist relations in the countryside was fought at every step of the way' (p. 204). These concerns over machinery, wages, enclosure and employment found their 'final' expression in the Swing Riots of 1830. In his longest case study, Empson depicts Swing as the dying gasps 'of the old traditions', its failure leaving a lasting realization that the rich could not be convinced to return to their 'traditional' roles. In his final chapters, Empson details the subsequent shift in the tools and mentalities of rural protestors. The adoption of agricultural unionism, abortively trialled at Tolpuddle and then championed by Joseph Arch, proved that 'agricultural workers could organise and win' (p. 281). These trailblazers thus inspired mass unionization in the early-twentieth century and the eventual modernization of rural protest. For Empson, these historical case studies serve to highlight the need for rural workers to organize, as even today 'a redesign of the world's food system will not come from above' (p. 293).

In any nationally focused work, generalizations are to be expected, especially when covering over six hundred years of history. However, Empson's narratives of 'class struggle' and the 'rise of capitalism' often feel worryingly lacking in nuance. Throughout this book, the rural 'working classes' and 'elite' are presented as two eternally opposed monolithic entities. This serves to lock historical actors into a socio-economic straitjacket, seemingly unable to operate outside of the assigned roles of their class. King Richard II, for example, could not have truly sympathized with the Peasants' Revolt, as no noble would betray 'the social structures that provided him and his class with their wealth and power' (p. 47). Enclosure riots are similarly romanticized, becoming sites of binary struggle 'as communities fought to use the resources instead of them being limited to the rich landowner' (p. 198). Such simplistic dichotomies risk obscuring the complex nature of rural power relations. As Briony McDonagh has illustrated, common rights were tangled webs of interest that cut across local socio-economic structures, often leading to alliances between multiple social groupings. Not all communities experienced enclosure equally, nor was the relationship between the rural poor and 'agrarian capitalism'

identical in every English village. It is a shame that in imposing these national models, Empson obscures the local distinctions that were foundational to the world view of rural people.

Despite these issues, Empson's meticulous and evocative retelling of these protests make this book an enjoyable read. These rebellions and revolts are expertly described through concise yet energetic prose. Though mostly reliant on secondary works, Empson nevertheless provides an interesting and well-researched synthesis. Consequently, those interested in the history of rural resistance will be well served by Empson's study. Additionally, this book provides an excellent summary of Marxist approaches to history and environmental activism, helping to contextualize many modern-day ecological conflicts. Although it occasionally stumbles, this book thus remains a valuable overview of the rural workers long struggle.

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SYLVIA CROCKER, *Squatters and social crime: Encroachments in the New Forest in the eighteenth century* (Hampshire Papers, sec. ser., no. 6, 2018). 28 pp. 10 illus. £8.

This nicely produced addition to the Hampshire Field Club papers focuses on the interactions of the commoners and squatters who lived in the New Forest with those in London who sought to manage the resources of the area for strategic reasons (timber for a wooden-hulled navy) and to provide some income for the national coffers.

Sylvia Crocker begins by putting the New Forest's economy and society in a national context of rising population, squatter encroachments and rural de-industrialization conflicting with pressures for enclosure, agricultural improvement and increased food production. She then links the encroachment on Crown Land in the New Forest to the concept of social crime as defined by Hobsbawm and Rudé with the informal economy and rules of the forest community. She argues that unauthorized squatting took place on a small scale and was vastly overshadowed by the activities of rich owners and holders of Forest offices who degraded the Forest by grabbing land and taking wood and timber. A clear analysis of Forest administration is provided with a neat diagram, followed by an account of the measures taken to manage the taking of timber and encroachment and squatting in the Forest.

Squatters and social crime makes good use of material in the Hampshire Record Office and other local sources, and some of the material in the National Archives. Another section examines printed material from local

clergy, landowners, and agricultural commentators which universally denigrated the squatters for their potential drain on welfare resources and propensity to criminality, as well as their absence from church (but not necessarily from chapel). The problems of parish welfare are highlighted with discussions of extra-parochial areas, inter-commoned land, and disputed boundaries such as Nomansland on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border which became a magnet for squatters and frustrated orderly administration. A map of 1789 provides details of where squatting was concentrated, with areas adjacent to the borders of private estates prominent.

The Crown's attempts to enclose the Forest in the 1790s by statute were successfully repelled but a more modest regime of regulation was instituted in 1800, with attempts to discover who owned the land, and allowing those with continuous occupancy for more than 15 years to retain possession on acceptance of a lease. But it also attempted to draw a line under squatting by providing new mechanisms for informing on squatters. Those informed on were largely landowners trying to extend their property by more than the cottagers' plots, which were generally under one acre. Squatting was not effectively extinguished.

This short booklet will provide local historians of the New Forest area with a useful overview of Forest problems, but those seeking more from this work will be disappointed. The bibliography is relatively sparse; whole topics such as E. P. Thompson's account of forest administration and social crime in the 1720s in *Whigs and hunters* are ignored. Other Hampshire forests were affected by those disturbances, so why was the New Forest relatively unaffected? The rich archive of Charles Withers, the Surveyor General of the forests in the 1720s has much on the New Forest and is in Hampshire Record Office. Social crimes such as deer stealing and smuggling were pervasive in coastal and forest areas such as the New Forest. Were they un-policed? There is more to be said about social crime in the area.

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RICHARD OLNEY, *Farming and society in North Lincolnshire. The Dixons of Holton-Le-Moor, 1741-1906* (Lincoln Record Society, 2018). 232 pp. 23 illus. £40.

PETER WORSLEY, *The Lincolnshire estates of Charles and Erasmus Darwin and their family* (Erasmus Darwin Foundation, 2017). 149 pp. £12.

The Lincolnshire Agricultural Society celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2019. At the time of its foundation people were used to reading about the quality of

Lincolnshire farming in agricultural journals and the farming press and Lincolnshire's pre-eminence as a county of 'improvement' was widely acknowledged. Richard Olney's study of the Dixon family's estate in North Lincolnshire and that of Peter Worsley examining Darwin family farms in the county illustrate the contribution of two, very different, farming estates to this overall picture through a detailed account of how each estate was painstakingly acquired, managed, and farmed.

The Dixons were farmers of the 'middling-sort' who built up their estate from a minor purchase in 1741 to a point where they owned the whole parish, lived in a fine house, had a governess for their daughters, and a phaeton to ride out in. In 1842 the estate of Thomas John Dixon and his wife (and cousin) extended to 3600 acres of which Thomas John farmed 3000 acres himself. This was an enormous holding by contemporary standards and probably the largest in North Lincolnshire.

Olney's account is chronological, introducing us one by one to six generations of Dixon landowners at Holton. He clearly identifies the different Dixons despite the family tradition of naming the eldest son alternately William and Thomas. There are chapters on 'The grazier: William Dixon (1697–1781)'; 'The tenant farmer: Thomas Dixon (1729–1798)'; 'The old-style farmer: William Dixon (1756–1824)' and two chapters on Thomas John Dixon (1785–1871) firstly as 'The man of business' and then 'The man of property'. Finally, we meet 'The ladies of Holton', two Dixon sisters who succeeded as owners of the estate, following the failure of the male line, before it passed to a cousin whose descendants own and farm the estate today.

Olney makes it clear from the start that his book is 'primarily a piece not of economic but of social history' (p. 1). However in the detail he provides about the Dixons' farming and business activity; their land acquisition and sales; their position as owner occupiers, rentiers and tenants simultaneously; the market centres to which they turned for the sale and purchase of goods; and their involvement in the development of the local canal and later railway networks (which led to the geographical expansion of their market and business activities even as far as London), there is plenty to interest the agricultural and economic historian.

The book also has a chapter based on a twenty-year run of journals kept by William Dixon junior who is dubbed 'philosopher and philanthropist'. With his breadth of reading and his insistence on styling himself *tenant* farmer, even though he owned a considerable amount of land, he could have been the model for Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mr Thomas Holbrook, yeoman*, in

Cranford. The evolution of William junior's religious and social thought gave rise to a wide range of benevolent activities: in 1800 he was the prime mover, and subsequently a lifelong supporter, of the Caistor Union Society of Industry workhouse whose three-volume history he wrote and published himself. For his workers he founded a friendly society and provided schooling. In his local market town of Caistor he also established a savings bank (1818) and his wife founded and ran the Caistor Matron's Society.

Olney's well-structured, immensely readable book is the product of nearly fifty years' association with the Dixon family and their remarkable collection of family and estate papers. It was he who organized the removal of the archive (lowered a basketful at a time) from a loft at Holton Hall to the Lincolnshire Archives, where it is now fully catalogued and available for further study. The fine set of labour and cash accounts (1824–97), some kept by the labourers themselves (whose education the Dixons promoted in the local Sunday School), are a source which has considerable potential for those interested in the day to day experience of labouring life. With its meticulous referencing and its appendix detailing the nature and content of the archive, Olney's book will serve as an invaluable guide to anyone wishing to explore the Dixon papers for themselves.

The accumulation of land in Lincolnshire by the Darwin family can be traced back to before 1548 at Marton in the Trent Vale. Worsley's account offers insights into the experience of a landowning family who rose from a similar level in society to that of the Dixons but followed a very different path and, with the help of advantageous marriages (including intermarriage with the Wedgewood family), and national recognition in the scientific field, rose to a more elevated place in society than was aspired to by the Dixons. Clear distinctions can be made between the two families: the Darwins were never such large landowners as the Dixon family became nor was their estate centred on a single parish as was that of the Dixons. Moreover, whereas the Dixons were resident landowners who took an active part in farming their estate, the Darwins soon became absentee landowners letting out their land to tenant farmers and leaving the management of their estate to the Alford-based local land agents, the Higgins family.

Worsley is a geologist and his starting point is to place the Darwin farms in their landscape context. Maps, along with a grid reference, locate each holding clearly. Underlying geology, soils, drainage and topography are all discussed in a scientific manner which gives way to more straightforward prose for an account of the

history of the farms. Worsley visited each one in person. He includes information received from inhabitants and neighbours of former Darwin properties, which demonstrate the importance of oral testimony especially in rural areas where collective memory is strong and people's links with the soil run deep.

At various times the Darwins held land at Cleatham, in and around Lincoln, in Sutterton Fen (Amber Hill), at Claythorpe (Aby) and at Beesby. There was also a family bequest of land at Kirton Lindsey to fund a charity. These landholdings are meticulously researched by Worsley who unravels for us the confusion caused by no fewer than seven successive generations of the family being called William, while others shared the name Erasmus, Robert or Ann(e). For each farm the reasons for its acquisition are examined along with the identity of its tenants, its nineteenth-century value (although not always its acreage), and its management by the local firm of land agents. The family continued to hold farms and parcels of land in various parts of Lincolnshire until 1943 when the last remaining Darwin land in the county, at Amber Hill in Sutterton Fen, was sold.

From the late seventeenth century the family were almost always non-resident landowners. They lived first at Elston Hall in Nottinghamshire, next in Lichfield, and then on the outskirts of Shrewsbury where Charles Darwin was born in 1809. Charles later purchased Down House in Kent to be his family home. The history of the Higgins family connection with the Darwin family (John Higgins' father and Charles Darwin's father were neighbours and professional associates in Shrewsbury) illustrates how social networks as well as family connections influenced the building up of an estate. Family and social connections of both the Darwins and the Higgins family, plus those of the tenant farmers themselves, all contributed to the dispersed nature of the Darwin farms in Lincolnshire.

Worsley pays considerable attention to the history of the Higgins family and their business dealings. There is also mention of the family's charitable activities in their home town of Alford. Information about the relationship between the Darwins and their managing agent, the business that was transacted, and the dealings of the family with their farm tenants is drawn from the Higgins papers deposited at the Lincolnshire Archives in 1974 by Dorothy Higgins, granddaughter of John Higgins senior. The deposit includes correspondence with various members of the Darwin family, principally Charles Darwin, farm records, and an account book belonging to Higgins which Worsley considers to be the single most valuable item in the deposit. There are also papers relating to Higgins' work as an Assistant Tithe Commissioner, an Enclosure Surveyor, and a

Crown Agent. Worsley mentions a report drawn up by Higgins in 1846 in relation to the proposed East Lincolnshire railway line which 'examined seven groups of prospective agricultural traffic: bones and oil cake, fat beasts, sheep, spring corn, wheat, and wool. He also assessed likely tonnages of chalk and lime' (p. 61). Worsley concludes that the role of land agents, and archive deposits of their papers, are areas of study which invite further attention.

In the books by Olney and Worsley we see clearly that, alongside wider political and economic circumstances which affect the fortunes of an estate, there are also social and kinship networks and individual, personal factors such as intelligence, aptitude, character, health, good or bad fortune, and the existence, or otherwise, of direct issue. These are harder for the historian to identify and more difficult to quantify. Micro-studies, such as Olney's study of the Dixons of Holton-le-Moor and that of Worsley focusing on the Darwin family estates, exemplify the importance of the human element in the history of landownership.

SHIRLEY BROOK
Lincoln

EMMA PAGE (ed.), *Exbury: the Mitford family's New Forest estate in the 18th century* (New Forest Heritage Centre, 2018). 329 pp. illus. £19.99.

This volume, the sixth in the New Forest Record Series, is based on the Exbury Estate book. Exbury, on the south coast of Hampshire, was the Mitford family's estate in the New Forest in the eighteenth century. The estate book was started by William Mitford in 1725 but it was his son John who added the instruction that the book should be 'kept and preserv'd for the use of the person ... entitled to the freehold & inheritance of the Mannor of Exbury'. Thus, at the end of the twentieth century, its discovery in the archives of a legal company resulted in its return to the current owners of the Exbury Estate and manor, the Rothschilds.

The Estate book has been transcribed and edited by Emma Page: she has recently used the Exbury estate as a substantial case study in her DPhil thesis on the landed gentry of the West Solent region in the eighteenth century. In her short introduction of 19 pages to this volume she suggests that, as a London merchant, William Mitford was keen to join the ranks of the landed gentry. However, his first purchase of 291 acres near Lymington in 1711 was insufficient for him to become part of this social grouping. Clearly prepared to take a long view, Mitford then purchased two farms in 1718 extending to 476 acres and these formed the basis of the Exbury estate which was developed by the Mitfords during the rest of the century.

Page examines how these purchases were financed and notes that, whilst strip-farming was still practised in Exbury, with the related inconveniences, the upside was that land was less expensive. Enclosure in the Exbury area was more likely to be piecemeal than by Act of Parliament or any formal agreement. Thus, as well as larger farms, the Mitfords built up the estate through the purchase of individual smallholdings, fields or even strips in fields, as well as coppices and commons.

The topic of agriculture is addressed in less than two pages, but there are details in the transcriptions relating to various agricultural husbandry practices such as marling and the use and value of urban dung. The estate book provides an excellent insight into the conditions which formed part of the tenancy agreements under which the Exbury farms were let: for example, one tenant is to plough and sow no more than three successive crops of grain, to be followed by laying the land down to grass for three years before it is ploughed again (pp. 279–80). A number of the entries give details of the acreages of fields and their associated values.

Other aspects of farming activities from the first half of the eighteenth century include the conversion factor between statute and woodland acres and an indication of corn yields and prices as part of a tithe calculation for one of the estate farms. There are examples of sub-sub-letting (p. 174) and also the practice of the descent of land through the female line, for example, '18½ acres in Leap to the use of Henry Stempe & Mary his wife & to the heirs of the said Mary for ever' (p. 176). As well as tenanted farms, the Exbury estate included a number of cottages, although the income from these would have been limited if the example of a cottage 'paying yearly 200 Shrimps at Michaelmas if demanded' (p. 124) was any sort of guide.

By 1747 however, more of Mitford's income came from timber and salt production than from the rental of farms. The nearby port and dockyard of Portsmouth would have provided outlets for both products, along with the numerous other shipbuilding locations in the adjacent area on the Beaulieu river. The book contains information on both timber and salt: for example, on the relative profits to be made from growing firs rather than oak (p. 282), and the cost of building a salt works, including the costs of the boat for transporting the salt and the windmill required to power the works (pp. 133–6). There is also reference to riverine activities in terms of the rent for fishing on the Exbury river which amounted to the 'ancient rent of 50s. & 10m oysters' (i.e. 10,000 oysters, p. 201).

Emma Page notes that this source will be of interest to social, economic, agrarian, local and family historians: to that list can be added building historians. The book

contains details of the cost of re-building Gilbury Farm (p. 100), as well as details of the materials and labour needed to build a large barn (p. 222).

In summary, this is a well-produced book, although, as with any transcription of historic documents, it is difficult to know whether what appears to be a typographical error is actually a faithful reproduction of the original source. In the opinion of this reviewer, the book would have been improved by the inclusion of a Mitford family tree, thereby obviating the need for the lengthy, somewhat confused, paragraph on page 10 linking the 'Mitford sisters' of the twentieth century with the Mitfords of the 1670s. The glossary provided is also lacking: for example, moot (both noun and verb) (p. 110), ayres or jeyens (p. 111), landshot (p. 113) and jesment sheep (p. 129) are some of the terms noted which are not included in what might have been better termed a 'Select Glossary'. Despite this, the publication of this volume has brought to light the existence and contents of an estate book which contains much rich detail from the early part of the eighteenth century.

ALAN WADSWORTH
Evesham

SARAH HOLLAND, *Communities in contrast. Doncaster and its rural hinterland, c.1830–1870* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2019). 160 pp. 13 illus. £18.99.

This book looks at six villages in the Doncaster area during the middle years of the nineteenth century. It contains five thematic chapters along with an introduction and conclusion. The themes under consideration are 'Social hierarchies, power relations and agency in the countryside'; 'rural economies'; 'living and working conditions'; 'religion and education' and 'rural recreation'. As such, it might be considered to be a relatively conventional local history which makes use of a range of both local and national sources to discuss developments in the area during the period under study.

In a relatively slim volume, the author attempts to cover a wide area of rural history. On the one hand, this might be considered as a strength in as much as a lot of topics are touched upon. On the other hand, it can lead to some surprising generalizations which are not always supported by the material under consideration. For instance, in the chapter on 'Rural economies' we are presented with: 'Brown brought wealth and business acumen from industry to agriculture, and his investments epitomized a metamorphosis of the entrepreneurial spirit in the nineteenth century' (p. 64). While the Brown family had made their money in the West Yorkshire woollen industry, the suggestion that agriculture required industrial entrepreneurs to

kick-start innovation is somewhat questionable, and a more thorough investigation would surely have highlighted a more complex dynamic for agricultural investment and innovation.

Perhaps rather surprisingly, the theoretical premise of the book lies in a critique of Dennis Mills' *Lord and peasant in nineteenth century Britain* (1980) and his work on open and closed villages, rather than using a more recent theoretical framework. While the author uses a framework of 'agency' for her discussion, the theoretical underpinnings for this discussion are not made explicit and the reader is left with the impression that this is a book that might have been written during the 1980s. Indeed, on occasion, one is left with the impression that Mills remains the prevailing paradigm determining the structure of the research, while the critique of the model included here fails to indicate the extent to which it remains useful as an analytical tool for the nineteenth century. Having said this, for those interested in Doncaster and its rural hinterland, the book will prove to be worthwhile reading.

The title might be considered somewhat misleading as it does not really investigate 'communities in contrast'. There is some discussion of the varying landownership structures across the parishes but one is left with the feeling that the discussion is rather bland. For instance, landlord-tenant relations are only considered in a superficial manner, while there is little evaluation of the internal hierarchies within the agricultural labour force. There is no meaningful discussion of politics (with a small 'p') or of protest. There is no mention of the origins of the Revolt of the Field, nor of what Raymond Williams termed 'oppositional cultures'; indeed Holland goes as far as to state that church and chapel were 'closely aligned with authority' (p. 112). While she considers Anglicanism to some extent, there is only a limited discussion of the various strands of nonconformity. Categorizing Anglicanism and nonconformity as a single entity ignores a significant power dynamic in the nineteenth-century countryside at a time when religion and religious adherence were of real importance. Reading the text, the reader is left with the impression that the entire period can be viewed as a single entity that was relatively unproblematic and where actions can be explained through a rather passive perception of agency.

CHARLES RAWDING
Edge Hill University

RICHARD HAWKING, *At the field's edge: Adrian Bell and the English countryside* (The Crowood Press, 2019). 224 pp. illus. £20.

The recent resurgence of interest in nature writing has led to greater critical attention being paid to earlier

examples of the genre. This increase in popularity is evident in the reissue of some classic works and the establishment of small, independent publishers such as Little Toller Books, who specialize in writing that focuses on rural life. In this context, Richard Hawking's new study of the English rural writer Adrian Bell is a timely contribution to revived discussions of past nature writing, as well as drawing deserved attention to one of Britain's keenest observers of rural life.

Born in London in 1901, Adrian Bell left his urban upbringing behind him in 1920 to become an apprentice farmer in Suffolk. His subsequent books detailing this move from city to countryside were highly popular, with the success of his now classic rural trilogy – *Corduroy* (1930), *Silver Ley* (1931) and *The Cherry tree* (1932) – reflecting the desire of an increasingly urban readership to reconnect with the land. Bell was not alone in his interests in country life. The inter-war period was one of increased preoccupation with rural affairs, with metropolitan-based intellectuals such as T. S. Eliot pronouncing on issues such as soil erosion and farming methods from their London offices. The 'Back to the Land' ethos, however, was no short-lived fad for Bell, but a central philosophy that shaped the core of his life and writing. It is the strength of this lifelong commitment to farming and rural life, Hawking argues, that makes Adrian Bell an authentic voice on the British countryside.

For the environmental historian, Bell offers a valuable account from the perspective of a farmer of the factors that contributed to the decline of British agriculture in the twentieth century and with it rural communities. For Hawking, Bell is an authoritative commentator on British agriculture because unlike other writers he quickly moved beyond a purely aesthetic appreciation of the countryside to recognize the complexities and hardships of rural life and the challenges brought by mechanization. Despite Bell's occasional sentimentalism in his writing, Hawking argues that he was pragmatic in recognizing the benefits of modern farming techniques and the need to adapt traditional methods to meet new demands. His clear-sighted analysis of the impact of mechanization, government policy and urbanization on farming recognizes the benefits of modernization and the potential for nostalgia to distort the realities of farming life. However, as Hawking makes clear, Bell's sensitive analysis of the impact of technological advances on agricultural work also warns against the losses caused by the capitalization of the countryside. For example, whilst accepting that machinery often eases farmers' lives, Bell also mourns the increased sense of distance from the land and the loss of intimacy and creativity in

farming that the old tools and methods had preserved. For Bell, such changes reflected a broader distancing between humans and nature in contemporary life.

Richard Hawking is a sympathetic guide to Bell's writing and a clear supporter of his philosophy, showing him to be a knowledgeable and important commentator on rural affairs in the mid-twentieth century. Hawking's study of Bell achieves a successful balance between detailing Bell's life and the broader historical context that shaped his farming and writing. The result is a study that is equally enlightening on Bell's literary achievements and the experience of modern farming. However, as in much nature writing, Bell's work is based on an underlying assumption of the moral and cultural superiority of country life that goes unchallenged by the study. Such anti-urban narratives risk deepening divisions between town and country rather than recognizing interconnections between them. They also fail to show awareness of the negative social experiences of country life for marginalized groups and individuals that drew many to the greater freedoms, opportunities and anonymity of the city. Such considerations are necessary if nature writing is to achieve a better understanding of urbanization and the social dynamics of rural communities.

Whilst Bell remained concerned with changes to agriculture throughout his life, Hawking finds his later work to be marked by a more reflective tone in his consideration of time, nature and human relations. Hawking suggests that the decline of Bell's popularity in the 1960s reflects a broader fall in interest in rural literature from a post-war population looking to the future and modernity rather than to the past. This disinterest is now being reversed as environmental concerns increase. In the contemporary context, Adrian Bell's foresight regarding nature, farming and environmental affairs makes him an important contributor to environmental debates. Bell's core argument that farming methods must maintain balance between old and modern, human and nature, producer and consumer resonates in the age of the Anthropocene, with its greater awareness of the impact of humans on the earth.

Richard Hawking's study provides an extremely informative and accessible introduction to Adrian Bell's writing and the period in which he lived and worked. For Hawking, Bell is 'one of our best documentary historians of rural life, describing and contextualizing the seismic shift in agriculture that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century'. Importantly, the study recognizes the many ways in which his lived experience of farming and nature can continue to inform contemporary understanding of the importance of balancing government policy, economic demand and

environmental well-being. Bell's support for an approach to farming that incorporates modern technology when it benefits both the land and the people working on it is directly relevant to contemporary moves towards greater crop diversity, locally sourced foods and organic farming methods. Occupying the position of farmer and writer in equal measure, Bell provides an excellent example of the interconnections between culture and nature, and shows how literature can encourage greater engagement with the natural world that sustains us.

ELIZABETH BLACK
University of Roehampton

JEREMY DIAPER, *T. S. Eliot and organicism* (Clemson University Press, 2018). 218 pp. £85.

To those who know little of the organic movement's early history, linking T. S. Eliot with the philosophy of organicism may seem rather far-fetched. After all, Eliot was a banker and publisher whose poetry memorably described the 'unreal city' where he lived and worked, with its lonely typists and its swarms of commuters. But this is only part of the picture. The poet and novelist Richard Aldington recalled country walks with Eliot which revealed his responsiveness to natural beauty. Eliot's sensitivity to the English landscape is apparent at times in his *Four Quartets*, and he was baptized into the Anglican communion not in a metropolitan church, but at Finstock in the Cotswolds.

Jeremy Diaper's argument in *T. S. Eliot and organicism* goes way beyond such circumstantial considerations, though, presenting a wealth of evidence to show that Eliot attached great importance to farming and to a thriving rural culture and economy. He saw them as vital to the health of the nation, both physical and spiritual, and through his work as an editor and publisher played a key role in promoting the organic cause during the 1930s and '40s. In demonstrating this, Diaper incidentally lends weight to the thesis of my book *The origins of the Organic Movement*: that the movement emerged from a context in which Christian social thought and the idea of a God-given natural order were prominent features.

Diaper begins by tracing the roots of Eliot's agricultural awareness to a period well before his active involvement with organicism. As early as 1915, Eliot praised America's schools of agriculture as 'better and honester places than its universities', because they did work which could be taken 'seriously' (p. 1). There follows a close analysis of how Eliot used agricultural and fertility symbolism in *The Waste Land*. Diaper shows that Eliot 'was absorbed by the idea of the desert and the fertility of the soil in a poetic sense' (p. 13), before becoming concerned about soil exhaustion

in a literal sense and about the social importance of farming. He rightly emphasizes the link in Eliot's thought between restoration of the soil and cultivation of a religious sensibility, and notes *The Waste Land's* references to the unhealthy lives of city-dwellers, with their diet of tinned foodstuffs.

By the early 1930s agrarian issues were a recurrent theme of Eliot's social criticism, and the majority of Diaper's book analyses his contribution to three journals which fostered organicism: *The Criterion*, *The New English Weekly* (NEW) and *The Christian News-Letter*. In an article for the *Review* in 1998 (AgHR 46 part 2), I identified the NEW as 'A Forum for Organic Husbandry'. Eliot served on its editorial board, and Diaper's chapter on that journal reveals that the *Four Quartets* (three of which first appeared in the NEW) can be interpreted 'in relation to the agricultural topics that were raised with conspicuous regularity in the journal' (p. 96). Diaper's study of *The Criterion*, which Eliot edited throughout its 17-year run, has led him to regard it as a 'platform for agricultural perspectives'. *The Criterion* featured reviews of many books on agriculture, and contributors included leading organicists such as Montague Fordham, Rolf Gardiner, Philip Mairet and H. J. Massingham.

Diaper's chapter on *The Christian News-Letter* argues that Eliot's involvement with this publication – as a member of the editorial committee and occasional guest-editor – is 'integral to a complete understanding of his agricultural thinking' (p. 99). The chapter contrasts Eliot's vision of a Christian society based on a series of rural communities with the farming projects of Rolf Gardiner (Dorset), Ronald Duncan (North Devon) and John Middleton Murry (on the Suffolk/Norfolk border). Through this contrast, Diaper 'indicate[s] the limits of Eliot's agrarianism' (p. 100). It was tempered by mistrust of the paganism with which Gardiner, in particular, flirted; and by the belief that agricultural communities were not ends in themselves, but could be the means of reviving an Anglo-Catholic spirituality in the post-war world.

Diaper also examines Eliot's role as a director of Faber and Faber, the company which published so many of the early organic movement's canonical texts. He provides evidence that Eliot's contribution to this policy was at least as significant as that of Faber's agriculture editor Richard de la Mare.

I have two problems with Jeremy Diaper's book. First, he evades the contentious issue of Eliot's 'alleged' (p. 175) anti-semitism, on the grounds that it has been discussed at length elsewhere. As to whether Eliot was implicated in the organic movement's radical-Right tendencies, Diaper notes his considerable affinity with

the outlook of Gerard Wallop (Viscount Lymington, later the Earl of Portsmouth), but says this was only in relation to Wallop's ideas on agriculture and rural life. In my article on Wallop ('Organic Society: Agriculture and radical politics in the career of Gerard Wallop, 9th Earl of Portsmouth (1898–1984)', AgHR 53 part 1), with which Diaper does not engage, I contend that his political outlook was closely intertwined with his views on these matters. Wallop was one of the early organic movement's most dedicated anti-semites, and the extent of Eliot's sympathy with his ideas requires more analysis than Diaper offers in his somewhat disingenuous dismissal of the subject.

Secondly, and more importantly for readers of this journal, the book lacks any real sense of the agricultural context, other than offering a handful of brief references to issues such as mechanization and the neglect of arable land. Readers are left unaware that an agricultural revolution was taking place. The organic movement was in part a reaction against the proposals of influential figures like C. S. Orwin and Sir Daniel Hall, who urged increased specialization and use of chemical fertilizers, and identified efficiency with output per worker rather than output per acre. While Eliot dreamed of a nation based on religious communities which practised organic husbandry, Fisons, ICI and the agricultural machinery industry were driving government policy towards the 1947 Agriculture Act and the subsequent reign of agri-business.

Nevertheless, despite this lacuna, Jeremy Diaper's monograph offers a convincing case for T. S. Eliot's major role in propagating the organicist philosophy.

PHILIP CONFORD
University of Leicester

Europe and Elsewhere

ROSA CONGOST and PABLO F. LUNA (eds), *Agrarian change and imperfect property. Emphyteusis in Europe (16th to 19th centuries)* (Brepols, 2018). 311 pp. €71.

The papers in this edited volume focus on the practice known as emphyteusis. This can be broadly defined as a contract in which one party grants the use rights to agricultural land to another party on the condition that the land is maintained, and in return for a fixed annual rent. The resulting contract may be of a long duration and the holder may be allowed to dispose of the use right by sale or bequest. Contracts often specify conditions attached to exit or eviction and allocate responsibilities for repairs and improvements.

Scholars have been divided in their interpretations of the operation and impact of emphyteusis. Some have

proposed that the resulting 'divided property rights' hindered economic development and limited opportunities for full ownership. Others have taken a more positive view of the practice, suggesting that it ensured that land was retained for productive purposes and arguing that both parties derived advantages, the landowner in the form of income and the tenant through long-term security. One reason for these contrasting views, according to the editors, is that the operation of emphyteusis varied both between locations and over time. The purpose of the volume is therefore to permit such comparisons. Thirteen papers encompass locations including Italy, Spain, Portugal, France and Germany across the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

A number of papers in the volume demonstrate how emphyteutic leases could be employed to encourage land improvement. Challenging economic conditions in Germanic lands during the period 1680–1720, for example, encouraged the adoption of emphyteusis. After a period of disruptive warfare, landowners were looking for incentives to encourage the resettlement of agricultural lands and decided to switch from short-term leases to more generous long-term ones. Introduction of new crops was a second form of land improvement. Catalonia became an important region for wine production from the mid-eighteenth century but a great deal of labour was required to transform uncultivated land into vineyards, and around five years had to pass before the first grapes could be harvested. Landowners therefore used the contracts as an incentive to attract the necessary investment.

Institutional and individual landowners employed emphyteutic leases, but their motivations often varied. Religious houses made such arrangements with local families in central-northern Italy and in France from the middle ages until the late eighteenth century. The process fostered links with the local community and corresponded with the idea that a religious house was a perpetual institution. In Lombardy, meanwhile, long-term contracts were used by landowners during the seventeenth century to limit exposure to economic fluctuations and to transfer maintenance costs and property taxes onto tenants.

The recipients of leases are also discussed in detail in the volume. A number of contributions suggest that emphyteusis provided opportunities for small-scale farmers who would otherwise have faced difficulty in establishing holdings. Agricultural land in eighteenth-century Normandy was of good quality and population density was high. However the agricultural economy was not commercialized and small peasant holdings were the norm. Emphyteutic contracts provided an opportunity for a peasant farmer to consolidate their

holdings around a farmstead. Sometimes the state actively encouraged the use of emphyteutic leases, as in Mallorca between the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries when they were first employed to strengthen the rights of large property owners, and subsequently to encourage the dispersal of their estates.

The extent to which contracts were monitored and enforced also varied between locations. In central-northern Italy penalties for non-payment of rent were limited but the land might revert to the owner if the male line of descent was interrupted. The Catalanian system initially contained an exit clause that required the tenant to return the land when the vines died. Some landowners, notably of Germanic lands, were insufficiently observant and allowed their rights to lapse, making their recovery of the land almost impossible. However landlords in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Galicia and those in eighteenth-century Normandy viewed emphyteutic leases as important assets and monitored contracts closely. Tensions arose in north-east Catalonia, meanwhile, when the success of the wine trade, established using emphyteutic contracts, caused landowners to increase rents and entry fines for future contracts.

Emphyteusis, the editors conclude, was a less rigid process than its critics suggest. It was employed by religious institutions who anticipated being a permanent fixture in the local community, but also by peasants to establish, consolidate and expand holdings. Clarification around the duration of contracts was established in some locations. Sometimes the aim was to facilitate the owner's recovery of the land, for example limiting duration to the life of the tenant or for 99 years and clarifying the procedure around eviction. However processes were also altered to reward tenants whose management and labour inputs had increased the land's value.

The editors take a more optimistic view of the connection between emphyteusis and economic growth than many previous scholars. They suggest that such long-term leases were particularly effective when they allowed an owner to delegate the clearance and cultivation of previously abandoned land. In such instances the owner was themselves required to absorb a degree of risk, as value of the rent that they set at the start of the contract might depreciate in real terms over its duration.

The book shows an awareness of the nuances in legal process between locations and over time. The introduction is particularly helpful in clarifying the direction of the argument to the reader. The volume will be a useful research resource for agricultural historians seeking to extend their knowledge of land transactions.

The geographical coverage draws out some interesting similarities and differences that raise questions for future research, including whether emphyteusis was most frequently employed in periods of economic crisis or those of economic growth.

CATHERINE CASSON
University of Manchester

E. M. DERMINEUR (ed.), *Women and credit in pre-industrial Europe* (Brepols, 2018). 364 pp. 14 illus. €100 / free open access.

The role of women in the credit economy is particularly obscure. The legal practice of coverture could prohibit women from appearing as sole litigants and a patriarchal legal code did not always record the role of women in household credit when they acted alongside their husbands as creditors and debtors. As women were more likely than their male counterparts to engage in small 'domestic' loans or to extend credit in closed social networks, many of their activities in the credit market elude the record altogether. This collection of essays brings together invaluable research on the role of women in the credit economy of pre-industrial society. Arranged chronologically, the chapters trace an almost continuous increase in female borrowing and lending in Europe from the fourteenth through to the eighteenth century. The book explores the agency of women as buyers and sellers at the marketplace, as investors in the credit market and invariably as litigants before the courts in pleas of debt litigation.

The contributions of Richard Goddard, Matthew Frank Stevens and Teresa Phipps all seek to recreate the everyday experience of credit in medieval England through a study of debt litigation. The study of credit via pleas of debt has significant limitations as noted by the authors. Debts were often settled amicably and when litigation was instigated, out-of-court settlement was the norm. Whilst these issues apply across genders, what the book highlights are the particular difficulties in identifying female agency before the courts where records rarely contain a description of the credit contract and where women frequently appeared as joint litigants with their husbands. It is possible, as suggested by Goddard, that women played a significant role as guarantors to the contracts of their male relatives. Ågren's study is particularly successful in addressing the limitations of the court records by exploring the ways in which women were able to extend the benefits of their trustworthy reputation to male borrowers. The focus on legal institutions in these chapters sets the tone for the book and the impact of legal custom on both practices in the credit economy and on the record of credit, remains a consistent thread throughout the following chapters.

Legal records remain at the forefront of the chapters on early modern English credit. Juliet Gayton's study of female participation in the seventeenth-century land market is based on manorial court records through which copyhold land was routinely surrendered. The probate and inventory records associated with death form the basis of Judith M. Spicksley's work on never-married women. Bringing together pan-European studies of women and credit, the book highlights a multiplicity of approaches to the history of women and credit. On the continent, where there existed a strong notarial culture, notaries' records indicate the involvement of women in formal credit markets. The survival of personal papers in the later early modern period points to the significance of informal networks of support. The richer continental source material is evident in those papers on female credit outside of England. Jaco Zuijderduijn explores female investors in the Low Countries through a study of life annuities issued by the town of Haarlem. Eve Rosenhaft utilizes the personal letters of the middle class widow Eva König to analyse the language of emotion in business. Montserrat Carbonell-Esteller bases her research on the accounts of the Mont de Pietat, an institution that granted loans against objects deposited as collateral. The variety of source material utilized within the book demonstrates that in spite of a legal code that sought to limit the economic agency of women, women remained active participants as both borrowers and lenders in the pre-industrial economy. The chapters thus speak to one another and as a whole, the book advances new approaches to the study of women and credit.

Whilst the book is broad in scope, it is unsurprising therefore that certain elements are missed. Considering the role of the Church in shaping the morality of the marketplace and as an authority presiding over instances of debt litigation in medieval England, it is surprising that none of the chapters explicitly address the role of religion in the credit activities of women. Though the chapter by Phipps highlights the peculiarities of localized legal custom, this is limited to the secular courts and the extent of legal pluralism in medieval England is overlooked. This does not, however, impact the overarching conclusions drawn across all papers that assess the role of women in the credit market as well as the significance of credit for advancing female independence. Fontaine's concluding remarks muse on the disjuncture between the legal code and practice in the marketplace and consider the means by which women subverted the restrictions imposed by law. The conclusions allude to the wider role of the credit market as a factor towards the empowerment of women. Subverting the legal code and exercising

autonomy in their financial affairs, women achieved a degree of economic independence through their engagement with the credit market. The book thus builds on earlier research by Judith Spicksley, William Chester Jordan, Amy M. Froide and others and raises important questions that should shape the future study of women and credit.

HANNAH ROBB

Institute of Historical Research

CHRISTOPHER M. PARSONS, *A not-so-new world: empire and environment in French colonial North America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). 264 pp. £35.

Ecology and environment played a crucial role in the French exploration in North America. As such, Christopher Parsons places the French belief in the agricultural potential of North America and the importance of 'cultivating' this environment for colonial success at the centre of *A not-so-new-world*.

Parsons argues that the concept of 'cultivation' was central to French discourses and practices of colonialism. Whilst the French were initially optimistic about their ability to transform the 'sauvage' (meaning something akin to 'wild' in English) world of America into a well-ordered, cultivated space, these attempts at 'cultivation' were increasingly frustrated and undermined as the radical difference of the American environment began to be recognized in the late seventeenth century. The central themes explored by Parsons will of course be familiar to scholars working on English and Spanish colonization in the New World. There is a rich literature that explores European attempts to control and cultivate American lands and thus recreate European societies across the Atlantic. The transformation of wild American lands into cultivated colonial spaces was critical to colonial success, the survival of distinctly 'European' bodies, and the improvement of indigenous ones. Cultivating the American environment, then, would not only allow for European settlements to flourish, it was also key to raising indigenous peoples to European standards of civility. Parsons's work is a welcome intervention into this already flourishing field. Parsons demonstrates how these shared European convictions about the mastery of the environment and its connection to successful colonial policy were enacted (and indeed frustrated) in the French context. Parsons shows in extraordinary detail the origins of this discourse of 'cultivation', its limitations, and its importance for understanding the nature of knowledge exchange between indigenous peoples and French colonists and missionaries. In doing so, Parsons argues for a colonial

history in which ecology and politics are recognized as being deeply 'entangled'.

In chapters one and two Parsons explores the meaning of 'cultivation' in a colonial context and identifies how this meaning was developed into a systemic theory of colonialism. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries French explorers, settlers, missionaries, and colonial administrators emphasized the similarities between France and North America. Rather than identifying significant differences between the two ecologies, observers instead suggested that New World plants were in fact merely 'savage' forms of plants that could be found in the Old World. Through a process of French cultivation, the qualities of these recognisable yet 'savage' plants could be improved, and the wider environment of North America made to resemble France more closely.

Chapter three explores the wider significance of the 'cultivation' metaphor for French colonialism. As Parsons argues, the notion of cultivation was intimately tied to the process of religious conversion. French missionaries recognized, but did not wholly understand, the spiritual nature of indigenous ecological knowledge. For successful conversion to take place, then, indigenous knowledge about the natural world had to first be understood and then, paradoxically, destroyed. Parsons also demonstrates how indigenous groups actively hid their ecological knowledge from French missionaries as a way of resisting both conversion and the dismantling of their spiritual connection to the natural world. What is perhaps missing from Parsons' analysis, however, is a discussion of how Christian conceptions of Eden, the Fall of Man, and the connection between agriculture and salvation framed the religious mission in New France.

Chapters four and five analyse the limitations of the French plans for 'cultivation'. Parsons argues that as the seventeenth century wore on, French understandings of indigenous spaces and ecologies became increasingly fragmented and agricultural plans for the region less coherent. Rather than noting the similarities between American and French flora and fauna, the transplantation of French plants became more important than cultivating 'savage' American ones. The boundaries between the 'cultivated' and the 'savage' continued to shift, as did notions of what constituted French colonial space. Using the example of 'Canada', Parsons argues that these shifting boundaries eventually solidified into a distinct region that was embedded in French ecological and social regimes. What increasingly defined French colonial space, then, was Frenchness. At the same time, indigenous ecological knowledge was further marginalized, a theme that Parsons explores through the establishment of botanical science in Paris. As Parsons

argues, American plant species were increasingly cleaved from their indigenous contexts, being prized for their botanical novelty and leading to the 'subtle recognition that New France was in fact a new place and not simply *sauvage* and in need of cultivation' (p. 150).

Parsons concludes the book by demonstrating just how contested the nature of New France was well into the eighteenth century. For some, the vision of a French empire remained predicated on the assumption that the Americas and Europe were essentially similar, whilst for others, a French Empire should be extractive, an understanding that was shaped by the idea put forward by France's scientists that New France was biologically distinctive and its plants uniquely useful. As Parsons also argues, in many ways our understanding of the ecology of North America remains stubbornly incomplete and tied to the physical and cultural violence of European colonialism. To rectify this, Parsons calls for the 'decolonization' of traditional ecological knowledge, and the mobilization of indigenous knowledge to confront and help rectify the 'ecological threats that centuries of aggressive agricultural expansion have wrought' (p. 188).

Whilst some aspects of Parsons' work do not break particularly new ground, the book is nonetheless a call to action that makes important interventions, not only into the history of science, environmental history, and the history of global knowledge exchange, but also into contemporary debates surrounding the entanglements of environment and politics. The book is richly researched and will no doubt become standard reading for anyone interested in the exigency of indigenous ecological knowledge or the importance of environment for the justification, implementation, and practice of European colonization in the early modern period.

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JOSHUA MACFADYEN, *Flax Americana. A history of the fibre and oil that covered a continent* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018). 368 pp. 42 b&w illus, 9 maps, 9 tables, 4 diagrams. \$110.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Great Lakes and northern Great Plains pioneers planted patches of newly ploughed land with purple-flowering plants. In *Flax Americana: A history of the fibre and oil that covered a continent*, Joshua MacFadyen uncovers the complicated story of a striking crop and vital commodity that historians have almost entirely overlooked. MacFadyen uses flax to weave together the interconnected social-ecological histories of agriculture, environment, business, science and technology, international trade, and commodities. Ironically, flax was

almost always peripheral. It originated and underwent processing at the margins of the farmer's fields, the agricultural frontier, and the industrial/capitalist marketplace. As MacFadyen points out, vital statistics in the census miss the ways flax fit into marginal landscapes, communities, and economies. The marvel of his research is the piecing-together of the history from the many fragments of flax found in the documentary record, including photographs, account books, trade publications, industry promotional material, and correspondence between farmers, manufacturers, and scientists. Like the plant itself, the history of flax branched many times, flourished in colourful ways, and transformed countless places where it was cultivated; little in the story of flax lends itself to a straightforward and easy-to-explain narrative.

MacFadyen's study of the social and material complexities of flax offers an ideal environmental history. The story in *Flax Americana* hinges on the irreconcilable tension between the fibre's potential value to the industrial economy, the frustrating process of converting the plant into cloth and cordage, and the ease with which converting its seed oil into paint created value for farmers, manufacturers, and modern society. Understanding the tension requires a careful explanation of why and where farmers and manufacturers expected to fit the fibre into local and the modern economies in the late nineteenth century; the material realities of the flax plant and its agency over humans; and finally the confluence of prairie colonization, an almost frictionless conversion of seeds into oil, and the cultural desire to cover the world in colour starting in the early twentieth century. By using the geography of flax to structure the organization of the book, MacFadyen avoids confusing the reader with multiple and overlapping threads of fibre and coats of oil, and allows the book to proceed chronologically. Originating in what MacFadyen calls the rural mill complex of south-western Ontario where tight-knit communities planted it at the edges of 'new breaking' (recently ploughed land) and sold it to small manufacturers, flax migrated with the colonizing land rush into the grasslands of the Dakotas, Montana, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan where farmers grew much larger acreages and supplied the urban industrial complex with raw materials for modern consumer products, including ready-mixed paints and linoleum. The transition from fibre to seed oil, cordage to paint, small mill to industrial processing, also pulled flax into commodity webs operating at multiple scales from the local to the global.

Drawing on the work of sustainability scientists Jianguo Liu *et al.*, MacFadyen employs the concepts of telecoupling and social-ecological systems to explore the

relationships between communities, agroecosystems, and the capitalist marketplace 'over long distances, between diverse systems, and through complex interactions like feedbacks and trade-offs' (p. 16). MacFadyen uses these concepts to provide an enhanced commodity chain analysis, which acknowledges and explains the complexity and nonlinearity of the stages flax moved through on its many paths from plant to product, from producer to consumer. By framing *Flax Americana* in this way, MacFadyen treats flax as one commodity networked into a wider constellation of others. Historians of agriculture, environment, and science and technology gain a more holistic view of commodities if, as MacFadyen argues, 'we think of flax not as a standalone chain but as one section of a much larger web of all commodities' (p. 18). MacFadyen dispenses with the approach that many other historians of commodities have taken, which is to isolate a single commodity and elevate its importance (warranted, or not) above that of others. Instead, MacFadyen engages in a very generous kind of scholarship that other historians, particularly agricultural and environmental historians might embrace. There is, after all, a substitute for almost every commodity, so looking for and explaining the interconnections between them is also just good storytelling.

Perhaps the biggest contribution MacFadyen makes to agricultural and environmental history with *Flax Americana* is one that he does not fully or clearly articulate. Almost precisely halfway through the book, MacFadyen asks why has flax 'not attracted the attention of professional historians'? (p. 138). Without stating so outright, the clearest answer the book provides is because the material properties of flax never attracted much attention – from people in the past, let alone from historians who read the records they left behind.

Flax did not thrive on its own merits. As MacFadyen makes clear, flax 'was an unexceptional part of life for rural people. Their records show that they did not treat flax as extraordinary or worthy of promotional fervour' (p. 138). Indeed, flax products (cloth, rope, paint, linoleum, etc.) satisfied none of society's needs, great or small. It became a part of industrial agriculture and modern society despite its material properties, not because of them. Processing the fibre was painstaking and laborious. Seed oil applications were capricious, if not conspicuous, consumption. The story MacFadyen tells, but seems hesitant to mention, is that flax had agency that resisted easy integration into anthropogenic social-ecological systems. Domesticated, certainly. But never indispensable. In fact, the history of flax provided by *Flax Americana* appears to be explained as the triumph of human agency over that of flax, but with many of the

opening rounds of the contest going to flax. The farmers, manufacturers, and promoters who saw its potential and derived some smaller benefit from their effort to achieve it, worked very hard to overcome the materiality of flax. The social, economic, and political meanings that people attached to flax constantly ran up against its ecological and physical properties. Looking only at what was grown, harvested, bought, sold, discussed, and described only gets at part of the story. Assessing the agency of the plant itself fills the story out.

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GÉRARD CHOUQUER and MARIE-CLAUDE MAUREL (eds), *Les mutations récentes du foncier et des agricultures en Europe* (Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2019). 294 pp. €30.

This, the first volume of a series of books on land and agricultural issues, aims to study contemporary relationships to the land. Despite the variety of agricultural conditions in the 28 European Union member states, the land question remains crucial, complex, and universal. Legacies of historic agricultural practice and land ownership systems continue to influence European agriculture, even as new forces disrupt existing models of production. It appears impossible to protect both agriculture and the land that supports it as much as it has been in the past.

The first part of the book is devoted to developments and revolutions in agricultural policies. Several perspectives from different disciplines offer a broad scope, beginning with three papers about France. The agronomist Devienne traces the twentieth-century agricultural revolution. The 1950s saw an increase in the output per worker, while retaining the goal of sustaining soil fertility: polyculture was considered the best solution at that time, but fell out of favour in the 1980s as farmers moved towards greater specialization. Recent developments in information technologies and biotechnology require high capital investments, while the policy agenda has shifted towards sustainability and biodiversity. The second paper, by a sociologist and a political scientist, analyses changes in the relationship between rural society and politics. Acting in the post-war agricultural transformation and the growth of national economy, the peasants aspired to influence agricultural policy decision-making. Indeed, the latter was co-managed by the State and the National Federation of Farmers' Unions (FNSEA) from 1958 to 1982. This co-management, abandoned by Mitterrand, resumed after 1990 but was weakened by the importance of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and trade union pluralism which reflects the great diversity of

farms. The third paper, also about France, by the legal scholar Bosse-Platière, sheds light on the evolution of land law, from the principles of individual good and family good to the common good. Individual landowners were protected by the civil code of 1804, and from 1945, the Tenant Farmer Act consolidated individual farmers' holdings, assuming every farmer could achieve the status of the small owner. During the mid-twentieth century new organizations helped establish new legal structures for landholding that enabled greater security in inheritance. Yet in 1980, challenges emerged when it became more profitable to invest in technical capital rather than land. Agricultural land equity management (*portage foncier*), in which a person or a company buys or receives the title deeds of land and manages it, is used increasingly in France. For the farmer, this avoids the burden of land buying, but this has caused the reduction of land ownership and a shift towards land management. All the while, concerns for the environment and climate change challenge this agricultural model and encourage considering the land as a common good. Environmental law now states that: 'we do not inherit the land of our ancestors; we borrow it from our children'.

Three papers then extend the focus to Europe, reflecting on agricultural policy. Bazin and Trouvé give a very informative summary of the CAP and the evolution of its goals. In 1958, the CAP was largely inspired by the 'Danish' model, i.e. a modernized family farm organized by powerful cooperatives. It provided direct assistance to farmers to increase production and ensure a fair standard of living. However, the CAP was subsequently faced with increasingly contrasting realities across Europe, as well as overproduction, while successive reforms after 1980 opened Europe up to the world market. In the present day, debates aim at finding a solution to reconcile a sustainable agriculture and food security. In central Europe after 1989, the ways the land was privatized and the transition to the market economy were influenced by the historic patterns. The creation of cooperatives and landowners' associations ensured the transition in the 1990s before integration into the CAP. In his chapter, Maurel outlines a trend towards land grabbing for investors controlling agricultural holdings. Mediterranean agriculture is the subject of the third paper. Three types of exploitation coexisted: the aristocrats' *latifundia*, the middle class' estates, leased in *mezzadria*, and the peasants' *microfundia*. In these regions with limited agronomic potential (except in irrigated or viticultural areas), agrarian structures were only modernized on their entry into the CAP.

The second part of the book (four chapters) questions the models of agriculture in France. Since

the nineteenth century there has been a lively debate between the partisans of small-scale farming and those of larger farms. Economic and political decision makers were convinced of the efficiency of large-scale capitalist exploitation, yet they protected family farming for social reasons. Cochet advocates systems of family farming which bring together land, capital and labour in the farmer's hands. He sees in it the source of progress in the post-war boom. It survives through the use of common structures like CUMA (Coopérative d'Utilisation de Matériel Agricole or Cooperative for the Use of Farm Implements). The family farm (sometimes over 300 ha.) coexists with 'companies' (F. Purseigle) where land capital, working capital and labour are dissociated. In 2007, France introduced the legal system of the 'trust' (*fiducie*) – a system similar to trusts in the Anglo-Saxon world – which provides a new legal entity into which the ownership of a property can be transferred, under conditions of specific use and duration, to a 'trustee' acting for a beneficiary. Labour can also be outsourced to a contractor providing both the workers and the machinery they use. This practice is already common for harvesting fruits and vegetables; hired foreign workers do not enjoy any social protection.

In a concluding chapter, Chouquer presents a wide reflection on the notion of land ownership, which he has developed in a recent masterly book (*Le foncier. Entre propriété et expertise*, Paris, 2019). Recalling European land tenure systems, in particular British common law and the Roman law, he analyses the current crisis of property in France. The contract system is gradually replacing the land status guaranteed by the State.

The fifteen contributors to this multidisciplinary book help the reader understand the importance of agricultural revolutions since 1945 and the less well known changes since the beginning of the twenty-first century. One of the major interests of the book is the combination of theoretical approaches and precise analysis of land ownership, farming patterns and developments. They have a strong correlation with social organization and are dependent on important historical trajectories, hence their great diversity in different European Union countries.

How can we reconcile a social Europe protecting workers and social aspirations for agroecology with the rise of agro-industrial enterprises and the need to feed a growing population? The readers will not find solutions for the future of agriculture in this book, but at least they will better understand the complexity of the problems and avoid unnuanced opinion.

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