

Book Reviews

UK and Ireland

DOUGLAS CROWLEY, *Braydon Forest and the forest law* (Wiltshire Record Society 72, 2019). x + 418 pp. £20.

Forests in the legal sense have a particular fascination for historians, for they are places apart, different in their landscapes, ecology and economy, certainly different in their legal systems. Moreover, they have largely disappeared, any woodland cover felled, the land apportioned and turned into arable or most likely pasture. As John Broad showed some years ago in work on the Forest of Bernwood in Buckinghamshire, a disafforested forest can cast a long shadow over the parishes in which the forest lay. Its impression does not go away.

Forests were a crown perquisite in the High Middle Ages. Attempts to widen their boundaries produced complaints which were largely resolved in the early thirteenth century. Much of the early history of the forests is therefore that of their swelling and contraction and of contests over their boundaries. This is true of Braydon as elsewhere. In the early seventeenth century, James I and Charles I certainly had more forests than they needed. There were too many which had rarely – if ever – seen a king but where a structure of offices was maintained, lodges were occasionally repaired in case the king might come and the system of forest courts continued to operate (after a fashion) to protect the royal interest. They also tended to be poached and the timber illicitly felled. Disafforestation released some value from these assets. Forests were cleared of woods and deer, the land in part allocated to those who could demonstrate common rights, the remainder sold or granted to suitors. This, of course, brought to an end the institutional history of a forest: it is perhaps surprising that so much record material has survived.

This book starts with what almost amounts to an apology. It is not a single text with an introduction of a sort which forms the staple of record series publications, but an attempt to gather together all the extant material on the Forest of Braydon in Wiltshire.

If it is a departure for the Wiltshire Record Series, then it is also a welcome innovation in the historiography of Forests. On its own terms it must be considered a success and a very welcome addition to the literature. In form it consists of a very long introduction (188 pages) covering the history of the forest from the earliest references to disafforestation in the late 1620s and early 1630s and then documents (a mere 175 pages). Latin documents are printed in English translation: English documents are not printed verbatim but in a form of reduced transcript. The scholarship involved is not to be questioned. The labour involved in locating and transcribing materials cannot but be admired.

And yet one wonders whether the book is quite the success that it might have been. The documents printed in the second section are discussed in the first half of the book: there is an element of repetition. But most curiously, there are no cross-references between the two, so archival references are given in the introduction but one has to hunt through the texts to see if the document being cited is printed there. (Not all of them are.) The introduction sticks very closely to the documents. At some points the detail is overwhelming, and the reader's comprehension is not helped by the lack of maps. There is no suggestion that parallels might be sought with other forests in Wiltshire or nationally, and one suspects that Crowley knows neither Buchanan Sharpe's work nor an essay on the improvement of the crown lands I published in 1992 (and the latter [*rev. ante* 42.1] would have given him some references that he might have usefully followed up). Neither appears to be cited. As regards Sharp's work, there is no interest on Crowley's part in the riots in the forest with which the former was chiefly concerned. These are small but important omissions but add to a sense that the book is inward-looking: one would never guess from it that the history of Braydon mirrors that of many other forests. It is a work which will be most useful to Wiltshire historians but also those interested in the history, and especially the final years, of a royal forest.

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TODD ANDREW BORLIK (ed.), *Literature and Nature in the English Renaissance: An ecocritical anthology* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). 622 pp. 11 illus. £84.99.

The field of ecocriticism in literary studies, which emerged into full flight around the turn of the present century, famously left the early modern period behind. Romanticism instead provided a bedrock, a moment of awakening to new perceptions of the relations between humans and the natural world. And it came with its own canon: John Clare, Dorothy Wordsworth, William Wordsworth, and so forth. This was convenient, since we already knew that these were people who wrote about nature; however, ecocriticism nonetheless provided a fresh and moderately useful theoretical frame, in accord with ethical concerns of the moment.

But the narrative of origin would have come as a surprise to Raymond Williams, whose seminal work of materialist criticism, *The country and the city*, stretched back into the Middle Ages. For that matter, it felt a little odd to me, as someone who lost my first supervisor (amicably, by the way, for this was England) by declaring to him that *The country and the city* was the best book on pastoral literature ever written. And then as someone who proceeded to read Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, and other literature engaged with urgent early modern debates about rural and environmental change. And then as someone told by a colleague, in 2000, that I was an ecocritic, when I had never even heard the word before. In short, early modern ecocriticism has always been a green area fuzzed at the edges with grey, and I am here to testify to it.

But a thread of important studies has worked to break down preconceptions and add clarity to Renaissance ecocriticism. Indeed, one of the most energetic and rigorous participants in this process has been Todd Andrew Borlik, the editor now of *Literature and Nature in the English Renaissance: An ecocritical anthology*. His previous critical work has demonstrated at once the benefits of reading canonical literature in fresh ways, with ecocritical questions in mind, and the value of looking beyond the canon to uncover a wealth of different kinds of writing about the natural world. This sort of thing used to be seen by literary scholars as interdisciplinarity; now it is just what we do. This book could easily have been a collection of things Borlik had found in his previous research and tossed together, but it is far more than that. At 600 pages and including over 200 texts (or extracts of texts), it is a hugely impressive, ambitious, and capacious piece of research.

The book gathers material from across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The vast majority of selections are original writing in English, but

he sensibly includes a handful of pieces that were translated and were influential in England at this time. The material is organized into six sections. The first, 'cosmologies', considers theories of creation that informed early modern thought, and writing concerned with the shaping hand of a Christian god in the natural world. The second, 'the tangled chain', responds to the idea of a great chain of being (so influential in Renaissance scholarship in the twentieth century), and includes selections of writing on humans, beasts, birds, fish, insects, plants, and metals and elements. The third, 'time and place', gathers material on seasons and key places of the early modern imagination: from the managed environments of gardens and estates, to forests, moors, mountains, rivers, and so forth. The fourth, 'interactions', covers human engagements with the animal world, from hunting and fishing, through pet keeping, to cooking and feasting. The fifth, 'environmental problems in early modern England', stretches from manifestations of agricultural and economic change (what its proponents might have called 'improvement', and what historians might still see as the beginning of an 'agricultural revolution') such as enclosure and the draining of the fens, as well as deforestation and pollution. And the sixth, 'disaster and resilience in the Little Ice Age', considers responses to extreme weather events.

This is a capacious collection of material, which offers much to historians as well as scholars of literature. It contains a strong thread of a literary canon: Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, John Donne, Ben Jonson, John Milton, Lucy Hutchinson, and so on. But it also contains, to take a few examples: selections from the Jacobean chorographer and surveyor John Norden, extracts capturing debates over enclosure, and a nice representation of religious thought. There are some rare gems, such as 'The Pout's Complaint', a critique of fen-drainage in the voice of a fish, written by someone known only as Penny of Wisbech. And I count seven extracts from the work of Drayton, most notably his epic *Poly-Olbion*, which is manifestly a fine thing in an anthology.

Of course, there are gaps, and various readers will find fault. Some may be disappointed to see relatively little material concerned with agriculture, or the day-to-day business of living in the natural world for most people in early modern England. Others may have hoped for greater concern with the ways in which colonial plantations in Ireland and engagements with the New World altered perceptions of the relation between the English and nature. Others still may grumble that Borlik's model of the 'nation' tends rather too consistently to be reduced to England. And literary

historians may feel that the sub-sections on pastoral and georgic – the literary modes that helped lend shape to writing about the land, and have proved valuable (albeit perhaps overly so) in the study of such writing ever since – are somewhat perfunctory. But no anthology ever satisfied every reader; this is an impressive effort, and by far the best we now have. As Borlik writes in the valuable introduction: 'By pitting Montaigne against Bacon, Descartes against Cavendish, Digby against Tryon,' the book provides a 'glimpse of the complex, messy and sometimes contradictory attitudes prevalent in the Long Renaissance: from curiosity to disgust, dominance to reverence' (p. 16).

Like no publication before it, *Literature and Nature in the English Renaissance* makes sense of writing about the natural world in the pre-Romantic centuries, when so much was changing in the countryside and so many established truths were being exposed to scrutiny. It is a remarkable achievement, that will prove valuable for teaching and as a first route into research in this field.

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EUGENE COSTELLO, *Transhumance and the making of Ireland's uplands, 1550–1900* (Boydell Press, 2020). 240 pp. 58 illus. £75.

Transhumance has been dismissed in the past as a marginal activity which has left little trace in the landscape, a view that has somewhat constrained this area of settlement studies. Previous work has generally been undertaken from a folklife or geographical perspective, and while Costello's fine book builds on this earlier work, he clearly articulates an archaeological approach, which adroitly combines field survey with the use of historical documents, cartographic sources and oral tradition.

Chapter 1 briefly looks at the issues and opportunities in the study of historical transhumance in north-west Europe before moving on to Britain. The author reviews the evidence as it survives in England and Wales, though reserves most of his attention on the shieling systems in different parts of Scotland, particularly in the highlands and islands, which is reflective of the surviving evidence and extent of current scholarship there. While drawing upon British evidence, the book in turn provides a useful parallel for the evolution and decline of transhumant practices in medieval and post-medieval Britain.

Chapter 2 delves into the perceptions versus actual practices of transhumance in medieval and early modern Ireland. English commentators in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries played up the practice

of transhumance among the Gaelic Irish, making unfavourable comparisons with the roving nomadic habits of Scythian horsemen on the Eurasian steppes. Such biased and uninformed viewpoints ignored tillage farming among Irish farmers, and that the need to spare the best land for crops and preserve winter grass ironically necessitated farmers to move livestock away in the summer in the first place. Costello makes the important point that transhumant communities in post-medieval Ireland were agro-pastoralists, with the balance between crops and livestock varying greatly, depending on the environmental, economic and political contexts. His research illustrates that transhumance was a stable, well-organized form of cattle farming, which took place over distances that rarely exceeded 12km and was carried out with reference to fixed units of land.

The central chapters in the book focus on three study areas in Ireland: the Carna Peninsula in Connemara, County Galway, the parish of Gleann Cholm Cille in south-west County Donegal, and the Galtee Mountains in Counties Limerick and Tipperary. Focus on these case studies from different parts of the country has allowed for a fine-grained study of differences in topography, soil quality and socio-economic trends in each of the regions. The author has marshalled an impressive array of archaeological and ethnographic evidence that throws light upon the practice of transhumance in Ireland between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The three regional perspectives together make for a substantive study of the book's central issues – the physical and cultural manifestation of transhumance in the landscape, the adaptability of non-elite tenant communities over time, and the decline of seasonal movement and settlement. By exploring the archaeological evidence through the various chapters, Costello has helped to create a template which can assist in the exploration of transhumant landscapes elsewhere in Ireland.

The style of booley dwellings ranges from sod- and rubble-walled huts of various shapes to larger rectangular 'houses' with coursed walls. Differences in shape (with rectangular, circular and irregular examples evident) suggest that chronological factors may explain the different forms of booley dwellings. Bearing that in mind, Costello calls for more archaeological excavations of booley sites, accompanied by palaeoenvironmental analysis in the surrounding areas. He advocates that further field survey could be undertaken to gain a fuller picture of the distribution of possible booley sites at a regional and national scale. Given that much of the discussion of seasonal settlement has relied on comparisons with permanent

settlement, the author believes that it would be beneficial to initiate a programme of excavation also at the permanent dwellings of transhumant families and communities. A better understanding of nucleated or dispersed settlements in general during the later medieval and early post-medieval periods would clearly allow for a more grounded discussion of the layout and distribution patterns of booley dwellings. With excavation and palynology, meaningful examination of transhumant landscapes could indeed be pushed back into the medieval period.

In chapter 6, Costello explores the evolving nature of transhumance in the context of political, social and economic changes that were afoot from the seventeenth century onwards. He sheds light on the impact of capitalism on transhumant practices, posing a new challenge for scholars in historical archaeology to better understand the dynamic relationship between pastoralism and capitalism as it evolved between the sixteenth and late nineteenth centuries – a global economic trend that came to influence the daily lives and seasonal rhythm of these farmers. Farmers increasingly interacted with the growth of capitalism, which influenced the number and kinds of livestock that they kept and rendered the continued removal of people to booley sites either impractical or unnecessary. The exercise of landlord control in the hills and mountains also served to disrupt the dairy- and cattle-based booleying system – Blackface sheep were introduced in large numbers to Irish uplands and their dominance ultimately rendered seasonal relocation unnecessary. The activities of landlords and the Congested Districts Board also restructured tenants' permanent settlements, which in turn undermined the traditional basis of transhumance. The dispersal of home dwellings and the division of infields weakened the co-operative basis that had characterized rundale strip farming. Permanent emigration to America or seasonal migration to Scotland, which reduced the availability of local labour was another factor in the decline of transhumant practices.

Costello's wide-ranging research and incisive analysis on transhumance makes a valuable contribution to historical archaeology not just in Ireland, but in a wider European context. The book is well illustrated throughout with maps, plans and photographs that detail the various booley dwellings in their surrounding landscape. The great achievement of this book is that it brings to the fore a people and a way of life that has not been fully appreciated in Irish settlement studies hitherto, surely a commendable achievement.

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MARGARET BIRD, *Mary Hardy and her world, 1773–1809*, I, *A working family* (Burnham Press, 2020). 818 pp. £38.

MARGARET BIRD, *Mary Hardy and her world, 1773–1809*, II, *Barley, beer and the working year* (Burnham Press, 2020). 896 pp. £38.

Following the publication in 2013 of four volumes of Mary Hardy's diary, along with that kept by her nephew Henry Raven while an apprentice at the Hardy family's brewery, Margaret Bird has now produced four volumes exploring 39 distinct topics covered in the diaries and portraying Mary Hardy's world. The first two volumes include family and working life, and quickly dispel any notions that Georgian country life was remote, static and changeless.

Although historians had been made aware of the diaries and the wealth of information in them by the extracts published by Mary's descendant, Basil Cozens Hardy in 1957 and 1968, it is only now with their publication that their full value can be appreciated. Their significance has been ably demonstrated in Margaret Bird's exhaustive and detailed work. There are many reasons why the diaries are so valuable. They are a detailed daily record covering 36 years. They are written, not by one of the gentry or aristocracy, but are a factual account written by a busy woman and active member of a working family, covering the domestic, agricultural, manufacturing, shipping, political and religious concerns with which she was fully involved. There is no introspection, opinions are rarely expressed and no conversations recorded.

The daughter of a village grocer, Mary married William Hardy, an excise officer who was moved from posting to posting. His ambitions were elsewhere, and starting as a manager of a rural brewery in the Norfolk village of Coltishall, he raised money through mortgages and property owned by his wife to buy his own brewery in 1781, developing his business to the point where the family fortunes enabled the purchase in 1803 of the neighbouring Letheringsett Hall and the extension of his landholding in the parish. The diary is a disciplined record of events and reveals a husband-and-wife partnership in both domestic and business matters. Mary died aged 75 in 1809, just as her son was enlarging the hall, developing the grounds and extending the estate, thus ensuring entry to the gentry class.

In Volume I we are introduced to Mary's family, early married life in Coltishall and the move to the north Norfolk village of Letheringsett. Appendices cover a dictionary of Norfolk dialect, a recipe book compiled by Mary's daughter and a complete list of the servants working for the family from 1772. A helpful family chronology starting in 1732 is included as an

appendix in both volumes. Volume II covers the family's business interests; the running of the farm, milling, malting, brewing and the managing public houses tied to the brewery, with appendices detailing other Norfolk and Suffolk breweries and the tied public houses. The evidence from the diary is painstakingly put in the context of both the place and the time in meticulous detail making extensive use of the most up-to-date secondary literature, occasionally challenging long-held views based on evidence in the diary.

Beginning with an overview of Norfolk and specifically the villages of Coltishall and Letheringsett, the author questions the view that villages in the densely populated north and east of the county were 'remote'. While recognizing that both settlements were on major routeways (Coltishall was on a navigable river and Letheringsett on a main road) the author points out that, while living in Coltishall, Mary Hardy was within three miles, an easy walking distance, of 17 other parishes, some admittedly very depopulated by the eighteenth century and, similarly, from Letheringsett, 25 could be visited. Using both census and map evidence Bird builds up a picture of the landscape, society and economies surrounding these two villages.

The origins of the two diarists are then explored in detail. Mary Hardy, born Mary Raven, came from a large extended family of Ravens in the small Norfolk village of Whissonsett. The many branches of the family, which included farmers and craftsmen as well as her parents, who ran the village grocer's shop, are all described in detail, as is William Hardy's Yorkshire background. Born in 1732, he joined the excise in 1757 and remained an officer with postings all over the country for 12 years. During postings in Norfolk he met Mary and they were married in Whissonsett in 1765. Shortly after he left the excise service, a poorly paid and itinerant occupation not suited to married life, and took on the brewery in Coltishall in 1772.

A second section entitled 'nurturing the young', deals with an under-researched topic. The subject of childbirth, the role of the 'gossip' or a supportive friend during labour, and the choice and hiring of wet nurses are all covered in the diary and comparative material discussed. This is followed by the subject of schooling. All her children attended local schools. The type of education available for the 'middling sort' has been little researched, but Margaret Bird includes a detailed study of the local endowed grammar schools attended by her two sons, and the ladies' academies thought suitable for her daughter. In this she was helped by the survival of an extensive archive held by Gresham's School, which began as an endowed grammar school in Holt, the nearest market town to Letheringsett.

The third section describes the two houses, one at Coltishall and one at Letheringsett, inhabited by the family. While the Coltishall house was on a scale suitable for a brewery manager, Letheringsett Hall was a much grander affair, especially after it was extended by Mary's son (another William). As a result of extensive research, Margaret Bird has managed to establish that the rather heavy Doric portico was the work of the Holt architect, William Mindham. Although his obituary in 1843 described him as 'an eminent architect of Holt', this is the first time any work has been ascribed to him. Mary Hardy died in 1809, just as the major works began on the house and much of this section dealing with the laying out of the grounds describes changes made after the diary ends. One detail however is of particular interest and was typical of the 'enlightenment' thinking of the time. Beauty could be made to serve utility and profit and this is clearly shown in the complicated water works which provided the pure water needed by the brewery across the road as well as the power to work the malt mill with the creation of ponds and water features near the house.

Of particular interest is the section on servants. Throughout the period of the diary two maidservants were kept, one responsible for cleaning of the house and the other for cooking and the dairy. This seems a very small number, especially as the size of the establishment increased with the move to Letheringsett Hall and the amount of entertainment of visitors on business that had to be provided often at short notice. This heavy workload, coupled with Mary Hardy's exacting standards and her husband's short temper may help explain the high turnover of servants, with over a third leaving before their yearly contract ended. It is clear from the diary that Mary often worked alongside her maids. Their living and working conditions are all discussed and compared with the situation elsewhere, but, as Margaret Bird admits, the voice of the servants themselves is rarely heard.

The impression we get of Mary Hardy is of a down-to-earth, hard-working businesswoman, fully engaged in the family business, turning her hand to running a pub when the need arose. It comes as something of a surprise to see her portrait painted in 1785, when she was 51, in which she is beautifully dressed in ribbons and lace with ornately coifed and decorated hair. A painting of 1794 when she was 64 shows her in much plainer clothes, possibly influenced by the more rigorous dress code of Methodism, which she had by this time embraced.

In Volume II we move on from family affairs to the world of work, both on the farm and in the brewing and malting business, beginning with the farm workforce

and the role of the 'farm servant'. It is clear that the accepted meaning of this phrase, particularly in pastoral districts, to describe a young, yearly paid living-in servant does not apply in arable Norfolk. Although these men were hired for a year, they were frequently married and living in local cottages. Their hours were long and there was little time off during the year. When farm work was slack, they would be diverted to help in the maltings and brewery, often delivering beer to the tied pubs across the county.

While at Coltishall, William Hardy hired 41 acres in Horstead and Coltishall for four years from 1774. The lease was transcribed into the diary and a five-course rotation, including an extra crop of barley was practised. On moving to Letheringsett in 1781, he bought alongside the brewery and maltings, 46 acres of scattered holdings. This rose to nearly 400 acres when in 1800 his son bought the 350-acre Letheringsett Hall Farm, thus beginning the formation of the Letheringsett estate, which by 1842 amounted to 2000 acres. In spite of these purchases the family always saw themselves as brewers and maltsters rather than farmers running a vertically integrated enterprise producing much of the hay needed for their dray horses as well as barley for malting, brewing the beer, and then selling it to their tied public houses. It is this record of a mixed business rather than the more usual farming diaries, accounts and *General Surveys*, that make the account so interesting. The diary gives the dates of the ploughing harvest, and the sowing of barley, which fluctuate wildly and are an indication of varying climatic conditions. The establishing of cropping patterns is difficult to identify as are yield figures or sowing densities, but it is clear that barley was the dominant cereal in this prime barley-growing part of the county. In common with evidence from elsewhere muck carting and manuring was a time-consuming activity and it seems that some was bought in. Store cattle, whose manure was regarded a vital part of any good farming system, were bought at the various autumn cattle fairs, but we learn little about their management and the day-to-day running of the farm, which was left to the Hardys' highly competent farm manager. Once he had taken over the running of the family business in 1797 William Hardy junior spent time and money on improving his riverside pastures and creating water meadows there. He had frequent meetings with those promoting the technique, but little about his project itself. He bought a flock of the deeply unfashionable Norfolk horn sheep which no doubt grazed on them. A few house cows were managed by Mary herself, and pigs were kept and fed on the waste products of the maltings.

Two-thirds of this second volume is taken up with the family's main occupation: malting, brewing, and the management of up to 100 public houses. The diaries provide an unusually precise description of a working life in which the Mary and her husband were actively involved. Both at Coltishall and Letheringsett the Hardy's were small-to-middling brewers with an output of 3500 barrels a year at most while the large Norwich brewers produced 13,000 barrels. The whole business was run by the family plus a clerk and four to five workers, who would be responsible not just for the malting and brewing, but delivering to their outlets in a 50-mile radius, as well as occasionally being diverted to farm work. The diary shows a rapid turnover of clerks and it seems that Mary's husband William, was an exacting and unsympathetic employer. In 1787, their son, William, left school at 13 to become a brewery apprentice and later, in 1793, Mary's nephew Henry Raven became an apprentice too, leaving for London in 1797. He too kept a detailed diary that complements his aunt's, explaining both the malting and brewing process. The diaries shed light on the role of rural breweries from the late eighteenth century and contrasts with other brewery histories which concentrate on large urban concerns whose records often only begin a century later.

It is fortunate that some of the buildings at Letheringsett survive, and detailed drawings were made of them before their conversion to housing in 2013–15. The long two-storey maltings are architecturally impressive and dominated the view of those travelling north from Holt. They were damaged by fire in 1827 and it is not clear how much rebuilding there had to be, but some of the fabric may well date back to the mid-eighteenth century. William Hardy junior gradually took more control of the brewing business, finally succeeding his father in 1797, and was responsible for initiating remarkable improvements. A supply of clean, soft water was essential for the brewing process and the diary describes the digging of a soft water basin across the road in 1787–88. The following year a leet from the river was diverted under the road through a tunnel to provide power to a malt mill at the end of one of the malthouses and in 1792 a house for the clerk was added.

A final section of Volume II deals with the tied system of pubs which was well-advanced in Norfolk by 1800. There were 25 pubs tied to the Hardy brewery by 1797 with 22 more by 1838, challenging the accepted view that the system of 'tying' did not develop until after the change to brewing porter, which required a dark-coloured malt and took longer to mature. A study covering the relationship between breweries and

publicans in rural areas is rarely possible and this is one of the many aspects of these journals that makes their study so valuable. Here the relationship was close with publicans frequently calling and being entertained at Letheringsett. However, pub finances were often precarious and publicans, made up of a shifting population of mobile people, frequently fell into debt. Debt was often allowed to build up; after all, an indebted innkeeper was tied by bond and could be difficult to replace if he left or was forced into bankruptcy.

The volume ends with an explanation of the taxation and excise system of the time and an analysis of the financial success of the Hardy businesses as revealed in the journals. The material on which to base a consideration of the financial success of the business is scanty and difficult to interpret, partly because there were so many different elements (the farm, malting, brewing and servicing the pubs), and partly because of the lack of detailed accounts. The period covered by the diary is one when brewers, maltsters and farmers were making increasingly good livings and the family were making a healthy profit of up to £2000 a year, allowing for investment in the business and the purchase of land and Letheringsett Hall in 1803. Although direct comparisons are difficult, capital valuations provided when William junior took over in 1797, and in preparation for his retirement in 1838, appear to show a rise from £16,000 to £65,000. Appendices cover the system for the collection of excise duties and the many officers employed, a directory of breweries in east Norfolk and Suffolk between 1750 and 1809 and finally details of the 101 public houses supplied by the Letheringsett brewery between 1773 and 1896.

These two volumes, amounting to nearly 2000 pages, are the first half of a mighty four-volume work and demonstrate how the diaries reveal an entirely different picture of the female role in business and society to that portrayed in the more usual journals of leisured ladies studied by Amanda Vickery and others. The Hardy family came from humble origins and, within two generations beginning with the purchase of Letheringsett Hall, joined the gentry class. Finally, in the 1890s, the maltings and brewery were sold to a Norwich concern and the family finally disassociated themselves from an industry that had been the source of their wealth.

One of the many values of the diaries which Margaret Bird brings to our attention is the contrast between the working wife and genteel society. Mary and her husband worked as a team and she was not averse to hard and sometimes menial work, supporting the family enterprise, even when it meant taking over

the running in an emergency of one of the family's tied public houses, if necessary, taking her small children with her. On top of domestic duties, she would entertain visiting tradesmen, excise officers and tenants and note in detail matters relating to the brewery, the maltings and the tied public houses. This is in great contrast to the journals of the gentry where the worlds of men and women were separate and clearly defined. In contrast, Mary was an equal business partner with her husband, yet when the occasion demanded, she could sit, beautifully dressed, for her portrait. That such a busy woman could find time to keep a journal is remarkable.

Be in no doubt that Margaret Bird has produced a formidable, detailed, well-researched *tour de force* showing clearly what can be learnt about a little-studied branch of rural society, the upwardly mobile operators of successful rural businesses, through the pages of a unique journal. Any problems with the density of the text in these beautifully produced volumes are greatly alleviated by the wealth of page-by-page illustrations and the marginal notes and references, which are easy to follow.

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CARL J. GRIFFIN, *The politics of hunger: Protest, poverty and policy in England, c.1750–c.1840* (Manchester University Press, 2020). 263 pp. £80.

The politics of hunger is a timely and welcome contribution to ongoing debates surrounding food security, protest, and governmental policy in Britain. With use of food banks becoming endemic, the languages of 'hunger', 'poverty' and 'starvation' stubbornly remain central to modern politics. As Carl Griffin acknowledges, studying the 'politics of hunger' matters because 'it is the history of now' (p. 235). Unfortunately, there has been a tendency amongst historians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to focus on the emotive extremes of famine or narrow causal relationships. In this monograph, Griffin seeks to move beyond questions regarding living standards or logistics and explore how articulations of hunger were used as a tool of protest, a spur for public policy change, and a foundation for elite perceptions of the poor (p. 4). Concomitantly, this book demonstrates how the 'bodily state of hunger', and associated fear of starvation, were ever present in the lives of rural people. The 'politics of hunger' were not 'rediscovered' during the 1790s or the 'Hungry Forties' but were consistently voiced throughout the period.

An opening pair of chapters explore how the 'politics of hunger' empowered, legitimized, and encouraged

popular protest. Chapter 1 studies how the idea of 'hunger' was mobilized during eighteenth-century subsistence crises. In this period, Griffin argues, the 'twin discourses' of hunger and starvation became a 'critical plank of the moral economy's invocation by poor consumers.' Critically, whilst the 'discourse of hunger' spoke deferentially of need, the 'discourse of starvation' invoked 'chaos and misrule' (p. 31). Although claims to starvation were rarely meant literally, deploying the 'discourse of starvation' signalled a popular belief that dearth was imminent unless immediate action was taken. Subsequently, whilst crowds and middle-class sympathizers used 'hunger' to implore paternalistic masters for aid, 'starvation' was used to justify all forms of direct action and covert destruction. For Griffin, it was the 'discourse of starvation' that ultimately became integral to popular provisions politics and radical participatory politics. Conversely, the 'discourse of hunger' was 'co-opted by authorities to stoke loyalist feeling' (p. 48). As such, chapter 2 studies how the 'discourse of starvation' was repeatedly invoked in early nineteenth-century protest. Griffin rejects the claim that the supposed 'death' of food rioting in 1801 represented the end of hunger as a political force. Instead, the notion of 'hunger amidst plenty' would 'become central to radical political discourse' (p. 59). From William Cobbett to Swing, the anti-Poor Law movement, and Chartism, hunger 'acted as a bridge between the city and the country, between the labourer and the operative' (p. 73). By 1840, the discourse of starvation had thus become a universal and effective tool for urban and rural protestors.

The second brace of chapters reveals how local and national political authorities responded to the 'discourse of starvation', first through Speenhamland-style 'bread scales' and then the New Poor Law. For the former, Griffin contends that the introduction of 'income-support schemes' was a 'humanitarian response' to the 'hypercrisis' of 1795 whilst simultaneously being a 'pragmatic yet paranoid attempt at maintaining order' (p. 86). Importantly, Griffin traces how a variety of 'Speenhamland-style scales' dispersed throughout the nation, often exploitative and rarely advancing from semi-formalized systems of temporary relief. Furthermore, the widespread adoption of these scales signalled a change in how authorities perceived hunger. Rather than thinking of 'individual need', magistrates and parish officers now judged claimants through 'universal measures of need'. With hunger being 'measured and quantified', poor workers were dehumanized as 'objects of calculation and control' (p. 103). These new imperatives to define and measure, Griffin argues, informed the New Poor Law. Chapter

4 thus explores the making and implementation of workhouse dietaries during the early years of the Poor Law Commission. Crucially, Griffin uncovers how dietary calculations struck an uneasy balance between 'basic biological adequacy' and a desire to punish 'idleness and immorality' (p. 140). Furthermore, when the PLC found itself unable to provide a diet that was both 'humane and economic' it deferred responsibility to local unions, enabling dietary regimes that were rarely adequate. Demonstrating his theoretical skill, Griffin details how workhouses were predicated on Foucauldian 'biopolitics', their systems designed to discipline and shape the pauper body (p. 155).

The politics of hunger concludes with two chapters that assess how hunger, and the hungry, were perceived and theorized between 1740 and 1850. In perhaps his most compelling contribution, Griffin utilizes theories from colonial and post-colonial histories to analyse how agricultural workers in Southern England were rendered as an 'internal colonial subject' (p. 183). By conceiving of the poor as a separate 'animalistic' race, authorities granted themselves moral consent to control and experiment upon the bodies of relief claimants, negating individual agency and transforming the hungry poor into 'biopolitical subjects' (p. 199). Although Griffin is careful not to simplistically equate impoverished labourers with enslaved peoples, his work skilfully demonstrates how racial theories were used to make sense of subaltern groups both abroad and at home. Consequently, Griffin's final chapter examines how hunger could also be understood and mediated through the plight of 'distant others'. By studying popular responses to the Irish Famine, it reveals how hunger was increasingly expressed as relational, becoming mediated not just by individual experience but also 'through the experiences of real and imagined communities' (p. 208). Despite lingering xenophobia in England's working-class population, a shared understanding of hunger led to a number of charitable subscriptions motivated 'by a sense of colonial responsibility and human solidarity' (p. 225). In this crucial moment, Griffin argues, the modern humanitarian response to hunger and starvation began to emerge.

This is a pertinent, well-researched, and compassionate book that should become required reading for students of hunger, protest, politics, and public policy in modern Britain. In every chapter, Griffin combines studious archival research with acute theoretical insights to reveal how the discourses of hunger and starvation became engrained into the fabric of everyday life, governance and resistance. Although further work is needed to explore the 'micropolitics' of hunger in

individual communities and regions, *The politics of hunger* will stand as a foundational text for a promising vein of future research.

LEONARD BAKER
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PAUL BRASSLEY, JEREMY BURCHARDT, and KAREN SAYER (eds), *Transforming the countryside: The electrification of rural Britain* (Routledge, 2016). 252 pp. 16 illus. £96.

This volume is an important historical contribution to the under-examined question of how the British countryside became electrified. Earlier scholarship has considered rural issues alongside a dominant urban focus and through debates over electricity's landscape and environmental impacts. Here, rural life is centre stage. With roots in a project led by the late Alun Howkins and a 2013 conference, the book forms part of Routledge's Rural Worlds series and is edited by leading rural historians Paul Brassley, Jeremy Burchardt, and Karen Sayer. Twelve individual contributors include some leading scholars in rural, energy and environmental history. While varied in approach and regional focus, collectively they demonstrate the complexity of this energy transition in Britain and beyond, examining themes of rural modernity and agency, regional and national difference, the intersection of technological change and everyday lives, and the role of institutions in expanding networks.

Difficulties shared across case studies include mutually reinforcing high costs and low demand in sparsely populated areas, and (for users) the inconvenience of electricity compared with trusted sources of heat and power. Enthusiasm for electric lighting was a widespread exception. Breakthroughs are shown to have been as much political as technical. Alongside the National Grid, developed from 1926, emerging national and regional governance bodies – especially post-war nationalization of electricity supply – provided policy direction and economies to aid rural distribution and consumer take-up by the 1950s and '60s. The international studies also suggest the significance of state support.

The first of three sections (the 'progress of electrification') explores technical and political challenges. Karl Ditt's chapter, translated from German, surveys rural electrification in England from the 1880s to the eve of the Second World War. Early tensions between local authority and private undertakings ensured fragmented supply areas and inhibited coordinated action. John Sheail brings his lucid analysis of policy debates to conflicts over the impacts of electricity infrastructure on salmon rivers and rural landscapes

in Britain. Protests from the 1920s onwards, he argues, spawned protections that helped form the basis of current environmental legislation. Scotland and Wales are distinct here despite their similar mix of coal in the south and hydro resources to the north. In Richard Moore-Colyer's study of the lesser-known case of Wales (revised from an earlier article), communities' distinct cultural identities, and attachments to established farming and domestic energy-use practices, proved resistant to electricity industry visions of 'efficiency'. The awkward persistence of rural practices is a theme taken up in several later chapters. By contrast, rural electrification appears a relatively straightforward process in David Fleetwood's account of the Scottish Highlands. 1940s social policy underpinned the state-sponsored harnessing of rivers to bring the benefits of electricity to remote homes and industry. Paul Brassley's in-depth examination of halting electrification in England's farms, with a case study of remote south-west England, shows that farmers' use of oil and gas equipment persisted until the post-war regional electricity boards brought economies of scale.

The second section ('effects of electrification') delves deeper into everyday priorities in contrasting visions of 'lived experience' in post-war rural Britain. Karen Sayer's rich study of post-war rural homes, drawing on farming publications and personal memoirs, shows how pre-existing energy sources retained a currency that frustrated electricity industry attempts to shape modernity in its own image. Despite electricity promotions targeting the rural 'housewife', the latest Calor Gas stove or solid fuel Rayburn represented alternative modernities. Rural agency takes a different form in Rosemary Shirley's visual analysis of Women's Institute village scrapbooks from the 1960s. For Shirley, these sources reveal an embrace of electrical life, whether signalled by 'early adopters' of the deep freeze, by fields given over to frozen pea production, or by the acceptance of new infrastructure. A scrapbook representation of pylons – part of the Grid's contested modernity in Sheail's chapter – suggests that the interweaving of modernity and tradition was now integral to rural life.

In the third section ('comparisons across space and time'), rural electrification proved challenging even for two turn-of-the-century pioneers of hydro-electricity. Carin Martiin highlights Sweden's distinctively rural setting for early electrification, developed by groups such as mill owners and farmers, rather than radiating out from urban areas. But here too supplies were fragmented and take-up partial; the wood stove remained 'the heart of the house'. Sweden's welfare state, Martiin hints, was ultimately crucial

to rural electrification in the 1950s and '60s. Ruth Sandwell's engaging discussion of Canada is also a story of gradual, uneven development across its provinces, despite strong and still dominant hydro-electric resources (with a slow incorporation of coal, oil and nuclear sources of generation only from the 1960s). In contrast to its current soaring levels of per capita electricity consumption, up to the 1950s Canada's mostly rural population resisted electric equipment, with cultures of domestic life shaped by seasonal labour patterns and cheap or freely available wood fuel. Martyn Warren's interesting comparative case of rural broadband shows a changed world of communications giants, EU regulations, and a vocal rural middle class. But similarities to electrification include broadband's difficulties as a network more suited to lucrative urban areas, echoes of debates over the role of the state and public finance, and uneven service levels that fall short of democratic entitlements to universal provision: a 'mutating digital divide' forged by rapidly changing technologies.

This volume is a thought-provoking exploration of interactions of technology, politics and everyday life that have transformed the countryside over the past 140 years. It would be good to see more scrutiny of the frequent early twentieth-century claim that electricity would stem Britain's rural depopulation. And there is, inevitably, some repetition of key technical and political developments across the chapters, but these are framed by nuanced interpretative approaches drawing on diverse sources, from industry records to farm surveys and oral histories. With its strong thematic discussions in the editors' introduction and conclusion (and a helpful index), this is highly recommended for scholars and students of rural societies, of energy transitions and of inter-relationships between technology and culture.

VANESSA TAYLOR
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NATACHA CHEVALIER, *Food in wartime Britain: Testimonies from the Kitchen Front (1939–1945)* (Routledge, 2020). xvi + 155 pp. 5 b&w figs. £33.29 (ebook).

Innumerable books, articles, and television programmes, together with the (possibly fallible) memories of those involved, have familiarized a British audience with the history of food in the Second World War. It is conventionally a story of rationing, plain but healthy eating, agricultural expansion and digging for victory, pig clubs, Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food from 1940 to 1943, and how well the Americans ate. The official accounts of food and agriculture written in

the immediate post-war years told stories of struggles, ultimately successful, to solve the problems posed by the war. Subsequent historians have either reinforced and amplified, or questioned and cast doubt upon the initial accounts, or made revealing comparisons between the British experience and that of people living in continental Europe.

Natacha Chevalier's testimonies from the Kitchen Front in Britain join those that argue for a more complex and nuanced history of food in the war years. They are essentially based on eight diaries in the Mass Observation archive held at the University of Sussex. These she selected by first applying a list of keywords (which she does not specify) relating to food 'through the search engine' of the digitized Mass Observation material, and making a first selection of diaries based on 'the number of keyword matches and a random reading of samples', then after 'a more extensive reading, eight diaries were eventually chosen according to the degree of information they provided about food purchase, preparation and consumption' (p. 4). These were then analysed using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, the number of complaints about food expressed each month was compared to the number of mentions of food 'in order to measure the degree of inconvenience related to food felt by the diarists' (p. 5) and the way in which it changed over the course of the war. Mass Observation also issued a questionnaire on food matters to all of its volunteers in April 1943, and the replies to this questionnaire were also analysed using the same methodology. This revealed that although, as expected, many respondents mentioned eating less fruit, meat, butter, eggs, and sugar than before the war, it was fruit, especially oranges and bananas, and sweets that they missed more than the other commodities (p. 41). At least part of the explanation for this, she argues, is that the people who responded to Mass Observation questionnaires were skewed towards the middle class, and that before the war fruit was purchased more by the middle and upper classes than the working class.

Given this bias in her sources, she makes a virtue of necessity by arguing that 'more attention has been paid to the working classes and their diet than to the food practices of the middle classes' in historical studies of the Home Front. This is a pity, she maintains, because not only did this neglect the experiences of nearly a quarter of the population, but it was the quarter whose food buying and consumption habits, with their greater emphasis on proteins, fruit and vegetables, were most likely to be affected by wartime shortages. Her eight diarists were therefore all members of the

middle class, although they illustrate the wide range of incomes, employments, and backgrounds that were found in that category, from Robert (the only man among the eight), an electricity sub-station worker living in a rented house in Hampshire, and Clara, married to a Bradford fireman and the mother of two young children, to Irene, a young widow with a bevy of servants and a house in Maida Vale, and Naomi, running a farm on her own estate in Scotland. She was the writer Naomi Mitchison, married to Dick Mitchison, MP and barrister, and the only one of the diarists identified by her real name. An edition of her diary (*Among you taking notes*) was published in 1985.

After the introduction explaining this methodology, Chevalier's first chapter is a brief account of changes in British eating habits since the sixteenth century, followed by a second summarizing class differences in food consumption based on pre-war surveys. The third chapter is mostly a summary of the literature, as it existed up to about 2012, on food production, administration, propaganda and nutrition education, but ending with a survey of the evidence on consumer responses to wartime changes revealed in the various Mass Observation sources. The final two chapters account for two-thirds of the book. The first part of chapter 4 contains brief biographies of the diarists and a flavour of their writing about food, and the second an account of the overall contents of their diaries and their views on wartime conscription, work, and health. The final part of the chapter provides some quantitative analyses which demonstrate that concerns over food issues varied in frequency, reaching a peak in 1941 when the overall progress of the war was at its worst from an Allied viewpoint. Chapter 5 covers the same material thematically, exploring a range of topics such as shortages, shopping, changes in values and attitudes, hospitality, feelings about unfair distribution, the black market (which is not distinguished from the grey market of arguable legality), eating out, the problems of feeding children, and so on. Given all this detail it is perhaps disappointing that the short concluding chapter contains few surprises, but it is nevertheless worth being reminded that wartime food, while sufficient, was often dull and monotonous, that there were big inter-personal differences in wartime food experiences, that social class affected attitudes to food, and that wartime solidarity applied especially to close family and friends.

PAUL BRASSLEY
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PAMELA SLOCOMBE, *Whaddon and the Longs: A west Wiltshire history* (Hobnob Press, 2020). 610 pp. 108 illus., maps and tables. £25.

The isolated hamlet of Whaddon is reached from the outskirts of Trowbridge in west Wiltshire by a narrow lane which at first inclines gently upwards through lush grazing pasture. After a mile or so, it descends to cross the Kennet and Avon Canal, then rises to a low ridge that gives an unexpectedly wide view of the River Avon, flowing south west toward Bristol, and of its tributary Semington Brook. Where the waters join, two farms and a scattering of houses comprise the hamlet. Passing a small church and graveyard, the lane descends to the Avon, turns briefly right, then dissolves into a web of footpaths and bridle tracks. A farm stands on the site of a long-vanished manor house. Beyond the brook, a now-dismantled railway once linked Devizes to Westbury and Chippenham.

From this quiet and unassuming location, Pam Slocombe, long-time organizer of the Wiltshire Buildings Record and member of the Medieval Settlement Research Group, has conjured a remarkable 600-page history of an ancient parish and its manorial owners, the Long family, whose association with Whaddon endured from about 1500 to 1996. They were first drawn to Whaddon from the neighbouring village of Semington to exploit its fulling mill, during the expansionary period of the white broadcloth trade that made Tudor west Wiltshire a driver of the national economy and enriched three generations of Longs. In the seventeenth century, now evolved into gentry, the family produced a notable wife, mother, and correspondent, Rebecca Long/Sherfield, and her son, the politician Walter Long. His story – leading from reckless resistance to Charles I and imprisonment in the Tower to a cavalry charge at Edgehill and promotion to parliamentary colonel, then disillusionment with the army, exile in France and knighthood ('for loyalty') by Charles II – forms the narrative heart of this volume, but is by no means its most signal achievement.

Slocombe's work is unstintingly grounded in archival research, and the clarity of this focus has determined the division of the book into three parts of unequal length. The shorter first part takes the settlement of Whaddon from prehistory to the arrival of the Longs. A succinct opening chapter notes a few archaeological finds and Whaddon's location on the boundary of Mercia and Wessex; then we are quickly into Domesday and the shape and distribution of the medieval village, identified with the help of laser imagery and aerial photography. Whaddon is set in its wider context between the great Selwood forest (which extended west to the Somerset border and as far south

as the Dorset downs) and the forests of Melksham and Chippenham. In the fourteenth century, Whaddon had just 13 households, a manor house, fulling mill, and parish church, and has never expanded much beyond that scale.

The second and largest part, the history of the Longs, provides lucid summaries of most of the many surviving documents relating to the family up to the late seventeenth century, from which Slocombe extracts their sometimes uncertain pedigree. A troublesome issue for west Wiltshire genealogists has been to connect the Whaddon Longs to the senior branches of this extensive family, seated at South Wraxall and at Draycot, and this problem is thoroughly addressed. Some unavoidably dry material is enlivened by the will of the wealthy clothier, Thomas Long of Trowbridge (d.1563), who acquired as many as nine manors during the mid-Tudor upheavals. The inventory of his elder brother and heir, Henry Long of Whaddon (d.1558), reveals the scale of the latter's activity both as a clothier and as a breeder and grazier, with over a hundred cattle and some thousand sheep dispersed among his various properties, including as many as 16 plough oxen in and near Whaddon itself.

In 1616, Henry Long's daughter-in-law Rebecca, newly widowed, married Henry Sherfield, also widowed, a lawyer from Salisbury who was then working at the Court of Wards in London, with chambers at Lincoln's Inn. Often apart, they wrote to each other frequently, and their surviving correspondence takes Slocombe's narrative way beyond the confines of Whaddon and west Wiltshire. Slocombe transcribes numerous letters revealing Rebecca's close attention to the management of her family as they grew into adulthood, especially those relating to marriage negotiations. The protocol of courtship amongst the gentry is clearly evidenced in these letters, along with the mundane issues of running estates at a distance. From this correspondence, Slocombe moves seamlessly into the career of Rebecca's politician son Walter, sourced partly from his own letters to Sherfield but also from state papers and other major collections.

The male line of the Longs died out early in the eighteenth century and the last two centuries of absentee lordship are quickly dispatched before Slocombe turns to the third part of her history. Perhaps the most interesting part for village historians, this deals comprehensively with the buildings of Whaddon and their evolution over time, starting with the church, the long-lost manor house and the surviving stone mill-house. Slocombe's expertise as an architectural historian is impressively deployed in her detailed account of the manor house as it was enlarged and

elaborated from c.1580 to 1700, with its contents, outbuildings and gardens, before its decline under tenancy and destruction by fire in 1836. The final 180 pages, almost a third of the book, are devoted to the open and enclosed fields, and to the manorial demesne, copyholds and leaseholds, not just of Whaddon itself, but of its outlying settlements of Paxcroft and Hilperton Marsh, and to tracing the families identified with them since the sixteenth century.

This is a work of astonishing dedication, which has taken Slocombe the best part of a lifetime to compile. There can be very few if any other village histories of such depth and detail. Since the book has been illustrated with a large number of well-chosen maps and illustrations, and laid out elegantly in comfortably readable type by the specialist Wiltshire publisher, Hobnob Press, it seems almost churlish to point out its few shortcomings. Academic readers may regret the limited reference to the regional historiography, and the minimalist endnotes, which consist mainly of document numbers. Many of the maps and the pedigrees of the Long family would have benefited from enlargement. Most of all one might wish for a more substantial index, to help the reader navigate the wealth of rural themes which run through this extraordinary history. But *Whaddon and the Longs* will be an essential work of reference for all future studies of west Wiltshire.

JOHN GAISFORD
London

FRANCIS PRYOR, *The Fens: Discovering England's ancient depths* (Head of Zeus, 2020). 416 pp. illus. £9.99.

Francis Pryor's *The Fens* is a charming and thoroughly enjoyable autobiographical landscape history of the Fens. This crossing of genre boundaries is accomplished using two parallel chronologies, wherein Pryor's life is used to mirror events in the ever-changing Fens. The two narratives are used to communicate a personal-historical ambience of the Fens. Pryor's various lives as an archaeologist, sheep farmer, and 'churchaholic' of the Fens singularly equip him for this approach.

The book can be split into two parts, the first deals with Pryor's distinguished career as an archaeologist, and this is broadly used to reflect his portrait of the Fens before the Roman conquest. The book's second 'part' moves from the post-Roman period to the present day, and this historical narrative is interwoven with the author's meditations on his life in the Fens after leaving professional archaeology. This distinctive approach finds best expression in the chapters on the prehistoric Fenland. Pryor's archaeological career

lends these chapters a powerful depth of knowledge, this detail providing the best entry-point for Pryor's autobiographical segues. The author seamlessly dips into his own experience preventing inbreeding in sheep as a sheep farmer when discussing the need for widely separated prehistoric agricultural communities to maintain contact. Pryor's agricultural experience grounds his relationship with the Fens and supports the book's overarching aim of dispelling the notion that the Fens were unproductive wastes, arguing instead that the Fens were prosperous landscapes throughout history.

The accounts of archaeological dig sites are set at a wonderful pace, and are the most engaging chapters of the book. This pacing is mainly a consequence of their immanent purpose: situating Pryor's major digs in the context of his life, and the broader prehistory of the Fens. These earlier chapters also convey the sense of urgency in Fen archaeology in the 1970s and '80s by teasing interesting sites which are then forced onto the backburner by outside factors. Chief among these are the urban expansion and demand for gravel in the period, which meant that many Fenland sites were in urgent need of excavation. Contextualizing Fenland archaeology in this period subtly builds suspense for the major discoveries of Pryor's archaeological career, which he is careful not to spoil too soon. Revelations in the study of maps and aerial photographs are delivered with the same understated theatre, giving the impression of reading a dramatized methodology textbook. Cropmarks, it is revealed, emerge when agricultural crops over historic ditches and earthworks grow differently to their neighbours, revealing a shadow of a former landscape when viewed from above. The hot and dry summer of 1976 was a particularly good year for cropmarks, and the reader is slowly drawn into Pryor and his team's anticipation of the aerial photographs of that season. These chapters are very successful in communicating the precise significance of archaeological finds, which means that they can be enjoyed as a basic and digestible introduction to archaeology. This is exemplified in Pryor's recollection of the Cat's Water excavation, where evidence of hearths in around half of 56 buildings is used to demonstrate that these were human dwellings. Phosphate analysis showing levels consistent with high concentrations of manure was then employed to show that the remaining buildings were used to house livestock. Moreover, some of the human dwellings were larger, a trend which increased over time, and this is used to infer increasing social stratification towards the end of the Iron Age.

The least convincing demonstrations of Pryor's personalized approach to Fen history are those chapters

on the Roman occupation. These lose the archaeological depth of earlier chapters, and the intimacy with the landscape which carries later passages here feels unfortunately synthetic. The book's later chapters show a notable change of pace, trundling gently through interesting episodes in the histories of several fen towns, from the pre-Norman period through to the modern day. Pryor is not a historian of this period, and the acknowledged oversimplifications on enclosure and the spread of Enlightenment thought are at times distracting. These later chapters are far less unified in purpose than earlier ones, very broadly linked in demonstrating that the fenland towns had and retained a distinct identity over these thousand years. This is done through analysis of medieval church architecture, eighteenth-century intellectual societies, and the rise and fall of the rail network on the Fens. As Pryor's life moves away from archaeology, these vignettes are more clearly motivated by his own experiences, and if the earlier chapters failed to capture the reader's interest, these more introspective chapters will certainly struggle to do so. With that said, Pryor's rich relationship with the Fens provides adequate cohesion for his various sallies into different historical periods and themes, and the amiable written style does not provoke the reader to ask too many questions. Pryor's rural background may contribute to the gleeful and infectious irreverence which makes for very easy reading.

In a sense, this is two rather different books held together by Pryor's fascinating life. The first part is a thrilling introduction to archaeology on the Fens, sustained with a clear purpose and genuine excitement for the source material. This is the strongest part of the book, and will be at least interesting to anyone invested in wetlands or archaeology. The second is a series of vignettes which are drawn together only by Pryor's life and his palpable love for the Fens and those who live on them. This will be of more local interest, providing a single collection of Fen narratives for the interested non-historian. My copy in paperback is wonderfully produced, with large text on thick paper, and a beautiful, abstract representation of the Black Fens by Fred Ingrams fits the front cover.

ANEURIN MERRILL-GLOVER
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MICHAEL BLAKSTAD (ed.), *Farming the Valley: Mapping the history of East Meon* (East Meon History Group, 2019). 159 pp. illus. £25.00.

This lavishly illustrated full-colour book traces the history of agriculture in the Hampshire village of East Meon, starting in the Mesolithic period and ending with the present day. It would appear that this book

has been written for the coffee table, rather than the academic bookshelf, in that there are no footnotes, endnotes, or bibliography: the only references are a series of research studies written by members of the East Meon History Group which are available as PDF documents on their website (<https://www.eastmeon-history.net/ftv/>), the majority having been prepared by the editor of the book. However, within these studies, there are numerous references to relevant primary and secondary sources.

Starting from before the Roman invasion, the chapter on Early Farming revisits widely understood descriptions of agriculture in England: indeed, the same is true of the chapters on the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods, although it does note that the best evidence for historic crops does not survive in the chalk-based soils of East Meon. Rather than providing evidence from the village to support these generalizations, it offers limited examples from within East Meon and its landscape.

Moving forward to the medieval period, the chapter starts with the Domesday survey and the two entries for Menes Hundred and Manor, and for Menes Ecclesia: both belonged primarily to the Bishop of Winchester, until some land was made over to Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1480. Here the Winchester Pipe Rolls have been used as evidence and the farming economy is presented in relation to markets, fairs, mills, and blacksmiths: the possible location and extent of fishponds and the deer park are described, before considering the effect of the Black Death on the village.

Farming in the early modern period uses evidence from a 1567 rental and the 1586 Lay Subsidy list, concluding that the layout of the village had changed little from the Domesday survey. Regarding enclosure by agreement, the only surviving record relates to the tithing of Oxenbourne in 1661. In this chapter, the surviving physical evidence of historic farm buildings is presented, in terms of barns, granaries, stables, cowhouses and cart sheds: here the input from Edward Roberts, expert on Hampshire buildings, is acknowledged.

The chapter on the nineteenth century focuses on the enclosures enacted in 1845, along with the 1851/2 Tithe Award: geo-referenced mapping is used to determine the parish land associated with each village farm in 1851/2, some 26 in number. Data is also taken from the 1851 Census to enrich the description of the farming landscape of East Meon. Village life is described through the development of non-conformism in the village, as well as the move away from self-sufficiency to a dependence on goods available in shops which came to the High Street in East Meon. One particular incident from this period is described at length: in

1826, a new vicar came to the parish and attempted to increase the lesser tithes due to him, by tithing turnips used as animal feed. The squire made a stand on behalf of all farmers in the valley and the vicar took the squire to court, concluding at Lincoln's Inn Fields, where it was determined that turnips were indeed subject to tithe. However, the squire's cousin was elected to Parliament in 1835 and raised the matter in the House: whether influential or not, the Tithe Commutation Act received Royal Assent in the following year.

The migration of farmers from Cumberland to East Meon is then described in the following chapter: the book states that it was possible in the 1890s to rent a Hampshire farm of 400 to 500 acres for the same price as 40 to 80 acres in the Lake District. Between 1892 and 1925, nine farming families moved from Cumberland to East Hampshire. These farmers changed the farms from corn growing to livestock husbandry, both sheep and beef cattle: they introduced machinery to make vast quantities of hay and abandoned the practice of folding sheep on turnips using hurdles. Descendants of these Cumbrian farmers are still farming in East Meon today. The breaking up of large estates following the first World War affected East Meon as elsewhere and some of the changes in landownership are traced in the book. As for the impact of the War Agricultural Executive Committee on the village during the second World War, oral evidence is presented of a farmer being shot at Botley in Hampshire whilst resisting confiscation of his land: whether this is a mis-located reporting of the well-known case of Ray Waldon of Itchen Abbas, also in Hampshire, or to a previously undocumented event is not clear.

The final chapter looks at farming in the valley since the 1950s and reviews the continuing agricultural activity in East Meon: the farms are larger, there is more specialization in both livestock kept and crops grown, yet there is some continuity in the farming families of the village. In the conclusion, the editor notes that, on the whole, East Meon has avoided public attention, apart from the Parliamentary army camping there in 1644 and the incident over the tithing of turnips and, therefore, its history is little different to that of many other English rural villages.

The book includes over 50 specially commissioned maps and plans, with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund: these along with a large number of captioned, colour photographs provide ample illustration for the accompanying text. However, the book would have benefited from a thorough proof-reading: the text is littered with minor errors and typographical mistakes, for example, 'Buster' rather than 'Butser' (of ancient farm reconstruction fame) in the caption on page 24

and in the table on page 83, where it states that the 1851 Census records that William Weeks junior of Oxenbourne Farm employed 489 boys, this figure actually being the arable acreage. Further, there are two occasions where the conclusion to a chapter actually presents a summary of the next chapter. Despite these shortcomings, this is a well-illustrated micro-history of agricultural practices in a single village.

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JAMES P. BOWEN and ALEX CRAVEN with JONATHAN COMBER, *The Victoria County History of Herefordshire. Colwall* (University of London, 2020). xii + 138 pp. 31 figs. 2 maps. £14.

This is the third parish history published by the Trust for the Victoria County History of Herefordshire, the others being Eastnor in 2013 and Bosbury in 2016: as part of the VCH Shorts series, they provide in-depth parish histories. The plan for the future is that they will eventually form part of a VCH red volume on Ledbury and the surrounding parishes of the Malvern Hills: thus, the structure of this book is unsurprising, as it follows a well-rehearsed format. The book opens by examining the parish boundaries, landscape, settlement patterns over time and the built environment. This is followed by an examination of the landownership of the parish in terms of manors and other estates before the main thrust of the volume which presents the economic, social and religious history of Colwall before finally examining the changing structure of local government which managed the parish affairs over time. There is also a chapter on the British Camp, a large earthwork enclosure, which surrounds the Herefordshire Beacon, the highest point on the Malvern Hills within the county of Hereford: the existence of the Norman ring-work bank at this site places it in a rare class of archaeological features at a national level, thereby justifying the separate chapter.

Written in the usual VCH descriptive style, the reader is presented with a chronological stream of facts within each chapter. Colwall was a largely agricultural community until the mid-nineteenth century, and thus this subject appears at the beginning of the chapter on economic history. The section on agriculture in the medieval and early modern period is split into arable, park and chase, meadow and pasture, and woodland. A three-course rotation was being followed in the parish at this time: wheat, Lent grain (grain sown during Lent), and fallow. The description of crops and livestock has been enhanced by the availability of a large number of wills and inventories in this period: dairying was an important activity producing both

cheese and butter, and hop growing was already being practised from at least the sixteenth century. Evidence of orchards along with the production of cider and perry is also presented, as well as the growing of flax and hemp.

From 1800 onwards, a series of new farm buildings were erected and existing ones improved, resulting in three 'model farms' in the parish: these were Barton Farm, Winnings Farm, and Park Farm. Whilst the growing of hops declined after this date, they continued to be grown in the parish of Colwall: as for the orchards, the Assistant Tithe Commissioner was unable to calculate the total acreage of orchards in 1839, simply recording 'numerous small orchards'.

A wide range of crafts were practised including weaving, tanning, gloving, and tailoring. With the coming of the railway in 1860, employment patterns changed as people were employed directly on the railway, but also the numbers in the building trades increased, reflecting the growth of the village at this time. Being adjacent to the Malvern Hills, there was access to the water that came from the springs, with a brewery and a mineral water factory (Schweppes) established in 1879 and 1892 respectively. Quarrying was in operation from at least the beginning of the seventeenth century, although this reduced significantly following the Malvern Hills Act of 1884 and the efforts of the conservators appointed under this act. In 1883, a vinegar brewery was moved from nearby Ledbury to the village and at its peak, it was producing 2000 gallons of prize-winning vinegar each day.

The editors have suggested that there were substantial numbers of sheep in the parish in the early nineteenth century, thereby providing large quantities of manure to enable high arable yields (p. 57). However, the only evidence presented is the number of sheep at individual farms at specific dates, and these were not significant numbers given that the parish extended to around 3800 acres at the time (the average of the four numbers quoted being just over 200 sheep), and further there is no indication of actual yields, provided for comparison purposes. The book describes the planting of new orchards by 1885 and reference is made to 'the avenues of lime trees which are characteristic of the village were also planted to attract bees to the orchards' (p. 60): they would indeed attract the bees but lime trees flower in late June/early July, and therefore would have been of no use to the orchard growers whose top-fruit trees blossom in the early spring.

A comprehensive range of manuscript sources has been used in the preparation of this volume, accessed at a number of archive offices, along with printed primary and secondary sources. A full list of abbrevi-

ations is provided, along with a useful index and a select glossary, although it would have been helpful if definitions of 'forlet land' (p. 49 and elsewhere) and 'fee-buck' and 'fee-doe' (p. 51) had been included.

The book is a high-quality production, marred only by two errors this reader found: firstly, in Table 1 (p. 12) the population figures for Colwall in 1981 and 1991 are given as 2088 and 2323 respectively, whereas on the opposite page the population for the same two years is quoted as 2074 and 2143. Secondly, the section on agriculture commences with the sizes of medieval holdings, being based around the concept of the yardland defined as 60 acres (p. 45): however, the glossary defines a yardland as between 15 and 40 acres, depending on local custom (p. 125) and there is no explanation as to why yardlands were larger in Colwall than elsewhere. Notwithstanding, this is a very readable account of an agricultural parish in the south-west Midlands.

ALAN WADSWORTH
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JAMES REBANKS, *English pastoral: An inheritance* (Allen Lane, 2020). 286 pp. £20.

I must start by declaring an interest – or, more accurately, a non-interest. *English pastoral* was commissioned by my daughter Helen when she worked for Allen Lane; she also commissioned and saw to publication James Rebanks's best-seller, *The shepherd's life* (2015). I have had, until now, nothing at all to do with the commissioning, editing, or promoting of either book. Had I been involved in the preparation of *English pastoral*, however, I would have queried the use of endorsements from Philip Pullman and Caitlin Moran: media celebs not noted as authorities on the hardships or history of farming. *English pastoral* looks set to repeat the success of *The shepherd's life*, having featured in January 2021 as a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week. But what can it offer to the student of agricultural and rural history?

Although much of the book does concern sheep and fields, its title is mischievously misleading. This is no tale of 'England's green and pleasant land', or escape from the stresses of urban life to bucolic tranquillity. The book is divided into three roughly equal sections, the first of which brings to life the author's memories of childhood on his family's Cumbrian farm and makes clear just how much of an endurance test such an existence could often be. Rebanks quotes Virgil's *Georgics*, in which the poet describes farming as a war against nature, where defeat means starvation. It would seem that Rebanks is remembering the early to mid-1980s (the book provides very few dates), describing a farm where money was short and there was a constant

struggle to keep on top of things. 'And such a hard way of living made for hard people', Rebanks tells us (p. 31).

The young Rebanks was much influenced by his grandfather, a farmer of the old school, who used the fields as classrooms in which he could pass on traditional knowledge to his grandson. He was slow, patient, and observant, and cared for his animals; he would not have been out of place in a book by H. J. Massingham. But Rebanks's farming relatives were dismissive of such an outmoded approach, and his father found himself increasingly under pressure to modernize. Rebanks is grateful to his grandfather for having shown him a traditional way of farming before it died out. Far from the supposed timelessness of rural England, *English Pastoral* conveys a sense of constant change: during the late twentieth century in particular, but stretching back through generations of the Rebanks family.

The coming of agri-business to Cumbria affected not just farming methods and farm numbers, but the wider culture and social life of the inhabitants. The world in which the young Rebanks was brought up was not entirely bleak, though: he recalls that there was a sense of community, an awareness of natural cycles, a wide range of skilled crafts still being practised, and an independence of spirit that resisted the blandishments of consumerism. But, in the end, Rebanks's father could not hold out against the changed approach that other farmers had adopted.

In the second section, ironically titled 'Progress', Rebanks describes how, through seeing the problems his father faced, he came in effect to discover those ideas about farming, economics and the environment which the organic movement has been promulgating since the 1930s. During the mid-1990s he spent time working on an Australian farm, an experience which showed him the reality of agri-business techniques. There was no sense of history 'to slow everything down', there were no people, no farmsteads: 'Just flat fields, perfect for huge machines' (p. 95). Tens of thousands of sheep were ranched in fields bigger than the Rebanks family's entire farm, a scale of production with which smaller farms could not possibly compete. Rebanks returned to Cumbria appreciating the full beauty of its landscape but bewildered by the seemingly impossible task lying ahead for him if he wanted to continue his family's farming history.

The account of how he and his father tried to keep afloat as economic pressure squeezed them ever harder, is powerful and informative – a valuable contribution to the agricultural history of the late twentieth century. Rebanks shows the reality behind the economists' abstractions: the harm done to animals and the soil,

and the poverty, isolation and social fracturing that adoption of agri-business techniques brought in its train. But his grandfather had offered him a different perspective, and it seemed to him, given the problems which overwhelmed his father, that there was wisdom to be gleaned from this supposedly outdated approach.

So, James Rebanks has come to appreciate the importance of a sense of limits; of replenishing the 'living soil' (though he does not mention Eve Balfour); of working with biological cycles; of encouraging earthworms; of mixed farming; of the philosophy of stewardship; of seeking quality rather than quantity; of local food production; of planting trees, and, in short, of agriculture as *husbandry*. This term takes us back to the 1945 collection of essays edited by Massingham: *The Natural Order: Essays in the return to husbandry*. Sadly, Rebanks refers to none of the chief pioneers of the organic movement, in whose writings all the above ideas and practices can be found, as well as a hostility to capitalist economics that Rebanks evidently shares.

Just as the early organicists contrasted economics with ecology, so Rebanks does, and not merely in theory but in practice. The book's third section is an account of how during the past few years he has sought to demonstrate to environmental activists that farming can be ecologically beneficial. He is fighting on two fronts: against those who see farming as inherently anti-environmental, and against those who ignore environmental and social issues in favour of large-scale food-production, where pursuit of 'efficiency' overrides other considerations. If Rebanks's project proves successful, his future books should, like *English pastoral*, make interesting reading.

PHILIP CONFORD

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Europe and Elsewhere

SANDRO GUZZI-HEEB and PIERRE DUBUIS (eds), *Organisation et mesure du temps dans les campagnes européennes de l'époque moderne au XX^e siècle* (Cahiers de Vallesia/Beihefte zu Vallesia, Archives de l'Etat du Valais, 2019). 234 pp. illus. CHF 55.

This far-reaching volume engages with a recent trend in historiography – the history of time and temporality – which is brought into a conversation with the study of rural landscapes and societies in post-medieval Europe. The volume's focus is on a discussion of three particular aspects: first, the measurement and organization of time in rural Europe or, as one editor calls it, the 'architecture of time in the countryside' (p. 247); second, the relationship between life and time in mountainous regions; third, the distribution of clocks

and watches. The overall focus lies on central and western Europe, covering the thirteenth to twenty-first centuries.

The introduction presents a wide historiographical survey. At times, however, the introduction tends to become a bit descriptive. A stronger argumentative framing of the introduction would have been desirable to bring together the wide range of topics discussed in the French and German contributions of this volume: the impact of the calendar reform on rural sites; cultural attitudes towards the closing of contracts; the relationship between notions of time and labour in proto-industrial hubs of watch manufacturing; the temporal regimes of religious services; the links between migratory labour, animal husbandry, agriculture, and timing. This is an ambitious volume with an all-encompassing approach to the history of the *longue durée* attitudes of rural European societies towards time.

The volume convincingly challenges long-held assumptions about the rhythmicity of times and the dichotomy of urban and rural temporalities. Urban contexts have widely been associated with notions of progress, precision, and change, the editors emphasize, which led to a largely assumed dichotomy between 'urban modernity' and 'the cliché of the immobility of the countryside' with its 'resistance against change' (p. 13). In accordance with other recent publications on the history of early modern notions and practices of time, this volume questions such a dichotomy and argues for a larger plurality and parallelism of different understandings of time. It enriches historiographic debates by stressing the potential for innovation in rural societies. When challenging 'the dichotomy of circular time and linear times' (p. 14), however, it is worth noting that Jacques Le Goff himself never understood the *temps de l'Église* and *temps du marchand* in such dichotomous terms; this dichotomy is rather a misunderstanding resulting from later readings of his seminal *Annales* article from 1960. This could have been highlighted more prominently, also in order to reflect a bit more on this volume's wide use of quantitative methods. Doesn't a quantitative analysis lend itself to a rhythmic or linear narration about the past?

E. P. Thompson's 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism,' is a second classical study from the 1960s that features prominently into the discussions of this volume. In his contribution on 'individual' and 'collective time' in eighteenth-century rural Burgundy, Jeremy Hayhoe argues 'that "ordinary" villagers adopted modern chronometry because they saw advantages in it, not because they would have been forced into it by the arrival of the factory and a discipline of time that

followed' (p. 66). Similarly, Anne Purschwitz focuses on *Zeitverwendungsstrategien* in her contribution about rural Saxony – a term that recalls Alf Lüdtke's concept of *Eigensinn* (p. 84). When examining time in regard to rural labour, one of this volume's strengths is clearly the rich discussion of proto-industrial settings. In her study of watch manufacturing in the German Black Forest, Michaela Hohkamp interweaves natural rhythmicity, agricultural production, inheritance practices, family structures, and labour division, in an inspiring discussion of how innovation could emerge, and the transformation of crafts into commerce. She stresses that the division of labour remained embedded within domestic economies of proto-industrial Black Forest communities. 'The division of labour ... was thus less orientated towards work performance, which could be measured in terms of temporal units, than in regard to the final product that could be sold. One is almost tempted to say that the production of timekeepers, in this case, prevented the measurement of working time' (p. 135). The strength of such research is its emphasis on the social, economic, and cultural grounding of the historical experience of time.

Practices of timing were enmeshed in a variety of cultural practices, and temporal practices deserve to be discussed in such anthropological terms. The introduction lists some anthropologists' and sociologists' works on time in rural settings, for example, Pierre Bourdieu's research on temporality among the Kabyle, published in 1963 (p. 9). However, this study is referenced without a discussion of what such work actually means for a historical-anthropological study of time in rural Europe. Bourdieu, for instance, argues that the 'awareness of time is not simply one of the dimensions of his life experience, but rather the form in terms of which that experience is organised' (Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Attitude of the Algerian Peasant Towards Time', *Mediterranean Countryman* 6, 1963, 55–72, reprinted in John Hassard (ed.), *Sociology of time* (1990), pp. 219–37, here p. 219). The question is thus how rural 'lifeworlds' could shape the making and unmaking of temporality in historically and culturally specific situations. Michaela Hohkamp and Claudine Remacle (p. 184) present some fascinating materials for thinking rural times in such a manner.

The volume ends with Pierre Dubuis's thought-provoking call for 'an economic, social and cultural history of the living' that includes an entangled study of time in regard to human, animal, and plant protagonists (p. 247). Unfortunately, this has not been spelled out in more depth. In light of recent work by anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and historians Timothy J. LeCain and Edmund Russell

on neo-materialism and coevolutionary histories, however, this seems to be a particularly promising trajectory of future research that puts the matter of rural environments itself centre stage for an interpretation of times. The editors' general comments, thus, hold true: *Bref, les historiens du temps ont encore bien du travail à faire* (p. 21: 'In short, historians of time still have a lot to do').

STEFAN HANSS
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VERENA LEHMBROCK, *Der denkende Landwirt. Agrarwissen und Aufklärung in Deutschland 1750–1820* (Böhlau Verlag, 2020). 309 pp. 5 illus. €37.99.

In the standard histories of German agronomy Thaer's *Grundsätze der rationellen Landwirthschaft* (4 vols. 1809–1812) is treated as a founding moment, the initiation of an agricultural science capable of systematic development. As with all such founding moments, there is a prehistory, but this has long been treated as a prior history of error and misunderstanding. For Verena Lehmbruck, however, Thaer is a point of arrival, not of departure; she is interested in what came before, how Thaer was able to present himself as an innovator, and what it was about his work that led others to accept this stance. Writing about agriculture was not a novel idea in early nineteenth-century Germany: since the early 1800s a veritable agromania had developed, with an increasing number of specialized journals, pamphlets, and books seeking to promote agricultural improvement. Lehmbruck is not so much interested in the various recommendations these texts made in themselves, but the status these recommendations had; why such an enormous literature was generated, for whom, by whom. Commanding an enviable knowledge of hundreds of texts in this Enlightenment literature, she seeks to combine the techniques of the history of science with those of the history of agriculture without resort to modernizing generalizations about 'experience', 'theory', 'practice', 'scholarship' or 'empiricism'. All of these terms had a particular contemporary connotation that is not necessarily the one we have today. In part the book draws upon arguments about agricultural practice; but it also examines the terms in which this practice is argued about. For English readers, she includes a lucid overview (pp. 253–69) entitled 'The farming thinker: agricultural knowledge and enlightenment in Germany 1750–1820'.

This title reverses the German of the book's title – 'the thinking farmer' – and this reversal points to one of the book's central ambiguities: the relation of the writer

to the material about which that writer writes. Those who wrote about farming had to have some knowledge of agricultural practice, but, on the other hand, also the time and opportunity to write, sometimes at great length. In the process complementary stereotypes emerged – of the writer remote from the real work of farming, of the farmer rigidly adhering to established practices and resistant to change. As she writes,

The discourse of improvement in the oeconomic Enlightenment was an epistemic and a social arena in which claims to knowledge about agriculture were negotiated. The prize of holding one's own in this arena was won through the power to define the form and content of a so-called scientific oeconomy. We know the outcome, but little about the route to it (p. 25).

'Oeconomy' was at the time synonymous with the agricultural economy – and so reference to an 'oeconomic Enlightenment' brings together the daily life of agricultural labour with the intellectual prospects of the European Enlightenment. At first glance Thae's book is continuous with this, linking 'rationalism' to agricultural practice. But *rationell* here denotes efficiency and profit-orientation; *rational* would by contrast denote the conduct of agriculture according to general rational principles, seeking greater yields for the own sake, or prescribing best practice in animal husbandry.

Following an introduction sketching out the purposes of the book – not a history of ideal agricultural practice, nor of the provenance of recommendations for such practice, but instead how arguments about good practice were formed, contested, legitimated, and diffused – the first major section deals with agricultural improvement (*Verbesserung*) around 1800. There follows the core of the book, a series of five 'perspectives', beginning with an outline of the work of Michael Irlbeck, a Bavarian farmer who, asked to draft a report for the Bavarian Agricultural Association, produced in 1834 a three-volume treatise for administrators and farmers. Irlbeck farmed about 10 hectares of poor land on high ground, and had dedicated himself to its systematic improvement. He was critical of 'the learned', by which he meant those with a university education; and especially critical of the universal prescriptions fostered by the oeconomic Enlightenment, such as the use of clover. Foreshadowing some aspects of the Green Revolution of the twentieth century, he asked why clover was supposed to be suited to his farming since it required, for his land, such intensive fertilization. Importantly, he did not question the aim of improvement, but questioned how it might be realized. His solution, however, dated from the very writings he criticized: that each recommendation should be vetted

by a government official. Furthermore, as Lehmbrock demonstrates, he used the new vocabulary of a profit-oriented agriculture to defend established practices. He turned the rhetorical devices used by agricultural writers and officials on these writers and officials themselves.

Lehmbrock reviews the contention (p. 84) that up until the later nineteenth century all the various measures of agricultural improvement originated in farming practice, not in the literature of agricultural improvement. And here she points to a problem in the historiography: that eighteenth-century writings have generally been interpreted by modern Enlightenment historians, while agricultural historians have generally focused on other sources. If, then, the work of agricultural historians is taken into account, she suggests that the evidence tends to support Irlbeck's thesis that he was not the only *Bauer* open to reform although the improvement literature saw established practice, and its practitioners, as the problem. Enlightenment history is intellectual history, but farmers are not intellectuals.

Having arrived at this insight she selects three mid-eighteenth-century periodicals and examines the manner in which they construct the figure of the 'simple *Bauer*', impervious to 'science'. To this she contrasts the '*denkende Landwirt*' of the book's title, an enlightened, reform-oriented agricultural producer who first appears in *Der Fleißige und fröhliche Wirthschaftsmann*, published in 1811 and 1812, thus coinciding with Thae's volumes. Lehmbrock here makes the point that 'before' and 'after' share a focus not on agricultural relations, but on the character of agricultural producers. Furthermore, she also makes the point that an apparent continuity in arguments over 'practice' is moderated by the intervention of Immanuel Kant. His *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) shifted the meaning of 'empirical' from unlearned, unlettered, to our present-day neutral sense. The meanings of 'science' and 'practice' were likewise transformed by Kant. And just as surely as an enthusiasm for Critical Philosophy swept through German universities at the turn of the century, it reached the 'agricultural sciences' too. Thae had read his Kant (p. 183), and was part of this transformation.

KEITH TRIBE
University of Tartu

REBECCA EARLE, *Feeding the people: The politics of the potato* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). 308 pp. 33 illus. £17.99

Feeding the people is at once a compelling account of the potato's journey to become a global staple, and a seminal history of how eating came to feature in modern politics. It is a thoroughly researched, ambitious, and

engaging study that builds on Rebecca Earle's work on the potato, including her hugely enjoyable short book, *Potato*, published in Bloomsbury's Object Lessons series (2019). The potato warrants such scholarly attention as it is now the fourth most important food crop in the world, an incredible feat considering that it was known only to those occupying the Andean mountains until the sixteenth-century Spanish conquest of the Incan Empire set in motion its global dispersal. Through the lens of the potato – this 'exemplary modern food' (p. 3) – *Feeding the people* argues that our contemporary neoliberal conviction that 'what we eat is at once an individual concern and a matter of public interest' (p. 21) has its roots in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

The argument proceeds logically and with a broadly chronological structure. Chapter 1 considers Europeans' first encounter with the potato in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its assimilation into European diets; chapters 2 and 3 focus on the Enlightenment campaign to encourage potato consumption; chapter 4 traces the global spread of the potato beyond Europe; chapter 5 explores the role of the potato in nineteenth-century discourses on capitalism; and chapter 6 brings the story into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially with regard to wartime expansion of state-led public health initiatives.

Through meticulous research, Earle carefully debunks a major enduring myth that has established itself in the historiography of the potato: that European peasants were slow to accept – and even feared – this new world food. Anxieties are commonly attributed to the knobbly shape of the tuber (which supposedly resembled the limbs of those afflicted with leprosy) and the familial relation between the potato and the poisonous henbane and deadly nightshade (all of the Solanaceae family). The only evidence Earle finds for the association between leprosy and potatoes, for example, is a second-hand comment in a Swiss herbal published in 1620. Instead, Earle argues that peasants and labourers in many parts of Europe had adopted the potato over the course of the seventeenth century, long before eighteenth-century elites encouraged them to do so. Only in the Enlightenment did philosophers, scientists, and statesmen become convinced of the benefits of potato consumption, as part of an emergent notion of statecraft in which the success of a nation relied on maintaining a healthy population.

This finding has significant consequences, not only for how we understand the history of the potato, but also for how we understand historical change. Reversing the traditional top-down historical narrative, it shows how ordinary people contributed 'to agricultural

and dietary innovation' (p. 205). Foreseeably, some may object to the lack of quantitative evidence used to support this claim, but I find the accumulative use of a variety of qualitative examples convincing, including examinations of tithe disputes, dietaries, and customs records. This can, however, only apply to those regions from which this data is drawn; Earle notes that elsewhere, including Russia and Finland, there is little evidence for the potato's early dispersion. It would have been interesting to consider why certain areas did not adopt the potato so readily.

Issues of food security, food sovereignty, and statecraft continue to feature in the fourth chapter, which follows the global pathways of potato production. Just as elite Europeans from the mid-eighteenth century took credit for the uptake of potatoes among the labouring classes, by the end of the century Europeans claimed to have introduced the potato in Iran, India, and other areas of colonial interest with the benevolent intent of improving the well-being of local peoples. This chapter begins by suggesting that in certain localities the potato had already been introduced before these top-down schemes, but this becomes less clear in later examples. Across Africa, for instance, Earle maintains that dissemination 'owes much to the activities of colonists, colonial bureaucrats and missionaries' (p. 123), whilst in Kenya, British attempts to enforce potato cultivation were so unfit that they led to the failure of native ecologies. Addressing this local diversity, however, is precisely what is so impressive about this chapter in particular. Moving gracefully between geographical nuances and broad trends makes this an exemplary piece of global history. As Earle indeed writes, 'global processes of imperialism and trade, and the emergence of new political languages, are always articulated locally' (p. 130). The acknowledgements page of the book demonstrates just how much work and scholarly collaboration has been necessary to research sources in several languages across the world.

This is a book of great academic merit and one that will undoubtedly also appeal to a wider audience. Moving across centuries and countries, Earle packs in a great deal of information but maintains an enthusiastic and clear writing style that prevents it from feeling too dense. I particularly enjoyed the eight potato recipes, which add further colour to the book's thesis. It is also refreshing to see repeated efforts to make clear the relevance of historical findings to the present and future. For instance, if it was small-scale growers who cultivated the potato, rather than states and industrial processes, should modern governments empower ordinary people to determine their own agricultural practices? In telling

a story about the humble spud, *Feeding the people* does what all good food history should do: it shows us that food is never just sustenance, but is intricately connected to broader cultural, economic, and political processes that continue to shape the present day.

ELEANOR BARNETT
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CHRISTIANE CHENEAU-BERTHELOT, *Paris et ses campagnes au XIX^e siècle: marchés, productions, producteurs* (Editions SPM, 2020). ix + 273 pp. 27 euros.

The agricultural history of the Ile-de-France region has been well documented by researchers, but this study is unusual in that it focuses on developments within a 7-to-15 kilometre radius of the gates of Paris. Covering a mere 47,000 hectares, the Seine *département* was France's smallest and in 1840 it contained a capital city, numbering one million inhabitants. Yet 74 per cent of the land surface of this tiny administrative unit remained firmly wedded to agricultural production. The story that unfolds can be summed up in the word 'interface': the peri-urban interface and the interface between intensive owner-exploiter cultivation and extensive cereal farming on the surrounding plateaux.

We know most about grain production (wheat, oats, and barley) in this context. Many historians have drawn attention to the high yields achieved in the region; yields that, by the end of the *ancien régime*, matched those being achieved on the best land in England. By continuing the investigation into the nineteenth century this author contributes three more bits of information. She points out that cereal producers planted wheat as much for straw as for grain in the first half of the century. The failure of observed grain yields to progress significantly can be linked to this practice because the seed-yield ratio used to ensure an abundant straw crop was more than twice the national average for cereals. Planting oats and to a lesser extent barley proved an increasingly attractive and reliable land-use strategy to farmers as well. As for the wheat grain, it was no longer conveyed directly to urban consumers by the nineteenth century. Instead, it was transformed into flour in technologically advanced mills (*minoteries*) situated on the outskirts of Paris. In Saint Denis, for example, three out of ten of the processing mills were steam powered by the 1820s.

The spur to these three developments was Paris, of course. The city's livery stables housed a total of 23,000 horses in 1812; 34,000 in 1826 and, if donkeys and mules are added to the total, around 80,000 in 1880. Farmers transported straw litter and also hay and fodder into the capital and then filled their empty carts with stable

manure, street sweepings and night soil for the return journey. This relationship is already known to agrarian historians, but not the price-sensitive context in which it operated, nor in its implications for land use and rotations.

The other main focus of this study is horticulture. The author demonstrates that intensive fruit and vegetable production on diminutive plots could be found cheek by jowl with tenanted cereal farms on landscapes almost within sight of the city. Whilst demand for bedding straw was constant and the price obtained for oats fairly stable, seasonal fruit such as peaches, strawberries, cherries, or indeed cut flowers, could be marketed at a considerable premium. The same applied to vegetables with beetroot and lentils achieving the best net profit. On the periphery of the capital the latter crop conveniently matured when neither Egyptian lentils, nor the produce of the south of France were available in the marketplace. Whole villages specialized using pioneering production techniques. Peach trees were nurtured in Montreuil within a grid of walled enclosures, apricots were grown in Arcueil, lettuce in Aubervilliers, cherries in Sceaux and rose bushes in L'Hay. In some villages vegetables were grown in open fields adjacent to wheat and other grain crops, whereas in others horticulture might be practised on separate holdings of no more than 400 or 500 square meters. Large-scale cereal production juxtaposed with what often amounted to kitchen gardening gave rise to differing arrangements in matters of tenure and agricultural machine use, not to mention contrasting patterns of employment, seasonal mobility and wage remuneration. But there were synergies to be had as well – particularly in the area of soil preparation and the protection of tender crops.

It has to be said that these valuable nuggets of information do not emerge very clearly. The book started off life as a doctoral thesis, which the author then adapted to make more accessible to a non-academic readership. This reformatting has produced very uneven results. The barely digestible and sometimes barely legible graphs and tables remain, but the author has added a lot of explanatory footnotes and narrative asides which do not sit comfortably with the text. A strong conclusion sorting the research grain from the incidental chaff would have been welcome. However, the conclusion consists mainly of musings (including comments on Scottish agriculture) that scarcely touch upon the specifics of the author's claims about the hybrid yet hugely enterprising and innovative agriculture of the Seine *département*.

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RICHARD BROOME, CHARLES FAHEY, ANDREA GAYNOR and KATIE HOLMES, *Mallee Country: Land, people, history* (Monash University Publishing, 2020). xiv + 415 pp. \$39.95.

Australia's mallee country in the States of Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia had a distinctive ecological history of woodlands and bushlands, of flora and fauna, that had evolved and flourished in semi-arid climatic conditions characterized by low and variable rainfall. After noting that these regions were named after an indigenous Aboriginal word for the mallee eucalyptus plant, Richard Broom, Charles Fahey, Andrea Gaynor and Katie Holmes elaborate on how, over some 50,000 years, the Aborigines had integrated themselves economically and culturally with the land.

Explorers and surveyors opened the way for a pastoral economy based on hundreds of thousands of sheep that catered for the British wool market. This resulted in armed resistance by and massacres of Aborigines, who were denied access to what was redefined as Crown land, on which, the authors demonstrate, pastoralists had an incentive to maximize short-term returns within the limitations of their annual licences. Hence, they over-grazed their sheep on native vegetation and eroded the soil under the impact of droughts that devastated sheep numbers and drove many pastoralists to the wall.

By the end of the nineteenth century, pastoralism had been replaced by wheat farming on land leased to settlers by colonial and State governments. As is the case throughout what is a model regional history, Broom, Fahey, Gaynor and Holmes draw parallels and make connections between government policies, ecological constraints, scientific discoveries and technological innovations. They point out that new wheat varieties resisted rust disease and thrived in hot Australian conditions, whilst the invention of the mallee roller and the stump-jump plough enabled the expeditious and low-cost clearing away of tough mallee vegetation before planting and harvesting could go ahead.

On the one hand, doing away with scrub that held soil together increased the intensity and frequency of dust storms and soil drift, which were worsened by drought. On the other hand, the advantage was the speed with which a crop could be obtained and delivered to market on government constructed railways, when compared with the years settlers required to chop and slash their way through dense forests in other regions before farms could be established. But the vulnerability of mallee land to drought was still underestimated and misunderstood until it caused a retreat of the wheat settlement frontier that made governments realise

that a reliable water supply from dams and irrigation channels was essential.

During the First World War, mallee farmers were able to turn their backs on past disappointments and losses as a result of some good seasons and the British government's acquisition of the entire wheat crop at a guaranteed price. Broom, Fahey, Gaynor and Holmes cast fresh light on how, after the improved conditions of the war years, economic rationality was distorted by political ideology when State governments believed that farming required the attributes of pioneering resilience and masculine independence, whilst rural family homes, where women provided housework and childcare, were the basis of a loyal citizenry and a prosperous nation. Consequently, when State government agencies selected settlers, including returned servicemen under soldier settlement schemes, too much weight was given to character traits and not enough to farming know-how and savings.

Even though the authors do not provide a coherent statistical analysis of class structure based on farm sizes and debt levels, they do show that, once global prices for wheat collapsed in the 1930s, the average debt owed to agricultural banks by inexperienced mallee settlers was 17 times the annual urban wage. Confronted with the prospect of discontented poor farmers getting poorer, governments and agricultural banks wrote off or rescheduled the debts of efficient farmers, while marginal smallholders beyond rescue were paid their equity when they packed up their lives and left the land.

All this resulted in bigger farms that were suitable for mechanization and diversification, so that in the 1950s and 1960s, when the price of wheat was high and farms were profitable, the area cleared and cropping increased. The authors describe how farmers could afford to improve their water supply with the installation of dams and bores, whilst they acquired new tractors which could work with disc ploughs and harvesters. They drew on research when they planted rotation crops to arrest soil drift, introduced trace elements to curb diseases and used fertilizers such as superphosphate.

However, by the early 1970s, the prices for farm inputs rose while prices for farm products fell. In response, the authors report, farmers looked to improve the productivity of their land. They formed Mallee Sustainable Farming and adopted the Landcare Movement, not only to curb erosion, but also to limit salinity caused by the cutting and pulling out of deep-rooted scrub, which had prevented the elevation of the water table and the salt that rose with it. Following on from this shift in farmer attitudes to the landscape, the next step for the authors could have been to apply modelling,

such as that outlined by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, to a quantitative historical measurement of the interconnections between human economic systems and non-human ecosystems; between financial accounts and environmental accounts; between monetary and non-monetary indicators of the value of productive natural resources, such as land and water, when they were degraded or depleted.

Nevertheless, Broom, Fahey, Gaynor and Holmes provide a commendable survey of how changes in public appraisals, motives and interests caused governments to end major land releases and to create and enlarge national parks. Despite the emergence of a conservationist consensus, the authors add that conflicts and compromises persisted over the relative merits of recreational tourism, wilderness experiences and agricultural projects. Importantly, Aboriginal communities, who had worked on or remained attached to their traditional land and had affirmed their identity with it, were able to run indigenous ranger and heritage programmes.

If proof was required that all was not well, the severity of recurrent droughts since the 1980s accelerated the use of no-till farming, which, the authors explain, mitigated the effects of drought, dust storms and soil drift because it replaced the use of fallowing or repeated cultivation of the soil as the way to remove nutrient-consuming and water-absorbing weeds. Instead, no-till farming depended on machinery to sow into undisturbed soil, mechanical seed crushers and herbicides to control weeds, as family-owned farms with inter-generational knowledge continued with mixed success to adapt technology to ecology under the pressure of climate change and unstable export markets.

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ULRIKE KIRCHBERGER and BRETT M. BENNETT (eds), *Environments of empire: Networks and agents of ecological change* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020). 278 pp. \$29.95.

COREY ROSS, *Ecology and power in the age of empire: Europe and the transformation of the tropical world* (Oxford University Press, 2019). 496 pp. 21 illus. £19.99.

The close relation between colonial empires and (so-called) natural resources has been a well-known subject of historical study. Often, these resources appear in the story once they would have been available – the cotton picked, the trees felled, the oil pumped from the earth – with the environment that offers the resources out of focus. The attention for the environmental side of colonial resource extraction policies

– either with or without taking into account how the colonized were using these resources and were affected – is more recent. Two books of this more recent type feature in this review. Corey Ross's *Ecology and power in the age of empire* was first published in 2017, with the paperback edition following in 2019. Eleven chapters cover over 400 pages, an impressive *tour de force* of colonial environmental history. But I propose to turn our attention first to the volume of essays edited by Ulrike Kirchberger and Brett Bennett, published in 2020. Their attention within the wider context of colonial environmental history focuses on the movement of plant and animal species between different geographical areas. The nine chapters (plus introduction and epilogue) are presented by a team that is well balanced in terms of focus areas, gender (as far as I can tell), and regional coverage. Together, the team brings specific species like tobacco and oysters, and arrangements like zoological and botanical exchange networks, to our attention. The overarching concept the book seeks to discuss is the question of non-human agency, with a connected question about how historians can mobilize insights from non-historical disciplines to capture that agency – two issues very close to my own interest!

There is enough to enjoy in the book; each chapter convincingly presents the social construction of ecological sciences and the associated movement of species. As with many edited volumes, the promised discussion of the main themes is not equally visible in all chapters. We do indeed find recognition of the non-humans that co-shape the story throughout the volume, but a few chapters do not move very far beyond the descriptive aspect. In the introduction and most chapters, the concept of networks is prominent. It is a logical choice, as exchanges between territories lend themselves well to being described as movements between nodes. So far so good. I would object, however, to the way networks as a concept are made equal to the concept of networks in actor-network theory (ANT) approaches. The word may be the same, but behind words appear different worlds. In network analysis, the network is fixed and the actors move between nodes. In ANT, it is the network that is continuously redrafted by the movements themselves. One is never certain the network will be there. I realize that writing about something that is continuously ambivalent is terribly difficult, but my criticism of the network concept in the book reaches further than some semantic debate. In a network approach, it is easy to connect the 'local' to the 'global', as the book indeed aims to do, with species moving over the globe (indeed, the global) from locales (indeed, the local) – leaving aside that the term

'global' is disturbingly often associated with 'Western', and non-western places are the 'local' ones. In ANT, the distinction between local and global does not make sense, as every connection needs to be (re)constructed locally. The global is as local as the local. I would have liked to read more about how the networks of exchange had to be continuously performed and created, but I like the way the chapters manage to present their colonial sub-projects in terms of the ecologies they tried to understand and did create – often without actually desiring specific creations!

The epilogue stands somehow apart from the approach in introduction and chapters. It aims to bring together the different chapters, and to make overarching sense of the processes of species movement discussed in the book. This feature is not what strikes me most in terms of the epilogue being different, however. I am simply fascinated that in a book aiming to use concepts like agency, networks, and what we could label as the social construction of (scientific and colonial) practices, the chapter that brings everything together mobilizes a narrative of 'underlying geographic and evolutionary factors shaping invasion that are then influenced by historical contingency' (p. 235) – accompanied by a rather traditional idea of science as a practice. Apparently, we can employ agency as much as we want, but we are only playing in the space that has already been shaped by external factors. I would like to know where these factors come from themselves – and see no other explanation than that these factors are the results of the agencies that shaped them, a route that the epilogue clearly does not pursue. Interestingly, one reason why the epilogue does fit with the other parts of the edited volume rather well, is the way networks are conceptualized as existing features, within which actors move – as I already suggested above. As soon as we use actor-network theory as a theory of actors-in-a-network, the network becomes a fixed pattern – and we have returned to concepts like agent and structure that ANT wanted to challenge in the first place.

I may not prefer the way it is done, but the question taken up in the epilogue of *Environments and empire* of how to bring the diverse experiences of different colonial regions together is worthwhile. Perhaps the monograph *Ecology and power in the age of empire* by Ross could offer much more in terms of relating different locales over time, with its single author discussing an impressive set of case studies on different ecologies and colonies. The ingredients are certainly there: we read about cotton, cocoa, rubber, tin, copper, oil, nature conservation and forests, and irrigation, and we move from continent to continent in a really impressive book on how ecological resources

were claimed, used and spoiled by colonial agents, from individuals to states. The chapters cover a lot of ground but maintain a comprehensive narrative of improvised planning – if I may borrow one of my own concepts. In some of the topics I think I know something about (like Geertz's agricultural involution concept), I found some of the references not up-to-date with recent scholarship. However, it is much to ask from an author who writes about so many aspects in admirable detail to have everything at the same level of scholarly debate. Overall, the book convincingly illustrates its three main propositions. It may not be the first imperial movement that changed environments rather drastically (the Assyrian empire comes to mind), but modern imperialism did mark a seminal period for the ecosystems of the colonial world. This thorough transformation of the colonial era indeed built on longer histories, and resulted in considerable harm to these diverse environments. After reading the book, one wonders how there is a single landscape left in the tropics, so much has been developed, moved, spoiled, turned into capital, etc.

What I miss in the richness of the book, is a closer connection between the case studies. There were opportunities to make links between regions, commodities and periods. To take another example that I can easily recognize, the large-scale irrigation systems in colonial India (that Ross mentions on pp. 316–18) are more or less directly related to the current pumping of groundwater in the Punjab referred to on p. 387 – if only because the British systems would have brought the groundwater that is now pumped out. I would also think that the forestry themes and chapters could have been connected more clearly. Obviously, Ross has made efforts to bring his themes, times, and ecologies together. In the introduction, he presents the three propositions I already mentioned, which serve as a guide for the chapters. In the final chapter, he brings his narratives together through programs like the Green Revolution and the Environmental Conservation policies of the decolonized world. I agree that such programs must be connected to the ecological actions and programs of the colonial world, but I do not think these connections help us to understand how the different extraction and development agendas of colonial powers in different regions and over time were (not) connected in colonial times. Colonial powers, commercial companies and colonized groups were engaged with all kinds of ecological activities simultaneously – forest exploitation was done next to mining or farming. I know that reviewers need to stay away from criticizing authors for not having written the book the reviewer wanted to

read, but I hope that Ross manages to use his vast and impressive overview of ecological interventions in the colonial world to bring out these continuously created connections between resource policies and actions of different kinds in different colonial localities over time in his forthcoming work. Indeed, I would think that an actor-network inspired approach would help do exactly that!

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BEN NOBBS-THIESSEN, *Landscape of migration: Mobility and environmental change on Bolivia's tropical frontier, 1952 to the Present* (UNC Press, 2020). 342 pp. 18 illus. \$37.50.

The development of tropical and semitropical frontiers comprises a dramatic chapter in late twentieth-century agricultural and environmental history. Particularly noteworthy is the transformation of Bolivia's eastern lowlands over the last half century. The region's largest department, Santa Cruz, witnessed an agro-export boom as hundreds of thousands of migrants converted native landscapes into soy farms and cattle ranches. Its capital, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, grew from a town of 40,000 to become the nation's largest city with a population of over 2 million. All along, economic growth defied political upheaval, as Bolivia careened from revolutionary to authoritarian to neoliberal regime. Ben Nobbs-Thiessen's illuminating study situates eastern Bolivia's take-off in the migration of peoples, plants, technologies, and ideologies. In the historian's able hands, such flows are reconstructed through multinational narratives that trace territorial displacements, sociopolitical tensions, and agroecological transformation. Boldly conceptualized, richly documented, and elegantly written, the book is much more than another case study of regional development in Latin America. How this one-time backwater became its nation's economic powerhouse is a parable of twentieth-century global capitalism and geopolitics.

Bolivia's 'March to the East' was a state-backed project of frontier expansion unveiled by the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement after assuming power in 1952. Over-reliance on tin exports and food imports, demographic strains on highland Andean landholdings, a history of humiliating wartime territorial losses, and U.S.-subsidized Cold War developmental priorities roused a new-found urgency among Bolivia's leadership to colonize the fertile and more sparsely populated lowland regions. Mass media played its part. In a delightful chapter analysing the oeuvre of the peripatetic Bolivian filmmaker Jorge Ruiz, backed by the state's Instituto Cinematográfico Boliviano

and the U.S. government, Nobbs-Thiessen analyzes the documentaries that showcased highland-lowland migration as a bridge for the nation's socioeconomic, regional, and racial divides. Like the gendered 'foundational fictions' of nineteenth-century Latin America nationalist literature dissected by Doris Sommer, Ruiz's plots centered too on the romantic unions between Indigenous highlanders (*kollas*) and largely mestizo lowlanders (*cambas*), with the latter often feminized in these odes to progress.

Change was, in fact, coming to eastern Bolivia in the mid-1950s, with the arrival of railways linking Santa Cruz to the Brazilian and Argentine borders and an interregional highway to Cochabamba. And from the get-go, *cruceños* avid for investment ranted at federal infringements on regional autonomy and at the influx of outsiders in scarcely camouflaged racist language. The core of the study, however, focuses on the origins of disparate human flows to eastern Bolivia – Okinawans and Japanese, Mennonites, and Andeans – and their impact on frontier development. While previous works compartmentalized the groups' trajectories, Nobbs-Thiessen's layered approach parts ways from traditional monoethnic studies of migration, allowing for broader insights into their commonalities and divergences. Agrarian populations with collective histories of displacement and transregional ties, the three groups, notwithstanding racial and religious differences, formed part of the flotsam and jetsam of twentieth-century globalization. Victims of Japanese imperialism and postwar U.S. military occupation, Okinawans were lured to South America by colonization projects promoted by the U.S. and Bolivian governments. Japanese colonists arrived as well. In their peregrinations, the Okinawans' paths converged with another Diasporic people, the Mennonites, who streamed in from Paraguay, Canada, and, predominantly, Mexico. The latter, distressed by overcrowding, drought, and the evangelizing/ cultural influences of U.S. and Canadian coreligionists, turned to Bolivia in the late 1960s, where the promise of agricultural cooperatives, exemptions from military service and public education, and the importation of duty-free machinery beckoned. Andeans, whose hardscrabble conditions had dispatched hundreds of thousands of household members for seasonal labor in Argentina, marched to the East in search of a plot of land, as 'spontaneous' migration far outstripped official colonization. In other words, a region at the margins was soon to be remade by settlers squeezed from other global peripheries.

Nobbs-Thiessen underscores the hardships endured by migrants lacking secure title and credit, local

environmental knowledge, agricultural extension, and access to markets. Those hailing from Asia and the Andes confronted *cruceños*' racism as well. Yet in the absence of backing from the Bolivian state, those more fortunate, and the Mennonites, in particular, counted on infrastructural and social service support from Protestant religious organizations, whose relations with U.S. development agencies and Bolivian government bureaus proved rather fluid. All three migrant groups clamored for the rights of 'agrarian citizenship' as frontier pioneers, resorting at times to acts of civil disobedience to protest their abandonment by state officials.

In a particularly evocative *mise en scène*, Nobbs-Thiessen juxtaposes the historical trajectories of two interlopers in the eastern lowlands in 1967: the insurrectionary foray of Che Guevara among the Bolivian peasantry, and a party of Mexican Mennonites scouting out lands for future settlement. While the former's doom is one of Cold War Latin America's watermarks, the fate of the latter encapsulates Santa Cruz's actual 'revolutionary' transformation over the next half century. Over the course of the 1970s, links to Mennonite communities in North and South America facilitated the acquisition of tractors, agricultural machinery, and livestock to establish a dairy industry in the region. (Japanese and Okinawan settlers focused on commercial rice cultivation, while Andean colonies planted sugarcane, rice, and corn. Cotton would also enjoy a boom into the mid-1970s.) Yet it was another migrant to the lowlands – soy – whose proliferation relied on the plant's adaptation to tropical and subtropical latitudes (advanced by U.S.-trained Brazilian agricultural engineers), rising global demand for livestock feed, and Bolivia's turn to neoliberalism in the mid-1980s, that propelled the region's skyrocketing agribusiness, with Mennonites prominently at the helm. Not that such sagas, *pace* Jorge Ruiz, would have their full Hollywood endings: following the presidential election of Evo Morales in 2005, Santa Cruz, as the center of economic power, would rally for regional autonomy from Andean highland control.

While Nobbs-Thiessen weaves multiple threads, the Mennonites' saga, meticulously reconstructed through archival sources and oral histories, overshadows that of other migrants. Collectively, the migration narratives crowd out a more comprehensive history of the receiving regions and their local populations, which emerges only sporadically amid extensive reconstruction of extra-regional processes. Nevertheless, Nobbs-Thiessen has provided a compelling account of Bolivia's 'March to the East' that will not only be of significant interest to historians

of Latin America but scholars of twentieth-century migration and comparative frontiers in general.

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MARCEL THOMAS, *Local lives, parallel histories: Villagers and everyday life in divided Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2020). 320 pp. 31 illus. £65. Marcel Thomas' fascinating comparison of two villages illustrates the similarities and differences in rural life in West Germany (FRG) and East Germany (GDR). In so doing, Thomas successfully challenges the traditional approach of treating the rural as backward and villagers as passive in the context of wider social change.

The book takes the West German village of Ebersbach in Baden-Württemberg, and the East German village of Neukirch in Saxony, to explore how local residents experienced and navigated social change in their localities in the post-war era. Thomas chooses these two villages because they shared similar characteristics in 1939, such as population size, types of employment and relative cultural heritage. What makes the book so interesting is its examination of two similar villages from a similar starting point. This allows for an effective exploration of the commonalities and divergences of how villagers were affected by, and negotiated their lives within, the two opposing systems of capitalism and socialism. In this way, it provides a useful contribution to debates around the relationship between state and society in the two post-war Germanies.

Previous work in this area has used Berlin or border towns as case studies; in contrast Thomas uses a comparative approach firmly focused on the local in two unrelated towns not close to the physical divide. A wide range of documents are used, such as local histories, transcripts of local political debates, newspaper articles, Stasi files, combined with interviews with 20 people who lived in each village. The use of oral history is a particular strength of the book, offering a window into how citizens perceived the world around them. Citizens' petition letters (*Eingaben*) are used to bring to life the views of citizens in Neukirch regarding the state, particularly in discussions of local activism in chapter 5. A combination of these sources allow Thomas to use Geertz-style 'thick description' and *Alltagsgeschichte* to develop a bottom-up approach to successfully uncover how individuals responded to and negotiated the larger changes going on around them.

The book comprises six well-structured chapters, first setting out the argument, then treating both villages separately before bringing them together to highlight similarities and differences. The first two chapters show how the residents of both villages

followed a similar theme of departing from, and then seeking to return to, the rural and village community, initially not wishing to protect this form of community but then missing it when it was gone. Chapter 3 explores the influence of foreigners on each society and concludes that locals in both villages marginalised foreign workers or ethnic German refugees coming into the community in order to claim ownership over their own local identity.

The main argument of the book is that 'villagers on both sides of the Iron Curtain gave local meaning to the Cold War and strove for the same goals' (p. 276) in using pragmatism to improve their lot within their respective political systems. This is seen most clearly in chapters 4 and 5. The fifth chapter provides examples of local activism within the political system such as the restoration of a tower and restaurant in Neukirch and the opening of a youth centre in Ebersbach. Chapter 4 is the strongest and most interesting chapter of the book; it considers how citizens located themselves within the context of the Cold War and in relation to the other German state. Here, it would be beneficial for the author to call upon works such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities* to provide a framework for how citizens in each state imagined people in the other. Nonetheless, Thomas' conclusions that Ebersbachers gradually lost interest in the GDR and claimed German identity for themselves whilst Neukirchens placed importance on the FRG as a barometer for life in the GDR, are strong and convincing.

Moreover, Thomas demonstrates how villagers considered themselves at the mercy of external changes. An example of this is in Chapter 6 where Thomas notes that in local histories, Nazism was briefly referenced

as an event that happened to citizens of each village, constructing a zero-hour narrative of the post-war era. This final chapter almost provides short literature reviews of local histories written of the two villages, an area of history the author laments as often being dismissed by academics as biased or inaccurate. It is here that Thomas makes one of the most interesting conclusions of the book, arguing that from the 1970s onwards, people in both villages used local histories to understand and control the past in order to shape the present and their future locally during times of uncertainty of the end of the economic miracle in the FRG, the shortage economy in the GDR, and the impact of reunification on people in Neukirch.

One aspect that remains underdeveloped at various points in the book is the concept of identity and in particular how local identity in this context relates to national identity. It would also have been pleasing to see more of an exploration of transnational influences from both Germanies on each society to complement the comparative approach. This is however only a minor point to enhance the study rather than pointing to a hole in the approach.

Altogether, the book is fantastically well signposted and structured, making several clear arguments in each individual chapter that serve as building blocks for the central argument that individuals negotiated their lives in a specifically local way within the wider Cold War context. As a result, Thomas fully immerses the reader in all things Ebersbach and Neukirch in a highly engaging way that allows him to succeed in his stated aim of bringing the local more into the academic.

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