
Louis XIV has long been regarded as the exemplary absolute monarch, and his creation of a large standing army – one more clearly than before an instrument of the royal will – as one of the pillars of his success at home and abroad. Recent decades, however, have witnessed a transformation of our understanding of both absolutism and the Sun King. Guy Rowlands builds on this revisionist critique and extends it to the royal army. While acknowledging that Louis did assert royal authority over his armed forces more successfully than did Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin between 1635 and 1659, Rowlands questions both the means whereby the king achieved this and the attitude which inspired him. Rowlands doubts the extent to which Louis or his subordinates were ‘modernizing’ or ‘state-building’ and instead views all those connected with the army – the king, his ministers, his army officers – as involved in a variety of fundamentally dynastic enterprises. At the top, Louis XIV sought to preserve his own inheritance and to assert his dynastic rights, using his enlarged army against rival foreign claimants; he also gave important military posts to his brother, his sons – legitimate and illegitimate – and his grandsons. Administration of the army was the responsibility of the Secretary of War and his subordinates. However, far from being made up of the bureaucrats of legend, this structure too was permeated by personal and family ambition. The most striking example of this was the tenure of the office of Secretary by Michel Le Tellier (1643–1677), by his son, the marquis de Louvois (1677–1691) and by the latter’s younger son – the eldest son proving incapable – the marquis de Barbezieux (1691–1701). The Le Telliers’ successful direction of France’s military machine depended in part upon a hierarchy of officials.
themselves seeking to push their own family interests, upon the establishment of family and other links with financiers and army commanders, and upon the sidelining of those connected with rivals of the Le Telliers, notably the Colberts. Successful supervision of the king’s army brought the Le Telliers titles, wealth and marriage alliances with more distinguished families.

Within the armed forces, too, personal and family interest was of crucial importance. Louis XIV needed an officer corps for his army – 20,000 officers for 320,000 men in 1694. The king drew the vast majority, more than 80 per cent, of these officers from the nobility. For lesser nobles, many of them poor, service in Louis’ army entailed the risk of death but – and despite the tightening of royal control – it continued to offer the possibility of material (and social) rewards which were of great value to them and their families. The same could be said of the greater nobles who filled the most senior posts: the dynastic ambitions of the duc de Luxembourg, one of Louis XIV’s ablest generals, to some extent rivalled those of the king himself.

This is an impressive study, founded on extensive research in the French army archives, one which throws important light on Louis XIV, his military and his nobility. Taking issue with John Lynn’s massive recent study of the French army in the seventeenth century, Rowlands shows that the Sun King’s armed forces were never ‘merely’ the king’s instrument. Instead, the army provides another example, or medium, of collaboration between a monarch who was an astute politician for the most part and a nobility which furthered its own interests in serving the Roi Soleil. By rewarding service, Louis attracted to the service of the dynastic state nobles and others engaged in their own dynastic projects. The significance of the removal of the Le Telliers from the Secretariat for War in 1701 and of France’s military failures thereafter in the War of the Spanish Succession perhaps merited (fuller) discussion; nevertheless Guy Rowlands has made an important contribution to the history of the armed forces of the Sun King, one with important implications for our understanding of army, government and society – and their interaction – elsewhere in ancien régime Europe.

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In England in the 1640s, the world was turned upside down, culminating with the trial and execution of the king and the creation of a republic. While denying attempting a revival of a Whig interpretation of this period, Alan Orr argues that the debates which led to that were fundamentally about sovereignty. He also downplays the ideologically revolutionary aspects of the earlier phase of the Civil War period by exploring the roots of protagonists’ ideas. In a readable and
engaging book, Orr begins with two ‘Concepts’ chapters, examining how treason and the state were understood and arguing that some saw treason in broader terms than a literal reading of the statute of 1352 might suggest. The theory of the king’s two bodies allowed crimes to be considered treason which indirectly attacked him by subverting his authority. The common law also allowed a wider definition of treason than was apparent in statute because, some argued, statute merely declared pre-existing aspects of common law.

The core of the book consists of case-studies of the trials of Charles Wentworth, earl of Strafford; William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury; Connor Lord Maguire, second baron of Enniskillen; and Charles Stuart, king of England (and incidentally of Ireland and Scotland). Each discusses the supposed crimes of the accused and the debate over the applicability of treason to those deeds and provides a narrative of the trial itself. Although there is a slightly wearing tendency for repetition and recapitulation, both within and between chapters, they are carefully argued and well constructed. The creativity with which those who sought the deaths of Strafford and Laud interpreted the statute of 1352 is striking. They argued that the actions of the accused, in spite of being carried out at Charles’s behest, ‘compassed’ his death by subverting his authority, through exercising martial law in time of peace (Strafford) and claiming ecclesiastical independence from the king-in-parliament (Laud). Similar arguments applied to Lord Maguire and these three trials demonstrate that prosecutors and prosecuted were not arguing from fundamentally different standpoints. The prosecution managed to maintain the fiction that the king could do no wrong. In the king’s trial, however, common ground vanished: conflicting views of sovereignty clashed (ascending and descending) and the former won because it held the whip hand.

One of Orr’s central arguments is that the ideological context, not just strictly legal arguments, must be considered. Although the point is well made, he dismisses too lightly those who suggest that these trials were ‘illegal’. He argues that Strafford, Laud and Maguire were convicted within current understandings of treason because the ideological context allowed a broad interpretation of statute. Yet these were political trials. Those who tried and executed these men did it because the accused were their enemies, and not really because they believed that the law had been broken. Attempts to convict Laud and Strafford in a court by due process failed and the more political route of parliamentary attainder was resorted to. With a majority in favour of prosecution, no legal arguments would have saved them.

An international context is provided, with the work of Bodin and the Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos cited and discussed. However, insufficient attention is given to Scottish influence, in spite of the Scots’ revolution against Charles I being underpinned by a political-thought tradition of limited monarchy and popular sovereignty. That John Bradshaw used material from George Buchanan’s Rerum Scoticarum Historia in prosecuting Charles I was missed (pp. 202–3) because the historiography of Scottish political thought, particularly in the works of Roger Mason and J. H. Burns, was not used. In July 1640, four months before Strafford was charged, the Scottish parliament tried and convicted Patrick Ruthven, Lord
Ettrick, for ‘high treason against the state and kingdom’. If the English needed external inspiration for separating the king’s two bodies and envisaging an impersonal state, they had to look no further than their nearest neighbour.

In spite of these criticisms, *Treason and the state* is a worthy addition to the ‘Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History’ series. It opens up significant questions about the nature of the revolution against Charles I and reveals how the revolutionaries struggled to free themselves from precedent and to re-fashion their conceptions of treason and state. The conclusion affirms another central assertion of the book: political theory is not a self-contained entity with an internal dynamic; rather ‘political thought and action were indistinguishable’. Political ideas are born from events and draw on ‘pre-existing, commonplace political ideas’ (p. 210) and Orr has ably demonstrated that.

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The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought in its wake a step-change in the way historians of twentieth-century Russia work. When the information controls dating from the Stalin era were swept away, ‘normal’ access to a far broader range of official records became a reality. Indeed, twelve years on, scholars have scarcely digested what is now available to them, but Soviet historical studies have been reanimated, and more than one collection of the type under review has recently appeared. Students and teachers of this period confront a proliferation of authorities and viewpoints.

The strength of David Hoffmann’s collection is in its attempt to reflect this variety of views. The familiar division of Soviet scholars into ‘totalitarians versus revisionists’, based on a disciplinary chasm between political scientists emphasizing the totalitarian state and social historians exploring the influence of society, is dissolving. To be sure, the underlying split between Right and Left remains, as the essays here by Martin Malia on the ‘tragedy’ of Soviet socialism and by Sheila Fitzpatrick on ‘everyday Stalinism’ demonstrate. However, common threads arising from the new archival revelations do emerge, and the distance between the old historiographical adversaries appears narrower. Russian historians are also represented in this collection, a welcome leaven to the debate.

In six chapters under the heading ‘The Origins of Stalinism’ explanations are presented for the violent social and economic transformation, deportations, anti-capitalism and personality cult of Josef Stalin’s dictatorship. The chapters cover some familiar territory. Stalin’s specific personality is central to explaining his amalgam of brutality and ideological flexibility, argues Ronald Grigor Suny.
Social conditions account for Stalinism’s perversion of socialism in the view of Moshe Lewin. Burdened by peasants unresponsive to the ‘ideals of October’, Stalin’s bureaucratic authoritarianism imposed modernization, but at the price of the ‘misuse of tools of analysis’. For Malia, there could be no ‘misuse’ since the ‘analysis’ was erroneous. Socialism is ‘an assault on reality’; the hoped-for ‘moral benefits’ of an anti-capitalist economy never materialized despite years of violence and reform.

Younger scholars offer some new insights. The available archival record of the purges of 1937–38, forensically assembled by Oleg Khlevniuk, demonstrates incontrovertibly Stalin’s ‘leading role in the organisation of the terror’. This historian from Russia concludes that terror’s purpose was to eradicate enemies of the regime as external threats to the USSR loomed. Stephen Kotkin and Peter Holquist engage with ideology, to argue that Stalin’s socialism was a recognizable offshoot of European Enlightenment idealism. Stalinism entailed creation as well as destruction. Favoured social groups were cultivated in cities (always ‘feared as anomalies’ in old Russia, Kotkin reminds us) even as violence was used ‘to sculpt’ an ideal society.

In ‘The Consequences of Stalinism’ five chapters assess the society resulting from these measures. Fitzpatrick’s piece argues that new Soviet Man learned to work the system, becoming not a Stalinist ideal but a ‘survivor’. By contrast, a discussion of diaries of the 1930s by Jochen Hellbeck asserts that Stalinist values were internalized by some. Elena Zubkova’s essay on ‘the conflict of expectation and reality’ after victory in 1945 offers students an empathetic window on late-Stalinist gloom. Gail Warshofsky Lapidus’s excerpt from her Women in Soviet society, published 25 years ago, is not about ‘Women and Gender’ as the editor claims. Including this excellent survey of women and family policy ignores recent archive-based scholarship on sexualities and masculinity as well as femininity. A chapter commissioned for this volume to reflect on Stalinism’s gender ‘consequences’ from a contemporary perspective would have added value to this book. Amir Weiner’s ‘Nature and Nurture in a Socialist Utopia’ discusses Stalin’s extremely complex and contradictory nationalities policies. The distinctiveness of post-1945 Stalinist ‘state revenge’ exacted from particular national groups is insightfully compared with the Western European rush to offer amnesty to collaborators. Yet the extract included here is dense and often opaque, a deterrent to undergraduates who will buy this book.

There is no chapter included on law, or on criminality, under Stalin. Likewise, excellent recent work on resistance and forms of social disobedience is also overlooked. No volume labelled ‘the essential readings’ – the publisher’s conceit – will satisfy every critic. Yet for readers concerned with jurisprudence and crime there is much to ponder here. The documentation of the Great Terror which we are permitted to see (for much is still sequestered by the security police and the Presidential administration) is couched in the discourse of law, crime and punishment. To the educative role of Soviet law recognized by Harold Berman over thirty years ago we should add the creative, social-engineering functions described by several contributors to this volume. Students looking for the response from below to
Stalin’s legislative ‘sculpting’ of society will have to look beyond this collection to work by Lynne Viola, David Shearer and Paul Hagenloh.

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Assessing the extent and timing of social change in the English countryside in the twentieth century is difficult, especially given the regional differences to which Alun Howkins refers in this book. The historian must decide how far to stress continuity and how far to focus on change, and in which periods; often, as Howkins remarks, it is ‘a matter of emphasis’ (p. 146). On the whole, the book achieves a balance between the two. It is clear to Howkins that the cumulative impact of changes in the twentieth century has been very large, but also that the relationship between town and country in modern England remains highly ambiguous. The declining economic clout of the agricultural interest contrasts with the power of rural tourism and, despite an obvious rural ‘crisis’, millions of town-dwellers want to live in the countryside. At the heart of the book is the question ‘What is the countryside for?’, which was asked increasingly in the second half of the twentieth century, and the answers to which have affected the uses of, and government policy towards, the countryside.

The death of rural England is structured into four parts: the first deals with the period 1900–1921; the second with 1921–1939; the third with what Howkins calls the ‘second agricultural revolution’, embracing the Second World War and subsequent technological, economic and social change in the post-war countryside until about 1990. The fourth part considers the changing uses of the countryside in the second half of the twentieth century, ending with the rural crises of the 1990s. In terms of the content, there is a slight imbalance in favour of the period before 1945. Howkins examines not only the changes in agriculture and the rural economy and the complex social relationships between social classes in the countryside and between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, but also urban perceptions of rural England, as reflected in conservationism and increased recreational use of the countryside.

Continuity in the history of the twentieth-century countryside is discussed, for example, in the case of farm service, which – contrary to the earlier arguments of Ann Kussmaul and other scholars – survived into the twentieth century in many parts of England, and even expanded in some during the inter-war period. Likewise, Howkins argues that the period immediately after the First World War, while it undoubtedly witnessed significant changes in the holding of land, did not mark ‘the end of an old social order’ (p. 36), as some contemporaries feared
(or hoped). Important changes occurred in mid-century, with the rapid development and penetration of machinery and techniques, including combine harvesters, milking machines, artificial insemination of cattle and artificial fertilizers; the availability of these and other innovations, together with the subsidies and price stability resulting from the Agriculture Act of 1947, initiated productivity growth and a series of longer-term changes in agricultural employment patterns. At the same time the influx of urbanites into the post-war countryside – as visitors and residents – created new social divisions and alliances in English rural communities.

In the earlier chapters, in particular, the importance of regional differences is kept in view. The author admits (p. 3) that the coverage of the book is ‘regionally uneven’, to the detriment of the northern and south-western regions of England. The experience of Wales is sometimes addressed, but Scotland is, probably sensibly, not really touched. The regional imbalance is most notable in the case of the chapter on the Second World War, in which Howkins draws heavily on the Mass-Observation archive, and in particular on the diaries that were kept throughout the war by Tom Harrisson’s volunteers. One or two of the diarists quoted were resident in the north and south-west, but the majority were based in the south and south-east, together with East Anglia; the author notes that these were Mass-Observation’s ‘heartlands’ (p. 141). Naturally, when discussing National Parks and related post-war developments, the author is more concerned with Wales and northern and south-western England.

Overall, and especially considering the inherent difficulties in writing a unified history of ‘rural England’, this book is an impressive achievement. It is accessibly written, and the paperback edition may be expected to reach beyond the usual academic readership. There are 21 black-and-white photographs, but I felt that some maps would have better illustrated the geographical and regional issues raised by the book.

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This series of thirteen essays, edited by Brenda Collins and Philip Ollerenshaw, results from the 1998 ‘Linen in Europe’ Conference. The essays combine the disciplines of history, sociology, economics and archaeology into the volume, making the work useful to academics in all of those fields. The range of specialisms required to do justice to the study of linen and its production reveals the fascination and complexity of the topic. The essays follow a chronological pattern, which sets the context for the multi-disciplinary themes of the compilation and gives an overall structure in which the different geographical and theoretical aspects are set.
The essays collectively review the continuities and changes within the European lines industry from the medieval period to the inter-war period in the twentieth century.

Elizabeth Wincott Heckett describes archaeological methodologies such as dating by radio carbon and the examination of linen compacted into earth. Further, she augments her theories of the importance of medieval northern Europeans, by references to the good fortune attributed to flax seeds and flowers in the eddas and sagas. The technical aspects of linen production are covered in some depth, with a detailed glossary and a number of explanatory tables. For example, Philip Ollerenshaw’s diagram depicting the organization of the Irish linen trade in 1921 gives a very clear picture of the various processes involved in the production of linen, and the large number of trade associations allied to the linen trade. Indeed, the position of linen as a textile is set as unique in relation to the luxury of silk, the multi-purpose usage of wool and the fashionability of cotton. Throughout the volume, linen the textile is set in a broad social and economic context, acting as an exemplar of wider issues.

Links to Scotland and Ireland serve as a thread throughout a number of the essays, both in their own right and also through their connections with other countries’ trade. Brian Mackey’s essay considers the revisionist view of Louis Crommelin and the role of the Huguenots in the development of the linen industry in Ireland. Alastair J. Durie’s examination of the Scottish linen industry before c. 1840 suggests that the regulations regarding the production of linen in Scotland had a similar effect to the regulations imposed in Ireland. Jane Gray traces the theme of low employment in Irish, Scottish and Flemish linen industries during the rise of proto-industrialization, while Peter Solar plots the survival of Irish and Belgian flax, hemp and jute spinners between the 1820s and the First World War, comparing the importance attached by Government to small and medium-sized businesses then and those revived in the 1980s.

There are also interesting case studies of the linen trade in northern Europe and colonial America, showing the differences and similarities across a wide range of countries and periods. Karl Ditt explores the fluctuation of the German linen industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, noting that Germany was particularly late in terms of mechanization but yet maintained a strong position in the European market for a large part of the twentieth century. Inger Jonsson examines the more rigid gender employment boundaries of the Swedish linen trade in the early nineteenth century.

In terms of consumerism, Beverly Lemire examines the fashionability of cotton as opposed to linen in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century. David Mitchell interestingly notes the fact that the Russian industrialist Yakovlev branded linen damask in a similar way to the marketing of Wedgwood in England in the same period. Robert du Plessis examines the impact of imported European linens on eighteenth-century consumerism in colonial America, while Adrienne D. Hood examines Irish connections in linen production in Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. The range of skills and trades associated with linen builds on its importance as a means of employment.
The essays combine to create a strong identity and history for the textile itself. A sense is created of a hard-wearing cloth that has survived in varying strengths throughout the period of the essays. It is shown that linen has been used not only in clothing but in some hugely significant artefacts, such as the Bayeux Tapestry and the Shroud of Turin. The weaving of themes such as consumerism and gendered employment within a multi-disciplined set of methodologies from archaeology, history, sociology and economics, gives a unique richness to this work.

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After earlier monographs about the provinces of Limburg, Utrecht and Groningen, this is yet another solid contribution from ‘the Nijmegen school’ on the historical demography of the Netherlands. This book is about fertility and nuptiality in the provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland. In common with the earlier studies it shows a keen interest in the relative role of economic versus cultural explanations of demographic patterns. A crucial difference is the time period: this is not a study about the demographic transition but rather a study about the influence of local cultures and economies in the pre-modern demographic system around 1800.

The book starts off with a clear presentation of both the Malthusian approach to pre-modern demography and the perspective of the demographic transition, applied to the Netherlands. This makes the first chapter of the book a valuable overview of Dutch historical demography. The core ambition of the book is to assess the role of locally determined cultures. Here lies the most interesting challenge posed by the author. To this end, he exploits archives from the years 1805 to 1813 that have never been used by demographers before. From these new sources, he has constructed aggregate measures on the level of municipalities, which is the basic level of analysis in this study. This level allows sufficient room for local variation while at the same time avoiding the time-consuming process of collecting nominal data.

The results broadly confirm the validity of the Malthusian model of pre-modern nuptiality, particularly in rural municipalities. The author enriches that model by qualifying it according to the major resources families had to live from (land, family labour and wage labour). The results of the analysis of fertility are much more ambiguous and do not allow firm conclusions to be drawn. In my view, the main reason is limitations of data.

The drawbacks of aggregated data are well known. The interpretation of correlations between aggregate measures is very tricky, and the risk of ecological fallacies is never far away. Many purely demographic but crucial causal relations

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(like those between infant mortality and fertility) can only be properly controlled for on the individual level. Some of the ‘inconsistent’ or ‘unexpected’ results may well be artefacts of the lack of detailed data. So I don’t share the author’s doubts (p. 145) about the added-value of individual-level data. Some individual characteristics are so crucial for demography that they can’t be neglected if you want to draw any firm conclusions. And how should we interpret the fact that rural areas with a higher proportion of Catholics also had relatively more marriages? Maybe this teaches us something about Protestants rather than about Catholics. The only way to tell is with data on the individual level.

The most interesting and innovative parts of this book are in the chapter about ‘The economy and culture of Overijssel and Gelderland’. In particular, next to religion, the author looks at the influence of soil type and dialect on local culture. Most historiography about the relationship between religion and language on the one hand and demographic behaviour (in particular fertility) on the other relates to the period of the fertility transition. Delger’s results are the first I have seen that explicitly and systematically relate culture to fertility before the transition period. We know from earlier research that Catholics entered the demographic transition later than Protestants, but the link between denomination and demography before that period of change is not so clear. Indeed, the difference between Catholics and Protestants has been interpreted in terms of the distinction between the conservative attitude of the former and a more modern attitude of the latter group. The implication of this interpretative scheme is that all denominations would behave ‘traditionally’ during the pre-modern era.

The results show that religion already played a role before the transition, but that the effects depended on the region. There was no unidirectional effect of denomination in all the sub-regions. Also, this study casts doubt upon some classic theories on the relationship between soil type and reproduction. The more fine-tuned analyses of this book show that the relationship, if any, is much more complex than previously thought.

The fertility analysis confirms the importance of local cultures. Yet, like many previous studies, the author finds difficulty in pinning down what exactly matters about culture. I would suggest that thinking within Bongaarts’ framework of the proximate determinants of fertility would have led to a far greater emphasis on local practices such as breastfeeding habits affecting infant and child mortality.

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Nearly one-fifth of all witches accused and convicted during the age of witch trials in the 1500s and 1600s were men. Based upon European empirical
studies researchers have determined that approximately 45,000 people were sentenced to death for crimes of sorcery and according to statistics, this included almost 10,000 men. There are some regions in Europe where men comprised the majority of those convicted for witchcraft. Finland, Switzerland and France are among the countries that had a large percentage of persecuted male witches. Twenty men and one woman were burnt at the stake as sorcerers in Iceland during the 1600s.

Several researchers have investigated the idea of ‘men as witches’, but frequently dispelled men as a secondary target group. Besides the fact that men were a distinct minority among those accused of witchcraft, historians, according to the authors of this book, have also maintained the following about men and the witch trials: (1) they were closely related (via family ties) to female witches and suffered repercussions because of this; (2) male witches appeared during periods of ‘witch hysteria’ (chain-reaction trials and mass executions) when the stereotypical female witch was dispelled; (3) men committed only minor acts of witchcraft, and were not accused of diabolism; (4) men as witches appeared in regions where witchcraft was treated more as heresy than malicious witchcraft (*maleficium*); (5) and men were accused of other things than the female witches.

In this book the two young Canadian historians wish to confront male witches as independent, historical actors. Using several examples they show that men, too, could be ‘real’ witches. It was possible for men to be accused of witchcraft independent of their female partners and relatives. Additionally, they were usually accused of having practised the same kind of magic as female witches (page 49). The two authors discuss men’s roles in demonological studies (ch. 4), and show how men were frequently dangerous practitioners of evil. They did not belong to any other fundamental category of sorcerers, according to the large number of theoreticians who have written dissertations on the witches and demons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (page 101).

Some of the chapters in *Male witches* criticize the works of other researchers. The English historian Stuart Clark is subjected to some criticism in chapter four. Apps and Gow set out to challenge his notion that demonologists were incapable of imagining that witches could be male. The Australian historian Lyndal Roper is also challenged in chapter three for the trite use of Freudian sexology in her witch-trial analogy called *Oedipus and the Devil: witchcraft, sexuality, and religion in early modern Europe* (1994). To write about the ‘play of torture’ and ‘sado-masochistic games’, as Roper does in connection with a number of brutal witch trials, is dispelled as mistaken and as a case of insignificant mental acrobatics. This assessment seems valid, even though the excellent chapter entitled ‘Tortured confessions: agency and selfhood at stake’ is a little sidetracked from the main topic of the book.

Master witches, according to the authors’ conclusion, were like other witches. But they also wish to show that men of this kind surpassed the limits of acceptable male behaviour. Their behavior was “feminized” to a certain degree. As a result, we can say that the book demonstrates the close connection between witchcraft and certain kinds of ‘indecent’ female traits. The male witches, too,
were associated with these traits. In other words, they were not real men but first-class witches. The Apps and Gow book is not an empirical investigation, but is built upon fairly well known accounts in the annals of witch historiography.

One book that is oddly missing from the literature of the two Canadian historians is Rolf Schulte’s *Hexenmeister – Die Verfolgung von Männern im Rahmen der Hexenverfolgung van 1530–1730 im Alten Reich* (published in 1999, with a second edition published by Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, in 2001). The German historian’s book is decisively more thorough and original than *Male witches*. Schulte comes to some of the same conclusions as Apps and Gow, but he also has a longer chapter on were-wolves, as male counterparts to female witches. In addition, Schulte raises the question of whether religious confession had any significance for the number of men in witch trials. More men in general were involved in witchcraft cases in Catholic regions. Schulte’s analysis of the quantitative extent of witchcraft and intellectual witchcraft studies is weightier than that of Apps and Gow. Schulte’s investigations include the old German empire and his own empirical studies of the northern German regions (Holstein and Sachsen-Lauenberg). He estimates that as many as 25 per cent of male victims of persecution (about 4,575) were involved in the witch trials of the German Reich (page 81). The German researcher writes, too, about magic and gender in common culture and barely touches upon the issue of shamanism. Both of these books would have gained much from looking at the role of the Sami in witch persecutions: among the Sami of northern Scandinavia and Russia, it was primarily men who were accused of sorcery by the courts.

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The Second World War has long been known as the ‘people’s war’ in Britain, to commemorate the extent to which the civilian population both suffered its hardships and structured its aftermath. As such, in the succeeding decades it has helped to configure national identity, part of a repertoire of such concepts as the ‘spirit of the Blitz’ or the equality of sacrifice. In this book, Sonya Rose interrogates some of these ideas and the way they defined who ‘the people’ were. We find there was no monolithic vision of what it meant to be British during the war. Instead Rose demonstrates that membership in the nation was contingent on a constantly renegotiated set of criteria. Thus for a woman to be a good citizen required not only being a good mother and serving the nation – as, say, a factory worker – but also maintaining a particular kind of sexualized identity in order to keep up the morale of British men. ‘Good-time’ girls were castigated if they partied too much.
or went with the wrong types of men. But it was not just female identity that was subject to redefinition. Men also wrestled with gender roles, she argues, as they had to be willing to serve, but not to be too ‘hyper-masculine’ (and too much like the Germans). Good citizenship, then, was a harder thing to embody than one might suspect.

Rose also enters into the debate (articulated by Angus Calder, Paul Addison and Penny Summerfield, amongst others) about whether the war was a period when social relations were recast. She rejects the idea that most British people were apathetic about the reshaping of society at the war’s end. Instead, she argues that in general people had evolved a ‘new structure of feeling’ (Raymond Williams’ term), which evinced a ‘concern about social and economic inequality and a renewed focus on “the social question”’ (p. 70). She does not uncover an agreed plan for achieving this, but uneartks support for change and a belief that this should be a priority for a post-war government. Both helped to shape people’s political choices.

Recovering the multi-faceted nature of citizenship is not straightforward. A British subject was not always the same thing as a British citizen. The complexities of national identity became apparent during the war. ‘Britishness’ was represented by the state and parts of the culture as ‘Englishness’. The imagery employed in propaganda essentially presented a bucolic vision of southern England and invested in the village idyll many warm ideas about what it meant to be British. Cavalcanti’s 1942 film *Went the Day Well?* (discussed by Rose) would be an example. This reality, however, was not experienced, and indeed was viewed as somewhat alien, by the Welsh and the Scots, who resented being fobbed off as being merely ‘the regions’. They insisted on imagery (such as the kilt) that celebrated their distinctive identities and histories. Knitting all this into a single ‘British’ nation called into question the larger problem of how to characterize the ‘nation’ or the thing for which everyone was fighting. Then there was the greater challenge in thinking about how to draw in the empire in order to elicit support from its constituent parts to fight what was, initially, a European conflict. Rose examines how, although the empire was an integral part of British national identity, imperial subjects increasingly felt themselves to have a different status from citizens. This was undoubtedly true, and there were clear tensions between the decisions in the twentieth century to expect imperial subjects to serve in British wars but not for them to expect to achieve full rights of citizenship if they decided to settle in Britain at the conflict’s end.

The questions that Rose raises here about patriotism and national identity are ongoing questions in the modern world, where the migration of millions means that definitions of citizenship are constantly under review. Her examination of attitudes towards Jews in Britain during the second world war is instructive, as the Jewish community was particularly law-abiding and supportive of the need for the conflict, and yet its members continued to be characterized by many as aliens in residence in Britain.

Rose’s research reveals that national identity and citizenship are constantly contested and redefined. In the war years, although many citizens agreed that there
was a common enemy that had to be fought, it remains clear that there were many reasons for fighting and there was no single national identity which embraced all men, women, English, Welsh, Scots and inhabitants of the empire. For this reason, the end of the war saw a disintegration of the empire and a reshaping of British society with the creation of the welfare state. In identifying and dissecting these movements, this book demands that historians and political scientists continue to confront the question of what constitutes citizenship, national identity and the nation in specific contexts in order to move beyond theoretical appraisals of these concepts and to understand the ways they were constituted in the real world. It should be read by all who wish to explore the complex interactions between shifting populations and ideas about nation.

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Few subjects offer the historian as many challenges or opportunities as the role of women during the English Reformation. The array of possible interpretative approaches, in terms of three or four generations’ worth of feminist theory as well as new thinking on the nature of the Reformation, is now vast. Does one follow Simone de Beauvoir in examining how women were relegated to the less promising position of the ‘other’? Should one pursue Virginia Woolf’s suggestion that a Judith Shakespeare may have striven to express her genius, unrecognized in her own time? How does one chart the female element in the sixteenth century, just as the Reformation itself seems like a slippery idea? Is it wise to echo some of the establishment-prone thinking of the late A. G. Dickens, or better to applaud Eamon Duffy’s evocations of a pious laity in a strong medieval Church that came under unexpected threat? Marina Warner in Alone of all her sex (on the cult of the Virgin) and Merry Wiesner in Women and gender in early modern Europe also present some formidable precedents.

For Christine Peters in Patterns of piety, in her attempt to answer the fundamental questions ‘What was the impact of the Reformation on women?’ (p. 1) and ‘Did women, more than men, have a Reformation?’ (p. 154), the strategy seems to be to present the reader with as many exciting new pieces of evidence as possible, especially from late-medieval art, in the form of wall paintings, stained glass, sculpture, and funerary brasses. This is especially welcome, as sources concerning women in the late-medieval and early modern periods have always been less common (for obvious reasons) than those for men. Peters’s book pulls together
material on women from a wide variety of records, artwork, and early printed books which has not been assembled elsewhere. Thus the reader learns that women slipped their wedding rings onto their rosaries, to enhance their prayers with an appreciation of "the sacramental nature of marriage" (p. 50). The parish wives and maidens who maintained the lights in their churches, or paid for steeple, were portrayed in the windows of St Neot in Cornwall (and elsewhere), kneeling side by side in gratitude for their achievements; women feeding the sick and clothing the poor were the motifs of wall paintings in Norfolk; and in stained glass in an Oxfordshire church, St Anne is shown introducing her daughter Mary to the Psalter—all illustrated in this book. Patterns of piety demonstrates that far more art survives as part of the fabric of late-medieval parish churches than is commonly realized, and much of it is relevant to the complicated layers of attitudes that society held concerning women. As an introduction to little-known paintings and texts, Peters’s book is a treasure-trove for further research.

While her grasp on the late middle ages seems secure, Peters is on less firm ground in assessing the impact of the reforms on women. Here the miscellaneous nature of her sources, and the slenderness of some of them, mean that she feels the need to measure a wide circuit in the second part of her book: from the preambles of wills; parish office-holding; the ideal of the godly woman as expressed in funeral sermons; changing attitudes towards the Virgin Mary and female saints (including Mary Magdalen); Old Testament narratives concerning female notables; martyrs (including Anne Askew) to marriage. Here the surplus of choice is a distinct disadvantage. Her attempt to consider everything means that she can make broad generalizations that may not stand up to sustained scrutiny. While ‘some connection between Reformation changes’ may have suggested the theoretical possibility for women to hold the office of churchwarden (p. 182), in practice few women ever held it, and those few examples are hardly revealing about the larger issues at hand. Was there a gendered aspect to sixteenth-century Christocentricism? This intriguing suggestion emerges from a brief consideration of the preambles of wills (when the dying surrendered their souls as their most precious bequests). Men may have identified with the ‘active’ aspects of Christ’s blood-shedding while women bequeathed their souls to Jesus in a spirit of ‘union and devotion’ (p. 168), though Peters’s suggestion is based upon such small samples of wills as to be almost unprofitable without further investigation.

Patterns of piety reveals that for all of the work that has already gone into the topic, we are still only at the beginning of trying to determine how much of a Reformation women actually experienced and built. To argue that ‘women lost out’ during the Reformation, or were ‘alienated’ by ‘a move to a protestant bibliocentric religious culture’, Peters suggests, would be ‘a gross oversimplification’ (p. 169), though only further work could show the vital details. Her book is a welcome addition to a subject that is still opening its mysteries.

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The importance of Laura Gowing’s contribution to the history of early modern women cannot be overestimated. It was her *Domestic dangers: women, words, and sex in early modern London* (1996) that first demonstrated the rich potential of church court records for revealing the daily patterns of gender relations in the lives of ordinary women. For many of us this was a hugely formative book, and it has been the starting point for much research since its publication. Eagerly awaited, Gowing’s second monograph, *Common bodies*, will not disappoint. This is another innovatory and thought-provoking book, again based largely on court records (but this time on the secular as well as the church courts), found in an impressive range and number of archives across England, from Devon to county Durham.

Gowing’s argument is that all women’s bodies were likely to be perceived and treated as ‘common’ in the early modern period. This is because the female body was public, open to scrutiny, surveillance and touch. Gowing shows this by examining attitudes to women who were pregnant, in childbirth, lying-in or following suspected crimes such as rape and infanticide. Contrary to studies which have suggested that rituals surrounding women’s bodies were opportunities for female solidarity, bonding and even the reversal of traditional gender roles, Gowing believes that these could be occasions of female conflict and division. Both formally in the courts, and (perhaps more frequently) informally in their communities, women sought to regulate each other’s bodies through interrogation and physical examination. Women’s bodies were prodded, pinched, squeezed and sometimes sexually abused. It was women as well as men who subjected the female body to such ordeals, and by doing so they upheld the ideals of patriarchy. Gowing convincingly argues that, in addition to the hierarchies of gender and social status which determined women’s and men’s relative position to each other, women had their own hierarchies of difference. These were governed according to a woman’s ability to defend and protect her body. Married women who were also mothers had bodies that were less open to suspicion, control and touch than young and unmarried women. Unmarried mothers had bodies that were subject to everyone.

Gowing answers some key questions about women’s interrelated physiological and psychological experiences in this period. She has retrieved evidence that reveals how sexual desire, pregnancy, childbirth and pregnancy ‘felt’ for women, and shows how these feelings were not only historically contingent, but also dependent upon marital status and age. She shows how historians of rape should look further than assize records for evidence of sexual abuse against women, demonstrating that it was in the quarter sessions and church courts, during examinations for pregnancy or fornication, that accounts of rape could be most detailed. Whereas trials for rape at the assizes were rare, stories of sexual assault were told with alarming frequency in other legal settings.
Overall, Gowing’s assessment of women’s lives in this period is bleak: while other historians have argued that women could find their bodies empowering, she presents a negative view of women whose bodies were not their own to control or manage. Of course, Gowing’s sources, largely recording women whose bodies were so deviant that they were appearing before the law courts, would tend toward this view. Gowing’s focus is on the sexual and reproductive body of the woman, particularly that of the unmarried mother. Further research on other female bodies – the hungry, sick, healthy, pre-pubescent or menopausal body – may give us additional perspectives. In addition, historians of masculinity urgently need to address the many assumptions that Gowing makes about the male body in this book. Did men have greater knowledge, self-control, sexual initiative and agency over their bodies than women? Men’s sexual bodies may have been better disguised and protected behind laced breeches, but did this make them less vulnerable to scrutiny by others? Certainly, it seems mistaken to treat the male body and men’s experience of it as any less complex or varied than the female body. Once again, however, Gowing has set the agenda for others to follow.

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The chapters in *Women in early modern Britain, 1450–1640* offer a set of familiar binary opposites: the married and the unmarried woman, the working and the disorderly woman, and the witch and the pious woman. Christine Peters’ survey goes beyond this familiar framework, however, to emphasize two themes. First, attitudes towards early modern women were not misogynistic but simply reflected prevailing ideas about the gendered capacities of men and women. For example, women were not punished more harshly than men for sexual misdemeanours or for scolding because they were women; economic factors and considerations of social order influenced their treatment by local authorities. Of course this still might be to the detriment of women. When male employment needed to be protected, female labour was regulated through a combination of economic and moral justifications that had gender at its root.

The second theme that emerges is that, while England, Scotland and Wales shared the same gendered assumptions about the characteristics of men and women, women’s lives differed according to the way that these notions were shaped by diverse familial, economic, legal and religious structures. Thus regional differences determined women’s status, how they were categorized and their punishment when they were disciplined. For instance, Peters argues that the variety of beliefs in fairies and magic and the relative strength of the reformed church explain the contrast in witchcraft beliefs and prosecutions found in the three countries. She also suggests that the pre-Reformation religious landscape in each
country shaped women’s experience of religious change. Thus English women may have been less emotionally affected by the loss of the cult of Mary than Welsh women, since England had adopted a Christocentric form of piety, in contrast to Wales where devotion to Mary remained strong.

*Women in early modern Britain*’s comparative approach is innovatory and can offer some insights. A British perspective, for example, suggests that marriage was not a particularly stable social institution. Traditional Welsh law formulated rules for separation with a fairly equitable division of marital goods, unlike England, and divorce with remarriage was available in post-Reformation Scotland, whereas only separation could be had in England. But the book falls prey to some of the difficulties inherent in this line of enquiry. It fails to acknowledge the methodological problems of comparing and contrasting like-for-like due to the greater availability of studies of English women than of their Scottish and Welsh counterparts, and the significant differences in the types of primary sources (and their survival) and in the institutions that produced them. Moreover, for all its claims, this is a book about attitudes towards women rather than their experiences. The reader is often presented with the possible outcomes of regional difference on women’s lives, rather than with hard evidence. The extent to which practice diverged from legal theory is not addressed in the study of marriage and inheritance, for example, nor is it clear which judicial form took precedence when a variety coexisted, as in Wales. All this makes it difficult to assess how far institutional diversity impacted on everyday lives.

Undergraduate readers will undoubtedly find useful information in this book, but they would benefit from structural and analytical improvements. The chapters need more consistent historiographical explanation. Some, like those on marriage and inheritance and on disorderly women, give little account of the key debates to date and others, like that on witchcraft, only relate parts of it. Peters should spell out that the material she has assembled reflects novel interpretations. Analysis is inconsistent and the materials raise several questions that are not pursued. In the face of the apparent flexibility of marriage in some regions, for instance, did married women feel free or insecure? There are also some internal ambiguities. How do we reconcile the claim in one chapter that it was increasingly easy for women to remain unmarried, because they could achieve semi- or independent lives, with the one in the next, that single women were gradually losing status to married women because their sexual reputations could be more easily damaged, and were therefore targeted, by authorities attempting to exclude them from some kinds of labour (pages 36, 67)? The tendency to present a series of snapshots of women in different parts of the British Isles is also heightened by the lack of a concluding chapter analysing the broader implications of the comparisons. Yet, though *Women in early modern Britain* is in some ways a missed opportunity, it has merit in further exposing the myth of homogeneous female experience by providing readers with a striking picture of the potential for variety in British women’s lives.

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This book is an elegantly argued and important work and a major contribution to the history of demography and birth control, women's history, and the history of the body and of sexuality. Hera Cook synthesizes an impressive range of scholarship over diverse disciplinary fields, drawing on epidemiology, anthropology, demography, social history, and the histories of gender and sexuality. These are impeccably woven together to make a compelling argument about the always contingent nature of sexual desire in women, and the perennial importance of the impact of reproduction and economic factors in the equation.

She eschews the practice prevalent in the history of sexuality of citing evidence relating to a particular, often idiosyncratic, individual or specific group as an uncomplicated representation of more general attitudes and practices. However, she does not overlook the importance of statistically quite limited phenomena, such as increasing premarital sexual experimentation in the 1950s, as precursors of what would become much wider social upheaval. There is an admirable attention to the need to locate attitudes and behaviour chronologically, by social class, and in many cases by specific regional location. She is also rightly critical of attempts to claim that women have always had means of controlling their own fertility, at least in ways that were both reliable and safe.

The book begins with an analysis of the physical burden placed upon women by reproduction, and examines the effect of the extremely high levels of fertility around 1800 in motivating women to control births. This is contextualized within the developing debate on contraception, and the continuing low (at least in terms of successful) use of methods of birth control. Cook places this firmly within contemporary sexual ideology and praxis to indicate some of the problems that there might have been in getting from the desire to exercise some control over reproduction to doing something actually effective about this. Controlling conception, whether by abstinence (partial or absolute) or using the various other methods available, required modification of sexual response and gender expectations.

The picture that emerges of English marital sexuality during the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth is grim and depressing, but it is certainly in accordance with much of the evidence that can be gleaned on the topic, for example the thousands of letters from Marie Stopes's grateful readership. Ignorance of the basic mechanics of sexual intercourse and even of reproduction was rife. The two genders had little in common and lived in largely homo- rather than heterosocial worlds (with some local variations). Reticence on the whole subject was the common standard.

There are some very minor points that one might niggle at. When talking about the impact of late marriage (the classic North-western Europe marriage pattern) on fertility (page 16), Cook does not mention the age-related decline in female fertility which must also have played a part, given the eschewal of marriage during
the years of (usually) highest fecundability and its deferral to a point when the women’s fertility must have begun to recede. I would also be inclined to be less absolute in claiming that ‘the separation of birth control and sexuality’ in advice literature ‘continued to shape the public discourse on birth control well into the 1960s’ (ibid.). Contraception and ecstatic marital sex were inseparably intertwined in the message of Marie Stopes, for many years the best-selling guru of twentieth-century sex advice, while other more radical voices, such as those of Stella Browne and Margaret Cole, pointed out that the capacity to avoid extra-marital pregnancy had wide-ranging implications for sexual mores, though their impact was probably much more limited. Syphilis (page 80) does not have an overall low rate of mortality: not only were massive under-reporting and euphemizing of causes of death from syphilis or syphilis-related diseases common, but what the disease does is a very slow progression from initial infection to death, providing lots of opportunity for an apparently healthy person to infect others. But these are all issues of emphasis, not errors.

Overall, Cook makes a compelling case for there having been a transformation in sexual mores, building on existing trends (such as rising rates of coitus and female sexual experimentation), with the introduction of the Pill in the 1960s, giving women for the first time in history the chance to enjoy ‘casual, low-risk sexual activity’. While conceding that the outcomes were complex, we can agree with her that it was a significant element among the ‘substantial improvements … in the lives of English women over the past two centuries’.

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This fascinating book adds greatly to our knowledge of what the author terms the ‘very long nineteenth century’. The subject of the book is the vital importance of economic credit in the formation of the Victorian notion of character, as well as the changing nature of debtors’ prison and small-debt courts. Finn shows how economic reputation remained a vital component of social identity throughout the nineteenth century, although its linguistic formation evolved from the idea of one’s credit depending upon being trusted – to pay one’s debts and to be honest – to having an honest ‘character,’ or a psychology of honesty. The book’s subtitle is also crucial, for this is very much a book about *personal* debt and individual credit rather than a study of the evolution of institutions of credit such as banks, the stock market or the national debt. It is a history of the practice of consumer credit within the expanding consumer society of the period, and a legal history of the changing nature of contract and debt laws and their institutional
enforcement in newly evolving legal institutions, as well as the changing nature of incarceration for debts.

Because of the importance of character and personal experience, Finn places a great deal of emphasis on literary representations of debt and imprisonment found in novels as well as the experiences recorded in diaries and memoirs. Literary representation is given prominence because of the important role fictional characters played in forming the resources on which readers drew to make themselves individuals; it is an examination of fictional characters which opens the book and sets the background for the study of debt and credit. Finn then moves on to study the history of the debtors’ prison throughout the period. In literature the debtors’ prison is well known, even today, through Dickens’s descriptions of the Marshalsea in London, but in nineteenth-century historiography it is the changing nature of criminal incarceration which has garnered more than the lion’s share of attention. Here Finn restores the history of the debtors’ prison to its rightful place, and she rightly points out that it is impossible to consider criminal prisons without reference to debtors’ prisons since they were often the same physical institution. The literature on the rise of the penitentiary in the long nineteenth century has focused on the paradigm of the desire to institutionalize discipline over the prisoner’s body in order to reform his mind through isolation from cultural influences of idleness and the criminal sub-culture. But, as Finn argues, imprisonment for debt had long been common, and had its own customary rules which were largely based on the prisoners creating a prison culture which was anything but disciplined. Debtors could rent rooms of better quality if they had the resources; drink and food were normally brought into the prison; debtors’ friends and family could freely enter, and in many cases debtors could leave the prison, with certain restrictions. Other more destitute debtors, on the other hand, lay in filthy condition, surviving only on charity. All of this presented a large problem to prison reformers in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the situation proved very difficult to change because debtors were not criminals, and there was still a great deal of public and legal sympathy for genteel debtors. They were seen as victims of unscrupulous creditors who had contracted too much debt, something which many people felt could easily happen to them. Reform was successfully resisted until the Act for the Abolition of Imprisonment for Debt was passed in 1869, effectively ending imprisonment for debt for the upper- and middle-classes, confining it in the future to working men committed by the new county courts for petty debts. Although discipline for imprisoned debtors remained problematic, the public view of the labourers incarcerated for debt did not remain sympathetic, but rather changed to viewing them as culpable agents deserving punishment rather than as victims of circumstance.

In the last part of this book Finn describes the rise of new legal institutions dealing with petty debts: the local courts of conscience and then county courts, after 1846. These institutions differed from previous local civil courts in that they were summary jurisdictions which relied on the judges’ discretion rather than on jury trials. Their advantage, according to promoters, was that they could deal with thousands of petty-debt cases in a short period of time. In the latter eighteenth
century many towns petitioned to set up courts of conscience, and by the early nineteenth century they had become a ubiquitous forum where petty-debt cases were heard, throughout Britain and parts of the empire. They were economically efficient, but unpopular with many poor debtors who felt the loss of a jury trial as a loss of liberty and compared it to the way the law treated the wealthy. They were also unpopular with many in the legal profession who pointed to many examples of local judges’ discretion leading to abuses. The result of this criticism was the formalization and professionalization of the discretionary system into the national system of county courts. Finn’s evidence agrees with Paul Johnson in that it shows the extent to which these courts were used by small tradesmen to sue working-class debtors, many of whom continued to be imprisoned for non-payment of bills. From the point of view of an early modernist this shift is striking. In the late seventeenth century the poor were both plaintiffs and defendants in local debt courts, and most imprisoned debtors were people who had once been wealthy. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the poor were only defendants sued by tradesmen creditors, and they were the ones imprisoned for debt in much larger numbers than previously. Although Finn emphasizes this shift, she does not go into detail as to why it occurred.

She concentrates instead on what is a vital point for both legal history and the history of the market in the nineteenth century. She demonstrates that, contrary to what has been argued by legal historians about the rise of freedom of contract and legal formalism in the nineteenth century, in fact the continued use of discretion, mitigation and interrogation on the part of county-court judges meant that legal principles were consistently flouted or ignored. As a result the life of English contracts remained persistently social. Finn also argues that judgements on consumer credit on the part of shopkeepers and the new trade protection societies remained largely personal and discretionary rather than becoming abstracted into calculations about average risk, which she argues did not happen until after the social cataclysm of the First World War. However, this still begs the question to what degree the £3,213 million worth of bank deposits, bills of exchange and securities in England, Wales and Scotland in 1873 there has been identified by Stephen Quinn, and the contracts involved in industrial and financial organizations, involved a more rational and abstract form of credit (see Stephen Quinn, ‘Money, finance and capital markets’, in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain Volume I: Industrialisation, 1700–1860 (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 147–51). Nonetheless, within the world of consumption this book brilliantly demonstrates the socially embedded nature of economic transactions and legal practice, and it will be required reading for both legal historians and students of nineteenth-century society and economy. As Finn says, ‘the history of personal debt and credit relations … underscores the inability (or refusal) of consumers, creditors, lawyers and judges to endorse the “modern” commercial concepts of economic individualism and freedom of contract’ (p. 2).

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