

BOOK REVIEWS

LAURA CARTER, *Histories of Everyday Life: The Making of Popular Social History in Britain, 1918–1979*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. ISBN 978 0 19 886833 0, £75.

Since its foundation in 1998 the Society behind this journal has promoted research outside the academy. Although FACHRS is indebted to anthropology, social sciences and the pedagogy devised to suit the Open University's mass education strategies, it is also built on the longer traditions of 'histories of everyday life' (HoEL). While notions of the 'everyday' shifted these were, for Carter, concerned with the material, with particularities, the visual past and the domestic rather than the political. HoEL were those products of publishers, schools, local authorities and museums which were geared towards 'community life', 'localism and active education' (16, 17). As a 'history for leisure' (16) HoEL provided detailed accounts told in familiar voices and rarely made reference to theoretical frameworks and 'grand explanatory promises' (23).

Carter charts the rise of the production and consumption of this form of social history developed by 'non-academic historians' (1) which aimed to 'decentre the professional historians' (15) and notes divisions between popular and expert knowledge. In the 1970s the core of this mass educational project was challenged and 'finally crumbled' (161). This decline in 'affective, practical local and feminised' HoEL is attributed to 'social and pedagogic forces', notably the growth in

multiculturalism, examinations and comprehensive schooling (202, 206). Ill-equipped to deal with a range of social inequalities, 'parochial and nostalgic' HoEL tended to separate the personal and the political, to disavow race, to employ a notion of the ordinary to marginalise class and to fail to 'speak to issues of power' (202, 238). While there was an 'educational unmaking' (196) of HoEL and a different type of social history developed, interest in HoEL books and television programmes remained.

At their zenith HoEL helped remake mass culture 'along more democratic lines' (55), feeding the 'educationalisation of popular culture in mid twentieth century Britain' (89). Showcasing HoEL was central to the renewal of local museums and subsequently to the heritage landscape. The publication of (often abridged) historical diaries and memoirs, fed interest in documenting everyday life, through diary keeping, Mass-Observation and documentary films. Many popular history titles were illustrated, taking them into the 'visual marketplace of popular mass culture' (38). HoEL helped cement understandings of national identity in terms of parochial pride. A 'light and conversational' (32) history series was provided for Service personnel, and war-time evacuees in Luton heard lectures on 'Everyday Life the Middle Ages' (142). It was 'localness' which 'stood at the heart' (77) of much school history teaching. Most Northern Ireland secondary school pupils, Protestant and Catholic, visited the

Ulster Folk Museum where, it was claimed, social history could be 'experienced' and prejudice 'eliminated' (159). HoEL also fed into post-war sociological investigations of communities. While HoEL was clearly an important node in a wide-ranging network, the relationship to the rise of genealogy receives little attention.

Important elements within HoEL include the 'liberal', 'neutral', 'accessible' (95, 96) BBC, which offered a range of material and emphasised 'active participation in history' (123). Local government cultural policies also promoted HoEL. There was also 'a strong tradition of women writing for the popular social history market' (34) especially 'white, educated middle class women' (7). In regard to HOEL, 'for decades, women had been both the producers and consumers' (242). Drawing on literary biography, history from the inside, they have made a significant contribution to Britain's 'educational culture' (114). Recognising that teachers used handwork, drama, and slides Carter has assessed the records of publishers, curators, broadcasters and filmmakers and engaged with personal testimony and records of school trips and projects, the professional organisation for history teachers and survey data. She frames this material with reference to debates about pedagogy and notions of empathy, relevance and citizenship. HoEL, she concludes, have been 'central to debates about secondary education' (59) within 'Britain's educational century' (15) as both allies of progressive education methods and as bulwarks of emotional and individualistic engagement.

Employing an illuminating periodisation and a distinctive, deftly gendered,

notion of conservative modernity, Carter has drawn upon a wide range of sources and used 22 illustrations, an index and data on the interviewees to connect publishing, pedagogic, municipal and curatorial developments and provide a multi-layered analysis of shifts in British culture.

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ALLEN WARREN, *Keynsham and its Scouts, 1909–1975*, York: Quacks Books, 2021. ISBN 978 1 912728 37 4, £20. Copies available through contacting the publishers at 7 Grape Lane, York YO1 7HU or emailing design@quacks.info

Allen Warren's *Keynsham and its Scouts* is what it says on the tin, a book of two stories: on the one hand, of the changing character of Keynsham (situated between Bath and Bristol) as it grew from a large village in 1909 of just under 4,000 residents to a town by the mid-1970s of some 15,000; and on the other hand, the main developments and leading personalities of its largely active and flourishing Scout movement. Lucidly written and well-researched by an experienced academic historian with strong local roots, its laudable ambition is to connect these two stories.

The limited nature of the primary sources available somewhat constrains Warren's treatment up to the Second World War. Even so, distinctive points emerge. In the absence of much in the way of a landed element, it was Keynsham's traders and shopkeepers who mainly comprised the local elite. Their natural political home remained for a

long-time old style Gladstonian Liberalism, with its links with the Non-conformist churches and, in daily life, its emphasis on civic duty and standing on one's own two feet – fertile breeding-ground for a local Scout movement, underway only two years after Robert Baden-Powell's foundational 1907 handbook, *Scouting for Boys*. Although there were significant local changes by the 1920s, with the rise of Labour and the greater involvement of two wealthy families (the Wills family of tobacco fame, and the Strachey family closely linked to the *Spectator* magazine), the underlying character of the town and its Scouts remained essentially unchanged.

Warren's texture becomes richer from the 1940s onwards, especially though the judicious use of oral history. This was when Keynsham not only began to expand rapidly, especially through the creation of large residential estates on the periphery, but also in due course saw, like almost everywhere in urban Britain, substantial redevelopment in the traditional core. In relation to Scouting, two key decisions were taken. The first, perhaps unexpected in retrospect, was not to establish new Groups on these new estates, but instead to develop 1st Keynsham as 'a super group' (in the phrase of the time) with multiple packs and troops. 'There was a danger,' notes Warren, 'that dispersed Groups would reflect differences in wealth and status in the town, which a single large group in the centre of the town might avoid.' (92) Our understanding of the new post-war settlements – the world of Debden and Borehamwood on the fringes of London, of Castlemilk and Easterhouse on the fringes of Glasgow – still remains very

patchy for smaller places, and this particular local strand is an intriguing contribution. The other decision, involving the gradual reshaping of the town's centre from the late 1950s, was made by the Town Council and also favoured continuity: in this case, not to apply compulsory purchase powers to the land where the Scouts' HQ sat. An important reason, suggests Warren plausibly enough, was that 'a significant number' of Council members looked upon the land behind the High Street as 'the Scouts' ground, on which their own sons had flourished since the 1930s, including the war years. (96) It is an illuminating moment, a kind of benign real-life version of *Swizzlewick* (the BBC's notorious 1964 soap drama about local government).

The book's other dimension is naturally the Scouts themselves and their actual scouting. Here, recollections of wartime Keynsham emphasise camping and the outdoor programme as inculcating self-reliance and practical skills that proved highly timely; larger-than-life characters emerge among the post-war Scoutmasters and others in charge; and in some especially vivid pages Warren evokes his own experiences on camp between 1957 and the early 1970s – a section which ends with the wry, even semi-rueful memory of 30 July 1966, when change-over Saturday at a fortnight's camp on a very wet Exmoor coincided with England's World Cup triumph, and it proved an almost impossible job to tear the boys away from their transistor radios.

We still lack a British equivalent to Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), his seminal study of the decline of civil society in the USA. *Keynsham and its Scouts* suggests, without undue

sentimentality, that up to the 1970s we were still largely bowling together, at least in towns of a certain size. It would be fascinating now to have the story of the last half-century.

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CARL J. GRIFFIN, *The Politics of Hunger: Protest, Poverty and Policy in England c.1750–c.1840*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. ISBN 978 1 5261 4562 8, £80.

Politics of Hunger is a pioneering study that examines the concept of hunger including the ways in which policy makers and the poor constructed meaning about hunger. Hunger is an evocative term with powerful connotations, and undoubtedly significant when studying the history of families and communities. It is linked to poignant themes such as poverty, discontentment and inequalities. Focussing on the period from the mid eighteenth century to the 1840s, the book positions these decades as pivotal to discourses of hunger. Throughout, Griffin demonstrates the central role of hunger in many well-known events and movements, including eighteenth century food riots, the Swing Riots, the work of William Cobbett, the Anti-Poor Law Movement, the Anti-Corn Law League, Chartism, the ‘Hungry Forties’, and the Irish Potato Famine. It is extensively researched, conceptually strong and makes a significant contribution to the field, as well as building on Griffin’s previous work, notably histories of protest, rural England and poverty.

Griffin explains that the ‘politics of hunger’ refers to three interconnected

manifestations of hunger that form the structure for this book: the articulation of hunger, the way in which it is framed as a policy problem, and the way in which it was theorised. The book moves beyond a simple cause and effect discourse, highlighting how hunger, or the fear of hunger, was about more than just food or famine. Indeed, Griffin notes that the relationship between all three was ‘not a simple nor a static one’ (2). The introduction provides a contextual (both conceptual and historiographical) foundation, which the three inter-related sections of the book develop. The first section examines the articulation of hunger. Griffin demonstrates how the language of hunger was present in food riots, and that the fear of hunger was a significant motivation in rioting. He points to the dual discourse of hunger and starvation: the former considered more deferential and the latter more proactive, violent and indicative of resistance. Articulating hunger could be symbolic, threatening or campaigning. It could be personified through the hungry labourer as frequently discussed in the local press. It could be embodied in wider discourses about the poor law, anti-corn law campaigning or Chartism. It could underpin a heightened political consciousness amongst labourers. Hunger, or the fear of hunger, was ever present and people found a multitude of ways to mediate and articulate this state.

The second section of the book addresses how hunger was framed as a policy problem. Griffin explores the dynamics which saw people both pauperised and stigmatised. Poor Law policies measured need and made assumptions about how the poor spent their income and what they consumed. Workhouse

dietaries were key to regulating the poor, and as Griffin argues making them biological subjects with discipline and deterrence increasingly at the forefront of policy making. This of course varied between institutions and over time. Controversies could lead to change, such as the six model dietaries which were introduced, which in turn could lead to contradictions. For instance, Griffin discusses that in spite of the principle of less eligibility, five of these dietaries could be argued to contain greater nutritional value than the recommended diet of an independent labourer. Controversies arising from workhouse dietaries could however also lead to scandals and widespread fears, and fuel anti-New Poor Law activity.

The third section of the book considers how hunger was theorised. It begins by addressing how hunger was a bio-political force, constructed and used by the elites. This inevitably revisits some earlier themes but from a different perspective. The role of Malthus and workhouse dietaries, the racialisation of the poor, and the notion of a collective pauper body are discussed. Griffin argues that workhouse dietaries were not merely policies of hunger but a way in which the elites conceptualised the poor as an abstract pauper body rather than individual paupers. This was part of a wider phenomenon, the racialisation of the poor. The poor were increasingly positioned as both a problem and a separate race. Griffin examines how the New Poor Law was underpinned by Malthusian intent, and how the making of the collective pauper body as an 'other' facilitated the regulation and control of the very same. This section of the book also considers how hunger could be

understood and mediated through the plight of 'distant others'. Here, Griffin explores the contrast between ideologically driven official government responses to famine and other forms of relief, through a case study of the Great Famine of Ireland. It is emphasised that many alternative forms of relief were often led by those who considered themselves only one step away from this fate themselves, people quick to respond with aid and collections. Of the many responses discussed here, the enduring message is that the famine gave a voice to the persistence of hunger.

Ultimately, Griffin demonstrates the value of hunger as a frame of historical analysis, illustrating how it was central to everyday life, policy making, popular protest and popular politics. *The Politics of Hunger* is a rich and varied text that should be of interest to readers of *Family and Community History*. Hunger, or the fear of hunger, would have underpinned the lives of many ancestors and communities. And, as Griffin points out, it is a theme that has contemporary significance in twenty-first century England. The book highlights a wide range of sources where expressions of hunger can be found. It provides an excellent foundation for those who want to rethink the history of families and communities through the lens of hunger.

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KATE FULLAGAR, *The Warrior, the Voyager, and the Artist: Three Lives in an Age of Empire*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020. ISBN 978 0 300 24306 2, £32.

This powerful biography does far more than narrate three eighteenth century lives. Kate Fullagar historicises the notion of the 'self', the concept and conventions of life writing, contemporary societies on opposite sides of the world, and the reception and promulgation of the expansionist British empire. Revisiting the lives of the Cherokee warrior-diplomat, Ostenaco, and the Ra'iatean voyager, Mai, *Three Lives* marks a reorientation from Fullagar's focus in *The Savage Visit: New World People and Popular Imperial Culture in Britain, 1710–1795* (University of California Press, 2012), which traced the evolution of British fascination with so-called 'savage' travellers from the New World.

Three Lives, while adding Joshua Reynolds into the biographical mix, emphasises indigenous agency, motivation, resistance, creativity, and complexity. It aspires to face empire through indigenous eyes. Demoting 'encounter histories' in favour of '[d]iscovering the whole life of an eighteenth century Indigenous person', Fullagar's methodology both relegates empire to a 'more modest place' and 'helps keep Indigenous people the main characters in their history' (8). Without presuming to speak *for* indigenous subjects, she impresses upon readers the tangentiality of Europeans in many indigenous lives, for whom empire was 'never the sole plotline' (13). Whether discussing war, art theory, diplomacy, or exploration, she successfully challenges assumptions of 'European centrality to all early [indigenous] dramas' (19), whilst emphasising the violent processes of genocide and dispossession. More recent theory on indigenous-centred

biography would, however, have been welcome.

Structurally, *Three Lives* is told in two halves, knit together by an 'Interlude', which catches all three men on the same date: lecturing to the Royal Academy; sailing home to Ra'iatea; and lamenting the Cherokee surrender to American revolutionaries. This halfway point is representative of the energy, depth of research, and world-building Fullagar achieves throughout the text. Each chapter alternates between the indigenous Other and the anodyne Reynolds, joining their tales through portraiture and comparative analysis of their societies.

Three Lives opens with Ostenaco's Cherokee community. Faced with violent imperialist forces, Ostenaco made his life 'into an Indigenous tale of deliberate, local creativity' for his people's survival (126). Having joined Cook's second voyage back to Britain, Mai's irredentist revenge mission against the Bora Borans was no less ambitious. Mai's two-year sojourn in Britain is relayed in delightful detail. Meanwhile, then 'undisputed leader of Britain's art world' (4–5), Reynolds is revealed as an unlikely political barometer for an 'incipiently imperial Britain' (61). Regarding empire, he remained perennially undecided. Through his celebrated portraiture, the 'scrupulously apolitical' (72) artist exemplified an 'uncanny ability to span radical oppositions' with flair (68–70). Thus, Reynolds' evolution as artist-philosopher is used to illuminate dissonance within the imperial narrative (46).

Fullagar takes seriously the artforms of all three men—Reynolds' portraiture, Ostenaco's 'war and diplomacy', and 'Mai's arts of travel and revenge'—which,

together, ‘suggest a neglected commentary on empire’ (251). The visit of each indigenous traveller to London, and subsequent sittings for Reynolds, are superficially what binds these lives together. But Fullagar dives analytically deeper, arguing that these lives reveal multiple modalities of indigenous resistance, the limits of empire’s interest to indigenous peoples, and ‘the diversity of opinion about imperialism during this era’ (250–1). Ultimately, revealing hesitation, doubt, and the ‘bumpier and more negotiated process’ of imperialism (6), Fullagar reminds us of the resistibility of the British empire.

With impressive detail, Fullagar analyses the quirks of each man and his society, tracing socio-political, spiritual, cultural, and economic characteristics of the Cherokee clans, and Tahitian and British archipelagos during the eighteenth century. Tethered closely to place, these features include gender roles and relations, social stratification, and communal versus individualised concepts of ownership and use. Fullagar is excellent, for example, on Cherokee familial and political organisation and its underlying principles of harmony and balance, the uncomfortable relationships between Reynolds and his ‘tricky siblings’ (163), the intense homosociality of Reynolds’ life, and the massive influences of his closest friends, Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke. Fullagar deftly traces evolving inter-generational tensions and the fluidity of social dynamics, including Cherokee gender roles and the increasingly individual perception of selfhood in Britain.

Three Lives destabilises Eurocentric notions of biography, bringing alternative, indigenous worldviews and knowledges

to bear on the process and outcome of life writing. Tracing the hubris of imperialism, the independent motivations of indigenous actors, and the fluid values and structures of their societies, Fullagar has rendered a stunning work of portraiture herself, entwining three lives and bloated empire—as she writes of Reynolds’ paintings—with ‘more flair than flailing’ (68).

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FRANK M. SNOWDEN, *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020. ISBN 978 0 300 25639-0, £16.99.

The language of pandemic disease has gained common currency for millions of people around the world as they have experienced the current covid-19 outbreak. Coronavirus has also impressed on people how vulnerable the world is to new strains of disease, but will that lesson be learned or soon forgotten as with the influenza pandemic of 1918–19? That outbreak, the worst demographic disaster of the twentieth century, is mentioned, but not analysed, in Snowden’s splendidly readable book, originally given as lectures to his undergraduate class at Yale. If the inter-disciplinary lectures were as clear and provocative with ideas as the book, they were fortunate students indeed. Snowden’s approach is to explain ‘the ways that infectious diseases have played a substantial role in shaping human societies and continue to pose a threat to their survival’. Readers are duly warned!

The book begins with the legacy of Hippocrates and Galen and the lengthy shadow their ideas projected into the early

nineteenth century. Subsequent chapters look at specific epidemic diseases and their origins, the vectors, transmission and the course of infection, effects, and responses to such outbreaks. The human suffering inflicted by the plague over 1500 years, which included the Black Death of the mid-fourteenth century, by smallpox, yellow fever, typhus, cholera, and tuberculosis is described in such a way that the reader can almost see, feel, and smell the infections and the social consequences of the diseases. In the late nineteenth century the movement of rats by steamships gave an impetus to the spread of plague. Pilgrims and steamships also helped spread that and other diseases, while imperial regimes used plague as a reason to promote urban racial segregation.

Snowden laments that the history of epidemic disease has been neglected in history courses in US universities. Britain seems to have been better placed, as for some time the history of medicine and disease has been a popular option in the secondary school history curriculum in England, and such courses are taught in British universities. To teachers at all levels, this book is a wonderful source of scholarship and humane erudition.

Thinking and teaching about epidemics, many of which are also pandemics, obviously cannot be confined within Eurocentric bounds. Smallpox, along with measles and other old world diseases, had a disastrous effect on the peoples of the Americas and the Pacific islands. For example, the population of the Caribbean islands, numbering around one million in 1492 was reduced to a mere 15,000 by 1520. Smallpox more than decimated native American populations, the disease

also serving as a European weapon in wars to wrest land from indigenous peoples. Around the same time gentler hands in Europe, copying prophylactic methods well established in west Asia, introduced inoculation. The long struggle to curb and control smallpox met a triumphant end with the global eradication of the disease in the 1980s, a rare victory.

Disease helped defeat European armies, recounted in a crisp account of the yellow fever which broke the French and British invaders of San Domingue in a tropical campaign to crush a black revolt. Another defeat was inflicted on the French army invading Russia, typhus and dysentery dogging each weary step of the winter retreat. In these campaigns the casualty fatality rate was horrendously high. In both these chapters Snowden reveals himself as a master storyteller. He applies that skill in describing the horrors of cholera, its causes, courses, and consequences in Naples (he is an authority on disease in Italy). A stimulating pair of chapters present tuberculosis in contrasting light, the first on 'consumption' as a 'romantic' disease, a second on it as a contagious lingering cause of death often spawned in squalid over-crowded city slums. Until the mid-twentieth century malaria was endemic across much of the southern European Mediterranean region, a disease combatted in Sardinia and elsewhere with DDT. Although programmes to destroy malaria in sub-Saharan Africa were optimistically promoted by international and national bodies, today this mosquito-borne disease continues to wreak a heavy death toll on Africans, especially young children.

The cause of malaria is well understood. The natural history of

poliomyelitis, a highly infectious viral disease often called infantile paralysis, was not understood when it became epidemic in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Science in the form of inoculation and oral medicine came to the rescue, but the battle to eradicate this disease continues, especially in parts of Africa where there has been Islamist opposition to anti-polio programmes. Eradication is still in the balance in 2021.

Snowden's final chapters look at two recent new diseases, AIDS/HIV and Ebola. AIDS has zoonotic origins in Africa, brought via Haiti to the United States, and is perhaps the first serious 'modern' disease in the public eye. Transmission is by contact with body fluids and thus it has been spread in the US mainly via sexually active homosexuals, drug users, and in infected blood supplies given to haemophiliacs. Antiretroviral drugs have helped deal with the threat in the industrial world, but AIDS is widespread in areas of sub-Saharan Africa where it has been spread primarily by heterosexual activity and to the unborn via infected mothers. Currently In South Africa 18 per cent of the total population is infected with AIDS/HIV, where thousands have died unnecessarily due to the denial and conspiracy theories made official policy by President Thabo Mbeki.

Ebola is another recent fear-inducing disease. Originating and spreading in Africa, Ebola's transmission was aided by big-tech company deforestation schemes for palm oil plantations. Weak public health systems failed to prevent the spread of this disease which had very high mortality rates. Ebola was largely confined to Africa. SARS – a severe acute respiratory syndrome - was the first new disease to

pose a serious international threat in the 21st century, spreading from East Asia rapidly across the world by airlines. The more serious coronavirus of 2020, and continuing, is well-known. Combated successfully with rapidly developed vaccines in a relatively short time in the industrial world, the major challenge to the wealthy is to find sufficient supplies and moral charity to donate those drugs to impoverished countries.

Snowden ends his splendid text with chilling warnings about 'emerging and re-emerging diseases'. In a closely inter-related world, international cooperation and transparency are vital to monitor disease outbreaks and to prevent transmission. Private and commercial interests should not confound collective health security. In a world where numerous deadly pathogens lurk, 'public health must be the highest law - and it must override the rules of the market place'.

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BECKY TAYLOR, *Refugees in Twentieth-Century Britain: A History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. ISBN 9781316638385, £22.99.

Over many centuries, Britain has provided a home for migrants seeking refuge from persecution, conflict, famine, and poverty. Few families and communities are without some historical connection to such migrants. This book focuses on four specific groups of refugees who came to Britain during the twentieth century, and situates their arrival and settlement within the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of the period. Although

Britain has admitted fewer refugees than many other European countries, and far fewer than the major receiving nations that are situated much closer to the sources of refugees, the arrival and settlement of refugees has been a persistent focus of political and social argument during the twentieth century. The introductory chapter of this volume provides a comprehensive overview of refugee migration to Britain in the twentieth century, focussing especially on legislation, the role of voluntary support groups and the circumstances in which refugees found themselves. Taylor's main argument is that Britain has not always been universally welcoming to incoming migrants, despite being characterised by some as a 'tolerant country'.

The four case study chapters focus on refugees fleeing Nazism in the 1930s, on refugees from Hungary following the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, on Ugandan Asians who were expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972, and on refugees arriving in Britain from Vietnam during the decade after 1979. Although each of these migrant groups is distinctive there are many commonalities that can be identified. In each case the role of voluntary organisations and refugee support groups was vital, often playing a far greater role than either local or national governments in receiving and settling refugees, and in each case there was substantial hostility towards the migrants from some elements of the British population and from their politicians. The book is especially effective at locating the arrival and settlement of refugees within the political, social, economic and cultural contexts of the periods studied, and provides a nuanced

exploration of the reasons for hostility towards refugees and how this varied between locations and over time. Initially, many refugees were housed in reception camps where conditions could be poor, and the resettlement and dispersal of migrants from these camps to other locations could cause considerable controversy. For instance, in the case of Ugandan Asians who arrived in Britain in 1972–3 the government attempted to steer settlement away from cities in which there was already a substantial community of New Commonwealth migrants (designated as 'red zones') and towards locations such as the country's New and Expanding Towns, and to Scotland where there were fewer migrants from South Asia. This policy did not always fit comfortably with the preferences of the refugees who, not surprisingly, were often keen to move towards towns and cities which had established communities of New Commonwealth migrants with the related support groups.

The four case study chapters also demonstrate the ways in which refugee migration to Britain was part of a global problem, with Britain often playing a rather minor role. For instance, although Britain took in some 19,000 refugees from Vietnam, this represented only 2.5 per cent of those relocated globally. Unusually, the resettlement of these refugees was coordinated by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and Britain's initial hostility to immigration in the 1970s was only swayed by its loyalty to Hong Kong where many who fled Vietnam initially went, through the actions of the British navy in rescuing Vietnamese 'boat people', and by the desire of the British

government to be seen to exert global influence. This, and the other case studies in the volume, clearly demonstrate the ways in which many of the issues that surround immigration policy today have long historical antecedents. Overall, this is a very well-researched and carefully argued book. Professor Taylor's selection of just four case studies allows her to explore them in detail and to place each within both a national and global context. It provides an excellent source for anyone who wishes to know more about the origins and experiences of refugees who arrived in Britain during the twentieth century.

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MARK GORMAN, *Saving the People's Forest: Open Spaces, Enclosure and Popular Protest in mid-Victorian London*, Hatfield: Hertfordshire University Press, 2021. ISBN: 978 1 912260 41 6, £16.99.

Mark Gorman has provided a new history of community protests to preserve commons in and around London, focusing particularly, but not exclusively, on the battle to save Epping Forest. Protesters were not only local inhabitants but also people who travelled out from London to those spaces for leisure and recreation. The story of the campaigns has been told before, the heroes being the City of London Corporation and upper middle class Londoners who fought mainly in parliament and in the law courts; the new heroes are artisans and lower middle class workers, whether voters or not, who persuaded MPs to take on the fights and to see them through.

Open spaces were threatened by the rapid spread of mid-Victorian London. The increasing population needed housing and so ambitious local landowners sought to cash in by developing former commons; objections arose because ordinary Londoners, as well as elite campaigners, were determined to save these open spaces, to which they believed they should have access. As Gorman notes, the expanding economy was providing better-paid, more secure work for many, which consequently 'helped to create an increasingly assertive urban population, ready to defend their entitlement to their open spaces'.⁽¹³⁾ At the beginning of the nineteenth century Epping Forest was still relatively remote but with the eastward spread of London and the opening of the first of several railways in 1837 (London to Romford) the forest became both more accessible and more vulnerable to development by landlords. In 1851 the Mornington estate, lords of Wanstead Manor, enclosed 34 acres of Wanstead Flats; although contested, the enclosure was upheld by the courts. Also in 1851 the estate sold 200 acres of Wanstead Flats to the City of London for a new cemetery. Through this purchase the Corporation acquired common rights locally, and subsequently claimed them across the whole forest, thus opening the way to preserving the forest (through a protracted Chancery case). Many east Londoners visited two particular events in Epping Forest: the Easter Monday Epping Hunt and the Fairlop Fair, on the first Friday in July. Although middle class pressure to control such boisterous events grew, the Hunt became a symbol of the ancient rights of London's citizens to recreation in Epping Forest. By the 1820s

Fairlop Fair was attracting the attention of local magistrates due to numbers attending and it became increasingly commercialised for the benefit of the pub trade. Interestingly there was also a growth in natural history clubs that used London's commons. Either way, 'the forest was a place of liberation from the workplace'.(33)

There were direct links between open spaces and radical politics in London from 1840 to 1868. Open spaces were the natural environment of political radicalism, not least because the authorities increasingly denied radicals access to public buildings for their meetings and even pub landlords banned meetings for fear of losing their licence. In Hyde Park in the mid 1860s police were unable to control the number of demonstrators in support of reform, with the result that the government prohibited political meetings in the Royal Parks. Other suitable places for large political meetings had to be found.

In 1852 Hainault Forest, just over the river Roding from Epping Forest, was enclosed, divided into farms and its timber sold off for shipping. This alerted many to the need to defend metropolitan open spaces, although it was not until 1863 that east London opponents of the Epping Forest enclosures began to organise themselves. Presenting petitions supporting a proposal for a parliamentary enquiry, Robert Torrens MP brought the matter before parliament and thus began parliamentary action on the enclosures. Property owners came in for harsh criticism, and manorial lords, alarmed at the possibility losing their rights without compensation, pressed on with attempts to enclose Hampstead Heath, Berkhamsted Common, Plumstead Heath, Bostall

Heath and commons elsewhere, but all were successfully opposed by local commoners. These protests had two notable results: the formation of the Commons Preservation Society in 1865 and the Metropolitan Commons Act of 1866. The latter recognised that urban growth and the need to provide for the recreation of inhabitants had become more important than the need to enclose land for agriculture.

The 1866 Act, however, did not apply to Epping Forest and in the campaigns for both the 1868 and 1874 elections 'the Epping Forest question' was an issue for candidates who stood in Tower Hamlets and in Hackney. In the meantime popular protest over enclosure continued with large open-air meetings at Wanstead Flats in the summer of 1871, when recently erected fences were destroyed despite a heavy police presence. Gorman draws attention to other forms of protest used at this point: the 'Forest Fund' (a new campaign group), lobbying parliament through petitions and a public campaign with the slogan 'Save the Forest' which bedecked omnibuses and vans in forest districts and was a platform backdrop at public meetings. There was also support from various east London vestries. But it was not until 8 August 1878 that the Epping Forest Act became law, preserving the area in perpetuity 'for the recreation and enjoyment of the people'.(108) Contests over open spaces in Hackney, Plumstead and Wandsworth, which were newly developing suburbs, are also considered.

Finally Gorman discusses the power of public opinion in mid-Victorian London and how specific protests and wider political campaigns gained support due to

extensive coverage in the national and local press. Indeed his principal sources are local newspapers from all over the country: their titles take up nearly two pages in the bibliography. Reporters covered the various meetings and protests in and around London and their stories were repeated in provincial newspapers. From these sources Gorman captures not only the events but also various editors' reactions to them and thus it is that the new story is told of the fight for Epping Forest, one of protest from below. Protests against the enclosure of commons were not new, but earlier anti-enclosure protesters did not have the benefit of press-reporting both to stir up further support and to relay their ideas (and thus their historians have much more meagre resources from which to reconstruct events).

Ultimately this is a book about politics, both 'traditional' politics played out on the hustings and in parliament, and 'popular' politics fed by the growth of nineteenth century radicalism and pressure for political reform. And even after parliamentary reform and the widening of the franchise, both those newly enfranchised and those still outside the process pushed parliamentary candidates to show their support for popular concern over loss of access to commons and their fight to save the 'People's Forest'.

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ANDREW HILLIER, *My Dearest Martha: The Life and Letters of Eliza Hillier*, Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2021. ISBN 978-9629375775, £28.50.

The first half of Eliza Hillier's life (née Medhurst, 1828–86) was both peripatetic and eventful. The third child of the missionary Walter Medhurst, Eliza had lived in Batavia, London, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Bury St. Edmunds, and Bangkok by the time of her twenty-ninth birthday. She had given birth to seven children, two of whom had died in infancy. After a decade-long marriage, Eliza was also a widow. In October 1856, her husband, Charles Hillier, died in Bangkok, where he was serving as the first British consul to Siam. Eliza was therefore a well-known figure in the emerging archipelago of British imperial East Asia, particularly in Hong Kong, where Charles was Chief Magistrate (1847–56) and her brother Walter Chinese Secretary (1852–55). She had played the part of missionary daughter, diplomatic wife, and colonial mother. Yet in most of the letters collected here, we do not directly see Eliza playing these roles; instead, we see her in the more intimate position of an older sister, writing to the younger Martha (1831–90). Across almost a decade of letters (1847–56), we follow Eliza working, not always quite successfully, to maintain the sisterly intimacy of girlhood against challenges of distance, marriage and new duties. Eliza gives vivid descriptions of her marriage, her private surroundings, and her children. The reader eavesdrops on her advising, teasing, commiserating, and sometimes hectoring her younger sister.

This 'intimate archive' of dense, cross-hatched letters is a remarkable survival, passed from attic to attic before being transcribed by Harold, Eliza's grandson; then back to the attic to be unearthed by her great-great-grandson, Andrew Hillier. Hillier's *Mediating Empire: An English*

Family in China, 1817–1927 (2020) explores the wider story of the multiple roles played by three generations of the Hillier-Medhurst family across more than a century in and around China. Eliza's letters enable him to dive deeper into the private side of that world, giving space for a rare female voice from early colonial British East Asia and supplying an important addition to Klaus Stierstorfer's six volumes of *Women Writing Home, 1700–1920: Female Correspondence Across the British Empire* (which does not include material from Southeast or East Asia).

The result is a treat for the historian. Hillier's legwork on family trees, dramatic personae, footnotes, images and timelines helps the reader navigate the complex networks and references of Eliza's letters in what is a model for the scholarly presentation of private papers. Hillier's superb introductions provide a rich historical and family context to the letters, while pointing towards some of their historical implications. These include questions of gender, communication, faith, emotion, death, and racism in early colonial Hong Kong and the wider Empire.

Some of the clues here are in the silences of Eliza's letters. Opium in these letters is not a financial goldmine or geopolitical flashpoint, but simply something to take when sick (77). I only spotted three instances of Chinese people being mentioned by name (all female domestic servants) and even in generic terms hardly any references to Hong Kong's Chinese residents – or, indeed, to the colony's lower-class white population and numerous other groups. The only event described in detail that reaches beyond the domestic world of Hong Kong's white

elite was a carriage accident Eliza and her children suffered on Queen's Road in December 1849. 'Poor Mrs Cleverly was thrown into someone's arms – and we were both taken in a public house, she in violent hysterics. I soon recovered and opened my eyes to see poor Willie crying most piteously in the arms of a black man' (86). Admittedly, this could have been a serious accident, but there is a sense that the incident was a shock as much in its abrupt shattering of domestic and racial boundaries as well as its medical consequences: 'my whole system seems upset by the fright, and I am as nervous as possible' (87).

Eliza's duty was to maintain – perhaps in this early period even to *create* – this racial, spatial and social line between white domesticity and the tumultuous reality of Hong Kong that Charles, as Chief Magistrate, was trying in his public life to control. This means that Eliza's letters are not quite the new window on 1850s Hong Kong that historians of the colony might have hoped. But perhaps more importantly, for historians of empire, they shed light on how the private world of a new colony was constructed, from relations with servants to childbirth, church and education to the material histories of music, clothes and gift-giving. The practice of intimate female letter-writing across the British Empire was itself part of this colonial buttressing.

Ironically, though, for all their part in racial boundary-making, Hillier points out that Eliza and Martha's maternal grandmother was probably of Tamil background, the long-time unmarried partner of a British officer in the Madras Army. This points us not just to the cracks in the British racial edifice, but to

some of the transitions in the life and letters of Eliza Hillier: from family roots in an older colonial system of looser sexual practices to the strict prohibitions – at least in theory – of mid-century empire; from improvisations of the immediate post-Opium War British Empire in China to the birth pangs of a permanent colonial society; from a British Asia held together by sailing ships and the Cape, to an era of steamships and the new overland route via Suez on the eve of canal construction; from the zealous, pre-Victorian evangelicalism of Eliza's non-conformist missionary father, to respectable low-church colonial Anglicanism. God rather drifts out of Eliza's letters over time, but she still can't write on a Sunday.

For the reader, though, what stands out most is the private transitions of Eliza's

life. The uncertainties of a young marriage give way to the stresses and joys of childbirth, maturity and, finally, the pain of widowhood. The last we hear of Eliza's own voice here is the long, gut-wrenching description and elegy of her husband's final days struggling with fever in a ship moored off Bangkok. Eliza returned 'home' to a long second marriage in provincial England. The China connection would live on, with three of Eliza's sons rising to high positions in the consular service, the Imperial Maritime Customs, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank (HSBC). But of Eliza's subsequent private life and feelings, we know almost nothing.

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