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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1950* by Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman

Review by: EDWARD ROYLE

Source: *History*, JANUARY 2011, Vol. 96, No. 1 (321) (JANUARY 2011), pp. 111–113

Published by: Wiley

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24429032>

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Ranelagh. Experiments and their authenticated accounts were for Boyle the only key to secure knowledge, and he was hostile to facile systematizations.

As the subtitle 'Between God and Science' suggests, Boyle's scientific endeavours cannot be divorced from his religiosity. Indeed, once the Royal Society was set up, Boyle spent more time as governor of the New England Company, supporting its missionary activity, and he also gave financial support to translating the Bible into indigenous languages for the propagation of the gospel. He constantly scrutinized his actions, was scrupulous in his views of God, took exception to making oaths (a reason why he declined the presidency of the Royal Society), and paused every time he mentioned God. Though Hunter does not believe that it is possible to determine the precise contour of Boyle's religious convictions (p. 204), Boyle's belief in God is undeniable. So is his belief in the devil and its activities. Boyle corresponded with Joseph Glanville about authenticated accounts of witchcraft, which in Boyle's view would provide empirical demonstration of the supernatural. As Hunter concludes convincingly, Boyle's 'experimental activity could be seen as the scientific extension of the pains he took in his spiritual exercises' (p. 255). Boyle's pursuit of nature as testimony to God and his design was a legacy taken up by later 'physico-theologians'.

Hunter also gives us a view of Boyle the person, who stuttered, and spoke very slowly with circumlocutions, just as he wrote; he shunned the fashionable coffee houses; he was duped by the master fraudster-chemist, Georges Pierre; he supported his nephew's plan of desalinating sea water; he had to post visiting hours over the door to control the influx of visitors; and his sister was a constant companion for twenty years, and he died a week after her death.

Hunter's account of Boyle is shored up by a command of the extensive primary and secondary sources on Boyle and his time. The bibliographical commentary at the end of the book shows just how much material there has been on Boyle, and we must be grateful to the author for adopting a narrative style in this section as he provides an invaluable road map through the literature. Any graduate student interested in Boyle or his period should start here. This bibliographical section also shows the judicious choices Hunter had made in order to write this book, and this is what makes the book so highly readable. This is an accomplished piece of intellectual biography, and Hunter should be thanked for writing such a clear and accessible book.

Trinity College, Cambridge

SACHIKO KUSUKAWA

Late Modern

***The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1950.* Edited by Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman.** Palgrave Macmillan. 2010. xiv + 281pp. £55.00.

The land was an issue which ran through the politics of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British life, and this collection of essays does justice to many aspects of its impact. Each essay is clearly written and to the point, offering both a self-standing case study and an episodic contribution to the theme as a whole. While welcoming the opportunity to gain fresh individual insights from the essays, readers should also benefit from the cumulative effect of reading the whole book. In this they will be aided by the excellent introduction provided by the editors which draws on the various contributions to present an overview of 'the

land question' as it impinged on the politics of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland over the 200-year period covered by these chronologically arranged essays.

The first two essays might be called broadly cultural in scope, and in this they differ from those that follow. Ian Waites begins with an art-historical look at representations of the pre-enclosed landscape, in particular John Crome's studies of Mousehold Heath near Norwich, and William Turner's visualization of the common fields of Oxford, depicting landscapes which were shortly to be lost or in some cases had already given way to the age of 'improvement'. Kathryn Beresford then complements this approach by addressing the literary representation of the 'yeomen of old England', symbols of that golden age before progress and industry had sapped the vitality and virtue of Englishmen in general and the 'men of Kent' in particular. Thereafter, the essays present the land as a largely radical issue. The tone is set by Malcolm Chase with a clear and expert exposition of the importance of the land issue to those radicals whose passion fed the Chartist movement between the late 1830s and the 1850s. Radicals saw the redistribution of the land as central to the democratization of political power; the view that the land issue was confined to Feargus O'Connor's Land Plan is wide of the mark. Chapters by Anthony Howe on the 'Manchester School' and Antony Taylor on Cobden, Thorold Rogers and Henry George then examine the failure of the Anti-Corn Law League to follow up their success in 1846 with an all-out attack on the aristocracy, although it is good to see the efforts of his son-in-law, Thorold Rogers, recognized in the creation and perpetuation of the myth which enlisted Cobden in the anti-aristocratic politics of later-Victorian England. Three further chapters collectively provide an instructive study in comparative history, highlighting similarities and exploring significant differences in the three 'other' parts of the British Isles. It was Ireland that pushed the land issue to the fore in Britain as a whole, and Philip Bull's chapter gives a clear explanation of how British misunderstandings of landholding customs in Ireland prolonged and complicated the issue there. Matthew Cragoe sees the Welsh attempt to make political capital out of the Irish precedent as relying less on economics than on culture and politics. In Scotland, studied by Ewan Cameron, there were some parallels between Ireland and the Highlands, but he reminds us that the land question in Scotland also embraced mineral rights in the Central Valley and the different grievances of farmers in the Lowlands.

By the end of the nineteenth century the terms of the debate were changing. The land was increasingly an urban as well as a rural issue, as chapters by Roland Quinault on London and Ian Packer on urban unemployment make clear. Paul Readman explains how Conservatives as well as Liberals were contemplating land reform before the Great War. John Becket and Michael Turner show how an active land market was disrupting older dynastic patterns of ownership even before the war. Despite the Labour Party clinging to the familiar words of the land reformers after the war, as Clare Griffiths explains, the land question was by this date politically dead, a fact neatly summarized by F. M. L. Thompson in an epilogue to the volume.

The achievements of this collection are considerable, with the editors maintaining the coherence of their theme without permitting undue overlap between the contributors. In such a wide-ranging book, though, there are bound to be omissions. It is surprising that, despite Chase's chapter which draws attention to

the influence of Thomas Spence, there is no reference to the contribution of Thomas Paine; the virtuous yeomen of England escape without reference to what 'the yeomanry' came to mean after the 'Peterloo' massacre in 1819; and the implications of Chase's comments on Chartism are not followed through with reference to Charles Bradlaugh's anti-aristocratic popular republicanism in the 1870s and 1880s. It is also a pity in such an expensive and well-written book that the publishers could not have allowed the illustrations to be larger and more clearly reproduced.

University of York

EDWARD ROYLE

***Electing our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair.* By Jon Lawrence.** Oxford University Press. 2009. £30.00.

Modern British political history remains a vibrant field of study. This is, in part, because historians like Jon Lawrence have succeeded in applying much of the best of cultural history to their study of politics and political culture. Lawrence's earlier work on popular politics in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, centred especially on very detailed study of Wolverhampton, did not suit all tastes; but it was, without a doubt, a very significant contribution. His latest book is ambitious, covering as it does the cultural history of electoral politics since the early nineteenth century. Disposing of such a long period in a text of 250 or so pages poses serious challenges. Superficiality and patchiness are always a threat, while the temptation towards a grand narrative, either of a whiggish story of progress or a 'why-oh-why' lament for some mythical golden age, is ever-present. But in fact Lawrence steers very ably between these different traps to produce a book that is both informative and challenging. He shows how the practice of elections and electioneering, or what might be called the popular culture of elections, changed over the period. Extensions of the male franchise, restrictions on expenditure, the secret ballot, the enfranchisement of women and, later, the development of television all resulted in significant changes, but not always the ones they were believed to have had. They did not always push in the same direction. However, the development of television in the 1950s, with the first real TV election being that of 1959, did signal a sea change which has, Lawrence believes, had a serious impact on participation. At the same time, he shows that the TV companies themselves could do more to re-enliven the process, although this might – one infers – need to involve more than the presence of the odd comedian on a political chat show. As he says, too, 'Further expansion of "vox pop" coverage will not do' (p. 252). It is interesting in this respect to conjecture whether the apparent impact of the TV debates at the 2010 general election was as significant as appeared at the time, and whether they will henceforth mark a major change in electioneering. Overall, the book demonstrates very well the significance of 'party'. It shows how important money was to electoral politics, and in doing so highlights yet again the extent to which political finance remains an under-researched area. Although certainly no whig, Lawrence also shows that he has no time for those who would romanticize the nineteenth-century hustings: 'Often what it involved was simply rowdy, drunken young men excluding others, especially women, from the political arena by their boorish and violent behaviour' (p. 128). The volume is rich in deep and informed insights into political culture and offers serious insights for others to consider and develop. Naturally no-one can