

## Reviews

*Rethinking Global History*, edited by Stefanie Gänger and Jürgen Osterhammel. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2024. 292 pages. \$105.00, cloth. \$34.99, paper. \$34.99, electronic. Open access available.

One of the defining features of world history is how much time practitioners spend defining the field. Scholars united by regional or temporal expertise publish about method and intermittently reflect on the state of their subfield. Kenneth Pomeranz, for example, examined “What is World History Good For?” in *The New World History: A Field Guide for Teachers and Researchers* (2016), but I’m hard pressed to think of analogs that consistently ask, “What is Brazilian history?” or “What’s the point of imperial history?” Researching, teaching, and writing on a global scale is, it seems, a world apart. *Rethinking Global History* questions this dichotomy by asking about the relationship between global history and the rest of the discipline. This edited collection goes beyond identifying payoffs and pitfalls of thinking with scale; it goes further than breaching national, regional, or linguistic borders—all attributes previously claimed as benefits of globally inflected inquiry (and present in many of the chapters here). This collective endeavor breaks new ground by leaning into theory and method to identify where a sprawling body of scholarship has introduced conceptual innovation to the discipline, showing connections between global history and “the established concerns of historical theory” (p. 3).

Some of these established concerns are expected: scales (Dániel Margócsy), temporality (Christina Brauner), distance (Jeremy Adelman), comparison (Alessandro Stanziani), and the environment (Sujit Sivasundaram). It’s a credit to the conversations that led up to this collection and the intellectual creativity of the contributors that each chapter has a fresh argument and individual character. These are all essays about how ideas work, not simply descriptions of narrativity in global history and not-global history, for instance (Jürgen Osterhammel).

Other chapters take a popular topic, such as objects, in unexpected directions. Stefanie Gänger reasserts the significance of the material turn for the discipline, then productively notes that materiality doesn’t have a “natural scale” (p. 236).

This observation opens a frequent method for global inquiry—the circulation of things—to an interrogation of historians’ varying relationships to the material world. Gänger explores the implications of using artefacts, commodities, and diffuse resources such as the air as evidence alongside documents—which of course have a materiality of their own. She argues that historians, whether locally or globally inclined, should be wary of the seduction of things, alert that a promise of sensory connection is not necessarily more revealing than words alone (p. 250).

Sivasundaram’s essay brings environmental and natural histories into conversation with cartography to make the Earth and changing representations of it the focus of inquiry, calling for “a more multi-disciplinary and materially aware global history... which can include the Earth itself as a vital agent” (p. 119). Sivasundaram’s use of materiality highlights one of the collection’s strengths: while the chapters offer useful focal points, they are not conceptual siloes. Such thematic cross-pollination makes the volume more thought-provoking than the sum of its parts.

That said, individual chapters can stand alone. Readers looking for an overview of economic history or a lucid explanation of what quantitative approaches can reveal will appreciate Pim de Zwart’s contribution. Jan C. Jansen’s dissection of teleology is the most successful explanation of what global history offers the discipline, noting “the fundamental tension between the universalism and unity of the past, on the one hand, and particularity and rupture, on the other, has come to a head in the intellectual milieu of global history” (p. 191). Dominic Sachsenmaier playfully unsettles centrism, reminding us that Euro- isn’t the only analytical core to explore (or avoid) and that centered and centrist also ought to be invited to the sandbox. Valeska Huber’s chapter goes furthest into new territory, using spheres as a metaphor to explore openings and closures—both in lived history and scholarship—helping us think about boundary work as necessary but not sufficient to practices of history at all scales.

This ambitious, well-executed collection benefits teachers and scholars. The citations in the introduction take readers through major work in the last twenty-five years. Each chapter offers tools for shaping an inquiry-based approach to teaching world history and reminds instructors about why we ask students to engage with dense, diverse content: to think about meaning-making rather than to master a litany of past events. *Rethinking Global History* offers an invigorating examination of “the possibilities and risks of history going global” (p. 1).

University of California, Irvine

Laura J. Mitchell

*Waiting for the Cool Moon: Anti-Imperialist Struggles in the Heart of Japan’s Empire*, by Wendy Matsumura. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024. 288 pages. \$104.95, cloth. \$27.95, paper. \$27.95, electronic.

Wendy Matsumura’s *Waiting for the Cool Moon* is a powerful history of agriculture, anti-imperialism, and archival silence in interwar Japan (1918-1937) that is told through the lens of the country’s racialized, gendered, and colonial

workforces: buraku tenant farmers, women domestic workers, Korean agricultural laborers and fertilizer factory workers, and Okinawan phosphate miners. Through meticulous archival research and theoretical analysis, Matsumura probes one of the most intimate spaces of Japanese nationalism—the quintessential small farm household—to reveal a colonial underclass whose land struggles, labor strikes, and everyday acts of refusal are largely absent from histories of the Japanese countryside. Such a work challenges the dominant narrative that portrays the Japanese agricultural crisis of the 1920s and 1930s as a state-led modernization project by uncovering how recovery depended on the exploitation of a precarious workforce. It also prompts Matsumura to ask what epistemological and disciplinary processes enable this concealment, as well as how scholars can approach the experiences of those erased by the archives.

One of the most important historiographical contributions of *Waiting for the Cool Moon* is its reconceptualization of Japanese rural development as a transimperial process of racial-capitalist formation. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter's transatlantic *pieza* framework and Lisa Lowe's extension of this structure to the Pacific, Matsumura positions Japanese studies in direct conversation with transpacific studies, Black critical theory, and global histories of imperialism to foreground systems of racialized abstract labor as foundational to the Japanese political economy. She portrays Japanese agriculture as a form of imperialism itself that was deeply implicated in global structures of dispossession, enslavement, Indigenous genocide, and ecological destruction. This framing shapes the book's structure and gives voice to its subjects, with Chapters 2 and 3 analyzing the Japanese state's enclosure of common lands held by buraku communities and the tenant disputes and labor struggles that followed in such places as Asama, Maemura, and the Matsusaka Momen factory. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the role of domestic women workers and Korean seasonal laborers in Japanese farming households, as well as the Korean-led rural protests and factory strikes against the Taki Seihi Company, a major producer of the country's agricultural fertilizer. Finally, Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the incorporation of Okinawan workers into a British-dominated transpacific phosphate industry based on Banaba Island that supplied Japan's fertilizer factories. By reexamining Japanese history through these interrelated networks, the book calls on scholars to recognize rural Japan as a contested site of global capitalist empire-building rather than a self-enclosed repository of national or feudal traditions.

Another major contribution of *Waiting for the Cool Moon* is its pointed critique of Japanese studies' tendency to valorize archival voices at the expense of the absences and silences that define subaltern experiences. Reflecting on how such government ledgers as the Farm Household Survey excluded precarious forms of labor that did not conform to the privileged patriarchal household unit, Matsumura warns that scholars who rely on such documents risk reproducing a colonial logic that determines which lives are legible and illegible. To overcome this, she draws on Dionne Brand's concept of the "left-hand page" to propose a counter-archive built from people's everyday acts of refusal, opacity, and withholding that guard the knowledge and memories of the displaced from assimilation into dominant histories. Although the book illustrates this strategy in its analysis of Okinawan

women's avoidance of colonial surveys during the Ginowan water struggle, its methodological intervention would have been even more powerful had it threaded this theme through earlier chapters and examined how the communities themselves remember and mourn the people who form the study's core.

*Waiting for the Cool Moon* is an invaluable resource for instructors teaching advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on modern Japanese history, Asian studies, or global histories of imperialism, capitalism, and labor. Matsumura's rigorous attention to caste, gender, race, and class exploitation makes this a compelling work for rethinking narratives of Japanese modernization by exposing the colonial workforces and their anti-imperialist struggles that underpinned rural development. Instructors may assign the entire book for seminar courses to engage deeply with its theoretical and methodological interventions. For lecture-based courses, they may use select chapters on buraku, Korean, Okinawan, or women's labor as case studies to introduce students to such key themes as intersectionality, global capitalism, and colonialism. Ultimately, scholars will appreciate Matsumura's work as an important contribution and methodological provocation within Japanese history. The book challenges scholars to move beyond the comforts of archival legibility and reckon with the silences and absences of subaltern experiences. This is a deeply relevant text for anyone committed to decolonizing Japanese studies and re-situating it within broader transimperial and racialized global structures.

Loyola Marymount University

Michael Hayata

*African Activists in A Decolonising World: The Making of An Anticolonial Culture, 1952-1966*, by Ismay Milford. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 298 pages. \$117.00, cloth. \$39.99, paper. \$39.99, electronic.

Ismay Milford's *African Activists in A Decolonising World: The Making of An Anticolonial Culture* follows the lived experiences of a cohort of activists from East and Central Africa who, despite often being under-resourced and restricted, sought to end the exploitation and marginalization of Africans under colonial rule within and beyond their region. Milford employs a micro-spatial perspective, viewing anti-colonialism as a historical formation and social process (pp. 15-16). Thus, rather than focusing on a watershed moment, Milford follows their anti-colonial culture, which included social practices such as giving speeches and pamphleteering to claim self-determination for themselves and the countries of interest. While often unsuccessful with their advocacy for systemic changes to improve the material conditions of Africans, their story is a great addition to the narrative of twentieth-century African nationalism, as it reveals the multiple ways decolonization was envisioned and demonstrates the limits of transnational activism.

In six chapters, Milford explores how the actors developed their anti-colonial culture and impacted the decolonization and international socialist movements. In Chapter 1, the author uses the 1952 strike at Makerere University as a point of departure to demonstrate the rise of the cohort's regional politics, which occurred as the push for the Central African Federation and the Mau Mau in Kenya (p. 47). Staging a strike over student food was linked to anti-colonialism. While devoid of traditional political maneuverings, the strike was an avenue for the students to not only protest the poor conditions of the food provided, but also present a general critique of the colonial regime. These students often served as a link to formal political parties (p. 23). In the Chapter 2, Milford looks at the students' responses to anti-colonial challenges and the anti-colonial hubs they created in places like Delhi and London. Studying abroad was an anti-colonial act where students negotiated their scholarship, exploiting colonial anxieties about protest, resistance, strike, and communism (p. 72). In this way, they contributed to global anti-colonial thoughts and socialist internationalisms (p. 81). In Chapter 3, the Pan-African engagements of these cohorts take center stage, highlighting how they advanced the idea towards decolonization with emphasis on East and Central African activists not as observers, but as key participants in these continental African changes. They pursued similar aims with the Algerian question, presented in Chapter 4, as well as the Congo crisis, presented in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the book highlights their navigation of the Cold War and their successful and unsuccessful attempts at transcending the binary politics of the era (p. 175).

The bottom-up approach of *African Activists in A Decolonising World* decentering heads of state and formal politicians to focus on students and youth provides new thoughts about the historical process of decolonization and transnational activism. While most narratives of African nationalism emphasize key state actors, Pan-Africanists, the "first premiers of the nation," or political parties and institutional politics, Milford redirects the attention of scholars to student activists whose historical accounts do not usually make it into the dominant narrative of mid-twentieth-century decolonization of Africa. While they did not have the geopolitical currency of diplomatic status, their newspapers, magazines, letter writing campaigns, and fellow activists from other student groups sent their message of liberation across the globe, tying African independence with anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements. For instance, Milford observes that while the activists underscored the significance of Pan-African events such as the 1958 All African Peoples Conference to the independence movement and post-colonial developments, they did not embrace the Pan-African rhetoric without question. Instead, they "approached Nkrumah's pan-African project with caution—and with demands of their own" (p. 134). They critically examined it and selected what they deemed helpful for their fight against colonialism in countries like Algeria and Egypt. Not only were these East and Central Africans active on the continent, but also engaged in overseas politics, which ties this work to twentieth-century global student politics.

As a social and intellectual history of decolonization spearheaded by African youth, *African Activists in A Decolonising World* is a welcome addition to

re-examining the decolonization narrative in African history. It demystifies anti-colonial solidarity projects, goes beyond celebratory narratives of national heroes, and provides new thoughts into the struggle for independence. One of the strengths of this book lies in the multiple sources the author uses, including multi-sited archival materials and interviews that enriched the research with a social account of decolonization. Scholars interested in African history, transnational activism, global decolonization, and student politics would find this resource informative.

*Baylor University*

Emmanuella Amoh

*The Muse of History: The Ancient Greeks from the Enlightenment to the Present*, by Oswyn Murray. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2024. \$37.95, cloth. \$37.95, electronic.

*The Muse of History* is a treasure trove of information and veritable “who’s who” on modern scholarship of Greek antiquity, from Thomas Hobbes to the end of the Cold War. Each of the twenty chapters focuses on either a particular historiographic issue, influential author(s), or scholarly controversy. While many names will be familiar to general readers (e.g., George Grote, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Moses Finley), readers will undoubtedly walk away with new characters such as John Gast, E. Bulwer-Lytton, and Elisabeth Charlotte Welskopf. In addition to these rigorously researched biographies and examination of scholarly developments, Murray inserts personal anecdotes about his own intellectual development. His stories hold a particular charm that will amuse or even shock readers. For example, his accidental rediscovery of John Gast’s history of Greece while serving as a “room steward in the decayed National Trust property of Chastleton House” (pp. 63-65), his hollowed-out nineteenth-century novel concealing cigarettes from his house-master (p. 127), his great-grandfather Sir James Murray who was editor of the Oxford English Dictionary (pp. 267-268, 417), and his harrowing near-desertion as a conscript at the Suez Canal in 1956 (pp. 407-408).

The book’s organizing principle is the concept of a “Republic of Letters,” the “pan-European” academics who constituted the scholarly engine of ancient history during and after the Enlightenment. A great strength of this book is how Murray connects intellectual trends in ancient history and Classics to other developments in the academic world. Murray reminds us that for much of the nineteenth century, ancient historians were at the forefront of the historical discipline (p. 7), contrasting the eventual move away from the theory of history in the wake of the World Wars and Cold War (pp. 417-419). Part One (“The Muse of History”) emphasizes the romanticism and positivism of European intellectuals during the intense nation-building and periods of high empire, including the “rediscovery” of ancient Greece, the appropriation of ancient

Athens and Sparta as paradigms for western Europe, the philhellenic movement, the Tory vs. Radical divide among English writers, and the dominance of German scholarship and critical theory in the nineteenth century. Part Two (“The Angel of History”) recognizes a distinct shift in which history as a discipline becomes a refuge from the horrors of the modern era (i.e., racism, two World Wars, increasing totalitarianism, and invasive capitalism). Chapters 15 to 18 cover Murray’s mentor Arnaldo Momigliano and titans from “The School of Paris”—namely, Fernand Braudel, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. The final chapter, “The Crisis of Theory in History,” offers Murray’s powerful and compelling warning against falling back into positivism and instead embracing empiricism, a commitment to truth, and the reintegration of theory into history (pp. 426-429).

Thematically, *The Muse of History* engages the complex historiographic changes from positivism to post-modernism in (mainly) European scholarship. With Murray asking, “will the Republic of Letters survive the triumph of ruthless capitalism and nationalism that is the curse of the twenty-first century?” he concludes that “Only the next generation can answer that question: ‘through suffering we learn wisdom: *pathei mathos*’” (p. 417). Scholars such as myself may be humbled by the thought of aspiring to the intellectual heights of Finley, Momigliano, and Vidal-Naquet, but those of us who aspire to be inspirations to our students should remember that we might just have the next Braudel, Burckhardt, or Murray in our classrooms. For Murray, the study of history is deeply personal. He includes an extended memoir of his contacts with scholars “behind the Iron Curtain” (pp. 407-417), moments when he discovered original manuscripts of E. Bulwer-Lytton (p. 132), and fascinating correspondence between John Gast and publisher John Murray (p. 66-74).

This book might be above the reach of many undergraduates, but graduate students both of Classics and related disciplines, as well as European intellectual history and the “West,” will have much to gain from Murray’s encyclopedic coverage. Some of the chapters might serve well as stand-alone chapters as introductions for undergraduates, such as those on Fernand Braudel and Jakob Burckhardt. In all, *The Muse of History* both enlivens historiography and captures the immediacy and relevance of theoretically-informed history.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

John J. Haberstroh

*Learning to Lead: Undocumented Students Mobilizing Education*, by Jennifer R. Nájera. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024. 192 pages. \$99.95, cloth. \$25.95, paper. \$25.95, electronic.

Jennifer Nájera’s *Learning to Lead* traces the development of political consciousness among undocumented undergraduate students at the University of California, Riverside in the mid-2010s. As scholars are wont to do, Nájera invents



a new label for their experiences: undocumented education. “This education is undocumented because it is education for undocumented people. It is also undocumented because it is often informal and unsanctioned by the university. Undocumented education encompasses the ways undocumented young people learn, both in formal settings and in their families and communities” (p. 8). Using eighteen in-depth interviews and several years of participant observation with the activists of the University of California, Riverside’s Providing Opportunity, Dreams, and Education in Riverside (PODER) student organization, Nájera aims to illustrate undocumented students’ unique path to politicization.

The book’s strength is the students themselves: Miguel, Victor, Italia, Jazmin, Alejandro, and others whom we get to know quite personally. Nájera’s close observation of their protests, rallies, conferences, and workshops, together with their personal testimonies and reflections, add up to a thick description of their experiences of growth, learning, and blossoming political subjectivity. Nájera shows us how they came to know they were undocumented and how this dawning realization factored into their adolescences. She traces their path to the university (often as transfer students from cost-effective community colleges), where the persistent anxieties of undocumented existence transform into sites of solidarity as they find they are not alone. And she charts their journeys as they build communities and inside and outside the classroom and develop ever wider understandings of the politics of immigration and their position therein.

Poignant vignettes illustrate the whirlwind of fear, courage, hope, and commitment at the heart of the students’ political actions. The moment that sticks with me is Miguel standing at the podium at PODER’s annual conference, before an audience of students and parents. He is terrified about outing his undocumented status, but knows this is his bravest contribution to the gathering. Thanks to Nájera’s intimate knowledge of her subjects, she captures the moment: “He knew how proud his parents were of him as a college student. He could see that pride in these parents, too. And he knew that he needed to honor those parents’ sacrifices with a speech that was true” (p. 92). At such junctures, the reader can feel the students’ sense of the past’s burdens, the future’s possibilities, and the power of truth.

Regarding analysis, the book retraces the familiar territory of activist education in the tradition of Paulo Freire: through activist praxis—reflection, theory, and action—learning happens outside the classroom at least as much as within, and students are empowered as they share experiences, build solidarity and community, develop their own political assessments, and choose tactics. While the trust Nájera built with her students made this book possible and rich, it also appears to stay her analytical hand. She situates her work in the tradition of “activist anthropology” and cites the activist practice of *acompañamiento* (accompaniment) as a methodological inspiration. She proved herself as an ally to her subjects and notes that their shared political goals were essential to winning their confidence (p. 10). This degree of affinity means that Nájera is unwilling to place her subjects in any interpretive frame that would depart significantly from how they describe themselves.



Thus, it is the students and their stories that carry the reader. Given this, it is unfortunate that the book was released by an academic press. *Learning to Lead* should not be a niche work of scholarship filling a CV line; instead, it ought to be a popular non-fiction book bringing these students' experiences and stories to a wide audience of educators, students, and readers. Sadly, the misguided incentive structures of academia deprive these students of the readership they deserve. Nonetheless, for the readers of *The History Teacher*, the value of Nájera's book is the window it opens onto the political dispositions of undocumented students and the well of family history and personal experience this derives from. Knowing our students is an essential element of effective teaching, but veils of secrecy can make our undocumented students the hardest to know. In our current political climate, this will likely get worse as spaces of relative safety—including our classrooms—become the preying ground of ICE. Nájera's book, therefore, is an essential read for any educators trying to support undocumented students at a time when such support is so dearly needed.

Rutgers University-Newark

Lance Thurner

*The Women of Rendezvous: A Transatlantic Story of Family and Slavery*, by Jenny Shaw. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2024. 280 pages. \$99.00, cloth. \$29.95, paper. \$22.99, electronic.

In *The Women of Rendezvous: A Transatlantic Story of Family and Slavery*, historian Jenny Shaw tells the stories of five women who called Rendezvous plantation home: Hester Tomkyns, Susannah Mingo, Elizabeth Ashcroft, Dorothy Spendlove, and Frances Atkins. All five of these women also gave birth to children fathered by the plantation's owner, John Peers. *The Women of Rendezvous* shows how bringing together the methodologies of women's history, family history, and imperial history allows historians to illustrate the interconnectedness of the Atlantic World without losing sight of the real people who lived in it. In doing so, Shaw has produced a text that will be interesting and accessible to both experts in these fields and to undergraduates just starting to engage with them.

Shaw's narrative blends storytelling and analysis in such a way that neither is sacrificed, keeping her reader engaged without losing track of historical significance. She makes choices that ensure the five women stay at the center of the story. Most importantly, instead of relying on surnames to distinguish between the twenty children fathered by John Peers, they are described as Hester's John or Susannah's Richard or Dorothy's Ann, regardless of whether their mother was one of John Peers's wives (Hester Tomkyns and Frances Atkins), hired servants (Dorothy Spendlove), or enslaved by him (Susannah Mingo and Elizabeth Ashcroft). John Peers may have been the father of their children, but Shaw shows that the women's lives were connected—whether they wished it or not—by far more than him.

Throughout *The Women of Rendezvous*, Shaw explores “the practices surrounding pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period in England and West Africa” within the context of seventeenth-century Barbados, making “clear the opportunities for some of the women, and the limitations, dangers, and dread of others” (p. 44). The diverse group of women at the center of Shaw’s story allows her to explore women’s experiences in the seventeenth-century Caribbean from a variety of different perspectives, comparing them to emphasize how race and status shaped their opportunities and choices in a myriad of ways. Instead of approaching them individually, she shows how their lives were entangled and produces a far more dynamic history as a result.

The story Shaw tells is extraordinary, even as it addresses experiences that were extremely common. One important piece of Shaw’s evidence especially reflects this dichotomy: the depositions of Elizabeth Ashcroft from a Chancery Court case to ensure that she and her children received what was promised by John’s will. That an enslaved woman had children fathered by a white planter was far from uncommon. That she brought a court case to assert her inheritance rights and that her own words were recorded in a legal document makes her exceptional in the documentary record. This court case allows Shaw to explore the complex relationships between the women of *Rendezvous*. It also reminds readers that even though historians can interpret how people in the past might behave or feel based on what we know of their race, class, or gender, people can still surprise us. Though Shaw frequently analyzes Susannah and Elizabeth together during their time in Barbados because of their enslaved status, in the London court they took opposite sides. Susannah accepted the smaller settlement offered by the executors, while Elizabeth demanded what John promised her in the will and formed an alliance with Dorothy (who was free and white, but legally disadvantaged because she was never John’s wife).

The court case also plays a central role in Shaw’s examination of the family’s time in England and the children’s lives after their father died. This allows her to illustrate both how life did and did not change for the women once they left Barbados, revealing “how the racial, gendered, and class hierarchies of the metropole not only reflected those developed in Caribbean slave societies, but were constituted in the hub of empire itself” (p. 99). Throughout this section of the text, she shows that as much as it was “a place of seemingly rigid hierarchy and patriarchal control, in reality there was room for negotiation within those systems of oppression.” Here, the influence of Nuala Zahedieh’s *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* is especially apparent, as the women’s knowledge and understanding of the money that flowed between Barbados and England was reflected in their actions in defense of their inheritance. In exploring and comparing the lives of the children born to these five women, Shaw considers the often-contradictory legacies of slavery and touches on the book’s most important conclusion: it mattered far more who their mother was than who their father was.

*The Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought: French Sociology and the Overseas Empire*, by George Steinmetz. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2025. 576 pages. \$45.00, cloth. \$29.95, paper. \$29.95, electronic.

“Colonial policy may be the area in which the adage ‘knowledge is power’ is best confirmed” (p. 97). This observation about the institutions within which power and knowledge become difficult to distinguish from one another comes not from Michel Foucault, but rather the Durkheimian theorist of the gift, Marcel Mauss. George Steinmetz’ *Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought* is an enormously rich and erudite book, the central argument of which is that the experience of colonialism, and in particular the struggle to do objective scientific work within it, is an essential element of some of the most useful and enduring monuments of French thought in the twentieth century. Pierre Bourdieu is the central figure in the book, which seeks to be an example of the kind of reflexive social science he championed—Steinmetz describes his own method as “the historical socioanalysis of social science” (p. 349)—and also, necessarily, to explain at least partly the conditions within which it was possible to formulate Bourdieu’s ideas. Bourdieu is the main hero of the book, but there are many others as well, and I do not believe any reader will fail to encounter a surprising new figure, text, or connection. Many, for instance, will be surprised not only that Frantz Fanon taught sociology for a year in Tunisia, but also by the degree to which his writing can be seen as “a kind of climax” of all “the different strands of sociological, ethnological, and psychological writing on the colonies that had accumulated since the late 1930s” (p. 122). Here, Steinmetz has produced a tour de force intellectual history of French sociology.

The central historical narrative is straightforward. French sociology was from its establishment as a profession deeply imbricated in French Empire. Durkheim himself did not write very much explicitly about empire, but a number of his students—collaborators at the *Année sociologique*—were directly involved in its institutions. The process of decolonization in the late 1950s and early 1960s saw a generalized disavowal of empire in French intellectual and cultural life—all the more so in sociology as a discipline, which repressed this element of its past. Steinmetz argues that, starting with Durkheim, sociologists even as they worked within empire were often quite critical of it. They were often—though by no means universally—precocious anti-colonials. Steinmetz wants above all to demonstrate that attempts to grasp sociologically the “colonial situation” were enormously intellectually generative.

This is a large book. The first chapter is an introduction, stating the argument and scope—which focuses on the 1930-1960 period, but deals substantially also especially with Durkheim and his immediate inheritors, and is constantly looking forward also into more recent debates. The second chapter is a demonstration of how the “disciplinary amnesia” regarding the colonial took hold of sociology as profession. The next three chapters draw together “political contexts” for the profession of sociology—beginning with the nature of French empire and

the place of “science” within it, moving on to the various inter- and then post-war developmental projects undertaken by the state, and finally focusing on the institutions, both in the colonies and in the metropole, within which sociologists, colonial and otherwise, actually worked, received funding, found promotion, and so on. The next three chapters turn to “intellectual contexts” understood first of all as the problems presented by earlier sociological programs—here, we get, for instance, a brilliant if brief discussion of Durkheim’s own writings and arguments around empire and race, as well as various other disciplines, including neighbors, allies, and adversaries. Frédéric le Play and his methods, it turns out, remained an important inspiration in the twentieth century alongside Durkheim. The next part (Chapters 9-10) is a sociology of the discipline of sociology. A central achievement of this part of the book is to show that colonial sociology was in no sense a sideshow within the discipline. Fully half of all sociologists worked in or on the empire, and while they often occupied subordinate positions within the intellectual field, this was not always the case. And some of these sociologists were “born as colonized subjects” (p. 211)—Steinmetz examines in this context the careers of François N’Sougan Agblémagnon, Manga Bekombo, Albert Memmi, and Paul Sebag (pp. 210-221). Chapters 11-14 again study individual trajectories, here in more depth: Raymond Aron, Jacques Berque, Georges Balandier, and Pierre Bourdieu. The book has a strong unity of argument, but any of those four chapters could be read independently with profit.

While the detail and theoretical investments of this monograph are likely to perplex or overwhelm undergraduates, selected chapters or parts could be used with profit in graduate seminars in French history, histories of empire, or course histories of sociology.

Kansas State University

Eric Brandom

*Menace to the Future: A Disability and Queer History of Carceral Eugenics*, by Jess Whatcott. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024. 248 pages. \$102.95, cloth. \$26.95, paper. \$26.95, electronic.

When proposals for mass deportation, migrant detention, and national disability databases surround us all, it is useful to understand the recent past of these disturbing projects. Jess Whatcott brings their work in prison abolition, human rights monitoring, immigrant rights campaigns, and disability work to bear on the many archives created by the carceral eugenics movement in California. Whatcott brings out the many ways progressive-era authorities justified detaining people, that the act of detention forestalled community formations and effectively challenged collective community reproduction, and that this detention as reproductive governance was justified in iconically eugenic ways, conventionally racist ways, deeply sexist ways, or randomly established ways. *Menace to the Future* is not an exhaustive work, as there is more to be done on the relationship

between state reform institutions and the communities that they maintain and erase. *Menace to the Future* is, however, an elegantly written provocation, a deeply documented push to get readers to widen their framework on these disabling institutions in California. Beginning with the Introduction, where Whatcott shares the realization that “detention is eugenics” (p. xiii), the project uses archives linked to California state agencies to analyze how officials decided to detain people they deemed too different, too disabled, or too threatening.

*Menace to the Future* develops the argument in four overlapping and intersecting sections: defining “defectives,” holding “defectives,” commodifying “defectives,” and resisting the “defective” process. Whatcott keeps “defective” as a term that agencies used to describe and detain a wide gamut of actions, behaviors, and communities and demonstrate how potentially different these decisions could be from our current discussions of illness, disability, sexuality, and community identity. Whatcott also demonstrates how the “defective” label “drew on and elaborated ideologies of ableism, racism, and heteropatriarchy simultaneously” (p. 31), placed the onus on individuals, maintained a sense of heritability, and contributed to an aura of contagion—all of which justified detention, an action that state officials defended because many communities and households considered the people the state considered to be “defective” to be part of their communities.

The deep and poetic dive Whatcott takes into the many changing ways state authorities labeled women, men, native Americans, Asians, Mexicans, and white migrant communities demonstrates the centrality of sexuality to forms of racial governance, as much of the justification for detention depended on whether state authorities believed the person could properly embody heterosexual coupling and household formation. The section on holding “defectives” examines this “carcerality of eugenics” and how officials worked to ensure that their asylums, state hospitals, industrial farms for women, state homes, and schools for industry did not evoke prison-like atmosphere while maintaining isolation, sex-segregation, and patient management.

Whatcott then links labeling to the political economy of these carceral asylums. The focus on political economy highlights the allegiances the Board of Charities and Corrections built with different parts of California society, be they farmers in need of temporary workers, psychologists and social workers seeking public legitimacy, white suffragettes seeking to build ways to reform working-class women away from the worlds of vice, unemployment and serial relationships into dutiful domestics, factory workers and wives, or homes for the feeble-minded seeking financial and medical resources to sterilize (“asexualize,” in progressive-era parlance) patients that might be able to leave their institutions.

Finally, *Menace to the Future* pushes us to consider resistance to carceral eugenics, whether it could be recognizable as falling support, physical sabotage, refusal to consent to sterilization, general disaffection, or a push to refuse the terms of their incarceration, be it through queer politics, labor uprisings, or refusals to go along with the respectabilities the state sought to internalize among their detainees and patients.

These summaries do little justice to the deep engagement with a variety of primary sources in *Menace to the Future*. Understanding the relationship of societies to medical institutions has been central to iconic social and cultural histories, whether they emphasize social control like Michel Foucault or community needs like Gerald Grob. More recently, historians like Alexandra Minna Stern, Miroslava Chavez Garcia, and Natalie Lira have helped place California institutions in a national framework, analyzing the more than 40,000 state sterilizations and the 45,000 deaths in custody while speaking to the childhoods and reproductive futures that California denied working-class communities of color. *Menace to the Future* brings multiplicity to the historiographical conversation. It builds out a feminist and queer analysis of the many social and political projects that shaped these medical detentions, an argument that emerges through close engagement with multiple rich evocative and disturbing primary sources. Historians working with emancipatory social movements do enrich our connections to far less liberatory pasts.

*Texas State University*

John Mckiernan-González