

interrupting the process); however, the relatively brief time span of 280 to 340 years has been challenged by the theorists of an early growth that could be dated even further back, to the Carolingian period. The many factors shaping the growth, and their geographic spread, are debated in the essays in this volume, questioning the Malthusian-Ricardian paradigm of a growth limited by the availability of (agrarian) resources. Growth is now linked to the environment, to institutions, to trading networks; medieval growth, above all, is related to the agrarian world, to the links connecting peasants and the owners of land, to the increase in labor productivity in the countryside and its several causes. The economic geography of medieval growth, and its effect on the standard of living (moving from growth to progress) is also emphasized in this volume: the long expansive period had different outcomes in different European regions.

Along these very general lines, contributors analyze and dissect, using a historiographic and theoretical approach first to debate the models that have been connected to the concept of economic development in the framework of the Western Middle Ages, and then to challenge the (mostly) neoclassical framework that economic historians tend to adopt in studying growth. The authors discuss the definition and measure of medieval economic growth and its phases and spaces, tackling climate variability and the forms of societies, the progress in agrarian production, the varied textile manufactures, the idea of a medieval industrious revolution, and demographic change. They debate commercial infrastructure and the diffusion of means of payment, the enlargement of cities and the dynamics of consumption, the relationship (also in terms of energy) between center and periphery, the existence of social inequalities (in medieval Italy), the perception of growth in contemporary sources, and the setback in the mid-fourteenth century. Further, in the case study of medieval Pistoia, the connection between visual arts and growth, competing empires in the Mediterranean area, and the influx of Byzantine artists completes the economic framework. In his final remarks, Alberto Grohmann comes full circle: quoting economists such as Robert Solow, he looks back, stressing the importance of economic thought that the authors chose instead to bypass. Readers will judge, but the book holds a very precious quality indeed—it helps us to think.

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Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-Modern Europe.

Arie van Steensel and Justin Colson, eds.

Routledge Research in Early Modern History. London: Routledge, 2017. xv + 276 pp. \$105.

Since the cultural turn, social and economic history has taken a backseat to more fashionable approaches such as entanglements, migration, and symbols. Long considered one of the hallmarks of the post-1945 historiographic shift away from big-men history,

the study of *conjonctures* and *structures* (Fernand Braudel) has receded considerably in recent decades. This collection, to a certain point, stands somewhere between these two poles: on the one hand, the editors, in their introduction (1–24), base their framework on, among others, Tönnies, Anderson, and Lefebvre (4–7), which, not only in the German-language academy, is rather uncommon, to say the least. Cities and communities are perceived as heterogeneous in nature, and the thirteen case studies detail certain “practices” (14–15) of urban life in premodern Europe. On the other hand, Colson and van Steensel argue against “[class] struggle” while building their case on “cooperation” and “competition,” perceived as “two sides of the same coin” (10).

This conceptual and terminological uncertainty is mirrored in the case studies that vary widely, from England to the Old Swiss Confederacy to Catalonia, from the Low Countries to Hungary and Croatia. Yet the editors’ claim to geographic variation “from all corners of Europe” (2) is only partially true: five essays focus on England, two more on the Low Countries; and if the East–West divide is considered, only two contributions (on medieval Zagreb [98–114] and on Hungary between 1750 and 1850 [188–207]) focus on areas outside Western Europe. Even so, and as with many comparable collections, there are some essays that stand out: Obradors-Suazo’s study on fifteenth-century Barcelona highlights the richness of the municipal archives (25–42, esp. 27–29); Arnaud’s comparison of the spatial arrangements in Bologna and Strasbourg is well researched and conceives of networks socially, not primarily spatially (60–78); if anything, one needs to read the thought-provoking essay by Vannieuwenhuyze on late medieval Brussels (132–50) and Burn’s extremely dense contribution on working communities in Newcastle upon Tyne (169–87). The two chapters on early modern London by Bishop (208–24) and Baker (245–67) also reveal new insights into speech regulation in livery companies and the sale of scientific instruments, respectively.

We must, at this point, also mention a few less fortunate details: virtually all contributors point to the interrelationship between craft associations and citizenship, yet with the exceptions of Burn, Obradors-Suazo, and, to a certain extent, the essay on poor relief in Zagreb, no essay addresses residency rights. Crosby’s interpretation of Gladman’s procession, while possible, remains rather speculative; and Jordan’s findings, based on court records from Freiberg in Saxony, while quite dense in terms of source material, is rich in vacuous jargon—what does “services” (83) mean in the sixteenth century?—and methodologically weak (81–82). Also, figures and tables should include appropriate captions (155, 157). Schober’s microstudy of two to three well-off inhabitants of Basel around 1600 (225–44), while skillfully executed, reminds us of the increasingly popular trend to take this particular approach, which originated in a very different time, to study individuals of the upper classes, thereby belying microhistory’s origins to a certain degree.

These issues aside, the essays are all rich in information and, the aforementioned geographic bias aside, make for very interesting reading. We need to note, however, that while the editors acknowledge this collection to be a “first step to a better under-

standing of premodern communities” (7), it is not always evident how the essays interact with each other or the general themes of the volume. Despite the introductory emphasis on digital tools (7–9), most contributors do not employ them, with Vannieuwenhuyze being the exception. Finally, and with respect to the notions of “premodernity” and “urban complexity” (14–15), the editors point to “practices,” a term that has become as fashionable these days as it remains ill-defined, yet virtually all research, across the ideological spectrum, points to the evolutionary nature of social change due to the emergence of capitalism from the late Middle Ages to the present, as, e.g., Spencer Dimmock, Steven Marks, and Markus Cerman emphasize. As such, this collection of essays will make you think hard about the individual case studies, but its general implications are, unfortunately, rather limited.

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Travels and Mobilities in the Middle Ages: From the Atlantic to the Black Sea.
Marianne O’Doherty and Felicitas Schmieder, eds.

International Medieval Research 21. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015. xlv + 342 pp. €90.

This wide-ranging and decidedly international collection of essays offers a fruitful and generative sampling of the strands and sessions on the topic of travel and mobilities at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds in 2010. Generously gathering established scholars as well as emerging voices, the collection in this broadest sense spans the entire Old World of Afro-Eurasia (territorial and maritime networks from the North Atlantic to the Indian Ocean), with Iona McCleery’s informative essay on the circulation of medical knowledge throughout the early Portuguese empire moving beyond medieval Europe per se along axes of both time and space (the discussion extends into the sixteenth century with some discussion of the Americas). Although the editors regretfully note the lack of Byzantine contributions in this collection (xxx), Latin, Scandinavian, Germanic, and Slavic contexts are represented.

In their introduction, the editors wisely signal an awareness of postcolonial approaches that avoid binary distinctions between “self” and “other” and increasingly offer medievalists nuanced frameworks for understanding historical and social phenomena of migration, mobility, and cultural exchange. Nonetheless, this collection shifts its focus away from the more extraordinary or spectacular forms of travel writing that tend to animate literary and cultural analysis regarding mobility (such as the works of Marco Polo or Ibn Battuta) to instead consider more quotidian forms of transit and experiences of everyday life. Revealing the historical depth and variety of short- and long-term travel by pilgrims, soldiers, knights, scholars, clerics, and diplomats, this collection persuasively demonstrates that medieval people were “anything but immobile, unadventurous, or ill-equipped to travel” (xiv).