In conclusion, Wilkinson has offered up a fine biography of Eleanor de Montfort based upon an impressive assortment of primary texts. Although she does not find major points of contention with historians who have been more focused on the era's men, the concerns and events of the thirteenth century from a noblewoman's perspective are refreshing. Though avoiding much direct engagement with feminist scholars in the debate over female agency or victimization, Wilkinson nevertheless highlights Eleanor's opportunities and involvement rather than portraying her as a pawn in marriage or politics. Finally, with great success, Wilkinson provides an understanding of the wider world of thirteenth-century noblewomen. She discusses Eleanor's childhood, marriages, and role in motherhood in the context of the lives of other women; she places Simon and Eleanor's patronage of mendicants in the wider context of the expansion of these orders; and she analyzes Eleanor's quest for dower alongside the legal and cultural expectations for dower in thirteenth-century England.

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Donald A. Yerxa, ed. *British Abolitionism and the Question of Moral Progress in History.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012. Pp. 320. $49.95 (cloth).
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The notion that British abolitionism was, in the famous words of nineteenth-century historian W. E. H. Lecky, among "the three or four perfectly virtuous acts recorded in the history of nations," is as old as the abolitionist movement itself (7). Credit for this virtuous act has frequently been given, not only to the British nation, but also to the evangelical Christianity that many British abolitionists embraced. The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson claimed, in fact, that credit for the abolitionist movement belonged "to Christianity alone" (23). This provocative collection of fourteen essays, with an introduction by editor Donald A. Yerxa, grapples with that historiographic tradition, taking up what Yerxa identifies in his introductory essay as one of the "big questions" facing historians: "Is there moral progress in history?" (2). Yerxa's preoccupation with this question reflects his long-standing concern to establish the role of Providence as an engine of historical change. Yerxa, an emeritus professor at Eastern Nazarene University and a contributing editor to the popular evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, argued in an essay published by the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* in 1997 that Christian historians should work to identify the hand of Providence in history. That impulse is visible in this collection, with "moral progress" standing in for the guiding hand of Providence.

Of course, the notion that the credit for abolitionism belongs to the British nation or the reforming spirit of evangelical Christianity has had its critics. Historians have pointed out that the vagaries of the Atlantic sugar economy during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries contributed to the political success of abolitionism, that the persistent rebelliousness of the enslaved lent urgency to abolitionist concessions, that abolitionism provided a reassuring hegemonic counterpoint to the miserable conditions of industrial laborers, and that abolitionists themselves were sometimes deeply racist. Several essays in this volume mention these objections only to brush past them, in order to place the moral virtues of the abolitionist movement once more at the center of analysis. The exemplary moral status of abolitionists is taken for granted by C. Behan McCullagh, who, in reflecting on "the lessons of history," suggests that the life stories of abolitionists have the potential to inspire history students in a similar manner to "the most inspiring person in human history . . . Jesus of Nazareth" (132).

Although the book's title suggests a focus on British abolitionism, the essays range widely and somewhat disjointedly, commenting on the historian's craft by taking up historical,

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philosophical, and theological debates about the nature of moral progress and the possibility of identifying its workings in history. Despite this seeming breadth of approach, some authors maintain a rather narrow focus on gauging a certain kind of progress, one that is cultivated by Christian and/or Western reformers who guide the inhabitants of the world down what essayist Gary Walton calls "the road out of poverty" (177). This march, Walton opines, demands the establishment of the rule of law, protection of private property, and "open, competitive markets" in order to reach its destination of modernization and economic development (173). Such a vision of progress has been widely critiqued by scholars of modernization and globalization, who point out that the "developing world" and the "developed world" are, in fact, interdependent parts of a global economy that thrives on differential development, but readers interested in exploring this critique further will have to turn elsewhere, because it is nowhere articulated in this collection.

Not all of the authors here subscribe to such a limited definition of "progress." David Brion Davis opens the collection with an essay that reprises many of the arguments made in his groundbreaking *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford University Press, 1984). Davis points out that, in the centuries stretching from Greek antiquity to the advent of the British abolitionist movement, many in the West actually linked chattel slavery with "various forms of social and economic progress" (13). The development of European empires in the Americas was, in fact, dependent on the availability of enslaved African laborers, making slavery crucial to the "progress" of European imperialism. During the era of abolitionism, however, a new notion of progress took hold, in which reformers who engaged in "conscious decision, collective effort, and mobilization of public opinion" hoped to bring about moral reform through the abolition of the slave trade and eventually slavery, thus displaying "the efficacy of Christianity" and the Providential plan for human enlightenment (24). Davis's essay thus plays a crucial role in the collection by historicizing the very definition of "progress" that other essayists take for granted.

One of the most compelling ironies in *Slavery and Human Progress* is, unfortunately, absent from Davis's essay here; antislavery reformers eventually brought their crusade to Africa, where their advocacy of abolitionism as moral progress became one of the greatest rationales for European colonialism. Jeremy Black, in his sweeping essay on the suppression of the slave trade in the Americas and Africa, speaks rather uncritically of Western "moral activism" in Africa as a justification for early European colonization and suggests that British abolitionism offers today's readers a lesson in "progressive moral vistas for government policy" (28). Black's essay, although impressive in scope, lacks citations at crucial junctures, such as when he makes the absurd claim that the British invasion of Saint Domingue prefigured later British anti–slave trade activism because "the British [presence in Saint Domingue] played an important part in ensuring the success of the Haitian Revolution" (33). Black leaves his reader with the impression that the British were there to help the revolution along, failing to mention that the British invaded Saint Domingue in the hope of capturing that highly profitable sugar colony for themselves.

In his carefully nuanced essay on British evangelicalism, David Hempton, like Davis, recognizes that the definition of progress is both "elusive" and "subjective." He acknowledges that the appeal of antislavery to British Methodists waxed and waned throughout the era of British abolitionism and argues that the British evangelical movement can be identified with "progress," but only insofar as "progress" encompasses (among other attributes) an emphasis on human agency, free markets, and labor discipline.

Lamin Sanneh problematizes the terminology of the debate even further, exploring how the definition of "slavery" is also historically and culturally contingent. Sanneh contrasts the stark opposition that many British abolitionists saw between slavery and freedom with the more fluid view of slavery and freedom suggested by his review of Islamic slave law. After enumerating the various avenues to manumission provided in Islamic law, Sanneh posits that "a theology of two natures—slave and free—never took root in canonical Islam . . . because in theory

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the door is open, however so slightly, to freedom, advancement, and integration" (76). Sanneh's analysis thus elucidates the difficulties embedded in comparative studies of African and New World slavery and abolitionism.

Overall, the essays collected here present a thought-provoking, if somewhat uneven, intervention in the age-old debate about slavery, abolitionism, and progress. While some essayists attempt to revive the spirit of Lecky, arguing that British abolitionism provides an instructive instance of moral progress in history, others pull apart the very terms of the debate, demonstrating the futility of attempts to conceive of moral progress as a transhistorical force.

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NEIL YOUNGER. *War and Politics in the Elizabethan Counties*. Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. Pp. 304. $95.00 (cloth).
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This fine first book from Neil Younger, now at the University of Essex, speaks to two distinct audiences and will be read with interest by both. One is the growing group of military historians who are interested in the role of war in the development of the state. The other are those Tudor and Stuart historians interested in local and national governance.

Younger begins with the surprisingly simple, but often overlooked, observation that between 1585 and 1603 Elizabethan England was constantly at war—in the Netherlands, in France, in Ireland, and at sea (although that last arena receives scant coverage here). Given the strength of the literature positing an intimate relationship between the strains of war and the development of more centralized states, it seems natural to examine more carefully what happened to the Elizabethan state during those eighteen years of war. His specific lens is the national-local relationship, represented here by the council, on one hand, and gentry/aristocratic county officials, on the other, primarily as mediated by the office of the county lord lieutenant. The first chapter fleshes out the basic processes of county-council relations in wartime and traces the revival and expansion of the lieutenancies (and their deputies) after 1585. Here and elsewhere, Younger's work is based on deep research in national and local archives, a thoroughness that showcases the highly variable and even personality-dependent outcomes. The lieutenancies were at the center of the council's efforts to create more reliable responses from the counties, but they were also "intended to limit the risk of overly high-handed rule by tying the practice of government into the political nation's perception of what was acceptable" (239). The men were chosen not only because of their reliability to the regime but also because of their ties to the counties. At least within central England (the situation differed in Wales, Ireland, and the North), they were not men imposed from the outside. Younger follows up in the next chapter with the next logical question. If the lieutenant became the channel for council demands, how did the counties respond? His answer runs against the grain of much of the historiography. His careful survey of the evidence finds that the gentry and the political public at large understood and supported the demands of defense, helped along by the ad hoc and flexible attitudes of the council, further moderated through a lieutenancy that emphasized persuasion over coercion, and buttressed by a national program of legitimation. In operation, "this was no conventional modernisation. . . . The lieutenancy remained highly ad hoc. . . . [But] habits of authority were formed and reinforced, and chains of command were forged" (89).

The next three chapters examine specific military activities and how well or poorly the counties met the national need. Younger covers in turn the militia, the levying of troops for service

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