Issues both of parental authority and of lineage identity (the Thynnes and the Touchets were ancient enemies in Wiltshire politics) might have led them to appeal to concepts of honor, but Alison Wall's extensive studies of the Thynne family indicate that no direct reference to personal or family honor is made in the rich correspondence surrounding the incident. Dr. Thomas suggests that "individuals often discussed matters relating to honor or reputation without necessarily employing those terms" (207), but this should be a preface to an obvious question. Why was the language of honor, so fertile in its potential meanings, avoided on some occasions? What alternative languages were preferred?

This criticism raises the second substantive issue that Dr. Thomas does not handle well: the question of changing meanings and the use of her key term in the early modern period. Dr. Thomas prefers to insist on the durability or continuity of concepts of honor but acknowledges that "the varying constituent parts of honor, and the level of privilege variously attached to them did change and shift slowly over time" (216). But she makes little attempt to understand the dynamics of these shifts in terms of the changing circumstance experienced by the elite. A parenthesis does remind us of "rising levels of urbanisation, shifts in conceptions of piety and religious identity . . . the expansion of the state, the rising wealth and associated prominence of some segments of society" (210). However, no attempt is made to demonstrate how these very general abstract forces inflected on the cultural expectations of the elite. This would require far more discussion of specific instances of value shifts in relation to constituent parts: on the decline of the heralds' visitations, for instance; on the move away from the expensive heraldic funeral; on the changed understandings of the significance of hospitality or gift-giving; on the common lawyers' suspicions of actions of defamation; on the feminization of service.

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The Draining of the Fens: Projectors, Popular Politics, and State Building in Early Modern England. Eric H. Ash.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. xvi + 398 pp. \$54.95.

The draining of the Fens in the seventeenth century was one of the most ambitious and large-scale engineering projects to be undertaken in early modern England. In the hands of a series of Dutch and English projectors, entire river systems were reconstructed, new artificial channels were created, and hundreds of acres of landscape were transformed from wetlands to arable and productive farmland, profoundly changing the lives and livelihoods of the inhabitants. But although the Crown had a vision of the Fenlands as unproductive and backwards, in need of reform and improvement, local people had a different view. In their eyes, the draining of the Fens threatened to destroy their

customs, traditions, and established patterns of life—and the interventions of the Crown and its experts were bitterly resisted.

In Ash's hands, the history of the draining of the Fens is not just a story of the physical transformation of the landscape, but a political and social story of early modern state building. Ash focuses on tensions over conflicting views of land use and productivity, issues that were closely tied up with the politically charged concepts of commonwealth and common good. The draining of the Fens serves as a case study for the antagonistic relationship between local communities—fiercely protective of their traditional customs, rights, and vernacular knowledge—and the increasingly interventionist projects and expansionist ambitions of the state. Set against this backdrop, Ash shows that the draining of the Fens was not a straightforward process, but was achieved through a series of projects, proposals, plans, and attempts at change that met with varying degrees of resistance over the course of almost a century.

This book contributes to recent scholarly interest in early modern notions of improvement, and it fits with a wider trend toward environmental and ecological history. Ash is not a newcomer to these fields: his *Power, Knowledge, and Expertise in Elizabethan England* (2004) surveyed several large-scale mining, building, and navigation projects, exploring how technological know-how and expertise were negotiated and deployed in different contexts. The draining of the Fens was outside the remit of this work, and Ash's new monograph extends and in some ways nuances his earlier argument. Whereas he characterized technological projects in the Elizabethan period as part of a process of state formation, characterized by cooperation, persuasion, and the pursuit of mutual benefits by both the central state and local provinces, Ash is clear that the draining of the Fens was an example of state building: a far more aggressive, coercive, and centralized process that was imposed from above onto so-called wild and uncivilized localities.

The project to drain the Fens appealed to a wide selection of projectors and reformers whose ambitions and ideas reached far beyond the east of England. The question of what to do with the land once the Fens had been drained was taken up by projectors interested in agrarian reform and new patterns of land use on a wider scale. The drained fenland was envisioned as a tabula rasa, a newly created landscape on which to inscribe utopian visions and reforms. This kind of thinking echoes contemporary projects for settlements in Ireland and the New World, and Ash makes these connections explicit in the second half of his book. Ireland was viewed by the English Crown and its agents as a prime example of unproductive, uncivilized land, ready to be transformed and reformed. Imperial projects for plantation and land use were based on a belief in the capacity of human reason to improve the natural world; in this context, mapping and surveying were co-opted as tools of imperialism and state building. This wider outlook allows Ash to argue that the draining of the Fens was not just a local or regional issue, but that it formed part of a political set of expansionist ideas and practices.

This comprehensive account is likely to become the standard textbook for the history of the Fens. It is thoroughly researched, drawing on a wide range of printed material

in addition to archival sources including court records, petitions, correspondence, and state papers. The text is illustrated with original maps and plans, as well as with photos of the Fenlands today. Ash has managed to transform a potentially specialist subject into a story of protest, resistance, and political wrangling that will appeal to a broad spectrum of readers: from those interested in the history of environment, technology, and projects, to students of the political, economic, and social history of early modern England.

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Hugo Grotius and the Century of Revolution, 1613–1718: Transnational Reception in English Political Thought. Marco Barducci.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. x + 222 pp. \$80.

Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was a Dutch jurist, political and religious thinker, statesman, and diplomat. His many writings included *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (*On the Law of War and Peace*; 1625), which is a classic of international law and political theory. He sided with the Dutch Remonstrants in their debate with Calvinists—a dispute which led to violence and resulted in his imprisonment. In 1621 he escaped and went to France where he published *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*. Later, he was appointed Swedish ambassador to the French court.

Grotius wrote a great deal, and his writings circulated widely in England and elsewhere. Famously, in 1635 the jurist John Selden published *Mare Clausum*, rejecting Grotius's arguments for the freedom of the seas. Though the two thinkers differed on that particular topic, they resembled each other on many other points, and Samuel Pufendorf later remembered both as important precursors of his own theories concerning the laws of nature and nations. Many English writers drew on Grotius, but until now there has been relatively little scholarly research on his influence in Britain.

This innovative and scholarly book is "the first attempt to provide to Anglophone readers a full book-length account of the English reception and usage of Grotius's work approximately from 1613 to 1718" (3). Grotius came to England in 1613, and the first English attack on his ideas about the freedom of the seas was published in that year. In 1718 John Toland's *Nazarenus* appeared. It undermined the arguments which Grotius had advanced in defense of Christianity in his best-selling *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* (*On the Truth of the Christian Religion*; 1627).

The first part of Barducci's book is about the state, resistance, and government, and discusses themes including contract, protection and allegiance, war, revolution, and ideas about republicanism and ancient constitutionalism. Part 2 surveys the uses made of Grotius's thinking on the state, the church, and religion. It deals with theories of church-state relations and ideas about church government. The third and final section is on property and empire, with one chapter on each of these two important themes.