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BOOK REVIEWS

Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *What is Early Modern History?*

(Medford, MA and Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021). Pages 154 +3 Images. Paperback £15.99.

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Merry Wiesner-Hanks poses a deceptively simple question: What does it mean to do early modern history? To tackle the issue, Wiesner-Hanks investigates the evolution of early modern studies and provides a succinct survey of the state of the field in a comprehensive marriage of history and historiography. This slim volume is comprised of seven chapters with a clear introduction and stimulating afterword. Wiesner-Hanks considers the trajectories of the many and often overlapping currents of early modern history, arranging subfields in a loosely chronological format yet emphasising thematic links and points of comparison.

Chapter One does well to group economic and social history together and begins with an overview of the progression of economic thought from Adam Smith, to Karl Marx, to Jan de Vries. Wiesner-Hanks explains the methodologies and theories that have shaped economic history, giving precise definitions to the 'Great' and 'Little Divergence', the 'consumer revolution', and the 'industrious revolution'. Economic history is shown to cross-fertilise with social history, as the emergence of capitalism and industrialisation had a profound impact on daily lives of ordinary people. Wiesner-Hanks presents social history as particularly interdisciplinary in its examinations of the body, medicine, senses, and emotions, as well as broader questions of social norms, work and leisure, and education, among many other facets of human life.

Chapter Two examines religious, intellectual, and cultural history. Scholarly focus in these fields has shifted away from an epistemology of ruptures and revolutions that favours 'history's heroes', and instead emphasises continuities and contexts for wider movements. Recent studies draw attention to the religious ideas and practices of everyday people, as researchers increasingly consider the blurred boundaries between popular and learned religion. Wiesner-Hanks then assesses intellectual history, giving context to the discourse surrounding the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Republic of Letters. Particular attention is rightly paid to traditionally marginalised figures and locales that participated in these greater intellectual shifts, including women and non-elites, as well as the participation of non-European centres in Enlightenment thinking. On cultural history, Wiesner-Hanks reiterates the impact of the material and linguistic turns and microhistories, and acknowledges the influence of anthropology on the field.

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Indeed, effective comparisons might have been drawn between cultural and social history, had they been grouped together.

Chapter Three draws on the author's expertise as an historian of women and gender, demonstrating her extensive knowledge of the field. Wiesner-Hanks locates the origins of gender studies in the second-wave feminist thought of the 1970s, when scholars fought for a reappraisal of the past in relation to the complex, hierarchical social system of patriarchy. Wiesner-Hanks demonstrates the relevance of current scholarly emphasis on intersectionality by asserting that women and men were not homogenous groups; their experiences of the early modern period were incredibly wide-ranging. From the 1990s, queer theory challenged traditional sexual and gendered binaries. By blurring these boundaries, or 'queering' subjects, new and nuanced understandings of people's sexual lives and identities have been achieved.

Chapter Four investigates the historical behemoth that is the Atlantic world, born from the 'overseas' and 'imperial' history of the twentieth century. Wiesner-Hanks spotlights recent studies that considers the lands, peoples, and goods surrounding the Atlantic Ocean as intricately entangled. Within a post-colonial framework, scholars see the epoch beginning in 1492 as an intense period of exchange, encounters, mobility, and hybridity. Wiesner-Hanks demonstrates the value in the discourse surrounding the voluntary and forced migration of peoples (including the slave trade), the exchange of commodities, the creolisation of Christianity and the development of racial and ethnic ideologies, as well as the environmental impact of transatlantic contact, and the interconnectedness of the American, Haitian, and French revolutions. Here, Wiesner-Hanks succeeds in rendering navigable what may at times seem a daunting field.

Chapter Five turns to global and world history, which the author largely treats together. Studies spotlight the interactions of peoples and goods, and the formation of networks of knowledge and trade as a defining feature of the early modern period. Military history is implicated in this as scholars consider technological advancements in warfare and the effects of such devastating action on global societies. Finally, the newer field of environmental history is assessed, which investigates the impact of the climate on global societies, and how societies impacted the environment. Closing with an entertaining musing on the European men's fashion for beaver fur hats and the many global arenas this fashion impacted, Wiesner-Hanks cleverly demonstrates how political, economic, military, gendered, environmental, cultural, and material histories can be bound up in a single phenomenon.

Chapter Six considers popular and public history. As Wiesner-Hanks argues, historical figures and events continue to captivate consumers across popular media. While many of these blend fact and fiction, their popularity showcases society's enduring fascination with the past. The internet has also democratised historical study and provides a platform for communities of researchers and enthusiasts outside the traditional bounds of academia. As such, as Wiesner-Hanks rightly affirms, the question of what early modern history is should not be mulled over exclusively by scholars, but also by the wider public. Finally, Wiesner-Hanks considers the future of early modern history, positing that 'taking the temperature' of the field assumes that 'something is in flux' (104). Written during the

coronavirus pandemic, Wiesner-Hanks's metaphor is certainly fitting, as quarantine orders continue to shift how historians undertake research.

Wiesner-Hanks achieves a clear and punchy survey of early modern historiography, peppering the text with enjoyable anecdotes and stories from the historical past. The author draws out the many parallels between the early modern world and today, and the unique vantage point of early modern history that affords scholars 'the ability (and responsibility) to highlight these connections' (105). Wiesner-Hanks is particularly attuned to global considerations and cutting-edge digital methodologies, which have transformed research in several subfields. As is warranted by the genre of the text, Wiesner-Hanks is careful in her critique, instead allowing the historiography to speak for itself. As with many short-format texts, explanations are necessarily economical, yet the book is impressively complete. Moreover, detailed footnotes and a further reading section provide excellent rabbit holes for the interested reader. This is a timely historiographic contribution that sings the praises of an incredibly rich and invigorating field, and will undoubtedly become the go-to handbook for students and scholars of early modern history.

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David Hitchcock and Julia McClure (eds), *The Routledge History of Poverty, c.1450–1800*

(London and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. xxvii + 380 + figures 37 + tables 2 H/b £190, e-book £35.99

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The claim made in the blurb for this volume is that it offers 'critical new directions in poverty scholarship'. Readers might be forgiven for thinking that there is little new to be said about poverty, certainly in the European context. In the main, however, these essays do provide novelty, in different ways. Indeed, if there is a unifying theme to this somewhat eclectic collection, it is that of novelty. Despite what the title might suggest, this volume makes no claims to being a comprehensive survey. From the perspective of an undergraduate in search of a textbook, this does not supersede Robert Jütte's *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, which is indeed heavily cited by contributors, though many authors do offer wide-ranging surveys of existing research.

Instead, the different contributions take a fresh look at the history of poverty. In their introduction, David Hitchcock and Julia McClure make a strong case for the early modern period as being fundamentally transformative for the experience and conceptualisation of poverty. More importantly, they make a passionate and welcome call for a broader definition of poverty, one that, echoing Amartya Sen