

The Smoke of London: Energy and Environment in the Early Modern City.
William M. Cavert.

Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xx + 274 pp. \$99.99.

For many people, smoky London town conjures up pictures of a Victorian street with a yellow gaslight looming through the murk and the figure of Jack the Ripper silhouetted against the darkness. William M. Cavert's book, however, explores the story of smoke pollution in the capital city in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. London became reliant on coal for a variety of purposes from the sixteenth century onward. While Londoners found coal "ugly, unhealthy or undesirable" (xviii), it became embedded in conceptions of social stability, economic prosperity, and state power. As Cavert states, it "brought benefits that rendered its dirtiness acceptable" (xviii). Disruption to coal supplies was thought to be as devastating to the social order as were problems with food supplies.

Cavert looks at the early legal debates, many initiated by personal complaints from Elizabeth I and Charles I, aimed at limiting smoky industries located near royal palaces. Charles II shared his father's dislike of coal smoke but "measures against it were limited, local, sporadic, and rearguard" (190), not least because Charles was more interested in projects in Windsor or Greenwich, outside the capital city. Such preferences marked the failure of earlier attempts to limit smoky industries within London. The situation changed gradually as local magistrates became more interested in cleaning London's air to benefit health and to protect buildings. But these early attempts to legislate show a pattern that was to be followed during later centuries as attempts to reduce smoke failed to be passed into law. A major part of the problem was that for many people the smoke pouring from workshops signified industrial success and full employment, just as smoke issuing from domestic chimneys registered prosperity and cosy domesticity, a relationship only hinted at in Cavert's book.

Other, wealthier individuals also tried to limit the number of smoke-emitting industries located near to their own dwellings. New developments in the west of London, such as Covent Garden, prohibited smoky trades from the outset in order to attract a higher class of resident. Urban settlements created for and by social and political elites partly explain why the East End suffered more than London's West End from smoke, as the vapors from the increasing number of domestic dwellings were blown eastward by the prevailing winds.

The most significant stand against smoke during the period covered by this book was John Evelyn's pioneering pamphlet *Fumifugium* (1661). Powerful though it was, Evelyn's polemic had little practical effect. Cavert also surveys the metaphorical and literary resonances of smoke. For many, London could be summed up as a place of "sin and sea coal" (200). The smoky atmosphere evoked images of mercantile greed and corruption. Innocent women might be ruined by the smoke of London but for

educated women London could be an intellectual center, leading one bluestocking to write that she looks “forward with joy to the dark days of January and the smoke of London,” which reduced the possibilities for outdoor recreations (214).

This book is not about the mixture of smoke with the natural damp atmosphere of London that produced London fogs, the “pea-soupers” that became frequent and dense from the 1830s onward; it is about specific smoke nuisances from industries such as breweries, soap producers, tanners, and glass and brick manufacturers, whose smoke poured into neighboring houses ruining their furnishings and clogging up their lungs. People in these earlier centuries were not environmentally apathetic and they attempted to control or even curb the filthy smoke, although many because they were personally affected. Cavert shows the development from this to attempts to protect the city’s air and beauty as a wider project. All of this sets the scene for later battles as industry in London expanded and domestic hearths increased, which culminated in the Clean Air Act of 1956. William Cavert has written an engrossing, readable, and authoritative study of a significant episode in the history of the urban environment, one with important lessons for today. It is a pity, however, that the publishers have not felt able to include any illustrations, despite the rich visual sources available on this topic.

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Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain. James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, eds.

Material Texts. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. x + 322 pp. \$69.95.

This collection of essays explores early modern letter-writing within the broad matrix of its social and material conditions. In taking this broader view of letter-writing, a genre that contributor Alan Stewart describes as “radical[ly] unmoored” and “even chaotic,” the volume includes chapters written by “scholars of rhetoric, literary analysis, linguistics, history, historical geography, material culture, paleography.” Together the contributors explore how early modern letter-writers immersed themselves in “the range of epistolary literacies” and the “complex series of overlapping and interlocking practices” necessary to read, draft, and post letters (5). Because early modern letter types were diverse in style and aim (including letters of friendship, advice, and news; business and state letters; letters of censure, petition, love, slander, and dedication), the early modern letter-writer acquired a diverse repertoire of epistolary, social, and behavioral skills. The well-versed letter-writer learned the craft and care of penman-