conclusion. The Navajo Nation's solar and wind resources are as prodigious as its buried coal.

On the whole, both books are well-written and refreshingly free of polemical posturing despite the fact that both offer a critical perspective on social inequality, business and political corruption, and environmental pollution and degradation. Both books are well-informed by geography theory and political economy, but neither allows theoretical discourse to mar the narrative—with the possible exception of Needham's last chapter, which slogs through some dissertation-style discourse analysis. Both balance their critical perspectives with hopeful acknowledgements of progress and problem-solving. Both books would work well as texts for upper division undergraduate or graduate classes in environmental history, energy history, and economic history. This is a field of study that will likely remain fertile and highly relevant for years to come as modern societies around the world make the transition away from fossil fuel-based energy regimes over the next couple of decades.

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Abigail L. Swingen. *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015. xv + 271 pp. ISBN 978-0-300-18754-0, $85.00 (cloth).

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When examining the near-exponential growth of enslaved populations in the early Anglo-Caribbean area, it can seem as though colonial slavery was an inevitable and unstoppable force. As Abigail L. Swingen demonstrates in her new book, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire*, the method of enabling and promoting that trade, however, was bitterly contested. In a highly ambitious work, Swingen tackles three major subjects—royal political control, imperial planning, and early-modern economic theory—in two locations, the Westminster court and the British West Indies. Starting with the rise of the Stuart monarchy and ending with the South Sea Bubble, she seeks to show how divergent commercial opinions and rival political factions created a young British Empire largely unguided by any core philosophy. Britain's initial

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imperial system was instead somewhat ad hoc, with the exception of one essential goal: to encourage the flourishing of colonial slavery. In this telling, British officials may have fought over what they wanted the empire to look like, but they agreed that it would be heavily populated with unfree laborers.

Working chronologically, Swingen traces the development of West Indian slavery alongside political and economic debates occurring simultaneously in England. She argues forcefully for an integrated view of the Atlantic world—one in which the paths of Caribbean settlement connected directly to the channels of Stuart patronage. The book begins by showing the failure of convict transportation and indentured servitude to meet the Caribbean's labor needs. By the time of Cromwell's Western Design in 1654, African workers had started filling that gap, transforming Barbados's economy and convincing English officials of the need to grab new territory for enslaved labor. As Swingen demonstrates through a careful reading of administrative sources, this plan also allowed interregnum leaders to pursue a more aggressive English state through conquest. The remainder of the book focuses on the balance between these twin imperial goals: a robust African slave trade and a strong centralized government.

The restored Stuart monarchy viewed a slaving monopoly as the best means to maintain this equilibrium. Charles II and his brother, the Duke of York, created the Royal African Company to supply colonies with enslaved workers as well as to shore up royal power at home by funneling profits directly to the Crown. As a monopoly, the company also fit well into the mercantilist philosophies of the time, as it was thought by some to be the best way to fight international competition while also keeping revenue safely contained within the British Empire. However, the enormous costs of controlling each part of the slave trade stymied the company's ability to deliver enough Africans to meet West Indian demand. Colonial planters, in turn, pushed back by either buying from non-company sources or petitioning the king for a more open trade. Swingen rightly views these disputes as evidence that mercantilism was by no means a hegemonic and unquestioned economic theory in the seventeenth century. Moreover, these clashes reveal how powerful slavery was to the imperial debates of the time.

The final three chapters of *Competing Visions of Empire* underscore just how bound up the monarchy was with the fate of slavery. By the 1670s, enslaved Africans were so highly valued that some colonists openly defied Westminster to secure as many as possible. Fears over James II's Catholicism may have weakened his support at home, but his fervent backing of a protected slave trade proved his undoing in the Caribbean. James reacted to this dissent in much the same way as

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he did in North America: He installed loyal governors in each of the West Indian colonies. If they had not already been previous employees of the Royal African Company, then they had been directed by the king to ensure that the company's monopoly was enforced. Very quickly, however, Jamaica's new governor, the Duke of Albemarle, fell victim to the personal advantages that came through promoting private slave sales instead. When the Glorious Revolution arrived in Jamaica, it was clear that something had to change with the slave trade.

Swingen makes the bold argument that the Glorious Revolution's new emphasis on an integrated empire was not, in fact, new at all. It emerged out of decades of debates about how the slave trade should be conducted. Planters had long insisted that the Crown and London investors should not be receiving individual windfalls at the expense of an efficient slave trade that would benefit the empire as a whole. Nevertheless, imperial planners did not shift entirely away from previous strategies after William and Mary came to power. As Swingen recounts, the demise of the Royal African Company was not followed by full-scale privatization. Rather, a new joint-stock endeavor, the South Sea Company, emerged to fulfill the *asiento* contract to supply the Spanish Empire with slaves, as well as to finance Britain's national debt, which was ballooning due to the new Crown's military adventures. Although it did not have a monopoly, the South Sea Company still hampered private merchants, resurrecting calls for a reform of the slave trade. The lesson from both companies, as Swingen shows, was that slavery continued to be a vital piece not only of Britain's finances, but also of its government's political maneuvering.

Throughout the book, Swingen provides an expert analysis of the Stuart court, and the ways that slavery intersected and interfered with its interest. At its heart, though, *Competing Visions of Empire* is a story about the Royal African Company. Swingen presents a compelling case for a reassessment of the company, not as an improperly maligned organization, but as an instrumental arm in the Stuarts' attempt to control and direct their empire. Indeed, her account provides a much-needed intervention demonstrating slavery's centrality to the British Empire for political, as much as economic, reasons. Her examination of the company's connections to the English court, and influence on colonial politics and society, is extensive and refined. However, when she begins incorporating the larger issues of imperial vision and labor theory, her sources become thinner and less convincing. In this push to make broad claims about British imperial ideology, she also occasionally misrepresents the current state of the field. In particular, she insists that historians inaccurately continue to treat Britain and its colonies as disconnected units. Although an

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older historiography did segregate the two, such approaches have been out of fashion for at least a generation. Still, Swingen's integration of colonial and domestic politics is impressive and likely to surprise many scholars with just how deeply slavery permeated the foundation of the British imperial state.

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David E. Nye. *America's Assembly Line*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013. xii + 338 pp. ISBN 978-0-262-01871-5, $33.00 (hardcover); 978-0-262-52759-0, $16.95 (paper).

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An automobile assembly line looks fairly simple—at least conceptually. Parts come to the line and are added to a growing vehicle as it moves along the line, until the finished automobile arrives at the end of the line and exits as a finished product. A closer examination, however, reveals that the line is only a piece of a more complex system of production. When we recognize that the parts themselves are assembled—on a different production line, in a different part of the same factory or in a different factory—we realize that the assembly line is merely the final line in a complex system of lines: A production line. Parts. Workers. Energy. Skill and know-how. Furthermore, the line is itself the result of a production process that is a part of a larger, ever more complex, system—not just a system of production, but a far more complex social system. As a simpler example, consider the assembly line that was adopted in the manufacture of household labor-saving equipment. These assembly lines dramatically reduced the labor time necessary to complete household production. As a result, women, being freed from much of the time needed for housework, began moving in much greater numbers into the paid labor force. This changed the whole social culture of households, leading to a tremendous amount of social change.

This is the process that David E, Nye, a professor of American studies at the University of Southern Denmark, reveals to us in *America's Assembly Line*. This is an interesting book on the evolutionary process from which Henry Ford's first real production line emerged. The mechanized assembly line that Ford Motor Company

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