
REVIEWS OF BOOKS

R.C. ALLEN, *Enclosure and the Yeoman. The Agricultural Development of the South Midlands 1450-1850*, Oxford-New York, Clarendon Press, 1992.

Already noted for his criticisms in relation to "Agrarian Fundamentalism", in *Enclosure and the Yeoman* Robert Allen develops and broadens the debate about the nature and the effects of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the English South Midlands (an area lying between Oxford, Cambridge and Leicester) from the 1450s to the 1850s. Drawing on the contrasting works and thought of Young and Marx, the assumptions of agrarian fundamentalists have conditioned not only our interpretation of English history in modern times but also that of many European states. Enclosure and the creation of large farms led to an unprecedented increase in agricultural productivity, which in turn promoted industrial expansion through both investments and the release of labour, but which also gave rise to great social inequality. The author's intention is not to deny the validity of these principles in his interpretation of separate and distinct features of the transition from an agricultural to industrial society, but rather to scale down their importance and to question their being an integral part of a unifying and linear model that is universally valid.

England did not undergo an Agrarian Revolution but rather two, which are treated in the chapters contained in the first part of the book: that of the yeomen, the small peasant proprietors, which reached the height of its influence in the sixteenth century, and that of the big landowners which occurred during the next two centuries. The economic crisis following the Black Death of 1348 led to extensive enclosure and the destruction of village economies by the big landowners. The effects of depopulation so alarmed public opinion that the Crown was led to strengthen and to extend ownership rights to peasants. Feudal life-long and temporary leases became safe forms of posses-

sion, through which the yeomen were able to manage their lands, still remaining within the open-field system. Thus it was this legal Revolution which put an end to the abuses practised by the big landowners and which helped to increase the number of small holdings during the sixteenth century, a process that was halted only during the Revolution of the big landowners. According to data provided by the author the average size of open farms was 59 acres in the seventeenth century, which gradually increased to 65 in the eighteenth century to reach 145 in 1800. As far as the number of holdings is concerned, open farms numbered 328 in the seventeenth century, increasing to 398 in the eighteenth century (114 of which were farms of between 30 and 60 acres) and dropping to 145 in 1800. On the contrary, enclosed farms showed an upward trend, increasing from 23 to 84 and to 327.

We need, therefore, to go further back in time than the big landowners' Agrarian Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to trace the preconditions of the English Industrial Revolution which are rather to be sought in the process of growth and expansion of small holdings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was largely a legal revolution which saw an early example of state intervention to define clear and uniform rules for property rights. In Allen's analysis, therefore, state action takes on a vital role in the process of economic transformation. Of course this is far from being an institutional approach although Allen's perspective does recall North and Thomas's picture of European evolution in modern times depicting the legitimization of land rights as a kind of bartering between the State and social groups and showing that the early development and fullness of such a process in England constituted the indispensable prerequisite for its extraordinary expansion. Consider the Italian case. A mere comparison of the economic data would not explain the profound differences that characterised the changes in the structure of landownership in preunitary Italy. If in Austrian Lombardy and in the Kingdom of Sardinia, for instance, the concept of landownership understood as full use, free from community obligations was already spreading in the eighteenth century, the situation in South Italy was very different. Here state intervention was weak throughout the modern era up to the abolition of feudalism; the uncertainty and confusion which marked property rights hardly lessened the chaos and according to such eminent eighteenth-century reformers as Genovesi, Filangieri, Galanti and Palmieri, they represented one of the biggest obstacles to the improvement of the economic and social conditions in the Kingdom of Naples.

The economic role of the yeoman, examined and explained by Allen in the second and third part of the book using a wealth of information and a sophisticated methodological framework, lies fundamentally in the fact that most of the growth in agricultural productivity and more than half of the growth in labour productivity which took place in England from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, originated in the peasant economy. The agrarian fundamentalists argued that enclosures led to agricultural improvement and

played a vital role in increasing productivity. Allen questions this assumption. By comparing yields instead of mere quantities the author reaches the conclusion that on both heavy and light soils and on pasture land the increase in growth derived entirely from the peasant economy. Thus the traditional correlation between the introduction of technological innovations typical of an intensive and capitalistic system of production — such as a more rational form of crop rotation — and the increase in productivity falls down. The only innovations of modern technology which produced economic growth were land reclamation and drain construction. According to Allen's figures, the estimates of GDP in 1770 show that the increase deriving from enclosures and the concentration of farms was of 0.7% and therefore less than half the increase recorded during the Agrarian Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed less to the growth of GDP than those before 1700.

Can we find similar situations in other countries? Consider the Italian case again. Too preoccupied with trying to verify the existence or absence of large capitalistic farms, Italian agrarian historiography has always underestimated the role played by small peasant holdings in the country's economic development. Nevertheless, a few writers, such as Bonelli and Lupo, have emphasised their importance. For instance, Lupo has highlighted the vital role of the small peasant proprietor, integrated into the traditional *latifondium*, in the expansion of Sicilian citrus farming in the nineteenth century. For the previous centuries Villani and Villari have shown that the number of small proprietors in South Italy tied to the land by tenant and lease-hold contracts increased in the modern era, although falling off markedly in the eighteenth century. Yet the situation regarding types of ownership differed greatly according to area. In areas like Terra di Lavoro and Terra di Bari, land distribution among the peasants gave rise to a type of farm management which was similar to that of small holders, whereas the situation was very different in other areas of the South. Along the Appenine ridge from Abruzzo to Sannio and from Irpinia to Lucania, the types of farm scarcely corresponded to the classification chosen by Allen of "open" or "enclosed" farms. In these areas the binomials open-enclosed fields and private property-collective use did not always necessarily constitute opposite and alternative pairs which were mutually exclusive. If on one hand the legal uncertainty over land rights in the Neapolitan Kingdom hindered the process of legitimation of landownership, in turn this process encountered a fundamental obstacle in the very contradictory and hardly uniform attitudes of the various social groups involved. Complex forms of resource exploitation often generated a conflicting network of interests which made it difficult to define definite and uniform rules, rules whose violation often constituted the condition of survival for entire social groupings.

Productivity growth is not the only variable which Allen uses to measure English economic development. Another element of evaluation is that of

equality, which is mainly dealt with in the fourth and fifth part of the book. The theme of equality and social justice, so dear to writers of recent political philosophy (consider the popularity of Walzer's works in the last few years), has become, thanks to authors like Sen, a crucial variable in economic theory. Allen uses it as an important element of historiographical assessment in analysing economic change in Britain, giving a decidedly negative influence to the impact of the big landowners' revolution on the distribution of national income. Enclosures released peasant labour from the countryside, but contrary to Marxist theory the peasants did not become proletarians but merely paupers who contributed very little to the nation's industrial expansion. The big landowners, benefitting from agricultural expansion through the rise in rents, did not reemploy their earnings in investments beneficial to the collectivity but instead dissipated them in expenditure for luxury and unnecessary goods. Allen's conclusions therefore are a valorisation of both the role of the peasant in the more general context of economic development and the role of agriculture compared to industry. The agricultural product would have grown more rapidly in the seventeenth century if the peasants had kept possession of their land. The yeoman was more tied to the land than the capitalist. To illustrate this the author gives the example of countries like Taiwan and South Korea where the creation of a system of small peasant holdings has led to high growth rates of production. The benefits of this growth have been more equitably distributed than in other countries which have instead witnessed greater concentration of ownership. Consequently, industry in many poor countries has been unable alone to give a boost to employment and so absorption of the workforce by agriculture has become an important political objective.

This book is an outstanding and indispensable contribution in which Allen demonstrates his vast knowledge of the sources and the literature. It is rich in stimuli and arguments for discussion related both to methodology and content. It opens new research avenues and fields of study, such as the need for greater attention to the interplay between institutional factors and economic changes, a closer analysis of the role played by small peasant proprietors in the development of industrialised countries and a more complex assessment of the relationship between economic growth, equality and social justice. At the same time the book is somewhat disorienting in its reappraisal of ideas and criteria that have guided entire generations of historians in their general interpretation of how the transition from feudalism to capitalism came about. Of course there has always been those who have scaled down the influence of enclosures and who have underlined the role of peasant proprietors in the period before the industrial revolution. But the fascination of Allen's work lies in the radicality of his criticism of conventional models; in an era which rejects ideological assumptions and in which the term "complexity" has become historiography's epistemological rule, Allen invites us to

avoid reading the past on the basis of rigid theorems which have not been previously subjected to careful experimental testing.

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K. BIDDICK, *The Other Economy. Pastoral Husbandry on a Medieval Estate*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1989, pp. XVII-230.

Heavily drawing on evolutionistic models, economic historiography has always attached great importance to the analysis of cereal production in studies about the mechanisms that characterised traditional agricultural societies. According to such models, animal husbandry was an element of backwardness and coincided with a phase that preceded the advent of arable farming, which, on the contrary, was a sign of development and progress. Through research on the economic changes brought about by the feudatories in the Abbey of Petersborough in the Midlands in medieval England, Kathleen Biddick sets out to invert this tendency and to restore dignity and importance to the role played by the pastoral economy in European history, challenging the stereotypes which have often prevented us from widening our knowledge about the subject.

While during the first part of the twelfth century the Abbey produced exclusively for internal consumption, there was subsequently an inversion in tendency and the feudatories began to produce for the market. Far from being subordinate to production, in the analysis consumption and trade represent two independent variables which were able to determine and shape economic choices, and affect the amount of livestock held. For example, it was food habits and market price trends which explain the composition of livestock and its variations over time, and which the author discusses in the second part of the book. Bread and beer consumption explains the greater numbers of animals used for hauling than those for producing meat and milk. The Abbey preferred to sell fodder to the peasants rather than to use it for dairy cows and lambs. The number of sheep, on the other hand, was directly related to the trend in wool prices. As far as horses were concerned, while plough horses were bought on the market, race horses — an important status symbol for the feudatories — were reproduced and bred on the estate. Pig-breeding brought about an expansion in the cultivation of legumes.

Within this context, agriculture and animal husbandry were closely inter-linked, constituting different but integral aspects of a single economy, as is clearly shown in the third chapter of the first part of the book. In 1300-01

out of a harvest of between 62,980 and 81,190 bushels of cereals and legumes, the Abbey consumed 44% of the total, the animals 21% and labour 10%. The conflict between agriculture and animal husbandry has, in fact, for some time been subject to historiographical revision especially in studies in modern and contemporary history. As far as Italy is concerned, authors like Villani and Marino writing on the Kingdom of Naples and Caffiero writing on the Papal States have shown that where the conflict between agriculture and animal husbandry existed it was much more complex and many-sided than is generally assumed, diametrically opposing, for example, animal husbandry and rich and intensive farming (and not vice-versa extensive farming), and small and large-scale animal husbandry.

It was not only economic considerations which explain the gradual access to the market. The feudatories could appropriate for themselves the products of the land at no cost at all, and still keep a balance between production and consumption. Underlying the recourse to the market were basically political and social factors. The profits arising from sales enabled the Abbots to pay for taxes, lawsuits and political favours, in other words, to pay for the costs of holding power and to invest in perpetuating their feudal authority over the area and in maintaining the social status quo. Here is one of the author's most astute insights. There is a current tendency in historiographical debate to cast aside criteria which are too rigidly based on economic theory when analysing the actions of social actors, particularly in relation to aspects that lend themselves to an interdisciplinary approach involving social sciences. Banti and Macry, for example, in various recent works in contemporary history, have focussed on the relationship between social strategy and economic strategy. These strategies — the first aiming at increasing or maintaining status and the second at producing economic gain — interlock, at times in conflict with one another and at other times in harmony with one another. It is precisely the way the two strategies are proportioned which gives shape and identity to the processes of transformation in different societies.

Contrary to what is commonly assumed by agrarian historians, the prevalence of self-sufficient farming was not an obstacle to technological change. Self-consumption and the remoteness of the market did not always and necessarily enter into conflict with innovatory strategies; moreover, consumption and investment were no longer two diametrically-opposed choices. This was the situation in Peterborough in the twelfth century before members of the feudal class became involved in more complex trade circuits. Consider the introduction of mills and granaries, of work-horses and cart-horses, of the use of fertilisers and specialised labour for threshing. Once more, just as we have recently seen with Allen's book on the Agrarian Revolutions in England, in Anglo-Saxon historiographical debate the technological element is underestimated and the structural element is emphasised. While for Allen it is the productive units, the size and position of the fields and of the farms which influence progress and agricultural productivity, for Biddick it is the

units of consumption and the differences in consumption habits which are important. These are new ideas which force us to revise traditional cause and effect relationships between consumption and investment and between technological innovation and economic growth.

This book is an important contribution to the history of the pastoral economy in Europe. Although considering a very limited time-span, nevertheless the author has used a wealth of documentary material and has not shunned using archeological finds. She has illustrated and tested various hypotheses and ideas about the interplay between social and economic strategies, the existence of a complex and not necessarily conflicting relationship between agriculture and animal husbandry, the changeable and flexible nature of the ties between consumption, production and the market and their effects on the pastoral economy. This is clearly a pioneering work, an invitation to open the doors of history to the study of a sector which has always been considered marginal by a too rigidly evolutionist approach, but which, on the contrary, played an important role that needs to be more closely examined and documented.

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D. CINEL, *The National Integration of Italian Return Migration, 1870-1929*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 280 pp.

This is an interesting and insightful study of Italian emigration and return migration in late nineteenth century. It will be useful for immigration historians, researchers and policy makers as a guide to the basic literature on the subject, particularly the multi-volume *Inchiesta parlamentare sulle condizioni dei contadini nelle province meridionale e nella Sicilia 1902-1910* (Faina Report), which is extensively used throughout the work. Introductory chapters cover the history of the Southern question and the national character of southern Italians; later chapters discuss the debate on emigration, return migration and remittances in South Italy. It concludes with a study of the effect of government policy on the south.

In the nineteenth century industrial countries exported manufactured products and services to the less developed countries and imported raw materials. Southern Italy exported labour and imported remittances-savings sent by overseas workers to relatives at home.

The effect of migration and remittances for the Italian economy has been the subject of a long debate among Italian historians. Ruggiero Romano has

argued that remittances had little effect on Italian economic growth when compared to the social and economic costs of migration. Ercole Sori, on the other hand, has maintained that remittances were indeed important. At the macro level, they provided a surplus in Italy's international accounts, made possible larger imports of coal, iron and cotton in a period of deficit trade balances during Italy's industrial revolution and helped with the successful conversion of the consolidated debt in 1906. At the micro level, they led to improvements in the standard of living, helped peasants pay debts, support relatives, buy land, build houses, etc. Similar effects were observed in Croatia, Galicia and Slovakia. Yet recent work suggests that Romano is probably closer to the truth.

Emigrant savings were sent back to Italy in several ways — via the Bank of Naples (after the reform of 1902), as international postal money orders, through private banks, by letter and carried back by returnees. Only transmission through the Bank of Naples and by postal money order were statistically measurable, so that we have only estimates of the amounts involved. It is unfortunate therefore that Cinel has relied on the ISTAT national income study of 1952 which is seriously flawed for his estimates of emigrant remittances. The ISTAT estimates probably overstate the value of remittances by at least fifty per cent between 1902 and 1913. The values cited for the post-war years 1919-1930 become astronomical because of violent devaluations of the lire at a time when remittances were actually declining. When billions of dollars are then confused with billions of lire (pp. 146-147) the exercise becomes a kind of elegiac dementia.

Although remittances played an important role in Italy's development their potential was never realized. They contributed approximately 3 to 5% of Italy's national product, and were about as important as tourism to Italy's balance of payments. The largest part of remittance income, however, was used for consumption rather than savings or investment. In fact there were few opportunities for investment by peasants in the archaic, parasitical agricultural system of South Italy and very little investment in small artisan enterprise which could have stimulated growth, as the government did not encourage it. The long-term effects of remittances therefore were slight.

Other aspects of the study raise interesting questions. Given the largely temporary character of Italian emigration to the U.S., it is difficult to understand why repatriates are considered failures. One could also argue that returnees were the most successful migrants.

Finally, we must accept Cinel's conclusion that emigration relieved population pressure but failed to solve the southern question. The significance of the remittance problem, however, is more complex. Southerners burdened with the heaviest agricultural debt in Italian history, accumulated between Murat and the agricultural depression of the 1880s, were neither risk averse nor Schumpeterian entrepreneurs. Faced with a vicious cycle of underproduction, they migrated in order to recover their property. A catastrophic

fall in agricultural incomes thus liberated the only abundant factor in the economy - labour.

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M. P. HANAGAN, *Nascent Proletarians: Class Formation in Post-Revolutionary France*. Cambridge, MA., Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1991, pp. x, 243.

Michael Hanagan's new book seeks to describe and explain how a class *an sich* grew into a class *für sich* in one small yet rapidly industrializing region in south-central France. Hanagan uses such contemporary categories as "class formation", proto-industrialization, social reproduction, and gender to substantiate his interpretation of events. He also relies on statistics and methods of family reconstitution from demographic data to make his case. Yet unlike many other social, labour, and family historians, who neglect the institutional and political aspects of working-class life, Hanagan treats the trade union and political party elements of proletarian existence amply. His basic narrative-analytical line explains how in the course of the nineteenth century in the Stèphanois coal and metal-working region a work force composed partly of a minority of skilled artisans and partly of a majority of unskilled day labourers, who were neither urban nor rural, became a permanent labour force of semi-skilled proletarians who worked for large employers.

In five compact chapters, Hanagan portrays the origins of an "industrial proletarian family economy" in the Stèphanois between 1840 and 1880 "that could survive and reproduce itself in the industrial city from one generation to another". The skilled artisans who had exceptional personal independence and autonomy at work as a consequence of their scarcity in the labour market, and the day laborers who shifted between the countryside and the city, depending on the seasons and the fluctuating demand for labour in countryside and city disappeared in the course of regional economic development. Over the next four decades, local employers enlarged their capital investment, introduced new technologies and modes of work, and recruited a semi-skilled permanent labour force. In Hanagan's words: "The emergent semi-skilled working class was a product of a managerial strategy that itself was based on the growth of large enterprises in metalworking and mining, the need of these enterprises for workers with special qualifications, and their financial ability to pay a premium to stabilize the workforce that they required so urgently" (p. 50). Labour recruitment patterns also changed. More and more rural migrants arrived from the immediate area, as changes in the agricultural economy

rendered their labour superfluous. In the cities they joined former family members and neighbours through a pattern of chain migration. These newcomers were acculturated to proletarian life by those who preceded them, and the single men among them built their own society of boarding houses, cafés, and voluntary social organizations.

Almost immediately, the newcomers and their descendants sought to establish a secure basis for the reproduction of themselves and their families. Both miners and metal workers sought security through greater independence from their employers. Owing to the disparate skills required by the primary industries in the region, miners and metal workers pursued different strategies to achieve family security. Metal workers, who were generally better paid and more highly trained than miners, stressed public education for their children as a tactic to endow them with skills independent of employer training programmes. This meant more widely spaced births and family limitation. Miners, by contrast, chose larger families which provided more male children to work in the mines, where formal education and the skills associated with it were not essential. Such wage-earning children could add to family income and also act as a form of social security for ageing parents. Working-class wives and daughters also defended family reproduction through unpaid and paid household labour, the latter achieved through the practice of boarding single male workers. According to Hanagan, the working-class family not only adjusted to its environment; it also changed and modified that environment making it more suitable to the survival of the family. Using Joan Scott's and Louise Tilly's concept of the "family wage economy", Hanagan credits that institution with tightening the gaps in the social safety net left open by employer practices and public policies.

Because the "family wage economy" by itself left holes in the social safety net, workers increasingly turned to collective economic and political action to win independence from employers. First, they allied with Republicans politically to win expanded forms of public education, and, then, in the aftermath of a contentious strike by miners in 1869, proletarians began to build a modern labour movement, one that allied with a socialist political movement. By 1880, according to Hanagan, the formation of a permanent proletariat in the region, family solidarity, and the violation of the workers' rights as republican citizens merged to create class consciousness. Thus, in one small region of France in the era of modern industrialism the world of work and the world of the family remained linked, and a working class in itself became one for itself. Hanagan tells this story clearly, effectively, and with solid evidence. To what extent the pattern of proletarianisation in the Stéphanois was replicated elsewhere in France or the industrial world remains for other scholars to determine.

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D. LEVINE - K. WRIGHTSON, *The Making of an Industrial Society. Wickham, 1560-1765*, Oxford University Press, xxi + 456 pp.

It is now more than a decade since Wrightson and Levine's *Poverty and Piety in an English Village. Terling, 1525-1700* was published. Now recognised as a classic, this was much more than a village history. What raised it above other community studies of the day such as David Hey's *Myddle* was the way local religious, economic and social changes were related to national developments. It offered a wholly original analysis in microcosm of the overall process of social change which transformed English society between the end of the middle ages and the dawn of the industrial and agricultural revolutions. *Poverty and Piety* stopped at the end of the seventeenth century but the present book rises to the challenge of crossing traditional historical dividing lines to make connections with the work of E.P. Thompson and others. Dealing with one large parish south-west of Newcastle on the important coalfield of north-east England, Levine and Wrightson have produced a book of great significance.

On a national scale and compared with the nineteenth century, rises in coal output during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were modest. Locally and by the standards of the day they were spectacular. The most important boom in Whickham occurred in the early seventeenth century, following the granting of the 1578 "Grand Lease" to Newcastle coalmasters, and was fuelled by London's burgeoning domestic demand. The second came after c. 1690, made possible by technological change and contributing to early industrialisation. As coal production expanded within and outside the parish, not only was it drawn into the orbit of Newcastle but also became tied to other manufacturing enterprises such as the nearby Crowley works. The authors chart agrarian change, too, as nascent industrial capitalism ravaged the countryside. The effects were deeply felt not only on the environment but also in the lives of Whickham's inhabitants. The main aim of the book is to study "an industrial society in a 'pre-industrial' world". Economic change and social developments are neatly blended with other aspects such as demography — characterised by exceptional population turnover and an unusually "young" age structure — in a seamless and powerful argument.

The complex and dynamic pace of economic and social change charted by Levine and Wrightson was much more rapid than in purely agricultural communities, quicker even than in textile areas of contemporary Yorkshire. This is one area where more direct engagement with other scholars might have helped to emphasize the general importance of Levine and Wrightson's findings and to complement their extensive and innovative use of archival material. For the coal industry was distinctive in being centralized, involving large amounts of capital, relatively advanced technologies and large numbers of full-time labourers. Yet, Hudson, Skipp and Swain (among others) are not even cited in the bibliography. The documents are patchy in their coverage of

so long a time period, restricting what can be said about topics such as wage rates and earnings before the mid-eighteenth century, or demography in the eighteenth century.

The reservations should not detract from the significance of the argument. Before the Elizabethan age Whickham was a prosperous agrarian community with limited social differentiation and a strong sense of "community". Increasingly, the "lords of coal" came into conflict with copyholders, a battle which the industrial capitalists won and which helped create a deeply polarised society in terms of wealth, origins and attitudes. Section four is the most important and innovative. It charts the growing unity of the working class — pitmen who mined coal and keelmen who loaded it onto ships — and their political education in conflicts with employers. By the late seventeenth century Whickham had become "an industrial class society in its essential structures" (p. 375) with three-quarters of the parish's inhabitants coal workers or cottagers. A wide range of methodologies are employed and the authors touch on many areas of life, including an illuminating section on the often misunderstood pitman's "bond" or work contract and fascinating detail on the way changing burial customs show the dissolution of the traditional community. There was still the appearance of continuity in areas of parish life as late as the 1750s. Certain administrative institutions remained important, the formal and informal influence of the gentry held up, and social stability was impressive. But beneath the surface profound changes had occurred. Long before the end of the eighteenth century Whickham's was an identifiably industrial society of a kind once thought not to exist before the nineteenth century.

The book is extremely readable. Quotations are handled with the exquisite precision we should expect from these skilled historical craftsmen as they make Whickham's people come alive. The viciousness of some of the actions of the coalowners is brought home alongside a sensitive and sympathetic portrayal of coal workers written with obvious feeling. *The making of an industrial society* is in that sense an example of the way historians are becoming much more open about how their own experiences influence their writings: an unashamed book about goodies and baddies where white hats must have looked odd atop sooty faces.

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