

The planting of New Virginia: settlement and landscape in the Shenandoah Valley

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of as 'our' global condition, Wood asserts, only makes sense in the light of a more encompassing 'globality' that has been doing its thing for billions of years.

These are timely and welcome insights. But, of course, this is also far from an original story, as the author is well aware. Wood makes it clear from the outset that this is a work of synthesis. It is equally apparent that the book seeks to appeal to a popular audience, as well as students of all levels. But while the quest for accessibility may be admirable, I suspect that many will find that Wood's chatty, chummy and often frat-boy-flavoured prose can grate. To be sure, there are moments of great charm and eloquence throughout the book. But a pace and style that seems to assume the reader has some kind of attention deficit rarely leaves room for the kind of quiet awe and contemplation that such observations invite. Too frequently, clumps of anecdote and clusters of association intrude on what could have been an elegant integration of social, biophysical and cosmological history.

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The planting of New Virginia: settlement and landscape in the Shenandoah Valley. By Warren R. Hofstra. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2004. 432 pp. US\$49.95 cloth. ISBN 0 8018 7418 1.

In this richly textured settlement history of the Shenandoah Valley, the author meticulously reconstructs the complex forces that shaped the cultural landscape of this important frontier region in the 18th century. Hofstra's narrative traces the evolution of settlement within this region from discrete open-country neighbourhoods to the 'town and country' landscape that in many ways characterized later western settlement. Through the use of impressive original sources, Hofstra brings this period of history to life, providing a window into the daily lives and ambitions of these frontier men and women. More than 50 illustrations, ranging from original maps and town plans to photographs of barns and homes, will particularly appeal to historical geographers with interests in the material culture of this region.

The planting of New Virginia adds to our understanding of this frontier period in three key areas. First, Hofstra goes beyond traditional explanations of settlement that rely heavily on the role of land speculation. The author instead focuses on imperial pressures that encouraged settlement within the Great Valley as a strategic buffer zone designed to keep France from expanding its influence between Canada and Louisiana and thereby surrounding Britain's North American colonies. Settlement in the valley was also beneficial for Britain because it prevented the wilderness from providing a haven for runaway slaves. Second, the author weaves the involvement of Native Americans throughout the narrative – an aspect of the story noticeably lacking in many earlier American histories. The misunderstandings and occasional hostilities between Native Americans and Europeans helped shape the landscape of the Great Valley, and perhaps had more of an influence than imperial forces. This conflict was a centralizing force, which encouraged settlers to establish towns and organize militias. The third key

contribution is how the author frames the formation of traditional institutions such as towns and county governments within the broader context of global economic and political pressures. Rather than being influenced solely by local markets and opportunities, the men and women of the Shenandoah Valley felt the same pressures for social, economic and political change that were sweeping the entire Atlantic world.

Today, as the rapid pace of globalization, trade deficits and job outsourcing dominates the nightly American news, *The planting of New Virginia* provides a useful reminder that such global connections have always existed, and were perhaps just as dynamic and disruptive then as they are now.

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La città incompleta. By Giulia de Spuches, Vincenzo Guarrasi and Marco Picone. Palermo: Palumbo. 2002. ISBN 88 8020 487 4. €23.

Palermo is a peculiar city hosting a peculiar group of geographers, working within the Institute of Cultural Anthropology. *La città incompleta* (the incomplete city) is a collaborative piece of work produced by Giulia de Spuches, Vincenzo Guarrasi and Marco Picone. It is a textbook useful for classes in geography and architecture, based on research by the authors on Sicily and the city of Palermo.

La città incompleta is divided into 14 chapters. The first are mainly theoretical and conceptual, while the following ones are grounded on empirical material and develop particular issues like urban mapping, the peripheries of Palermo, or the legacy of the Italian National Exhibition 1891–92 in the urban form of the city. The book discusses a series of important contemporary issues in geography: mapping (in the broad sense used, for instance, by Denis Cosgrove), performative geographies, or time-space compression. It also bears the very peculiar mark of the Palermitan ‘school of geography’, made up by the intertwining of international discussions and home-brewed modes of thought related to interpretive anthropology and Russian semiotics of culture (Lotman and Uspenskij). Empirically, the book comes out of nearly three decades of research, often within national and international networks: on local territorial systems (with the Turin-based Giuseppe Dematteis), landscape planning in Sicily, urban peripheries, or GIS (with the critical companionship of the Bologna-based Franco Farinelli).

The result is both very stimulating and open to discussion. Stimulating because, despite the diversity of its theoretical references, it works as an organic whole, expressing the long and fruitful collaboration of its authors, rather than being an odd patchwork. It is also open to discussion, but in an interesting way. The book is as incomplete as the spaces it refers to. Sicily is, as most readers will know, an ever-changing and labile reality. Palermo, in particular, manifests a (sometimes