

commercialization does not conform well to models designed to explain either frontier or modern urban industrial societies. Historians must come up with new models to explain the social context and consequences—as well as economic and political aspects—of agricultural developments in societies that exhibit characteristics of both traditional communities and modern societies. T. H. Breen's book is a good place to start, even though the place and time—and thus the distinctive characteristics of the *mentalité*—are quite different from nineteenth-century midwestern rural societies.

I urge agricultural historians and others interested in integrating the study of economic life with larger intellectual currents and social and cultural patterns, especially in a society heavily influenced by an agricultural economy, to make some time in their schedule to allow this book to stimulate fresh thinking.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

MARVIN BERGMAN

*Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures Since 1880*, by Pete Daniel. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985. xvi, 352 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, index. \$22.50 cloth.

In *Breaking the Land*, Pete Daniel explores the transformation and effective destruction of the "cultures" he believes developed around the production of three important southern crops—cotton, tobacco, and rice. Daniel defines culture both in the narrow, agricultural sense, as an annual pattern of work involved in the production and marketing of a crop, and in the broader, social sense. To Daniel, crops shape not only agricultural practices, but also social relationships and institutions. Over the past century, according to Daniel, culture in both senses has undergone a revolution among southern producers of major staple crops.

The transformation of the cotton culture was most dramatic. Already stressed by the boll weevil and adverse climatological and economic developments, the cotton culture faced a severe crisis when the Great Depression hit. Government intervention transformed it. Initially, federal relief threatened planters' control over sharecroppers, but New Deal farm programs ultimately facilitated and even encouraged the modern enclosure movement which displaced most tenants from the land. State experiment stations and implement and chemical companies assisted by developing devices that allowed producers to do without labor. The result was the transformation of the cotton culture in less than a generation from a semifeudal remnant of the postbellum adjustment to emancipation to a modern commercial enterprise on the

business model. Change was less dramatic in tobacco and rice, but Daniel sees in both instances government and technology conspiring to alter traditional cultures.

This melancholy story has been told by others, but Daniel tells it with impressive facility, erudition, and sensitivity. His knowledge of southern agricultural practices and social life is broad, and he displays a remarkable ability to explain clearly difficult and complicated phenomena such as the twists and turns of government policy. His prose style is lively and witty, and he has the rare ability to touch readers' hearts. He makes us feel toward his subjects as he feels toward them. Only rarely do I read a book I wish I had written; at times in *Breaking the Land* I felt that way.

The major shortcoming of this book lies in the central concept of culture. Daniel's inclusive use of that term works well enough with cotton, a crop that lay at the center of an intricate web of social institutions and human relationships. On the other hand, its descriptive and explanatory utility in regard to rice is limited. That crop was grown mainly by midwesterners who moved to the South around the turn of the century. They were already heavily mechanized, and their culture, in the broad sense, was a transplanted Iowa or Illinois rural culture only minimally influenced by the crop they grew. Daniel tends to become a prisoner of a structure of his own creation, a common fate among scholars. Hence, he feels compelled to describe in detail the effects of the automobile on the tobacco culture, essentially ignoring the fact that the automobile had a dramatic effect on rural society in general, regardless of the crop produced.

Daniel's weakness on culture is more than compensated by his strength in other areas. He forces us to grapple with important issues. For example, he reminds us of the irony of government programs that were designed to preserve a way of life they were actually destroying. He shows us that even a flawed system of agricultural production, such as sharecropping in cotton, had its social compensations. He points out that technological progress does not come without a human price. And he makes us wonder about what we have done to rural America, and how beneficial our agricultural programs have been. Had the government chosen policies on the western European model, programs designed to preserve small-scale, family agriculture, rather than policies that effectively destroyed the traditional family farm, rural America would be a far different place today. Daniel thinks it would be better, and his case is a strong one.

The twentieth-century rural South has become a boom area for historical scholarship in recent years. Of those who have turned their attention to this subject, Daniel is one of the most sensitive to what has

been lost. Like the Nashville Agrarians he echoes, he sees the flaws in the modern age and the strengths of the bygone system. As agriculture wallows in depression throughout the country, and as the new-model "family farm" thrashes about in death agony, the issues Daniel raises take on a new cogency and relevance. *Breaking the Land* would be a good book any time; it is especially timely right now.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

DAVID B. DANBOM

*A Field Guide to American Windmills*, by T. Lindsay Baker. Foreword by Donald E. Green. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. xii, 516 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth.

*A Field Guide to American Windmills* is divided into two parts. The first, consisting of 111 pages, is the more interesting for the general reader. It is organized into sixteen very short, liberally illustrated chapters that cover the history, technology, and use of windmills in the United States. Orientation to the Midwest is especially strong, for that was where the device found its greatest popularity. The text is well written, although including a few labeled diagrams would have assisted readers in following the brief technical discussions that have been included.

Part two, the heart of the work, consists of an alphabetical listing and discussion of 112 windmill models ranging from the Halladay Standard, the first commercially successful windmill, to the well-known I.X.L. steel windmill, a fixture of the early decades on midwestern farms, to such oddities as the oil drum windmill, using fifty-five-gallon oil drums split in half as vanes. As in part one, the illustrations are profuse and are supplemented with pen-and-ink silhouette sketches. The text often provides little-known information and frequently in considerable detail given the limited format (each model is assigned only a page or two of space including illustrations).

Two appendixes round out the volume. They provide an exhaustive listing of windmill manufacturers, together with model identification features and the dates and places of manufacture.

Because of its wealth of research material, *A Field Guide to American Windmills* will undoubtedly become a standard reference source. Virtually every library, certainly in the Midwest, will want its own copy of this valuable work. But this does not mean that the volume is not without its shortcomings. Although carefully edited, the text does make occasional gaffes. On page 20, for example, the Caribbean Island of Aruba is given as "Oruba." More serious is a general lack of any reference to, or discussion of, European-type windmills that were built in

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