

Agency for International Development, coauthored by one of the writers of this review (Halperin), emphasized the role that reductions in the number of sexual partners had in the decline in Uganda's HIV infection rate. (Oddly, Thornton describes the impetus for this report as a "hidden agenda" to push abstinence.) In contrast, recent national surveys suggest an increase in the proportion of South African men having multiple partners. Thornton's assertion that "sexual behavior has changed by similar amounts in both countries" is bizarrely incorrect.

Certainly, sexual behaviors are rooted in complex relationships, motives, and forces that extend beyond the individual. Yet the prescription for reducing the sexual transmission of HIV in these epidemics is clear: Sexual networks must be broken up, primarily through reductions in number of sexual partners. The declines in HIV infection not only in Uganda but also more recently in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and Malawi suggest that it is possible to promote such changes successfully. In fact, when Thornton proposes a "new approach to prevention" in the final pages of the book, he stresses the need to reduce the number of sexual partners. While hardly novel, this recommendation may be the most valuable message of his book.

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HISTORY

Why the Sun Finally Set

Reviewed by William Anthony Hay

ROME CAST A LONG SHADOW over the Western imagination. The British in particular saw themselves as Rome's spiritual heirs and named the cultural flourishing of the early 18th

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1781–1997.

By Piers Brendon.
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century an Augustan age, after the emperor who found Rome built in brick and left it in marble. Conflicts within the English-speaking Atlantic world that formed the basis of Britain's first empire climaxed in the American Revolution, prompting darker reflections. Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88) and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) both express anxieties about the evanescence of power. Smith believed history proved that the costs of holding Britain's empire in America outweighed the benefits. Neither man anticipated the second British empire across Asia, Africa, and the Pacific that Piers Brendon chronicles. Gibbon's famous work offers a model for this account, and Brendon underlines the parallel between ancient and modern empires by stressing how British elites steeped in the classics looked to Rome for guidance.

The 1780s might seem an inauspicious moment from which to chart the revival of Britain's empire. British historian and parliamentarian Horace Walpole predicted that the next Augustan age would occur across the Atlantic, and European rulers saw a Britain shorn of its colonies as a second- or third-rate power. But Britain held Ireland, the Caribbean, and Canada, and its public finances proved far more resilient than those of its French rival. Brendon argues persuasively that the "pugnacious nationalism" sparked by the wars with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France from 1793 to 1815 raised the British Empire to new heights. Control of sea-lanes and commerce secured by strategic chokepoints from Gibraltar to Cape Town and Singapore created parameters for a revived empire in the early 19th century.

As "an English barrack in the Oriental seas," India played a central part in consolidating British power in Asia in the 1790s. It served as a secure base and a source of manpower, and provided tax revenues and a captive market for

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British exports that more than made up for losing America. Britain's imposition of order and progress, which often meant Westernization, touched off a bloody uprising in 1857. Afterward, direct rule and paternalistic accommodation of native customs stabilized India. But Edmund Burke's earlier insistence that colonial government was a trust exercised for the governed became what Brendon calls an "ideological bacillus" that would prove fatal to empire once colonies educated to venerate British liberties grasped for their own independence.

The question of how a society committed to liberty could sustain an empire became inescapable, and Rome offered little guidance. Liberty as the ultimate solvent of empire gives Brendon a running theme. Policy toward settlement colonies focused on avoiding mistakes made earlier in America: Britain granted responsible government as soon as colonies proved themselves able to exercise it; its leaders now preferred trade over the burdens of governing distant territories and their turbulent populations. Guiding colonies to self-government worked in Australia and Canada, where emigrants filled largely empty lands, and even in New Zealand, where colonists, restrained by administrators, reached a *modus vivendi* with indigenous peoples.

Elsewhere, particularly in Africa, empire took a different turn as the old preference for trade gave way to opening territory for exploitation, and natives faced displacement or subjection. Rudyard Kipling ominously remarked of the Sudanese, to whom he believed British colonizers had brought "civilization," that "if you give any man anything that he has not painfully earned for himself, you infallibly make him or his descendants your devoted enemies."

Even before imperial sentiment peaked following Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897, Indian nationalism was rising and the Irish were agitating for home rule. Britain's empire reached its widest extent as a superpower between the world wars, but its weakness was apparent even before decolonization after World

War II through the transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997.

Brendon dwells on the petty injustices of empire that alienated subject peoples, and his account emphasizes the decadence and inequality inherent to imperialism. One need not lapse into nostalgia to discern a more complex story. Harvard historian Niall Ferguson, among others, has noted that Britain brought peace, investment, and development, along with the suppression of horrific tyranny and injustice, to the lands it colonized. In many places, decolonization has produced failed states, low-level anarchy, and a wistfulness for imperial rule. Britain itself did not have to choose between empire and irrelevance, as Brendon suggests. Revival based upon a dynamic commercial economy, rather than decline, has been the British story of recent years. So Adam Smith may have been right about the burdens of empire after all.

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Animal Power

Reviewed by Dick Courteau

HORSES AT WORK IS A sprawling account of two species sharing a common destiny. Expect no tight thesis, but it's the story that counts. Ann Norton Greene leads us on a

grand tour through the streets and roads, the railroads and waterways, the farms and factories, and the grisly battlefields of the 19th century. The core of her argument is that while steam engines were the backbone of the Industrial Revolution, they required, because of their limited mobility, millions of horses as a complementary power supply. Around this idea she weaves other strands: that energy use shapes landscapes—material, cultural, political, social—and that our energy sources and technologies are determined not just by inexorable material progress but by

HORSES AT WORK:
Harnessing Power in
Industrial America.

By Ann Norton Greene.
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