discussion of the use of the Defence of the Realm Act (1914) to police Chinese allegedly engaged in the opium trade. Auerbach also raises new gendered questions for historians. The Chinese were represented as a threat to British manhood, and protecting masculinity meant policing not simply the behavior of Chinese men but also that of white, particularly working-class, women.

Mostly located in London and port cities such as Liverpool, the population of Chinese resident in the United Kingdom in the early twentieth century was small and, even bearing in mind the larger “floating” population of merchant seamen, the numbers were out of all proportion to apprehensions about the “problem.” The contrast between legal responses to Chinese at different times and the small number of cases of Chinese before the law, as well as the excessive publicity and extravagant headlines that these generated, suggest that the “problem” was driven more strongly by media and popular literary representations than anything else. Yet Auerbach also contends that the legal system, which was officially “color-blind,” could still treat individuals of different racial origins in markedly different ways.

Auerbach persuasively demonstrates that anti-Chinese attitudes had deep roots across the empire well before a local “Chinese problem” was even recognized at the empire’s hub. Anti-Chinese rhetoric in the Australian colonies was manifest first in working-class fear of economic competition but quickly adopted racialized overtones. The consequent passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and commitment to a “White Australia” underpinned Australian migration policies for more than half of the twentieth century. In the wake of the Boer War, an argument based on the moral right to jobs of British workers who had fought the Boers for the empire had resonance both in Britain and South Africa. South African legislation soon led to repatriation of indentured Chinese labor, while in Britain itself, South Africa’s Chinese problem reverberated through Westminster as the government fell. It was in the colonies that methods to control minority populations were often pioneered; fingerprinting, exclusionary legislation, pass laws, and curfews were used on both indigenous and Chinese populations.

Throughout the book, Auerbach engages directly with the question that underpins much of the historiography in this area: was fear of economic competition or racism the ultimate cause of anti-Chinese attitudes? Concluding that economics alone provides insufficient explanation, Auerbach argues that the perception of the “fundamental incompatibility between the Chinese and the Anglo-Saxon ‘races’ was the single most persistent and prominent element of British public discourse on the Chinese and on Anglo-Chinese relations” (p. 3). The book presents persuasive evidence for this point of view in the British context and turns significant new light onto the same question within the empire. Too seldom has comparative engagement with this obviously transnational issue been undertaken, and Auerbach’s study is the more to be commended because of this.


Building barrages in the landscape to the benefit of humans has caused much anxiety among environmentalists. In this fine book Harriet Ritvo examines the importance of an early case, the development of the Thirlmere Lake located in the heart of England’s famous Lake District.

Ritvo is the author of The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age (1987), which brought the history of animals to a new level, and The Platypus and the Mermaid, and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination (1997), in which she documented the importance of classification for our understandings of the natural world. In the book under review Ritvo moves away from investigating histories of single species and the order of nature toward a study of an entire landscape. In doing so she situates her work within the growing field of environmental history.

The title of the book should not be taken too literally, as Ritvo is keenly aware that our environmental sensitivities are as old as humankind. What she argues is that the Thirlmere development in the 1870s represents one of the earliest cases in which industrial progress was pitted against nature conservation. Advocates of the scheme argued that the people of Manchester were in urgent need of drinking water, sanitation, and water for industrial use, while those against damming up the lake thought that such developments would represent the unfortunate destruction of a scenic landscape.

Ritvo does an excellent job of outlining the various stakeholders of a long and vocal public debate about the future of the lake, including their personalities, interests, social groups, and modes of argumentation. The book offers a social history of environmental debate in which landowners, outdoor enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, and various citizens of the Manchester region clashed over how to use and evaluate Thirlmere.

Debates about the Thirlmere water works construction were cast in binary terms: to build or not to build, that was the question. Although Ritvo carefully spells out the social complexity of the issue, the nature of the conflict inevitably led to a history of winners and losers. The proponents in Manchester got their water at the expense of the nature the conservationists had enjoyed. In her masterful maneuvering of the material, Ritvo’s sympathy tends to lean toward the environmentalists.

“The basic structure of the Thirlmere debate has been replicated in controversies about many other settings threatened with similar transformations during the last century and a quarter,” Ritvo notes in the epilogue (p. 178). In view of various freshwater schemes

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“The basic structure of the Thirlmere debate has been replicated in controversies about many other settings threatened with similar transformations during the last century and a quarter,” Ritvo notes in the epilogue (p. 178). In view of various freshwater schemes
and hydropower developments around the world, this seems like a reasonable claim. Yet while electrification surely belongs to the modern world, histories of channeling freshwater to cities reach back at least to the ancient Sumerians. Equally old are controversies about how to make the best usage of landscapes. The Thirlmere case can thus be understood within a broader and deeper history of environments.

While dam constructions and other radical environmental changes in the landscape often shaped environmental debate of the 1960s and 1970s, current disagreements are quite different. The issue at stake in topics such as global warming, pollution, and environmental justice is hardly whether to build or not to build, but instead how to reduce the environmental impact of human agency. This raises the question of whether or not the Thirlmere case can serve as a representative “dawn” of modern environmentalism. This is not to argue that the book is irrelevant to current affairs. The demand for resources are quite different. The issue at stake in topics such as global warming, pollution, and environmental mental debate of the 1960s and 1970s, current disagree- ments are quite different. The issue at stake in topics such as global warming, pollution, and environmental men- tal debate of the 1960s and 1970s, current disagree- ments are quite different. The issue at stake in topics such as global warming, pollution, and environmental

It is refreshing to read Ritvo’s detailed and well-re-searched account of the Thirlmere debate. She offers a novel story written in engaging language free of tech- nical jargon. This book is an important contribution to the history of environmentalism in Britain that is worth reading.

**Peder Anker**
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**VERÓNICA SIERRA BLAS. Palabras huérfanas: Los niños y la Guerra Civil. Madrid: Taurus Historia. 2009. Pp. 434. €20.00.**

Two weeks after Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union and a week after General Francisco Franco’s foreign policy shift from non-belligerency to “moral belligerency” in June 1941, propaganda was emitted from Madrid concerning the Spanish children evacuated to Russia and the Ukraine during the Spanish Civil War. The 1941 reports, put out to persuade public opinion that hostility toward the Soviet Union was a logical continuation of Franco’s anticommunist “crusade” of 1936–1939, claimed that there were 6,000 Spanish children in the Soviet Union. In fact, a total of some 3,000 child evacuees from Spain had disembarked at the ports of Yalta and Leningrad between March 1937 and October 1938. The propaganda also claimed that many of them were the orphans of parents killed by “the Reds” during Spain’s war, whereas, in fact, they were the children of supporters of the Spanish Republic, who, as Verónica Sierra Blas’s book explains, were sent to the Soviet Union out of ideological commitment and fear of aerial bombardment, as well as a profound apprehension about the consequences of a Francoist victory.

The book, replete with many illustrative images, focuses largely on the children sent to Russia, but it is usefully set within the context of a broader evacuation of some 30,000 children to France, Belgium, Britain, and Mexico, as well as to the Soviet Union, from the republican zone during the civil war. Reference is made to a wide range of primary sources found in archives from Mexico to Moscow, including official documents and newspaper reports, children’s diaries, notebooks, and drawings. However, the book is primarily based on children’s letters, many of them from the Civil War Archive in Salamanca and others lent to the author by the surviving families of the evacuees. The main appeal of the book, and one of its several strengths, is the implicit relationship made between history and memory—or between “great” events and ordinary individuals—in paying attention to the intimacy of the letters, repre- senting as they did the thread connecting children with all which was familiar and that they had left behind. This sense of intimacy, and its positioning alongside ideological faith and commitment, is even more notable in parents’ letters to the children. One combatant for the Spanish Republic who was also a Communist Party activist wrote movingly to his daughter in the Soviet Union in January 1938 to tell her of the fall of the north- ern city of Gijón, which seemed to justify the decision to evacuate her and, as he pointed out, presaged much further destruction shortly to come: “The house where we lived, just like all the others in the row of houses, was completely destroyed on 19 September . . . You, my dear daughter, if you’ve managed to arrive in the patria del proletariado (‘homeland of the proletariat’) will live happily and will be able to study tranquilly and become a valuable woman in future conquests to help liquidate all oppression and tyranny in Europe” (pp. 272–273).

Traces of even the relatively recent past are rarely uncomplicated, of course, and the origins of the letters and the way in which they became historical documents in the hands of the author raise many questions about their production, the context of their writing, and their various destinations. Chapter ten makes clear that many of the letters written in the Soviet Union were constructed according to “models” given to children by their Spanish or Russian caregivers and teachers. The problem of accounting for children’s internalization of ideology is difficult to resolve satisfactorily. Many let- ters were confiscated by the Francoist authorities, who feared they might carry a communist contagion, and never reached their destination. Thus, apart from often constituting cartas disciplinadas because they included prescribed watchwords, greetings, and closing formulæ, the letters just as often became ‘palabras huérfanas’ (‘orphaned words’) because they did not reach their intended destination. Eventually they found their way to the archive where they can be consulted by histori- ans.

An ideologically fueled propaganda battle was waged over the evacuated children as it became clear in early 1939 that the Spanish Republic would be defeated. Some parents had been killed; those who survived were frequently ambivalent about bringing children home to a situation of defeat. Some were in prison or were so- cially marginalized to such a degree that the responsi- bility of supporting children was too much. As many parents feared, in the aftermath of “liberation” the chil-