

impetus for closer ties with the European six in that period came from below, from individual businessmen and companies because the leadership of the FBI remained committed to EFTA, whose creation they had been closely involved with—it was only with the announcement by the government that it was to apply for membership of the EEC that the FBI leadership changed its stance. Indeed, the FBI leadership then became such strong advocates of membership that they were not above presenting the results of various surveys of their members' attitudes so that they showed a more united pro-European stance than was warranted. The FBI also had a crucial role as a disseminator of information which did help to overcome certain prejudices and ignorance among British business and thus did pave the way for a more pro-European attitude from business in general.

Several chapters (for example, those on overseas investment or competition policy) offer fresh perspectives and evidence that insist that this book should find its way on to the reading list of any course seriously interested in Britain's postwar relationship to Europe or more generally in postwar British business history. Furthermore, most chapters begin with neat summaries of the existing literature views and end with clearly stated summaries of the main findings that students will welcome. From a research perspective, Rollings has thrown down challenging gauntlet to other scholars who operate in this space. Indeed, he ends the book with his own clarion call: firstly for a "Europeanization of contemporary history" (p. 264), a clumsy phrase which in essence calls for a greater integration of domestic political-economic dynamics and the wider European project; secondly, for a greater integration across the relevant social science disciplines to tackle a topic which he sees as being intrinsically interdisciplinary.

PETER HOWLETT, *London School of Economics*

The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfillment in Early Modern England. By Keith Thomas. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. xvi, 393. \$34.95.
doi:10.1017/S002205071100012X

In Mike Dash's book, *Batavia's Graveyard*, the mutineers on the ship *Batavia* get stranded on a parched sand bar with the liquor and foodstuffs, but no fresh water. A few hundred watery yards away are the remnants of the loyal crew, stuck on another islet without liquor or provisions, but with plentiful fresh water. Trade proves impossible. The analog of this breakdown is the current relationship between history and the social sciences.

The Ends of Life is a work of staggering erudition. Each page glitters with quotes from literature spanning 300 years, illustrating aspects of people's aspirations—attitudes to work, wealth, death, love, friendship—in early modern England. It is a treasure house of speculations about how the attitudes and behaviors of the early moderns may have differed from ours. Keith Thomas inhabits this world perhaps uniquely. But all is ultimately for naught, because Thomas has no way to determine if any of his hypotheses are true or not. The book ends up as a mass of evidential snippets, whose wider significance and import is unfathomable. Thomas is stranded on an intellectual sandbar, with no hope of distinguishing truth from fancy.

On our own little sandbar sit we economists and economic historians, awash in methods to determine truths, but hungry for material to apply them to. Our offices are but a short walk from the rich stores of knowledge in history departments in the universities, but we might as well be on another continent.

To illustrate this, consider Thomas's treatment of attitudes to work. There has been much debate about when, exactly, modern high-labor input societies emerged from a hunter-gatherer world of generalized sloth. There has, however, been widespread recent acceptance of the notion that the years 1600–1800 saw an increase in the hours of work of men, women, and children, driven by a heightened desire for material consumption (see, for example, Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*).

Can Thomas confirm or deny this view through his extensive discussion of the writings of the English about work between 1500 and 1800? No. He confirms nothing, and he denies nothing. He does neither, because in any society there is great individual variation in attitudes to labor and its rewards, and selective quotation from these written attitudes can prove anything you want. Thomas is too much of a scholar to do this, but in recounting the voices in all their splendid variety, we get the unintelligible cacophony of a crowded room at a party. Sure some in all periods thought work a drudge: "twas never a good world since Bowness people went to work" (p. 85). Others thought it a moral duty, or a pleasure: "filthy idle drones, who will not work" (p. 87), "I very much delighted in holding the plough" (p. 98). Thomas makes a deliberate way among all these citations. But in the end, it all adds nothing to the debate on the existence or nonexistence of the early modern Industrious Revolution.

Exactly the same issues characterize the treatment of all the other aspirations examined in the book: military ideals, wealth, possessions, honor, friendship, marriage, and fame.

Marriage and fertility in early modern England, for example, and when fertility began to be controlled, have recently attracted renewed attention among economic historians. Can Thomas shed any light on this with his literary forensics? Again no. For example, here he does seem to reach a conclusion that marriage changed from a business arrangement in the sixteenth century, towards unions of "conjugal affection" in the eighteenth century. Yet any quotes in favor of the business nature of marriage are from mid-sixteenth-century writers (p. 215), and Thomas cites approvingly the conclusion that the medieval world was "full of married friends" (p. 215). Did families take measures to limit fertility? Perhaps not since children were "Valued. . . by the poor as a practical investment for their old age" (p. 218). However, since "Children were notoriously a burden to the poor" (p. 219), perhaps yes. Again we get the dueling quotes on the burden of children versus the joys: "the chiefest earthly blessing" (p. 218), "Others, having many children, wish them dead" (p. 219).

Even if the literary voices were clear and unanimous, immediately the issue would arise about how much people's self-presentations, and social descriptions, indicate actual behaviors. We know in the modern world that the link between social realities, people's knowledge of these realities, and people's self-perceptions is weak. After all, nearly 18 percent of U.S. residents in a recent survey had the completely false belief that President Obama is a Muslim, and 43 percent did not know what his religion is.

This book then is more interesting as an illustration of the limits of a traditional approach to history than as a window into the aspirations of people in early modern England. These limits render even someone as erudite and energetic as Thomas, with an unrivalled command of the literary sources, effectively mute.

GREGORY CLARK, *University of California, Davis*