This is a repository copy of *Spectral labour in the Fens of Eastern England*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/207805/

Version: Published Version

Article:

Jaines, R. (2023) Spectral labour in the Fens of Eastern England. The Sociological Review, 71 (2). pp. 387-405. ISSN 0038-0261

https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261221150091

Reuse
This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. This licence allows you to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the work, even commercially, as long as you credit the authors for the original work. More information and the full terms of the licence here: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/

Check for updates

Article

the Sociological Review
MONOGRAPH SERIES

The Sociological Review Monographs
2023, Vol. 71(2) 387–405
© The Author(s) 2023

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/00380261221150091
journals.sagepub.com/home/sor

Spectral labour in the Fens of Eastern England

Rowan Jaines
Department of Geography, The University of Sheffield, UK

Abstract

This article performs a site-specific and critical reading of agricultural labour in the Fen landscape in the East of England to explore lived experiences of class in this landscape. The analysis is based on fieldwork and archival research undertaken between 2017 and 2019. The article disrupts conventional division between migrant and domestic labour through employing the critical theoretical lens of the German Jewish cultural critic Walter Benjamin. The article traces previously obscured narratives of agricultural labour that glimmer in the dark light of the disruption of the distinction between migrant and domestic experiences. In doing so it follows lines of continuity and connectivity through the novel concept of the 'spectral labourer'. This concept is used to draw out the significance of tenuous and evolving chains of citizenship and state exclusion within the agricultural working classes in the Fen region.

Keywords

class, critical theory, Eastern European migrants, Fens, landscape, rural, Walter Benjamin

> The task of history is to get hold of the tradition of the oppressed.
>
> (Benjamin, 2006, p. 390)

Introduction

While the idea of class is characteristically put to work in order to understand unequal relationships within the context of labour arrangements, the landscapes on which the drama of class struggle is enacted and reproduced are often overlooked. The nexus of landscape and class is an underused lens for understanding present-day lived experience (Dowling, 2009).

This article seeks to contribute a site-specific and critical reading of agricultural labour in the Fen landscape in the East of England. I perform this by brushing the contemporary

Corresponding author:
Rowan Jaines, Department of Geography, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN, UK.
Email: r.v.jaines@sheffield.ac.uk

moment ‘against the grain’ (Benjamin, 2006, p. 393) to consider the choreographies of class as they respond to the music of shifting political rhetoric and regimes. Employing the critical theoretical lens of the German Jewish cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1999a, 1999b, 2006) this article goes beyond the idea of rural spaces as a ‘quantitative multiplicity’ (Bergson, 2015, p. 122) in which material and affect emerge from mechanistic processes of externalisation. Put another way, rather than tracking the multiple and networked productive elements of rural landscapes (see Buller & Hoggart, 2015; Whatmore, 2013, 2017; Woods, 1998, 2007, 2010) this article attends to the *de*structive processes that are enacted alongside the generative labour in this particular rural site.

The deployment of Benjamin’s critical methodology builds on recent social sciences scholarship that takes up a similar approach to provide new insights into urban sites (Gregory, 1991; Keith, 2000; Pile, 2013) and critical methodologies more generally (Belcher et al., 2008; Dubow, 2004; Kingsbury & Jones, 2009; Latham, 1999). A further original contribution of this work is the adoption of a Benjaminian understanding of time and space to analyse a rural landscape as a constellatory point of radical non-synthesis, in which new political contingencies gesture.

This article is based on the author’s own research in the Fens of Eastern England, where in-depth interviews with a wide range of local people were used in a novel way to create an inductive rationale for archival research into the shared classed experiences of agricultural labourers in this specific site. The article focuses on the very particular experiences of agricultural labourers in order to question ‘the certainty of knowledge that is lasting’ and to privilege the ‘integrity of an experience which is ephemeral’ (Benjamin, 1999b, p. 100) in relation to the lived experiences of agricultural labourers. The fields and factories that dominate the Fen region and its economy are understood in this article as a medium in which a present moment struggle to recruit migrant labour reveals itself as a crystallisation of a recent history of agricultural labourers. These workers, I argue here, have both literally and metaphorically lost their histories through what Benjamin (2006, p. 392) calls a ‘tradition of the oppressed’.

The article begins by unsettling dominant narratives concerning the organisation of agricultural labour in the Fen region before introducing the novel concept of the ‘spectral labourer’: precisely the agricultural labourer as an indication of disorder in the apparently coherent life-world of the capitalist food system who manifests through a degraded citizenship that links the present to obscured histories of previous working bodies in site-specific contexts. Following a brief account of the research methods, the article interrogates the temporal connections between seemingly disparate groups of labourers by drawing constellatory connections that render visible obscured histories at work in this landscape. I conclude by outlining the potential significance of using Benjamin’s conceptual lexicon to make possible different forms of response to classed conditions of exploitation that work through the denial or degrading of citizenship. The article therefore provides new insights for academia in theoretical terms, but also potentially for policy and practice.

Agricultural apparitions

Since the 1990s the power of corporate food retailers has intensified and shifted in form. By the beginning of the 2000s these new demands created a market for commercial

temporary employment agencies for the hiring of international migrant workers in the UK (Rogaly, 2008). In our present moment scholars are making calls for an analysis of agrarian labour as a distinct category of migrant labour that should be analysed across space, in the context of a longer history of racial capitalism (Melossi, 2021; Rogaly, 2021; Selwyn, 2021).

The exploitation of migrant labourers in agriculture is often viewed within the context of the teleological trajectory of racial capitalism. The geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2017) defines it as such, charting the development of racial capitalism as 'a mode of production developed in agriculture, improved by enclosure in the Old World, and captive land and labor in the Americas, perfected in slavery's time motion field-factory choreography' (pp. 225–226). This reading of the past, which historicises the present, also contains what the critical thinker Walter Benjamin calls 'a secret index' (2006, p. 390) of recent events that have been omitted from the narrative that make one truth from heterogeneous experiences of class in agricultural sites.

One such 'secret index' can be located in the oppressed history of agricultural labourers in the Fen region in the recent history prior to the establishment of the commercial temporary employment agencies market which, when seen in context of the whole UK, was disproportionately lucrative in the fields and factories of the Fen region. This was due, at least in part, to the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004, which lifted restrictions on individuals' rights to enter the UK for individuals from Poland, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary and Estonia. These countries were termed the 'Accession 8' (A8) countries and the effects of the flows of workers from these A8 countries across national and local levels became the subject of intense debates in academic and media discourses. Issues concerning the agricultural labour market have been of particular interest due to the concentration of A8 migrant workers in agricultural sectors and sites, and the consistent nature of this trend over time, indicating that migrant labour serves specific functions in the UK's food supply chain (Dustmann et al., 2010).

While these analyses shed light on the development, significance and consequences of this new workforce, for employers, local governments, economies and the workers themselves, the current article goes beyond the argument that migrant workers' experience of agrarian labour is distinct and can be read apart from the historical materiality of the sites in which this work is performed. This article contributes a novel reading of a situated place – a 'negative dialectic' (Adorno, 2003) – that works alongside broader and more joined up ways of thinking about agricultural labour.

In this work evidence that tradition does not establish continuity through direct narrative transmission is located in the experience of the domestic workers who as recently as 1998 carried out '95% of the work' (Beattie, 2008, p. 24) in the Fen region. Following Benjamin I propose that it is precisely in this ruptured and discontinuous 'tradition of the oppressed' that we might find a redemptive force. It is in the tenuous and shifting thread of the 'covered over' history of the agricultural labourer in the Fens that I located the potential for new discussions concerning the shared classed experiences of this work, beyond domestic/migrant boundaries. Instead, I aim to show that the exploitation of A8 migrants in the Fen region – which by 2014 was so serious that it warranted the development of an anti-slavery task force and has led to long-term over-subscription of the

homeless shelter in Wisbech – is part of an endemic culture of agricultural exploitation in this area.

Spectral labour

Since the mid-1960s there has been a fantasy of a 'technological fix' that will put an end to the need for human hands to carry out 'menial' agricultural tasks. The Fen region – where every year enough wheat is grown to produce 250 million loaves of bread, and where 33% of all the vegetables produced in England are grown (National Farmers Union [NFU], 2019) – undoes this utopian ideal. The rich soils here have led this land to be divided into plots of land too small to make the purchase and upkeep of this technology economically viable. Human labour is simply cheaper and more efficient in this landscape. To be clear, by understanding the exploitation of migrant workers in the fields and factories of the Fens only through their migratory status, not only is this landscape primed for the next wave of exploitation, simultaneously an oppressed history that is active in the present remains unchallenged. This occurs whilst ignoring the internment and mistreatment of previous workers – that of the Gypsy and Traveller communities – persisting today. The Wisbech area of the Fenland has one of the highest proportions of Gypsy and Traveller populations in the UK (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2021). This population – previously integral to the seasonal labour force in the Fen region – was forced to settle in authorised encampments through the implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA). Between 1994 and 2010 the number of settled Gypsy and Travellers in the area near Wisbech doubled (Cambridgeshire County Council, 2010) – interned and disavowed in the local area. The oppressed history of this community in relation to the current debates regarding deficits in seasonal workers indicates a wider history of the use and dis-use of pickers, not only during the performance of labour but also in its aftermath.

Whilst domestic, itinerant and migrant workers have all laboured in the Fen fields and factories, the status that they all share at the moment that they perform this labour is a lack of full citizenship in the eyes of British employment law. This article traces the way that this 'spectral labour' is barred from work within the food production economy as they are absorbed into the subjectifying mechanisms of the English state – recognised as full citizens. This term provides an important negative dialectic to Selwyn's (2021) observation that one of the corporate food system's principal foundations is cheap and expendable labour (see also King et al., 2021); precisely that the inverse or lining to this foundational logic is not only the constant sourcing of non-citizen subjects to provide this but simultaneously the disavowal of those 'spectral labourers' who have become fleshy in the eyes of the state.

Data and methodology

This article draws on research conducted between 2017 and 2019 for an Economic and Social Research Council sponsored doctoral project in which I used a mixed methodology to perform a close reading of the Fen landscape in the East of England. This project interrogated the Fen landscape as a limit-case: in other words an essential point of

contact between experience and history. In this article I pay particular attention to the way that placed histories of agrarian labour in this specific landscape disrupt common narratives regarding the lived experience of class in the United Kingdom.

The research is based on a 'multidirectional temporal practice' (Macdonald, 2003, p. 97) of fieldwork that aimed to investigate assonances between a lived present and a past that remains active in this landscape. In practical terms this consisted of four research trips, each of which consisted of staying in the research area for between two and four weeks. During these periods of fieldwork I aimed to gain familiarity with the Fen landscape in order to glimpse the fine grain of this place. This broadly ethnographic work was complemented by archival research during which I attempted to locate histories that had been omitted from the grand narrative of history *per se*.

My aim was to access a diverse range of perspectives not only across social stratifications such as race, class, gender and age but also across history. This involved liaising with local third sector organisations, local government, politicians and law enforcement agencies, and required an iterative process of negotiating and renegotiating access to different cross-sections of this community. In this respect, ethical considerations, particularly those relating to the 'power-geometries' (Massey, 2012), were integral to this work. In addition to adhering to the protocols outlined in the ethical approval from my research institution, explicit attention has been given to the vitality and difference of participants who are not determined by their environment but who live in it. I seek in this article to analyse some of the narratives that emerge from this research as events that unfold within a complex social and moral universe (Josephides, 2003).

The 50 participants recruited in the Fen region varied in age from those in their late teens to those over 70 years old. When stratified by class it is notable that the gender and ethnic backgrounds of participants became less representative as social privilege increased. This was also the case for the archival research, where the sources used include local newspapers, recordings of oral history projects, alongside House of Commons and House of Lords debates. Narratives put forward by male representatives of the English political classes and aristocracy also increasingly dominate as the course of history moves towards the more distant past. This article seeks to disrupt this homogeneity through analysing these historical sources through the narratives of the present-day working people in the Fens.

While I by no means accessed a representative sample from which deductive conclusions could be drawn, this was not the aim of the project. The experiences and perceptions of my participants were analysed and developed as an inductive schema which structured the search criteria of the archival research.

My analysis puts the conceptual vocabulary of German critical theorist Walter Benjamin to work in order to make a novel contribution regarding the consideration of rural labour as a limit-case, an essential point of contact between experience and history. Benjamin's particular cultural materialism of spatiotemporal frameworks offer an opportunity to disrupt the concept of the arable field as a site of organic processes through its focus on the *de*structive elements of historical narrative as they flash up in the present-day landscape. This is a theoretical orientation that operates in contrast to Raymond Williams's (2020) cultural materialism which understands the past as a *con*structive element of hegemonic spatial practices. As such it provides an opportunity to consider

agricultural labour as a critical site of disjuncture where apparently petrified and hegemonic class relationships might appear as infused with contingent possibilities

Findings

Issues with the new, the outmoded and heteronomous feature as enduring concerns across Benjamin's writings. This analysis takes a similar approach to the reading of the tendency of 'rational progress' to become irrational regress in the feeling body of the agricultural labourer, the organisation of which is the technology of food production at its most corporeal level.

The following sections discuss the empirical data and bring into focus an ensemble of previously oppressed narratives. These narratives are arranged to tighten the aperture on three distinct but related dialectical images: the gangmaster, the spectral worker and the disavowed worker. These three figures make space for a wider narrative that places the spectral worker as a symptom of a wider disadjustment that reanimates distinct, site-specific traces.

A spatial choreography of loss

The Fens have been a keystone of England's organised food production since the monasterial period – between *c.*600 and *c.*1536 – during which the land was strategically drained and managed by the monastic houses that dominated this area. Following the dissolution of the monasteries, the largely absentee landlords to whom the land was granted struggled to maintain the established systems of common rights and responsibilities that had led to a thriving mediaeval economy in the Fen region. The area became steadily wetter and more difficult to manage productively. It was partially this unmanageability that allowed the Fen region to escape the early waves of enclosures that swept across agricultural communities in England from the sixteenth century onwards. Though the Fen region is often defined by the drainage of the seventeenth century, the mechanical, political and legal technologies required to drain and enclose this region only came into being with the arrival of the (long) Industrial Revolution. The windmills, cuts and dykes engineered by the seventeenth century Adventurers had proved insufficient to keep the Fen region dry. New applications for the steam pump in the early nineteenth century proved instrumental in draining the last large body of water from the area around Whittlesey – in what is now the Fenland district in Cambridgeshire. In the autumn of 1851, the wind could be seen curling the water of the mire. By 1853 it blew on the same site over a sea of yellow corn. This metamorphosis was the marker of an epochal shift in which the last unenclosed area of English countryside shifted through technology into the first large-scale industrial arable site in Britain.

This industrial monocultural arrangement took on the spatial form of an internal 'colony'. The landscape was managed using the 'high farming' techniques of the Victorian period. The biodiversity that once defined the area was curtailed through the use of fertilisers and pesticides aimed at making agricultural production more efficient and predictable. The Fen region from the 1840s onward was also the birthplace of the 'gang' system which – like the high farming techniques – aimed to allow farmers to achieve

higher outputs with lower economic outgoings. The formation of the gang labour system in this region can be understood as a product of a very particular nexus of legislative, spatial and employment market based opportunities in this peculiarly historicised landscape, in a particular moment. The spatial choreography of the gang labour system that emerged in this place is pertinent to the uses and misuses of agricultural labourers in the present, through its use of 'outsiders' as a source of 'spectral labour': precisely, bodies who provide hard labour and to whom the state – or in this early iteration, the parish – bears no fiscal responsibility.

In order to understand the emergence of the gang system – which is still in use today – in these newly enclosed former wetlands, it is necessary to understand the geographies of 'open' and 'close' parishes that developed in the early nineteenth century. The distinction between 'open' and 'close' parishes did not arise in this period, although it was around 1830 that the terminology first appeared in legal language (Holderness, 1972). This geographic distinction can be traced back to the early stages of the 'poor administration' in English law. The initial Elizabethan Act from 1601 was parochial in form, in that the administrative unit of the system was the parish. In 1662 a further poor relief bill – the Act of Settlement – placed the burden of supporting the poor onto the parishes in which they were born. This Act encouraged many landlords to rid their estates of labourer cottages and instead to import labourers from other parishes, thus escaping their responsibility for supporting the poor. The early administration of England's poor prescribed that each cottage should have at least four acres of land to call its own. This was in statute until 1775. However, this fell into the jurisdiction of the large estate owners on whose land these cottagers resided. By the seventeenth century this statue was essentially a 'dead letter' as estate holders steadily deprived cottage smallholders of their land in favour of developing a vision of arcadia in which agricultural labour was obscured – kept not only out of sight but outside of the estate holder's ethical and financial responsibilities.

This development was not only an economic decision from the landowner's perspective. Political philosophy in the seventeenth century was increasingly influenced by a 'neo-Aristotelian' framework in which internal qualities and external form entwined – so that poverty appeared as a lack of goodness and the beauty of virtue manifested as the transcendence of a privileged few from base physical needs. Of course, it is only those whose base physical needs are consistently met who can afford the luxury of the concealment of corporeal necessities. It is in this distinction that we find the rationale for the development of 'open' and 'close' parishes. The latter term refers to a parish where one or two elite individuals exercised tight control over the population and the activities of their parishioners. These 'close' parishes were considered wholesome communities of long-standing families – good and God-fearing folk. The 'open' parishes, on the other hand, tended to have a diversified power structure that prevented monopolistic or oligarchic control over parish affairs. The population of 'open' parishes tended to be larger and the parishioners poorer, less well educated and more diverse in origin (Khun Song, 2002). The existence of a close parish was thus conditional on the existence of a nearby open parish that could provide a steady supply of low-paid manual labourers – thus the close parish reaped the benefits of labourers willing to accept low wages – without bearing fiscal responsibility for the poor relief of these workers.

The sourcing and management of these labourers was carried out by a 'gangmaster'. This was usually a local man from the open parish. The rapid metamorphosis of the Fen region through the steam power of the mid-nineteenth century hurtled this method of labour management into a new context. The new fields that stood where once water lay were quickly furnished with farm buildings. But workers' cottages failed to emerge. The long-standing settlements on the old gravel islands and the higher silt ground on the Fen edge were transformed into a new kind of 'open' parish, in which women and children from poor families were sourced by new 'gangmasters' to perform agricultural labour.

By the 1860s – within two decades of this last drainage – the social structure of these areas shifted, from one of the last semi-subsistence economies in England to an area where conditions for the poor were worse than in the industrial cities of the North. The sixth report of the Children's Employment Commission (1862) outlined that in Wisbech the death rate of children under one year was the same as in Manchester. The rates of infant mortality in general had spiked across the Fen region. This was attributed, by the medical officers of the Children's Employment Commission, to the widespread use of opium by labouring women, who would drug their infants in order to keep up with the work rates demanded by gangmasters in the fields. Children from the ages of five or six – as well as women from the poorest of families – made up these gangs, who often had to walk up to 10 miles before a day's labour in the fields. The gangmasters often also touted produce and instead of receiving money, at the end of the week labourers were often required to barter for food and drink, sold at a price fixed at the discretion of the gangmaster.

The Liberal politician John Wodehouse – third Earl of Kimberly – asserted in a House of Lords debate regarding the report from the Children's Employment Commission that 'to a very considerable extent, the smallness of the wages received by agricultural labourers compelled them to employ their wives and children in work of that description' (HL Debate, 1867). In an adjacent House of Commons debate, Mr Fawcett, also of the Liberal Party, asked 'could anything bring out more strongly the fact that the interests of those who were not directly represented were too often little regarded?' (HC Debate, 1867). The issues of democratic representation, poverty and agricultural labour are, I propose, entwined in the Fen landscape. The parliamentary debates that occurred following the sixth report of the Children's Employment Commission led to the Agricultural Gangs Act 1867 (and latterly the Agricultural Children Act 1873), which stipulated that no child under eight was permitted to be employed on an agricultural gang, that no female was to be employed on the same gang as males, and that no female was to be employed under a male gangmaster unless a female gangmaster was also present. The Act also required gangmasters to be licensed. These licences were to be granted by two or more magistrates at petty sessions, on evidence that the applicant was of good character and a fit person to be licensed. Stipulated licences were not to be granted to keepers of public houses. The Acts made no attempt, however, to address the issues of poverty, lack of democratic power and spatial inequalities (in particular, the open and close parish system) which were identified in the debates as giving rise to the gang system.

Despite the success of urban campaigns to increase suffrage in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was not until 1917 that the property-less population that made up

the labour gangs in the Fens received the vote. Even then their political power was stymied. Mary Chamberlain makes clear, in her 1975 study of agricultural labourers in the Fen region in the early part of the twentieth century, that 'party allegiance differentiated the employed from the unemployed, the deserving from the undeserving poor, the employable from the unemployable . . . to vote Tory was to get and keep a job. The Liberals were the party of the unemployed and the undeserving' (p. 130). Furthermore, cottages were not built for labourers and industry was not diversified in the area, so that the conditions of the rural poor in the Fens failed to shift throughout a large part of the twentieth century.

Whilst now it is common for university undergraduates to engage in 'charity tourism' in so-called 'developing countries' in the Global South, in the mid-twentieth century these middle-class projects had their sights on the 'others' *within* the UK. It was popular from the 1930s onwards for Cambridge undergraduates to visit the Fen region each summer as part of a project called the 'Cambridge Fruiting Campaigns'. The undergraduates spent time with the fieldworkers and provided aid and support to the children of the pickers in the fields. This included not only local children but also the children of families from London who arrived each summer for picking 'holidays', but also the children of the Gypsy and Traveller families who provided vital labour for the soft fruit picking season each year. What is clear from the development of this project is that the Fen region and its pickers were seen as 'outside' of normal life and offered an experience of alterity for Cambridge students throughout the middle part of the twentieth century.

Seasonal conditions

In the winter of 2017, I spoke to Tina and Wendy, two women in their fifties who had lived in the Fen region and worked in fields and factories all their lives. Tina described to me that:

> My Nan worked in the fields and so did my Mum. My Nan had to, all her life, most people did back then. I used to work with my Mum when I was little. I used to work behind the roller, taking the potatoes out. Whether it was cold or snowing, I used to do it all year round. Lots of children did, it was normal to go to work in the fields instead of going to school.

Wendy confirmed that this was her experience too:

> I used to do field work. When I was about 11 or 12, I used to go pea pulling. I'd go along with my net bag picking the peas off and when the sack was full, I remember I would take it to be weighed. At the end of the day, you'd get a big round disk with a hole in and that'd be your wages. I used to love doing that. I used to go to the fields with some gypsy friends, they'd be here and away again all year. They used to come first, just before Spring for the daffodil picking. That's how it was, us women and kids from here and the Gypsies. We all worked together.

A Wisbech town councillor in his mid-thirties confirmed that the phenomenon of children missing school to work in the field continued into the 1990s in the Fen region. He told me:

> I was working on the land from 10 years old. I used to take the last few weeks of the summer term off to go out strawberry picking every year to earn money, so that my mum could take us on holiday. And then we went blackberry picking and then we went onion bunching. Me and my sisters, we all did that. And I left school at 15. No qualifications. Because I was earning money.

The labour arrangements in the Fen region from the mid-twentieth century onwards are difficult to ascertain. As in the anecdotal evidence above they were largely made up of 'black market' arrangements where piece work was paid cash in hand meaning that gangmasters could bypass employment laws. In short, labour in the Fen area – from the final drainage of the area in the mid-nineteenth century and through most of the twentieth century – was carried out by people who were largely unseen, othered and outside of political and legal representation, by a gang system that bore many of the hallmarks of British labour abuses within colonised states abroad. With each movement that aimed to legislate this workforce, new bodies of 'spectral labourers' were animated. For example, the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1975 provoked fear in agricultural workers across East Anglia. Workers in a mushroom factory in Norfolk specifically levied against wage increases in recognition that the enactment of this legislation would result in widespread redundancies for formally employed workers (Mackie, 1975).

The increase in legislation regarding pay and labour rights from the 1970s through to the introduction of the minimum wage in 1998 had significant effects on the agricultural labour market of the Fen region. As a participant in Wisbech explained to me:

> What I think probably changed is that you used to be able to drop into field work and get cash in hand. You could always drop in, you know, if you were a bit down, or a bit short, it didn't matter what you were doing in your life. That was handy for the farmers. And it was handy for the people. It worked well, for both. Yeah. But now they can't do that. Everything has to be declared. Everything has to be on paper. And I think that is where there was a big change with land work.

> The informal labour market here was very, very handy for people in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. You could wake up in the morning and realise you didn't have enough money to buy a loaf of bread and all you had to do was make a phone call. You'd go out on the farm and get paid at the end of the day. With that money you could go and buy everything you needed.

The convenience described by my participant belies a level of poverty in the region – a provisionality of everyday life – that is directly attributable to the low-wage, casual labour economy of the region. This particular manifestation of poverty can be seen in this quote as acting to secure the contributions and cooperation of populations in the region in this insecure, informal and underpaid labour market. In a House of Commons debate in 1972, Mr Gavin Strang of the Scottish Labour Party raised the issue of the disparity between pay for urban and rural manual labourers:

> The latest figures for farm workers in England and Wales, released this month, show that the average weekly earnings of farm workers for the year ending December, 1971, were £21.6 for a 47.9 hour week. Recently the Department of Employment issued the results of its survey into

> the earnings of manual workers in the first week of October last year. They showed that the average earnings of manual workers covered by the survey were £30.93 for a week of 44.7 hours. The figure for manual workers in the manufacturing industry was £31.37 for a week of 43.6 hours.
>
> We have a situation where the gap between the earnings of farm workers and of workers in other industries is intolerable. It is a gap of about £10 a week. If one looks at the hourly earnings, bearing in mind that farm workers work longer hours than industrial workers, incredibly the average hourly earnings of a worker in the manufacturing industry are no less than 66 per cent higher than those of a farm worker. (HC Debate, 1972)

Further to this, Strang also raised the issue of the casual nature of agricultural labour which did not offer occupational pension schemes and sick pay schemes. In the Fen region this was further compounded, since even regular hours which would allow workers to plan their economic activities were not available. The convenience that my participant spoke of – in the period in the mid-twentieth century – actually amounted to precarity. Things did not improve in the late twentieth century, and by 1990 the basic minimum rate of pay for agricultural workers was still around £70 less per week than their counterparts in the cities. Anecdotal evidence from local newspaper reports and interviews reveals that the labouring population in the Fen region managed their finances by drawing unemployment benefits and working for gangmasters in the fields and factories through ad hoc cash in hand arrangements. This obscured the labour performed by this population and created an oppressed history – a myth that ‘the locals will not work in the fields’.

In the seasonal economy of agriculture, work is often available for short, condensed periods, followed by languorous lulls. Under the conditions of Jobseeker’s Allowance, claimants could work up to 12 hours without consequence. For seasonal workers these opportunities are concentrated into smaller, dense periods of work. An analysis of the local paper archives from the 1970s and 1980s shows the manner in which the benefits system not only failed to accommodate non-normative, non-industrial work practices but actively punished them.

Where locals were found to be drawing benefits whilst working for gangmasters, an increasingly hostile regulatory environment developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In 1978 it was reported by the *Fenland Citizen* that a woman from Wisbech was fined £20 and ordered to pay £10 towards costs by Lynn Magistrates for taking two potato picking shifts whilst claiming benefits:

> Mrs Carol Roper (30), of Neeps Terrace, Middle Drove, Wisbech, admitted obtaining supplementary benefit by making a false representation. Mr William Morris, of the Department of Health and Social Security, prosecuting, said Mrs Roper, a mother of three who was living apart from her husband, had signed a declaration on October 10 last year stating she had correctly reported any change of earnings which could affect her benefit. But between October 3rd and October 15th she had been employed by Mr Cutworth of Franks Farm, St John’s Fen End, as a potato picker and had twice received payments of £30. The department had since recovered £24. Mr Ken Land (Southwell, Dennis and Land. Wisbech), however, said the payments were of £20 and £18. He told the court that Mrs Roper had found it difficult to live

> on the amount of money she received being paid no maintenance and had wanted extra to assist with the decoration of her house, for which she could not obtain a grant. Summing up chairman of the bench, Mr J. B. Walton, expressed sympathy for her difficulties, but said she should have asked for guidance. 'You need not have been here at all really,' he added. (*Fenland Citizen*, 1978b, p. 13)

Later that year a man, also from Wisbech, was fined £20 and ordered to pay £20 costs by Lynn Magistrates for taking on two weeks' potato picking work whilst claiming benefits. In 1983, a man from Sutton Bridge appeared before Spalding Magistrates for failing to declare one month of onion and Brussels sprouts picking to the DHSS.

These reports (*Fenland Citizen*, 1978a, 1978b, 1983) show the increasing level of conditionality regarding access to welfare benefits that had effects across the UK from the 1970s onwards. Though conditionality has been a long-standing feature of welfare benefit entitlements in the UK, the scope and scale of behavioural forms of conditionality – as well as the severity of the sanctions applied for failure to comply with the required conduct – increased substantially during this period (Dwyer, 2004). This culminated in the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) in 1996. The incoming Labour government in 1997 adopted a 'work first' and 'work for all' approach, embracing JSA's monitoring of claimants' job search activities, backed up by benefit sanctions in cases of non-compliance. These sanctions were employed alongside an expansion of the reach of work-related conditionality, which intensified and culminated in 2012 in a maximum sanction – for repeated 'high level' non-compliance – of complete withdrawal of benefits for three years. The reports from the *Fenland Citizen* from the 1970s and 1980s show the use of fines as punishment for working whilst claiming benefits. Later the risk of being caught taking part in 'cash in hand' work made working for gangmasters prohibitive, as a participant explained to me in the summer of 2017:

> You don't very often get cash in hand jobs now like you did in the 70s and 80s because the majority of cash in hand jobs were done by people that were drawing benefits as well. That's more or less what it boiled down to, these people were signing on and working cash in hand jobs because they didn't have tax and didn't have to go through the paperwork and things like that. And they could just do it illegally. Cash in hand is illegal.
>
> Cash in hand jobs now are minimal, there aren't many of them about. You know I did one a couple of years ago, but that was a farmer that I knew. He wanted some work done. And I did do that for him, but I used to think, you know, if I ever get caught and I'm drawing benefits I'll lose everything. So I just stopped and went back to my benefits because it wasn't worth the risk really. Sometimes the risk can be too great. You could lose everything you see if you get caught. And then once you lose your benefits, you lose them for good, you lose your housing benefit, your money benefit and you'll probably be homeless because then you wouldn't be able to pay rent.
>
> I thought, at the end of the day this cash in hand job is okay, but if I ever get caught the reaction from it would be terrific. It'd be awful to be homeless and have no money. So, I give it up. I just thought the risk was too much to outweigh what I was doing. Now I just draw my benefits and sign on, and I just go for jobs to show my advisor, I'm looking for work. And obviously I go on courses that are going to get me a job.

What we see here is not the unwillingness of the 'domestic' population to engage in agricultural and food processing work in the Fen region, but rather a situation in which the population that previously had acted as 'spectral labourers' – people who carried out agricultural labour towards whom the parish, and latterly the state bore no responsibility – were assimilated as citizens. In gaining citizen status, this community found themselves barred from the agricultural gangs on which they had previously relied for employment. In an area constructed for food production – based upon a gang labour system and with poor transport links – many found themselves entirely dependent on an increasingly hostile benefits system. In contrast to the temporal progression that the urban site makes claim to, the Fen region unfolds choreographically as the continuum of space. There is no unity of character to either the pickers or the gangmasters and no self-determining neoliberal subject is to be found on this agricultural stage. It is not only the bodies of the 'domestic' labouring class who have been interned in the Fen region, but also the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities who worked alongside them. It is important to note that there is no clear dividing line between the 'domestic' and the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations in the Fen region, as Luke, a man in his early twenties, explained to me:

> I was raised by my stepdad, he was born and raised in Chatteris, he was a Traveller and then he just spent all his life working in farming. His Mum is from a Traveller family. My Mum came from Peterborough and her family are all still there. We moved to Chatteris when I was a baby. Diversity is good. Chatteris is still pretty much the same. Eighty percent of Chatteris is Traveller descended so it is all big families. There is a traveller site there and some of them live in houses. The ones who live in houses are called Gaujes[1] – that's a word for a Traveller who lives in a house. They all do all sorts of work, some work on the roads, building, gardening. Yeah, hedge-trimming and stuff all sorts of stuff. Just what they turn their hands to.

In 1960 the British government introduced the Caravan Sites Act, which made it difficult for the Gypsy and Traveller population to buy and winter on small plots of land. It also sought to prevent stays on the private land of farmers for who they were working. Though the 1968 Caravan Sites Act introduced duties for local authorities to provide accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, this legislation did little to safeguard or create suitable pitches. Crucially, the CJPOA also limited the number of vehicles that could assemble in one stopping place, which meant the exclusion of large families.

Although official data are scarce, anecdotal evidence from interviews and local newspapers (in which mistreatment of this community is regularly documented) suggests that throughout the mid-twentieth century various communities of Gypsies, Travellers and Romany workers regularly provided labour for Fen farms. This appears to have shifted following the passing of the CJPOA in 1994. This not only meant that councils no longer needed to build sites, but that they had the power to close existing sites. Whilst the government suggested that Gypsies and Travellers should buy their own land and set up sites, the planning system made this virtually impossible. The effect of this legislation was that the seasonal movements of the Gypsy and Traveller community, which provided much needed agricultural labour for farms across the country, were criminalised. In the period following the 1994 Act, the systematic closure of traditional stopping places made this way of life impossible.

This meant that even where a provision of camps was made by local authorities – as it has been in the area around Wisbech, where the population of Gypsy and Traveller families has doubled since 1997 – they too have been subject to the increasingly punitive benefit conditions which affect the 'domestic' population. It was at this point, in the mid to late 1990s, that British agriculture became heavily dependent upon international migrant workers.

Although the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) was first implemented by the Home Office in 1945 to allow farmers and cultivators in the UK to recruit overseas workers to undertake short-term agricultural work, it was only after the CJPOA that SAWS began to be used to address the increasing difficulty in recruiting for seasonal agricultural work. These workers were generally provided with onsite accommodation, the cost of which was extracted from the workers' pay. This arrangement can be seen as leading directly to the widespread labour exploitation and modern slavery conditions that were described to me by Ivo, a Lithuanian man, who was held in debt bondage in the Fen area in the early 2000s. He described the situation in the following way:

> I'll tell you my personal opinion, it is very simple. To come to the UK the organisers charged three hundred euros. Then we paid for someone to arrange work for us. So, it seems like that is probably quite alright because there are loads of places in Spalding, Boston, Wisbech around that where people can be promised work. We arrived here with nothing; we sold our last things to pay for the transport. And then no job was offered in the first week. Then another week. So, we waited for two weeks. But during that time we still had to pay rent. They told us: 'Don't worry, we'll just take your passport, everything will be good. When you start work, you have to pay us back.' So basically, that's how people get stuck with it. . .
>
> I lived in this house and there were 13 people living there with me. So, at that time I think I paid fifty pounds a week, not for room or bed just literally paid for [. . .] we slept on the floor. That's the way it was. They promised us work and all of us in the house were struggling. When there was work, some of us got the job, some of us didn't. If you did get the job that day, you didn't complain when they told you that you had to walk ten miles when everyone else was still in bed because you have no other place to go to get paid. The people there were mainly middle-aged females, around 45 years old. They did not know the English language. All they did was work and they were abused – but not physical abuse. It's just they didn't get the jobs. So, they couldn't pay off the debt to the gangmasters and could barely pay for food.

The experiences of the A8 migrant labourers appear here not as a development in this region but as a new iteration of previous labour abuses in this spatial choreography. The Fen region is – in short – a landscape drained and put to work with no contingency in place. A site with no contingency and a singular factorial aim – to profit from 'natural' resources, and where the notion of natural resources always includes the human bodies that interact with and facilitate the extraction of this value.

Progress doesn't progress

The women who laboured on the Fen fields in the 1970s and 1980s imagined a better life for themselves than their mothers had lived:

> My mum looked really old, she looked old before her time really because she had to stand and scrub at the dolly tub, no land work for her that was what our fathers were doing and there weren't the money for childcare. . . the reason I went to work on the land and put myself through all those aches and pains is I wanted a washing machine. (Country Characters, 1980)

This better future did not manifest. Rather the promise of something better to come twisted topologically on the surface of the Fen region. This brings to mind the novelist Graham Swift's description of the Fen region as a 'landscape which of all landscapes most amounts to Nothing' (Swift, 2015, p. 13). It is on the surface of this landscape that we find an interminable failure of progress that underlies our 'developed' society. The Fen region holds on its surface an endless repetition of Aristotle's concept of agricultural labour as performed by non-political, servile humans.

Agricultural labour, in Aristotle's political economy, is necessary to but distinct from the free life of politics. In *Politics I* the management of – and relationship with – nature that defines the labour at the base of the food chain acts as a limit-case between free and unfree: that is, superior and servile human life (Smith, 1991). For Aristotle it is through the corporeal existence of agricultural workers that the thinking life of the 'thinking' body in the city is freed to practise politics. The Fen landscape displays on its surface the extent to which this mode of thinking – in which the internal production of food serves as an incontrovertible ground and guide to the boundaries of national politics – remains powerful in our own time (Frank, 2004).

As each of the populations that have performed agricultural labour in the Fen region – since its final drainage in the mid-nineteenth century – have gained suffrage and citizen status, they have simultaneously found themselves barred from this labour. Without alternative labour economies to enter into, these populations have found themselves held in place, at the same moment as new bodies of spectral labourers – to whom the state bears no responsibility – also find themselves held in this place.

Throughout my research in the Fen region people repeatedly referred to A8 migrant individuals as 'better workers'. This is a rhetorical trend also noted in other areas of the UK where use of A8 migrant labourers for agricultural work was common between 2004 and 2020 (see Findlay & McCollum, 2013; Ruhs & Anderson, 2010; Scott, 2013a, 2013b). I put forward in conclusion to this article that when read 'against the grain' of the oppressed history of the previous agricultural labourers in this landscape, this positive discrimination takes on new meaning. It is an indication of an absence of progress at the very ground level of the UK's labour economy. This manifests as the consistent need for – and remaking of – a 'spectral labour' force that has no political embodiment and thus leaves little trace in the historical narrative.

This notion of the 'better worker' as one whose life is simultaneously excessively and insufficiently embedded in the structure of the site of their labour was rendered corporeal in an interview with a town official in Wisbech. He told me that:

> On the news, in the run up to Brexit they interviewed a local GP and said to the GP, surely all these Eastern Europeans coming in must have caused major problems with your appointments and your waiting lists. And he turned around and said well, actually, the Eastern Europeans

> cause me no problems because most of them are young, they're healthy, and they work. The ones who cause me the problems are the ones who have lived here for a long time, probably never worked, high levels of smoking, get heart disease, type two diabetes, and this lack of activity and that's where the problems lie, not in the sort of populations who have arrived mainly in the last five or six years.

This narrative not only operates as a rhetoric of positive discrimination which denies the extreme health problems stored up by the physical and psychological conditions described by Ivo, the man held in debt bondage, and his contemporaries. It also oppresses the histories of the communities in the Fen region who previously fulfilled the roles of 'spectral labourers'. The 'deserving poor' here are deserving only because they do not present a physical or social need for their employers or the state.

Conclusion

The close reading of the recent history of agricultural labour in the Fen region demonstrates that site-specific histories of classed experience have the potential to bring to light the shared experiences of seemingly disparate groups.

It also demonstrates that the Fen region itself is a significant site for the historical study of class as a lived and living phenomenon. This article glimpses a narrative of the Fen region as a site where the technology of the Industrial Revolution bewitched the rural, deranging the already spatialised class order in a proliferation of spectral workers whose denied or degraded citizenship has ongoing consequences beyond the spatial-temporal location of the birth of the gang system.

The article also demonstrates the value of using Benjamin's critical lexicon to sift the material of rural areas more generally. This theoretical lens was used in this article to develop the understanding of spectral labour as a point of disjuncture in the grand narrative of distinct groups at work in the Fen fields. By bringing these groups together by the cultural materiality of their labour conditions lines of connection are drawn between sections of this community that have been constructed as hostile to each other. The location, tracing and disseminating of these disruptive placed histories therefore can be understood as a method that holds potential for fostering a sense of shared identity between disparate sectors of the working classes.

Future research on the classed experiences explored in this article might focus on the extent to which the domestic labour in the Fen region has been racialised. This avenue of exploration has the ability to understand the critical moment of the creation of the gang system in tension and critical collaboration with the historical trajectory of what Robin Kelley (2000) – in his foreword to Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* – calls 'the racialisation of the proletariat' (p. xiii) through agricultural exploitation.

This article can thus be understood as making a contribution to critical social sciences that focus on the ephemerality of experience. By tracing the fleeting and excessive alchemical reactions of placed experience, as Benjamin asserts, 'the true picture of the past whizzes by' (2006, p. 390), and offers the chance for significant contributions in the form of negative dialectics that shine a dark light on more traditional histories of social structures and stratifications.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the four anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions which have helped to improve this manuscript.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

This work was supported by Economic and Social Research Council: Grant Number: ES/J500215/1.

Note

1. The term Gauje is usually used to refer to non-Gypsy Travellers. Luke's bleeding of the boundaries of this term speaks to the non-conventional social structures at play in the local authority housing estates in Fenland.

References

Adorno, T. (2003). *Negative dialectics*. Routledge.

Beattie, A. (2008, May 17). The road from Morecambe Bay. *Financial Times Weekend Magazine*, 24–25.

Belcher, O., Martin, L., Secor, A., Simon, S., & Wilson, T. (2008). Everywhere and nowhere: The exception and the topological challenge to geography. *Antipode*, *40*(4), 499–503.

Benjamin, W. (1999a). Capitalism as religion. In *Selected writings 1927–1934, Vol. 1* (pp. 288–291) (M. Jennings, Ed.). Harvard University Press.

Benjamin, W. (1999b). On the program of the coming philosophy. In *Selected writings 1927–1934, Vol. 1* (pp. 100–110) (M. Jennings, Ed.). Harvard University Press.

Benjamin, W. (2006). On the concept of history. In *Selected writings Vol. 4* (pp. 389–400) (M. Jennings. Ed.). Harvard University Press.

Bergson, H. (2015). *Time and free will: An essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. Martino Publishing.

Buller, H., & Hoggart, K. (2015). *Rural development: A geographical perspective*. Taylor & Francis.

Cambridgeshire County Council. (2010). *Joint strategic needs assessment: Cambridgeshire Travellers 2010*. https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Travellers-JSNA-2010.pdf.

Chamberlain, M. (1977). *Fenwomen: A portrait of women in an English village*. Virago.

Children's Employment Commission. (1862). *Sixth report of the Commissioners, with appendix, Volume 16 of reports of commissioner*. House of Commons,.

Country Characters. (1980). *Country characters* (P. Melton & Fenprobe, Eds.) [No 27 Tape], Cambridgeshire Farmland Museum. www.farmlandvoices.org.uk/Country%20Characters.htm

Dowling, R. (2009). Geographies of identity: Landscapes of class. *Progress in Human Geography*, *33*(6), 833–839.

Dubow, J. (2004). Outside of place and other than optical: Walter Benjamin and the geography of critical thought. *Journal of Visual Culture*, *3*(3), 259–274.

Dustmann, C., Frattini, T., & Halls, C. (2010). Assessing the fiscal costs and benefits of A8 migration to the UK. *Fiscal Studies*, *31*(1), 1–41.

Dwyer, P. (2004). Creeping conditionality in the UK: From welfare rights to conditional entitlements? *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie*, *29*(2), 265–287. https://doi.org/10.2307/3654696

Fenland Citizen. (1978a, June 7). Made false statement to obtain benefit, p. 17.

Fenland Citizen. (1978b, June 7). Needed money to decorate house, p. 13.

Fenland Citizen. (1983, July 13). Farmworker made claims for £620, p. 9.

Findlay, A., & McCollum, D. (2013). Recruitment and employment regimes: Migrant labour channels in the UK's rural agribusiness sector, from accession to recession. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *30*, 10–19.

Frank, J. (2004, February). Citizens, slaves, and foreigners: Aristotle on human nature. *The American Political Science Review*, *98*(1), 91–104.

Gilmore, R. W. (2017). Abolition geography and the problem of innocence. In A. L. G. Johnson (Ed.), *Futures of black radicalism* (pp. 225–240). Verso.

Gregory, D. (1991). Interventions in the historical geography of modernity: Social theory, spatiality and the politics of representation. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *73*(1), 17–44.

HC Debate. (1867, April 2). Vol. 186. Column 1014. https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1867-04-02/debates/3cbb6e3f-d4ea-44c8-9fed-267c73ecb40a/AgriculturalWomenAndChildren%E2%80%94Resolution

HC Debate. (1972, April 12). *Minimum wage for agricultural workers*, Vol. 834 cc1260-3. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1972/apr/12/minimum-wage-for-agricultur al-workers

HL Debate. (1867, April 11). Vol. 186, Column 1475. https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1867-04-11/debates/7e762bbe-9c85-41a8-bd22-8ce9bda19dc4/AgriculturalGangs

Holderness, B. A. (1972). 'Open' and 'close' parishes in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *The Agricultural History Review*, *20*(2), 126–139.

Josephides, L. (2003). Representing the anthropologist's predicament. In A. Dawson, J. Hockey & A. James (Eds.), *After writing culture* (pp. 26–43). Routledge.

Keith, M. (2000). Walter Benjamin, urban studies and the narratives of city life. In S. Watson & G. Bridge (Eds.), *A companion to the city* (pp. 410–427). Blackwell Publishers.

Khun Song, B. (2002). Parish typology and the operation of the poor laws in early nineteenth-century Oxfordshire. *The Agricultural History Review*, *50*(2), 203–224.

King, R., Lulle, A., & Melossi, E. (2021). New perspectives on the agriculture–migration nexus. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *85*, 52–58.

Kingsbury, P., & Jones, J. (2009). Walter Benjamin's Dionysian adventures on Google Earth. *Geoforum*, *40*(4), 502–513.

Latham, A. (1999). The power of distraction: Distraction, tactility, and habit in the work of Walter Benjamin. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *17*(4), 451–473.

Macdonald, S. (2002). Trafficking in history: Multitemporal practices. *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures*, *11*, 93–116.

Mackie, L. (1975, November 24). *The Guardian*, 1.

Massey, D. (2012). Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place. In J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam & L. Tickner (Eds.), *Mapping the futures* (pp. 75–85). Routledge.

Melossi, E. (2021). 'Ghetto tomatoes' and 'taxi drivers': The exploitation and control of Sub-Saharan African migrant tomato pickers in Puglia, Southern Italy. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *88*, 491–499.

National Farmers Union. (2019). *Delivering for Britain: Food and farming in the Fens*. www.nfuonline.com/pcs-pdfs/food-farming-in-the-fens_web/

Office for National Statistics. (2021, July 21). *Traveller caravan count*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/traveller-caravan-count-july-2021

Pile, S. (2013). *The body and the city: Psychoanalysis, space and subjectivity*. Taylor & Francis.

Robinson, C. J. (2000). *Black Marxism: The making of the black radical tradition*. UNC Press Books.

Rogaly, B. (2008). Intensification of workplace regimes in British horticulture: The role of migrant workers. *Population, Space and Place*, *14*(6), 497–510.

Rogaly, B. (2021). Commentary: Agricultural racial capitalism and rural migrant workers. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *88*, 527–531.

Ruhs, M., & Anderson, B. (2010). Introduction. In M. Ruhs & B. Anderson (Eds.), *Who needs migrant workers?* (pp. 16–52). Oxford University Press.

Scott, S. (2013a). Labour, migration and the spatial fix: Evidence from the UK food industry. *Antipode*, *45*(5), 1090–1109.

Scott, S. (2013b). Migrant–local hiring queues in the UK food industry. *Population, Space and Place*, *19*(5), 459–471.

Selwyn, B. (2021). A green new deal for agriculture: For, within, or against capitalism? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *48*(4), 778–806.

Smith, N. (1991). Aristotle's theory of natural slavery. In D. Keyt & F. Miller (Eds.), *A companion to Aristotle's politics* (pp. 142–155). Blackwell.

Swift, G. (2015). *Waterland*. Washington Square Press.

Whatmore, S. (2013). Where natural and social sciences meet? Reflections on an experiment in geographical practice. In A. Berry & G. Born (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary: Reconfigurations of the social and natural sciences* (pp. 161–178). Routledge.

Whatmore, S. (2017). Hybrid geographies: Rethinking the 'human' in human geography. In B. Braun & K. Anderson (Eds.), *Environment: Critical essays in human geography* (pp. 411–428). Routledge.

Williams, R. (2020). *Culture and materialism*. Verso Books.

Woods, M. (1998). Rethinking elites: Networks, space and local politics. *Environment and Planning A*, *30*(12), 2108–2119.

Woods, M. (2007). Engaging the global countryside: Globalisation, hybridity and the reconstitution of rural place. *Progress in Human Geography*, *31*(4), 485–507.

Woods, M. (2010). *Rural*. Routledge.