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: Harnessing Power in Industrial America.

By Ann Norton Greene. Harvard Univ. Press. 322 pp. $29.95

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

our culture, our minds, as well.

About 1800, with industry rising, Americans were seeking a mobile power supply. The ox was popular, but America chose the horse, mainly for its speed and consequent versatility. Greene launches her narrative with a discussion of physiology and anatomy, and the physics of harnessing, which gets too technical for her purpose and contains puzzling and misleading explanations. Carry on, reader! She recovers, and conducts us through the landscape taking shape along the many arteries of the newly developing transportation system.

The bustle and hum must have been exciting: freight wagons pulled by teams of six or eight horses, traveling in groups of up to 30; eight thousand horses pulling passengers and freight along the 363-mile Erie Canal; a thousand weekly arrivals and departures by stagecoach in Philadelphia. In 1860, travelers going from Washington, D.C., to New York City began by horse-drawn vehicle, transferred to a train, to a horse-drawn streetcar, to another train, to a horse-drawn vehicle again, to the ferry boat—and that only got them as far as the Susquehanna River!

The Civil War, "the first war of industrialized animal power," brought a colossal need for horses. In 1861 alone, the Quartermaster Department purchased 194,000 horses and mules. Keeping the Union army supplied with equines, and hundreds of thousands of tons of forage and grain, and millions of iron horseshoes, fell to highly efficient Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, a desk-bound soldier who lectured General William Rosecrans on the care and judicious use of horses and demonstrated to a complaining George McClellan, always tricky with the numbers, that he had received 10 times as many horses as he was reporting. The war

A team pulls a streetcar on a winter day in Harlem in 1892. In 1900, an average of nearly 500 horses powered each square mile of New York City.

ground up horses as it ground up men. One officer folded horses and men into the same casualty report.

Industry and industrialized agriculture could be hard on horses too. Especially grueling were the stationary units whose tramping horses turned the gears of power machines to do almost anything. "On the treadmill" was not a metaphor. Cities ran on horse power. In 1872, an epidemic of equine influenza brought Philadelphia to a standstill. They couldn't even get beer to the saloons!

New York and Chicago each averaged nearly 500 horses *per square mile* by 1900; Milwaukee had 709, Richmond 615. Then the numbers began to collapse, quickly in the cities, much more slowly on the farms. As the millions of acres that once produced horse feed began producing surpluses, effects of the resulting depressed prices rippled through the economy. In 1933, the Census Bureau suggested the transition to automotive power as a main cause of the Great Depression.

Greene maintains that the abandonment of horses wasn't inevitable. Objections to the ubiquitous manure, the greater privacy and independence provided by the automobile, humane considerations—these all played a part, but "the overriding objection [to horses] came from the discomfort of the visible, physical work of power production." If the explanation for this most fundamental revolution in daily life can be reduced to so few words, then let me reduce it to fewer: man's fatal attraction to the Machine.

Greene's account is as much about the 19th-century cultural landscape as about horses. "Progress," "civilization," "prosperity," become almost a chant, first linked to horses, then turning against them. Especially revealing is her discussion of animal breeding. Americans, in their ebullient new faith in controlling nature, were intent upon molding new horses for new purposes, but myth and prejudice pervaded all. Mules, for example, a hybrid between horses and donkeys that "straddled the border between what in the popular mind were two separate species," were often discussed in "explicitly racial" terms. Americans "transformed horses," Greene states, hinting at radical genetic engineering, but ultimately all we know is that a few new specialized breeds emerged, and that horses got *much* bigger, the result of European imports.

As a lifelong horseman and teamster myself, I cannot but wish that Greene had avoided the technics, where she illuminates little, but this is a very small part of a vast scholarly work. As a historian, Greene has limited herself to the descriptive, but in her epilogue, falling out of—or perhaps into—character, she hesitantly suggests a future mixed-energy scene that might include horses. Why so timid?

Dick Courteau has been a teamster and horse trainer for more than half a century. His essay on horse power appeared in *Orion* in 2007. He lives in the Ozark Mountains of northwest Arkansas.

ARTS & LETTERS

Canon Fodder

Reviewed by Eric Liebetrau

PROMISED LAND: Thirteen Books That Changed America.

By Jay Parini. Doubleday. 385 pp. $24.95

Since America's birth, its writers have attempted to capture the essence of the American dream. Jay Parini, a prolific poet and novelist and one of the nation's foremost literary scholars, taps into that common project in *Promised Land*. Putting a welcome twist on the concept of the best-of list, he searches the landscape of American literature for works that "played a role in shaping the nation's idea of itself." Parini is quick to note that his choices aren't necessarily the "greatest" books, but rather a handful of "nodal points, places where vast areas of thought and feeling gathered and dispersed, creating a nation as various and vibrant as the United States."

Inspired by British journalist Melvyn Bragg's 2006 lecture "Twelve Books That Changed the World"—all of them, ahem, English—Parini settled on a baker's dozen of works (a nod to the original 13 colonies) that he believes "helped to create the intellectual and emotional contours of this country." The choices cover a wide swath of literary traditions, ranging from a 17th-century journal to 20th-