While it has not received the same attention as Agincourt, the battle of Crécy, fought in 1346 between Edward III of England and Philippe VI of France, is equally important to the history of the Hundred Years War, and equally shrouded in myth and nationalistic sentiment. Michael Livingston's book questions this mythologizing, and challenges much of what we "know" about the battle.

Crécy: Battle of Five Kings is divided into three parts. In the first Livingston provides a succinct and clear outline of the circumstances leading up to Edward III's claiming of the throne of France, the opening of the war, and the preparations of the royal army for the invasion. It integrates political matters—such as William of Normandy's capture of the English throne in 1066—with the economic importance of England's European wool markets, and with the dynastic issues of Edward's blood tie to the French royal house.

The second part deals with the campaign through to the eve of the battle. Here Livingston starts by describing the size of the army and the logistical implications of bringing fourteen-thousand men to France: the difficulties of moving an army that size through the French countryside, and the devastation caused by the English as they ravaged French lands for provisions and profit. The English army's sack of Caen, which lasted four days, is dealt with in a page and a half, which seems somewhat thin, while Livingston's explanation for the brutality and violence of the sack—notorious in its day—is to say that war is always brutal and that it probably served Edward to allow the army to sack the town as it answered their need for pay and plunder. This feels somewhat dismissive, and misses an opportunity to dig more deeply into the difficulties of command and control in a medieval army. It might also be seen as making light of the suffering of the civilian population.

Livingston goes on to consider Edward's plans and options following Caen. Edward, he decides, pursued his course south towards Paris and then north towards Flanders for primarily financial reasons. His army needed supplies and pay, which Edward could poorly afford from any source other than the French themselves. Livingston accordingly sees the remainder of the campaign not as an attempt at a war-winning decisive victory, nor as a great chivalric gesture, but as a chévauchée on a grand scale, aimed at cutting a swathe of destruction through French territory as far as the river Somme. The French king, by contrast, used Fabian tactics, waiting Edward out, with every day of the campaign making the English army weaker and more desperate, and the French victory, when battle was engaged, increasingly likely.

The third part of *Crécy* deals with the battle itself. It is here that Livingston's narrative diverges most obviously from that of previous historians. He rejects the traditional battlefield, offering instead a compelling argument for a new location about three and a half miles south, based on a reinterpretation of the primary source material as well as an examination of the terrain. This revised site underpins Livingston's narrative of the battle. He emphasizes the strength of the English position, enhanced by a massive ditch and a "Wagonburg"—a fort made of the carts and wagons that accompanied the army. He argues that this new location, and the reports from French scouts, would have resulted in the French attacking piecemeal. The Genoese crossbowmen, long blamed for the French defeat, were doomed to fail against the English bows who, secure behind their wooden walls, had them outranged and outnumbered.

The other major revision that Livingston weaves into his narrative is Prince Edward's role in the battle. He challenges the traditional heroic story of the sixteen-year-old being left by his father to "win his spurs" in a furious struggle with the French. Livingston highlights the primary accounts that suggest the prince made a foolhardy advance out of the safety of the English lines, was captured (albeit briefly), and his ward nearly overrun. Edward III's

response, far from his famous *sang froid* retort, was a hasty counterattack to relieve the prince and rescue victory from the jaws of defeat.

The book is well written, with an accessible and informal style that draws the reader into the narrative. The English search for a crossing of the Somme, for example, is told with a breathless pace that reflects their desperation. Livingston's credentials as a professor at The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina are obvious. They are reflected in his clear and uncomplicated prose, but also in his emphasis on logistics, terrain, and the need to walk the ground of the battlefield to truly understand it. His reinterpretation of the battle is based on this traditional approach to military history. There is less focus on the individual experience of combat, or of the military culture of the protagonists. There is little mention of chivalry and its impact on the engagement. This means that some actions, particularly the impetuous advance of the Prince of Wales, remain hard to understand. There is scope for considering how chivalric culture's emphasis on displaying prowess might have spurred the newly-knighted prince to behave so recklessly, and why the experienced veteran nobles who had been placed by the king to watch over his son failed to rein him in. There is also little discussion of the structure of the English army. This was one of the last field armies to include both indentured retinues—comprising mixed companies of men-at-arms and mounted archers raised under contract by captains—and county levies of archers and spearmen serving on foot, raised by commission of array. This mixture must have affected Edward's deployment and would certainly have had an impact on the speed of the army, a subject central to Livingston's understanding of the battle.

This is an important book, working both as an introductory text for a general audience, as well as offering an important reinterpretation of the for consideration by scholars.

Robert W. Jones 🆔
Franklin and Marshall College /Advanced Studies in England
r.jones@asebath.org

Ted McCormick's *Human Empire* is a very good book. It examines demographic thought, the thinking of populations, their mobility, and transformation in Britain and its colonies from Ireland to North America from the early sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century. Although he focusses on the quantitative aspects of populations, McCormick's main argument throughout *Human Empire* is that qualitative ideas about populations underlay the attempts at quantification.

McCormick traces two major developments or changes in the demographic thinking of the period. First, during the Tudor and early Stuart periods, there occurred a major shift in the object of demographic knowledge. Whereas in the sixteenth century the object was what McCormick calls "multitudes" as qualitatively defined groups, by the mid seventeenth century this was replaced by "population" or even "the national population." Underlying this change was, or so McCormick argues, new attitudes to the state and the natural world. The second major change, which took place in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and culminated in T. R. Malthus's work, concerned demographic agency. Whereas in the mid seventeenth century that agency rested on the state, in Malthus's work the individual was supposed to take "the moral responsibility of demographic decision-making" (3). The