Most of these documents are not particularly sexy; some of them, including those from TRIPLEX, are actually quite anodyne if not outright dull. The most intriguing one is possibly the unabridged version of a secret MI5 history prepared for internal consumption, copied by Blunt and passed to the Soviets (a redacted version, with unrecognized deletions, had been previously released by the Public Record Office and published in 1999). Sometimes, one gets the impression that by looking at documents produced in Britain, and read via Russian in Moscow we are somehow observing history from the keyhole. And, of course, important as they are, these documents add only another piece to a mosaic which is still broad as much as it is incomplete. Nevertheless, this collection is very important and useful for intelligence historians. The documents published in this anthology are significant not just, or even primarily, for what they tell, but for what they represent and symbolize. They offer yet another example of the penetration of British intelligence by the Soviets; at this stage, we know a lot about it and yet reading volumes such as TRIPLEX we still wonder how could that be possible. The magnitude of the penetration and the directly proportional ineptitude of the British services are simply shocking (as, retrospectively, is the dedication and commitment of the Cambridge Five). In addition, these documents offer a very useful tool to study the Five themselves: to understand how they operated and thought; to define their view of the world and their predictions of the future. Differently from many other spies, the Five were indeed self-directed; in other words, they were “in the extraordinary position of deciding for themselves what they should remove for Stalin” (p. 3).

West and Tsarev have done an important service to scholars and devotees of intelligence history. The only complaint of this reviewer is that the historical introduction and the brief biographical sketches at the beginning of each part are somehow too hasty and short. Something more – on the Five, their story, and more generally the history of World War II and early Cold War intelligence – could have been added to make the volume more accessible to non-experts.

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Labour's Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England

Carolyn Steedman's Labour's Lost sets itself an ambitious and intensely stimulating challenge, in tracing out the 'making' of English society through the prism of
domestic service. Steedman argues that the work of servants went beyond the washing of dirty clothes and nappies, the scrubbing of floors and the care of children, to act also as a means to think through, or think with, profound questions concerning the organisation of society. This study ranges confidently and eclectically across numerous areas which show transformations in eighteenth century England - literacy and numeracy, food and famine, policing and the organisation of identity, the law, consumption and wages, and the evolution of state powers of taxation and the relief of poverty. The far-reaching nature of the argument is impressively linked to a deep underlying concern not to eclipse the physical labour of servants and the material things with which they interacted; the discussions of stays or ‘the necessary house’ continually shift the reader’s focus from the abstractions of settlement claims or property law to the very material presence of dirt, shit, and human bodies. Indeed, Steedman argues that the act of ‘thinking through’ domestic servants often entailed minute attention to actions such as the cleaning of knives and boots or the act of serving at table, by the courts, Poor Law institutions and tax commissions of eighteenth century England. She is actively committed to foregrounding material objects and the ways in which they call into being certain kinds of labour, as well as the individuality and presence of domestic servants, and to writing both into history in their own right. Labours Lost contributes to the recent historical interest in rethinking ‘the social’, drawing on theories of material culture that place novels, ideas, jokes – the stuff of cultural history – into the frame as things themselves, and not simply as ideas, representations or symbols.

There is enormous insight in Steedman’s probing, speculative accounts of the relationships between servants and their employers. She notes, for example, the implicit insult made by the servants who depict their employers’ house, or the product of their labour, as their own property, or refuse the employer the satisfaction of their regard. Steedman’s servants are not depicted as members of the employing family, but rather as a chorus, commentating on or mocking employers’ affairs. Steedman refuses the framework of ‘pathos and melodrama’ through which social historians have usually approached domestic service, and offers in its place an ironic, startling and transformative account of eighteenth and early nineteenth century servants as literate, articulate workers, acutely aware of their contracted role and legal rights, and able to speak, act and consume in ways historians have been slow to recognise (p. 289).

Alongside consumption, Steedman’s most recurrent concern is with theories of labour, and the transformation in thinking about labour in the eighteenth century, from being a social relationship to becoming a thing that could be owned, a material activity, located in the body of the worker. This allowed, Steedman argues, for servants, both male and female, to take the objects on which they
laboured into their own verbal possession, and to be recognised as legal persons. Their labour was no longer simply a form of prosthesis for the powers of their employers, but became recognised by the law, and might form the basis for a recognition of their individual selfhood and psychic states - their depression, as William Godwin proposed, or their dreams, as Steedman prefers. The function and meaning of domestic service is thus not simply concerned with a making of the modern labour market and state, but also a making of the modern self. Steedman notes, for example, the ‘compulsory autobiographical material’ produced through the Poor Law, and the way in which the servant’s character (reference) produced a form of identity and selfhood. She explores the opportunities for servants to write, through their access to paper and ink, their moments of free time built into the nature of domestic labour, and their occasional access to the libraries or reading materials of their employers. Through these processes, servants might come to be considered members of the polity, the possessors of rights, in ways that they had not previously been. These changes, however, were in no sense permanent, and servants became increasingly marginalised and dispossessed under new fiscal, welfare and labour market formations in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The long term changes to which domestic labour was subject are mostly left implicit in Steedman’s account, and the powerful differences between late eighteenth century servants and their descendants still need further historical attention.

Another recurrent theme which helps hold together the very wide-ranging concerns of this book is the sometime comic nature of domestic service. Steedman is acutely attuned to the jokes made about servants, the laughter of employers, elites and judges, as well as the wry, ironic and ever-present humour of servants themselves. She presents the kept letters from domestic servants, for example, as ‘an archive of social comedy... preserved for the purposes of laughter’ (p. 211). The attention to laughter as a form of policing and resistance, and to the ‘chillingly comic vignettes’ employers told about their servants acknowledges that providing the content of jokes might be another part of the labour of servants, and that jokes might be an important part of how ‘the social’ has been conceived. Steedman draws on new work in the history of emotions, and links Labours Lost to this promising realm of historical innovation. The comic also serves to link eighteenth century service to later centuries. The comedy of domestic service was just as powerful in the twentieth century, as the writer-turned-servant Monica Dickens noted in the late 1930s, ‘It is a curious game that people like to play sometimes, drawing out the maid (baiting the butler in some houses), in order to get amusement out of the screechingly funny idea that she may have some sort of a human life of her own…. You have to humour them by saying amusing and slightly outrageous things so that they can retail them to their friends, or ‘dine out’ on quotations from your
The intellectual contexts in which Steedman places eighteenth century English domestic service are eclectic; insights from anthropology, literary history, linguistics, law and psychoanalysis are woven together, resulting in a form of intellectual and social history which is hard to categorise – it is Steedman’s unforgettable and unique voice which presents domestic service in all its materiality alongside ‘the thought processes it gave rise to’. As with Steedman’s earlier work, *Master and Servant*, it is the partiality and neglect of E P Thompson’s *Making of the English Working Class* that motivates this attempt to map out a new ‘making’.4 Steedman talks of ‘nascent class feeling’, and attempts, for example, to place the murder and abuse of children by the domestic servants charged with their care in the same historical niche as food riots and other forms of ‘class consciousness’ (p. 301). Indeed, she argues that the work of domestic servants enabled them to think about class – or dream of a different life – more overtly than, say, agricultural workers might have done. This at times feels as though Steedman is diverted from her own ground, and is attempting to reposition domestic servants within an existing narrative rather than pursuing her own. She is rightly critical of the formulaic ‘plot lines of modern social history’, but is at her best when she abandons her critique and offers new ways of thinking about her sources (p. 16). Steedman concludes, however, with a deliberate ambiguity, refusing to choose between frameworks of social class or of populism: servants ‘were the people – or, if you will have it this way, the working class’ (p. 356). At its best, *Labours Lost* weaves class into the history of domestic service, without privileging it as the central way in which domestic servants thought of themselves and their work. This ultimately does more than an attempt to revise the ‘making’ of an English working class, and provides an extraordinarily sensitive and rich account of eighteenth and early nineteenth century domestic service.

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In *The Britannic Vision*, W. David McIntyre examines the relationship between

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