and then our plants shape us. However, as the author admits, the historical development of Prairie wheat and oilseed systems—including the important history of biological innovation in Canadian wheat breeding—is too brief. Granted, the book’s focus is on recent politics, but when a plant’s history is offered as a determinant in its unique passage through modern biotechnology, readers will expect historical evidence. We are left wondering, how is bread any different than oil? Especially since Prairie vegetable oils are found in most of the same products as wheat and in a whole host of others.

The adoption and then rejection of GM is also puzzling in the case of flax, a small oilseed industry that has been centered in the Prairies for as long as wheat. Unlike canola, GM flax was rejected four years after its approval, and although Eaton presents it as an example of producer resistance, it was clearly the result of the anti-GM stance taken by the European Union, flax’s largest consumer.

Resisting GM wheat was about protecting food, enabling process, and empowering producers, but in some places the takeaway is confused by historical gaps and theoretical jargon. Eaton’s personal bias is clear—she is in favor of renewed resistance against genetic modification or at least against the companies that want blanket permissions and exclusive rights to do it. Growing Resistance offers practical advice for the anti-GM movement, including the need to listen to producers and to consider the local and historical contexts of each plant, and in this way the book is a welcome resource for all parties.

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*Soft Soil, Black Grapes* is a welcome and lively addition to the growing set of works combining social history, critical cultural studies, and agricultural history. Cinotto argues that race and ethnicity were the decisive factors shaping Italian winemaking in California in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That racial milieu was a “changing, modular, and heavily contextual process that influence[d] . . . social status . . . power relations . . . [and] the reception of commodities produced by ethnic businesses in the marketplace” (2). Focusing on the Italian Swiss Colony, Italian Vineyard, and E.&J. Gallo wineries,
Cinotto weaves a deft tale of how immigrants from Italy’s northern Piedmont region and their descendants expanded California winemaking into a mass-market business and helped turned wine into a national beverage.

The author aims to debunk some pervasive wine myths, including the two-pronged belief that Italian immigrants succeeded in California because, first, the Californian terroir was so similar to that of northern Italy, and second, that Italian immigrants came well-equipped with all of the winemaking skills they needed in America. The real history, Cinotto argues, is far more complex, difficult, and interesting, and far more dependent on dense networks of social relations than any other single factor. He writes, “In essence, right on the eve of the Piedmontese immigrants’ arrival on the scene, California winemaking had developed into a mature, complex, and highly risky system” (89). Most Italian immigrants came to California with few or no specific winemaking skills, but they did share a common economic and social background. Importantly, Italian immigrants to California were also racially “in between”—not white, but also not black nor yellow (136). By playing up their Italian-ness, Piedmontese-descended businesses highlighted their European qualities and rallied together as a group. Cinotto details that Italian winemakers capitalized on this liminal identity beginning in the late nineteenth century and continued to do so into the twentieth. In the 1950s, for example, E.&J. Gallo scored its first major success on a national scale after noticing that “residents of some black ghettos in the big cities drank large quantities of white port with lemon juice added” (168). The Gallos then created a lemon-flavored fortified wine called Thunderbird, which they promoted by “discarding empty bottles on sidewalks so the brand would imprint itself on the imagination of ghetto residents” (168–69). This opened the door to what has been called the “misery market,” as “the Gallos’ fortunes were long tied to cheap, fortified ‘hooch’ or ‘street wine’ . . . difficult to break away from so as to expand toward other, wealthier consumers” (169). Successfully navigating the racial complexities of America’s capitalist markets may indeed have been the defining factor for early Italian American winemaking. Translated from the Italian, Soft Soil, Black Grapes’ clarity and structure is exceptional. This work, in which ethnic studies meets wine history, should have a home in many upper-level undergraduate courses.

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