Barker’s work, published in the UK as *England, Arise: The People, the King and the Great Revolt of 1381* (Little, Brown, 2014), is an exhaustive recounting of the events leading to, during, and resulting from the revolt of the Commons usually referred to as "The English Peasants' Revolt" or "The Great Rising." As a work of traditional narrative political history, Barker accomplishes what she set out to do: to identify the root causes of the revolt; to point out the ways in which the chronicle accounts have shaped the tone of historical discourse about the revolt; and to present as detailed an account as possible of the actual events of the short-lived rebellion, which began in Essex in late May 1381 and was effectively over by mid-August. In so doing, she also suggests that King Richard II might have been somewhat sympathetic to specific causes of the rebels—the abolition of villeinage and the arbitrary imposition of excessive taxation on those least able to pay—and that the events of the Rising shaped Richard's subsequent view of kingship, sovereignty, and the malign influence of ambitious uncles on a young king's life.

This reviewer admits to finding it difficult to determine the intended audience of this work because, while a very well crafted and extensively researched narrative of events, it is not really intended for "professional" audiences, but nevertheless is too technical and detailed for most "popular" or student audiences. This can make it a bit tricky to assess for the users of this online review service. Barker herself is likewise difficult to assess with respect to her medievalist credentials: the dust jacket and her brief biography identify her, rather hyperbolically, as "one of Britain's most distinguished literary biographers and medievalists" and "an expert on chivalry and the world authority on medieval English tournaments" (507) but her first prominent publications were literary biographies of the Brontës and Wordsworth. Her book, *Agincourt: Henry V and the Battle That Made England* (Little, Brown, 2006), was well received in the commercial press, but a quick search on JSTOR reveals that it was apparently not reviewed by any of the standard academic journals—and evidently not by TMR, either.

As a researcher, Barker relies a great deal on printed primary sources and secondary sources for analyses of events that others might have investigated differently. Although she has used a particular series of parliamentary indictments (The National Archives [TNA] KB 9/166 series, also identified as reports of commissions of oyer and terminer) and some documents in the series known as ancient petitions (TNA SC 8 series), most of the primary sources are derived from calendared chancery records: (the Calendar of Close Rolls and Calendar of Patent Rolls; The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England), edited with great care by an editorial team headed by Chris Given-Wilson, and available on the website British History Online or in print (Boydell, 2012); and a number of collections edited by county record offices, which have extracted and transcribed or calendared documents relating to the county and its experience of revolt. While these are also the fodder of other medieval historians who make use of archival sources, they tend to be the starting place for such research, not the entire compendium. The archival evidence of Richard's reign is very large, much of it digitized and available for free from the
Barker makes good use of the four main chronicle sources that discuss and narrate the events of The Rising: the Westminster Chronicle, Thomas Walsingham's Historia Maiora and other historical writings from St. Albans, Froissart's Chronicle, and the Anonymallle Chronicle. The particular biases of the chroniclers is self-evident, especially those of Walsingham, whose animus against the townspeople opposing the exactions of St Albans was even hotter than his hatred of John of Gaunt. In this portion of her analysis, Barker presents a more sophisticated argument about the mediated nature of the sources and the problems of interpretation, suggesting that she might be more comfortable with literary sources, perhaps because of her career as a literary biographer. With respect to her use of secondary sources, Barker seems to be rather heavily reliant on a few very traditional works, whence she derives most of the background material for her reconstruction of events during The Rising itself--especially Nigel Saul's Richard II (Yale University Press, 1997). It is difficult to know if she consulted other work because the bibliography is abbreviated and refers only to works mentioned in the endnotes.

The first five chapters of the book focus on background to the Rising, both general--a brief description of England and its people in the late fourteenth century--and specific--the expensive and incompetently-run wars in France that overburdened the population with extraordinary taxation in the form of both levies and the infamous poll-tax. Chapters six to fourteen describe in sometimes painful detail the day-by-day (sometimes hour-by-hour) progress of the revolt, from its origins in Essex and Kent to the movements in outlying counties such as Somerset and Yorkshire. The final three chapters focus on the suppression of the revolt and the vengeance of the elites on the leaders, the immediate effects of the revolt (a deliberate and determined return to status quo ante bellum), and the longer-term "legacies" of the Rising to the reign of Richard II. Barker's conclusions and insights align with most current standard interpretations of the revolt: the leaders and most of the rebels were not "peasants" but instead came from a wide range of social and economic classes, many of them members of the urban middle class; the goals of the revolt were to end the oppression of the Many by the Few--the monasteries and elites who imposed extraordinary obligations on their tenants and villeins; the burning of records and destruction of archives were not anti-intellectual but instead were intended to obliterate the records of people's obligations to their elite overlords; the king was not the target of the revolt because the "people"s" ire was directed at his uncles and "bad counselors" who were promoting an endless and futile series of exorbitant and disastrous military campaigns in France, Spain, and Portugal. Barker demonstrates that the iconic images of the revolt, such as John Balle's sermon ("When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?") and Wat Tyler's confession, were fabrications of Walsingham and other chroniclers. Her most interesting conclusion is that, as a result of Richard's initial sympathy with the rebels' stance on villeinage and the ways in which his council and parliament pressured the fourteen year-old monarch to abandon his own progressive principles, he became far more resistant to the parliamentary notion of consultative politics.

Barker also makes some attempts to present an England that includes not only men but women, but in so doing, she also succeeds in trivializing their position and possible roles. She mentions that significant properties subjected to attack by the rebels belonged to the inheritances of the Bohun heiresses, Eleanor, wife of Thomas of Woodstock, and Mary, wife of Henry of Bolingbroke, or formed the dower of their mother, Countess Joan de Bohun. She also mentions that other properties were part of the vast estates of Margaret de Brotherton (aka Margaret Marshall) suo juris Countess of Norfolk and Marshal of England and widow of one of the heroes of the Edwardian segment of the Hundred Years War, Walter de Mauny. If Barker had made these inclusions as exemplary of the ways in which the economic and social systems among the landed elite were more complicated than many political historians admit, I would have applauded the inclusion of discussion of these women. Barker, however, uses the Bohun women and, especially, Margaret Marshall as opportunities for presenting medieval "tabloid" headlines, emphasizing Countess Margaret's marriage woes and comparing them to those of the Queen Mother, Joan of Kent (49). She also editorializes whenever mentioning these women and their estates: "Curiously, two other powerful widows held large estates in Essex..." (49); "That she [Joan de Bohun] was an exacting landlord can be guessed from the fact that so many of her manors would be targeted in the revolt..." (48); "It will come as no surprise to learn that this formidable woman's estates in Essex...were at the heart of the revolt..." (50); "The litigious Margaret, countess of Norfolk..." (383). She even presents Barking Abbey, the only female foundation she discusses in detail, similarly, as a contrast to the male monastic foundations that also experienced attack by rebels. Barker does not isolate the male peers of the Bohuns and Margaret Marshall in the same way; indeed, by presenting these women--or the nuns of Barking--as somehow aberrant, she implies that they were automatic targets of the rebels' wrath, even when the depredations of the rebels against male-owned lands far exceeded the attacks on properties held by women.

Unfortunately, Barker presents female rebels in similarly satiric ways. Although she mentions a few women who engaged in direct attacks against their perceived oppressors, the most memorable female rebels were the women who, Madame Defarge-like, cackle and dance around the headless torsos of their victims crying "death to intellectuals; death to aristocrats!" Thus instead of presenting a more well-rounded view of English political society from both ends of the spectrum, Barker has preserved the traditional perspective that women who engaged in political acts were somehow anomalous and derisory. It is likely that many women participated in the rebellion against landlords and overseers, but that their activities were hidden by their husbands' legal invisibility: their husbands would have been indicted instead of themselves. Similarly, many female landlords must have been subject to attack by rebels simply because of their aristocratic status and the ways in which they--like their male neighbors--oversaw their properties.

Although on the whole the book is well edited and beautifully presented (including two sections of color images from medieval
manuscripts, most of them completely irrelevant to the topic of the Great Rising), there are some errors. Bishop of Norfolk Henry Despenser is described as the son of "one of the favorites of Edward II" (347)--Bishop Henry was Hugh Despenser's grandson. In her description of medieval towns, Barker describes "urban cathedral[s] like Salisbury or Gloucester..." (29): Gloucester was a Benedictine abbey until the Dissolution, at which point it was converted into a diocesan chapter. Although Gloucester Abbey church did indeed rise high above the town, it was not an "urban cathedral." A description of petty treason includes the following list: "a servant who killed his master, a husband his wife or a cleric his superior..." (377). While the first and last are certainly indicative of petty treason, husbands who killed their wives were charged with manslaughter or homicide; wives who killed their husbands were charged with petty treason.

Taken as a picture of the Great Rising, Barker's exploration of 1381 is competent and comprehensive. Taken as a work of history, her book is diligent, if unexciting, and well written, if conventional. It would be suitable for history buffs who want to know the ins and outs of the Great Rising, for students who might need a detailed narrative of the events of the revolt, or for professionals who might want a handy reference for all of the main characters involved in both sides of the revolt.