

penny-dreadful, *The Mysteries of London* (1844), in the same ‘foul and filthy arena’ amidst the ‘labyrinth of narrow and dirty streets’ which enclosed the market’s grounds. These were the thoroughfares that harboured the butchers, slaughterers, tripe-dressers and others who relied upon the market for their livelihoods (blood, intestines and offal providing raw material for the manufacture of everything from violin strings to perfume). Metcalfe’s book is not, however, an exposé of the gory and gruesome. Certainly, it contains some of those details – I particularly like the MP who affirmed that the condition of market and its slaughterhouses sent ‘a general vomit through the House’ – and the book shows us why Smithfield became widely acknowledged as a public nuisance. But the author’s principal objective is to take us through 50 years of various attempts to address that nuisance, from unsuccessful bills in parliament to the final decisive royal commission. Most of these efforts championed one of two options – either expanding the existing market (which might exacerbate the problem) or relocating it to a more suburban site (which might prove a commercial failure) – ‘improve or remove’. The City of London, which always preferred ‘improvement’, has often been portrayed as a stubborn, self-interested authority with little interest in the greater good of the metropolis. Metcalfe, however, presents a more nuanced account, and takes pains both to show the City’s efforts to improve Smithfield before the 1850s, and to present the divergent and remarkably disparate views of the various interested parties, including the shopkeepers, innkeepers, butchers, drovers, salesmen and others who all had a stake in the smooth running of the meat market.

The book will certainly interest London historians and also provides some useful nuggets of information. How many readers will know that ‘forestalling’ originally meant keeping cattle back from reaching the market, in the hope of artificially increasing their value? I also warmed to brief details about ‘The Sublime Society of Beefsteaks’, a Georgian gentleman’s club with the motto ‘Beef and Liberty’ and, more generally, the Englishman’s ‘honest reverence for beef’. There are a couple of peculiar non-sequiturs buried in the text – for example, where Metcalfe proposes that a select committee’s witness is suggesting turning the market into a ‘pleasure garden’, because he uses the phrase ‘an open square for pleasure’. The length of the notes also seems a little disproportionate to the relatively short length of the book. But these are trivial objections to an otherwise interesting and informative work. This is a fascinating read for anyone wanting to learn more about an important, hitherto neglected aspect of the growth and development of the Victorian metropolis.

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Charlotte Vorms, *Bâtisseurs de banlieue à Madrid: le quartier de la Prosperidad (1860–1936)*. Paris: Créaphis éditions, 2012. 368pp. 26 figures. 5 tables. Bibliography. €25.00.
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Charlotte Vorms’ first monograph, which draws from her doctoral dissertation of 2006, explores the working-class suburb of Prosperidad from its foundation in the early 1860s to outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. As the title of the book proclaims, this study sets out to explore how the true *bâtisseurs* or

builders of the suburban settlement were not urban planners, but individuals – landowners, investors, city councillors and working-class purchasers – who collectively and individually shaped the social identity and physiognomy of this marginal district. As with other *arrabales* or suburbs on the northern fringes of the capital, Prosperidad was notorious for its disorderly growth and its lack of hygiene and infrastructure, a conundrum commonly referred to as the ‘*problema del extrarradio*’ (problem of the outskirts). The living conditions of Prosperidad and its neglect by municipal authorities contrasted with the contemporary urbanization project drawn out for the neighbouring bourgeois district of Ensanche. Although Prosperidad was not regulated by administrative laws until 1923, the book demonstrates that the quarter was not a shanty town occupied by the working class; rather, its development was intertwined with the wider process of urbanization carried out in the Ensanche. By examining how a community of landowners, private and political initiatives and an incipient real-estate market were woven together, the author refutes the normative literature of the time that presented Prosperidad as an unstructured clustering. Despite some flaws, the originality of this nuanced microhistory of Prosperidad is that it effectively surveys the suburb’s socio-spatial development and the framework behind its seemingly spontaneous settlement, whilst identifying the linkages between the district, the political context of the time and the migration flow that sustained Madrid’s steady demographic growth at the turn of the century.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part maps out the birth and development of Prosperidad from 1860 to the late 1880s. The plotting of the agricultural holdings and the profile of the first working-class settlers is reconstructed in detail in this section. The second wave of expansion spanning from the late 1880s to 1914 is the focus of second part. The relative prosperity the suburb enjoyed was mirrored in its social and architectural diversity, attracting the attention of promoters, city councillors and government employees. Because information regarding the plots up for sale was not advertised, but spread by word of mouth, Vorms relies on a range of sources to trace the practices and transactions carried out by these actors. *Padrones* (municipal census), sale deeds, land registry certificates, building permits and records of public works are skilfully cross-referenced with the aim of articulating a coherent account of the plotted land as it passed from landowners to developers to working-class purchasers. Urban historians have just begun to use such oft-neglected sources as *padrones* to reconstruct the everyday history of Madrid’s dwellers (as, for example, Rubén Pallol’s work on the Ensanche). The area’s transition from a predominantly rural enclave to an urban centre with small businesses and factories is documented through three generations of urban settlers. It is precisely the book’s methodological approach and the centrality of specific families and actors that makes the absence of a much-needed index all the more obvious. Locating and following these individuals’ actions throughout the eight chapters of the book becomes a painstaking task.

The study also explores the forging of a sense of community and solidarity among the landowners which prompted them to sign petitions demanding improvements for their neighbourhood. The inauguration of the quarter’s first chapel in 1871 was instrumental in drawing the city hall’s attention and providing Prosperidad with a place for social congregation. Though the reference to the chapel is brief, it is exemplary in connecting religion to socio-spatial practices, a

path frequently overlooked in Spanish historiography. Issues of community and self-awareness are successfully tackled but might have ideally required a more assertive standpoint. The book's approach to the complex notions of identity and belonging, on the other hand, is less convincing. A wider use of the press, oral history archives, literary sources or an updated bibliography of foreign urban settings might have further enhanced the argument of the forging of a local identity and a sense of belonging and solidarity that surfaces throughout the book.

The third and final part of the book concentrates on Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923–30) and the tensions that arose between urban planners and the ideologically driven projects promoted by the Second Republic (1931–36). The final two chapters provide an insightful look into the impact of the transition from the dictatorship to the socialist government, during which the predominantly working-class Prosperidad became a focal point in urban politics for the first time in its history. Nevertheless, this is perhaps the weakest part as it represents a break from the thematic and methodological homogeneity achieved in previous chapters, with scarce references to the actors so strenuously examined in parts one and two. The maps featured in the book support the overall argument (with the exception of the duplication of figure 2). However, references to the present street plan, either in the illustrations or body of text, might have proved useful to the present-day reader.

This book remains a remarkable achievement that offers new perspectives to social and urban historians of Spain interested in exploring the links between official and informal growth. Likewise, studies of other urban settings might also draw from this innovative model in the study of suburban centres and the points of convergence with their wider contexts.

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