

## Reviews of books

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**C.P. Lewis and A.T. Thacker (eds.),** *A History of the County of Chester. Volume V, Part 1: The City of Chester: General History and Topography.* London: Boydell and Brewer, 2003. xviii + 290pp. 61 plates. 13 figures. 25 tables. £90.00, US \$180.00.

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The Victoria County Histories for many counties have long since been completed. That for Cheshire, perhaps surprisingly, is still an ongoing project. This is the fourth volume to be completed and, together with its sister volume, is the only one to focus on a single town: the county and regional capital of Chester. The purpose of the volume is to offer a general account of the city (Part 2 forms a detailed account of particular topics, including local government, and leisure and culture): an ambition reflected in the fact that it forms very much a team effort, drawing on the efforts of at least thirteen well-known historians of the city and county.

A general introduction is followed by seven chapters covering Roman Chester, the early and later medieval periods, the early modern, late Georgian and Victorian developments, topography and twentieth-century Chester. The first of these is by far the shortest, reflecting how little is known about this stage of development, despite Chester's importance within the Roman urban system and the significance of this period to the subsequent history and topography of the town. Far more detailed discussion charts the changing nature of the city from the later medieval period onwards. The sub-sections of each chapter reveal the systematic, yet traditional, organization of the analysis offered. These emerge with consistency in the chapter on later medieval Chester, and cover government and politics, economy and society, and religion: sustained discussion of the cultural life of the city or the impact of planning appears only in later chapters. Each chapter is also subdivided temporally. In earlier chapters, the thematic structure is repeated for each sub-period, giving a series of 'snap shots' of the city, whereas that on Georgian and Victorian Chester – perhaps the strongest in the volume – follows each theme through the entire period. Here, the shorter time periods reflect real phases of development, and dramatic changes in the fortunes and character of the city, from traditional county capital, through railway boom town to a commuter and service centre settlement.

Overall, a number of key themes emerge: some well-known strands in the story of Chester, others less familiar. Perhaps the most important and recurrent is the

close relationship between the city and its hinterland – an area which encompassed not just Cheshire, but also parts of neighbouring counties and much of north Wales – and the wider web of links that stretched across the country and especially to Ireland. These relationships were forged in Roman times and remain strong today, despite changing economic, social and governmental conditions. The importance of external influences on the fortunes of individual towns is a familiar strain in urban history: what is most striking about Chester is their number and variety. Through the medieval period, the interests of the crown emerge as the most significant, often in terms of military expeditions into north Wales. The Reformation brought ecclesiastical factors to the fore, as Chester became the centre of a new diocese. Economic change dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the region experienced widespread industrialization, diminishing Chester's regional role. Yet cultural influences remained significant, with Chester a centre of polite leisure and, more recently, of heritage tourism. Importantly, these changes are not presented as a seamless or uncontested transition: we see the pain and a little of the seamier side of Chester's changing socio-economy, including courtyard dwellings that survived into the 1930s and a surprising degree of indecision and inaction over the historic infrastructure of the city well into the 1960s.

The analysis underpinning these narratives draws on the considerable volume of research already undertaken on Chester, but also includes significant original research, for example on the customer and supplier networks of urban retailers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This assimilation and augmentation of research forms a characteristic feature of the VCH, but it would be useful to have the literature itemized more systematically in a bibliography. A similar point might be made about the illustrations included at the end of the volume. They form an interesting cross-section of pictorial images of the city, and include many unusual images, yet could usefully have been more closely referenced in the text. But these are minor quibbles about a book which, very much in the tradition of the Victoria County History series, presents a clear and authoritative account of the development of Chester. It will, no doubt, become a standard reference for anyone undertaking research on the city.

**Jon Stobart**

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**Michael Lapidge, with contributions by John Crook, Robert Deshman and Susan Rankin, *The Cult of St Swithun*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. xxv + 811pp. 16 plates. 5 figures. 13 tables. Bibliography. £225.00. doi:10.1017/S0963926805222939**

Michael Lapidge's volume is the second of a three-book study of the Anglo-Saxon minsters of Winchester to appear in the Winchester Studies Series (Winchester Studies Series 4.ii). It joins Alexander Rumble's *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester* (4.iii), published in 2002. Professor Lapidge has gathered together all the texts that relate to the growth of the cult of Winchester's saint, and editions and translations of these form the second part of the volume. The first part is concerned with the rise of the obscure ninth-century bishop of Winchester to one of the foremost saints in England, one whose fame spread beyond its shores to Ireland and Scandinavia, and to France, where a cult grew up within a short time of the

translation of Swithun from his original resting place outside the west door of the Old Minster into the chancel of the church. The chapter on the historical Swithun is understandably short (pp. 3–7), given that the evidence comprises mentions of the bishop in episcopal lists, his appearance in charters and his profession to Ceolnoth, archbishop of Canterbury. Swithun's second and more famous career, as saint rather than bishop, began with the translation of 15 July 971 at the instigation of Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester with the backing of King Edgar, who provided the saint with a lavish gold and silver reliquary. There soon followed Æthelwold's reconstruction of the Old Minster, to make the original site of Swithun's burial the focal point for the church.

Within a generation there had developed at Winchester a cult with two major feasts, those of the deposition (2 July) and translation (15 July) and there is evidence for a third, that of Swithun's ordination (30 October). Lapidge analyses the evidence for the spread of the cult, through church dedications, the acquisition of relics of Swithun and the appearance of Swithun's name in liturgical books from the late Anglo-Saxon period. Within a few years the literary productions had begun, the earliest being Lantfred's *Translatio et Miracula*, commissioned by the monks of the Old Minster, which was rendered into Latin hexameters by Wulfstan, monk of Winchester, and Ælfric's vernacular life of Swithun. Lapidge points out that these works are concerned with Swithun's translation and miracles. It was the post-Conquest author of the *Vita*, possibly a cleric of Sherborne, who provided Swithun the saint with a human background in what Lapidge calls 'a work of pure fiction' (p. 69). The *Vita* was used by virtually all the medieval historians, William of Malmesbury, John of Worcester, Henry of Huntingdon and many others. A detailed discussion of the treatments of Swithun by the medieval historians, and their interrelationships, appears in chapter 6. Also in the first part of the volume are observations on Swithun's appearance in the liturgy, in medieval art (by Robert E. Deshman) and medieval liturgical music (by Susan Rankin).

The second part of the book contains editions and translations of, and commentaries on, twelve texts or groups of texts that provide evidence for the origins and development of the cult, beginning with the *Translatio et Miracula S. Swithoni* by Lantfred, a Frankish monk temporarily resident at the Old Minster, which is to be dated within a few years of the translation. This, like the majority of the texts presented here, has never been published before in its entirety. Lapidge calls it the key to 'understanding the spiritual and religious life of late Anglo-Saxon England and of Winchester in particular' (p. 217). Wulfstan's *Narratio Metrica de S. Swithono* appeared in an edition of 1906, but with little annotation and no translation. Prefacing his recasting of Lanfret is Wulfstan's dedicatory letter to Bishop Ælfheah (984–1006), which contains interesting details of the buildings of the Old Minster as reconstructed by Bishop Æthelwold. Lapidge argues that the *Epitome Translationis et Miraculorum S. Swithoni*, an abbreviated version of Lantfred's *Translatio et Miracula*, was the work of Ælfric, who also wrote an Old English Life of Swithun, which draws on Lantfred and the *Epitome*. The *Vita S. Swithoni Episcopi et Confessoris*, the first attempt at a life of Swithun, survives in ten manuscripts, and Lapidge argues that its division into eight chapters would suggest that it was designed to be used as lessons at the monastic night office – indeed, some of the surviving copies come from late medieval monastic breviaries. Lapidge further suggests that the author of the *Vita* was also responsible for the *Miracula S. Swithoni*, here printed in its entirety for the first time. The corpus of

material is completed by the inclusion of briefer versions of the *Vita* and the *Miracula*; the portion of the *South English Legendary* devoted to Swithun; John of Tynemouth's *Vita et Miracula* from his *Sanctilogium Angliae, Walliae, Scotiae, et Hiberniae*; the *Gilte Legende*; the *Kalendre of the Newe Legende of England* and minor Latin poems. All these texts attest the enduring vitality of the cult of Winchester's saint, and the place he occupied in the city as well as in England and on the continent.

**Janet Burton**

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**Lisa Jefferson (ed.)**, *Wardens' Accounts and Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mystery of London 1334–1446*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003. xxxviii + 630pp. Bibliography. £95.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805232935

Only four of the London Livery Companies (Mercers, Goldsmiths, Grocers and Merchant Taylors) have administrative records dating back to the fourteenth century and, of these, only those of the Grocers have been available in print.<sup>1</sup> This volume, therefore, which provides a transcript and facing-page translation of the earliest records of the Goldsmiths' Company, is to be warmly welcomed. Dr Lisa Jefferson, who is a medieval French scholar, has not only transcribed and translated the text (539 pages) but has also provided an index of some 4,000 names of the London goldsmiths, their apprentices, servants and family members who occur in the records. A formidable amount of work has gone into producing this edition which has thus opened up an important source for scholarly investigation.

Dr Jefferson has combined two volumes which appear to have been kept concurrently and, occasionally, she has supplemented this with material drawn from other archives at Goldsmiths' Hall. The sources of the different passages are clearly indicated. Even so we still do not have a complete picture of the business of the Company during these years: the information that has survived is largely confined to the enrolment of apprentices, entries to the freedom and licences for aliens to work in the craft. Some standard payments (for example, for the ringing of the great bell of St Paul's on St Dunstan's day) are regularly recorded, but less standard expenditure seems to have been recorded elsewhere. There is little to be found in these records about negotiations by the craft either with the mayor and aldermen or with the crown (and such negotiations must have taken place since the Goldsmiths monopolized the office of comptroller and master-worker at the Mint), or about internal craft discussions of policy. Hence the silences in this volume can tell us nothing, but the speech is richly rewarding.

Nearly 30 years ago Reddaway and Walker used some of this material to write their account of the early history of the Goldsmiths' Company.<sup>2</sup> The records printed here allow further progress to be made. They throw a good deal more light on the practice of apprenticeship (the costs, resolution of disputes, punishments) in medieval London. There is also important information about the pageantry and

<sup>1</sup> J.A. Kingdon (ed.), *Facsimile of the First Volume of the Archives of . . . the Company of Grocers of . . . London 1345–1463* (London, 1886).

<sup>2</sup> T.F. Reddaway and L.E.M. Walker, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company, 1327–1509* (London, 1975).

music provided at civic and royal occasions in the city. In 1382, for example, the Goldsmiths provided a 'somercastelle' in Cheap to greet Anne of Bohemia (p. 196) and the Company owned a considerable collection of musical instruments (trumpets, clarions, shawms, a bombard and a horn pipe, p. 236) which were used at the annual ridings of the sheriffs and the mayor. The records reveal something of the roles played by women within the craft: goldsmiths' wives took on apprentices (pp. 8, 28, 158, 402, 426, 432) and women were clearly working as burnishers (p. 126) and goldbeaters (p. 220). Women on their own, or as wives, paid fines for contravening craft regulations (pp. 142, 286, 424, 440, 460, 526) and the wording of some of the ordinances implicitly acknowledges the existence of women workers, in 1401–02 when for example, members of the mistery were forbidden to send goldsmiths' ware to any woman married to a man of another mistery (p. 267) or in 1434 when no man or woman of the mistery was to employ an unlicensed Dutchman (p. 463). Widows are sometimes recorded in receipt of company alms (pp. 91, 351) and they played an important part in transferring their husbands' bequests to the craft (pp. 351, 415). Isabelle Joyce who took on a boy apprentice in 1426–27 was listed with the members of the livery of the craft in 1436 when she contributed 8*d* towards the costs of sending soldiers to relieve the siege of Calais (pp. 432, 484).

The editor is a literary scholar and her interest in the text (which is largely in French with some Latin documents, but English is used increasingly and by the 1420s is the predominant language) is primarily linguistic.<sup>3</sup> The footnotes, therefore, more often draw attention to word usage than to historical elucidation. To take an example: in summer 1379 it was recorded that the wardens had entertained at a feast 'the most honourable Lady Isabelle, daughter of the King of England, and her daughter the Countess of Oxford, and Lord Latimer and the High Master of St John of Clerkenwell and the Mayor of London, with other goodmen of the City' (p. 185). Jefferson merely notes that Isabelle was 'Edward III's daughter' and ignores the other guests. In fact Isabelle was the wife of the French knight, Enguerrard de Coucy, created duke of Bedford by Edward III but who had abandoned his wife and children at the accession of Richard II and returned to the allegiance of the king of France. His younger daughter, Philippa, was only ten when she was married to Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, the 'favourite' of Richard II. So at this feast Isabelle was a deserted wife of 47 and her daughter was a young bride of 13. This entry confirms that the accepted date of Isabelle's death (before 4 May 1379) must be wrong since the feast was held soon after 19 May 1379. Lord Latimer had been chamberlain of the royal household, was impeached in the Good Parliament of 1376 and was currently involved in peace negotiations with the Scots. The Master of St John's Clerkenwell was Robert Hales, soon to be a victim in the Peasants' Revolt and the mayor of London at the time was the famous grocer John Philipot. This entry provides a valuable insight into the ways in which city companies oiled the wheels of favour and patronage. Moreover the editor has not made any attempt to follow up relevant supporting documentation that may be found elsewhere. For example the wills of William Cliff drawn up in 1339 and

<sup>3</sup> See Lisa Jefferson, 'The language and vocabulary of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century records of the Goldsmiths' Company', in D.A. Trotter (ed.), *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge, 2000), 175–211.

William Burton (d. 1368) both referred to in the accounts (pp. 55, 143) can be found enrolled in the City's Husting rolls but these avenues are not explored.<sup>4</sup>

In one particular instance the editor's lack of a feel for civic politics in the period of the accounts has led her to miss an interesting identification. Jefferson's text (p. 198), following Reddaway and Walker, records that early in 1382 (before May) Thomas Vok was appointed as clerk to the Company at the annual fee of 6s 8d together with his 'vesture'. But a check of the manuscript reveals that this was in fact Thomas Usk, the notorious London scrivener, secretary to John of Northampton's party in 1381–84, turncoat supporter of Nicholas Brembre from 1384 to 1388, undersheriff of Middlesex (1387–88), author of the *Testament of Love* (1385–87), executed for treason by the Merciless Parliament in February 1388.<sup>5</sup> The accounts contain another reference to Usk who seems to have been particularly close to Adam Bamme (goldsmith, sheriff, 1382–83) and this may throw some new light on the tortuous politics of London in the early 1380s.

Dr Jefferson has done a useful job in producing a text and a translation that bring this remarkable body of material within the range of students and scholars. But the readings are sometimes shaky and the historical significance of the text has not been elucidated. At £95 a volume the reader is entitled to expect a text of the quality of the Oxford Medieval Texts and, sadly, this is not in that class. The Goldsmiths are, however, to be congratulated on the provision of riches which others will now be able to exploit.

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**Margaret Pelling**, *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London. Patronage, Physicians and Irregular Practitioners 1550–1640*. Oxford Studies in Social History. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. xvi + 410 pp. 13 figures. 15 tables. Appendices. Bibliography. £65.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805242931

A glance at Margaret Pelling's entries in the bibliography of this book confirms the major contribution she has made to the causes of identifying non-professional practitioners, highlighting the role of women, and demonstrating the complex nature of the medical marketplace in the early modern urban situation. This book, which is the epitome of meticulous research, addresses these aspects, but also assesses a major medical institution, the College of Physicians of London, and its relationship with the irregular practitioners. The book is centred on an examination of 663 individuals accused of irregular practice – i.e. practice which had not been authorized by the College. While this drive to prevent irregular practice can be seen as a classic example of urban craft demarcation, the situation is shown to be much more complex, with the College seen to be lacking strong connections to the major urban institutions, and at an apparent disadvantage because of the 'female'

<sup>4</sup> R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Wills... Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London 1258–1688*, 2 vols. (London, 1889), I, 433, II, 113.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), ch. 7, and Ronald Waldron's article on Usk in the *New Dictionary of National Biography*, forthcoming.

nature of physicians' work. It is described as a 'parasitic for its own identity' (p. 332) through its opposition to irregulars, many of whom were more in tune with current developments in medicine, and less reactionary than the College.

The book commences with an account of the membership and workings of the College, meeting patterns shaped by season and outbreaks of plague. There follows an account of the election and duties of College officials, particularly the Censors, relating patterns of activity against irregulars to attempts by the College to regain its status following major epidemics, during which irregulars could be expected to be more active. The remainder of the book deals with the multifaceted nature of the irregulars, the surprisingly complex role of females, who appeared to have more extensive 'medical practices' than the males; the importance of patronage here as in all aspects of early modern life; the nature of the charges made and the penalties applied – though not always enforced. What emerges from this intensely detailed study is that pursuit of irregulars was an important aspect of the identity of the College, in addition to the comprehensive illustration of the many sorts of individuals, including a substantial number of foreigners, who were accused of irregular practice. The contractual nature of medical practice is confirmed – as it has been for other urban centres in Britain and Europe. Within this turbulent and all-embracing medical marketplace, demarcation and attempted definition and defence of a medical orthodoxy were important to the College, though it was clearly less than successful in its attempts. It is clear also that the College, as with most individuals or institutions at this time, was easily swayed by the influence of high-status patrons. Individuals were not prosecuted, or given lesser punishments, if they could show the backing of an important patron, and there was a considerable element of negotiation surrounding the cases.

As well as the medical aspects of this investigation, the book adds a further dimension to the social historiography of London as the largest and most cosmopolitan urban centre in the British Isles at the time. We are given, through the words of the prosecutors and prosecuted themselves, hints at the constantly changing, noisy and dangerous aspects of urban life, as well as the sorts of medical treatment offered by the practitioners and, importantly, accepted by the patients, who were themselves active participants in their pursuit of health. These aspects are of key importance when assessing institutions, as by their very nature and lengthy survival the medical corporations give an impression of permanence and authority which was by no means guaranteed in the earlier periods of their existence. The diagrammatic display of statistics is useful throughout, the work is copiously footnoted, and includes a comprehensive bibliography. Appendices cover the Biographical Index of Medical Practitioners, now in the author's custody; an account of the database of irregulars, some examples of contracts, and a map showing the London parishes.

This is a magisterial work and an object lesson in the use of these kinds of source material. It is of interest to urban as well as medical historians, and adds to Pelling's already high stature in this field. It is probably true to say that in this period everyone was a medical practitioner of sorts, and this book gives some of them an identity, as well as offering a meticulous assessment of the College. Minor quibbles are that while great care is taken in outlining the limitations and cautions needed with this sort of material, this is a little overdrawn at times and detracts from what the material *does* tell us; that it would be useful to know whether the actions of the College were typical of similar institutions; and that although

extracts from the prosecutions are included, it would have been useful to have had a further Appendix reproducing one or more prosecutions in full, to give a better feel of individual cases. Overall, though, this book is to be highly recommended.

**Helen Dingwall**

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**Orest Ranum**, *Paris in the Age of Absolutism. An Essay*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2003. 403 pp. 2 maps. Illustrations. \$35.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805252938

*Paris in the Age of Absolutism*, first published in 1968 and now revised in an illustrated second edition, is a series of essays on the political, cultural (religious and secular) and socio-economic history of seventeenth-century Paris. The book has three main concerns. First, it is a cultural history of the capital, of its architecture, decorative arts, literature and theatre, and of some of the creators of these objects. Secondly, it is a political history, of the relationship between Parisian society and the creation of the absolute monarchy of Henri IV and Louis XIII; and of how absolutism under Louis XIV came to order and regulate the city's institutions and daily life after 1660. Thirdly, and above all else, the book is a history of the relationship between politics, faith, culture and the physical construction of Paris: how the processes of change observed across the seventeenth century came to shape the fabric of the city and the material culture of its inhabitants. Sometimes overtly and always implicitly, this is a history of urbanization and materiality. As such, it is highly relevant to historians of the early modern city.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first, 'The medieval burden', Ranum examines the political, social and material construction of Paris c. 1600, then explores the restoration of monarchical authority – absolutism – under Henry IV, through the lens of the crown's relationship with Paris, a theme that continues into the second section. The majority of the second section, 'Foundations of modernity', is devoted to the impact of absolutism on the fabric and layout of Paris. Henry IV and Louis XIII sought to restore and augment the capital of the newly peaceful France; the crown sponsored public building such as the Louvre and Pont-Neuf, began to take an interest in regulating street frontages and road widths and encouraged new residential developments that would beautify Paris, from the Places Royal (today Vendôme) and Dauphine to the Quartier-du-Palais-Royale.

In sections two and particularly in three, 'Medieval revival', Ranum examines the religious, social and cultural changes that influenced material life in Paris. The rise of polite culture and its impact upon the domestic interior is charted in great detail for the aristocracy and bourgeoisie of Paris, including biographies of some of its most influential artists: Corneille, Brosse and de Champagne, for example. Ranum also examines the importance of women's influence on sociability, with its implications for more intimate domestic settings for conviviality. The religious revival of the Catholic reform movement is detailed, in terms of its spiritual influences and its impact upon the fabric of Paris, with the construction of around 70 new religious houses, new architectural forms and decorative motives, especially baroque classicism. In the last section, 'Urban absolutism: the flight from modernity', Ranum describes how Louis XIV came to construct a 'New Rome' in Paris, augmenting the building patrimony and closely regulating the



city's institutions of government to give order and discipline to the capital of the most dignified monarch in Europe.

It is true that in some ways, Ranum's work seems a little old fashioned today. The emphasis is on 'gorgeous things', and the central role in the story is given to the political, clerical and social elites. There is some detail on the lives of the ordinary people of Paris, but they are not the main actors in this drama. We do not learn about suburbs, nor how the political, religious and cultural changes of the seventeenth century influenced more humble dwellings and the construction of their material culture. There is little discussion of political culture – the construction and interpretation of a sophisticated language of words, images and signs, that has been central to recent studies of eighteenth-century Paris. Post-modernist discussion of 'reading' and 'understanding', the mediation of the relationship between ruler and ruled through cultural forms, are not explored. The illustrations, almost all of which were contemporary plans, engravings and prints, add significantly to the text, although it is a shame that they were not more crisply produced.

But Ranum's history of saints and heroes, buildings and objects, is not lessened by these omissions. It is a masterly and elegantly written work. I loved the evocation of the different lives lived within the walls of the palaces, hotels and monasteries of the New Rome, and the material world which they created around themselves. *Paris in the Age of Absolutism* remains an important study of the relationship between politics and physical place. It should be read by all historians of urbanity and of material culture. And it remains one of the best guides to must-see sites in Paris that I know!

**Elizabeth Tingle**

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**Helen Berry**, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xiv + 264 pp. 8 plates. 6 tables. Bibliography. £40.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805262934

As the first periodical with an 'agony column', the *Athenian Mercury* (published twice weekly between 1691 and 1697 by John Dunton) is an important landmark in the history of print culture. Containing anonymous letters written by middle-class men and women, this early periodical contains some of the earliest examples of first-person narratives ever published, together with the answers given by the self-styled 'Athenian Society' (a rather grand name for its three authors: Dunton, Richard Sault and Samuel Wesley). Urban historians have long recognized the significance of this 'coffee house' periodical, but have hitherto failed to subject it to careful analysis. Although the questions answered covered a very wide range of topics, including religion, natural science, literature and philosophy, Helen Berry focuses on questions relating to sexuality, courtship and relationships, which together account for 31 per cent of those published. Not simply a reflection of the current historiographical interest in gender, this choice makes sense given the fact that one of the most innovative features of this periodical was the fact that these essentially private details of ordinary people's lives were discussed so publicly in print.

In her pioneering work on the depiction of women in the early periodicals, Kathryn Shevelov argued that they constructed an ideology of separate spheres, in which men and women were ascribed fundamentally different characteristics and responsibilities. Berry takes a different approach. While she accepts that the advice offered by the Athenian Society was essentially conservative and patriarchal, she notes that the periodical often took a more feminist approach, advocating, for example, women's equal reasoning capacities to men and the need for improved educational opportunities for women, while criticizing the double standard of sexual morality which largely tolerated male (but not female) sexual promiscuity. But it is in the content and tone of the readers' questions, however, that the journal was really radical, for even though the answers were usually conventional, the fact that questions were raised in print about subjects such as illicit sex, male impotence and women's role in courtship raised at least the possibility that existing norms could be questioned. Moreover, the casuistical method adopted in the answers encouraged a questioning disposition among readers. As Berry argues, the fact that questions on topics such as adultery frequently recur suggests how widespread dissatisfaction was among the journal's readers with the traditional injunctions of the ecclesiastical and legal authorities. This book thus provides a valuable opportunity to go beyond the prescriptive literature and ascertain what ordinary people thought about gender and sexuality.

It is difficult, however, to judge the wider significance of this public discussion and questioning of gender norms. The fact that the opportunity for ordinary people to send in anonymous questions about sex did not arise again until the early twentieth century could be taken to mean that the significance of this periodical was ephemeral. Determining the extent to which these questioning attitudes were held among the wider public in late seventeenth-century London and beyond is virtually impossible given the lack of much surviving evidence of reader responses to the *Athenian Mercury* (independent evidence of only one reader actually sending in a letter has been discovered), and Berry is forced to rely on skilful readings of the internal evidence of the text – as well as several related publications – for her arguments. Ultimately, she cannot say whether the anxieties and critical attitudes she has identified in readers' letters were new in the 1690s (this seems unlikely), or whether such attitudes merely found a new outlet in print; nor is it possible to measure the impact of their publication.

Berry plausibly situates the readership and content of the *Athenian Mercury* in the context of late seventeenth-century London, particularly the emergence of polite coffee house culture, an expanding middle class, the numerical predominance of women in the city and the critique of prevailing elite and popular sexual immorality embodied in the reformation of manners movement following the Revolution of 1688. On the basis of internal textual evidence, she argues plausibly that the journal also appealed to a slightly higher, professional, class of provincial urban readers, who lacked the social networks to discuss these issues in person which were available to their peers in London. This potentially provides further evidence of the impact of London middle-class cultural values on provincial towns, but external evidence is needed to support this claim. It is both the strength and the weakness of this book that evidence of the wider social and cultural significance of the periodical is derived almost exclusively from internal evidence.

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**Robert Colls and Richard Rodger (eds.),** *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain 1800–2000. Essays in Honour of David Reeder.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. xix + 329pp. 14 illustrations. 9 tables. Bibliography. £55.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805272930

This festschrift for David Reeder brings together many of the leading figures in modern British urban history to address a range of topics around the themes of governance and civil society. Like most collections of this kind the results are variable with a marked divergence of approach and tone between the essays in the first half of the book – which offer an optimistic revisionist view of the management and organization of the Victorian city – and those in the latter half which provide mostly pessimistic accounts of twentieth-century issues. Thus Martin Dauntton offers a fascinating insight into the way accountants both solved the problem of pricing and profits for municipal undertakings (the sliding scale) and in the process helped to bolster their own emerging professional standing. Such attempts to satisfy public and private interest are also addressed by Richard Rodger who enumerates the extensive off-rates benefits for the citizens of Edinburgh provided by the ‘Common Good’ fund, an account drawing its income from property owned by the Council. Similarly, Bob Morris’ mapping of early nineteenth-century subscriber democracies argues that this extension of associational culture from private sociability to public good allowed the bourgeoisie to extend welfare and paper over the cracks caused by political, religious and professional divisions. Together they suggest that Victorian governance often sought to provide the best value for citizens and not just benefit the powerful. Bill Luckin is also revisionist in arguing that London’s success in providing improved public health has been greatly underestimated, especially the contribution of the Metropolitan Board of Works’ immense sewerage system. Less effective, as Philip Cottrell shows, were its attempts to turn a profit from its sewerage, his piece providing a detailed examination of a failed venture to fertilize Essex farmland with London excrement.

This optimistic revisionism is tempered by much of the rest of the book. Chris Williams’ interesting piece on attempts by the post-Chartist Sheffield Democrats to challenge aspects of the city’s legal and policing system reveals an enduring thread of opposition to the growing power of the local and central state embodied in “backward-looking” radical localism’. Such an attitude is evident in some of the other contributions in the volume where a deep pessimism about change in the twentieth century is apparent. Brian Simon’s and Bill Williamson’s essays on respectively the end of the School Boards and post-war adult education identify the ways working-class opportunities were closed by a growing centralization of education which led to the end of local accountability and a narrowing of access to non-utilitarian liberal education. Helen Meller and Pat Garside in studies of women planners and Sutton Trust Housing take a similar approach to the rise of the municipality in planning and social housing. They show how the small-scale holistic housing provided by early twentieth-century voluntary bodies evidenced a sensitivity to the needs of the tenants which was often developed by women planners. Both, however, see inter-war housing policy as unhelpful to these methods, increasing the size of the estates and the role of male planners. Finally, Rob Colls’ contribution – ‘When we lived in communities’ – combines solid evidence and analysis of northern working-class life in the early twentieth century with personal reminiscences and opinions which ignore historical context

or contingency. Colls identifies gender as central to the effective operation of these communities but in ruing their passing – which he largely attributes to the collapse of heavy industry – he overlooks wider societal changes, including expanding educational opportunities, female emancipation, owner occupation, consumerism and demographic change which allow us to see these communities as a product of their time. This criticism apart, the broad diversity of opinions and themes in this book show that urban history has moved a long way in 40 years and it is a testament to David Reeder's influence that he has done much to facilitate this richer and more productive approach.

**Barry Doyle**

University of Teesside

**Paul Carter (ed.)**, *Bradford Poor Law Union. Papers and Correspondence with the Poor Law Commission October 1834 to January 1839*. Suffolk: Yorkshire Archaeological Society and Boydell Press, 2004 (YAS Record Series CLVII for 2003). xlviii + 226pp. £40.00, \$70.00.

doi:10.1017/S0963926805282937

Bradford is a marvellous case study to use to illustrate the impact of the New Poor Law in the 1830s. It was the location of some of the fiercest resistance to the impact of the new regime; it exemplified the capacity of guardians to act with considerable local discretion; it exhibited all the problems of merging townships and parishes which had previously had local poor law autonomy; as a new and vibrant industrial city it was prey to severe economic fluctuations which tested the new system to its limits; and in its large migrant, including Irish, population it teased out the complexity of the rules of settlement and removal. Hence this meticulously edited collection of national and local Poor Law records is warmly to be welcomed. It should be stressed that this is a careful literal transcription of the documents (including extant alterations etc.). So, not least of its value to university and college teachers will be the access given to students who would not normally be able to visit the National Archives or other repositories. Dr Carter, who works at the National Archives at Kew, has written a valuable 40 page introduction, which comprises not only a most useful overview of national legislative and administrative developments, but also a local review of the Bradford union, together providing the context of the records themselves. This introduction deserves a wide readership and it is to be hoped that its relatively obscure location will not prevent it getting the attention it merits. In the nature of the case, the records themselves have a diverse and variegated character, presented here in chronological order. They amply demonstrate the myriad issues and queries which had to be resolved to get the new system functioning effectively. Questions bombarded the central Poor Law bureaucracy on such diverse topics as the rules of bastardy, the qualifications for appointment as Poor Law medical officer, the role of township bodies under the new arrangements and the plight of war service personnel who had been deprived of pensions. Indeed, the reader may dip into this collection at any point and find fascinating social and official insights.

What comes over powerfully is the relentless bureaucratic process which was eventually to see the new rules enforced, albeit often on a piecemeal basis. There was a central authority which was able to give definitive answers to all

these local enquiries and the records illustrate some local support for the new regime, notwithstanding the 'misguided' popular opposition. The collection is supplemented with assize records of those tried for disorder in the anti-Poor Law riots and some reproductions of examples of the records themselves. Here a minor cavil must be registered at the poor quality of these illustrations, which are difficult (and in one case impossible) to read. That apart, this book is to be welcomed and urban and social historians will find it is a valuable quarry of information.

**Derek Fraser**

University of Teesside

**Georgina Hickey**, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890–1940*. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2003. vii + 296pp. 23 figures. Bibliography. \$39.95.

**Nancy Hewitt**, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s–1920s*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. 376pp. \$20.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805292933

Georgina Hickey and Nancy Hewitt have written two fine studies of women and gender in the urban South at the turn of the twentieth century, a time when women of diverse social groups assumed a major public presence in developing southern cities. *Hope and Danger* examines in vivid prose the lives and representations of white and black working-class women in Atlanta when the city had emerged from the ravages of the Civil War to become a thriving urban centre of the New South. Working-class women gained increasing public visibility in Atlanta as they entered the paid labour force and participated in commercial amusements and urban politics in growing numbers. They also became potent cultural symbols for city boosters, politicians and reformers who were eager to embrace urban progress and growth, but worried about its impact on established race, gender and class hierarchies. According to Hickey, Atlantans expressed their ambivalence about urbanization through conflicting images of working-class women as the best hope and the worst danger for the city. Drawing on a range of sources, including newspapers, government reports, organizational records, oral histories and photographs, Hickey develops a compelling analysis of the cultural representations and social anxiety about working-class women in chapters that address women's paid employment and leisure-time activities, public health campaigns, social welfare reform and politics and suffrage.

Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, civic leaders and reformers debated intensely the benefits and dangers of women's participation in new workplaces and urban amusements. They tried to reconcile the economy's reliance on female wage-earners with the desire for traditional families of bread-winning men and domestic women. Fears about the fate of female wage-earners reached a climax for white Atlantans with the murder of young factory worker Mary Phagan in 1913 and the subsequent trial and lynching of Leo Frank. In the numerous newspaper articles and popular songs written about the case, Phagan became the embodiment of the perils the urban environment posed to white working women. While the dominant public debates about women's work and leisure expressed white fears and concerns, Hickey argues persuasively that social anxiety about working-class women cut across racial lines. Like their

white counterparts, black leaders worried about the young women of their race as they worked away from home and played in amusement parks and dance halls. Furthermore, black Atlantans connected the morality of African-American women to the larger project of racial uplift. Following the 1906 race riot, black leaders avoided direct confrontation with white authorities and the system of racial segregation, and focused instead on a programme of 'uplifting' the black masses, especially women, as the best way to benefit the race and improve race relations.

The preoccupation with working-class women directly influenced other urban developments in the early twentieth century, including the city's emerging public health movement. At different moments public health reformers depicted working-class women as either the most vulnerable group or as the primary agents of contagion. Race was a decisive factor, but not the only one, shaping these perceptions. In the campaign against tuberculosis public health workers pitied poor white women and their children, yet demonized African-American domestics and washerwomen as the main carriers of the disease. Two decades later, however, during the mobilization for the First World War, public health advocates castigated white working women for supposedly infecting soldiers with venereal disease. In the realm of urban politics, vice crusaders in the anti-prostitution campaign and middle-class activists in the suffrage movement used images of victimized working girls to build public support for their causes. Hickey contrasts the depictions of female victimization and depravity that circulated in public discourse with the political actions of black and white working-class women who sought to claim rights for themselves, both collectively in strikes and public demonstrations, and individually by filing petitions and registering complaints with the courts, city council and police.

*Hope and Danger* covers some familiar territory in urban and women's history – regulation of women's work and leisure, anxiety about the morality of urban women, social welfare reform, campaigns against prostitution and venereal disease. Hickey nevertheless brings a fresh perspective to these topics by examining them in the context of an important southern city and by linking them to a broad public discourse about working-class women and urban development. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the book is Hickey's demonstration of the centrality of women and gender to urban history. Working-class women were key actors and potent cultural symbols in Atlanta, as the city came to terms with urbanization, industrialization and rapid population growth functioning as the ideological territory for the contested work of city-building. Their centrality to public urban discourse, however, constituted a particular moment in the city's history. The social preoccupation with factory girls, washerwomen, store clerks and domestics, so intense in the first two decades of the century, declined steadily in the 1920s. As public concerns shifted from morality and social order to economic crisis and racial strife during the Great Depression, the unemployed male worker replaced the working girl as the dominant cultural symbol of the city's hopes and fears.

While *Hope and Danger* highlights the public representations of southern urban women, Hewitt's book focuses more directly on their political activism and identities. *Southern Discomfort* presents a richly detailed analysis of the changing shape of female activism in Tampa from the founding of the cigar industry in the 1880s through to the 1920s. In a departure from most studies that focus on a

particular movement or group of female activists, Hewitt's book explores the broad array of political activities pursued by different communities of women – native-born white, African-American, Cuban and Italian immigrant women. Using ethnic and mainstream newspapers, organizational records and family papers, the author deftly demonstrates how race, ethnicity, class and gender intersected in complex and shifting ways to define women's public identities and interests. Tampa's distinctive history set the stage for the development of a striking 'mosaic' of female activism. With one foot in the Jim Crow South and the other in the Caribbean basin, Tampa developed a multi-racial social order instead of the bi-racial order that characterized the South as a whole. Home to native-born blacks and whites, Tampa also attracted thousands of Cuban and Italian immigrants seeking work in the booming cigar trade. At the same time, Tampa became the US base for Cuban exiles organizing on behalf of Cuban independence and the disembarkation point for US troops heading to Cuba in 1898. Anglo, African-American, Cuban and Italian women forged multi-faceted public identities and agendas in the context of rapid industrialization and immigration, racial segregation, American imperialism and Cuban nationalism.

Hewitt identifies several key shifts in the history of women's activism during this period. In the late nineteenth century women organized primarily on the basis of nationality and race; most women embraced causes they shared with the men of their families and communities. African-American women organized alongside African-American men to challenge the imposition of racial segregation and to foster the social and economic advancement of their community, while Cuban women and men joined together in the mixed-sex labour movement and the struggle for Cuban independence. White women activists formed temperance, beautification and social welfare associations; although they worked primarily in single-sex organizations, they too shared the concerns of their male counterparts to address the class tensions and social problems caused by rapid urbanization, industrial growth and mass immigration. After 1901, Hewitt argues, class-based actions and identities became more pronounced within the various ethnic and racial communities in Tampa, causing divisions within communities, but at the same time forging new links between different racial and ethnic groups. Cuban and Italian cigar workers and their families in the immigrant enclaves of West Tampa and Ybor City formed the strongest alliances. Under the leadership of Cuban organizers, they formed an industrial union open to all workers regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or skill, and launched two industry-wide strikes in 1901 and 1910. As both workers and family members, women assumed central roles in these efforts; they took part in mass demonstrations, ran soup kitchens, walked picket lines and led a march to City Hall in defence of striking workers. Shared class concerns also brought together well-to-do Latin and white women reformers, though on a more limited basis. Several white women's organizations invited prominent Cuban women to join their efforts to establish mission schools, orphanages, rescue homes and temperance societies for the poor and working classes.

A third shift in women's activism occurred after 1915, Hewitt argues, when African-American, white and Latin women began to organize more frequently as women around gender issues. (Hewitt uses the term 'Latin' to refer to Cubans, Italians and their descendants.) The emergence of woman-oriented movements did not replace, but rather coexisted with, women's participation in race and class-based organizations. While African-American activists formed women's clubs,

such as the Tampa School of the Household Arts and the Helping Hand Day Nursery, to address the needs of black working girls and mothers, they also took a prominent role in the community-wide effort to regain black voting rights. Native-born white women protested against their political exclusion by white male leaders and campaigned vigorously for women's enfranchisement yet eagerly joined male civic leaders in the charter reform campaign which limited the political influence of African-American and immigrant neighborhoods. Latin women in the cigar industry both challenged male co-workers to address the low wages and poor conditions facing women workers and joined men on the factory floor to protest against the hiring of 'American girls' to replace Latin workers. Hewitt's in-depth look at the varieties of women's activism in one locale enables her to identify significant differences in political organizing among groups of activist women. Throughout the period white women were more likely to organize in single-sex groups around their gender identities. African-American women, active in both single-sex and community-wide efforts, were especially prominent in efforts to build inter-racial and inter-ethnic alliances. They acted as bridges between groups, enlisting the support of white and Cuban leaders in the Tampa Urban League and Afro-Cubans in various social welfare programmes in the 1920s. Latin women were less likely to engage in gender-based organizing than either white or African-American women. (While Hewitt does not emphasize this latter point, her evidence seems to support it.) A fuller explanation of why such differences existed would enhance the author's analysis of how race, ethnicity and class shaped women's political activism.

One of the central arguments and key insights of the study is that all women activists, regardless of differences, 'repeatedly claimed and changed the identities around which they forged social movements, combining and recombining elements of race, ethnicity, sex, and class to meet the demands of particular circumstances'. They declared solidarity with men of their community and insisted on their needs as women. They formed ethnic alliances across class lines and took part in labour struggles against employers of the same ethnicity. They claimed rights as women and denied other women those same rights because of their race and class backgrounds. Social, cultural and legal barriers clearly limited women's political choices, but within these constraints, activists continually reconfigured their political identities, agendas and alliances in response to changing needs and circumstances. *Southern Discomfort* makes a very compelling case for an expansive approach to the study of female activism. By examining the interplay among diverse communities of women over five decades, Hewitt is able to illuminate in concrete ways the 'varied, competing, and contradictory dimensions of women's activism'.

Both *Southern Discomfort* and *Hope and Danger* enrich our understanding of women and gender in urban history through astute analyses of women as key public actors and cultural symbols in the emerging cities of Tampa and Atlanta. These two studies of urban women in the South also recast our understanding of southern history. Hickey questions the notion of southern exceptionalism by showing striking parallels between Atlanta and cities coming to terms with industrialization in other regions of the country, while Hewitt demonstrates how Tampa's multi-racial female networks alternately challenged and reinforced the South's dominant bi-racial order.

**Mary E. Odem**

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**David M. Pomfret**, *Young People and the European City: Age Relations in Nottingham and Saint-Etienne, 1890–1940*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. xii + 315pp. 17 figures. 7 tables. Bibliography. £49.50.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805302938

This book makes a significant contribution to the growing study of age relations in modern Europe. Its localized context enables nuances to emerge that are missed by national studies, while its comparative element provides a new dimension to existing research on youth. The book commences with a comprehensive demographic survey of Nottingham and Saint-Etienne, before examining three major themes in turn: young people's work, leisure and participation in politics. Pomfret's sensitive comparisons between the communities under study, and the countries in which they are situated, is aided by a wide range of source material, including census data, government and trade union records and, occasionally, oral history. This approach works best in chapter seven, which examines how concern over urbanization was manifested in anxiety over young urban dwellers' health. The romanticization of the rural is not a new theme, but Pomfret's sensitivity to regional nuance means that he adds a new dimension to our understanding of concern over industrialization, particularly how it affected governance and voluntarism at the local level.

The opportunities offered by localized, urban history are, however, not exploited to such a great extent elsewhere in this study. The introduction declares that the book compares representations of youth with young people's own experiences. This is a valuable enterprise, since existing studies have tended to concentrate on one or other of these themes. Yet ultimately, Pomfret's is a history of young people from above. The sources are drawn from adult representations of young people – more precisely, from mostly middle-class adults' representations of working-class youth. Working-class adults' voices are few and almost exclusively male. Tantalizing snippets of oral history from those who were themselves young during this period are not given the same prominence as other material. Given that at least one of Pomfret's sources was Nottingham's extensive Making Ends Meet oral history collection, this is a serious omission. In recent years, historians have been quick to point out the weaknesses of oral history, and, indeed, the historical study of experience – but concentrating exclusively on representations of working-class life brings its own problems. Compelling analysis of age, gender and class within a rich urban context is perhaps exemplified by Jerry White's *Worst Street in North London* (1986), but as White himself noted, his conclusions only emerged when his research moved from an examination of planning regulations and police reports to a study of the inhabitants themselves. In neglecting this approach, Pomfret depicts a silent, largely male, problematic working-class youth group. Curiously, White's study, together with the localized histories of English youth provided by Elizabeth Roberts' *A Woman's Place* (1984), Jacqueline Sarsby's *Missuses and Mouldrunners* (1988) and Andrew Davies' *Leisure, Gender, and Poverty* (1992) are omitted from Pomfret's bibliography.

This book consequently leaves some important questions unanswered. 'Age relations' are presented as the major source of social tension, but this fails to explain why young people in both Nottingham and St Etienne chose to contribute financially to the parental household into adulthood. Life histories in fact make clear that tensions between middle-class reformers and working-class youth were

more often the product of class than age; reciprocal economic ties were frequently strong between parents and children in working-class households. As Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott (*Women, Work, and Family* (1978)) have highlighted, young urban workers – including young women, neglected by Pomfret – frequently became important household breadwinners during periods of high unemployment. This explains why young wage-earners entered ‘blind alley’ – but well-paid – employment, a trend highlighted in chapter three of this book. Politicians’ and social commentators’ attempts to solve the ‘problem’ of youth by curbing young people’s independence also need to be compared with experience. Against such strategies, young wage-earners asserted their right to financial independence and were increasingly prominent commercial leisure consumers. This trend helps explain the declining popularity of organized youth movements, to which Pomfret devotes a chapter. More attention to the popular press, as well as oral history, could also have extended chapter eight’s analysis of young people’s political participation. Pomfret provides a thoughtful study of political differences between the two communities, but neglects young people’s own perspectives in the many strikes in which they participated – documented in local and national newspapers – and ignores the influence of gender. The enfranchisement of young women in England in 1928 had a significant effect on political attitudes, whereas women did not get the vote in France until 1944. This major difference between the two countries is particularly relevant to Pomfret’s study, given the importance of localized governance in the first half of the twentieth century. This then, is a book that raises more questions than it answers; but despite this, it is a well-structured, genuinely comparative piece of scholarship that will enrich our knowledge of urban young people, and particularly their place in political discourse. Pomfret achieves his aim of demonstrating the worth of comparative urban histories; it is to be hoped that more will follow.

**Selina Todd**

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**Richard Harris**, *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900–1960*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. x + 204pp. 15 figures. Bibliography. £28.00 hbk, £11.25 pbk. doi:10.1017/S0963926805312934

In this crisply written and engaging book, Richard Harris draws upon his earlier research to provide a work of considerable brevity. Comprising a little over 200 pages, the book sweeps over a wide expanse, focusing upon the specificities of Canadian suburbanization, while also highlighting the many stark similarities with the suburban trend in neighbouring America. Each theme is summarized clearly and concisely. Definitions of suburbs include prestigious upper-class enclaves, the broad range of middle-class residential developments and working-class suburbs, notably industrial areas where work and home were closer to each other, spatially, than in the superior zoned subdivisions. The complex relationship between cities and suburbs within the continuing decentralization of many Canadian cities is deftly analysed, offering a familiar story of public transportation before the Second World War, and the rise of motorization afterwards. In addition the dispersal of industry created quite self-contained working-class suburbs on the

peripheries of urban Canada. Diversity was at the heart of the social experience of suburbanization in Canada. Although a few suburban districts were mixed, many adopted versions of segregation also found in pre-dispersal ghettos and wealthier inner neighbourhoods. High-income planned suburbs, Jewish areas and lower-class shack-towns are some examples given here.

Harris' theme of gathering conformity constitutes the second half of the book. During the 1930s a powerful stimulus to the rise of post-war corporate suburbs was initiated. The 1934 United States Federal Housing Administration was emulated the following year by the Dominion Housing Act in Canada, and reinforced by the National Housing Act of 1938 which allowed approved lenders to provide long-term mortgage loans underpinned by insurance. National building regulations were also introduced, and adopted by a growing number of cities and towns across the country. Developers played safe, constructing single-family houses to market-friendly designs. And as motor-car ownership and private consumption spiralled during the affluent post-war period, the suburban landscape typical of so many Canadian cities mushroomed. In common with the United States, Canada was flooded with what Dolores Hayden has termed 'sitcom suburbs' during the 1950s. And also in synch with American social scientists, Canadian sociologists discerned a dangerous potential for admass conformity, in addition to loneliness and privatism.

In a previous work, Harris has declared his love-hate relationship with suburbia.<sup>1</sup> The author grew up on the metropolitan outskirts of Birmingham in the English Midlands. Now he lives in suburban Canada. But slightly more of the hate and less of the love informs Harris' overall approach, for *Creeping Conformity* begs one important question: how more or less 'conformist' might Canada be without suburbanization on the scale that developed during the twentieth century? Few would doubt that the visual homogenization of the suburban environment constantly suggests homogeneity of lifestyle to many observers. Many rural areas and city centres, however, also share characteristics from one region to another but rarely do they suffer from criticisms of conformity or standardization to the extent that suburbs do. And some might celebrate the fact that in a country divided into Anglophone and Francophone speakers, and built upon successive waves of immigration, Canadian suburbia has appealed to so many people for such a long time. For all of his careful attention to nuances as opposed to over-generalizations, and despite the welcome tendency to focus on some fascinatingly atypical suburbanites, the assumption against suburbia still holds, as the title of the book suggests. No wonder Harris begins his book with Gertrude Stein's famous view of Oakland in California: 'there is no there, there'. Used many times before, Stein's witty put-down will no doubt be deployed again and again by anti-suburban writers. It was unnecessary here, because one of Harris' achievements is to show that many Canadians, in a spirit of pioneering self-help, worked hard literally to build a home for themselves, converting raw outskirts to liveable places. This is a criticism of one element of Harris' approach rather than of general content, however. His book will be of great value to different types of courses: to undergraduate history courses on modern Canada, and to urban history and geography courses. Postgraduate students in suburban history will also find that

<sup>1</sup> Richard Harris and Peter Larkham (eds.), *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function* (London, 2001), xiv.

the book summarizes many key themes within the field in an admirably accessible manner. *Creeping Conformity* fully deserves the endorsements of Dolores Hayden and Larry S. Bourne to be found on its back cover.

**Mark Clapson**

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**Robert O. Self**, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. xvi + 387pp. 30 halftones. 8 tables. 11 maps. Appendix. Notes. Index. £22.95, \$35.00.  
doi:10.1017/S0963926805322930

In *American Babylon*, Robert Self has given us a rare, field-redefining, gem. An investigation into the social, political and economic fate of the California city of Oakland and its surrounding suburbs between the Second World War and the 1970s, *American Babylon* contributes mightily to the evolving field of the post-war urban history of the United States. Self proves that his conspicuous description of his work as ‘metropolitan history’ – rather than simply ‘urban history’ – is neither pedantic nor purely semantic, but rather a term that precisely reflects his critical engagement with an entire region. *American Babylon* reveals the complex interaction between core cities and suburbs in the East Bay and forces us to rethink our often-lazy reliance on the terms ‘urban decline’, ‘suburbanization’ and particularly ‘white flight’. Perhaps the greatest strength of *American Babylon* is its successful combination of at least two increasingly familiar narratives, which are traditionally treated discreetly; ‘black power politics of community defense and empowerment’, and the history of ‘neopopulist conservative homeowner politics among whites’ (p. 1). Connecting these narratives takes on particular importance in California, birth place of both the Black Panther Party and Proposition 13, the infamous 1978 tax-cutting initiative that devastated the urban infrastructure of California cities and whose effects are still evident today. In combining these narratives, it could be said – without detracting from the originality of Self’s contribution – that *American Babylon* combines many of the strengths of Thomas Sugrue’s *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, and Becky Nicolaides’ *My Blue Heaven*, two of the most important recent books investigating the post-war trajectory of United States cities and suburbs.

Self’s story appropriately begins in the booming years of the Second World War, when Oakland’s developers and boosters hawked their ‘industrial garden’ of mixed-class residential communities to eager, white, working-class homebuyers. Though blacks were mostly restricted to the heavily segregated flatlands of West Oakland, they too shared the optimism of its white residents, as well as a modicum of prosperity in its humming industrial plants. Although some whites in the labour movement advanced a vision of liberalism that included racial integration, by the 1950s the racial fissures in Oakland’s progressive coalition were evident and were further intensified by the divisive anti-communist politics of the city’s downtown business interests. In chapter 3, one of the most original and illuminating chapters in the book, Self limns the geographic consequences of these fissures. But rather than relying on the hackneyed notion that whites simply fled cities, presumably to ‘escape’ their increasingly black populace, Self explores ‘the complicated intersection of public policy and subsidy, economic individualism and

self-interest, and regional development and underdevelopment' which attracted whites to nearby suburbs (p. 100). His case studies of San Leandro, Milpitas and Fremont reveal the growing preoccupation among white worker/homeowners with fiscal conservatism and racial exclusivity. However, even here, Self is not content to rely on generalizations, showing us the significant – though, admittedly, exceptional – efforts to create alternatives to segregation orthodoxy. The most exciting of these was the Sunnyside project in Milpitas, an interracial co-operative housing complex built by the Richmond's Local 560 of the United Automobile Workers.

Compounding the increased racial isolation of blacks in Oakland were the redevelopment and renewal projects of the 1960s which, as elsewhere in the United States, were often synonymous with 'Negro removal'. Swaths of the West Oakland flatlands were gobbled up by new freeways, BART tunnels and the modernization of the port. Here Self advances the argument that the civil rights movement in Oakland, and black power in particular, were not simply extensions of the 'real' southern civil rights movement, but rather direct responses to changes in neighbourhood geography and economics. In the process – and in a sharp break from many studies of post-war African American communities which tend to emphasize victimization and decline – Self reveals the vibrant, aggressive black politics that emerged from these communities. In this context, black power and 'neighborhood-driven and self-determination politics' were not hyper-radical aberrations (though they certainly appeared that way to folks in other parts of the country) but indigenous and well-grounded responses to neighbourhood change. We know that *American Babylon* cannot end well: Proposition 13 dramatically curtailed urban opportunity, the costs heaviest for those African-Americans reliant on public resources. But Self again avoids the victimization narrative, finding instead valuable (and perhaps timely) lessons in the efforts of the Black Panther Party and others to organize neighbourhoods into effective political entities in an otherwise unsympathetic political system.

One cannot do everything in one book, so it should not be surprising that some things were omitted in this otherwise superb work. Students of American culture will likely wonder about the wellsprings of black and white culture in post-war Oakland – the families, churches, social institutions and schools that incubated ideas about race that are so central to Self's analysis, but seldom explained. They might also ask about the ways in which the racial and geographic contests in Oakland and the East Bay manifested themselves in the musical, literary and artistic contributions of its black and white residents. Finally, urban historians and sociologists may question Self's failure to discuss crime in West Oakland, particular in the late 1970s when the intensifying drug trade took a violent toll on the very streets the Black Panthers were organizing. Though always exaggerated by white suburbanites, the crime statistics are worth addressing, even if only to amplify our understanding of the 'social imagination' (p. 17) of space which Self explains so well elsewhere in the book. None of these omissions, however, detract significantly from the great strengths of Self's book. In its conceptualization, breadth and readability, *American Babylon* will likely set a new standard for urban historians for some time to come.

**Josh Sides**

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**David G. Schwartz**, *Suburban Xanadu: The Casino Resort on the Las Vegas Strip and Beyond*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003. xii + 243pp. Bibliography. £17.99 pbk.  
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This is a strange and idiosyncratic contribution to the explosive growth of the historiography of Las Vegas. The author co-ordinates the Gaming Studies Research Center at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, and the supporting quotes on the cover include an encomium from Steve Wynn, himself a major participant in the casino resort industry. This reflects one of Schwartz's aims, which is to rehabilitate casino gambling as a legitimate, well-organized, indeed path-breaking business which has suffered unjustly from myths and legends about its associations with organized crime and from the attacks of (as he sees it) ill-informed moralists who seek to interfere with the American people's right to spend its money as it sees fit. His initial protestations are increasingly diluted as the argument proceeds, but the overall tone remains assertively supportive of the desert city and its casino resorts, and readers in search of a more pessimistic viewpoint on the morality of Las Vegas' gaming industry and its impact on American politics and mores are referred to a work that perhaps came out too late to receive Schwartz's attention: Sally Denton and Roger Morris, *The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and its Hold on America, 1947–2000* (London, 2002). A more rounded urban history of Las Vegas, meanwhile, can be found in M. Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (Malden, MA, and Oxford, 1999), which is also missing from Schwartz's bibliography. Schwartz's proposed contribution to urban history lies in the idea that Las Vegas as a resort represents the values of the suburban United States of the second half of the twentieth century; that its prosperity originates in being able to attract the respectable middle classes of a suburban nation to enjoy the thrill of mild transgression in a controlled environment which is (contrary to stereotype) family-friendly; and that the 'casino resort' complexes on which its organization has been based are themselves, if not actually suburban in character, then 'connected to suburbia on several levels'. It offered an outlet for the widespread urge to gamble on card games and slot machines (very little attention is paid to other forms of gambling) while keeping its expression at a safe distance in the Nevada desert, and allowing potential punters to indulge themselves on special occasions while accepting the need to suppress similar activities as part of the everyday downtown scene in their own cities. These arguments are advanced essentially by repetitive assertion: no direct evidence is supplied in support of any of them, and there is no hint that American suburbia might be culturally divided on this issue rather than displaying the unspoken consensus whose existence is necessary to Schwartz's argument.

The book does have interesting things to say about the changing design and nature of the 'casino resort', with its agenda of keeping punters on the premises by supplying in-house eating and entertainment and its resulting cellular urban structure that makes it difficult for casinos to act as general agents of urban regeneration. It compares Las Vegas with Atlantic City and with subsequent casino ventures, as provision was liberalized at the end of the twentieth century; it examines attempts, from Atlantic City onwards, to use casino gambling as a force for urban renewal; and it looks at the potential impact of internet gambling

on conventional casino operations. The author remains resolutely agnostic on the alleged adverse social impact of casino gambling on regular players and addicts, and his treatment of the sex industry is remarkably limited and restrained. His treatment of Atlantic City would have benefited from the use of Nelson Johnson's excellent *Boardwalk Empire* (Medford, NJ, 2002), which pulls few punches and makes excellent use of oral history and of the author's local knowledge and contacts. His treatment of casino gambling as a whole would have benefited from awareness of its European antecedents and of developments elsewhere in the world, for example in Argentina's Mar del Plata. This is, then, a disappointingly parochial book whose central arguments from an urban history perspective fail to convince. It does have useful material to offer on the 'casino resort' concept, but its utility to the urban historian does not extend much further than that.

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