

estuarine location. When the council was alerted that William Adam's wonderful – if decrepit – Town House of 1733 might be protected by HM Office of Works ahead of its bicentenary, the demolition men's scaffolding was up within a week. No surprise then that Dundee is unique among the large Scottish towns in being without a single National Trust for Scotland property. The Tay Road Bridge became central to the continuing Elizabethan Renaissance, and Jim Phillips' account of the episode makes salutary reading (too cheap, too central, too local). But the Dundonians did get many things right: over 8,000 council homes were built between the wars, and housing and industrial estates were unravelled safely along the Kingsway bypass. In the end, as this superb book shows, Dundee has proved to be quite adept at transforming itself. So farewell 'Jam, Jute and Journalism', farewell Timex and NCR. Enter the V&A-on-Tay, Britain's new Northern Cultural Capital.

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Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud and Richard Rodger (eds.), *Environmental and Social Justice in the City: Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge: White Horse Press, 2011. 302pp. £65.00.
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In his greatest work, *Capital*, Karl Marx informs his readers that the metabolic relationship between the human and nature, embodied in the processes of production, is a historical universal. The forms that production takes may change, but that human societies must evolve particular productive relations to the rest of the natural world is an absolute necessity. This realization is the fundamental basis of historical materialist theory, and it founds the possibility of the historical analysis of human society. It is curious that Marx's claim fails to receive more attention from environmental historians given that their fundamental object of study is precisely the relationship between social relations and the production (and consumption) of nature. *Environmental and Social Justice in the City* is perhaps indicative of the quandary in which environmental history often finds itself with regard to social theory: it is a volume that is fundamentally unsure of its direction, a fact already indicated in the way in which the title hedges its bets. Are we concerned here with environmental justice as a fundamentally new perspective on urban struggles? Or are we looking at social justice as affected by the contingent shape of the relation to nature? At the heart of these questions is whether an urban environmental history really has anything new to offer to urban history as a whole, and, if so, what that might be.

Five themes structure this collection of essays: the construction of environmental injustices; the management of risk; water and inequality; waste and inequality; and industry and the factory as environment. Each theme is addressed by skilled and dense treatments in a range of regional and empirical studies that will be of particular interest to scholars of their respective period and to those teaching environmental history and in search of useful and accessible case-studies. Some of the essays that particularly stand out are Joanna Dean's remarkable synthesis of the concept of the social production of nature with a detailed spatial

analysis of access to urban forest. Both rigorous in research and informed by social theory, this contribution is particularly interesting for its reflection on the contingency of environmental injustice and the rapid rate at which access to urban environmental amenities can change. Elsewhere in the volume, Stéphane Frioux provides a significant addition to the literature on urban waste disposal, providing an important comparative insight into the management, and contestation, of urban waste disposal facilities in twentieth-century France. Chloé Deligne and Wanda Balcers provide a much needed insight into the political struggles around industrial waste and pollution. This is one of the only essays in the collection to engage directly with the politics of environmental justice issues and, given recent 'revisionist' moves to recuperate industrial society as 'relatively green' by *laissez-faire* industrial ecologists such as Pierre Desrochers, this is a timely reminder of environmental and social reality of industrial society, as well as a fascinating investigation of the complex relationship of such issue with class and class struggle.

While the empirical contributions of this volume are all of a high standard and will be essential reading to scholars in urban environmental history, the question remains of the overall structure and objectives of this collection. It is immensely difficult to give coherence to edited collections, and the editors provide a stimulating introduction with a useful synthesis of the literature on environmental justice that many will find useful. However, ultimately this volume does not challenge some of the fundamental limiting assumptions of environmental history. There are a number of reservations in this regard, but two in particular stand out. The first of these is that the declared attempt to bring together environmental and social dimensions in this volume reproduces the idea that these are separate categories in the first place. It would have been interesting to have had investigation of the politics of this binary, and perhaps an attempt to undermine it. Among the concepts and categories that historicize and critique this binary we might include feudalism, capitalism and class, and these might have provided an alternative, and perhaps more challenging, means of organizing the empirical material. There is, of course, always a politics involved in such choices, and this brings me to the second reservation. As the editors recognize, the field of studies of environmental justice is a practice-led one in which race, gender and class inequality are not merely studied but also actively resisted. This volume is not explicitly allying itself with the environmental justice movement, so it is perhaps questionable whether the use of this terminology is appropriate in this context. The editors do recognize this, but there is a wider challenge here to environmental history, which concerns how, as environmental historians, we are to engage with the numerous crises of our time in a manner not merely theoretical but also practical. There are real questions here that environmental justice could teach history and it would have been interesting to have seen these addressed more directly and substantively. In facing the existential challenges of climate change, environmental history surely has a great deal to offer; one of those things may be a willingness to challenge the barriers between historical thinking and political engagement.

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