

## Reviews of books

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**Roger Cooter and Bill Luckin (eds)**, *Accidents in History: Injuries, Fatalities and Social Relations*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997. x + 273pp. Bibliography. Hf140, \$25.

'Accidents', state the editors of this volume in their opening sentence, 'can seem nearly as pervasive as the air we breathe'. Writing this review in the immediate aftermath of the death of John Archer under a tractor in the popular radio soap opera, and with the drama of Princess Diana's death constantly before us, one may be forgiven for feeling this to be a truism, although it was probably not one when Cooter and Luckin wrote it. The pervasive nature of these two highly-publicized tragedies underlines the concern of this book: accidents to human beings – the 'social experience of sudden death or injury' – rather than the cultural and historic or other significance of the dropped teacup, or the accidental discovery of a lost continent. The aim is to rescue the accident so defined from historical neglect, and to demonstrate that it is worthy of study, 'historically contingent, as well as germane to our understanding of some of the most fundamental features of social, political and material life'.

The scholarly range of this book is broad. From the philosophical consideration of what an accident is or is not, to the history of accidents in the American home between 1870 and 1940, this approach constructs a pretty comprehensive conceptual and interpretative framework around the idea of the accident, provides a more specifically chronological history, and raises many and various issues. Categories of accident, as opposed to their classification, escape special attention, yet two designated types of accident feature repeatedly: the industrial and the urban. The rural and agricultural are all but invisible, provoking reflection – with an eye to John Archer and Princess Diana – on the validity and difficulty of making such terminological distinctions. ('Accident' is a very fluid concept in all sorts of ways, as the editors point out.) Since, however, the urban and industrial accidents clearly have a specific meaning and a specific history, it may be concluded that rural and agricultural accidents are indicated as areas for exploration.

Three of these essays deal more particularly with the urban accident, although none is specifically focused on that category. Roy Porter examines, with his customary grace, the accident in the eighteenth century. For Porter, the pre-industrial world was at least as hazardous as the industrial, and he has fun illustrating this contention, while demonstrating how a fundamental faith in personal providence enabled people to cope with a perpetually unpredictable world. Lay first aid and domestic self-help were essential strategies when

fetching a doctor could take several hours or even days, but with the rise of the hospital in the Georgian city, Porter suggests, there came a seismic shift in urban accident experience. Accident victims were admitted to hospital at any time, and ambitious Georgian surgeons were avid for more cases to practise on: by 1800, accident care had shifted from the street to the hospital, as Providence and self-help were ousted by modernizing medical men and their modernizing institutions.

Porter's emphasis on changing urban institutions conceptualizes the city itself as a dynamic of changing perceptions of the accident and its management. Urbanization, rather than industrialization, appears to have been a critical force in generating public consciousness of accidental injuries and the need to provide for them in the 1870s and 1880s. At the heart of this collection are two essays, by Roger Cooter and by John Hutchinson, which dispute explanations of the timing and impetus for the 'moment' (as Cooter designates it) of the accident's public arrival, the years when the supply and organization of accident provision began to be debated and formulated. Both emphasize the role of militarization in this development, but whereas Cooter glosses this with what Hutchinson calls an 'ideological' interpretation for England, Hutchinson, taking a European perspective, stresses the importance of a growing realization of the dangerousness of modern life. For Cooter, it is the fear of social disorder that drives change; for Hutchinson the great technological and building innovations whose consequences were most glaringly obvious in the congested milieux of the nineteenth-century city. Cultural and political explanations are attractive; the more prosaic perception of danger may prove to have more mileage. One of the earliest urban accident concerns centred on the 'accident' of infection with communicable diseases. Already in 1818, a Select Committee had recommended a system for conveying infectious patients in London which would obviate the use of public coaches and sedan chairs; from 1855 onwards, the city's medical officers of health periodically fulminated against the practice of using ordinary cabs to take infectious patients to hospital, and several local authorities invested in conveyances for that purpose which they could supervise. The culmination of this concern tailored neatly with the 'moment' of the 1870s/1880s: in 1881, the Metropolitan Asylums Board initiated a system of organized transport for the infectious sick which, operating out of the isolation hospitals, was by 1900 carrying 34,000 patients a year. In London, the accident of infection was early perceived as being greatly enhanced by the circumstances of urban life.

Perusal of this volume should convince its readers that the accident is a suitable subject for further exploration. The very evident conceptual and interpretative issues raised by these essays should provoke research and reflection as they were meant to do, more especially, perhaps, among urban historians, within whose territory many of the defining moments of the known history of the accident appear to have taken place.

**Anne Hardy**

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**William Nolan and Anngret Simms (eds)**, *Irish Towns: A Guide to Sources*. Dublin: Geography Publications, 1998. 249pp. 94 figures. Bibliography. No price stated.

**Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds)**, *Irish Country Towns*. Cork and Dublin: Mercier Press, 1994. 192pp. 13 plates. 14 figures. Bibliography. IR£9.99.

**Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds)**, *More Irish Country Towns*. Cork and Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995. 206pp. 15 plates. 16 figures. Bibliography. IR£9.99.

**Howard B. Clarke (ed.)**, *Irish Cities*. Cork and Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995. 220pp. 31 figures. Bibliography. IR£9.99.

Thirty years ago comparatively little was known about the history of Irish towns. The mythologizing of a Gaelic and rural Irish past consequent to the establishment of a new nation state, the destruction of the Public Record Office in the violent emergence of that state, and the association of urbanism with the colonizing English, meant that towns were disregarded as part of the Irish past. Time has healed some of those memories and a generation of historians, geographers and archaeologists have, between them, assembled an impressive body of published work on all aspects and all periods of the Irish urban past. Many of those urban specialists have been equally assiduous in ensuring that their academic endeavours have reached a wider audience of government, planners, local historians, and the general public so that the Irish urban heritage is now properly appreciated and, where appropriate, conserved. These publications fall into that latter category of informing and publicizing.

In *Irish Towns: A Guide to Sources* an impressive team of contributors provide extended commentaries on the main sources of information for urban history in Ireland which will be of considerable assistance to students and local historians planning urban historical projects. Much of the information, and the stimulus for the book, derives from the EURO CIT project funded by the European Commission. The most direct input is the massive fifty-page, select, classified bibliography of works published on Irish urban history between 1969 and 1993, provided by Desmond McCabe, which concludes the volume. The book is introduced by brief summaries of Irish urban history, national record repositories, and the complexities of territorial divisions used in the variety of census records. Eight chapters then survey the characteristics of particular groups of records including maps, prints and drawings; buildings and archaeology; medieval and plantation sources; central and local government; estate papers; church records; newspapers and directories; and literary sources. A further chapter provides two brief case studies (Kells and Lurgan) of the ways in which some of these record sources can be used. Each chapter is extensively illustrated with examples of the sources under discussion, many of them in their original full colour. The A4 format ensures a clarity of scale, and the reproduction is of a very high standard.

The texts of these chapters are more than a commentary on the bibliographies and the location of archives. They make a real effort to make links with research themes at national and European levels and they show how professional academics use these materials in different ways. Local researchers therefore have a broader contextual setting for their studies. They illuminate too, how, and why,

particular sources evolve through time and consequently provide different kinds of information at different periods. The editors and publisher are to be congratulated on providing a most attractive book which does its job effectively and at a modest price.

The other three volumes reviewed here derive from the biennial Thomas Davis lecture series sponsored by Radio Telefís Éireann and broadcast in 1991–95. Once more, university teachers were encouraged to use their expertise to present a succinct spoken essay on particular country towns. These are printed in these little volumes. Each essay is accompanied by an historical illustration and a map of the town in question, together with a brief bibliography. The places are drawn from both north and south of the border. *Irish Country Towns* has a logic to its choice of towns in that the places were chosen to illustrate the broad chronological perspectives of Irish urban history: from Gaelic Christian monastic town, through the plantations, estate towns, to industrial new towns and seaside resort. The logic is not reflected in the order in which they are printed, however. Annegret Simms introduces this perspective, followed by fourteen chapters on individual towns. By European standards small towns in Ireland are very small indeed. There are only six places with a population of more than 25,000 and most towns have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants; however, most of the first selection will be familiar. Only Enniscorthy, a plantation town in north Wexford, used by Henry Wallop in the 1580s as a base to drive back the Gaelic population from this region, and Ennistymon, a County Clare market town of the eighteenth century are likely to be unfamiliar to non-Irish readers.

In *More Irish Country Towns*, J.H. Andrews provides an introduction which surveys Irish urban historiography from the point of view of town histories as preface to fifteen further urban essays, this time including more unfamiliar small towns as well as better known places such as Wexford, Coleraine and Bangor. The same variety of periodization is present, though without further examples of purely nineteenth-century towns. Tuam, the smallest city in the British Isles, is perhaps the most fascinating. With two cathedrals and bishop's palaces, seven schools, and various other ecclesiastical institutions and monuments, its population has fallen by 16 per cent since 1986 to only 3,500, half what it was in 1837. Sadly, the historical maps of the first volume are substituted by inadequate outline street plans in this one.

*Irish Cities* deals with the eight larger towns of the island. Belfast, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford have two chapters each, the chronological division being drawn in the early modern period; Derry and Kilkenny have a single chapter, and Dublin has three covering the medieval, early modern and industrial and modern city respectively. In this volume the maps are mostly reproductions of historical plans, whilst the photographic plates reproduce very poorly indeed. The essays are readable, succinct and, even where authors have to deal with the Troubles in modern Belfast and Derry, there is sufficient sense of the varying perspectives of different communities. These three small volumes are pocket-sized and provide a readable, stimulating and strongly place-oriented introduction to Ireland's rich urban history.

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**András Gerô and János Poór (eds)**, *Budapest. A History from its Beginnings to 1998*. Atlantic Studies on Society in Change No. 86. Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc., Distr. by Columbia University Press, 1997. vii + 344pp. 1 map. \$42.00.

The title promises a short biography of the Hungarian capital. In the hands of a single author it might have explained the features of its particular development, by concentrating on forces and circumstances which enabled the town, despite several devastations and sharp declines, to struggle its way up to the top of the urban network. Unfortunately the majority of the nine contributors dealing with the single periods preferred the narrative to the analytical approach. The book gains by this in affording a good read, and presents many interesting historical events mostly unknown to the foreign reader, but may lose value in terms of analysis and assessment.

Although the editors strive to standardize the different chapters by a uniform structure (demography, society, economy, municipal government, town planning, architecture, culture and education), their effort is not completely successful, as the contributors – perhaps due to the fact that only one of them, the late Károly Vörös, is an expert on urban history – pay more attention to topics of which they have a more intimate knowledge, neglecting or cutting short others. So, for example, in the chapters dealing with the history of the town up to 1873 very little is to be found about economy, while the description of the activity of the city council or of the development of the built-up area seems to be inflated. This is especially so, as given the lack of cartographical documentation it is hard for readers not familiar with the town to appreciate the extension of the town or locate the buildings mentioned. However, the contributors dealing with the earlier historical periods – Gábor Agoston (from the beginnings to 1703), János Poór (1703–1815), and László Csorba (1815–73) – though the periodization adopted seems to me strange and poorly argued, succeed, despite the rather limited size, in tracing the development of the town. Detailed data on population growth, and the occupational, social and religious structure of the inhabitants, as well as details about culture and architecture, are particularly informative and useful.

The chapter dealing with the building of the Metropolis (1873–1918) presented by Károly Vörös excels in its comprehensive analytical approach to the economic, social and cultural processes. Similarly outstanding is the chapter on the inter-war period by Miklós Lackó. Besides his analytical account of events and processes of the period, he is the only contributor who dwells on the place of Budapest in the urban network and on the national estimation of the capital. In consequence of the ill-considered periodization little is said about the intriguing period of the post-war reconstruction. László Varga, the author of the chapter on 1945–56, concentrates on general political changes, and gives a short, but comprehensive and interesting account of the revolutionary events in 1956. The chapter on ‘Post-revolutionary crisis’ by János M. Rainer deals rather with problems of general political history than with that of the capital. The presentation of the Kádár Era (1957–88) by Judit Kósa is rich in information on demography, municipal government and particularly on city development and housing, but totally neglects to present the society of the capital and the first movements of the opposition. The lack of political antecedents raises difficulties

in the understanding of the chapter on the change of regime, the period 1989–96, written by László Bán, who gives an excellent explanation of the political background and the problematic consequences of Local Government Act favouring the districts against the municipality. The account of events and processes of the first years of the democratic regime is very informative both for urban historians and for a wider readership interested in new developments in Hungary and its capital.

Despite these critical comments the volume offers a more comprehensive knowledge of the history of Budapest than the former brief and often simplified surveys published in foreign languages, and presents a useful help for scholars engaged in comparative urban history.

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**Jenny Kermode**, *Medieval Merchants. York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. xvii + 381pp. 2 maps. 3 figures. Bibliography. £45.00.

This useful book has been long heralded by a series of articles and essays by Jenny Kermode on the merchants of the three northern towns of Beverley, Hull and York. The original project was a very ambitious one, allowing comparison to be made between a regional capital, a large provincial town, and a major port, which had different systems of government, varying degrees of involvement with secular lords and religious institutions, as well as contrasting economies and social structures. In this book there is some emphasis on comparative urban history, but more space is devoted to the common experiences of northern merchants. Surprisingly little work has been done on English merchants since 1948, when *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* was published, and we are drawn into judging this book alongside Sylvia Thrupp's masterpiece. Thrupp's central theme was the definition of the social position of London merchants, which became one of the best explorations of medieval society ever written. Thrupp and Kermode both use as their main source of evidence wills, supplemented with the records of civic and royal government. This book begins with a survey of merchants' role in government, religion and society – which is mainly about families and households. The second part of the book is concerned with trade, reconstructing the commercial patterns of northern England, and discussing business techniques, partnerships, credit, competition and merchants' investment in land.

Thrupp used the word 'class' with confidence to define her group of merchants, but Kermode in the style of the 1990s avoids the word, and appreciates that the merchants are difficult to define at their edges. She has identified 1,400 individuals, because contemporaries used that word to describe them, or because in such sources as the Hull customs accounts they can be seen to be involved in trade on a large scale, over long distance, or as we would say, 'wholesale'. In examining their life cycles and activities Kermode finds that some of the conventional generalizations are not applicable to the northern merchants. First, while it is true that the greatest offices, such as that of mayor, tended to be occupied by merchants, they cannot be seen as monopolizing town government,

and were content to see better-off artisans serving in the less prestigious positions. A number of butchers, for example, acted as chamberlains at York. The *cursus honorum* by which leading citizens in York qualified for the mayoralty through a succession of lesser offices was surprisingly short – about twelve years – so that many mayors occupied the position for the first time in their forties. Second, she shows that the notion that merchant families survived for three successive generations was quite rare. Many merchants were not succeeded by their sons. And finally, although northern merchants bought land, not many of them intermarried with the gentry, or were able to establish themselves as landed families.

The chapters on trade are much concerned with the shrinkage of the economy of the larger northern towns in the fifteenth century. The main factors were the decline in the wool trade, the rise of the small town and rural cloth industry in west Yorkshire, and the competition from London merchants. Kermode suggests as causes of these difficulties the cheapness of West Riding cloth, which was made from inferior wool, which was fulled mechanically, and which was successful in attracting a large market among customers with modest means. She attributes the success of the London merchants to their access to better sources of credit, and their privileges and influence which enabled them to discriminate against the northern merchants. They complained in 1478, for example, that they were allocated stalls on the fringes of the cloth fairs.

This book handles the themes that it has chosen thoroughly, but there are still many aspects of the merchants' lives that will no doubt be covered by future researchers, such as the relationships between the merchants and other sections of urban society (already the subject of stimulating work by Swanson), and the housing and residential patterns of merchants within the urban space.

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**Holger Th. Gräf (ed.),** *Kleine Städte im neuzeitlichen Europa*. Berlin: Arno Spitz GmbH, 1997. 272pp. 6 figures. 14 maps. 30 tables. DM48.

This book is an outcome of the session on European small towns held at the Third International Conference on Urban History in Budapest in 1996. The original papers have been efficiently assembled, some translated from English into German, and published in this interesting and well-edited collection, with a good introduction and in which every chapter has at least one map, a brief discussion of the sources used and a reproduction of one of the sources used. Conducting research on central European towns has its problems: in his introduction Gräf, who knows his English urban history and frequently draws interesting comparisons, laments that whereas English researchers can (sometimes) get away with visits to their county record office and the PRO, central European researchers need to struggle through a plethora of archives from the town, church, region, state and nobility. The historiographical traditions are of course also different, but international conferences are meant to bring these things together and this book clearly shows that this is happening, with a rather strong Leicester influence, particularly with the editor.

Some of the problems with which the authors have grappled will not be

unfamiliar to English readers, with clear implications for the study of English urban history. In this category comes Subacchi's analysis of small towns in north Italy, taking issue with de Vries' view that urbanization in northern Italy retreated from 15.1 per cent of the population in 1550 to 14.3 per cent in 1800. The larger cities did indeed experience a fall in population: for instance Mantua's population fell from 38,000 in 1550 to 25,000 in 1750. But it was quite another matter for the smaller towns with populations of five to ten thousand as the textile industry moved out from the larger cities not only to the countryside but also to the smaller towns. The implications for what remains of classic proto-industrialization theory are of interest. However, Carl Hoffman's paper on Bavarian small towns from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries gives a different picture, describing a process of deindustrialization as the Bavarian towns lost their role as entrepôts for long-distance trade, even while they simultaneously became integrated into the state structure, dominating the countryside and increasingly acting as centres of state power. Yet this very decline permitted the gradual growth in local importance of those that dealt with local agriculture – innkeepers, brewers, etc. – and who took a key role in the modernization of their towns. He suggests that this group was also influential in English towns. Nevertheless, if Bavaria was like Saxony during this period, there were two sorts of small towns: 'real' towns (*Stadt*) with a good school which taught Latin and a *Städtlein* without such a school and which of course could not send anybody to university as Katrin Keller shows.

Some regions are similar enough to England to bring back familiar problems: one of them turns out to be eastern Denmark during the later eighteenth century, where Mikkelsen has examined the role of three small towns as agrarian centres, each functioning very much as one among many other nodal points in an integrated national economy, despite their distance from the centre, something that Gräf in his introduction considers sufficiently remarkable to contrast with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Nearer home, Brian Graham has examined priest-led protests in small towns in north-eastern Ireland between 1880 and 1914, where the Irish question deflected the bias of any anti-industrialization rhetoric.

More typical for central Europe, and at any rate at first sight more remote from the English experience is the problem struggled with in Sonkoly's paper 'What is urban?' (a database of small towns in Transylvania for 1750, 1786 and 1857 which also seeks to tease out their 'urban' characteristics, classified under headings such as administrative role, total and non-agricultural population, degree of centrality). It is an approach that owes something to Lepetit and rather more to the circumstances of development of central Europe, where such problems troubled contemporaries and subsequent historians. Cities that sought autonomy needed to watch their budgets, and the budgets for three small Austrian towns between 1550 and 1750 have been examined by Pühringer. There is the obvious question of their typicality, but they do tend to show similar trends, with problems starting in the sixteenth century, naturally becoming worse during the Thirty Years War, while not improving much until the eighteenth century and then usually hesitantly.

To finish off for the nineteenth century there is Ralf Pröve's paper on two small towns in Brandenburg in 1843, where handicrafts were still dominant; and finally Lada Feldman, a cultural anthropologist, concludes with a chapter intriguingly



entitled 'Dubrovnik and the town as a theatre of myth', where the town is a stage and the stage recognizes this, as do the authorities who forbade performances around certain parts of the town, both in the 1550s and the 1950s.

**Leonard Schwarz**

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**Robert Tittler**, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540–1640*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. xii + 395pp. Bibliography. Index. £48.00.

This book is certainly not at all what I expected. Most scholars active in the Reformation field perceive the Reformation primarily in religious terms: as a revolution in the religious lives, practice and belief systems of peoples and communities. Broadly speaking, these are still largely the assumptions underpinning studies of urban Reformations in most continental traditions. Tittler takes a different approach, which perhaps demonstrates how the work of urban historians and others interested in these matters have now taken sharply divergent paths. In this fine, painstaking and exhaustive study the Reformation in the English towns is perceived largely as a redistribution of urban property and of political authority. As the dissolution of the monasteries flooded the property market, urban elites embarked on a long, patient and ingenious campaign to appropriate as large a proportion as possible of this property to civic control. The accretion of new responsibilities in turn required the development of a more sophisticated structure of office holding and record keeping. The newly powerful civic officials were careful to assure that local authority was ever more firmly under their control (oligarchy). This, then, is a study, as Professor Tittler really acknowledges in the last sentence of his book, of 'the Age of the Reformation in English urban history', rather than a study of English urban Reformations. For those interested primarily in religious questions this can be frustrating, though there are still some important and interesting insights. Most of all, by demonstrating that the Henrician and Edwardian dissolutions had such momentous consequences for urban communities, Tittler underlines the need, rather against the trend of most recent writing on the Reformation, to recognize the real importance of the first generation of religious reform. Even if England did not become a Protestant country at this stage, it bade farewell to much of the accumulated custom and heritage of its Catholic past. In contrasting the pre- and post-Reformation periods Tittler is not entirely free of the besetting sin of much recent writing on the subject, in studying the actual consequences of Reformation change against the background of a rather idealized picture of the medieval community. Did the pre-Reformation church really function as effectively to bind communities and avert discord as is here presented? Tittler is best in dealing with change, and in particular in sketching the emerging urban regimes. He demonstrates satisfactorily that the emergence of oligarchy was not inconsistent with wide access to office, and that the relationship between the urban regime and the local and Court notables with whom the towns developed a relationship was more mutually satisfactory than is sometimes recognized. He is particularly good when exploring how changes in the urban cultural environment reflected and enhanced changes in local authority. But even here his decision not to

consider the effect of Puritanism seems curious and self-defeating. By arguing that the Reformation was a fundamental cause of these developments, and then wholly ignoring the personal religious motivations of the individuals involved in these processes, Tittler presents a curiously dehumanized picture of England's civic elites. While the Reformation questioned their most cherished beliefs and assaulted the fabric of their churches, the civic fathers busied themselves with trusts and charters of incorporation. While members of their communities fought, argued and even died for their beliefs the town council added arms to the mayoral chair. One is reminded of Aneurin Bevan's contemptuous denunciation of Hugh Gaitskell as a 'desiccated calculating machine'; and yet we know from other sources that many of the leading figures of England's towns cared deeply about these things. To remove from a study of the Reformation in the English towns any notion of commitment, not to say passion, emotion and belief, is to make of urban history something curiously removed from what must have been the contemporary reality of living through these troubled times.

**Andrew Pettegree**

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**Joseph P. Ward**, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity and Changes in Early Modern London*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997 (Cambridge University Press outside N. America). xii + 203pp. 2 plates. 2 tables. Bibliography. £30.00; US\$45.00.

What held together early modern London? Between 1550 and 1650 the metropolis possibly doubled its population every forty to fifty years; by 1750 it was probably the largest city in Europe. London experienced high levels of mortality and population turnover. Before 1666 a fifth of the population were periodically wiped out by plague epidemics and immigration levels were high, both from home and abroad. London also experienced long-term decline in its main industry and export, woollen cloth; had to deal with social problems of poverty, vagrancy and prostitution; and was the focus of civil wars and revolutions in the seventeenth century. Yet for all these upheavals, London was arguably no more unstable than some other places in England and, unlike many continental cities, emerged after 1700 at the head of an aggressive and successful imperial state.

Valerie Pearl, Steve Rappaport and Ian Archer have to varying degrees argued that London's institutions were key elements in its preservation amidst turmoil, and Joseph Ward's book contributes to these discussions. By focusing on the city's trade guilds, especially the Grocers' and Weavers' Companies, Ward questions some basic distinctions that earlier historians made about early modern London. He doubts the validity of drawing a sharp line based on guild jurisdiction, between the City, in which the guilds enforced the requirement of membership to gain the 'freedom' to trade and manufacture, and the extra-mural 'liberties' and suburbs. Preachers emphasized that all parts of London were 'united in sin', and in reality, based on twenty companies' records, Ward finds considerable crossover between City and suburbs. The latter, he says, presented economic opportunities to Company members, while the City offered economic benefits to non-citizens if they paid voluntary dues. Further, some members of City Companies resided and worked outside the City walls, and guild member-

ship, whatever status it conferred, did not guarantee high-quality production. Where enforcing their authority was concerned, the Companies policed members and non-members alike and refused charitable assistance to some members while granting it to others. The old view that Companies were dominated by oligarchies needs to be revised according to the author. In fact, they were increasingly run by their clerks, often lawyers, while their governors and assistants participated less in day-to-day management.

The author presents valuable new material about the Grocers and Weavers. He finds that the religious divisions that some historians have discerned among the Grocers were not so important. They were very preoccupied with the Company's spiritual life, as manifested in celebrating feast days before and after the Reformation, but the latter event did not split them and they survived the civil wars of the seventeenth century by tolerating religious differences. A greater threat was the hiving off of the apothecaries in the early seventeenth century, but even that divorce was marked by official celebrations of unity. For their part, the Weavers faced a host of threats – alien immigration, riots in 1595 and 1675, imported 'engine-looms', the exceeding of the customary four-loom limit, increased employment of women after 1650, and expansion in the suburbs. Nevertheless, the Company's survival demonstrated, Ward states, its flexibility and durability.

*Metropolitan Communities* is a valuable contribution to early modern London history, but it leaves some questions unanswered. Preachers presented a 'metropolitan view' of London that played down divisions, but what do we then make of Thomas Dekker and others who denounced the 'sinfully polluted suburbs'? If we blur the distinctions between City and suburbs, free and unfree, what remains? Were the guilds really influential? In his conclusions Ward admits they were only 'potential' communities, and certainly much of his evidence shows them losing unity rather than vice versa. Moreover, the issue remains how effective they were in enforcing the freedom. We have no idea what proportion of the workforce was affected by crossover between free and unfree, while parish register evidence shows declining numbers within the guild system and rising ones outside it. A final point concerns the downplaying of ideological divisions. Ward is persuasive in showing that the Grocers were not involved in religious radicalism over the long term, but their appointment of evangelicals in the early years of the Reformation seems more audacious than he allows and is left unexplained.

All told, historians should probably eschew generalizing about one, unitary London. The metropolis obviously contained many distinctive communities. Perhaps such diversity should be taken as a sign of London's nascent modernity and of the real freedom – as opposed to the official one – that its remarkable growth afforded many people.

**Lee Beier**

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**Antoine de Roux**, *Villes neuves. Urbanisme classique*. Paris: REMPART, 1997. 144pp. 1 map. Illustrations. Index. 140 FF.

The seventeenth century was a period of urban aggrandisement in France, in the numbers, size and monumental patrimony of towns. In particular, many new

towns and planned additions to existing towns were founded during this century, the 'classical' period of French urbanism. The new towns and extensions to existing sites were striking both for their origins as well as their designs: they did not arise organically, through commerce and population expansion, or through the activities of local elites. Rather, the motor was state power and the motives military and political, by the kings of France, dukes of Lorraine and, occasionally, ministers of state (e.g. Henrichement by Sully and Richelieu by the Cardinal).

*Villes neuves* is a manual or handbook designed to explain the features of the seventeenth-century new town to a wide audience, both specialist but more particularly the public. Rochefort, with its naval base and shipyards, Charleville, with its monumental symmetry and the magnificence of Versailles and its palace, all continue to attract admiring tourists, as they did when they were built. The book is one of a series of handbooks published by REMPART to further public knowledge and to promote conservation of the historic buildings patrimony of France.

Le Roux has produced a condensed but informative survey of the 'new town'. The book begins with an introductory chapter describing the meaning, characteristic 'types' and origins of new towns. The rest of the book is then divided into three sections, each devoted to a particular category of town: fortified or military towns (e.g. Arras, Longwy, Belfort), ports (e.g. Toulon, Rochefort, Dunkirk) and centres of power (e.g. Versailles, Nancy, Aix-en-Provence). Each section contains a chapter devoted to the origins, evolution and construction of the town type, a survey of their forms and functions and a detailed gazetteer of sites arranged according to their characteristics. The text is copiously illustrated with black and white plans and prints to illustrate the points made.

In all, the book provides a useful introduction to the subject of seventeenth-century new towns and to their origins, development and features. It is clearly laid out, with a detailed contents page, well-labelled illustrations and an index of places and people cited in the text. It could be used as both a short textbook and as a traveller's guide.

**Elizabeth Tingle**

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**Natacha Coquery**, *L'Hôtel Aristocratique. Le marché du luxe à Paris au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998. 444pp. 72 documents. Bibliography. 180 FF.

Whereas, apart from the recently refurbished Spencer House, the great metropolitan residences of the British aristocracy have completely disappeared from the London landscape, the centre of Paris still seems to be dotted at almost every turn with the recognizable shells of pre-revolutionary noble *hôtels*. Paradoxically, it might well have been the French Revolution which saved them from the fate of their cross-Channel counterparts. For, as Natacha Coquery shows in this original and pioneering study, pre-revolutionary aristocratic families had little sentimental attachment to these ostensible showcases of their prestige and importance. The early eighteenth century saw a mass-desertion of the city-centre Marais for new *faubourgs* further west and south, and even here proprietors did

not scruple to rent off their mansions and live as tenants elsewhere. In some cases they even demolished them in order to rebuild speculatively. What drove them to such lengths was changing perceptions of what was prestigious, and the remorselessly rising costs of conforming to them. Deprived of the substance of power by the Louisquatorzian monarchy, the Court nobility sought solace and continued recognition in ever-increasing ostentation. They found it not in the ancestral piles and forelock-tugging tenantry still prized by provincial elites, but in the determined pursuit of luxurious fashion in the capital. Taking five representative families and studying their expenditure from records confiscated during the Revolution, Coquery analyses their Paris houses as centres of consumption and motors of demand for all manner of luxury goods. Between them her five families gave business to almost 1,800 tradesmen and suppliers scattered throughout the city. A series of graphic appendices maps their distribution. The combined stimulus of all the as-yet unchronicled noble residents of Paris must have been enormous, and done much to make it the world capital of luxury that it has remained ever since. Here, at least, the explosive consumerism which some recent historians have seen as evidence that there was a rising bourgeoisie after all, appears to have been noble-led. On the other hand, Coquery argues that as time went by the boom was more and more supplier-driven. She depicts her grandees as increasingly seduced by sophisticated marketing of fashion, and tradesmen decreasingly willing to extend endless credit to their high-living clients in the traditional way. So inexorable were the costs, that eventually families were obliged to treat their very houses as objects of exchange as well as places (and objects) of consumption. Had there been no Revolution, perhaps the private palaces of Paris would have gone the way of those of London, bulldozed by their owners to sustain more fashionable tastes in luxury.

**William Doyle**

University of Bristol

**Charles Harvey, Edmund M. Green and Penelope J. Corfield, *The Westminster Historical DataBase: Voters, Social Structure and Electoral Behaviour*. Bristol: Bristol Academic Press, 1998. CD-ROM £39.50; book £27.50.**

The Westminster Historical Database is one of the most important landmarks in electoral history. It contains no fewer than 150,000 records relating to the electoral history of Westminster between 1749 and 1820. The Database, available in CD-ROM, comes with an accompanying volume of introduction and technical specification. Together, they constitute a monument to electoral scholarship which stands besides the pioneering work of Speck in the early 1970s and that of the late John Phillips in the early 1980s. They represent the product of many years of co-operative research, expensively funded by the ESRC. The Database consists of twelve two-way tables in standard relational format of Westminster Poll Books for the years 1749 to 1820 as well as nine further tables of Westminster Parish Rate Books. These data enable researchers and students to investigate the most important constituency in Britain at an intensity of depth and detail hitherto unimaginable, and during a period of exceptional importance. As the largest

constituency in the country, Westminster was unusually open and remarkably sophisticated in its electoral life. Its electorate constituted one quarter of the adult male workforce. It was contested no fewer than twelve times in these years by supporters and opponents of successive governments, of the Foxite Whigs and of fluctuating groups of reforming popular politicians. The publication of this Database enables the pre-reform constituency of Westminster to become nothing less than a testing ground for many ideas, interpretations and theories in not only electoral but also in political and social history more generally.

It is difficult to praise too highly the scrupulous and meticulous processes of recording and research which inform the Database, which are on a par with those attained by John Phillips and his associates. The Database is taken for the most part from original manuscript Poll Books, not merely from printed records. The extent of detailed research is phenomenal, the logic of the enquiry engagingly reasoned and rational and the procedures employed have throughout been rendered transparent. I have some reservations of my own about the occupational classification – a ten-fold variant of the Booth Armstrong tables – which is employed here, but it is unlikely that electoral historians will ever agree about occupation. It is, incidentally, worth noting that the discussion of occupational classification which appears here (pp. 71–117) is perhaps the best that exists, so far as electoral history is concerned.

The technical procedures involved in handling the Database are conveniently set out in chapter six of the handbook and should be within the grasp of most computer literate historians. They permit an almost endless combination of individual, geographical, occupational and political information. Occupations and groups of occupations can be linked to voting behaviour; individual electors can be pursued throughout their electoral lifetimes and even quite minor quivers of electoral change over time may be confronted and elucidated. The wealth and variety of the almost unlimited possibilities for investigation and discussion should enliven research workshops for many years to come.

Certainly, the availability of the Database can revolutionize the *teaching* of electoral history. Aided by a handy cluster of machines, the energetic academic can with some little investment of expertise alert the imagination of a class of (preferably) final-year undergraduates or, of course, postgraduates to the almost endless possibilities of research into electoral history. This massive Database can sustain an almost limitless range of essays, projects and dissertations on the electoral history of Westminster during this period.

The Westminster Database certainly sets the standard for future research in electoral history. Indeed, it may well serve to inspire a new generation of electoral research. After all, there are literally hundreds of Poll Books for large provincial centres. Why not databases on Nottingham, Leicester and Liverpool? Yet it occurs to this reviewer that in spite of the mountainous evidence contained in the Westminster Database it is still not clear precisely what causes electoral choice in any specific context. As other researchers have found, occupation is not an especially powerful determinant of voting behaviour. Residence may be a more powerful influence but it is scarcely an independent variable. Where it can be verified, it is likely that religious denomination played a powerful role in informing electoral decisions, but even the Westminster Database has little to say on this subject. It may just be the case that electoral history is fast becoming a branch of social history, a reservoir of vital data which may illuminate the history

of the family or of the constituency/community or, indeed, the history of particular occupations as much as it may bring any kind of certainty to the history of electoral behaviour.

**Frank O’Gorman**

University of Manchester

**Martin Hewitt**, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester, 1832–67*. Aldershot: Scolar, 1996. xii + 355pp. 7 tables. 4 figures. Bibliography. £45.00.

The study of class formation and class politics in early industrial England has produced a clutch of monographs on particular towns and cities. The industrial north and midlands provide the locale for a disproportionately large number of these, chiefly because of the presumed role of these areas in the process of class formation. As a rule, such studies are not intended primarily as contributions to urban history, but nonetheless urban historians have reason to be grateful for their existence. Even if the approach varies and the interpretation may cause controversy, it becomes possible to speak of (among others) Foster’s Oldham, Morris’ Leeds, Koditschek’s Bradford, Taylor’s Bolton and even Joyce’s Blackburn. To these we may now reasonably add Hewitt’s Manchester. (Other topics and other periods would produce different lists: Dauntton’s Cardiff, Waller’s Liverpool and so on.)

*The Emergence of Stability* extols the virtues of ‘class’ and ‘class-consciousness’ as central paradigms of social identity in nineteenth-century Britain. Although Hewitt is not untouched by the agenda of the ‘linguistic turn’ (note his interest in political rhetoric), his book is best regarded as part of the post-Marxist defence of class as an historical concept. He constructs a model of class-consciousness designed to be less ‘narrow and prescriptive’ than the version attacked by Patrick Joyce and others. Instead, his inspiration is the experience-consciousness dialectic as conceived by Edward Thompson. A virtue of Hewitt’s study is the linking of the chartist and post-chartist eras (rare in the historiography). In his narrative of these, class-consciousness survives intact into the post-chartist era of liberal consensus. It is its ‘strategic consciousness’ alone which changes. That is, the transition from the platform politics of agitation and confrontation to moral suasion and the liberal agenda was a question of changed tactics rather than of altered norms or values. However, this involved a gradual loss of confidence and the frustrating experience of collaboration and compromise.

In a review solely concerned with the substance of Hewitt’s argument rather than the value of his book for the urban historian it would be possible to make much of the self-imposed limitations of his approach. The main criticism would be that, although the author explicitly disavows any notion of a monolithic working-class consciousness (p. 194), he writes repeatedly as if there was one. It is not the focus on class that is the problem but the exclusivity of the approach, in which the *only* consideration of ‘social identity’ is as ‘class identity’. He gives particularly short shrift to the alternative possibilities (gender, ethnicity and so on); see his comments on page 19 for example. One would have hoped for more sensitivity to a plurality of meanings.

However, the emphasis upon the local basis of class formation means that the

urban context is more than a locale of convenience. The footnotes bristle with local references especially to the periodical and pamphlet literature. The argument is rooted in what is called the 'intellectual morphology' of the mid-Victorian city. This means there are useful chapters on such topics as religion, rational recreation and popular culture. To take one example, the politics of urban space is explored in the context of the 'moral imperialism' which led to the laying out of public parks at the same time that erstwhile open areas (such as Peter's Field, the site of the Peterloo Massacre) disappeared in the encroaching urban sprawl. The disappearance of such open spaces within the borough boundaries greatly assisted the policing of the platform politics of working-class radicalism. During the 1830s and 1840s as respectable politics moved to indoor venues, the authorities increasingly regulated and restricted remaining open-air gatherings. Thus the 'changing morphology of public space' made it difficult to sustain independent politics and in part explains the greater dependence upon middle-class reform movements.

An early chapter includes an up-to-date assessment of the historiography of Manchester's economy and society. In a lengthy and well-informed discussion due attention is paid to the complexities of the city's economic development to substantiate points about its diverse employment structure. Manchester was never a mill town nor was cotton ever the overwhelming employer. This argument is well presented, although the discussion of census evidence for Manchester alone (excluding the much less complex labour structure of Salford) could strengthen the picture even further. Cotton employed only 18 per cent of total occupied persons in Manchester in 1841. But the real point about Manchester and cotton was the town's place at the centre of the international trade in cotton goods. As Lloyd-Jones and Lewis have begun to show, it was the proportion of capital invested in warehouses rather than the labour employed in the factories that characterized the local economy. This may well have been a predominant feature from the late eighteenth century, not one acquired during the 1820s as inferred by Hewitt. However, these are minor caveats about a well-researched and lucid monograph.

**Alan Kidd**

Manchester Metropolitan University

**Roger V. Gould**, *Insurgent Identities. Class, Community and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995. viii + 253pp. £12.75 pbk.

This is a comparative study of revolutionary Paris in June 1848 and in March–May 1871. It is based on Gould's hypothesis that in 1848 workers were fighting within their trades for the right to work, while in 1871 they were asserting the rights of the community against the dictates of the centralized state. June 1848 was set off by an economic crisis, March 1871 was the result of war and specifically provoked by the government's attempt to claim cannon, built by municipal subscription in Paris to defend them against the Prussians. The June Days were fought primarily in the eastern works' quarters, Bloody Week 1871 was city-wide, involved over 200,000 on both sides; 20,000 of the Communards were killed by government troops. Gould explains the contrasts between the two



insurrections by the hostility to the urban 'renewal' of Paris by Haussmann in the intervening period.

Having established his initial thesis, both on the empirical ground tilled in recent years by Traugott, Gossez, Rougerie, Tombs and others, Gould embarks on a more abstract, mathematical analysis of urban insurrection. Subsequent chapters look at the relationship between unrest and urban change in a chronological framework, summarizing the findings of recent scholarship in a manner which undergraduates will find helpful. The section on the Commune presents the author's archival findings. A 10 per cent sample of the 13,000 people arrested and tried for participation in the Commune is analysed – and his reader's mathematical expertise was found wanting.

Suburban life did not eliminate the sense of class identity among work-mates, but new links between suburb and centre grew up. In 1868 public meetings for electioneering and other purposes were permitted for the first time in nineteen years and 776 meetings, aside from election ones, were held before April 1870, the liveliest being in the suburbs of Belleville and Montmartre. Class and the centralized state figured high on their agendas, and hostility to the state was accentuated by the deprivations of wartime Paris, all of which were blamed on the government. Demands for municipal liberties were the most compelling theme of Commune pamphlets.

In 1848 friend and foe were convinced that the June Days witnessed the first class war. More recent research has underlined that the insurgents were skilled artisans, as had been the fighters in 1830 and the 1790s, but so were their opponents in the Mobile Guard. The objectives of the June rebels were specific: they were afraid that the long-feared dissolution of the national workshops would leave them destitute. In other words June can also be described as neighbourhoods at odds with central government.

The rebels of 1871 were primarily artisans, as were those of 1848, but Gould's research into those charged reveals that it was no longer the tailor, cabinet-maker and metal-worker who predominated, but the machine-builder, stonemason, painter and roofer, incidentally showing base ingratitude for the job opportunities which haussmannization had offered! The map of 1871 showing that far more people were arrested in the suburbs than in the centre (p. 176) is impressive, but where had they fought, near to their jobs in the centre, or near home?

Few would contest the importance of locality in Parisian insurrection, from the late eighteenth century, if not earlier. 'Barricade' revolution was a unique feature of nineteenth-century Paris (1830, 1848, 1870–71); cramped artisan quarters jostling the heart of government and the newspaper industry, making insurrection easy and its repression difficult. Revolution was the product of the geography of urban life. Gould stresses that in 1871, although the Commune members were mostly working men, they tried to speak for a whole city at odds with the government. He observes the city-wide ramification of the National Guard, but the attachment of battalions to their own district weakened their will to fight away matches.

Mathematics aside, Gould's innovative research is a promising start to an investigation of the first step in the current compelling problem of the suburbs.

**Pam Pilbeam**

Royal Holloway, University of London

**Alistair Black**, *A New History of the English Public Library. Social and Intellectual Contexts, 1850–1914*. London: Leicester University Press, 1996. viii + 353pp. £50.00

Relationships between libraries and historians have been unequal. While libraries have served historians well – as the now obligatory acknowledgements in publications to their services testify – historians have not reciprocated. This inequity concerns Alistair Black, and he sets out to restore the balance by providing the public library with a history.

This ‘uncontroversial cultural institution’, he argues, needs to be rescued from its taken-for-grantedness. For too long the public library has been seen as socially and politically neutral, in part because the detailed chronologies which constituted its history rarely thought to raise such issues. Black puts together a rescue package with the tools and skills of a cultural historian, powered by interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives.

The scope is therefore broad and wide-ranging. We encounter the influence of utilitarians in the campaign for free libraries, of economic imperatives to help remedy malaise after 1870, of notions of social control, particularly when the open access revolution occurred, of late nineteenth-century idealists’ efforts to promote cultural diffusion, and of librarians as definers of knowledge. The evidence submitted to the 1849 Select Committee on Public Libraries is excavated, the narrative and symbolic forms of library architecture (re)viewed, and the place of libraries in the modernist project assessed. All this is informed by a sense of the changing historical context which framed the expansion of public library provision.

It is an ambitious study containing a wealth of detail which no future historian of public libraries will be able to ignore. The ambition, however, lacks control and focus. In the commendable aim to provide a broad interpretative framework, Black mobilizes a disparate variety of theoretical concerns, the inherent incompatibilities of which are glossed over. The result is that an argument built around the tension between utilitarian and idealist visions is constantly compromised by diversions into aspects of cultural theory, some of which are rather dated. Thus we are invited to consider familiar debates on *inter alia* the nature of culture, social control and hegemony, and Foucauldian theories of knowledge in a way that is redolent of the mandatory intellectual exercises found in postgraduate dissertations.

The problem is compounded when evidence is used carelessly to support a particular argument. One example must suffice. Appendix 2 of the book contains details of occupations of new borrowers at the Leyton public library during 1902–3. It purports to emphasize the public library’s ‘democratic purpose’, demonstrating that the majority of the users were working class. In fact, of the 2,616 occupations listed, only 459 were unambiguously working class, the remainder comprising for the most part clerks, scholars and schoolmasters. This is not merely an infelicitous calculus, but an error in interpretation that tends to challenge some of the central arguments on the cultural and political dimensions of library provision, and its success in achieving working-class patronage.

Thrown into sharp relief here is the whole question of the hegemonic role of the library. The library may well be seen as a site of struggle between middle-class attempts unsuccessfully to reform popular culture and working-class

resistance to such rationalizing endeavour. The reluctant recognition towards the end of the nineteenth century of the need to make available fiction and other popular forms of literature is readily accommodated in this thesis. But the ultimate failure of middle-class hegemony cannot be explained by isolated examples of disorderly conduct in the libraries. It failed because the majority of the working class was never actively engaged by the ideals and practices of the public library, using it for counter-cultural activities, establishing alternative institutions of learning, or simply abstaining from the provision of elite culture – as the experience of Leyton tends to suggest. None of these concerns is pursued with rigour, and as a result our understanding of this site of contestation remains impoverished.

Overall, it is almost as if the object of enquiry has determined the approach to its own exegesis. To enter this book is to enter a public library and survey shelves replete with diverse forms of knowledge – some diverting, some dated – when in order to appreciate it as a cultural institution we need to step back and consider how it operates to define knowledge in particular ways with both intended and unintended consequences. By offering an alternative to descriptive accounts of the fortunes of public libraries, Black's study has gone some way to shift the balance between libraries and historians, and we can all learn from it. The public library, however, still awaits its history.

**John Marriott**

University of East London

**Keith Walden**, *Becoming Modern in Toronto. The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 430pp. £18.00

**Janet Wright**, *Crown Assets. The Architecture of the Department of Public Works, 1867–1967*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 325pp. 210 plates. Bibliography. £26.00.

Keith Walden's *Becoming Modern in Toronto. The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* begins with an accident. While attempting to cross a street in downtown Toronto in 1892 a sixty-year-old woman encounters a tram. Disoriented by the warning bell, she runs towards the oncoming vehicle and is run over. It was the driver's first day on the job and the electric trolley's third week in service. The incident provides Walden with a *leitmotif* for his discussion of 'meaning in a dynamic society' during the late Victorian period.

Toronto's Industrial Exhibition, like the Great Exhibition at London's Crystal Palace before it, was not merely a place where manufacturers displayed their goods, where farmers showed off their prize heifers, and where country and city folk alike were entertained. The Industrial, as Walden convincingly argues, provided the city's elite with a means of influencing the public's taste and shaping its attitude towards gender and class, identity, social space and public policy.

Organizing his discussion around such themes as order, confidence, display, entertainment and modernity gives Walden an opportunity to flex his theoretical muscles. The work of Catherine Belsey and Lynn Hunt provides the aperture on which he builds his thesis. Sometimes Walden's foray into the 'new cultural

history' works well. The chapter devoted to space shows how the example of the park, the city and the leisure garden helped to determine the manner in which the grounds of Toronto's Industrial Exhibition were laid out. The chapter on order reveals the extent to which the Industrial Exhibition – like museums, libraries and art exhibitions – knitted, cast, and arranged people on the one hand while unstitching, disturbing and upsetting them on the other.

It is in the handling of the positive and negative – or intended and unintended – features of the Industrial that Walden is at his best. Because its goals were inherently contradictory, the Industrial Exhibition was contested space. Recognition of this leads Walden to the conclusion that 'as much as hegemonic elements wanted to use it to impress the desirability of system and harmony, they also wanted to break down established habits, values, and expectations'. In this sense the Industrial was flawed as a vehicle of order from the outset.

*Becoming Modern in Toronto* is less successful when Walden deals with Mikhail Bakhtin's and Natalie Davis's ideas about the carnival in medieval and early modern Europe. Likewise, his discussion of late Victorian culture often overwhelms his central theme – the Industrial Exhibition. This reader came away from the book feeling that what Walden really wanted to do – and goes more than half way to doing – was to write a general history of order, confidence, identity, space and modernity in late Victorian society in Toronto.

The subject of Janet Wright's *Crown Assets. The Age of the Department of Public Works, 1867–1967*, could not be more different. The architects who worked for the government during the first hundred years of Canada's history were not interested in incorporating modernist trends into Canada's public buildings. For the most part they preferred to cling to long-established and in many cases outmoded styles of architecture in their effort to create imposing landmarks. Going for stability and prestige – and keeping to a tight budget – generally led to standardization, repetition and monotony. Not surprisingly, modernism arrived late in the design of Canada's post offices, custom houses, drill halls, experimental farms, office buildings and penitentiaries. The Art Deco style, which emerged after the Paris Exhibition in 1924, was not evident in Canada's public buildings until the mid-1930s. And this only happened when private architects were hired to help the Chief Architect's Branch design the country's buildings. Yet the best examples of their work – Moshe Safdie's National Gallery of Canada and Douglas Cardinal's Museum of Civilization – were built in the 1980s and therefore fall outside this study, which confines itself to Canada's first hundred years.

*Crown Assets* is not only concerned with public architects who are often out of touch with new ideas, although Janet Wright has taken an unimaginative approach to her subject. We learn little of the architects themselves. We are told nothing about the government buildings which fell outside their jurisdiction. One is left wondering who designed the ubiquitous lighthouses, and the clapboard buildings beside them, which line the east and west coastlines, not to mention the shores of the Canadian Arctic. Wright does not mention the styrofoam snowhouses which were designed for Baffin Islanders in the 1950s and the tragic outcome of their use. (They easily caught fire, condemning their occupants to an excruciating death.) There is, moreover, little consideration of the public projects which did not come to fruition. In 1918 Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere hired the British architect E.A. Rickards to design a museum in

which to house the works of art that had been produced during the First World War. The press barons offered to pay for the construction of the building and even chose the site – the land now occupied by the Supreme Court of Canada. But the prime minister of the day, William Lyon Mackenzie King, turned a deaf ear. Was this because he felt that there were other demands more imperative than the building of an art gallery? Or was it because the Dominion architects balked at the prospect of having a British architect design Canada's war memorial building?

These are very different books by very different authors. Where Walden tends to give too much context, Wright, by contrast, tends to give too little. Where Walden is consumed by theory, Wright often seems unaware of it. *Becoming Modern in Toronto* and *Crown Assets* fill two gaps in the history of Canada's cultural and urban history, and in doing so offer the student two very different approaches to the writing of cultural history.

**Maria Tippett**

Churchill College, Cambridge

**Gerhard Melinz and Susan Zimmermann (eds)**, *Wien. Prag. Budapest. Blütezeit der Habsburgermetropolen: Urganisierung, Kommunalpolitik, gesellschaftliche Konflikte (1867–1918)*. Vienna: Promedia, 1996. 319pp. Tables. Bibliography. No price stated.

**Gerhard Melinz and Gerhard Unger**, *Wohlfahrt und Krise. Wiener Kommunalpolitik 1929–1938*. Vienna: Franz Deuticke, 1996. 144pp. Tables. Bibliography. No price stated.

More has been written in English about the history of Vienna than most other modern European cities, but it is a history which is dominated by two episodes: the cultural and intellectual flowering of the *fin de siècle* and the experiment in municipal socialism that was the Red Vienna of the 1920s. Each of these books seeks to look beyond the received perspective of its period. Much writing on Vienna at the turn of the century has been dominated by accounts of the city's high culture and elite intellectual circles (an approach which has more recently been extended to the other Habsburg capitals, Prague and Budapest), and the effect has been a celebration of high culture, albeit an ambivalent one given the atmosphere of decadence and doom that has been identified as the cultural *leitmotif* of the period. Austrians (and others) have capitalized on this approach with a number of publications and exhibitions over the last twenty years. The first of these volumes, however, picks up on a rather more critical approach to the Austrian *belle époque*, and brings together a number of excellent essays on urbanization and the development of cities in the Habsburg empire, on urban society and local government, and on social conflicts and identities in the 'communal spaces' of Vienna, Prague and Budapest. Although there is rarely an attempt at comparison within the individual essays, the overall effect of the volume is a cumulatively comparative perspective which builds both on the observations contained in the authors' own introduction and, implicitly, on the existing literature. Thus the essays on ethnic conflict and national identity in Prag, Pest and Pressburg (now Bratislava) complements an extensive literature on ethnicity in Vienna. Indeed, Monika Glettler, who compares ethnicity as a

field of social conflict in Pressburg and Budapest has herself written on the Czechs in Vienna. The volume is a product of a collaboration between Austrian historians and their colleagues in Czechoslovakia and Hungary which has intensified since the collapse of the eastern bloc, but which pre-dates 1989. It is a collaboration which is not without its own nostalgic echoes: intellectuals in Prague and Budapest began to redefine themselves as central (not eastern) Europeans in the 1980s (preferring the term *Zentraleuropa* to the tainted *Mittel-europa*) and part of this reorientation has been the rediscovery and reinstatement of the natural urban networks of the Habsburg empire. It is one of the most useful and accessible comparative collections of essays on the urban history of central Europe to be published in recent years and deserves a wide readership.

Important themes in the editors' own contribution to the volume – a comparative analysis of local government policy in Vienna, Budapest and Prague, and its function as a determinant of urban living conditions – are built upon in the second of these volumes. Gerhard Melinz and Gerhard Ungar have undertaken a critical examination of welfare policy in Red Vienna during its most testing time, the economic and political crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Vienna occupied a peculiar position within Austria. The city was an independent federal state with far-reaching fiscal autonomy. Its Social Democratic council, whose enormous electoral majorities barely faltered even during the Depression, was perceived as an affront by the succession of right-wing coalitions which ruled Austria from 1920 until the fascist coup of 1933–34. Vienna incorporated in tangible geographical form all that the political right sought to eliminate. The government's financial 'march on Vienna' (the indirect analogy is Mussolini's march on Rome) did much to undermine the council's policies even before the authorities resorted to shelling the council estates with heavy artillery. The authors are not uncritical of Red Vienna and its ambitions. A sceptical attitude is adopted towards the council's welfare ideology under Julius Tandler, and in particular its emphasis on youth, family and health, which, they suggest, served to integrate the working class into an ordered, productive and respectable society. The scepticism is understandable, if a little harsh in the light of what the council achieved in practical terms. This volume, too, is an important contribution to our knowledge of the history of Vienna, and brings to bear a critical perspective on the ambiguities of municipal welfare policy.

**Tim Kirk**

University of Northumbria

**Tom Woodhouse**, *Nourishing the Liberty Tree. Labour Politics in Leeds, 1880–1914*. Keele: Keele University Press, 1996. 144pp. 12 tables. Bibliography. No price stated.

**Sam Davies**, *Liverpool Labour. Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900–1939*. Keele: Keele University Press, 1996. 416pp. 39 tables. 30 figures. 16 appendices. No price stated.

The Labour Party's expansion in a variety of urban contexts – from the coalfields to university towns, and including the majority of major northern cities – has been the subject of countless articles, books and postgraduate theses. Paradoxically, given that Labour was hardly a major force until after the First World War,

it is the period before 1914 which has received the most attention. In recent years historians and urban geographers have attempted to make sense of the complex electoral mosaic which detailed study of the Edwardian period has revealed. As a result, the basis of much research on Labour politics has shifted away from the concerns of the 1970s, when the works reviewed here were initiated. What, then, do these works add to our understanding of Labour's early history, to broader explanations of Labour politics, and to our understanding of the relationship between the urban environment and party politics?

Woodhouse's slim volume deals with Labour and socialist politics mainly up to 1906. He pays scarcely any attention to Savage's recent and much-discussed suggestions about the relationship between social structures and the expansion and style of Labour politics. Nor is there much real engagement with those recent works which suggest that Labour's expansion cannot be explained by simple reference to class sentiment and the expansion of trade unionism. If as a result his study appears to be stuck in a conceptual time-warp, it is still a well-researched book, based on a clear knowledge of the main incidents and personalities, which adds to our understanding of a city in which Labour performed comparatively well before 1914. Indeed, it is a strangely slim work, which might easily have been expanded. By contrast, Sam Davies deals with a city where Labour was much less successful than it was in Leeds, and develops a far more detailed and conceptually sophisticated argument. Davies examines the more recent interpretations which Woodhouse largely passes over, directly addressing the importance of Liverpool's peculiar pattern of class and gender relations on the evolution of Labour politics in the city. The city's sectarian problems are given some attention and Liverpool's allegedly 'exceptional' political history is discussed through comparisons with other areas. In place of an emphasis on either class or religion as the major influences on Labour's popular support, he presents an analysis in which a variety of influences – including the political strategy of Labour in Liverpool – is given due weight.

There are three further features of the book which are worthy of particular note. First, and continuing his earlier work, Davies makes some interesting comments on women's roles in Liverpool politics, a field where there is considerable and continuing research in progress. Second, the book covers far more than the pre-war period. There are few studies which examine Labour's development at local level between the wars and even fewer which cover the whole period from 1900 to 1939. Davies' 'long view' is thus particularly helpful, although more attention might have been paid to the dynamics of social change across this diverse period, and especially to the impact of the great war and the social consequences of the development of corporation housing estates. A third and unique feature of this book is the exceptionally careful examination of the electoral structures which confronted the Labour party and impeded its expansion. The post-war municipal franchise (which continued to exclude male and female tenants of furnished rooms) is examined more fully than in other studies. However, it is Davies' detailed study of the impact of ward boundaries on Labour's electoral prospects which really breaks new ground. Several chapters examine this issue, whilst exceptionally lengthy statistical appendices supply details of the social and religious composition and the electoral history of every ward in the borough. As a result electoral detail seems to dominate Davies' broader analysis, and the book may seem a little unbalanced, disjointed and

perhaps over-detailed to those who are not primarily concerned with either Liverpool's history or with the electoral politics of the Labour party. However, it would be unfortunate if the book's readership was limited in this way. Davies' analysis, as much as his original and impressive empirical research, merits the attention of a wider audience. As a case study of an important city, and as a guide to others examining local politics, there is much of merit in this significant addition to the literature.

**Duncan Tanner**

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**Margaret Crawford**, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns*. London and New York: Verso, 1995. viii + 248pp. 67 Illus. \$60.00.

Margaret Crawford, a faculty member in the History and Theory of Architecture Program at the South California Institute of Architecture, has made a fine addition to the growing body of scholarship on American company towns. Her objective is not to provide a comprehensive history of American company towns, but to examine the emergence of a new type of professionally-designed company town around 1910, and reasons for its decline during the 1930s.

Crawford argues that during the seventeenth through to the mid-nineteenth centuries, companies involved in the textile, heavy metals, forest products and mining industries often provided housing in order to recruit and retain labour. Located throughout the United States, company towns differed according to vernacular traditions and the economic expediencies of each industry. At the same time, however, they shared several characteristics. Company towns often consisted of one or more unpaved streets lined with rows of cheap, identical frame dwellings. Educational, recreational and commercial facilities, and municipal services were poor or non-existent. Workers were often segregated by race, ethnicity and skill.

The 1894 strike at the famous company town of Pullman, Illinois, and other examples of class unrest, prompted industrialists to institute new ways of reducing labour autonomy and increasing production. They hired professional architects, landscape architects and city planners to design comprehensively planned communities modelled on the British garden cities. These 'new' company towns as Crawford calls them, provided employers with an opportunity to reinforce the lessons of workplace programmes in scientific management and welfare capitalism in the home.

In Part II, Crawford examines the contributions of four design professionals to new company towns. Architect Grosvenor Atterbury was hired in 1915 by the Norton Grinding Company to design Indian Hill, a garden village located in Worcester, Massachusetts. Atterbury combined vernacular New England architecture styles and European city planning elements to create a sense of community order consistent with the company's goal of Americanizing its ethnically divergent workforce and promoting conservative working habits and values.

Architect Bertram Goodhue was employed by the Phelps-Dodge Corporation to design the mining town of Tyrone, New Mexico, in 1915. Crawford argues that the company's decision to build the town was in part influenced by its lack of



success in preventing labour organizing at its Bisbee, Arizona, mine and its determination to dominate employee relations at Tyrone. By contrast to Atterbury's Colonial Revival architecture which suggested the existence of social and economic equality, Goodhue's Spanish colonial-inspired architecture contributed to what Crawford describes as an 'almost feudal relationship between Mexican miners and their American bosses' (p. 139).

Educated as a landscape architect, John Nolen was one of America's foremost city planners from approximately 1910 through to the 1930s. According to Crawford, Nolen excelled in promoting the new company town. He 'standardized' the planning process and helped make it possible for smaller manufacturing firms and business organizations to sponsor housing. During the First World War, Nolen was among a group of reform-inspired planners who helped to ensure that the federal government built housing for shipyard, munitions and other war workers which set new standards in design and construction.

After working for Nolen on the city plan for Kingsport, Tennessee, landscape architect Earl Draper opened his own office in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1917. Draper specialized in the design and construction of mill villages for cotton textile manufacturers in the southern Piedmont. Similar to the other three planners, Draper identified with the social and economic class interests of his sponsors. At the same time, however, he had a strong sense of regional identity which prompted him to favour the preservation of a site's natural topography and vegetation and vernacular traditions. Crawford argues that Draper's site plans provided textile workers with a validation of their rural and mountain culture and ability to survive in the new economic order.

As active participants in housing reform and planning organizations, Atterbury, Goodhue, Nolen, Draper and other new company town designers were both committed to and successful in raising the physical standards of working-class life. In the final analysis, however, they served the interests of industrialists too unquestioningly, helping them use architecture and planning to discourage labour organization and reduce worker autonomy.

Crawford observes that the demise of the company town took place during the Great Depression as advances in labour legislation were made. The rise of the mass-consumer culture, the decentralization of industrial production, and other factors which also contributed to the demise of the company town during the 1930s, deserves fuller consideration. Despite the gradual disappearance of company towns, they influenced the work of Draper and planners hired by the Tennessee Valley Authority and other planning agencies instituted under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

Crawford's analysis will be of special interest to scholars of urban planning, labour and the Progressive Era. She argued convincingly that during the early twentieth century, industrial manufacturers turned to professional architects and planners to help them bring order to the seemingly chaotic industrial landscape. Company towns were carefully planned by design professionals to reinforce the economic and social values of their sponsors. The job now falls to other historians to examine an issue Crawford raises in the course of her analysis, but chose not to examine further – the methodologically complicated problem of determining how workers responded to new company towns.

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**John Delafons**, *Politics and Preservation: A Policy History of the Built Environment*. London: E. & F.N. Spon, 1997. xvi + 215pp. 33 illustrations. Bibliography. £24.99 pbk.

Histories of conservation in the built environment have a long and honourable tradition, almost as long as the history of conservation itself. Many, however, are of only passing interest: revealing little that is truly new, or written in a pedestrian and uninspiring style. There are two such histories which stand out, those by Briggs (*Goths and Vandals: A Study of the Destruction, Neglect and Preservation of Historical Buildings in England*, 1952) and Kennet (*Preservation*, 1972). Briggs was written early in the post-war period and contains a mixture of good solid history with the post-war mood of euphoria and despondency. It is a good read, and sometimes surfaces in second-hand bookshops at about £20. Kennet was himself a minister in the government which operationalized the 1967 Civic Amenities Act, and so his own slim history is very authoritative and shows the insider's insights. It is even more scarce than Briggs.

An updated history of this ever-increasing environmental concern is thus timely, and this is what John Delafons has produced. Delafons is a former Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Environment, and before that was Principal Private Secretary to five Cabinet Ministers, including Richard Crossman. He was also Secretary to the Advisory Committee on Listing. He is thus in a very good position to give another insider's account, and uses a wide range of sources, from official policy statements to Crossman's diaries and advice from Lord and Lady Kennet. Although the details of legislation and guidance are very familiar, Delafons does impart new information about personal, political, civil service and governmental motivations behind the statutes and circulars. The volume is entertaining in style and content, with a range of relevant and well-produced illustrations.

The book is divided into four main sections. Part 1 deals with the early history, 1882–1940: a time of developing interest, early but limited legislation, and the first stirrings of public pressure in the Georgian Group's formation. Part 2, 1940–75, deals with the development of the legislative system of listed buildings and conservation areas with which we are familiar. These are the parts likely to be of most direct interest to the urban historian. Part 3 is a short section devoted to churches, the perennial difficulty of seeking to preserve ecclesiastical buildings still in use, and the range of suggested approaches. Part 4 brings the history up to 1995, and includes a critical commentary on advice and doctrine, and Delafons' own approach to the interrelationship between the concepts of conservation and sustainability.

Subsequent to the book's publication, Cocks has given a useful additional comment on 'the mysterious origin of the law for conservation' (Cocks, *J. of Planning and Environment Law*, 1998, 203–9). Cocks reviews in detail the personalities and debates behind the Housing Etc. Act (1923) which contains a surprising section dealing with the preservation of existing special architectural, historic or artistic character of a locality. Cocks traces this short section to the planning problems of Oxford in the early 1920s, and its need to secure an amendment of planning law. Influential Oxford-trained lawyers drafted the necessary measure, and Oxford-trained politicians secured its insertion into Chamberlain's Housing Act with little comment. This is a revealing commentary on what Delafons has

called, in effect, the introduction of the conservation area concept as early as 1923 (p. 38).

The faults of the book are few. One or two minor errors have escaped the proof-reader and spell-checker, but these do not impair the message nor impact of the volume. Perhaps some of the chapters seem rather short, and the amount of coverage given to churches – although they have long had a special place in conservation history and planning systems – might be generous. As an academic reader I looked for rather wider referencing, and perhaps a greater degree of commentary, particularly in the last section, with its review of English Heritage, the ‘heritage industry’ and Delafons’ development of a concept of ‘sustainable conservation’. But this may be unfair: however informative to the expert, a style stuffed with references or footnotes is less easy to read, the message more likely to become over-complex and lost, and the non-academic markets – practitioners and the ever-increasing interested public – more likely to be discouraged.

In summary, this book is timely, and provides more of the human dimension behind formal action (or, perhaps, inaction). This is a major contribution to our understanding of the history of this area of thought and legislation, and of its impact with history and the production of urban form, and contemporary development and the changing of urban form. Delafons is a worthy successor to both Briggs and Kennet, and is more directly useful for the urban historian than either in his exploration of motive and detail. It is fluent, entertaining and informative: high praise for an academic text!

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**Stuart Hylton**, *Reading: The 1950s*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997. vii + 120pp. Illustrations. £9.99.

This short book by Hylton represents the fourth in a series of popular accounts of Reading. Like the author’s previous publications it is based on information and pictures from the pages of the *Berkshire Chronicle* newspaper. As with other such popular histories that now fill the expanding domain of local history, this book exhibits the same rather eclectic approach. As the title suggests, the main theme is life during the 1950s and the author approaches this in a strict chronological fashion, with each chapter encompassing a year.

The book covers a wide variety of themes ranging from public life and urban planning through to all aspects of popular culture. Each chapter contains this mixture of ideas, but at the same time does attempt to focus on a particular theme around which other points are developed. For example, chapter one covers 1950 and is entitled ‘Out of austerity’. This discusses the nature of Reading’s entertainment industry, including the advent of post-war television which as the local newspaper proclaims ‘has brought a new meaning into home life’. But as local stores were selling TV sets at the price of £75, it seems obvious that few were able to experience this form of family entertainment. Part of this chapter also covers the relationship between the town’s Labour MP, Ian Mikardo, and its Conservative council. This hostility between the local press and the MP was a recurring one in the 1950s as this book demonstrates. In 1951 the Festival of Britain (chapter two), sees Reading, or at least its local press, taking a

somewhat critical line against the whole project, claiming it was 'Socialist profligacy' (p. 12). The author also draws attention at this time to increasing development of self-service shopping as many of the town's stores adopted these new forms of selling. Indeed the whole nature of consumption is well represented in the pages of the local newspaper, especially through the special women's section.

The author also highlights Reading's attempts and reactions to come to terms with new forms of youth culture. Thus, the chapter for 1954 entitled, 'Teddy boys and tragedy' reveals the growing social unrest associated with Saturday night entertainment in the town's Olympia ballroom. This was in the same year that Reading saw the opening of its first 'expresso coffee' bar (p. 57).

The 1950s was not only a period of changing consumption patterns and social behaviour but it was also a time of increased urban change. Reading experienced changes in its structure through the increasing growth of new local authority housing estates. The scale and reaction to such developments are well recorded by Hylton. In the Coronation year of 1953, 'council house building hit new heights' in the town with two houses being completed each day (p. 41). We also see that these new estates even then had social problems. Thus, the 'new Southcote estate suffered from an epidemic vandalism. Houses awaiting letting had their rooms flooded' (p. 41).

It is difficult to understand the aims of this book, other than to present a snapshot of 1950s Reading. The chronological approach is somewhat limiting and it would have been more interesting if a thematic one had been followed. Chapters on popular culture, consumption, social behaviour, housing, planning and public life would have cut through much of the jumble of stories in each chapter. One thing the book does achieve is to demonstrate, if such a demonstration were needed, what a valuable source local newspapers are.

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