

debate over whether a recognizable sub-class of such incorrigible families existed – the Family Service Units, the Eugenics Society and some medical officers of health. Once again, the most enduring feature of the ‘underclass’ concept was the strongly held conviction by its advocates that the dysfunctional behavioural traits of its members could be vividly described; yet research studies once again produced results that were inconclusive. The American poverty debates of the 1960s were in part underpinned by the ‘culture of poverty’ idea – no less ambiguous than its predecessors, and equally difficult to verify empirically: value judgments of self-damaging behaviours were often highly class-selective. Welshman shows how the theories of Oscar Lewis engendered considerable debate, partly because they were open to different interpretations, and were woven into the War on Poverty’s community action recipes (which also had an influence on the British Community Development Projects). In perhaps the strongest section of the book, Welshman traces the controversy over Sir Keith Joseph’s ‘cycle of deprivation’ concept of the early 1970s – yet again, an unwitting revival of many of the familiar themes. Finally, there is a discussion of the American ‘underclass’ debate of the 1980s, which justified the conservative-led ‘welfare backlash’ and the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. It was to an extent imported into Britain, but received a generally hostile reception.

This book provides a comprehensive and detailed account of a tantalizing, controversial and long-enduring perspective on poverty. As such, it will be a welcome addition to the existing literature, filling a large gap. The scope of the book is commendably ambitious, and this seems to have necessitated a very ‘history of ideas’ approach, in which competing theories tend to be outlined in a rather descriptive way, without an explanation of background socio-economic changes. The American ‘underclass’ debate, for example, is really a debate over rival interpretations of very complex long-run trends in poverty, employment, ethnic achievement, family formation and so on, going back to the 1930s, and these trends need to be explained if the competing interpretations are to be properly understood. Again, a more critical analysis of some of the participants’ ideas would have been useful: Charles Murray’s *Losing Ground* (1984) may have been ‘brilliantly argued’, but it was subjected to a devastating critique by American social scientists. However, doing full justice to this important topic would probably have required a book of unreasonable length. As it is, its long history has been well presented and documented.

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**Daniel Eli Burnstein**, *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 232pp. £24.95.

doi:10.1017/S0963926807314533

In *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*, Daniel Burnstein addresses the significance of Progressive Era reform politics though the lens of debates over street cleaning. He argues that Progressives consistently associated physical disorder, in the form of dirt and litter, with social disorder and immorality. For Progressives, dirty cities represented immorality and disorder among their citizenry. The classic Progressive concern with environmental

causes of social problems (rather than racial or character issues) made the converse proposition true as well. Progressives believed that dirt and disorder created chaos and made it difficult for citizens to lift themselves out of poverty. Dirty cities thus exemplified and caused the social problems that Progressives battled. Thus, Burnstein's four chapters each deal with distinct topics, but also structure his discussion of some of the thematic issues that have comprised historians' debates over Progressivism. In addition to covering the narrative of the garbage strike of 1907, chapter one addresses the issue of reformers' understandings of the cause of disease. He argues that although germ theory was well accepted, many educated people during the garbage strike of 1907 still drew on the theory of miasma to argue for a speedy conclusion to the strike. Chapter two, which focuses on George Waring's reform of the Department of Street Cleaning in the 1890s, takes up the dynamic relationship between Progressives and ward politicians. Burnstein shows that Tammany Hall changed its own ideas about city governance to make it competitive against reform candidates and their platforms. Chapter three centres on pushcart policy and the often fraught relationship between the immigrant poor and the reformers who wanted to help them. Pushcart policy proved to be a difficult issue for Progressives because it pitted two public goods against each other. While pushcarts provided cheap goods to the poor, they also generated large amounts of trash and blocked already congested city streets. Chapter four, which focuses on the creation of Juvenile Street Cleaning Leagues, describes Progressives' commitment to children as future citizens as well as agents who could agitate for reform in their own communities.

Burnstein's work provides a concise overview of the mechanics of Progressive reform. However, the work also engages debates that many historians consider largely resolved. For example, he insists that while Progressivism had its coercive elements, it was also motivated by a genuine desire to help the poor. While this was a significant debate in the 1970s and 1980s, most historians today would agree that Progressives were both. Where Progressives fell on this spectrum depended on the reforms in question. Burnstein's reflexive defence of Progressives as good people strikes an odd chord, as does his vehement insistence that the poor sometimes made common cause with reformers. When focusing on an issue like garbage, it seems logical that the poor would be as interested as other citizens in removing the huge piles of stinking, vermin-infested refuse that regularly collected on their streets. These criticisms aside, individual chapters might prove useful in urban history classes, especially as examples of how issues like street cleaning took on symbolic meaning for Progressives and other city residents.

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**Diane Watters and Miles Glendinning**, *Little Houses, The National Trust for Scotland's Improvement Scheme for Small Historic Homes*. Edinburgh: RCAHMS and The National Trust for Scotland, 2006. 200pp. 192 illustrations. Notes. Map. Gazetteer. £9.95.  
doi:10.1017/S096392680732453X

There has been an explosion of interest and research into conservation since European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975. The vast majority of this research