

Finally, Breman touches on the question of how a government handles an official document which contains information unpalatable to those in power. In the case of the Rhemrev Report, the government simply refused to release the document, gave misleading summaries of the main conclusions of the report, and diverted attention by stating that proposed reforms would ensure that abuses of the type uncovered would never be repeated. The system thus continued with little change despite the Rhemrev Report and the debate that followed. The limited improvements in the subsequent years owed more to economic self interest than to any change of heart by planters or to any change of policy by the government.

The collection of forty photographs at the end of the volume provides interesting visual insights. The bibliography (291-318) is useful, but the index (319-321) is a disaster (consider, for instance, entries such as cash crops 1, crisis 65, 67-9.). On the whole, however, the book is a well-researched exposé of the evils of the colonial plantation system in east Sumatra, written with emotion and a touch of dry humour.

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David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds — *Metropolis. London: Histories and Representations since 1800*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. Pp. 330

One need not follow in detail Prince Charles' jousting with the architectural profession to realize that the façade of present-day London has altered almost beyond recognition in recent times; similarly, one need not pursue Mrs. Thatcher's abolition of the Greater London Council in order to appreciate the massive reorganization of political life in the capital. Change is all about — perhaps nowhere more evident than in London's erstwhile dockland — but the contributors to this anthology collectively remind us of continuities and constants in London life. In so doing, they call attention to the historical context underlying such dramatic, far-reaching change as the last decade has witnessed. Yet while London's own history continues to matter, the editors assert that the way in which its history ought to be written has changed, albeit in a subtle fashion. As a result, their present volume seeks out "the space between neighborhood and nation...the space upon which the social and political history of London has been fought out" (6). That space —perhaps "metropolitan" best characterizes it — is important not only in its own experience, but also a leading element in the unfolding of the national experience. Thus, in their view, London as metaphor must be placed beside the historical reality.

Their contributors illustrate London's "cutting edge" paradigm evident in metropolitan conceptions, among others, of the nation, the "underclass", the alien, woman as worker, and socialism. To be sure, there is more than these themes in the various individual contributions, but these particular themes admit of generalization and constitute the core of the volume's content. David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones opine that such a search demarcates a newer social history, open to diverse methodologies and a variety of less orthodox sources. Not surprisingly, these new directions of inquiry tend to relate to "metaphor", for example, in the evolving image of working women in London in the first decades of this century; Deborah Thom's

“Free from Chains” is drawn largely from period photography. What is surprising, however, is the high incidence of politics — not “high politics”, to be sure — found in this self-advertised newer social history: no fewer than five of eleven essays are so inclined, to wit, Feldman’s own, “The importance of being English: Jewish immigration and the decay of Liberal England”, setting the restrictive *Aliens Act* of 1905 in London’s East End; John Davies, “Radical clubs and London politics, 1870-1900”; Susan Pennybacker, “Reconsidering London Progressivism, 1899-1907”, a succinct review of its decline and fall; James Gillespie, “Populism and proletarianism: Unemployment and Labour politics in London, 1918-34”; and the Namier-like review of constituency politics by Tom Jeffrey, “The Suburban Nation: Politics and class in Lewisham”, which compares Labour’s past and present electoral problems in such areas. Those who take their social history with a strong dash of politics will find much to consider in this volume, although they may not credit the “newness” of the topics or methodologies.

A lesser but substantial yield also awaits the student of gender questions. In addition to the Thom essay noted above, there can be found a substantive and suggestive essay by Ellen Ross, “Married life in working-class London, 1870-1914”, which demonstrates the inter-relatedness of the sexual antagonism which characterizes many such marriages with a host of other social and economic factors. Sally Alexander’s “Becoming a woman in London in the 1920s and 1930s” draws heavily upon oral history to refute the traditional views of femininity underlying “the visions of England and the English” (249) voiced by Orwell and J.B. Priestley in those decades. Three other essays do not relate directly to questions of politics or gender, although the editors place them within their own tripartite organizational scheme. Deborah Weiner’s “The People’s Palace” describes a late Victorian failed experiment in social engineering of the East End working class; Jennifer Davis turns to the middle of the century in a revisionist reconstruction of life within a Kensington “rookery”; her “The construction of the under-class in mid-Victorian England” warrants serious attention, as she produces evidence — from one “rookery” only — that “...the use of so-called cultural characteristics either to label groups or individuals or to explain their behaviour appears problematic” (31). The Irish may yet escape the tender ministrations of Frederick Engels! Finally, Gareth Stedman Jones contributes an illuminating and entertaining characterization, “The ‘cockney’ and the nation, 1780-1988”, which will amuse all the readership who have a soft historical spot for this “rough kind o’cove”. And they are likely to recognize good social history, whether new, newer or something else.

As is the general rule, the collection is by its nature uneven, and responses are likely to reflect particular historical interests no less than the individual author’s historical skills. That three or four of the essays can be described as first-rate pieces which either sustain significant generalization or afford grounds to question orthodox views ought not to denigrate the contributions of the others. Taken together, the eleven essays document the range, variety and complexity of working-class life in London, living laboratory of the social historian.

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