

John Burnett — *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985* (second edition). London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1986. Pp. xi, 387.

The original edition of this work appeared in 1978, and it quickly became a standard survey of English housing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All of the virtues of the first edition are left intact in this new version. Indeed, the second edition is largely a reprint and extension of the first. Thus, there are detailed descriptions of housing for the middle and working classes replete with illustrations and well-drawn plans. There are many interesting subsidiary discussions (on the evolution of the kitchen, for example, and the inexorable spread of water closets and baths) and many surprising insights. Pride of place in this respect goes to Burnett's conclusion that two-room back-to-back housing often marked an improvement in living standards for their occupants, many of whom had previously lived in urban cellars or rural slums. Likewise, he is able to demonstrate that the twentieth-century return of population to city centers began long before the "urban gentrification" of the 1970s and 1980s.

As Burnett notes in his new preface (xi), he has tried to take into account recent statistics and secondary works in order to advance his analysis beyond 1970, the terminal point of the first edition. In practice, this means that the first nine chapters and most of the tenth (covering 1815-1970) give only passing glances at the recent work of M.J. Daunton, David Englander and G.C. Powell and, instead, they remain much as they were written in the 1970s. Especially surprising is Burnett's failure to take into account the demographic findings of E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield (*The Population History of England 1541-1871* [Cambridge, 1981]) or the important monograph by Avner Offner (*Property and Politics 1870-1914* [Cambridge, 1981]).

Burnett's main new contribution has been to extend the narrative down to 1985, which involved the writing of twenty new pages (326-345). As promised, he furnishes many up-to-date statistics in this section. He shows that the persons-per-room ratio has been considerably less than one in recent years, and he regards the virtual elimination of overcrowding as one of the major accomplishments in housing over the entire period. In terms of average interior space, however, he shows that the twentieth-century peak occurred as long ago as the Attlee prime ministry. The 1970s (the last years for which data are provided) actually witnessed declines in this measurement. At the same time, the average age of the housing stock has been increasing, as has the number of homeless people, especially in London. Burnett provides an informative discussion of the 1985 Inquiry into British Housing, which dealt with many of these topics and linked them to the fact that Britain spends a smaller percentage of its GNP on housing than any other major industrial nation.

Among the other major themes in this section is the remarkable volatility of the recent housing market. This is reflected in the large number of bankruptcies among building companies, high unemployment among construction workers, and widely fluctuating interest rates and land and house prices. A British record was apparently set, in the early 1970s, when average house prices were five times average annual earnings. Greater variety in housing has also been a prominent trend. At one end of the market, many first-time buyers discover that they can afford only minimal interior space with few amenities. At the other end, homeowners who take advantage of inflationary trends to "move up" often insist on detached houses with more than one bathroom and space for a host of modern appliances.

Even with the provision of much new information, Burnett has missed a number of opportunities in preparing this new edition. The text could have been streamlined in the innumerable passages where it bogs down into virtual compendia of house types, room measurements, construction costs, and so on. Burnett and his publishers should have taken a cue from Lawrence Stone and thought seriously about the many virtues of an abridged edition. The inclusion of a bibliography would have also added to the usefulness of the work, especially for students. More could have been done with the social dimensions of the subject, although this admittedly would have required substantial revisions and amendments. But it is, after all, a "social history". As it stands, Burnett covers only two themes in any depth — the types and the locations of homes characteristic of specific social groups. Richard Rodger, in his *Housing in Urban Britain 1780-1914* (Basingstoke, 1989), gives an excellent overview of some of the topics Burnett might have included or at least dealt with in more detail. Among them are possible relationships between housing density and various social phenomena (like riots and suicides); housing as a socio-political issue, both locally and nationally; and the changing impact of company housing, migration and railways on urban and suburban housing trends.

Who should buy this book? Libraries and researchers that have an interest in this field and do not own the first edition should, by all means, purchase the second. It remains a fine scholarly treatment of its subject with many insightful observations. Of those who own the original edition, only large research libraries and specialists in the history of British housing should consider buying this new offering. Their money would be better spent on recent works by some of the other authors mentioned above.

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Robert Carlisle — *The Proffered Crown: Saint-Simonianism and the Doctrine of Hope*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Pp. xii, 269.

After the death of Henri Saint-Simon, in 1825, several young men banded together to promote his ideas. Some were former *Carbonari*; others bankers and *polytechniciens*. Many had suffered socially from the prejudices of bourgeois society; illegitimate sons, sons of bankrupt fathers and Jews were joined later by women and workers. Over the next seven years, the Saint-Simonians developed a doctrine based on liberation from the constraints which inheritance and repressive codes of sexual behavior placed on society and individuals. A meritocracy of engineers, financiers and the like would administer society in the best interest of all producers; the dissociation of property and sexual relationships would usher in an era of personal fulfillment through serial monogomy. The Saint-Simonians proclaimed a religion which embodied the emotional inspiration for the creation of a new organic society based on co-operation and association. They spread their message through newspapers, numerous pamphlets and missionary preaching. The first phase of the Saint-Simonian movement ended in 1832, when leaders of the movement were found guilty of various infractions and given prison terms. The Saint-Simonians are usually remembered, now, because several went on to have prominent careers during the July Monarchy and the Second Empire.