

social implications, but Ribeiro raises these issues too briefly and without sufficient support or explanation.

There are many problems with this book from the perspective of social history. First, half of it is a simple narrative of revolutionary events, which Ribeiro juxtaposes with descriptions of clothing. For historians, this narrative is superfluous, even irritating with its glib generalizations of extremely complex events. It appears to be a substitute for an in-depth analysis of the social and political implications of French fashion from the 1780s to 1800, despite Ribeiro's claim to "explore the ways in which social and political trends were reflected in dress" during the French Revolution (19). She often fails to make clear distinctions among social classes and social groups in her assertions about fashion. Nor does Ribeiro explain sufficiently the social, political and economic changes before and during the Revolution that related to clothing. What was the position of the bourgeoisie during the late eighteenth century, and how did this affect fashion? To what extent did government controls over production and trade influence the kind and quantity of fabrics available for private consumption? How did technological developments in textile manufacturing relate to fashion? What were the effects of revolution, war and emigration on clothing industries and workers — tailors, dressmakers, ribbonmakers, hatters, wigmakers, embroiderers, lacemakers, staymakers and so forth? These and other questions bear directly upon Ribeiro's stated intention and assertions, yet, she addresses them only in passing, if at all.

Finally, the book would benefit from a reading of some of the many recent social histories of late eighteenth-century France. For example, were Ribeiro familiar with works on elite women by Margaret Darrow, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Samia Spencer and Elisabeth Badinter, among others, she probably would not have made the following, erroneous, statement: "Fashion was...a way of life...for upper-class women with very little to do except to enjoy a life of pleasure" (25). Contrary to Ribeiro's interpretation, studies now show that upper-class women in the pre-revolutionary period were actively engaged in the promotion of family status, in the social and official life of salons and court, and in significant cultural and literary pursuits. It is surprising, too, that Ribeiro's bibliography mentions no other study of fashion except her own earlier book.

In sum, Aileen Ribeiro raises some interesting and important questions, but there is room for some wide-ranging research and more penetrating analysis of fashion during the French Revolution.

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Roger Sawyer — *Children Enslaved*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988. Pp. xviii, 238.

This survey documents the widespread existence of enslaved children in the late twentieth century. To Sawyer's credit, he defines slavery to include a wide range of forms of enforced exploitation: from the debt peonage and chattel slavery which survive in the Third World to child prostitution, homelessness and "kiddie porn" which flourish in the First World. The tale which the author recounts is a harrowing

one, and he tells it unflinchingly and unemotionally. Also, to his credit, he avoids any sentimentality about free labour, which all too often can simply mean the freedom to starve. He understands that there are circumstances in which children can and must work and that labour is not itself enslaving. It is the elements of coercion, lack of remuneration and perpetual inescapability which convert labour into slavery. Sawyer understands that strategies for emancipation must provide alternative ways for children and their families to survive economically. This, in itself, is a major contribution.

More problematically for some readers, the author does not accept the notion of cultural relativism, that practices cherished by certain cultures should be valued for their role in bolstering a tradition and solidifying a group identity. Certain practices, such as the genital mutilation of female children, are, in Sawyer's view, abhorrent, and need to be abolished by external agencies when internal ones refuse to abide by international standards. His discussion of the practice makes it quite clear that it is a horrifying one which mutilates healthy females so that they can never live normally or free of suffering — if they survive the initial trauma, which many do not. Sawyer clearly sees no reason to cherish a culture which tortures its population. Although he never says so explicitly, what is implicit throughout this book is that people can be so demoralized by their own society that they will submit to their own mutilation or enslavement. They are nonetheless exploited for all that. Indeed, their very submissiveness may be the most fearsome symptom of the pervasiveness of the disease of exploitation.

This is the sort of book that one hopes will be read by the relevant policymakers and, perhaps, that is the author's intention. Historians, however, are likely to find *Children Enslaved* somewhat frustrating and superficial. Sawyer presents a strictly narrative account of the problem which lacks analytic depth. The intended audience is not clear; nor does *Children Enslaved* fall into an easily recognized genre. Is it a policy study, investigative reporting, or perhaps, yet, simply an anti-slavery tract? It is not historical scholarship as that is generally understood; nor does it pretend to be. It is innocent of theory, economic, psychological, or otherwise. It is ahistorical and assumes that all cultures should abide by a single, albeit humane, standard. There is no recognition that anyone has seen this differently. In fact, this book reads as if written in an intellectual vacuum, though it deals with a number of controversial issues which have been written about extensively. For all its empiricism, there is not much perspective on the problem of slavery. Perhaps Sawyer is too close to the subject to see the significance of what he has written. We learn, for instance, that the problem of child slavery is a widespread one. The author often lists the nations in which a particular form of exploitation has been reported, but how extensive it is within these countries, we do not learn. Is child enslavement marginal or central to the economies of these countries? What proportion of children are enslaved? We learn of governments, particularly at local levels, conniving with economic interests at the exploitation of children. Are these incidents occasional or fundamental to the ways in which these governments operate? These questions are important for policymakers who might wish to attack the problem.

What we get from this book is anecdotal accounts, not systematic analysis. This brings the scholarly reader up short on a number of occasions. Sawyer, for instance, touches on modernization as the great bugaboo, and suggests that this wreaks havoc with traditional family life and creates an artificially imposed need for cash which can lead to the exploitation of children. I am sympathetic with this interpretation, but exactly how modernization does all this and why are not explained. Comparisons with

earlier periods of industrialization are left unexamined. Moreover, some forms of enslavement, such as female genital mutilation, occur despite modernization, not because of it. Indeed, in the case of the specifically female forms of exploitation he discusses, it is the traditional family itself which is oppressive. Sawyer explains much of this as a misreading of the Koran (53), which simply begs the question. He does not address the question of why the Koran would have been misread in this way for centuries, or relate this to the low status of women in areas where these atrocities occur, and which undoubtedly leads to the demoralization mentioned earlier in this review.

Sawyer, in fact, does an admirable job of untangling the skein of cultural, social and economic events which may lead a child into a lifetime of slavery. He understands that different situations may require different solutions. For all that, his solutions seem naive. His faith lies in a reworking and re-enforcement of the International Labour Organization, despite the fact that he is well aware that international law has not worked well in the past. In fact, his portrayal of the United Nations is one of a cumbersome bureaucracy hampered further by the conflicting claims of sovereignty. Although the evidence is present even in Sawyer's own account that multinational corporations and the governments that protect them are responsible for at least some of the documented atrocities, he is reluctant to point the finger. Nor does he explain how to get around these powerful vested interests.

Americans are likely to be irritated by the "Britishisms" of Sawyer's writing, occasionally reminiscent of a stilted graduate school style. His frequent use of the passive voice distances the reader from the text. It also enables the author to avoid assigning responsibility for unpleasant actions. If the intended audience for *Children Enslaved* is indeed Western policymakers, there may be a certain tact inherent in Sawyer's caution.

Indeed, Roger Sawyer delivers a truly savage indictment of our world, and does so in the most neutral, detached way imaginable. He goes about his work gingerly, perhaps trying not to antagonize the powers necessary to ameliorate the horrors he describes. But indict us he does: from the description of an ill-prepared American delegation (11) to the notion that child exploitation is worst in the richest as well as in the poorest countries (which he does not explain); to the West's contribution to abusiveness in the Third World as well as to the plight of our own homeless, sexually abused children; to the withdrawal of American and Soviet aid to the United Nations; to the UN's own impotence during its much-heralded "Year of the Child"; to the fact that, even in a good year, only 0.7 percent of the UN budget "is allotted specifically to the promotion and protection of human rights" (177). Consequently, its peace-keeping activities may be rendered practically irrelevant. As Sawyer eloquently demonstrates, "an immunized population of an adequately provisioned nation may be subject to arbitrary arrest, torture and forced labour...Efficient activities of United Nations technical advisors may serve only to stabilize a nation in order that it may suffer the tyranny of a dictator or be enslaved by cruel traditional practices" (177).

This is a chilling book, and one not likely to be soon forgotten. Nor should it be.

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