was a development tied to the industrial separation of home and work and to what extent it had been long a characteristic of the urban labour market, with its much larger component of individual wage labour.

The second section of the book deals with the social expression of marital discord and causes of strife. Phillips makes no claim that his evidence is representative of family life, but simply that it "indicate[s] the limits of acceptable behaviour" (p. 108). He illustrates with rich descriptive material the pervasiveness and acceptability of (some) physical violence, sexual disputes, financial struggles, and the unequal material consequences of divorce for men and women (women lost all but their personal belongings, bed and bedding, and sometimes they had to go to the law in order to recover these).

Phillips' conclusions move away from divorce to the social context of divorce. He believes that there were weak bonds among family members, and that this was one of the reasons why the Revolutionary divorce legislation failed "to establish a form of intimate familiar justice" (p. 202). He also concludes that neighbourhood was an important community of reference, and possibly, "a moral community in which women in particular developed a strong sense of solidarity" (p. 203). This possibility, he admits, could be simply a consequence of the fact that women, more often than their husbands, worked in the neighbourhood where they lived.

The sources Phillips has used do not really address the question of family breakdown, but that of marital discord or strife. They do not tell us much about parent-child relations, for example, except at moments when the couple is struggling. They tell us about kin relations only for those kin who could be or were called on to act as *arbitres* or *témoins* or those who sheltered divorced persons. That such kin were often unavailable tells us as much about rural to urban migration and urban social relations as it tells us about family breakdown. The interrelationship of family and community needs to be studied with documents that tell us about the community as well as those that focus on the couple. Phillips has done an excellent job with the sources he chose to examine in depth. Answers to the broader questions he has raised must await studies which make the community as well as the couple problematic.

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R. S. NEALE. — *Class in English History, 1680-1850*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. Pp. *vi*, 250.

The title suggests a survey or review of the development of classes in England from 1680 to 1850, including of necessity some theory of what "classes" are. What the book really is, however, is a contribution to the debate currently raging between Marxists and others, and even more fiercely among Marxists, about the proper place of theory in historical work. Neale insists on the necessity of correct (in his view) Marxist theory, in the light of which he looks at the ways other historians have used the idea of class. He does so, however, with enough idiosyncrasies that even the unconverted may find the process interesting.

The first chapter, the cornerstone of the book, is a careful analysis of Marx's theory of class, which, to this non-Marxist non-expert, seems to be fair and accurate. (*Class* used in this sense he always italicizes, leaving the un-italicized form for

other and lesser uses of the word.) He then employs this definition to criticize Laslett's single-class and Perkin's classless pre-industrial societies. Indeed, he seems to prefer Mousnier, not always a favourite among Marxists, whose society of orders does at least institutionalize conflict. Proceeding chronologically, he criticizes Perkin for separating class consciousness (once it has appeared) from the struggle for incomes. These (and others) are sensible points. But they can be made, and have been, without as rigorous a Marxism as Neale insists on.

Neale goes, moreover, beyond *class*. Drawing heavily on the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, he insists that *class* consciousness can only be the consciousness of the proletariat of its historical role, to triumph through revolution and thus end all *classes* (and presumably classes). Some of us may be uneasy at this; it seems to deny us a useful term for what goes on in the minds of other classes, or of most working classes most of the time. We might consent to be left with "class perceptions", which Neale will allow us, if his definition really added to historical understanding. He uses it to deny that E. P. Thompson's English working class was class conscious in 1832, and — more fiercely — that John Foster's Oldham proletariat was in 1842. Both criticisms have been made, however, from a standpoint only mildly Marxist. Neale's rigour and elaboration do not seem to add anything.

His definition of *class* consciousness, in fact, depends on the existence of something that has not yet happened (his penchant for Eastern European subversive jokes suggests that he doesn't think it has arrived there). The study of the working class, or any other class, turns into the Whig history of an as-yet-unattained future. That may be useful for Marxist praxis. Its value for history of any stripe is problematical.

If Neale's insistence on theory frequently results in overkill, it is also occasionally misleading. For instance, Marx's claim that the proper re-building of this world demands the destruction of religion leads Neale to Elizabeth Sharples as a key to the history of women. She was converted (in a manner reminiscent of St Augustine) from orthodox Christianity to Deism and Richard Carlile, and became perhaps the first female non-regnant to give political speeches in England. She is interesting in herself, and significant in the tradition of radical atheism. To see her as significant in the development of feminism and the consciousness of women in nineteenth-century England, however, is a victory of theory over reality.

In the midst of this orthodoxy, Neale places a defence of his five-class model of English society in the 1820s and 1830s, substantially unchanged from its introduction in 1968. This is based firmly on Dahrendorf (an uncommon enthusiasm for a Marxist), his classes being conflict groups determined by relations of authority, not economics or incomes. His creation has its uses. It warns against a rigid three-class model (in one of his nicer artistic comparisons, he compared its disturbing intention to Magritte). It highlights the radicalism of the junior and unsuccessful professionals and property owners below the richest who, with others, form his "middling class".

The model has been widely questioned, by Marxists and others, largely for turning so varied and unstable a group into a class (not, of course, a *class*). The Marx he follows here does seem to be the one who, in *The 18th Brumaire*, so providentially found a class to explain every political party. But the model can be criticized from the opposite point of view. His "middling class" collapses, as a conflict group, before the working-class militancy of Chartism. But something remarkably like it turns up, after the collapse of Chartism, in the radicalism and radical liberalism of which Vincent and Tholfsen have written. Perhaps, though Neale values Dahrendorf as a bulwark against vulgar economism, and insists that

his "middling class" is based on relations of authority, not economy, he does not eschew economism enough. J. S. Mill's notion of the "disqualified classes" is the new evidence that Neale adds to this revival of his model. Mill clearly includes many — perhaps most — factory owners in that group; they were certainly strong in later radicalism. In Neale's hands, they become "small capitalists" if not petty bourgeois. Even an adventurous Marxist may be made uneasy at the thought of so many bourgeois as outsiders in a bourgeois society.

Though no Althusserian, Neale laments the lack of sound theory behind most current social history. Centred on rather vague notions of social structure, it embodies merely "a weak version of the Materialist Conception of History" (p. 228). But does the strong version here recommended produce great benefits for history? When applied at full strength, it seems to add nothing new. Neale's main original idea, the five-class model, is not derived from strict Marxist theory. (It may be reconcilable to theory, but that is something else.) Perhaps social historians should take their Marxist theory, as so many "middling class" radicals took their medicine, in homeopathic doses.

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ANTOINE SYLVÈRE. — *Toinou, le cri d'un enfant auvergnat.* Paris, Plon, 1980. *Xxii*, 404 p.

Les historiens qui s'intéressent aux couches populaires ont toujours une plainte commune. Les sources d'information qui leur permettent de reconstruire tant bien que mal la vie des communautés ouvrières et paysannes sont des documents produits en dehors de ces communautés. Rapports de police et de fonctionnaires, enquêtes, données statistiques — tout cela est le produit de gens qui se situent à l'extérieur des classes populaires. Le regard vient du dehors, et rares sont les sources «internes». Si, au XIX[e] siècle, il y avait une poignée d'ouvriers militants qui nous ont laissé des souvenirs de leurs luttes, on ne peut en dire autant pour les masses rurales. Le paysan, c'est l'autre «grand muet» de la société française.

Cela pour signaler l'intérêt qu'on doit porter d'emblée à ce livre. Toinou est le petit nom en dialecte auvergnat d'Antoine Sylvère. Officier, industriel, résistant, Sylvère (1888-1963) a laissé plusieurs manuscrits autobiographiques dont *Toinou*, écrit pendant les années trente. Issu d'un milieu de pauvres paysans du Massif Central, «Toinou» a voulu expliquer, en se l'expliquant d'abord à lui-même, comment il a réussi à s'échapper de sa condition. Il ne s'agit pas, cependant, de l'histoire d'une quelconque ascension sociale. C'est plutôt une longue interrogation sur les forces sociales et culturelles qui dominaient la jeunesse de l'auteur. Ce faisant, Antoine Sylvère brosse un tableau saisissant du rude monde campagnard d'avant 1914.

Comme document humain son récit est passionnant. Il manque malheureusement l'épaisseur de détail sur les pratiques agricoles qu'on trouve dans l'extraordinaire *Vie d'un simple* de Guillaumin; mais il apporte autre chose. Qu'est-ce que l'historien peut apprendre de *Toinou*? D'abord et surtout, on y voit un système dans lequel la reproduction sociale se trame à l'aide de mécanismes efficaces et souvent brutaux.