to build up their organizational strength, publish and disseminate propaganda, hold meetings, draw up petitions, lobby in political circles and generally gather votes and support for their efforts to attack the slave traffic through the legislative process. By the first decade of the nineteenth century abolitionists had even developed a new strategy which called for relegating humanitarian issues to a secondary position while arguing that the slave trade was not in the national interest or even in the true interest of the West Indies. These tactics, along with the increased number of reform-minded ministers who entered the government in 1806-07, enabled the abolitionists to undercut slowly the pro-slave trade faction in Parliament, persuade the majority in the Peers and Commons that abolition would not adversely effect England's well-being, and eventually bring about slave trade abolition by act of Parliament in 1807. Anstey's work provides the first detailed, incisive and comprehensive account of this religious, political, humanitarian campaign which finally culminated in abolition. It demonstrates effectively that the struggle against that slave trade owed its success primarily to religious inspiration and political manoeuvring rather than to the decline of the slave trade's economic importance.

In the process of developing his general thesis Anstey makes two other original and important points concerning the final phase of the English slave trade. First of all, while examining the slave trade as an economic phenomenon, he amasses an impressive amount of quantitative evidence which enables him to project an approximate 10% annual return on investments made in the English slave trade during the last decades of its existence. Such a projection is extremely significant, for it shows that the British slave trade was considerably more profitable at the time of its abolition than the Dutch or French slave trades (which had profit margins of about 1½% and 1-7% respectively), thus countering Williams' assumption that Great Britain acted against the traffic in slaves only when it was no longer lucrative. At the same time Anstey's estimation of a 10% profit level lays to rest once and for all some of the exaggerated statements made by other writers about the immense profitability of the slave trade. Secondly, Anstey shows by other projections that the total sum of investments made by slave traders in the process of English industrialization probably amounted to less than 1% of the total capital invested during this period in British industry. This point too refutes a major tenet held by Williams, namely that profits from the eighteenth century slave trade had been a major source of capital for English industrial expansion. In calculating both the profitability of the slave trade and the percentage of these profits invested in industry Anstey admits that his figures are only projections, and, as such, subject to error, but his evidence is impressive and apparently as complete as possible in the present state of historical knowledge. In any case, Anstey's statistics and his conclusions alike are more convincing than the generalizations offered three decades ago by Williams, and it appears that in the years to come the historiography of the slave trade will be as marked by Anstey's contribution as it was in the past by that of Williams.

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THOMAS WALTER LAQUEUR. — *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

This excellent book is one of the more unexpected results of E. P. Thompson's inspiration. Mr. Laqueur tells us that he began his work on the Sunday

Schools which flourished during the Industrial Revolution expecting to confirm Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*; they would turn out to be weapons of cultural imperialism, "agents of the middle class in [its] struggle to remould the innermost feelings and desires of working people." (p. xiii) Instead, after giving them an examination more intense than they have previously received, he concludes that Sunday Schools were thoroughly working class institutions — "a creation of the community they served" as well as "significant cultural achievements [of the working class] in their own right." (p. 245).

The stereotype that Thompson adopted is comprehensible. Laqueur does not deny that some of the first Sunday Schools, in the 1780s and 1790s, were blatantly intended to make the poor patient and subservient; and he quotes a suffiency of hair-raising examples of this intention, from Robert Raikes, Hannah More, and others. But after the turn of the century, he sees this repressive side of evangelical benevolence in decline, and the schools becoming institutions of as well as for the working class. While committees of management remained in middle class hands, a large proportion of the teachers were working class volunteers, themselves products of the Sunday Schools (he cites examples ranging from 50% to 86%). He further argues that the teachers did more of the actual running of the schools than the middle class management committees did. One would like to see more substantiation of this, but one would not expect to find much of it in the minute books of the management committees. Since the teachers were unpaid, they were not likely to put up with excessively dictatorial control. And finally, Sunday Schools regularly flourished together with working class radicalism and self-assertion, in the same towns and in the same people.

Taking as his example that exceedingly industrial town, Stockport, whose Sunday Schools were perhaps the most impressive in the country, he finds few examples of conflict between middle class managers and working class teachers over matters of politics or working class aspirations. The instances he does find, in 1797 and 1818, rather cloud his case; but the even more striking absence of conflict in the tense 1830s and 1840s seems to re-establish it. Certainly if Sunday Schools *were* intended to keep the working class subservient, they did not do a very good job of it. Towns with the strongest Sunday Schools were often the towns with the most vigorous working class radicalism.

He looks for propaganda from above in text books, prize books, and Sunday School magazines, and finds very little. Their content was mainly either "improving" or religious; and they cited Biblical texts both on the duties of servants, and on the sinfulness of grinding the faces of the poor. He notes the factory-like discipline of the larger Sunday Schools, but convincingly refuses to attribute it to any attempt to inculcate factory discipline on the Lord's Day. Both institutions were simply coping with a new scale and size of organization in similar ways. And the pupil-teacher ratio of 10:1 or better compares very favourably with the impersonality of the factory, let alone more recent schools. (One can do wondrous things if the teachers do not need to be paid). As for the relatively "puritanical" morality and style of life which the schools tried to instill, this was as much the property of working class radicals as of middle class prudes.

There is one *caveat* to this picture of Sunday Schools as agents of working class autonomy and independence. It applies well to industrial areas, where the larger schools were often fiercely independent. Laqueur says less about those rural places where the school was tightly linked to a particular church; there, the older stereotype of submission may have flourished. Behind the independence of much of the Sunday School ethos, further, the Gramscian is still free to find the hegemony of the middle class. Indeed, Laqueur seems to do so. (p. 241). Hegemony, however, while a splendidly useful concept, is (to an outsider) sometimes one that explains so much that it explains nothing. If education and religion in some senses strengthened middle class hegemony, they also gave the working class the strength and intellectual tools and self-respect to break through it. As hegemonic institutions, the Sunday Schools were a good deal less effective than slave religion in the American South, and Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* has shown how basically subversive of hegemony that was.

By no means all of Laqueur's book is devoted to combatting received ideas about the place of Sunday Schools in the conflict of classes. He is equally interested in looking at them as a part of day-to-day working class life. And in doing so, he offers material that will be significant for many sorts of historians.

Religious historians, for instance, have been preoccupied with the separation of the working class from the churches. Laqueur shows how they were not, none the less, separated from religion. Though few Sunday scholars went on to become formal church members, they received the elements of a "Christian culture" (p. 160) which is visible in much working class activity. If their parents did not join churches, or often attend them, they sent their children (examples are cited, from industrial Lancashire, ranging up to 80% or 90% of all children in Sunday School), and filled the churches — and the collection plates — on Anniversary Sundays, when money was raised for the schools. Ecclesiastical historians interested in the general religion of the country would do well to avert their eyes from the pulpit and even the pew, for a while, and turn them toward the school room.

Educational historians also, who have tended to regard Sunday Schools as a desparate and inadequate substitute for *real* schools, might do well to look at them more searchingly. They offered basic literacy to some (mainly those incapable of attending day school). But Laqueur suggests that their greater contribution lay in expanding literacy and the habit of reading — not to speak of such higher skills as writing and arithmetic — among those who had learned the basics elsewhere, and leading them on to groups for discussion and "self-improvement" among the older scholars. And he adds force to the welcome discovery, which seems to be spreading[1], that working class education cannot be understood only from the supply side — government administrators and benevolent people wishing to elevate the poor, or to render them harmless. The working class demand for education was important too. For instance, the demand for skills beyond mere reading, combined with the competition among schools for pupils, compelled some managers who thought writing and ciphering inappropriate for the Sabbath to offer them anyway. (On the extent of this higher learning, however, Laqueur's text rather outruns his statistics).

But historians primarily interested in the working class itself (of whom Laqueur is one) will probably find the most material on aspects of life which have not been much studied. When the mutual charity of the poor toward each other is mentioned, for instance, it is usually with the regret that we can never know much about it.[2] Laqueur finds hand loom weavers, colliers, and mere labourers setting up Sunday Schools to do good for their neighbours' children in the same years in which Hannah More and other benevolent superiors were founding them with slightly more ulterior motives. The growth of humanitarianism from the late eighteenth century on was evidently not a monopoly of the middle and upper classes.

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[1] E. G. WEST, *Education and the State* (London; Institute of Economic Affairs, 2nd ed., 1970); Michael SANDERSON, "Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England," *Past and Present*, No. 56 (Aug. 1972): 75-104.

[2] Brian HARRISON, "Philanthropy and the Victorians," *Victorian Studies*, IX (1965-66), pp. 368-369; Norman McCORD, "The Poor Law and Philanthropy," in Derek FRASER, ed., *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 108-109.

Laqueur sees Sunday School outings as one of the very few forms of organized leisure activity between the decline of pre-industrial fairs and the development or organized sports at the end of the nineteenth century. And the enjoyment at visiting the seats of the mighty and parading to celebrate royal festivities gives a hint of the "flag-waving, peer-loving" side of the proletarian mind, which E. P. Thompson himself has suggested would repay study. There is an affecting picture of an Owenite Sunday School (one of the few; non-religious and "political" Sunday Schools were rare) listening to "Rule, Britannia" and consuming currant bread and ginger beer on a jaunt to the seat of the Earl of Stamford — and this during the peak of the Reform Bill agitation in 1832.

As his title implies, Laqueur sees Sunday Schools as an important impetus toward working class "respectability." This splendidly Victorian virtue is beginning to be taken seriously as a category and a style of life worthy of serious exploration.[3] Laqueur adds to our knowledge of how it was propagated, and to our understanding of what it meant; "respectability" meant self-respect as much as it meant pretentiousness. It is not clear how far he associates this virtue with a "Labour-Aristocracy," the context in which it is most often studied at present. He explicitly finds that Sunday scholars came from all levels of the working class, not from the "aristocracy" alone or even predominantly. With so large a proportion of children at least exposed to respectability in the Sunday Schools, one almost wonders where the "roughs" came from.

It remains only to note that the book has a remarkably clearly articulated organization and a clear and pleasant style. Laqueur is scrupulous in setting out counter-arguments and the evidence for them, though not diffident in contradicting them. The source material — records, manuals, and rule books of schools, textbooks, and a mass of biographies and local histories — is of a richness and extent new to this particular topic, and not invariably found in religious or educational history.

Laqueur has modified one of E. P. Thompson's major themes, by insisting that the working class must be understood in terms of its local and day-to-day life and its adaptations to society, as well as in its wider class consciousness and its political resistance. On the other hand, by taking the Sunday Schools away from the middle class and reclaiming them for the working class, he has strikingly vindicated Thompson's other contention, that the working class was not simply made by others; it made itself.

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[3] Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971), pp. 256-273; Geoffrey Crossick, "The Labour Aristocracy and its Values; a Study of Mid-Victorian Kentish London," *Victorian Studies,* XIX (1976): 301-328; Robert Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1976); Peter Bailey, "Working-Class Respectability in Mid-Victorian England: Ideology or Role?" (paper given at the Canadian Historical Association, Edmonton, 6 June 1975) takes a somewhat more cynical view, suggesting that a good deal of what the middle class saw as "respectability" was put on for their benefit, and for the benefits a "respectable character" could bring to its possessor, or claimant.