

bourgeoisie to the richer gentry families and only later to what he calls the 'higher aristocracy' or sometimes the 'court aristocracy', and much later still to the bulk of the population. Most of the printed material Stone relies on relates only to the upper levels of the society and it is with them that he remains mainly concerned. But he cannot resist the temptation to deal also with the rest of the population whom he lumps together uncomprehendingly as 'the plebs' and whose life and culture his printed sources do not enable him to penetrate. In several sections of the book he includes a limp page or two on the way the subject at hand might have affected the working population and in the section on sexual behaviour this rises to an entire chapter. But none of this gets very far because the evidence is so indirect.

When he is dealing with the groups he knows best and from which his sources most clearly derive, Stone develops his argument vigorously and persuasively. It is in some respects perhaps too vigorously argued, for he undoubtedly exaggerates some of the contrasts he is concerned to establish. The picture of the sixteenth century seems too dark and on the other hand his eighteenth-century family seems to be too completely liberated from the authority of the father and husband. The argument is more persuasive, it seems to me, when one discounts some of what appears to be hyperbole in the way it is presented. There are a number of other problems in the book. With so broad a theme some of the evidence has had to be pulled and pushed to fit. And I would say too that parts of the very long text might have been pruned with advantage. The re-telling of essentially familiar stories at considerable length in the chapter on gentlemanly sexual behaviour — including for example the exploits of Pepys and Boswell — borders on the self-indulgent. But many of these problems are essentially superficial. At its centre the book develops an important argument about the ways that human relationships have changed in the past five hundred years. The argument will be refined and no doubt modified. But Stone's work will remain as a stimulus to research and clear thinking about the centrally important transformations he has sketched.

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JOHN MONEY. — *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977. Pp. 312.

Nineteenth century Birmingham was a city whose political life was characterized by a degree of social cohesion and class co-operation not found in many other industrial centres. The contrast has often been made between the relative solidarity of Birmingham and the marked social cleavages which existed in Manchester or Lyons in the last century. This difference between Birmingham and many other industrial towns has been attributed to the particular structure of the city's industrial base, as well as that of the surrounding region. In the nineteenth century Birmingham was the centre of an important metalworking district whose manufactures consisted of buckles, buttons, hatchets, steam engines, toys, nails, pots and a variety of cheap hardware items. Its workforce was skilled and could command relatively high wages. The place of work was still the workshop, not the large scale factory, and, most historians agree, there was little in the way of class

antagonisms among its workers, small scale manufacturers, skilled artisans and entrepreneurs.¹

John Money's study of Birmingham and the West Midlands in the last four decades of the eighteenth century concentrates on the formative years in the development of this region's social and political patterns. He argues that it is in this period that we will find the origins of the political "tradition of popular but orderly participation, embracing all levels of the community" (p. 283). After an examination of the emergence of a sense of regional identity, particularly as a result of the creation of a new transportation network, the author shifts to a lengthy study of the "Means of Communication" by which the region established its own responses to the political crises of the day. Professor Money shows that the newspapers of the West Midlands in the third quarter of the century occupied a middle ground between those earlier provincial papers which merely copied London material, and the more mature editorial efforts of the 1790s. In addition he outlines the rapid development of local libraries, social clubs, debating societies, music festivals and dramatic productions which attests to both the vigour of provincial town life and a growing popular "political awareness" (p. 148).

In a third section on "Politics" the author shows how the rapidly expanding Birmingham area was first able to flex its political muscles and dominate the Warwickshire County election of 1774. One might argue, however, in light of the subsequent political developments, that this election was not as important as the author suggests (p. 4). It has been traditionally argued (and Professor Money is well aware of the arguments) that the formative political experience for Birmingham was the campaign against the Orders in Council of 1812. In this struggle all groups in the region appeared to form a united front against the trading restrictions imposed by an ill-advised government in London. Moreover, it has often been pointed out that this early nineteenth century campaign made the reputations of many of Birmingham's political leaders.² Indeed the year 1800 seems to be a particularly arbitrary termination for this study. A more useful alternative would have been to carry the analysis into the second decade of the nineteenth century.

The most stimulating part of the book deals with the political response of Birmingham to the French Revolution. In the 1790s Birmingham's radicals or 'Jacobins' were less numerous and more moderate than their counterparts in the northern cutlery town of Sheffield. Indeed the radical "Birmingham Society for Constitutional Information" had been set up late in 1792 as a result of the "missionary" work of a Jacobin razor-maker from Sheffield. Why was Birmingham more conservative than the comparable metal-working town of Sheffield? Professor Money dismisses the suggestion that it is the damaging effects of the anti-radical 'Priestley Riots' of 1791 which alone can account for the difference. He suggests that the explanations for Birmingham's conservative nature lie deeper in the region's history. Traditional explanations of economic change had a strong appeal to West Midland artisans who were also conscious of the fact that their manufactures were often luxury or ornamental goods. Therefore, Money suggests, they

¹ See, Asa BRIGGS, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1968), chap. 5; "The Social Structure of Birmingham and Lyons (1825-48)," *British Journal of Sociology*, I (1950); "Thomas Attwood and the Economic Background of the Birmingham Political Union," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, IX (1948); "The Background of the Parliamentary Reform Movement in Three English Cities (1830-32)," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, X (1952).

² See D. J. Moss, "Birmingham and the Campaigns against the Orders-in-Council and the East India Company Charter, 1812-13," *Canadian Journal of History*, XI, No. 2 (Aug. 1976).

were hostile to revolutionary suggestions that might alter the existing social structure and the markets for their wares. It is not clear, however, why this argument does not apply to many other English towns and other skilled trades. In the end the author is forced back into a circular argument in support of his conclusion that,

...both as regards the agencies through which it was formed and as regards the immediate political experience which it assimilated, the development of popular articulacy ... took place in a context which tempered its radical potential with a highly adaptable admixture of practical conservatism. (pp. 282-3)

Birmingham was a conservative town in the 1790s because its local traditions were more conservative than those of other towns. Here we encounter the major deficiency of this study. It lacks a rigorous comparative analysis which would test the author's conclusions. Indeed the comparative approach of John Foster's study of Oldham in the industrial revolution might have been usefully employed in this book.³ Professor Money's study leaves the reader with an unanswered question: Do the different responses of English towns to the political crises of the late eighteenth century reflect very real differences in their socio-economic structures?

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JOHN M. MERRIMAN. — *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848-1851*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978. Pp. xxxvi, 298.

Within the last decade the historiography of the French Revolution of 1848 and the Second French Republic has been enriched by the appearance of social analyses such as those by Maurice Agulhon, Roger Price, and Peter Amann. John Merriman's book is a welcome addition to this collection of social histories of mid-nineteenth century France. Basing his work upon an impressive examination of the major Parisian and provincial archives, Merriman has provided historians with the first detailed study of the process of repression which uprooted and destroyed republican — especially leftist republican — political organizations throughout France after the Revolution of 1848 and thus enabled Louis Napoleon to seize power in 1851.

A history of the suppression of radical republican organizational apparatus from 1848 to 1851 could have been written from an administrative point of view, focusing upon events in Paris and the implementation of directives regulating the repression. Merriman has avoided this institutional approach and has concentrated instead on describing how suppression on the local level actually affected the lives of common people. The result is an often touching account of how innumerable republicans throughout France attempted to establish a radical infrastructure, only to face reverses and eventual repression from a more powerful, and better organized, government intent upon destroying any manifestations of an alternative economic-political system.

The author begins his book with a description of the unsuccessful efforts by radical organizers to dominate the working class strongholds of Limoges and

³ John FOSTER, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).