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Donajgrodzki, A. P., editor. *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain*. London: Croom Helm, 1977. Pp. 258. £8.50

Angus McLaren

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Better City Government may not be a book that will please everyone, but that is a tribute to the author's willingness to entertain an array of critical issues. Fox has written a provocative book that can only be ignored at one's peril.

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Donajgrodzki, A. P., editor. Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain.  
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Whether or not they employ the specific term "social control" a growing number of historians of nineteenth century Britain have in the past decade been turning to the question of how the social elites succeeded in maintaining both themselves and the lower classes in their respective places during the difficult transition from a rural to an urbanized society. Donajgrodzki has drawn together nine essays of varying quality and interest which attempt to deal with some key aspects of this enormous problem. In his introduction to the volume the editor sketches out the history of the term "social control" and traces its use by sociologists from Durkheim to Ross to Parsons. At the bottom the concept implies that order -- in which the possessing classes had the greatest interest -- was not "natural" but a product of social processes, relationships, and institutions. And these institutions included, in addition to the obvious arms of the legal system, charity, education and the direction of both leisure and philanthropy. The problem of social control was in one sense thus a constant implicit pre-occupation of the nineteenth-century elite, but only at times of acute social tensions as in the 1840s and the 1880s would they address themselves explicitly to the issue. Such a concept as that of social control can, in clumsy hands, be pushed to absurd, reductionist lengths. Every act of the upper classes could be construed as being blatantly hypocritical; their institutions seen as serving no other goal but that of assuring consensus while deflecting conflict. The essays in this collection are indeed successful or not according to the extent to which they stress the interactionist, developmental potential of the concept rather than its crudely mechanistic employment.

John Stevenson's essay on riots between 1789 and 1829 deals mainly with the machinery of legal repression and focuses on the flexibility and subtlety of the establishment's responses to disorder. Extremes were avoided, he asserts, charity was doled out, deference was elicited. Donajgrodzki's own contribution is a comparison of visions of order held by the traditionalist Tremenheere and the utilitarian Chadwick. He finds that, not surprisingly, they agreed on ends and only differed on the means by which order was to be

obtained: by appeals to morality or state intervention. A more difficult line of argument to follow is contained in Richard Johnson's piece on education, studded as it is with terms such as "problematic," "historical instance," "machinofacture," "synchronisation," "mediated," "hegemony." The section on Charitism is introduced with the line, "The need for an organic moral reorientation of labour was reinforced by more conjunctural determinations." And yet the gist of Johnson's argument seems simple enough: Victorian educational experts were not given free reign -- though they offered more efficient means of control -- because they were opposed by the Church, were themselves split on tactics, and were held in suspicion by the working class. Jennifer Hart looks more closely at the role of the church but in digging out what she can in the way of conservative social and political doctrines from sermons produced between 1830 and 1880 she offers little that is new.

R. D. Storch has greater success in an analysis of leisure as a new field for nineteenth-century, middle-class benevolence. The goal was to preserve order, impose new discipline, and diffuse moral authority. But the working class proved to be far more impervious to such pressures than philanthropists assumed and Storch ends with the observation that the establishment failed to carry out the "cultural lobotomy" of the lower orders. Hugh Cunningham's essay supports some of Storch's findings in providing a detailed account of how the authorities sought to use fairs as an outlet for harmless forms of amusement. In Michael Rose's article are the first signs in the volume of a real interest in the workers who were the object of such concerns. He asks why it was that despite its turbulent past the Lancashire workers were so tranquil during the cotton famine. He finds that even a respectable, thrifty, educating, co-op joining, chapel-going work force could still raise the spectre of revolt in an elite haunted by the pathological fear that relief led to pauperism. To ration philanthropy the Central Relief Committee was established which later provided the inspiration for the Charity Organization Society. Judith Fido's contribution is an examination of the C.O.S.'s pioneering efforts in casework. What some have seen as an apparently progressive administrative innovation proves on closer analysis to have been in practice a carry-over of earlier forms of social police. In demanding from the "client" proper behavior philanthropy was to prove perhaps the most potent form of control.

Victor Bailey rounds off this selection of essays with what is to my mind the most interesting article, a study of the riots of the 1880s against the Salvation Army. The Army was created in part as a response to the social problems of the 70s and 80s but as Bailey shows it was itself subjected to abuse by representatives of the "old culture" of the smaller towns -- both the roughs and the brewers. In resorts and deferential areas the Army was seen as an intrusion and opposed by tradesmen. Mobbing of Sally Ann meetings was winked at and sometimes supplemented by the law. In short Bailey provides a classic example of how authorities regulated disorder which far from challenging social control, acted to support it.

Bailey's essay is useful because it reveals the splits within classes and the interaction of classes. The other contributions in this collection deal primarily with the machinery of social control and its operators, rarely with its "victims." And here one can see why Gareth Stedman Jones' strictures of historians' use of the concept of social control are important. (Why Jones -- whose name is cited in several of the essays and whose presence seems to trouble one or two others -- is not listed in the index is a puzzle.) Clearly there is the danger of becoming so hypnotized by the workings of institutions that one accepts the "problematic" as given by the operators and fails to discern accurately the actions of those whom they seek to control. Where these essays are most useful is in revealing that in the nineteenth century attempts to simply consecrate the status quo were rare; there were a variety of conservatisms and each had its own internal contradictions.

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Abrams, Phillip, and Wrigley, E. A., editors. Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. Pp. vii, 344. \$17.10 cloth.

The point of departure for Phillip Abrams' own contribution to this volume of essays in Fernand Braudel's contentious statement that "a town is a town wherever it is." By "towns," of course, Braudel and the editors of this volume are referring to cities; in the context of European history the terms are practically interchangeable. But it is not semantics which concerns Abrams; rather, it is a more fundamental conceptual problem. Should towns be treated as social realities? Should historians deal in typologies categorizing towns and allotting them specific roles as dependent, independent or intervening variables in explanations of the complex processes of historical change? Certainly in the past historians as well as sociologists have inclined toward generalizations. For Pirenne the commercial town of medieval Europe was the leaven required to transform the lump of feudal society; for Sjoborg the "pre-industrial city" was a parasitical growth draining off surplus production from the countryside; for almost all there was an inescapable duality between town and country.

The twelve essays in Towns and Societies serve not only to challenge these conclusions but also to examine cities from a thoroughly historical perspective. With two exceptions they are about particular towns in particular societies at particular times. It is the diversity rather than the uniformity of the urban experience which their authors are at pains to emphasize. In her excellent and provocative contribution, "Urban Growth and Family Structure in Medieval Genoa," Diane Owen Hughes emphasizes the fact that Genoa was different from Florence and also "in its extended families and constricted enclaves, its private spaces and inchoate civil life, its noble clans and artisan couples, an urban reality of its own."