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the poor of Philadelphia, much to the chagrin of their socio-economic betters. Several bread and election riots are cited to support the contention that the newly enfranchised poor posed a threat to the political status quo. Beyond that no evidence is presented that such a fear existed and was justified. No sustained critique of the misuse of power by any champion of the lower orders, which might have heightened their fear and suspicion, is mentioned.

Unable to substantiate fear as a motive for antipathy towards the poor, the author hits on moral rectitude as the determinant of contemporary attitudes. Poor people were categorized either as worthy, moral, and honest or vicious, immoral, and undeserving. In a series of loosely related chapters describing the conditions of the poor, the political structure of urban society and attitudes towards crime, public and private poor relief, and charity education, Alexander tells us that contemporaries responded to poverty by praising the virtues of honest poverty and by trying to convince the dishonest poor to emulate their morally superior counterparts.

Anxious to avoid inconvenient complications, Alexander omits all reference to other contemporary categorizations of poverty. What of the casual and permanent poor? Many of the relief projects and social institutions highlighted in this study catered specifically to these economic and life-cycle conditions of poverty. What about the transient and resident poor? If Philadelphia was similar to other cities on the eastern seaboard, it did not want to relieve poor people who belonged elsewhere. Much of the explanation for the eager promotion of the recommendations system was related to the perceived need to identify the poor, not to teach them deference as Alexander would have us believe.

Central to the discussion are two chapters on public poor relief which examine the ubiquitous controversy over outdoor relief. The house of employment, opened in Philadelphia in 1766, not only failed to act as a reformatory for the vicious poor, by 1789 it had become little more than a refuge for the permanent poor. This does not prove, however, the failure of reform so much as the growing magnitude of systemic poverty. Moreover, the elimination of public outdoor relief should be placed within the context either of the expansion of private relief, which Alexander examines in a separate chapter, or of economic expansion in the city, which he considers irrelevant to this analysis.

The penultimate chapter on the education of the poor is the only one in which the author allows that a consensus on attitudes towards the poor might not in fact have existed. For a debate arose between those who wanted to use education to keep the poor in their place and those who wished to provide the poor with opportunities to improve

their condition. Here again, however, the economic aspect is ignored. Whether or not education contributed to upward mobility, it indisputably affected an individual's ability to find gainful employment and thereby avoid the necessity of seeking relief. Indeed, whereas Alexander favours the rather outdated interpretation of social control to explain responses to poverty in the late eighteenth century, an economic explanation seems more plausible. Increasing population, greater extremes of poverty and wealth, and the emergence of the economy-conscious middle class all point to a desire to control, not the poor themselves, but the escalating expense of both relieving and reforming them.

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White, Jerry. *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1887-1920*. History Workshop Series. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. Pp.xvii, 301. Figures, maps, illustrations. \$30.00

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These two recent volumes in the History Workshop Series are further tributes to the good sense and fruitfulness of its conception and the inspirational drive and tenacity of its founding editor, Raphael Samuel. For more than ten years now, Samuel has been challenging the arcane exclusivism of the academic establishment in his attempt "to bring history closer to the central concerns of people's lives." By drawing on energies outside the profession (though welcoming co-operation with academics who share his concerns), he has created more than a new school, he has created a movement. History Workshop with its journal, monographs, conferences and distinctive "enthusiasms" (its book reviews are called just that) is avowedly socialist and primarily concerned with working-class history. What needs equal emphasis, however, is that, if this is "people's history," it is also often very good history, by several non-partisan criteria. In his own work and editorial direction, Samuel never lets zeal or sentiment excuse the need for scholarly rigour, and he has in particular pioneered the new study of local and oral history. Based upon some six years of often difficult interviews with a notorious East End criminal (Arthur Harding, 1886-) who flourished in the early years of the century, Samuel's own volume here is a *tour de force* of oral history. Jerry White's community study of a sub-enclave of London's artisanat within a specific built environment is an impressive piece of micro-history with an effective

use of oral testimony, by a man of whom Samuel in his foreword delights in telling us “his only professional qualifications ... are a failure to get ‘A’ level history.”

Through Harding’s words, Samuel relays an exceptionally vivid picture of life in a small, labyrinthine pocket of streets in Bethnal Green, much of it corroborated by the editor’s extensive cross-checking of contemporary sources. Among the most striking impressions conveyed is that of the almost Asiatic compress and traffic of bodies – the houses, yards and alleyways teemed with people (and not a few cows!). Remarkable too is the account of the complex permutations and contingencies of the mixed economy forced upon the poor in the low wage, overstocked, casual labour market of the East End. The Harding clan were relatively well placed in the drink and retail trades, but a combination of ill health and fecklessness drove Arthur’s immediate family into destitution. As a youngster, he was soon streetwise, passing almost imperceptibly from cadging, scavenging and odd jobs, to pilfering and petty crime. At sixteen, in the first of several spells in gaol, Harding perfected his criminal techniques, strong-arm style and knowledge of the law. Outside he picked pockets, passed counterfeit money, ran protection rackets, organized scabs and recruited street bullies for Mosley. On the one hand crime is represented as mundane. It is an inescapable and unremarkable occupational expedient – “to survive you’d got to swindle someone.” On the other hand it is part of a passionate nexus of loyalty and hatred, generosity and betrayal that enmeshed criminals, police and “ordinary” citizen alike. The “glamour of poverty” is a spurious, almost obscene concept, invoked only at a distance, but in the immediacy of Harding’s recollections slum life does take on the vibrancy of melodrama. Moreover this is not simply the nostalgia of hindsight but, paradoxically, an essential element in the book’s social realism.

No more than a half mile south of Harding’s domain lay the Rothschild Buildings, a model tenement built for the immigrant Jewish poor by the Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Company, “the ugly offspring of a reluctant paternalism,” as White puts it. Though bleak and barracks-like, the buildings represented a distinct advance in comfort and amenity over the rookeries and rough lodging houses that lay at their doorsteps. White provides a detailed reconstruction of life in this “island community,” its family and neighbourhood dynamics and, again, the various expedients of a mixed economy that countered the exigencies of poverty (and make nonsense of the frozen occupational categories of the decennial census). Readers of both books might care to speculate why White’s Jews none the less eschewed crime, whereas many of their co-religionists were deeply involved in Harding’s twilight world where crime and everyday life were interwoven. This is only one of the important questions raised by White’s sensitive consideration of both

complementary and competing determinants in tenement life – occupational, class and racial – over two or more generations, as Rothschild’s inmates lived out a telescoped version of the modern Jewish experience from the ghetto to a new diaspora.

We have there then two closely textured accounts of the relationships between social networks and the physical and economic constraints and opportunities of the urban village and its compelling sub-cultures, set within the *locus classicus* of contemporary social commentary and class anxiety, East End London. For the urban and social historian, there are rich pickings across the whole field of class and popular culture, and a ready-made exercise for themselves and their students in a comparative study with other notable personal and imaginative accounts of contemporary slum life – Robert Roberts’ *Classic Slum* and Arthur Morrison’s *Child of the Jago* in particular invite attention. Meanwhile, we can look forward to a companion volume from Samuel that will place Harding’s narrative more tightly in the local social context as well as the more general political economy of crime. On the evidence of White’s work, suggests Samuel, every street could be the subject of a book. Though one winces at the thought, these well-crafted works do much to advance the claims of local (and oral) history, and certainly justify the experiential rationale of the History Workshop.

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Folsom, Burton W., Jr. *Urban Capitalists: Entrepreneurs and City Growth in Pennsylvania’s Lackawanna and Lehigh Regions, 1800-1920*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981. Pp.xiv, 191. Tables, photos, maps.

Bold guys finish first, asserts Professor Folsom in his study of urban growth and leadership in the Lehigh and Lackawanna Valleys in eastern Pennsylvania during the years 1800 through 1920. Folsom effectively challenges social scientists who argue that environmental determinism is the key to understanding urbanization, not the individual. Folsom convincingly demonstrates that entrepreneurs overcame a lack of locational and initial advantages and even the absence of critical resources to promote city growth and an integrated urban order in the two regions.

Within the Lackawanna and Lehigh valleys, Folsom concentrates on the rise of Scranton and South Bethlehem as economic centres in their respective regions. Neither city had locational or initial advantages. In fact, both were founded long after settlement had begun in their valleys.