

Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques

Volume 19, 1987

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt19bn01>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

(1987). Book Notes / Références Bibliographiques. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 19, 253–258.

BOOK NOTES/ RÉFÉRENCES BIBLIOGRAPHIQUES

Robert J. Brym, *The Structure of the Canadian Capitalist Class* (Toronto: Garamond 1985).

EIGHT ESSAYS ARE presented here, organized into an introduction, a discussion of capitalist class boundaries and class cleavages, and a concluding section on the nature of capitalist class rule. William K. Carroll provides a sophisticated assessment of "Dependency, Imperialism and the Capitalist Class in Canada," while Michael Ornstein's "Canadian Capital and the Canadian State: Ideology in an Era of Crisis," will prove useful to many concerned with the current structural and ideological context. Representative of debates within political economy, these essays are an expression of the way in which recent analysis is challenging and building upon the foundation studies of Porter and Clement.

Donna Wilson, ed., *Democratic Socialism: The Challenge of the Eighties and Beyond* (Vancouver: New Star 1985).

THIS COLLECTION presents the discussions that took place at an October 1983 Vancouver conference on democratic socialism. Hailed as a gathering of "more than 150 leading left-wing thinkers and activists from Europe and North America," the resulting published proceedings are organized into four sections: the people, the economy, the government, and the world. There are the appropriate concerns with democracy, the arms race, the preservation of the welfare state, and the impact of technology, but the overriding preoccupation is with winning electoral power for social democratic parties.

Marc Raboy, *Old Passions, New Visions: Social Movements and Political Activism in Quebec* (Toronto: Between The Lines 1986).

THIS ECLECTIC collection of statements by a number of Quebec activists is a guide to the so-called "new social movements" in French Canada. Concerned with the struggles that reach beyond the PQ, the brief positions developed in this text outline the direction and character of the women's, ecological, peace, independence, and youth movements, as well as giving a glimpse of immigrant, cultural, and labour mobilizations. Reminiscent of Paul-Émile Borduas' *Refus Global*, some of the passions and visions presented here are a reminder that some politics never die, only move on to other constituencies. Consider, for instance, the Black Rock Manifesto (named for the memorial stone that sits in the traditionally anglo working-class district of Pointe Saint-Charles, commemorating the death of 6,000 immigrants in 1847, victims of a typhoid epidemic) penned by the playwright David Fennario and other Verdun-based advocates of the English-speaking working class. Its tone harkens back to the refusals of Borduas: "Yeah keep those peppers down on the farm and Rule Britannia with Griffintown following Westmount into wars that had nothing to do with them, dying for the fuckin British Empire in defence of the divine rights of British Petroleum and then getting hot at the French cause they had enough sense to stay out of that very bad joke called World War One. . . . And that's all history and who gives a fuck cause the chances are the Bomb will blow us all to bits any-

way. . . The Black Rock is not the myth of Sisyphus. We have pushed it up the hill and into your factories. It is washed with blood and now it shall be washed with the creative energies of a new generation. . . The referee has made a bad call." (198-201)

R. Douglas Francis, *Frank H. Underhill: Intellectual Provocateur* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1986).

UNDERHILL IS probably Canada's best known, least published historian. This concise and balanced account of his life as an intellectual provocateur explains why Underhill achieved the stature he did, keeping himself in the public eye as he travelled the road from moderate socialist intellectual to curator of the liberal tradition.

Paul W. Bennett and Cornelius J. Jaenen, eds., *Emerging Identities: Selected Problems and Interpretations in Canadian History* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall 1986).

THIS BOOK SHOULD prove useful to undergraduate students being introduced to Canadian history. It is composed of twenty "problems" and interpretive issues, stretching from the phenomenon of white-native contact to regional identifications of Canadians in the post-1960 years. For labour specialists, the chapter on the working-class response to industrialism in the late nineteenth century is most relevant, although attention will obviously be paid to a host of other sections, including those covering social reform in British North America, the women's movement (1880-1929), regional protest in the 1920s and 1930s, and Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Subtitled "Living Wage or Workers' Control," the chapter on workers is structured in the same manner as the rest of the text. A brief three-page introduction situates the subject considered, supplemented by

about ten pages of contemporary comment from newspapers, royal commissions, and texts. This is then followed by another ten pages drawn from conflicting historical interpretations. All of these passages are introduced by the editors and other historians, who explain the meaning and interpretive differentiation of the material presented. Closing each chapter is a short, but discriminating, bibliography that provides a useful guide to further reading. Those instructors that want to convey to students both a sense of what happened in the past, and an appreciation of what debate turns on and why, are well-advised to consider adoption of this collection.

Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press 1986).

AUTHORITATIVE AND innovative, this study of the white and black societies of the political economy of the tobacco-growing Chesapeake region is an exciting exploration of the household economy, domestic patriarchy, and class formation of an important region. Kulikoff's style is a bit stilted and monotonous, a problem compounded by the length of the text, but in its blending of the structures of gentry and slave, man and woman, *Tobacco and Slaves* is an impressive accomplishment.

Harry J. Ausmus, *Will Herberg: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1986).

WILL HERBERG is one of those twentieth-century figures who moved from "left" to "right." A communist during the 1920s and 1930s, he drifted rightward into the socialist camp during the 1940s, and by the 1960s had embraced the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, considering himself a Burkean conservative. His most famous work is undoubtedly *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, but this bibliog-

raphy lists 672 separate pieces of writing, from his "Coal Miners: Here and in Russia" in the *Young Worker* (1925) to a review of a book of essays on biblical theology that appeared in the *Library Journal* (1976).

Carrol Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press 1985).

SMITH-ROSENBERG IS an essayist of considerable distinction, perhaps best known for her "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America." This collection gathers together essays that she has written over the last fifteen years, some unpublished. While she pays only cursory and fleeting attention to class, Smith-Rosenberg's focus on the sexual, psychic, and symbolic content of historical development demands serious consideration on the part of labour historians.

Asa Briggs, *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs* Volume One: *Words, Numbers, Places, People* and Volume Two: *Images, Problems, Standpoints, Forecasts* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1985).

BRIGGS HAS LONG been one of the best known of the English social historians, a historian with eclectic interests and a capacity to synthesize imaginatively. These two volumes gather many of his essays together, some of which have been extensively revised. "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth Century England" repays reading today, especially given the theoretical congratulation with which many of the new exponents of language cover their socio-linguistic excursions into the past. It is the lead essay in the first volume. Perhaps the most notable essay in the second volume is "Cholera and Society in the Nineteenth Century,"

which first appeared in *Past & Present* (1961). But labour specialists will find the first section of that volume, devoted to poets and novelists, useful as well, given the stress on Morris, the novels of the new urban landscape of the nineteenth century, and the Luddism of *Shirley*.

Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm 1985).

THIRTEEN ESSAYS, accompanied by the editors' introduction and bibliography, comprise this text on the urban experience of a people central to the making of the modern world. Bristol, York, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Edinburgh merit in-depth treatment, while selected aspects of the Irish in other cities — their impact on London elections, their role in the disorders of riot and anti-Catholic uprising, and their contribution to radicalism in the 1815-50 years — form the substance of other chapters.

N.F.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1985).

THIS RECENT TEXT incorporates much new work on the Industrial Revolution, especially that which argues for the slow rate of growth over the course of the period 1700-1850. Not meant to be a survey, but equally distancing itself from the detail of a monograph, it is neither fish nor fowl. Undergraduate students will be frustrated by its endless tables and equations, while specialists in the field will want a bit more than its generalities and its fence-sitting. The chapter on economic growth and the standard of living, for instance, reminds us that "adjustments to the national expenditure evidence on consumption to accommodate the effects of reduced leisure and increased longevity are controversial but could be large. Maybe the effects would cancel out, but not necessarily. Thus the 'quality of life' questions remain unresolved." (112)

Carolyn Steedman, Cathy Urwin, and Valerie Walkerdine, eds., *Language, Gender and Childhood* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1985).

NINE ESSAYS address the ways in which gender and childhood were constructed through language, education, song, and a culture that turned on changing, but nevertheless persistent, levels of differentiation between the public and private spheres. The focus is English and the chronological sweep carries the reader over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although, the 1880-1950 years are developed weakly. For those concerned with labour the most useful essay will undoubtedly be Catherine Hall's "Private Persons versus Public Someones: Class, Gender and Politics in England, 1780-1850," which introduces the volume.

Gerald A. Dorfman, *British Trade Unionism Against the Trades Union Congress* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press 1983).

SOMETHING OF A preface to the Trades Union Congress role in the miners' strike of 1984, this book analyzes the TUC's ineffectiveness in influencing government policy. Arguing that individual member unions have jealously guarded their own power, Dorfman depicts the TUC as capable only of sabotaging policies its members oppose but powerless to convince government to adopt alternatives that the labour movement favours. The result is that the recent history of the TUC has been one of stalemate, stagnation, and defeat, a history that Dorfman outlines in chapters on the 1978-9 "winter of discontent" and the sorry record of the early Thatcher years. What the battle of 1984 revealed, however, may well be outside of Dorfman's conceptual framework: the stark reality that there is no possibility of dialogue with particular kinds of government and that what is required is an unprecedented class unity and militant resolve. In any event, neither was forthcoming

from the TUC in the years that followed the publication of this study, a period of intense class conflict and sharp defeat for the British trade unions.

Clive Emsley and James Walvin, *Artisans, Peasants, and Proletarians, 1760-1860: Essays Presented to Gwyn Williams* (London: Croom Helm 1985).

ANY *FESTSCHRIFT* PRESENTED to Gwyn Williams had better cover a lot of ground. As the bibliography at the end of this book attests, Williams has ranged far and wide in his writing, which includes 10 books, a number of edited collections, and almost 30 articles, not to mention radio scripts, plays, and reviews. He is as at home in the Italian council movement as he is in the art of Goya, as accomplished a commentator on Welsh history as he is on artisan radicalism in France and England. The eight essays that comprise this collection exemplify the comparative perspective, focus on the popular classes and concern themselves with forms of struggle and resistance that Williams has long been associated with. From the American Revolution and the anti-slavery crusade through rural revolt in southern England and the artisan impact on the nineteenth-century labour movement, the contributors walk ground suggested by Williams. If this book of *writings* thus conveys some sense of Gwyn Williams' impact on modern historiography, it must be said that an appreciation of his power as an orator awaits another medium.

Dirk Hoerder, ed., *Labor Migration in the Atlantic Economies: The European and North American Working Classes During the Period of Industrialization* (Westport, CT: Greenwood 1985).

MOST LABOUR HISTORIANS of necessity deal with migration and the immigrants that populate their locales and periods of study. Dirk Hoerder has assembled an impressive collection of eighteen essays on this process within the transatlantic

community, providing as well an introduction to the subject and a closing bibliography. Some of the chapters reprint essays that have already appeared, such as Sewell's "The Working Class of Marseilles" and Hobsbawm's "Working Classes and Nations," but many of the contributions are original pieces of research. All are substantially researched and in their collective sweep provide commentary on continental Europe, Australia, and the United States. Reference to Canada is sparse, and Britain is probably underrepresented given the importance of the English and Scots migrations to North America; the Irish fare a bit better, but not much. Germany, Hoerder's home base, however, is the subject of a number of treatments. An innovative part of the volume is the closing section on "Acculturation Twice: Return Migration," which deals with the remigration of European peoples after the termination of their new world sojourn.

David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984).

THE PECULIARITIES OF the German historical experience — the disjuncture between economic and social development; the hegemony of Prussian bureaucrats, officers, and Junker landowners; the heavy-handed state; the distinctive mind-set of the mystical "German" — have long been a historical staple. In this deliberately controversial book, Blackbourn and Eley take some swipes at what they argue is a hardened orthodoxy that inhibits new questions about the German past and reproduces the same sorry interpretive conventions. Against German exceptionalism the authors posit the "discreet charm of the bourgeoisie," uncovering a bourgeois revolution in nineteenth-century Germany that, for all its lack of liberalism, was as potent a force in the

rise of modern Germany as was the bourgeoisie in other advanced capitalist economies of the West.

Robert Shenton, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1986).

THIS SHORT BOOK is of interest to more than those concerned with Third World development or African history. Almost 60 years of development are scrutinized by Shenton, who sensibly argues that merchant capital has been a two-edged sword cutting through the history of Northern Nigeria. As a powerful catalyst of social transformation, it worked to undermine the established social relations of the pre-colonial state and economy. While the resulting changes were enormous, explored in a series of impressively-researched chapters on the consolidation, concentration, and centralization of colonial capital, they were also barriers to the full-scale realization of capitalism in a country that was overwhelmingly agricultural. The threats of famine and disease were thus intensified rather than banished, exposing Northern Nigerian society to the crises of an undeveloped capitalism. In the capitalist world, but not of it, Northern Nigeria suffered the hard consequences of undeveloped colonial development: by the mid-twentieth century the rural producers of Northern Nigeria were an impoverished and chronically indebted peasantry.

Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985).

THIS IS A pessimistic book. According to the author, economic interest cannot provide a justification for socialism and, therefore, the most that can realistically be developed is a class compromise that will lead to the improvement of capitalism. Social democracy, if incapable of producing socialism, is just what

Dr. Przeworski orders. Socialism is simply too far off, and, again according to Przeworski, will not happen until it "once again becomes a social movement and not solely an economic one, when it learns from the women's movement, when it reassimilates cultural issues." One wonders just what kind of socialism Przeworski is talking about that is *solely* economic, that is devoid of cultural stands, and that has not had something to contribute to matters of central concern to women. But with this kind of caricature firmly embedded in his mind, Przeworski closes his book with words that all social democrats should ponder: "The struggle for improving capitalism is as essential as ever before. But we should not confuse this struggle with the quest for socialism." (248) Indeed, we should not.

Hans Mayer, *Outsiders: A Study in Life and Letters* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1984).

THE GERMAN LITERARY critic Hans Mayer provides an account of alienation through examination of the depiction of women, homosexuals, and Jews in the writing of Shaw, Brecht, Eliot, Sand, Mailer, and Genet, among others. Those interested in radicalism will find the chapter entitled "Comrade Shylock" — an interpretation of Trotsky's *My Life and Literature and Revolution* — an innovative probe into the revolutionary aesthetics of the man who once said: "If the revolution in the interests of developing material production is obliged to set up a centralized, socialist system, so must it at the same time, and from the very first, establish and assure an *anarchistic* regime of intellectual freedom."

B.D.P.

Talkin' Union: Music Lore History (Box 5349, Takoma Pk., MD 20912, USA).

EDITED BY Saul Schneiderman, *Talkin' Union* began publishing in 1981. Now in its sixth year, it has reached number 13 and appears to be growing in size and depth. *TU* "presents the music, folklore and history of today's labor movement." It includes stories, songs, poems, photos, and cartoons "home-made by America's greatest resource — its working people." Recent issues have included articles on the Almanac Singers, Bruce Springsteen, Labor Murals, and much, much more. This magazine combines the history of working-class struggle with vivid expression of contemporary working-class culture. I highly recommend it.

John H.M. Laslett, *Nature's Noblemen: The Fortunes of the Independent Collier in Scotland and the American Midwest, 1855-1885* (Los Angeles: Institute of Industrial Relations 1983).

THIS BRIEF MONOGRAPH presents the preliminary results of Laslett's ongoing study of Scottish coal miners on both sides of the Atlantic up to World War I. Here the comparison involves only Scotland and the American midwest but Laslett apparently plans to consider Nova Scotia as well. While still mainly a report of ongoing research, the volume deserves attention as well for its interesting introduction on "The Need for Comparative Social History."

G.S.K.