

GIBSON-BRYDON, Thomas R. C. – *The Moral Mapping of Victorian and Edwardian London: Charles Booth, Christian Charity, and the Poor-but-Respectable*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016. Pp. 226.

Charles Booth and his vast survey of London poverty around the turn of the twentieth century has attracted attention from numerous historians, both as a source of information on everyday life among the poor and as a document of middle-class attitudes to poverty in the late-Victorian years. However, Booth also paid considerable attention to the religious life of the London poor and how religion could provide a “way out” from destitution, an aspect of his work that has been strangely neglected. *The Moral Mapping of Victorian and Edwardian London* is an attempt to draw attention to the third section of Booth's 17-volume *The Life and Labour of the People in London*, the seven volumes published in 1902-1903 under the heading “Religious Influences.” In these books, Booth and his associates presented findings based on interviews with 1,800 religious officials and church-goers. The study by Thomas Gibson-Brydon provides a close reading of these interviews to shed light on the role of religion in poor London and on Booth's social scheme. In emphasizing Booth's stance on religion and charity, Gibson-Brydon claims that earlier assessments of Booth have been erroneous, assuming a “humane” and “sensitive” attitude to the poor, while acknowledgment of his religious notions shows that he was highly judgmental towards many of the social groups he identified, suggesting that supportive charity be directed only at the “poor-but-respectable.” Booth's picture was based on current moral-religious ideas of “character” based on the fear of various “weakening” influences upon the moral fibre of the working classes.

The book is divided into six chapters, each of which focuses on a special group or aspect of the religious culture of the poor of London. The two initial chapters look at Booth himself and how his religious struggles laid the basis for his religious investigation; the following two focus on the interviews made with ministers and charity workers and the issues and obstacles that they encountered; and the final two chapters examine the subjects of the “Religious Influences” series: the working class and the poor. The confrontation between the Booth team and their interview subjects is the main theme of the study. Gibson-Brydon emphasizes among other things the prejudiced attitude of the surveyors towards women charity workers, the way various kinds of charity worked on a purely practical level, and how alcohol affected the life of the poor. The discussion throughout is confident and illuminating, opening up new avenues for studying and re-evaluating aspects of working-class life. Yet, at the same time, the topic wavers between examinations of the charity workers, of the Booth surveyors, and of the poor people themselves and their living conditions.

The reason for this vacillation might be the book's route from manuscript to printed volume. Its author Thomas Gibson-Brydon, whose promise as a social historian this study certainly illustrates at its best moments, tragically died in a car accident just after completing his doctoral thesis. The book's editor states in the preface that Gibson-Brydon's thesis upon publication has been heavily edited

down from its original 850 pages. The present volume is slim and concise, and one assumes that quite a bit has been excised. This editing is a cause for concern; as reader, one feels that the book inadequately presents its aims and purposes. Reading the introductory chapter, one cannot help but wonder what the book is about: Booth or his subjects? Several phrases suggest that it is the interviewees of Booth's religious survey who are in focus, and yet the first chapters almost exclusively deal with Booth and his faith. The final lines of the introduction open up a thought-provoking line of inquiry, however, asking "Who hierarchised poor London?" and indicating that the working people "themselves were intent on creating and maintaining poor respectability and hierarchical relations on every rung of London society" (p. 17).

This struggle between various factions on claiming the prerogative to interpret the problems of poor London is the book's true topic, and it is revisited with increasing urgency throughout the empirical chapters. If one reads the book as a study of notions of morality and hierarchy in various social strata, then it is an insightful and confident foray into the complex relations among various viewpoints, dealing closely with several illuminating examples of how ministers and charity workers related to the people they encountered in their work and how the poor related to them in turn. In the sections detailing such relations towards the end of the book, Gibson-Brydon formulates a welcome criticism of received notions about the late-Victorian lower classes handed down almost unaltered from Marxist labour historians to post-Marxist, post-structuralist historians. Instead of trying to find proof of a "class consciousness" among the London poor or of progressive "radicalism" among working women, Gibson-Brydon is one of those rare historians who actually looks at how the lower classes of this age acted and thought, giving us fascinating insights into the internal relations of working-class life. At their most revealing, his findings certainly fulfil the aim he phrases of demonstrating "to historians that working-class social relations ran on hierarchical, not class lines, and Booth's survey gives scholars a good idea of how hierarchical relations worked" (p. 106). I only wish we would be given some more of these findings.

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GRENIER, Benoît et Michel MORISSETTE (eds) – *Nouveaux regards en histoire seigneuriale au Québec*. Québec: Septentrion, 2015. Pp. 483.

What images of the seigneurial regime, Jean-René Thuot asks in this volume, should we wish to preserve today? For many people outside Québec, and particularly non-historians, seigneurial tenure probably evokes an antiquated image from the distant past. If English-speakers have much notion of it, they likely conjure up the long lots spreading back from the banks of the St. Lawrence