The Proletarian Other: Charles Booth and the Politics of Representation

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The Life and Labour of the People of London was a research project that began in 1886 and was completed 17 years later. It was probably the largest private research project ever carried out in Britain, and it detailed every aspect of London life in every district of London. It is a mass of detail, moving from maps and statistics to house by house depictions of streets and moving biographies of ordinary people.

The Life and Labour Inquiry was co-ordinated by a successful businessman, Charles Booth. Charles Booth was not a Londoner. He was born in Liverpool in 1840 and came to London as a young man. Although he was the shaping force behind the project - and its primary funder - the Inquiry was very much a collective endeavour, involving a team of dedicated researchers, mostly young men and women.

This paper is about the politics of representation in the London of the late 1880s. It will centre on the production of Life and Labour, perhaps *the* founding text of modern British urban sociology. But it will place that production in the context of its time. The 1880s, I will argue, were a period when the proletariat of London made a great attempt to represent itself politically. At exactly the same time, bourgeois writers, like Booth, were making great strides in attempting to represent that same class in texts like Life and Labour. These two processes cannot be separated from each other. I will focus on the personage of Beatrice Potter (or Beatrice Webb as she became), a figure who participated in both the working class movement and Booth's Inquiry. The encounter between these two processes was, I will argue, a class encounter. There are two sets of themes I want to look at around this encounter. First, there is the theme of *spaces of representation*: the proletarian public spaces of representation (such as Victoria Park, the Mile End Waste, the working men's clubs), the new bourgeois textual spaces of representation (such as Booth's Inquiry), and the mixed spaces that served as a sort of conveyor belt between the two (such as Toynbee Hall, Oxford House, the Halls of Science). Second, there is the theme of the *eugenic imagination*, the representational framework in which the middle classes approached their encounter with the proletariat, a framework, I will

argue, that would be embedded in the emerging discourse of urban sociology.

The period of time that this paper will deal with runs from around 1882, when Engels wrote "You ask me what the English workers think of colonial policy. Well, exactly what they think of any policy - the same as what the middle classes think. There is, after all, no labour party here, only conservatives and liberal radicals, and the workers cheerfully go snacks in England's monopoly of the world market and colonies."[1] It finishes around 1892 when he wrote

> today there is indeed "Socialism in England" again, and plenty of it... Socialism of the working-class and of the middle class, for, verily, that abomination of abominations, Socialism, has not only become respectable, but has actually donned evening dress and lounges lazily on drawing-room *causeuses*...

>   What I consider far more important... is the revival of the East End of London. That immense haunt of misery is no longer the stagnant pool it was six years ago. It has shaken off its torpid despair, has returned to life, and has become the home of what is called the "New Unionism"... the masses, whose adhesion gave them strength, were rough, neglected, looked down upon by the working-class aristocracy; but they had this immense advantage, that *their minds were virgin soil*, entirely free of the inherited "respectable" bourgeois prejudices which hampered the brains of the better situated "old" Unionists... the revival of the East End remains one of the greatest and most fruitful facts of this *fin de siecle*, and glad and proud I am to have lived to see it.[2]

The main themes of this paper are encapsulated here: the immense drive of the "lowest" elements of the proletariat, especially in the East End, to represent themselves; the accompanying rise of a genteel "socialism" in the drawing rooms of the West End (a movement, I will argue, that laid the foundations for British urban sociology); and the eventual capture, by the West End movement, of the minds of the East End leaders, and the winning of their minds to "respectable" bourgeois prejudices.

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1 in a letter to Karl Kautsky, September 1882, in Marx and Engels (1991).

[2] "Preface" to the English edition of Condition of the Working Class in England written in January 1892, Engels (1973).

This paper will be divided into two parts, the first dealing with spaces of representation, the second with the eugenic imagination. I will look first at the rise of the working class in 1880s London, a rise I will describe as the shaking off of representation. In looking at this movement, I will note the struggle over space that went on in London between the classes. Then I will look at the "new consciousness of sin" among the middle classes that resulted from the rise of the working class. This will provide the context for examining the discovery of the social and the emergence of urban sociology generally, and Booth's Inquiry in particular. The main task of this new discipline was, I will argue, the separation of the respectable working class from the lumpen "residuum", a political task dictated by the situation. I will look at the ideological frameworks (positivism, Darwinism, eugenics) which mediated the encounter, to show how these became embedded in subsequent urban sociology, as well as subsequent social policy, social work and social welfare.

PART I: SPACES OF REPRESENTATION
It is not in country but in town that 'terra incognita' needs to be written on our social maps   Charles Booth

THE WORKING CLASS REFUSES REPRESENTATION
The late 1880s were dominated by two working class political movements: the unemployed agitation and "New Unionism", the self-organization of the unskilled and casualized sectors of the working class. Both these movements were particularly prominent in London: the unemployed fought their battles in highly visible West End public spaces like Trafalgar Square, while the centre of New Unionism was the docks and sweatshops of the East End. Previously, leadership of the working class movement had come from the "aristocracy of labour" (the skilled artisans) and from middle class intellectuals. Now the supposedly least "advanced", the lowest of the low, were coming into prominence. This was *refusal of representation*, an insistence that now the task of the emancipation of the workers would be carried out by the workers themselves.

Here I can only give a brief sketch of the working class movement.[3] The unskilled workers of East London, working in harsh conditions for low wages in industries wracked by seasonal and cyclical slumps, began, in their hundreds of thousands, to organize themselves into unions and

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[3] For fuller descriptions the working class movement of this period, see, for instance, Fishman (1988, 1975:197), Webb and Webb (1907:361ff), Walkowitz (1992:76-80), Nethercot (1961:254-77), Stedman Jones (1984:ch16-17, 1983).

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strike for change: first the matchgirls and the Jewish tailors, then the Bethnal Green matchbox makers and South London tin box makers, and then the shop assistants, chain makers, fur pullers, gas workers, cap makers, hairdressers, printers' labourers, stokers, furriers, house-painters and decorators, cigarette makers and tramwaymen. As well as industrial combination, the lowest proletarians began to organize politically. In November 1888, for instance, there was an International Trades Union Congress with delegates from the dockers, matchgirls and others, including the proletarian socialists John Burns, Tom Mann and Keir Hardie; there were elections to the London School Board with mass working class participation securing the victory of printers' union leader AG Cook (after an industrial dispute between printers and the Board) and of the socialists, Annie Besant and Stewart Headlam (Cook for Finsbury, Besant and Headlam for Tower Hamlets); and there were elections to the newly formed London County Council, with John Burns winning a seat.

FOR PROLETARIAN SPACE

Perhaps more spectacular than the New Unionism, however, were the unemployed agititations of the mid-1880s. In February 1886, a mass meeting of the unemployed was held in Trafalgar Square. When the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) took the platform, all hell broke loose and a parade to Hyde Park turned into a riot, with symbols of wealth and privilege (such as the Carlton Club) attacked. For the next two days, the rich were reduced to a state of terror as mobs of "roughs" in their thousands gathered menacingly in Trafalgar Square, Deptford, Elephant and Castle and Cumberland Market. A new police chief was appointed, Sir Charles Warren, a hero of the colonial wars in Africa, to introduce a military spirit into metropolitan policing.[4]

The warm summer of 1886 led to many unemployed "roughs" sleeping out in Trafalgar Square and St. James' Park. "Agitation" among them by members of the SDF gained much support and a winter of confrontations between the police and militants ensued. In August and again October of 1887, the SDF called mass demonstrations in the Square. The October rally, with speeches from Herbert Burrows and Henry George and the raising of a black flag, led to police hostility; when a second procession entered the Square behind a red flag, they were charged by the police with many arrests. As a result, the police banned

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[4] The use of colonial policing (whether in Africa or in Ireland) as a blueprint for the policing of the "jungles" of the metropolis is significant.

meetings in the Square "which for a whole generation," the Webbs later wrote, "had served as the forum of the London agitator" (1907:372). The police's first act under the new ban was the arrest, not of an unemployed person, but of the Irish MP, William O'Brien, for preaching Irish liberty in the Square. The Metropolitan Radical Federation called together Radical clubs, Fabians, the SDF and the William Morris' Socialist League and resolved to challenge the police.

The resulting demonstration, on November 13 1887, came to be known as Bloody Sunday. Mounted police, Life Guards and Scots Guards charged the marchers. The working class leaders, John Burns and Cunninghame Graham MP, were imprisoned for breaking through police lines. The following Sunday, there was a disorganized attempt to retake the Square; the police hospitalized many (including another MP, Fergus O'Connor) and killed one man. The casualty, a bystander named A Linnel, became a working class martyr; his funeral attracted 200,000 marchers, a sea of red flags, and some green banners of Irish freedom and yellow pennants of the radical clubs. Two weeks later, there was a second death from injuries sustained on Bloody Sunday, that of William Cunner, an unemployed Deptford painter.[5]

An important feature of these events was the cleavage it opened between the lumpen masses and those socialists who sought to distance themselves from their activities. This was a defining moment for the newly formed Fabian Society, the socialist organization Beatrice Webb would join and her husband to be, Sidney, had helped form. The Webbs' biographer, Lisanne Radice, writes that the events of February 1886 "frightened the majority of the Fabians, including Sidney, and encouraged them to separate themselves both ideologically and organizationally from the SDF" (1984:59).

As well as attempting to capture new West End spaces for the proletarian public sphere, the working class of the East End developed

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[5] One of the reasons I have dwelt on these events is their contemporary resonance. Firstly, the 1997 Reclaim the Streets/Liverpool dockers occupation of Trafalgar Square and the bloody police assaults on it, not to mention similar events in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square during the summer of 1994 over the Criminal Justice Act or the Poll Tax riots of 1991 - these events followed very similar patterns to the events of the 1880s. Indeed, every decade sees these sorts of moments. That the participants refuse to listen to the calming words of their "leaders" (as in the Poll Tax and CJA riots) is testimony to the same sort of refusal of representation that characterized the 1880s. Secondly, it is interesting to note that before the 1880s, the sight of homeless people in the fashionable West End was rare, making it an object of police and bourgeois fear when it became generalized. Although Tony Blair's pronouncements on "aggressive beggars" captures something of those attitudes, on the whole the generalized - and routinized - homelessness of today does not generate that sort of feeling.

other spaces of representation within their own "territory". Victoria Park on a Sunday or Bank Holiday and the Mile End Waste on a Saturday night were transformed into vast open air debating society, where a babble of raucous voices competed for attention: secularists, socialists, Primitive Methodists, birth control advocates, anarchists. These discursive spaces were free from the respectable proprieties of the bourgeois public sphere.[6]

Indoors, the working men's clubs played the same role. Booth recorded that there were 115 in the East End and Hackney. Thirty-two of these wouldn't open their doors to him (he assumed them to be gambling dens); thirty-three were mission or philanthropic clubs, all but one being teetotal; fifty were working men's clubs proper, mostly affiliated to the CIU (Working Men's Club and Institute Union) or Federation (of Working Men's Clubs). All but one of these latter sold beer, and indeed beer was the main means of making the club independent, and therefore a symbol of autonomy. "The bar," Booth wrote, "is the centre and support of a working men's club - the pole of the tent." Of the pure working men's clubs, eighteen were just social and thirty-two were primarily political (mostly Liberal or Radical, some Socialist, one Irish Home Rule) but all had libraries or reading rooms and took the left-wing papers. The biggest by far in the East End were: the United Radical, a hotbed of political activism; the Boro' of Hackney; the Workers' Circle (Booth calls it "the Jews' Club") on Great Alie Street, the only teetotal independent club, and a centre for socialist debate; and the University Club. The University Club was originally a philanthropic club, but became independent, strictly confining its membership to the working class to show, as its president told Booth, "that a people's palace can be built out of the people's pence."[7]

The clubs and the outdoor debates represented an *alternative public sphere*, an alternative sphere of self-representation. A public sphere is an arena or social space where meanings, ideas and demands are articulated, distributed and negotiated. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993) use the term *proletarian public sphere* for a public sphere of the working class, a counter-public to the "bourgeois public sphere" of the

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[6] For descriptions of Victoria Park on a May Sunday, see Coleman (1997:58-9, 74-5) and Webb (1982:206-8). Booth wrote that "the exercise in which the people [of the East End] most delight is discussion [which] flourishes yet more freely in the open air" (1st edn, Vol. 1, pp94-124, in Fried and Elman 1969:228).

[7] All Booth quotes from 1st edn, Vol. 1, pp94-124, in Fried and Elman 1969:212-19. On the symbolism of the bar, see Stedman Jones (1983:198). Incidentally, this was not just an East End phenomenon. The Hatcham Liberal Club, one of the largest working men's clubs, where Fabian and SDF socialists debated with secularists, progressives and radicals, still stands in New Cross.

dominant class. Central to it is "sensually graspable solidarity" (28) and "social wealth" ("sociality - co-operation - freedom - awareness - universality - wealth of needs and of subjective human sensuality" (81-2)). It is defined by its striving for *autonomy* from the dominant society (what I have called the refusal of representation), often in a particular *location* in space (in this case, the East End). But, unlike the vanguard party or "camp", it is also heterogeneous, open and diffuse.

However, as the East End's proletarian public sphere emerged and its striving for self-representation strengthened, the West End began to pay more and more attention to it.

A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN

Coinciding with the physical presence of the lumpen masses in the West End and the mass organization of casual workers in the East End, the presence of the proletariat was also felt in the imagination of the rich: a slew of texts brought a consciousness of another world into the parlours of the bourgeoisie. In 1881, the left-wing writer, Henry George, published his Poverty and Progress which stirred up the political imaginary of the poor and shook the complacency of the rich. In 1883, a missionary, Rev. Mearns, published the sensational Bitter Cry of Outcast London, a best-selling exposé of "darkest" East London. In 1885, the left-of-centre mass middle class weekly, Pall Mall Gazette, published extracts from an SDF report showing that 25% of Londoners were in poverty.

The result of all this was what Beatrice Webb famously called "a new consciousness of sin among men of intellect and men of property" (1948:154). For her, this expressed itself first in philanthropy (Lord Shaftesbury, Owen Chadwick), then in aesthetics (Carlyle, Ruskin), then in social science (JS Mill in his later years, Marx, Henry George, Toynbee, the Fabians), and finally in growing state regulation of social life (ibid:154-8). For Gareth Stedman Jones, there was certainly consciousness of sin (expressed in the bourgeois vogue for "slumming" or "East Ending"), but "the more predominant feeling was not guilt but fear" - fear of the power of the urban poor (1984:285). In other words, the emergence of "the social" as an object of inquiry[8] was a bourgeois reaction to the emergence of the proletariat as a social subject. In the next part of this paper, I will try to show how this middle-class movement, based on guilt and fear, passed from philanthropy (and the

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[8] For a more sophisticated analysis of the discovery of the social, see Burchell et all (1991).

mixed representational spaces that created) to sociology (and its new textual spaces) and finally to social policy.

HETEROSOCIAL SPACES

I am taking the term "heterosocial spaces" from Judith Walkowitz, who uses it to describe the new spaces of the 1880s in which men and women could come together. These spaces, however, were also spaces of class encounter. There are three types of heterosocial space that concern us here: the spaces where mainly female middle class people acted out the role of charity worker, the spaces where mainly male middle class people bought bourgeois culture to the masses, and the spaces where middle class people of both genders and working men came together in discussion. All of these spaces emerged directly from the new bourgeois consciousness of guilt and fear. They lay the foundations for the subsequent emergence of urban sociology.

Charity work

The 1880s saw the rise of professional "scientific charity". The most important figure in this was Octavia Hill, who bought and managed reformed housing developments wherein the contact between the "civilized" charity workers and the tenants would "improve" the latter.[9] She trained a generation (mainly women) in her practices. Most of these would go on to abandon her classical political economy for "new liberal" or socialist views in their quest to strengthen the "scientific" basis of work amongst the poor. Beatrice Potter was one such protégé who went on, via sociology, to socialism.[10] Scientific charity was the blueprint for social work, in that "the everyday activities of living, the hygienic care of household members, the previously trivial features of interactions between adults and children, were to be anatomized by experts, judged in terms of their social costs and consequences and subject to regimes of education or reform" (Rose 1996:49).

Settlement work

For philanthropically inclined males who wanted to go among the poor, the 1880s saw the rise of settlement houses, people's palaces and philanthropic working men's clubs. Toynbee House in Whitechapel,

[9] She also campaigned for the preservation of open spaces and parks. To introduce a note of South-East London parochialism, it was her we have to thank for the existence of Hillyfields in Brockley.

[10] cf Walkowitz (1992:52-8). Potter's 1883 diary entries give a flavour of the new cult of East Ending: "it is distinctly *advantageous to us* to go amongst the poor. We can get from them an experience of life which is novel and interesting; the study of their lives and surroundings gives us facts wherewith we can attempt to solve the social problems; contact with them on the whole develops our finer qualities" (1982:85).

started by Samuel Barnett, Oxford House, started under the aegis of Octavia Hill, and Walter Besant's People's Palace on the Mile End Road (which now houses Queen Mary College) were all institutions intended to bring culture and education to the benighted people of the East End. Toynbee Hall and Oxford House were "settlement houses"; university-educated young men lived in them and were supposed to form bonds with the working men of the slums that would civilize the latter. Male settlement workers, like Hill's female rent collectors, entered the formerly closed spaces of the working class. As with Hill's young ladies, settlement men were in the forefront of the development of "new liberal" and socialist political economy and urban sociology. Three of Booth's assistants were Toynbee residents.[11]

Debating clubs

Men of the lower orders like Sidney Webb or John Burns were able to enter the formerly closed middle-class world through heterosocial spaces like the British Museum Reading Rooms, drawing-room debating societies, and liberal clubs (which were really more formalized drawing-room societies). In the Zetetical Society, the Fabian Society or the Hampstead Historical Society, intelligent people of different classes encountered each other (although few, if any, working class women, found their way here). It was in the British Museum Reading Room that the bourgeois Miss Potter met the young Cockney shop-keeper's son, Sidney Webb; their marriage was *barely* conceivable in the early 1890s but it would have been utterly unthinkable a decade earlier.[12] In these spaces, however, and in the settlement houses, working men had to submit to the proprieties of bourgeois discourse, modify their accents and language, and attempt to deport themselves in the manner deemed correct. In this sense, the heterosocial spaces and the settlement houses were very much part of the bourgeois public sphere, in sharp contrast to the proletarian public sphere of the East End (the working men's clubs, the open air debates). As such, the heterosocial spaces served as conveyor belts transmitting bourgeois ideologies into the working class. The emerging modes of representation developed by the bourgeoisie (including urban sociology) were worked out here and found their confirmation here.

THE TEXTUAL SPACE OF SOCIOLOGY

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[11] cf Simey and Simey (1960:101), Walkowitz (1992:59-61).

[12] cf Walkowitz (1992:68-70), Radice (1984:50).

For the Webbs, writing in 1892, the 1880s "new consciousness of sin" gave rise to sociology.

> The discontent was fanned by well-intentioned if somewhat sentimental philanthropists, who were publishing their experiences in the sweated industries and the slums of the great cities. The Bitter Cry of Outcast London and other gruesome stories were revealing, not only to the middle class, but also to the "aristocracy of labour", whole areas of life... With the middle class the compunction thus excited resulted in elaborate investigations issuing inconclusive reports.... And, more important than all of these, Mr. Charles Booth, a great merchant and shipbuilder, began in 1886, at his own expense, a systematic statistical inquiry into the actual social conditions of the whole population of London, the impressive results of which have since reverberated from one end of the kingdom to the other.

> The outcome of the investigations thus set on foot was an incalculable impetus to social reform. They had, for the most part, been undertaken in the expectation that *sober and scientific inquiry* would prove the exceptional character of the harrowing incidents laid bare by the philanthropists unsparingly quoted by the new agitators (1907:367, my emphasis).

The political context gave an urgency to the need for "sober and scientific inquiry". Booth cultivated an impersonal stance and gave weight to his qualitative findings by the use of quantitative facts: statistics, tables, maps, figures. Consequently, for Walkowitz, he "set the parameters for knowledge of the late-Victorian metropolis for the past one hundred years" (1992:30); for Beatrice Webb, he was a "pioneer in social science"; while for the Simeys he was the very model of the social scientist.

For Beatrice Webb, Booth's importance lay in showing us "for the first time how best to combine the qualitative with the quantitative examination of social structure" (1948:210-2). Although interested in the grand social theories of Marx, Comte and Spencer, Booth felt that too much deductive theorizing had been going on in social science and not enough inductive fact-finding. The Inquiry also pioneered ethnography: Booth lodged for some weeks in East End homes, while Potter went incognita as a trouser-finisher in a Jewish sweatshop and, for her study

of co-operatism, did participant observation in the Lancashire town of Bacup.

Beatrice, in her development as a social investigator, never gave up the faith in authorial impartiality and objectivity in social description - even as she became increasingly politically committed and partisan. That partisanship was to remain outside her sociological texts.[13] Booth's impartiality, indeed, would set the tone for subsequent urban sociology. In the next section, I will explore the intellectual roots of this faith in objectivity.

THE CULT OF SCIENCE

Beatrice Webb identifies the period in which she was formed with "the cult of science": it was "by science, and by science alone, that all human misery would be ultimately swept away." For middle-class people like herself, this cult manifested itself in the mania for Herbert Spencer, who taught that scientific investigation could solve all social ills. For the lower classes, it meant Halls of Science in every working class district and Bradlaugh's mass secularist movement (1948:113-22). Allied to this was "the religion of humanity"; "the impulse of self-subordinating service" was transferred "from God to man." The "Positivist" philosophy of Auguste Comte elevated this to its highest pole. Comte believed in evolutionary progress towards a day when society would be run for its own good by an elite of disinterested and unselfish businessmen and bureaucrats, the "Priests of Humanity".

Beatrice's intellectual formation clearly shows how these ways of thinking caught hold of the first urban sociologists. Herbert Spencer was a family friend and her life-long model. Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin and the founder of modern statistics and modern eugenics, was another family friend and her ideal of the scientist-as-hero. T.H. Huxley, the Darwinian, and Frederick Harrison, president of the English Positivist Committee, who took her to the Positivist Hall, were two more family friends.[14] This milieu was to leave its stamp for the whole twentieth century on sociology; thus one generation's intellectual fad became the orthodoxy of a whole discipline.

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[13] e.g.: Our description, the Webbs wrote, includes "personal recollections of the authors themselves, one of whom, as a member of the Fabian Society, observed the transformation from the Socialist side, whilst the other, as a disciple of Mr. Herbert Spencer, and a colleague of Mr. Charles Booth, was investigating the contemporary changes from an Individualist standpoint. The authors' own participation [may] deprive their narrative of the *critical impartiality* which throughout this volume they have striven to maintain" (1907:316n21, my emphasis).

[14] Webb (1948:123-30, 1982:7-10).

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The philosophical systems of Comte and Spencer, as well as the evolutionism of Darwin, shared a belief that things were slowly getting better, that progress was afoot. This position also characterized Fabian socialism. In Sidney Webb's Fabian essay of 1889, he talked about "the inevitability of gradualness" and drew on Comte, Spencer and Darwin to show that things were getting better. When Beatrice Potter read this (before she met him), she was delighted by its "delicious *positivism*" and the "optimistic conclusion that the world is most assuredly going their way" (1982:327).

Spencer's system and Comte's Positivism demanded a shift from moral explanations of poverty and class, to "scientific" ones. This imperative was satisfied by Fabianism, by sociology, and by social Darwinism and eugenics.[15]

PART II: THE EUGENIC IMAGINATION

> *No sooner do [the casual poor] make a street their own than it is ripe for destruction and should be destroyed* - Charles Booth

CLASS AND THE SOCIAL

A central feature - maybe *the* central feature - of Booth's Life and Labour is his grouping of the different people of London into eight classes:

A. The lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers, and semi-criminals.

B. Casual earnings - 'very poor'.

C. 'The poor' with intermittent earnings.

D. 'The poor' with small regular earnings.

E. Regular standard earnings - above the line of poverty.

F. Higher class labour. Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.

G. Lower Middle class. Well-to-do.

H. Upper middle and upper class. Wealthy (1st edn Vol. 1, pp33-61, in Fried and Elman 1969:9).

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[15] On the influence of these currents on Booth himself, see Simey and Simey (1960:242-4).

This way of representing class is familiar to us now (it is not dissimilar to the standard "social classes" used by the census, opinion pollsters and so on) but was novel in Booth's day. Prior to Booth, society was divided into large antagonistic classes (such as "capital" and "labour", as in Marx) or by vertical cleavages into different occupational sectors ("manufacturing", "agriculture", etc). Booth's class schema, of "hierarchically structured occupational groups with different life chances and experiences, was seized on by the eugenicist Francis Galton in an attempt to prove his "heriditarian" theories about intelligence. Booth's preference for "environmental" explanations for things like intelligence was shared by the statisticians of the General Register Office, and (after vigourous debate starting in the 1880s) they adapted Booth's schema for the 1911 census in the hope that the census would prove their sociological theories. Their classification "became the basis of all succeeding official analyses of social class".[16]

Among the striking things about this schema is that, in it, the proletariat does not make an appearance. Instead, the working class is distributed among six or seven classes, fractured by minute gradations of poverty and respectability. Secondly, the weighting at the bottom is also revealing: the wealthier escape the fine-toothed analysis that apportions the poor into so many categories. This is because, for Booth and his associates, the poor were just more interesting. A passage from one of the project notebooks about Brockley, in South East London, states that "it is on the whole a very 'comfortable' neighbourhood and 'social problems', as commonly understood, can hardly be said to exist" (Steele 1997:219). In other words, "the social" - the object of social investigation - is clearly identified with the urban poor. The erasure of the proletariat in Booth's class schema and its dissection into his "classes A to F" clearly dramatizes the discovery of the social as an object of inquiry as a response to the emergence of the proletariat as a subject of its own activity. In this section, we will see how the discovery of the social (and thus the emergence of sociology and social policy) was mediated by what I am calling here the eugenic imagination.

THE RESPECTABLE AND THE RESIDUUM
The bottom two (A and B) of Booth's classes were the "residuum", the surplus population.

A. The lowest class, which consists of occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals, and semi-criminals... little

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[16] Scott (1990:84-90)

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> regular family life... homeless outcasts... of low character...
> Their life is the life of savages... They degrade whatever they
> touch, and as individuals are perhaps incapable of
> improvement
>
> B. Casual earnings, very poor [including many] who from
> shiftlessness, helplessness, idleness, or drink, are inevitably
> poor... the "leisure class" amongst the poor (1st edn, Vol. 1,
> pp33-61, in Fried and Elman 1969:11-14).

B was not considered a class "in which men are born and live and die, so much as a deposit of those who from mental, moral, and physical reasons are incapable of work" (ibid). A, however, was considered hereditary. Class B, said Booth, must be eliminated through segregation in labour camps. "It is not a pleasant process to be improved off the face of the earth", he wrote, yet that was what had to be done (quoted Simey and Simey 1960:96).

Beatrice Potter's private exercise in "social diagnosis", her ethnography of Bacup in Lancashire, had already reached similar conclusions in that it drew a sharp line between Bacup's "independent working class" (with its puritanical ethos, cult of self-respect, religiosity, and sense of the "natural order of things") to the East End and its "idle ne'er-do-well", "misdoer", "non-worker" and "habitual out o' work" (1982:69-99, 175). Before her work for Booth, her notebooks talk about "the aborigines of the East End" (ibid:134), "on the whole a *leisure* class - picking up their livelihood by casual work (poor in quality), by borrowing from their more industrious friends, and by petty theft. Drunken, thieving and loose in morality" (ibid:138).

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OTHER

The two main racially other groups in the East End were the Jews and the Irish. The encounters between them and the (white) middle class "imaginatively doubled", to use Walkowitz's phrase, for the relationship between England and its colonies (1992:35). When the black migrants from those colonies found their way to London, the discourses developed in the earlier period found a new use. The language elaborated in the 1880s to deal with the Jews was mobilized again in the post-WWII period to talk about Asians; the language elaborated in the late nineteenth century to talk about the Irish was mobilized again for the Afro-Caribbeans.[17]

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[17] I have only come across one reference to blacks in Beatrice Webb's East End writings, a passage in her 1887 diary which she saw fit to reproduce in her 1926 autobiography, but which was expunged from the 1982

Irish and Lumpen Cockneys
In her diaries, Potter wrote "The worse scoundrel is the cockney-born Irishman. The woman is the Chinaman of the place, and drudges as the women of the savage races" (1982:205). Most of the dockworkers were Irish and Potter clearly saw them as a race apart: "low-looking, bestial, content with their own condition" (ibid), and "even the best of dockers bear the brand of London cunning and London restlessness" (ibid:351). In 1891, when the Irish Home Rule cause was running into trouble, she wrote "In spite of my innate dislike and distrust of the Irish people it was impossible to avoid a true feeling of compassion" (ibid:348). She did not change her views after she became a socialist. In their history of the dock strike, the Webbs would write that Burns organized an "elaborate system of strike-pay, which not only maintained the honest worker, but also bribed every East End loafer to withhold his labour" (1907:390).

In Booth's writings, there is a constant association of Irish Catholics with all the vices of the lower classes: idleness, gambling, drinking, sexual immorality, coarse language. Class A is overwhelmingly made up of Irish families, and the proportion decreases as you go up to the more respectable classes. One example of anti-Irish sentiment comes from the part of the study on religion: "The poor Irish, who form the bulk of the Catholic population, are careless, but are naturally devout. They are rough-mannered and fight amongst themselves, or with the police at times, and they drink a great deal" (3rd edn, 3rd series, Vol. 2, in Fried and Elman 1969:160).

Jews
Whereas the attitude to the Irish was unambiguously one of dislike, the attitude to the Jews was more complex. Walkowitz argues that Booth found it difficult to deal with the Jews. They did not quite fit into his underclass categories. They were anomalous: neither rough nor respectable, clean in person while dirty in habits, noisy yet sober, with none of the visual signs of repeatable domesticity yet clearly private and home-centred (1992:36). Booth was particularly disturbed by Jewish left-wingers: "Some foreign Jews may add nihilism and the bitterest kind of socialistic theories to very filthy habits" (quoted Fishman 1975:72). Beatrice Potter, who took on the job of describing the Jews in the first volume of Life and Labour, appears in some ways to be a philosemite in

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published version of her diaries: "Here was a nauseous nigger mouthing primitive methodism; a mongrel between the unctuous sacramentalist and the Christy Minstrel" (1948:258). This was probably a reference to the West Indian Victoria Park orator Celestine Edwards; cf Coleman (1997:74).

16

her writing. Like Booth, she constantly praises their thrift, ambition and industry. She described the "superior mental equipment of the Jew... the untiring energies of the Hebrew race... [their] sobriety, personal purity, and a consequent power of physical endurance" (in Fried and Elman 1969:146-7). But, of course, this apparent philosemitism is a form of racism, much akin to praising blacks for their athletic and dancing abilities.

And this public demonstration of high regard for the Jews was accompanied by private expressions of prejudice. Of her first meeting with Sidney Webb, later to be her husband - and, incidentally, not Jewish - she wrote "a huge head on a very tiny body, a breadth of forehead quite sufficient to account for the encyclopedic character of his knowledge, a Jewish nose, prominent eyes and mouth, black hair, somewhat unkempt..." (1982:324). Occasionally, her private anti-semitism broke into her supposedly objective and neutral contributions to Life and Labour. She said that sweating "employs those who are incapable of the disciplined factory system" (quoted Fishman 1975:43). She compared their products to English ones: "the English home worker was a good instrument out of repair, the Jewish 'bespoke' workshop an inferior instrument sharpened to its highest pitch" (ibid:45). She described the "runners" (the Jews who took newly arrived immigrants to overpriced lodgings) as "the most repulsive of East End parasites" (in Fried and Elman:150). She comes out with many phrases like "Why bluster and fight when you can manipulate or control in secret?" (ibid:154) or "the enigma of Jewish life" (ibid:152). These testify, not to a blanket hatred of Jews, but an ambivalence, an inability to fit them into categories, a sense that they were not quite right, that they were hiding something, that they were, to use Mary Douglas' phrase, matter out of place.[18]

PHRENOLOGY AND RACE PRIDE

The above description of Sidney Webb by Beatrice Potter fitted into a very prevalent discourse in the nineteenth century, that of judging people's moral characters by their physical appearance. This not only gave vent to racial prejudices, but also to class prejudices, as Beatrice's

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[18] She evidently never clarified her ambivalent views. In her 1926 autobiography she wrote "The ease with which the untiring and thrifty Jew became a master was proverbial in the East End" (1948:283). Arnold White, the deeply anti-semitic right-wing demagogue who led the anti-alien movement in the 1880s, is a minor figure who crops up here and there in her diaries and in her autobiography. He does not merit any sort of criticism in either the earlier or the later text, except a vague allusion to his alcohol consumption, suggesting she had no serious problem with his views.

diary record of her second meeting with Sidney illustrates. "His tiny tadpole body," she wrote, "unhealthy skin, lack of manner, cockney pronunciation, poverty, are all against him" (1982:326).[19]

Being on the receiving end of these sorts of attitudes, however, did not inoculate Sidney from race pride. Around the time Beatrice was writing these diary entries, he wrote in a private letter that his "theory of life" was "to feel at every moment that I am acting as a member of a committee and for that committee - in some affairs a committee of my own family merely, in others again a committee as wide as the Aryan race" (quoted Radice 1984:63). It is striking to think that he perceived of the Aryan race as a committee (a very Fabian racism), but also that his moral world appeared to extend no further than its boundaries - that is, it did not include Jews, let alone the coloured people of the Empire. These attitudes cannot be seen as isolated, personal opinions; they were part of coherent, systematic philosophical parcel. In the next section, I will trace how these sorts of attitudes developed from the eighteenth century and how they found their way into early urban sociology.

THE MALTHUSIAN TRADITION
In this section, I will trace the history of the bundle of ideologies that, alongside the positivism already discussed, shaped modern urban sociology: Malthusianism, Darwinism and eugenics.

Rev. Thomas R. Malthus' 1798 Essay on the Principle of Population was a jeremiad against population growth, especially among the poor. It also introduced the idea of a "redundant population", a dangerously parasitical growth on the population at large. However, Malthus' only solution was moral education to increase self-control (Morris 1994:10-13, Nethercot 1961:116).

Charles Darwin was influenced by Malthus' population studies in formulating his theory of natural selection. His The Descent of Man (1871) argued that, if lower classes continued to outbreed their superiors, the result would be evolutionary regress: "If various checks do not prevent the reckless, the vicious, and the otherwise inferior from increasing at a quicker rate than the better class of men, the nation will retrograde" (quoted Paul 1995:34). But, like Malthus, he did not recommend any particular "checks".

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[19] Charles Booth and his wife, Mary, both found Sidney extremely distasteful.

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Darwin's cousin Francis Galton took it a bit further. His Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development (1883) coined the term eugenics (from Greek "good in birth") and defined it, rather loosely, as "the science of improving stock, which is no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which... takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote degree to give the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable" (quoted Paul ibid:3). Galton differed from Malthus and the previous neo-Malthusians because he thought that self-restraint was not the solution; it would only decrease the numbers in precisely the "best" types of human. Instead, he urged checks on the those with bad blood. Darwin's ideas slotted into the positivism and evolutionism of Comte and Spencer, and they made it possible to extend "science" more thoroughly to the study of human behaviour. Before the 1880s, Darwinism had been an embattled, marginal position. By the 1890s, however, it was accepted orthodoxy.

The next generation of Darwinians, contemporaries (and often friends) of Beatrice Webb, took up eugenics, led by Charles' son, Leonard Darwin, and by the founder of biometrics, Karl Pearson. However, where Galton had concerned himself largely with "positive eugenics" (encouraging good blood), Pearson and his colleagues were increasingly concerned with "negative eugenics" (reducing bad blood) (Paul ibid:35-6). Pearson is an interesting figure for three reasons: he saw himself as a socialist; he had been involved in the "heterosocial spaces" of 1880s London (founding the Men and Women's Club) before immersing himself in the purifying waters of hard science; and he embodied the connection between the new disciplines of eugenics and sociology in that he simultaneously directed the Galton Laboratory for National Eugenics and the Department of Applied Statistics, both at University College London.[20]

"Darwin at most flirted with eugenics", Paul argues,
> But his work provided the context that made Galton's views on heredity compelling. The claim that social failure results from bad blood engendered such alarm in the late nineteenth century [precisely because of] its link to Darwin's theory of natural selection. Eugenics was transformed from abstract idea to social movement when it became attached to widespread assumptions about evolutionary progress and decline...

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[20] cf Paul (ibid:35-6), Walkowitz (1992:ch5), Morris (1994:26-7).

Darwin's <u>Origin</u> and <u>Descent</u> provided a biological framework for understanding unsettling social problems that was broad enough to accommodate widely divergent approaches. Conservatives, socialists and liberals all deduced social policy from the facts of evolutionary biology (ibid:36-9).

Of course, their interpretation of these facts was conditioned by their class politics. For professional men like Darwin, Galton and Pearson, the people who carried the traits of "the fittest" were professional men; for another eugenics advocate, an self-taught socialist from a poor home, Alfred Russell Wallace, workers and shopkeepers carried them. All agreed, however, that the "lowest orders" were bearers of bad blood.

At the right-wing side of this consensus was Arnold White. In 1887, he declared how "repugnant it is to reason and instinct that the strong should be overwhelmed by the feeble, ailing and unfit!" Forty per cent of "the nomad poor", he claimed, were "physically, mentally and morally unfit, there is nothing that the nation can do for these men except to let them die" (quoted Stedman Jones 1984:285-7). Occupying a middle position in this consensus was the "new liberal" economist, Alfred Marshall, who said that "the only remedy is to prevent such [feeble] people from coming into existence... persons in any rank of life who are not in good physical and mental health have no moral right to bear children" (ibid).

EUGENICS AND THE FABIANS

The influence of eugenics was apparent in the work of Booth and Potter. Her notebooks, for instance, are filled with references to "racial progress" (e.g. 1948:275) and "race deterioration" (e.g. ibid:335). They also portray the East End in terms borrowed from Darwin. Potter wrote "A drift population, the East Enders, of all classes and races - a constantly decomposing mass of human beings, few rising out of it, but many dropping down dead, pressed out of existence in the struggle" (1982:132). Booth described life in the East End as a Darwinian struggle too: "the clash of contest, man against man, and men against fate" (quoted Simey and Simey 1960:103).

The Fabians were among the most enthusiastic followers of eugenics. This was not a brief flirtation but a foundation-stone of their vision of socialism. It fitted in nicely with their campaign against laissez-faire, their ideal of a "National Minimum" standard and their doctrine that the respectable working class must be distinguished from the residuum. George Bernard Shaw wrote "there is now no reasonable excuse for

refusing to face the fact that nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilization." Lancelot Hogben wrote "Negative eugenics is simply the adoption of a national minimum for parenthood, an extension of the principle of national minima familiarized in the writings of Sidney and Beatrice Webb." Sidney himself said that eugenics was the negation of laissez-faire individualism: "interfere, interfere, interfere!" He lamented the low reproductive rates of the prudent and disciplined members of every class and the high birthrate of "the thriftless and irresponsible", on the one hand, and Irish Catholics and Eastern European Jews, on the other. This could only result, he argued in "a national deterioration", or else "this country falling to the Irish and the Jews".

Harold Laski worked briefly in Pearson's lab and argued that "the production of a weakling is a crime against itself." Eden Paul said that "Unless the socialist is a eugenicist as well, the socialist state will speedily perish from racial degradation." HG Wells wrote that "we cannot go on giving you health, freedom, enlargement, limitless wealth, if all our gifts to you are to be swamped by an indiscriminate torrent of progeny", which expresses not just Fabian eugenicism but Fabian elitism and technocracy too. It was Wells who was most vociferous in his calls for coercive sterilization. He called for "the sterilization of failures" and argued that "there is only one sane and logical thing to be done with a really inferior race, and that is to exterminate it."[21]

PART III: BOOTH'S PROGENY

CLASS B AND THE WELFARE STATE
We have already seen how the Life and Labour project developed key methods of qualitative social research - such as ethnography - and a "scientific" model for the study of society. We have seen how the origins of these methods were tied up in an encounter with the proletarian other structured through the eugenic imagination. The insights of the project, embedded as they were in the eugenic context, were also to find their way into social policy.

For Beatrice Webb, the political effects of the project were immense. Booth's work, she argued, demonstrated the irrelevance of charity and stimulated the growth of collectivist solutions to poverty. Booth's call for state pensions, taken up by Samuel Barnett of Toynbee Hall and by the Fabians, became a reality under the Liberal Government of 1908. His

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[21] Quotes from Paul (1995:75-6); cf Morris (1994:25-7).

two main assistants, Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Ernest Aves, she continued, participated in the "two biggest experiments in public administration and public control in the interests of the manual workers that the century has yet seen." Smith set up the labour exchange system in 1906, and then unemployment insurance in 1918. Aves was the architect of the Trades Board Act of 1909, setting minimum wages across trades (1948:212-20). In short, the political imperatives built into Booth's study shaped the course of British social policy from 1908 to 1979. The Simeys concur, speaking of "the new type of citizenship that came into being after the full implications, both of Booth's Inquiry and of the old-age pensions controversy with which it was so closely connected, had been understood, digested and embodied in British social policy" (1960:6).[22]

Stedman Jones agrees that the "new liberal" movement (which included Booth) anticipated the welfare state - proposing, for instance, national insurance, free school meals and old-age pensions. However, he argues that this side of their views cannot be separated from other policies they proposed: segregation of the residuum, compulsory labour camps, sterilization, shipping the causal poor overseas (1984:302-14). Both the welfare state and the apparently crueler policies share one aim: the elimination of the residuum.

THE EAST END AND THE SOUTH SIDE - AND BACK AGAIN

As well as Booth's impact on British social policy, he had a significant influence on the "Chicago school", urban sociologists like Louis Wirth, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. In Park and Burgess' 1921 Introduction to the Science of Sociology, they wrote that

> Sociological research is at present in about the situation in which psychology was before the introduction of laboratory methods, in which medicine was before Pasteur and the germ theory of disease. A great deal of social information has been collected merely with the purpose of determining what to do in a given case. Facts have not been collected to check social theories. Social problems have been defined in terms of common sense, and facts have been collected, for the most part, to support this or that doctrine, not to test it. In very few instances have investigations been made, disinterestedly, to determine the validity of a hypothesis.

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[22] The Simeys' book, especially its Conclusion, is the strongest statement of the view that Booth was the architect, not only of twentieth century British social science, but also of social policy in the same period.

22

> Charles Booth's studies of poverty in London... is an example
> of such a disinterested investigation (1924:44).[23]

This quote reveals one of the key innovations of the Booth endeavour that he bequeathed to Chicago sociology: the fetishization of scientific method, the dream of disinterested neutrality.

Later in the same book, Park and Burgess wrote that "The historian and the philosopher introduced the sociologist to the study of society. But it was the reformer, the social worker, and the business man who compelled him to study the community" (ibid:212). They continue that the study of the community "is still in its beginnings" but cite Booth's Inquiry as an exemplary "comprehensive description of conditions of social life in terms of the community" (ibid). This theme was taken up in Wirth's "Bibliography of the Urban Community" in Park and Burgess' 1925 classic, The City. The section there on "the ecological organization of the city" described Life and Labour as "The most comprehensive study of London in existence. Especially interesting in this connection for its depiction of the natural areas of that city" (1967:188). These quotes illustrate Booth's second key legacy to the Chicago school: an ecological model for understanding urban life.

Later, Robert Park would reflect slightly more critically on Booth's work. In a 1929 essay, "The City as a Social Laboratory", he wrote:

> The thing that characterized [Booth and Rowntree's "case studies on a grand scale"] was a determined and, as it seemed, somewhat pedantic effort to reduce the descriptive and impressionistic statements of investigators and observers to the more precise and general formulation of a statistical statement. Booth said:

> "No one can go, as I have done, over the description of the inhabitants of street after street in this huge district (East London), taken house by house and family by family - full as it is of picturesque details noted down from the lips of the visitors to whose mind they have been recalled by the open pages of their schedules - and doubt the genuine character of the information and its truth. Of the wealth of my material I have no doubt. I am indeed embarrassed by its mass and my resolution to make use of no fact that I cannot give a quantitative value.

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[23] In the bibliography, they also give the Webbs' Problems of Modern Industry (1898) and Industrial Democracy (1920), Seebohm Rowntree's Poverty (1901) and Patrick Geddes' Cities in Evolution (1915) as other signs of the emergence of scientific social investigation (1924:44,58-60).

The materials for sensational stories lie plentifully in every book of our notes; but even if I had the skill to use my material in this way - the gift of the imagination which is called 'realistic' - I should not wish to use it here. There is struggling poverty, there is destitution, there is hunger, darkness, brutality and crime; no one has any doubts that it is so. My object has been to attempt to show the numerical relation which poverty, misery and depravity bear to regular earnings and comparative comfort, and to describe the general conditions under which each class lives."

It was not, however, Booth's statistics, but his realistic descriptions of the occupational classes which made these studies a memorable and permanent contribution to our knowledge of human nature and of society" (1952:76-7).

What Park is hinting at here is that the borders that Booth erected around the new science of social inquiry (reality not imagination, statistics not description, the numerical not the picturesque, the quantitative not the qualitative) were continually transgressed in Booth's work itself. This repressed side of Booth's project - the imaginative work of ethnography - was Booth's third legacy to urban sociology.

In a second "transatlantic conversation", as Les Back describes it, this "way of understanding urban life was repatriated through the publication of Young and Wilmott's classic study Family and Kinship in East London (1957)" (1999:132-3). In particular, the ecological model of social life - the idea of "natural areas" of the city and a resulting spatial determinism - was embedded in Wilmott and Young's "community studies" approach to social research. Indeed, numerous references to Booth in Family and Kinship (e.g. 1957:17, 19, 24, 27, 90) make it clear that they are walking in his footsteps, re-visiting his findings, in their attempt at a (much smaller scale) door by door sociological inquiry.

OTHER ADVENTURES AMONG THE PROLETARIAT
Alongside, and sometimes overlapping with, the tradition of urban exploration that Booth inaugurated and Wilmott and Young inherited, were other traditions of middle class encounters with the proletarian other. Many of these encounters focused on the East End of London. Some of them took place in heterosocial spaces which - like the Settlement houses - attempted to transmit middle class values to the urban poor. In the Jewish East End, for instance, the wives of the Anglo-

Jewish gentry opened clubs where the daughters of the Jewish slum-dwellers would learn to deport themselves in a correct manner.

Other encounters, however, would take place on very different terms. Rudolf Rocker, Olive Malvery, A.B.C. Merriman-Labor, Claude McKay and Sylvia Pankhurst are examples of writers who encountered the urban proletariat very differently.

Rudolf Rocker was a German bookbinder who plied his trade around Europe before settling in the East End around the time Booth was conducting his Inquiry, where (although not Jewish himself) he became a mainstay of the Yiddish-language anarchist press. The paper he edited, *Der Arbeter Fraint* (Worker's Friend) carried several descriptions of the sweated garment industry, written by people who actually worked there. While Beatrice Webb was going undercover in an East End sweatshop, Rocker was helping the garment workers organize for better conditions.[24]

In London at around the same time was Olive Christian Malvery, who came as a young woman from India to Edwardian London to train as a singer. She undertook to get to know the "lost tribes" (n.d:309) of London as intimately as possible. Her book, The Soul Market, describes her eight years of working undercover as a bar-maid, sweatshop operative, flower-seller and organ-grinder to do so; she became (as she puts it in inverted commas in the last chapter) an "insider". While Booth and Potter step lightly over the ethnographic and imaginative dimension of their work, Malvery had a commitment to the social understanding that comes from walking in the shoes - and the gait - of another. Her formal studies, she wrote, "seem almost play, when compared with the heart and blood studies of life I have since made" (9).

> "I undertook again another excursion among the outcast and the poor. To accomplish this successfully, it was necessary, in a way, to get lost, to change one's personality, one's dress, one's surroundings... To anyone studying the various grades of life in the working and submerged classes, it will be apparent that one disguise would not effectively carry any person through the various phases. For instance, a factory girl is different in a hundred small ways, in the fashion of her clothes, in her manner of walking and talking, from the girl employed in

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[24] Rocker was interned in Alexandra Palace during World War One as an "enemy alien" then deported to Germany at the end of the war. He fled Germany to escape the Nazis and ended his days in America.

> a small shop... There are infinite varieties, and any impersonation to be successful requires an intimate study of the class, a quick adaptation of speech, and a very decided dramatic instinct" (202-3)

Malvery, then, was alive to and reflexive about the performative and embodied dimensions of social inquiry (and, indeed, the performative and embodied qualities of class itself) that Booth and Potter repress. She reversed their hierarchies so that dramatic instinct and imaginative impersonation became serious business while book-learning became play.[25]

A contemporary of Malvery's was Sierra Leonian A.B.C. Merriman-Labor. His Britons Through Negro Spectacles is a carnivalesque tour through London. His humourous style - puns, satirical sketches, cruel parodies - seems quite different from Malvery's somber, poetic writing. However, this belies a more serious purpose: to hold up a mirror to white racism, to confront white society with a description of itself that is similar to the descriptions of Africa conjured up by the imperial travel writing of the time, to explode racist preconceptions, to undermine the epistemological foundations of imperialism.

A slightly later urban explorer in London was Claude McKay, the gay West Indian poet usually associated with the Harlem Renaissance. In 1919, McKay came to England, looking for "some respite, however brief, from the pressure-cooker tension of living black in white America" (Cooper 1987:108). McKay's world spanned the black public sphere of the West End - subterranean jazz clubs frequented by African, African-American and Caribbean boxers, students, servicemen and sailors - and the proletarian public sphere of the East End - clubs such as the International Socialist Club in East Road, Shoreditch, which he later described as a hotbed of "dogmatists and doctrinaires of radical left ideas: Socialists, Communists, anarchists, syndicalists, one-big-unionists, and trade unionists, soap-boxers, poetasters, scribblers, editors of little radical sheets which flourished in London" (ibid:110). The outlet for his journalistic talents, while he was in England, was the Worker's Dreadnought. The Dreadnought was an East End-based paper

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[25] Malvery's extraordinary empathetic understanding of Londoners' lives and her status as a racial other in England did not, however, immunize her from occasional racist attitudes. On the garment industry she wrote "What the Jew's profit was I am unable to say, but my experience with the class would convince me that he made an enormous profit on each" (200). Elsewhere, she talks of "this alien pauper curse" (211) and the evils of the alien white traffickers in white slaves (212). But she ultimately attributes the alien problem to the capitalist system that drives wages down and rents up.

26

edited by the radical socialist and feminist Sylvia Pankhurst. McKay reported on East End life (and especially the multi-racial maritime proletariat of the dock zone where he lived) as well as "race" issues, naval mutinies, Welsh miners and Marxist theory.

Indeed, Pankhurst herself offers a striking contrast to her contemporary Beatrice Webb. Born to a wealthy family, Sylvia Pankhurst based herself in Bow and immersed herself on a long-term basis in the lives of working class women there. While the Webbs had no enthusiasm for the Russian revolution but were keen on Stalin's version of state planning, Pankhurst (although never losing her commitment to Marxism) withdrew her support from Bolshevism in reaction to its authoritarian tendencies, devoting her energies instead to anti-colonialism in Africa and Asia.

This fragmented genealogy suggests a counter-history of urban investigation, an alternative model of understanding the social. These forms of inquiry have features in common with Booth's project - not least the commitment to the possibility of understanding across class and spatial borders. But they differ in a variety of significant ways, and principally in the ways they *represent* the proletarian other. In these writers, the mask of objectivity is cast aside; instead there is imagination, empathy, reflexivity, "the heart and blood study of life". At the same time, the voice of the proletariat is allowed to represent itself. As such, these writers offer alternative resources for contemporary attempts to understand the social and the city.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued that the 1880s was a time of a battle over representation. Charles Booth's monumental <u>Life and Labour of the People of London</u> must be seen as one moment of this battle. The refusal of the working class to be represented and its desire to represent itself created the politically urgent task, for the bourgeoisie, of developing new modes of representing the proletariat. Modern British urban sociology, a discipline inaugurated by Booth's Inquiry, was one of these modes; Chicago School sociology was another. The ways of seeing the proletarian other that Booth helped inaugurate have found their way into social policy itself. However, embedded in Booth's project were traces of other possibilities, possibilities that have been cultivated by other urban explorers.

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