



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S44. The City as a Stage for Social, Political and Cultural Movements

Wednesday 30 August: 9.30-11.30am

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Cities are the key fabric of modern and postmodern societies. In Britain for longer than anywhere else they have structured the lives of the majority. They are the stage on which the drama of social, political and cultural life unfolds. This seminar, continuing Strasbourg 2002, will look at the way the peculiarities of urbanisation and of the lay-out of cities in the British Isles and in other English-speaking countries can help us describe, explain and interpret events: religious processions, street demonstrations, social and ethnic divisions of space, epoch-making festivals, carnivals or riots, simple neighbourhood and active networking, etc.

Epidemic City Fathers

Logie Barrow (University of Bremen) & Susan Trouvé-Finding (University of Poitiers)

The first ever vaccinal preventive was against the extremely infectious disease of smallpox (1796). Yet only during the 1970s was an eradication-strategy found: isolation of sufferers; isolation and vaccination of contacts. Interestingly, in Britain at least, the main pioneers of this strategy were, from around 1900, the mainly anti-vaccinationist councillors of Leicester and their pro-vaccinationist Medical Officer. We will compare their responses with: mixed experiences in the well-vaccinated city of Sheffield (1887-8), deadly chaos in “anti”-dominated towns such as Gloucester (1895-6) or Dewsbury (1904-5) and, in little-vaccinated Australia, mayorally-led defiance of centrally-imposed quarantining of the whole city of Launceston, Tasmania (1903).

Anarchist Scares in the Late-Victorian City: an Urban Symptom?

Constance Bantman (University of Paris 13) & Logie Barrow (University of Bremen)

Between 1880 and 1914, Britain harboured many foreign anarchist colonies. Conspiracy theories involving them developed quickly, focusing especially on London – the modern Babylon, the symbol of imperial and industrial capitalism and its disastrous social implications. Anarchists thus catalysed many of the social fears engendered by one century of industrialisation and urbanisation. This paper will explore how these anarchist scares expressed, explained and amplified urban anxieties, and conversely. The

interactions and cross-fertilisations between the fear of the new city and that of anarchism will be underlined.

Volcano at Rest: Liverpool 1890-1910

François Poirier (University of Paris 13, France) & Tomasz Niedokos (Catholic University of Lublin)

In the two decades before the transport strikes of 1911, Liverpool seemed comparatively at rest. This paper will look at the embers burning under cover, the simmering discontents -- the juggling together of millionaires and starvelings in a city whose architecture meant power and glory. Philanthropists, Christian Socialists, and a bunch of dedicated lib-lab trade-unionists were at work, but they could not quell the flow of burning frustrations. This paper will look at the way the stage was set for the eruption of 1911 through the study of the written production of the main actors on this urban stage.

Peter Ackroyd's London: Real and Imagined

Tomasz Niedokos (Catholic University of Lublin) & Constance Bantman (University of Paris13)

Peter Ackroyd's London is delimited by very clear geographical boundaries: i.e. 'the sacred geometry idea'. The heart of Ackroyd's London is not Westminster, but the City of London, the area where ancient Londinium was founded. In his view the London community is organic, bound by the space, the particular layout of the city, its customs and rituals, rather than by the ties of blood, race, common history, or political organization. This inclusive, territorial concept of London community is akin to the concept of *total history* developed by the *Annales* school of French historiography and Andrew Greeley's notion of *enchanted imagination*.

The City as Text: Urban Space and Language Memories in New York's Italian-American Community

Luisanna Fodde (University of Cagliari) & François Poirier (University of Paris 13)

This research aims to detect what memories of Italy, particularly language memories, have been preserved in the present-day Italian-American communities of New York. The choice of the city has been made because of the symbolic nature of New York, the first shore the Italian community saw of the promised land. This choice has also been made because of the urban symbols of the Italian-American community still very much visible in New York, which limit and yet stimulate not only the Italian-American urban space but also its language space. As we well know, symbols are important factors in arousing our memories.

Staging the Memory of Cities: the Museography of British Seaports

Susan Trouvé-Finding (University of Poitiers) & Luisanna Fodde (University of Cagliari)

Key elements in the economic and cultural development of a nation dependent on maritime trade, the social constructs of British seaports left architectural and cultural

relics that have been converted into and conserved in maritime museums. The staging of this historical legacy anchors the city's present in its past celebrating social developments and cultural influences. This memory is staged so as to reveal cultural representations. The distribution and location of maritime museums, their main topics, the institutionalised memory of their function should provide insights into how historical social and ethnic stratification in the seaports is viewed and reinterpreted.