

the 1853 Preface – there would be relatively few readers, even among those free from the taint of late twentieth-century English Departments, who would know about all of the following: Orpheus, Musaeus, the Sophists, Hesiod, Schiller, Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido, *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Jocelyn*, the *Iliad*, the *Oresteia*, Merope, Alcmaeon, Polybius, Menander, Mr Hallam and M. Guizot. Or who would have a full understanding of this passage from “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”: “[. . .] Luther’s theory of grace no more exactly reflects the mind of the spirit than Bossuet’s philosophy of history reflects it; and [. . .] there is no more antecedent probability of the Bishop of Durham’s stock of ideas being agreeable to perfect reason than of Pope Pius the Ninth’s” (34). Then, in “The Study of Poetry,” well-known quotations from Shakespeare are glossed, while the reader is offered no help in identifying Sainte-Beuve, Pellisson, M. Charles d’Héricault, Clément Marot, “the *Imitation*,” M. Vitet, “Christian of Troyes” or “Wolfram of Eschenbach.” Given the quality of the primary texts here, it is regrettable that the editors have lacked the foresight or the commitment to make Arnold’s writings more accessible to a potential new readership.

**Joanne Wilkes**

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***Lords of Misrule: Hostility to Aristocracy in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, by Antony Taylor. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. xii + 233. ISBN 1-4039-3221-2. £45 (hardback).**

In *Lords of Misrule*, Tony Taylor adds to an emerging body of scholarship that is revising the place of the aristocracy in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British history. Whereas an earlier, Whiggish historiography had constructed a narrative of a largely benign aristocracy, prepared to compromise in the face of increasing democratisation and ultimately marginalised by the early twentieth century, the new historiography, following the work of Martin Weiner, F.M.L. Thompson, David Cannadine and others, has highlighted the aristocracy’s centrality to the economy and politics in Britain well into the twentieth century. Taylor’s particular interest is in what he calls “plebeian readings of the aristocracy” (10), those rhetorical critiques of the powerful by the powerless, which helped fuse working class radicalism with Liberalism and the emerging Labour Party in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. He argues – convincingly I believe – that this anti-aristocratic sentiment acted as “a central plank” (15) connecting the diffuse and often contradictory politics of reform that dominated those years. In the process, the book also contributes to our understanding of the composition of later Victorian and Edwardian society and social relations.

Taylor identifies four main anti-aristocratic arguments, and he organises his book around case studies that exemplify each of them. The first argument is a moral one (focusing on the debauchery of the aristocracy); the second is an economic one (focusing on the detrimental effects of the aristocracy on land-holding); the third is emotional (focusing on the aristocracy and blood-sports); and the fourth is a “legislative” argument (focusing on aristocratic resistance to bills of progress). While each argument is distinct, one of the strengths of the book is the way in which it demonstrates the connections between them, both in terms of the arguments themselves and by virtue of the overlapping networks of radicals who employed them. The substance of the arguments is generated from a wide range of sources, but particularly from radical newspapers and periodicals and other forms of demotic culture. Taylor usefully locates these arguments in longer rhetorical traditions and broader political and social debates of the time, but for me the teasing out of the details in the immediate contexts gives the book a nuanced character that is particularly attractive. The liberal quotations from the sources give a feeling of liveliness and immediacy that adds to the enjoyment of reading it.

The moral argument against aristocracy is analysed in Chapter One, which takes as its starting point the case of Colonel Valentine Baker, a well-connected member of the Marlborough House set frequented by the Prince of Wales. In 1875, Baker was accused of “insulting” (a euphemism for attempting to rape) a young woman with whom he shared a railway compartment on his way up to London. Baker was cashiered, fined and sentenced to one year’s imprisonment. The response in the radical press, particularly *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, was one of outrage at the leniency of the sentence. Taylor draws widely on this material, arguing that the case became emblematic of aristocratic debauchery, and showing how the imaginative world of Victorian radicalism “was populated by debauched aristocrats and professional rakes” (25). Taylor is particularly good on the tropes that organised this imaginative world (including a nice reading of the comparison of aristocracy and vampirism), and deftly shows how they acted as metaphors for larger arguments about the exploitation of the poor by the rich and about the “plunder” (40) gained from their participation in the imperial system.

These arguments about an unproductive, pleasure-seeking aristocracy receive further treatment in Chapter Two, which explores the land debate and the impact on that debate of Henry George. Taylor makes a compelling case for the importance of George to a late nineteenth-century radical milieu “that distrusted government, exalted the Jeffersonian idea of the small proprietor, and campaigned for the abdication of the great land-owners” (46). Showing how the moral fervour of Georgeism’s critiques of the moral bankruptcy of the aristocracy drew upon a wide range of Nonconformist beliefs, he argues that the real key to understanding George’s popularity is “the minute attention he paid to the origins of aristocratic connection and position in Britain” (59). In this, the Norman Conquest became a defining metaphor for the origins of an illegitimate aristocracy that dispossessed the

rightful owners of the land. Contemporary territorial aristocrats, rather than being seen as the preservers of timeless traditions of the land, were portrayed as usurpers with no legal or moral rights to that land. Taylor's recovery of Georgeism as a significant force in late nineteenth-century radicalism (and, indeed, Liberalism) makes a real contribution to our understanding of the contours of reformist and radical politics at the time.

Chapter Three moves to the emotional argument against the aristocracy's participation in blood-sports, especially shooting and fox-hunting. The great virtue of this chapter is that it takes us beyond sentimental expressions of abhorrence for blood-sports, and locates opposition to those sports in the broader radical critiques of the great territorial landowners. Here Taylor demonstrates that "radical opposition to hunting became enmeshed with the notion of lost rights" (75), as members of the hunt could trespass with impunity on tenants' land. In this way, too, contemporary aristocrats were tarred with the brush of their Norman ancestors. He also draws out the further connection between radical opposition to hunting and critiques of imperialism, arguing that "for radicals, anti-imperial sentiments merged with hostility to aristocratic imperial administrators, republicanism, and sympathy for imperial subjects, in press campaigns against royal hunting tours" (91). Connections of this kind raise very interesting questions about the international flow of radical ideas, an area that is still badly under-researched.

The legislative argument against aristocracy is taken up in Chapter Four, which explores the House of Lords debate. Here Taylor argues that, "far from being the last gasp of an exhausted Liberalism, Lords reform was a strong popular issue that created the basis for a working partnership with the Labour Party in the early twentieth century and cemented the progressivist politics of 1906-1914" (102). While he quite convincingly shows the similarities in views between Liberals and radicals on this issue, I think his argument about opposition to the Lords helping to overcome the deep divisions between them is a little overstated. Certainly they shared "a generalised narrative of liberty" (119), but one only has to trace the fallings-out of erstwhile colleagues to touch some of the fundamental differences separating them. At best, I would have thought that the campaign against the Lords, like an earlier camaraderie around opposition to the Boer War, temporarily papered over differences rather than overcoming them. Nevertheless, Taylor's account of the campaign provides us with important examples of the links in the broad reform-radical spectrum at the time.

A final chapter takes up the story into the 1920s and '30s. In it, Taylor focuses on images of a traditional aristocracy in decline and under threat from an emerging plutocracy. Contrary to scholarship which takes such nostalgia at face value, he argues that the aristocracy was actively "reinvented" during these decades from both the right and the left. As the conspicuous consumption of the "plutocratic, bullion-broking, racing, gambling set" (133) became more and more a focus of distaste, so an "idealised arcadian model for an England reborn out of the wreckage of the war"

(150), based on the sturdy English yeoman, started to be constructed. Whereas the late nineteenth-century version of this image was part of a critique of the territorial aristocracy, Taylor sees the new version as anti-plutocratic rather than anti-aristocratic: "The organic movement elevated the traditional aristocratic families of England, re-inventing them as a shield for long-established English values against the alien, invasive presence of un-English plutocrats" (153). This was the moment when country houses began to be donated to the National Trust in return for financial support and continued residence, a moment when the heritage industry was born. I found this chapter the least successful in the book, not because Taylor's basic argument doesn't make sense – it does – but because it's not clearly drawn out and we are left somewhat in the air at the end of it. However, this is a minor criticism of a book which I found thoroughly engaging and immensely suggestive.

### **Jock Macleod**

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***In Darkest London*, by Margaret Harkness. Cambridge: Black Apollo Press, 2003. Victorian Series. 224. ISBN 1-900355-28-0. £12 (paperback).  
*Children of the Ghetto*, by Israel Zangwill. Cambridge: Black Apollo Press, 2004. Victorian Series. 344. ISBN 1-900355-30-2. £13.95 (paperback).**

It is heartening to see the republication of these two important and quite different pieces of *fin-de-siècle* socialist writing; these are absolutely basic paperbacks, bare of any critical apparatus except brief introductions, and emanating from a publishing house I had never heard of. Black Apollo Press is part of a larger group called Germinal Productions based in Cambridge, England, "a multimedia company of writers, visual artists, film makers and graphic designers. Our focus is on the integration of image and word exploring history, thought, art and expression." The Harkness and Zangwill titles are the first and the last (according to the web site) in a Victorian Series, and other publications range from contemporary crime and fantasy novels to women's studies and popular history texts. A strange mix indeed, but obviously a sign of the enthusiasms of the people involved in Germinal Productions. I was intrigued enough by this rampant eclecticism to pursue the trail of the editor of the Victorian Series – also the author of the introductions (and I suspect the guiding light behind the enterprise) – R.A. (Bob) Biderman, and he turns up as an author of fantasy novels who was associated with a longstanding Puppeteers Guild from San Francisco. It is possible that the Harkness and Zangwill reprints might have been merely a judicious choice of out-of-copyright titles aimed at the burgeoning interest in this period which has been apparent for a few years now and which was given fresh impetus by the 2001 London Conference; certainly they are priced