

in many ways it feels like a separate project, but Sewell's analysis of the built environment points toward middle-class women's political machinations: "The increased range of nonpolitical public spaces in which women could and did move and act was an important aspect of their claim to political rights as members of the public and their ability to make that claim" (127). Equally interesting are the commercialized aspects of the public spaces Sewell documents. Women's movements toward direct political engagement seems dependant on women's occupation of commercialized public spaces. As a result, women, as consumers and spenders, become valuable to the state in new ways during this time period, but only in ways that women of means could experience. Drawing from a rich trove of sources, *Women and the Everyday City* examines women's political mobilization from the perspective of the built environment; as such, it documents a race- and class-specific movement that re-gendered the urban landscape and expanded political entitlements for women.

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Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

Seth Rockman provides new clarity and validity to the vision that modern industrial capitalism was built on the backs of poor, downtrodden, and largely anonymous masses. *Scraping By* is about the working poor in early America and the various ways in which impoverished families and individuals struggled to survive during the early nineteenth century when urbanization and industrialization began to transform the social and economic landscape. Readers are immediately thrust into the 'dirty work' of early republic American capitalism, a rapidly changing political economy where impoverished wage labourers, slaves, and indentured immigrants 'scraped by' in unskilled, precarious, and exploitative work. Compelled by the exigencies of survival and divided by gender, race, legal status, and place of origin, a diverse workforce of labourers faced the daily grind not yet guided by a coherent sense of "shared consciousness, identity, or politics" (11). The material conditions in which the working poor found themselves were imposed by an unjust and exploitative market system that created and reinforced class distinctions, eventually giving rise to the American working-class. During this early period, however, Rockman finds only disaggregated masses of industrious people whose hard (and often dangerous) work collectively transformed Baltimore into an economic powerhouse.

Rockman contends that the transition from slavery to wage work was essentially incomplete and presented new problems whereby most wage labour-

ers were unable to exercise much freedom in the marketplace. Both enslaved and 'free' labour were confined by a social and material hegemony where entrepreneurs derived their wealth from their control and ownership over working bodies. Capitalists benefited from slavery and eagerly hired both enslaved and free labour, often coexisting in the same workplace, in order to keep wages down. A simultaneous continuum of enslaved labour, indentured servitude, and wage work blurred the lines between free and unfree labour. In this context, 'wage slavery' assumed greater relevance and poignancy for 'free' labourers who navigated a fairly narrow range of options. According to Rockman, the political economy that emerged during the period of early capitalism created new social and economic disparities where only people with capital were able to exercise the kind of freedom and autonomy so central to the ideals and ethics of the American Revolution. Rockman believes that prosperity and poverty are linked and are often "flip sides of the same coin" (2). He argues that the growing affluence and concentration of wealth during this period directly contributed to the creation of chronic and debilitating poverty as more and more people became dependent on wage work in urban economies.

Rockman reconstructs the lives of workers navigating Baltimore's low-end job market through careful analysis of newspapers, institutional records of the local almshouse, courthouse, penitentiary, and municipal records, particularly petitions by ordinary folks defending themselves against a variety of charges. His adept handling of these records carries important lessons for social historians seeking to rescue their subjects from anonymity in the historical record. Rockman's evocative analysis of Baltimore's port workers moves smoothly into his larger discussion of people drawn to the city in search of work. The key to the rise of Baltimore as a major commercial and transportation centre was its port, given the city's strategic position along the eastern seaboard. Constant dredging of silt that tended to accumulate at the mouth of the port was required to keep the port open for business. Finicky mudmachines helped carry dredged silt away from the harbour wall, but the majority of the work was carried out by a small army of workers who shovelled out the muck by hand. The work was so poorly paid, physically exhausting and dangerous that many recruits quit after a few hours even though much of the other available work in the city was similarly precarious and underpaid.

Rockman takes us through similar narratives of other jobs filled by workers of all stripes: immigrant, native-born, women, men, white, black, free and unfree. In doing so, he pulls away from typical distinctions on the basis of race, culture and gender so that we are left with an impression of the working poor as sharing a certain degree of material hardship and oppression in the developing market system. A focus on women as wage workers, peddlers, and even prostitutes leads to a discussion about the role of gender identity through wage work, gender and family dynamics, family economy, and systems of power

and inequality that shaped the lives of impoverished workers and their families. With these social and material realities in mind we have a fuller understanding of the working poor before moving into subsequent discussions of their contact with institutional sites of power such as state welfare, courts, and penitentiaries. Finally, Rockman concludes with a discussion of the extent to which the advent of the free market system and attendant commodification of labour coincided with a reassertion of a commitment to slave labour. The strategic placement of early chapters on material hardship and subjugation ahead of later chapters on state welfare and punishment seems to chart the inevitable path toward which this new political economy propelled those caught in its web. This organisational structure forces the reader to grapple with Rockman's larger contention that capitalism is an essentially oppressive system.

Scraping By is a provocative yet convincing work that outlines disturbing parallels between slavery and wage work in the antebellum period. Rockman shows how the commodification of labour in the modern capitalist system entailed the purchase and control of human labour, accruing profit and advantage to a concentrated few with financial means. By focusing on the plight of subaltern workers in the early American republic, Rockman successfully demonstrates how early capitalists controlled access to and movement within the market system and in so doing, constricted opportunities to ameliorate extreme disparities in wealth. Probably Rockman's most important contribution is to reaffirm that the best indication of whether or not a given society is just is to consider the condition of those at its foundation, which is to say, the material condition of working people. The poverty, toil, and anguish of early Baltimore's working poor as sketched out by Rockman reveal a great deal about the nature of American capitalism in the early nineteenth century.

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Daniel Burton-Rose, *Guerrilla USA: The George Jackson Brigade and the Anticapitalist Underground of the 1970s* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2010).

Between 1975 and 1977, the George Jackson Brigade took part in more than two dozen bank robberies and bombings. Daniel Burton-Rose's *Guerrilla USA* gives a critical, but largely sympathetic account of this seven-member armed struggle group based out of Washington State as they bombed targets ranging from the prison industrial complex to strike-bound workplaces in an attempt to stir the masses into action.

Laying the background for the introduction of the brigade, the book's