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Présentation de la fiche

Coteb013 f0087

SourceBoite_013 | Bibliographies diverses. Pauvreté. Hermaphrodites. Anormalité. Criminalité. Onan

LangueFrançais

TypeFicheLecture

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

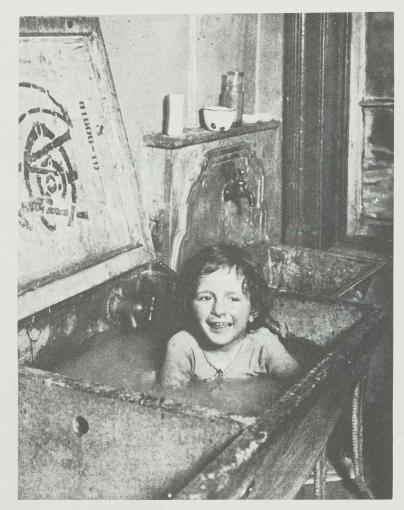
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PORTRAITS OF THE POOR

This section presents largely contemporary descriptions of the state of the poor from the early nineteenth century through the 1930's. Some of the portraits are etched with sober concern, others with missionary zeal—altogether they form a vivid panorama of how the other half has lived for more than four generations.

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**Williams, II, p. 181 "vivid, concrete."

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London Labour and the London Poor gives a picture of the darker side of Victorian life which is equalled in scope and vitality only by the novels of Charles Dickens. An objective, meticulous and sympathetic observer, Mayhew spent years in the streets and slums of Victorian London, talking with shopworkers, watercress girls, prostitutes and thieves, costermongers, acrobats and hundreds of others who lived on the very edge of survival.

"Mayhew was incomparably the greatest social investigator in the mid-century. Observant, ironic, detached yet compassionate, he had an eye for all the awkward peculiarities which escape statistical measurement. In a fact-finding age, he looked for the facts which the enumerators forgot: he wrote consciously against the grain of the orthodoxies of his day, discovering his own courageous 'laws' of political economy — 'under-pay makes over-work,' and 'over-work makes under-pay.'" E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 250.

"Urban agony is about to become a bread and butter subject in universities and will soon enough, be productive of a set of 'model cities' far from the original conceptions of the Great Society social engineers. The models, of course, will be econometrical. Their object, hopefully, will be to help us understand why cities tend to become dreadful places for people to live. If any 'Urban Studies' scholar should be interested in the history and development of his subject, the reappearance of Henry Mayhew's volumes ought to be of great interest. For the historian and lover of Dickensian prose Mayhew's renewed presence is an unequalled opportunity to discover Victorian Britain." Journal of Political Economy

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