Judith Fingard — *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax*. Porters Lake, Nova Scotia: Pottersfield Press, 1989. Pp. 224.

In her article "The Winter's Tale", published in 1974, Judith Fingard dealt with such topics as the nature of poverty and attitudes to the poor in mid-19th-century Bristish North America. She concluded that poverty and winter were inseparable — the condition of the poor was shaped more by the climate than the economy. Her excellent book, *Jack in Port*, provided an examination of merchant sailors, a group largely ignored because they did not "readily conform to models and theories". Professor Fingard's most recent work, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax*, is both interesting and important; it builds upon earlier themes and research discussed in articles like "Jailbirds in Mid-Victorian Halifax" to address the question of the nature of social relations in this era. This is done through the study of the underclass in Halifax and the reactions of middle-class reformers to the so-called disreputable lower classes. She focuses upon the careers and world of ninety-two notorious petty criminals who repeatedly turn up in records of Rockhead Prison, police court minutes, court reports in the press, poorhouse records, public hospital registers and coroner's court records. This group comprised just over 5 percent of the total number of offenders, yet, accounted for about 32 percent of the 4,749 committals between 1864 and 1873.

Fingard has argued that the social history of crime and criminal justice usually emphasizes either attitudes to crime and punishment, or the nature of criminality. Both approaches reflect history from the top down and, thus, reveal little about the individual criminals. The book provides us with a picture not of the "social criminal" bent on resisting authority or protecting customary rights, but of the petty criminal convicted of offences against property, persons and public morality. This group has not been romanticized; they were not the Halifax equivalents of the patrons of Joe Beef's Canteen. These offenders were threats to themselves and to others. Mary Slattery, for example, was a well-known prostitute and went to jail thirty-one times between 1862 and 1873; two-thirds of her convictions were for lewd conduct or vagrancy. Andrew Doyle, a violent and alcoholic Irishman, was unable to work regularly because he lost a couple of fingers on his left hand; he was imprisoned tewnty-nine times in roughly the same period as Slattery. But his problem was pathological, not economic — half of his convictions were related to alcohol abuse and family violence.

Fingard's study of individuals such as Slattery and Doyle sheds some light on the world of the underclass in Victorian Halifax. This group remained concentrated in the rough slums near Citadel Hill which were populated by the poorest Irish and Blacks. The taverns and brothels of the area attracted a steady stream of soldiers, visiting sailors, prospectors and residents from other parts of the city. Most crimes were linked to alcohol. This neighbourhood was perceived to be disorderly and dangerous; it was barely on the margins of the respectable community. Yet, Fingard reveals the complexities and rythms of life in this part of Halifax. The residents comprised a distinct social class and significant relationships developed among the members of this underclass. These were not simply the economic links between the drinker and the saloonkeeper, or between the john and the prostitute; a subculture developed in which people depended on each other for friendship, food, accommodation, entertainment and so forth. Their relations were not simply marked by conflict; there was also co-operation to ensure survival.

Fingard uses underclass as a cultural rather than an economic concept. The underclass did not develop as a result of industrial capitalism; rather, the limited

opportunities available to its members were the result of lack of education, poverty and pathological disorders. Winter continued to contribute to poverty and hardship. Gender reinforced helplessness; women like Mary Slattery often had to make their way as prostitutes. Race was also a factor; Blacks comprised only three percent of the city's population, but they made up forty percent of jailed prostitutes. Yet, class lines were not rigidly fixed. After Isaac Sallis was discharged from the army, for example, he began his life in Halifax as a brothel and tavern keeper. Although he faced thirty-three charges between 1857 and 1880, Sallis only served two jail terms; on other occasions, he was acquitted or was able to pay the fines. He was not a derelict nor did he seek jail as a refuge; he was a successful entrepreneur who, by 1885, was able to move into a better neighbourhood. At the time of his death, in 1904, Sallis had become a more respectable member of the community; he had made the transition from the underclass to the bourgeoisie.

Fingard also examines the attempts by middle-class reformers to impose social control in this area. Their apprehension of the lower classes produced a myriad of reform endeavours designed to addres human weaknesses — evangelical missions, rescue efforts, poor relief, temperance and anti-cruelty movements. The reformers also took a environmental approach; they wished to clean up the slums, separate children from immoral parents and provide religion and education. Yet, the underclass remained beyond their reach; like much of the social reform in this period, the solutions were piecemeal and unsystematic. The lack of commitment to reform and the lack of resources doomed their efforts to failure. The only success of the moralists and reformers was their ability to define codes of acceptable behaviour and establish institutions designed to create the new urban order, the poorhouse, prisons and reformatories. (It is also ironic that the erroneous and biased observations of the middle class about the so-called disreputable elements have often provided the evidence exploited by many social historians to develop models of class structure and theories of social control.)

Fingard reveals that members of the underclass were relatively free of middle-class interference with their way of life. The prison and the poorhouse were not simply institutions of social restraint; rather, they were agencies for the welfare of the group they were designed to control. They became refuges from the climate, unemployment and enemies for the homeless and destitute. Thus, repeat offenders often preferred incarceration to life on the streets. Prostitutes, for example, sometimes accepted the safety of prison where they could avoid the violence often directed against them. Moreover, the family remained an important institution among this group. While some families were positive influence and provided solidarity, others were wracked by conflict. The family of Andrew Doyle often resorted to the courts for discipline by laying charges themselves in cases of family violence, and the courts often co-operated with prison sentences or banishment from Halifax. Therefore, the judicial system was used for social control, but that control was family, not state-sponsored. The courts were popular institutions — not just a source of entertainment, but a means by which members of the underclass could define their own social relations. The State could be drawn in reluctantly, but only when people in marginal situations overstepped the bounds of propriety and deference. The law did not simply reflect middle-class ideology, nor was it aimed at oppressing and exploiting the lower classes. Attitudes to crime and punishment and the nature of criminality cannot be dismissed merely as a by-product of industrial capitalism. As Professor Fingard has shown, these themes take on a new definition when examined through the focus of the underclass.

Unlike the social reformers whom she discusses, Professor Fingard does seem to understand the underclass. She is sensitive to the social, familial, gender and racial problems faced by people on the margin, and her excellent work reveals a clearer picture of the complex social life in 19th-century Halifax.

There is one final point to me made. The publication of *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* indicates the vitality of regional presses in this country. There may be an unfortunate tendency to downplay the significance of this work simply because it was not published by one of the major scholarly or commercial presses in Toronto. Both Professor Fingard and Pottersfield Press are to be commended for this book.

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George Huppert — *After the Black Death. A Social History of Early Modern Europe*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986. Pp. xiv, 169.

George Huppert's *After the Black Death* is both an engaging account of life in early modern Europe and a synthesis of some of the best recent social history. Huppert places his book in the tradition of the *Annales* approach to history, as exemplified by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, and specialists will recognize many of the articles and monographs he draws upon. They will recognize them with pleasure, however, for Huppert has succeeded in incorporating two of the strengths of *Annalist* social history — evocative detail and quantitative precision — into a book which is accessible both to students and the general public.

After the Black Death deals with the 14th-18th centuries, and presents vivid portraits of the disparate social groups which made up the Third Estate. His organizing principle is the community, whether depicting villager or city-dweller, urban patriciates intent on social mobility, artisans and peasants rebelling against erosion of tradition, and even those outcasts who have no place within any community. A major assumption of the book is that those four centuries constitute a distinct period in European history, which is defined by the precarious balance worked out by individuals and communities between available resources and population.

Yet, this was not a static period, and Huppert must reconcile continuity of demographic patterns and rural and urban traditions with significant change in social structure. This is a problem posed by much *Annales* history, for it is not easy to reconcile an emphasis on the *longue durée* and the Eternal Village, as exemplified by Sennely (1-9), with urban rebellion in Romans (88-99), or rapid social mobility among nobility (65-66). Indeed, many of the works Huppert cites emphasize on either continuity or change, that is, either Sennely or Romans; Huppert, in order to produce a successful synthesis, has to present both.

He does this by implicitly extending Lawrence Stone's image of the English upper class as a "bus or hotel, always full, but always full of different people" (66) to the most basic structures of early modern European society, the village, the city and the *seigneurie*. These, for Huppert, remain constant, populated to the capacity of existing resources. What does change is who owns or works or administers them. Huppert is