

JOHN DAVIS. *Waterloo Sunrise: London from the Sixties to Thatcher*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. 600. \$39.95 (cloth).  
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In 1967, the Conservative-controlled Greater London Council offered its tenants the chance to buy their homes at a discount. While take-up proved limited—fewer than 15,000 sales had been completed by the time the program was suspended by the incoming Labour administration in 1973—the scheme nevertheless prefigured Thatcher’s landmark 1980 housing policy, Right to Buy, and the widespread marketization of social housing provision thereafter. The Greater London Council’s sale, which was initiated by its Housing Committee’s chair, Horace Cutler—a landlord, property developer, and ardent Thatcherite—in this sense represented an early ideological attack on council housing. But market zealotry aside, the sale also responded to a growing disenchantment among Londoners with the bureaucratic and centralized local state, and indeed an emerging sense of individualism at this time that ran counter to the paternalistic politics of municipal socialism that had flourished in the postwar years.

The Greater London Council sale was just one of many trends and precursors evident in London in the 1960s and 1970s that, according to John Davis in *Waterloo Sunrise: London from the Sixties to Thatcher*, anticipated Thatcherism. Growing skepticism toward the local state was similarly manifest in rising public concern over comprehensive development, and a distaste for hubristic central planning more generally: in 1973, behind strenuous local opposition, the Greater London Council scrapped both its plans to build a series of new urban motorways—or ringways—though inner and outer London and to demolish most of Covent Garden. The abandonment of these schemes, the latter of which would make room for “dreary and anonymous” (193) office towers and new roads, was part of a tendency toward conservation in 1960s London that broadly encompassed the quickening spread of gentrification and attendant owner occupation. If Cutler was Thatcher’s unwitting foot soldier, paving the way to neoliberalism through the unpicking of postwar orthodoxies, then so were the community activists and middle-class gentrifiers whose self-determining actions demonstrated the “increasing powerlessness of public agencies in London” (428).

For Davis, it was precisely the increasing distrust toward the local state and the crumbling of postwar orthodoxies in London that laid the foundations for Thatcher’s Britain. But as Davis points out, these foundations “owed virtually nothing to her” (47). Deindustrialization, rising unemployment, and resulting demographic upheavals and widening inequalities in London all anticipated the national picture in the 1980s: homelessness and social unrest—trends typically associated with the 1980s—were more than nascent in the preceding decade. In delineating the city’s bust years, Davis charts the struggles of London Labour, amid considerable internal tensions over the party’s leftward shift, to respond to the economic maelstrom. He also charts the inability of statutory welfare agencies to adequately respond to the needs of “Twilight London,” as Honor Marshall called it (*Twilight London: A Study in Degradation* [1971]). In the 1960s, the spatialization of urban policy concentrated efforts on pockets of multiple deprivation and was problematically tied to ideas of transmitted poverty. Under-resourced and ineffective, these initiatives fueled disenchantment with local authorities, and a surge in community activism—most visible in claimants’ unions, militant tenants’ organizations, and a mass squatting movement, which, as Davis points out, was often steered by disaffected middle-class radicals.

But grassroots activism was far from the preserve of bearded graduates. In inner-city areas like Brixton and Notting Hill, where embattled Black communities found themselves at the sharp end of the crisis, self-reliance in the form of hostels, community centers and other Black-led spaces of relative sanctuary was often a matter of survival, particularly in the face of hostile policing. In Davis’s captivating retelling of the origins and evolution of the Notting Hill Carnival—another important site of Black belonging and resistance—we see

this hostility play out forebodingly: violent clashes between the police and Carnival-goers in 1976 and military-style policing of the event a year later portended the cataclysmic street disturbances of the 1980s. Here, Davis points to a race relations machinery that was “well-intentioned” (429) but ultimately ill equipped to deal with the mounting disadvantages faced by black people—a conclusion that suggests an artificial distinction between race relations and mainstream policy and that ignores, for example, the exemption of police powers from the Race Relations Acts. In Davis’s consideration of race overall—especially given her emphasis on housing—more attention to efforts taken to revitalize run-down property as part of a broader movement of Black enterprise and self-help in the inner city would also have been welcome.

But these are small quibbles. *Waterloo Sunrise* is an absorbing and eclectic account of London in the 1960s and 1970s, as comfortable tracing the rise and decline of the sex industry in Soho as it is the rise and decline of the city planner. Palpable is the sense of London in flux and of old stitching coming undone under the weight of various crises, conflicts, and self-determining movements. Palpable, too, is the sheer quantity of research that has gone into animating Davis’s sixteen standalone chapters. From the Dickensian working conditions of family-run Chinese restaurants to the fascinating testimony of Soho’s strippers and descriptions of officially sanctioned mass rough sleeping among tourists in Hyde Park, Davis’s narratives are evocative and unexpected and make clear the scale and complexity of change in London in these critical two decades.

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EMMANUEL DESTENAY *Conscription, US Intervention and the Transformation of Ireland, 1914–1918: Divergent Destinies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. 272. \$115.00. (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.121

The Irish conscription crisis of April 1918 is familiar to historians of both World War I and the Irish independence movement. The German offensive triggered by the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March, which permitted no less than a million German soldiers to move from Russia to the Western Front, prompted British policy makers to consider what they had avoided for the previous nearly four years of war: introducing compulsory military service in Ireland. But the threat of conscription (which had been in force in Britain itself since 1916) triggered a surge of Irish protest that contributed to Sinn Féin’s startling victory in the December 1918 British elections, when the upstart party captured nearly all of the seats previously held by the Irish Parliamentary Party.

This much is widely known. Nonetheless, historians have generally seen resistance to conscription as just one small piece of the puzzle of how Sinn Féin, which sought a fully independent Ireland, so thoroughly decimated the Irish Party, with its less ambitious objective of Home Rule. After all, when the war began, Home Rule had (at least on paper) been achieved and John Redmond’s party was supported by the vast majority of the Irish nationalist population. At the center of most historical interpretations for the dramatic shift in the respective fortunes of the two parties has been the 1916 Easter Rising, and especially Britain’s ill-conceived executions of its leaders that followed. However, in *Conscription, US Intervention and the Transformation of Ireland, 1914–1918: Divergent Destinies*, Emmanuel Destenay demonstrates conclusively that although conscription was never implemented in Ireland, the *fear* of conscription needs to be taken more fully into account in explaining the shift. Beginning to generate popular anxieties in late 1916, he shows, the threat of compulsory military service played a