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Trash! On Ragpicker Children and Recycling

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

The current word on European streets is of the vibrant economy of contemporary India. This book shows how one aspect of this vibrancy starts in the Indian streets. The country's recycling industry is the largest in the world, and it's powered from the bottom up by the street kids who, for pennies or less, collect recyclable materials much in the way of their London counterparts in Mayhew's time.

All this is explained in the engaging tale of Velu, the country boy who arrives futureless in the city and is swept up into the sweeping-up industry that supplies the paper and plastic trades. The tale is skilfully told and interspersed with illuminating cameos of Indian city life and environmentally relevant information. From it emerges a picture of a situation in which street-kids, far from being a drain on the public economy, are essential contributors to it.

Is this exploitation or opportunity? Well, it can be either as the reader ? automatically drawn into the debate ? can find out. And the story is pleasurable, with an Indian accent sharpening ? like fresh coriander ? reader awareness. The charming, almost ?retro? production, with tipped-in colour plates and excellently large type extends the pleasure.

This is a welcome reappearance of an original idea which, having gathered awards and admirers since we first saw it, may be on its way to classic status. TP

Running Order:

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