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Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

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Since its establishment in the mid-1970s, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO) has played a pioneering role in promoting and undertaking research in the field of immigration and ethnic studies. Beside setting up a sophisticated research apparatus aimed at recovering a wide variety of ethnocultural documentary sources, the MHSO has brought together an impressive number of scholars from North America and Europe on a regular basis around conferences dealing with the Society's research concerns. This is not the place to evaluate the accomplishments of this research institution, but to simply point out that thanks to the MHSO's work, a sizeable body of literature has begun to emerge which represents an important pole of reference for scholars working in this field. This published material includes topical essay-collections growing out of the conferences mentioned above;¹ the Society's journal *Polyphony*; and a series of individual essays called "Occasional Papers in Ethnic and Immigration Studies."

The fact that all the "Occasional Papers" discussed in this review are concerned with some aspects of Toronto's ethnic history is no coincidence; Toronto has constituted the main terrain of research for the Society, and, moreover, many of the scholars associated with the MHSO are drawn from the Toronto area.

Despite their uneven quality and the variety of *genre* they display, these papers bring out some elements which enrich our knowledge of the different ethnocultural itineraries that have contributed to provide the Queen City with its particular brand of cosmopolitanism. Equally important, these papers raise — directly or indirectly — the crucial question of the relationship between immigration and urban history, and thus invite timely reflections on a very important dimension of Canadian social history.

Unlike Montreal² — whose cosmopolitanism drew its initial stamp from the coexistence within its urban space of French and English Canadians — Toronto's cosmopolitanism derives largely from the presence of non-British immigrant communities and their interaction with the dominant English Canadian culture. If cosmopolitanism must not be viewed as just a 'feeling' nor as something deduced mechanically from population statistics, but, as an attribute of urban civility, we may still be far from knowing whether Toronto has actually attained such a state, and what historical dynamics may have gone into the making of the city's present-day urban image.

If Toronto's cosmopolitanism — real or alleged — deserves a history, Robert Harney has provided an incisive outline of how such a history might unfold. In his Occasional Paper *Toronto: Canada's New Cosmopolite*, Harney traces in broad strokes the shifting social and cultural terrain upon which the encounter between immigrant communities and English Canadians has occurred in the 20th century. Harney sees three major periods as successive historical frameworks through which Toronto's ethnic relations have evolved. The first corresponds with the mass arrival of non-British immigrants — roughly from the late 19th century to World War II. This was a period largely marked by intolerance toward immigrant cultures, an intolerance which at its worst would take the form of outright racism and at its best, that of a longing for an acceleration of the assimilation process. If this 'history' has to have its Dark Ages, undoubtedly this period will do it — particularly the World War II years (which Henry calls "the nadir of respect for ethnic pluralism") — when considerations dictated by a dubious form of *raison d'état* obliterated any progress that Toronto might have made in viewing her immigrant communities as a permanent part of her social fabric. Yet, in Harney's outline the war years also represent the period during which the seeds of a changing attitude toward ethnic groups were sown. As the city witnessed a steady arrival of refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe, and as the presence of Allied servicemen became more frequent, native Torontonians proved more inclined to give a second look at the ethnic diversity that had long characterized their city.

According to Harney, the real test, however, came in the post-war years, when Toronto became the destination of the largest wave of immigrants coming from Eastern and Southern Europe, and later, from a variety of non-European countries. It is in the aftermath of this social and cultural recomposition, one which — as Harney puts it — has “altered forever” the character of the city, that cosmopolitanism has become a concrete reality.

A large part of Harney's paper is made up of reflections on the nature of cosmopolitanism — how to recognize it in the ethos of an urban population rather than deducing it from statistics about ethnic stock. Nowhere does Harney attempt a formal definition of cosmopolitanism, yet his argument is so rich in anecdotes, illustrations, and subtle conceptual distinctions that by the end, the reader feels he has been on a guided tour through Toronto's multiethnic universe.

The conclusion to be drawn from this paper is that if Toronto has produced something that resembles a cosmopolitan ethos, the merit rests not just with the present generation of immigrants, but also with the previous generations who out of a need for survival weaved into the urban texture of the city signposts pointing to cultural pluralism. Moreover, lest one falls into the error of equating ethnic diversity, or the existence of multicultural policies, with cosmopolitanism, Harney reminds us that in the final analysis, it is common people who have imposed on Toronto those values that have made cosmopolitanism a real possibility. From the immigrant-receiving area, to the ethnic neighbourhood, and on to the ethnic community and the multi-ethnic city, this is the urban itinerary on which those values have been grafted and on which the basis for a cosmopolitan Toronto have been laid.

Two partial illustrations of what particular forms this itinerary has taken are found in John Zucchi's and Varpu Lindstrom-Best's papers — the first dealing with the Italians and the second with the Finns. They both focus on the earlier stages of settlement in Toronto, and they are less concerned with analysing the interaction between immigrants and native Torontonians than with tracing the “internal” sociocultural composition of the two groups and the associational forms that came into being.

Zucchi's prize-winning essay *The Italian Immigrants of the St. John's Ward, 1875-1915* is one of the first historical studies which investigate the formation of an immigrant neighbourhood in a Canadian city. The questions he tries to answer are exceedingly relevant to both ethnic and urban historians. What factors led the early Italian residents of Toronto to choose the St. John's Ward over other urban districts? How did that Ward evolve from an Italian immigrant-receiving area into an ethnic neighbourhood deserving the title of Little Italy? To answer these and other questions, the author has made sophisticated use of a wide variety of doc-

umentary sources, most of which are well known to the practitioners of the ‘new social history.’

Zucchi shows that considerations relating to the specific urban environment (job availability, distance from the commercial centre, housing costs), coupled with the need to live in proximity of other immigrants coming from the same hometowns, were at the origin of the first residential concentration of Italian immigrants in Toronto. The reader may be surprised to realize to what extent hometown-based relationships overshadowed links growing out of a common nationality. A greater surprise will be to see how different the assimilationists' time-table was from that of these early Italian residents. Indeed, Zucchi's paper seems to show that the two time-tables went in opposite directions, as Italians learning to transcend their regional or hometown-based allegiances moved toward a national identity which became operative in the associational network they erected in their midst. Zucchi is careful to point out that the forging of an Italian identity did not necessarily imply the erasing of regional bonds. Yet, this mutual discovery as Italians — something which was hardly possible in Italy at that time — took these immigrants farther away from the unilinear trajectory that most assimilationists projected.

The author has carried this historical investigation deeper in a doctoral dissertation that has been completed recently. This paper, however, constitutes an excellent introduction into the social and cultural universe of one of Toronto's first ethnic neighbourhoods, and helps us understand how easily urban reformers could overlook their complexity.

In her paper *The Finnish Immigrant Community of Toronto, 1887-1913*, Varpu Lindstrom-Best explores a similar territory. Her study adds another piece to the ethnocultural mosaic that had developed in Toronto by the eve of World War I. Although Toronto's Finns made up a much smaller population than the Italians, their presence was as visible, and the ethnic universe they created in their midst as complex. The author provides us with a very perceptive profile of this immigrant group, and she succeeds in pinpointing the major forces that shaped Toronto's Finns into a stable ethnic community. Her access to rare immigrant documentary sources, coupled with her research skills, have permitted her to identify the first Finnish pioneer who settled in Toronto, and to trace vividly his efforts to lay the foundations of what later became the Finnish community.

According to the author, three major factors seem to have determined the rapidity with which Finnish immigrants consolidated themselves into a community, and the vitality that they exhibited in their social life. One was the degree of occupational homogeneity among them; a majority of the early comers were in fact tailors, which means that their common social life was not limited to leisure activities but encompassed also the world of work. The other was the unusually balanced sex-ratio of Toronto's Finns, which not

only facilitated the process of family formation, but also insured a great degree of residential stability. And finally, the overwhelming adherence to socialist principles — a factor that facilitated a common orientation in their associational activities.

Students of socialism may find this particular brand of socialism puzzling and fascinating at the same time. What to make, in fact, of the “Iso-Paja” — the first large Finnish manufacturing shop where the owner expected his tailors to join the Journeymen Tailors’ Union and to embrace socialist doctrines? “The tailors” — the author tells us — “listened to selections from working-class papers, socialist literature, Marx Engels, Kautsky and Finnish authors such as Aleksis Kivi, or from English authors such as Shakespeare, read by a paid reader during the busy times and by one of the tailors during the slower season” (pp. 9-10).

Whatever puzzling quality the reader may find in this type of social practice, it is soon dispelled when one discovers that socialism, more than a mere ideological abstraction, was a vehicle of collective identity, permitting Toronto’s Finnish immigrants to keep alive their national roots, while at the same time, equipping them to face the material and the cultural challenges of a capitalist society. Lindstrom-Best’s study points to one of the best historical examples of how ideology could acquire the character of a material force and act as a leaven in the making of an ethnic community.

Neither Lindstrom-Best’s paper nor Zucchi’s explore the attitudes of native Torontonians toward the two immigrant groups in question. One is not sure, therefore, to what extent such attitudes may have affected the process of community building and the collective image that both Finns and Italians sought to create in their new city. These two studies then, help us little to understand what Harney calls “Toronto’s attempt over half a century to come to terms with growth, with non-British newcomers and with cosmopolitanism as a substitute for loyal colonialism” (p. 2). One would expect this issue to be a central one in Keith S. Henry’s paper, *Black Politics in Toronto Since World War I*; but it is not so. The author does make occasional references to discrimination and racism as part of the reality in which Blacks had to live in Toronto; but the reader has difficulties perceiving how this hostile environment could serve as a mirror reflecting the city’s path toward a cosmopolitan ethos.

In all fairness, the author makes clear that what he calls “external factors” — i.e., the political environment and the public climate regarding civil rights issues — are not central to his investigation. Instead, Henry takes us through a tortuous and bumpy voyage into the universe of Toronto’s Black politics — a universe marked largely by discord, apathy, and lack of leadership. His paper reads as if it was written all in one breath, and clarity does not seem to be one of the author’s main concerns. Notwithstanding, the tenacious reader will

learn much about community issues, personalities, and political styles.

Henry’s conclusion is that the most striking aspect of the Black experience in Toronto has been “its inability to mobilize effectively as a united community for public purposes” (p. 30). He offers a number of sociological explanations for this inability, mostly associated with the cultural and social diversity characterising Toronto’s Black population. On the one hand there are the old Black families, most of them with roots dating back to the 19th century, and well integrated into Toronto’s public life. On the other hand, there are the West Indian Blacks, who began to settle in the city at the time of World War I, soon becoming the largest component of the Black population. In addition, there are two smaller groups: the “Americans,” many of whom working in the entertainment industry and living a largely transient life, and the “Nova Scotians,” Blacks who migrated to Toronto from that Atlantic Province.

Another explanation given for the low level of political activity has to do with the unbalance in the sex-ratio of Toronto’s Black population. “Having an overwhelming fraction of its population female” — Henry points out — “was an undoubted disadvantage, until recently, in the group’s quest for political influence, their sex disqualifying them for positions of influence almost as often as their colour. In addition, the traditional dictates of social life for black women in Toronto, church and/or social club membership, were also largely in conflict with progressive political ambitions” (p. 15).

In discussing this social and cultural heterogeneity among Toronto’s Blacks, Henry shows he is aware of the important distinction between *race* and *ethnicity*. One of the conclusions flowing from this study is that the ethnic bonds existing within each Black group seem to have overshadowed bonds based on a common racial belonging. Unfortunately, the author does not pursue this aspect much farther. Instead, his whole analysis is based on the assumption that Black politics in Toronto should have grown entirely out of common racial considerations. A common Black identity shaped by the struggle against racial discrimination: this seems to be the ‘ideal type’ of Black political activism which Henry adopts to interpret much of the Toronto Black experience. This, of course, is the dominant interpretative model in U.S. Black studies; but when applied to the Toronto context its effect cannot be but a one-dimensional perception of the Black historical experience. What to ethnic historians may appear as the consolidation of group identities shaped by particular ethnocultural roots, becomes here not only a history of divisiveness, but also a male history exclusively.

Henry’s main concern with “public activism” prevents him from penetrating into the frame of mind of Black Torontonians and into their daily experience. Here is where *A Black Man’s Toronto, 1914-1980* comes to the rescue.

Edited by Donna Hill, this booklet grew out of an oral history project, and it contains the reminiscences of Harry Gairey.

It must be noted at the outset that Harry Gairey is no ordinary Black Torontonion. Not only does his story span almost seven decades of life and activity in the city, but he also was in the forefront of some of the most important initiatives undertaken in the Black community. In some of these Gairey acted on his own, for example when he confronted the City Council because his son had been denied access to one of the neighbourhood's skating rinks. (As a result, the City passed an ordinance on January 14, 1947, forbidding discrimination in all recreation and amusement establishments licensed by the police commission). In other cases, he acted in concert with other Blacks, if not to tear down, at least to fracture the wall of racism that they encountered in their daily life. Out of this dedication to the cause of racial equality, a Toronto local of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters emerged in the 1940s, and a few years later a new organization, the Negro Citizenship Association, began its activities aimed at denouncing racial discrimination in Canadian immigration policies.

But Harry Gairey was also an immigrant from Jamaica, a young man who in the 1920s was fired up by Marcus Garvey's message; he was also a church goer, a husband, a father, and a neighbour to many non-Black Toronto residents. And this is where a well-produced 'life history' can become a rich source of historical understanding. It opens the door into the private sphere of a person's life, and allows the reader to gain a sense of synthesis of the whole experience of an historical actor.

Before the 1960s, Blacks made up a tiny portion of Toronto's population. But if racism has been one of the barriers preventing the city to attain a genuine cosmopolitan ethos, Harry Gairey seems to be one of those Blacks who, through a life of modesty and devotion, have helped lower the barrier. His vision of a cosmopolitan Toronto is not theoretical. He knows that the city has made major strides forward, but he also knows how easy it is to fall back and lose many of the gains that have been made. Here is how he addresses this question in his concluding remarks:

"This morning I heard over the radio where they are giving the Pakistan people a very, very hard time, and it's distressing. Down on Gerrard Street, the reporter was interviewing these various people, asked a little fellow, ten-twelve years old, "Why don't you like the Pakistan people?" He said, "Well, they want to take over." "Where did you get that?" "I get it from my mother, my father, who tell me that they are dirty and they should go back to their own country."

Oh, it bothers me so much, when you think that you're making a little gain, you have these senior people who should be telling the children that we are all brothers

under the skin. "Why don't they go back to their own country?" Well, their forefathers were immigrants. You see my point? (p. 43).

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NOTES

1. These include, Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert F. Harney and Lydio F. Tomasi, eds., *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America* (Toronto, 1978); George E. Pozzetta, ed., *Pane e Lavoro: The Italian American Working Class* (Toronto, 1980); Robert F. Harney, ed., *Little Italies in North America* (Toronto, 1981); Michael Karni, ed., *The Finnish Diaspora*, 2 volumes (Toronto, 1981); Raymond Breton and Pierre Savard, eds., *The Quebec and Acadian Diaspora in North America* (Toronto, 1982).
2. Some aspects of Montreal's cosmopolitanism have been skillfully discussed by Paul-André Linteau in "La montée du cosmopolitisme montréalais," *Questions de culture 2* (1982): 23-54.

Sutcliffe, Anthony. *Towards the Planned City: Germany, Britain, the United States and France, 1780-1914*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. Pp. 230. Illustrations, index. £15.00 cloth; £6.50 paper.

Any explanation of public intervention in the urban environment involves a complex set of factors and this complexity is increased when an author attempts to describe these events in several political systems. *Towards the Planned City* is an impressive addition to a series consciously designed to tackle this problem by systematically examining major historical themes in a comparative setting.¹ Author Anthony Sutcliffe outlines the evolution of planning in Germany, Britain, the United States and France in successive chapters and analyses the international aspects of planning in the final two chapters. Few scholars in the world are as qualified as Sutcliffe to take on this task for his preparation includes extensive research and publication on the history of planning in France, Britain and Germany.² As well, he has developed close contacts with urban historians abroad through the organization of conferences for the Planning History Group, through a number of lecture trips (including at least two to Canada), and through his coordination of the international bibliographical coverage annually in the *Urban History Yearbook*.

While the dates in the title might suggest that this volume is a general survey of urban planning from the late 18th century, Sutcliffe actually concentrates on developments during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Earlier forms of planning are not ignored — the author, after all, is an authority on mid-19th century Paris. But here he argues