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America's ethnic discourse thrives on familiar but increasingly slippery metaphors of identity such as "melting pot" and "mosaic," as well as related ideologically weighted descriptions of urban space: "slum," "ghetto," and "inner city." Since the 1930s, historians have participated in this highly political and often confusing conversation. Having vanquished the Anglo-Teutonic nativists who had dominated the profession with their longing for the alleged cultural homogeneity of the past, two generations of scholars reared in and committed to understanding the ethnic complexity of the nation's immigrant-derived cities have redefined America's past. In recent years, social historians have stressed the persistence of ethnic identities, the distinctive power of the culture of racism, and immigrant workers' strategies "under capitalism." We no longer have a unified (and unifying) immigrant history, but a variety of American ethnic histories. As the four books I will be discussing reveal, social historians have formulated increasingly sophisticated understandings of the varied experiences of

European migrants. They are also somewhat aware that the recent migrations which are reshaping our cityscapes may call for reconceptualizing "the immigrant experience." But there remains a great deal of uncertainty over whether (and how) our reading of the many ethnic pasts can (or should) provide a vision capable of informing public discourse in our ethnic present.

David Gerber's *The Making of an American Pluralism* is a richly detailed and theoretically sophisticated history of the first wave of mass European immigration which transformed the relatively homogeneous Buffalo of 1825 into the multi-ethnic polity which gave most of its votes to Abraham Lincoln in 1860. From Gerber's opening description of the boom town speculation that followed the selection of the confluence of the Niagara and Buffalo Rivers as the terminus of the Erie canal, to his culminating analysis of the Republican Party's successful campaign to woo German votes away from the Democratic Party, the reader is treated to what is arguably the most empirically rich and astute study of the political culture of a nineteenth century immigrant city. Whether describing Bishop John Timon's struggle against the Franco-German trustees of St Louis parish, the Democratic Party's "colonization" of Irish canal labourers in the Fifth Ward on election day, grudging middle class Protestant appreciation for the Sisters of Charity and their hospital, or the interclass struggles in an ideologically and regionally diverse German community, Gerber's detailed reconstruction lets us eavesdrop on the inter- and intra-ethnic conversations through which the residents of Buffalo renegotiated their ethnocultural identities and forged an integrating political pluralism.

While not averse to quantitative comparisons and reasonable qualitative generalizations, Gerber never reifies the "host" or immigrant cultures but traces the interrelationship between ethnicization and rise of pluralism. Unlike some recent practitioners of social history, Gerber pays a great deal of attention

to the formation and hegemonic aspirations of the local Protestant elite. The "host" was not simply native and Protestant; it was the ongoing project of a bourgeoisie trying to legitimate a world they had just begun to make. Immigrants, particularly poor Irish Catholic labourers, threatened bourgeois Protestantism's "hegemonic" vision. But along with nostalgia for the past and virulent anti-immigrant sentiments, the native-born elite gradually saw how the charity and schools of the Catholic religious orders and the example of lager-drinking, property-holding Germans could contribute to a refashioned public sphere. Similarly, while Gerber does not downplay the pre-migration culture of the immigrants, he does not view immigrant-derived ethnic identities as transhistorical givens. Like the native born, their "ethnicization" involved both the inner life of the community and its memories, and historically contingent and shifting class and cultural relations within and among groups.

As Gerber makes plain in his introduction, his book is intended to be read as more than a local history. As he puts it, "it is rather a study of the rise of social pluralism" itself, which he defines as "a form of society characterized by public competition, conflict, and cooperation among large complex groups composed of overlapping social solidarities." Gerber is by no means the first to argue that within the framework of this pluralism, ethnicity and not class became the most dominant axis of political identity. But following the lead of neo-Marxist political scientists Ira Katznelson and Amy Bridges, his analytic narrative tries to avoid both the pluralist celebration of ethnic/interest group politics so dominant in the fifties as well as the more recent ethno-cultural determinism. Rejecting the "pieties and cynicism of the consensus school," Gerber sees no "messianic purposes" to American pluralism. It is simply a "fact of life" that the system that emerged in Buffalo had the capacity "to defuse and absorb conflict and to integrate new and foreign born groups."

Thus, for Gerber, ethnicity, like class, permeates the urban social structure; its role as the crucial category of urban politics requires explanation. One powerful reason is that the fragmentation of labour through a cultural division of labour meant that "the experience of class was lived in ethnic boundaries." Most important, however, was the system of urban politics which organized around ethno-geographic issues and identities. But in spite of his theoretical intention, as the narrative builds to its conclusion, Gerber's voice loses its self-conscious critical distance. Rather than delineating Buffalo's new hegemonic "trench system," as his earlier nod to Katznelson's theory would have us expect, Gerber stresses its "capacity . . . to preserve order by balancing competing claims and interests . . ."

David Emmons' equally masterful *The Butte Irish* also addresses the relationship between class, ethnicity, and power. And like Gerber, but even more directly, Emmons explains why their "worker's world . . . was not always or necessarily the world assigned to them by [left] political theorists." Though "eastern in its industrialization, its Catholicism, its politics," Butte was not like Buffalo. Irish immigrants did not have to respond to the "host" society or bargain with other ethnic groups; they bore the responsibility and benefits of shaping order in the industrial city. Consequently, the subject of his study is not the making of an American pluralism deflecting workers from class politics through ethnic competition in the integrative mechanisms of urban politics. Instead, Emmons traces the making of Irish working class conservatism.

As self-conscious exiles from an "enslaved" land, Emmons does not deny the "seam" where Irish nationalism and labour militancy often came together. But he stresses the conservative consequences of the "seam" where "Irish" and "worker" met in Butte. Thanks in large part to a wealth of "Irish stuff" in local archives, Emmons demonstrates that this conservatism was rooted in the character

of their jobs, corporate policy, and Irish associational life. Late nineteenth century Butte occupied a distinct place in the world capitalist system. Drawing Irish immigrant labour, particularly from West Cork, Butte offered the highest industrial wages in the nation, and thanks to Thomas Edison, steady work for the "muckers" who dug the copper to wire the nation. Furthermore, Marcus Daly, a founder of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, provided his fellow "exiles" privileged access to employment. Nonetheless, life under capitalism could be short, especially in Butte: its copper mines were the most deadly in the world. But it was not labour radicalism but conservative unionism and the associational life of exiled Hibernia that helped the miners cope with what Eric Hobsbawm has called the "primary life risks" of working class life. For example, foremen and hiring officers helped their fellow members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians secure jobs in cool, relatively safe spots in the company of other Irish "practical" miners. And the association's death and sick benefits socialized the cost of injury. The Butte Miners Union was not a class-based rival to this ethnic world, but an instrument of the settled Irish working class. With overlapping membership in the Irish associations, the union protected a "contrived" labour aristocracy using artificial boundaries to guard their relatively privileged place in the ethnic division of labour.

The Irish worker's world of "Butte, America" lasted only a generation. Emmons is at his best tracing the changes in corporate policy, labour migration, and Irish nationalist politics which before and during World War I eroded and finally shattered this distinctive working class community. But if, unlike Gerber, Emmons makes a few broad claims, his work stands out as one of the more important studies of the immigrant working class. Through its rich portrait of associational life and the worker's world, he convincingly argues that Butte's Irish "working class conservatism owed little to the hegemony of middle class ideas and values." By situating

workers in their local and transnational community, Emmons has given a critical ethnocultural twist to the job consciousness which John R. Commons and Selig Perlman identified as the crux of American working class consciousness.

With rich empirical detail and interpretive clarity, Gerber and Emmons "re-vision" the relationship between class, ethnicity, and power on the immigration historian's familiar terrain. The editors and contributors to *Shades of the Sunbelt* scout the relatively unexamined world of the post-World War II urban South. Taken as a whole, the essays demonstrate that the racial caste system no longer defines social and political relations in the urban South. Business elites committed to the politics of growth, blacks exercising hard won political rights, "ethnic" migrants looking for job opportunities or affordable retirements, and new immigrants trying to secure a place in their adopted land are fashioning their own "pluralism."

Like Gerber, a number of the essays refuse to reify univocal ethnic identities. Deborah Dash Moore's synthesis of recent studies emphasizes the diversity of Jewish migrant destinations and goals as they search for comfortable retirement or career opportunities in the Sunbelt. While few would consider Florida's Canadian migrant community a crucial topic, Robert Harney has written a lighthearted but theoretically acute essay pulling together such themes as the global leisure industry, labour migration, ethno genesis, and the illusiveness of Canadian identity. Following recent work by other anthropologists, Gary W. McDonogh demonstrates the powerful role of historical consciousness in shaping ethnic identity in Savannah, particularly among the city's Catholics whose versions of the past articulate their different racial and class experiences. And while hardly a pathbreaking work in women's studies, Julia Kirk Blackwelder reminds us that experiences of ethnicity and race should also be seen in the context of gender.

But the crucial discussion of race, ethnicity, and class in urban politics seems constrained by a somewhat uncritical application of the familiar pluralist paradigm. Ronald Bayor and Raymond Mohl demonstrate that the familiar "fact of life" of ethnic competition for government resources has crossed the Mason-Dixon line in the emerging multiethnic South. But if the urban South has learned to live with the "competing groups, conflict resolution, and accommodation" that has characterized Northern urban politics since the nineteenth century, this new pluralism has also yielded some bitter fruit, as Mohl's essay on conflict-ridden Miami makes painfully clear. Here is a city characterized by an assertive Cuban immigrant community, blacks angered at the rise of this Cuban influence, and embattled whites who despite their immigrant origins supported an antibilingualism ordinance so they could feel like they lived in an "American" city again. For Bayor, with all its tensions and shortcomings, this "Northern model" is clearly a vast improvement over the "rigid, violent, and politically noncompromising white-black caste system." But even he acknowledges that this "sharing of political power" may not lead "to equality, the end of neighborhood segregation, and the opening up of job opportunities."

Bayor's concluding caveat points to the crucial unaddressed issue: the historical and contemporary relationship between "American pluralism" and racial inequality. As Gerber points out, American urban pluralism grew and fostered the Jacksonian culture of racism among white immigrants. As some contributors to the volume demonstrate, the Southern racial caste system, like the urban "ghetto," was re-made through post-war social planning. In one of the collections best essays, Christopher Silver concludes that in the era of change between 1940 and 1970 planners in Richmond and Memphis ended neighbourhood diversity and shaped a more racially segregated community. Blacks may be players, but they may not be winners. Whatever the merits of this new "pluralism" as

a "fact of life" it may well become a "trench system" protecting new patterns of inequality and fostering competition between the diversely disempowered.

In addition, the rise of Miami as the capital of finance and conspiracy in the Caribbean basin suggests the pluralist paradigm may not adequately address the new migrants' "transnational" world. Undoubtedly, as Emmons makes clear, exile politics are not new; powerful bi-national politics may fade with time, but the increasingly fluid movement of capital and labour suggests that today's immigrants may choose to maintain their involvements with the politics of their home countries for longer periods than have previous immigrant generations. While ethnic politics is by no means unimportant, we need a more textured account of the new immigrants sense of place in the world system.

At different moments and to varying degrees, all three books show how ethnic political consciousness relies upon the mobilization of aspects of popular memory. Social scientists draw upon their own specialized lore; visions of the past as well as ideas from the past also have a powerful hold on social theory. Indeed, despite its weaknesses, the value of David Ward's *Poverty Ethnicity and the American City* is that it encourages us to historicize the assumptions that have guided the social scientific construction of the urban space where poverty and ethnicity have been said to meet: the "slum" and the "ghetto." His intellectual history is a sobering reminder that over the last century and a half, scholars have not been neutral observers, but participants in the construction of ethnicity. Today, Ward warns us, the policy and scholarly "debate" about the "inner city" "retains many elements of these earlier dialogues."

Ward provides, as his subtitle puts it, a useful overview of "changing conceptions of the slum and the ghetto" between 1840 and 1925. In Part I, Ward chronicles social reformers' and researchers' formulations of

the relationship between ethnicity, poverty, and the physical environment during the years of mass European immigration. Initially, faced with the first waves of mass immigration and the concentration of the poor, particularly Irish Catholic in areas like New York's notorious Five Points, Protestant reformers offered an unabashedly moral vision of poverty focusing on the unworthy poor beyond social redemption. After 1875, observers voiced a more generalized fear of social polarization, and earlier attempts to focus on housing and sanitary reform again dominated the reformers agenda. After the turn of the century, in spite of a growing critique of systemic social inequality, social workers increasingly emphasized a complex matrix of social and familial factors and advocated the "casework" treatment of individuals rather than macro-social interventions. In Part II, Ward surveys the social scientific and historical "reformulation" of these relations. One chapter reviews the sociological conceptions of the Chicago School and its legacy. The next chapter synthesizes the more recent historical reconstruction of the complex residential patterns, migration fields, and ethnic divisions of labour among the European immigrants. This recent work has shown that the human subjects of social observation had greater resources and were more constrained by the "structural environment of American capitalism" than the early observers and social scientists who stressed neighbourhood ecology, "marginality," or the ordeal of assimilation recognized.

Unfortunately, Ward's history of scholarly discourse is a disappointment. While his survey of conceptions of the immigrant slum and ghetto does not provide the multifaceted conversation of Gerber's local study, Ward does give the reader a sense of the contextual relationship between knowledge and power, at least until 1925. As he shrewdly observes while discussing progressive studies of working class poverty, "the poor had to cope not only with their material predicament but also with formulations of that

predicament that rarely included their own reactions." But when he turns to the "reformulation" of the ghetto after 1925, Ward offers a rapid-fire explication of theory, ethnography, and history. Having entered the terrain of modern sociology and history, Ward seems unwilling to contextualize these texts and read them politically. He fails to analyze this scholarly production as the expression of an unfolding discursive community whose reformulations of the ghetto occurred in the context of immigration restriction, the rise of industrial unionism, pluralist redefinitions of American identity, the civil rights movement, the rise of a "semi-welfare" state, and the emergence of the racially-defined "inner city." This schematic condensation of post-Chicago School sociology and history is all the more telling since he does not address in any detail the scholarly conceptualization of racial inequality. Ward is by no means unconcerned with this issue. He jabs at Harvey Zorbaugh's definition of the "black belt" as a "natural" area. And, he is aware that racial minorities had historically been subjected to a distinct discursive regime. But, for example, he does not discuss Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* or Oscar Handlin's *The Newcomers*, works that explicitly apply conceptions of the European immigrant urban experience to black and Puerto Rican urban communities.

Undoubtedly, it is unfair to criticize an author for not writing the book you wanted to read. But in this case, I believe Ward did not write the book that, on some level, he wanted to write. At a minimum, his book has two plots. The first, fully developed, is announced in the title. It is a historical critique of the ideological and conceptual limits of the writers who first labelled the immigrant "ghetto" and its inhabitants. The second is an unfinished shadow text addressing why (accurately or not) the "original definition of the immigrant slum apparently had prophetic validity as a description of the predicament of the deprived minorities who dominate the inner cities today." But the best he can offer is a cautionary tale: models of the European

immigrant "ghetto" and "slum" were inadequate and ideological. Now that we understand how limiting these "conceptions" proved to be, we can show a little more humility as we go about "naming" the "urban question" today. While not a minor point, Ward's work exposes the need for an explicit analysis of the historical relationship between models of European immigrant urban experience and the conceptualization of racial inequality and white supremacy. In other words, how has our increasingly sophisticated history of the "nation of immigrants" illuminated or distorted our understanding of today's black poor and new immigrants?

Nonetheless, the inadequacies of Ward's book are instructive. Historians have become increasingly adept at uncovering the circumstances, beliefs, and strategies of once unheard historical subjects. Eschewing a "messianic" American pluralism as well as working class teleology, books such as Gerber's and Emmon's show both the constraints of immigrant life under capitalism and the strategies of accommodation and resistance of his human subjects. But, we are only beginning to grapple with what the late Warren Sussman, in *Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, called the "continuous interaction of the past and present." As Sussman put it, once we leave the archives "the historian composes a set of words that are to be words of his [or her] time." As Ward implicitly reminds us, intended or not, our words become part of the "predicament" of today's "poor."

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McMahon, Michael. *Metro's Housing Company: The First 35 Years*. Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Housing Company Limited, 1990. Pp. ix, 204. **Black and White photographs.** Cloth.

Scholars have not paid much serious attention to public or "social" housing in Canada. Of course there was not much of it to speak of before the Second World War. Since then, through the ups and downs of federal policy, a good deal of publicly-subsidized rental and co-op housing has been built, especially in the larger cities where need has been greatest. Many planning and policy studies have been written in connection with specific projects, but the larger picture has remained elusive: what has been the overall contribution of subsidized housing to the urban housing stock, and how has that stock been produced and managed? *Metro's Housing Company* takes us one step towards answering these questions for Canada's largest city.

The Metropolitan Toronto Housing Company — the Housing Company for short — is as old as Metro Toronto itself. Amidst the vagaries of housing policy in Canada, its status and role is notably ambiguous. It is sometimes confused with the Metro Toronto Housing Authority, the manager of "public" housing for families and the brunt of much criticism down the years. In fact, embodying a strange blend of public and private ownership, the Housing Company has built and managed its housing mainly for seniors and, in McMahon's view, with fair success. It was active during the 1950s and became an inspiration in some ways for the public housing legislation and agencies of the 1960s. Its peculiar legal status made it a 'third sector' agency before the term and concept were popular. Ahead of its time, it has in recent years been somewhat eclipsed by a co-op movement which has attracted the greater part of the rather limited funds for social housing. Even so, through steady activity over 35 years, it has accumulated a stock of about nineteen thousand units. This is almost equivalent to the housing stock of, say, the City of Kingston.

Michael McMahon, the final author in what he acknowledges to have been a collaborative endeavour involving the MTHC and the Metro Toronto Archives, tells the story