
Royden Loewen
were far more significant and enduring than the largely cosmetic
that is contested and marches, advances, and otherwise moves
torical events. When he does use the active voice, it is the
machines to help them do their work. Some of their innovations
innovations occurring, arriving in clusters, developing, and driv­ing
favour of the wider American society by asserting and even her­s­
sections devoted entirely to descriptive narrative that only tenu­
modernization, and boat-building in this country who have documented
theoretical discussions followed, often abruptly, by long
people do appear in the story it is either as part of a specific nar­
modernization, and boat-building in this country who have documented
and cultural change are not the products of human action.
Norcliffe’s “two-wheeled” approach to his subject did not work. The theoretical analysis is not well integrated into the narrative
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about the state of roads but not how the bicycling community
to their improvement or whether Kron saw himself in
For all of its problems, I think that this book is worth a careful
hitherto unknown events, artifacts, and individuals central to the
This book reflects the American immigration historian’s ongoing fascination with the process of integration and even assimilation
nations, and the very phenomenon of “myth making”, argues
who professed true Spanish descent from

Norcliffe also makes some rather extravagant claims. He argues that early bicycle trekkers “stretched space by travelling to new
theoretical analysis is not well integrated into the narrative
innovations were constantly inventing, adapting, and building ma­
This might come as a surprise to historians of sport, recre­
refinements offered up by most Canadian bicycle inventors. Fi­
Many of these “vanguard of cultural and technological progress.” (230) This might come as a surprise to historians of sport, recre­
I also had problems with Professor Norcliffe’s writing style. He writes almost exclusively in the passive voice which tends to ob­s­
the drive for inclusion was that of the European immi­
Notcliffe’s research is first rate and he has documented
1897 “reflects the social embeddedness of invention and innova­tion.” (67) What this means, I think, is that inventors registered
In his determination to demonstrate the singular importance of
farmers were constantly inventing, adapting, and building ma­
the countryside into “a recreational space” for city dwellers.
In his determination to demonstrate the singular importance of

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by travelling to new frontiers on their bicycles,” creating “a new
treks were not at all the norm and that the handful who did un­
In his determination to demonstrate the singular importance of

history of cycling in Canada. Though his theoretical analysis

the bicycle market was booming, to take advantage of the opportunity for profit.

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in his theoretical analysis was not very successful, he nevertheless demonstrates the

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the conquerors. The assimilative message of the public schools diminished immigrant cultures initially, but the assimilative language of "acceptance" propelled the immigrant mind not into a cultural acquiescence but towards ethnic assertions of worthiness. Full acceptance may have been presented to the immigrant in terms of minority-majority relations, but the fact was that the greatest challenge to being accepted lay in outwitting other ethnic groups willing to wage acrimonious interethnic "homemaking wars," each group seeking to weaken the other groups' claims to legitimacy. Thus ethnicity was not about continuity, but was in fact the final act of discontinuity. Its assertion was always an attempt by the immigrant to be integrated into a nation that itself was obsessed with questions of belonging, legitimacy, merit, and acceptance. Ethnic identities did not mark the shibboleth of Americanism, they were its very expression.

A second strength of the book is that Overland has identified a phenomenon that is dynamic. The book is specifically about contestation; "how organized groups responded to the problem of being considered foreigners." (2) Much information is offered on the western European immigrant elite - the journalists, the editors, the novelists, the preachers - but their writings are never one-dimensional. They arise in the context of immigrant inferiority complexes, Anglo-American exceptionalism, the anomic of assimilation, and the desire to be American. The immigrant groups could see what the host society and its historians could not and that was that the great divide between "history" and "heritage", to employ David Lowenthal's concepts, was duplicitous; the Mayflower Compact was as interwoven with teleology as the most "grotesque" filiopietist narrative of contribution his historiographic narratives were. (20).

Each of the three sections of the book carries this message of irony and dynamism. These sections describe three kinds of identity creating myths, the stories placing the immigrant at the very seat of the nation founding, stories suggesting that the immigrant was a truer voice of the nation's ideals that the host society itself, and stories recounting the valour of sacrifice. In this wide coverage the book leaves few gaps.

Still some questions remain. How did the many sectarian immigrants, such as the Amish and Hutterites, who placed their very legitimacy as people on a successful rejection of the wider society, jibe with the book's sweeping explanation of ethnicisation? How can one still argue that the phenomenon of ethnic identities was a New World phenomenon, when scholarship has shown that the mindset of European groups was shaped by monarchical patriotism, religious wars and internal migrations? How can one suggest that ethnicisation ended in the context of the tolerant post-World War II era, when hostilities were directed to such groups as the Haitians, Koreans, and Arabs who in turn were compelled to assert athletic prowess, entrepreneurial skill, or peaceful tradition. The story may just be even more complex than Overland's evocative portrayal demonstrates.

Royden Loewen
Chair of Mennonite Studies
University of Winnipeg


La Seine « était dynamique au XVIIIe siècle, animée par une grande diversité de pratiques et d'acteurs et dominée par une tension permanente entre les usages et leur régulation. Elle devient statique au XIXe siècle, la ceinture de quais ayant pour objectif principal d'enfermer et de contenir le fleuve » (p. 344). Depuis nous dit Isabelle Backouche, le fleuve - et ses abords - est un « espace étranger à la vie de la capitale ». Il est « musée », il est architecture, il est esthétique; il n'est plus le moteur d'urbanité qu'il a été, l'« espace urbain » au cœur de la vie parisienne.

Partant de ce constat, l'objectif Backouche est de faire connaître la relation entre Paris et son fleuve avant et pendant la « rupture » opérée au cours de la première moitié du XIXe siècle. Comment la Seine a-t-elle perdu le rôle prédominant qu'elle tenait dans Paris? Comment le lien entre Paris et son fleuve a été tissé puis, quand et comment s'est opérée la rupture? Divisé en trois parties, l'ouvrage couvre la période 1750 à 1850, soit au moment où de « réels enjeux, économiques et politiques, s'attachent aux relations entre Paris et son fleuve », jusqu'au moment où le devenir de Paris devient indépendant de son fleuve.

Dans la première partie de l'ouvrage (Un espace partagé), l'auteure dresse le portrait des pratiques sur le fleuve et ses abords au tournant des années 1750. Grâce à un usage judicieux des documents légaux et administratifs de l'époque, l'auteure retrace les multiples rôles du fleuve : réception de produits de toutes sortes, échange de migrants, constitution de « dynasties fluviales » familiales propriétaires de nombreux bateaux. En examinant la disposition des bateaux et des quais, des ponts et des rues avoisinantes au fleuve, l'auteure dévoile le processus de « zoning » dont la Seine est à l'époque l'objet et l'instigatrice.

Le fleuve est « un espace qui envahit la vie urbaine » (p. 103) en 1750. Il agrément de manière contrariée aux déplacements de tous les Parisiens, se pose comme un lieu de rassemblement, permet à tout un chacun de s'investir d'une appartenance géographique intra-parisienne (appartenant à la rive Gauche, à la rive Droite). Enfin, Backouche démontre que, de par son rôle central, la Seine bénéficiait d'un statut juridique notamment complexe qui la distingue dans la cité (p. 141) et dont le contrôle est jalousement gardé par les autorités locales et leurs représentants (inspecteurs, contrôleurs, receveurs).