Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xxii, 455. Maps, illustrations, photographs, index. \$17.95 (paper)

Robert J. Young

Volume 25, Number 2, March 1997

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016081ar DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1016081ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print) 1918-5138 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this review

Young, R. J. (1997). Review of [Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xxii, 455. Maps, illustrations, photographs, index. \$17.95 (paper)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, *25*(2), 71–72. https://doi.org/10.7202/1016081ar

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 1997	This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.
	https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/
	This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.
érudit	Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to

https://www.erudit.org/en/

promote and disseminate research.

took advantage of the situation to rid the country of undesirable people.

Of particular interest in the first section is the author's discussion of the Cuban-American community's division along the lines of race and class. The Mariel Boatlift brought thousands lower class Cubans of African descent to "Havana USA" thereby reintroducing the exile community to the tensions that have characterized Cuban history since the first slaves arrived on the island in the sixteenth century. Although there were family reunifications, those who arrived in 1980 became known as the "marielitos," a pejorative term used by established members of the community to distance themselves from the new arrivals.

Whereas the first wave of Cuban exiles were met with open arms by a U.S. government and society wrapped up in Cold War hysteria, thousands of the "marielitos" were imprisoned and some were repatriated. The result for the Cuban-American community was a backlash from mainstream U.S. society and a marked decline in their support for the anti-Castro cause. Consequently, the established Cuban-American community resented the "marielitos" and discriminated against them.

In the second part of the book, the author examines the contemporary Cuban exile community. Her focus is on the community's identity, political divisions and intelligentsia. Garc-a frames her discussion of these subjects within the context of the differences and high level of distrust existing between the early exiles and those who arrived during the Mariel Boatlift. The author's stress is on the diversity created by the differing origins of the Cuban emigre and the accommodation each group has had to made for the other. The dilemma for the community is that the first arrivals now have money and political clout, but need the unconditional support of more recent exiles to maintain their strong position in South Florida. On the other hand, those who arrived in the Mariel Boatlift require community support in order to become well established in their new country of residence because the U.S. public has begun to fear Cuban immigration. The description is of an antagonistic yet symbiotic relationship.

The author's conclusions are that the Cuban-American community is undergoing a profound change and that the future is uncertain. The community of the 1990s is very different from that of the 1960s. Whereas at one time all Cuban-Americans looked forward to returning to a Cuba without Castro, the emergence of Havana USA as a permanent fixture has altered attitudes. The length of time spent individual emigres have been in the U.S. combined with the kind of reception they received has impacted on the community. More recent arrivals would return tomorrow while others can no longer consider giving up their lives and lifestyles in Florida.

Overall, *Havana USA* is highly readable and a welcome addition to the literature. The one area where the reader is left without any clear answers is with regards to the multi-generational character of the Cuban community in Florida. The author could have devoted more attention to the children of exiles and their place within the complex community structure. However, as an analysis of exiles in the United States, the book is appropriate for use as an undergraduate text and is a welcome contribution to the growing field of Hispanic-American studies.

R. Harpelle Department of History Lakehead University

Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. xxii, 455. Maps, illustrations, photographs, index. \$17.95 (paper).

This is a splendid book, splendidly conceived, researched, written, and packaged. Fittingly, it is a book about the intersection between an unsuspecting city and a man determined to be its master. The city, of course, was Paris, its would-be master, Baron Georges-Eug,ne Haussmann. In truth he was no Baron, but between 1859 and 1869 he was most certainly the city's top administrative officer. Formally the Prefect of the Seine, informally he was called the "vice-emperor" because of his exceptional access to Napoleon III. A Bonapartist to the core, Haussmann responded to the emperor's challenge to modernize Paris, responded, then exceeded his sovereign's expectations.

At first, David Jordan was interested in neither, emperor nor prefect. Paris intrigued him, Haussmann did not. But then the two grew together, the man offering a personal perspective on urban development, the city offering Haussmann's life its requisite context. It is a wonderful match, although one not made in heaven. The prefect had mixed feelings about the city of his birth, and the city reciprocated. Its residents appreciated the new sewer and water systems, and some of the redesigning around the Opera and the Etoile, but they accused him of desecrating the lle de la Cit, the city's cradle, and the Luxembourg Gardens. Moreover, Haussmann never tamed Paris politically, never converted it to Bonapartism. He paid for this failure in January 1870 when he was replaced as prefect, nine months before the military collapse of Napoleon's regime.

For those interested in urban history, there are great riches here. There is much about the conversion of Paris from ancient days to those of Haussmann, including the innovations of Claude-Phibert Rambuteau. There are photographs, as well as fine text, on the process by which Haussmann's plans were designed, surveyed, engineered and constructed, and rich detail on the various financing schemes which the prefect invented to float his interminable projects. There are well executed descriptions of the "cleansing" of Paris, those costly projects to deliver fresh water to the city, and to flush away its wastes. The biographical side is equally rich, particularly in its characterization of Haussmann. He was not a very likeable man. Arrogant in life, vain, insensitive, obsessed by power, largely friendless, he left an autobiography which unintentionally recorded his shortcomings — the egotism, the ruthlessness, the exaggerations. But he also left the substantial debts of one who had never lined his own pockets, as well as an unbroken loyalty to a regime which he had served with energy and singlemindedness.

Most intriguing of all, however, is Jordan's suggestion of a psychological link between the man and his sometimes devastating assaults on Paris. There seems to have been some sort of inner compulsion, particularly with respect to Haussmann's manhandling of the lle de la Cit, the city's medieval quarter. As a boy, he had been forced to use the dark, fetid, jumbled lanes of this quarter en route to school on the Left Bank. As a boy, too, he had been sickly and frail, a condition which he subsequently attributed to the poor air, the poor water, and the confined spaces of central Paris. Hence, the connection between an apprehensive child and an adult determined to let in the light and the air: the wide boulevards lined by chestnut trees, the urban green spaces, the urban lakes and fountains.

And who should care about all this, about Haussmann, or Paris? Jordan has the answer. Haussmann's decade of violent urban renewal is still the most intensive in the history of the city. It made Paris a "public city" (295), a spacious capital of light, luxury, political and financial power, a city quick to capitalize on the burgeoning tourist industry. It was a showpiece. And the poor were eyesores. Haussmann contemptuously called them "nomads", indifferent to the fact that his street-widening, his demolitions, even his green spaces, had displaced the poor and sent them scurrying. Partly because of the antagonism so generated, and the mounting deficits associated with his rebuilding, and his own imperious nature, he became a "lightning rod" (178) for the Second Empire. On him were focussed the disparate criticisms of the Empire - liberal, socialist, monarchist, republican. And so they fell, first the prefect, then his sovereign.

Haussman died in 1891, unlamented and unrecognized by the government of the Third Republic. He was taken to the cemetery of Père Lachaise, to a modest tomb overlooking the city which he had so changed. At last, David Jordan has given him a worthy monument.

Robert J. Young Department of History University of Winnipeg Gould, Roger V. Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Pp. viii, 253. & black and white plates, statistical and methodological appendices, bibliography, index.

Craft traditions, class consciousness, or neighbourhood ties which of these factors fashioned the social identity and political outlook of Parisian workers in the middle of the nineteenth century? This is the big question Roger Gould tackles in his stimulating reinterpretation of the social impact of political conflict, economic change and urban reconstruction, from the Revolution of 1848 to the Paris Commune of 1871. In other words, what shaped the social consciousness of the men and women who participated in these famous episodes of urban violence?

The author challenges the linear view of the "class-formation narrative" which dominates historical writing on this period. He agrees that 1848 saw the breakthrough of class consciousness as a shaper of workers' identity. But he argues (convincingly in my opinion) that this was the outcome of specific political and economic circumstances, and that the class solidarity momentarily attained in 1848 did not replace alternative markers of workers' consciousness. Indeed, it was craft identity, not class consciousness, that formed the basis for revived labour militancy in Paris in the 1860s - specifically in skilled trades that remained concentrated in the city centre, not in industries that were dispersed across different wards. Here the influence of urban space played a much greater role than formal labour associations, for labour militancy was strongest in trades where the relations of the workshop were reinforced by daily patterns of sociability in the same neighbourhood's cafés and wineshops.

The aspect of the book that will most interest readers of this journal is Gould's rejection of the standard interpretation of the effects of Haussmannisation --- the celebrated rebuilding of the city centre in the 1850s and 1860s. Historians wedded to the "class-formation narrative" hold that urban reconstruction set off a sharp jump in property values and rents that drove workingclass families out of the right-bank neighbourhoods of central Paris and into the cheaper suburbs, especially those in the northeastern quadrant (La Villette, Belleville and Charonne today's 19th and 20th wards). There they found themselves isolated in overwhelmingly working-class neighbourhoods quite different from the socially mixed central wards they had left behind. This spatial segregation of working people in the 1860s heightened class consciousness and kindled a bitter political discourse that attacked both urban capitalism and its servant, the imperial regime of Napoleon III. Consequently, a defining aspect the great uprising of 1871 was the violent repossession of the city centre by dispossessed, insurgent workers.

Gould contests this interpretation by denying that working people experienced increased social segregation in Second Empire Paris. He agrees that many Parisian workers (as well as provincial newcomers) moved from the centre to the periphery of the city. But, he argues, the suburban neighbourhoods they entered were not socially monolithic but rather "akin to an urban