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Jean Wardle Bradley, *A Home Across the Water* (Portland, Or. and North York, Ont: Braeward Publishing, 1996), 210 pp., photos. \$10.95 ISBN 0-9652061-0-6

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village" where social relations included everyday contact between middle- and working-class people. For Parisian workers the outcome of urban reconstruction was not social isolation but rather a new spatial identity based on new ties of residence.

To support his bold thesis, Gould compares marriage records in two central wards with two wards in the northeastern periphery for the year 1869. When a bridal party with the required four male witnesses came to the town hall for the civil ceremony, they had to identify themselves by name, age, address and occupation. Gould uses a sample of this information to show that many bridal parties were socially mixed, with men from middle-class occupations serving as witnesses for working-class couples. Although four out of five people in the suburban wards were workers, three-quarters of working-class marriages there included at least one witness with a middle-class occupation (and a third involved two middle-class witnesses). This result is the opposite of what the class-isolation interpretation would predict, and Gould uses it to argue that the supposedly homogeneous suburban wards actually constituted a new urban space where social contacts arising from common residence cut across class lines. From that perspective, Gould holds that the great Parisian insurrection of 1871 was grounded not in class antagonism but rather in the collective action and resentment of specific neighbourhoods — "the salient collective identity" of the time — against the centralizing state.

The author shows imagination and resourcefulness in deploying marriage records to support his challenge to the standard interpretation of *Hausmannisation*. But can the weight of his new view be supported on such a slender evidentiary base? Quite apart from the size of the sample or the taxonomic problems of classifying certain occupations as "middle-class", a much broader issue is at stake here. Marriage is a rite of passage in which the couple publicly seeks social approval and legitimacy for their union. On such occasions we might well expect couples from the lower rungs of the social ladder to try to enhance their status by enlisting the presence of an acknowledged social superior at the ceremony. But does that act necessarily imply that these people shared a genuine social relationship? One can readily envision a groom asking his boss (or a civil servant, teacher or shop-keeper) to "do him the honour" of standing up for him on the big day. And one can just as easily see middle-class witnesses agreeing because, given their social position, that would be "the right thing to do". Deference and noblesse oblige are also forms of social interaction; so the real question is whether Gould's sample indicates the presence of real relationships cutting across class boundaries, as opposed to transitory crossings of social paths appropriate only to this ceremonial occasion.

This said, Gould's book nevertheless remains a stimulating analysis of the social and political consequences of the French capital's most famous episode of urban renewal, one that is likely to provoke an engaging debate among social historians. But *Insurgent Identities* also supplies a good introduction to the

literature on nineteenth-century French labour history and so will be suited to classroom use as well. A book that is both stimulating for specialists and useful for undergraduates does not come along all that often, and the author deserves to be congratulated for producing one.

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Jean Wardle Bradley, *A Home Across the Water* (Portland, Or. and North York, Ont.: Braeward Publishing, 1996), 210 pp., photos. \$10.95 ISBN 0-9652061-0-6. [Copies may be purchased at the Gibson House, 5172 Yonge Street, North York, or ordered from Braeward Publishing, 14 Ashdean Ave., Scarborough, Ont. M1P 1E3.]

In recent years more urban historians have come to appreciate that personal documents can provide vivid glimpses of how life was lived. *A Home Across the Water*, a self-published memoir of growing up in the community of Newtonbrook in North York during the Depression, is a fine example which illuminates a distinctive era of suburban settlement in Canada. The author Jean Bradley, a retired journalist and published writer of short stories, knows what she is about. Skilfully, she frames her recollections as a flashback. In the prologue she puts us in the window seat of the plane that brought her back to Toronto from her present home in Oregon, on the day that her childhood home was being demolished. As the bulldozers go to work, the memories surface ...

In its bare outlines the story she tells is that of thousands of British immigrants to Canada in the first quarter of this century. With little saved, and eager to better their situation, they did everything they could to acquire homes, often by building their own at the suburban fringe. Bradley's parents had met in New castle-upon-Tyne after World War I. Her father, Archer Wardle, was a miner's son just discharged from the army. Her mother, Eleanor (Nell) Aitkin, had lost her job in a munitions factory. They married in 1919. Archer left for Canada in 1920, soon followed by Nell and a newborn child. After lodging in Toronto's east end, in 1922 they bought a 25-foot lot in Newtonbrook, four miles beyond Toronto's city limits. There, during the summer and fall Archer built a small house. Conditions were primitive. Archer had to dig a well and privy pit. Other services were minimal or entirely absent. When Nell was expecting her fourth child, in 1925, she went to stay with friends closer to Toronto so as to be closer to a midwife and doctor. In her absence, a fire started and, without piped water, the blaze destroyed the house. Archer rebuilt immediately, and Jean herself was the first to be born in the new house, in 1928. Tragically, the effort of re-building triggered Archer's rheumatoid arthritis and soon he was bedridden. The family struggled on, and it is Bradley's recollections of her Depression childhood that make up the

core of the book. There are many small insights into the place and time: the daily tasks of keeping house, the deliverymen, the school, the children's games, her mother's breakdown (and recovery), her sister's death in an auto accident, the subtle cultural differences between English and Canadian ways, and above all the efforts to make ends meet.

There are few enough personal accounts of this sort of suburban life that Bradley's story is interesting for its facts alone. The author's intelligence and humour, however, give it more general appeal. Listen to what she does with toilet paper. One of her jobs as a child was cutting the *Daily Star* or the *Telegram* into little squares to be hung on a nail in the outhouse. Characteristi-

cally, however, she adds "I never saw *The Globe and Mail* used this way ... presumably its subscribers had indoor plumbing — although they may have used it in summer cottages in the Muskoka Lakes." Bradley appreciates how the experiences of her family compared with those of her contemporaries; as personal testament and resource, her memoir helps us to bridge the gap between urban life and urban history.

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