

Chudacoff, Howard P. *The Evolution of American Urban Society*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1975. Pp. vii, 280

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of the oncoming wave of laissez-faire sentiment, the municipal corporation abandoned its extensive body of measures regulating commercial endeavour.

Teaford goes on to show how traditional limitations on political participation fell victim to the new spirit of experimentation and political renovation ushered in by the American Revolution. Just as the new currents in thought and technology destroyed the past conceptions of the purpose of the municipal corporation, so the political philosophy of the Revolution transformed the municipality's political framework. The result of these changes was the modern municipal system of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Chudacoff, Howard P. The Evolution of American Urban Society. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1975. Pp. vii, 280.

Chudacoff's guide to the American urban experience is one of first attempts to incorporate the developing social dimension of American historiography into an enveloping synthesis of the urban process in the United States. To succeed at the task requires the author to confront and overcome two major problems.

The first of these problems is one that bedevils nearly every synthesis, regardless of the theme, topic, time or nation, and tends to be a flaw in most: the treatment will tend to be a trifle bewildering to the novice and a trifle boring to the veteran. For the former the banquet will be too diverse; for the latter too insubstantial. Chudacoff proves quite able at meeting the needs of what in most cases are mutually exclusive audiences. The clarity of the book's structure will enable the apprentice to move through it without too much fear of being lost, and at the end he should at least be able to say: "I came, I saw". And the

new material incorporated into the book can provide, at the least, a refresher course for those working in the field, as well as potential textbook for those teaching in it. The book can be read or used at a number of levels, and for that not inconsiderable feat, Chudacoff deserves some considerable praise.

The second problem concerns the integration of the new material in American urban history, much of it with a lower class bias, into the traditional material, much of it with an elite bias. The new material not only represents biases at odds with the old, but in some instances methodology and interpretation. How, then, does one fit the "new" urban (or social) history into the parameters of the "old"? Quite easily, it seems. All the old, familiar themes seem to have amazing absorptive powers. The patterns are richer overall -- the contribution of the new -- but not revolutionized. Perhaps Chudacoff can be criticized for not radically breaking from tradition. Perhaps it wasn't necessary.

The result is that grizzled monographic veterans -- some from the nineteenth century -- and bewhiskered chapter headings seem quite at home with the slick, shiny, reconceptualized products of the 'seventies. Certainly Chudacoff has done as well with the evolution of the urban bibliography as he has with the evolution of urban America itself. In many ways, contending with that bibliography is the more admirable feat.

To begin with, the bibliography has become, with the 'seventies, a massive one where a generation ago only a few "seminal" treatises covered the field. In addition, its coverage is not confined to the great cities, but in a literary version of urban dominance and rivalry, the lesser and newer places are commanding increased attention. "Urban" is no longer Boston or New York writ comprehensive. As well, any author has to steer a course between those aspects of the national history that happen in the city and those phenomena that are of the city. What is "urban" history? What is "urban" bibliography? Finally, as indicated, the new "urban" or social history has given added dimension or depth to both the discipline and its literature, and cannot be ignored in any serious study.

Chudacoff has here the makings of a lively textbook rather than vital reinterpretation of the American urban experience. And even as textbook, two elements would be useful: a chapter or appendix on the historiography of urban America, and a bibliographical essay to complement the sources listed at the end of each chapter.

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Stevens, John, editor. The Urban Experience. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975. Pp. v, 121. Illustrations. \$3.25 paperback.

This collection of prose, poetry and drama is part of the "Themes in Canadian Literature Series" under the general editorship of David Arnason. At least ten other titles have already been published in this series, including one dealing with The Immigrant Experience, and several others are "in preparation."

The Urban Experience consists of a short introduction by the editor and twenty-seven excerpts from the work of Canadian writers, past and present, that illustrate or comment on the theme. A very shallow "bibliography" is also included.

According to the editor, John Stevens, "the view offered by this sampling of Canadian urban writing suggests that although the maple-leaved city may be sometimes a place for bitter regrets and sometimes a place for satiric laughter, one thing is certain: it is never merely dull."

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