

Noel, Jan. *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Pp. vii, 310. Illustrations. Price? paper

Sharon Anne Cook

Volume 25, numéro 2, march 1997

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016075ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016075ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Cook, S. A. (1997). Compte rendu de [Noel, Jan. *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Pp. vii, 310. Illustrations. Price? paper]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 25(2), 66–67. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016075ar>

resembles a booster tract. Perhaps the best article is Bettina Bradbury's study of the municipal relief crisis during the Great Depression, and it supplements our general understanding of this topic rather than supplanting or broadening it.

If you need to learn something specific about Burnaby itself, you might find it in this collection. It has particularly maps on various themes, although the photographs are sparse and poor. Otherwise reading it will not expand your understanding of cities in general or suburbs in particular.

Paul Voisey
Department of History
University of Alberta

Noel, Jan. *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995. Pp. vii, 310. Illustrations. Price? paper.

One of the many pleasures gained from reading Jan Noel's prize-winning history of the temperance movement in pre-Confederation British North America is coming to know some of the prominent temperance pioneers who directed and shaped the movement in various parts of the colonies. One such captivating portrait is drawn of the Reverend Joseph Stibbs Christmas, pastor of Montreal's American Presbyterian Church and founder, in 1828, of Montreal's first (interdenominational) temperance society. Noel's description of Christmas — a learned man with a sensitive, poetic temperament, a firebrand who "stirred up a furious press controversy with intemperate criticism of long dead popes" and a gifted orator, causing his congregation to swell to three hundred from thirty during his four-year ministry — allows the late twentieth-century observer to appreciate the scale of temperance enthusiasm generated through the influence of single individuals, the movement's intimate association with evangelical principle and expression, and the broad network of temperance advocacy. The Rev. Christmas fired his born-again troops from an urban stage, but Noel shows that this was by no means only an urban or even town phenomenon. In fact, she provides persuasive evidence that the most dramatic reduction in imbibing occurred in farming communities, particularly during the 1840s. Further, her examination of temperance leadership at all levels of the movement demonstrates that the learned Rev. Christmas was the exception rather than the rule amongst the movement's pacesetters: temperance societies tended to be led by people like Jesse Ketchum of Toronto or Jeffrey Hale of Quebec, wealthy but lacking in formal education or elite culture and thus considered not to be 'persons of the first rank.'

Noel's impressive analysis of the personalities and issues associated with this first wave of temperance is further strengthened by the clarity of her expression. Her graceful prose carries the reader over a period of about fifty years during which the temperance movement rose in the Maritimes as a powerful force

associated with temperance lodges, crested in Upper Canada and then coasted west to Red River and British Columbia. Noel's book is a model of intelligent and broad research, while her energetic prose makes this research accessible to a wide audience.

Noel's thesis is that the successful temperance campaigns of the 1840s, during which it is estimated that between one-quarter and one-third of the Upper Canadian population accepted the teetotal pledge, with something close to that in the Maritimes, were fueled by the simultaneous growth of evangelicalism and the formation of a new middle class. Between 1820 and 1867, she finds two distinct stages: an early phase, culminating around 1850, during which temperance was promoted and sustained by religious revivalism, and a second, more secular phase, in which temperance was championed by Victorian improvers of various stripes as a means of developing a stable workforce to support their middle-class aspirations. Where the movement's first stage was led by utopian revivalists, the second saw the accession of "gentlemen" prohibitionists who drank moderately, and whose main complaint about alcohol was its corrosive effect on the work ethic. In sum, she argues, "temperance followed a pattern common to many movements: it started out small, pure and fiery, and became less so!" (p. 12)

In spite of the undeniably great value of this book, there are several troubling features of Noel's analysis. The study rightly ascribes fundamental significance to the evangelical ethic as a defining condition for the ready acceptance of temperance before 1850. As the movement progressed, however, Noel finds that evangelicalism waned as a motivating force, eclipsed by a variety of factors more closely related to class formation than to spiritual demands. Yet, it seems clear from recent work on evangelicalism, a good deal of which Noel references, that it did not fade as a central feature of Maritime and central Canadian life until near the end of the nineteenth century. During this much longer period, in fact, right until 1914, evangelicalism remained a powerful force. This was particularly true for female temperance advocates associated with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, such as Letitia Youmans. Interestingly, women play almost no role in shaping temperance to their own ends in the fascinating story told by Noel. It seems possible that the underestimation of evangelicalism's on-going societal influence results at least in part from the absence of women reformers from the record she presents. This is not to say, however, that Noel ignores the impact of temperance on women's societal position in this fine book. She provides a particularly insightful argument for the role of temperance literature as one of the prime vehicles for carrying the gospel of domesticity to the middle classes, and in constraining women within this new role description. Nevertheless, in this analysis, strongly reminiscent of Barbara Welter's writings, women are acted upon, not actors.

Secondly, Noel assumes that a largely secularized middle class had developed by mid century. Most studies of this period, including Jane Errington's new work, argue that the process of middle class formation did not occur in Ontario, and by infer-

ence in other less well-developed colonies, until several decades later than Noel posits. Prescription and description of class prerogatives are often mixed in literature devoted to altering behaviours, such as temperance materials, and it is possible that the distinction is less clear than we like to imagine. Regardless, Noel's elastic definition of the middle class in the pre-1850 period is a departure from the current literature.

Even with these caveats, Noel's book makes a major contribution to our understanding of the intersections of religious ethos, class and state formation in pre-Confederation Canada. As a bonus, Jan Noet's fine study is amongst the most literate of Canadian histories written.

Sharon Anne Cook
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

Arrom, Silvia M., and Servando Ortoll, eds. *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America, 1765-1910*. Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1996. Pp. ix, 248. Index.

The seven essays in this volume deal with "urban riots in Latin America before the period of populist politics" (p. 1). Yet some of them show nineteenth-century city dwellers engaged in such a politics *avant la lettre*. Rioters were political actors, mobilized by factions of the elite or by issues that affected their lives, and they made a difference in the interplay of power and subordination. Essays by Silvia Arrom, Sandra Lauderdale Graham, and Jeffrey Needell provide examples. Elites sparked the outbreak of the Parián riot in Mexico City (1828), Arrom says, but its "political context" made it different from Mexico City's riot of 1692, for "a new kind of democratic politics" following the independence was fostered a greater *degree* of mobilization of urban populations than ever before (pp. 86-7, my emphasis).

Graham argues that the Vintem riot in Rio de Janeiro (1880) revealed, but "did not directly cause," a shift in Brazilian political culture. The uprising taught elites that politics could not be confined to parliamentary chambers as it spilled into "city squares" where "street violence ... [became] an element in the political equation" (p. 121). And we see this again in a failed riot 25 years later in Rio (1904) as analyzed by Needell.

"*Jacobino* military elements" coordinated their plot to overthrow a traditional oligarchy by aligning themselves with an urban populace revolting against obligatory vaccination (p. 166).

After Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudeé, the essays in *Riots* view rioters, not as irrational "mobs" engaged in random violence, but people with "broadly shared beliefs and attitudes" who "responded to specific provocations," "attacked property rather than people," and "vented their rage on selected targets that symbolized hated figures or policies" (pp. 2-3). 'Reading' attacks on "tax administration buildings, police headquarters,

import merchants' shops, or foreigners' houses" (p. 2) as if the actions and targets of a crowd can be treated as texts implies an interpretation of plebeian actors as working within a 'moral economy'. (Popular race riots — targeting the Chinese in Sonora in 1911, for example, or African Americans in the American South after the Civil War — could be 'read' in much the same way, but would require some tinkering with assumptions about just how perceptive rioters were in targeting their true oppressors rather than convenient scapegoats.)

The most explicit of the moral economy readings is Avital Bloch and Servando Ortoll's study of riots in Guadalajara (1910), the most conventional, Anthony McFarlane's of "urban insurrection in Bourbon Quito" (1765), and the most original, João José Reis's of protests over "funerary reform" in Salvador (1836). Bloch and Avital tell us that "rioters displayed a rational and structured mass behavior" in attacking "wealthy and/or Protestant Americans," which to them means they were protesting "the ostentatious American presence and arrogant dominance" (p. 213). McFarlane characterizes the Quito rebellion as a temporary alliance to "[resist] changes in taxation" (p. 58) through actions that replicated those of Hobsbawm's "European 'city mob'" (p. 52). Reis's fascinating discussion of resistance to public health legislation prohibiting burial in local churches relies on a cultural explanation. In this case, then, the logic of resistance transcends class and economic determinism and rests on shared traditions. As well, he brings women fully into his narrative as actors and agents. David Sowell's study of a riot in Bogotá (1893), on the other hand, places its meaning and dynamics with a single group, artisans, who, in an age of rapid change, "defend[ed] their social standing" and the 'good name of the artisan'" (p. 148) when it had been — so they thought — publicly debased.

The essays in *Riots* are for the most part already known, but having them republished in a single volume allows us to view them from afresh, much as a retrospective of painters invites reassessments. On reading them together, for example, one wonders how early, with what variations, and in what sequence populist politics emerged in Latin America? Is the attribution of moral economy as convincing an explanation for crowd behaviors as it once was and how convincing is "symbolic behavior" as evidence for it? Is anybody else surprised that articles written mostly in the mid-1980s failed to find women among the rioters? These and other musings would make for interesting and rewarding discussions with students and colleagues.

In a concluding postscript Charles Tilly, a distinguished student of the crowd in European history, writes of his surprise that Latin American historiography is so "thin" (p. 235) on the subject of the urban crowd. It is also dated, he implies, in its attachment to the teleological/evolutionary Marxism of Hobsbawm and Rudeé. Tilly hints that his own shift to the variables social base, culture, and opportunity structure would yield more convincing studies in the future. As an outsider, therefore, he applauds the essays in *Riots* while, at the same time, inviting Latin Americanists to rethink and regroup for a new round of investiga-