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ouvrages démontrent que ces tensions identitaires s'inscrivent dans la longue durée. Depuis l'établissement des premiers colons au XVII^e siècle, jusqu'à la création récente de la nouvelle méga-ville de Longueuil, la région a vécu des «ambiguïtés existentielles», accentuées par la proximité de Montréal.

Aujourd'hui, la région doit relever des défis environnementaux majeurs. L'intensité des activités agricoles en a fait un des territoires les plus pollués du Québec. Le taux de motorisation y est plus élevé que la moyenne québécoise, ce qui amplifie le problème de congestion routière que connaissent les grandes artères de circulation de la région. La qualité de l'aménagement urbain laisse aussi à désirer (pensons notamment à certaines entrées de ville défigurées par des longs boulevards commerciaux ou encore au paysage résidentiel marqué par l'éclectisme des modes architecturaux passagères). Qui plus est, depuis les années 1980, certaines municipalités de la région sont aux prises avec des problèmes analogues à ceux des villes-centres : concurrence avec des territoires plus récemment urbanisés, fermeture d'écoles due au déclin démographique, désindustrialisation, vieillissement et paupérisation de la population.

Ces ouvrages montrent qu'en dépit des forces économiques et culturelles homogénéisantes qui affectent la morphologie tant des espaces suburbains qu'urbains, les ensembles métropolitains renferment des spécificités qui tiennent beaucoup à leur histoire propre. La Rive-Sud de Montréal en est un bon exemple. Il n'est resté pas moins que pour bien comprendre l'histoire de cette région, il est important de tenir compte de la nature des liens qu'elle a développés avec la métropole.

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Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua. *America's First Black Town. Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830–1915. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000. Pp. xiv, 276. Tables, index. US\$37.50 (cloth).*

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Much of early African-American urban history dealt with the rise of ghettos in Chicago and New York in the post World-War-I era. More recently, we have seen a shift toward the study of African-American community building; black urban dwellers are no longer seen as pawns manipulated by white supremacist industrialists, but as active agents forging political alliances, economic cooperatives, kinship networks, and gender-based bonds which help them deal with the discrimination and economic hardship they face on a daily basis. Two recently published studies of African-American urban life deserve special

attention from those interested in urban history, gender studies, and African-American culture.

Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua's study of Brooklyn, Illinois is groundbreaking research. Most people have never heard of Brooklyn, Illinois. Many of the residents refer to their hometown by its more commonly known name, Lovejoy (in honor of the celebrated abolitionist). Yet as Cha-Jua relates, Brooklyn's history is fascinating. Formed in the 1820s as a haven by a group of runaway slaves and free blacks from Missouri, it became America's first black town. Officially incorporated as a town in 1873, Brooklyn found itself in the midst of one of the fastest growing industrial heartlands in America – the metro-east region of St. Louis. What made Brooklyn such a highly unusual African-American community was its rapid and complete incorporation into the surrounding industrial economy. As Cha-Jua states, "Brooklyn's Black male population . . . entered industrial wage labor more than a generation before proletarianization became a common experience among African-American males" (2). What makes the study of Brooklyn, Illinois so fascinating is its atypicality.

On the other hand, Lillian Serece Williams has also written an important piece of scholarship that details the plight of African-American migrants to Buffalo, New York at the turn of the twentieth century. Williams contends that what makes Buffalo such a perfect case study is its typicality. She maintains that hundreds of thousands of African-Americans left the oppression and destitution of the rural south for small urban centers, like Buffalo, during the "Great Migration." Most African-Americans found that industries in Buffalo drew the color line, preferring to hire recent immigrants rather than African-American migrants from the south. As a result, the vast majority of African-American males were relegated to the lowest paying service jobs as waiters, porters, and janitors. African-American females worked as domestic servants, chambermaids, and laundresses. The story seems all too familiar though the scenery is new.

While at first glance the two books might seem to have nothing in common, both emphasize African-American community building and the ability of African-Americans to shape their own destinies and give meaning to their own lives. According to Cha-Jua, this was often accomplished through the use of formalized institutions. One example he cites is the growing strength of the Republican Party. As the black population of Brooklyn swelled in the 1870s and 1880s with migrants lured by the opportunities for industrial employment in the metro-east region, African-Americans began to challenge the political dominance of the small white minority that resided in the town. Forming local Republican clubs, organizing political rallies, raising voter awareness through pulpit speeches by church leaders, the African-American community was able to unite and elect its own slate of candidates to village board of trustees and to the mayor's office. Black self-government, a dream for virtually all African-Americans was a reality for the residents of Brooklyn, Illinois. But the dream soon became a nightmare as the spoils of office became a battleground between rival political factions. Cha-Jua notes that in contrast to Mozell Hill's contention that in all-black towns, racial unity supercedes class and personal differences in poli-

tics, in Brooklyn, Illinois class and color divisions led to such political chaos and factionalism by 1915, that the sheriff had to declare martial law to maintain law and order in the town.

Even after the stream of southern black migrants into Buffalo turned into a flood after World War I, the African-American city dwellers remained a rather small portion of Buffalo's total population. As such, though they were staunch supporters of the Republican Party, they wielded little influence on Republican campaign strategy, candidate nominations, and dividing the spoils of office. Undaunted, as Williams describes, African Americans turned to other institutions to voice their concerns and address their grievances. In Buffalo, this meant the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Buffalo chapter of the NAACP provided a caring and sympathetic ear to the victims of racial and economic abuse. It also acted as a "watchdog" agency to ensure that African Americans' right of access to public accommodations was not denied in any way that conflicted with basic human rights and freedoms. Finally, the NAACP sponsored educational programs to help foster literacy and better job skills among African Americans and also to generate and promote black pride and further the sense of community among blacks in Buffalo. Denied political influence by the white power structure that dominated local politics, African Americans, Williams argues, still found effective ways to strive toward their goal of greater economic success and social freedom.

Both studies also look at the effects of urban life and industrialization on the African-American family. According to Cha-Jua, the early years of settlement saw remarkable stability in the family patterns of Brooklyn residents. Most children grew up in nuclear family homes and it was unusual to have extended kin or boarders living in the home. The male-to-female ratio was virtually equal which made for a stable self-reproducing community. However, as industrialization reached the metro-east region in the late nineteenth century, the family pattern underwent a revolutionary change. The factory jobs lured a predominately male labor force to Brooklyn, which created a highly imbalanced male to female ratio. The result was a decrease in nuclear families and a large increase in extended families and augmented households. That is to say, males who had family in Brooklyn went to live with aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. Those who had no relatives in Brooklyn, paid board to families who, in need of extra income, rented out rooms in their homes. With so many young single males in Brooklyn, the area also soon came to have a reputation as a seedy area. Prostitution, drinking, and gambling houses all became profitable businesses in Brooklyn, catering to the desires of not only black industrial workers, but also white sojourners who sought an exotic escape from the rigidity of the Victorian era.

Williams introduces her chapter on family life by stating, "For African Americans in Buffalo, family was the foundation of the community" (45). Williams maintains that the nuclear family was the most common family pattern throughout the entire period of her study, but as time passed, the male to female ratio increased substantially, making stable family formation difficult. In

the earliest years of settlement, it was quite common for residents to take in recent arrivals as boarders due to the scarcity of housing and its high cost. This was seen as an African-American communal responsibility. Migrants needed help until they had had time to earn sufficient money to establish their own households. As time passed, augmented households became less common but extended households became more numerous. It became standard for elderly parents to move in with one of their grown children. This was often mutually beneficial. The elderly couple had someone to care for them in their sickness, and the adult parents had someone to look after the grandchildren because often both husband and wife worked. Williams also notes that it was often the letters written between family members that served to entice other migrants to leave the south and head for "the land of paradise."

Cha-Jua describes the importance the African-American community attached to churches, schools, and voluntary associations as mechanisms to enhance their independence from white control. Just as the founding families of Brooklyn had defiantly risked their lives to offer sanctuary to runaway slaves before the Civil War, after emancipation, the African American residents of Brooklyn held elaborate ritualized celebrations of the historic event that brought freedom for all their people. The Baptist congregation constructed a new church at a cost of \$1500 in 1875. Five years later, the African Methodist congregation spent \$2500 for a new church of their own. Despite the town's reputation as a den of vice, the people flocked to church on Sunday. Another place the African-American community revered was the local school. When they received the power to vote, they immediately concentrated on electing an all-black school board. The board then immediately set about to end segregated schools. Hence, African Americans in Brooklyn had access to publicly funded racially mixed schools from 1876 until 1894. The ability to educate their children was one of the most cherished privileges Brooklyn residents enjoyed. Also, fraternal orders such as the Masonic Lodge and the International Order of Odd Fellows sought to provide fellowship, mutual benefit, and recreation for their members and the black community. African Americans in Brooklyn were determined that the dehumanization inherent in industrialization in the late 19th century was not going to destroy their sense of spirituality, community, and humanity.

Williams also describes the importance of churches, schools, and voluntary associations. Migrants to Buffalo brought with them their religious fervor and set out to establish numerous congregations of Baptist and Methodist churches in the black districts. Lacking effective political representation, the church took on a more active role in civil rights issues. The church advocated membership in the NAACP to its parishioners. It also served to advertise special NAACP lectures, events, and demonstrations. Many black churches loaned the NAACP their buildings to hold meetings or public lectures. Dissatisfied with the education their children were receiving from city public schools, many African American parents sought to supplement their children's learning with extra classes sponsored by the Urban League or the YMCA. The Urban League offered classes in

crafts, sewing, cooking, drawing, dancing, gymnastics, drama, singing, and poetry. It offered a place where young African Americans could socialize, learn together, and most importantly, according to Williams, feel a sense of race pride and community. Even more important was the construction of the Michigan Avenue YMCA. The YMCA Board of Directors was committed to improving the physical, intellectual, and social well-being of African-American youths. The YMCA performed several crucial functions for the black community of Buffalo. Vocational courses were targeted to careers open to African Americans. There were courses in music appreciation, furnace operation, and household management. The Y acted as an employment agency placing many young blacks into jobs. The Y also promoted good morals by stressing Bible study and by encouraging "Father and Son" and "Mother and Son" banquets to emphasize the importance of family ties. Williams argues that voluntary associations were incredibly important building blocks in keeping the African-American community together.

Both of these books are meticulously researched. Both historians use a diverse range of primary resources including census data, manuscript sources, newspapers, government documents, etc. Additional praise is due Lillian Williams for her outstanding collection of photos from the era which brings such life to her words. I highly recommend these books to the person with a casual interest in urban history and/or in African-American cultural studies as well as to the trained professional. However, I find one thing disturbing. As thought-provoking and important as these books are, we are missing something. No matter how much we hate to admit it, by ignoring race relations the books seem incomplete. Black communities do not develop in a vacuum. To treat them as if they did, seems shamefully naive and dangerously misleading. We just do not seem to get the whole story. By failing to address the white community that surrounds the African-American urban dwellers, the books leave many questions unanswered. What role did the relatively peaceful residents of Brooklyn play in one of the bloodiest race riots in American history which erupted in 1917? If the central premise of the book is that incorporation into the industrial metro-east region forced Brooklyn into a position of permanent economic subservience, how can you not discuss the relationship between core and periphery in greater detail? If Buffalo industrialists chose to hire recent immigrants rather than African Americans in their factories, how can you not at least comment on their reaction? Did they protest? Burn buildings? Attack foreigners on the streets? Did they live in the same neighborhoods? Questions for others to investigate, or maybe merely the rumblings of a comparative race relations historian.

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Glen Norcliffe. The Ride to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869–1900. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001. Pp. 288. Illustrations. \$19.95 paper.

The Ride the Modernity is an interesting and ambitious book. In it, Glen Norcliffe tells the story of the bicycle in Canada over three eventful decades. His primary goal is to place the bicycle, a long neglected technology, in the larger context of the times and to use it to explore and highlight certain aspects of social, cultural and economic change. He focusses particular attention on the bicycle boom of the 1890s, when thousands of Canadians discovered and embraced cycling as the thoroughly modern thing to do. By looking at this period, he argues, it becomes clear that this technology made a significant contribution to social and economic change in Canada.

The narrative is rich in detail and colour, reflecting Professor Norcliffe's extensive knowledge of cycling and cycle history and his love of the pastime. It is abundantly illustrated with over 90 images carefully chosen and captioned to enhance and elaborate on the text. The book itself is organized thematically into eight chapters each of which is divided into several smaller sections by subject. In these chapters, the author tells us a great deal about the technology of the bicycle and its development in Canada. His research on Canadian bicycle patents and manufacturing fills significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding of an important turn-of-the-century industry. His discussion of the social context and impact of cycles – cycle clubs, cycle touring, the good roads movement, women and cycling – helps to illuminate and explain some of the complexities and contradictions of Canadian society at the turn of the century. Based on this lively and informative narrative, it is quite clear that the bicycle was an important technology.

Other aspects of Norcliffe's book, unfortunately, are far less satisfying. His thematic and theoretical framework is problematic. Rather than giving form and substance to his narrative, I found his 'theory' of social and cultural change awkward and confusing. His primary theme is "modernity," which he describes by referring repeatedly to a series of generalizations: modernity seeks change, modernity opposes established ideas and standards, modernity is multi-faceted and differs from one community to the next, modernity in the late 19th century is inextricably linked to industrial change, and modernity builds but it also destroys. None of these statements is untrue, but they are so broad and amorphous that they can be applied with equal accuracy to Protestantism, capitalism or socialism.

Similarly, Norcliffe's use of the theoretical concept of "carrier waves" to explain technological change poses certain problems. He defines carrier waves as clusters of "related innovations," arising from one important invention but which, through their commercial success, exert "a much larger" influence on society. (21) But the application of this concept does not, in my view, clarify or add depth and subtlety to our understanding of the process of innovation. In many instances, it seems only to obscure the obvious. For example, Norcliffe states that the "historical clustering of patents" at the height of the cycling craze in