

En analysant les retombées historiographiques de l'exécution des Vaudois de Provence en 1545, Gabriel Audisio nous livre pour sa part un bon aperçu des choix que fait la mémoire lors du rappel de certains événements marquants. Haut fait militaire pour les uns, massacre pour les autres, cet épisode sanglant des troubles religieux du XVI^e siècle donne lieu à des interprétations fort différentes suivant que l'on retienne la version des vainqueurs ou celle des vaincus.

Enfin, après avoir considéré les différentes relectures dont a fait l'objet le personnage de Jacques Cartier dans l'historiographie québécoise, Jacques Mathieu nous rappelle que la signification d'un événement change dans le temps et selon les groupes sociaux concernés. Ainsi, un événement, hier tombé dans l'oubli, peut soudainement resurgir dans la mémoire collective et prendre une toute autre importance si, à ce moment, les engagements ou les aspirations d'une société le justifient. Le sens d'un événement est donc intimement lié au contexte qui le met en œuvre.

Voilà donc les grandes lignes de cette étude qui vient en quelque sorte reprendre là où l'avaient laissée les participants au colloque tenu à l'Université d'Aix-en-Provence en 1983. Fort instructif et d'une cohérence qui manque parfois à ce type de publications où sont rassemblés de nombreux articles d'auteurs variés et de formations diverses, *Événement, identité et histoire* vient en effet jeter un regard neuf sur les rapports existant entre différents événements traumatiques et la formation de l'identité collective. Certes, la conclusion de l'ouvrage nous laisse un peu songeur et l'on peut déplorer l'absence d'une définition préalable de « l'identité collective », ce qui aurait rendu moins « subjective » l'évaluation du caractère traumatique de certains événements. Ces remarques n'enlèvent cependant rien à la valeur générale de l'étude ni à la qualité de la plupart des articles qui le composent. Assurément, voilà un ouvrage qui va relancer le débat sur le poids de l'événement en histoire, une voie dans laquelle beaucoup hésite encore à s'aventurer.

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Michael Doucet and John Weaver — *Housing the North American City*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Pp. vi, 572.

Among the myriad subjects examined by urban historians in the past thirty years, the history of housing has loomed large. Studies of suburbanization, municipal reform, land use, and urban planning have all dealt with housing development as an integral part of city-building. Few of these works, however, have made shelter their primary concern. In *Housing the North American City*, Michael Doucet and John Weaver put the history of housing center stage, offering a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment of this important topic.

Using the city of Hamilton, Ontario, as a case study, the authors offer a periodization of housing development comprised of three stages: the era of individualism, the era of corporate involvement, and the era of state intervention. Covering the years before 1880, the era of individualism was characterized by a decentralized, laissez-faire system of land development in which numerous small-scale operators constructed a motley array of houses and neighborhoods. With only a

limited pool of consumer credit available, most of these homes were geared toward the rental market, and home ownership levels remained low.

From 1880-1945, the housing business experienced a sharp increase in production levels due to technological advances, corporate consolidation, and increasingly sophisticated finance and marketing practices. Home ownership expanded markedly in this period of corporate involvement, but so did the social stratification of the city due to restrictive covenants and other forms of self-regulation by developers and realtors.

The final stage, that of state intervention, encompasses the postwar era. While legislators laid the groundwork for such intervention in the 1920s and 1930s, it was the creation of the Central (later Canada) Mortgage and Housing Corporation in 1945 that provided the administrative apparatus for guaranteeing home loans, establishing building standards, and other forms of state control. This intervention, the authors maintain, resulted in increased production, expanded municipal services, and the rise of large, vertically-integrated development firms that had the resources to comply with state-ordered standards and procedures. Although such intervention ultimately produced better quality housing stock, the cost of residential housing increased while its affordability diminished. This same period also saw the establishment of state-owned and managed social housing for low-income families. State intervention, the authors argue, has most benefited the poor and those in the top half of the income spectrum; working-class and lower middle-class families have gained the least.

The remainder of the book deals with discreet housing issues over the long term including home ownership, material culture, finance, the rented house, the apartment building, and environmental quality. Some of these chapters, such as those on material culture and home finance, are rather dry and detailed and will be of limited interest to non-specialists. Others, including those dealing with home ownership and tenancy, offer more compelling reading.

In particular, the authors' discussion of home ownership and what they term "the will to possess" presents a new and provocative view. Rejecting neo-classical and Marxist explanations of home ownership as a conservative phenomenon, Weaver and Doucet emphasize consumer motivation and its radical roots in anti-tenancy movements of the nineteenth century. Noting that the demographic shift to home ownership predated the emergence of both sophisticated real estate marketing and state support of mortgage financing, the authors argue that a distinctively North American "will to possess" emanated from popular protests against the concentration of land ownership in the Old World. Under the influence of Henry George and other anti-tenancy leaders, home ownership became a powerful expression of working-class independence and self-reliance. Only later would real estate and other capitalist interests exploit these impulses for their own benefit.

The last four chapters of the book provide further insights on home ownership and tenancy and their impact on urban social relations. Through an inventive use of tax assessment rolls, census statistics, and other data, the authors construct a detailed picture of Hamilton's housing history, including a social profile of property ownership and tenancy by age, sex, occupation, and ethnicity. As the authors readily acknowledge, however, the methodology behind this analysis is sometimes suspect. Housing assessments, for instance, often lagged below or above actual market values; the status and income levels of occupational categories have changed over time; and surnames were not — and are not — necessarily a good indicator of ethnicity. Nevertheless, the

authors' approach is resourceful and innovative and will serve as a point of departure for future studies.

Ultimately, the authors argue that until quite recently, there has been a growing "democratization" of housing in North American cities. The housing industry responded enthusiastically and creatively to consumers' "will to possess", making home ownership increasingly accessible to various age and ethnic groups. At the same time, apartment house developers have expanded the shelter options for white-collar groups, the elderly, the young, and others for whom home ownership and maintenance has been undesirable. In both cases, the size, quality, and environment of such housing have gradually improved over time, while the social segregation of the city has decreased. Laborers and the poor (including many single mothers), who have been increasingly relegated to crowded rental flats in deteriorating neighborhoods, constitute the main exception to this democratization trend.

While Doucet and Weaver make a compelling case for the democratization trend in Hamilton, their attempts to generalize this finding to "the North American city" are not convincing. The more complex nature of U.S. race relations and the resulting phenomenon of suburban flight and urban decay make the integration and democratization trends of Hamilton seem less plausible for U.S. cities. Likewise, in both Canada and the U.S., there have been significant differences between urban and suburban housing stock. By limiting the scope of their study to Hamilton city proper, the authors may have painted a more equitable and integrated picture that is actually the case in most metropolitan areas.

These and other debates, however, suggest that *Housing the North American City* is an important and provocative book. It will no doubt find a large and well-deserved readership among urbanists on both sides of the border.

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Steven A. Epstein — *Wage Labor and Guilds in Medieval Europe*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991. Pp. vii, 307.

In this new work, Steven Epstein seeks to explain the appearance of wage labor and guilds in western Europe and to illuminate both their character and context. He accomplishes the latter with refreshing originality and a wide variety of sources, but addresses the former with less success.

Epstein begins by establishing that medieval guilds were not descendants of Roman craft and trade associations (*collegia*). These ancient guilds, which figured so prominently in coercive late-imperial economic legislation, disappeared as the germanic migrations of the fourth and fifth centuries transformed western Europe. Terms resembling "guild" (*gildonia*, *gegildan*) in early medieval documents, Epstein argues, denote religious confraternities or sworn peacekeeping associations unrelated to crafts or trade. Although Epstein sees no institutional continuity between ancient Roman and medieval guilds, he does acknowledge the importance of Roman law