

Trans Toronto: An Oral History. By Darryl B. Hill. New York: William Rodney Press, 2012. 204 pp. Paperback, \$21.50

Darryl B. Hill's *Trans Toronto: An Oral History* is not in fact an oral history as such but uses oral histories as qualitative research evidence in a close sociological reading of Toronto's trans community in the mid- to late-1990s. The book should be of interest to scholars and students of sexuality as well as to those looking for historic perspective on the experience of persons who are "transidentified," Hill's term for those who identify as transsexual, transgender, crossdressers, and intersex.

Hill draws on a group of oral histories he conducted with eighteen individuals in 1995 and on a second group of interviews he conducted four years later with ten of the original interviewees plus ten others. Hill recognizes that his data, as he uses the oral histories, is now twenty years old, but he does not explicitly treat the interviews historically, that is, in comparison to contemporary events or understandings of trans communities. But what could be a significant deficit—that on its surface the book was published twenty years too late—in fact ends up being one of its main strengths; even without any historical framing on Hill's part, the collection does allow the reader to think historically by engaging with a community's self-description from the 1990s, facilitating all sorts of comparative work with other time periods. Thus *Trans Toronto*, despite its sociological approach, will undoubtedly be useful in gender and sexuality history courses, which currently have a dearth of historical treatments of the T in LGBT on which to draw.

Hill is less successful, however, in framing the work as an oral history. While describing oral history as "a method for the margins" that allows for access beyond that of other research methodologies, he promises to "tell the life stories of the transidentified" but only offers small selections of interviews within the analytical text as evidence of points he makes as he explores identity construction and other themes (6, 1). Interviewees often appear without names, and it is impossible to track many individuals across the chapters in such a way as to construct a coherent life story for each. Including full transcripts, or even larger partial transcripts, either in the volume itself or in an online addendum to the publication, would have made it far richer and more useful to scholars, students, oral historians, and the trans community alike.

Hill describes his oral history method as differing from life history or from interviews that adhere to a "structured and largely fixed interview protocol"; instead, he describes his method as "conversational encounters" focused on teasing out meanings rather than on describing events (12). Hill and each interviewee then debated the meanings back and forth in what he calls "a hermeneutic dialectic between researcher and informant, an ongoing conversation on

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the research question" (12). That approach is somewhat lost in the presentation, however, since Hill serves up only small bites of the interviews as evidence in support of his own arguments, and thereby any sense of conversation is lost in the process. That being said, *Trans Toronto* is certainly useful and interesting, both as a moment caught in time and as an exploration of how transidentified people in that time and place understood themselves, their communities, and their process of personal and community identity construction.

Hill sets out his agenda as using examples of "emancipated lives" to demonstrate the coping strategies of marginalized people (8). His basic framework for studying Toronto's trans community in the 1990s is premised on an understanding of that community as postmodern, and he goes to some pains, successfully, both to define the postmodern condition and to fit his subjects and their self-understanding within this worldview. Terms for self-identification especially fall within the postmodern understanding, allowing for a looseness, flexibility, and understanding of change that can incorporate a range of shifting self-understandings and give an early glimpse of the ideas of gender fluidity and pan sexuality, for example, that are now regular parts of the trans lexicon.

Hill's chapters move through a number of themes, from self-identity and naming, concepts and categories of gender, narrative framing of trans experiences, and the multiple relationships between gender and sexuality. Throughout he expertly employs excerpts from the interviews to highlight a certain point or general approach, and the interview snippets do give a lovely, albeit brief, glimpse of the world of transidentified folk in 1990s Toronto. As mentioned earlier, this may leave the reader wanting more of the interviews themselves, but as it stands *Trans Toronto* is a much-needed contribution to both the historical and sociological study of transidentified communities, effectively employing evocative narratives of self-understanding from a particular time and place.

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The Last Days of the Rainbelt. By David J. Wishart. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. xviii, 202 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95.

David J. Wishart's new book, *The Last Days of the Rainbelt*, focuses on the boom and bust settlement cycles of the Great Plains in the late nineteenth century, directly relying on oral histories, government records, and other documentary sources to bring the ensuing period of drought and agricultural crisis into popular scholarly discussion.

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individualism. In contrast, Moran's historical survey serves as an important reminder that any emphasis on intentional discrimination that ignores outcome "obscures the significance of links between racial identity and personal choices in neighbors, friends and lovers" (p. 193). In the twenty-first century, Americans need candidly to confront the fact that segregation and same-race families are not race neutral; in the absence of regular interaction, as Moran warns, racial boundaries can only endure and become rigid and reified.

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MIA BAY. *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2000. Pp. viii, 288. Cloth \$45.00, paper \$19.95.

In her important new book, Mia Bay asks and answers two wonderfully timely and relevant questions: what new ideas about white people did Africans and African Americans develop in America, and why have historians been profoundly silent on such an essential subject? Despite two important limitations—that the majority of black people across much of American history have been illiterate, and that blacks have rarely been in a position freely to express their views of whites—Bay patiently and persuasively documents several powerful strands of African-American thinking about whiteness. This book fills a giant hole in the otherwise rich literature about the history of race in America. It is, profoundly, a story of "the limits of what black people can be made to believe about themselves" (p. 220).

Common to all black thinking about white people, Bay argues, was blacks' understanding that whites "deemed blacks a lesser species only to rationalize their own exploitation and abuse of people of color" (p. 9). African Americans wondered, from the early nineteenth through the twentieth century, whether the lie of white supremacy instead suggested the truth of white inferiority. Yet "African-Americans never inscribed white images across their culture and imaginative life" (p. 5) as scholars as varied as George Fredrickson, Toni Morrison, Joel Williamson, Eric Lott, and Linda Williams have shown white Americans did with their images of blackness. Black thinking about whiteness, Bay insists in one of her most important arguments, is a much smaller space than its reverse. Black people in America have thought about white people's identities to defend themselves from the effects of white racism. But otherwise, unlike whites, they have filled their psyches and their imaginations with other themes, with what it means to love and fight and live.

Bay usefully divides this black thinking about whites into three categories: nineteenth-century black ethnology, black folk thought or the racial thinking of slaves, and black racial thought in the twentieth century. Black ethnology, written almost exclusively by black men, was a literature produced in response to ethnol-

ogy, the nineteenth-century "science of the races" written by white scientists, politicians, and proslavery polemicists. This black discourse served as defense, an effort to prove that Africans and African Americans were part of a then evolving, scientific conception of humanity. Much black ethnology "reenvisioned" rather than "repudiated" (p. 47) ideas about racial difference and, as Bay argues, could easily slide "into a black chauvinism that mirrored the very racist logic it opposed" (p. 45). Here Bay examines the racial thinking of well-known figures like David Walker, Frederick Douglass, and William Wells Brown and lesser known figures like John Russwurm, a West Indian-born college graduate who wrote for and worked as an editor at *Freedom's Journal*, and the abolitionist speaker and medical doctor John Rock.

In Bay's second category of black thinking about whites, black folk thought or what she also calls "the racial thought of slaves" (p. 113), blacks' sense of white racism evolved from white actions, from observing whites treating blacks more like animals than people. Slaves' counterarguments, offered in the songs, tales, folklore, and autobiographical statements of ex-slaves, did not so much question white humanity as vigorously assert their own. Often informed by black religious faith, this vernacular tradition probed the morality of whites and suggested that divine retribution would achieve justice, if not in this world then in the next.

In her final category, Bay examines the changing racial thought of African Americans in the early twentieth century. The gradual erosion of racial determinism in white thinking posed special difficulties for black thinkers. Some black intellectuals slowly began, in a parallel development to that of some white thinkers, to see culture, rather than race, as the crucial location of human differences. Other African Americans, in contrast, continued and indeed strengthened their embrace of race as the essential and even divine marker of difference, giving rise to black separatist movements from Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association to the Moorish Science Temple.

Bay concludes by arguing that scholars have not studied black racial thinking in part because they have assumed that "the African-American struggle for equality was informed by a conviction in the fallacy of innate distinctions between the races" (p. 220). In demonstrating just how rich and varied the traditions of black racial thinking have been, that African Americans have used racist assumptions as often as they have challenged them, Bay has made an original and important contribution to historical scholarship.

GRACE ELIZABETH HALE
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MATTHEW PRATT GUTERL. *The Color of Race in America 1900-1940*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2001. Pp. ix, 234. \$39.95.

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Nevertheless, Johnson deserves to be congratulated for a job well done. His book redefines the way in which future historians will look at military aviation in the period from 1907 to 1918, and the turmoil of the interwar years. Like all good history, Johnson's book forces a reevaluation of interpretations that are so often taken for granted.

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JANET R. DALY BEDNAREK. *America's Airports: Airfield Development, 1918-1947*. (Centennial of Flight Series, number 1.) College Station: Texas A&M University Press. 2001. Pp. viii, 226. \$39.95.

Like the general public, historians pay little attention to the physical infrastructures supporting modern, urban societies. Recently, however, a number of scholars have begun to examine highway networks, urban sewer systems, downtown rail terminals, and municipal airports. Studying the origins, construction, development, and use of these facilities, it turns out, opens windows on the interaction of politics, city planning, cultural practices, and technological change.

One such work is Janet R. Daly Bednarek's monograph on American airports. Narrowly focused, it asks two questions: how did American airports become "municipal," owned and operated by cities rather than by national authorities as in many other parts of the world, and how did they also come to be federally funded and regulated? Covering the long generation, 1918-1947, Bednarek shows the emergence of the pattern of airport governance that still exists.

Bednarek demonstrates that the earliest airfields, built during and after World War I, varied considerably in their ownership and management. Some were owned by cities, others were leased from private landowners, and still others were privately owned and operated. Yet all were "municipal" in that they were identified with the town or city in which they were located and were open to all flyers. The impetus for airport development also varied, coming in part from local Chambers of Commerce and other aviation boosters as well as the U.S. Army Air Service and the Post Office. In 1917-1918, the Post Office began an experiment carrying mail by plane, while in 1921 the Air Service launched its "Model Airway" program. The latter scheme envisioned air routes between major cities along which other municipalities would build flying fields accessible to both military and civilian pilots. Neither the Post Office nor the Army had funds for air field acquisition or construction, however, so they hoped that exhortation and local "airmindedness" would lead communities to found airports. Even after Charles A. Lindbergh demonstrated the ability of planes to leap oceans, triggering an aviation boom, municipal efforts at airport building proved largely inadequate.

Ultimately, it took federal money to produce a nationwide network of up-to-date airports. The 1926

Air Mail Act began the process, permitting fledgling airlines to bid on subsidized federal contracts to carry the mail over specified routes. Although these subsidies did not directly help municipalities, they created an incentive for communities to develop airports in order to get on the air map and procure mail and passenger service. The 1926 act had in fact banned federal spending on municipal airports, analogizing them to the docks along navigable rivers or in harbors; although the federal government clearly had the authority to fund river or harbor improvements, it believed docks and airports should be developed municipally or privately.

The Depression and war of the 1930s and early 1940s changed the relationship of the federal government to cities generally and altered many people's thinking on the appropriateness of aiding municipal airports specifically. New Deal agencies such as the Civil Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration channeled work-relief funds to cities for hiring the unemployed to improve airports. Municipalities in this period not only needed help with unemployment, but they also could not afford the continuous upgrading of their fields to adapt to rapid changes in aviation technology. Faster and heavier planes required longer, paved runways, while technologies enabling a plane to fly "blind," landing in fog or inclement weather, demanded costly ground-based installations. Federal funds addressed these needs as well. Because Congress demanded that fields be municipally owned and operated before receiving aid, by World War II, all major airports in the United States, save for National in Washington, D.C., were municipal in the legal sense, not just in name.

Bednarek provides a competent guide to these developments along with the impact on airports of the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, the militarization of flying during World War II, and the more systematic federal involvement embodied in the Federal Airport Act of 1946. Because her book is based largely on the aeronautical trade press, however, we rarely glimpse airport making or operation from the grass roots, municipal level. The specifics regarding how local leaders, business leaders, politicians, and others interacted with higher government officials and the aviation community seldom enter her analysis. I hope her work will stimulate more in-depth studies of particular cities and their struggle, first alone and then in partnership with the federal and state governments, to build, operate, and—so it seems to today's air traveler—continually rebuild and expand municipal airports. In the meantime, Bednarek's book will serve as a useful introduction to the subject.

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CHARLES DAVID JACOBSON. *Ties that Bind: Economic and Political Dilemmas of Urban Utility Networks, 1800-1990*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press. 2000. Pp. xi, 282. \$35.00.

author outlines her own recommendations for "a broad-gauged study of political economy rather than a narrow study of the poor," and here, at the end of the book, the reader catches a glimpse of the author's progressive vision for "imagining, organizing, and mobilizing a new poverty knowledge" (p. 295).

RUTH CROCKER
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JENNIFER FROST. *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s*. New York: New York University Press. 2001. Pp. xi, 257. \$35.00.

Jennifer Frost has provided a coherent examination of the role of American women during the poor people's movement of the 1960s. Mining a variety of sources, Frost incorporated private diaries, and personal interviews as well as manuscript collections to make her case. Frost investigated community organizers at the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), a grass-roots organizing program, with major offices in Cleveland, Chicago, Boston, Newark, Baltimore, Trenton, and Philadelphia. ERAP challenged the previous reliance on the working class, focusing instead on a vision of "an interracial movement of the poor" to attack racial inequality. The agency's mission was to collaborate with the civil rights movements and voice "problems with welfare, housing, urban renewal, children's welfare, police brutality, as well as jobs" (p. 96).

The author incisively argues that ERAP encouraged women to become organizers. For many, being a community organizer was better than the likelihood of a future of low-paying jobs. Since females were the most active constituency, it was not long before they helped shape the culture of ERAP, adding a maternal aspect that called for programs for children, food, clothing, and health care. Accordingly, ERAP staff provided babysitters for female activists when they held rallies. Women were closely associated with programs such as Head Start and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and in Chicago they established a program in which girls went door-to-door testing children for lead poisoning.

Throughout the text, Frost supplies illuminating stories to create a rich tapestry that yielded insight on the life of community organizers. She recounts how ERAP employees wrote letters, distributed petitions, and organized protests. In the words of one organizer, "You go in, stir things up, you create an organization, local people take it over, and you leave" (p. 85). Participation empowered organizers to create change, as in Cleveland when ERAP activists stole the employee handbook at the Welfare Department, simplified the rules, and then returned it. To their surprise, some caseworkers liked the changes and adopted the "revised" manual. Later, poor people held a "Rat March" to city hall by parading broken furniture, torn clothing, and dead rats to call attention to the need for the removal of garbage.

According to Frost, the power of Cold War legislators and law enforcement agents weakened the accomplishments of ERAP. In 1964, when the federal government mandated representation of the poor, ERAP staff demanded that poor people be given representation on the board of directors of antipoverty projects. In Newark, it was a success, yet the same was not true in Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. The fact that political machines in Democratic strongholds overpowered ERAP meant that the overall impact of ERAP was one of little successes and big defeats. In Frost's opinion, police relations within the ghetto were tenuous, as exemplified in Chicago when police officers allegedly broke into ERAP offices, started fires, hid marijuana, and later arrested several organizers for the possession of drugs. Shortly after the urban riots of 1967, several police departments insisted that the disturbances were the result of Communists associated with ERAP. In many respects, the riots signaled an end for ERAP.

By 1968, most ERAP organizers had vacated the movement and returned to the theoretical world of college life. Frost remarks that this coincided with the emergence of Black Power and that white organizers in black communities now stepped on contested terrain. External and internal pressures such as inadequate strategies, heavy workloads, and high expectations also brought a closing phase to ERAP. "Only a few organizers had their own bedrooms; many slept on floors and couches. And low project budgets and a lack of funding made food items like meat and juice luxuries" (p. 155). Initially, members of ERAP idealized the world of poor people until they witnessed high rates of alcoholism, violence, and abuse of women. It is undeniable that these intractable issues continue to be difficult to resolve, even in the best of circumstances.

The most bothersome aspect of Frost's work has to do with the disorganized discussion of the multiple ERAP projects. In the third chapter, each of the four major cities were clearly delineated; however, subsequent chapters often skipped from one city to another within a single paragraph, making the narrative tough to follow. But having noted that, there are many different things for scholars to admire about this book, whether one is interested in postwar American history, social welfare, women's studies, radical politics, or social movements.

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PAMELA S. NADELL. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon. 1998. Pp. xiii, 300. \$30.00.

Pamela S. Nadell vividly narrates the provocative story of U.S. Jewish women's ordination. The story begins in the late nineteenth century, when U.S. Jewish women began publicly voicing a desire for ordination. It concludes a century later, when, in the 1970s and