

**Nemes, Robert. *The Once and Future Budapest*. DeKalb:
Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 247**

J.-Guy Lalande

Volume 35, Number 1, Fall 2006

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016006ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016006ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this note

Lalande, J.-G. (2006). Nemes, Robert. *The Once and Future Budapest*. DeKalb:
Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 247. *Urban History Review /
Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 35(1), 60–61. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016006ar>

The youthful shoppers analysed in this book are not depicted as dupes of advertisers or the market (witness the discussion of children's "consumer disappointment" in Chapter 6). Rather, Jacobson "restores agency to the non-corporate elites—children, parents, educators, child experts, and reformers—who played a crucial role in both moderating and fostering a culture of consumption" (p. 4). The early-twentieth-century culture of juvenile consumption, she argues, was the result of the merging of market strategies and new family ideologies that privileged companionate relations between parents and children, crystallized in the notion of "play." During the interwar years, ideas of the companionate family meshed nicely with ideas of the family as a consumer democracy (or "the family firm," p. 77). However, while both early-twentieth-century childrearing theories and corporate marketers promoted the democratic family, their emphases differed: while "advertisers promoted a vision of family democracy that privileged children's consumer desires, child experts envisioned an enlightened family democracy that retained a fair degree of parental control" (p. 178). The limits to cooperation and consensus can be seen in Jacobson's Chapter 5, which describes middle-class parents 'fighting back' against commercial recreation by creating spaces devoted to play at home. Ironically, however, the counterattack waged by parents and their supporters echoed the "strategies of enticement" (p. 181) developed by the promoters of commercialized leisure. In the end, Jacobson argues, defenders of the companionate family settled into an "uneasy alliance" (p. 217) with the promoters of juvenile consumer culture.

Raising Consumers provides insight into relationships between marketers and the family but also into relationships within the family. Advertisers calculated how best to win over children without alienating their parents, while at times (such as in the case of Depression-era radio clubs) revealing a willingness to sacrifice parental goodwill in order to capture the children's market. Children and adolescents were occasionally marketers' best allies ("active selling agents within the home," p. 18), convincing parents of the necessity or desirability of particular purchases. Like advertisers, children adopted gendered strategies of persuasion. Daughters, for example, 'seduced' fathers into opening their wallets. Consumption could also reinforce existing familial fault-lines. Mother-daughter "consumer alliances," for instance, could threaten "the breadwinner's prerogatives" (p. 50), while consumer culture was a realm in which savvy boy consumers "could stage imaginary Oedipal coups, triumphing over fathers as tutors in consumption and master persuaders" (p. 115).

Jacobson is generally careful to distinguish among children, demonstrating the ways in which consumption was enabled and shaped by social factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity. Although most of the evidence in this book concerns middle-class children, *Raising Consumers* includes intriguing and occasionally moving evidence of the relationship of working-class children to money, particularly during the Depression years: the boy who faithfully deposited his earnings in the school savings bank so as to protect them from his "erratically employed" father;

the teenagers in Muncie, Indiana who entered their high school by the side door rather than endure the exacting consumer scrutiny of their better-off peers, gathered on the front steps. Jacobson's use of gender as a category of analysis likewise produces some of the most innovative material in the book: Chapter 3, for example, examines the savvy, modern, decisive "boy consumer"—a boy who combined consumption with manly producer virtues, avoiding the fickle and irrational tendencies attributed to female consumers. Jacobson pays less attention, however, to race and ethnicity. She notes that "black and other minority children" were neglected by advertisers (p. 6) and she provides scattered bits of evidence on immigrant children and consumption (immigrant children properly trained in spending, for instance, were seen as potential "agents of Americanization in their own homes," p. 67). But the whiteness of the children analysed in this book goes unproblematicized. Canadian readers might also find the lack of attention to region rather unsettling: this is a study of the United States that makes little allowance for geographic differences within the nation. Surprisingly, there is also relatively little analysis of age in *Raising Consumers*. Jacobson does not, for instance, provide us with a clear sense of when 'childhood' ends in the period under study. And although Chapter 4 introduces us to "a new archetypal consumer: the peer-conscious adolescent girl," there is little analysis of contemporary distinctions between childhood and adolescence.

Despite these criticisms, *Raising Consumers* is a compelling and persuasive book and an enjoyable read. Its most important contribution is probably that related to periodization: Jacobson's emphasis on the emergence of child-centred consumption in the 1920s and 1930s (that is, long before the arrival of television in American homes) reminds us that the targeting of children by corporate interests is by no means a recent phenomenon.

Magda Fahrni
Université du Québec à Montréal

Nemes, Robert. *The Once and Future Budapest*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 247.

How did urbanism and nationalism intersect in nineteenth-century Budapest? Why did nationalism mobilize so many women and men, and how did it shape the development of this city located on both sides of the Danube? Finally, how did Budapest become a manifestly Hungarian city in the nineteenth century? These are the questions that Robert Nemes (history, Colgate University), using extensive archival materials, memoirs, travelers' accounts, and newspapers, answers in a well-crafted and well-written monograph, that is informed by recent work in cultural studies and cultural history.

A town with an undeniable German character in the early 1800s (symbolized by the presence and the political power of the Habsburgs), Budapest gradually evolved from a muddy, dusty, marshy, and provincial city into a burgeoning metropolis and, since the *Ausgleich* of 1867, a capital. This complex

process of change was largely attributable to the influence of the French and Industrial Revolutions, and to the zeal of national activists—writers, journalists, poets, musicians, linguists, and scholars (Count Istvan Széchenyi being the most famous figure here) –, who were committed to all things Hungarian, including costumes, dances, theater, cuisine, history, and, above all, language. The ability of these reformers to insert themselves into local public life (as witnessed, for example, the large number of voluntary associations, whose visibility increased through a rapid growth of the press), the memory of the Glorious Revolution of 1848–1849 (a revolutionary experience that “encouraged people to see themselves not as subjects, but as citizens belonging to a national community rather than a particular town, religion, or occupation,” p. 150), the construction of monumental buildings (museum, bridge, schools, theater, parliament)—all these initiatives combined with a rapid spatial and demographic growth (from c. 50,000 to c. 750,000 at the end of the century) to create an urban space that came to reflect an authentic national character. This campaign to nationalize Budapest had also a dark side: it often involved exclusionary practices, intolerant language, violent street demonstrations, and even vandalism. The author concludes his book with too brief a glimpse of the many changes the city underwent in the twentieth century. Hopefully, Nemes will continue his pioneering work on Budapest, a city that had its share of tragedies in this arguably most tragic of all centuries.

My only quibbles are that Nemes sometimes uses interchangeably the words Magyar and Hungarian; in the political context of the nineteenth century, such an approach is not quite exact. Also, a more elaborate treatment of the major changes in the urban economy would have further enriched this original study.

A book about a city and the political visions that molded its character, *The Once and Future Budapest* will appeal equally to historians, architects, and urbanists.

J.-Guy Lalonde
St. Francis Xavier University

Kruse, Kevin M. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

In 1963, James Baldwin wrote that “the black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations.” While African Americans have consistently struggled to escape the fixed racial binary to which Baldwin refers, whites have just as surely reacted to these tremors by working indefatigably to restore their separation from and superiority over blacks. As a number of American urban historians have pointed out, this process of black assertion and white reaction utterly transformed the demography of American cities after the Second World War as blacks flocked to them and whites fled from them. In

his book, Kevin Kruse analyzes the ideology accompanying white flight and its ongoing impact on American politics.

Kruse traces a direct line between obscure neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan terrorists operating against residential desegregation in post World War II Atlanta, to the leaders of the conservative movement that dominates every level of American politics today, many of whom, including Newt Gingrich, have represented metropolitan Atlanta constituencies. In doing so, he puts to rest assertions that this movement is race blind or egalitarian. Instead, he demonstrates its roots in white reaction to and ultimate defection from the desegregating cities of the 1950s and 1960s and the “politics of suburban secession” that developed along with this exodus. In a beautifully written, clearly structured, and deeply researched narrative, Kruse lays out the historical processes that led to the development of modern conservatism. This political evolution resulted from the white fight against desegregation, first in neighborhoods, then in public schools, and finally in public facilities. Perceiving the civil rights movement as a fundamental threat to their rights as homeowners, taxpayers, businesspeople, and citizens, a growing number of white Atlantans began to subscribe to an explicit ideology of individualism, privatization, freedom of association, and distrust of the federal government to bolster their ongoing white supremacy.

Kruse’s examination of this anti-desegregation ideology does much to explain the current state of American cities. Deeply resenting civil-rights activism that resulted in the court-mandated desegregation of “their” public recreation facilities, schools, and transportation system, for example, white Atlantans in large numbers abandoned these services, not only by ceding them to blacks, but also by refusing to support them with their tax dollars and turning to their own white-only private institutions. Suburbanization, according to Kruse, was the end result of this racialized secessionist movement from the city and its services. He thus makes an important point about the pyrrhic victories of the civil rights movement in American cities. What did this courageous, decades-long movement for racial equality achieve if it led to the white abandonment of the public sphere to African Americans, white flight from “black” cities to “white” suburbs, and white suburbanites’ rejection of any connection or responsibility to city dwellers, especially if it meant higher taxes or expanded government services? Ruefully, Kruse concludes that white flight represented not the defeat, but the ultimate victory of the segregationists.

In focusing on Atlanta, Kruse made a canny choice for developing his argument for a nationwide process. Long characterized by city elites as the “city too busy to hate,” Atlanta has had a nationwide reputation for racial moderation and economic progress, especially when compared to other cities in the South. Kruse topples this myth in two ways. First, by focusing on grassroots whites rather than the elite, he demonstrates that a growing majority of Atlanta’s whites were vociferously opposed to desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s. Starting with the working class, which was most affected by black “incur-sion” into formerly white neighborhoods and segregated public