In *Undressed Toronto*, Dale Barbour offers a detailed "history of public bathing in Toronto in the period between 1850 and 1935." The author focuses on the swimming hole to explore "how Torontonians used the bathing boy as an icon to soften the transition into modernity' (p. 4). The swimming hole is a homosocial space where the working class developed a distinct bathing system that the author calls vernacular bathing, which he claims, was maintained by the middle-class pastoral haze. According to Barbour, "the goal of the swimming hole was the production of vigorous masculinity" (p. 4) and was not intended for profit. The book rests on the contrast between the swimming hole and the beach, which according to the author, solved vernacular bathing's security issues as it dictated behaviors and dress, was physically safe, and was a heterosocial space thriving as commercial entertainment. Barbour bases his argument on John Fiske's definition of the beach as a social system imported from Europe in the nineteenth century regulating the bathing of men and women in public spaces. Accordingly, he also endeavors to summarize the history of the bathing suit and review the evolution of the naked body's image over time.

Barbour attempts to show Toronto's social and economic evolution and demonstrate "how the beach as a system of governance was laid over Toronto's physical and social environment" (p. 17). He aims to move away from bathing's moral issues and focus on vernacular bathing and the beach's adaptation to the urban environment. The term "bathing" is used in line with nineteenth-century terminology to mean "swimming and hygiene" (p. 5). Thus, one of the book's values is its claim to challenge historians' general idea that Toronto's industrialization severed the city's relationship with Lake Ontario. For Barbour, city developments, like the Esplanade, were interven-
tions that enabled bathing by maintaining marginal spaces.

Dale Barbour’s scholarship specializes in the history of leisure in urban environments and incorporates women’s and gender studies, enriching his reflection. His ambitious book includes an introduction, six main chapters, an extensive appendix of notes, a bibliography, illustrations credits reflecting the book’s wealth of primary sources, and an index. Topics are well set in place and time, and each chapter introduces and feeds forward to the following chapter effectively. The introduction is very detailed. However, the last section (p. 17) describing how the beach was laid over Toronto would be a better fit in the book’s conclusion and impacts its reading, which then feels repetitive at times, thus less exciting.

The first two chapters work together. First, they look at how Lake Ontario became a zone of contact at the beginning of the nineteenth century as settlers progressively “consigned [Indigenous people] to the past and portrayed [them] as an impediment to future development” (p. 26). Then they look at how Lake Ontario became a contested space for bathing in the early twentieth century, reflecting the dialectic between the working class, middle class, bylaws, nudity, masculinity, and the place of women and Indigenous people. Barbour reviews the laws and management efforts that could not prevent the city’s waterfront from remaining a bathing space for middle-class males. A substantial part of chapter 1 is dedicated to describing the effects of “the Esplanade project and the railroad and industrial development” on “Toronto’s relationship with its waterfront” (p. 33).

Chapter 3 explores how Toronto Island became a heterosocial bathing space. Barbour explains how the beach’s “implementation was negotiated, challenged, and resisted” (p. 73) and how its spatial meaning was progressively created, becoming, by the beginning of the twentieth century, known as a "coherent set of cultural markers" (p. 106). He shows how the Wiman Baths built the idea that bathing could be linked to better working-class hygiene and thus "moral propriety and economic success" (p. 83). This period is when Toronto also started to embrace mixed-gender bathing areas "emblematic of a modern city" (p. 87). In this chapter, Barbour relies on Norbert Elias, John Fiske, and Michel Foucault to develop the notions of shame, community practices, visibility, and social control. He details the efforts made to introduce the bathing suit at the beach and insightfully analyzes its power to attract the gaze of both men and women when "vernacular bathing asked people to turn their eyes away from the naked body" (p. 92). However, he explains that the advent of the bathing suit was not easily implemented.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Don River’s capacity to preserve vernacular bathing between 1890 and 1930, thanks in part to new safety and surveillance systems that enabled the emergence of a heterosocial bathing culture. Barbour argues against historian Jennifer Bonnell and states that "the presence of boys bathing created a nostalgic gloss over the middle Don that cloaked the river’s hazards" (p. 108). He also claims that "the Don River was a space where gender and sexuality were performed, produced, and verified" (p. 109), not acted, as Judith Butler argued. Unfortunately, this chapter contains lengthy descriptions of drownings that can distract the reader from the essential main point: “The physical environment could change easily, but the social use of the river, settled into familiar spaces, was slow to adapt” (p. 124).

Chapter 5 contrasts the Don River with the Humber River, which became a place of aquatic promenade and courtship for the middle class and in which the Don’s bathing working-class masculinity was perceived as a social threat. Barbour describes the practice of canoeing and analyzes its propensity to "romanticize nature" (p. 145). He points out the Torontonians' effort to embrace the City Beautiful movement by creating the Humber
Boulevard, which enabled cars to alter the river environment. The author skillfully uses the City Beautiful movement to analyze the contrasts between the Don and the Humber Rivers: " Vernacular bathing had been able to survive in the degraded nature of the Don, but it had no place in the ordered environment that City Beautiful advocates envisioned in the Humber" (p. 158). The naked body did not belong and was removed from the Humber public space. In chapters 4 and 5, Barbour raises questions of identity formation that would benefit from a more in-depth reflection.

The last chapter focuses on Sunnyside and its Bathing Pavilion in the early twentieth century to show how the beach could monetize "the mixed-gender experience of bathing" (p. 20). Barbour underlines the "carnivalesque" quality of the beach as a space where everyday-life rules were temporarily overturned while the Toronto Harbour Commission was setting up expectations. A lifesaving system was set in place in which lifeguards became the authority. This chapter also explores the evolution of the bathing suit and the acceptability of showing more skin. However, Barbour explains that skin colors did not necessarily mix, and ethnic communities "created and were pushed into distinctive neighbourhoods and spaces of their own" (p. 209).

The epilogue focuses on modern-day Hanlan's Point to show "how rules and social expectations at a beach can be used to manage nude bodies and how those rules continue to be circumvented and challenged" (p. 219). Barbour reviews the site's gay and queer history along with the creation of a nude beach to demonstrate that beach-goers self-regulated themselves. The epilogue bridges the gap with contemporary issues.

In the book's strong introduction, the author sets his claims against the arguments of some scholars, like historians Jennifer Bonnell and Alain Corbins, to show the relevance of his contribution. While this approach is engaging and promising, the book's main body would have benefited from a more consistent integration of these theories and materials. Instead, Barbour punctually relies on the theoretical tools of a few significant thinkers, like Foucault, to examine how bathing was managed and how people responded. Thus, he initiates but does not fully mature the debate on identity in the Torontonian bathing spaces.

Most evidence is drawn from Toronto's newspaper archives, including the Globe, extensively cited, and Toronto Harbour Commission's reports. The valuable and fascinating primary sources help readers unfamiliar with Toronto's geography understand the topic and dynamics at play in Barbour's book.

The bibliography is well organized, but the book would become more appealing to a broader range of disciplines if it included more comprehensive literature on the concepts of beach, body, and identity. Sport sociology offers a wealth of perspectives on the relationship between the body (in its multiple definitions) and the environment. Such reflection is touched upon in the book but not fully developed.

The book convincingly challenges historians like Bonnell, who claim that industrialization and pollution made the Don River a marginal space. As announced in his introduction, Barbour shows that uneven development preserved vernacular bathing. He shifts away from an approach that starts the history of bathing after the adoption of the bathing suit and includes vernacular bathing in the history of bathing that he sets in the Reform Era (1890-1920), offering a new perspective on this popular practice.

It should be noted that this book is a history of Toronto's bathing activity with references to other humanities disciplines, but readers from social sciences might notice some absences in the question of identity's treatment. In the introduction, Barbour announces that we "will see how identity formation" occurs, but he does not cite any foundational texts to discuss and analyze the concept of
identity formation, which is debated in social sciences. The author claims that vernacular bathing is a component of identity formation in resistance (p. 12), but the claim needs unpacking throughout the text.

Thus, even though the book will interest students and scholars in gender studies, cultural studies, and urban geography, it could create more bridges between its specific topic and other disciplines by further considering questions of belonging, identity formation, and authenticity it substantially employs to support its argument. Since the book's aim is also to challenge assumptions about the naked body, readers might wish to read more about what the naked body meant and means, which schools of thought were relied on to address those questions, what the controversial notions of authenticity and nostalgia entailed, and what those identities in formation amounted to.

The book is a remarkable historical piece but, in that way, lacks the interdisciplinary depth that scholars from social sciences might be looking for. I had to fill in the gaps to answer identity-related questions, as the author directs the readers to endnotes but does not develop his own perspective on those issues.

In sum, despite the superficial treatment of the question of identity and some lengthy descriptions, Barbour's narrative is an essential addition to Toronto's history, leisure studies, cultural geography, and gender studies. This book goes well beyond the scope of the history of bathing in Toronto, particularly with the author's attention to women's and gender studies through the Reform Era.

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