

provide a focus on the vehicles themselves, yet the author argues that automobilism is about much more than cars. Moreover, the book also does not encompass everything that could be said about automobilism: some important motor vehicles and themes are missing, such as the motorcycle and the development of French roads which since the 1950s have been crucial for promoting the wine industry to tourists.

To sum up, this book is a solid historical work based on a wide range of source materials and is mainly iconographic (around three images by page). It shows clearly and concisely how French society was transformed by the motor vehicle during the *Thirty Glorious*, and can be read by specialists of mobility or not. Finally, it allows readers to understand the place of automobilism in French society and to consider the context of the third automobile revolution that we can see today in France.

Carlton Reid, *Bike Boom: The Unexpected Resurgence of Cycling* (London, Island Press, 2017); 246 pp., US\$60, ISBN 978-1610918169.

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Bike Boom is the second volume of Carlton Reid's trilogy about the history of cycling in the United Kingdom and the United States. Whilst the first volume, *Roads Were Not Built For Cars* (2015), deals with the pioneering role of bicyclists in the early development of modern traffic infrastructures, *Bike Boom* focuses on everyday bicycle usage in the twentieth century. The title is ironic: Reid demystifies the various widely discussed bike booms of the past, including the more recent 'bicycling renaissance'. It turns out that these positive stories largely pertain to fleeting fashions and media hype, rather than there being real increases in the extent of cycling, which in the UK and the US have in fact dropped to the lowest level in the Western World, despite a recent upsurge of pedalling in gentrified urban centres. Reid's matter-of-fact approach is refreshing, all the more so because he questions the strong belief among cycling advocates and planners that the building of adequate infrastructure will automatically put 'more bums on saddles' (p.156). Such a causal link may apply to motoring, but not to pedalling, certainly in countries with low biking levels. In the US and the UK, there are many more barriers to cycling than the lack of convenient and safe spaces and facilities. For this reason, Reid's message is that the promotion of cycling requires an understanding of more elusive political, social, cultural and psychological factors, which have evolved across time and cannot be changed in the short run through policymaking.

Reid clarifies his point convincingly by including a full chapter on the Netherlands, and by contrasting Dutch cycling practices and policies with those in the English-speaking world. The reason cycling in the UK and US has fallen way behind the Netherlands is tied to two tendencies, which in the course of the twentieth century mutually reinforced each other: transport policies that

overwhelmingly favoured motoring in the UK and the US, and the ensuing negative imagery of, and attitudes toward the bicycle amongst the general population. Whereas around 1900 this vehicle had been embraced by the well-off as a signifier of liberating modernity and conspicuous consumption, in the following three decades, the masses embraced it as a daily transport mode. The downgrading of cycling as proletarian and inferior enabled politicians and traffic planners to marginalize it, even though cyclists still far outnumbered drivers. From the 1930s on, and in particular in the 1950s and 1960s, US and UK governments and experts prioritized infrastructure for motoring. Cycling was dismissed as archaic, inefficient and dangerous, and in the postwar period, it was also associated with scarcity and exigency, whereas motoring epitomized progress and affluence. More and more, pedalling was viewed as merely recreation, sport or children's play – activities not belonging on regular roads designed for fast flows of traffic. Apart from some local exceptions, efforts to provide cycling infrastructures were incoherent and disputed. Such facilities, mostly for recreation rather than daily travel, were generally inadequate because of their poor quality and incompleteness. Even in the few American and British towns that did put in provision for cyclists, significant and lasting growth of cycling failed to occur. Moreover, the infrastructure built recently in some cities is mainly geared to a minority of dedicated and gentrified cyclists: typically young, male, middle-class and white.

Irrespective of the availability of either good or bad cycling provision, Reid argues that today most British and Americans refrain from cycling as a means of transport because of particular culturally entrenched attitudes and presuppositions. Cycling is not only considered strenuous, uncomfortable and dangerous, but there is also a widespread feeling that pedalling is abnormal and even weird, and affects social status. Cyclists are often viewed as a breed apart, either as poor wretches without a car or as sporty and daring young men, privileged yuppies or alternative hipsters. This also explains why cycling promotion will hardly make a difference as long as cars continue to be prioritized and well facilitated. A structural restriction of motoring is not an option for governments that do not want to antagonize the majority of their citizens who are used to driving. Traffic policies tend to follow the established patterns of mobility rather than providing feasible alternatives.

Dutch cycling levels are the highest in the Western world. Reid emphasizes that this cannot be explained by the pervasive and well-designed bicycle infrastructure in the Netherlands, as such. The material facilities are not so much the cause but rather the effect of political, economic, social and cultural factors that in the course of the twentieth century have encouraged cycling to become normalized among the Dutch. Reid refers to several factors: the image of the bicycle as a convenient means of transport for all ranks and file; its association with Calvinist and national virtues, such as soberness, simplicity, practicality and egalitarianism; the consensus-based nature of Dutch democracy in which the needs of different groups are catered for; the careful planning of infrastructure as part of the design of the landscape and densely built environment, which is fundamental for water

management; the success of leftist anti-car activism in the 1970s and car-restricting policies in Dutch town-centres; and the absence of a substantial domestic car industry.

Although Reid's account of the bicycling history in the Netherlands as a stark contrast with its development in the US and the UK is useful, his argument largely focuses on the recent development of cycling infrastructure. An analysis of Dutch cycling history in earlier periods, as covered for example in Anne-Katrin Ebert's seminal study *Radelnde Nationen* (2010), might have strengthened his account in this respect. Also, his optimism about the possibility that the UK and the US will follow the Dutch example seems tenuous at best, especially given enduring and pervasive sociocultural and political barriers to cycling in these two countries. In fact, Reid's strong argument about these stumbling blocks is at odds with his optimism about the future for cycling in Britain and America, and thus this makes his conclusion contradictory.