

At the same time, the author has relied upon historical literature now several decades old, overlooking recent publications which might have provided a more intricate analysis of the political, social, and economic undercurrents of Canadian immigration policy: Angus McLaren's *Our Own Master Race: the Eugenics Movement in Canada, 1885-1945* (1990), Mariana Valverde's *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (1991), or Reg Whitaker's *Double Standard: the Secret History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (1987), among others.

Strangers at Our Gates, then, is a good effort, but also something of a lost opportunity, offering few new insights into the nature of Canadian nativism, immigration policy, nationalism, or the immigration experience itself. In all fairness, however, it was never intended as a landmark of Canadian history. And given immigration's vital significance to all aspects of the country's development, Knowles will not have the last word on the subject.

Recent historiographic imperatives, in fact, may have improved the odds of seeing subsequent multi-century studies of Canadian immigration history. Historian Michael Bliss has lamented that recent historical research often appears arcane to readers other than the professional historian, and of limited relevance to those seeking a context in which to contemplate current political affairs ("Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 26, 4, Winter 1991-92, pp. 5-17). According to this argument, there must be a return to that lost praxis, which characterized several preceding generations of Canadian historians, of explaining the nature of the country via broad, interpretive treatises, potentially spanning the course of several centuries.

When and if another historian ventures into that grand terrain which Knowles has attempted to cover, who knows? — such a publication may well be the very catalyst which, according to some, is needed to rescue Canadian historical writing from its current malaise.

Dorothy Moore and James H. Morrison, eds., *Work, Ethnicity, and Oral History*. Halifax: International Education Centre, 1988, pp. xii + 242.

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This engaging book contains the edited proceedings of a conference that took place in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, in October 1986. It was organized by

the Society for the Study of Ethnicity in Nova Scotia, the Atlantic Oral History Association, and the Canadian Oral History Association. The guiding theme for the conference, and subsequently for this volume, was to examine three aspects of social history — labour, gender, ethnicity — “under the all inclusive methodology of oral history.” The sheer range of topics dealt with powerfully demonstrates the value of oral history as a research tool, and as an important way of humanizing the past. The editors, Dorothy Moore (social work, Dalhousie University) and James Morrison (history, Saint Mary’s University), deserve a great deal of credit for pulling all the diverse material together into a most readable account. Their introduction lays out in a very helpful way the book’s eight parts and provides an overview summary of the various chapters (there are 27 in all, many quite short) listed under each part.

The first four chapters deal with the social and cultural history of Blacks in Nova Scotia. As Sylvia Hamilton points out in her introduction to this section, much of the research done to date on Blacks in Nova Scotia “was neither controlled by the community, nor was there much exchange or discussion during the research process between the researcher and the subjects.” These papers represent Black researchers recapturing their own historical research and defining it in their own way. From this perspective, for example, the oral accounts of poets, musicians, and church and community leaders, are no longer seen as non-traditional sources for historical reconstruction. Kimberley Bernard Morris’s paper, “The Symbolic Influence of Music and Poetry on Black Women” examines the content and symbolism of material from the group Four the Moment, an a cappella singing group and the work of black poet Maxine Tynes. The chapter gives us a wonderful glimpse of a deep cultural heritage wrought by Black women artists out of struggle and pain; it concludes with a poem by Maxine Tynes, “The Profile of Africa” which, as she says, “tells everybody exactly who I am.”

The next series of chapters deals with “Ethnicity and Life Chances in Nova Scotia.” There is some very evocative writing here such as the opening to Marie Battiste’s chapter, “Different Worlds of Work: The Mi’kmaq Experience.” Battiste, who is the Education Director/Principal on her home reserve of Chapel Island in Unama’kik, and Co-Chair of Native Studies at St. Thomas University in Fredericton writes:

From the great wooden crosses that overlook Eskasoni to the Boisdale Hills, the crossroads of Mi’kmaq life is laid open to view. Directly below is a sprawling community of small centralization-era houses; a rusting oyster farm that the federal government built and abandoned when it became competitive with white business; and the beginning of the major road that twists through the reserve — “Welfare Road” it is called by many, because it was paved in 1960 to allow Sydney businesses to capture the federal welfare dollars to the reserve.

Another section of the book looks in detail at the historical intersection of work and gender and we are reminded that "ethnic marginality is gender-structured." Here too careful attention is paid to regional/local research and the role of women in sustaining a domestic economy is highlighted. In their chapter, "Work and Gender in a Scottish Community on Cape Breton Island", Pieter J. de Vries and Georgina MacNab-de Vries make the telling argument that gender roles and gender relations "derive their definition from the adaptive strategies of those relegated to the margin of industrial capitalism." Like so much of this volume their insightful discussion begins to pry open the past and unmask the deep seated oppressive historical forces that have so destructively shaped Canadian society.

Another whole section discusses documentary and oral sources for labour, ethnic and community history. There is a fine account of the Black Historical and Educational Research Organization (HERO) project, which in the early 1970s assembled interviews with 270 Black people over the age of 65. The interviews were carried out by Black students at Dalhousie University and gave them a unique opportunity to learn about their own history. What emerged as the several hundred interviews came together was a picture of a past 'Black unity' where there was a true sense of community and where the "kind of Black humanistic philosophy" practised in the past holds out a shining hope for future liberation. A chapter on the Public Archives of Nova Scotia provides all kinds of leads, both documentary and oral sources, for further inquiry into ethnicity, gender and class.

Other sections and chapters move away from Atlantic Canada, and explore the Mormon question in Alberta, the festivals and folklore of Hindus in Canada, the experience of Macedonian workers in Toronto and Polish veterans toiling as farm labourers. A number of authors probe the religious experience in ethnic communities, while others explore themes of the culture of work and how the rural/urban divide affects work patterns. Throughout it is the voice of the people that so often speaks with resonance and depth. This book is 'common social history' in the making.

At several points coal mining is investigated and Lynne Bowen, a freelance writer and historian from Nanaimo, expands our usual definition of oral history as she looks at the coal miner on nineteenth-century Vancouver Island. Her broadened definition includes letters, diaries, and testimony at trials, royal commissions, and inquests. As she tells us, "these sources can contain wonderful colloquial renderings of events just recently passed." Her expanded definition gives her access to the past lives of the substantial number of Italian and Chinese miners who laboured in the mines of 19th century Vancouver Island. The book's last chapter is entitled, "Songs of the Workplace: Coal Miners" and reflects the final conference session, an evening of song and story at the Glace Bay Miners Museum. In the

1920s many coal miners joined the Communist Party of Canada in one final attempt to obtain decent wages and working conditions. "Arise Ye Nova Scotia Slaves" was a call to arms for miners and sung again at the closing of the conference. Its first two verses indicate the power and authority of working-class songs:

It is time for the coal miners to rise up on their feet
And crush the opposition wherever they will meet.
Too long the capitalist party has kept the miners down,
With their mansions full and plenty — on the miners they do frown.
Through years past the coal companies have trodden down the poor
But now comes the crisis — the miners' votes galore;
The capitalists do shudder, they now must turn aside,
To the miners' class in power, and may we ever abide.

This is a most unusual volume and one that can be returned to again and again for fresh insights and inspiration. The only thing better than reading the book would have been to be there in the fall of 1986, and to have gone on the organized tours, participated in the closing night concert, and the many late evening discussions. Fortunately the editors have preserved it for us and there are moments in reading the accounts when something of the original experience lives again.
