

En conclusion à ce livre, Gross Solomon et Hutchinson suggèrent plusieurs pistes de recherche : la personnalité et les objectifs des architectes de la réforme médicale, les structures organisationnelles élaborées à différents paliers d'administration, les relations entre les médecins et le régime soviétique, le maintien de la pratique médicale privée, l'enseignement de la médecine, la rapide féminisation de la profession dans les années 1920 et les patients-bénéficiaires des soins médicaux. L'agenda est impressionnant, mais la variété et la qualité d'ensemble des essais présentés dans ce livre laissent croire que le travail est déjà très bien engagé.

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Mariana Valverde — *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991. Pp. 205.

Another slim volume in the Canadian Social History Series, Mariana Valverde's work certainly challenges preconceptions. Telling us in her preface that "history as a discipline is in a methodological crisis," she argues that social theory is also in crisis. This work is her contribution to the ongoing debate between historical materialists and those who see the usefulness of examining the "role of discourses, symbolic systems, images and texts in actively organizing both social relations and people's feelings." This, then, is a work operating at two levels: an account of moral reform in English Canada, it also attempts to demonstrate the effectiveness of discourse analysis and "some tools from literary theory."

Ms. Valverde interprets "discourse" not as "language separate from the real world", but rather as "organized sets of signifying practices that often cross the nineteenth-century boundary between reality and language." Material things such as badges, or clothes, or church buildings function as signs at one level, but also compose a "material substratum" made up of real bricks or textiles. In this fashion, she intends to avoid the obvious unsubtle dichotomy between idealism and materialism.

How well does all of this work? Quite well indeed in many cases. Ms. Valverde's use of discourse analysis provides historians with a timely caution against the use of single theme explanations of events that employ exclusive or mechanical concepts such as race, class, gender, or even economy. On the negative side, the language of such analysis must, of necessity, be cumbersome because it is breaking new ground.

A most melodramatic and successful illustration of Ms. Valverde's technique may be seen in her treatment of the white slavery panic. It was believed, in the late nineteenth century, that thousands of respectable young Anglo-Saxon women across North America were lured away by despicable foreigners (beware those who live near the Mediterranean) and forced to spend the rest of their lives in brothels. Though no solid evidence was ever found to substantiate this strange belief, it was widely accepted by a varied constituency. This, of course, is the point. The imagined but explicit and lurid accounts of such incidents were framed in a way as to appeal to different groups organizing their own institutions and seeking to cross the lines of gender, race and class. Such tales reflected, for example, the fears of Anglo-Saxon

parents whose daughters were leaving the control of the home for the more autonomous position of “working girls” in the cities. The “rescue” of single women from such a fate also played into current middle-class male notions of chivalry. Finally, the idea that all single young women were at risk once outside the home satisfied a variety of police, municipal and philanthropic organizations concerned with either their own empire building or the constitution of society into separate categories of “respectable” and “vice ridden”. Thus, many groups would combine in their propagation of this myth as they combatted a non-existent “social evil” and furthered their own ends.

Less convincing, perhaps, is a chapter entitled “Work of Allegories” where the author deals with “the symbolic universe of social purity”. She tells us that the link between cleanliness and purity was actual as well as metaphorical. Thus, her deconstruction of a quotation from a sex hygiene book for young girls discovers three levels: a hidden sexual message, an obvious statement about cleanliness in the home, and an implicit declaration about the meaning of dishwashing:

The hot water represents truth, heated by Love. The soiled dishes represent myself, with my worn-out thoughts and desires. I plunge them in the loving truth and cleanse them thoroughly, then polish them with the towel of persistence...

The author here admits that “taking these texts as a whole, it becomes clear that symbolism is too simple a concept to capture the complexity and the practical effects of social purity metaphors.”

Nevertheless, we are given considerable insight into the minds of pre-1925 moral reformers. Ms. Valverde is correct in noting that their hopeful theology of sanitation, fresh rural air, sunlight, soap and moral virtue places them some distance from our present view of social welfare. She has also shown us that moral reform can be attributed to no single or simple motivation. Discourse analysis demonstrates that support can be found in many sources.

There is much here that will act as a corrective to traditional accounts of the period. For example, the notion that the Anglo-Saxon race was superior (partly because of its sexual restraint) was widely held by reformers such as J.S. Woodsworth, feminists and a great many others; not just a few bigots. Valverde shows that in addition to the oft discussed hierarchy in which Anglo-Saxons stood above “foreigners”, the Japanese and Chinese were viewed as having once been civilized, but having later collapsed into degeneracy. Less obvious, too, is her conclusion that lower-class or slum English people from English cities were as much of a threat to Canadian social virtue as the depraved foreigner.

Contrary to current popular belief, many crusaders for moral purity were not repressed, anti-sex spinsters. Rather, they felt that sexual ignorance was the worst possible state and would lead directly to vice. Knowledge and the right moral context could lead to a rewarding sex life and thus to greater happiness.

The most terrible social evil in the eyes of reformers appears to have been incest which they supposed occurred only because of cramped or overcrowded conditions. Moral virtue required a single bed for single people. Large families in small two-room houses were suspect. Real virtue required a large middle-class house.

Finally, we are shown the complex relationship between the state and private or church-run philanthropic organizations. There appears to have been no simple pattern

of evolution. The state often funded the private charity which, then, acted with the power and authority of the state. Chapters on the work of the Salvation Army and the eccentric career of the Methodist Alice Chown indicate the flexible and changing boundaries between private philanthropy and the state. A modern and scientific approach to the problems of social welfare developed only in erratic fashion. However, the first sociology courses at the university level were taught in church colleges such as the Methodist Wesley College in Winnipeg (1906) and in the Methodist Victoria College in Toronto. Clergymen participated in the early struggles of this new discipline and often saw their task as one of leading the unfortunate from the vice ridden Babylon of the inner city slum to the clean and sanitized heights of the New Jerusalem. The old imagery died slowly.

This is an interesting and useful volume. It challenges the exclusive emphasis of Marxist historical studies on material conditions and it rejects the older generations innocent acceptance of the Social Gospel message. This is not any easy book for the general reader, but it does deliver a fruitful reinterpretation of an important area of Canadian cultural history.

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Serge Wagner, collab. Pierre Grenier — *Analphabétisme de minorité et alphabétisation d'affirmation nationale. À propos de l'Ontario français*, vol. 1 : Synthèse théorique et historique. Toronto : Ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, 1991, 506 p.

Dans ce premier de deux volumes que l'auteur propose de soumettre sur la question, Serge Wagner réalise une synthèse générale sur l'analphabétisme et l'alphabétisation en Ontario français. De son propre aveu, c'est là un essai engagé qui adopte une perspective franco-ontarienne, puisqu'il tente de comprendre le problème de l'intérieur. Dans un premier temps, l'auteur pose que l'analphabétisme en Ontario français est provoqué « par l'infériorisation et la subordination globale, économique, politique et culturelle du groupe minoritaire au sein de la nation majoritaire où il vit » (12) et, dans un deuxième temps, que le remède à un tel état de fait consiste en une « alphabétisation d'affirmation personnelle, communautaire et nationale » (70).

S'il existe une sociologie des groupes ethniques et minoritaires, il n'existe pas, cependant, de théorie pour rendre compte de « l'analphabétisme de minorité ». L'originalité de l'œuvre réside justement dans le fait que l'auteur en développe une à partir de l'expérience des Franco-Ontariens. C'est d'ailleurs ce qu'il élabore au premier chapitre.

Les Franco-Ontariens vivent doublement leur état de minorité : d'abord parce que noyés dans une majorité étrangère et dominante et aussi parce que coupés du groupe ethnique principal dont ils sont issus. Ils forment, en effet, une minorité culturelle et linguistique, une « minorité nationale établie » par son appartenance à la société canadienne-française; mais ils forment également une minorité dépendante et inférieure au sens politique en plus d'avoir subi, depuis trois décennies, une transformation profonde liée aux bouleversements constitutionnels du pays.