

superiority in American colonization relies heavily on the work of Bernard Bailyn and Charles Carroll, while the story of the eclipse of the Dutch follows closely the work of Thomas Condon and Van Cleef Bachman. As for French colonization it is somewhat disconcerting to see the use of citations from the late 17th and even 18th centuries to illustrate colonial life before 1664.

Finally, the author considers the rebirth of European societies in America but now ignores the dictum given at the beginning of his work to the effect that the Amerindians were a dynamic element in the transplantation process. A number of basic observations undermine any possibility of sustaining a Utopian or Turnerian interpretation of the colonization process. Land was assigned according to social status; skilled labour was scarce but slaves and engagés were introduced, New France remained tied to the fur trade and subsistence agriculture while the Dutch and English diversified their activities. This seemed to indicate that the North American colonies might some day pass to the level of the semi-periphery. Of course, there is always the question of scale, for New France had only 3,000 inhabitants by 1660 whereas the Dutch had twice as many Europeans settlers and the English eleven times as many. An element which receives surprisingly little attention, although it was four or five times more remunerative than the fur trade for France, is the fishery.

Le Pays Renversé is a well written, tightly argued comparative colonial history which never departs from its central theme. So reflective and provocative an interpretation deserves wide circulation and demands an immediate English version to which we recommend the addition of an index and detailed maps of the English, French and Dutch colonies in North America.

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Charlotte Fuhrer — *The Mysteries of Montreal: Memoirs of a Midwife*. Ed. by W. Peter Ward. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984. Pp. 170.

Canadian booksellers in recent years have been employing a new marketing technique: they target the summer readership with certain titles in the belief that thrillers, romances and mysteries have a special affinity with beach tar, frisbees and ghetto-blasters. There finally is a book for historians too guilt-ridden or status-conscious to take Harlequins to the seashore — *The Mysteries of Montreal*.

It must be pointed out emphatically that the above does not apply to Peter Ward's excellent introduction. He details childbirth practices in early Canada and offers rare personal accounts of familial reactions to the birthing process, and it is hoped that this anticipates a larger study of Canadian midwifery. It is simply that the introduction far out-classes the rest of the book.

Out of respect for the publisher and the editor, the reader looks to pinpoint relevant artifacts in midwife Charlotte Fuhrer's stories — which, unfortunately do not include any reference to her actual midwifery, in obvious deference to Victorian middle-class respectability. There is the tidbit in "The Frail Shop Girl" about the physical hardships suffered by Montreal salesclerks (which one would suspect was mentioned to give a topical flavour to the story). There is Fuhrer's adventure "Among the Fenians" in which she attends a mysterious stranger amid a deadly arsenal. There is the gothic "The Two Orphans" in which a desperate widower, blackmailed by his vindictive sister-in-law, engineers her committal to an insane asylum — a favourite theme in contemporary yellow journalism following the publication of Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*.

Fuhrer was not a social commentator; she should be seen within the context of popular women's fiction of the last century. While comparison with "Austen and Eliot, Flaubert and Fontaine" (p. 25) is stretching the point, Fuhrer could hold her own among Lydia Sigourney, Sara Payson Willis (Fanny Fern) and Susan Warner: Nathaniel Hawthorne's detested "scribbling women" whose

work far outsold his own. That Fuhrer did in fact model her stories after the popular domestic novelists is apparent in scenes which mirror those in the best-sellers.

In North American Victorian society, one event that attracted the horrified fascination of the public was a steamboat explosion which caused great numbers of deaths by scalding and drowning. Newspaper articles graphically detailed the tragedies. Not surprisingly, steamboat accidents played pivotal roles in domestic novels. In Elizabeth Prentiss' *The Home at Greylock* (1876), such an accident was the device by which the matronly heroine met her demise. Her son-in-law, who attempted to save her from drowning, is firmly refused in an act of ultimate womanly submission to divine will:

Your mother's last movement was different; she clasped my hand, kissed me, then dropped it gently, or to express it more truly, laid it down, as she would something forever done with.

Compare this beatific scene with Fuhrer's description of the death of "A Disciple of Satan" who drowns while eloping with her equally dissolute lover who had grabbed the lone life preserver with no thought to her safety:

The expression of her face, lit up as it was by the blaze of the burning steamer, was terrible to behold: the veins in her head and neck were swollen almost to bursting, and she died cursing with bitter malediction the man for whom she had sacrificed not only herself, but her husband and her children.

According to Ward, Fuhrer "defended the conventional morality of Victorian Canada" (p. 21) but there is a paradox underlying this. A conventional Victorian moralist would not publish a "true" account of pre- and extra-marital sex, illegitimate births and prostitution, at least not in such an engaging and titillating style. In *Family Secrets and Domestic Subversions*, Elaine Showalter noted that many Victorian female novelists were emphasizing not conventional morality but the freedom and excitement their anti-heroines experienced. Alongside the standard cautionary conclusion, such as the drowning of "Satan's Disciple", was the implicit lesson that contravention of the repressive aspects of Victorian life could be exhilarating and rewarding; the eloping lover had in fact acquired three husbands, a pair of lovers and a great fortune to be squandered freely before choosing to murder (and die beside) her treacherous lover.

It would be a few years before young women would take as their anthem Dorothy Parker's "My candle burns at both ends — it will not last the night ..." Charlotte Fuhrer's tainted ladies burned their candles at both ends for which she bestows upon them her unconscious admiration. Perhaps this is why *Mysteries of Montreal* was privately published.

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Clare Gittings — *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*. London: Croom Helm, 1984.

Clare Gittings argues in this study that the early modern period formed a "watershed" in the history of English attitudes to death and burial. It was, she says, a period of anxiety that saw the transition between the elaborate, communal funerals of the later Middle Ages and the individualistic, modern rites that isolated the bereaved from a wider community and sharply differentiated life from death. By individualism Ms Gittings means the sense of uniqueness society attaches to individual human beings as distinct from their membership in a community or social group, such that the death of a person signifies the loss of an irreplaceable being. It is this view, Ms Gittings contends, that has caused death to become "the great taboo subject of...the western world in the late twentieth century" (p. 7). As examples of rising individualism in early modern funerary practices she cites the preaching of funeral sermons, the increasing number of tombs and monuments to the dead, changing patterns