

ter Backhouse states that the classification of Inuit is still a subject of debate “today” (p. 51). This ordering of the cases limits possible discussion of the evolution of the concept of race. The author is rightly aware that definitions change over time, and it would be useful to see how concepts of race classification were used, contested, and altered in different contexts and situations, particularly as earlier concepts of race classification were being challenged in the mid-1930s by anthropologists outside Canada such as Franz Boas. That the Supreme Court case on the status of the Inuit occurred in the late 1930s is of interest precisely because it revealed how racial classification could be viewed as valid by lawyers and experts on the eve of the Second World War. Backhouse’s statement that the classification of the Inuit remains a subject of debate is even more curious given that such classification is no longer considered a legitimate area of scientific study.

In addition, it is unfortunate that there is little discussion of racism in Quebec in this book. This omission is particularly evident for the Inuit case, since it pertained to the Inuit in Quebec. This chapter includes a section on the legal definition of Indians in federal statutes, provincial legislation, and the courts, but the extensive list of examples refers almost exclusively to other provinces. Most of the material from Quebec is a description of the brief presented on behalf of the Quebec government, but there is little on the province’s history of relations with the Inuit or other aboriginal peoples. In the other case studies, while there are frequent examples from other provinces, references to Quebec are the exception.

Despite these limitations, this is a useful and interesting book. Each case is presented in a very readable manner, and the work is clearly the product of extensive research. About one-third of the book is made up of footnotes, and readers are often referred to the publisher’s web site, where even more research material is available to those with access to computer technology.

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Rainer K. Baehre, ed. — *Outrageous Seas: Shipwreck and Survival in the Waters off Newfoundland, 1583–1893*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press for Carleton University, 1999. Pp.392.

“The Sea is made of mothers’ tears” is a proverb once frequently quoted in Newfoundland. A substantial body of literature explains why Newfoundlanders felt that way. Works including Kenneth Peacock’s *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, Gerald S. Doyle’s various editions of *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*, and *Haulin’ Rope and Gaff*, edited by Shannon Ryan and Larry Small, establish the widespread currency of folk memories of danger and disaster on a hostile ocean. Anthologies like those by Garry Cranford and Ed Janes (*From Cod to Crab*) and Cassie Brown (*The Caribou Disaster and Other Stories*) recount sad tales of heroism, suffering, love of family, and a divine presence in the face of disaster on the frigid North Atlantic. Brown’s gripping account of the sinking of the *S.S. Florizel*,

entitled “A Winter’s Tale”, describes one exceptionally dramatic loss in a thorough and affecting way. The number of lives lost on the *Florizel* was unusual, but not the fate of the vessel. Cranford and Raymond Hillier, in *Pothead and Drum Hoops*, present a list of 69 ships built in the small community of New Harbour, Trinity Bay, between 1804 and 1935. Twenty-six were lost at sea. In adding his particular selection of narratives to these resources, Rainer K. Baehre seeks to add to our grasp of “the deep cultural imprint” (p. 1) that the sea made on Newfoundland and Labrador and to enrich this understanding with its historical and intellectual context.

Seventeen stories cover a broad spectrum of marine history in Newfoundland’s coastal waters. Each has a prologue in which Baehre establishes the historical setting and cues the reader to its key interpretive elements. Beginning in 1583 with an account of one of Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s captains who, in obeying an ill-advised command of his superior, brought his ship and most of its crew to destruction on Sable Island, the chronicles end in 1893 with the wreck of *Corisande*, the first ship on which the famous Captain Bob Bartlett served. Most of the disasters took place in the nineteenth century, particularly between 1820 and 1840, and included the wrecks of ships engaged in all kinds of seafaring activities, from passenger travel to cargo transport and naval operations. The ships were usually British, although two stories involve French vessels and one an American steamer. Three narratives focus on landmen confronting the rage of the sea.

None of the narratives can be considered unexceptional, but several stand out as examples of extreme duress. The *Frances Spaight*, a timber ship which was demasted and swamped in 1836, was the scene of murder and cannibalism. The report by John Palmer, one of only eleven survivors, was graphic and filled with remorse and counsel that those enjoying some comfort in life should not risk it for adventure, as he had done. Interestingly, there is no indication that the survivors were ostracized or threatened with legal proceedings arising from their murderous acts. The account of the sinking of the *Anne* in 1704 by Henry Treby is perhaps the most effective in portraying the feelings of resolve, resignation, and terror faced by sailors adrift in a life boat as they struggled to remain alive and to reach land. The loss of the *Arctic* in 1854 showed the consequences of less honourable traits. In this case, many of the crew abandoned their stations and left passengers, including many women and children, to their fates. Not all danger came from the sea. Neil Dewar avoided death after the loss of the *Rebecca* in 1816 only to face further privations in the cold and desolation of the Labrador coast. He alone lived to tell the tale, although crippled from the amputation of his hands and feet. Loss of gangrenous limbs resulting from exposure to the bitter elements of the North Atlantic was one of many risks faced by castaways in those waters.

Beyond the stories themselves, Baehre gives us a substantial and carefully reasoned introduction. Here the editor establishes his claim that the narratives in his collection amount to more than just a good read. They were shaped by history and in turn have shaped history. They created in the popular mind a region in which danger lurked, and this impression in turn moulded the expectations of those who went there. Culturally, the narratives served to instruct readers in significant moral, spiritual, and psychological lessons. Writers stressed the interests and values then

socially current, so the language and interpretation of the stories reflect the times in which they were written as well as the events themselves.

For all that, these particular narratives are not so much expressions of the identity of Newfoundlanders as fragments of other world views articulated by transient witnesses. Aside from the experiences of Bob Bartlett and Jessie Hale, who lost a brother on the *Reason*, they mainly are part of a seafaring lore of outsiders who have added their experiences off Newfoundland to a wider body of popular wisdom. We gain considerable insight into the British (or French or American) mentality, some perceptions of Newfoundland, but only a little evidence of how the island's inhabitants responded to the sea.

Some description of the availability of the narratives in Newfoundland or their impact on local attitudes towards the sea would have been helpful, if the evidence permitted such analysis. Cassie Brown's *Death on the Ice* is an example of a chronicle that both recorded and shaped history. A powerful description of the disaster of the sealing ship *Newfoundland* in 1914, it significantly influenced public opinion in the province in the opening years of the anti-seal-hunt protests.

Ironically, the editor's exploitation of his sources for scholarly purposes sometimes gives rise to the kind of cultural marker that he seeks to elucidate in the texts. Readers are distanced at times from the subject matter when it is objectified as an "artifact" (pp. 14, 111, 310). He also occasionally appears to disparage the religious beliefs of his authors by, for example, interpreting one man's faith as "as a form of protection from depression and despair" (p. 191) or referring to the "presupposed divine intervention" (p. 110) of the Moravians in Labrador. A reading of the accounts indicates that profound belief was widespread and firmly held among mariners. Who is to say such faith was ill-founded?

Volumes of narratives, at their best, are distinguished by notes and commentaries that are as useful and interesting as the work they support. With some slight intrusions of personal bias and academic stiltedness, Baehre's work approaches this level. Nevertheless, the power of the volume remains with the narratives. They add not so much to our understanding of Newfoundland, however, as to our comprehension of the mariners who ventured into its perilous seas. Even that, for those who are interested, is a significant accomplishment.

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Kathryn Bernhardt — *Women and Property in China, 960–1949*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. viii, 236.

Lawsuits in late imperial and early modern China brought together three distinct but related phenomena: legal institutions, that is, the codified law; legal practice, the ways in which the judge tried to apply law to specific circumstances; and popular conceptualizations of law, the set of expectations that plaintiffs or accused brought with them to court. Since the codified law has always been the most accessible to