

## 176 Histoire sociale / Social History

permet à un nombre non négligeable de familles acadiennes d'échapper à la destitution — mais non à la pauvreté. Comme tous les mouvements de ce genre nés de dépression économique, celui-ci échoua à long terme, et la reprise économique vit le départ des colons vers les centres industriels. Le comportement des Acadiens est ici loin d'être unique.

Dans la troisième partie, Phyllis Leblanc et Nicole Lang tracent le portrait d'une Acadie urbaine et industrielle. Leblanc, étudiant la place des Acadiens dans la société et l'économie de Moncton, conclut que, dans la mesure du possible, ils participaient « de leur plein gré » aux transformations de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> et du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et ce malgré le discours des élites cléricales de l'époque. Le texte de Cyr et celui qui suit de Nicole Lang sur la papeterie Fraser et ses travailleurs de 1918 à 1946 nous incitent toutefois à nuancer « ce plein gré ». Les Acadiens n'avaient finalement pas beaucoup de choix : la pauvreté sur des fermes de pierres, le déménagement en ville, dans un milieu dominé par les anglophones, le travail industriel à des conditions dictées par le patron — lui aussi anglophone — ou l'exil.

L'impression d'ensemble que l'on retire de cet ouvrage est que les Acadiens participaient activement à la société et à l'économie qui prenaient forme autour d'eux et ont contribué à façonner cette transformation. Ils ne se tinrent pas délibérément à l'écart pour des raisons idéologiques ou culturelles, et certainement pas parce que c'était là un comportement dicté par une élite homogène et inféodée à l'église — puisqu'une telle élite n'existait pas. L'église elle-même était loin d'avoir l'influence qu'elle aurait souhaité. Les écarts de comportement entre les Acadiens et la population anglophone tenaient plus à des causes économiques hors de leur pouvoir, qu'à un parti-pris culturel.

Un ouvrage donc vraiment très utile, qui non seulement met à la disposition du public le fruit de recherches récentes, et complémente fort heureusement les publications en anglais, mais qui également renouvelle notre vision des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick, voire même de l'histoire de la province elle-même : plus moyen d'attribuer la pauvreté de la péninsule acadienne à des traits culturels mal définis dont auraient été affligés les Acadiens. Il ne reste plus qu'aux chercheurs à se pencher sur les Acadiens des autres provinces.

Béatrice Craig  
*Université d'Ottawa*

Robert A. J. McDonald — *Making Vancouver: Class, Status and Social Boundaries, 1863–1913*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996. Pp. xx, 316.

Robert A. J. McDonald paints a vivid picture of Vancouver's rapidly changing society and economy from the first days of white settlement, when small villages developed around sawmills on the shores of Burrard Inlet, through the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1887 and the emergence of Canada's leading western metropolis by 1913. He suggests Vancouver stood apart from contemporary North American cities by "the degree to which it retained elements of its 'frontier past' "

(p. xii) and that, as “a city being formed, not a city firmly established” (p. 53), its society was “open and fluid” (p. xii).

McDonald eschews as oversimplified both the British Columbia historiographical tradition of debating the relative importance of class and race and the “master theory approach”. Using a three-class model, he advances the historiography by adapting the Weberian idea of “status”, or “the criteria of mutual regard and prestige”, to examine social relationships and boundaries. This does not negate the importance of “class” but leads him to conclude that “perceptual and behavioural differences *within* classes were often as important to the way people lived their lives as differences *between* classes” (p. 237). Although class identities sharpened over time,

family, neighbourhood, associational life, and ethnicity, as well as a shared antipathy to elites at one end of the social spectrum and to the floating and “immigrant” population at the other, linked people of respectable but middling status in practical ways that softened, and at times made unimportant, the contradictions inherent in capitalism. (p. 199)

Vancouver had a distinct hierarchy of people, but McDonald contends that “the division between citizens and non-citizens constituted a boundary more definitive than the one separating capital from labour and more complicated than the one dividing Asians from Whites” (p. xx). He devotes considerable space to the elite and a little to the opposite extreme, and he pays special attention to the broad, “middling” class of small businessmen, lower-level managers, and some professionals of the middle class and the blue- and white-collar wage earners of the lower or working class (p. xvi) who, despite economic differences, shared a common British identity, expectations of upward mobility, and especially ideas of respectability (p. 189).

People at the very apex of the social and economic structure were most aware of class identities (p. xix). CPR executives, for example, supported “top businessmen” in defining “themselves as a social status elite” by helping to form high-status clubs and cultural organizations (p. 69). Men of less modest means with good educational and family backgrounds could “reassemble” the high social status they brought from their previous homes. As the city grew and prospered, men from lower-status backgrounds could become prosperous businessmen, thus reinforcing “popular faith in the idea of progress” and boosting “incurable optimism” of the pre-war speculative boom (p. 144). They did not necessarily enjoy high social status. Nor did they always retain their wealth; some members of the economic elite died broke.

Speculative fever crossed class lines. Some working people invested in real estate in the hope of making a profit or secured capital to start their own businesses and move into the middle class. Yet, McDonald concludes, for both groups “opportunity for social mobility was more myth than reality” (p. 146). Moreover, mobility was virtually impossible for “foreigners”. Such outsiders, including Asians, Italians, seasonal or migrant male workers, and the poor, were perceived to be “outside the realm of respectable men and women living in families” (p. 210).

*Making Vancouver* is incredibly well researched. McDonald has read widely in Canadian, American, and British social history and has been usefully informed by feminist theory. Moreover, he has fully plumbed the rich resources of the Vancouver City Archives, painstakingly perused the city's newspapers, and read its fiction — both booster literature and novels. He has exploited to great advantage routine records such as the census, company registrations, probates, corporate records, and private memoirs. Telling anecdotes and lively biographical sketches help make points. Descriptions of Dominion Day and Labour Day celebrations, for example, illustrate the class identity of the working and middle classes and, as the city grew, the growing gap in social status between them and the “upper class” (p. 84).

The book is so well written, so generously illustrated with carefully chosen and placed photographs and maps, and so handsomely designed that it will appeal to a variety of readers. Within it are fine historical sketches of industries, businesses, trade unions, politics, cultural activities, and even, in a limited way, religious ties. Women were a minority and technically non-citizens, but McDonald shows how they participated in society and “shared the status, though not the power, of their husbands and fathers” (p. 88). His vignettes of pioneers give a very human touch, but the book's episodic nature leaves stories hanging. For example, the importance of CPR executives in the first decade is clearly delineated, but they disappear after the mid-1890s except as promoters of the prestigious Shaughnessy Heights subdivision.

More theoretically inclined readers will find material for comparisons with other cities. They may debate arguments that sometimes appear contradictory but illustrate the contention that “Vancouverites were people of multiple identities, and the relationship among those identities shifted in meaning and character according to the context of the time” (p. 174).

McDonald suggests Vancouver was unique. His arguments about social boundaries are persuasive for Vancouver, but might not similar relationships between class, status, and social boundaries appear in cities with comparable fluidity and homogeneity of the “middling classes”? Gordon Hak has observed such muted relationships in several smaller British Columbia centres; comparisons with larger cities elsewhere — Calgary is a possible example — might be instructive.

The conclusion hints that class had a different meaning in Vancouver in 1919 than in 1912. One hopes McDonald will pursue his explorations of the city's history and take on the formidable challenge of examining that change. By so doing, he would illuminate understanding of Vancouver's history, test his thesis against a larger, more complex city in which progress could no longer be taken for granted, and provide stimulating comparative material and a welcome sequel to an important contribution to studies of social relationships, urban history, and British Columbia.

Patricia E. Roy  
*University of Victoria*