
The broad outlines of the history of nineteenth-century Newfoundland and Labrador and the North Atlantic world, of which Kurt Korneski writes so well, are generally well known. What distinguishes Korneski’s book from the earlier historiography, which was essentially pre-occupied with constitutionalism and diplomacy, is his innovative approach, which effectively weaves many of the new approaches to the study of the past into a masterful analytical narrative. This book does not rely on a single interpretive framework but effectively marries the “new” diplomatic history with social and cultural history, “Britishness” and the new imperial history, borderlands history, and the history of state formation. And, underpinning Korneski’s interpretive framework is solid and impressive archival research in American, British, and Canadian archives, as well as a thorough reading of the existing historiography, with which Korneski engages admirably.

Korneski moves his analysis of Newfoundland and Labrador away from the capital region of St. John’s and the metropolitan centers of London and Paris to the contested borderlands between the British and French Empires in Newfoundland and Labrador, which are situated on the North Atlantic Coast. There, in such places as Fortune Bay, Hamilton Inlet, St. George’s Bay, and along the Great Northern Peninsula, Korneski describes instances of conflict, upheaval, and controversy, and explores how a shifting set of ecological circumstances and distinctive social relations combined to create a distinctive set of social relations that shaped the lives and opportunities of ordinary people. In the process, he asserts, a sense of place was forged, though that sense of place inevitably changed as different localities became contested places due to new upheavals and new conflicts. As Korneski’s five case studies demonstrate, the voices of St. John’s (and presumably other metropolitan centers) were important in Newfoundland and Labrador’s political and diplomatic history, but they were only “partial, a regionally specific voice in a larger conversation” (154). Korneski contends that conflict and upheaval in particular places throughout Newfoundland and Labrador led residents in those localities to embrace particular perspectives. The places people inhabited shaped their interests and their relationships with the colonial elites in St. John’s.

The Fortune Bay area of southern Newfoundland, for instance, was at the intersection of the British and French Empires. It was also an area where American as well as French fishers came to purchase bait, particularly herring, from local fishers. Later the Americans tried to secure herring with their own enormous seiners for their own use as bait and to sell to French fishers. Residents, worried about the threat to their traditional bait trade with French and American fishers and the potential ecological threat caused by the American seiners, seized and destroyed the gear. Such violent outbursts were part of the survival strategy of Fortune Bay residents: to relinquish the trade in bait was not in their economic interests. The colonial government in Newfoundland, on the other hand, saw the bait trade as a threat to the economic interest of the Avalon-based fish merchants and wanted it eliminated (70–72). Of course, the residents of Fortune Bay resisted all attempts of the state to ban the bait trade. When other regions of the country responded in similar ways to thwart the colonial government’s attempt to exploit the ocean-based resources, the largely St. John’s-based elites felt their control of the ocean-based trades was threatened and, together with the state, they then placed greater emphasis on the landward development as the best avenue to economic diversification and growth.

While Korneski’s embrace of a variety of literatures and approaches is one of the strengths of the book, it is also one of its limitations. Take, for instance, his attempt to describe the notion of “Britishness” and the rights of “free-born Englishmen” among some of the individuals and groups he discusses for Newfoundland (155). The development of this particular theme covers a variety of areas, including the economic elite’s objective of establishing political and judicial institutions that they believed befitted their positions in society, to the belief among adult males that they deserved a secure status as breadwinners befitting the patriarchal order that came with any notion of Britishness, and the construction of a transsural railway across the country, a sign of progress that any progressive British society would surely have. The discussions of Britishness seem contrived and forced at times. Yet this is a minor quibble and does not detract from the superb and ambitious scholarship and insight that Korneski brings to his subject. He has set a new standard in the study of nineteenth-century Newfoundland history.

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Emigration from Ukraine and changes in transnational Ukrainian communities across the globe could not be timelier subjects for historical inquiry. The annexation of Crimea, the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and the ongoing political and societal instability have reconfigured narratives surrounding the phenomenon of Ukrainian migration and the ways in which Ukrainian migrants organize themselves between places, both inside Ukraine and across international borders. Since 2014, new migration flows and systems have developed inside Ukraine (to Central and Western Ukraine), while international migrations to the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the Americas have also transformed. Thus there is much to learn from Ukraine’s longstanding emigration and diaspora history, as this well-organized and well-researched book illustratively shows.
The historical event of migration from and to numerous places and spaces in the years between World Wars I and II had a plethora of economic, social, and political implications for a large number of countries and people. Its significance and the related socioeconomic consequences are unquestioned. However, to discuss and better understand this complex event, one needs to focus on specific cases, and that is what Orest T. Martynowych has set out to do in Ukrainians in Canada: The Interwar Years, Book 1: Social Structure, Religious Institutions, and Mass Organizations. He focuses on the processes of emigration, social struggles, and the evolving organizational sophistication of Ukrainians in Canada during the interwar years (1918–1939).

From the beginning, the reader will be convinced by the author’s deep engagement in the subject matter. Martynowych starts out by describing how the new Ukrainian arrivals of the interwar period began to settle in Canada, but also how the situation in Ukraine has developed and how these developments—at times frustrating and depressing—have affected Ukrainians in both Ukraine and Canada. The failure to establish Ukraine as an independent state, the difficult economic conditions, and the expansionary intentions of the Soviet regime left many Ukrainians contemplating the idea of leaving the country. The author subliminally and carefully reflects on the aspirations of those who considered heading for Canada, where the Railway Agreement of 1925 promised work and a potential better future—indeed a “clever political ploy” on the part of the Canadian liberal government (4).

Martynowych meticulously discusses the growth of a Ukrainian transnational community spanning across the Atlantic. Even more interestingly, he analyzes how critical religious and political ties have divided the homeland but held the transnational community together. From the new Ukrainian arrivals’ struggle to climb the social ladder in Canada during the Great Depression, to the chaotic and scandalous frictions within the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the subsequent disputes between the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches, to the forming of associations and organizations of farmers, workers, and veterans, as well as the rise of political ideologies closely linked to movements in the “motherland,” the author manages to successfully intertwine these historical and social developments. Offering depth in his narrative, he does not fail to achieve the wide scope of the book that he promised to cover.

Not only does Martynowych enrich this narrative with fascinating details, but he manages to include a historical view on organizational sociology relevant to the situation of Ukrainians in Canada. He poignantly demonstrates the efforts it took to uphold religious and secular mass organizations, while at the same time he maintains a balanced focus on both immigrant elites and the “ordinary people” whom he uses to draw appropriate attention to the significant role of the history “from below.”

Martynowych must be congratulated for offering such a rich overview of the associations, organizations, and federations that have developed and actively generated Ukrainian history in a transnational space. My only criticism is that, in my view, the book is missing a chapter, or at least a critical commentary, on the implications of those years for Ukraine and Ukrainians today. Against this background and historical narrative, with such meticulously detailed research and such a rich platform of data, could we not learn from these lessons the author is discussing in regard, for example, to the conflict between political and ideological camps? A discussion of the author’s crucial consideration of uncritical progressiveness among supporters of Stalinism or Nazi Germany in relation to contemporary movements within Ukraine and in Ukrainian transnational spaces could have added a conclusive note and an appeal to future research.

No doubt this book is an essential read not only for advanced scholars in the field of Canadian and Ukrainian history, political science, and the sociology of migration and transnationalism, but also for advanced students in these fields. Martynowych successfully exemplifies with the case of Ukraine how the ramifications of national, international, and transnational political and organizational struggles have played out in a particularly crucial period in time and how they have determined not only the future of diaspora communities outside Ukraine, such as those in Canada, but also the future of Ukraine itself.

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Donald Worster’s Shrinking the Earth: The Rise and Decline of American Abundance begins with an intriguing literary analysis of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1925 classic The Great Gatsby, which is cast as an environmental lament. While Gatsby stares longingly across Long Island Sound at the green navigation light on the boat dock of his unattainable object of desire, Daisy Buchanan, Fitzgerald’s narrator, Nick Carraway, understands that green light as an allegorical representation of nature’s once infinite promise—the abundance of North America’s resources—which, by the early twentieth century, was already largely a thing of the past. Worster names Carraway’s insight the “theory of the green light” and employs it to frame his premise that Europeans’ discovery around 1500 A.D. of the continents of the Western Hemisphere “marked a watershed in human experience” (5). Access to the wealth of nature in the New World granted Europe reprieve from the ecological limits that were constraining the continent’s progress, and triggered revolutions in society, economy, politics, and culture. The resources of the New World changed material conditions, at first in the advanced nations but eventually throughout much of the world. By the twentieth century, however, the modern era of natural abundance was coming to an end, and neither science nor technological innovation would be able to restore the abundance that the world had enjoyed for the past five centuries.

Shrinking the Earth provides a far-ranging intellectual