

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.

Cheryl Krasnick Warsh
University of New Brunswick

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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

in the distribution of mourning clothes, and a growing unease over the physical decomposition of corpses. She is less clear, however, about *how* these developments manifested individualism; for example, although she cites the growing popularity of funeral sermons as evidence of this trend, she never undertakes a systematic study of their contents. The heart of her study is instead an examination of 3,096 probate accounts spanning the years 1580 to 1655 from the counties of Berkshire, Kent, Lincolnshire, and Somerset. These accounts frequently give itemized funeral expenses which executors paid out of the estate of the deceased. She supplements these sources with other early modern documents, printed books, and literary sources in which funerals are described.

Ms Gittings's interpretation of changing funeral practices in the period rests heavily upon an assumption derived from modern anthropological studies: that funerals had latent meanings or functions unknown to the participants but of which the modern historian is aware. This assumption leads her to distinguish sharply between the "religious" and "social" functions of funerals, with religion relegated to the status of an epiphenomenon. In the later Middle Ages, she contends, the elaborate and lengthy funeral rites of the Church, including masses and prayers for the dead long after the deceased had been interred, harmonized with social customs of eating, drinking and gift or alms giving. The significance of this harmony, she says, lays in the sharing of grief between the bereaved and a wider community and in representing death not as an abrupt end of life but as a transition to another state of being. With the elimination of the doctrine of Purgatory at the Reformation, however, the religious function of the funeral was powerfully de-emphasized and focused on the interment of the corpse, an act that had earlier been merely one stage in a more elaborate set of ceremonies. The Reformation did not, however, mark a sudden transformation in the "social" customs of funerals. She uses an analysis of funeral costs recorded in probate accounts between 1580 and 1655 to show, in effect, that although the liturgy of Christian burial was simplified after the Reformation the expense of funerals did not decline, but in fact rose in the four counties from which most of her research is drawn. This finding, she claims, is evidence that the "reforming zeal" of Protestant churchmen and Puritans for a simplified burial ceremony did not catch on among the wider population. Seventeenth-century executors, she shows, were often reluctant to forego the expense of feasting and laying out yards of black cloth in mourning, whatever the final wishes of the deceased. Taking her cue from anthropologists van Gennep, Turner, and Malinowski, Ms Gittings sees these practices as traditional rituals that reinforced social hierarchy and constituted a liminal period in which the relationships of the living to one another were restored after the disruption of death. Her stress on the social conservatism of seventeenth-century funerals is rather at odds with her contention that traditional attitudes to death were eroded by creeping individualism in the same period. The most convincing evidence she produces for the latter comes in her discussion of the rise of the undertaking profession, which spread through much of England in the eighteenth century. While she does not document eighteenth-century funerals in as much detail as earlier ones, she does present a plausible case that undertakers commercialized funerals in such a way as to divert expenditure from the "social" rituals of eating, drinking, and dispensing gifts and mourning, to the trapping and paraphernalia of the actual burial itself: fancy coffins, shrouds and pillows, and mourning attire worn by pallbearers. Undertakers were gradually able to dictate the form of these ceremonies in ways that would be to their financial advantage with pernicious social and psychological, as well as financial, consequences, especially to the poor and the middling sort.

Ms Gittings successfully demonstrates the gap between clerical prescription and popular practice over burial of the dead, and shows how the older funeral customs of feasting and giving gifts persisted well into the early modern period. Her book is also useful for the details it provides of funerals of people below the level of the aristocracy. On the other hand, Chapter 8, on the heraldic funerals of sixteenth-century peers, adds little to the points Lawrence Stone made on the same subject in *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*. There are some errors of fact: the third Earl of Essex could hardly be counted among the "major figures of the Interregnum" (pp. 230-31) if he was buried in October 1646; and the year of Mary Tudor's burial is incorrectly given as 1553 (p. 222). Her study is more seriously flawed in three related aspects. First, the distinction she makes between "religious" and "social" is artificially sharp and belied by the evidence she cites. Given what we know about popular religious beliefs in the seventeenth-century it is hard to accept the proposition that the Reformation effectively

ended the “religious” meaning of death for ordinary people, however much it changed its official theological status. We are repeatedly told that early modern Englishmen at nearly all levels of society wished for a “decent burial”: the evidence Ms Gittings cites clearly shows that this meant a “Christian” burial too. Her rendering of the religious context of attitudes to death is on the whole unconvincing and occasionally sloppy. Secondly, her thesis regarding the corrosive effects of individualism on attitudes to death is, with few exceptions, asserted and imposed on the evidence in ways that reify the concept: individualism becomes her *deus ex machina*. This is not to say that changes in attitudes to death and burial had nothing to do with a more individualistic outlook on human life, only that Ms Gittings has not allowed her theme to emerge from a careful and sensitive consideration of the evidence. Thirdly, and most importantly in my view, Ms. Gittings’s study disappoints because it fails to reconstruct what death and burial meant to ordinary English men and women in the early modern period. We are told a great deal about the functions of funeral ceremonies, but very little about what the subjects of her study thought about them: the categories of thought *they* employed in making sense of life’s end are inadequately addressed. While the interpretation of diaries, letters, and other personal documents for individual attitudes to death undoubtedly has its difficulties, Ms Gittings’s decision to reject the systematic use of them on the grounds that they are biased and unrepresentative goes too far, and renders her book less a study of *early modern* English attitudes to death than it might have been. Finally, the referencing system adopted here, “to avoid burdening both the book and reader with constant repetitions and unwieldy footnotes” (p. 1), is inadequate and makes the identification of sources difficult.

Stephen Macfarlane
Bennington College

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Michelle Guitard — *Histoire sociale des miliciens de la bataille de la Châteauguay*. Ottawa, Direction des lieux et des parc historiques nationaux, Parcs Canada, Environnement Canada, 1983, 150 p.

Voilà un petit livre sans prétention qui constitue une belle contribution à la recherche historique. Michelle Guitard a voulu connaître le soldat de la bataille de la Châteauguay. Nous ne savions rien à son sujet. M. Guitard a comblé cette lacune. Elle établit la présence sur la Châteauguay, le 26 octobre 1813, du corps des Voltigeurs, levé par le lieutenant-colonel Charles-Michel de Salaberry, le 15 avril 1812, de membres de la milice d’élite et incorporée, de représentants de la milice sédentaire, d’une compagnie de réguliers provinciaux et d’Amérindiens. Après avoir bien défini la nature des divers groupes militaires impliqués du côté canadien, l’auteure explique leur recrutement respectif. Ces pages nous en apprennent beaucoup sur la milice.

En ce qui concerne les officiers de milice, le lecteur est frappé comme l’auteure par la multiplicité des liens de parenté qui existaient entre eux. Son tableau à ce sujet (p. 22) est un document sociologique en soi. Noblesse, métier des armes, bourgeoisie des professions libérales avaient tissé entre eux des liens de toute sorte, dont on souhaite, après avoir examiné ce tableau, qu’ils soient examinés de plus près. La prolifération des liens de parenté était favorisée par le jeu du patronage dans le recrutement des officiers. En outre, l’officier devait avoir les moyens de faire face aux exigences financières que la fonction impliquait, en plus d’être capable de commander des hommes... en temps de guerre en tout cas. Mais d’autres facteurs entrent en ligne de compte comme le prestige social, les pressions sociales, le service militaire antérieur et la bravoure au combat. Cependant, la pensée de l’auteure manque de clarté sur cette question.

Pour ce qui est des Voltigeurs, la désertion de plusieurs recrues complique leur recrutement. En octobre 1813 les Voltigeurs comptaient tout de même 29 officiers et 481 sous-officiers et soldats dans leurs rangs, alors que le nombre originel de soldats avait été fixé à 500. Artisans ou journaliers sans emploi, les soldats provenaient plutôt des centres urbains (près de 60 %). Les officiers, par contre,