

probability and that one may become widowed tomorrow, even if young. It is also a reminder that single mothers may be widows.) Most of the interviewees have more resources, both economic and familial, than many widows. Because each woman wrote her own story, there is uneven "hard data." I was not able to ascertain the province of residence in all cases; neither was I able, in all cases, to figure out current age, age at widowhood, and length of time as widow.

But I feel like I am nit-picking; *Beyond Coping* is not meant to provide a social scientific analysis of widowhood. Rather, it gives widows a venue to tell their own stories in their own voices, and it gives the reader an inspirational glimpse at the ways that widows of all ages deal with this difficult life course transition.

Ellen Gee
Simon Fraser University

Obligation and Opportunity: Single Maritime Women in Boston, 1870-1930. Betsy Beattie. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen University Press, 2000; illustrations; xii + 176 pages; ISBN 0-7735-2019-8; \$22.95US (paper).

Beattie's study of young single women who joined - and at some points led - the out-migration of half a million Maritimers in the years between the 1860s and the 1920s is a welcome addition to the still-sparse historical literature on Maritime women. The story of this major exodus has been a central theme in regional historiography, but as Beattie points out, "an inadequate male-centred explanation"(4) has focussed very narrowly on economic decline. The book is structured in two parts, one focussing on the period from 1870 to 1900, the second on the years from 1900 to 1930, when tighter US immigration restrictions made the move to Boston much more difficult. Each part of the book includes a discussion of the economic conditions in the Maritimes as well as employment and living conditions in the Boston area.

Beattie's argument that there were important differences in the two periods is the

central element of her contribution to historiography. Following Scott and Tilley,¹ she argues that the first generation of young, single women went to find waged work in Boston to contribute to the household economies of their families of origin back in the Maritimes. They chose Boston because it was easy to get to and because it was easy to find jobs in domestic service that paid enough to permit them to send money back home; Beattie characterizes this cohort as "dutiful daughters." The experience of the second generation was more multi-faceted. Some "dutiful daughters" still went to Boston to earn wages in domestic work to send back to struggling Maritime farm families, however the fact the second generation tended on average to be older and better educated than the first suggests that the decision was more likely to be a personal choice, shaped not only by economic need but also a pursuit of new experience. This argument is supported by the fact that by 1900 the Maritime economy offered considerably more opportunities for waged work for women than had been the case in the 1870 to 1900 period. Another consideration that Beattie raises is the wide range of jobs and training Maritime women pursued in Boston.

The major problem Beattie faced in this study was to understand the personal motivations that underlay the statistical phenomenon of out-migration, and the lack of evidence of the personal experiences of rural working class women heightened her difficulty. In Part One of the book Beattie largely resorts to economic explanations of the women's behaviour, which results in a plausible explanation but not a rivetting story. Part Two, however, is enlivened by the large number of letters and interviews which provide personal insights into the motivations of the migrants. Beattie's description of the culture of lodging houses, restaurants and "cheap amusements" in early twentieth century Boston helps us to understand the appeal of big city life for rural Maritime women.

ENDNOTE

1. Joan W. Scott and Louise A. Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17 (1975): 36-64.

Janet Guildford
Halifax
