IN 1883 A FIERCE dispute opposed United States and Canadian authorities. It all started when the Honorable John Lowe, the Canadian Secretary of Agriculture, contested the figures published by the United States Treasury Department that placed at 70,241 the number of Canadians having migrated to the United States during the past fiscal year.¹ To Lowe those figures were misleading, and could not but cast a negative shadow on his newly confederated Canadian nation for being unable to keep so many of its children within its borders.

Lowe not only produced his own figures, but sought to discredit the inspection procedure followed by United States agents at border points. On two occasions he boarded a train directed to Port Huron, Michigan, so that—as a common passenger—he could observe first hand how Canadian immigrants were inspected and consequently assess the accuracy of the statistics compiled by United States authorities. The essence of his report was that United States border officials—at the time custom agents—were primarily interested in “the value of [the traveler’s] effects, but he is asked nothing with regard to his age, or calling, or number of his family, or his destination, and there is nothing in the printed form of entry, a copy of which I have in my possession, which calls for any further information.”² How could then one rely on published United States statistics compiled from the count made at border points?

In his calculations, Lowe took into account also the number of Americans having entered Canada during that same fiscal year. He thus came up with a Canadian population net loss of 7,222, which looked much better than the gross total reported by the United States Treasury Department.³ A triumphant Lowe could now go on with his other important tasks, that involved much more than migration issues.

We cannot judge the accuracy of Lowe’s counterfigures, compiled as they were from data provided by railway companies. But clearly, counting Canadians who entered the United States was not a priority for United States authorities, judging also from statements made subse-
quent by United States border agents and Federal inquirers. As late as 1896, the United States Commissioner-General of Immigration admitted that lack of statistics prevented him from reporting on the number of Canadians entering the United States. All he could say was that “it is known that many of the citizens of Canada annually come to the States across our northern frontier, as well as by rail and water routes.”

Nor were Canadian authorities particularly interested in counting their own nationals who left their districts to go to work and live in the United States, in spite of the periodic public inquiries on the topic, and the often-fierce political wrangles it provoked in the Dominion. For despite Lowe’s outburst of civil-servant zeal, no administrative procedures were put into place by Ottawa or by the individual provinces to keep track of Canadians traveling or moving south of their border.

Yet, when the 1900 United States federal census was made public, it showed that 1,179,922 Canadians lived in the United States—a number corresponding to 22 percent of the Dominion’s population. The movement comprised Canadians from all regions, from all age groups, and from all walks of life, including a significant contingent of professionals, students and scholars. If the immigrants’ United States-born children and their offspring were added, the number more than doubled, equaling 54.8 percent of Canada’s population. The Canadian stock had certainly undergone an important demographic growth during the previous decades, but a significant portion of that expansion had occurred not in Canada but in the United States.

These figures and the little public debate they generated in either one of the two countries reveal much about the nature of United States—Canadian relations, and in particular about the attitude of authorities toward their common border. Perhaps to most contemporaries, the flow of Canadians into the neighboring republic was seen as an academic issue; after all, throughout the nineteenth century the border lay unguarded except for a few checkpoints along the major trade routes. Or it could be that these contemporaries subscribed to W. Swanson’s view that “the boundary line is imaginary, and really the people of Ontario and New York State have far more in common than the people of Ontario and Quebec.”

What is certain is that this lack of concern for the northern neighbors entering United States national territory was a clear indication that Canadians were no ordinary immigrants. For the United States Commissioner-General of Immigration, the “large number [of Canadians] who arrive and depart along our northern frontier and the eastern or maritime
provinces of the Dominion” was seen as a normal occurrence in the special relations between the two neighbouring countries; a presence evoked in clearly positive terms when he described these men and women as “thrifty, industrious, and belonging to all trades and occupations both skilled and unskilled”—just the kind of immigrants United States employers and politicians wished to receive.8

Canadian immigrants enjoyed in fact a special status as members of the Western hemisphere, one that was probably best concretized in their being exempted from the head-tax that United States authorities levied on overseas immigrants. If one adds that United States citizens were as free to move north, then the circulation of population and labor across the border evoked more a common market than protectionist relations.

But by the end on the nineteenth century, the boundary line between Canada and the United States had become a major cause of concern. By then, the United States had emerged as the single most important magnet of European population and labor, and a growing portion of these overseas immigrants had learned that they could elude United States immigration inspection by entering through the Canadian border. It had taken a few years and several public enquiries to realize that in a typical year such as 1890 about one fifth of all United States-bound overseas immigrants had used Canada as an illicit ‘back door.’9 When in the 1890s the United States government re-hauled its immigration services and tightened inspection procedures, the northern border was high in its agenda. In the attempt to shut the ‘back door,’ a string of checkpoints was progressively created along the entire United States-Canadian boundary line, manned by a specially-created corps of immigration inspectors.10 The preferential stance towards Canadians continued, certainly to the extent that they remained exempt from the head-tax (and in the 1920s they would be exempted also from national quota restrictions). But these reforms meant that Canadians now had to undergo border inspection like any one else, and comply with admission criteria involving health, crime, and labor-contract violations. And infractions that most likely had gone unnoticed when border inspectors were interested only in the luggage Canadians carried with them, now were caught and certified, and Canadians declared inadmissible.

The boundary had ceased to be that “imaginary line” Swanson described in 1906 and increasingly become instead the conscious spatial and political line of a nation-state bent on protecting its territory from illegal intruders—Canadians or not. Hatty L. was one of many Canadians for whom that line turned into an insurmountable wall when on 7
July 1910 immigration inspectors at the Port Huron, Michigan, checkpoint declared her debarred. An eighteen-year-old waitress from London, Ontario, Hatty was headed to Detroit with the stated intention of migrating permanently. The inspectors, however, found her undesirable and she was turned back. In the eyes of the inspectors, she was a "prostitute"—as they wrote on their border manifest.11

Ironically, this continental dividing line became a more permanent physical symbol of the separation of the two neighboring nation-states at a time when Canadians had begun to reassess their traditional ties with the British Empire, stressing their country's "continental destiny."12

But the rise of the border, far from preventing an overflow of Canadian population into the United States, only made it more selective. As the new century progressed, Canadians in fact kept migrating, giving rise to fluctuating rates that resulted from regional economic conditions, from United States immigration policies, and from world events such as the Great War. In some years, Canadian immigrants represented 31 percent of all newcomers legally admitted into the United States.13 And by 1930, roughly as many Canadian-born lived south of the border as they had in 1900—a sign not only of the resilience of the movement, but also of the fact that migrating to the United States remained an integral part of Canadian life and of North American development, certainly until the Great Depression struck.14

The two nation-states were separated by an increasingly inspected—and from 1924, policed—border. Yet, the social, cultural and emotional links cutting through that border were a continental reality only known to the immigrants themselves, to their families and their neighbors. And the significance of those links for the relations between the two societies throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth could only be guessed. This movement in all its regional articulations had unfolded relentlessly since at least the 1830s and 1840s—when the great trans-Mississippi migrations pulled growing numbers of Canadians, and the first of many Canadian public inquiries into the phenomenon was undertaken.15 But it was not until the late 1930s that it became the subject of scholarly investigation.

In 1943 statistician Leon E. Truesdell, using United States census figures, captured the demographic contours of the Canadian presence in the United States in his The Canadian-Born in the U. S. soon after Marcus Lee Hansen had carried out his sweeping study of Canadian and United States population movements across the common border.16

There are reasons to wonder whether these two works would have
ever seen the light of day had it not been for a singular political and scholarly conjuncture. They were, in fact, part of a series of studies sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace which saw them as essential scientific contributions to one of the Foundation’s priorities in the 1930s—i.e., the promotion of understanding between the two neighboring North American countries, so as to set their relations upon a solid and promising course.17

The scholarly terrain for such an initiative had been prepared by a United States Social Science Research Council program, set up in 1927, aimed at studying the various phases of American foreign policy. But it was Columbia University historian John B. Brebner who drew attention to the importance of Canadian-United States relations, as a field of historical studies, in his address at the 1931 Canadian Historical Association meeting. Brebner surveyed some of the crucial conjunctures in the history of North America, and stressed the need “of applying North American, that is, continental contours to the histories of Canada and the United States.”18 Brebner’s ensuing efforts to explore what he called “North American concepts” found an attentive ear in James T. Shotwell, the Foundation’s director of the Division of Economics and History, and soon after the series got underway. The results were impressive, not only for the sheer number of volumes published, but also because some of them would become classic works in North American history.19

Despite the Carnegie Foundation’s readiness to put up the money and the prestige of its organization (and undoubtedly its moral support) behind the series, one has reason to question whether such a vast project of scholarship could have been carried out (let alone envisioned) without the crucial role played by Canadian expatriates teaching in the United States.

Shotwell and Drebner—who became the chief adviser and the planner of the historical volumes—were only two among the several Canadian-born scholars teaching in the United States and who were recruited for the series. Moreover, the authors included some of the best-known Canadian historians, whose monographs became milestones in Canadian (and one could add, North American) history.20

Brebner’s concern with developing a North American perspective reflected his own intellectual itinerary, one that had taken him from Toronto to Oxford, and on to Columbia University. Undoubtedly, his transnational academic experience enabled him to see the limitations in approaching Canadian history through the lenses of the ‘British imperial school,’ and convinced him of the importance of uncovering the ‘North-
The choices of Markus L. Hansen to author the volume on population movements across the United States northern border was a logical one, for his work on the Atlantic migrations had already made him the leading migration scholar within the historical profession—a position he held long after his premature death if one shares Frank Thistlethwaite’s assessment of Hansen’s contribution in his seminal 1960 Uppsala paper. \(^{22}\) The result of his efforts—\textit{The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples}\,—is a work that stands to this day as the only attempt to look at the cross-border population movements from a continental perspective.

In retrospect, an attentive reader will notice the extent to which \textit{The Mingling} was conceived more as a history of Canadian/American relations than as a history of migrations—partly in keeping with the Foundation’s mandate. It certainly belongs to an era when the analytical tools enabling social historians to explore the various dimensions of migration phenomena had not yet been developed to their fullest. Despite Hansen’s attempt to situate the various population movements within specific time-frames and regional contexts, ultimately much of the cross-border mobility he narrated is a response to environmental and continental forces flowing from East to West, reminiscent of the Turnerian paradigm from which Hansen drew much of his inspiration. Not surprisingly, with the exception of one short section on the industrial era, Hansen’s migrants move predominantly across a virtually borderless nineteenth-century North American agrarian universe, and farmland is as much a historical actor as are the migrants.

Still, Hansen’s work remains to this day a historiographical milestone. Students of nineteenth-century Canadian and American migration across the border will find in it a mine of information on regional population movements and on specific economic and political conjunctures that could have very well become a research agenda for future generations of historians on both sides of the border.
But *The Mingling* was the last scientific effort undertaken by Hansen before his premature death. It is not merely a question for biographers to speculate whether Hansen would have pursued the field farther, or at least bring it outside the tight packaging of Canadian-American affairs, and into the mainstream of both United-States and Canadian national historiographies. The sad fact remains that *The Mingling* left no legacy—neither in the United States nor in Canada.

As to John B. Brebner, the man who had been most intimately associated with Hansen’s work and who had contributed the most to developing a transnational perspective on North American history, he turned his interest to British history and to the development of the welfare state, probably convinced that the Carnegie volumes that he so much helped to shape constituted as solid a legacy as scholars wishing to pursue that perspective could hope for.\(^{23}\) He probably was not aware that among his admirers there was a young English historian who would go on redirecting the course of migration history, and who in his late years declared himself “a disciple” of Brebner. Several of us heard Frank Thistlethwaite pay homage to Brebner at the Spring Hill Center, in Wayzata, Minnesota, during the conference held in November 1986 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Immigration History Research Center.\(^{24}\) Probably very few of us, if any, had been aware of John Bartlett Brebner.

During the post-World War II era, scholarly concern for United States-Canadian relations grew in both countries and consolidated itself into a field of its own, mostly populated by political scientists and economists. The relatively few historians working in that field were attracted primarily to diplomatic, military and trade-relations topics; which should not come as a surprise, for their work reflected the dominant perspective that placed the nation-state at the center of historical inquiry. Those were the years when, as Ian Tyrrell has argued recently, nation-centered historiographies exerted their greatest hegemony on the profession, shaping the way of looking at ‘national experiences’ and at the relations between countries across common borders and across oceans.\(^{25}\) Recalling those years, Thistlethwaite deplored the extent to which a transnational subject as migration “went unrecognized in a profession whose parameters were still so largely drawn by the nation-state.”\(^{26}\) Narratives whose main protagonists were politicians and bureaucrats operating out of Washington, Westminster, or Ottawa allowed hardly any room for the relations among ordinary men and women across the border, no matter how widespread their movement had been. In many ways, as Richard White
has argued, the emphasis on nation states has tended to remain pre-
eminent also in the more recent literature that has inserted North America
within a larger spatial scale or that has employed comparative approaches.
As he has pointed out, “Whether in the Atlantic World of historians or a
North American world of geographers, comparison and a broad exami-
nation of development seems easier before the emergence of Mexico,
Canada and the United States as nations. Once they emerge, the litera-
ture becomes largely a literature of nation states.”27

With one notable exception discussed below, we had to wait till the
1980s to see serious attempts at placing ordinary men and women at the
center of United States–Canada relations. The initiative came primarily
from political geographers, though it soon became a multidisciplinary
undoubtedly stimulated by the growing expansion of ‘borderlands studies.’ But as with the Carnegie-sponsored monographs, it is
likely that a particular political conjuncture played a role in stimulating
scholarly attention. It seems in fact more than a coincidence that interest
for the cultural, economic and spatial dynamics between the two coun-
tries gained momentum as the issue of a North American trade agree-
ment took center-stage in United States–Canadian affairs. In the words
of a leading representative of this new scholarship, the search for a
“more effective North American economic integration” entailed a “move
toward a new realization of North American relationships,” which in
turn favored an understanding of borderlands as “the joints of continen-
tal articulation.”28

Whatever the impact of the political conjuncture on the field, United
States/Canada borderlands studies have opened new vistas on the nature
of the relationships between the two countries (and not just between the
two nation-states), contributing to analytical frameworks that strive to
be continental in scope. And with a shared boundary line measuring
some 5,500 kilometers, and with the majority of the Canadian popula-
tion spread, east to west, within 150 kilometers from the line—including
of course some ‘First Nations’ populations—‘borderlands’ hold an enorm-
ous research potential.

The necessarily slow tempo of empirical studies in this field contrasts
with the rapidity with which theoretical and conceptual frameworks
have been articulated. The relatively few scholars studying United States–
Canadian borderlands have been able to draw from a variety of disci-
plines in order to address local and regional realities while at the same
time seeking to reveal their continental significance. Whether studying
the interaction between two cross-border cities, or the transborder char-
acter of much of the northern timber industry, or still the differential symbolic meaning the border has had for Canadians and Americans, the perspectives adopted have invariably privileged continental dynamics over nation-bound developments.29

One of the results has been a far more complex categorization of ‘North America’ than that adopted by most nation-centered narratives. In the words of Victor Konrad,

North America is being reconceptualized as a unique continental amalgam where culture remains decidedly plural, political lines are sustained yet social forces move people across boundaries within a vast and relatively underpopulated land mass. This concept of North America defines a continent that is more complex and vigorous, and consequently more effectively interlaced than the image that is portrayed in the simple layering of Canada beyond the United States and Mexico below it. Key elements of integration and differentiation were set in place as the three countries, and particularly Canada and the United States, emerged as independent yet interdependent states.30

Despite the conceptual boldness with which Canada–United States borderlands studies have sought to position themselves within North American scholarship, they still constitute a novelty in most academic circles, and their production lags far behind the older and more popular field of United States–Mexican borderlands. More important for our discussion, northern borderlands studies have thus far merely scratched the historical surface of those ‘joints of continental articulation,’ despite the participation of historians. And so, while the widespread nineteenth- and twentieth-century migration of Canadians across the border has been pointed to as one of those “social, political, and cultural phenomena [that] have been continental in scope and continent-wide in impact”, it has thus far eluded systematic research, standing as no more than a research-agenda item in this new field.31

The lack of interest in population movements across the border, and in Canadian migration in particular, could also be seen as part of the more generalized neglect in which immigration history was held within the historical profession during much of the post-war era.

True, when in the 1960s and 1970s immigration became a major theme within a rapidly-expanding “new social history”, and one immigrant community after the other came under historical scrutiny, the immigration movement from French Canada did generate its contingent of historians. The pioneering works that Ralph Vicero and Tamara Hareven
initiated in those years brought to the historical surface the significance of the cross-border migrations from Quebec and their centrality to an industrializing New England; and by the end of the century those works had become part of a rich historiographical production that compares with that of any other major immigrant group in the United States.32

Yet, for every French-Canadian who immigrated to the United States, two Anglo-Canadians did likewise. If on a map we circumscribe the Quebec-New England axis as the space traversed by Canadian migration flows and filled by their social networks, the rest of the continent remained pretty much a historiographical desert (except for the occasional article—often of a biographical character—appearing in local historical magazines). How could Anglo-Canadians, a group whose presence spanned from New England to the Pacific region, with heavy concentrations in the Great Lakes states, be so conspicuously absent from immigration and social histories?

The view expressed by an American observer in the late nineteenth century, that Anglo-Canadians were “americanized even before they emigrated,” may have been exaggerated and certainly tells more about the writer’s ethnocentric frame of mind than about Canadian migrants.33 But it helps to explain the attitude that gradually made its way, and then came to prevail, among both contemporary observers and scholars.

Progressive America, at least that segment most concerned with the plight of immigrants or with the political capital that their votes could represent, simply did not seem to have noticed Anglo-Canadians. If, as America opened her door to a growing variety of nationalities, immigration often became synonymous with a “social problem,” Anglo-Canadians were simply not seen as part of that problem. And from being ignored—however benevolently so—to being taken for granted the step could be but a short one.

Similarly, immigration scholars trained to approach their subjects through prominent symbols of group identity such as the national parish, the ethnic press, or the mutual-benefit society, would have looked in vain for such conspicuous symbols among Anglo-Canadians, even if they tried. In the absence of those institutional markers that afford the scholar an entry into the particular universe of an immigrant group, Anglo-Canadian immigrants might as well be considered ‘invisible.’

Taken for granted by some, and declared invisible by others, the fact remains that Anglo-Canadian immigrants have remained a crucial missing link in the historical narrative of a multicultural America, and in the socioeconomic reconstitution of several regions and states.
There is no question that of all immigrant groups, Anglo-Canadians were the most equipped—occupationally and culturally—to incorporate successfully into American society. Buried—though not invisible—under the hundreds of statistical tables compiled in 1909–11 by the Immigration Commission, is a rich snapshot of their presence within the American industrial apparatus. Although the commission’s data did not provide occupational breakdowns, the position of Anglo-Canadians at the top of the hierarchy can be deduced from data on earnings. The average weekly earnings of Anglo-Canadian men aged eighteen and over stood well above the average for all other foreign-born groups; and they were also significantly over-represented in the top earning levels.34

Even more significant, in several important industries (iron and steel; agricultural implements and vehicles manufacturing) Anglo-Canadians had higher earnings than their American counterparts (“native-born of white native fathers”). In the two latter industries, Anglo-Canadians outscored not only American workers but also English immigrants—the group that consistently ranked among the highest in most industries.35

Though much less present in United States industrial manufacturing, the performance of Anglo-Canadian women within the overall female workforce paralleled that of their male counterparts. Their average earnings, too, were well above those of all the foreign-born combined, and even higher than those of Americans.36

The Immigration Commission also gathered data on the language proficiency of immigrant workers, thus adding another important element to the profile of Anglo-Canadian industrial workers. With nearly 97 percent of them able to read and write, they again stood at the top of the hierarchy, ranking even above English immigrants.37

The Commission concerned itself only with immigrants employed in manufacturing and mining, but its findings may be supplemented by our recent study covering the entire occupational spectrum of Canadians emigrating to the United States during the 1906–1930 years.38 Looking at the Anglo-Canadian movement as a whole, one is immediately struck by the considerable presence of men and women belonging to the highest occupational echelons of an industrializing society. Prominent among men were businessmen mostly operating in the trade sector, along with professionals, and supervisory personnel. This group constituted 14.4 percent of all male occupations and it hardly matches the profile that historians ordinarily encounter in their studies of pre-World War II United States immigration. The movement, of course, had also its contingent of common laborers, and even of hoboes like George Beattie, who, when
interviewed by United States federal researchers answered that he had "no relatives, no friends in the world," and then went on listing all the jobs he had done—all of them in the Great Lakes region, most of them lasting only a few days.39

But the striking feature among Anglo-Canadian blue-collar immigrants was the significant presence of skilled occupations, most of them denoting previous experience in factory and craft manufacturing. One may safely assume that a number of these skilled workers and tradesmen were members of their respective unions or likely to join one once in the United States. William A. Calvin, for instance, had joined the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders, and Helpers of America in 1914, in his city of Saint John, New Brunswick, while in the employ of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. After serving in World War One with the Canadian Army, Calvin carried his work experience and his union membership to the United States, where after two years as boilermaker for the Florida Seabord Railroad, he was elected chairman of his local shop committee, becoming in 1929 vice-president of his international union.40

When it comes to women, the most striking feature of the Anglo-Canadian movement was the strong presence of professional and white-collar occupations. All together, they made up over 40 percent of all adult women declaring an occupation other than "housewife," and most prominent among them were occupations denoting basic if not advanced training and education in fields such as nursing, teaching and administration. The movement, of course, also included an important number of "servants"; but as important was the wide variety of clerical occupations, mostly associated with office work and sales. As in the case of their male counterparts, a significant proportion of Canadian female immigrants were students—more than half of them in the field of nursing. The overrepresentation of nurses—both professionals and students—resulted largely from the ongoing demand coming from American hospitals and other types of health institutions. In her survey of United States Immigration and Naturalization Service records pertaining to Canada, Marian L. Smith refers, in fact, to the "never-ending list of hospitals applying to import Canadian nurses," and to the many special permissions granted by United States immigration authorities to exempt recruiting institutions from the provisions of the contract-labor law. Women like W. Blampin and Cynthia Kelley may serve as illustrations of the numerous cases in which nurses or student nurses provided United States border officials with the names of the health institutions they
were directed to. In the case of 26-year W. Blampin—a nurse who in 1922 departed from Grandby, Quebec—her destination was Philadelphia’s Women’s Hospital. Cynthia Kelley was instead directed to the City Hospital in New York. A 20-year old student nurse from Sudbury, Ontario, she declared to United States border officials that her move was “permanent,” most likely envisioning a career in a city that offered ample opportunities in her field.41

What our data show is not only the high level Anglo-Canadians were likely to occupy within the occupational ladder; but also their diffusion into practically all productive and service sectors of industrializing America. And this certainly contributed to their ‘invisibility’ unlike French-Canadians whose visibility was greatly enhanced by their concentration in relatively few manufacturing sectors (most prominent among them the textile industry).

This diffusion in the labor markets had its parallel in their patterns of settlement, at least judging from the little research done on this subject. In his study of Detroit, Olivier Zunz sought in vain for Canadian residential clusters comparable to those of recent European immigrants or even of a long-established group such as the Germans. The few small clusters of Anglo-Canadians he did find were in areas largely populated by native white Americans and, to a lesser extent, by British immigrants. Equally revealing of the Anglo-Canadian’s rapid entry into the mainstream of American life were the marriage patterns they practiced. Only 21 percent of the Anglo-Canadian males in Detroit who married during the 1890s chose an Anglo-Canadian spouse. A larger number (29 percent) chose native white Americans as spouses, and the other half married women belonging to a wide variety of ethnic groups. Quite significantly, Anglo-Canadians were the most frequent partners chosen by native white Americans who married foreigners.42

These occupational and cultural traits undoubtedly set Anglo-Canadians apart from most other immigrant groups, and certainly from French-Canadians, suggesting that once they stepped into American labor markets their path to incorporation in American civil society became definitely smoother than that experienced by most other immigrant groups. But as historical agents within a continental migration process, Anglo-Canadians behaved like most migrants. Some left districts undergoing major economic and social dislocations; others left in search of the cash needed to pay a mortgage or to buy a farm, or to start a family business; still others felt that their skills afforded them a brighter professional future once in the United States. And like most other migration move-
ments, the Anglo-Canadian one included single men and women, just as it included children and family units. Here too the role of family and kin was so central that the majority of Anglo-Canadians migrated within kinship networks, linking transborder districts both emotionally and through the back-and-forth transfer of material and cultural resources.

That these widespread departures, occurring as they did from all provinces and from all kinds of socioeconomic contexts, have left little trace in Canadian national historiography is not surprising. Like most national narratives, the Canadian one too (in its Anglo variant) has been more concerned with the ‘others’ who have entered (when not intruded) its civil society than with Canadian nationals who abandoned their fatherland.43

More difficult to understand is the absence of Anglo-Canadians from American historical narratives that have been reconceived in the light of the substantial contributions made in the past three decades by immigration historians. For, even accounting for the alleged invisibility of Anglo-Canadians in the American multicultural landscape, the standard methods and sources employed in our craft have long been available to historians wishing to identify them and make them visible in labor markets, in neighborhoods, in schools, and in a wide range of religious and political institutions.

Anglo-Canadians have been just as invisible (or taken for granted) in ‘the new,’ American immigration historiography. This was true in 1985, when John Bodnar published his highly acclaimed The Transplanted; it was still true in 1999, when Jon Gjerde offered an enlightening critical appraisal of historiographical tendencies, old and new, in the pages of this journal.

My reference to The Transplanted is far from being casual. That work stands as a thorough and solid interpretative synthesis of immigration history as practiced by a whole generation of scholars.44 And if ‘Canada’ or ‘Canadians’ do not get one single entry in the subject index this may have simply reflected the fact that the field had not produced sufficient synthesizable works; as to the absence of French-Canadians, one may only speculate: perhaps they were deemed of little interest, associated as they have mostly been to a ‘regional experience,’ New England, or confined to one single industry (textile).

Gjerde’s silence is more puzzling. The point is not that he should have felt obliged to include Canadian immigrants in his discussion—after all they are just one among over one hundred groups who people the United States immigration literature. Rather, the puzzlement comes
from the central place Hansen’s work and contribution are given in his analysis. But Gjerde’s assessment concerns exclusively Hansen’s works on European immigration, among them *The Atlantic Migrations*, which he qualifies as Hansen’s “only major monograph.”45 To historians like myself who are struggling to make Canadians visible, Gjerde’s is a sad formulation. It contributes to consigning *The Mingling* deeper into historiographical insignificance, and as a judgement it makes sense only if Canadian immigration is optically invisible to him. Coming as it does from such a skilled and authoritative representative of United States immigration historiography, one has good reasons to think that the neglect of Canadian immigration is a generalized ailment among students in the field. It remains to be seen, of course, how much visibility the few, scattered scholars who in recent years have tackled such a vast field will get in mainstream United States immigration history.46

The ‘invisibility’ of Anglo-Canadians and their faring so low in immigration historiography raises another issue, both conceptual and methodological; an issue that addresses other immigrant groups equally dismissed or neglected because of their ‘low visibility’—be they Americans in Canada or French in Quebec (just to remain within the North American context). Despite the important role immigration historians have played in challenging the mystificatory treatment of immigration by United States national narratives, we do not seem to have entirely freed ourselves from a key methodological posture of the assimilationist historians: most often, in fact, our inquiries have found their genesis in the cultural ‘otherness’ ascribed to a given immigrant group. It is in this essential premise that the Chicago School sociologists and later the field of ethnic studies or ethnic relations (in Quebec, ‘relations interculturelles’) have found their raison d’être. Of course, what we historians do with that ‘otherness,’ how we treat and interpret it, should set us apart from the assimilationist tradition.

Yet, for us as well, it is culture or ethnicity (as we construct it) that more often than not constitutes the criterion of selection for our historical inquiries and the central factor through which immigrant behavior in the larger society is explained. And if it is primarily culture and ethnicity that render immigrants visible to us historians, then ultimately some cultures are more visible than others, and still others are so tenuously visible that they can easily disappear in the historical vortex. No wonder then if, for instance, the presence of French Canadians in Massachusetts has produced a wide array of doctoral dissertations, published monographs and scholarly articles—overwhelming if compared to the histori-
cal attention given to Anglo Canadians who yet outnumbered them in the state.

We may have replaced the teleological and ethnocentric concept of assimilation with the more dialectical one of incorporation; still the broad problematics within which we set our inquiries point more toward the nation-state and its processes of incorporating minorities than toward that transnational terrain on which migration phenomena unfold. I am not questioning the validity and importance of studies concerned with the incorporation of immigrants, for this path of inquiry has produced some of the best studies in socio-cultural and political history. As Donna Gabaccia has recently argued, these works have had a determining effect in demystifying the “immigrant paradigm”—that theoretical stance that stressed the inevitability of assimilation as a key characteristic of American exceptionalism.47

I am primarily arguing that if the subject of migration history is migrants and not merely Polish, German or Italian candidates to americanization or canadianization, than the migration process has to be an essential dimension of our inquiry, and its conceptualization as central as that of incorporation. It is another way of reiterating what Thistlethwaite stressed back in 1960 when he said that “[Plotting] the trails of such specific groups of migrants reinforced my view that origins were as important as destinations in the history of migration, the particular circumstances leading to uprooting as significant as the experience of adjustment and assimilation.”48 Lack of proper emphasis of the migration process not only limits our understanding of incorporation; it also contributes to the invisibility syndrome as much of the focus is directed to ‘ethnic phenomena.’ Had Thistlewaithe proceeded from the expressions of ethnicity of English migrants or from their incorporation in the host societies—be it in the United States, Canada, or Argentina—I wonder if his contribution would have taken the direction it took, and his insights so determining for the reorientation of our field.

Similarly, had Charlotte Erickson designed her inquiry taking as her starting point the manifestations of ethnicity among English immigrants in the United States, I wonder whether her Invisible Immigrants would have ever been conceived and become the milestone it is. To Erickson as well, the study of the migration process was an essential prerequisite to inquiring on the adaptation of her immigrants to American society. And she joined Thistlethwaite in rightly criticizing the “one-sidedness” of those approaches that placed most of the emphasis on “the impact of immigrants on the economy and society of the receiving country.”49 My
reference to Erickson is not casual, for she devoted much of her scholarly career to the study of one group, the English, who became the archetype of the ‘invisible immigrants’ in United States society. Thanks in large measure to her approach, English immigrants have become visible in United States historiography. But Erickson made also another important observation when she stated that “the Englishman in America, like the Irishman in England, was more exposed [to painful encounters with members of the receiving society] because his difficulties were not so apparent.” Language similarities between English immigrants and native white Americans, in fact, “sometimes masked […] variations in attitudes arising out of cultural differences.” And this contrasted with the experience of ‘visible’ groups whose “built-in shields” eased their accommodation to the receiving society. It is an observation that is as relevant to Anglo-Canadian immigrants, and cannot but remind us of the complexity of the task before us.

Of course, the fallacy that Thistlethwaite and Erickson have so eloquently addressed has since been recognized by a number of historians who have stressed the transnational character of migration phenomena. Samuel Baily’s village-outward framework, for instance, has allowed him to deal at once with incorporation phenomena—whether in New York or in Buenos Aires—and with the socioeconomic realities that produced out-migration in one Italian Appenine region. And more recently, the “Italians Everywhere” project has redefined the concept of diaspora to show the extent to which Italian migration pertains not only to the history of nation-states but also to world history.

And so it should be with Anglo-Canadians. Invisible as they may have been to historians who seek their analytical starting point in the immigrants’ expressions of ethnicity, they would be as visible as any other immigrant if viewed as actors within a migration process. If their Ontario, Maritimes, or British Columbia districts are integrated within a temporal and spatial frame that includes as well their new neighborhoods and labor markets in Connecticut, Michigan, or California, we would learn much more about the regional history of Canada and about the immigration history of the United States; we would also contribute to renew our perspective on the relations between those two North American nation-states while adding a significant missing link to current attempts at constructing a world history.
NOTES


3. Ibid., p. 5


16. Leon E. Truesdell, *The Canadian Born in the United States* (New Haven,
1943); Marcus L. Hansen and John B. Brebner, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (New Haven, 1940). Hansen passed away soon after the completion of his manuscript, whose publication was ensured by John Brebner.


19. A complete list of the Carnegie volumes has been reproduced at the back of John B. Brebner, *North American Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (Toronto and New Haven, 1945).

20. For a lengthier discussion of other Canadian-born authors participating in the series see Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, pp. 145 ff.


27. In his critical review of some recent literature on North American perspectives, White offers an illuminating discussion of some of the conceptual pitfalls that have hindered or enhanced the development of a transnational framework pertaining to North America. See his, “Is There a North American History?” *Revue française d’études américaines* 79 (1999).


29. Notable has been the cooperative effort carried out at the Canadian-American Center, University of Maine, through conferences and publications growing out of its ‘Borderland Project.’ See Stephen J. Hornsby, Victor A. Konrad, and James J. Herlan, eds., *The Northeastern Borderlands: Four Centuries of Interaction* (Frederickton, 1989); Robert Lecker, ed., *Borderlands: Essays in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto, 1991). But see also Richard White’s extremely pertinent comments on some key implications that First Nations history would have for borderland studies, White, “Is There a North American History?”


31. Ibid., p. 84.


37. Ibid., vol. 19, p. 168.

38. The occupational composition of Canadians migrating to the United States during 1908 to 1930 has been reconstituted in Ramirez, Crossing the 49th Parallel, chapters 3 and 4—a study largely based on a systematic analysis of the rich data provided by the “Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries.”


between Europe and the United States." p. 47. Puzzling because Thistlethwaite acknowledged Hansen's *The Mingling*, and his actual comment was that Hansen "only acknowledged himself with migrants who had one special destination: the United States." Which, obviously, includes Canadians. Cf. Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas," p. 20.


50. Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants*, p. 3.