

Ethnic Studies in Atlantic Canada: Some Ethnics are More Ethnic than Others

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Browne's orientation was towards Europe and New England rather than towards Canada, and he was a faithful member of a church whose hierarchy was openly opposed to union. His is a useful account from the anticonfederate trenches. That he lost and Rowe and his party won might perhaps be explained by a symbolic incident on a St. John's wharf in the late 1940s. An elderly official was watching schooners from northern outharbours load up with supplies; he was heard to mutter in disbelief as he turned away, "Asparagus tips! Tinned pineapple chunks!"

The publications mentioned in this article have added immensely to our understanding of Newfoundland's experience in the 1930s and 1940s, though further work will be needed before a full synthesis is possible. Equally, more research is needed on some aspects of the country's political history prior to 1934. But the period is coming into focus, slowly perhaps, since like constitutional history, political history is hardly fashionable. Would the process be speeded up by a conference in Edinburgh two years hence on Atlantic Region political history? It might be worth a try.

JAMES K. HILLER

Ethnic Studies in Atlantic Canada: Or, Some Ethnics are More Ethnic than Others

THE STUDY OF ETHNICITY CONTINUES TO be one of the growth industries of Canadian scholarship, both academic and nonacademic branches. Increasingly in recent years, however, it has become clear that ethnic study is not a peculiarly Canadian phenomenon, but has a substantial international dimension. A recognition of ethnicity as an important human variable is, of course, not entirely of recent origin. Earlier generations studied ethnicity (calling it something else) under several rubrics. Much of the travel literature of the past dealt with the different customs of people to be found in exotic places, and with the rise of nationalism at the end of the 18th century, a good deal of ethnic analysis — however simplistic — went into the creation and promulgation of "nations" and "peoples" as the basis for new political reorganization of older outmoded states and empires.

The new ethnic studies share something in common with their historical ancestors, but their rationale has become much more complex, ranging along a very interesting continuum. That continuum begins on one side, perhaps, with the needs of the particular ethnic group itself for identity, recognition, and acceptance. Ethnic group identity in the Canadian context normally implies

some sort of minority status, although it certainly remains theoretically possible in most models of ethnicity for majorities to seek ethnic status. At the same time, majority ethnic groups in most cases identify themselves with the nation (or the province) rather than the ethnic group. This situation may be somewhat different in Canada, where the Anglophone majority is to some extent an artificial creation and the Francophone minority constitutes a majority in its own political entity, Quebec. In any event, ethnic groups that feel beleaguered and under some sort of siege are normally most insistent upon recognition of their history and traditions. Much of the literature of ethnicity is really little more than hagiographic treatment of the past development and present situation of an ethnic group. Often the approach taken is to celebrate the careers of famous or accomplished members of the ethnic community under study. Alternatively, a mythology of ethnic travail is created, uncovered, or developed, such as the widespread notion that all Highland Scots were cleared by rapacious landlords or all Irish departed their native land because of potato famines.

Self-identification, both of the ethnic group and of its particular history, is only the first step in the continuum of ethnic study. The second step is one of consciousness-raising, both within the ethnic community and within the host society. Some of that consciousness-raising occurs in the very process of identification, particularly among groups with records (mythological or documentable) of serious exploitation of and/or discrimination by the larger society. But the identification stage usually does not have a larger political agenda. In the Canadian context, consciousness-raising typically involves the documentation of limitations upon the group and the demand for the elimination of the racism, intolerance, and other factors that constrict its self-identified goals. In recent years, moreover, the goals include not only total equality and liberation, but frequently the recompense to the ethnic group for past abuses by the host society in its political guises. Thus Japanese-Canadians have sought (and received) compensation for Canadian policy during World War II, and the Metis of Manitoba have gone to court to recover lands they claim they were systematically defrauded of by the state after 1870. Retroactive compensatory justice is a quite different concept from contemporary justice, and part of the rationale behind campaigns for compensation is clearly to raise the consciousness of the host society, both to recognize the disadvantaged situation it has created and not to continue it.

Public consciousness-raising leads naturally into the next phase of the politics of ethnicity: the quest for a public policy or policies that reflect its existence and importance, both for particular ethnic groups and for ethnic groups in general. Probably no more profound shifts in public policy have been executed in Canada since 1950 than those surrounding the nation's immigration policy, which have opened the doors to much larger numbers of immigrants from outside the classic "preferred nations" of northern Europe and the United States. One result of a new immigration policy has been, of course, to exacerbate

a number of long-standing Canadian attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities of all descriptions, many of which will be slow in changing. One would like to believe that the policy of multiculturalism adopted by the Trudeau government in 1970 was motivated principally by the quest for new attitudes, but it is likely that a more important factor was the need to tidy up loose ends left over from the adoption of the policy of bilingualism and biculturalism. In any event, multiculturalism has been a government policy that has had a substantial impact upon ethnic study. Instead of group-generated study to influence policy, we now have policy influencing group study. The Multiculturalism Directorate of the Canadian Secretary of State's office has been a major player in the funding of ethnic studies within Canada. The process has, very interestingly, looped upon itself. Nowadays, the dictates of national policy make it possible for ethnic groups to engage in the business of self-identification.

To some extent, multiculturalism is engaged in the task of redefining the Canadian national character in ways deemed more appropriate to the national self-image than previous formulations. Almost by definition, the picture of Canada as a multicultural state within the framework of two founding peoples (bilingualism and biculturalism) serves to conjure up a nation quite different from others around the world, but particularly from the United States, where melting pots rather than mosaics have been the longstanding goal. As ethnic scholarship in the United States has been increasingly demonstrating, the Americans melted far less than either they or Canadians have previously believed. Nevertheless, Canada continues to try through multiculturalism to define itself as a distinctive society and to set appropriate goals for the late 20th century.

Where, one might ask, does academic scholarship on ethnicity fit into the above picture? A facile and somewhat facetious answer might be: with considerable difficulty. But such a generalization would be far too simplistic to deal with the complex factors of ethnic scholarship. It is true that the motivations discussed above are often easier to identify and isolate in academic studies than are the scholarly ones, partly because scholars have a tendency to write for one another and to assume that their readers share a conceptual and bibliographical framework that makes explicit discussion of such matters tedious and unnecessary. Moreover, ethnic studies is, on a variety of levels, a highly politicized field of endeavour. While totally detached and disinterested research is not impossible, it is difficult to achieve for several reasons.

One political factor with which scholars must deal is the question of funding. Ethnic studies represents a scholarly subfield in which the state has a considerable vested interest, reflected if in no other way through the priorities for public funding available for it. Much of the academic literature on ethnicity currently being generated in Canada has had its research and/or its publication financed by public agencies, particularly the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Dominion's Secretary of State office. Funding priorities do create "hot" academic fields, and

the sheer extent of the scholarship helps encourage others to enter it, either because they sense that ethnic projects are more easily funded or because the richness and diversity of the emerging literature supplies its own motivation for further study, refinement, and revisionism. Funding agencies are seldom so crass as to attempt to dictate to scholars the nature of their findings, but there is, nonetheless, a general ethos of ethnic studies (much of which reflects the general liberal inclinations of scholars regarding such matters as racism and tolerance) that is fairly unmistakable. Funding priorities combined with natural liberal academic attitudes do produce a general set of shared assumptions and a shape to much of the literature on Canadian ethnicity.

The politics of funding in Canada, particularly for book publication, has become quite significant for authors. Canadian book publishers, particularly the academic presses and the regional ones, have become almost totally dependent upon subsidies for their publication programmes. The relevant question for publishers has become less the quality of the manuscript than its eligibility for — and likelihood of receiving — subvention from one or more granting agencies. The Multiculturalism Directorate of the Secretary of State has been particularly active in promoting publications in the field of ethnic studies, with very little attempt to control quality. While Sec State's generous catholicity has meant that ethnic writing in Canada has not been subjected to much ideological control from Ottawa, it equally has not been subjected to very much quality control either. In fairness to ethnic writing, not much currently published in Canada has been forced to meet rigorous intellectual or stylistic criteria in order to justify publication. The emergence of desk-top publishing has completed what the subsidization process had begun. Obviously the openness of publication has both its advantages and disadvantages, the pursuit of which would be worth a separate essay. Here, the major point must be that the assistance of the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Secretary of State in publication, present for every book considered herein, produces no cachet of quality. Books on ethnicity can get published with subsidy, but so can almost anything else if the author is sufficiently persistent. Quality and utility are matters for the consumer, not the publisher or granting agency, to decide.

As far as perspective in ethnic studies is concerned, there is a general although not universal tendency for study of particular ethnic groups to be carried on from within rather than without. As a scholar who has done considerable work on the Scots, I am often asked (by members of the general community and scholars alike) how I came by such an interest given the fact that my surname is not of Scottish origin. Over the years I have found it easier to reply to such queries by remarking that "my grandmother was a Barclay" rather than attempting to explain the intellectual sequence of events that piqued my interest about Scots and Scottish emigration. And significantly, most querists profess themselves quite satisfied with such a response. There are obviously both attractions and advantages resulting from some direct identification with the ethnic group one is

studying, in the case of some groups involving religio-cultural background and in others a language facility without which large parts of the historical record are inaccessible. One of the reasons that so little has been done with the Welsh in Canada, for example, is that much of the background research must be done in Welsh documents and publications which few contemporary Canadians (even if of Welsh descent) can read. This self-selecting tendency for much ethnic scholarship has its obvious advantages and disadvantages, but it does make it exceedingly difficult to attain olympian detachment from the subject matter under investigation. For a variety of reasons, therefore, academics usually share with non-academics an engaged approach to the subject of ethnicity and ethnic groups. Such an observation does not impugn anyone's enterprise, but merely places it in a different and more realistic context than is often appreciated.

Although ethnic studies is frequently described as "interdisciplinary" in nature, in fact most academic work in the field remains firmly rooted in particular disciplines. As I have already suggested, each discipline has its own vocabulary, conceptual framework, and bibliography. Whatever the extent of cross-disciplinary attention — and it is really quite variable — there is usually an obvious disciplinary base that often constricts real dialogue among scholars. Like most recently developed hybrid fields in the humanities and social sciences with "studies" in their titles — one thinks of women's studies, labour studies, native studies, and indeed even Canadian Studies — the common vocabulary, methodological assumptions, and literature that characterize a distinctive discipline has not yet emerged in ethnic studies. Scholars still tend to talk past one another much of the time, and shared ideology or geographical commonality often serves as a surrogate for crossing disciplinary barriers. "Multidisciplinary" is usually a more appropriate descriptive term than "interdisciplinary".

If students of ethnicity and ethnic groups are separated from one another by disciplinary barriers, they often find some sense of community in geography, sometimes that of the country/region of origin, sometimes that of the country/region of destination, sometimes of both. In terms of Canadian ethnics, it remains the case that many groups have not distributed themselves across the nation in dutifully proportional terms. Thus those of Asian origin have, until recent years at least, been considerably over-represented in British Columbia, those of Ukrainian origin concentrated in western Canada or even on the prairies, and those of Acadian origin in the Maritime provinces. All of these concentrations can be quite straightforwardly explained, and often have been. Perhaps equally interesting, however, are those members of an ethnic group that manage to avoid the well-worn paths of their compatriots and end up in uncommon areas. While the Atlantic region has scarcely been composed of a homogeneous population throughout its history, it has developed several distinctive patterns. One is Canada's greatest concentration of British groups, broken until recent years only by substantial pockets of Acadians and one or two other minorities. The extent of Atlantic Canada's British-Canadian ethnic homogeneity may be

debateable, but from the standpoint of small numbers of ethnics standing outside the dominant groups, it has seemed quite discernible and occasionally disturbing. Studies of a number of such groups in the Atlantic context have appeared in recent years. How they came to wind up out of the mainstream and what this decision has meant are common themes in works that are otherwise quite disparate.

In the Atlantic region, as indeed in all others in Canada, there are distinct differences in the situation of ethnic groups being studied, in the both the past and present context. Some groups, like the English or the Scots, have since their first appearance been part of the majority culture and/or favourably treated in terms of their ethnic differences. Since even a group like the Scots has never been ethnically homogeneous, however, variations in treatment, reception, and self-image have occurred, depending on conditions at the time of departure from the mother country and circumstances in the area of settlement. And circumstances could and did change over time. The Yorkshiremen who settled in the Chignecto peninsula in the 1770s felt themselves part of a beleaguered minority, for example, as loyal Englishmen in communities of radical Yankees, although subsequent developments allowed them to slip into the mainstream. Highland Scots of Catholic religious persuasion and speaking the Gaelic language on Prince Edward Island were probably initially more isolated and consciously "ethnic" than those who settled in Cape Breton, although that situation would change over the 19th century, as these Scots became better integrated on P.E.I. and more of a minority after Cape Breton was amalgamated back into Nova Scotia. The worsening and only relatively recently improving conditions for Acadians are, of course, notorious, and even in the present the ethnic position of Acadians in New Brunswick is considerably different from those in Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland. Despite their numbers and the ostensible integration of Ireland into Great Britain in the late 18th and early 19th century, the Irish typically felt themselves beleaguered and discriminated against throughout the settlement period, although it mattered whether one was a Catholic southerner or a Protestant northerner. At the same time, the relative ease with which the Irish were able to integrate into English-speaking society has made them a much less visible ethnic group than the Gaelic Scots, much less frequently studied and chronicled. The Welsh disappeared so completely that it has required an effort of considerable skill to recover them.

Among the ethnic groups with readily identifiable differences from the majority cultures of the region — whether of language, religious practice, or colour of skin — the situation has been quite complex. In some cases small numbers seem to help in acceptance, as in the case of the Lebanese on Prince Edward Island or the Jews in Newfoundland. In most cases the passage of time heals, although not in the case of the blacks of the region, many of whom have better historic credentials than most inhabitants. Some groups, like the blacks, have sought integration and failed to achieve it. Others, like the Jews, have

joined the mainstream to the point where those who study them fear their loss of identity. The Welsh have totally vanished as a distinctive people. As with most subjects, that of ethnicity in the Atlantic region becomes increasingly more complicated the more it is investigated. It is almost axiomatic that what increased study does for a subject, beyond demonstrating its complexity, is constantly to muddy the waters of received wisdom. Scholars, of course, delight and thrive on complexity and intellectual controversy. The general public, by and large, takes a different view. It wants "the truth" in a palatable form, something easily comprehensible and inoffensive to its self-perception. Multiculturalism feels "good" to most Canadians, although whether they are prepared to accept its academic versions — or its ultimate logical implications — is another matter entirely.

Nancy and Joseph Jabbra's *Voyageurs to a Rocky Shore: The Lebanese and Syrians of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, Institute of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University, 1984), is easily the most academic work under consideration in this essay. It contains the almost ubiquitous notice of publication with the assistance from the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Secretary of State, although it deserves publication without subsidy. The Jabbras have taken a variety of approaches to their subject, most of them in the context of sociological discourse. They begin with a brief historical discussion of the movement of Lebanese and Syrians, then move quickly on to a series of individual case studies. They then turn to the question of the definition of ethnicity, offering a detailed discussion from the perspective of the sociological literature before attempting to fit their people into the picture. This survey of the field makes clear both the priorities and theoretical difficulties of the sociologists, who are particularly concerned with defining ethnicity in order to deal with the questions of assimilation and acculturation.

As the authors emphasize, the Lebanese and Syrians are a particularly interesting ethnic group to study in their North American context, since in their native habitat their traditional ethnic identification was as Arabs rather than as either Syrians or Lebanese, and Arabs are one of the more complex and amorphous ethnic groups around. For the Lebanese, their Arab background was complicated by their religion, which was often Christian rather than Muslim, and Christian of a curious type in the North American context (one sect of Lebanese immigrants ended up in the Anglican Church, for example). Much of the subsequent discussion of these immigrant groups in Nova Scotia is placed into the standard three-generational model of assimilation, and the reader gets the clear impression that — as with other groups — fresh immigration is all that retards an even more rapid rush to assimilation on the part of the third generation.

While the Jabbras are very strong on what are for them the central questions — what is an ethnic group and how does ours fit into the pattern? — they are less interested in matters either of history or of geography. Five individual immigrant

“histories” presented virtually without comment are no substitute for an analysis of how this fairly exotic immigrant group (at least in North American terms) managed to arrive and set down roots in Maritime Canada. Nor do we gain any real notion of the percentage of North American or Canadian Lebanese/Syrians in Nova Scotia, or the extent to which Nova Scotia is a representative experience for this ethnic group. Some of these missing ingredients are supplied by David Weale’s *A Stream Out Of Lebanon: An Introduction to the Coming of Syrian/Lebanese Emigrants to Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown, Institute of Island Studies, 1988), which takes a less theoretical and more historical approach to the presence of this ethnic group in another Maritime province.

Weale is aware of the importance of the question “Why Maritime Canada?” — although he does not really attempt to answer it. The Lebanese/Syrians on Prince Edward Island appear to have come there as part of a secondary migration from Nova Scotia, quickly establishing themselves as peddlars and storekeepers. Weale’s approach continues his earlier work on Prince Edward Island in its effort to present history clearly for the lay audience, with a minimum of jargon and heavy theoretical subtext. The story of the Lebanese, moreover, is congenial to the larger themes of the author’s work in Island history, in which the province’s past is nostalgically evoked and the future cast as a series of questions. There is, in the end, a strong subtext to this little book.

In the case of the Lebanese, Weale sees them at the crossroad in terms of their absorption into the Island community. Like Islanders generally, he argues in his conclusion, the Lebanese traditional culture has been dissolved by the “powerful solvent” of the “technocratic, popular culture of North America” (p. 47). Weale continues:

Increasingly, there are signs that this evanescent mass culture is, in many ways, a poor substitute for the traditional cultures it has supplanted, for it does not represent the careful working out over time of responses to the deepest questions of human existence. As a result, we discover on every hand a search for identity, for roots, for cultural integrity. But the quest is a difficult one. Where does one begin to look for such things? (p. 47)

The answer, Weale argues, is in traditions such as those of the Lebanese, which can feed into the larger stream of Island society. If the brief text that precedes this conclusion is any indication, it would appear doubtful that the surviving Lebanese tradition on Prince Edward Island has very much to offer. These people have been relatively well received by an alien community and culture, partly because there were not really enough of them to sustain an identity.

Like the Lebanese/Syrians, the Jews constitute an important component of the minority ethnic groups of the Atlantic region. It is interesting that two sets of peoples presently squared off against one another in the Middle East have both developed on the minority fringes of Atlantic culture. Sheva Medjuck offers an

overview of their historical development and present situation in *Jews of Atlantic Canada* (St. John's, Breakwater Press, 1986). Medjuck has done considerable work in the historical sociology of New Brunswick in the 19th century, but although this work has an historical component, it is mainly sociological in emphasis. Its two key sections are a statistical profile of Jewry in the Atlantic region, followed by an analysis of survey data on attitudes of members of the Jewish community. Both these sections depend heavily on a questionnaire sent to all 1,097 households on the mailing list of the Atlantic Jewish Council and responded to usefully by 379 individuals. This survey was supplemented by in-depth interviews with key members of the community.

Although the author insists that she has been heartened by the recognition within the Jewish community of the "importance of the historical method", she is forced to admit that her survey approach has not turned up as much historical detail as one might have wanted — or expected. As Medjuck observes:

It is a curious irony that Jews have such a strong sense of their collective history while at the same time have no appreciation of their own particularized histories. Thus, while they can recount tales of ancestors four thousands years ago, they lack any knowledge of their fellow Jews forty years ago. Unfortunately, many remain unconvinced that there is any clear rationale for wanting to uncover the histories of their communities (p. [9]).

Much the same observation could be made for most of other minority ethnic groups such as the Lebanese. As a result, although Medjuck recognizes the importance of attempting to understand how and why Jewish communities developed within the Atlantic region, she really cannot explain their history very adequately. Nor does the survey data, for what is admittedly an untypical region in terms of its Jewish population, have any comparative Canadian dimension. What Medjuck found is that Atlantic region Jews are strongly tied to synagogues (over 80 per cent are affiliated); believe that kosher dietary observance matters; did not experience much overt anti-semitism (over 60 per cent denied they had experienced any); support Israel; and finally, overwhelmingly oppose inter-faith marriage. Medjuck concludes that, despite small numbers and the difficulties of ethnic maintenance, Atlantic Jews are by and large managing fairly well under difficult circumstances.

Medjuck's survey results offer a more positive interpretation of the continuation of Jewish identity than Alison Kahn's *Listen While I Tell You: A Story of the Jews of St. John's, Newfoundland* (St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1987). Kahn is a folklorist, and this book began life as a thesis at Memorial University of Newfoundland. It is told by the author in the first person, and consists mainly of interviews with older members of the Jewish community of St. John's, many of whom live in retirement in central Canada. If the presence of Jews in the Atlantic region is a subject of comment, their existence in

Newfoundland must be a cause of considerable amazement. Kahn's informants do not really explain how the Jewish community in Newfoundland came to grow, although most of the early immigrants appear to have come from elsewhere in North America, often from the United States. At least one informant came to Newfoundland from Liverpool, England, having been deported from the United States. Offered a choice of Cuba or Newfoundland as places without strict immigration laws, he chose the northern island (p. 89). Not initially drawn to Newfoundland from eastern Europe, like the Lebanese in Prince Edward Island, the Jews began as peddlars and graduated into retail trade. Indeed, the similarities between the Lebanese on P.E.I. and the Jews in Newfoundland are strikingly similar, and it is regrettable that the nature of the approaches of Weale and Kahn preclude any serious pursuit of this comparison. As so often happens, research and writing on subjects unlikely to be reinvestigated come from completely dissimilar disciplinary origins, even within the narrow range of ethnic studies.

Kahn's presence is readily apparent in these pages, but her conclusions are not so obvious. The "voices" of the interviewed are intended to speak for themselves, and the reader must draw most of the generalizations. I find this strategy very tedious, but perhaps folklorists don't believe in managing their data. In any case, one gets a sense of a very beleaguered community, less affected by the overt hostility of the alien majority society than simply bewildered by its poverty and strangeness. Keeping a kosher kitchen was impossible, although almost every informant mentioned the same St. John's butcher who tried to be helpful about the dietary laws. Intermarriage was a constant threat, and the real danger for Newfoundland's Jews was not persecution but absorption. The author suggests in a brief conclusion that the St. John's community did not survive because "*they were not serious-minded Jews*" (p. 178, author's italics). Lacking sufficient knowledge of the Talmud — and rabbis to teach it — the Jewish community dissolved over the usual two generations of immigrant ethnicity. There is some sense of "blaming the victims" in such an analysis, which undervalues the problems faced by Newfoundland's Jews. Weale makes much the same point for P.E.I.'s Lebanese when he notes that they lacked a sense either of Arabness or of national ties. What are the minimal requirements for ethnic survival? Does the region matter? Such questions remain unanswered in most of these writings.

Almost all of the problems and questions raised in the foregoing pages are exposed — if not addressed — in *Work, Ethnicity, and Oral History*, subtitled "Proceedings of a Conference at Baddeck, N. S." and edited by Dorothy E. Moore and James H. Morrison (Halifax, International Centre, Saint Mary's University, 1988). Conferences are places where interdisciplinary things do occasionally happen and from which new ideas do come, but seldom do published conference proceedings accurately reflect the results of a good conference. The emergence of desktop publishing and publication subsidies have combined to proliferate the number of conference proceedings now finding their way into print under the auspices of academic units like Saint Mary's International

Education Centre. The relative ease of publication acts as a counter-force to the economic pressures of the marketplace, with mixed effects on quality control. Few sets of conference proceedings contain more than a handful of memorable papers, and gaining access to the good work becomes ever more difficult, particularly given the lack of contact between most of the regional academic networks in Canada.

Combining the topics of work, ethnicity, and oral history was in principal a good idea. Much of the study of ethnicity is, or at least ought to be concerned with behaviour in the workplace. Both labour studies and ethnic studies, particularly among peripheral groups, must rely heavily on oral history (or as it so often ends up, oral folklore) as evidence. Given the conference organizers and location, there was bound to be a heavy Nova Scotia emphasis. Unfortunately, the conference papers ended up being about too many subjects and lacking much useful focus on the interactions among the gathering's ostensible themes. Several of the most interesting papers added gender to work and ethnicity, but as a whole, the conference — at least on paper — never congealed, and the editors have not provided a sufficient input and comment of their own to make the connections. Short of listing every paper, there is no way for a reviewer to be sure that readers are made aware of over 20 very disparate contributions, many only loosely related to the ostensible title of the conference. This problem is one of the most endemic difficulties for such sets of proceedings.

Finally, we turn to three works dealing with what one might at first glance think are “main-stream” ethnic groups in the Atlantic context. But all three studies deal with neglected groups: the New Brunswick Irish; the Prince Edward Island Acadians; and the Maritime Welsh. Only the work on the Welsh breaks much new ground in terms of ethnic studies, the other two being more important for the historiography of their region or province.

New Ireland Remembered, subtitled *Historical Essays on the Irish in New Brunswick* and edited by P. M. Toner (Fredericton, New Ireland Press, 1988) is already in a second printing, which suggests that it has been something of a popular success beyond the fondest hopes of its sponsors. The essays contained herein collectively point up, as the editor insists, that “in New Brunswick, the impact of the Irish during the 19th century was profound” (p. ii), since they were the largest single ethnic group in the province. Those familiar with recent academic writing on New Brunswick history will find little new in these pages, but one gathers that such specialists were not the intended audience anyway. Social violence, the Orange Order, Irish Catholicism, the Irish in the Miramichi, Fenianism and Confederation, the Irish in Saint John — in short, the familiar topics — all receive consideration in these pages, a sort of sampler of the “new social history” of New Brunswick from the Irish perspective.

As Toner observes in his editorial introduction, the Irish have survived as an ethnic group without many of the usual prerequisites of ethnic retention, although he fails to mention the way in which St. Patrick's Day — an ethnic

holiday if ever there is one — has become a national experience. The St. Patrick's Day business suggests some of the ways in which the Irish in New Brunswick or elsewhere in Canada are a different kind of ethnic group from the Lebanese or the Jews, however improperly their historical experience may be understood.

Georges Arsenault's *The Island Acadians 1720-1980* (Charlottetown, Ragweed Press, 1989) is an English translation of the author's 1987 work, winner of the 1988 Prix-France Acadie. The translation, by Sally Ross, is highly readable. Arsenault's history of the Acadians has almost no connection to the received history of the Anglo majority on the Island, indicative both of the way that the majority has neglected the Acadians and the particular focus of this work, which emphasizes Acadian survival and implicit parallels to the history of Acadia outside the island. It is not at all clear whether Arsenault sees his Acadians as ethnics — the term is not in his index nor prominent in the text, which indicates no familiarity with the literature on ethnicity. Accepting the Jabbras' definition of an ethnic group — “an aggregate, category, or group of people who share a common culture, social structure, and/or physical appearance differing from those of other similar aggregates, categories, or groups, and who identify with or are identified with that aggregate, category, or group” (p. 40) — the Acadians are plainly ethnics, particularly if one accepts Arsenault's view of their continued distinctiveness despite considerable acculturation and especially in the context of Prince Edward Island. That Acadian studies are not more obviously a part of the ethnic studies enterprise in Canada tells us a good deal about the politics of ethnicity in this nation.

The Welsh are not only members of the British majority in the Maritimes, but they are also Britons without any profile at all, in either the past or the present. In *Strangers from a Secret Land: The Voyages of the Brig Albion and the Founding of the First Welsh Settlements in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986) Peter Thomas has done yeoman service in recovering a Welsh past for the region, one involving not anglicized Welsh folk but people with a quite distinctive culture and language, who established beachhead settlements in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the early years of the 19th century. Like most great immigration studies, this one is equally competent on both sides of the Atlantic, and provides the first serious attempt at the Welsh context of immigration (and later lack of it) to Canada. The beachhead settlements did not draw other Welsh to them, as had similar settlements by Scots and Irish, and Thomas does not really attempt to explain what had happened to staunch the early flow of Welsh immigration, at least to British North America. But this book is elegantly written, with a richness of texture not present in any of the other works under discussion here. It will doubtless become a classic of Canadian ethnic and immigration studies.

What are we to conclude from the foregoing collection of work on ethnic topics in the Atlantic region? The field is likely to continue to be an active one, for all the possible ethnic groups and localities of their settlement have not yet

been exhausted. The importance of the region (except as setting) in most of these studies is not at all apparent. Some ethnics, such as the Jews, are more ethnic than others. And some ethnics, such as the Acadians, appear not to be ethnics at all. Whatever the extent of ethnicity in their approach, all these studies share a common sense of tension and ambivalence. They seek for their subjects a full sharing in economic prosperity and social equality, at the same time that they maintain an expectation of a separate sense of identity. Acculturation is desirable, so long as it doesn't go too far. If Atlantic Canada's ethnic groups can manage this trick of balancing short of assimilation, the ostensible ideal of multiculturalism, they will indeed have done well.

J.M. BUMSTED

The Canadian Encyclopedia of Limitless Identities

THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA IN BOTH ITS 1985 and 1988 editions has been hailed by most reviewers as a publishing triumph. I have no quarrel with such a position. As someone who teaches Canadian Studies and is presently writing several chapters for an introductory Canadian history textbook, I can testify to the enormous value of this handsome monument to Alberta's 75th anniversary as a Canadian province and to Mel Hurtig's unflinching confidence in Canada as an independent national entity. The expanded second edition, the subject of this review, is especially welcome, correcting, as it does, some of the errors of the first, providing statistics from the 1986 census, and offering a more reliable index. Unfortunately, the second edition adds new errors and consolidates some of the questionable assumptions built into the *Encyclopedia's* structure. It will, of course, come as no surprise to readers of *Acadiensis* that some of these difficulties arise from the way in which the Atlantic Region is integrated into the *Encyclopedia's* "national" perspective. For, although "limited identities" are richly explored in these volumes, reflecting, as they must, the intellectual climate of the times, the pitfalls of this approach are also starkly revealed.

I will not dwell long on the virtues of the *Encyclopedia*. It is obvious even from a cursory glance that it is a well-illustrated, meticulously-edited publication, an indispensable reference work for every home and school library. My undergraduate students are already plagiarizing its entries on such topics as Patriation of the Constitution, Foreign Investment and Women's Suffrage, no doubt spurred by the assumption that no professor in her right mind would read "the whole damned thing". In truth, many of the entries in the *Encyclopedia* are a pleasure to read. Among my favourites are Jack Granatstein's spirited piece on Canada and the United States, presumably penned while the free trade debate was reaching a crescendo, and J. Murray Beck's loving overview of his native province, whose