

## Reviews of Books

*Les Réfugiés Acadiens en France: 1758-1785, L'impossible Réintégration?* By Jean-François Mouhot. Paris: Septentrion. 2009. 210 pp. €37.75. ISBN: 9782894485132.

Jean-François Mouhot's examination of Acadian refugees in France in the three decades following their expulsion from *Acadie* (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) by the British in 1755 focuses on two key groups of migrants, which form a particular subset—and indeed a minority—of the totality of Acadians deported (who numbered around 10,000). The first group was made up of the 2000-2500 Acadians from Louisbourg and Ile Royale who arrived directly in France between 1758 and 1759, and the second was made of the 1500 Acadians deported from the Grand-Pré region of Nova Scotia to Virginia in 1755, who then moved on to England, of whom around 800 arrived in France in 1763.

These particular Acadians are the focus of Mouhot's work because their sojourn in France during the three decades between 1758 and 1785—seen in the light of their departure for Louisiana at the latter date—provides an effective optic through which to observe and then to interrogate the impact of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliation upon them. Mouhot's overall concern is with refuting the existent literature on Acadian identity in general and on the Acadians' stay in France in particular, a literature which, Mouhot argues, relies on two interrelated points: first, on Acadians' essential North American-ness which was the source of their unhappiness in France, as their intrinsic independence prevented them from fitting in with metropolitan expectations of peasants; and second, on narrow understandings of the intentions of the French state towards the migrants predicated on the existence of a coherent resettlement policy and a consistent desire to integrate them. Mouhot's book examines metropolitan plans for Acadian resettlement, the migrants' economic situations while in France and the ways of the migrants represented their cases before the French administration in order to prove that neither of these assumptions is correct.

Indeed, studying how Catholicism and Frenchness defined Acadians' identity while they were residing in Catholic France demands a closer analysis and sharper powers of observation than would asking the same questions of the Acadian identities formed in largely Protestant Anglophone North America, where the majority of Acadians settled following 1755. This innovative angle and Mouhot's impressively detailed research certainly constitute his greatest contribution to the current historiography on Acadian dispersal and identity formation. Nonetheless, Mouhot's conclusion that the degree to which Acadians understood themselves during their 30-year sojourn in France to be a coherent 'nation' apart was negligible comes, perhaps, as no great surprise.

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