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Geoffrey Plank delineates the course of British policy changes regarding the colony of Nova Scotia from about 1710 to about 1760. His dual scope acknowledges policymakers’ perception of a joint threat from Acadians and Mi’kmaqs in the event of a war with France during the tense half-century following French cession of Acadie in the Peace of Utrecht. He downplays the influence of French Catholic clergy as French emissaries, particularly among the Mi’kmaqs.

The book’s climax and focus is the expulsion of thousands of Acadians following the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War. The cover reproduces a nineteenth-century illustration from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem *Evangeline*: Redcoats forcing the separation of an Acadian family. Plank’s research delivers less actual English-bashing than the cover blurb and illustration suggest.

The book’s subtext answers the implicit question, “Who was to blame for the Grand Dérangement?” with the predictable answer: British officials, with twin assimilation goals of Anglicizing and Protestantizing. It is in tracing how officials came to their decision to expel Acadian men who refused an unqualified oath of allegiance that Plank presents a broad array of relevant documentation for understanding currents of identity, competition, and suspicion—as well as greed for fishing grounds and good farmland.

The author’s thesis is that the British switched their approach to Mi’kmaqs and Acadians during the first half of the eighteenth century. As new masters of Acadie, according to Plank, they envisioned sending the Acadians to France and assimilating the Mi’kmaqs into Nova Scotia’s economy and society. By mid-century, he maintains, they had determined to isolate the Mi’kmaqs and assimilate the Acadians into Protestant British America. Mi’kmaqs indeed became marginal and isolated, but displaced Acadians returned to Nova Scotia legally after the war and/or relocated within present-day Maritime Canada, most notably in western Nova Scotia, now New Brunswick, nurturing a distinctive cultural identity.

There are points of strain as Plank works to trace this crisscrossing evolution of policy. Even so, the fruits of his research are valuable. For this reader, however, they do not point cumulatively to some “British” responsibility for the Acadian expulsion, which remains his driving sub-text. Rather, they point cumulatively to colonial Americans, particularly New Englanders. The strength of Plank’s analysis is that at many points he distinguishes among English, Scottish, and regional colonial individuals, connections and interests, but his concern to bind them together as a new eighteenth-century British imperial conglomerate has little resonance with his New England and Nova Scotia material.

Ultimately, Plank credits an imperial British outlook as the force behind injustices that befell eighteenth-century Acadians and Mi’kmaqs. His evidence does link components of British imperial identity, but it will be difficult to digest Plank’s treatment without seeing New Englanders and New England interests at the center of the thrust against both Mi’kmaqs and Acadians.

One expects that Acadians throughout Maritime Canada will be puzzled by the cover’s careless assertion that the Acadians’ “most famous descendants are the Cajuns of Louisiana.”
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