GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

People who emigrated from Britain to the United States and the colonial territories of white settlement in the British Empire came from four nations, not one. Many would have identified themselves as Irish, Scottish, English and Welsh rather than British. Some would have subdivided these identities further, into northern or southern Irish (long before there was a geographical border to demarcate such a distinction), into Highlands, Islands, Lowlands, Borders in Scotland, into northern and southern Welsh, and into various geographical versions of Englishness, including specific counties like Cornwall. But such subdivisions were not only geographic: they were also sometimes linguistic (Irish and Scottish forms of Gaelic, the separate Scots language, Welsh, and even English dialects); they were often religious (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican and various forms of so-called 'non-conformity'); they were certainly cultural, a category that includes literature, song, and musical instruments, historical icons, architectural and domestic traditions, as well as culinary distinctions and diet; and there were also issues of educational methods and attainments. Additionally, there were questions of kin, of clans in the Scottish case, and of geographical affiliation, with attendant networks of friends and acquaintances in all cases.

Such aspects of ethnic identities began to interact on board emigrant ships where, invariably, people from different backgrounds within the UK mingled, noting the distinctive characteristics of each other's culture as they did so. To that they added matters of physical appearance and supposedly stereotypical character traits. The more literate among them often recorded these, as a source of curiosity, wonder, laughter and anxiety, in shipboard diaries or in letters home. Once they had landed at their destinations, such markers of ethnic origin certainly did not disappear overnight. Questions of their continuation have become important in the studies of such emigration flows and consequently of the manner in which they contributed to the European-formed national identities of countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and even South Africa. The manner in which different ethnicities may have interacted with indigenous peoples in various ways has also become a significant source of study.

Some of these issues have occasionally been studied in terms of specific identities (such as the Scots). The great strength of Angela McCarthy's book is that she examines both Irish and Scottish identities in New Zealand in comparative mode. But there are other strengths too. McCarthy sets her work into an already extensive historiography looking at work on identities in the United States and in other 'dominions' of the British Empire, as well as exhibiting an easy familiarity with the different component parts of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Moreover, she uses an extraordinary range of primary sources to build up her analyses, including shipboard diaries, letters,

GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

reminiscences and oral interviews, spanning the period from the earliest days of 'pakeha' (immigrant) New Zealand in the 1840s right down to the 1950s. She also examines the various issues of identity listed in the first paragraph above as well as the important question of relations with the Maori people.

But identities do not die with the first generation of migrants. They live on into second and third generations and even beyond. Why this happens constitutes one of the great questions of Canadian, Australian and New Zealand social and cultural history. In some cases, the markers of identity are naturally continuous – family names, place names, religion (even with the onward march of agnosticism and atheism). In others, they are cultural lifestyle choices. In the latter instance it is even possible to identify revivals in more modern times, as with (in the Scottish case) Highland Games, Burns suppers, pipe bands, clan societies, even at times efforts to reconnect with the Gaelic language. Some historians see this as 'bogus', but that is to belittle the social and cultural affiliations that people choose to adopt in order to express themselves and connect both with their pasts (however 'mythic', which is just another way of expressing deeply felt truths) and with people of like interests. The efforts of people to link themselves to former times through family and genealogical history (such a growing field in recent times), the study of history, even if only of its iconic moments, represent deep psychological and cultural needs. Suggesting that they are somehow spurious represents the 'de haut en bas' attitude of the elite scholar, disconnected from the real world. Other historians like to pursue their own fantasy of 'integration', the 'melting pot', but the reality is much more complex. Some aspects of integration do of course occur, but it is a fascinating fact that identities become layered and complex among people who have relocated to other parts of the world. It is the work of the historian to understand and to explain these complexities, not to reject them, and Angela McCarthy displays admirable tenacity in doing so. Other scholars should be able to build on her work.

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