

*From Red Ochre to Black Gold.* Edited by Darrin McGrath.

Philip Hiscock

Volume 18, Number 1, Spring 2002

The New Early Modern Newfoundland: Part One

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds18\\_1rv04](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds18_1rv04)

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Publisher(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (print)

1715-1430 (digital)

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Cite this review

Hiscock, P. (2002). Review of [*From Red Ochre to Black Gold.* Edited by Darrin McGrath.] *Newfoundland Studies*, 18(1), 139–142.

<sup>3</sup>Gordon Inglis, "Truth and Fiction," *Newfoundland Studies* 16, 1 (2000), 69.

<sup>4</sup>Ronald Rompkey, "Newfoundland and Labrador: Colonial and Post-colonial Writing," Unpublished paper, n.d. I am grateful to Dr. Rompkey for allowing me to see a copy of this paper. At the time of writing this review, Stan Dragland's 2000 Pratt Lecture on Johnston was unavailable.

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Drabble (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (5th edition. Oxford University Press, 1985), 463, 336.

<sup>6</sup>Lillian Bouzane, *In the Hands of the Living God* (Winnipeg, Turnstone, 1999). Though women in late fifteenth-century Europe certainly wrote and performed music, it was within conventual or private, not public settings. I am grateful to Dr. Jane Gosine for information on this point. Rose Tremain dropped a similar clanger in her much-praised *Music and Silence* (London, Vintage, 1999), set for the most part in seventeenth-century Denmark. A sub-plot hinges on the visit of a paper-maker to Scandinavia to find wood supplies — but the technique of making paper from wood pulp was not invented until the nineteenth century.

<sup>7</sup>The first line in L.P Hartley's 1953 novel, *The Go-between*.

<sup>8</sup>Gordon Inglis commends Patrick O'Brian and George MacDonald Fraser.

*From Red Ochre to Black Gold*. Edited by Darrin McGrath. St. John's, Flanker Press, 210 pp., trade pbk., \$16.95, 2001, ISBN 1-894463-17-x.

## PHILIP HISCOCK

GARRY CRANFORD'S FLANKER PRESS in St. John's has been producing books at a rapid rate, about two dozen titles over the past two or three years. Some of these books are dependable reprints of local books of popular history — three of Cassie Brown's books are examples. Others are more recent — for example, the White Bay author Earl Pilgrim has had several titles published, including the best-selling *Will Anyone Search For Danny?* (1986). Local history and collections of themed essays are also represented in a list of commendable range and quality.<sup>1</sup>

In mid-2001 Flanker published *From Red Ochre to Black Gold*, a collection of essays edited by Darrin McGrath, who is well known in Newfoundland both as a sociologist and as a public figure. He has taught at both campuses of Memorial University, and has lobbied, written letters, and called open-line shows on topics related to what he sees as the decline of Newfoundlanders' access to the outdoors and its fruits. Some of the essays here are relevant to this topic.

No doubt as a result of teaching courses about this province's society and culture, McGrath was aware of the need for an eclectic collection focusing on cultural and social issues in the past and present. It's a problem I have faced, too, teaching

courses about Newfoundland folklore. In this volume McGrath has put together ten essays that, with his introduction, cover a range of human activity in the province, both current and historical. Whether or not he meant it to be a good textbook, it is. I have used it in a university Folklore course and have found that more than half the material can serve as useful cultural matter. It would be even more useful in a course looking more broadly at life in Newfoundland.

*Red Ochre* is perhaps the most scholarly of Flanker's current crop of books (though Maura Hanrahan's recent bibliography on food is a close second).<sup>2</sup> The essays were almost all written as academic papers, replete with notes and bibliographic references. Like so much scholarly writing, the style varies from the rivetingly light through the — dare I say soporifically? — dense and arcane.

The title refers to the opening and closing pieces by the late Ralph Pastore and by Wade Locke. The first is an analysis of the economy of the Beothucks' extinction. The other is a discussion of how governments might better use oil revenues in a strategy to improve the province's economy. In between are articles that examine the interaction of culture and society from a wide variety of perspectives, some of them reprints, some new. Jodi Durdle's examination of women's coping mechanisms in rural Newfoundland, and Maura Hanrahan's discussion of the integrative South Labrador Métis custom of sharing salmon are two interesting, new pieces. Two reprints are Pastore's valuable article, and Marjorie Doyle's short essay reflecting on current uses of the Newfoundland outdoors. (Doyle, by the way, has what she calls "path rage" over the lack of respect our outdoors gets.)

The editor does not always make clear the publication history of the articles, which can be problematic. Tom Nemec's "Political Brokerage on the Southern Avalon Peninsula" is a case in point. There is no indication whether it was published before, when the research was done, and when it was written. Internal clues suggest it was produced some time ago, since there is nothing in the bibliography later than 1973. It remains a well-argued discussion, and one suspects that most of what it says is certainly as true today as it was 30 years ago, even though Nemec's brokers, if they have survived, must be in their 80s or 90s.

Other points of apparatus make this book a sometimes frustrating read. The reference to McGrath's M.A. thesis (73) gives no title. Bibliographic style is inconsistent. Article titles have variously no quotation marks (39, 163), single quotation marks (180), double quotation marks (73), and both none and double on page 145. Some references are ambiguous or vague: is *Marine Policy* a journal or a book (182)? Pagination is left out of one set of citations: does Wellbourne's article (75) take up an entire issue of *Equinox*? The references on page 10 to a source simply called "1987" are unclear.

On the other hand, there is something beautifully Canadian in this book's welcoming attitude to style. Flanker seems to have no house style, and McGrath has an especially light editorial hand. Variant spellings hang precariously between the nationally variable and the not-in-the-dictionary. On the former, this obsessively

picky reader noticed that Doyle spells British: "centred" (57), while Nemec spells American: "labor" (126). Or does he? For instance, he uses "levelling" (128) with the British "-ll-." Peter Sinclair flicks back and forth from metric tonnes to tons of fish, while Shannon Ryan uses only tons of seal oil. Ahh, this is the country where we buy grams of sliced meat (and hash, perhaps), but weigh our babies and ourselves in pounds and ounces. The need to have and use a good dictionary is raised on reading "genealogist" (152) and "Inuktituk" (153).

Darrin McGrath's own main chapter is on the culture of poaching in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. This is an interesting excursion into the pervasive culture of illegality, a topic that has been investigated by sociologists, folklorists, historians and anthropologists. Here McGrath, the sociologist, examines the legal and cultural history of poaching. He could have used some folklore! The existence of songs like "The Moonshine Can" (about a community supporting a man convicted of making his own whiskey), "The Moose Song" (about a community rallying against the police informer about an illegal moose kill), "The Hunting of the Bawks" (a protest against the legal restrictions on shooting birds), and, in the 1990s, "Jig One On the Sly" (a poaching anthem) underscores McGrath's point that freedom of access to materials and processes controlled by governments was a cultural claim of rural people. There are many more folkloric examples.

Turning the idea of the culture of illegality on its head, James Overton's "Official Acts of Vandalism" is a discussion of the mid-1990s privatization of provincial parks. Asking who the vandals really are, Overton places the event in the context of changing attitudes not only to government ownership, but also to what constitutes good development. By the 1990s, people who still thought that the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador was not for sale were being told to "Get Real." "Reality" meant that we sold our culture and non-cultural heritage just as we sold our real property, our realty. In a province that used its songs and tales and legends as reified grist to a cultural flour mill, the sale of beauty spots and commons was now normal. In a section on the puzzling, if not bizarre, stand taken by the Newfoundland government against gravel pit camping, the clear interaction of culture, society and economy is shown.

Some of these articles deal more directly with the economy than others. Peter Sinclair's article examines the lead-up to the 1992 groundfish moratorium. He argues that the principal cause of the decline in groundfish was overfishing. Shannon Ryan's article on the development of the commercial seal hunt and seal oil industry in Newfoundland is a superb outline of the rise and decline of Newfoundland's first industrial culture. I, the folklorist, say "industrial culture," but Ryan's article (unlike some of his other work) deals more specifically with the historical economy of sealing.

*Red Ochre* is a generally well-presented, and always enjoyable book, filled with intelligent and provocative thought. Its deficiencies are far outweighed by its

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strengths: information and commentary from social, economic and cultural viewpoints. I hope Flanker continues to publish books of this genre.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For example, Garry Cranford and Ed Janes, *From Cod to Crab: Stories and History of Hant's Harbour* (1995), and Cranford (ed.), *Sea Dogs and Skippers* (2001).

<sup>2</sup>Maura Hanrahan and Marg Ewtushik, *A Veritable Scoff: Sources on Foodways and Nutrition in Newfoundland and Labrador* (2001).