

Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed. — *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993, Pp. 272.

Whether considered the "elixir of life" or the "demon rum", alcohol has permeated the fabric of Canadian society since Europeans first came to this country, and it remains a powerful influence on our society today. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh has edited a collection of historical essays that explore the contested meanings and the social functions of alcoholic drink. "Rather than concentrate upon the failure of prohibition", Warsh insists, "historians must examine the persistent success of beverage alcohol. Why, indeed did John Barleycorn 'prove the strongest man at last'?" (p. 5). Warsh introduces the volume with a comparative review of the social history of alcohol, paying particular attention to recent anthropological perspectives. "John Barleycorn Must Die: An Introduction to the Social History of Alcohol" describes the who, when, where, and why of alcohol consumption in the context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century societies. She points to the importance of the social sciences in directing historians to investigate the "social, psychological, and economic functions of drinking" (p. 5). If the essays contained in this book are any indication, Canadian historians have begun to follow this direction. *Drink in Canada* represents a wide breadth of topics, which clearly depart from the existing social history on Canadian temperance and prohibition.

Several essays in this collection offer creative perspectives on nineteenth-century temperance movements by bringing ethnicity to the forefront. Jan Noel writes about the efforts of a Roman Catholic priest, Father Charles Chiniquy, who effectively painted temperance in mid-century Canada East in nationalistic colours. Priests and *patriotes* were reconciled over the issue of drink, though not without uneasy tension. Local religious revivals and secular reforms harnessed both Roman Catholic ultramontane and *rouge* liberal efforts against the "canker of intemperance". Particular characteristics set French Canadian temperance apart from similar movements elsewhere in Canada: the clerical monopoly, the absence of extensive participation by women, and the extent of its success (over half of the francophone population pledged temperance by 1850) before mass industrialization. Noel capitalizes on the "dry patriotism" of the Chiniquy crusade by portraying it as a movement best understood within its particular ethno-cultural context.

In "Temperance in Upper Canada as Ethnic Subterfuge", Glenn Lockwood also emphasizes ethnicity as a central theme behind temperance activity. In the Upper Canadian counties of Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark, the temperance movement had a definite ethno-political agenda. Lockwood argues that the massive influx of Irish immigrants to the Canadas in the 1830s triggered a "complex of interwoven ethnic, religious, and political fears and grievances" (p. 44) within the Loyalist-host society. The temperance movement thus became the outlet with which to cope with these fears, "to stave off potential assimilation ... and as a cover for organizing politically in response to Orangeism" (p. 49). By focusing on perceptions of the Irish by non-Irish settlers, Lockwood effectively avoids becoming entangled in the recent debate over the nature of Irish immigration, although he is often unclear whether only

Upper Canadians of American origin or all non-Irish residents exploited temperance lodges for political ends. It is a notable omission, however, that Warsh's collection does not include the most obvious Canadian ethnic group for study: Canada's First Nations. An essay on Canadian aboriginal peoples and alcohol would have nicely complemented the focus on ethnicity in the previous two essays.

In one way or another, all the essays in *Drink in Canada* deal with the social functions and daily use of alcohol. In particular, the issue over how to control consumption illuminates the debate over private versus public solutions to the "problem" of alcohol. What are the contested meanings of drink? How are these attitudes constructed and reproduced? Warsh sheds some light on these questions in her second essay, which explores the impact of the Victorian cult of True Womanhood on the female alcoholic and upon the gender of drinking. Female alcohol abuse was stereotyped in sexual terms as the "fallen woman" or the "bad mother", and she notes that "these stereotypes were especially compelling because ... they crossed class lines" (p. 71). By the late nineteenth century, female liquor consumption had virtually disappeared from public view, driven into secrecy largely as a result of social pressures and assumptions about who drank alcohol.

Jim Baumohl explores North American society's solutions to alcoholism by examining two approaches to residential treatment of male alcoholics. One approach, closely associated with the temperance movement, considered habitual drunkenness to be a moral issue. Its solution was voluntary commitment in a "retreat" or "home" designed to facilitate the personal "battle with the bottle". The other approach defined alcohol abuse as a disease which could best be treated by involuntary commitment in asylum-type, often state-supported institutions. Yet as much as it was perceived as a "social problem", alcohol abuse undoubtedly had a great impact at the personal level. James Sturgis's biography of one family's struggle with alcoholism represents a departure from the impersonal and sociological approach of much of the temperance literature. The plight of the Rennie brothers illustrates the private tragedy experienced by many nineteenth-century families.

Legislation and liquor control were often the means by which attitudes towards alcohol were both reinforced and enforced. Public policy is explored in three of the book's essays. Jacques Paul Couturier examines liquor laws in Moncton, N.B., as a case study of legislation and enforcement. His study is very revealing of the community's ambivalence towards alcohol legislation, particularly over the role of government and municipal authority in its enforcement. Ernest Forbes also centres his inquiry on public reaction to liquor control. "The East Coast Rum-Running Economy" considers the role of the underground economy and the bureaucracy created to combat it. During prohibition, Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland turned to rum-running, not for profit, but to survive a depressed economy. In this and many other regions in Canada, the changes in public policy towards alcohol introduced new issues. Robert A. Campbell discusses the evolution of state liquor control in post-prohibition British Columbia. As liquor control became an important source of income for the government, a new dilemma emerged. Was the purpose behind continued state monopoly of liquor to create revenue or to exercise control?

Today, governments remain torn over policies of liberalization and moderation, proving Campbell's assertion that liquor "control is still as important as profit" (p. 192).

In many ways the essays in *Drink in Canada* reflect the diversity of research on the history of alcohol, summarized by Pamela McKenzie's thematic bibliography at the book's conclusion. It is still a very young field of inquiry, and Warsh's rich collection reflects the quality of social history already produced by scholars within it. The historians represented here have succeeded in explaining Canadians' ambivalent relationship with alcohol. I highly recommend this book as a valuable contribution to the burgeoning historiography of drink in Canada.

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Kris Inwood, ed. — *Farm, Factory and Fortune: New Studies in the Economic History of the Maritime Provinces*. Fredericton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press, 1993. Pp. viii, 274

In these times when fragmentation, deconstruction, and post-modernism are threatening the tranquillity of academic pursuits, it is comforting to reflect on the great historical debates of earlier and (for many historians) happier times. One of the great traditions of Western history has been the periodic emergence of a single issue around which historians' diverse interests could coalesce — the formulation of a single question whose answer, for a time at least, seemed essential to understanding an entire national or even international history. British historians argued for decades over the standard of living during industrialization before turning their attention to the troubling question of why Britain had no revolution in 1848. French historians worried for years over the question "Which class started the Revolution?", while German historians have been obsessed with "What happened to pervert our liberal tradition?" Although it is difficult to discover a definitive national debate in Canada, those from "the regions" have been united in their apparent diversity by the single question, itself a distinctively Canadian derivative of modernization theory, "Why didn't we turn out like Ontario?"

The calming effect of these single-question issues has, like the clarity and coherence of much of the research they spawned, been seriously disrupted by the international collapse of functionalist systems and positivist ideology. Over the past decade, as Giovanni Levi summarizes, "what has been called into question is the idea of a regular progression through a uniform and predictable series of stages in which social agents were considered to align themselves in conformity with solidarities and conflicts that were in some sense given, natural and inevitable" ("On Microhistory" in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Penn State University Press, 1992, p. 94). The essays in *Farm, Factory and Fortune* suggest that, while social historians may be writhing under crumbling monolithic explanations and destabilized structures of meaning, Canadian economic