

community, police brutality, and black/Jewish relations. Along these lines, the author asserts that social welfare benefits did not destroy the black family, that families were flexible and mutually supportive, and that a broad array of citizens with different interests became involved in movements for social change.

Because of its heavy reliance on institutional data and statistics, some parts of *Or Does it Explode?* are dry. The author might have added life to the book by interviewing politicians, activists, business owners, and Harlem residents about their experience during the Depression in the manner that makes Studs Terkel's books so gripping.

Nevertheless, "*Or Does It Explode?*" *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* is a well-written and detailed book that is a valuable resource for scholars interested in Harlem life, race relations, ethnic politics, and the Great Depression.

— Steve Gold  
Whittier College

**Joseph Hobbs. *Bedouin Life in the Egyptian Wilderness*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992) 165 pp., \$25.00.**

It is not often that a person can pick up a book and read it with clarity and understanding, especially ethnographic materials that attempt to describe peoples of various cultural orientations. Joseph Hobbs has managed to accomplish this task in an enlightening manner.

Hobbs's book on the Macaza Bedouins is extensive yet concise in its presentation of the lifestyle, habits, history, environment, and beliefs of these pastoral nomads who make their home in the deserts of Egypt and Southwest Asia. It is noted that these mainly Arabic-speaking people and their culture are a direct manifestation of their interaction in their arid environment. This is not unusual given the limited rainfall that occurs in their homeland and their astute ability to maximize the utility of their surroundings. This position is presented consistently by the author throughout the text.

It is more than evident that Bedouin Khushman, through their incessant movement around the desert, have assisted in documenting new varieties and species of both plants and animals. In addition, these family oriented people have managed to exist practically in the same manner as their ancestors. Although the Bedouins lack a Western perspective of the world, it should not be suggested that these people are not civilized. Hobbs acknowledges that this opinion is often assumed when traditional nomadic cultures are observed.

Historically, the Bedouin are suggested to have descended from twenty or so clans or family units. The basic family lineage is reflective of a basic patriarchal system. It is for this reason that these people adapt so well to desert life. The Bedouin consider themselves as being a part of the desert, which in turn is the center of the Universe.

Khushman traditions have been documented and maintained since the times of dynastic Egypt. Modern periods saw the Bedouin survive the colonial *Explorations in Sights and Sounds* No. 12 (Summer 1992) 27

hegemony of England and the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967-73. The author made certain to present the reader both with a sociocultural history of Khushman life as well as scientific information regarding the general habitat in which they live. Aspects of agricultural and nonagricultural life, inclusive of folklore, provide valuable insight to the belief orientation of these desert nomads.

The manner in which the author has manipulated so much information regarding these people, within the framework of 165 pages, suggests that it is possible to provide a cursory yet informative synopsis of non-Western cultures without displaying historic and social biases.

— Torrance Stephens  
Clark Atlantic University

**Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth. *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) viii, 370 pp., \$ 50.00.**

This book should be more useful in Canada, where I have some reason to believe that there are more general ethnic studies programs than there are in this country. In this country, the major interest would be perhaps with less academic people who would be intrigued by the differences between the Irish in Canada and the Irish in this country.

The thesis of this book is that the two patterns differed substantially. Irish, the majority Protestant (Anglican and Presbyterian) came from northern Ireland, relatively well-off, beginning in the early 1810s. The vast majority were rural farmers or workers in the lumber and fishing industries along with a small merchant class. This is not, apparently, the general impression about the Irish in Canada itself, where the sense, presumably infected by US stereotypes, is that the Irish were Catholic, poverty-stricken, and city dwellers.

This thesis is supported by less factual material—emigration records seemingly being rather scarce—than by simple repetition. In fact, repetition is a problem in this book. Three sets of emigrant letters from the 1800s, which should, perhaps, contain the material of most human interest in the book, are themselves undercut by the fact that many quotations have been taken from them and used in the main part of the book. Letters of these sorts have been published for groups in this country, but unfortunately, these seem lacking in interest, since so much of the material is in the general area of “we [details] are fine here in Canada, how are [details] over there?”; as well as “why don’t you write”; and “I should have written a long time ago.” There are, however, some valuable and interesting facts about prices, economic and general living conditions.

Thus, this is primarily an analytical study of where the Irish came from in Ireland and the places they settled in Canada, rather than a more sociological study of what they were like as people. This reviewer favors the second type of book and thus finds too little about religion, language (some apparently spoke