

Reviews

Reviews Editor: Vivien Hughes

History

Claude Couture and Srilata Ravi, *Britannicité. Essai sur la présence française dans l'Empire britannique au XIXe siècle* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2020), 318 pp. Paper. \$35. ISBN 978-2-7637-2205-4.

What inspired this book was the enduring presence of the British Empire in the lives of its authors, born in Québec and Northern India respectively, but subsequently living and working in Alberta. For Couture and Ravi, 'cette présence, même fragmentée, de l'Empire a été troublante, contradictoire, voire ambivalente' (p. 2). This book seeks to understand this troubling presence. Part 1 contextualises what the authors define as the key period of British imperialism, 1830–60. The first chapter situates the British Empire of the nineteenth century in relation to other Empires of the period (French, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, German). The second chapter (usefully for francophone readers) presents an overview of the almost exclusively anglophone-authored historiography of the Empire. The third chapter considers institutional aspects (including the Rule of Law, religion, the armed forces and the printed text), to argue that far from being built 'in a fit of absence of mind' (John R. Seeley, 1883), British imperialism displayed a rigorous and systematic approach, quashing dissidence, imposing rules and practice throughout the Empire. The creation of the Dominion of Canada satisfied an imperial (rather than national) desire, establishing a white-dominated, Christian, settler colony, with control of the Indigenous population assured through the reserve system and assimilation. The second part focuses on francophones (from France and Canada) who operated within the confines of the British Empire, whether benefitting personally or performing acts that confirmed the basic ideology of Empire, through their 'civilising' missions. As Britain gained imperial supremacy in India in the 1760s, French mercenary Claude Martin (1735–1800) deserted the army of la Compagnie française des Indes Orientales to join the East India Company Bengal Army, in which he rose to the rank of major general, amassing en route vast wealth as engineer, architect, collector, and exporter of cotton, indigo, and tobacco. Doctor-turned-priest Jacques-Désiré Laval (1803–60) left France for British-controlled Mauritius in 1841 where he lived as a missionary among the recently enfranchised Black former slaves. Creoles of Black African descent remain the poorest, least well integrated into society, which the authors suggest may indicate that the Catholic teaching they received taught them to be more submissive and less concerned with social justice than Indo-Mauritians descended from indentured labourers. The final chapter turns to Oblate missionary Albert Lacombe (1827–1916). His career in the Canadian West covered the full range of the Empire building process: working as a missionary with Canadian Pacific Railway, facilitating the settlement of colonisers, involved with a number of treaties between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples, promoting the

assimilation of the younger generation through the founding of residential schools, and influencing First Nations chiefs against supporting the Métis Rebellion. As the authors stated at the outset, this is not a history book; rather it is a book *about* history, which takes a stand, denouncing the brutality of the British Empire, but also calling out the complicity of many French subjects of the British Empire.

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Brendan Kelly, *The Good Fight: Marcel Cadieux and Canadian Diplomacy* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019), 540 pp. Cased. \$45. ISBN 978-0-7748-3897-9.

Brendan Kelly has written an exceptional book about an exceptional man, Canadian diplomat Marcel Cadieux. Now mostly forgotten, Cadieux was at the peak of his powers in the 1960s, when he served as Canada's under-secretary of state for external affairs (or deputy foreign minister). Armed with a razor-sharp intellect, an iron will, and a volcanic temperament, Cadieux played an especially important role in Ottawa's efforts to contain French president Charles de Gaulle, whose promotion of Québec autonomy after 1963 threatened to tear Canada apart.

Cadieux was a diamond in the rough. Though often good-humoured, he could be aggressive and crude, as Kelly's ample use of his diary and correspondence makes clear. Born and raised in Montréal, in August 1941 he joined the Department of External Affairs, which was on the cusp of its Pearsonian 'golden age'. Kelly's accounts of Cadieux's assignments through the 1940s and 1950s are each small gems, adding to our understanding of Canadian diplomacy and showcasing Cadieux's personality and beliefs. Postings as a junior diplomat in wartime London and postwar Belgium broadened his horizons and reinforced his Canadian nationalism. A turn in the late 1940s in the personnel division honed his administrative skills and reinforced his interest in the success of French-Canadian recruits in external affairs. In the following decade, there were stints with NATO in Paris at the height of the Cold War and a posting to communist Hanoi, where he served as political advisor on Canada's delegation to the commission overseeing the French withdrawal from Indochina. The experiences left him an unyielding anti-communist. Back home, he moved steadily up the departmental hierarchy: head of UN Division, legal advisor, and deputy under-secretary. By the 1960s, the hard kernel of the mature Cadieux was fixed: 'a fierce anti-communist, a dedicated civil servant, and a passionate French-Canadian nationalist' (p. 140).

Cadieux became under-secretary in 1964, foisted onto his unwilling minister, Paul Martin Sr., by outgoing under-secretary Norman Robertson, and prime minister L.B. Pearson. Cadieux distrusted politicians and Martin was slipperier than most. Martin was a difficult minister, given to madcap schemes to recognise communist China and to end the Vietnam War. Though clearly in Cadieux's corner against all-comers, Kelly handles the tensions between the minister and his deputy skilfully and judiciously. Cadieux stood out in the 1960s for his opposition to Québec's claims to an international persona and to de Gaulle's meddling in Canada's internal affairs. He was the first to see the dangers ahead, and his personality – combative, remorseless, and determined – was ideally suited to dealing with them.

Kelly's Marcel Cadieux is not an especially likeable man. By book's end, it seems that no one is immune from being denounced as a whore, a cheat, or a fool. Nonetheless,