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"Canada's Bastions of Empire: Halifax, Victoria and the Royal Navy, 1749-1918 (Book Review)" by Bryan Elson

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Even though some questions remain unanswered, Ugolini's work is immensely valuable as a study that adds multiple new perspectives to the history of minorities in Britain during the Second World War, moves away from the overemphasis on internment and POW's, and effectively challenges existing interpretations. Moreover, the author's blending of different historiographical approaches and perspectives such as gender, military, social and oral history is remarkable. Ugolini earned the Gladstone History Book Prize of The Royal Historical Society for this unique study, and she fully deserved to win the award. Touching on a large variety of issues, this thought-provoking work will hopefully inspire other social historians of the Second World War to rethink narratives of homefront, internment, gender relations, and memory. This concise and well-written book does not only make an excellent introduction into the history of Scottish-Italians during the Second World War, but it should also be read as a stimulating case study of immigrant experiences in times of conflict, and is highly recommended to anyone interested in social military history.

ADRIAN MITTER, *UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO*

Canada's Bastions of Empire: Halifax, Victoria and the Royal Navy, 1749-1918. Bryan Elson. Halifax: Formac. Pp. 280.

Bryan Elson's *Canada's Bastions of Empire: Halifax, Victoria and the Royal Navy, 1749-1918* sheds light on the underappreciated history of both coastal defence and the domestic service of the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy. The author situates the stories of the two coastal fortresses and their associated ships in a narrative that touches on local, national, Canadian-American, imperial, and global factors. Elson, a former Canadian naval officer, asserts that the study of the two "coastal sentries" (p. 7) and their responses to threats, both real and imagined, not only furthers the understanding of changing military strategies and technology but also the political transition of Canada from a colony to nation (pp. 10-11).

The book is organized into eight chronological chapters with the first two providing background history and the pre-First World War developments of the fortresses at Halifax, Nova Scotia and Esquimalt, British Columbia. It is within these chapters that the author situates the two militarized ports in a broader geopolitical

context while at the same time looking at more local, social, and economic developments. Halifax, with its eighteenth-century colonial roots, survived the American Revolution to become the summer home to the nineteenth-century North America and West Indies Station, a British Royal Navy command that was also based out of Bermuda. Socially, the presence of British ships and their officers contributed to the “sophistication and gaiety” (p. 18) of the city while the fleet’s presence also boosted its economy. As the threats of France and Spain receded after the Napoleonic Wars, British policymakers began to reorder their priorities by checking the advances of the United States and Russia (pp. 18–19). This pivot to the west was responsible for the development of Esquimalt and its associated city, Victoria, British Columbia in the 1850s. Esquimalt hosted a military hospital during the Crimean War, served as a naval depot, and provided an opportunity for the Royal Navy to show the flag in the eastern Pacific (pp. 28–30).

The primacy of metropolitan goals persisted through the nineteenth century, even after Confederation in 1867. Canada’s military forces were miniscule and impermanent. The Royal Navy was the perfect tool to defend the vast Atlantic and Pacific coasts against an increasingly powerful post-Civil War United States (pp. 43–45). In addition to following the evolving threats to British interests in North America, Elson provides readers with details about the changes in military technology and garrison forces at the two locations. In both cases, the British continued to provide the majority of leadership and funding, providing gunners, officers, engineers, modern artillery, and minefields (pp. 53–61).

The bulk of the work is interested in the early twentieth century and the First World War, particularly the events of 1914, a focus that is at first obscured by the book’s somewhat misleading subtitle. The third chapters offer a glimpse at the years of flux in the first decade of the 1900s. Using the military history of the two ports as a lens, Elson shows how the British presence was greatly reduced as a result of the 1902 Japanese alliance and easing tensions with the United States. The last British troops were pulled out of Canada by 1906 and the Canadian government was unenthusiastic about the maintenance of the two large fortresses (p. 82). Nationally, the period witnessed two competing visions: the more North American, cautious approach of Liberal leader Wilfrid Laurier and the more imperialist approach of Conservative leader Robert Borden. Under

the former, the 1910 Naval Service Act created a small, locally built, and independent Canadian naval force that struggled to fill its ranks and was restricted to local waters (pp. 88–93). Socially, the author provides an interesting look at the daily lives of those tasked with manning Halifax during this period. Officers were recruited in a way “reminiscent of a private club” (p. 83) and supported by a regimental fund. Soldiers participated in bands, artillery contests, and sports to pass the time.

When Canada automatically entered the war against the Central Powers in August of 1914, Halifax and Esquimalt were woefully unprepared. Elson dedicates two very detailed chapters, one focusing on each locale, to how the crisis of the sudden declaration played out. The history of coastal defence offered here touches on a variety of events, ranging from the global to the local and their interaction. Geopolitically, the fear of an American alliance with Germany and the initial “intelligence fog” (p. 134) served to heighten the need to protect the Atlantic link; the Royal Navy’s Fourth Cruiser Squadron was supported by Halifax, the Canadian ship *Niobe* escorted vessels to Bermuda and patrolled local waters, and the HMCS *Rainbow* was dispatched to the eastern Pacific to seek out two British sloops that had been operating off of Mexico. Closer to home, militia were mobilized and drilled, the transatlantic cable secured, and the colorful philanthropist J.K.L. Ross procured much-needed vessels for Canada’s navy. Perhaps most fascinating are the efforts of British Columbia’s Premier Richard McBride, who secretly and illegally purchased two American submarines from a Seattle contractor for over one-million dollars (pp. 179–194). In addition to these actions, the author also provides an account of the actions of the German East Asia Squadron, whose commerce raiding off of South America ignited a panic in Pacific Canada (pp. 175–177).

Another chapter is dedicated to the role of the fortresses and their naval forces for the remainder of 1914. Elson details the often overlooked British and Canadian blockade of New York City that served to deny gold, reservists, arms, and supplies to the Germans. The *Niobe* was one of six ships used to maintain the constant two to three ship presence. The cruiser was also used to maintain communications between Halifax and the blockade while that port served to sustain the entire operation. The author argues that just as in the past, Halifax was strongly orientated toward the Royal Navy and the Atlantic rather than the interests and goals of Ottawa (pp.

211–217). The book ends somewhat abruptly with the last chapter serving as an afterward, which goes over the remaining years of the war. The book also contains an appendix that further details coastal defence artillery, command structure, and mines.

Elson's work provides a very well-written and detailed historical account to a variety of audiences. Its effectiveness is bolstered by a plethora of maps and photographs. The book usually does an admirable job of balancing the stories of its subjects with wider historical contexts, though in a couple cases the background history can delve unnecessarily deep. More casual readers with an interest in Canadian military history will find many interesting anecdotes and a highly readable narrative of the ways the country mobilized to defend its shores in the early days of the war. Those who teach Canadian and/or First World War history and their students now have a focused, high-quality synthesis of the key secondary sources, newspaper accounts, and some more obscure primary documents, one that skillfully places the microhistory of Halifax and Esquimalt into larger contexts. However, audiences that are more academic will be frustrated by the book's lack of endnotes and citations. In addition, conceptualization and analysis remain rather implicit, a fact best seen by the lack of a conclusion or explicit discussion or earlier works in the introduction.

The work is not especially groundbreaking but rather serves to contribute to the existing literature and at least partially fill a gap in the historiography. Elson is not the first to pen a comparative history of Halifax and Esquimalt but is rather unique in his emphasis on the First World War.¹ Throughout the book, Elson argues that British interests and policy were paramount and served to push and pull developments at the two coastal fortresses. This argument and focus puts his survey in line with recent scholarship that seeks to rediscover Canada's place in the British Empire or Atlantic World.²

¹ For an earlier comparison of the two posts, see Clarence Stuart Mackinnon, "The Imperial Fortresses in Canada: Halifax and Esquimalt, 1871–1906" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1965).

² For an articulation of the concept of a "British Atlantic," see Stephen Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British North America* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005). For recent work on Canada as part of the British Empire, see Phillip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration and Identity* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

Overall, *Canada's Bastions of Empire* makes the case for maritime and defence history as a means to transcend the usual stories of battles and leaders to further our understanding of not just war but politics, lived experience, and the connections between specific places and the wider world.

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Americans at War in Foreign Forces: A History, 1914–1945. Chris Dickon. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2014. Pp. 234.

American citizens have served in foreign militaries almost as long as there have been American citizens. Dickon's book tells the story of these individuals in the Canadian, British, and French militaries in the First and Second World Wars, with some mention of other militaries in other conflicts. Drawing largely on contemporary newspaper accounts, Dickon focuses on the soldiers, their stories, and the various systems and organizations that got them to and from the front. The book is not a treatise on the broader phenomenon of foreign enlistment or what it tells us about military service, citizenship or international relations, nor does the book provide much comparison among the different incidents. Readers looking for such analysis will be left with more questions than answers.

Dickon begins by briefly recounting the tale of the Marquis de Lafayette, the French soldier who played such a key role in American victory in the Revolutionary War. This forms the bridge to the service of many Americans in the French military in the First World War while the United States was still neutral. Young Americans flocked to France and Belgium as ambulance drivers, airmen in the French *Escadrille Lafayette*, and soldiers in the French Foreign Legion. In the English-speaking world, large numbers of Americans headed north, joining the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), in both the ranks of the "ordinary" battalions as well as the purpose built American Legion.

All provide for good stories, but the service of Americans in the CEF is especially interesting for Canadian readers. Dickon's section on the American Legion, a battalion of Americans recruited for service in the CEF in spite of American neutrality, is especially thorough and interesting. However, his description of Americans serving in