

Steve Marti and William John Pratt, eds. *Fighting with the Empire: Canada, Britain and Global Conflict, 1867-1947*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019. Pp. 206.

Canada's transition from colony to dominion to independent nation is a well-trodden topic for Canadian scholars and despite the plethora of texts available, the debate of how Canada navigated this transition is still ongoing. The role of Canada's military participation alongside Britain during several major conflicts proves to be one of the more contentious pieces of this debate. On the one side are those who see Canada's nationhood being born at Vimy Ridge and solidified on the beaches of Normandy and on the other are those who see a direct line between Canadian national identity and British imperialism, thus rendering military cooperation a direct result of imperial belonging. It is into this debate that Steve Marti and William John Pratt insert their edited collection *Fighting with the Empire: Canada, Britain, and Global Conflict, 1867-1947* in order to challenge both sides of this discussion and to explore the contradictions created by the intersection of imperialism and nationalism during times of conflict.

The nine original essays that comprise *Fighting with the Empire* explore questions around how race, gender and indigeneity intersect with questions of national identity and imperialism during times of peace and conflict in the period following Confederation. While each author makes their own methodological choices and contributions, each piece broadly falls into new imperial and new international history. The methodological cohesion is one of the great strengths of this text as it allows authors to frequently interact with other themes and chapters within the collection.

The text is organised into three sections that each focus on a different component of identity and conflict in Canadian society. In Part 1 "Mobility and Mobilization," scholars Amy Shaw, Steve Marti and William John Pratt all consider how processes of mobilisation and the movement of people during war created spaces for and encouraged people to (re)consider the contradictions of imperial nationalism as it pertained to Canada's wartime contributions. Shaw and Pratt specifically focus on this phenomenon in soldiers deployed overseas during the Boer War and the Second World War respectively and their contributions offer a fascinating look at points of continuity and change in expressions of loyalties among soldiers during two conflicts that bookend this study's temporal range. Marti applies a

gendered lens by exploring how wartime expanded and broadened the meaning of patriotic work through the Imperial Order Daughters of Empire. In this way, his contribution compliments Shaw, as both explore how Canadian citizens navigated the dual role of being mothers and fathers of the nation while also being daughters and sons of empire. Together, these three essays demonstrate that, far from being a singularly unifying period, wartime also causes moments of discontinuity. Whether deployed overseas or on the home front, men and women both had to decide if their wartime contributions were rooted in a sense of loyalty to the empire, to the nation or some combination of both.

The second section of the anthology, “Persons and Power,” considers how individuals or groups of individuals served as symbols of either the Dominion or Crown governments and gauges how broader society related to these figures as personifications of national and imperial identity. These contributions largely focus on peacetime rather than wartime and demonstrate how Canada’s trajectory towards nationhood may have been rooted in conflict but extended well beyond those conflicts.

Eirik Brazier’s piece explores the role of British imperial officers in Canada prior to the First World War. These officers were broadly embraced and deeply popular among the public as symbols of the British Crown, but this popular support was not always reflected in their ability to influence and enforce changes in the Canadian Militia to reflect the norms and traditions of the British Army. Nonetheless, imperial officials remained an important symbolic representation of the British Crown and the natural military alliance that existed between the Canadian Militia and the British Army. The culture of assumed unity shifted by the time of the 1939 Royal Tour, as demonstrated by Claire Halstead in her chapter. Instead, Halstead asserts, memorabilia from the Tour demonstrate that the public framed the visit in personal terms and individual meanings. Far from being symbols of imperial unity, the monarchs’ visit represented a moment when Canadians actively claimed the monarchs as their own. While Halstead and Brazier focus largely on Anglo-British identity in Canada, Robert J. Talbot sheds light on William Lyon Mackenzie King’s efforts to cultivate English and French cooperation within Canada during the interwar years, specifically within the Department of External Affairs, with the goal of forging a unified Canadian outlook towards supporting Britain in another imperial war. As all

three entries in this section demonstrate, the meaning of British identity and symbolism was under constant negotiation. Individually and collectively, the Canadian public began to understand their relationship to Britain as one of two equal nations brought together by common heritage rather than one defined by an imperial legacy.

Regardless of how much influence British symbolism had in society, there were always those located outside of the British-Canadian nexus and the final section, “Hardly British,” introduces those voices. Centred around racial and ethnic others, Geoff Keelan, Mikhail Bjorge and R. Scott Sheffield each explore how non-Britishness raised questions of subjecthood and citizenship, as well as loyalty and obligation during wartime. Keelan begins by considering French Canadian support for the First World War and asserts that French Canadians were willing to support the war until the introduction of conscription, which ultimately demonstrated that the Canadian government was waging war out of imperial loyalty rather than in accordance with ideals of liberalism, creating lasting change in the nature of Quebec nationalism. Bjorge and Sheffield both shift to focus on the Second World War, with Bjorge addressing illegal strikes among miners against immigrant workers and Sheffield considering the nature of Indigenous wartime participation. Bjorge demonstrates in his piece the tension that existed between nativism and racial patriotism and the legal definition of citizenship in Canada, as wartime economic demands necessitated the employment of non-British European workers. Sheffield draws on similar themes of legal citizenship and obligation to explore how First Nations communities leveraged their unique relationship with the British Crown to resist conscription in 1942 and to negotiate with the Canadian government for increased agency at home. “Hardly British” represents perhaps the strongest section as all three entries work cohesively to demonstrate the limitations of British racial patriotism and familial obligation identified in Part 1 while also illustrating the role of pluralism in creating a distinctly Canadian response to imperial conflict.

The final entry of the anthology is a short conclusion that offers a synthesis of each author’s major contributions while also connecting each piece to a larger narrative about the transformation of Canada’s identity from imperial subject to independent nation. The strengths of this text are two-fold. First, each entry stands alone as an excellent piece of scholarship and could easily be read and understood outside the context of this anthology. This not only increases the book’s

accessibility, particularly for use in undergraduate classes, but it also speaks highly of the research conducted by each author and the skills of the editors to pull together the entries into a fluid and complete piece. Secondly, the gendered and racial analysis allows all readers to identify themselves within the text and greatly increases this collection's claim to be a work of disruptive history. Overall, *Fighting with the Empire* is a wonderful piece of scholarship and should appeal to a broad range of academic interests including Canadian social history, war and society, Canadian military history and imperial history.

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