

Si l'avènement de la télévision, en 1952, amorce l'agonie des spectacles traditionnels de la « Main », il voit poindre en même temps l'étoile du *strip-tease*, autre type de représentation étroitement contrôlé par les gens de la pègre qui en sont les promoteurs. Ce ne sera qu'après un long déclin dans la qualité de ses spectacles que la rue Saint-Laurent entrera dans une ère de renaissance postmoderne, époque actuelle marquée surtout par la danse et les galeries d'art contemporain.

L'occasion qui a déterminé la publication de cet ouvrage a été le centenaire de l'ouverture du Monument-National, inauguré en 1893. Ce vaste édifice, qui a connu cette année une seconde inauguration à la suite d'une restauration générale, avait une vocation toute différente de celle du reste de la « Main ». Construit dans le but d'implanter par le moyen du théâtre professionnel la culture francophone dans cette zone multiethnique, le Monument a toujours détonné à côté des établissements voisins soumis aux lois du marché et de la mode. Son élitisme est toujours apparu comme un signe de contradiction. Situation paradoxale qui a obligé les auteurs à inclure dans leur étude cette institution orientée à contre-courant de leur analyse, mais pourtant partie intégrante de leur matière. Autre paradoxe relevé à ce propos : pour faire face à des difficultés financières, le Monument a dû dès ses débuts sacrifier la qualité de ses spectacles, en présentant des combats de boxe, et même son nationalisme en louant sa grande salle à des théâtres de langues étrangères.

Parmi les surprises que réserve cette étude, on rencontre l'opéra cantonnais dont on nous donne un aperçu de 1954 à nos jours, mais dont l'histoire reste à écrire tout comme celle de tous les spectacles de la communauté chinoise de Montréal. On découvre aussi – et surtout – le théâtre yiddish, produit de la forte concentration des Juifs dans la partie sud de la « Main » et qui a connu son apogée durant les Années folles. Mais tout un volume serait nécessaire pour reconstituer en détail le passé montréalais des activités scéniques de la diaspora juive; aussi est-ce à regret que les deux chercheurs nous laissent sur notre faim.

Si, grâce à sa riche documentation, la seconde partie du livre de Bourassa et Larrue nous fait mieux connaître la géographie d'une rue au bilan culturel considérable, la première partie, grâce à la rigueur de son analyse et à la vigueur de son style, nous rend attachante cette artère que la multiplicité et la mobilité de sa clientèle transforment en une sorte de caravansérail au goût insatiable de la fête et du spectacle.

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Carmen Miller – *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War 1899–1902*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993. Pp. xvi, 541.

Now barely discernable through the disdain that so many Canadian academics show for the subject of military history, the South African (or second Anglo-Boer) War which spanned the turn of the nineteenth century was a major Canadian issue at the time, internally and externally, politically and militarily. It marked the first time that

national contingents served and fought overseas, and the experience of those contingents was a major factor in turning the post-war Canadian Militia into a balanced force with its own medical, logistical, and administrative services as well as combat arms.

While the war was still being fought, a number of books on Canada's part in it were written and published, including several first-person accounts; naturally enough, none of them were comprehensive studies and all lacked perspective. The best of a bad bunch, outside the realm of personal reminiscence, was probably W. Sanford Evans's *The Canadian Contingent and Canadian Imperialism: A Study of a Story* (1901).

Why have we had to wait nearly a century for a thorough exposition of the formation of the Canadian contingents and the parts they played in South Africa? It may have been in part because the First World War, beginning only 12 years later, eclipsed it in every way, and in part because it has never been the subject of an official history. Unofficial historians are all too often ready to criticize their official brethren as mere mercenary puppets – the running dogs of bureaucracy – while sensibly relying on them to take the first step in historical enterprises whenever possible.

In this case, moreover, the varied and piecemeal nature of the Canadian contribution makes it a peculiarly difficult topic to handle. There was (and is) the internal political controversy over whether we had any business in South Africa at all. There was the "imperial" question of relationships between the British Army and colonial contingents in general and the Canadian contingents in particular (one aspect of which was exemplified in the Australian movie, *Breaker Morant*). There was the issue of how those Canadian contingents were recruited. Finally, there were the five quite different and largely unrelated campaigns fought by the several Canadian contingents.

Carmen Miller has made a praiseworthy attempt at covering all these bases, and in some cases he has done so brilliantly. It will likely be a very long time before anyone improves upon his first three chapters, dealing with the diplomatic and political background to recruitment. The fourth chapter considers the social composition of the First Contingent – carefully selected from all across the Dominion in some sort of rough proportion to the population of each region, with commissions more often than not going to those who were not only militarily competent but also politically correct. The language balance was sadly out of kilter, however, with only one francophone company in which half the non-commissioned officers were anglophone.

The next six chapters recite the First Contingent's experiences in South Africa, amplifying the account given by Desmond Morton in *The Canadian General*. Sir William Otter was sadly out of his depth as contingent commander and commanding officer of the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. In all the contingents, an unusual proportion of the soldiers seem to have kept diaries, while a considerable number of their letters home have survived the years. Miller has made good use of them, and here, better than anywhere, one can follow the gradual disillusionment of young men who initially saw war as a romantic adventure coming to grips with harsh reality – of which the severe and inflexible Otter was a significant part.

Miller goes on to examine the social composition of the later contingents: the Second, comprised of two battalions of mounted rifles (the first, built around a cadre of Royal Canadian Dragoons, soon taking that title at the behest of its French-Canadian commanding officer) and three batteries of horse artillery; the Third being the privately-raised Lord Strathcona's Horse; the Fourth a Canadian contribution to the South African Constabulary; and the Fifth, consisting of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Canadian Mounted Rifles, arriving at the Cape "too late to participate in the combat", so that "their dispatch constituted little more than a mobilization exercise".

There are some surprises. Who would have thought that there were more Mounted Policemen in the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles than in Strathcona's, which has commonly been labelled the "Mountie" regiment probably because it was commanded by that archetypal Mountie, Sam Steele.

The adventures of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and Lord Strathcona's Horse have been fairly fully recounted in regimental histories, but the remaining units have been poorly served. Miller recounts their vastly different experiences—which can be summarized as those of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Royal Canadian Dragoons and the Canadian Mounted Rifles, the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, Lord Strathcona's Horse, and the Canadian component of the South African Constabulary. Except for a couple of brief articles in obscure journals, this last is all original material.

Miller is a political and social historian, and it is in those respects that his book shines. Conversely, although he does a competent job on the military side, one could wish for more tactical analysis, especially in comparing British and "colonial" views. For example, artilleryman Lieutenant E. W. B. Morrison, in his memoir *With the Guns in South Africa* (1901), recalled that:

I have seen every variety of mounted troops out here – regular cavalry, mounted infantry, regular and irregular, and none of them are in it with the "Canadians" for the sort of work to be done. Their outpost work is the best I have seen by long odds, for the simple reason that they know how to keep under cover. So far, all the British soldier has learned in this war is to keep under cover when he is being fired at. When not being fired at, he chooses for preference a conspicuous position on the skyline or a hill top and the Boers know just exactly where he is and how many of them there are. The Canadians keep under cover all the time, taking up their positions before daylight, and the Boers never know when they will stumble on them or how many will be there.

Was this Canadian chauvinism, or was it true? Did their British generals recognize their superiority in that regard? What about the Australians and English South Africans? It seems unlikely that either of the latter were inferior to the Canadians in their use of ground, but these are not questions that trouble Miller. If they had, surely this would have been the definitive study of Canada and Canadians in the South African War.

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