

**Rutherfordale, Robert, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to the Great War*. Vancouver; UBC Press, 2004. Pp. xxiv, 331, illustrations, index, bibliography. \$29.95 (paper)**

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and the chair of the EBUC seem to be glossed over far too quickly. For example, Roberts notes that in January and February 1918, McGregor, as chair of the EBUC, "called several meetings to explain the bylaws needed to implement the plans and set up the infrastructure for a Border Cities—wide sewage system. To illustrate the need, at one meeting he graphically emphasized the complete lack of any control or treatment in Ford City, where raw sewage from his plant and from his employees' houses flowed directly into the Detroit River" (170). However, Roberts does not discuss the specific proposals put forward by McGregor nor does he describe the reaction of the other members of the commission or indeed, that of the general public. Although this may be due in part to his heavy (and to be fair, involuntary) reliance on the *Evening Record* instead of archival records, it does make for a study heavily biased toward automotive history and, one which urban historians may find frustrating for its lack of detail on the municipal issues to which Roberts refers. Aside from that significant proviso, it is undeniable that David Roberts has made an important and very readable contribution to both Canadian urban and automotive history.

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**Rutherford, Robert, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to the Great War*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004. Pp. xxiv, 331, illustrations, index, bibliography. \$29.95 (paper).**

Military historians of the distant past possess the luxury of not having to cope with angry veterans protesting, "But I was there, and it wasn't like that." Living memory is an invaluable thing, but it can also douse objectivity in dewy sentiment. Now that the generation that fought the Great War has passed, historians are reconsidering the war's origins, rethinking its consequences, and refighting its battles. Nonetheless, Canadians possess rather delicate patriotic sensibilities, and some historians still feel compelled to tiptoe around them. It is therefore to his credit that Robert Rutherford says goodbye to all that and offers a serious, unsentimental analysis of the way in which the people of three small towns: Lethbridge, Alberta; Guelph, Ontario; and Trois-Rivières, Quebec, experienced First World War.

On issues of region Canadian historians find themselves amidst rocks and hard places: write a national study and critics will snipe at you for neglecting regional variations, write about regions and they will decry the death of the heroic national narrative. Rutherford sees no contradiction: the national story of the Great War, he argues, *is* a regional story. Soldiers were recruited locally and departed for war with local fanfare; stories of their exploits overseas were carried in local papers; small towns felt the deaths of their young men more acutely than the deaths of other young men; they responded to "enemy aliens" (Canadians of German descent) in ways that var-

ied according to longstanding community relations with them; their voluntary efforts were framed by local concerns and class boundaries, and so forth. Rutherford does not, however, claim that the small town experience of the war undermines the theory that the war contributed to a greater sense of nationhood. Local and national, he writes, are "illusionary dichotomies" (p. 264). While Canadians perceived the war through a regional lens and experienced it in local ways, they understood nonetheless that the war was being fought for larger purposes. But beneath the patriotic veneer of wartime consensus and what he calls the "innocent enthusiasm" (p. 47) of 1914, Rutherford uncovers a sustained argument about the war, what it meant, and how the home front could contribute to winning it. In turn, this formed part of a larger argument about the meaning of empire, nationhood, citizenship, gender, and modernity.

In a sense, none of this should be surprising: Canadians have rarely agreed about anything. What is surprising is the extent and intensity of these arguments as already existing social debates were recast in patriotic terms. While the basic contours of the conscription crisis, for instance, are well known, Rutherford reveals that on the regional level the debate was far more nuanced than the conventional French versus English Canadian dichotomy suggests. As we might expect, newspaper editors in Trois-Rivières appealed to a concept of nationhood that they believed conscription violated. In Lethbridge, however, where both newspapers were staunchly pro-conscription, many farmers protested the potential loss of agricultural labour, while in Guelph police actually raided the St. Stanislaus Jesuit seminary over the noncompliance of its members with conscription. Among the novices was none other than the minister of justice's son.

Such cases illustrate how the federal government's best efforts to produce homogeneity of thought and opinion floundered on local pluralism. Only in the aftermath of the war could a powerful mythology of unanimity and collective sacrifice (at least on the part of English Canadians) emerge.

Rutherford provides no particular justification for his selection of small towns, except to note that they are all quite different, nor is one needed. Why not study Lethbridge? Nevertheless, one wonders how more remote towns, isolated not only geographically but also in terms of communication (and presumably less susceptible to the press that did so much to demonize the enemy, as Rutherford argues) experienced the war. Obviously a great many regional studies are possible.

Some readers may question Rutherford's reliance on local newspapers such as Lethbridge's *Daily Herald* and Guelph's *Evening Mercury*, as in some chapters these constitute a third or more of his sources. But Rutherford is judicious in their use, and makes a case for drawing plausible inferences about social attitudes from them. If only the case he makes were more readily comprehensible. Putting it mildly, Rutherford's book can be hard going. In fairness, those of us

who object to theory-laden prose must consider the possibility that the fault lies not in the syntax but in ourselves. After all, non-specialists do not open the latest issue of *Physics Today* and expect to understand it, so perhaps it is unfair to criticize historians for employing a jargon of their own. But one wonders if it was really necessary for Rutherford to positively pack the book with such phrases as: "In Habermasian terms, the public spheres or lifeworlds one finds in them were far from holistic" (p. xxii). Perhaps I am terribly old-fashioned, but surely history is best served when its practitioners remember that it is a literary discipline. In the foreword, Rutherford acknowledges Jack Granatstein as one of his intellectual mentors. No doubt the mentor approves of the book's intriguing line of argument, but one wonders what he thinks of his pupil's prose.

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**Wild, Mark, *Street Meeting*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.**

Mark Wild offers an unusual case study of urban ethnicity. Rather than following the broader tendency to discuss a single ethnic group, Wild focuses attention on the relationships in early twentieth century Los Angeles that crossed ethnic boundaries. He contends that such relationships encouraged the development of "inclusive notions of community" that "challenged established and . . . restrictive notions of national, ethnic, or racial identities" (6). The book details the demise of these inclusive communities in central Los Angeles neighborhoods, as efforts to find fellowship across racial and ethnic lines were sabotaged by their own internal contradictions and battered by hostile "Anglo" elites. The latter, who preferred "distinct, bounded ethnic communities that could either be isolated from white populations or incorporated, one ethnic group at a time . . . into the broader urban community" (39) ensured that the diverse political alliances and social liaisons of central Los Angeles faded by the end of the Second World War. Wild sees this shift as deeply troubling. The social division of the city erected walls later breached in the heat of postwar racial and ethnic violence.

The confrontation between two competing visions of community is clearest in Chapters 6 and 7, where Wild describes the efforts of the Socialist Party, the IWW, and the Communist Party of Los Angeles to mobilize a broad alliance of working people. Preaching from a soapbox in central Los Angeles in 1908, Rev. George Washington Woodbey, an African

American Baptist and Socialist orator, urged multiethnic crowds to welcome their Asian immigrant brethren: "if capitalists could not import Asian workers, he reasoned, they would simply export jobs to Asian countries" (162). In the decades that followed, Anglo elites, threatened by the varied "aliens" organizing in central Los Angeles, mobilized the LAPD to contain and then brutally squash such alliances.

However, in much of the rest of the book, Wild seems to strain against his own evidence. The Anglo elites seldom seem to behave as Wild would have us believe. In their efforts to "Americanize" foreigners in the city, local reformers lump ethnic groups together, rather than isolating national groups from one another (44–56). Methodist churchman G. Bromley Oxnam brings All Nations together at his central Los Angeles church (62–93). Playground planners seem untroubled by the mixing of children of diverse origins (101–102), while school teachers, as often as not, promote accommodation among their pupils of varied backgrounds (109). Although Wild is able to document discrimination in each of these contexts, the evidence seldom sustains the notion of an Anglo elite conspiring to drive wedges among ethnic groups. Instead, for the most part, the "established" and "divisive" notions of community emerge from within the ethnic groups themselves. This tendency is especially clear in the chapter on "mixed couples" which documents widespread antipathy toward lasting adult sexual relationships that crossed racial or ethnic lines (121–147).

The trouble is not with Wild's evidence. This is a richly researched book. Wild makes excellent use of institutional archives, a wide range of government records and reports, and a large body of oral history interviews. Instead, the book falters in its analytic framework. Wild ought to have followed the evidence, which suggests a complex contested ethnic landscape. Guardians of "restrictive" norms were found in both "elite" and "ethnic" circles, as were those willing to challenge narrow definitions of community. Wild leaves these varied alliances largely unexplained. Had he looked deeply into these questions, Wild might have found himself in dialogue with recent studies of urban ethnicity that have focused on the motives, interests, and strategies of ethnic leaders, as well as the complex interplay of ethnicity and race. By undertaking a fuller analysis of both the defenders and transgressors of ethnic boundaries, Wild would have arrived at more satisfying answers to his own intriguing questions.

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