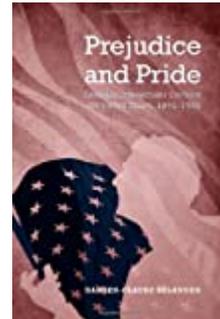




Damien-Claude Bélanger. *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. 322 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4426-4045-0.



Reviewed by Daniel Macfarlane (Carleton University)

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Commissioned by Stephanie Bangarth (King's University College, UWO)

Continentalists and Imperialists: Conceptualizing Canada by Critiquing the United States

Given the proximity of the United States to Canada, its past impact on Canada's development, and its role as a foil for Canadian identity, it will surprise no one that Canadian intellectuals have historically spilt a great deal of ink dissecting their southern neighbor. Canadian commentary on the United States, however, reveals more about the latter country than the former, serving as a sort of prism reflecting Canadian preoccupations and concerns. This is a central contention of Damien-Claude Bélanger's *Prejudice and Pride*.

Two general periods—and two generations of intellectuals: continentalists and imperialists—are identified in the 1891-1945 timeframe, with the First World War serving as a transition zone: "Canada may indeed have been born at Vimy Ridge, but nineteenth-century Canadian imperialism died at the Somme" (p. 37). *Prejudice and Pride*, which is based on the author's doctoral dissertation, is divided into three parts. The first is a chapter that chronologically traces and explains the general evolution of the two main intellectual groups in order to set the stage for the thematically organized chapters that follow.

The second part is made up of four chapters that examine how Canadian intellectuals viewed various aspects of American society, including politics, religion, culture, gender, race, and industrial capitalism. The third part moves to bilateral political topics, such as annexation and Americanization, identity, American foreign policy and Canadian-American relations, trade, unionism, and migration.

Bélanger chose to proceed thematically instead of chronologically which, given this type of study, seems the best choice. He employs over five hundred texts and provides a useful quantitative breakdown of the types and authorships of his sources, as well as an appendix with the corpus of texts arranged chronologically. Only monthly periodicals were examined, to the exclusion of daily, weekly, and bimonthly publications. While one could quibble with this approach and raise questions about representativeness, I was willing to accept that a manageable research project required such choices.

Imperialists tended to be conservative and anti-

American, with continentalists generally liberal/left-leaning and more favorably disposed toward the United States. The continentalists were not antinationalists, however, and B  langer points out that he avoids the usual nationalist and antinationalist paradigm. He also contends that a continentalist-imperialist axis transcends the French-English language divide. In this reading, English-speaking imperialists and French-Canadian nationalists shared a wider conservative ethos—anti-Americanism was strongest among Roman Catholics and Anglicans—that tended to put them on the same page when it came to views of America, though there were important differences. The United States, as seen through imperialist and French-Canadian intellectual prose, was a dysfunctional society.

On religious and cultural issues, the focus of chapter 3, continentalists pointed to the ways that Canada was an “American” society, highlighting affinities and continuities. Imperialists advocated the opposite. Both pro- and anti-American factions in Canada disparaged the American treatment of blacks and Aborigines, but drew different conclusions from said treatment about the Republic. Views of American industrial capitalism, and such questions as whether it engendered a violent and disordered society, occupies another chapter. B  langer contends in chapter 7 that most continentalists were opposed to outright annexation, viewing increased Americanization as a means of improving Canada’s condition and standing. For both continentalists and imperialists, when it came to dissecting American foreign policy, imperialism and isolationism were the chief concerns. Canadian-American trade, particularly reciprocity, receives its own chapter, along with associated issues, such as cross-border investment, unions, and migration.

The discussion in chapter 6 of the role of geography—whether Canada naturally runs north-south or east-west—is especially interesting. Conservatives gravitated toward the staples and Laurentian theses, with B  langer identifying the latter as overtly anti-American. However, French Canadians preferred the idea that Canada existed in spite of geography (i.e., the continent naturally ran north-south) because the corollary was a decentralized federal structure. But both English and French Canadians saw themselves as a northern people shaped by the climate and nordicity. B  langer further points out that the early stirring of the borderlands concept can be found in the continentalist discourse, and labels “exacerbated differentialism” as a historical unifying force for Canadian identity formation (p. 126).

The point of convergence for the anti-Americanism of French-Canadian intellectuals and English-Canadian imperialists was antimodernism. B  langer writes that the United States epitomized an implicitly liberal version of modernity, and that conservative anti-Americanism commentary was fundamentally antimodern; continentalists meanwhile embraced the modernity represented by the United States. Competing evaluations of modernity therefore lay at the heart of Canadian conceptions of themselves and the Americans.

The assertion that antimodernism took the form of anti-Americanism is intriguing, and it raises a number of questions. I would argue that a significant, probably the dominant, strain of Canadian nationalism has tended to appropriate technology as a means of state building and resisting U.S. domination, going back to at least the nineteenth-century transcontinental railways and canals. This tendency is even more pronounced after the start of the Second World War as Canadian nationalists seized on technological mega-projects—e.g., the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project, Trans-Canada Highway, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), pipelines, etc.—as a means of distancing Canada from reliance on the United States (granted, such endeavors also held the potential to further continental integration).

As many of these large-scale projects can trace their roots back to the first half of the twentieth century, the First World War may well be the more significant transition point in terms of Canadian nationalist conceptions of modernity and technology. Perhaps the transition is tied to another evolution B  langer identifies: between the 1890s and the 1960s, the left- and right-wings essentially swapped when it came to advocating North American integration. Liberals and socialists were not anti-American before the Second World War but by the 1960s had emerged as perhaps the most strident anti-Americans, with the Right the greatest advocates of integration aside of prominent exceptions, such as Donald Creighton and George Grant.

The relationship between Canadian views of modernity vis-  -vis the United States thus may be more complex than presented in this book. But, to be fair, B  langer’s stated task is to identify the intellectual currents rather than explain the policies and nation-building efforts of the Canadian state. Nevertheless, the discussion might have benefited from other works engaging Canadian technology and modernity, including recent efforts, such as R. Douglas Francis’s *The Tech-*

nological Imperative in Canada: An Intellectual History (2009); Marco Adriaâs *Technology and Nationalism* (2010); and Christopher Armstrong, Matthew Evenden, and H. V. Nellesâs *The River Returns: An Environmental History of the Bow River* (2010).

Some of the standard works on Canadian-American relations and Canadian foreign policy are also absent from the bibliography.[1] Giving the author the benefit of the doubt, this may just be a case of including only those works directly cited. But that too speaks to another issue: this book is not as much about Canadian-American relations as it sometimes claims. *Prejudice and Pride* potentially conflates Canadian views of Americans with Canadian-American relations; it is an aspect of Canadian-American relations, but in some respects missing the ârelationsâ since it is one-sided (i.e., the Canadian perspective). Nevertheless, a strength of this study is that it will appeal to scholars of more than just Canadian-American relations.

This is a well-written effort, aside of the occasional overuse of a few unnecessary words. B langer deals deftly with complex intellectual currents. He finds the linking ideas and makes appropriate generalizations, while respecting differences and nuances, which can be challenging when writing intellectual history. He aptly shows the varying degrees of the two main viewpoints: for instance, the four âsensibilitiesâ of continentalism (p. 34). In a study of this nature, with over five hundred texts and a thematic organization, the reader has to trust the authorâs judgment when it comes to accurately representing and explaining a diverse range of thinkers. Al-

though his attempts to establish causality between ideas and their impact on policy could have been stronger, B langer generally substantiates his contention that ideas do matter.

Prejudice and Pride is a noteworthy addition to Canadian historiography. An obvious contribution is the identification and demarcation of the dichotomy between continentalists and imperialists, including the way B langer charts their evolution over time, identifies their main attributes, and delves into the ways that commentary about the United States reflects on the Canadian condition. The linking of English imperialists and *nationaliste* sentiment is another important conclusion. Moreover, B langer has done an important service by pointing to the centrality of modernity as an intellectual conception and organizing principle of Canadian intellectual debates concerning the United States. Indeed, the attention currently paid in Canadian historical scholarship to âliberalismâ as a central axis of investigation might as fruitfully be paid to âmodernism.â In the end, *Prejudice and Pride* will appeal to a broad scholarly audience, particularly those interested in Canadian intellectual, cultural, nation-building, and political history, as well as students of Canadian-American relations.

Note

[1]. For example, Norman Hillmer and J. L. Granatstein, *For Better or for Worse: Canada and the United States into the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: Thomson/Nelson 2007); and Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

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