

A Fortified Town and a World War Profitably Re-examined

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A Fortified Town and a World War Profitably Re-examined

IS THERE A NEED FOR ANOTHER study of Louisbourg, described by James Axtell in 1984 as the best-known “colonial community in North America”?¹ Is there a need for an additional examination of the Seven Years’ War after the detailed volumes devoted to this “seminal event of the eighteenth century” by Lawrence H. Gipson?² A.J.B. Johnston’s *Control and Order in French Colonial Louisbourg, 1713-1758* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 2001) and Fred Anderson’s *Crucible Of War: The Seven Years’ War And The Fate Of Empire In British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2000) contend, respectively, that this fortified town on Île Royale and this mid-18th-century world war deserve reconsideration and re-evaluation. In view of the extensive work done by the Fortress of Louisbourg Historic Park researchers and many academic historians on the former and the tendency to view the latter as a “hazy backdrop to the Revolution” and a “quaint prelude” to American “national history” (Anderson, pp. xv-xvi), both scholars have set themselves rather formidable tasks.

Particularly in Johnston’s case, the flood of material, both in government studies and refereed publications (to which Johnston has substantially contributed), makes his assignment particularly daunting. Louisbourg studies have progressed well beyond the primarily military examinations of its important role, and its twice-captured military fate, to a much better picture of the socio-economic side of life within and beyond its walls. Despite this more detailed appreciation of its 1713 to 1758 evolution as a vibrant trading and fishing community, quite different in certain aspects from its older sister colony of New France, Johnston confidently asserts the need to “explore a previously unexamined topic” (p. xviii). Historians have neglected to analyze how Louisbourg society was ordered and controlled, Johnston argues, as he hangs his hat on the need to develop the “ways in which individuals and groups within Île Royale, and in the ministry of the Marine in France, attempted to maintain an organized society on what for them was an island wilderness”. Such an exercise allows assessment of the extent to which Louisbourg development duplicated France or New France and the degree to which its “character was an innovative response to Cape Breton Island’s particular setting” (pp. xviii-xix). In some ways these are important and ambitious questions but, at the same time, they set the conceptual bar very low and could lead to rather obvious conclusions. Johnston has the credentials to offer the most substantial synthesis of Louisbourg documentation and research yet available but, in his quest to address the neglected aspects of the fort’s history and his desire to avoid almost totally the military sieges, his framework and questions give short-shrift

1 Quoted in A.J.B. Johnston, *Control and Order in French Colonial Louisbourg, 1713-1758* (East Lansing, 2001), p. xxviii.

2 Patrick Griffin, “In Retrospect: Lawrence Henry Gipson’s *The British Empire Before The American Revolution*”, *Reviews in American History*, 31, 2 (June 2003), p. 174.

to a truly broadened “comparative dimension” and analytic conceptualization judged as somewhat neglected in two of his earlier studies.³

Dissection of “the population, the institutions, and the powers (or authorities)” (p. xx) is the basis of Johnston’s study. Various chapters treat Île Royale’s creation and organization, the evolution of the colony’s capital as a carefully planned and fortified town, the pursuit of harmony and order among the civilian and military segments of Louisbourg society and the values and behaviour which marked this diverse but apparently largely compliant population. Although at times repetitious, as the demographic statistics as well as more colourful court cases and punishments resurface too often, and with findings that have already worked their way into textbooks or were given more detailed attention in earlier studies, a comprehensive portrait of Louisbourg society emerges as do a number of interesting comparisons.

The population of the colony of Île Royale was always dominated by Louisbourg; in 1720, 32.0 per cent of the colony’s population resided in Louisbourg and, by 1752, the figure had risen to 70.0 per cent (p. 38). Within the walls of the fortress/town, the continuing presence of a substantial garrison, 33.4 per cent of the residents in 1720 and 31.7 per cent in 1752, gave the community a pronounced and unique military complexion (p. 39). Also, unlike the more even gender balance gradually achieved in New France, Louisbourg had a striking imbalance as late as 1752 when men still outnumbered women six-to-one (pp. 41, 225). Although the colony’s original military and civilian settlers were transplanted from Placentia, Newfoundland, when Johnston examines the origins of Louisbourg’s inhabitants at a later date he establishes that its population was not a part of Acadia or New France but was “an extension of France”. Bretons, Normans and Basques from France’s west coast were “the most numerous groups” (p. 43); adding to the mix were German and Swiss soldiers in the garrison as well as Irish Catholics and 200 African slaves (p. xxi). This diversity “of origins, cultural backgrounds, languages and religions” gave Louisbourg society a “complexity that was not often found to the same degree elsewhere in New France” (p. 50). The community’s ethnic and linguistic diversity was a potential recipe for disaster, however, when it was combined with the large transient population present during the military and commercial shipping season, the soldiers’ presence and the sexual imbalance (p. 125). In Louisbourg, as a result, “violence was a routine part of life” with “thefts, scuffles, and insults” as normal as “ships in the harbor and the soldiers on the ramps” (p. 290).

Both in the military and civil spheres, despite the potential for chronic disorder and outright mutiny, order and social harmony were, for the most part, preserved. The various courts and officials combined with the majority of residents in articulating “the same outrage and desire to punish wrongdoers” and protect private property and human life while upholding the “values of society” on behalf of the entire community (pp. 307-8). Military discipline, justice and punishment were more often and swiftly administered, with the same harshness as civilian offenders faced for the most serious offenses (p. 306). But, as Johnston points out, the shortage of military personnel sometimes led to as little punishment as possible, a preference for confinement rather than corporal punishment and less severity than punishments called for in the “Code

3 See G.A. Rawlyk, “Louisbourg Revisited”, *Acadiensis*, XIV, 1 (Autumn 1984), pp. 120-2.

Militaire” (p. 197). Indeed, he admits there remained real challenges “in controlling both the enlisted men and their officers” (p. 213). Among the officer corps, bitterness and rivalries as well as a willingness to exploit the rank-and-file persisted, while his choice of words in describing the enlisted men (“independent” in outlook, a “marked casualness and at times even outright disregard for certain duties and responsibilities”) hint at a garrison with problems. If “excessive consumption of alcohol often lay behind their truculent attitudes”, the inflated wages paid to the half of the soldiers working on fortification construction in the 1720s and 1730s, sometimes earning as much in a day as soldiers normally earned in a month, exacerbated the problem. Officer exploitation of their troops emerges as another form of social control; “the economic leverage the officers exercised over the men in the ranks” (p. 306) was achieved by controlling the soldier’s earnings since the officers both handled the soldiers’ wages and, through the captains’ canteens, made deductions for food, alcohol, equipment replacement or repairs and supplies purchases (p. 183). As a result, many of the troops remained in debt to the officers. Above all, Johnston concludes, military society was sufficiently controlled to keep the troops largely isolated from excessive confrontations with civilian society, with the “major exception of the 1744 mutiny and the minor exception of several violent crimes” (p. 214).

As this balanced and cautious picture and assessment reveal, this is not history from the bottom-up although the social findings and comparisons are worthwhile, valid and, on some occasions, fascinating. The ordered and controlled military in Johnston’s Louisbourg was matched by a civilian population able to express itself “through written petitions, verbal comments and public gatherings” (p. 304), who “wanted, or at least did not resist” officialdom and government edicts (p. xxiv), and who, in the face of potential chaos and disorder, widely subscribed to and supported “a hierarchical structuring of social relationships” (p. 305). Mother country attitudes emerged intact, Johnston contends. While court records and various other sources are mined quite effectively, it is the official correspondence which frequently carries the heaviest weight, a balance that might have been offset by a more extensive discussion of other scholars’ perceptions and their use of Louisbourg and other colonial Atlantic Canadian sources. For example, when discussing the “illegitimacy rate of 4.5 per cent” (p. 229) or when presenting the average age of first marriage – 19.9 years for Louisbourg women versus 22.0-23.2 years in 18th-century Canada while Louisbourg men averaged 29.2 years versus Canada’s 27.7 years (pp. 41, 225) – no comparison or consideration is offered of Gisa Hynes’s conclusions about similar issues in the not-too-far-distant Acadian community of Port Royal under both French and English rule.⁴ Christopher Moore’s emphasis on the importance of trading, transshipment and the cod fishery to Île Royale’s development is vital to Johnston’s statements that Louisbourg differed from New France’s seigneurial-fur trade economy, but no detailed discussion is offered. Allan Greer’s work on the Louisbourg garrison is cited, but his subtle exposition of the soldiers’ motivations and grievances is not adequately employed to explain the 1744 mutiny. Clark, Rawlyk, Crowley, Chard and Griffiths

4 Gisa Hynes, “Some Aspects of the Demography of Port Royal, 1650-1755”, *Acadiensis*, 3, 1 (Autumn 1973), pp. 3-17.

could be added to the list of other historians who could have been called as witnesses for a better understanding of Louisbourg and an enrichment of the comparative dimension but, although some of their publications are listed in the bibliography, this literature is insufficiently engaged.

Perhaps this is an unfair request, compelling the author to move beyond the parameters he has set out and to write a quite different book. Nevertheless, there are several different and important issues touched upon in Johnston's *Louisbourg* which could have profited from a broadened historiographic perspective. The neighbouring Roman Catholic and French-speaking Acadians had an active connection with, interest in and debatable presence at Louisbourg and Île Royale. Yet Johnston minimizes or ignores Acadian connections and faithfully quotes official perceptions of these "independent spirits" who lacked "the right combination of respect and subservience". They were an "indolent nation . . . [of] difficult people to lead" and "not accustomed to obeying their superiors" (pp. 141-2). Admittedly, only a limited number were willing to re-settle on Île Royale after the colony's founding in 1713 (largely concentrated at Port Toulouse); a few hundred more came in the 1750s although most "opted in 1754 to return to the British jurisdiction of mainland Nova Scotia" (p. 142). If insignificant numbers justify this neglect of Acadians, there are some topics raised by Johnston which require attention to this neighbouring society. Only briefly dealt with in this work is the "illegal or extra-legal trade" (p. 67) so vital to Louisbourg's prosperity and even survival. Order and control vanished in the face of pragmatic reality as officials on Île Royale justified such trade and the home authorities approved it. Johnston mentions the vital New England foodstuffs and building materials provided but, as Andrew Hill Clark, Naomi Griffiths, Geoffrey Plank and others have demonstrated, this equally illegal trade from Acadian Nova Scotia was vital to the "golden age" Acadians were enjoying. This active external connection might have been matched by more of an internal impact than Johnston acknowledges. There is an all-too-brief discussion of the *Compagnie franches de la Marine's* officer corps being drawn from the colonies with cadet positions in each company reserved for officers' sons. Applying W.J. Eccles's work on the Canadianization of the officer corps in New France and militarization of the fur trade might have revealed the same sort of indigenous military emergence with a possible impact on Île Royale's economy. This opportunity is missed but, more importantly, Johnston reports in a footnote that of the 32 military officers in the Louisbourg garrison in 1744 with a known birthplace, 15 were from France, 7 were born in Acadia, 5 on Île Royale, 4 in Placentia and 1 in Canada (p. 215). Since the officers were the "leaders of local society" (p. 175), this Acadian-born contingent suggests a presence of more significance than we have been led to believe. At least one Anglo-Irish-Acadian officer in the English army, born at Port Royal, was an active participant in the illegal Louisbourg trade and the entrée his French-language abilities and Acadian officer-relatives provided was no secret.⁵

Finally, as hinted earlier, Louisbourg's society can be usefully compared with Old and New France but, given what we now know about Acadian society, is this a valid

5 See W.G. Godfrey, *Pursuit of Profit and Preferment in Colonial North America: John Bradstreet's Quest* (Waterloo, 1982), pp. 17-9.

comparison as well? The neglect is indirectly justified when Johnston admits that life beyond Louisbourg's walls, in Île Royale's "outports", was "much less touched by the impetus toward controlling settlement and behavior" (p. 309). Thus, as very much an "outport" society itself, Acadia is safely placed beyond the pale. Yet this reveals a final qualification: order and control extended only so far and had both successes and failures. The clearest indication of a successful quest for "an ordered society", Johnston argues in his conclusion, was the military engineers' triumph over several decades in allocating, developing and using urban space so Louisbourg emerged as a "transplanted" French community. On the other hand, control over the social dimensions of the fortified town faced "countless challenges" (p. 305) with achievements in some areas but "resistance" and "outright failure in a few" (p. 309). It is a somewhat ambivalent, if honest, conclusion that underlines the complexity of the scholarly task Johnston has set himself. Likewise, although the temptation might be to dwell upon Louisbourg's differences from France and New France as evidence of a "specific identity", he argues that both the military and civilian Louisbourgeois "felt no special attachment to the colony other than as a place to make a living or to advance a career". Softening somewhat, he does admit that the trauma and common experience of bombardment in 1745, deportation and then a return to their colonial "homes" might "well have begun to sow the seeds of a distinctive Louisbourg identity" (pp. xx-xxi), but its second capture in 1758 eliminated that possibility. Johnston's study is balanced and qualified; while overly cautious and tentative on occasions, it does enrich our understanding of the evolution and shaping of Louisbourg's society. The author has largely accomplished what he proposed to do; however, throughout the book his evidence, details and conclusions could have been pushed much further and rendered more convincing by a wider comparative focus and more extensive use of the relevant studies available on 18th-century colonial Atlantic Canada and colonial America.

Louisbourg only makes a substantial appearance in Fred Anderson's *Crucible Of War* when he discusses its final and finest military moment, the 1758 siege and capture. This is only one of 74 chapters in this ambitious and sprawling 862 page tome – a chapter, however, that is reasonably representative of Anderson's insightful analysis as he brings a new perspective to the Seven Years' War and its eventual impact on a triumphant but fatally "hollow British empire" (p. xix). At first glance, the 1758 siege of Louisbourg was a typical textbook exercise in 18th-century civilized warfare, the "siège en forme" (p. 251), but Anderson emphasizes important variations. Ranger scalping of enemy bodies, even as James Wolfe's troops made their lucky landing at Gabarus Bay and forced a French retreat to Louisbourg, revealed the brutality that had crept into this conflict and the desire, by both Anglo-American irregulars and British regulars, to avenge the "massacre" of Fort William Henry a year earlier. The siege reverted to the traditional precepts of European warfare with trenches inching forward, bringing the artillery bombardment ever closer until fortification walls were reduced to rubble. During a six-week period, the 27,000-strong British naval and army attacking force slowly tightened the noose on the approximately 6,000 French defenders until honourable resistance was no longer possible. If European tradition prevailed, the surrendering garrison would have been accorded the full honours of war. Such was not to be since, as Anderson points out, the North American campaigns of this war often ignored European niceties.

Louisbourg's Governor Drucour was confident that his battered forces had earned an honourable surrender but the British commander, Jeffery Amherst, denied such traditional terms to the conquered fortress. No parole was extended to the captured French forces; instead they were "transported to England" as prisoners of war. Louisbourg's civilian population "would be deported to France". Behind the imposition of these harsh terms were memories of Fort William Henry when Montcalm failed to control his Indian allies who felt that their French ally's generous and honourable terms betrayed their contribution and deprived them of promised plunder. Jeffery Amherst's consequent "refusal to play the magnanimous victor imparted a kind of totality to this war in the New World that was alien to the presumptions and standards of the old" (pp. 254-6, 199). When the same Jeffery Amherst two years later accepted Vaudreuil's surrender at Montreal in 1760, the conqueror of Canada again denied the French forces the honours of war as punishment, he explained, for "the infamous part the troops of France had acted in exciting the savages to perpetrate the most horrid and unheard of barbarities in the whole progress of the war" (pp. 407-8).

Yet "exciting" and attempting to employ the Native peoples in this struggle was a British and Anglo-American strategy as well, first graphically revealed when the conflict broke out in the Ohio Valley in 1754. That year, Anderson proposes, is a better starting point for the war and his study, and he likewise extends the concluding point to 1766 to better understand the impact on the British empire in North America. He examines "a theater of intercultural interaction", involving metropolitan centres of empire as well as the colonists while transforming the Indian population into far more than "incidental players" (pp. xviii, xx). Drawing upon the wealth of writing colonial Americanists have produced over the last quarter century on the strategies of the Native peoples for survival, Anderson delicately folds their motivations and shifting positions into a narrative which once overemphasized the clash between contending European colonial empires and reduced the Indians to mere pawns. They are major players in this study from its beginning to end. Young George Washington's bumbling 1754 attempt to confront the French presence in an area regarded as vital to Virginia's expansion and prosperity also "marked the end of the prolonged collapse of a half-century-old strategic balance in eastern North America – a tripartite equilibrium in which the Iroquois Confederacy occupied a crucial position, both geographically and diplomatically, between the French and the English colonial empires" (p. 12). Although between 1713 and 1744 the "Great League's influence" seemed at its peak, its neutrality and manoeuvrability were subject to gradual erosion, and the European contentions which erupted in the mid-1750s would spell "a change of fortune" attributed equally to growing "European power" and "Iroquois hubris and greed" (p. 21).

While capturing a shift to the British side within the ranks of the Six Nations, particularly as the tide of war increasingly favoured the Anglo-American forces, Anderson does not neglect the metropolitan, colonial American and French Canadian dimensions of this conflict. Moreover, despite the book's primary focus on the North American phase of the struggle, the war's world-wide nature is outlined as it spread through Europe to the Caribbean, West Africa, India and the Philippine archipelago. But the crucial decisions were made in the metropolitan centres of England and France, and the "Great Commoner", William Pitt, still wins high, if expensively

earned, marks for an emphasis on the war in the colonies where France proved more vulnerable. Initially Pitt could only place “his distinctive rhetorical stamp” on British war policies, with the American war as “his first priority”; this meant a strengthened army and navy commitment to the “American and West Indian operations” (p. 173). Eventually this would be sharpened to an attack on French colonies wherever opportunities presented themselves as well as substantial subsidy arrangements with European allies while holding the line in terms of Britain’s direct military commitment. At the same time, he built British naval superiority in the Atlantic to the point where French overseas supply lines were badly disrupted, setting the stage for Britain’s “relatively small army” to combine “with the much more numerous American colonists to overwhelm Canada’s defenders” (pp. 212-3).

On the French side, the supply and reinforcement problems were compounded by the “mutual contempt” existing between Montcalm and Vaudreuil, largely rooted in the clash between Vaudreuil’s desire for “Indian allies and guerilla warfare to defend Canada” and “Montcalm’s more ‘civilized’ strategies”. Futile delegations rushed to Paris from both the governor and the regular military commander to no avail because, as Canada’s vulnerability mounted after 1758, the French king and his ministers “were quietly writing North America out of France’s grand strategy” to save the main house in the European theatre rather than the outhouse overseas (pp. 238-9).

In an earlier work, Anderson dealt sensitively and successfully with the Massachusetts military response to the Seven Years’ War and a colonial, provincial army which radically differed from the British army alongside which it was compelled to serve.⁶ Building on this strength and expertise, he now presents a case that other American colonies shared this growing uneasiness and emerging recognition that, in serving with and under the British, colonials were discovering that they were American rather than British. There was an increasing sentiment that American provincials were treated as second-class, inadequate soldiers, blamed for defeats and never given credit for their contributions to victories. As Benjamin Franklin expressed it as early as 1756, “The Provincials, it seems, apprehend, that Regulars, join’d with them, would claim all the Honour of any Success, and charge them with the Blame of every Miscarriage”. Franklin continued with an example from the 1755 campaigns: “They say, that last year, at Nova Scotia, 2000 New England Men, and not more than 200 Regulars, were join’d in the Taking Bea[u]sejour; yet it could not be discovered by the Acct. sent home by Govr. Lawrence, and publish’d in the London Gazette, that there was a single New England Man concern’d in the Affair”.⁷ Anderson demonstrates that both sides were equally scathing about the other’s military performance. The provincials who served in James Abercromby’s 1758 rout at Ticonderoga witnessed an “injudicious and wanton Sacrifice of men” by an arrogantly incompetent British commander (p. 286). British officers frequently responded, however, with descriptions of provincials as “an Obstinate and

6 Fred Anderson, *A People’s Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years’ War* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1984).

7 Quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630 to 1784* (Montreal and London, 1973), p. 215.

Ungovernable People, Uterly Unacquainted with the nature of Subordination” – remarks which were capped by Wolfe’s much-quoted view that provincials were “the dirtiest most contemptible cowardly dogs that you can conceive” (p. 288). The Americans’ critical words revealed an irregular horror about regular army practices, a realization, as Anderson phrases it, that “a coercive disciplinary system was the engine that drove the British army, and that the blood of common soldiers was its lubricant”. There were even more “enduring marks” made on the provincials since “the manifest differences between themselves and their British comrades-in-arms” revealed how different their American world was from the “British cultural and class system as refracted through the prism of the regular army” (pp. 286-8).

A common enemy and Pitt’s concessions concerning provincial officers holding comparable rank with their regular counterparts, at least up to a certain level, held the alliance together. Most importantly, the British government’s promise to reimburse colonial legislatures for a good portion of their military expenditures aided colonial recruitment and kept provincial units in the fight. To be sure, major battles such as Louisbourg and Quebec were largely fought and won by regulars, and the British naval strength was of vital importance in actually winning the war. But in many engagements provincial units made an undeniable contribution to the conquest of the French American empire and, in doing so, helped to transform the British army. As Anderson points out, Amherst’s 18,000-man force which accepted the French capitulation at Montreal was about 60 per cent regular along with 6,500 provincials, “drawn from every colony north of Pennsylvania, and more than 700 Iroquois warriors” (p. 410). The provincials wore “ordinary civilian clothes” while regulars’ uniforms, suitably adjusted to North American realities, “would have made them a laughingstock in Europe”. The new army was trained in “bush fighting”: rifles were aimed rather than simply levelled, enemy officers were now legitimate targets, ranger and light infantry specialized units were a necessity while armed bateaumen, wagoners and crews of schooners and sloops were required for success (pp. 410-1).

A military victory achieved through the co-operation of mother country and colonies brought a division of the spoils and an imperial attempt to share or shift the burden of the expensive war that disappointed and even outraged colonial America. Anderson devotes considerable attention to the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as “Britain’s first effort to impose institutional form on the conquests” and to “outline a policy for the empire” (p. 565). The need for such action heightened when news of Pontiac’s Rebellion reached London, an uprising partially caused by Amherst’s short-sighted Indian policies and tendency to treat them as subjects rather than allies (p. 406). A restless Native population presented the first of a series of major problems within the expanded British-American empire but, in trying to be accommodative to new subjects, the English government alienated old subjects. New colonies were created north and south of the already-existing American colonies but the vast territory “from the Great Lakes basin to Florida, and from the Mississippi to the western slope of the Appalachians” was closed to settlers and “reserved for the use of the Indians” (pp. 565-6). Denied entry to the territory American expansionists had long assumed to be their badly needed living room, for which they had fought and from which they hoped to remove the hated French and Indian menace, this British decision was both unpopular and, to a great extent, unenforceable. Linked with this concession to the Indian population was an accommodation of the new Quebec colony as George III

“was obligated to offer his protection and justice impartially” to all subjects within his transformed and apparently more tolerant empire. In doing so “the aspirations and assumptions of the Anglo-American colonists” conflicted “with the needs of the Indians” and were equally unsympathetic to the resurrected, legislature-deprived, French and Roman Catholic Quebec (pp. 741, 568).

At the beginning of Anderson’s book he makes clear that the Seven Years’ War should be granted status as the “most important event to occur in eighteenth-century North America”, thus even elevating it above the Revolution “that no one knew lay ahead, and that no one wanted” (pp. xv, xviii). Moreover, by moving beyond 1763 and choosing 1766 as his “stopping point”, he dismantles the traditional perception of the Stamp Act crisis as the commencement of the relentless American march to Revolution (pp. xx-xxi). Instead, in a brilliantly-argued handling of the extended period, he successfully establishes the “parallels between the Stamp Act riots and Pontiac’s War as efforts to defend local autonomy within the empire” (p. xxi). Ironically, although military expeditions launched against Pontiac regained fallen or beleaguered British outposts, in reality the Indians’ rebellion revealed that “the British could be coerced into amiable relations and left the British army with neither the ability to control the west nor the disposition to try” (p. 637). The Native peoples had “reacted violently” against their placement “in a newly subordinated relationship to the Crown” just as Anglo-Americans had “resisted efforts by the commanders-in-chief to treat them as subjects rather than as the allies they believed themselves to be” (p. 743). When the Stamp Act was imposed, it created “exploding settlements up and down the whole Atlantic seaboard, where riots threatened to collapse the structure of imperial governance” (p. 637). To joy and acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic this measure was repealed, as parliament appeared to back down; however, “the colonists’ enthusiasm for the empire” had been shaken and diminished while apprehension still lingered that “in the highest circles of imperial power, men might yet plot to destroy [American] property and liberty” (pp. 712-3). The reality was that while both the Pontiac and Stamp Act crises were resolved by 1766 with reassurances “that the new empire would be a tolerable place to live”, British authorities “had no intention of letting either Indians or colonists define the character of empire” (p. xxi). Victory in the Seven Years’ War had enlarged Britain’s “American domain to a size that would have been difficult for any European metropolis to control” (p. xvi) and the hollowness of this new empire was confirmed by 1766 (pp. 709-13). Consequently, Anderson’s reinterpretation makes this war the Revolution’s “indispensable precursor” since it “crystallized competing visions of empire, the contradictions and revolutionary potential of which only gradually became manifest” (p. 746).

The above summary certainly does not do justice to the intricate concluding analysis and arguments offered by Anderson which provide one of the rare moments when he might fall just a bit short of his desire to produce a study aimed at the general reader as well as his fellow historians. Thickly layered argumentation will probably not offend his academic audience, however, and is more than balanced by the crisply written, lucid and eminently readable remainder of the book. The “narrative intended to synthesize a sizable range of scholarship” (p. xv), modestly promised in the introduction, is admirably delivered. The author’s masterful grasp of the secondary sources, both recent and more dated, as well as printed primary sources, stands out. Carefully weighing evidence, extracting the appropriately timed and telling quote,

insightfully reading and thoughtfully processing the work of other scholars while pushing their research and conclusions even further – Anderson’s magisterial study merits the acclaim it has already received.⁸ Quibbles could be offered that he sometimes pushes the evidence too far or not far enough. William Shirley is designated “the architect” of the Acadian deportation (p. 114) when the evidence appears weak or lacking entirely. As well, if dealt with in greater detail, Britain’s tolerant magnanimity with conquered Quebec (pp. 566-8, 730-1) might be exposed as concealing an unaccommodative and assimilationist hope, still present at a later date in the instructions attached to the Quebec Act. Faced with social and political realities, pragmatic military officers and governors sometimes overlooked mother country inclinations and instructions, applying a softer approach to preserve and develop Quebec as a British colony. But these minor issues do not detract from the strength of Anderson’s major themes and his accomplishment in not only escaping from Gipson’s shadow but in casting his own shadow in this forceful interpretation that must be reckoned with when the Seven Years’ War, along with pre-Revolutionary North America and the British empire, are examined.

Fred Anderson’s *Crucible Of War* and A.J.B. Johnston’s *Control and Order* are two quite different books in length, topic and approach which, as mentioned earlier, rarely intersect. The sweeping study of a global conflict and an in-depth examination of an isolated fortress–town on Île Royale require dissimilar sources and interpretive styles. Nevertheless, both at least offer powerful reminders that reinterpretation and re-examination of the well-studied as well as the under-emphasized can be rewarding exercises. Anderson’s work is clearly the more successful but both leave us with challenging new questions and themes, and both have added new dimensions to our comprehension of colonial North America and the forces shaping what were at times both different and similar colonial societies and mother country controls and desires. Maintaining order and control in an over-extended empire, even after a triumphant victory, apparently was fraught with difficulty in both the 18th and 21st centuries.

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8 It should be pointed out that on the capture of Fort Frontenac and on John Bradstreet’s role during Pontiac’s Rebellion, Anderson’s close reading and perceptive use and extension of my *Pursuit of Profit and Preferment* are especially well done. See Anderson, “Crucible of War”, pp. 259-66, 778-9 and pp. 618-25, 818-20.