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Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010.

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In the first decade of the 21st century, France experienced rioting among its marginalized ethnic minority populations. In 2010, there was again rioting in France, this time due to the expulsion of Roma (Gypsy) immigrants and due to a general and growing resentment among French citizens against a proposed increase in the national retirement age. These social explosions in France, a former colonial power, reflect rapidly changing social configurations that were similar to those that caused dissent in Montreal during the 1960s and early 1970s. In *The Empire Within*, Mills references these historically recent French riots to introduce the reader to his detailed analysis of a similarly riotous period in the history of the province of Quebec and its capital city, Montreal.

Sean Mills must be commended for undertaking the task of re-creating and dissecting a society that was undergoing cataclysmic upheavals during the 1960s and 1970s. He sought to prove that ideas emanating from radical groups and individuals in Montreal at that time transcended ethnic and linguistic barriers. The author successfully situates the upheavals in Montreal within a global context. This is only one of the strengths of this book. Another is his inclusion of the contributions of both ethnic minorities and women to the resistance. One aspect of the Montreal-based women's movement, for example, that made it a particularly powerful element within the larger resistance movement in Montreal at that time was the decision of English-speaking women's groups to join in solidarity with their francophone counterparts. This was evident as groups like the Montreal Women's Liberation Movement joined with the Front Commun des Québécoises, later comprising, along with the Front de Libération des Femmes du Quebec (FLF).

With respect to the contribution of ethnic minorities, Chapter 3, "The International Dimension of Resistance," and Chapter 4, "Montreal's Black Renaissance," outline in detail the crucial importance of the Black Canadians, the Black Power movement of the United States, and even the turmoil of the Cuban Revolution to the upheavals in Montreal during the 1960s. For example, as Mills explains, there was an explicit effort made to link Canada's Blacks' and the U.S.'s African Americans' struggle for racial equality during the 1960s with that of the francophone struggle for linguistic equality and political autonomy within English-speaking Canada during that time. This solidarity between Blacks and francophone Quebec was propounded by two Quebec revolutionaries, Charles Gagnon and Pierre Vallières, the latter proclaiming that francophone Quebeckers were as oppressed as Blacks and were treated no better than *nègres blancs* (white niggers). (Ironically, however, as Mills notes, although Vallières sought, for political purposes, to identify with oppressed groups outside of Quebec such as U.S. African-Americans, he tended ignore many Black and Aboriginal groups within Quebec.) Mills goes on to explain that the conferences held by the short-lived Caribbean Conference Committee and The Congress of Black Writers not only helped develop Black consciousness in Montreal but also provided a fertile environment for intelligent debates on colonialism, exploitation, and racism, directly creating a context within which

francophone Quebeckers could position their own struggle against a dominant majority. Among the gifted and charismatic speakers who boosted this growing radical fervor were CLR James, James Forman, Walter Rodney, and Stokely Carmichael.

Chapter 6, “The Language of Liberation,” addresses in great detail the explosion of the language rights movement itself and examines the struggle of Quebec’s French-speaking population against the dominance of English language in Canadian society. The author deals with this language crisis on different levels and specifically addresses the ethnicity and language of immigrant populations, the language of instruction at elementary schools, the infamous Bill 63, which was supposed to protect the interests of the Anglophones regarding freedom of choice in language instruction in schools and the crisis at McGill University. The protest at McGill University was due to the concern among activists and intellectuals that their university had become a symbol of American imperialism.

A noteworthy feature of *The Empire Within* is Mills’ explanation of the influence of ideas and anti-colonial publications on Montreal’s activists and intellectuals in their understanding of the destructive impact of colonialism on the psyche of the colonized. Anti-imperialist books by Andre Gunder Frank and Kari Levitt provided fuel to the radicalism and nationalism of the era, as Mills astutely articulates. Mills is also accurate in highlighting the fact that the New Left, Third World decolonization movements, and works of Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre were appealing to the Left in Montreal, who formed “a mixture of ideas and movements” (p. 35).

In Montreal during this time, the militancy of organized labor unions coupled with the blossoming of nationalist groups and other citizens’ committees was a major factor in political activism being generated in Montreal in the 1960s and 70s. Chapter 7 provides evidence that the showdown between organized labor, radical politics, and government security forces was inevitable. Specifically, the emergence and work of organizations such as the radical, nationalist Front d’Action Politique (FRAP) and the politically active trade union federation, Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN) (which officially advocated for Quebec’s sovereignty) made the Canadian government uneasy. In addition, the use of violence and kidnapping by another resistance organization, the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), undermined political gains made by the more mainstream Left and provided the rationale needed by the government to order the army’s occupation of Montreal and enforce the War Measures Act. In fact, the disillusionment and often fragile unity among various groups comprising Quebec’s Left is discussed in the Mills’ conclusion. During the early 1970s, he explains, some activists and intellectuals were dabbling in Marxism, while others were attracted to Maoism or optimistically joined the Parti Québécois, believing this party would shift further left. Mills is accurate in presenting Quebec’s Montreal-based resistance movement against an English speaking majority as involving often contradictory (even conflicting) approaches.

There is only one minor shortcoming in Mills’ work. More information could have been provided on the membership size and influence of smaller groups such as the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity and the Québec-Palestine Solidarity Committee. Mills could have addressed whether these groups made a viable contribution to the resistance movement or whether they occupied only the fringe of the resistance. Nonetheless, *The Empire Within* will prove very useful in understanding the long and difficult development of a movement in Montreal that eventually led to limited social change. Evidence of this

limited change is described in Mills' observation that in the 1970s, "instruction [in public schools] was not being given in Native languages, as had been promised, Aboriginal teachers were not being trained, local customs were not being observed, and the goal of creating local control over education was not being met" (p.213).

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