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Germaine Warkentin, ed. *Pierre-Esprit Radisson: The Collected Writings*. Volume 2. Montreal & Kingston: MQUP / Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2014. 283 pp.; \$65.00 (cloth) ISBN 9780773544376

The North American exploits of Pierre-Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law, Médard Chouart des Groseilliers, are well known in fur trade and exploration historiography. Their fur trading expeditions into the interior of the continent resulted in considerable knowledge of the Hudson Bay region and the peoples who surrounded it. This knowledge contributed to the creation of the trading and retail giant Hudson's Bay Company in 1670. Germaine Warkentin's recent critical two-volume collection returns to the life and writings of Pierre-Esprit Radisson and provides fresh insight and analysis of figures well known to historians, while also introducing new documents and context to Radisson's life and writings. Volume 2, in particular, contains fascinating archival finds that reveal much about Radisson's controversial journeys to Hudson Bay and the excitement that unfolded during his time there.

Radisson and Groseilliers have been celebrated and vilified as either heroes or traitors to France or England (depending on the author's perspective) for the events that transpired at Port Nelson between 1682 and 1684. Radisson was raised in New France and entered into English service after realizing that access to furs in the interior of North America would be easier through Hudson Bay and its tributaries. Warkentin carefully reviews Radisson's life and these decisions in volume 1. Volume 2 includes Radisson's travel writing *Relations*, which covers the period of his life after he and his brother-in-law left English service for French service, and subsequently returned to the English. His *Relations* reveal how Radisson chose to tell the story of these events to the English monarch in 1684 not only as an attempt to clear his name against rumours and charges of disloyalty but also to gain a pension for his explorations in the name of England. The *Relations* are a wonderful read, in both French and English. Warkentin skillfully footnotes these with relevant discursive

notes, references to volume 1 and other writings, and germane comments on connections to twenty-first century fiction such as the work of Joseph Boyden (25). Readers of volume 2 may be surprised by how infrequently Indigenous peoples are mentioned and, when they are, how brusquely Radisson addressed them and the aid they provided him while at Port Nelson. Warkentin addresses this matter in the introduction (ix), in part because it contrasts with materials contained in volume 1. Nonetheless, Warkentin's critical collection documents how Radisson recounted promises made to Indigenous peoples that are relevant and helpful for understanding the context of trade and paternalism shaped by Europeans at moments of contact with Indigenous peoples (25, 81).

In addition to the *Relations*, volume 2 includes various documents Warkentin unearthed in her extensive research that help the reader understand Radisson's final years in England. The inclusion of personal correspondence and documents supporting Radisson's petitions for a pension as well as his previously unpublished "Last Will and Testament" chronicle his little known state of affairs in his declining years. Warkentin's exhaustive research and rigorous analysis have revealed much about Radisson's life, illuminating not only how he lived and died, but also how political machinations, imperial designs, and economic gain influenced the ways in which men in the service of empire were treated after the work of gaining access to resources was done.

Volume 2 is arranged with Radisson's *Relations* of his time in Port Nelson first, from 1682 until 1684, followed by "Miscellaneous Writings" by or relating to Radisson during this period, following which are "Related Documents and Appendices." For the *Relations* and documents originally written in French, transcriptions of the French document and a side-by-side English translation appear. The late and highly respected literary historian, K. Janet Ritch, skillfully translated both *Relations*. While it is possible to understand the events and editorial insights of volume 2 without reading volume 1, the second volume contains references throughout to the first and, for those not knowledgeable of Radisson's life and actions, volume 1 will provide valuable context for understanding the events discussed in volume 2.

Warkentin's wonderfully engaging textual introduction explains each document included in volume 2 by title, location, date, description, and provenance. This section will engage those interested in the lives of documents. Warkentin's meticulous tracking and comparisons of materials reproduced in volume 2 is apparent, as is

her sense of humour and attention to detail. In her description of the copy of Radisson's *Relations* held at Windsor Castle, in the Library of Her Majesty the Queen, Warkentin explains, "The binding is brown finely crackled calf, probably late seventeenth century, with gold stamped double rules on front and back boards" (xvi), and the copy held in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) in Winnipeg is described as having been copied "by two scribes, using the same regular late humanist cursive italic hand belonging to a different paleographical tradition from that of the miscellaneous scripts of the company's minutes and account books. There are small corrections in Radisson's own italic hand on folios 30r, 38r, and 39r" (xvii). Not only does Warkentin impress the reader with detailed descriptions and contextual information about the documents transcribed in volume 2, but she also provides novel insight into their creation. Regarding the HBCA copy of Radisson's *Relations*, Warkentin "speculate[s] that the copyist was [Gédeon] Godet's daughter Charlotte, who travelled with them and married Radisson in 1685. She may later have worked as a professional copyist" (xvii). This sort of attention to detail, knowledge of seventeenth-century writing and reproduction processes, and clear understanding of the group of people with whom Radisson surrounded himself is evident throughout volume 2 and demonstrated in an engaging, entertaining fashion.

While earlier digital and print versions of Radisson's *Relations* are available, including the British Library's digital copy, they are difficult to access outside a university or large public library. Until the publication of this volume, most readers interested in the events at Port Nelson encountered Radisson's *Relations* through Grace Lee Nute's *Caesars of the Wilderness*, a text Warkentin refers to regularly in volume 2, both to challenge and laud. Germaine Warkentin has made Radisson's *Relations* and his life upon returning to England more accessible to a broad readership and done so in a spectacularly enjoyable fashion. Both volumes of Warkentin's *Pierre-Esprit Radisson* are published through the Champlain Society and McGill-Queen's University Press (MQUP), which is one of their many desirable qualities for bibliophiles. The Champlain Society editions are bound in the classic red cloth with gold lettering and beautifully accompany the MQUP editions, which are bound in black cloth with silver lettering and covered with a glossy jacket with stunning photographs of the Port Nelson area.

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