

Making Heroes, Selling Heritage: Commemoration and History-Making in 19th- and 20th-Century Canada

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REVIEW ESSAYS/NOTES CRITIQUES

Making Heroes, Selling Heritage: Commemoration and History-Making in 19th- and 20th-Century Canada

IN 1999, WHEN I FIRST BEGAN TEACHING A GRADUATE SEMINAR on the history of commemoration and memory, it would not be an exaggeration to say that insofar as the Canadian field was concerned I was not faced with an embarrassment of scholarly riches. To be sure, there were important books and articles to include on my reading lists, such as Ian McKay's *The Quest of the Folk*, Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble*, H. V. Nelles's *The Art of Nation-Building*, a special issue of *Histoire sociale/Social History* with articles by scholars such as Nelles and Kathryn McPherson, and Robert Cupido's work on the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation. To cover periods and themes that I – and my students – considered important, however, I found it necessary to include a hefty dose of historiography from American, English, and imperial literature. Soon, though, and much to my and my students' delight, my reading list on Canada began to grow. It now includes work on a range of topics by scholars such as Alan Gordon, Ronald Rudin, Elizabeth Furniss, Donald Wright, and Paige Raibmon. What's more, the interest in examining commemorative practices and the formation of historical memory, past and present, shows no sign of abating.¹

Two new works in this area, Alan Gordon's *The Hero and the Historians: Historiography and the Uses of Jacques Cartier* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), and Ian McKay and Robin Bates's *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), take up questions that others, particularly Gordon and

1 As in other national contexts, the Canadian historiography now also includes work on history education and an interest by historians in contemporary understandings of the past. See, for example, Ken Osborne, "'Our History Syllabus Has Us Grasping': History in Canadian Schools – Past, Present, and Future," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 3 (September 2000): 404-35; Peter Seixas, ed., *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Ruth W. Sandwell, ed., *To the Past: History Education, Public Memory, and Citizenship in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Jocelyn Létourneau, *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); and Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian's Journey Through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). Examples of studies of historical commemoration in Atlantic Canada specifically include the following: James Overton, *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture, and Development in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1996); Greg Marquis, "Celebrating Champlain in the Loyalist City: Saint John, 1904-10," *Acadiensis* XXXIII, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 27-43; Matthew McRae, "The Romance of Canada: Tourism and Nationalism Meet in Charlottetown, 1939," *Acadiensis* XXXIV, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 26-45; Roger Marsters, "'The Battle of Grand Pré': The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and the Commemoration of Acadian History," *Acadiensis* XXXVI, no. 1 (Autumn 2006): 29-50; and Alison Norman, "'A highly favoured people': The Planter Narrative and the 1928 Grand Historic Pageant of Kentville, Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis* XXXVII, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2009): 116-40.

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McKay, have examined elsewhere²; most specifically, they analyze the veneration of individuals through genres such as narratives and monuments and explore the role of the state in producing particular forms of history and conceptions of heritage. I do not mean to suggest, though, that these books are derivative or that their contributions to the historiography are minimal. Gordon and McKay and Bates demonstrate the many possibilities for the expansion and deepening of the field, both in the questions they explore and in the questions that their work raises but does not address. These books also suggest the different stances, both empirical and theoretical, that can be taken towards the history of commemoration and the construction of so-called usable pasts.

As his title suggests, Gordon focuses on the creation of Cartier as a “national” figure and his shifting fortunes as a “hero” amongst Canadian historians (both French and English). Starting with the 16th-century Cartier, Gordon carefully details, as much as is possible, Cartier’s three voyages of 1534, 1535-36, and 1541-42 – pointing out that which can be “known” by historians about these expeditions and, equally importantly, that which is vague, contradictory, or simply unknowable according to historians’ standards of evidence. Accounts of Cartier’s voyages received only scant attention in the 16th century; the trip of 1534-35 was the only one to be widely acknowledged. Cartier’s fortunes did not improve over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. Gordon suggests, in particular, that “having neither established a Christian colony nor paid much attention to the proselytization of the Natives” neither Jesuits nor other explorers found Cartier particularly useful or inspirational (36). Over the course of the 19th century, though, Cartier’s popularity grew; he was hailed as a national hero and ended up winning a place in the pantheon of New France’s founders.

This construction of Cartier’s narrative and image, Gordon suggests, was the result of intellectual, political, and social developments in Lower Canada and Quebec. The aftermath of the Rebellion of 1837 accelerated an already-growing interest in New France’s history: the rebellion’s failure, coupled with vast social change in the province, led its youth into “both a nostalgia for a more distant past and a hope that history would teach them the way to a better future” (55). And the growth of historical and literary societies and groups, formed by middle class Lower Canadians in the 1840s, was spurred by the surge in education, particularly at the college and university level. By the latter half of the 19th century, these developments augmented the ranks of a middle-class reading public that was receptive to and desiring of historical narratives. But these were not just any narratives; 19th-century nationalist ideologies, themselves underpinned by the discourses of liberalism, romanticism, and individualism, actively sought and, all too often, relied on “heroes” plucked from the archives (or, as we shall see later, the pages of fiction). However, as Gordon points out, in the context of mid-19th-century Quebec a belief in the power of individuals was tempered, at least for Catholic nationalists, by a commitment to the bonds of family and its imbrication with the nation. Through the efforts of the publisher Eusèbe Sénécal, and the research of Abbé Cyprien Tanguay, genealogy came to serve

2 Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal’s Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001); Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*, 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008).

nationalism by demonstrating continuity, cementing status, soothing anxieties about emigration to New England, and upholding – by tracing lines of consanguinity and filiation – the norms of heterosexual marriage (62-3).

“Cartiermania” developed out of this crucible of general factors, Gordon argues, but it was also the result of the work of individuals located within it – not the least of which was the research and lobbying of the lawyer and “unofficial” provincial archivist, Georges-Barthélemy Faribault. Faribault sought out “relics” of Cartier’s sunken ship, the *Petite Hermine*, and helped bring a copy of a portrait of Cartier, painted by Théophile Hamel, from Saint-Malo. It did not matter that the portrait Hamel copied was only four years old and supposedly based on a sketch in the Paris archives, a sketch that had somehow eluded the vigilant and prying eyes of historians (67-8). As Gordon astutely points out, specific, concrete things were required in order to establish symbolic and emotional connections to a wider audience so that Cartier (and other “heroes”) could become national figures: faces and bodies, expressions, and dress (68-9). In the same vein, one cannot help but think of late-19th-century commemorators’ need to detail Laura Secord’s clothing; like Cartier, her portrait also was a composite of memory and her supporters’ desires.

Armed with the marker of individual identity, archival records, histories that pinpointed his voyages as crucial acts of nation-building, and material artifacts, Cartier’s image and narrative thus began its journey into the history books and the hearts of historians and Quebec citizens. The “man from Saint-Malo” became ubiquitous, as he marched in Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day parades, sailed across the Atlantic to appear in the Paris universal exposition, was the subject of more archival research, and graced the pages of a number of academic histories (73-85). His “apogee,” Gordon suggests, was reached in the creation of the Cartier-Brébeuf monument in Quebec’s Lower Town, unveiled in 1889 on Saint-Jean-Baptiste day. Connecting these images and representations, Gordon demonstrates, was an ultramontane vision that linked Cartier to the religious nature of French-speaking Quebec. Cartier, insisted the bishop of Trois-Rivières, Monsignor L. F. R. Laflèche, resembled nothing so much as the patriarch Abraham. His arrival in North America paralleled the latter’s in Canaan, the result of providential intervention: both had been sent by God, both encountered heathens who forced their departure, and both saw said heathens succumb to God’s will (83-4). Others, most notably Benjamin Sulte, disagreed with this interpretation; he claimed that “no one knew when the peopling of French Canada began” and thus Cartier could not be seen as a “founding patriarch” (84). It seems, though, that these were minority voices. Furthermore, while the admission of other “heroes” might – and eventually, in Cartier’s case, did – vitiate claims to exalted status, the creation of other figures as national symbols appears to have bolstered claims to Cartier’s heroism. Le Moyne d’Iberville, de Salaberry, Jean Talon, Bishop Laval, Frontenac, and Champlain all joined Cartier and Jean de Brébeuf on the parade route and history book pages. Far from being an isolated case, then, Cartier could be made to represent a collective entity; together these men represented something far more than acts of individual heroism and sacrifice. They came to embody the “spirit of New France” and, teleologically, the spirit of Quebec and French Canada.

What of English Canada? While a few English Canadians, primarily based in Montreal or Ottawa, were interested in Cartier (Rosanna Leprohon, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, Hiram Stephens, and Sir John A. Macdonald’s secretary, Joseph Pope), and

American historian Francis Parkman's poetic imagination was stirred by him, overall he remained far more important to French Canadians in Quebec than to anglophones (particularly those outside the province). Debates and discussions of Cartier's career, though, took place in both linguistic circles. Was he accompanied by priests, mused Pope? Was he really a member of the French nobility? Narcisse-Eutrope Dionne thought probably not. But the "common sense meaning," as Gordon calls it, of Cartier's career was not seriously questioned (110). However, it was the "anglophone secularization" of Cartier's story, Gordon feels, which began the process of undermining it (115). Rival claims to "founding" or "first" status started to jostle Cartier from his centre-stage position. Amongst anglophones, Montreal intellectual Samuel Dawson's championing of John Cabot cast some doubt on Cartier's supporters' claims; the most damaging blow, though, came from within the ranks of Cartier's fellow heroes of New France. Samuel de Champlain, not Cartier, began to receive much more attention, first from francophone writers and organizations and then from anglophones. The lavish 1908 Tercentenary Pageant at Quebec City, probably the best-known manifestation of Champlain's commemoration, emphasized the fusion of English and French and focused attention on Champlain as the founder of New France.

Nevertheless, Cartier's image did not vanish from Canadians' notions of "nation-builders." During the interwar decades, in fact, English Canada's interest in him grew. In 1922, the newly formed Historic Sites and Monuments Board chose to erect a plaque to Cartier, one that commemorated his third and fourth voyages (although, as Gordon notes, the board compromised on its location, basing it not on "historical accuracy" but, rather, on accessibility and visibility for passing tourists). In this instance, however, Cartier was remembered by these anglophone Protestants as a colonizer but not a very successful one; Champlain increasingly assumed the mantle of triumphant colonizer (130-2). Other forms of commemoration regarding Cartier were even more fraught by tensions between French and English Canada, whether the matter at hand was his landing site at Montreal, his intentions at Gaspé, or his function as a symbol of international goodwill.

Even as the plaques were being nailed down, Cartier's time in the commemorative sun was running out. Shifts in French Canadian nationalism and in Quebec, whereby French Canadian youth sought solutions to the challenges facing their society through modernism and not the commemorative practices of previous generations, account for part of Cartier's decline (163-6). Although some public historians (most notably Gustave Lanctôt) retained an interest in Cartier, by the 1950s and 1960s university-based historians increasingly eschewed a focus on individuals and heroism to concentrate on structural questions. To be sure, debates over Cartier still took place within seminar rooms, conference sessions, and the pages of academic journals; however, they did so with a new focus, using him "as a resource through which to investigate the St. Lawrence Indians" (177). The commemorations of Cartier that continued did so, Gordon argues, in a less unified manner: a display of the *Grande Hermione* at Expo 67, the removal of a plaque in Charlottetown to a new provincial park in western Prince Edward Island, and the adding of more information to the Saint-Roch Cartier monument (178-9). As Gordon points out, though, these acts did not represent a renewal of interest or the emergence of new debates over Cartier's significance; they were simply a continuation of older habits and provided only a few more facts about him.

Gordon brings his study into the 1990s and early 21st century. Although interest in

Cartier has not completely vanished – witness, for example, the *Heritage Minute* in which Cartier is portrayed, or Ramsay Cook's edition of Cartier's *Relations*³ – Gordon maintains that Cartier is now a peripheral figure for both historians and nationalists. Yet while this might seem like a somewhat bleak conclusion, Gordon suggests that, as with any investigation of commemorative practices, Cartier provides us with opportunities for reflection beyond this case study. Cartier's case demonstrates that methods, acceptable evidence, and the meanings of history have changed over time – an observation that I think few historians who study commemoration would dispute. Gordon also recommends, however, that we might “develop new ways to think about [our] own discipline,” ones that would help us acknowledge our role – and its limits – in the creation of “common sense knowledge.” What is more important, though, is Gordon's desire that “professional historians acknowledge more fully how much their interpretations of the past, and more precisely their methods, reflect the common sense of their times.” Historians “must investigate more directly the politics of history-writing” (189).

The politics of writing history and creating historical sites and landscapes are central themes in McKay and Bates's *In the Province of History*. This should come as no surprise, of course, to those familiar with McKay's 1994 award-winning *The Quest of the Folk* or with his other influential work on the history of Canadian labour and the left.⁴ As the authors acknowledge, this book “can legitimately be read as a sequel” to McKay's “investigation into the cultural contradictions of capitalism”; however, their goal in *In the Province of History* is to provide a deeper analysis of “the relations between tourism/history, liberal order, and the logic of commodification in capitalist society” (vix). To do so, McKay and Bates identify key areas and actors who created particular images and symbols of the province, ones in which certain notions of history and, in particular, “heritage” became key components of its identity. Longfellow and his 19th-century creation of “Evangeline,” the mid-20th-century writings and Maritime heritage promotion of Will R. Bird and Thomas Raddall, and the work of Liberal premier Angus L. Macdonald in constructing Nova Scotia as an enclave of “tartanism” and whiteness: all of these were significant and influential characters in this narrative of turning the province's messy and complicated histories into the tidy bundles of signs, symbols, and artefacts needed for tourism/history's promotion.

Similar to the opening pages of *The Quest of the Folk*, the “Prologue” of *In the Province of History* begins with an analysis of a montage of photographs used in a 1936 tourism booklet. The authors first explore the multiple meanings and readings that the montage might hold for readers and then move to the meanings provided by the Department of Highways – meanings shaped by concepts of race in which whiteness, particularly that of the Scots, was pivotal and dominant. Yet they argue that it is not just race alone that the photograph encapsulates; the photograph also exemplifies the ways in which Nova Scotians reworked representations of the past to

3 See Ramsay Cook, ed., *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

4 Ian McKay, *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008); McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005).

attract tourists, producing a cultural, social, and, most importantly, politically charged phenomenon of “tourism/history.” While not quite David Lowenthal’s much-cited “heritage,” “tourism/history” can be understood as a process and set of relations that “consciously reordered representations of the past as it catered to (real or imagined) tourists” (15). Tourism/history discouraged its audience from engaging with the past in a multifaceted and dynamic fashion; instead, it “encouraged the passive reception of images . . . [and] forcefully imposed an authoritative reading (backed by state resources) that made any such dialogue difficult if not impossible” (15). Predating the boom in heritage sites identified by Lowenthal as having occurred from the 1970s on, McKay and Bates argue that tourism/history was solidified from the 1930s to the 1950s – decades when the province underwent significant social and economic upheaval and witnessed the creation of a new consumer capitalism “exemplified above all by the advent of tourism” (19). Following through on arguments made in *Quest of the Folk*, *In the Province of History* pinpoints the creation of tourism/history by, for the most part, local cultural elites and the provincial government. To be sure, the demands and desires of outsiders for a tourist landscape unscathed by the turmoil of modernity were influential but, as McKay and Bates demonstrate, such demands and desires were also given full rein by insiders searching for emotional, moral, and social solutions. “Tourism/history not only blurred the line between fact and fiction,” they observe, but it also obscured the divisions between “insider and outsider” (22).

On the surface, though, it ostensibly sharpened these divisions by promising visitors an entrance into a landscape inhabited by a simple and (usually) gentle folk. This was a terrain unmarked by the struggles and, at times, outright violence of the colonial period, when an array of competing groups and imperial powers jostled for possession of the territory. The history of the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries that McKay and Bates outline is a past marked by complexity, uncertainties, and, at times, confusion. These histories would be suppressed and subsumed by the anodyne certainties that tourism/history deployed. In the writings of Bird and Raddall, for example, the ordered and accessible past presented for public consumption was one in which British settlers and colonial officials were benign and benevolent figures; Acadians were backward and recalcitrant (or, if victims, childlike dupes easily manipulated by the French); the Mi’kmaq were savages, with unfathomable motives for their barbaric behaviour; and women (if they appeared at all) were either passive and innocent victims or, more likely, sexually promiscuous, dishonest, and disloyal threats to honest, upright, white manliness.

McKay and Bates present us with a wealth of archival detail and point to the importance of specific processes and contingencies that helped shape these developments. Their chapter on *Evangeline*, for example, argues that Longfellow’s poem and the way in which it was understood and deployed by tourism/history’s promoters was crucial to the 20th-century tourist-state’s mode of operating. *Evangeline* helped shape conceptions of Nova Scotia as a “therapeutic outpost,” constructing the province as a romantic, pastoral, pre-modern haven of tranquility. Longfellow’s vision came to dominate how people thought of this haven because of the power of his poetry, the receptivity of his audience to a number of its features (such as the story of the doomed lovers Evangeline and Gabriel), and the destruction, loss, or absence of Acadian architecture, visual representations of Acadians, and eyewitness accounts of the deportation (78). Another factor was that the poem itself

held different meanings for different audiences: for New Englanders wishing to shore up American nationalism, it served as proof of colonial British tyranny and 19th-century American literary superiority; Catholic French Canadians turned *Evangeline* herself into a Catholic heroine, defiant in the face of British violence; and Acadians read it as a paean to the virtues of Acadian solidarity, innocence, and, in particular, whiteness, as it identified them as Europeans and thus removed them from any suspicion of racial intermingling with their Mi'kmaw neighbours. Just as *Evangeline*, though, could be read through different sets of lenses depending on one's social, cultural, and national location, its use also shifted over the course of the 19th century. From a rather "unpredictable and disorganized" phenomenon of the 1860s-80s – one that, for example, sparked provincial debates about the causes of the Deportation, whether it was necessary or unjust – it morphed into a central element of tourism marketing (96). The establishment of the Dominion-Atlantic Railway in 1894, which used a fictional portrait of a fictional character as its figurehead, helped bring masses of tourists to Grand-Pré who were eager to find the virtuous maiden in her "forest primeval" and mourn over her sad, yet inspirational, fate (one that they need not take any responsibility for nor understand as anything but the result of inexorable forces). Although *Evangeline* did inculcate sympathy for those not usually deemed sympathetic by Anglo Protestants and also provided, as McKay and Bates note, a space for Acadian identity, they nevertheless argue that it became a central framework into which the past could be safely lodged.

The theme of innocence that ran through the *Evangeline* phenomenon also shaped the work of the writer Will R. Bird, whose travel books and histories of Nova Scotia were defined by, as McKay and Bates note, "a principled decision to reject analytical reasoning as an illicit temptation, to instead uphold a categorical imperative to live by unexamined nostrums that are represented as in keeping with transcendent truths inaccessible to human understanding" (132). In particular, Bird's experiences of and writings about the Great War provide background and context, the authors believe, for his later work. While critical of officers' class-based elitism and highhandedness and of the brutality of war, he steadfastly refused to admit that his experiences were founded in social, religious, geographical, cultural, and political and, therefore, historical processes. Instead, both his experiences of the war and of the history of Nova Scotia could be understood through the lens of character and personality, albeit not ones subject to a psychoanalytic mode of explanation. A liberal interpretation of individualism, which privileged the strictly personal, as well as a willingness to ascribe agency to supernatural, inexplicable, forces were all that was needed in encounters with the past. An inherited "character," split neatly into dichotomous binaries, was the motor of Bird's history. Yorkshiremen, for example, tended to possess heaping amounts of good character while blacks and Natives generally tended to be woefully lacking in it, displaying atavistic qualities of childishness or primitive savagery.

In contrast to Bird, Raddall (whose work received considerable acclaim in his day and who, unlike Bird, is still posthumously respected in Nova Scotia as an author and intellectual) took a different path to (or in) the "Province of History" (200). Many of Raddall's concepts of history can be found in his historical novels, set primarily in 18th-century Nova Scotia. While replete with historical detail, as McKay and Bates point out, the novels have a timeless feel to them. His characters represent gendered, social, and racial essences and enact already-known scripts that rely on notions of

hierarchies of ethnicity and race. Furthermore, while Bird believed that the supremacy of Anglo-Celtic men was a result of their superior character, Raddall understood it as a result of their evolutionary superiority. His work also linked particular environments to morality; the harsh conditions of the province's winter climate, for example, provided a testing ground that weeded out the unfit and morally suspect weaklings while allowing "healthy, resourceful stock to populate the province" (212). It is not surprising, then, that throughout Raddall's work lurked fears of degeneration, always ready to undermine the liberal forms of progress made by those who had proved their racial mettle. The French in Acadia, for example, exemplified such a process: their intermingling with the Mi'kmaq, not their subjugation by the British, was the true reason for their downfall (221-7). Differences between the two commemorators' understanding of gender are also apparent. Bird's understandings and performances of his masculinity were shaped by the values of Protestant, middle-class, small-town Nova Scotia: hard work, "fair dealings," temperance, and an innocence of the fast ways and material enticements of urban centres. Raddall, in contrast, depicted himself as "the aloof backwoodsman who disdains the tinsel and tawdriness of the big city for the manly world of the hunting lodge and fishing shack" (251). While neither Bird nor Raddall had much use for women, Bird did not see them as individuals (146), while Raddall saw women as existing only to support, amuse, and seduce men (207).

Yet it was their association with Macdonald that moved these men from the world of textual production to that of state-sponsored commemorative practices. Macdonald appointed both Bird and Raddall to the Historic Sites Advisory Council, formed in 1947 with the primary aim of promoting a history for the province that would bring in tourists and their dollars. The council's responsibilities included projects such as the rebuilding of parts of Louisbourg and of Fort La Tour; it soon, though, found itself besieged by requests from communities and heritage activists who wished to see their particular historic home, inn, or spot given funds for preservation or marked with a plaque. As McKay and Bates note, the vast majority of such requests dealt with the pre-Confederation period and often (albeit not exclusively) from areas with the most tourists (357); successful requests tended to focus on "the individual and the unusual – preferably the unique" and not the "social, the structural, or the causal" (359). Preserving the province's history became, they argue, a matter of preserving commodities, such as "statues, plaques, restored homes, memorabilia, all the bric-à-brac of commemoration" (368). Not surprisingly, this type of commemorative landscape did not lend itself to the histories of workers, African Nova Scotians, non-elite women, or Natives (except for "prehistory" sites). Simultaneously, and in tandem with this particular creation of heritage, Macdonald was enthusiastically promoting the province as an enclave of Scottishness. Although McKay explored this process in *The Quest of the Folk*, here he and Bates develop a more thorough and explicit critique of the ways in which Scottishness became a racial category. Macdonald, they argue, valorized whiteness, reinforced racial and ethnic hierarchies, and used "tartanism" as a set of symbols and associations that located Scottish identity primarily in the "rugged individualism" of the Highlands. They also examine what they view as the erroneous notion that the Scots formed the majority of the province's population and how this was accompanied by a "myth of Scottishness" that relied on notions of the Scots as a biological and somehow "pure" race; this approach, they maintain, also glossed over the ways in which historical processes – the Highland clearances, English colonialism,

and unequal socio-economic relations within Scotland – accounted for the Scottish presence in Nova Scotia. Accompanying this mythic complex, McKay and Bates point out, was the state's attitude towards the Gaelic language. While Macdonald venerated Gaelic, his was a "mystic racialization" of the language (297), one that saw it as part of the great romance of Scottishness but consigned it to a distant past (the fact that he was far from fluent in Gaelic did not help). Despite the demands of prominent Gaelic speakers, such as Sydney's James MacNeil, that it be taught as a living language in the province's schools and that Gaelic broadcasting be defended, the state's response was, at best, half-hearted. The Gaelic College at St. Ann's did little more than promote a dehistoricized and romantic "Scottishness" embodied in craft classes, a gift shop full of souvenirs, and annual summer festivities, all of which celebrated notions of "traditional clan" hierarchies (and, not incidentally, attracted tourists) (300-6).

While Gordon is correct that the romance surrounding Cartier has dissipated, McKay and Bates conclude that the romances of folk, Innocence, and tartanism are far from finished in the "province of history." The different conclusions reached by the authors of these books are shaped to no small extent, of course, by their subject matter and their approaches to it. Gordon's is a carefully crafted work that keeps its sights set on a specific image and scrupulously tracks that image through time and space. *The Hero and the Historians* also makes very clever and insightful use of Cartier as a device that links French and English Canada and places them in the same commemorative force field. Gordon, as well, brings a transnational and transatlantic perspective to his work, a refreshing dimension in a field that is often framed methodologically by national borders. Yet although he grounds his detailed research in the ideas of theorists of nationalism (most notably Benedict Anderson), and takes careful account of the role played by intellectual, social, and political frameworks, Gordon's use of theory might be described as either overly judicious or, perhaps, slightly too cautious at times. I would have liked to have seen further elaboration, for example, of his intriguing, concluding remarks, cited above, concerning the politics of history-writing and historians' need to acknowledge and analyze how their own work is influenced by the "common sense of their own times" (189).

Furthermore, gender as an analytic category receives only a limited amount of attention. While Gordon acknowledges Donald Wright's work on the masculinization of the Canadian historical profession, I was curious why masculinity, both of in terms of Cartier's image and in terms of those who created it, does not receive more sustained attention; certainly in his first book, *Making Public Pasts*, Gordon paid careful attention to women's work in Montreal commemorations. Is it because the sheer ubiquity of men in these processes allows them to pass unmarked by relationships of power and privilege? Could it also be that we still lack a strong historiography on elite masculinity in Canada? Here I think Bonnie Smith's *The Gender of History* might be drawn on, as Smith poses useful questions about gender's relationship to those intellectual and social practices that shaped the production of 19th-century knowledge. Smith, along with literary scholars such as Nina Baym, has also pointed to the use of genealogy as a 19th-century phenomenon, one shared across lines of religion and ethnicity.⁵

5 Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

I also could not but help wonder about the use of Cartier's story in helping to shape the cultural and political contours of settler society. While Gordon is attentive to the misrepresentations of Native people in the Cartier narratives and images, I would argue that the use of images of Natives goes beyond simply misunderstandings or racist fantasies of savagery. As Gordon points out, at times Cartier lagged in the sweepstakes of heroism because of his lack of overt interest in colonization. However, when Native people were, albeit erroneously, put to work in Cartier's history as either threatening savages or welcoming subalterns who recognized European superiority, how then did Cartier's narrative help to provide foundational stories for both English and French Canada as settler societies?⁶ Moreover, what, if any, was or is the significance of Cartier's narrative and its many retellings to Native people in Canada: has he had anything close to the charged and fraught meanings that Columbus has held for Native Americans?

Different groups, the historiography on commemoration suggests, might choose to celebrate the same individual, event, or process for different reasons.⁷ Reception, though, can be a fraught issue for cultural history. While both studies are attentive to the reception of these cultural messages, as Gordon points out it is always difficult to gauge individuals' reactions to the dissemination of cultural constructs (77); in his earlier work, McKay also pointed to the difficulty of measuring their effect in any kind of "scientific" fashion.⁸ It is curious, though, that while both books track their particular subjects' appearances in multiple venues and genres, there is one very obvious missing element: school textbooks and readers. Both books suggest that children were drawn into the creation of these histories and heritage, as they appeared at Cartier celebrations (137) or attended St. Ann's and danced in Gaelic Mods (305). Yet the transmission of Cartier's narratives or the tales of hardy Scots settlers and fisherfolk might well be equally prevalent – not to mention pernicious – in the public school classroom, possibly transcending the limitations of the provincial (in McKay and Bates's case) or Quebec/Ontario (in Gordon's case) frameworks. While texts and readers cannot tell us how such history lessons were taken up by individual teachers and students, nevertheless as artifacts of commemoration they suggest how state

6 See, for example, Annie E. Coombes, ed., *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, and South Africa* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), and Chris Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

7 This is probably most evident – but not limited – to work on the American Civil War. The historiography on its memory and commemoration is huge; see, for example, Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), and Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008). For Canada, see Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

8 McKay wrote in 1994 that "it is rarely possible to prove the impact of an ideology, a myth-symbol complex, or a mythmoteur. The positive methods of social history do not illuminate such questions very fully." He stated, furthermore, that "no conceptual breakthrough has occurred in the methods of cultural history, at least so far as I know, that would provide me with any certainty as I extend my analysis of the *Quest of the Folk* beyond Creighton and Black (whose assumptions can be thoroughly documented) to a much wider range of words and things concerned with Nova Scotia." See McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, 215.

policies, popular fiction, or academic histories might be disseminated in even broader ways. For example, what kinds of lessons might children on the Prairies or British Columbia have learned about Cartier, given Ontario's dominance in English-language textbook publishing until the 1960s and 1970s? Furthermore, because textbooks often repeated and reiterated "received wisdom," tending to flatten out complexities and stifling multiple interpretations and perspectives, I would hazard a guess that they played a significant role in the reification and reduction of the past that, in particular, troubles McKay and Bates.⁹

These queries aside, though, both books raise important questions about the location and scope of commemoration. While McKay and Bates refrain (wisely, in my opinion) from trying to argue that Nova Scotia was unique in its harnessing of "history" in the service of tourism, they suggest a number of times that the province was "precocious" in its recognition that particular versions of history might serve tourism, the state, and, ultimately, liberal capitalism (20). Their argument responds most directly to Lowenthal's location of the heritage boom in the 1970s; however, it raises questions that historians of commemoration in other regions of Canada might do well to ponder. Did tourism and heritage promoters in other areas respond to the success of the "province of history"? To what extent was there a shared dialogue across regional and provincial boundaries? McKay, for instance, has demonstrated the linkages between the Nova Scotia's Helen Creighton and national institutions such as the National Museum of Canada. The mantle of "history" seems to have enveloped and shrouded Nova Scotia in ways that it did not – or could only partially do – for example in Ontario. While romantic archetypes and antimodern stereotypes can certainly be found in the latter province's self-promotion, and tourism played a central economic and cultural role in certain areas,¹⁰ nevertheless both had to jostle with other forms of identity and activity. McKay and Bates have provided those of us who work on related themes, but in different contexts, not so much a template for our research but, rather, opportunities for future and ongoing dialogue about the significance of contingency and specificities of time and place.

Finally, both books tell us much about the centrality and significance of individuals in creating commemorative constructs and practices. This is not, I hasten to add, a return to "great men" theories of history; both are careful to place these individuals within particular contexts, subject to specific historical processes. Yet by drawing our attention to, for example, the influence of 19th-century Quebec historians or the power of a Liberal premier, we are reminded of Susan Crane's argument about the need to reinsert individuals into our conceptions of historical consciousness or

9 For a discussion of textbooks' tendency to flatten and reduce historical complexity, see Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 109-15, 170-87.

10 Alan Gordon, "Heritage and Authenticity: The Case of Ontario's Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons," *Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 3 (September 2004): 507-32; Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 1999); and Cecilia Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario Historical Societies, 1890-1920," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (September 2001): 491-528.

collective memory. As Crane states, “All narratives, all sites, all texts remain objects until they are ‘read’ or referred to individuals thinking historically”¹¹ – even if “thinking historically” is as fraught or problematic a process as Gordon and McKay and Bates suggest. While the individuals in these studies may not have crafted historical memories under circumstances of their own direct choosing, the historians show that these individuals indeed made particular choices about the histories they decided to remember and, equally importantly, those they attempted to forget. These books remind us of the significance of the interplay between the histories we experience and the histories that we write, an interplay we would do well to remember.

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11 Susan Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 4 (December 1997): 1372-85, esp. 1381.