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Résumé de l'article

The spatial dimensions of contemporary society differ substantially from those prevailing in earlier centuries and even in the first half of the twentieth century. The change requires a re-thinking of “region,” one of the fundamental concepts in discussions of Canada as nation-state. In the past, the concept of region has enabled Canadians to come to terms with physical, cultural, and historical differences within the country and to imagine the community as an appropriate and cohesive whole. In the conditions created by changing trade patterns, global migration, and electronic communication, the concept of region has to be revised if it is to serve as one of the underpinnings of the contemporary nation-state. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, this paper advocates the use of three regional concepts in place of one. Denoted, instituted, and imagined regions acknowledge the social change, the negotiation, and the contingency that must be part of a spatial approach to Canadian history.

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2005 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OF THE CHA

Space and Region in Canadian History

GERALD FRIESEN

Abstract

The spatial dimensions of contemporary society differ substantially from those prevailing in earlier centuries and even in the first half of the twentieth century. The change requires a re-thinking of "region," one of the fundamental concepts in discussions of Canada as nation-state. In the past, the concept of region has enabled Canadians to come to terms with physical, cultural, and historical differences within the country and to imagine the community as an appropriate and cohesive whole. In the conditions created by changing trade patterns, global migration, and electronic communication, the concept of region has to be revised if it is to serve as one of the underpinnings of the contemporary nation-state. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, this paper advocates the use of three regional concepts in place of one. Denoted, instituted, and imagined regions acknowledge the social change, the negotiation, and the contingency that must be part of a spatial approach to Canadian history.

POLITICAL DISCUSSION IN CANADA jumps from the normal give and take of negotiation to threats of national disintegration with remarkable speed. Such threats, in turn, have often prompted historians to wonder whether the country will survive its next crisis. In her 1976 presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association, Margaret Prang invoked a sense of disquiet when she contemplated the state of the nation. Desmond Morton employed similar language in 1979. One can find such strains in W.L. Morton's address in 1960. Comparable sentiments appeared in the 1980s and 1990s, when Rene

I would like to thank Barry Ferguson, Jean Friesen, David Hall, Len Kuffert, Ian McKay, Morris Mott, Graeme Wynn, and Robert Young for their helpful comments on drafts of this paper.

Durocher, Michael Bliss and J.L. Granatstein expressed their concerns.[1] The talk is circulating again: talk of Quebec sovereigntism, of western alienation, of the Atlantic provinces' campaign for "better terms," of the big cities' unique situation, of the long-standing problems faced by Aboriginal communities, of the drama associated with the tied vote in the House of Commons in May 2005. It doesn't take an historian to recognize, however, that contemporary uncertainties have as much to do with longer-term forces, international and domestic, as with today's sponsorship scandals.[2]

The nation and the nation-state are less stable than they have been for a century. The fabric of Canada, and of all countries, is being stretched in two directions: outward, continentally and globally, as environmental phenomena, transnational migrations, and economic integration make plain the connections among peoples; and inward, as the increasing importance of metropolitan areas, of borderlands, and of electronic media sustain what were once called "limited identities" and now include even virtual communities. Perry Anderson writes,

> In the age of the satellite and optical fibre, ... the spatial commands this imaginary as never before. The electronic unification of the earth, instituting the simultaneity of events across the globe as daily spectacle, has lodged a vicarious geography in the recesses of every consciousness, while the encircling networks of multinational capital that actually direct the system exceed the capacities of any perception.

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1 Margaret Prang, "National Unity and the Uses of History" Canadian Historical Association/La Société Historique du Canada, *Historical Papers Communications Historiques*, 1977, 3-12; Desmond Morton, "History and Nationality in Canada: Variations on an Old Theme," Canadian Historical Association/La Société Historique du Canada *Historical Papers Communications Historiques*, 1979, 1-10; W.L. Morton, "The Relevance of Canadian History;" this 1960 CHA presidential address was republished in Morton's *The Canadian Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961, second edition 1972), 88-114; Michael Bliss, "Privatizing the Mind: The Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1991-92); J.L. Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: Harper Collins 1998); René Durocher, "Le rapatriement du Québec" Canadian Historical Association/La Société Historique du Canada, *Historical Papers/Communications Historiques*, 1987.

2 The most obvious contemporary uncertainty was the unstable situation in the House of Commons. In May 2005, Liberals and New Democrats and several independents voted to sustain Paul Martin's government while an equal number of Conservatives and the Bloc Quebecois voted to defeat it. The Speaker broke the tie in the government's favour.

The uncertainty was also due to the scandal associated with the sponsorship programme devised by the Liberal government in the 1990s to raise the level of awareness of Canada within Quebec by means of a wide range of advertising campaigns. The programme was being investigated by Justice John H. Gomery during the spring of 2005. The dramatic hearings won large television audiences in Quebec for several months as Gomery discovered widespread corruption in the execution of the programme, corruption linked to the federalist Liberals.

Using words that echo the thinking of Harold Innis a half-century earlier, students of the late modern (or postmodern) age talk about "the ascendancy of space over time" – of the individual as consumer over the historically-conscious citizen – in the contemporary world.[3]

This is not to suggest, as some have done, that the nation-state of Canada is doomed. Canadians have managed, thus far, to balance these complex forces. They have accommodated the different circumstances of thirteen provinces and territories, seven informal but widely-recognized regions, three metropolises, two linguistically-based markets for cultural products, dozens of ethnic and language-based communities, and fellow citizens whose views of gender and sexuality differ from their own. This list of social differences could run far longer but it will suffice to establish one spatial implication: if each of these characteristics were mapped, not one would result in a homogeneous picture of Canada as nation-state. Each has a spatial aspect because it is distributed unequally across the surface of the country. But should it be mapped according to the seven traditional regions of our junior high classes?[4] Should the spatial distributions be ignored? In arguing no to both, I would like to discuss an alternative, a revised approach to the notion of region that provides a flexible conceptualization of Canada's changing circumstances.

Region has been employed effectively in a number of disciplines to depict the spatial qualities of a given society. In geography, especially, it has acquired a precision and flexibility that can serve historians well. Geographers' use of three distinct definitions of region – the objectively-denoted, the institutional, and the imagined or naively-perceived – underlies the following observations on spatial factors in Canadian history.[5] They employ, first, "objectively denoted" regions to distinguish a series of related spaces on the basis of clearly-defined, consistently-applied criteria that reflect widely-recognized academic language. These denoted regions may be "formal," if they are relatively homogeneous, or "functional," if they are related parts of a system, whether staple and metropolitan zones within an economy, frontier and long-settled zones

3 Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity*, (London: Verso, 1998), 55-6.

4 The usual seven geographic regions referred to here are Newfoundland, Maritimes (sometimes united as the Atlantic), Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia, the North.

5 An introduction to these concepts is presented in Robert Ostergren, "Concepts of Region: A Geographical Perspective" in *Regionalism in the Age of Globalism Volume I: Concepts of Regionalism*, eds. Lothar Hönnighausen et al (Madison: Center for the Study of Midwestern Cultures, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 1-14; and Robert C. Ostergren and John G. Rice, *The Europeans: A Geography of People, Culture, and Environment* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004), 3-9. The Canadian context is discussed in "Roundtable on Re-Imagining Regions" which was held at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, Fredericton, 12 May 2005. The papers presented by Margaret Conrad, Jean Barman, Bill Waiser, Randy Widdis, and Sean Cadigan will be published in *Acadiensis* in the Spring issue, 2006, and are available on the web at http://lusankya.hil.unb.ca:8000/archive/00000051/.

within a society, or broadcast centre and periphery within a communications regime. Their "instituted" regions, second, are spaces delimited by boundaries drawn by formally-authorized authorities, often for administrative purposes and often nested in hierarchies. Third, the "imagined" region is one perceived as distinctive by those who live within it, by those who live outside it, or both.

These approaches can be illustrated by reference to Ojibwa experience in Canada. An example of a formal denoted region appears on maps of pre-contact Aboriginal North America that distinguish territories where one distinct language family predominated. On them, an Algonkian-speaking region – to which Ojibwa belongs – lies between Labrador and the Rocky Mountains, distinguishing this space from the Iroquoian language zone of the St. Lawrence and the distinct language regions of the north and of the northwest Pacific coast. Functional denoted regions developed in the fur trade, it could be argued, as Ojibwa moved into the western interior to serve as middlemen between the Hudson's Bay Company posts on the shore of the Bay and more distant groups such as the Blackfoot who welcomed the trade goods but did not themselves travel to the posts. In this case, the three functional regions included the posts on the Bay, the middle zone where intermediaries dwelt, and the more distant peoples who participated in the trading system through the middlemen.

Instituted regions are purposeful creations that serve particular administrative functions and distinguish clearly-delimited zones for which one group or another holds responsibility. It has been argued that they arise from "a basic tendency of human territoriality, often motivated by the need to accomplish quite specific objectives."[6] In Manitoba Ojibwa terms, government is organized on the basis of a reserve, a broader treaty organization (such as the South East Tribal Council) to which a number of reserves belong, a provincial Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the national Assembly of First Nations/ Assemblée des Premières Nations and these various groups' relations with Ottawa as outlined in the constitution. Taken on its own, each of the units in this hierarchy could be regarded as an instituted region of Ojibwa government.

Third, the imagined Ojibwa region takes many forms, depending on the observer (Aboriginal or not?), the medium (television drama, oral folktale, country song), and the audience. Such an imagined region might include physical features as diverse as southern Ontario islands and northern Manitoba traplines. It might encompass social experiences as different as pre-contact encounters with mythical characters and contemporary bingo games on the reserve. And yet the distinctive Ojibwa character of the expression – a distinctive Ojibwa "space" and, therefore, region – will shine through. These three

6 Ostergren, citing Robert D. Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

definitions of region underlie the following discussion of changing spatial arrangements and understandings in the Canadian nation-state.

I. Denoted Regions

Patterns in trade and investment, immigration and demography, culture and communications reveal some of the most important forces shaping the modern world. In each sphere, the patterns seem to portend that contemporary Canada is coming apart at the seams. The most striking studies to touch on this theme in the past decade have discussed Ontario. Thomas Courchene and Colin Telmer's *From Heartland to North American Region State*, which crystallized a discussion that had been developing in the 1990s, and John Ibbitson's *Loyal No More*, which put political context and a sharp point on Ontario's estrangement from Confederation, provide accessible discussions of the thesis.[7] Using reports on Ontario trade with the United States, Courchene and Telmer demonstrated that a new regional pattern of trade was emerging. As the title explains, what was once Canada's heartland is rapidly becoming a "North American region state." Though the book contains no maps, no regionalized analysis of trade flows within the United States, or within Ontario, its outline of the relative decline of east-west trade in Canada, and the increase in north-south movement of goods and services, is unassailable. The old Canada based on trade flows is being eclipsed. Instead, Ontario is becoming a different kind of entity, a region state or even "an economic nation state" on its own.[8]

The Courchene-Ibbitson thesis publicized a country-wide economic phenomenon. In the post-1988 FTA and NAFTA era, Canada's trade shifted significantly from an east-west to a north-south axis. The Canada West Foundation circulated analyses that made the same point about each of the western provinces: 90% of Alberta's exports, 80% of Manitoba's, 70% of British Columbia's, and 60% of Saskatchewan's now travel south.[9] In this new

7 Thomas J. Courchene with Colin R. Telmer, *From Heartland to North American Region State: The Social, Fiscal and Federal Evolution of Ontario: An Interpretive Essay* (Toronto: University of Toronto Faculty of Management, 1998); John Ibbitson, *Loyal No More: Ontario's Struggle for a Separate Destiny* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2001), 3.

8 Courchene with Telmer, *From Heartland to North American Region State*, 287; and David Wolfe "The Emergence of the Region State" in *The Nation State in a Global/Information Era: Policy Challenges*, ed. Thomas J. Courchene (Kingston, Queen's University: John Deutsch Institute for the Study of Economic Policy, 1997), 205-40.

9 Canada West Foundation "Building the New West: A Framework for Regional Economic Prosperity," http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/sc_mrkti/tdst/engdoc/tr_homep.html, (Calgary, October 2001), 14. The precise numbers, based on reports on export destinations for the year 1995 and the year 2000, as reported by the Canada West Foundation, were: BC – from 51% to 67%; AB – from 77.5% to 88.5%; SK – from 49% to 62%; MB – from 74% to 81%. The numbers come from Statistics Canada "Trade Data On-Line" 6 January 2006; I would like to thank Robert Roach of the Canada West Foundation, who provided me with this material.

context, the emergence of historical studies of borderlands regions should be no surprise. When trade is the measure, the boundary divides the continent less decisively, even in the post 9/11 world of security concerns, than at any point in the last one hundred years.

These trends seem to foreshadow disaster and were seen in this way a generation ago. Donald Creighton's essays in the late 1960s and early 1970s reflected his deep-seated pessimism about the future of Canada, an anxiety stemming especially from the country's increasing economic links to the United States.[10] And yet few Canadians today voice much dismay. Rather, they seem to regard intertwined economies as irrelevant to the expression of national distinctiveness. Nonetheless, the trade-based regions add up to North American, but not exclusively Canadian, economic entities.

The story of immigration to Canada offers a similar moral about the traditional region. Students of Canada are familiar with the historical rhythms of immigrant recruitment and with the conflicts that accompanied French-British, Catholic-Protestant, and southern/eastern European versus northern European interaction in the years before, say, 1970. Since then, Canada has recruited immigrants from every corner of the globe, including many from less-developed countries. Some critics have expressed concern about the viability of a society drawn from so many sources but the Canadian public discussions of race and ethnic mixing have been viewed as relatively polite. This impression of Canadian multicultural harmony can be misleading because the assessment focuses on the places where immigrants live rather than on the places where they do not. That is, the positive comments have arisen from observations situated in a local rather than a broader frame. As a result, observers have not listened with sufficient care to expressions of disagreement about immigration and particularly the spatial distribution of those expressions.

The stresses of multinational immigration have been visited upon just a few Canadian communities. And the response within these communities has been remarkably generous and effective. Nonetheless, the very fact of the immigration imbalance has introduced a new and significant division within the nation-state. The largest cities, particularly Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, are no longer like the rest of Canada in social composition. They share exceptional burdens ranging from inadequate physical infrastructure such as housing and transportation to expensive cultural needs, including language classes and a school curriculum oriented around anti-racist education. Moreover, seemingly

10 Creighton's pessimism was due, first, to his views on the place of the French language in Canadian public life; second, to his critique of judicial support for provincial government powers rather than for the paramountcy of the federal government; and, third, to his unhappiness with the American penetration of Canada's economy and culture; Donald Creighton, *Towards the Discovery of Canada: Selected Essays* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), particularly "Canadian Nationalism and its Opponents" (1971).

unrelated matters – the law on the registration of guns can serve as an illustration – assume very different guises in the metropolis and in other communities. The depth of this chasm is not sufficiently appreciated in either the periphery or the metropolis.

The regions created by this distinctive pattern of immigrant settlement are, on one hand, the metropolitan magnets, especially the three largest, and, on the other, outlying areas. Such a regional pattern is new and Canadians are unaccustomed to talking about it. Somehow, in the next few years, they will have to imprint in their minds, as schoolchildren once memorized provinces and their capital cities, that there are as many residents in the three biggest cities as there are in all of Quebec and the Atlantic provinces together, or in all of the four western provinces together.[11] Though every citizen will have to acquire this knowledge, the burden will be especially difficult for those who have no experience of life in the metropolises and cannot really imagine it. Seen from the other side, how does one explain the urgent countryside issues to residents of the big city? Consider gun control: its hinterland opponents are dismissed in the metropolis as rednecks; its metropolitan supporters are mocked in the country as bleeding hearts. Such talk represents a failure of citizenship on both sides. It illustrates, just as Ontario trade flows do, that metropolitan centres built on pluralist ideals represent a new regional force, the implications of which will require further reflection in the Canadian community. In effect, it suggests that Canada is better understood not as seven regions defined by physical geography but as two regions, each defined by population density and relation to immigrants.

The impact of modern culture and communication changes upon Canada's regional alignments is more difficult to pin down. There can be no question about the increase in popular consumption of cultural goods and in the relative importance of cultural products in the marketplace. Fredric Jameson, among others, contends that the economic order of capitalism has changed substantially and that its cultural components – consumerism, electronic communication, giant media corporations, the global sweep of these institutions – have eclipsed previous regimes of production and reproduction.[12] When and why did this cultural difference begin? Perry Anderson argues that a sharp break at 1945 is "certainly too abrupt" and that the quarter-century after the Second World War "seems in retrospect an inter-regnum ... ."[13] He, like David

11 Statistics Canada, "2003: Canada at a glance," 1: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver: over 10.6 million; five eastern provinces: just under 10 million; four western provinces: just under 10 million; Ontario: over 12 million.

12 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

13 Anderson, *Origins*, 84; Anderson has explained, "culture has necessarily expanded to the point where it has become virtually coextensive with the economy itself, not merely as the symptomatic basis of some of the largest industries in the world – tourism now exceeding all other

Harvey, points to the 1970s.[14] Central in the hypothesis is the impact of one medium:

> ... The capacity of television to command the attention of its audiences' is immeasurably greater [than radio or print], because they [the audiences] are not simply such: the eye is caught before the ear is cocked. What the new medium brought was a combination of undreamt-of power: the continuous availability of radio with an equivalent of the perceptual monopoly of print, which excludes other forms of attention by the reader. The saturation of the imaginary is of another order.

Which moment in television history? Not the 1950s, its first full decade, nor even the sixties, when it acquired "major salience," but the early seventies, says Anderson, when colour television arrived:

> If there is any single technological watershed of the postmodern, it lies here. If we compare the setting it has created to the opening of the [twentieth] century, the difference can be put quite simply. Once, in jubilation or alarm, modernism was seized by images of machinery; now, postmodernism was sway to a machinery of images.[15]

These scholars propose that we see the last few decades as a new cultural and historical epoch.

Within this transition to a global economic order built upon a media- and culture-oriented capitalism, Canada constitutes two regions of cultural con-

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branches of global employment – but much more deeply, as every material object and immaterial service becomes inseparably tractable sign and vendible commodity." Anderson picks out a paper on postmodernism presented in the fall of 1982 as the beginning of Jameson's major work on the theme; pp. 47-77.

14 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Jameson, *Postmodernism*. Anderson, in *Origins*, 78-92, notes that political changes such as the collapse of the aristocratic order earlier in the century and of the bourgeoisie in individual nation-states around mid-century, the economic changes associated with what Harvey called a regime of 'flexible accumulation,' and the changes in technology that led to innovation becoming "a permanent principle of industrial output" all played a part in the emergence of the new order.

15 Anderson, *Origins*, 87-88: "This [television] was the first technological advance of world-historical moment in the post-war epoch. With it, a qualitative jump in the power of mass communications had arrived. Radio had already proved, in the inter-war and war-time years, a far more potent instrument of social capture than print: not merely by greater immediacy of reception, but above all because of its temporal reach. Round-the-clock broadcasting created potentially permanent listeners – audiences whose waking and hearing hours could at the limit be one. This effect was only possible, of course, because of the dissociation of the ear from the eye, which meant that so many activities ... could be performed with the radio in the background."

sumption. One, located mainly in Quebec, has developed a lively, indigenous television-based culture oriented around local issues, local dramas, local stars. In the rest of the country, audiences consume foreign (that is, non-Canadian) English-language productions, most of it generated in the United States. As Laszlo Barna, a leading entrepreneur of Canadian television drama, argues: "If we are to be independent, we have to have cultural pillars on which to build a vision of ourselves ... Yet we have become strangers to our own story-telling."[16] Canada is an unusual entity, despite its technological sophistication, because a relatively small proportion of its citizens – and most of those in only one of the two official languages – see stories and dramas created by Canadians that discuss the events of their own communities via the crucial communication medium of the age. Such a condition poses a challenging question: can a country that is, in truth, two peripheral regions – one voluble, but in a second official language (French), the other relatively silent – both immersed in a larger communication system, possibly survive as a viable nation-state?[17]

These three brief sketches illustrate how the country has changed in just the last thirty or forty years. They illustrate, too, that such changes define Canada according to spatial criteria different from those relied on by our predecessors. Southern Ontario is becoming part of a trade and industrial region that stretches across the international boundary into the north-central United States. The Canadian metropolises, as immigrant destinations, are increasingly distanced from smaller cities and rural districts. Contemporary communication technologies emphasize new forces – television, music, tourism, the web – that seem to ignore the national boundary entirely while playing up the importance of linguistic difference. Each casts doubt on the continued relevance of the Canadian nation-state and of the seven traditionally-defined regions at least as they are presently understood by ordinary citizens.

16 Laszlo Barna, "Extreme Makeover: The Final Surrender of Canada's Airwaves," W.L. Morton Distinguished Lecture, University of Manitoba, 18 March 2005 [my notes].

17 This region, in Canada's case, is bounded not by the borders of the state but by the distribution maps of television and advertising producers, chiefly but not exclusively headquartered in the United States. Whereas, in the age of print, communities found their voice in relatively-local cultural expressions such as newspapers, television's continued centralization has enabled it to retain control over vast hinterlands. The great exception is Quebec, where movies and television enjoy the barrier erected by language; an illustration is in Konrad Yakabuski, "Made in Quebec – and cleaning up at the box office," *Globe and Mail*, 9 July 2005, p. R6. The radio age also differed. Between roughly the early 1930s and the early 1950s, radio was increasingly a centralized production instrument. Then, because of low capital costs and its ability to speak directly to relatively small communities, stations emerged in many towns and cities wherein advertisers were willing to pay to broadcast their messages. Jeremy Wiebe, "CFAM Southern Manitoba," student essay, University of Manitoba, 2005; Bernard Bocquel, *Au Pays de CKSB: 50 Ans de Radio Française au Manitoba: Grand Reportage* (Saint-Boniface: Les Éditions de Blé, 1996); Wayne Schmaltz, *On Air: Radio in Saskatchewan* (Regina: Coteau Books, 1990).

The sketches comprise a single phenomenon, the objectively denoted region. Such regions are academic creations, exercises "analogous to the process of classification common to nearly all scholarly disciplines."[18] They change with the times and do not claim to demarcate eternal physical places. Despite their relatively unfamiliar quality, denoted regions will have to be absorbed into the thinking of Canadian citizens. Such "place identities" are far more fluid than the essentialist regions they replace but they are also clearly discernible and definable. Through this approach, Canadians will grasp both the world's continuing diversity and the forces working for global uniformity. The challenge for us as historians is to convey at once both their merit as a way of perceiving the world and that they are subject to change.

II. Provinces as Instituted Regions

A second approach to regional discussions in the discipline of geography relies on the concept of "instituted" regions. It has an obvious relevance to Canada, the disintegration of which is less often attributed to the foregoing international forces – trade, immigration, and communications – than to the frequent, intense struggles between provincial governments and the federal administration. Certainly, federal-provincial conflict has complicated Canadian discussions of regions. In response to these uncertainties, some observers have chosen to forego the historic interest in the Atlantic or the Maritimes or the prairies, the traditional multi-province regions, and to concentrate solely on individual provinces as the most easily-defined reservoir of regional sentiment. There is logic and consistency in this view, though it raises the obvious problem of how to reconcile "province as region" with other regional approaches. The geographers' answer, the instituted region, can clarify the analysis, as the following cases illustrate.

One version of province as region was evident in an issue raised by the Nova Scotia government at the end of the Second World War. The premier, Angus L. MacDonald , had written economist Harold Adams Innis concerning the federal government's plans to restructure its financial arrangements with the provinces. He wanted to know whether Nova Scotia should accept further centralization of economic power. Innis said no:

> The exclusive right of the Dominion to impose income tax, succession duty and corporation tax does not seem to me to be really necessary to encourage enterprise and stimulate employment... My own view has always been that the federal government people have always been too optimistic as to what could

18 Robert Ostergren, "Concepts of Region: A Geographical Perspective," in eds. Lothar Hönnighausen et al *Regionalism in the Age of Globalism Volume I: Concepts of Regionalism* (Madison: Center for the Study of Midwestern Cultures, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 2-3.

> be done by monetary measures. They have been carried away by their enthusiasm for the possibilities of the Bank of Canada by Keynes and Hansen, by their own bureaucratic interests and by the necessities of a war programme. The problem is not one of financial manipulation – it is one of getting down to brass tacks and considering in each case what can be done by cooperative effort ... I have always felt that these various devices for full employment implied grave dangers for the Maritimes in that full employment is apt to mean prosperity on the St. Lawrence and the continued drain of population and revenues from the maritimes ...

Innis said he wrote in haste but, as so often in his work, the conceptual model he utilized was subtle. He did not suggest that Nova Scotia should forever control certain revenues but, rather, that the two levels of government would regularly come into conflict. Which administration was more likely, he asked, to

> work through in great detail the complications of specific problems? When the Dominion government has shown its ability to give intensive consideration to specific problems of a definitely regional character and its willingness to recognize to the full its necessity of overcoming the handicaps of the tariff and other measures then the government of Nova Scotia or of other regions similarly placed can perhaps afford to consider suggestions of an over-all character ...[19]

His words conveyed a stiff warning: when overriding economic powers were allocated to the central government, the interests of smaller units in the nation-state might well be overlooked.[20]

A speech by entrepreneur Craig L. Dobbin, chairman and chief executive officer of CHC Helicopter Corporation, illustrates a second aspect of "province as region." He was speaking in 2003 about the place of Newfoundland and Labrador in Confederation and he was not complimentary about his province's political leadership since 1949. He blamed these leaders for specific policy failures:

> The terms of union for Newfoundland were not very forward looking. The Fathers of Confederation were more focused on the pre-Confederation margarine industry over on LeMarchant Road, and Parker's Boot & Shoe Shop on

19 Harold A. Innis to Rt. Hon. Angus L. Macdonald, 17 January 1946, Innis Papers, University of Toronto Archives, B72-003, File 16.

20 The same argument was made in the same era by John W. Dafoe. It is discussed by Barry Ferguson and Robert Wardhaugh, A 'Impossible Conditions of Inequality': John W. Dafoe, the Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission, and the Interpretation of Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4, (December 2003): 551-83. The parallels with the federal government role in the Quebec-Manitoba quarrel over a CF-18 overhaul contract in 1986 are striking.

> Water Street, and the church's authority over education ... than they were with our natural resources ... I'm embarrassed to say that the majority of our political leaders for the past fifty years have failed us miserably in areas of fisheries, hydro, minerals, oil and gas.

Dobbin's analysis addressed specific spheres of economic activity. He argued that the province had failed to protect its capacity to tax and develop these resources. His response was that the province had to win back such powers:

> "We need a commitment to a new political compact – or Terms of Union – which is based upon securing our long-term economic self-determination and casting away the shackles of dependency ... We've got to take our message to all of Canada ... If we don't, be sure of one thing. The present situation will not be allowed to continue. If Newfoundland and Labrador is not allowed into Confederation, we'll seek a way out. Ladies and Gentlemen, it's up to us to choose our future."[21]

Dobbin's speech was significant not only because it presages the Atlantic struggles of the past two years but because it was structured in terms of the politics of federal-provincial relations. He placed two levels of the state in opposition because either Ottawa or St. John's must take precedence in controlling these specific revenue sources. The contest for power within a federal state could not be stated more plainly. And Dobbin's closing shot, a time-honoured if frayed gambit in federal-provincial rhetoric, was "better terms or secession."

A third distinct approach to this theme can be illustrated by an Alberta example. Ever since the Leduc discovery in 1947, the province has reaped enviable oil and gas revenues. Its government has also waged numerous battles of the sort Craig Dobbin proposed to ensure that this income accrued to local people and, only secondarily, to the rest of the country. The resource taxation debates of the 1970s and the National Energy Program of the early 1980s are well-known phases of that contest. The "Firewall" letter of 2001 offered a slightly different approach. In it, Stephen Harper, Tom Flanagan, and four colleagues called upon the Alberta premier, Ralph Klein, to replace the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with a provincial police force, to withdraw from the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Health Act, and the Canadian income tax system, and to press for the creation of a Triple-E Senate.[22]

21 Craig L. Dobbin, "Speech at NOIA's Oil & Gas Week Luncheon," 26 February 2003, pp. 5, 11. I would like to thank Margaret Conrad for this reference.

22 Sheldon Alberts, "Klein urged to trim ties to Ottawa," *National Post*, 26 January 2001, A-1, 6. The signatories and their positions: Stephen Harper, President, National Citizen's Coalition; Tom Flanagan, professor of political science and former Director of Research, Reform Party of Canada; Ted Morton, professor of political science and Alberta Senator-elect; Rainer Knopff, professor of political science; Andrew Crooks, Chairman, Canadian Taxpayers Federation; Ken Boessenkool, former policy advisor to Stockwell Day, Treasurer of Alberta.

As in the Dobbin proposals, the Firewall Six selected specific areas where province and national government both claimed legislative competence. In each sphere, these Alberta-based, small-c conservative activists, as they then were, took exception to the policies of the federal Liberal government. But, unlike Dobbin, who sought control over particular resources, they were driven by ideological dissatisfaction with federal policy choices. Such creativity is not only a conservative virtue. Impatient social democrats introduced Saskatchewan's medical care programme because of a comparable motivation in 1961.

These three cases illustrate that provinces – or territories – constitute another version of region. Geographers describe them as "instituted" regions, meaning that the territory is organized, often in hierarchical form, to administer certain activities and to accomplish certain objectives. The organizing agency could be a church, a business, the Women's Institute, the Assembly of First Nations. In Canada, the most recognizable instituted regional hierarchy is government itself, wherein powers and responsibilities are allocated among the nation-state, the province, the municipality, the library board, and so on. Conflict within this system is normally channeled according to formal rules, such as the constitution and acts of the legislatures. And the disputes are often conducted on a spectrum that runs from centralization to decentralization.

The three examples illustrate the instituted region but they also expose an unfortunate tendency in Canadian peoples' accustomed spatial perceptions. In each of the cases cited here, the province is seen as the more responsive, more responsible, more creative partner in the dialogue. The centre is seen as grasping, remote and likely to cause damage – to the little partner – while giving advantages to the big. At least as many cases would prove the contrary. My choice is one-sided for a particular reason. Canadians outside the province concerned in any single battle are prone to present the decentralization-centralization axis in terms that respect the centre and distrust the periphery. Centre means big and worldly and urban; periphery means small, naive, inadequately-informed, and self-seeking. Centre means unity, periphery means disintegration. My choice of illustrations offers a different perspective: we should remember that these discussions are usually just that – negotiations – and not the apocalypse.

Dobbin of Newfoundland simply wanted greater local control over resources; the firewall proposal in Alberta sought control over some major government programs and a Senate more attuned to conservative objectives; Harold Innis advised Nova Scotia to retain control over provincial revenues. The common thread in these campaigns was power: the hinterlands were concerned that a large nation-state, preoccupied by the interests of larger population clusters, might overlook the interests of its smaller units. The citizens of federal states have to accept that this kind of conflict – too often dismissed as squabbling – is the very language of government and, therefore,

of popular sovereignty. Most important, the balance in the relationship is not fixed. The concept of instituted region challenges the rigid idea of fixed provincial and federal powers. It forces us to consider whether we respond automatically in favour of one side or the other (the local or the centre) in their recurrent struggles; and it introduces a sense of ebb and flow into an analysis that is too easily interpreted as a contrast between a fixed, spatially-defined, partial community and the whole of the nation-state.

III. Imagined Regions

In his recent book on *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Charles Taylor examines "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings .... [in] images, stories, and legends." He is trying to describe, he says, the "common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy."[23] One such social perception, the imagined or "naively-perceived" region, is the third category of space-based analysis employed by scholars in a number of disciplines, including the so-called new regional geographers. It relies on popular recognition of a collective experience; that is, the people themselves generate the category. In distinguishing one area from others, they create a "region of the mind." The West in the United States, the centre in Australia, the North in Canada are illustrations of such popularly-perceived regions. In each of these cases, indeed, a part of the country becomes a phenomenon that informs the popular culture and becomes a metaphor for the entire community.

Because novelists have been so eloquent in evoking the feel of local landscape, people, and habits of thought, the regional worlds they describe often take on a life of their own, at least in the minds of readers. Alice Munro's stories of southern Ontario and Guy Vanderhaeghe's of Saskatchewan offer eloquent testimony to the existence of such imagined places. Working from such literature, Eli Mandel and Robert Kroetsch have declared that the fiction was necessary to make the regional community real.[24] But such academic assertions, isolated in the worlds of high culture and scholarly exchange, do not exhaust the meaning of imagined regions. The cultural experience of ordinary citizens over long periods of time, in which spatial reference points are generated by expressions as diverse as Group of Seven paintings and Don Cherry's hockey commentary, can shape and reshape these conceptions.

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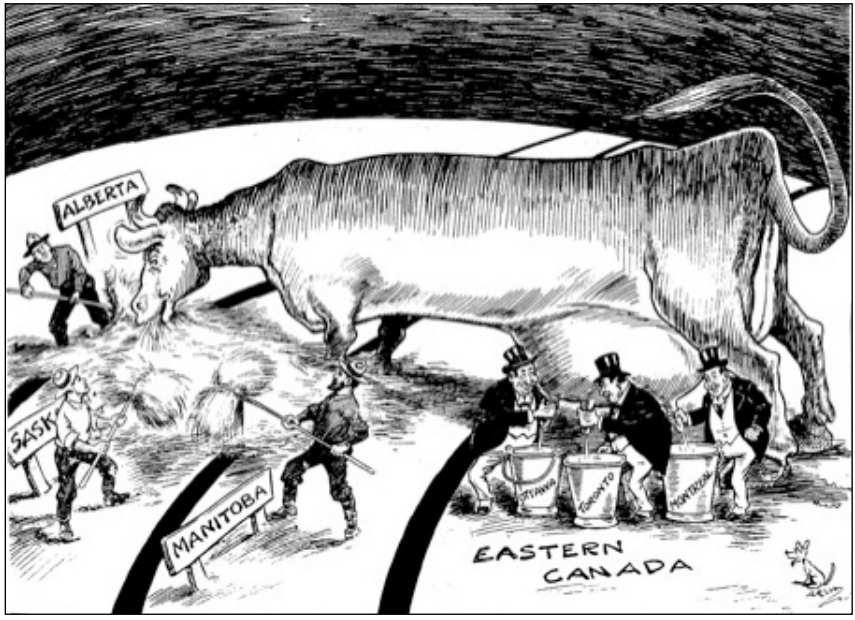
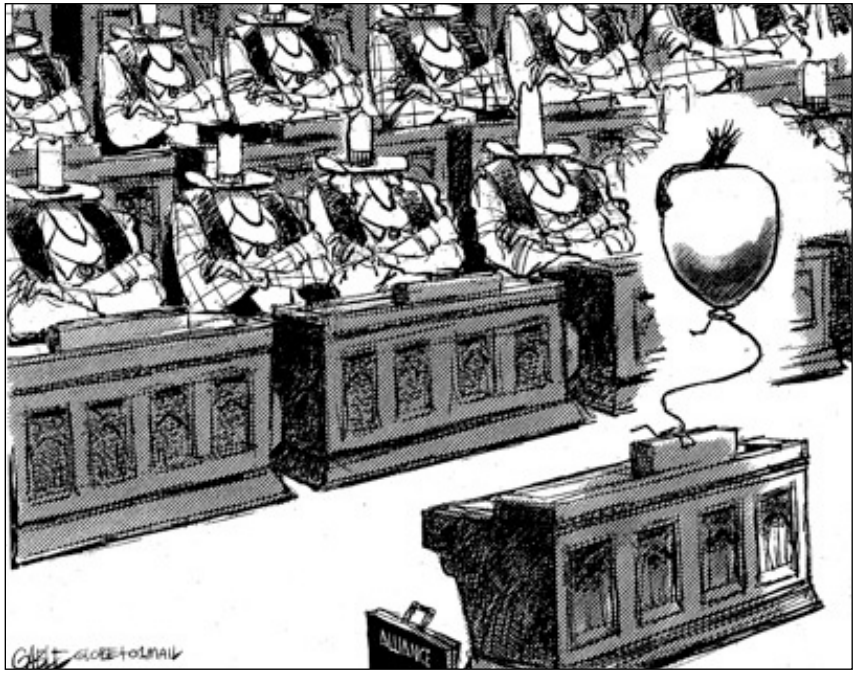
23 Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

24 Eli Mandel, "Images of Prairie Man," in *A Region of the Mind*, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Studies Centre, 1973), and "Romance and Realism in Western Canadian Fiction" in *Prairie Perspectives 2: Selected Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conferences, 1970, 1971*, eds. A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).



Arch Dale "The Milch Cow" (*Grain Growers' Guide* 15 Dec. 1915, p. 6)



Brian Gable (*Globe and Mail* 28 Feb., 2001)

These two cartoons represent one imagined region but the perceptions are strikingly different. The first is internally-perceived (the artist is standing within the space that is being depicted), and the second is externally perceived. The 1915 version, drawn by Arch Dale in Winnipeg, offers a respectful portrayal of prairie farm dissatisfaction with economic circumstances; the 2001 case, drawn by Brian Gable in Toronto, depicts the West in terms that recall images from popular culture during the past two generations – Hollywood westerns, the Calgary Stampede, films on prairie life such as "The Drylanders," and such popular histories as *Don't Shoot the Teacher*. Both present comparisons between a western region and the rest of Canada. In the first, the image is literal: the map, the occupations, the head and tail of the cow's digestive system represent geography, class, and economic power via the artistic tradition of realism. In the second, the image is figurative: the Parliament, the MPs, the relative weightlessness of their leader, Stockwell Day, provide suggestive references rather than realistic images. It says that this is "the West." The rest of the country is not even sketched, except implicitly. Viewers have to remember – more or less consciously – that the MPs on the *other* side of the aisle do not look like this group and that these very backbenchers actually represented three-quarters of western Canada's constituencies at the time.[25]

Where do all the images of the West – good and bad – come from? They grow out of the peoples' awareness of what has happened in this place over decades and centuries. The process of their development is very old, older than the Canadian state. The images are rooted in the distinctive Aboriginal cultures and fur trade relations of the northwestern interior of the continent. They have been sharpened by Canada's colonial administration of the prairie provinces and the inferiority of agriculture in the price system. They have been made richer by the remarkable ethnic mix of prairie society and the cultural leadership of that ethnic crucible, Winnipeg. They have been communicated at home and abroad by fiction and painting, catalogue art and newspaper, public oratory and family correspondence. Through them, people's experience of this place crystallized into something that was not merely known but felt. This process of image formation – peoples' perception of a distinct community – developed over a period of three hundred years and has endured as a factor on the national scene.[26]

25 Arch Dale, "The Milch Cow," *Grain Growers' Guide*, 15 December 1915, p. 6; Brian Gable in *Globe and Mail*, 28 February 2001.

26 A Canada West Foundation poll noted that 83.7 per cent of respondents in the four western provinces agreed with the statement, "The West is a distinct region, different in many ways from the rest of Canada." The poll also discovered that only 12.1 per cent of respondents selected the West as their primary identification, choosing Canada or their province or locality instead; this summary is taken from Jeffrey Simpson, "When West meets West," *Globe and Mail*, 1 May 2001, A17. The poll is summarized in Canada West Foundation, "Building the New West: A Framework for Regional Economic Prosperity," (Calgary, October, 2001), 4-5.

The stories concerning the West as a popularly-imagined region are not unique. One can say the same of every part of northern North America. Such imagined spaces "cannot be reduced to an insubstantial dream."[27] Rather, they are real, rooted deeply in the past and in the assumption that Canada is an "old country." Canadians are accustomed to the assertion that theirs is a young nation-state and that it began only in 1867. They accept implicitly that Britons and Greeks, for example, can trace their heritage more than two thousand years and that even the United States, a new country in the New World, is much older than its northern neighbour. Leaving aside the issue of whether nation-state status for 138 years actually qualifies as youthful, the thesis of a "young nation" illustrates the staying power of race-based concepts we inherited from our grandparents that should be abandoned today. What does it say about the Aboriginal place in this country?

Canada is not young. People have been living in this part of the world for over ten thousand years and the cultures that developed during those millennia influenced everything that follows. In northern North America, the encounter between Aboriginal people and European newcomers resulted in several different patterns of trade, diplomacy, and war. Consider the story of epidemics in Aboriginal-white relations. The Atlantic and Saint Lawrence and Pacific Aboriginal peoples were severely reduced in number; those in the northwestern interior, who participated for two hundred years in peaceful trade with the employees of fur companies, were also affected by such diseases but not to the same degree. Canadians are only now coming to appreciate the significance of this fact. It underlies the much larger proportion of Aboriginal residents in northern Ontario and the prairie provinces, and their growing influence in public life. Not that they are irrelevant in the former territories, but that their political roles are different.

Similarly, one cannot understand the spatial forces at work in northern North America without taking the British Empire's influence into account, particularly its distinctive versions of mercantilism, capitalism, parliamentary democracy, army, and church. And yet, each of the major settlements in this territory was shaped differently. Educational institutions, repertoires of contention, the women's suffrage movement, and anti-Catholic prejudice, to cite just a few examples, appeared in distinct regional forms because of differences in the timing of settlement, in the nature of the staple, and in the ethnicity of the settlers themselves. Both nation-state and region were creatures of the Empire.

This thesis of old place-based myths is true of all the traditional regions of Canada, including Quebec. Of course, Quebec is not often called a region in today's conversations because its citizens and thinkers alike perceive it as a

27 Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 183.

nation, conceptually a more robust identity and one that raises the prospect of building a nation-state. As Michael Ignatieff has commented, "the essential argument within the Quebec elite is within terms set by the nationalist argument, i.e. between those who believe a nation must have its state, and those who believe the nation can achieve everything it wants without one."[28] Canada, in contrast, is merely a shadowy presence in the nationalists' conversation. Within Quebec, the notion that it constitutes a region of Canada, even an imagined region, is irrelevant, if not insulting.[29]

And yet Quebec does participate in the same federal-provincial contests as the other provinces and, thus, as province, belongs in the category of an instituted region. Its linguistic character, given the concentration of French-speakers, makes it a denoted region for communication purposes. And, whether imagined as a potential nation or as an historic culture within a larger Canada, Quebec is, in the geographers' definition, an imagined region. Its intellectual leaders have not been prepared to employ that term, however, for the obvious reason that it would undermine the sovereigntist project and the national project, two different but related political loyalties.

Ignatieff, who wrote *Blood and Belonging* from the vantage point of Canada, rather than in Quebec's own terms, concluded that two different imagined communities occupied the same space. Of his interviews with a man in Trois-Rivières, he said:

> We cannot share a nation – we cannot share it, since I am English and he is French, and he was born in Quebec and I was not. Because we do not share the same nation, we cannot love the same state. I tell myself this might be just as well. Shared love for a nation state might be a dangerous thing. Perhaps the gentleness, tolerance and good-naturedness of so much of Canadian life depends, in fact, on that absence of a fiercely shared love.

These are telling observations. They distinguish nation, nation-state, and a third condition, one that juxtaposes the two perspectives in a single construction – Quebecker and Canadian simultaneously. Significantly, Quebec citizens have, thus far, refused to seek a resolution of the tension created by this juxtaposition and have opted instead for the ambiguous third condition. As Ignatieff

28 Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: Vintage, 1994, first published 1993), 122-3.

29 Indeed, as a result of a programme launched in the 1970s and funded by the government since 1981, Quebec has developed an historical argument for its status as a "normal nation" in the form of a multi-volume regional history project. Fernand Harvey, "La Question régionale au Québec," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 2 (1980): 74-87; Chad Gaffield, "The New Regional History: Rethinking the History of the Outaouais," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1991): 64-81; I would like to thank Fernand Harvey for his generous assistance with materials on this theme.

rightly observes, following a path blazed by Lord Acton a century ago, this unresolved tension offers consolation to Quebecois and Canadians both: that country is freer, Acton suggested, that accommodates more than one "race," (here one could read "nation," "region," or another significant imagined identity), within its borders.[30]

One Quebecker who is prepared to accept this difficult balance is Alain Dubuc, former editor of *La Presse*. He believes sovereigntism is no solution for Quebec's ills. But he also argues that nationalism in the rest of Canada introduces rigidity and narrowness that will be just as responsible for the country's disintegration, should that happen, as anything in Quebec itself. His answer to this double bind relates directly to the preceding analyses of Canada's various regions: the country must discover "a way of perceiving the Canadian dynamic whereby the regions can play a role as a setting for initiative and for identity definition." "In Canadian history," Dubuc writes, "the initiatives of regions, the competition that takes place among them[,]... [the] imitation[,] have been major factors in national progress." He speaks of the rise of double identities among citizens which "can work – on the condition, of course, that the national identity is firmly grounded to begin with."[31] It is a message that Harold Innis and Craig Dobbin would find congenial.

Imagined regions are not merely social constructs. Collective social understandings are not simply ideological inventions. They have a force of their own. They can provide a foundation for national aspirations. In northern North America, such spatial identifications are so old, so deeply-rooted, have been expressed in so many forms, and have penetrated the peoples' cultures in so many ways, that they will out, no matter how rigorously we insist on their constructed nature. What is more, they are often the source of creativity, just as surely as the centres of civilization and Canada's metropolises – not the same thing – can be the forcing grounds of new ideas and movements. But as there

30 Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*, 134, 189; I am following such scholars as Eric Hobsbawm in distinguishing between nation-state, the political entity, and "nation," a younger phenomenon. As Hobsbawm argued, the nation-state is "a territorial state over which the people who live in it , the nation, hold a sovereign power." This meaning emerged from the French Revolution and, in part, from the American Revolution. "It is a political and not an ethnic or linguistic definition of the state: it is the people who choose their government and decide to live under a certain constitution and certain laws. In comparison, the other meaning adopted for the term is much more recent, and consists of the idea that every territorial state belongs to a particular people, defined by specific ethnic, linguistic, and cultural characteristics, and this constitutes the nation .... only one nation lives in the nation-state, and the others are minorities who live in the same place but are not part of the nation." Eric Hobsbawm in conversation with Antonio Polito, *The New Century* (London: Abacus: 2000, 2003), 22-23.

31 Alain Dubuc in John Ralston Saul, Alain Dubuc, and Georges Erasmus, *The LaFontaine-Baldwin Lectures* Volume I *A Dialogue on Democracy in Canada*, ed. Rudyard Griffiths (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2002), 82-3, 84.

is danger in nationalism, so there are dangers in regionalism, particularly concealment of special interest – a class, an economic sector, a particular corporation – behind the opaque screen of community solidarity. Worst of all, notions of imagined regions can doom the country to debilitating internal disputes and, of course, to disintegration.

Conclusion

This paper argues that traditional, fixed, landscape-based regions – typically seven in number – as a way of conceptualizing the differences among Canadians are increasingly undermined by the ambiguities that accompany them. It has presented an alternative in the form of three distinct discussions drawing on the so-called new regional geography. First, the denoted region: economic forces that once seemed to glue these regions together are being eroded as a north-south axis of trade develops; demographic homogeneity based on European origins is being superseded by immigration patterns that divide us differently; communication-based national understandings are being challenged by continental and global media. In these circumstances, denoted regions are far superior to the seven traditional regions as a means of encapsulating spatial realities because they are more flexible and more readily suited to discussions of the forces shaping today's society. Moreover, they leave open the question of whether any given nation-state can survive under such conditions. Second, the instituted region: in the Canadian federal system, province and territory operate as partners with the central government in a constitutionally-defined relationship as they always have. We need only understand that this notion of region, too, is a constructed one, stable in the sense that boundaries and constitutions are not easily revised, but flexible, too, because the relationship is subject to the give and take of negotiations that affect the actual meaning of province and central government. Third, the imagined region: these communities have evolved over four centuries and might just be the repository of the nation-state's greatest sources of strength. They, too, grow and change. If the nation-state is to survive in something like its present form, it will have to roll with the challenges that such understandings raise and, as previous generations did, to find ways of integrating them in a single entity.

Though my generation of historians has spent a great deal of effort on class, gender, and race as categories of thought, and handled them with subtlety, it has not dealt as successfully with the once-prominent category of region. Like these other concepts, region should be seen as ambiguous, evolving, and yet capable of expressing another important aspect of social experience, the lived spatial dimensions of our world. This is why the thinking of the new regional geography is helpful. In asserting the relevance of regional understandings, it revises inherited concepts that reify a particular physical setting and historical community as if a region could be fixed in one place for all time.

Peoples' identifications with spatial communities are changeable but they are still nearly inescapable in this vast, sparsely-populated state. A region-related shorthand seems inevitably to develop when citizens grapple with day-to-day issues. At this point, the Quebec, western, Atlantic, and Ontario images begin to pile up and one's thinking inevitably turns to the traditional fixed, essentialist regions of earlier generations. One must resist the thought. It is a trap. Regional categories, not the old notion of regions as fixed chunks of real estate, should be part of the evolving language by which one interprets the country.

Regions emerge in our thinking because they reflect important themes in the community conversation. Three subjects that have historically been addressed in regional terms in Canada are the unequal distribution of wealth (the "economics" approach), different policy and party preferences (the "politics" approach), and whether a community "culture" can be expressed best within the larger nation-state or in several smaller states (the "sociology" and, at times, the "literature" or "cultural studies" approach).[32] All have had obvious, spatially-distinctive expressions. The third subject, culture, often expressed as a question of unity versus disintegration, looms behind many discussions of "regionalism" and seems all the more pressing when it articulates grievances in the two other categories as well.

The national unity question also offers a persuasive reason why historians' writings about Canadian regions have relevance for public conversations. With our colleagues in other academic disciplines, we have a responsibility to develop models of experience that will enlighten and to criticize models that will lead us astray. When a previous generation's social truths become stale, or cannot survive without qualification, it is our task to develop new language that better depicts our circumstances. We must bring to bear the experience of past centuries upon the public's consideration of present and future. In a valuable 1991 article, Charles Taylor suggested that "accommodating difference is what Canada is all about." Contrasting this country with the "uniform model of citi-

32 The economic: Alan Green, *Regional Aspects of Canada's Economic Growth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) and O.J. Firestone, *Regional Economic Development* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1974); the political: Donald J. Savoie, "All Things Canadian Are Now Regional," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 203-217, and Reg Whitaker, "Will Canada Survive the Canadian State?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35, no. 1, (Spring 2000): 218-38; the sociological: Ralph Mathews, "The Significance and Explanation of Regional Divisions in Canada: Toward a Canadian Sociology," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 43-61; the literary: William Westfall, "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 3-15; the geographic John Warkentin, "Canada and its Major Regions: Bouchette, Parkin, Rogers, Innis, Hutchison," *The Canadian Geographer* 43, no. 3 (Fall 1999) and Graeme Wynn, "Geography at the Millennium," *The Canadian Geographer* 43, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 220-43.

zenship" in the United States, he wrote that the latter may be "the classic image of the Western liberal state" but it represented "a straitjacket for many political societies." Other countries needed other models, he said, "in order to allow for more humane and less constraining modes of political cohabitation." His one practical reference was to the "increased breathing space for regional societies" in Europe.[33] Taylor's model is an important one but it requires a continuous flexibility that is not easy to achieve.

In light of the foregoing, it is platitudinous to say that the nation-state is eternally changing.[34] But it needs to be said. Just because new loyalties are emerging and old formulations are less convincing, we should not jump to predictions of national disintegration every time indices of change are announced. It is a sign of greater maturity when we build an awareness of contingency into our thinking about the country. By recognizing the unstable realities of space-based differences, the necessity of flexible political institutions to accommodate such differences, and the inevitability that imagined communities not coincident with the nation-state's boundaries will forever complicate and enrich our conversations, we can provide a language within which to discuss how we differ, how we govern, and what we share. This language will rely, among other things, on new ways of imagining regions, space, and their histories.

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33 Charles Taylor, "Shared and Divergent Values" in Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 155-86.

34 The challenge to fixed spatial categories known as regions must be accompanied by a similar challenge to the category of nation-state. These observations owe much to comments by Ian McKay, "A Note on 'Region' in Writing the History of Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 89-101; and McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*