

INSECTIONS

Canadian
Historical
Association



Société
historique
du Canada

8.3
2025

where people meet history and history meets people
au carrefour de l'histoire et des collectivités

La biographie et l'histoire



Biography and History

Réunion annuelle de la SHC 2026

Vous êtes invité.e.s!

La prochaine réunion annuelle de la Société historique du Canada se tiendra du lundi 1^{er} au mercredi 3 juin 2026, à Charlottetown, Île-du-Prince-Édouard. L'événement aura lieu à l'Université de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

Réservez ces dates dès maintenant! La réunion annuelle 2026 s'annonce comme une réunion novatrice et stimulante, et nous serions ravis de vous accueillir à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard!

Les inscriptions ouvriront sous peu.

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CHA Annual Meeting 2026

You are invited!

The Canadian Historical Association's next Annual Meeting will take place Monday to Wednesday, June 1-3, 2026, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The event will be hosted by the University of Prince Edward Island.

Please mark your calendars – this will be a novel Annual Meeting in many respects, and we are so pleased to be able to welcome you to Prince Edward Island!

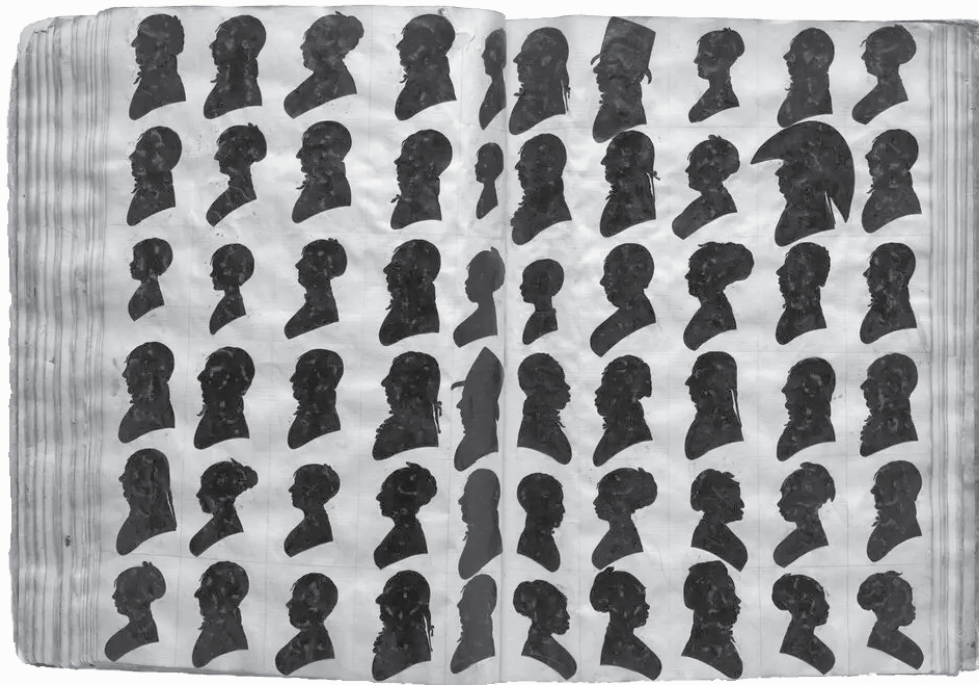
Registration will open soon.

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numéro : La
biographie et
l'histoire

Issue Theme:
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(en partant du haut | from top) Ledger Book of William Bache, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution : Mark Gulezian. [Portraits] *U. Franklin*: gracieusement fourni par Monica Franklin | courtesy of Monica Franklin; *W. L. Mackenzie King*: Yousuf Karsh, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, PA-174058 | Library and Archives Canada, PA-174058; *Capt. A. C. Hannaford*: contribué | contributed; *Roi Atropates de Médie* | *King Atropates of Media*: Musée national de l'armée | National Military Museum, Baku, Azerbaijan; *Silhouette d'un Cubain inconnu* | *Silhouette of unknown Cuban man*: Ledger Book of William Bache; *John A. Macdonald*: Michal Klajban, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0; *H. Tanner*: May Ann Katnola; *A. Hitler*: domaine public | public domain; *Guerrière amazone et guerrier grec* | *Amazon and Greek warriors*: Saiklo, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0. Tous les portraits sont des détails des originaux. | All portraits are details of the originals.

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Conception d'une bibliothèque avec bureau, collection Elisha Whittelsey, fonds Elisha Whittelsey, 1952. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photographie : Pharos. CC CO 1.0. | Design for a Bookcase with Writing Desk, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1952. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photography: Pharos. CC CO 1.0.

Si vous avez des renseignements que vous aimeriez voir dans le numéro d'octobre du bulletin, veuillez les envoyer à cha-shc@cha-shc.ca avant le 24 novembre.

Le calendrier de publication est le suivant :

- 1 février
- 1 avril
- 1 juin
- 1 août
- 1 octobre
- 1 décembre

If you have information that you would like included in the October issue of the newsletter, please send it to cha-shc@cha-shc.ca before November 24th.

The publishing schedule is as follows:

- February 1st
- April 1st
- June 1st
- August 1st
- October 1st
- December 1st

Politique éditoriale d'*Intersections*

Intersections est une publication bilingue de la Société historique du Canada qui paraît trois fois par année. Les articles, les notes et les lettres de 600 à 1000 mots et portant sur des sujets d'intérêt pour les membres, sont les bienvenus.

La date limite pour soumettre des articles pour le prochain *Intersections* est le 1^{er} mars 2026.

La rédaction se réserve le droit de réviser les articles qui nous sont soumis. Les opinions exprimées dans les textes sont celles de l'auteur.e et ne reflètent pas nécessairement celles de la SHC. Veuillez acheminer toute correspondance à : *Intersections*, Société historique du Canada, 1912-130, rue Albert, Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4

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Editorial Policy of *Intersections*

Intersections is published three times a year by the Canadian Historical Association. Notices, letters, and articles of 600 to 1,000 words are welcome on topics of interest to historians.

The deadline for submission of articles, etc. for the next *Intersections* is **March 1, 2026**.

The editors reserve the right to edit submissions. Opinions expressed in articles etc. are those of the author and not necessarily the CHA. Direct correspondence to: *Intersections*, Canadian Historical Association, 1912-130 Albert Street, Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4

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Les espaces entre les cases

L'été dernier, ma conjointe et moi avons eu la chance d'assister au premier jour du festival de lecture et d'écriture de Denman Island, qui dure trois jours, comme nous l'avons fait à plusieurs reprises au cours des deux dernières décennies. Denman Island (population permanente d'environ 1 400 habitants selon le recensement de 2021) se trouve à une courte distance en traversier depuis l'île de Vancouver, à environ 20 kilomètres au sud des villes jumelles de Courtenay-Comox. Il s'agit d'un festival à l'échelle intime, une occasion de voir des écrivain.e.s reconnu.e.s de fiction et de non-fiction parler de leur travail et échanger avec un public cultivé, attentif et curieux. Les historien.ne.s académiques apparaissent rarement sur la liste des conférencier.ère.s, mais ils et elles sont parfois invité.e.s. Par exemple, en 2010, l'historien de la Colombie-Britannique Richard Mackie avait présenté ses recherches sur l'histoire de l'industrie forestière du sud de l'île de Vancouver dans *Island Timber: A Social History of the Comox Logging Company* (Sono Nis Press, 2000).

En juin 2025, l'écrivain de non-fiction créative John Vaillant a présenté son livre primé et captivant sur l'incendie de Fort McMurray, offrant une réflexion saisissante sur l'impact du changement climatique, d'autant plus réel pour le public local en raison du grand incendie qui faisait rage à Sproat Lake, à l'ouest de notre emplacement, sur l'île de Vancouver. Lors de sa conférence quelques années plus tôt, Mackie avait expliqué comment un gigantesque incendie forestier avait traversé les forêts du sud de l'île au XVII^e siècle, créant un couvert homogène de sapins de Douglas au moment où l'exploitation forestière industrielle a commencé dans la région, environ deux siècles plus tard. Même dans le climat habituellement humide de la côte Ouest, les incendies de forêt étaient possibles. En 1938, un autre grand incendie a ravagé une grande partie de la vallée de Cowichan. De tels événements étaient donc envisageables. Mais, comme le dirait Vaillant, ils surviennent maintenant avec plus de fréquence et beaucoup plus d'intensité. Nous sommes, comme le rappelle le titre du livre de Vaillant, en période d'« état de feu » (« Fire Weather »).

La contribution de Vaillant au festival de Denman Island nous rappelle le moment historique dans lequel nous vivons. À leur manière, plusieurs autres auteur.e.s ont attiré notre attention sur d'autres moments historiques clés, parfois personnels, parfois collectifs. L'artiste de bande dessinée queer Sarah Leavitt a parlé de manière émouvante et parfois humoristique du deuil de sa conjointe dans *Something, Not Nothing: A Story of Grief and Love* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2025). Elle a souligné l'importance, dans les bandes dessinées, de l'espace entre les cases, où se trouve une grande partie de la narration.

L'aventurier professionnel Adam Shoalts, qui détient un doctorat en histoire de l'Université McMaster, où il a travaillé avec Ken

Spaces Between the Panels

Last summer, my partner and I had the good fortune of attending the first day of the three-day Denman Island Readers and Writers Festival as we have done a number of times over the last two decades. Denman Island (permanent population of around 1,400 according to the 2021 census) is a short ferry-ride away from Vancouver Island, about 20 kilometres south of the twin cities of Courtenay-Comox. This is a small-scale and intimate festival, a chance to see celebrated writers of fiction and non-fiction speak about their work and engage with a well-read, appreciative, and inquisitive audience. While academic historians rarely figure on the speakers list, they are occasionally invited. For instance, in 2010, BC historian Richard Mackie spoke about his work on the history of the logging industry of southern Vancouver Island, *Island Timber: A Social History of the Comox Logging Company* (Sono Nis Press, 2000).

In June 2025, creative non-fiction writer John Vaillant discussed his award-winning and compelling book on the Fort McMurray fire, providing a haunting reflection on the impact of climate change, all the more real to the local audience because of the large fire burning at Sproat Lake on Vancouver Island to the west of our location. During his talk some years earlier, Mackie had explained how a massive forest fire had swept through the southern island forests in the seventeenth century, creating a largely uniform Douglas fir tree cover by the time that industrial-scale logging began in the area some two centuries later. Even in the usually damp climate of the West Coast, forest fires could occur. In 1938, another massive forest fire burnt through much of the Cowichan Valley. Such events were within the realms of the possible. But, as Vaillant would say, they now occur with greater frequency and much higher intensity. We are, as Vaillant's book title reminds us, in a period of "Fire Weather."

Vaillant's contribution the Denman Island festival reminds us of the historical moment in which we live. In their own ways, many of the other authors brought other key historical moments, sometimes personal, sometimes collective, to our attention. Queer comic artist Sarah Leavitt spoke movingly and sometimes humorously of grieving her partner's death: *Something, Not Nothing: A Story of Grief and Love* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2025). And she pointed out the importance in comics of the space in between the panels, where so much of the narrative is contained.

Professional adventurer Adam Shoalts, who has his PhD in History from McMaster University, where he worked with

Un mot du président | A Word from the President

Cruikshank, a décrit son périple en solo de 4 000 km en canoë, du nord du Yukon à la baie d'Hudson. Comme il l'a souligné, ce n'était pas le voyage le plus facile, car les rivières dans le Grand Nord ne coulent pas généralement d'est en ouest. Bien que sa carrière d'aventurier et d'écrivain offre une perspective unique sur un parcours alternatif du monde académique, il a également décrit son travail d'archives en retraçant les pas de l'explorateur arctique Hubert Darrell (c. 1875–1910?) dans *Vanished Beyond the Map* (Allen Lane, 2025).

L'ancienne poète lauréate de Vancouver, Fiona Tinwei Lam, a lu des poèmes sur la nourriture, l'amour et la survie (*Odes & Laments*, Caitlin Press, 2019). Lenore Newman, directrice de l'Institute of Food and Agriculture à l'Université Fraser Valley, ainsi que les romancier.ère.s Janiko Oza et Timothy Taylor ont participé à une table ronde sur les pratiques alimentaires contemporaines.

Une des séances du festival de l'été dernier m'a rappelé la façon dont le travail des historien.ne.s universitaires apparaît parfois dans des lieux inattendus. Caroline Adderson a lu des extraits d'une nouvelle tirée de sa collection *A Way to Be Happy* (Biblioasis, 2024), racontant une tentative d'évasion d'un hôpital psychiatrique. Adderson a expliqué son inspiration : un court article dans un journal britannique sur un nid d'abeilles dans un hôpital psychiatrique. Puis elle a présenté ses recherches : des articles académiques de Mary-Ellen Kelm sur les femmes de l'« Hôpital provincial pour les aliéné.e.s ». En projetant les articles de Kelm à l'écran, Adderson a rendu hommage à la capacité de cette historienne à saisir les histoires humaines de femmes incarcérées pour leur comportement jugé indiscipliné ou en dépression post-partum. Adderson a également visité plus tard les Archives de la Colombie-Britannique à Victoria pour consulter elle-même les dossiers des patientes. Puis, l'écrivaine a comblé les failles entre la documentation historique et l'interprétation académique avec son imagination créative pour créer une histoire de solidarité et de lutte.

Nous ne pouvons pas assister à l'intégralité de l'événement chaque année (et n'avons donc pas pu entendre Drew Hayden Taylor l'été dernier). Certaines années, nous avons même manqué le festival complètement (y compris en 2024, lorsque l'historien Frank Tester a parlé du déménagement forcé des Inuit, son ouvrage coécrit avec Krista Ulujuk Zawadski). Mais notre expérience du festival l'été dernier me rappelle l'importance de se rencontrer, d'écouter, de partager et de se réjouir de la sagesse et de la créativité. Elle illustre aussi comment le travail historique peut inspirer d'autres formes de créativité, tout en partageant notre formation, notre savoir-faire et nos questionnements avec de nombreux écrivain.e.s. À une époque où tant d'événements malheureux peuplent nos nouvelles quotidiennes, gardons à l'esprit les espaces créés par des événements comme ce festival – tout comme les espaces entre les cases d'une bande dessinée – où se situe une grande partie de la narration de nos propres vies.

Colin Coates
Président

Ken Cruikshank, described his solo 4,000 km paddle from northern Yukon to the Hudson Bay. As he pointed out, this was not the easiest journey, as the rivers do not tend to run in an east-west direction in the far north. While his career as an adventurer and writer gives a unique twist to an alt-ac pathway, he also described his archival work in retracing the steps of Arctic explorer Hubert Darrell (c. 1875–1910?) in *Vanished Beyond the Map* (Allen Lane, 2025).

Former Vancouver poet laureate Fiona Tinwei Lam read poems about food and love and survival (*Odes & Laments* [Caitlin Press, 2019]). Lenore Newman, director of the Food and Agriculture Institute at Fraser Valley University, and novelists Janiko Oza and Timothy Taylor contributed to a panel discussion about contemporary foodways.

One of the sessions in last summer's festival reminded me of the ways in which the work of academic historians sometimes shows up in unusual places. Caroline Adderson read from a short story in her collection *A Way to Be Happy* (Biblioasis, 2024). The story related an escape attempt from a hospital for the insane. Adderson spoke of her inspiration: a short item in a British newspaper about a bees' nest in a psychiatric hospital. And then she turned to her research: academic articles written by Mary-Ellen Kelm about women in the Provincial Hospital for the Insane. As she showed Kelm's articles on the screen, Adderson paid tribute to that historian's ability to capture the human stories of women who had been incarcerated in the hospital because they were unruly or suffering postpartum depression. Adderson also later visited the British Columbia Archives in Victoria to look at patient records herself. Then the fiction writer filled in the spaces between the historical documentation and scholarly interpretation with her creative imagination to create a story of solidarity and struggle.

We cannot manage to stay for the whole event each year (and therefore did not get a chance to hear Drew Hayden Taylor last summer). And some years we have missed the festival entirely (including the 2024 event when historian Frank Tester spoke about Inuit Relocation, his co-authored work with Krista Ulujuk Zawadski). But our experience of attending the festival last summer reminds me of the importance of meeting, listening, and sharing and revelling in wisdom and creativity. And it also illustrates how historical work can serve for inspiration for other forms of creativity, at the same time that our training, our craft, and our questions are shared with many writers. In a time when there are many panels of unhappy events that comprise our daily news, let's keep in mind the spaces between those panels, where so much of the narrative of our own lives is located.

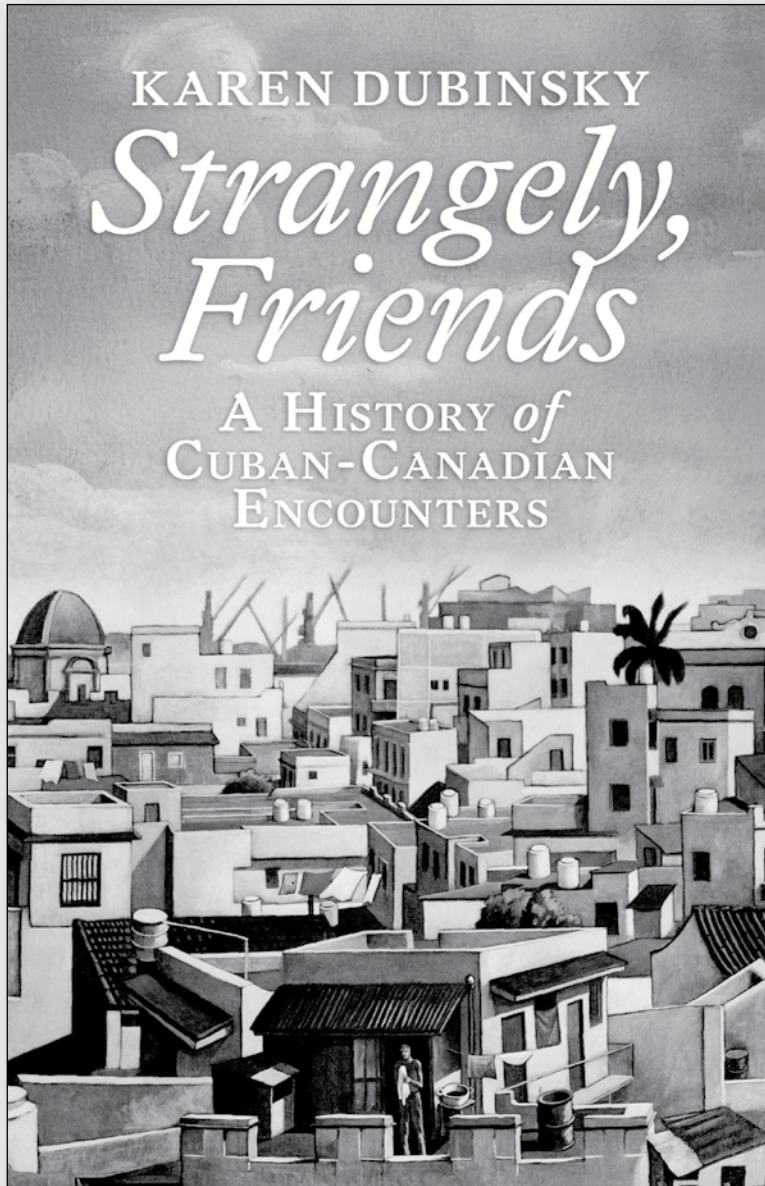
Colin Coates
President



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Strangely, Friends delves into the rich, often overlooked history of personal and cultural connections between Cubans and Canadians. From the early days of the Cuban Revolution to the present, this book uncovers the stories of Canadians who were drawn to Cuba—teachers, artists, development aid workers, filmmakers, and activists—who left an indelible mark on the island, and Cubans, especially the musicians, who found a home in Canada. Through intimate portraits and serendipitous encounters, Karen Dubinsky explores how these relationships transcended political ideologies and state policies, revealing a shared humanity that defies borders. From the classrooms of Havana to the jazz clubs of Toronto, this book captures the enduring bonds forged through music, education, and mutual curiosity, offering a fresh perspective on the power of people-to-people connections.

“Dubinsky masterfully weaves together the intimate and intricate stories that define the relationship between Cubans and Canadians.”
—**Elizabeth Rodriguez** and **Magdelys Savigne**
of OKAN

“*Strangely, Friends* is a delight. Drawing on extensive interviews, Karen Dubinsky explores the friendships and affective bonds among ordinary and extraordinary people living the complexities of the post-1959 Canada-Cuba relationship.” —**Cynthia Wright**,
coeditor of *Other Diplomacies, Other Ties: Cuba and Canada in the Shadow of the US*



Karen Dubinsky is a historian at Queen’s University. Between 2008 and 2023, she cotaught and coordinated a university exchange program on Cuban culture which brought Canadian students to the University of Havana and Cuban artists and academics to Canada. She is cohost of *Cuban Serenade*, a podcast about Cuban musicians in Canada and hosts the CFRC radio program Cuban Sounds in Canada. Her previous books include studies of transnational adoption, Canadian cultural history, and Canadian-Global South relations. She lives in Kingston, Ontario.

La biographie et l'histoire

En 2017, lorsque j'ai commencé à faire des recherches sur l'état de la biographie historique au Canada, j'ai trouvé de nombreux articles laissant entendre que les historien.ne.s ne voyaient pas la biographie d'un bon œil. Selon la formule mémorable de David Nasaw, la biographie était « l'enfant mal-aimé de la profession ». Pourtant, certain.e.s des historien.ne.s à qui j'ai parlé ont accueilli de telles déclarations sur l'état déplorable de la biographie avec indifférence. Tout allait bien, selon eux et elles : la biographie était et demeurera une méthodologie historique valable. Néanmoins, ma revue de la littérature m'a amené à partager l'évaluation de Barbara Caine selon laquelle « malgré la reconnaissance généralisée parmi les historien.ne.s de l'importance et de la popularité de la biographie, plusieurs continuent d'entretenir une ambivalence considérable à son égard ».

À la suite du tournant vers l'histoire sociale, l'une des principales sources d'ambivalence à l'égard de la biographie a été l'association supposée entre les hagiographies littérales et les traitements non critiques des « grands hommes (« blancs ») » de l'histoire ; la classe, le genre et la « race » ont façonné et continuent de façonner la biographie historique. Cependant, comme le souligne Laura Macion dans son article, les hagiographies – lorsqu'on les lit à rebours – peuvent toujours constituer des sources historiques précieuses, et les compétences critiques nécessaires pour les analyser sont utiles pour « l'étude historique de tout texte ou de toute période ». Lorsque la théorie du « grand homme » est poussée à l'extrême, toutefois, un.e seul.e dirigeant.e politique en vient à représenter une histoire nationale entière et complexe. Dans son texte sur l'« hitlérisme », Melanie Carina Schmoll montre que c'est encore parfois le cas.

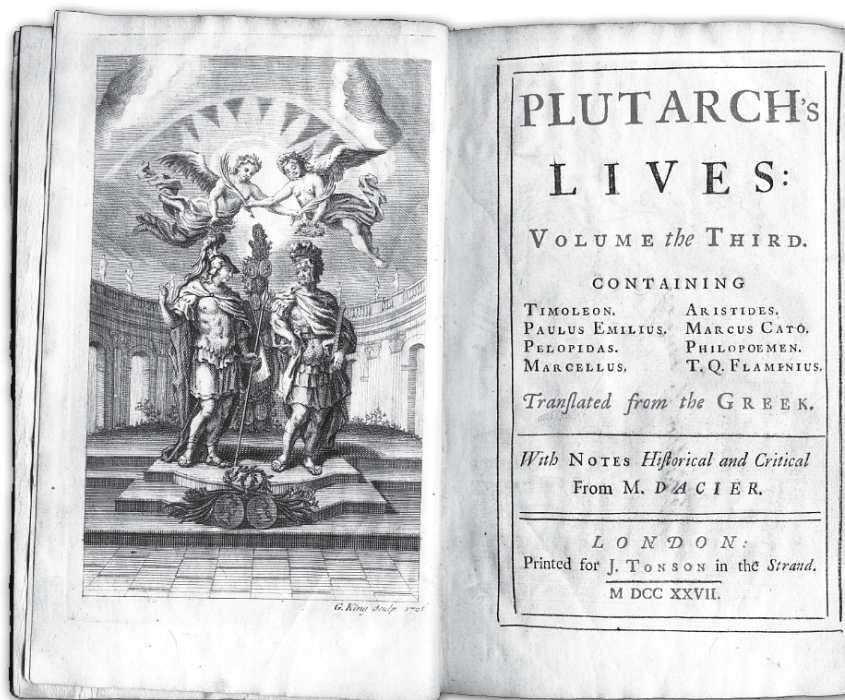
Biography and History

In 2017, when I first began researching the state of historical biography in Canada, I found numerous articles suggesting biography was not viewed fondly by historians. In David Nasaw's memorable phrase, biography was “the profession's unloved stepchild.” Yet some of the historians with

whom I spoke greeted such pronouncements about the dire state of biography with a shrug. All was fine, they said: biography was and will remain a valid historical methodology. Still, my literature review left me concurring with Barbara Caine's assessment that “despite the widespread recognition amongst historians of the importance and popularity of biography, many of them continue to express considerable ambivalence about it.”

Following the turn to social history, one of the primary sources of ambivalence about biography has been a supposed through-line from literal hagi-

ographies to uncritical treatments of the “Great (‘White’) Men” of history; class, gender, and “race” have shaped and continue to shape historical biography. Yet as Laura Macion points out in her article, hagiographies – when read against the grain – can still be valuable historical sources, and the critical skills that are required to engage with them are valuable for “the historical study of any text or period.” When the “Great Man” theory is taken to extremes, however, a single political leader is made to stand in for an entire complex national history. In her piece on “Hitlerism,” Melanie Carina Schmoll shows that this is sometimes still the case.



Édition de 1727 de Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans, volume III, imprimée par Jacob Tonson. Collection privée de S. Whitehead. Domaine public. | 1727 edition of Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans, Volume III, printed by Jacob Tonson. Private Collection of S. Whitehead. Public domain.

Pourtant, les grandes figures politiques ne font pas toujours l'objet d'un traitement biographique – ou du moins, pas de biographies officielles complètes, comme le révèle Barry Cahill dans son article sur William Lyon Mackenzie King. De même, les « grandes femmes » de l'histoire, comme la professeure Ursula M. Franklin, n'ont pas toujours reçu l'attention qu'elles méritent, comme le discutent Petra Dolata et Noreen Humble dans leur article. Selon elles, Franklin était « une personne extraordinaire » qui « mérite d'être mieux connue ». Malgré un vaste fonds d'archives, qui a été « bien exploité » à diverses fins, personne n'a encore « examiné le matériel dans l'optique de comprendre la personne elle-même ». Cet objectif de recherche remettra sans doute en question les conclusions de ces études antérieures, car c'est là l'un des avantages de l'approche biographique. Un autre avantage de la biographie est qu'elle peut transcender les frontières. Dans un article tiré de sa monographie collective sur les rencontres canado-cubaines, Karen Dubinsky aborde le cas de Harry Tanner, un homme dont la vie « illustre à la fois l'insignifiance et la signification des frontières nationales dans les relations humaines ». (Bien sûr, certains.e.s sujets biographiques poursuivaient l'objectif inverse. L'article de Nora Jaffary montre comment son grand-père a cherché à rendre les frontières nationales plus significatives en distinguant intentionnellement le Canada de son voisin nucléaire du Sud.)

Les histoires orales, comme celles qu'emploie Dubinsky, sont un moyen d'obtenir de l'information sur des vies pour lesquelles il existe peu de traces documentaires. Mais quel type de biographies peut-on écrire sur des sujets décédés depuis longtemps et pour lesquels il reste peu de sources? Dans certains cas, la rareté des sources résulte de silences archivistiques dus à des biais ou à des effacements. Dans son article, Gabriel Milhet soutient que les biographies « reflètent la structure même des archives » et que « la biographie canadienne, en tant que genre, consacre les personnes esclavagistes tout en effaçant les personnes réduites en esclavage ». Matthew Monrose offre une interprétation différente du genre biographique, le voyant comme « une vieille tradition au sein du Canada noir ». Pour Monrose, ce n'est pas le genre biographique qui a condamné les Canadien.ne.s noir.e.s à l'effacement, mais plutôt l'historiographie canadienne dans son ensemble. Nuançant davantage la discussion, il note également que, dans le cas de son sujet, B.J. Spencer Pitt, des scandales ou des rumeurs à leur sujet ont peut-être contribué au silence historiographique entourant la vie et l'héritage de Pitt.

Dans d'autres cas, la rareté des sources est simplement due au passage du temps. C'est le cas d'Atropatès (370 av. J.-C. – 321 av. J.-C.), dont Mahir Khalifa-zadeh propose une esquisse biographique. Ce grand général joua un rôle décisif à la bataille de Gaugamèles, mais fut finalement condamné à la défaite par son supérieur, le roi Darius III. Bien qu'elle se concentre sur la bataille plus récente de la crête de Vimy et sur une soldate de rang inférieur, la « micro-biographie » de Melissa Davidson consacrée à Alfred Hannaford

Yet major political figures do not always get biographical treatment—or at least not complete official biographies, as Barry Cahill reveals in his article on William Lyon Mackenzie King. Nor have the “Great Women” of history, people like Professor Ursula M. Franklin, as Petra Dolata and Noreen Humble discuss in their article. Franklin was, in their estimation, “an extraordinary person” who “deserves to be better known.” Despite leaving behind a broad archive, which has been “well mined” for various purposes, no one has “looked at the material with a view to understanding the woman herself.” This latter research objective will, no doubt, challenge the findings of these previous studies, for this is one of the benefits of the biographical approach. Another benefit of biography is that it can reach across borders. In an article based on her larger collective biographical monograph on Cuban-Canadian encounters, Karen Dubinsky discusses Harry Tanner, a man whose life “illustrates the meaninglessness and significance of national boundaries in human relations.” (Of course, some biographical subjects had the opposite goal in mind. Nora Jaffary's article shows how her grandfather sought to make national boundaries more meaningful, by intentionally distinguishing Canada from its nuclear neighbour to the south.)

Oral histories, like Dubinsky employed, are a means of obtaining information on lives for whom there may be minimal documentary evidence. But what types of biographies can be written of long-deceased subjects for whom few sources remain? In some instances, the scarcity of sources is the result of archival silences due to biases and erasure. In his article, Gabriel Milhet argues that biographies “mirror the very structure of the archive” and that “Canadian biography as a genre enshrines enslavers while erasing the enslaved.” Matthew Monrose offers a different interpretation of the genre of biography, seeing it as “an old tradition in Black Canada.” For Monrose, it is not the genre of biography that has condemned Black Canadians to erasure, but rather the Canadian historiography most generally. Further nuancing the discussion, he also notes that in the case of his subject, B.J. Spencer Pitt, scandals or rumours thereof may have also contributed to the historiographical silence about Pitt's life and legacy.

In other instances, a scarcity of sources is due simply to the sheer length of time that has passed. This is case with the Atropates (370 BCE – 321 BCE), whose biographical sketch Mahir Khalifa-zadeh provides. The great general played a decisive role in the Battle of Gaugamela, but was ultimately doomed to defeat by his superior, King Darius III. Though focusing on the more recent battle of Vimy Ridge, and a lower-ranking soldier, Melissa Davidson's “micro-biography” of Lt. Alfred Hannaford similarly shows the difference a single

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montre également la différence qu'une seule personne peut faire dans un conflit plus vaste. Cependant, une biographie plus complète de Hannaford est impossible, car il était un soldat ordinaire qui n'a laissé que quelques lettres derrière lui. Pourtant, comme le soutient Davidson, la micro-biographie qu'elles permettent sert à humaniser ce qui, autrement, pourrait être un récit clinique de la bataille.

Les lettres comme celles de Hannaford, ainsi que d'autres égo-documents comme les journaux intimes, les carnets et les mémoires, constituent des sources précieuses susceptibles de complexifier les récits historiques. Comme le décrit l'article de Gabrielle McLaren, les colonisateurs s'imaginaient – et ont souvent été imaginé.e.s par la suite – comme des guerriers valides luttant contre la nature. Pourtant, les journaux du milieu du XIX^e siècle de Mary O'Brien documentent une (micro)histoire inattendue du handicap et des réseaux de soins en dehors des contextes institutionnels. Bien sûr, il s'agit d'une histoire – et d'un document – encore médié par la « race », la classe et le genre, mais mettre en lumière la culture qui a façonné les auteur.e.s est l'un des usages précieux des égo-documents, comme le suggère J.I. Little. Dans son article sur deux diaristes canadiens, il soutient que de tels documents « permettent à l'historien.ne de personnaliser les constructions sociales de genre, de classe et de race ». En d'autres termes, loin d'être à l'abri ou opposée aux perspectives apportées par le tournant de l'histoire sociale, la biographie permet en réalité à l'historien.ne de mieux comprendre les catégories analytiques que ce champ met de l'avant.

De même que les biographies fondées sur les égo-documents ne constituent pas le dernier mot sur leurs sujets, le genre biographique lui-même n'est pas statique. Mackenzie King n'a peut-être pas encore eu de biographie officielle complète, mais il a reçu beaucoup d'attention biographique. Franklin n'a pas encore de biographie, mais elle en aura bientôt une. Les personnes réduites en esclavage n'ont pas auparavant fait l'objet d'un traitement biographique, mais des dictionnaires biographiques commencent à paraître. John A. Macdonald était autrefois considéré par les biographes comme au-dessus de tout reproche, mais, comme le montre l'article de David A. Wilson, un récit important de sa vie fait maintenant l'objet de révisions critiques.

La biographie est par nature révisionniste, tout comme toutes les formes d'histoire. Pour cette raison, il est étrange de la qualifier de « riche en problèmes », comme l'a fait un historien. Toutes les approches historiques sont imparfaites et mieux adaptées à certaines questions qu'à d'autres. Quelle que soit l'approche qu'un.e historien.ne choisit, il ou elle doit être conscient.e de ses limites et s'efforcer de les atténuer. Les historien.ne.s qui adoptent une approche biographique – peut-être même plus que leurs critiques – sont conscient.e.s de ces problèmes et tentent de les atténuer de manière transparente.

person can make in a broader conflict. But a more comprehensive biography of Hannaford is impossible because he was an ordinary soldier who left few only handful of letters behind. Still, as Davidson argues, the micro-biography they enable serves to humanize what could otherwise be a clinical account of battle.

Letters like Hannaford's, along with other egodocuments like diaries, journals, and memoirs, are a valuable source that can complicate historical narratives. As Gabrielle McLaren's article details, settler colonists imagined themselves, and have often been subsequently imagined by others, as able-bodied warriors fighting against nature. Yet the mid-nineteenth-century journals of Mary O'Brien document an unexpected (micro) history of disability and networks of care outside institutional contexts. Of course, this was a history – and document – still mediated by “race,” class, and gender, but shedding light on the culture that shaped their writers is one of the valuable uses of egodocuments, J.I. Little suggests. In his article on two Canadian diarists, Little argues that such documents “enable the historian to personalize the social constructs of gender, class, and race.” In other words, far from being immune or opposed to the insights brought by the turn to social history, biography actually enables the historian to better understand the analytical categories this field prioritizes.

Just as the biographies that egodocuments inform are not the last word on their subjects, nor is the genre of biography static. Mackenzie King may not have gotten a complete official biography (yet), but he has received plenty of biographical attention. Franklin does not yet have a biography, but she soon will. Enslaved persons were not previously given biographical treatment, but biographical dictionaries are beginning to appear. John A. Macdonald was once treated by biographers as being beyond reproach, yet as David A. Wilson's article shows, an important account of his life is now undergoing critical revisions.

Biography is inherently revisionist, as are all forms of history. For this reason, it is strange to single it out as “abounding in problems,” as one historian put it. All historical approaches are imperfect and better suited to some historical questions than others. Whatever approach a historian chooses, they must be aware of its limitations and work to mitigate them. Historians taking a biographical approach – perhaps even more than their critics – are aware of these problems and transparently attempt to mitigate them.

The articles of this issue wrestle with some foundational questions about historical biography. Who “deserves” a biography? What are we to make of biography's inherently revisionist nature? How do we avoid mirroring archival si-

Les articles de ce numéro s'attaquent à certaines questions fondamentales concernant la biographie historique. Qui « mérite » une biographie? Que devons-nous penser de la nature intrinsèquement révisionniste de la biographie? Comment éviter de reproduire les silences archivistiques dans la sélection et le traitement de nos sujets biographiques? Comment écrire des biographies de personnes pour lesquelles il ne subsiste qu'un matériel limité, et comment qualifier de telles tentatives? Il n'existe pas de réponses simples, mais chaque contributeur.rice apporte une preuve convaincante de la passion avec laquelle les historien.ne.s au Canada tentent d'y répondre. C'est précisément cette passion qui me porte à croire que le haussement d'épaules était peut-être justifié après tout, et que la biographie historique se porte très bien.

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lences in our selection and treatment of biographical subjects? How do we write biographies of people for whom limited source material survives, and what do we call such attempts? There are no easy answers, but each contributor provides strong evidence of the passionate ways in which historians in Canada are trying to respond to them. It is precisely this passion that suggests to me that perhaps the shrug was warranted after all, that historical biography is doing just fine.

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English-Language Co-Editor

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Reading Biography as Hagiography: Methodological Reflections from a Medievalist

Describing a biography today as a “hagiography” carries certain connotations, implying perhaps that the author is too protective of the subject’s reputation or overly keen on rendering a flattering portrait. Those of us trained as medieval historians, however, will be familiar with hagiography (also known as a saint’s life) as a specific genre that was very common throughout the Middle Ages.

The medieval genre of hagiography can be broadly understood as a spiritual biography of a holy person, usually written in Latin and with the goal of the subject’s canonization. The genre’s repetitive tropes (childhood sanctity, holy visions, a perfect death) and the sometimes implausibly zany, underwhelming, or simply weird nature of the saintly person’s miracles led some earlier historians to discredit the hagiography as a historical source. More recently, however, scholars have recognized the potential of medieval hagiographies to reveal historical details, authorial assumptions, issues of gender, voice, and power, and more, when read with a trained eye.

Because medieval hagiographies most often include certain telling tropes, it is clear early on that they are constructed and part of a recognizable genre. Our teachers then prompt us to ask, how is this person being constructed as saintly, within the genre’s general conventions? What is saintly about them? Where do the conventions slip? Does the author tell us where he (usually he) gets this information? What is his relationship to the saintly person? Does he talk about his method? What kinds of information would he need to include because everyone in town would know about it – for example, that someone mishandled the family fortune or was publicly chastised as too chatty – even if it makes the saintly portrait awkward? What information is missing, and is its absence explained or just glossed over? What gets repeated? Who is the intended audience, and to what intended ends?

Such questions are also useful in analyzing post-medieval biographies, especially those that tune us into textual silences. Around 1722, the Sulpician priest François Vachon de Belmont wrote a spiritual biography or hagiography about Jeanne LeBer, a woman who adopted a form of religious seclusion, voluntarily and permanently enclosed in a dwelling attached to a church in Ville-Marie, the French colony that would become today’s Montréal. By embracing this life, LeBer followed an ancient Christian tradition but went against social expectations to marry and reproduce, or to engage in the social reproduction of hospital and teaching work of the colony’s established female religious groups.

When Belmont wrote her life story as part of a report to be sent back to France, he had some rhetorical work to do. Like in a medieval hagiography, Belmont claimed that LeBer was already holy as a child and had rejected worldly finery as a sign of devotion, fitting for someone who would quit the secular world as part of her later religious life. Like a responsible historian of his time, though, he stated that he would not speculate about LeBer’s thoughts or inner world but would rely on concrete, observable evidence. He collected different kinds of sources and sometimes inserts them directly into the text, like the rules for conduct given by her spiritual director, including a “Rule of Silence” outlining, rather than silence, the people she was obliged to speak to if they visited (the bishop, her father).

This text is rich in information about how LeBer lived as a recluse in colonial North America, but there are also important silences. One chapter ends by stating LeBer’s desire to undertake a religious life rather than continue to entertain suitors on the marriage market, and the next chapter begins with a description of the religious life she lived in her natal home. The jump between chapters occludes a host of potential stories, not least of all her parents’ reactions, deciding upon the logistics of her domestic religious life, and finding a priest to act as spiritual director. Was this information not included because it was awkward to his portrait of LeBer, or because Belmont simply did not know?

Any biography, like any hagiography, is a portrait of its subject from a particular standpoint and taken at a particular moment, making it an important witness to the historical moment of the subject’s life and of the author’s writing, as well as to the contingency of historiography on the epistemic propositions of its sources. When hagiographies, and biographies, present certain arguments about their subjects, they minimize or omit other, perhaps more complex or incendiary aspects of those people’s lives. Even the most apparently flawless portraits will reveal complexities and silences once we scratch the surface. The sensitivity to gaps, variations on tropes, and stated or unstated sources of information that regularly reading hagiographies force a scholarly reader to develop are useful for the historical study of any text or period.

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“Hitlerism” and the Limits of Biography

In contemporary debates about the uses and limits of biography in historical writing, one persistent challenge remains largely underexamined: the reductive power of personalizing history through a single, dominant figure. Nowhere is this more evident than in the continued centrality of Adolf Hitler in German collective memory, public discourse, and educational practice. While biography as a genre offers powerful tools to humanize the past, illuminate agency, and expose ideological undercurrents, it also carries the risk of oversimplifying complex historical processes—especially when it falls into the narrative logic of the so-called Great Man theory of history, which attributes historical change to the will and character of exceptional individuals.

The phenomenon often referred to as “Hitlerism”—the discursive elevation of Hitler to a near-omnipotent explanatory figure—illustrates precisely how biography, when deployed uncritically, can obscure more than it reveals. This tendency to reduce the National Socialist regime to the will and actions of a single man is not a historical coincidence, but a culturally and pedagogically embedded narrative structure. It operates as a form of guilt displacement, whereby responsibility for the crimes of the entire country is projected onto Hitler alone, leaving the broader society in a curiously passive role. The seductive power attributed to Hitler—his supposed charisma, ideological conviction, or hypnotic control—serves to absolve the millions who followed, supported, or silently accepted his policies. Entire generations in Germany have grown up with family narratives that present grandparents as either ignorant, resistant, or themselves seduced, while the broader machinery of complicity disappears into the shadow cast by one man’s biography.

In this way, Hitler becomes not only a historical figure but also a mythic one—an embodiment of the Great Man theory in its most extreme form. He is cast as the singular agent of an otherwise inexplicable catastrophe, whose unique evil eclipses the systemic nature of the regime he led. Such mythologization lends itself to a narrative closure that feels morally satisfying but historically simply false. This mythologization aligns, in troubling ways, with the very worldview that National Socialism itself promoted: history as the story of great men, of racial hierarchies, of heroism and betrayal. It raises the uncomfortable question of whether contemporary memory practices, even in their efforts to condemn Hitler, inadvertently reproduce some of the ideological logics of the regime they seek to expose.

These dynamics are especially visible in the context of Holocaust education. Studies of classroom interactions in Germany reveal how students frequently attribute the Holocaust to Hitler’s per-

sonal hatred of Jews, echoing phrases such as “he gassed” or “he burned” Jews, as though the machinery of genocide were the expression of individual aversion rather than a bureaucratically orchestrated, socially embedded process involving thousands of willing participants. The personalization of atrocity, while perhaps emotionally accessible, flattens the historical record. It constructs a false symmetry in which Hitler and “the Jews” become antagonistic counterparts, reenacting the dichotomies of Nazi ideology rather than dismantling them.

Even at the primary school level, German children absorb this simplified version of history. Hitler is imagined as a totalitarian mastermind who manipulated a reluctant population, often imagined as secretly opposed to him or even plotting his assassination. Within this narrative, refusal seems unimaginable, resistance universal, and moral clarity assured. The war ends when Hitler dies; guilt ends with him. Such interpretations are not merely historically inaccurate—they are pedagogically dangerous. They foster empathy for abstract moral lessons while neglecting the structural and social conditions that made genocide possible.

Responding to students’ curiosity about Hitler—without reproducing a cult of personality—can serve as an entry point into deeper historical inquiry. A differentiated, critically guided engagement with Hitler’s biography may help open up broader discussions about structures of power, ideological manipulation, and the social mechanisms of exclusion and persecution.

One reason for the persistence of this pattern lies in the shift from communicative to cultural memory. As living witnesses disappear, the Holocaust becomes a distant historical event, mediated largely through film, literature, and educational materials.

Research in Germany shows that although many students express only limited interest in history in general, there is a significantly higher interest in topics related to National Socialism—and particularly in the figure of Adolf Hitler. This raises a paradox. On the one hand, the overemphasis on Hitler risks

reinforcing a personalized and mythologized account of the Holocaust. On the other hand, this very interest may offer a didactic opportunity. Responding to students' curiosity about Hitler—without reproducing a cult of personality—can serve as an entry point into deeper historical inquiry. A differentiated, critically guided engagement with Hitler's biography may help open up broader discussions about structures of power, ideological manipulation, and the social mechanisms of exclusion and persecution.

To sustain students' attention and foster meaningful learning, it is not sufficient to condemn past atrocities in abstract moral terms. Students must be helped to understand not only Hitler—if this is possible at all—but also the changing historical functions of hatred of Jews in different contexts. Only then can the Holocaust be understood not as a singular eruption of evil, but as a consequence of longer-term developments and recurring patterns of exclusion, hate, and dehumanization.

Who Killed the Official Biography of Mackenzie King?

In his foreword to Raymond Blake's *Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity* (2024), John English observes, "historians in recent decades have published surprisingly little about Canada's prime ministers. The official biography of Mackenzie King was never completed..." Thereon hangs a tale.

Three volumes of the official biography were published between 1958 and 1976, but at least one more was required to cover the Second World War, the 1945 election, post-war reconstruction and King's retirement as leader of the Liberal Party and prime minister in 1948. Nor is the official biography the only unfinished major study of Mackenzie King. In 1955 H.S. Ferns and Bernard Ostry published the first volume of a projected three-volume life, *The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of the Leader* covered the years 1874 through 1919. Alas, no further volumes in the trilogy appeared.

The official biography was not authorized by King himself. Instead it was a project of his four literary executors, and it arose in response to King's failure to make any substantive progress

What is needed, is a different kind of biographical thinking: one that resists the allure of singular explanations and insists on embedding personal stories within the broader structures of power, ideology, and social participation. Rather than using Hitler to explain the Holocaust, educators and historians must ask how millions came to see his ideas as plausible, even necessary. The question is not what Hitler believed or intended, but why so many others acted in accordance with his vision. Biography, when critically employed, can help illuminate these questions—but only if it refuses to stand alone.

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with his planned four-volume memoirs. In April 1949 it was announced that the Rockefeller Foundation had granted \$100,000 to McGill University to enable King over the next three years to employ assistants to help with organizing his archive and preparing his memoirs for publication. Without the Rockefeller Foundation grant there would have been no official biography. After King's death in July 1950 the literary executors applied to the

Photo : William Lyon Mackenzie King avec son chien « Pat I », 1940. Photographie : Yousuf Karsh, Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, PA-174058. | William Lyon Mackenzie King with his dog, "Pat I," 1940. Photographer: Yousuf Karsh. Library and Archives Canada, PA-174058.

foundation to have the grant moneys reassigned to them in order to fund the writing of an authorized biography. The foundation agreed. Such was the genesis of the official biography project.

Robert MacGregor Dawson, professor of political economy at the University of Toronto, whom King's literary executors appointed official biographer in February 1951, signed the preface to the first volume of the official biography in May 1958. Two months later he was dead, not having lived long enough to see the publication of *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography 1874-1923*, which took place in November. King's literary executors lost no time finding a replacement. The following day it was announced that historian Blair Neatby, Dawson's principal assistant, had been appointed official biographer in succession to Dawson. The University of British Columbia granted Neatby a three-year leave of absence to carry on the work. Over a period of eighteen years, 1958-76, Neatby wrote two volumes, taking King's life to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Despite the passage of nearly half a century since the last volume in the series appeared, it is not too late to resume and complete the official biography. It would be an appropriate way of commemorating King's sesquicentenary, which occurred in December 2024.

Volume two was published in October 1963, shortly before Neatby's move from UBC to Carleton University. Subtitled *The Lonely Heights* and covering 1924 through 1932, it was still a work in progress when literary executor J. W. Pickersgill published the first of a four-volume series: *The Mackenzie King Record*, a dense thematic chronicle comprising an abridgement, with running commentary, of King's diary, 1939 through 1948. The original purpose was to provide a sourcebook which would complement the final volume of the official biography. In the end, however, *TMKR* would be a convenient excuse for not proceeding with the final volume at all.

Neatby's *The Prism of Unity* (1976), the third volume of the official biography and the last to appear, covers 1932 through 1939. It concludes with an epilogue which tends to imply that Volume Three would be the last. Neatby went on to contribute the introductory essay in the centenary volume of historical papers,

Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate (1977), but any reference to the official biography, perhaps in view of its recent demise, is conspicuous by its absence. In "Mackenzie King and the Historians," Neatby quotes the official biography without identifying Dawson or himself as successive official biographers. By a striking coincidence, among the other contributors to the volume was Pickersgill, who would have had a major say in the cancellation of the official biography.

The dust jacket to *The Prism of Unity* asserts the preposterous fiction that it "brings to completion the outstanding biography of a consummate politician." How the official biography could have been deemed complete when King remained prime minister for nine more years and lived nearly two beyond that beggars belief. Since 1976 no effort has been made to revive the dormant official biography. The University of Toronto Press, which published all three volumes, appears to be uninterested in such an undertaking.

We know *what* happened to the official biography, but not *why*. George Henderson's definitive *W.L. Mackenzie King: A Bibliography and Research Guide* is unhelpful: "It was decided that the official biography would end with the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939" (p. 330). Perhaps the Rockefeller Foundation moneys had just run out. Despite the passage of nearly half a century since the last volume in the series appeared, it is not too late to resume and complete the official biography. It would be an appropriate way of commemorating King's sesquicentenary, which occurred in December 2024.

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Reluctant Subjects: Writing Women's Life Stories

Canadian historians may have been viewing biographical writing as a mode of understanding the complexity of the past ambivalently since the 1970s but, if so, they have been woefully out of step with the insatiable desire for biographies among the general public, as witnessed by the huge biographical sections in bookstores and seemingly endless Wikipedia entries on individuals. In a recent article, Franziska Martini estimated that 30 percent of all entries on the highly frequented German-language Wikipedia were biographies; nearly five times more often these were about men than about women. This gendered Wikipedia bias was brought home to Canadians in 2018 when they learned that the co-winner of the Nobel prize in physics, Donna Strickland, did not have her own page and it transpired that an attempt to create one was denied by the platform's moderator who did not deem the physicist worthy of an entry.

Biographies of key women continue to be absent from the historical record, especially of women who have achieved hard won success in the fields of politics and science. Viewing the past through the lenses of their lives is not just to be desired but essential, not least because acknowledging the stories of their agency and how they negotiated the broader, mostly hostile, structures of their working lives, will provide a much-needed counterbalance to the dominant national narrative centred primarily on the Great White Man figure.

But how do you write a biography of a great woman who according to her daughter always refused when asked whether people could write her life story, explaining that “they could not possibly understand what she had gone through”? How do you do justice to a life that spanned more than 94 years and crossed the Atlantic, which was lived during the many crises and revolutionary developments throughout the twentieth century and lived by an extraordinary woman who was many things and as she herself admiringly wrote of a colleague “was all of these [...] at the same time.” With humility for a start!

Even though a Wikipedia page exists for her in both English and German, Professor Ursula M. Franklin, physicist, metallurgist, activist, pacifist, feminist, humanitarian (among the many “labels” that can serve to describe parts of her full, active and engaged life), is far less well known than she should be beyond her hometown Toronto, where a street and a school are named



Ursula Franklin at the Ontario Research Foundation in 1953. Image courtesy of Monica Franklin.

after her. She left behind an extensive archive of personal and public documents and photographs, which she gifted to the University of Toronto, and which has been well mined by different researchers for a variety of purposes, but none have looked at the material with a view to understanding the woman herself.

Born in Germany in 1921 to a Jewish mother and Protestant father, Ursula Franklin was forced to abandon her scientific studies at Berlin University during the Second World War, survived a Nazi labour camp, completed her PhD in Experimental Physics after the war in Berlin while working as a research assistant at the prestigious Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physical Chemistry and Electrochemistry (later part of the Max Planck Society), emigrated to Canada in 1949, became a professor in the Department of Metallurgy and Materials Science in 1967 and the first female University Professor at the University of Toronto in 1984, led the 1960s Voice of Women baby teeth collection program amongst many other activist initiatives in the following decades, chaired the Science Council of Canada's Committee on Canada as a Conserver Society and its famous 1977 report, and wrote and spoke (1989 Massey Lectures, recently revisited in a CBC Ideas episode) on society and technology. Ursula Franklin lived a remarkable life and there is so much more to mention. We could not agree more with her own sense that it would be next to impossible to understand what she went through.

Undaunted (to borrow from the title of the illustrated biography written by her daughter in 2024, and aimed at children aged 9-12), and in the knowledge that we will only be able to capture a fraction of her life, a fraction which will be guided, as all biographies are, both by our own interests and by our own shortcomings, we think the task an important one. This is a woman who deserves to be better known, and her courageous story of navigating life in a new country and fairly hostile work environments will certainly complicate the traditional historical narrative we are fed about progressive and prosperous Canada after 1945.

We acknowledge ... that lives are inherently messy, that no biography can capture anyone fully, that the very act of our composition is also addressing the broader issue of erasure of women across time from the historical record, and above all that the task of writing a feminist biography is fundamentally collaborative, cooperative and non-competitive on multiple levels.

Our prime methodological framework will be that of feminist biography. We acknowledge from the beginning the unavoidable presence of the biographer in every choice made about the material to include, that lives are inherently messy, that no biography can capture anyone fully, that the very act of our composition is also addressing the broader issue of erasure of women across time from the historical record, and above all that the task of writing a feminist biography is fundamentally collaborative, cooperative and non-competitive on multiple levels. These last three points in particular also seem to us to be at the heart of how Ursula Franklin lived her life. Our research collaboration combines complementary disciplinary strengths of studying life stories and an abiding interest in creative and experimental ways of trying to capture the essence of a life. On a more personal level, like Ursula Franklin, we have led transnational lives, living and working as academics, as Ursula Franklin did, in both Europe and Canada. Like the new generation of female biographers who in their focus on women's life stories have inserted themselves more visibly into the writing process, we also aim to make the writing of Ursula Franklin's life more transparent.

In addition, we include insights from Translation Theory into our study of Ursula Franklin's life story, not just literally (not

least since the archives contain both German and English material), but also figuratively as a methodological framework. We are committed to being open to experimental ways of writing lives (see, for example, Nina Rattner Gelbart's inspiring device of writing letters to her Enlightenment era subjects to insert a deeper personal connection to the process, or the many ways that digital humanities tools help to visualize and map out transnational and networked life stories) and to not shying away from inserting ourselves positionally. We cannot hope to capture the truth of Ursula Franklin's life but then our aim is not about finding the truth in a life, but *how to look for* truths, and how to honour and give voice to an extraordinary person whose long life intersected with major historical developments in the twentieth century and encompassed migrating across the Atlantic Ocean.

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Excerpt from Karen Dubinsky, *Strangely, Friends, A History of Cuban-Canadian Encounters*

Preface

This book is a collective biography of Canadians who have been drawn to Cuba—teachers, artists, development aid workers and activists, and Cubans, especially the musicians, who found a home in Canada. These relationships transcended political ideologies and state policies. From the classrooms of Havana to the jazz clubs of Toronto, this book, based on interviews with 150 Cubans and Canadians, captures the bonds forged through mutual curiosity and offers a fresh perspective on cultural diplomacy and people-to-people connections.

Excerpt: Harry Tanner's Legacy

Among the remarkable personalities I've encountered in this research, Harry Tanner stands out. I met Harry towards the end of his life, and he let me record hours of conversations. His life story was like hearing a radio serial. His life illustrates the meaninglessness and significance of national boundaries in human relations.

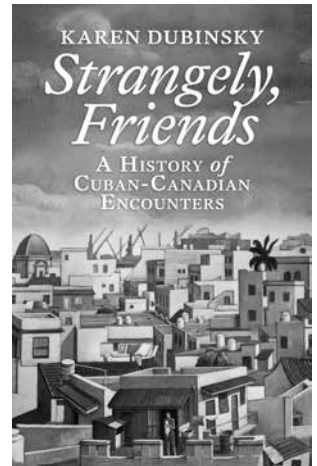


Photo credit: May Ann Kainola

Harry Tanner was born to Charles and Dorothy Tanner in 1934 in Manzanillo, Cuba. His Canadian father worked for the Bank of Nova Scotia in Cuba. Harry's mother was from Indiana. Manzanillo was, as Harry described it, a sugar plantation company town, "a place of misery and riches." The labour force was a mix of Cubans and Spaniards. He remembered the grandeur of the mill owner's house. "They made a fortune," he recalled; "they were Spanish [*said in a high mocking voice*]. We were just [*low voice*] Canadians."

The family moved to Havana in 1944 and enjoyed the comfortable life of the North American upper class of pre-revolutionary Cuba. "You could live here and not even know Cuba existed," Harry later recalled. But even a foreign banker's son realized that these were dangerous times. "We all knew that Batista was a killer," Harry recalled. Harry became politically involved. "Not much, because I was Canadian, not Cuban, and nobody took me seriously. But I felt the same things the Cubans were feeling. I saw the misery, the corruption, the oppression, the bodies on the street." Decades later, Harry asked himself why he'd stayed after the revolution. "Why was I sympathetic to the revolution when others weren't?" He evoked these memories of pre-revolutionary Havana, and concluded, "Perhaps I stayed because I knew things my father never wanted to know."

On New Year's Day, 1959, Harry watched President Batista's plane depart. A week later, he leaned over the balcony of his girlfriend's apartment and photographed the revolutionaries rolling into Cuba as in Harry's life.



Book cover: photo of Harry Tanner painting by Camille Neiryneck-Guerrero

As revolutionary Cuba occupied itself creating art schools, literacy campaigns, and film institutes, Harry started frequenting the newly opened offices of the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos, (ICAIC). One of Harry's jobs was to source cameras, dollies, lights, and animation tables, helping to establish the first ICAIC studio.

Harry's own film output was prodigious. From 1959 to 1970—when he pursued another career in painting—Harry worked on seventeen documentaries and six feature films. He worked with many of the most important filmmakers from the creative cauldron that was ICAIC in the 1960s. He was also thrilled to work with Soviet filmmaker Mikhail Kalatozov, becoming, in his words, "assistant to the assistant to the assistant," when Kalatozov came to Cuba to film the legendary *Soy Cuba* in 1963.

Harry also made films about a comic character, *Pepe Trinchera* (Pepe Trench). Pepe was a cartoon that illustrated a serious issue, the Cuban government's call for trench building as a form of civil defence. This was basically a Cuban version of the "duck and cover" films in 1950s North America, with the enemies reversed. Instead of the Russians, Cubans worried about the Americans. Harry worked on this alongside Australian Harry Reade and famed Cuban animator Juan Padrón. For all the discord that Harry Tanner experienced as a First World foreigner in a revolutionary state film institution, it bears noting that two foreigners made a Cuban civil defence film.

Harry lived his first fifty years in Cuba and the last thirty in Canada and was culturally fluent in both countries. Yet at times, nei-

ther country knew exactly what to make of him. During the last interview I had with him before his death in 2019, I told Harry that I was going present his story at a conference at Humber College. He said, "Great, maybe you all can figure out whether I'm Cuban or Canadian."

The banker's son who grew up in Cuba because of the expansion of Canadian finance capital in the Caribbean. The young man who came of age during the Cuban Revolution that politicized a generation of young rebels, everywhere. He embodied Cuban and Canadian histories but above all, Harry was an artist who lived a rich artistic life—in two art forms, no less—in Havana at the centre a vibrant cultural and political moment.

Karen Dubinsky is Emeritus Professor in the departments of Global Development Studies and History at Queen's University.

On Contemplating Canadian Independence

This summer, as Donald Trump bombed the world into a third theatre of international conflict, I paused to consider an earlier chapter of Canada's periodically fraught history of relations with the United States. The details of the conflicts change; the patterns remain. How is Canada to advocate for a morally and politically independent geopolitical position when it remains so economically wedded to the U.S?

In June 1960, writer and environmentalist Farley Mowat began dispatching letters across and beyond the country to individuals he hoped to persuade to join a "Committee for Canadian Independence." These would follow the example of the "Palgrave Committee" of twelve that he had founded the previous month in the small community north of Toronto bearing the same name. Mowat sent one invitation to Bertrand Russell, and another to my grandfather, Stuart Jaffary, a professor of social work at the University of Toronto. I came across Mowat's letter to Stuart in mid-June when I sat for a week reading the archive of Stuart's papers housed in the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library. This was just as President Trump was apparently finalizing his decision to pound Iran's Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan nuclear facilities with over a dozen "bunker buster" bombs. An archivist had filed Mowat's letter within a folder entitled "Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament." Inside the file were other prescient records: position papers by the University's Committee on Nuclear Disarmament, pamphlets from the Canadian Disarmament Bulletin, newspaper clippings, and correspondence.

Farley Mowat's Palgrave Committee sought like-minded activists. According to the Palgrave pamphlet Mowat forwarded to

Stuart with his letter, its members were convinced that Canadians "were being deliberately blinded to the actual reality of the 'mutual air-defence' arrangements between Canada and the United States – arrangements which, in the words of American military authorities, conceived of Canada as a 'killing ground' over which nuclear missiles and bombers would be destroyed before they could penetrate United States territory." The Palgrave group urged local leaders to form groups aimed at securing Canada's withdrawal from the North American Air Defense organization, NORAD, the "repudiation of all treaties and agreements... which deprive Canada of the power of decision in the event of war," and "disassociation from NATO." Mowat confessed in his personal letter that "we are not actually as rabid as this piece of material might lead you to believe." But I think he was downplaying his position. Mowat was likely just as rabid as the Palgrave Committee founding document suggested, if not more so. This is indicated in his satirical *Maclean's Magazine* essay of 1959, "Let's apply for admission as the 51st state," (*Maclean's Magazine*, June 6, 1959).

As the Cold War grew hotter, Mowat, like others of his generation, grew increasingly incensed about the implications of Canada's close alliance to the United States. Mowat was provoked into forming his Palgrave group after reading *Peacemaker or Powder-Monkey: Canada's Role in a Revolutionary World* (1960) written by CBC journalist James M. Minifie. (This in itself points to a significant difference between my grandfather's era and ours; today a 280-character X post rather than a 174-page book would be more likely to incite a political movement.) In this work, Minifie advocated that Canada must publish a dec-

laration of neutrality to identify its political independence from the United States to international audiences.

It sounds dandy: Take the third way (although Salvador Allende attempted this in 1970 and look at what happened to him). But is the “Third Way” the tightrope between condemnation and support, (veering heavily toward support) that Mark Carney articulated when, following the Iran bombing, he declared on X that the “U.S. military action taken last night was designed to alleviate” the threat of Iran’s nuclear proliferation, but also that “Stability in the region is a priority”? This doesn’t sound like Canada is stepping significantly beyond the shadow of its big brother.

Preserved in the “Nuclear Disarmament” file in the Stuart Jaffary collection is an article by Frank Underhill that my grandfather had clipped and saved. “This Business of being Canadian,” was published in *The Globe and Mail* on 21 February 1961. Underhill, then a professor of history at Carleton, had earlier been the principal author of the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF’s) Reginal Manifesto of 1933. But Underhill was no socialist. In his 1961 piece, he underlined the conflicted position in which the country’s forever position within the US sphere of influence placed Canada. One of his central points remains

relevant: Canadians pride themselves on demonstrating to Europe, Asia, and Africa (Underhill did not deign to include Latin America) that they “were the original anti-Americans” (Loyalist settlers in Upper Canada, anyone?). However, Canada remained economically embedded within the US: “We do not merely save ourselves from the United States about once every 20 or 30 years, but at the same time we use U.S. investments to build ourselves up into the second most affluent society in the modern world.” Underhill’s statistics do not apply to 2025, when, according to *Forbes India*, the US squeaks into tenth place internationally for GDP per capita (Singapore and Luxembourg rank 1 and 2 respectively, and Canada does not place on the list). But the dilemma his piece evokes is still relevant: How is Canada in any position to claim distance from a belligerent, an unthoughtful US foreign policy, when it remains so deeply enmeshed, current tariff “wars” notwithstanding, with its most important economic partner?

Nora Jaffary teaches in the history department at Concordia University. She is a historian of colonial and nineteenth-century Mexico who is contemplating pursuing further research on her grandfather, sociologist Stuart Jaffary, an advocate for penal and social reform in Canada.

Setting the Record Straight: Colonialism, Biographies & History’s Accountability to the Enslaved

In her monograph *Dispossessed Lives*, historian Marisa J. Fuentes argues that “non-moments” in history emerge from events so routine that they leave only faint archival traces. The pervasiveness of racism itself, which rendered Black lives both unremarkable and disposable, often obscures the fact that early Canada was a site of bondage and racial exploitation. White prosperity, through landholding, enterprise, and institutions, was built, in part, on the backs of enslaved Black labour. Canadian biography as a genre enshrines enslavers while erasing the enslaved; only by juxtaposing slaveholders and their enslaved people can we see the structural violence of early Canada.

Consider the case of Major John Ward. Originally from Westchester County, New York, Ward served as a soldier in the Loyal American Regiment during the American Revolutionary War, before resettling in Parrrtown (now Saint John), New Brunswick. His entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (and refer-

enced articles) remembers him as a “Saint John pioneer” in the West India Trade, which “brought so much prosperity to the city.”

Absent from these accounts, however, is the fact that the West India Trade, the single factor which had brought “so much prosperity” to Ward and his family, inevitably, linked their fortune to the institution of slavery. Northeastern North America furnished West Indian plantations with hardwoods and salt fish, while West Indian plantations supplied the Northeast with valuable commodities like molasses, rum, and sugar. Naturally, this system sustained itself via the exploitation of enslaved Black labour. Sarah Chute describes the relationship best:

Every spoonful of sugar, drop of molasses, and sip of rum that colonists consumed linked the Maritimes inextricably to West Indian slave labour, just as Mar-

itime-shingled houses sheltered slaveholders and Atlantic cod fed enslaved people.

Yet, Ward was not content to benefit solely from the excesses of slavery. He also owned an enslaved Black person named Toney, whose entire life survives as a single sentence in Thomas Watson Smith's seminal work, *The Slave in Canada*:

and in May, 1789, Abraham Treadell, of St. John, surveyor, sold to John Ward, merchant, of the same place, "his heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns forever[,]" Toney, a negro boy, for twenty-five pounds.

There is no footnote nor archival reference to confirm or elaborate his life beyond that fleeting mention. Toney appears, and just as quickly, he vanishes.

Much remains unknown about Toney, and this uncertainty is itself part of the violence of enslavement. The bill of sale tells us almost nothing beyond the fact of his commodification: he is a "negro boy" valued at twenty-five pounds. This fragment raises many questions. How old was he? Did "boy" signify his youth, or was it a racial diminutive that stripped him of adult personhood? Was he separated from the rest of his family in Saint John, or was he brought with Abraham Treadell from elsewhere in the Atlantic world? Did Ward purchase him for domestic service, for labour in his milling and shipping ventures, or as a disposable asset to be sold into the West Indies?

Whatever the case may be, Toney's life was undoubtedly folded into Major Ward's prosperity. His story, compressed into a single transaction, reveals how Loyalist wealth in the Maritimes was not only entangled with the abstract West India trade but with the very real lives of enslaved Black people.

Ward was certainly not the only Canadian slaveholder whose biography remains unsullied. Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Sir John Wentworth is frequently remembered for his erratic treatment of the Jamaican Maroons, but lesser known are the 19 enslaved people whom he disposed of to Suriname in 1784. Likewise, James McGill, founder of McGill University, counted six enslaved Black persons as part of his personal holdings. Slavery was not peripheral but embedded in the social and political fabric of colonial Canada.

The public reputation of Major Ward demonstrates this normalization. His obituary described him as a man who "led an unblemished life" and departed with "the highest esteem and most profound respect of the community." That a slaveholder could be remembered as of "amiable disposition" reveals how deeply enslavement was accepted, if not actively erased, within colonial society. Ward's reputation for integrity was not seen as incompatible, or better yet, as antithetical, with and to human bond-

age. The obituary thus serves as a window into a moral landscape where the exploitation of the enslaved was ubiquitous, set against the intentional erasure of Black presence and self-assertion.

The nature of sources like biographies and eulogies, as well as their construction, is not incidental. Rather, they mirror the very structure of the archive, which was designed to preserve the voices of enslavers. As Stephanie Hunt-Kennedy notes, it is difficult for us to actively engage an archive that is "very much tied to imperialism and colonial violence," reducing enslaved lives to fragments like bills of sale, runaway ads, and probate inventories.

Against this silence, Harvey Amani Whitfield recovers the lives of over 1,000 enslaved people in his *Biographical Dictionary of Enslaved Black People in the Maritimes*. Despite this, the project better reveals the limits of the archive. Nearly 300 people are listed as "Name Unrecorded," while Whitfield concedes that the dictionary "might well raise more questions than [it answers]," including the actual number of enslaved people in the region. The scarcity of records means that the names of many remain unaccounted for, subsumed under the biographies of their owners.

In colonial Canada, the act of writing biographies was a product of and became a tool of erasure, celebrating enslavers while muting the enslaved. The lives of Major John Ward and Toney reveal the imbalance at the heart of Canadian national historic memory. Ward's name survives in obituaries and local histories that praise his "unblemished life," while Toney appears only once, in a £25 bill of sale, before disappearing into oblivion. Only through a critical revision of these narratives can we disrupt the cycle of colonial violence and reckon with the truth.

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A Child of Sisyphus: The Hagiography of B.J. Spencer Pitt

Biography is an old tradition in Black Canada. Traditions tend to recycle familiar tropes and challenges—and in the case of history as biography, the scarcity or nature of sources surrounding an individual's life can make it difficult to distinguish biography from hagiography. Such is true of the oral histories of the “brilliant” and “handsome” B.J. Spencer Pitt.

The fifth Black lawyer called to the Ontario Bar in 1928, Bertrand Joseph Spencer Pitt was a fixture of Toronto's interwar Black community, celebrated for his eloquence and generosity. Born in Grenada in 1892 to a prosperous mercantile family, Pitt immigrated to Canada in 1926 to study law. As an exception to Canada's then overtly anti-Black immigration policy, he nevertheless encountered the coldness of the Canadian racial state. After graduating from Dalhousie University, Pitt's legal practice was initially restricted to Nova Scotia. It was not until 1928—after petitioning the Law Society of Upper Canada and paying \$750 in fees (roughly \$14,209.47 CAD today)—that he was sworn in as a member of the Ontario Bar. Pitt's unique circumstances—entering Canada before federal immigration policy reform, working as Toronto's only Black lawyer, founding and serving as president of Toronto's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) chapter for approximately two decades, the dearth of archival and public information about his life, and the abundance of oral histories affirming his significance to Toronto's interwar and postwar Black community—underscore both the central role he played in shaping the city's Black community and the systemic erasure of Black histories within Canadian historiography.

As the only Black lawyer in Toronto for some time, Pitt represented and assisted many Black Torontonians in a range of criminal and civil matters—often free of charge. A criminal lawyer specializing in *habeas corpus* proceedings, he was known for his aggressive cross-examinations and unapologetic oratory. Echoing “Old Cicero,” Pitt was willing to speak to white professionals without obsequiousness or affectation. His readiness to express contempt toward and speak plainly to white professionals earned him the admiration of Toronto's Black community. Other leaders in the community—those serving as executives of associations and credit unions—were often reluctant to risk their employment or economic standing by confronting racial injustice directly. Pitt, however, embraced this risk as his legal work frequently brought him into contact with state-sanctioned racial violence. Pitt regularly spoke about racism—then discussed using the language of “fair practices”—at the UNIA Hall

and helped devise strategies for responding to everyday racial prejudice. To strengthen his community's capacity to resist such injustice, Pitt used the UNIA to foster transnational connections across the Black diaspora. He was also heavily involved in Black community life and recreation (see Figure 1). Throughout his involvement with the UNIA, he was known for planning the iconic annual Big Picnic in Port Dalhousie and repairing to the community center at 355 College Street with funds from his own pocket.

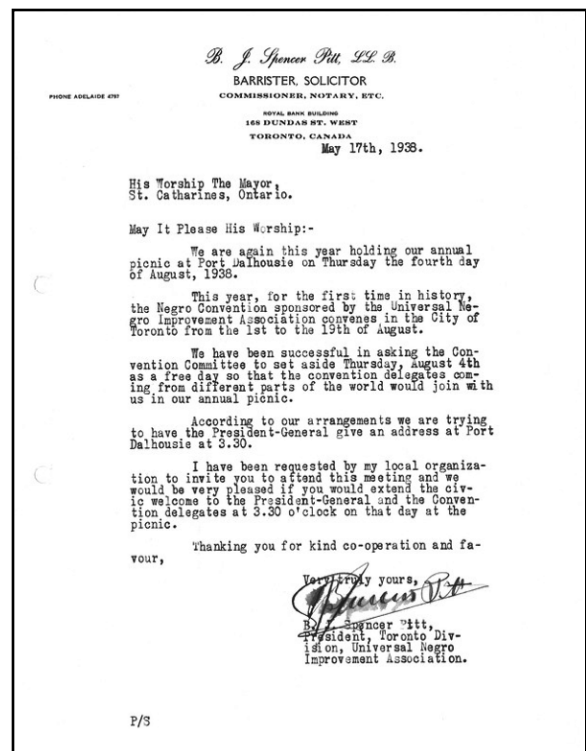


Figure 1: Correspondence from B.J. Spencer-Pitt to the Mayor of St. Catharines, B.J. Spencer Pitt, Archives & Special Collections, Brock University Library, 1938.

Admired by Black elders and youth alike, Pitt mentored a generation of young Black activists and lawyers who later challenged Canada's domestic and international relations with the Black diaspora and catalyzed radical social change in the postwar decades. Trailblazing lawyers such as Myrtle Smith—the first Black woman to become a lawyer in Ontario—articled with him. Bromley Armstrong, a relentless leader of Toronto's Black Liberation Movement, considered Pitt a father figure. As Lloyd Perry attested, Pitt worked hard “to raise the morale of West In-

dians who had a poor self-image in those days.” The frequency with which Pitt’s name is mentioned in oral histories of Black Toronto, coupled with the encomiums offered by Harry Gairey, Bromley Armstrong, and Lloyd Perry gives his legacy a near-saintly quality. Yet while his significance to the development of twentieth-century Black community and institutions in Toronto is indisputable, his reputation remains contested.

Pitt’s unique circumstances—entering Canada before federal immigration policy reform, working as Toronto’s only Black lawyer, founding and serving as president of Toronto’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) chapter for approximately two decades, the dearth of archival and public information about his life, and the abundance of oral histories affirming his significance to Toronto’s interwar and postwar Black community—underscore both the central role he played in shaping the city’s Black community and the systemic erasure of Black histories within Canadian historiography.

Pitt’s involvement in a paternity suit and the perceptions surrounding his ignominious departure from Toronto during the crucial period of Black lobbying for immigration reform in 1954 have contributed to a deafening historiographical silence about his contributions. The oral history archive alludes to Pitt’s declining mental health. The pressures of leadership and the risks inherent in his work likely inevitably strained his mental state—for instance, while interviewing a client in jail, a racist police officer seized Pitt by the throat and threw him from the room. Both Harry Gairey and Bromley Armstrong appeared to feign ignorance while cautiously answering questions concerning Pitt’s health and ultimate fate. In an interview, Lloyd Perry suggested that Pitt’s declining health stemmed from a brain tumor that impaired his memory and speech. Unable to continue practicing law, Pitt’s wife, an American, took him to the United States and placed him in a home for the mentally ill. He later died on 18 June 1961, in Corona, New York.

Perry also recalled that following Pitt’s “intellectual deterioration,” members of Toronto’s Black community accused him of embezzling their money. In his later capacity as Official Guardian of Ontario, Perry investigated these allegations and found

them baseless. Such attempts to tarnish Pitt’s reputation reveal the frustrations underlying the hagiographical reminiscences of community leaders like Bromley Armstrong and Donald Willard Moore—leaders who often described their work as “thankless” while ironically failing to recall the name of Pitt’s wife, a child psychologist. Across these oral histories, the politics of masculine martyrdom continue to generate hagiographies of Black men that obscure the contributions and achievements of Black women.

As the achievements of mid-twentieth-century Black communities remain marginalized in Canadian historiography, the moment for a ‘biographical return’ separating man from myth is now. This does not necessarily entail, however, the rejection of all allegory. Reflecting on his role in Canada’s Black Liberation Movement, Bromley Armstrong remarked that in “continuously fighting an uphill battle, we counted ourselves among the children of Sisyphus.” B. J. Spencer Pitt was a child of Sisyphus—and despite the uphill battle, Sisyphus still smiled.

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Atropates – Achaemenid King Darius III's Mysterious General in the Battle of Guagamella

Atropates (370–321 BCE) was a Medes nobleman and satrap of Media and general who served Darius III (380–330 BCE) and Alexander of Macedon. He was a founder of the independent kingdom Media-Atropatene and the dynasty that was named after him. Atropates' descendants ruled the kingdom until the 2nd century CE. The kingdom was established in c. 323 BCE and was the only Iranian region to remain under Zoroastrian authority from the Achaemenids to the Muslim Arabs' conquest.

The early life of Atropates is unknown, but what is certain is that his parents were Zoroastrians. There is some evidence that he was a nobleman of Medes and possibly had very distant relation to the Achaemenid House. It is known that Cyrus the Great (590–529 BCE), who united the Iranian people of Medes and Persians and established a new Empire under his Achaemenid dynasty, was half Medes. His mother, Princess Mandane of Medes, was a daughter of the last powerful Median King Astyages (585–550 BCE).

General Atropates attracts historians' attention because a couple of hypotheses exist regarding the origins of the name Azerbaijan. According to the classic tradition, the name comes from the time of Alexander of Macedon's conquest of the Achaemenid Empire. Particularly, it presumably originates from general Atropates, who was a commander of troops dislocated in the Darius III's army's right wing in the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BCE.

Atropates, as satrap of Media, commanded Median, Arrānian, Sacasenian, Cadusian, and Arminian troops. Ilya Dyakonov indicated that Arrānians and Cadusians participated in the battle as the allies of Atropates, not of the Persians and, thus, he believed that Atropates' political influence lasted far to the north of Aras/Araxes River.

On the eve of Gaugamela battle, Atropates commanded the mounted reconnaissance squad that Darius III sent to reconnoiter the field. Intriguingly, during the battle, Atropates' units pushed Alexander of Macedon's army to stop the advance and implemented defensive measures. Only Alexander's personal

intervention with fresh troops allowed the Macedonians to stop their retreat and concentrate on a victorious advance in the center, facing troops under the direct command of Darius III. Indeed, it was a unique moment in the battle. The Macedonian left wing had begun to retreat and, if King Darius III realized and utilized it, the battle's outcome would have been completely different.

However, as is well known, Darius III's poor commanding and leadership skills resulted in the catastrophic defeat of the Achaemenids Army. When Darius III lost the battle, he fled to the Median capital of Ekbātān – Achaemenids' summer capital (present-day Hamadan, Iran). Atropates, as satrap of Media, met Darius III with a great respect and helped him get a new army.

One month after Darius III's death in June 330 BCE, Atropates surrendered to Alexander. Later, in a personal meeting, Alexander mentioned Atropates' military skills and esteemed him so highly that his daughter was married to Perdikkas, a close ally to Alexander and commander of the Macedonian cavalry. The marriage occurred at the famous mass wedding in Susa in February 324 BCE.

It is notable that Atropates traveled to Susa together with Alexander and offered 100 Amazons (Fig 2), as Greeks called beautiful female archers from Media and Arrān, for the Macedonian and Greek military elite. As Strabo mentioned, referring Theophanes of Mitylene who participated in Pompey's campaign in Caucasus in 65 BCE, Amazons lived in the Caucasian mountains above Albania: "In the mountains above Albania the Amazons are said to live."

In 324 BCE Atropates pacified unrest against the Greeks, and Alexander decided to keep him as a King of the land, which later became the independent (or semi-independent, vassal of Arsacid Parthia) kingdom of Atropatena with its capital at Ganzak/Gazaca. Atropates had a last interview with Alexander in Media in 324–323, who came to inspect the breeding of the ancient world-famous Nisaeen horses for the Macedonian army (Alexander's Bucephalus was a Nisaeen horse).

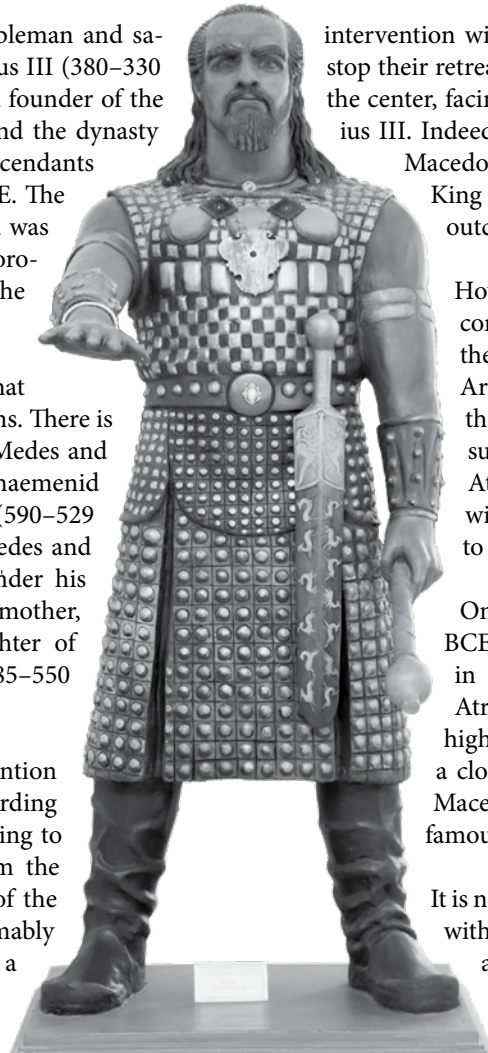


Fig 1. Sculpture/reconstruction of Atropates (Pahlavi: *Ātūrpat*), King of Media – Atropatena, National Military Museum, Baku, Azerbaijan



Fig 2. Greek fighting an Amazon. Detail from painted sarcophagus found in Italy, 350-325 BCE, available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Produzione_greca_o_magnogreca,_sarcofago_delle_amazzoni,_350-325_a.C._ca._da_tarquinia_05.JPG

Alexander acknowledged the geostrategic location of the Medes' Ecbatana for its approximately equal distance from Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. In Ecbatana, Alexander left a huge treasure of 180,000 talents as a special reserve garrisoned by a force of 6,000 Macedonians. By establishing the military base for Alexander's main army, Ecbatana became the most important military center of his empire. Ecbatana was the place where Bessus (Bactria's Viceroy and slaughterer of Darius III) was executed and his body was publicly exposed to the Macedonian soldiers.

After Alexander's death in June 323 BCE, Atropates did not participate in Alexander's satraps' and generals' meeting in Babylon. However, thanks to his diplomatic and political skills, he became one of only two non-Macedonians (along with Alexander's Bactrian father-in-law Oxyartes), who were listed as holding a satrapy of Media – Atropatene (Lesser Media) after the division of the empire between Alexander's successors.

Fig 3. King Atropates ((Ātūrpat) meets Alexander of Macedon, painting 1956, National Museum of History, Baku, Azerbaijan



Atropates was a strong follower of Zarathustra (Zoroaster) and his name was neither Median nor Persian but Zoroastrian. The name Ātūrpat originates from Avesta's word "Ātare-pāta", (keeper of the fire) and he was one of the sons of Zarathustra. The transcription of name Ātūrpat from Pahlavi (Middle Persian) could be "protected by fire".

It is known that Atropates enjoyed support from Zoroastrian priests or Magi/Maguses to minimize Greeks' impact on Zoroastrianism in Media-Atropatena. Indeed, the Achaemenids' favored Goddess Anāhītā's fire temple had been sacked and desecrated by Alexander of Macedon, who had burnt there the 12,000 ox-hides on which the original Avesta was written in golden lettering and which had been placed in the Fortress of Archives in the city of Istakhr in Pārs. However, Atropates was able to secure the fire temple of Ādur Gušnasp in Šiz (now Azar Gushnasp in Takht-e Soleyman, Iranian Azerbaijan), where the other copy of the Holy Avesta was preserved and copied on calf skins.

Later, under the order of Sasanian King Shāpūr I (240–272), the fire of Ādur Gušnasp (the last survived Great Fire of State) was classified as the empire's most sacred victorious warriors' class fire of the highest grade, holding the rank of "cathedral." The fire of Ādur Gušnasp, as Ataš Bahrām, was the most sacred or "cathedral" fire of the highest grade in Zoroastrianism, established in the late Achaemenid or Parthian era in Ādurbādagān in Media. Each new king, as Sasanian King Shāpūr I proclaimed, was obligated to make a pilgrimage after coronation to Ādur Gušnasp, providing royal gifts and celebrating Nowruz.

Finally, as one may assume, General Atropates (Āturpāt) occupies a significant place in the history of Azerbaijan and Iran. His name, possibly, is the key to understand the origin of the name Azerbaijan: a land of fire. Eventually, the Pahlavi name Ādurbādagān evolved into the Turkified form of Azarbaijan/Azerbaijan. This is where the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Iranian province of Azerbaijan get their name.

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CAPT. ALFRED C. HANNAFORD, M.C., of Montreal, who died of wounds received at Cambrai. He went overseas as a private with the 24th Battalion and was promoted to lieutenant and later to captain. He won the Military Cross in April 1917 for gallantry at Vimy Ridge. For gallantry at Cambrai he was awarded the bar to the Military Cross.

“I simply tried to carry out work allotted to me”: Captain Alfred Hannaford, MC and Bar

On 3 June 1918, Lieutenant Alfred Hannaford, MC, was serving in France as a platoon commander in A Company, 87th Canadian Infantry Battalion, when he, along with a fellow officer, captured gold in the three-legged race at the 11th Brigade sports day. The two young officers were also part of the victorious 87th Battalion 1,000-yard shuttle run team.

Alfred Hannaford was an athletic nineteen-year-old when he enlisted in Montreal for service with the 24th Battalion in January 1915. Likely a replacement for an earlier volunteer who had been found unfit for overseas service, Hannaford arrived on the Western Front in September 1915. Wounded in the left arm and face by shrapnel in the trenches around Ypres in May 1916, he spent more than a month recovering before returning to his unit. He was only with them for a matter of months before being commissioned from the ranks. Sent to join the 87th Battalion,

Photo credit: from the Canadian Virtual War Memorial. Link: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/178629>

another Montreal unit, he joined A Company in December 1916 and was given command of a platoon.

On 9 April 1917, when the Canadian Corps left their trenches to assault Vimy Ridge, Hannaford's objective was a section of the German front line not far from where the modern Vimy Memorial now stands on the highest point of the ridge. Although Hannaford's platoon, the second one out of the trenches on the battalion's left flank, successfully captured their objective, the rest of the 87th Battalion's assault was going badly. On the right, all of the officers of C Company became casualties within minutes of zero hour, victims of a German strong point that was now creating a gap in the Canadian advance.

As it became clear that the assault was not unfolding as planned, the soldiers of the 87th Battalion began to respond. In the centre, Sergeant Harry Wilford of B Company rallied a group in an attempt to clear the front line. On the left, Hannaford pressed forward across three additional lines of trenches to secure A Company's final objective about half-way up the slope of the ridge. As he established a strong point in a crater and secured the brigade's left flank, Hannaford was now the only unwounded officer from the 87th Battalion who had gone over the top only hours earlier.

When two companies from the 85th Battalion were sent in at 6:30 that evening to finally secure the troublesome section of the front still in German hands, they were covered by the Lewis guns of Hannaford's strong point. Attacking in a limited area and with commanders unsure of the location of the Canadians on either side, the 85th Battalion's attack did not have a covering artillery barrage, making machine gun fire their only effective protection. At this point, Hannaford and his men had been in action for more than twelve hours.

The Canadians held their positions overnight, working in the dark to link up and secure their gains. On the afternoon of 10 April, Hannaford was ordered to take a party forward to cover the final advance over the ridge, clearing the trenches abandoned by the withdrawing Germans. Finally, on 11 April, an officer summoned from the rear arrived to relieve Hannaford, who was later awarded a Military Cross for his actions. Writing to his mother in June, Hannaford was modest: "I simply tried to carry out work allotted to me and at that I didn't do as I had wished and planned."

We can know regrettably little about the thousands of ordinary soldiers like Hannaford. Although he credited God's help and guidance for his good fortune at Vimy, we know nothing about what motivated him to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force or to accept a commission. That he was a good officer is attested to by his popularity and his successes as a commander – he was awarded a second Military Cross while in command of

A Company in September 1918 during the attack on the Drocourt-Quéant Line at Dury.

In the absence of a strong documentary base, it is often impossible, even with the help of family members, to turn the scant details available in war diaries and service files into full biographies. Yet micro-biographies, chosen judiciously and used with care, can be a key tool for military historians trying to personalize narratives that might otherwise threaten to become clinical. Where traditional military historians kept their focus on the commanders and the movements of large formations, modern military history makes use of stories like Hannaford's at Vimy to illustrate the difficult conditions of combat and how the actions of a few men could help make a difference between local success and failure at critical moments.

Unfortunately, Captain Alfred Hannaford was killed in October during the assault on Bourlon Wood. Hit in the right hip, he was struck again while being carried to shelter. His wounds were dressed by a fellow officer (perhaps his race partner, Lieutenant Norman Nicholson) and he was evacuated to a dressing station, but the bearer party was gassed on the way. Hannaford died of his wounds several days later at a casualty clearing station and is buried at Bucquoy Road Cemetery south of Arras. His headstone, in an inscription chosen "In loving memory" by his family, notes that he, the "Son of Mr. & Mrs. A. Hannaford, Westmount, P.Q. Canada" was "Faithful unto death."

In the narrative of his battle experiences and the commemoration of his death, let us not forget that 'Alf' Hannaford was a young man, the son of a milkman, who missed the beautiful summers of home in Westmount and who helped his battalion win at brigade sports. (Alfred Hannaford's surviving letters and his medals are in the collection of the Royal Canadian Military Institute, a donation of the Hannaford family.)

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“And in sickness and in sorrow be contented”: Microhistory, Care Work, and Disability History in Mary O’Brien’s Journals (1828-1838)

Activist and editor of *Disability Intimacies* Alice Wong describes intimacy as “an ever-expanding universe . . . [of] relationships within a person’s self, with others, with communities, with nature, and beyond.” Wong and contributors argue that providing, sharing, and receiving care are therefore some ways in which disabled people experience intimacy. In the following case study, I suggest that this insight is methodologically useful for historians interested in disability.

Mary O’Brien’s 1828–1838 journals document much of her care work as a wife, mother, midwife, and settler. Mary thus carried those she cared for into the archive, including her husband Edward whose recurring rheumatisms, pains, fatigue, stiffness, and fevers we can think of as chronic illness, even without venturing into the thorny terrain of retrospective diagnosis. As far as I know, Edward did not write about his disability. Mary’s journals thus offer important insight, while also counterbalancing what Nancy Hansen has called the “descriptive, clinical, or medicalized perspectives” that dominate the history of disability.

... the O’Briens shows us that it was networks of care that allowed this family not just to survive but to thrive in Upper Canada. Edward’s story in turn asks us to rethink the settler colonial mythology that contemporary Canada draws on to create itself and its past, suggesting that care should supplant ruggedness.

Mary arrived in Canada in 1828 as a visitor, not an immigrant. She’d looked forward to a comfortable and independent spinsterhood in England until her unexpected courtship with Napoleonic War veteran Edward O’Brien. Ahead of the couple’s May 1830 wedding, Edward wrote to his future sister-in-law that: “My wanderings are now at an end, and I feel now more and more each day that I have something to live for . . . With such a wife I may well bid defiance to the world and in sickness and in sorrow

be contented and thankful to the Giver of all good for the greatest of all blessings.” It is easy to understand why playwright Leah Holden structured her dramatization of Mary’s journals as a love story: Act 1 follows Edward and Mary’s slow-burning courtship, while Act 2 focuses on how the couple’s affection, respect, and partnership help them succeed in the colony, raise their family, and establish the town of Shanty Bay. There is intimacy in this archive, and historians can learn much from taking it seriously.

Mary served as confidante and companion to Edward as he navigated his disability, even before their marriage. On 17 April 1830, for example, she wrote that: “Mr. O’Brien was more seriously sick of rheumatism and, as the doctor says, of intermittent fever. Whatever it may be, its effects are terrible—both the weakness from which he suffers all day, and the pain comes on, most especially at night.” Mary accompanied Edward to doctors’ appointments, reached out to physicians or family members when his condition took a turn, and supported various treatment regimes. She wrote on 12 June 1830 that Dr. Daly’s new prescription had failed: “we had a terrible night, so that it was out of the question for Edward to go to church or for me to leave him.” On 28 June 1830, she noted that “Edward is still better” and Dr. Daly “has ordered him to drink wine. After I had attended to my little dairy I read Paley to him whilst he smoked a cigar.” In Mary’s journal, sickness, chores, and companionship are interwoven facets of married life. The O’Briens also organized their household to accommodate Edward’s range of abilities, which was facilitated by their class. The O’Briens could not only hire labourers but, as landowners, they could also outsource farm labour by renting out their land to a tenant. This alleviated pressure on Edward while safeguarding their growing season.

As a methodological strategy, following care work helps us situate disability outside of institutions and the records they create. To find people like Edward whose class, race, gender, and interpersonal relationships enabled alternative forms of care, historians must use other records: microhistory, by situating disabled people in their communities and families, offers an especially rich pathway. Another reason to look for alternatives from institutions are their general absence in early, settler colonial “frontier” contexts. As J.F. Richards argues, the frontier is often imagined as peripheral places where settlers wage dramatic wars against nature to bring order to chaos, the spatial-temporal do-

main of hypermasculine and able-bodied men. Human survival, settler mythology says, is rooted in their fearlessness, bravery, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, resilience, and independence. But the O'Briens shows us that it was networks of care that allowed this family not just to survive but to thrive in Upper Canada. Edward's story in turn asks us to rethink the settler colonial mythology that contemporary Canada draws on to create itself and its past, suggesting that care should supplant ruggedness.

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Biography as Microhistory: Two Examples

Because I attended university in the 1960s and 70s, I am of the generation for whom, as Geoff Eley states in *A Crooked Line*, the writing of individual biographies was dismissed as old-fashioned and trivializing. But the later eclipse of social history by cultural history, with its turn to subjectivity, led to a resurgence of interest in biography, though with the goal – as Eley also notes – of revisiting individual lives “as complex texts in which the same large questions that inspired the social historians were embedded.” Given my longstanding attraction to microhistorical analysis, I was eventually drawn to the challenge of examining the generalized and the abstract through the lens of the personal and the particular. In recent years, I've written three book-length biographies, the latter two of which conform to microhistory as defined by historian Jill Lepore, namely a history of a hitherto obscure person, the goal being to shed light upon the broader social and cultural landscape.

Both Henry Trent and Robert James Roberts, the subjects of those two biographies (the latter remains unpublished), were nineteenth-century British immigrants from an upper-middle-class social background, which helps to explain why they began keeping diaries at a relatively young age. In contrast to the stereotypical immigrant to North America, however, both men became downwardly mobile, socially, as they worked manually on their farms into old age in order to support their families. That, however, is where the similarities between the two largely end.

After being freed from the oppressive rule of his mentally disturbed father, Trent spent a few exciting years in London, England, as well as on the West coast of British Columbia, before finally marrying and fathering a large bicultural family in Drummondville, Quebec. His life was captured well by one reviewer who wrote that it was “full of boundary crossings, partly borne from pragmatism, but also the fact that his life played out on the edges of institutional conformity (whether cultural, religious, or linguistic) where structural power was less suffocating, where rubbing against other norms opened up possibilities.”

Roberts, on the other hand, was a sober-minded social conservative who served for many years as an Anglican missionary on the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) reserve of Grand River, Ontario, followed by the Kuper Island (Lamalchi) reserve in British Columbia. His diary not only provides a vivid account of the internal feuding among the Church of England missionaries at Grand River, but also a sympathetic portrayal of daily life among the First Nations people who lived there.

The chief value of both diaries is that they enable the historian to personalize the social constructs of gender, class, and race, as well as to examine the roles of ideology, personality, intellectual ability (including education), emotions, physicality (Roberts suffered from epilepsy), and progression through life's stages from youth to old age. The main focus in each case may be on

a single individual, but both men touched many lives, and, as literary scholar Felicity Nussbaum has noted, all types of autobiographical texts “issue from the culture as much as the individual author.” Indeed, Hans Renders and Binne de Hann of the University of Groningen’s Biography Institute argue that shedding light on the culture that shaped the writer of “egodocuments” should be the goal of any microhistorian.

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Rewriting Lives: The Dictionary of Canadian Biography and John A. Macdonald

Revisions have long been a preoccupation of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography / Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*. Many of our 9,000 biographies were published more than thirty years ago, and much has changed in the world of historiography since then. Some of the things that need fixing are relatively minor – a birthdate, for example, or a similar kind of factual error that slipped through the editorial net. Others involve terminology that was acceptable at the time of writing but that is now viewed as offensive; this can range from changing the language that was used to describe Indigenous peoples, to replacing expressions for people with intellectual disabilities. I should stress here that we never alter words, no matter how offensive they might be, that appear within quotations; we are not in the business of bowdlerizing the past. I should also point out that we always tell readers what we’re doing, and provide access to the original biographies; we are not following in the footsteps of Winston Smith at the Ministry of Truth.

Other changes are more substantial, requiring major revisions to existing biographies or resulting in entirely new biographies; re-

Little, J.I. *A Missionary Life: Robert James Roberts in Ireland, Ontario, and British Columbia, 1849–1905*. Unpublished manuscript.

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cent examples are Pierre Esprit Radisson and Samuel de Champlain. As Gwyn A. Williams reminds us, history is an inquiry, not a story. We try to make sense of the past by putting questions to it – and the kind of questions you put depends upon who you are, what you are, and when you are. As the questions change, new angles of vision appear, familiar sources are seen in a different light, and hitherto unknown or neglected sources are brought to the surface. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of John A. Macdonald.

Our biography of Macdonald was written by P.B. Waite and J.K. Johnson in 1990. In many respects, it is a fine piece of work, which effectively covers Macdonald’s political career, with an understandable emphasis on his role in Confederation and his nation-building strategies. It is, inevitably, very much a product of its time. The biography has only one passing reference to Macdonald’s role as Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1878 to 1887 and no references at all to Chinese Canadians. His Indigenous policies and his views on Chinese immigration were completely ignored.

The overall result is a biography ... that recognizes both the constructive and destructive consequences of his policies, and suggests that there is no necessary contradiction between the two. "Like the country he helped to found," runs the concluding sentence of the revised biography, "he was large and contained multitudes."

In the light of new questions and new perspectives, it was clear that this situation had to be changed. The first question that arose was whether we should commission an entirely new biography, or insert the new material into the old one. Partly because the existing biography is so good in the areas it covers, and partly because commissioning a new 25,000-word biography would be an enormous strain on our resources, we decided to opt for the latter option. The question then became: Who do we ask to write the new sections on Indigenous policies and Chinese immigration? We decided upon two of the leading authorities in the field: Professor J.R. Miller for Macdonald's Indigenous policies, and Professor Patricia E. Roy for his Chinese immigration policies.

Miller described what he called the blots on Macdonald's record: establishing residential schools that became "largely engines of oppression" for children; using hunger as a weapon to force First Nations in the Canadian west onto reserves; presiding over the pass system and the permit system that kept them under tight control; outlawing the potlatch; and attacking the communal land system that First Nations favoured. By this time, it appeared that the blots had enveloped almost the entire page.

At the same time, Miller rejected the view that Macdonald's policies could fairly be construed as genocidal, and took issue with the view that they were grounded in racist assumptions about Indigenous peoples. Taking the United Nation's 1948 definition as his guide, he argued that Macdonald's residential school policy – "heinous and frequently destructive" as it was – had not been developed "with intent to destroy" a definable group. And although Macdonald clearly believed that Indigenous peoples were culturally inferior, the stated policy of his government was "to lead the Indian people by degrees to mingle with the white race in the ordinary avocations of life."

The Chinese, however, were a different matter. The contrast comes out clearly in Patricia Roy's supplement to the Macdonald biography. During the debates over the

Electoral Franchise Bill of 1885, Macdonald explained why he wanted to give Indigenous men but not Chinese people from the vote. "Indians are sons of the soil," he wrote, but the Chinese were foreign labourers who had been temporarily useful, in the same way that "a threshing machine or any other agricultural instrument" was useful.

Once the railway had been completed and their usefulness was over, Macdonald acceded to popular demands to restrict Chinese immigration. While he believed that Indigenous people could and should mingle as equals with "the white race," he described the Chinese as "in some respects, an inferior race" – as "semi-barbarians whose backs were so fertile that potatoes could be grown thereon." If Chinese immigrants were allowed to stay in Canada, he said, they would produce "a mongrel race," adding that there was "near universal" agreement on this point.

The overall result is a biography that is both similar to and different from the original – one that recognizes both the constructive and destructive consequences of his policies, and suggests that there is no necessary contradiction between the two. "Like the country he helped to found," runs the concluding sentence of the revised biography, "he was large and contained multitudes."

And so it stands in 2024. Not everyone will agree, but no texts are definitive and all are open to debate. One can only speculate what new questions will be asked, what new (or old) angles of vision will appear (or reappear), and what new revisions will occur in the future.

David A. Wilson is the General Editor of the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. To read the revised Macdonald biography, see http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/macdonald_john_alexander_12E.html. To access the original, see http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/6248?revision_id=33469.

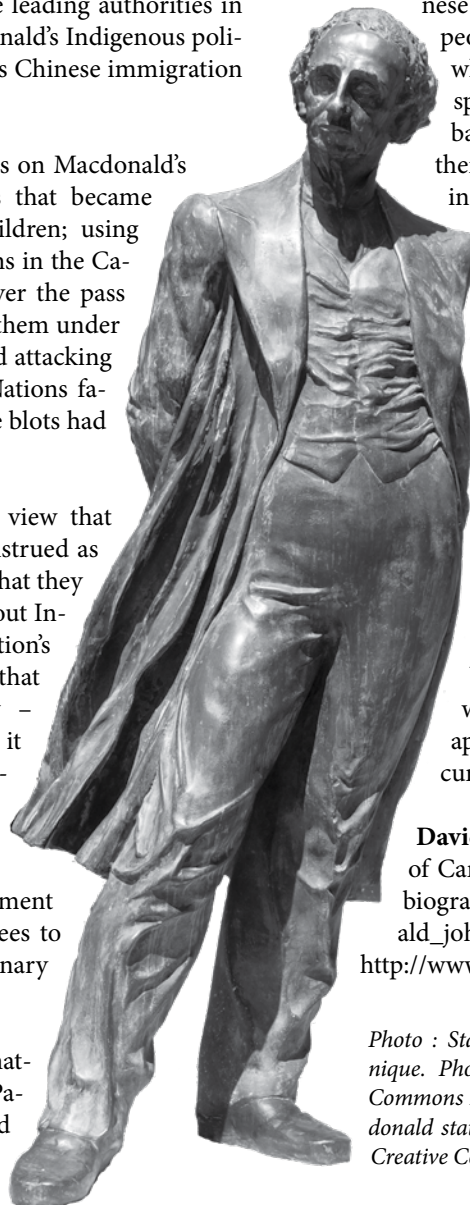


Photo : Statue de John A. Macdonald, Victoria, Colombie-Britannique. Photographe : Michal Klajban. Détaille. Licence Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International. | John A. Macdonald statue, Victoria, BC. Photographer: Michal Klajban. Detail. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence.

Les deux biographies de l'étudiante aux cycles supérieurs

Chaque chronique que j'écris pour *Intersections* contient des fragments de moi-même. Chacune d'elles renferme des traces de biographie. Techniquement, ce sont des traces autobiographiques, mais si vous avez lu mon dernier article, vous connaissez mon point de vue sur les frontières définitives. Lorsque j'ai commencé à réfléchir à la chronique de ce numéro, je revenais sans cesse à cette idée des multiples « soi » que nous présentons dans le milieu académique. Nous montrons certaines facettes de nous-mêmes à nos étudiant.e.s, mais nous en dissimulons d'autres. Nous adoptons une version spécifique de nous-mêmes auprès de nos collègues et des comités, tout en occultant d'autres aspects. Cela a toujours fait partie de la vie universitaire. Pourtant, j'existe dans un contexte contemporain de crises qui se multiplient, et je me surprends de plus en plus à considérer la compartimentation comme une compétence académique essentielle. Pas plus importante que l'usage correct de la virgule d'Oxford, mais presque.

La compartimentation est une compétence vitale lorsqu'il s'agit de notre entrée en classe. Je me souviens qu'un an ou deux après le début de mon doctorat, j'ai parlé avec une candidate au doctorat à l'esprit calme, quelques années plus âgée que moi, qui venait de terminer le cours qu'elle enseignait. Cette enseignante, aussi posée que lors de son cours quinze minutes plus tôt, m'a parlé de la soirée précédente, passée à rompre avec sa partenaire de longue date. Je me souviens de mon étonnement face à son calme. Maintenant, je pense aux nombreuses fois où j'ai dirigé des tutoriels, des heures de bureau ou des réunions après avoir vécu des événements bouleversants plus tôt dans la journée.

La compartimentation est malheureusement une compétence critique lorsque l'on considère la manière dont les chercheur.se.s travaillant sur un nombre croissant de sujets évoluent dans leur monde. Je me souviens, il y a quelques années, d'une conversation avec un.e historien.ne spécialisé.e dans la vie trans. Mon/ma collègue américain.e m'a dit que, lorsque des inconnu.e.s demandaient des informations sur ses recherches, iel avait un sujet factice prêt à leur présenter. Je n'en ai pas. Pourtant, je me surprends de plus en plus à parler de manière générale de mes travaux, alors qu'auparavant je parlais explicitement de ma recherche sur la vie trans dans le passé.

Cette compartimentation accrue est peut-être un réflexe de défense face à un monde en crises. J'étais en voyage de recherche aux Archives Kinsey cet été, pour travailler sur l'histoire trans. J'ai fait une courte pause et, en consultant les nouvelles sur mon téléphone, j'ai appris que le premier ministre britannique Keir Starmer souhaitait interdire aux

The Grad Student's Two Biographies

Each column I write for *Intersections* I put parts of myself into. Every one of them contains traces of biography in it. Though technically they are autobiographical traces, but if you read my last article then you know my thoughts on definitional borders. When I began to think of this issue's column, I continually returned to this notion of the many selves that we present in academia. We show parts of ourselves to students, but we cloak other aspects. We are a certain version of ourselves to colleagues and committees, yet we occlude others. This has always been part of academia. Yet I exist amidst the contemporary moment of unfolding crises, so I find myself increasingly viewing compartmentalization as a critical academic skill. Not more important than proper Oxford comma usage, but it's up there.

Compartmentalization is a vital skill when it comes to how we enter the classroom. I remember a year or two into my doctorate I spoke with an even-tempered PhD candidate a few years my senior who had just come from the course she taught. This instructor, as calmly as she had lectured to her students fifteen minutes before our conversation, told me about how late she was up the night before breaking up with her longtime partner. I think about how shocked I was at her tranquility. Now, I think about the many times that I have chaired tutorials, office hours, or meetings after upsetting events have happened to me earlier in the day.

Compartmentalization is an unfortunately critical skill when it comes to how scholars of an increasing list of topics move through the world. I recall years ago speaking with a fellow historian of trans life. This American colleague mentioned that when strangers asked about their work they have a fake topic prepared to tell people. I do not have one. Yet, I have found myself increasingly speaking in generalities around my work when before I would explicitly talk about my scholarship on past trans life.

Increased compartmentalization is perhaps a defensive reflex to a world of crises. I was on a research trip at the Kinsey Archives this summer. I was there researching trans history. I took a short break where I happened to check the news on my phone, and I saw that British Prime Minister Keir Starmer wished to ban trans women like me from women's bathrooms. So, I took a longer break.

femmes trans comme moi d'utiliser les toilettes pour femmes. J'ai alors pris une pause plus longue. J'ai déambulé dans les couloirs de cette archive queer et trans, eu une conversation réconfortante avec un.e autre chercheur.se, puis je suis retournée au travail. La compartimentation comme compétence académique critique.

Cela semble une réponse naturelle à une institution de plus en plus bifurquée. En mai, l'Association du corps professoral de l'Université de Toronto a demandé à sa société de gestion des pensions de désinvestir de toutes les entreprises soutenant la brutalisation continue du territoire palestinien occupé par Israël. En octobre, l'Association des professeur.e.s et bibliothécaires de McGill a voté en faveur du boycott académique et culturel d'Israël. Pourtant, ces universités continuent d'investir dans l'armement et de soutenir un État colonial d'apartheid qui commet activement un génocide.

Certain.e.s d'entre nous dans le milieu universitaire nient le génocide, d'autres l'ignorent sous prétexte que « les nouvelles sont trop déprimantes », certain.e.s l'ont quitté.e.s à cause de la dissonance cognitive insurmontable, et d'autres, comme moi, compartimentent. C'est une compétence académique très importante, mais devrait-elle l'être?

Aino Pihlak, Représentante des étudiant.e.s diplômé.e.s au Conseil d'administration de la SHC

I wandered the halls of this queer and trans archive, I had an uplifting conversation with a fellow researcher, and then I returned to work. Compartmentalization as a critical academic skill.

It feels like a natural response to an increasingly bifurcated institution. This May, the University of Toronto Faculty Association called on its pension management corporation to divest all holdings which support Israel's ongoing brutalization of Occupied Palestinian Territory. In October, the McGill Association of University Teachers voted to endorse the academic and cultural boycott of Israel. Yet these universities continue to invest in weaponry, and they continue to support an apartheid settler-state actively committing genocide.

Some of us in academia deny genocide, others ignore it all because 'the news is too depressing,' some have left as the cognitive dissonance is too much, and some like me compartmentalize. It is a very important academic skill, but should it be?

Aino Pihlak, Graduate Students' Representative on the CHA Council

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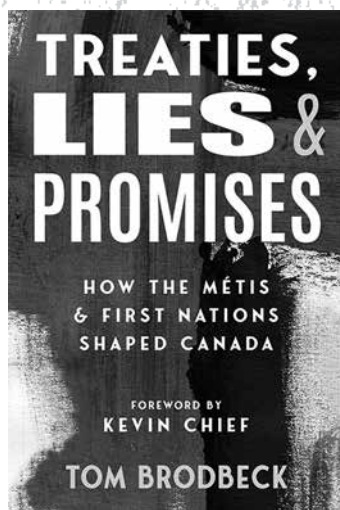
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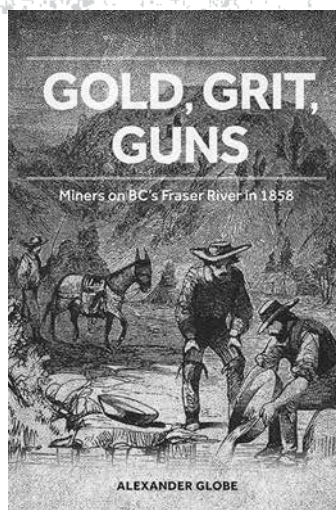
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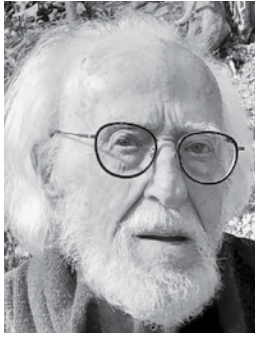
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Alfred Dubuc, 1929-2025

Alfred Dubuc, un des fondateurs du Département d'histoire de l'UQAM, est décédé à Montréal, le 11 septembre 2025. Natif de Chicoutimi, il a fait ses études au Collège Jean de Brébeuf, à l'Université de Montréal (Licence en droit, 1953), à l'Université de Louvain (Licence en sciences politiques et sociales) et à la 6^e section de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études de Paris (doctorat, 1969). Il a commencé sa carrière au Département de Sciences économiques de l'Université de Montréal en 1959 et a choisi de passer à l'UQAM dès 1969.

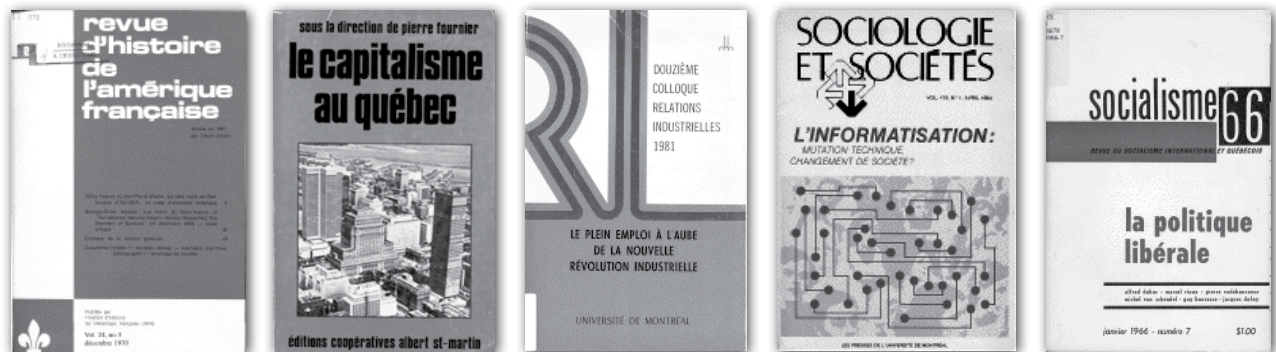


Ses travaux de doctorat sur l'entrepreneur Thomas Molson (1791-1863) l'ancrent dans l'histoire économique du Canada et du Québec. Il s'intéresse à l'histoire de l'entrepreneuriat et à celle de l'entreprise, dans le contexte du développement du capitalisme canadien. Cette sensibilité l'amène à s'impliquer dans la mouvance syndicale (arbitre auprès du tribunal du travail) et socialiste (Membre du Comité des Cent, qui produit le manifeste « Pour un Québec socialiste », en 1981). Par ailleurs, élève de

Fernand Braudel, il contribue à faire connaître la méthodologie de l'École historique des *Annales* au Québec. Au département d'histoire, il a enseigné aux trois cycles d'études, dirigeant de nombreux étudiants à la maîtrise et au doctorat. Il prend sa retraite en 1996.

Il laisse le souvenir d'un collègue d'une grande culture, fin causeur et volontiers charmeur, participant actif et attentif au développement du département. Il connaissait à fond les classiques de la pensée économique et était toujours disponible pour une discussion ou un conseil. Beaucoup se souviendront de son bureau, où papiers, livres et cahiers étaient entassés par couches, entremêlées d'une manière aussi savante que précaire, que l'on craignait toujours de voir d'écrouler sur le plancher. Néanmoins, il s'y retrouvait toujours. Collègue depuis 1975, j'avais fait sa connaissance en 1969, alors qu'il avait participé à la direction de mon mémoire de maîtrise et m'avait impressionné par sa disponibilité et son érudition.

Jean-Claude Robert, Professeur émérite, Département d'histoire, UQAM



Alfred Dubuc a contribué à plusieurs publications, notamment à la Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française (1970), à Le capitalisme au Québec (1978) et au Douzième colloque Relations industrielles (1981).

James Rodger Miller, 1943-2025

James (Jim) Rodger Miller passed away at home on October 11, 2025. He lived happily in Saskatoon for fifty-five years – unlike others who arrived in the “Paris of the Prairies,” vowing their stay was temporary.



Jim Miller was one of the foremost Canadian historians of his generation. Born in Cornwall in April 1943, while his father was serving overseas in the Second World War, Jim earned three degrees at the University of Toronto. He did his doctorate with the renowned Donald Creighton.

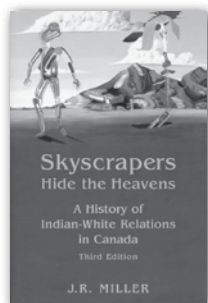
Miller secured a tenure-track position at the University of Saskatchewan in 1970. Historian of French

Canada Dale Miquelon, another University of Toronto graduate, was also hired by the History department that same year. Jim liked to joke that he and Dale were the two male historians who were supposed to replace Hilda Neatby, the prominent and revered (some would say, feared) public historian.

Jim’s specialty was late nineteenth century Canadian political history, especially French-English relations. He published a revised version of his dissertation, *Equal Rights: The Jesuits’ Estates Act Controversy* in 1979.

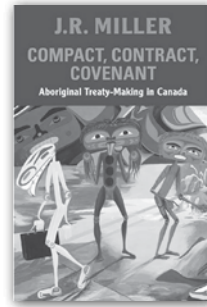
Miller’s career took a significant turn while serving as a visiting professor of Canadian Studies in Japan in 1982-83. The distance and time away from Saskatchewan gave him time to ponder the state of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations back home. He confronted some hard realities about Indigenous life in Saskatoon and the wider Saskatchewan community. In looking for answers, he turned to history to try to understand why.

Jim read widely on of what was then called Native-newcomer relations. He reinvented himself along the way. When not teaching, he wrote a general history on the topic, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, on a small portable typewriter in his office. That monograph has since gone through four editions—a rare accomplishment for any discipline.



Miller next turned to a comprehensive history of the residential school experience, *Shingwauk’s Vision*. That research and writing was paired with another monograph on Saskatchewan treaties (*Bounty and Benevolence*) that was undertaken at the request of the treaty commissioner.

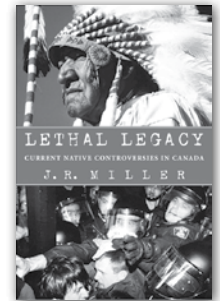
There followed, among other books, a history of treaty-making (*Compact, Contract, Covenant*) and an assessment of the residential school reconciliation process (*Residential Schools and Reconciliation*). Perhaps the most underappreciated work was *Lethal Legacy*, an attempt to introduce the general public to a number of festering Indigenous/non-Indigenous issues.



When not researching and writing, Jim shared his vast knowledge in the classroom. Former graduate students and post-docs (many who secured tenure-track positions) speak fondly of his patience, generosity, and above all, support.

Some critics suggested that Miller, as a privileged white historian, had no business working on Indigenous topics. But Jim firmly believed that he was writing about a relationship. He took to heart the words of the treaty commissioner: “we are all treaty people.”

Miller understood history not to be black or white, but complex, complicated, even messy. He brought a balanced perspective to his writing that is sorely needed today. His skill was being insightful and rigorous. It’s little wonder, then, that he was widely recognized—and sought after—as a national authority.



Miller gave back to the profession. He served, for example, as president of the Canadian Historical Association. That work came with a warning in his presidential address, “The Invisible Historian.” Jim said that historians, as public commentators, had to invite themselves to the table or their place in a democratic society would be usurped by others with less historical knowledge, less historical perspective.

Miller’s many honours included appointment to the Order of Canada, named a member of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and awarded the Killam Prize for the Humanities and the SSHRCC gold medal. Jim downplayed these tributes in his own self-effacing way.

Jim Miller was an extraordinary man, blessed with a sharp wit, gentlemanly manner, and deep sense of doing the right thing. He was a good friend and mentor—a source of inspiration to me. We spent the better part of half a century discussing history, the profession, and the academy, most times over a beer. His death is a great loss.

Bill Waiser, CM, SOM, FRSC, DLitt
Distinguished Professor Emeritus

Jim's Vision: Some Reflections on J.R. Miller

When I learned that Jim Miller had died, I reached out to his partner, Lesley Biggs, to express my condolences and to let her and her family know how much I admired Jim. A few weeks later, Lesley invited me to share a few words about him that would be read at his celebration of life. "It would be my honour," I replied. And I meant it. Jim was something of a hero to me back in the day, when I was a graduate student and junior professor starting my academic career.

I first "met" Jim in the fall of 1993. I say "met" because I didn't actually meet him. I was a first-year PhD student at the University of Ottawa, and he was a professor at the University of Saskatchewan. But I did read "Owen Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy," an article that he had published just a few years earlier.

As a green-as-grass graduate student, I thought that it was about the coolest thing I had ever read. The title alone was worth the price of admission. What did two characters from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* have to do with Canada's "Indian" policy in the late Victorian era? A lot, in fact.

When Owen Glendower pronounces that he can "call the spirits from the vasty deep," Hotspur replies, "But will they come?" In other words, what matters, according to Hotspur, is the response, not the call, or the outcome, not the intent.

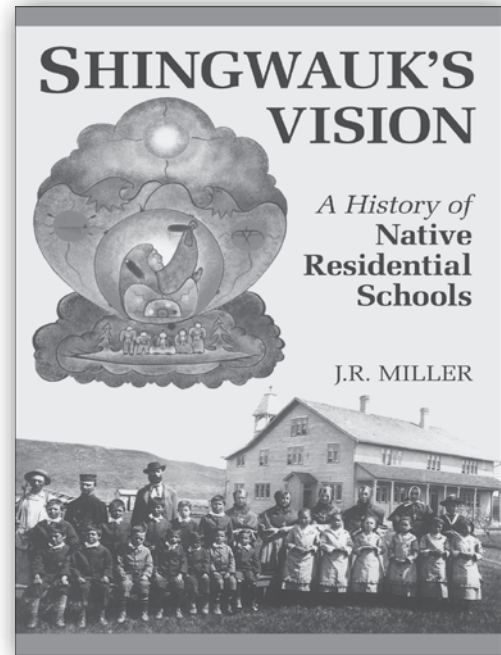
Riffing on Shakespeare, Dr. Miller – as I would have addressed him in those days – examined the difference between the intent of government policies and the outcome of those policies. Long story short, he showed that Indigenous peoples, in his words, "resisted, evaded, and defied" a series of policies that took aim at their suppression and assimilation.

"Owen Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy" effortlessly combined original research and clear writing to reach broad conclusions, or so it seemed to me, although I now know that academic writing is bloody hard and never effortless.

Jim's 1990 article, which was later re-printed in a reader for undergraduate students, challenged our understanding of Indigenous history: Indigenous peoples weren't passive victims, they were active agents.

Two years later, in 1995, I "met" Jim for a second time. Again, I say "met" because I had yet to actually meet him.

For a paper I was writing on the Canadian historian Donald Creighton, I spent a long, hot summer at the National Archives,



today Library and Archives Canada. Tucked into the Creighton papers was a series of letters between Donald Creighton and a young Jim Miller, then a PhD student at the University of Toronto.

It's clear from the correspondence that Donald Creighton thought very highly of Mr. Miller, as he called him. He was smart, hardworking, and focused on his research and writing. And when the time came, Creighton wrote a generous letter of reference that helped his last PhD student land a permanent position at the University of Saskatchewan.

A few months later, I gave my first academic paper at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association on, well, Donald Creighton. Afterwards, someone introduced me to Jim, who had attended my talk! I was star struck, and mumbled something incomprehensible.

Although Jim may have been a star, he didn't comport himself like a star, which is to say that he didn't parade his learning or his academic stripes. He was kind, decent, and solicitous, and he instantly put me at ease.

Curiously enough, Jim and I would cross paths at the Canadian Historical Association that fall, and, for the next couple of years, we worked closely together. I was the English-language Secretary, and he was the president.

Watching him chair meetings, navigate difficult conversations, and find consensus, I learned a lot about academic leadership and the importance of listening.

I also learned a valuable lesson in leading by example, which I remember very clearly. *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* had just been published. It's a remarkable piece of scholarship which we devoured as graduate students at the University of Ottawa.

Almost certainly, it would have been a finalist for what was then called the Sir John A. Macdonald Prize for the Best Book in Canadian History. And who knows, it may have even won.

... that's when it dawned on me.

Shingwauk's vision of a teaching wigwam was also Jim's vision of a better and fairer Canada, of a country that, if it can't change its past, can imagine a different future.

But as president of the Canadian Historical Association, Jim knew that he couldn't possibly accept the award even though prize juries operate at arm's length from the Association, and so he made it clear that he had instructed his publisher, the University of Toronto Press, not to submit his book for the Macdonald Prize. I was terribly impressed by his example and his integrity.

Fast forward 10 years, I had finished my PhD, secured an academic position, and resumed my research on Donald Creighton. I sent a formal note to Jim, requesting an interview, and he agreed. Meeting in his office at University of Saskatchewan, we spent a wonderful couple of hours talking about the University of Toronto, Donald Creighton, and the writing of Canadian history.

When my book was finally published, I sent him a copy to say thanks. A few weeks later, he sent me a generous note. It was clear that he had read the thing, which meant a lot to me at the time. All these years later, it still does.

Jim and I continued to exchange occasional e-mails about this and that. I am not going to pretend that I was a confidante, because I wasn't. But re-reading those e-mails, I am struck by his essential generosity and kindness. He was one of the good ones.

After Jim's death, I did what historians do. I took his books off my shelves and dipped into them, especially *Shingwauk's Vision*, a book that takes its title from Chief Augustine Shingwauk's 1832 vision of a "teaching wigwam" in what is now northern Ontario. Of course, Shingwauk's vision of a teaching wigwam was very different than the eventual Sault Ste Marie mission and school that, in Jim's words, "oppressed and attempted to assimilate" Shingwauk's people.

Although it had been years since I cracked its spine, I was instantly reminded why my friends and I had eaten it up. The research is remarkable, and the writing is impeccable.

But *Shingwauk's Vision* is not only a scholarly project. It's also a moral project premised on notions of understanding, respect, and what we now call reconciliation.

"Native peoples in Canada," Jim concluded, "still have a vision of the healthy and effective education of their children and the development of their communities, and they still look to the people who have usurped their lands for assistance in bringing it to reality. Now, as always through the history of Native policy and residential schools, it is up to the Euro-Canadian majority to decide if they will help or hinder, facilitate or oppress, support or tyrannize. Will it be the realization of Shingwauk's vision, or another episode of the Native nightmare?"

It was a big question, and for that matter, it still is.

And that's when it dawned on me. Shingwauk's vision of a teaching wigwam was also Jim's vision of a better and fairer Canada, of a country that, if it can't change its past, can imagine a different future.

Donald Wright, University of New Brunswick

Tim Cook, 1971-2025

One of Canada's most prolific and most-read historians, Tim Cook, Chief Historian at the Canadian War Museum, passed away in Ottawa on 25 October 2025 following a brief illness. He was 53. The shocking loss of this brilliant scholar, writer, teacher, mentor, public historian, frequent media commentator, proud Canadian, and devoted husband and father has left, in particular, the community of Canadian military history scholars reeling. Tim had celebrity status with Canadians as a result of his numerous powerfully written and painstakingly researched books, some selling tens of thousands of copies, treating Canada's wars from the perspective of the ordinary men and women who fought them. And he was one of the nicest people you could meet.



Tim's powerful intellect, astounding capacity for work, and passionate prose allowed him to write some of the most enduring books and articles of Canadian military history ever published. Tim was born in Kingston, Ontario but grew up in Ottawa. He was educated at Trent University (BA, 1994), the Royal Military College of Canada (MA, 1996), and the University of New South Wales (PhD, 2005). After having worked at the National Archives of Canada for several years, in 2002 Tim joined the Canadian War Museum as its First World War historian. Over the years he curated or co-curated many major exhibitions including *Trench Life – A Survival Guide*; *Victory 1918 - The Last 100 Days*; and *War and Medicine*. Of late he became committed to preserving the experiences of Canadian veterans through the museum's *In Their Own Voices* oral history project. From 2006-17 he was an adjunct research professor at Carleton University, where he supervised fourteen MAs.

Almost unbelievably, in 26 years he wrote 19 books, including a few major museum catalogues, and more than 100 academic articles and chapters in scholarly collections in addition to hundreds of professional and trade articles. Many are classics of Canadian military history writing. His first book, 1999's *No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War* established him as a serious emerging scholar of note. He was 27. It also provided a glimpse of his methodology: deep archival research supplemented by a vast infusion of personal stories derived from private and official correspondence, diaries, memoirs, and other untapped sources that he somehow found. *No Place to Run* won the coveted C.P. Stacey Award for the most distinguished book in Canadian military history. Not bad for a first-timer. *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (2006) is foundational to the study of Canadian military history and its authors.

Soon, Tim launched his first foray into the popular marketplace with his raw, evocative, magisterial two-part study of Canadians fighting in the First World War, *At the Sharp End* (2007) and *Shock Troops* (2008). These publications were wildly popular with Canadian readers and catapulted Tim to the best-seller list – for the first, but hardly the last time. The academic historian had bridged the gap to a much wider audience, and done so spectacularly.

Tim also confidently moved into Canada's Second World War history. His two-volume study, *The Necessary War* (2014) and *Fight to the Finish* (2015) mirrored the popular and critical successes of his First World War publications. *The Necessary War* won Tim his second C.P. Stacey Prize. There seemed little he could not do.

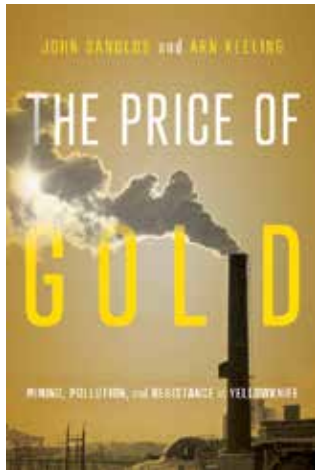
His masterful *Vimy: The Battle and the Legend* (2017) is the best-told account of Canada's most famous engagement and how we have chosen to remember it. *The Fight for History: 75 Years of Forgetting, Remembering, and Remaking Canada's Second World War* (2020) was an instant classic. His main work of diplomatic history, *The Good Allies: How Canada and the United States Fought Together to Defeat Fascism during the Second World War* (2024), is a reminder of what was once a critically important relationship in North America and perhaps it is also a plea to return to what could be achieved in troubled times by two neighbours sharing so much in common.

Among his other titles are *The Madman and the Butcher: The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie* (2010); *Warlords: Borden, Mackenzie King, and Canada's World Wars* (2012); *The Secret Lives of Soldiers* (2018); *Lifesavers and Body Snatchers: Medical Care and the Struggle for Survival in the Great War* (2022), and the soon-to-be-released *Ripples of War: The Canadian Veterans' Experience, 1945-2025*, co-edited with Michael Petrou and Andrew Burtch.

Tim's books consistently have been nominated for prizes, including some in Britain and the United States, and have won the Ottawa Book Award for Literary Non-Fiction four times, the J. W. Dafoe Book Prize twice, the C. P. Stacey Award twice, and the Charles Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction. He was the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a Member of the Order of Canada. Tim was a warm, kind, and generous man with a great sense of humour. He was optimistic and brave through adversity and a treasured friend. He is survived by his wife, Sarah, daughters Chloe, Emma, and Paige, his mother Sharon, and his brother Graham.

Serge Marc Durflinger is a Full Professor in the Department of History at the University of Ottawa.

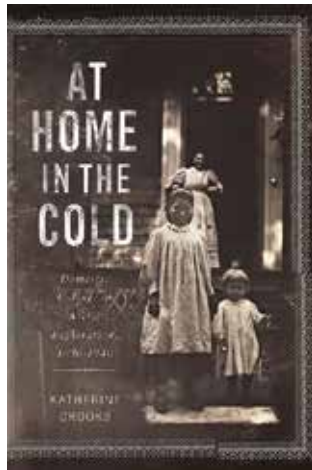
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The Price of Gold

Mining, Pollution, and Resistance in Yellowknife
John Sandlos and Arn Keeling

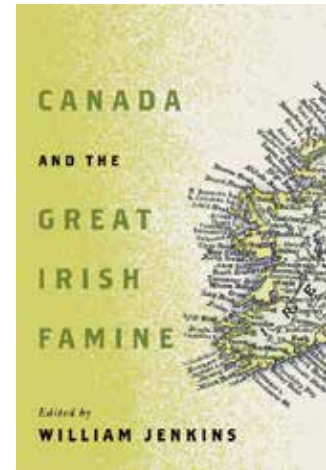
“Sandlos and Keeling foreground community resistance and the enduring fight for environmental justice long after the rush is over.”
–Lianne C. Leddy, Wilfrid Laurier University



At Home in the Cold

Domestic Culture in Arctic Exploration, 1890–1940
Katherine Crooks

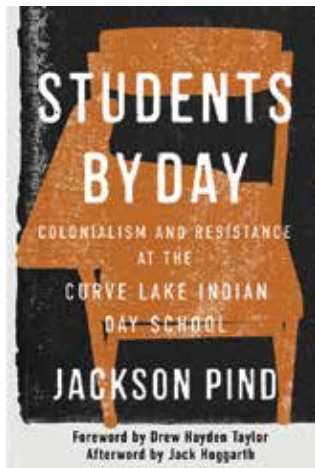
“Katherine Crooks sheds new light on histories of exploration and gender in North America in this exciting and thought-provoking volume.”
–Karen Routledge, Parks Canada



Canada and the Great Irish Famine

Edited by William Jenkins

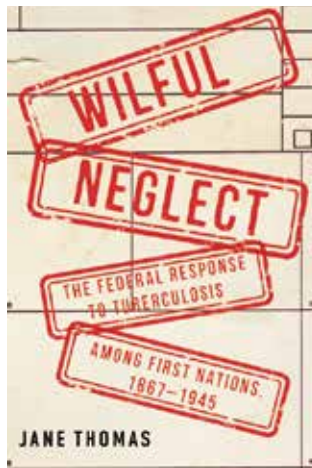
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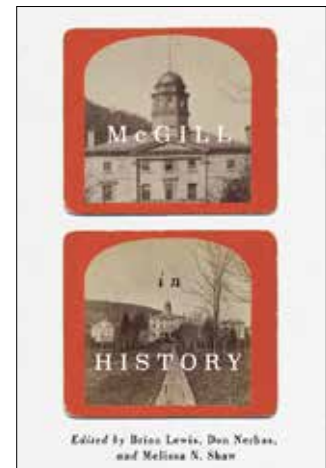
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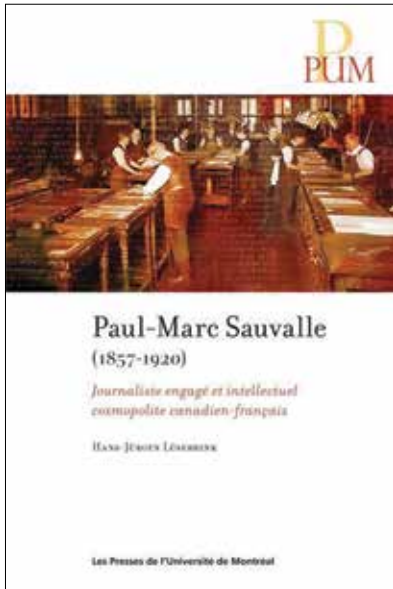
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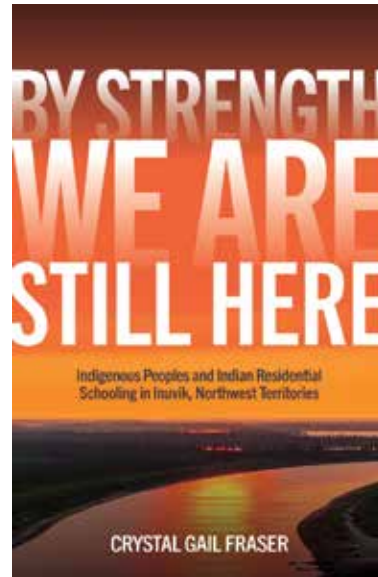
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