

A decorative banner at the top of the page features a light orange background with faint, stylized illustrations of historical maps and documents. The text "DISTINGUISHED HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY LECTURE, 2012" is prominently displayed in a bold, black, serif font across the center of the banner.

DISTINGUISHED HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY LECTURE, 2012

'Tracing One Warm Line Through a Land so Wide and Savage'. Fifty Years of Historical Geography in Canada

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ABSTRACT: In this essay I enlist Canadian folk singer Stan Rogers to provide a title and a structure for inevitably personal reflections on the scholarly contributions of Canadian historical geographers and the changing fortunes of historical geography in their country since the 1960s. From the "Northwest Passage" ("one warm line...") to "Make and Break Harbour" (where "the boats are so few") this is a tale of considerable achievement, but one that, may lack a particularly happy or optimistic ending unless we attend to "The Field Behind the Plow" (and "Put another season's promise in the ground"). Because this story, however told, bears the marks of influence from the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere, this essay speaks to developments beyond the territory of Canada and the geographical interests of those who live within its borders. Like several of Rogers' songs, it might also be considered something of a parable.

When Robert Wilson invited me to give the fourth HGSG distinguished lecture he observed: "You may speak on whatever topic you like. It could be about some aspect of your current research or about the state of historical geography (or both)." In the end I decided to do both – and more. To structure the inevitable jumble spilling from this great portmanteau I make two moves. First I focus my comments on historical geography in Canada since the late 1960s. Second, I draw inspiration and a handful of telling phrases from Canadian folk singer Stan Rogers. Said by American folksinger Tom Paxton to be "to Canada what Woody Guthrie was to the United States," Rogers' songwriting genius produced many iconic pieces of Canadiana.¹ His *Northwest Passage* provides my title – and a reminder that this is ultimately a personal view, a retrospective effort to trace my own warm line through the wide (and only very occasionally savage) territory of Canadian historical geography.²

"Let me sail up Golden Bay"

1968, the year of my arrival in Toronto from the UK, is as good a place to begin as any. I was familiar with historical geography – of the "Domesday variety" (so-called because of the series of volumes based on the 1086 survey of England and Wales produced by H C Darby and

co-workers) – as almost every British geography undergraduate was in those days. Yet seduced by the allure of the relatively new, I came to Canada intent on joining the subaltern ranks of William Garrison’s “space cadets” in the department from which Ian Burton had announced the Quantitative Revolution as “a radical transformation of [the] spirit and purpose” of Geography.³ Within three months (and a mere five years after Burton’s proclamation appeared in *The Canadian Geographer*), however, I had realized that although numbers are good to count with, I preferred words.

Many things contributed to this lapse (and I use the term deliberately to suggest a fall from grace and a failure of belief). Although placid by comparison with Paris and Berkeley, Toronto, like so many university cities at the time, was a lively place, even one (to echo William James), of “blooming, buzzing confusion.”⁴ Controversies, protests, and proto-revolutions vied for attention, and there was widespread anxiety about the state of the world.⁵ There was also a strong sense of liberation, of the democratization of power, and of new possibilities. Marshall McLuhan was at the height of his influence, publishing *The Medium is the Message* and *War and Peace in the Global Village* in quick succession.⁶ University of Toronto students challenged university authorities to implement more democratic governance and more open curricula. The world seemed too much with us for me to take refuge in its abstraction.

The 1960s had brought massive investment in universities and the discipline of Geography was growing rapidly. These were heady times. In 1961 there were 19 university Geography departments and about 75 Geography faculty in all of Canada. Seven years later the country had 35 departments with some 300 faculty members. By University of British Columbia geographer Lew Robinson’s estimate, some 30-40 new positions a year were being advertised in the mid-1960s, at a time when there were only 4 or 5 new-minted PhDs a year from Canadian departments.⁷ Graduate programmes were being expanded in response, but – I discovered after I arrived in Canada – the Head of UBC’s department was not entirely happy about this: “A high proportion of these graduate students,” he wrote, “are from Britain. They are being attracted by the ample funds for assistantships at some departments, and by the adventure of living in another country....”⁸ At least a few of these opportunists were attracted by the academic standards and good reputations of the departments to which they came. Certainly the Toronto department was an intellectually vibrant place with a healthy mix of very able people from Britain, Canada and a handful of other countries including New Zealand, Australia, Germany, and Taiwan among its 50 or so graduate students in residence. There, heated debates about what we might well call the spirit and purpose of geography were common, particularly among human geographers.

Remarkably, in a department widely regarded as having embraced geography’s latest quantitative, analytical fashion – one of my graduate school contemporaries came to Toronto, he said later, because it was “a vibrant center of calculation” – several faculty espoused markedly different intellectual positions.⁹ Joe May challenged all new graduate students to think critically about the explanatory claims of the different subsectors of the discipline; hazards work in the Gilbert White vein had some considerable momentum; and urban geographers of more qualitative bent found a sympathetic mentor in Peter Cave. There were also three historical geographers in this department of 20 or so faculty members.¹⁰ Jock Galloway, a Latin Americanist trained at Berkeley and in London by Darby, was a supportive, understanding mentor to students with a broad spectrum of interests. Early in 1969, I found new inspiration in a course with Jim Lemon, whose PhD was from Wisconsin. He was then working on *The Best Poor Man’s Country*, which spoke to the foundations of American ideology, but his teaching reflected his deep engagement with urban and social issues in Toronto.¹¹ Indeed it was hard to disaggregate the personal or the political from the historical in listening to Jim, and he moved many of us to more active, engaged citizenship, even as he convinced us that North American historical geography could be far more lively and relevant to present-day concerns than the studies of Europe’s pre-historic trade in amber or early medieval field patterns in Roseland, Cornwall that I had pored over as an undergraduate. Cole Harris, another student of Andrew Clark’s from Wisconsin, who was on sabbatical in Ottawa in 1968-69, also retained a presence in the department, in the stories told by

an earlier cohort of students and through the influence of his essay on "Historical Geography in Canada" published in December 1967.¹²

In a few pages of *The Canadian Geographer*, Harris sketched the state of what he took to be a wide-open field. Geographical concerns held a central place in Canadian letters: the awesomeness of the land, the expansiveness of space, the niggardliness of the ecumene, the sense of isolation and struggle involved in the occupation of a new territory, these themes – as the country's leading literary critic Northrop Frye understood – were woven into the fabric of Canadian writing, in novels and poetry, memoirs and diaries. Historians, too, had made geography a virtual protagonist in accounts of the country that emphasized the importance of the St Lawrence axis and built interpretations around natural endowments (fish, beavers, trees) that became staple resources driving economic and social development. Yet, wrote Harris, "there has been little work in the historical geography of Canada." Casting a very wide net indeed, he identified a corpus of "some fifty graduate theses and almost twice as many publications." Little of this had been produced by "trained historical geographers, it was in no sense "a unified body of scholarship" and much of it was "under-researched and poorly written."

These sentiments received independent endorsement from Lew Robinson, who noted in a more general reflection on the discipline that appeared alongside Harris's essay, that few Canadian geographers seemed "to care much about the geography of 'people'." Few historical geographers, he averred, "have tapped the wealth of Canadian historical sources, or added their geographical viewpoints to the interpretation of Canadian history." Those interested in "the human aspects of geography," he suggested, would do well "to make more apparent in their writings on resources or urban areas... their interest in the people involved rather than in the resource itself, or the distributional character of urban functions."¹³

In 1968, then, Canada was an historical geographer's oyster. There were topics aplenty upon which to work. With John Warkentin, David Wood, Skip Ray, John Radford, Roy Merrens, Jim Gibson, Conrad Heidenreich and James Cameron on faculty at York University by 1970, and Tom McIlwraith joining UofT (Erindale) that year, the city of Toronto may have had the largest concentration of historical geographers anywhere in the world; among my approximate contemporaries in the Uof T graduate program were historical geographers John Mannion, Leonard Guelke, Peter Ennals, and among several at the MA level who continued in the field Denis Cosgrove from England, Judith Johnston from New Zealand. There were historical geographers, albeit in smaller numbers, on faculty at almost all Ontario's universities (there were close to twenty of these), and the Eastern Historical Geographers' Association led energetically by Martyn Bowden of Clark University helped to establish a strong sense of camaraderie and shared endeavour. Despite growing enthusiasm for a view of geography as a spatial science, it seemed that historical geography was a vital and important part of the discipline. At least temporarily.

"our decks so sharply tilted that we could barely keep our feet"

In April 1970, *Economic Geography* published a half-dozen reviews of recent books in historical geography.¹⁴ These began well enough. Les Heathcote was graciously complementary about Don Meinig's *Great Columbia Plain*, but then William Koelsch rolled out some heavy artillery against Andrew Clark's *Acadia*. Not to be outdone, Martyn Bowden loosed a volley of large-caliber cannon shots in the much the same direction in an otherwise positive assessment of Clifford Smith's *Historical Geography of Western Europe before 1800*. Bowden detected a widening rift between geography and historical geography, which he attributed to the "refusal of historical geographers either to use or to test the methods and theories developed in geography's systematic subfields." In sufficiently similar vein to suggest that he and his departmental colleague might have shared thoughts about their reviews, Koelsch indicted Clark for his failure to utilize "methodological cutting edges" such as central place theory and location theory in a study so heavily focused on "patterns of settlement and economic activity." Clark's avowed interest in the study of "geographical change through time" stood revealed in *Acadia* as a "cul-de-sac, a principle

of ordering which contains no principle of selection." In sum, wrote Koelsch, the book revealed that without the adoption of new research strategies more in touch with recent paradigms in the discipline, historical geography would be "trapped in a kind of limbo, neither sheep nor goat, merely mule, possessing neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity."¹⁵

Reflecting on trends within his own department (marked by several recent appointments as well as the proliferation of "quantitative" courses in the graduate program) and sensing the direction of the gathering critical winds, Cole Harris had begun reading in the philosophy of history during his sabbatical. Finding good sense in Isaiah Berlin's essay in the first issue of *History and Theory*, which saw history as a search for the fullest possible understanding of complex particularities, and drawing from the work of philosopher William Dray who argued that historical accounts were *sui generis* and that framing them as laws yielded only untestable truisms, he returned to Toronto to offer a lively graduate course on historical explanation in geography.¹⁶ Of a sudden we were reading and debating, not only Berlin and Dray, but R G Collingwood, Herbert Butterfield, Michael Scriven, Louis Mink, Carl Hempel, Karl Popper, Maurice Mandelbaum, W.H Walsh, and others.¹⁷

All of this enabled Harris to respond quickly and vigorously to the Clark University centred critique of Andrew Clark and his subfield, which he did in a November 1970 discussion paper entitled "Reflections on the Fertility of the Historical Geographical Mule." This was published a few months later in slightly revised form in *The Canadian Geographer* as "Theory and Synthesis in Geography."¹⁸ These were invigorating times and it is difficult to imagine a better foundation for a career in historical geography than they provided. Indeed I am tempted, as I remember the late 1960s and early 1970s in Toronto, to think again of Stan Rogers, whose rousing chorus in Barrett's *Privateers* (we will leave aside the more somber lyrics for now) runs: "I was told we'd cruise the seas for American gold/ We'd fire no guns! Shed no tears."¹⁹ Armed with his own letter of marque in the shape of his discussion paper, Cole Harris was certainly optimistic about prospects of historical-geographical gold:

If I read the signs aright [he wrote in 1970], geography is again in a period of rapid flux from which the outcome is still unclear. Certainly the last decade has shown the historical geographical mule to be a stubborn beast, and my strong hunch is that the next will reveal its fertility to even the most sceptical.²⁰

"For the good times come and go"

In Canada, at least, this prediction of a productive decade for historical geography was not merely realized, it was exposed as an understatement. The 1970s began with a splash – in the form of important books from Peter Goheen (*Victorian Toronto*) and Eric Ross (*Beyond the River and the Bay*). The next year saw Conrad Heidenreich's *Huronian*; and 1972 brought a deeply historical study by economic geographer James Gilmour: *Spatial Evolution of Manufacturing: Southern Ontario, 1851-1891* as well as John Tyman's *By Section, Township and Range: Studies in Prairie Settlement*. In 1973, J Gordon Nelson published *The Last Refuge* dealing with indigenous occupancy of Alberta and Saskatchewan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Then, in 1974, came John Mannion's *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada*, Skip Ray's *Indians in the Fur Trade* and Harris and Warkentin's remarkable survey of *Canada Before Confederation*.²¹

Alongside these important books were dozens of journal articles. At a time when *The Canadian Geographer* included a good deal of work in physical geography (one-quarter of the papers accepted in 1972 were in Geomorphology and Climatology), eleven of 99 papers published in the five years between 1970 and 1974 dealt with the historical geography of Canada.²² Others, by scholars working in Canada brought historical geographical perspectives to bear on Iceland and the UK and Alan Baker from Cambridge University contributed an essay on France. Other journals ranging from the *Canadian Historical Review* to *Ontario History*, from the *Cahiers de*

geographie du Quebec to the *Annales de geographie*, and from the *Geographical Magazine* to *Pioneer America* and the *Professional Geographer*, also bore the fruits of research on Canada by Canadian historical geographers. A rather unsystematic scan of the geographical writing on the Canadian past listed in the Conzen bibliography for this five year span encompasses at least twenty-five journals and includes substantially more items written by geographers than Harris identified in 1967 as the sum of all published work in Canadian historical geography.²³

All of this owed a good deal to the growing number of historical geographers in expanding university departments. In round numbers, my own tabulation from the 1971 CAG *Directory*, identifies some 40 trained historical geographers (5 or 6 of whom worked on areas other than Canada) in 20 departments, and another 15 or so with at least some historical interests.²⁴ Together these colleagues accounted for more than 10% of geography faculty (instructors to full professors) in the country's 40 universities and colleges. Most of the major books with early 1970s imprints were derived from doctoral dissertations, completed variously at Chicago, Edinburgh, McMaster, Toronto, Oxford, and Wisconsin.²⁵ Their authors, others with PhDs from within Canada and abroad, and a growing number of students in Canadian graduate programs generated the surge in journal publications during these years. The 1967 assessment, that the corpus of work in Canadian historical geography was "not a unified body of scholarship," and that it encompassed a wide diversity of subjects and methods (by 1974 the latter ranged from deep engagement with archives to content analysis, cultural analysis, and landscape description) remained accurate, but much of the recent work rested on more probing research and more rigorous analysis than had underpinned early efforts in the field.

This rapidly expanding literature undergirded *Canada Before Confederation*, but the book was more than a masterful synthesis of published work. Harris and Warkentin invested a good deal of time in archival research to develop their novel interpretation of the distinctive qualities of Canada's major geographical regions.²⁶ The book also broke new ground in other ways. It was the third in Oxford University Press's series on the Historical Geography of North America, characterized by series editor Andrew Clark as addressing a "little cultivated field of American historical scholarship ... usually called historical geography or geographical history." This he wrote, was a form of inquiry focused on geographical change, appealing to historians, but centrally and vitally concerned with those fundamentally geographical concerns, "place, location, and interaction or diffusion through space...." Harris and Warkentin extended this template to ask how and why humans occupied the land. This meant a stronger emphasis upon landscape than had been evident in most of Clark's own writing, and reflected both a sense of landscapes as human creations (in the WG Hoskins and JB Jackson mould) and the vaguely Collingwoodian or (as Leonard Guelke was arguing at the time) "idealist" conviction that landscapes, as products of human action, provided a key to understanding the minds of their creators.²⁷

Grand syntheses can sometimes foreclose possibilities for further work by their sheer majesty, but Harris and Warkentin invited those who disagreed with parts of their interpretation to do the work to prove them wrong, and their grand survey certainly made it easier for scholars to address one of the shortcomings of the earlier literature by "relat[ing] individual studies to previous work." So the momentum of the previous five years was sustained. In 1975, J David Wood, another Canadian with a PhD from Edinburgh, collected a large handful of essays offering *Perspectives on Landscape and Settlement in Nineteenth Century Ontario*, and Brian Osborne, a Welshman with a doctorate from Southampton convened a British-Canadian Symposium on Historical Geography, which evolved into the ICHG, still going strong in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and yielded a collection of essays entitled *The Settlement of Canada: Origins and Transfer*.²⁸

Reaching beyond the academy, Cole Harris served as general editor for a short series of short books supported by the Canadian Studies Foundation and the Canadian Association of Geographers and published by McClelland and Stewart that was intended to carry the perspectives and insights of historical geography into senior high school classrooms. Harris's own contribution to this series, *Two Societies: Life in Mid Nineteenth Century Quebec*, drew from

an earlier article in the *Canadian Historical Review* to paint an evocative picture of the seigneurie of Petite Nation. Conrad Heidenreich and Skip Ray of York University contributed a volume on the *Early fur trade*, and John Mannion produced a microstudy of the Cape Shore Newfoundland community of *Point Lance in Transition*.²⁹

A year later “the “Colloque du Golfe du St. Laurent” convened at McGill. It brought together a surprisingly large number of enthusiastic young scholars committed to historical and geographical work on people and places ranging from Blanc Sablon to the Avalon Peninsula, from the Strait of Belle Isle to southern New Brunswick. Among the geographers who would later make substantial contributions to the literature on Atlantic Canada were Rosemary Ommer, Patricia Thornton, Larry McCann, and myself. Others, more established, who shared and indeed helped foster the enthusiasm for work on the Atlantic Region that pervaded the conference, were John Mannion, Alan Macpherson and Gordon Handcock from St. John’s and Eric Waddell and Sherry Olsen from Montreal.³⁰ In the end, the colloque spawned the Atlantic Conference (later Workshop) held every two years and continuing in modified guise to this day, and it played no small part in affording geography a significant voice in Atlantic regional scholarship.

These developments owed more than a little to the emergence of Memorial University as a significant centre for research in historical geography. Founded in 1946 the department added an MA program in 1968, and appointed a handful of scholars trained in historical geography or cognate subfields at about this time. Alan Macpherson, with an MA from Edinburgh in his native Scotland and a PhD in progress at McGill, was the first to arrive, in 1966. Yorkshireman Michael Staveley, with a BA and MA from Reading and a PhD pending from Alberta joined the department in 1968. Galwayman John Mannion with a degree from UC Dublin and a Toronto PhD pending, came the next year. In 1970 Bonavista Bay-man and Eastport native Gordon Handcock joined the department in which he had completed his BA and MA, before enrolling in and completing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Birmingham. Bringing disparate conceptions of the field into productive juxtaposition these four individuals shaped a vigorous and distinctive school of historical geography.

Its first and most distinctive monument was *The Peopling of Newfoundland*, a collection of essays edited by John Mannion and published to wide and positive reviews in 1977. Handcock, Macpherson, Mannion, and Staveley each produced a chapter for this volume, one was contributed by a PhD student from the University of Aberdeen sojourning in St John’s while completing her research, and four were by Memorial MA students, three of whom pursued, and completed, doctoral studies elsewhere.³¹

Six features distinguish this collection and help to define the “Memorial School” of historical geography. First, the work it presented was regional and local. Second, it was unified by its emphasis on the specificity of trans-Atlantic and local migrations from particular origins to specific destinations. Third, it was distinguished by the sources upon which it was based; censuses were complemented by parish registers, tombstone surveys, diaries, newspapers, merchant’s letterbooks, various official records and even interviews, reflecting an assiduous, even painstaking, quest for evidence that yielded remarkably fine-grained accounts of settlements and societies. Fourth, the work combined geographical and anthropological influences (derived from Scottish Studies and Estyn Evans), reflected in careful studies of genealogies, clan and kin systems, and material culture traits. Fifth, there was clear commitment to understanding the hearths from which migrants came. And finally, there was a deep desire to understand lives lived along the shores and on the waters of Newfoundland, allowing it to be understood as more than a fishing camp and revealing the resilience and adaptive capacity of its people.

These emphases offered a new and powerful approach to understanding land and life in Newfoundland. They also formed a distinctive strand in Canadian historical geography. Engaged more heavily than their counterparts elsewhere in the country with demographic techniques, influenced to a degree unusual in Canada by concerns characteristic of earlier work on European peasant and Celtic fringe societies, and recognizing the value of an Atlantic perspective in history, members of the “Memorial School” produced a body of scholarship that reflected both

the peculiar conjuncture of influences, approaches and traditions brought together in St John's, and the particular highly distinctive circumstances of Newfoundland. All of these characteristics are also on display in the contributions of this group to the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, which stand as a second monument to their work within the framework of that extraordinary collective achievement.

The *Historical Atlas of Canada*, published in three volumes between 1987 and 1993, reflected the growing sense, among historical geographers and others in Canada, that the subfield was capable of great things.³² Discussions about the possibility of producing a major new scholarly interpretation of the country – one that would reach a wide audience through its beautiful maps, and contribute to the great task of national self-definition – began in 1970. By mid-decade, the daunting magnitude of the task was becoming apparent. An early prospectus envisaged academics from across the country engaging in a “massive multidisciplinary effort” to produce “distributional, analytical and synthesizing maps designed to depict the complex and changing mosaic of human impact on the physical landscape of Canada.”³³ But there was purpose to this ambition. The atlas was conceived of as “a standard reference work for all Canadian high schools and universities” and a contribution that would enable “the literate public” to better understand the making of the country. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council awarded major funding to the project in 1979. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s the behemoth grew. In the end, it drew “hundreds of authors and assistants from thirty universities across Canada, from departments of the federal and provincial public services, from private organizations, and from universities in the United States and Europe,” into its maw.

The result was remarkable, especially as it depended heavily upon the efforts of a relatively small cadre of people. Eventually amounting to 193 plates, most of which included many maps, in English and French, the original volumes spawned a concise (single volume) selection, published in 1998, and an online project that makes some of the original research available in interactive maps accessible on the world wide web. As the Association of American Geographers’ noted in awarding the project a special citation in 1990, it offered an “erudite and elegant exposition of the results of original research in geography and related disciplines.” A scholarly footnote might one day describe the last decades of the twentieth century as the age of national historical atlases, but the “exceptional scope and depth” of the Canadian project was widely seen to have established “a new standard of scholarly excellence.”³⁴

The project was led and largely executed by historical geographers. Through these years there were approximately 50 individuals with more or less active research interests in Canadian historical geography in faculty positions across the country and about three-quarters of them were involved, more or less heavily, with the atlas. The editors of the three volumes were Cole Harris, Lou Gentilcore, and Deryck Holdsworth and Don Kerr. Geographers filled almost half of the 21 seats on the deliberately broadly-constituted editorial boards, and historical geographers, a handful of whom were without faculty positions, took major responsibility for 35 of 50 plates dealing with the historical period in Vol I, and almost two-thirds of all those in Vol II and Vol III.³⁵ Little wonder then that the *HAC* reflected the broad emphases of Canadian historical geography at the time, and sought to emphasize, as Cole Harris said of volume I “the economic and social circumstances of ordinary life rather than the more usual fare of historical atlases: geopolitical events and their historical consequences.” Without in any way detracting from the magnificent cartographic achievement that is the *Atlas*, it is true to say that most of its maps did the “relatively simple things” that were the stock-in-trade of the subfield as then conceived: they showed “broad patterns of distribution, routes of movement, and... the layout of individual settlements.”³⁶

When Volume II (actually the third to appear) was published in 1993, “the \$7.5-million project had extended eight years longer than originally planned and had required major financial restructuring three times.” It had surely tested the limits of administrative tolerance and bilingual publishing in Canada. Conceived in the age of the typewriter and of cartography practiced with scribing knives, mapping pens and mylar sheets, the project survived a Byzantine editorial process (“nine distinct stages of editorial procedures during which a minimum of seven persons

participated in 10 editorial functions producing six edited products which required a minimum of 12 editorial checks”) and coped with (and benefited from) a transition through use of floppy disks to its current web presence.³⁷ It also took a significant toll in time and cross-country travel upon the editors. When all was said and done, however, this slowly realized and unexpectedly cumbersome initiative had to be counted a triumph. All three volumes sold well. Individually and together they received a string of major awards. They also won attention and respect for historical geography within and beyond Canada.

Perhaps in reflection of this, Canadian historical geographers were significantly involved in a number of major, widely-noticed projects during the 1980s. *The Illustrated History of Canada* edited by Craig Brown and published in 1987, appeared in English, French, and Spanish editions and sold considerably more copies than the most successful of the Atlas volumes.³⁸ Still in print and described as “a Canadian classic,” its six substantial chapters include two written by historical geographers – Skip Ray (by this time a member of the UBC History department), and myself. Larry McCann’s edited *Heartland and Hinterland*, which appeared in 1982, was also widely read and appeared in several editions.³⁹ Intended as a work of synthesis and a contribution to the understanding of Canadian regional geography, it included a clear focus on contemporary issues and present day patterns in its 14 chapters. For all that, Cole Harris, Don Kerr, Jock Lehr, Larry McCann, P J Smith, Michael Staveley, and I offered strongly historical perspectives in our various contributions to the volume, leading historian Ramsay Cook to describe it “as a showpiece of the often excellent historical work of Canadian geographers.”⁴⁰ Canada also took its place in *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent* edited by Bob Mitchell and Paul Groves, with chapters on the French presence in North America, on British North America, and on the post-Confederation period (1867-present) by Cole Harris, Tom McIlwraith, and myself, respectively.⁴¹

Others continued to add more specialized studies to the growing corpus of work in the field. It is quite impossible to identify, here, all who did so. The University of Chicago’s *A Scholar’s Guide to Geographical Writing on the American and Canadian Past* provides a reasonably full accounting and also allows acknowledgement of a small handful of relatively productive scholars not heretofore mentioned, whose contributions stand as significant interventions.⁴² Most single-minded among these was John Clarke, in the middle years of a career largely devoted to studying the settlement history of Essex County in far southwestern Ontario. Author of a score of articles on land acquisition, land speculation and related topics since his 1970 dissertation completed at the University of Western Ontario, he was developing a level of familiarity with, and a data base pertaining to, a chosen corner of the country unrivalled elsewhere in Canada. Eventually this focused and assiduous toil would yield two large, heavily-empirical volumes, on *Land, Power and Economics in Upper Canada* (2001) and *The Ordinary People of Essex* (2010) which likely make Essex county the most intensely chronicled 875 square miles of territory in the entire country.⁴³ By 1990, Clarke’s UWO classmate, Alan Brunger, had produced a series of papers charting patterns of ethnic group settlement and “geographical propinquity” among members of migrant groups in Upper Canada.⁴⁴ And several important essays by Kenneth Kelly, a 1968 PhD from the University of Toronto, had done much to advance understanding of nineteenth century agriculture and land management in Upper Canada-Ontario.⁴⁵ Far less easily characterized but equally influential was the work of Brian Osborne, on topics ranging from frontier trading, marital fertility and housing tenure to studies of the Canadian postal system and the iconography of nationhood in Canadian art.⁴⁶

Urban historical geography also flourished as Canadian historians and geographers found new interest in cities. Between 1970 and 1990 students at Toronto and York universities completed well over two-dozen theses and dissertations on the city and its suburbs. In Montreal, Sherry Olsen, Pat Thornton, David Hanna and Robert Lewis led the “Shared Spaces/ Partage de l’espace” project that revealed important facets of that city’s social geography.⁴⁷ In Vancouver historical and contemporary urban interests were blended in studies that explored the influence of “social belief” and ideology in the built environment, and the social geographies of elite and

immigrant groups in the city.⁴⁸ A decade after completing his PhD at Queen's University, Richard Harris was well embarked on a productive publishing career that would make him a Canadian, and international, leader in studies of housing tenure and suburban development.⁴⁹

In little more than two decades, the corpus of Canadian historical geography had soared beyond the 150 entries in Cole Harris's 1967 bibliography to exceed 2000; near 400 graduate theses and dissertations had been added to the 50 identified by Harris and over 100 still-active scholars (not all trained or primarily identified as historical geographers) had contributed historical publications to the Canadian literature. Aware of this remarkable outpouring, the editors of the New Canadian Readings series, produced by Copp Clark Pitman, commission a compilation and assessment of the field. This appeared in 1990, as *People, Places, Patterns, Processes*, (hereafter *P4*) a title intended to capture the main emphases of work through the previous two decades.⁵⁰

Reflecting on the literature from which he drew his selection, the editor of *P4* sought to find common threads in the broad weave of recent geographical scholarship on the Canadian past. At least two of these – the urban and the “quantitative” – were given too little attention. One the urban, was treated relatively briefly because it fell in part within the purview of another volume in the series.⁵¹ The second, on the evolution of spatial form, reflecting the quantitative, logical-positivist enthusiasms of geographical analysis in the 1960s and 1970s, had found some purchase in the McMaster and UWO graduate programs and had set Bill Norton and a handful of others to simulate pre-census populations, to characterize the pioneer economy using land-use theory and (to adapt the title of one of Norton's papers), construct abstract worlds of the past.⁵² But this was a more vigorous line of inquiry in the 1970s than the 1980s and by the end of that decade its momentum had largely dissipated.

Concluding that an important distinguishing feature of Canadian historical geography, had been “its respect for reality,” the editor observed that still-important emphases had been signaled in *Canada Before Confederation*. Canada's historical geographers were interested in regions and landscapes and the processes of their creation by people. Several sought to “see the land with the eyes of its former inhabitants”; others considered the ways in which territories were differentiated by occupance and use. Taken as a whole, Canadian historical geography encompassed a very wide range of topics and was conducted at a great array of scales; much of it exhibited a strong materialist emphasis. Overall the literature included much more on settlement patterns, on farm-making and rural life, than it did on small towns and suburbs. “Values, ideologies, and beliefs, the state, demographic, economic and social forces, and kinship, land speculation, technology and the law” had all been invoked in the quest for understanding.⁵³

From one line of sight the literature extant in 1990 appeared much more diffuse than that available in 1967. Yet it was also markedly more integrated. In “The Simplification of Europe Overseas,” Cole Harris had developed a basic argument, extending the ideas of F J Turner, H A Innis and A H Clark, about the mechanisms that differentiated new world societies from those in the old world.⁵⁴ In the *Historical Atlas* and other major contributions, historical geographers had sketched out many of the fundamental lineaments of the country and offered up broad and influential interpretations of Canadian development. Approaching the end of the millennium, a prominent Canadian historian told me that historical geographers had produced most of the best work in Canadian history through the 1980s, a decade when, he said, historical geography had “set the agenda” for exciting work in his field.

“We just lost sight of the Queensport light down the bay before us”

Within Geography, however, the bones told a more ambiguous story. Perhaps it should be no surprise to historical geographers that the future was not ours' to see, but those among us who scanned the forward horizon in the late 1980s and early 1990s recognized that the times they were a changing. Taking a relatively long and retrospective view, Bob Mitchell noted, in his introduction to *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, that the antagonism between deductive theory and humanistic synthesis that had framed debate ca 1970

no longer drove discussions about geographical practice. Although he could still differentiate between “studies that use the past as the distinctive focus to be examined on its own terms,” and studies that “use the past selectively to explore the historical validity of current theories of human behavior” Mitchell noted that it had “become clear that geographical theory could not be separated from social theory.” Distinctions between “old” and “new” approaches to the past, he averred, “appeared less and less clear.” This led him, in 1987, to the benign conclusion that: “trends in history and the social sciences ... have forced a greater awareness of the need to examine basic assumptions underlying historical research in geography.”⁵⁵

In broad agreement, I saw sunshine rather than clouds ahead. “For all the debate going on among social theorists about the appropriate orientation, subject matter, focus and procedures of their study,” I wrote in *P4*, the broad stream of “social theory” carried the promise of a more integrated geography, “one conscious of the impact of the past on the present, concerned with ‘knowledgeable and capable human subjects’ shaping lives within the contingencies of their settings, and therefore thoroughly congenial to the traditions of historical geography.” Herein lay prospects for “an even more vital, exciting historical geography” than that which had served as a beacon for many Canadian historians.⁵⁶

Cole Harris fuelled the optimism and extended the argument in “Power, Modernity and Historical Geography,” published in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* in 1991.⁵⁷ Noting how the intellectual climate had changed since the emergence of historical geography, and impressed by the way in which human geography was coming to reflect “broad, interdisciplinary interests in culture, the political implications of authorship and elaborate post-Marxian and post-Weberian accounts of the changing dynamics of power,” he offered an exegesis of what he took to be the most pertinent insights of Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann. After years of immersion in the Historical Atlas project Harris found his intellectual horizons enlarged by this theoretical literature, which he saw as a congenial assemblage of ideas capable of stimulating productive thought, rather than as a corpus of knowledge to be applied deductively. “A growing conversation between historical geography and parts of social theory would,” he concluded, “enrich both, while drawing historical geography into much closer association with the rest of human geography.” More than this, it seemed, the intellectual climate of the times had “the potential to move historical geography into more prominence than ever before.”

At UBC the conversation to which Harris alluded was facilitated by the presence of Derek Gregory, newly arrived from Cambridge in 1989, and a number of very able graduate students engaged with the social theoretical literature as British undergraduates and/ or prepared to do the hard work of mastering these ideas even as they immersed themselves in archives and the complexities of particular places.⁵⁸ The best results of this conjuncture were, both transformative and impressive. “Having read Foucault,” Harris observed, “I will not be able to write on British Columbia as if I had not read him.”⁵⁹ But such makeovers were neither common nor widespread. The catalytic moment was just that, a short period of excellence manifest in only a few places and exhibiting little of the capacity Harris anticipated to place historical geography at “the heart of a reconstructed human geography.”

There were many reasons for this, but they might be summarized broadly as follows. Demographic and institutional circumstances worked against the widespread embrace of new approaches in Canadian historical geography; the promise that human geography shaped by “social theory” would develop “a substantial interest in the past” proved illusory; and as disciplinary interests were focused and refocused in the two decades around the millennium, historical geography found itself- to invoke William Koelsch’s extravagant analogy once more- neither sheep nor goat in the marketplace of new hires.⁶⁰

The massive expansion of higher education in the 1960s and early 1970s had been good for Canadian historical geography, opening up positions and laying the groundwork for the great outpouring of historical geographical scholarship in the following decade or two. But young men – and those involved were almost entirely male – grew old in these positions. Few historical

geographers were hired into tenure lines in the 1980s. By 1990 the youngest of the 1960s-early '70s cohort were mid-career scholars; others were little more than a decade from mandatory retirement. Many were employed in departments without graduate programs, while some of the country's largest graduate departments had one or fewer historical geographers with Canadian interests on their books (at least hinting at a perception that historical geography was good to teach, but less important as a research specialization).

Perhaps reflecting as much, several individuals trained and appointed as historical geographers had developed contemporary research interests; others were publishing little. Certainly, shifts in research focus and waning individual vigor were not unique to historical geographers; indeed the traffic flowed both ways as a few colleagues found new interest in historical scholarship during the decade. But institutional pressures – from sometimes subtle shifts in the allocation of research grant funding by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to the growing emphasis on the importance of frequent publication for career advancement in our leading universities – exacted a premium from those whose work entailed the long gestation periods characteristic of historical research. The effects were incremental, and in Canadian historical geography at least, the late 1980s are better seen as a time of stability than of transcendent change. A few colleagues – William Wonders, Richard Ruggles, and Don Kerr among them – retired. A small handful of new appointments were made.

Overall, the situation in 1990 looked little different from that in 1980. Historical geography at York remained strong numerically, and colleagues there continued to publish regularly. With the addition of Simon Evans to its Corner Brook campus, Memorial had half a dozen active historical geographers, but only an MA program, and as each of these people pursued increasingly individual interests, few graduate students took up historical studies. Remarkably, all four professorial-track members of the Mount Allison University department in 1990 were active historical geographers, but they had no graduate program. Without the stimulus provided by new colleagues or graduate students, with the implicit costs (and risks) entailed in rethinking one's *modus operandi*, and with a great deal of research capital invested in particular archives, topics and approaches, the prevailing choice (conscious or otherwise) of most Canadian historical geographers was to hold course. So the furrows carved though the good years were extended into the last decade of the century.

More than inertia may have motivated some of those who made the decision to stay with what they knew. As human geography moved ever deeper in its embrace of “social theory” – which phrase I am using here as a shorthand for a veritable portmanteau of philosophical and epistemological perspectives including the relativistic, “heteroglossial” impulse of postmodernism, the view that reality is socially constructed, and various forms of post-structuralism – current practice challenged many of the comforting verities of earlier scholarship in the social sciences and the humanities. The well-entrenched idea that scholars, and social scientists in particular, were detached “objective” interpreters of the world, who steered clear of fanciful, fictitious, idiosyncratic, and imaginative accounts of human circumstances to provide accurate, factual descriptions – verisimilitude – was perhaps the first to fall.

Whereas Bronislaw Malinowski had welcomed Raymond Firth's first work on Tikopia as proof that cultural anthropology was not “a factory of impressionistic, short-cuts or guess-work reconstructions,” and two generations of anthropologists had seen themselves as careful cartographers rather than exuberant, slapdash painters of the social world, now the very possibility of representation – and in that phrase I include description, comparison, classification, and generalization – stood indicted as a delusion.⁶¹ All texts were evocations, and “the whole visualist ideology of referential discourse, with ... its presumption of representational signification” was an emperor without clothes.⁶² For many Canadian historical geographers, whose field had been so long and so fully wedded to studies of distributional patterns and landscape forms, and who had hardly questioned the importance of providing accurate knowledge of the past, these were difficult claims to accept.

Introspection was an inescapable corollary of the new social theoretical impulse. What price the historical scholar's judgment, honed by hard work in relevant sources, based on deep familiarity with the time, place and circumstances under investigation, and dependent upon an acuity judged in the marketplace of informed scholarly opinion, if (as the relativist argument would have it), all texts and circumstances hold multiple, and equally valid meanings? If discourse theory questions the possibility of objective knowledge, can the researcher offer anything more than his/her own views, inevitably shaped by experience (pre-judice) and reflective of one's "positionality"? The burden of authorship, the nature of authorial assumptions, the asymmetries of authority and power, all of these have become vexing questions, in one way or another, under the new dispensation, even for those most open to the possibilities of so-called "critical" perspectives in historical geography. Cole Harris whose work on native-European interactions in British Columbia exemplifies the potential of theoretically informed, deeply empirical research in the field has confronted the consequent self-doubt: "Am I" he asks, "in a sense, living off the avails, somewhat like the archeologist Harlan Smith who came in the 1890s to study the Thompson Indians and shipped to New York every important artifact he could find? Are my texts, like those of ethnographers who assumed natives were becoming Europeans, making it harder for people to be what they are or what they want to be? If they might be, then have I the right to write?"⁶³

Although the critical geography impulse has sharpened our understanding in many ways, reminding us that culture is "a struggled over set of social relations" rather than a "given thing," that landscapes are extremely complex social and symbolic formations, and that the world is threaded through with structures of power, it has not produced the foretold new dawn of a more historically-engaged human geography. Putting none too fine a point on it, the recent cultural, textual, and constructionist "turns" might be likened to earthquakes that have shaken the very bedrock upon which the study of history *qua* history rests. Historians have heard and felt the rumblings and heeded them to some extent by shoring up the foundations of their practice and remodeling the shape of their enterprise to some degree. But for all the impassioned pleadings of a few of their number, who urged them to move to the postmodern side of the street, most have refused to abandon their ancient dwelling place. Geographers, by contrast and in a manner not unfamiliar, were quick to relocate to new intellectual territory. Entailing a shift in focus from "the world out there" to "the world in our heads" - from a concern with the multiple forces acting in the world to a preoccupation with the ways in which humans have constructed and interpreted the world - and occurring when it did, during a period of financial uncertainty, and the severe curtailment of faculty hiring in Canadian universities, this move had less than propitious consequences for an historical geography that "respected reality."⁶⁴

In proselytizing mood, influential proponents of new thought denigrated historical geography as a tired and fusty endeavor lacking relevance and devoid of prospects. Graduate students, acutely sensitive to the winds that shape job markets and, variously, scorned by their peers for suggesting that the world might be understood without being refracted through lenses ground by Foucault, Derrida, Butler, Deleuze, Guattari, or Agamben, intrigued by the selfsame group of thinkers and others, or (like most young people) keen to be close to "the action," turned increasingly to cultural theory to tease out the multiple meanings of singular objects, particular events or specific sites. Many of the results were insightful and impressive. But they, also, and in their own ways, offered particular and idiosyncratic interpretations of their subjects. "When I was asked to review a book entitled *The Intemperate Rainforest*, reflected one Canadian historian, about Bruce Braun's remarkable volume that stands as one of the landmark contributions of the new genre of cultural theoretical work on Canada, "I expected it would be about trees. But ...[it] is really about words, and also paintings, photographs, advertisements, posters, diagrams, and (occasionally) maps."⁶⁵

With its strong social constructivist emphasis, cultural theory foregrounds texts, discourse, and rhetoric at the expense of more quotidian concerns. As Cole Harris came to argue in "How did Colonialism Dispossess?" published in 2004, inquiry in this vein largely eschews engagement

with the differences that mark particular times and places to focus on the ways in which they have been constructed or represented.⁶⁶ Carried to its logical end it also tells us more about ourselves than about the world out there, however imperfectly we may be able to know that world. Although relatively few of the papers published in *The Canadian Geographer* during the 1990s embraced critical theory, a growing number of the items published elsewhere by human geographers based in Canada reflected the broader disciplinary trend toward work of this type.

Far from being a foreign country, to be considered on its own terms, for its intrinsic interest, the past was also remade by critical theorists, as a mirror to the present. There are several strands to this story, but most of them originate with Foucault, whose, critical history, or history of the present, suggests Michael Roth, is at least at some level a form of "antihistory" because it attempts "to make the present into a past which we leave behind, and not into a history that we tightly embrace as our own."⁶⁷ More revealingly, the recently established University of Illinois journal that uses both of these Foucauldian phrases in its title aims "to create a space in which scholars can reflect on the role history plays in establishing categories of contemporary debate ...; and to ...[call] into question [taken-for-granted] certainties about the relationship between past and present."⁶⁸ This, says Hayden White, leads ultimately to the "disremembrance of things past."⁶⁹ Perhaps early manifestations of this tendency lay behind English historian Eric Hobsbawm's lament, late in the twentieth century, that young people had grown up "in a permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times in which they live."⁷⁰ In Geography, in Canada, the practical results of all of this have, I think, combined with larger fiscal and intellectual circumstances to have very significant effects upon historical geography.

The last two decades have not been easy ones for Canadian geography departments. University leaders have spoken of budgetary retrenchment more frequently than of real growth, and the country's leading institutions, aspiring to those ill-defined heights called "excellence" and "world-class" have recognized that certain types of investment bring greater returns than others in the effort to climb global rankings. For the most part this has steered scarce resources away from Arts and the Humanities, and even away from basic Science. Add to this the tendency to define the university's role evermore insistently in instrumentalist terms, and it is clear that the values associated with a liberal **education** (in which historical geography could always claim a proud place) have been marginalized by calls for market relevance and useful training.

In department after department these circumstances have combined to make each "new" position (which is mostly to say "replacement" for a departure or retirement), a scarce and hard-won prize, subject to heated contestation. In the face of competing claims, and pressing demands, from students and others, for expansion of capacity in demonstrably useful areas of the discipline such as GIS, in those fields that stand the best prospects of attracting research funding (say health geography), and in areas that mirror current societal concerns (sustainability/ climate change), hiring historical geographers has not been a high priority. When internal departmental debates (in which historical geographers are invariably a minority) have steered job searches to less applied and instrumentalist subfields of the discipline, advertisements have almost invariably emphasized the need for competence in the perceived "hot" or latest theoretical realms of human geography.

Coming at a time when the cadre of historical geographers appointed in the 1960s and 1970s was moving into retirement, the combined effects of all of this were as dramatic as they were, perhaps, unanticipated. Typically two or more "historical" positions would be "replaced" by one new appointee; although that person might have strong historical interests, they more than likely filled a slot described as a cultural or critical geography position. With this shift went courses in "historical geography." Explicitly historical perspectives were increasingly confined to courses with broader, more contemporary (and in truth more widely recognizable) foci, such as "Globalization." In the process, historical geography lost its "shingle." The sense of the subdiscipline as a distinctive field began to fade. So too, of course, did the number of historical geographers across the country decline precipitously.

From the direction of Mr. Rogers' neighbourhood, I hear a lament:

In Make and Break Harbour the boats are so few
 Too many are hauled up and rotten.
 Most houses stand empty, old nets hung to dry
 Are blown away, lost and forgotten

Now I can see the big draggers have stirred up the bay
 Leaving lobster traps smashed on the bottom
 Can they think it don't pay to respect the old ways
 That Make and Break men have not forgotten⁷¹

"to sing, about the trees and the wind, / 'Bout the hills in spring, and the rivers that bend,"

Here and there across the country, this story followed a slightly different trajectory, although it too may have to be framed, in the end, as a declensionist narrative. In my early days as a graduate student in Toronto I felt a certain tension between rising societal concern about environmental issues and the loose (but nonetheless quite effective) "disciplinary norms" of Canadian historical geography that made regional patterns or "areal differentiation" its fundamental concern. Framed in substantial part by Andrew Clark under the influence of Richard Hartshorne, these norms mirrored North American geography's decisive drift, during the 1950s and 1960s, away from the discipline's earlier interest in human-environment relations.⁷² Schooled in this older view of geography as an integrative discipline, I was then neither bold nor wise enough to craft a dissertation that broke completely with prevailing expectations. But some have found evidence of my environmental/ecological interests written, so to speak, between the lines of disciplinary orthodoxy in this early work.

Watching the emergence of a new field called environmental history in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, I found it entirely congenial (and in many ways familiar) to my geographical way of thinking. Did not practitioners of this new form of history suggest that it was concerned, in part, with the ways in which humans had transformed the face of the earth? And was this not what geographers had traditionally claimed as one of their abiding interests? Indeed, I found strong echoes of Carl Sauer's views of geography in a 1979 publication called *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change*, the first book by the brilliant and now famous environmental historian, Richard White.⁷³

As environmental history flourished in the United States and elsewhere, however, it seemed to languish in Canada. Few environmental historians were hired into Canadian history departments that were suffering all of the same institutional challenges and pressures as faced Geography programs from the mid-1980s. Such purchase as the field gained came in large part from historians trained in the Canadian political economy tradition that traced its roots back to Harold Innis – and which had in fact informed a good deal of Canadian historical geographical scholarship, including my own. Reflecting my interests and my sense that work on the human-environment interface was of growing interest to students, *P4* included what some likely considered a disproportionate emphasis on work in this vein. So opportunity seemed to beckon during the 1990s. Might not geographers once again set the agenda for Canadian historians by reclaiming Geography's long-asserted but substantially under-nourished interest in the human-environment interface? Here was space, time and reason enough to encourage good, even exemplary, work in environmental historical geography?

In context there was nothing particularly brave about this course, but at UBC fortune smiled on us as we pursued it. We attracted a cluster of able students interested broadly in environmental history; some of them were historians excited by the prospect of interdisciplinary work. In the decade after 1996, I was fortunate to have David Demeritt, Robert Wilson, Arn Keeling, Matthew

Schnurr, and Shannon Stunden Bower, all of whom have since made significant contributions to the literature, complete their doctorates with me. There were also several good MA students. In 2000, we hired Matthew Evenden to replace Cole Harris, and before long NiCHE, the Canadian Network in Canadian History and Environment developed from chrysalis to highly active national web. With three historical geographers (Evenden, Laura Cameron and myself) among its core group of seven, NiCHE has been a marvelous catalyst encouraging, promoting and disseminating historical and geographical work with an environmental focus in and on Canada, and fostering an unprecedented level of communication among graduate students, faculty and others interested in the field.⁷⁴ With the support of UBC Press, the Nature | History | Society book series initiated in 2004 has gone from strength to strength (it now includes 18 fine monographs, with several more in process and a count of 25 by 2015 not beyond possibility).

Geographers have contributed significantly to the burgeoning literature in this area, with monographs in the N|H|S series (Linton, Bavington, Stunden Bower) and beyond (such as Evenden's *Fish versus Power* on the Fraser River, and his co-authored *The River Returns*, on the Bow River of Alberta);⁷⁵ with essays in such collections as *BC Studies on the Environment* (2004);⁷⁶ with contributions to several journals (including the *Journal of Historical Geography*, *Environmental History*, *History and Environment*, and *Historical Geography*);⁷⁷ and with a sweeping interdisciplinary interpretation of the environmental history of *Canada and Arctic North America*.⁷⁸ But any realistic assessment would have to conclude that historians have come to dominate this interdisciplinary space in the last five to ten years. Several history departments have hired in the area and offer courses in "environmental history". These hires and the explicit recognition of the field have attracted graduate students. The momentum definitely seems to lie with this group.

Meanwhile historically inclined colleagues in geography departments continue the long battle to hold open a place for the past in the field. Keeling now the only historical geographer in the Memorial University department that was once so strong in the field, was hired to teach cultural geography. Laura Cameron, the Canada Research Chair in Historical Geographies of Nature at Queen's University in Ontario teaches a second year course on the geographies of Canada, third year courses titled "Geographical Imaginations" and "Environments & Societies" and a graduate course that explores cultures and histories of fieldwork. Both publish as historical geographers, and have good, active graduate programs, but the question remains: from whence will capable students come to work in these areas if and as historical geography fades from undergraduate curricula?

"Oh to leeward was the island and to win'ard was the gale"

As I look back across, and try to make sense of, a history (and a career) that is (rather depressingly) nudging toward a half-century span, I sometimes have the sense that my time has been more-or-less bookended by two momentous "revolutions" - the positivist/quantitative upheaval of the late 1960s/early 1970s and the social theoretical/ postmodernist/ cultural impulse that marked the turn of the millennium. Although proponents of each argued forcefully for the power and "rightness" of their particular views, these were, of course radically different "moments." It may be an illusion, or simply a product of the passage of time, but in retrospect (as indeed at the time), the latter seems/seemed far more diverse and diffuse than the former. And this was, I think, highly consequential for historical geography.

Bolstered by widespread enthusiasm for the logical positivist position in the 1950s and carrying Richard Hartshorne's 1939 attempt to define the discipline to its logical culmination, the "quantitative revolution" envisaged geography as a law-finding spatial science. Time, and the environment, had little place in this view of the subject. The battle lines were clear -- and they had been rehearsed. Just as Andrew H Clark had pushed back against Hartshorne's ideas to claim (what I would describe as a constrained) place for the past in geography in the 1950s, so many historical geographers felt the need to resist a unitary definition of geography as spatial analysis

in the 1960 and early 1970s. The choice seemed stark: make the case for difference, or fall upon the scientific method's procrustean bed. Because others with an historical turn of mind had framed and proclaimed an argument for historical and humanistic understanding as something apart from the positivists' favoured deductive-nomological mode of explanation, there were models of dissent to hand. So, in resistance, a legitimate space for historical work in geography was defined, and indeed broadened by the subject's so-called humanistic turn of the late 1970s.⁷⁹ This was, still, and generally, a particular and limited form of historical analysis, perhaps more concerned with patterns and processes and the making of places and landscapes than with the ideas, actions and aspirations of people. But it was a distinctive form of inquiry that generated both insight and interest.

By contrast with the quantitative revolution, the social theory impulse seemed far more congenial to geographers with historical interests. Despite their strong and enduring "respect for reality," they had long understood, with their colleagues in history departments, that history was ultimately interpretation; they knew that each generation wrote its own history, and that objectivity in the broadest sense (of detachment rather than accuracy) was but a noble dream.⁸⁰ As it turned to flood, many thought to join the new social-theoretical tide. It seemed capable of lifting all ships to new heights of shared interests and endeavour; here, it appeared, was a surge upon which formerly disparate craft might sail in convoy, under the guiding light of a few theoretical stars. By contrast with the threat of obliteration that had loomed in the 1960s, historical geographers were encouraged to believe there might be prominent place for historical understanding in a revitalized, reconstructed human geography at the turn of the millennium.

Yet things have not, perhaps, turned out quite as enthusiasts anticipated. In its tendency to privilege "the World according to the Word," the cultural turn has shifted the balance of scholarly attention in human geography from the material to the immaterial, from physical to mental, from matter to mind.⁸¹ Much of this has been valuable, directing attention to struggles for influence and control in society, moving geographers beyond landscape description to consider, among other things, the symbolic and political dimensions of place-making, and raising questions about the distribution of power and how it is (and was) exercised. But in fostering a tendency toward presentism it has reduced the intrinsic value of the past and scanted efforts to understand it on its own terms.

As I conclude these reflections, I find it difficult not to think of Canadian historical geography's last few decades as the metaphorical equivalent of Odysseus's journey through the Straits of Messina. On one side, a rock shoal – the six-headed sea monster of critical social theory. On the other, a whirlpool – threatening to drag the once mighty, now frail craft of Canadian historical geography into the deep waters of environmental history. Doom to the left, death to the right. How to navigate between the hazards of Scylla and Charybdis? The myth, and the question it embodies, have been invoked time and again: by a political cartoonist portraying William Pitt steering the British constitution between the rock of democracy and the sinkhole of arbitrary power; by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*, in reference to the rebel barricades at Faubourg Saint Antoine and Faubourg du Temple; even by the American heavy metal band Trivium pondering "destruction by decision" in 2008. Pitt had set course for the haven of liberty. Who knows where historical geography is headed or what course it should steer to get there? Odysseus, wiser and braver than I, chose to sail close to Scylla, figuring the death of a few sailors better than the loss of his ship in the whirlpool. Should this be our answer too? I cannot say.

"Let me feel my dory lift"

My conclusions, you may think, are not entirely happy ones. Death or Doom? Those of you who know Stan Rogers' work might even hear echoes, in all of this, of one of his finest, most poignant, and most elegiac songs, "The Rawdon Hills":

The grandsons of the mining men scratch the fields among the trees, //
 When the gold played out they were all turned out with granite dusted knees; // But at night
 around the stoves, sometimes the stories still unfold, //
 How the Rawdon Hills once were touched by gold. //⁸²

But this is not the time to grow nostalgic, keen a lament, and think of our historical-geographical selves as scratching thin fields beneath the robust and luxuriant growth of other forms of geographical inquiry. Fields can be fertilized, and the essential point of Straits is that they CAN be navigated. Despite my deep concerns about the future of the past in geography, I refuse to join those who have declared *The End of History*, seen *The Death of the Past*, or asked *Who Killed Canadian History?*⁸³ In my view, historical geography is neither a thing of the past, nor a field facing life-threatening crisis. Yes, it is changing, and there are things we need to worry about – a lot. It is no longer sufficient (to paraphrase another of Rogers' songs), to sit back and watch the apples grow. We need to push back, again, against the idea that historical geography has neither contemporary relevance nor something distinctive to say about worlds we have lost. We need to insist on the importance of engaging the past in various ways. We also need concern ourselves with what Rogers calls "The Field Behind the Plow." We need to "Put another season's promise in the ground"⁸⁴ by attracting top-notch graduate students, inspiring them, and ensuring that there are jobs from which they can build and sustain the vigor of historical work in geography. To do all of this, however, we need to move beyond "the old ways/That Make and Break men [and folks like me] have not forgotten." We need to accept that twenty-first century historical geography is going to be very different from the subject that formed the springboard of my career. "The past" (as the Canadian Roderick Haig-Brown once said of "conservation") is a dynamic, not a static conception, subject to transmutation and re-presentation according to the particular social, cultural, economic, intellectual, and other influences playing on its producers.⁸⁵

Intellectual historian Mark Phillips, whose work focuses on theories of historical representation, offers us a useful way of thinking about this shifting scene. Although his concern is ultimately with "the myriad forms and practices that have served the purposes of historical representation over the centuries," it seems to me that his musings offer a pertinent focus for thinking about the shape and prospects of historical practice in changing times.⁸⁶ Phillips seeks, first and foremost, to complicate the commonplace understanding that "truth is the daughter of time," or (as Eric Hobsbawm once had it), that "Retrospectiveness is the secret weapon of the historian" because it provides him/her with the detachment necessary to see developments in proper proportion and thus to assess their implications accurately.⁸⁷ Rather, Phillips argues, time-distance "needs to be re-conceived in terms of the wider set of engagements that mediate our relations to the past, as well as the full spectrum of distance-positions from near to far." More than the "bequest of time," historical distance "is the work of hands, hearts, and minds (sometimes tugging in different directions)."⁸⁸

In this view, temporality is not a simple chronological gradient. "Calendrical time and objective knowledge," Phillips writes, "have to be put in context with other forms of engagement that mediate the now/then of history. Formal structures and rhetorics, affective coloring and ideological commitments, the quest for intelligibility and understanding—the push and pull of these fundamental investments give historical time a complex plasticity...." Temporality is "bound up with other distances that come from our need to engage with the historical past as (simultaneously) a realm of *making*, of *feeling*, of *doing*, and of *understanding*."⁸⁹ Here Phillips contends: "what histories 'most manifestly' do is to mediate the relationship between the now of the present and the *then* of both past and future."⁹⁰ More than this, Phillips believes that scholars (let's be specific and say historians/historical geographers) have long followed certain self-imposed but ever-shifting rules about the levels of detachment or intimacy that are appropriate to their inquiries. He calls these the "norms of distance" – and it seems clear that those that prevail in much contemporary (historical) geographical scholarship are quite different from those generally adopted a half-century ago.

Further, Phillips argues, every historical work involves at least four aspects of representation: the conventions that shape its structures; the affective claims it makes; its implications for action; and its preferred modes of explanation. These “overlapping, but distinctive distances -- formal, affective, ideological, and cognitive” – provide Phillips with an analytic framework for examining changing modes of historical representation and comparing different media and genres.⁹¹

The implications of all of this are nicely summarized in a single short paragraph in which Phillips outlines his reformulation of historical distance as a heuristic rather than as dogma:

Scientific time may be measured by abstractions, but history’s movements are neither neutral nor uniform. Though time is often compared to a river ..., it might equally be imagined as a city street, where the traffic changes its rhythms at different times of the day, and where the flow of present purposes rubs up against structures built by earlier generations. In narrative, as in a streetscape, heterogeneity produces a variety not reducible to a single optimum viewpoint – what some have wanted to call a *truly* historical perspective. Rather, historical distance emerges as a complex balance that has as much to do with the emotional or political uses of the past as with its explanatory functions or its formal design.⁹²

In this big tent, on this wide street, historical endeavours assume many forms. In place of the hand-wringing anxiety produced by the “but-is-it-geography?” and “How do we accommodate an interest in time-past in a discipline concerned with space?” questions of yesteryear, and the tedious debates about cross-sections and vertical themes to which they gave rise, Phillips’ nuanced view of historical distance holds the promise of a more varied and inclusive historical practice.⁹³ This, I would suggest (with Phillips) opens the way to thinking about history as a “mediatory practice” that requires a “fusion of horizons” and embraces a wide range of positions, “none of which is privileged except in relation to the specific purposes pursued by historical authors and readers.”⁹⁴ These are hardly radical claims (nor do they purvey entirely new sentiments), but engaging with this well-grounded, catholic understanding of historical practices and purposes has the potential, I would hope, to open a richer, more varied, and more cherished place for the past in Geography than has been characteristic of recent years.⁹⁵

* * *

I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to make some small contributions to the story I have sketched here, and for the honour done me in recognizing them. But I am acutely conscious, as I finish tracing my one warm line through the course of historical geography in Canada, that I have been engaged in a deeply personal exercise, and that this account is in some sense an example of what the French historian Pierre Nora would call *ego-histoire* (self-history) – a marriage of the personal and the historical.⁹⁶ These reflections are not strictly speaking a memoir so much as a memoiristic essay, in which my own views and recollections connect with, infuse, and colour representations of both my own scholarship and that of countless colleagues who have guided, sustained, and yes, even goaded, me over the years.

That I have dared to venture down this path is another reflection of how things are changing – and of how even old dogs can bark up a new trick or two. *Ego-histoire*, observes Kenneth Dewar, a thoughtful, under-recognized Canadian historian, “represents an explicit departure from the ideal of objectivity, and the embrace of what its adherents believe to be an inescapable subjectivity....”⁹⁷ As Dewar notes, the very emergence of such a concept, such a practice, reflects the blurring of boundaries between historical genres, which is itself associated with the blurring of boundaries between disciplines in recent years. Seen more generally yet, this reflects the crumbling of those rigid demarcations between different types of scholarship so assiduously reinforced during the heyday of professional and disciplinary specialization in the

20th century. Reacting against what he described, fulsomely and provocatively, as the century-long scientific project that had misguidedly “compelled historians to disappear behind their work, hide their personalities under their erudition, barricade themselves behind their note cards, flee from themselves into another age, [and] express themselves only through others,” Nora called for a new kind of autobiographical writing that worked the boundary between historical interpretations and personal experience.⁹⁸

Now I have, surely, fallen short of producing the arresting insights and radical revisionism that Nora and his followers expected to flow from “restaging and re-enacting the past in a self-reflexive mode.”⁹⁹ But I trust that the pages above convey something of how I came to this subject, and how my own engagement with it might have influenced my shaping and telling of it – what I looked for, what I deemed important along the way and how I came to these views. My hope is that this account will illuminate the route I have traced, even as it encourages readers to make up their own minds about my rendering of it. An even better outcome would be a dialogue considering our different individual contributions to the broader path of historical scholarship in geography, and pondering where it may lead and where we would like it to go.

And if that is toward rich, undiscovered seams of historical inquiry, then perhaps Stan Rogers can lead us once more, in hope:

Grandsons of the mining men, you'll see it in your dreams,
Beneath your father's bones still lies the undiscovered seam
Of quartzite in a serpentine vein that marks the greatest yield;
And along the Midland Railway, it's still told,
How the Rawdon Hills once were touched by gold.¹⁰⁰

NOTES

¹ Paxton cited by Chris Gudgeon “Stan Rogers,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* available at: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/stan-rogers>. The Paxton quote also appears as a blurb on the cover of Chris Gudgeon, *An Unfinished Conversation: The Life and Music of Stan Rogers* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994) Stan Rogers, “Northwest Passage” is from the album *Northwest Passage* (1981). Subheadings are also taken from Rogers’ oeuvre as follows: “**Let me sail up Golden Bay**” and “**Let me feel my dory lift**” from “Cape St Mary’s” on the album *For the Family* (1982); “**our decks so sharply tilted that we could barely keep our feet**” and “**Oh to leeward was the island and to win’ard was the gale,**” from “The Cliffs of Baccalieu,” on the album *For the Family* (1982); “For the good times come and go,” from “Field Behind the Plow,” on the album *Home in Halifax* (1994); “**We just lost sight of the Queensport light down the bay before us,**” from “Fogarty’s Cove,” on the album *Home in Halifax* (1994); “**to sing, about the trees and the wind, / ‘Bout the hills in spring, and the rivers that bend,**” from “Down the Road,” on the album *From Coffee House to Concert Hall* (1999). All quotations from the music of Stan Rogers are used with the permission of Ariel Rogers and Fogarty’s Cove Music.

² Despite the length of this reflection, it is impossible to identify every contribution to the broad story it seeks to tell; no slight is intended to those whose names I could not include or whose works I do not cite.

³ Ian Burton, “The Quantitative Revolution and Theoretical Geography,” *The Canadian Geographer* (1963) 7(4): 151-162. The space cadets phrase was applied to students of William Garrison, American leader in the use of computers and statistics for the study of spatial problems, presumably in playful reference to the juvenile science fiction novel by Robert A. Heinlein, *Space Cadet* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948).

⁴ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 488.

⁵ As William O'Neill suggested in the title of his book on the sixties, the United States seemed to be "coming apart": William L. O'Neill, *Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971). As the number of disaffected young Americans in their city increased, many Torontonians felt the tensions that seemed to be rending the very fabric of society to the south -- see Mark Satin, *Manual for Draft Age Immigrants to Canada* (Toronto, Jan. 1968; 2nd ed., House of Anansi Press, March 1968). There were four subsequent editions 1968-71. According to The Radical Middle Newsletter (<http://www.radicalmiddle.com/manual.htm>), "The Manual sold 65,000 copies by mail from Toronto, largely to young men and women in the good ol' USA, at a time when it was illegal for Canadian publishers to sell more than 1,500 copies of any one title in the U.S. In addition, tens of thousands of "pirated" copies (often abridged and mimeographed) were produced in the U.S., usually by draft counseling groups or other radical groups..." For additional insight into Toronto in these years see for example Stuart Henderson, "Toronto's Hippie Disease: End Days in the Yorkville Scene, August 1968," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, (2006) 17(1): 205-234; Richard White, "Jane Jacobs and Toronto, 1968-1978," *Journal of Planning History* (2011) 10(2): 114-138 and Sherry Brydson, "Pollution: Is there a future for our generation?" *The Varsity* (1969) 24(February). Also Sarah Elton, "A 1969 article in The Varsity ignited students to start the Canadian environmental movement," *University of Toronto Magazine* (winter 2012).

⁶ Marshall McLuhan (and Quentin Fiore), *The Medium is the Massage* (New York: Random House, 1967) and *War and Peace in the Global Village* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

⁷ The foregoing estimates derive from J Lewis Robinson, "Growth and Trends in Geography in Canadian Universities," *The Canadian Geographer* (1967) 11(4): 218, 223-224.

⁸ Robinson, "Growth and Trends," 223.

⁹ Eric Sheppard as reported in Matt Farish, "Amid Revolutions: Human Geography at the University of Toronto, 1963-1978," Virginia Maclaren and Gunter Gad, (eds.), *Reflections on the History of Geography at the University of Toronto* (Toronto: Department of Geography and Program in Planning, University of Toronto, 2010).

¹⁰ The department was in a period of major change. Bill Birch, Head from 1963 to 1967 appointed 15 people, ten of whom spent their careers in the department. Eight who predated Birch remained through the late 1960s. With the development of suburban campuses at Scarborough and Erindale (now UT Mississauga) appointments there added to the complement of University of Toronto geographers, which reached 41 in 1970-71. Tom McIlwraith, was appointed at Erindale in 1970, with a Wisconsin PhD in process. See Jock Galloway, "The Birch Years, 1963-1967: An Informal Paper Based on Reminiscences and University Records" in Maclaren and Gad, (eds.), *Reflections*.

¹¹ James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: a Geographical Study of early Southeast Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

¹² R.C. Harris, "Historical Geography in Canada," *The Canadian Geographer* (1967) 11(4): 235-250, from which quotations in the following paragraph are drawn from pp. 235, 241.

¹³ Robinson, "Growth and Trends," 229.

¹⁴ *Economic Geography* (April 1970) 46(2): 199-206, carried a block half a dozen "Reviews in Historical Geography" Heathcote on Meinig (199-201), Koelsch on Clark (201-202) and Bowden on Smith (202-203) were the first three.

¹⁵ Similar sentiments were voiced less exuberantly in Alan R H Baker, "The Future of the Past," *Area* (1969) 1(4): 46-51, but the Koelsch review in particular was responsible for the reaction discussed below. Denis Cosgrove, commenting on Harris, "Theory and Synthesis in Geography," (see Denis Cosgrove, "Commentary 2," *Progress in Human Geography* (1996) 20: 197-199, recalled this differently, leading Farish, "Amid Revolutions," to suggest that "Theory and Synthesis" was a response to Baker et al. My memory is different, and I adduce in support the title of the University of Toronto Department of Geography discussion paper that was effectively the first draft of *The Canadian Geographer* article: "On the Fertility of the Historical Geographical Mule" (November 1970).

¹⁶ Visiting Harris on a research foray to the (then) Public Archives of Canada in April 1969, I was introduced in little more than a week to the work of William Dray, the excitement of a Montreal-Boston semifinal clash in the Stanley Cup, and the thrill and chill of canoeing and capsizing on a Gatineau lake. Isaiah Berlin, "History and Theory: The Concept of Scientific History," *History and Theory* (1960) 1(1): 1-31; W. H. Dray, (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis and History* (Scranton, Pa.: Harper and Row, 1966), and William H. Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957).

¹⁷ R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946); Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1959); Louis O Mink, "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding," *History and Theory* (1965) 5(1): 24-47, reprinted in Dray, (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis*, 169-192; Carl Hempel, "Explanation in Science and in History," in R.G. Colodny, (ed.), *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), and reprinted in Ronald H Nash, (ed.), *Ideas of History*, Vol. 2 (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 79-106; Michael Scriven, "Causes, Connections and Conditions in History," in Dray, (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis*, 238-264; Maurice Mandelbaum, "Historical Explanation: The Problem of Covering Laws," *History and Theory* (1960) 1(3), reprinted in Nash, (ed.), *Ideas of History*, Vol 2, 124-140; W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1958); and Alan Donagan, "The Popper -Hempel Theory Reconsidered," *History and Theory* (1964) 4(1): 3-16 and reprinted in Dray, (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis*, 127-160.

¹⁸ R. Cole Harris, "Reflections on the Fertility of the Historical Geographical Mule," (University of Toronto, Department of Geography Discussion Paper, November 1970), and Cole Harris, "Theory and Synthesis in Geography," *The Canadian Geographer* (1971) 15(3).

¹⁹ Stan Rogers, "Barrett's Privateers," from the album *Fogarty's Cove* (Fogarty's Cove Music, 1976).

²⁰ Harris, "Reflections".

²¹ Peter Goheen, *Victorian Toronto, 1850-1900: Pattern and Process of Growth* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Dept. of Geography, 1970); Eric Ross, *Beyond the River and the Bay: some observations on the state of the Canadian Northwest in 1811 with a view to providing the intending settler with an intimate knowledge of that country* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Conrad Heidenreich, *Huronian: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); James Gilmour, *Spatial Evolution of Manufacturing: Southern Ontario, 1851-1891* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); John Tyman, *By Section, Township and Range: Studies in Prairie Settlement:*

Studies in Prairie Settlement (Brandon, MB: Department of Geography, Brandon University, 1972); J Gordon Nelson, *The Last Refuge* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1973); John Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: a Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); and Cole Harris and John Warkentin, *Canada Before Confederation: a Study in Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). The list might be extended by including R.L. Gentilcore and M. Kate Donkin, *Land Surveys of Southern Ontario: An Introduction and Index to the Field Notebooks of the Ontario Land Surveyors 1784-1859* (Toronto: Cartographica Monograph #8, 1973) and J.L. Robinson and W. Hardwick, *British Columbia: 100 Years of Geographical Change* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1973), which was essentially their chapter "The Canadian Cordillera," from J. Warkentin, *Canada: A Geographical Interpretation* (Toronto: Methuen, 1968), 438-472.

²² See "Report to Readers," by editor J.H. Galloway in February 1973, in *The Canadian Geographer*, (1973) 17(1): 77, which also notes that 5 of the 20 papers accepted in 1972 were "Historical/Cultural".

²³ Michael P. Conzen, Thomas Rumney and Graeme Wynn, (eds.), *A Scholar's Guide to Geographical Writing on the American and Canadian Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²⁴ Including the 15 increases the number of departments with an interest in historical geography to 25. Numbers are approximate because the information in the *Directory* is often imprecise and at some level interpretation depends upon inference and familiarity with the individuals and their work.

²⁵ Ross and Goheen were Canadians who studied in Edinburgh and Chicago, Mannion and Gilmour came to the University of Toronto from Ireland and Scotland for their PhDs, Tyman from England lived in Canada from the late 1950s before enrolling in and completing his Oxford DPhil.. Heidenreich a Canadian completed his dissertation at McMaster. Ray, an American, came to York University from the PhD program at Wisconsin-Madison.

²⁶ Harris and Warkentin, *Canada Before Confederation*; Clark quotes from his Preface.

²⁷ W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955); J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); on both see Donald Meinig, (ed.), (with John Brinckerhoff Jackson), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979); Leonard Guelke, "An Idealist Alternative in Historical Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1974) 64(2): 193-202.

²⁸ J.D. Wood, (ed.), *Perspectives on Landscape and Settlement in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975); Brian Osborne, (ed.), *The Settlement of Canada: Origins and Transfer* (Kingston: Queen's University, 1976).

²⁹ Conrad E. Heidenreich and A.J. Ray, *The Early Fur Trade: A Study in Cultural Interaction* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); John J. Mannion, *Point Lance in Transition; The Transformation of a Newfoundland Outport* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); and R. Cole Harris, *Two Societies: Life in Mid-Nineteenth Century Quebec* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

³⁰ This paragraph is lightly adapted from a longer version in Graeme Wynn, "Thinking About Mountains, Valleys and Solitudes: Historical Geography and the New Atlantic History," *Acadiensis* (Autumn 2001) 31: 129-145. My early career research centred on the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick: see Graeme Wynn, "Late-Eighteenth Century Agriculture on the Bay

of Fundy Marshlands," *Acadiensis* (1979) 8: 80-89 and the recent resurrection of the work on which this was based as *Culture and Agriculture on the Tantramar Marshes* (Sackville, NB; Tantramar Heritage Trust, 2012), as well as *Timber Colony: A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth Century New Brunswick* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

³¹ John J. Mannion, *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (St Johns: Memorial University of Newfoundland, ISER Publication #8, 1977).

³² Cole Harris, (ed.), and Geoffrey Matthews, (cartographer), *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol I (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); R. Louis Gentilcore, (ed.), and Geoffrey Matthews, (cartographer), *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol I (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Donald Kerr and Deryck W Holdsworth, (eds.), and Geoffrey Matthews, (cartographer), *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

³³ Devin Crawley, "What happens to a book when it becomes a database? An examination of the emerging paradigm of electronic text through a comparison of the print and electronic versions of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*," Published on September 30, 2004 at <http://enlightenedlibrarian.com/files/Atlas.pdf> and consulted in January 2012; now archived at: <http://enlightenedlibrarian.com/content/what-happens-when-book-becomes-database>.

³⁴ Special citation at: <http://www.historicalatlas.ca/website/hacolp/background.htm>; William G. Dean, Conrad Heidenreich, and Thomas McIlwraith, (eds.), *Concise Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); For the online Atlas see: <http://www.historicalatlas.ca/website/hacolp/index.htm>; for commentaries see Graeme Wynn, "Maps and Dreams of Nationhood: A (Re)view of the *Historical Atlas of Canada*," *Canadian Historical Review*, (1995) 76(3): 482-510, and Matthew Sparke, "A Map that Roared and an Original Atlas: Canada, Cartography, and the Narration of Nation" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, (1998) 88(3): 463-495.

³⁵ Numbers are approximate because of the difficulty of defining levels of contribution. Here "major" indicates credit among the authors of at least one plate.

³⁶ Harris, *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Vol I, Preface.

³⁷ Crawley, "What happens to a book when it becomes a database?"

³⁸ R. Craig Brown, (ed.), *The Illustrated History of Canada* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1987).

³⁹ L.D. McCann, (ed.), *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada* (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1982), revised as L.D. McCann and Angus Gunn (eds.), *Heartland and Hinterland: A Geography of Canada* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall, 1998).

⁴⁰ Ramsay Cook, "Regionalism Unmasked," *Acadiensis* (Autumn 1983) 13(1): 137.

⁴¹ Cole Harris, "France in North America," 65-92; Thomas F. McIlwraith, "British North America, 1763-1867," 220-252; and Graeme Wynn, "Forging a Canadian Nation," 373-409 in Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves, (eds.), *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987).

⁴² Conzen, Rumney, and Wynn, (eds.), *A Scholar's Guide*.

⁴³ John Clarke, *Land, Power and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada* (Montreal and Kingston:

McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); John Clarke, *The Ordinary People of Essex: Environment, Economy and Culture on the Frontier of Upper Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

⁴⁴ e.g., Alan Brunger "The Distribution of English in Upper Canada, 1851-1871," *The Canadian Geographer* (1986) 30(4): 337-343; Alan Brunger, "The Distribution of Scots and Irish in Upper Canada, 1851-1871," *The Canadian Geographer* (1990) 34(3): 250-258.

⁴⁵ e.g., Kenneth Kelly, "Wheat Farming in Simcoe County in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *The Canadian Geographer* (1971) 15(1): 95-112 and Kenneth Kelly, "The Artificial Drainage of Land in Nineteenth Century Southern Ontario," *The Canadian Geographer* (1975) 19(3): 279-298.

⁴⁶ Brian Osborne's research areas include aboriginal history, settlement history, cultural landscapes, and the role of the "culture of communications" in the development of a Canadian sense of place. He has published extensively on the Kingston area. As examples see his "Constructing the State, Managing the Corporation, Transforming the Individual: Photography, Immigration, and the Canadian National Railways, 1925-30," in Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (eds.), *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographic Imagination* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 162-191 and his "Remembering and Constructing Intangible Heritage along Canada's Upper St. Lawrence," in Sérgio Lira and Amoêda Rogério (eds.), *Constructing Intangible Heritage* (Barcelos, Portugal: Green Lines Institute, 2010), 119-128.

⁴⁷ One culmination of this work is Sherry Olson and Patricia A. Thornton, *Peopling the North American City: Montreal 1840-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); another dimension is MAP - Montréal l'avenir du passé, an H-GIS array of databases and geobases that harnesses the power of geographic information systems for historical research on Montreal. Hosted by McGill University, its layers are richest for 1825, 1846, 1880, and 1901. Data are available to all scholars for exchange, enrichment, and exploration, in searchable formats; Other work can be tracked through the website of Sherry Olsen.

⁴⁸ Most of this work was in dissertations never published as books, although several articles appeared. Perhaps the most widely available example is Deryck W. Holdsworth, "Cottages and Castles for Vancouver Home-Seekers," *BC Studies* (Spring/Summer 1986) 69/70: 11-32, and reprinted in Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn (eds.), *Home Truths: Highlights of BC History* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2012).

⁴⁹ Richard Harris, *Building a Market. The Rise of the Home Improvement industry, 1914-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Richard Harris, *Creeping Conformity How Canada became Suburban, 1900-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Richard Harris and Peter Larkham, (eds.), *Changing Suburbs. Foundation, Form and Function* (London: E. and F.N. Spon, 1999); Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs. Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900-1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁵⁰ Graeme Wynn, (ed.), *People, Places, Patterns, Processes: Geographical Perspectives on the Canadian Past* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd, 1990).

⁵¹ Gilbert A. Stelter, (ed.), *Cities and Urbanization; Canadian Historical Perspectives* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd, 1990).

⁵² William Norton, *Historical Analysis in Geography* (New York: Longman, 1984), and by way of further example, William Norton, "The Relevance of Von Thunen Theory to Historical and Evolutionary Analysis of Agricultural Land Use," *Journal of Agricultural Economics* (January 1979)

30(1): 39-47.

⁵³ Wynn, *People, Places*, Introduction.

⁵⁴ Cole Harris, "The Simplification of Europe Overseas," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1977) 67(4): 469-483.

⁵⁵ Robert D. Mitchell, "The North American Past: Retrospect and Prospect," in Mitchell and Groves, (eds.), *North America*, 10, 9.

⁵⁶ Wynn, *People, Places*, 18.

⁵⁷ Harris, "Power, Modernity and Historical Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (December 1991) 81(4): 671-683, quotes following from 671.

⁵⁸ e.g., Daniel Clayton, *Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000).

⁵⁹ Harris, "Power, Modernity," 681.

⁶⁰ Koelsch review in *Economic Geography*.

⁶¹ Bronislaw Malinkowski, "Preface," in Raymond Firth, *We the Tikopia: A Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936), xi.

⁶² Stephen A. Tyler, "Post-Modern Ethnography: from Document of the Occult to Occult Document," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, (eds.), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 130.

⁶³ Harris, "Power, Modernity," 680.

⁶⁴ For some reflection on and push back against this see Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2004) 94(1): 165-182.

⁶⁵ H.V. Nelles, "Review of Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture and Power on Canada's West Coast*," *BC Studies* (Summer/Autumn 2003) 138/139: 187. For a pointed reflection on the somewhat parallel clash of styles/ approaches between old and new in anthropology see Clifford Geertz, "Deep Hanging Out," *The New York Review of Books*, 22 October 1998, in which he attributes the "deep hanging out" phrase to James Clifford, who uses it to characterize "localized, long-term, close-in, vernacular field research" and appears to have adopted it from Stanford anthropologist Renato Rosaldo.

⁶⁶ Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess?"

⁶⁷ Michael S. Roth, "Foucault's 'History of the Present'," *History and Theory* (1981) 20(1): 32-46, quote on 44.

⁶⁸ *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* (University of Illinois Press).

⁶⁹ Hayden White, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground," *History and Theory* (1973) 12: 23-54.

⁷⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus 1994), 3.

⁷¹ Stan Rogers, "Make and Break Harbour," from the album *Fogarty's Cove* (Fogarty's Cove Music, 1976).

⁷² For more on this see Graeme Wynn, "A Deep History of The American Environment," *Journal of Historical Geography*, (forthcoming).

⁷³ Graeme Wynn, Review of Richard White, "Land Use, Environment, and Social Change (1980)" in *Idaho Yesterdays* (1984) 27: 37-38.

⁷⁴ see <http://niche-canada.org/>

⁷⁵ James Linton, *What is Water: The History of a Modern Abstraction* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Dean Bavington, *Managed Annihilation: An Unnatural History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Shannon Stunden Bower, *Wet Prairie People, Land, and Water in Agricultural Manitoba* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011); Matthew D. Evenden, *Fish versus Power: an environmental history of the Fraser River* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Christopher Armstrong, Matthew Evenden, and H.V. Nelles, *The River Returns: An Environmental History of the Bow River* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

⁷⁶ John Thistle, "As Free of Fish as a Billiard Ball is of Hair: Dealing with Depletion in the Pacific Halibut Fishery, 1899-1924," (105-128); Arn Keeling, "Sink or Swim: Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in Vancouver, 1889-1975, (69-104); and my own "'Shall we Linger along Ambitionless?' Environmental Perspectives on British Columbia, (5-67) in Graeme Wynn. (ed.), *BC Studies on the Environment, BC Studies* (Summer/ Autumn 2004) 142/143.

⁷⁷ Matthew Evenden, "Aluminum, Commodity Chains, and the Environmental History of the Second World War," *Environmental History* (2011) 16(1): 69-93, and the special issue on Canada, guest edited by Matthew Evenden and Alan MacEachern, with contributions, among others from geographers Shannon Stunden Bower, Sherry Olsen, and Matt Farish, being *Environmental History* (October 2007) 12(4); John Thistle, "A Vast Inland Empire and the Last Great West: Remaking Society, Space and Environment in Early British Columbia," *Journal of Historical Geography* (October 2011) 37(4): 418-428; Jonathan Peyton, "Corporate Ecology: BC Hydro's Stikine-Iskut Project and the Unbuilt Environment," *Journal of Historical Geography* (July 2011) 37(3): 358-369; Shannon Stunden Bower, "Natural and Unnatural Complexities: Flood Control along Manitoba's Assiniboine River," *Journal of Historical Geography* (January 2010) 36(1): 57-67; John Sandlos and Arn Keeling, "Claiming the New North: Development and Colonialism at the Pine Point Mine, Northwest Territories, Canada," *Environment and History* (February 2012) 18(1): 5-34; Jonathan Peyton, "Imbricated Geographies of Conservation and Consumption in the Stikine Plateau," *Environment and History* (November 2011) 17(4): 555-581 Laura Cameron, "Digging in the Dirt: Unnatural Histories and the "Art of Not Dividing" . *Historical Geography* (2010) 38: 5-22.

⁷⁸ Graeme Wynn, *Canada and Arctic North America: An Environmental History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2007).

⁷⁹ see Cole Harris, "The Historical Mind and the Practice of Geography, in David Ley and Marwyn Samuels, (eds.), *Humanistic Geography: Problems and Prospects* (Chicago: Maroufa Press, 1978), 123-137.

⁸⁰ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁸¹ The quote is from Benita Parry, "The postcolonial: Conceptual Category or Chimera?" *The Yearbook of English Studies* (1997) 27: 3-21, quote from p. 12, cited by Harris, "How Did Colonialism...," 166.

⁸² Stan Rogers "Rawdon Hills," from the album *Fogarty's Cove* (Fogarty's Cove Music, 1976).

⁸³ J.H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1969); Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992); Jack Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 1998).

⁸⁴ Stan Rogers, "Field Behind the Plow," from the album *Northwest Passage* (Fogarty's Cove Music 1981); Stan Rogers, "Watching the Apples Grow," from the album *Fogarty's Cove* (Fogarty's Cove Music, 1976).

⁸⁵ Here I paraphrase Kenneth Dewar, "Does the Past have a Future?" *Literary Review of Canada* (2012) 20(1): 4, whose essay arrived at just the right time to shape my concluding reflections and give added point to what follows.

⁸⁶ This brief and inadequate summary draws from both Mark S. Phillips, "Rethinking Historical Distance: From Doctrine to Heuristic," *History and Theory, Theme Issue* (December 2011) 50: 11-23, and the description of a doctoral training course entitled "Reconsidering Historical Distance" that Phillips offered at Universiteit Gent in May 2011. A summary is available at: <http://www.ugent.be/paradoctorschools/en/doctoraltraining/courses/archive/2010-2011/2010-2011-reconsidering-historical-distance.htm>.

⁸⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, "Un historien et son temps present," in *Actes de la journée d'études de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Present* (Paris: CNRS, 1992), 98, cited by Phillips, "Rethinking," 12.

⁸⁸ Phillips, "Rethinking," Abstract and 12, 14.

⁸⁹ Quote and those in following paragraph (except as indicated) from Phillips, "Rethinking," Abstract and 12.

⁹⁰ Phillips, "Reconsidering".

⁹¹ Phillips, "Rethinking," Abstract.

⁹² Phillips, "Rethinking," 14.

⁹³ Carl Sauer indicted the blinkers imposed by the "pernicious anemia of the "but-is-this-geography" question in his presidential address before the Association of American Geographers, "Foreword to Historical Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1941) 31: 1-24. For more on the straitjacketing effects of disciplinary orthodoxy see Wynn "A Deep History."

⁹⁴ Phillips, "Rethinking," passim and 15. Mark S. Phillips, "Histories, Micro- and Literary: Problems of Genre and Distance." *New Literary History* (2003) 34: 211-229 and Mark S. Phillips, "Distance and Historical Representation." *History Workshop Journal* (2004) 57: 123-141 are also worthy of attention here.

⁹⁵ In this context it is worth revisiting Wilbur Zelinsky, "In Pursuit of Historical Geography and Other Wild Geese," *Historical Geography Newsletter* (1973) 3: 1-5.

⁹⁶ Pierre Nora introduced the term "ego-histoire" in Pierre Nora, (ed.), *Essais d'ego-histoire* (Paris, Gallimard, 1987), which includes a series of studies of personal memory and its relationship to public history. Nora described ego-histoire as a "new genre, for a new age of historical consciousness." Several prominent French scholars including Georges Duby and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie have explored this approach in book-length studies. Paul Bourdieu and Jacques Lacan might also be seen as drawing upon this approach, which resonates with the concerns of "critical historiography" See also: Luisa Passerini and Alexander Geppert, (eds.), 'European Ego-histoires: Historiography and the Self, 1970-2000', (special issue of *Historien: A Review of the Past and other Stories*); Jeremy D. Popkin, "Ego-Histoire and Beyond: Contemporary French Historian-Autobiographers." *French Historical Studies* (Autumn 1996) 19(4): 1139-1167; and Richard Vinen, "The Poisoned Madeleine: The Autobiographical Turn in Historical Writing," *Journal of Contemporary History* (July 2011) 46(3): 531-554.

⁹⁷ Dewar, "Does the Past," - I owe special thanks to Dewar for unknowingly connecting several of my own "dots" here, and sending me to read further in the realm of ego-histoire.

⁹⁸ The "scientific project" quote is taken from page 1045 of Jo Burr Margadant, "Introduction: The New Biography in Historical Practice," *French Historical Studies* (Autumn 1996) 19(4): 1045-1058; she gives her source as Nora, *Essais d'ego-histoire*, 5.

⁹⁹ Margadant, "Introduction," 1046.

¹⁰⁰ Stan Rogers, "Rawdon Hills," from the album *Fogarty's Cove* (Fogarty's Cove Music, 1976).