

Scientia Canadensis

***Inventing Canada. Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation.* By Suzanne Zeller. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009. Xxi +356 p., ill., notes, notes on sources, index. ISBN 078-0-7735-3561-0)**

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contribution of science and technology to overall economic benefit. Economists from OECD eventually succeeded in getting their views accepted by the majority. Godin points out that “Over time, the economists won. The strategy developed at the OECD to integrate productivity into its statistics and reports was threefold. First, digest all available academic work in order to imitate its methodology. Second, internationalize the (academic and national) statistics to make a convincing case for its member countries. Third, organize the narrative into a policy-oriented framework, using buzzwords” (p.292). The new plan included solutions for old problems such as consistency in terms of methodology and statistics that could be interpreted differently in different locals, to promote buy in from international member companies. The development of such buzz words as “new economy” and “economic growth” organized the other strategies in a manner that allowed maximal participation and also persuade both people and businesses that in order to be viable they would need to participate in this venture. Again this is the result of developing a convincing narrative.

In *The Making of Science*, Godin discusses the emergence of technology and the impact on science policy. The book illustrates how discourse emerged about phenomenon in society, eventually becoming reality through the power of the narrative. In addition, his examination reveals that there is no central organism that influences the end result. He uses examples of collaborative efforts to show that academics, government and international organization, specifically the OECD, are influential in the development of these narratives. Benoit Godin successfully illustrates the power of conceptual frameworks as narratives in science studies; his approach allows the reader to compare this to frameworks that explain the influence of narrative in decision making in other areas of policy making and in society in general.

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***Inventing Canada. Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation.* By Suzanne Zeller.** (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009. Xxi +356 p., ill., notes, notes on sources, index. ISBN 078-0-7735-3561-0).

The history of Canadian science as a reasonably professional research field is scarcely thirty years old, but if we could speak of a “classic” work in our field, Suzanne Zeller’s *Inventing Canada* would surely qualify. First published by the University of Toronto Press in 1987, it has now

been reprinted as part of the Carleton Library series. It was a “must read” twenty years ago and it should still be required reading for anyone entering the field today. Her original text is reprinted with no changes, but there is a new preface which discusses the historiography of both the Canadian and the wider history of early Victorian science.

For those new to the book, Zeller’s essential argument is that the “inventory sciences,” as they were prosecuted in the period roughly between 1840 and 1870, were important elements in the creation of Canada as a transcontinental nation. Inventory sciences in this study include geology, terrestrial magnetism, meteorology and botany. Her study of geology, particularly the role of William Edmond Logan, is by far the strongest part of the book and the most persuasive.

Terrestrial magnetism, as personified in Lieut. John Henry Lefroy and represented in bricks and mortar in the Toronto Magnetic and Meteorological Observatory, seems, at least superficially, like another form of glue to hold together the nascent nation. On reflection, I am a little doubtful that terrestrial magnetism was on anyone’s radar at the time. The average MLA in the Province of Canada was surely much more attuned to the demands of the agricultural community than to any Imperial scientific research programme. To me, the argument that botany, the third inventory science surveyed, was somehow key to nation-building, seems strained.

There were, of course, other inventory sciences at the time. Zoology is barely mentioned. There was, to be sure, a community of “huntin’ and fishin’” *afficionados* (one thinks of the naturalist and taxidermist William Couper) and a solid literature by explorers dealing with land and aquatic animals and birds, but any discourse on animals would not have contributed to the larger nation-building discourse. Zeller does, to be sure, mention entomology briefly, but entomology in the 1860s and 1870s was largely focused upon agriculture and fruit growing.

Inventing Canada is rich in detail and sources: there are many topics discussed that would provide a launch pad for further research. It is also a beautifully written book. When I reviewed the original book in these pages in 1988, my feeling was that I “would have to bring in the Scottish law verdict of ‘not proven’ on Zeller’s contention, but even if the argument is perhaps exaggerated, that it is persuasively made is a sign of the maturity of the history of Canadian science.” My feeling, on reading the book again after all these years, is still the same. That in no way diminishes my admiration for Zeller’s work: it was and is a remarkable work that everyone interested in nineteenth-century Canadian science must read.

For members of the CSTHA/AHSTC, her remarks on the estrangement of that society from the Canadian Society for History and Philosophy of Science will raise eyebrows. She argues that in the US, the History of

Science Society enfolds everyone and that Canadians are only doing damage to themselves by remaining apart. This is a bit disingenuous. Historians of American science had long felt marginalized in the HSS and eventually formed the Forum for the History of American Science, publishing their own newsletter and holding special sessions at the HSS meetings. CSHPS has so few members in any one speciality that a critical mass never has formed for any research topic; this has not been the case of CSTHA/AHSTC.

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***Les manuels de géographie québécois. Images de la discipline, du pays et du monde, 1800-1960.* Par Marc Brosseau (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011, xviii + 170 p., notes, tab., ill., biblio. ISBN : 978-2-7637-8832-6).**

Cet ouvrage est le quatrième livre publié dans la collection *Géographie* dirigée par Guy Mercier, professeur de géographie à l'Université Laval. Il fait partie de la section *Référence* de cette collection qui regroupe des ouvrages portant entre autres sur l'histoire de la discipline. L'auteur, professeur de géographie sociale à l'Université d'Ottawa, manifeste un intérêt pour les manuels scolaires depuis ses recherches sur le sujet pour son mémoire de maîtrise, déposé en 1988 à l'Université d'Ottawa. Deux chapitres sont cosignés avec son directeur de mémoire, Vincent Berdoulay.

Le contenu de l'ouvrage porte sur l'analyse d'environ 300 manuels en français de niveau primaire et secondaire depuis le premier manuel écrit par l'abbé François Pigeon du Séminaire de Québec, en 1804. Avec l'analyse de ce corpus, l'auteur veut exposer en quoi les manuels de géographie ont contribué à la formation du savoir et de la culture géographiques des Québécois ainsi que de l'image du monde qu'ils reçoivent. Pour ce faire, il propose d'explorer trois avenues qui structurent son ouvrage.

La première avenue porte sur l'évolution de la production des manuels en les répartissant par périodes : 1) 1804-1860 : début des manuels écrits tant par des laïcs que des clercs ; 2) 1860-1880 : production plus abondante avec une prise de contrôle par le clergé ; 3) 1880-1940 : production assumée essentiellement par des clercs, surtout les Frères Maristes ; 4) 1940-1960 : production assumée principalement par des géographes professionnels. La deuxième avenue porte sur l'évolution du contenu notionnel des manuels. De 1804 à 1868, la géographie est descriptive car elle désigne, localise, classe et organise les phénomènes