The Trudeau Foundation

PAPERS

VOLUME IV, 1 • 2012

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A Canadian institution with a national purpose, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation is an independent and non-partisan charity. It was established in 2001 as a living memorial to the former prime minister by his family, friends, and colleagues. In 2002, the Government of Canada endowed the Foundation with a donation of $125 million with the unanimous support of the House of Commons. In addition, the Foundation benefits from private sector donations in support of specific initiatives. Through its scholarship, fellowship, mentorship, and public interaction programs, the Foundation supports outstanding individuals who make meaningful contributions to critical public issues.

Human Rights and Dignity | Responsible Citizenship
Canada in the World | People and Their Natural Environment

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Preface

When the Trudeau Foundation first began its work some twelve years ago, its program consisted of the selection and appointment of scholars, fellows, and mentors in the humanities. It soon became apparent that we needed another element—the sharing of the research, scholarship, and ideas with the public at large. So began the Foundation's Public Interaction Program, of which this volume is but the latest example. Referring to the conferences and lectures organized by the Foundation, we have chosen for publication five papers written by our fellows, to share with a wider audience.

Year after year, the Foundation supports fine thinkers and renowned experts on global issues, enabling Trudeau fellows to undertake independent research in search of answers to pressing challenges. The fellows focus on four topics that preoccupied Pierre Trudeau and which continue to demand our attention—human rights and dignity, responsible citizenship, people and their natural environment, and Canada in the world—offering fresh perspectives and pioneering approaches to some of the most contentious issues confronting humanity.

While their areas of specialty are diverse, these scholars in the humanities and social sciences share a capacity to not only conceive

new ideas but also to share these ideas widely to help resolve major contemporary challenges. One of the Foundation's goals is to foster long-term relationships with the larger community in order to translate great ideas into even greater societal results. Fellows are encouraged to give back to society by transferring the key ideas from their research through public lectures, thus contributing to the greater public good.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau reminded us that "Each of us must do all in our power to extend to all persons an equal measure of human dignity—to ensure through our efforts that hope and faith in the future are not reserved for a minority of the world's population, but are available to all." As this fourth edition of *The Trudeau Foundation Papers* underscores, five fellows have embraced Trudeau's call and carried on in his footsteps, offering their visions for a more equitable society and invaluable guidance on how these visions might be achieved.

Since launching the Fellowship Program in 2002, the Foundation has named 46 Trudeau fellows and has held 20 Trudeau Lectures from coast to coast. Collectively, the fellows have breathed life into the Foundation's mission to "foster a fruitful dialogue between scholars and policymakers in the arts community, business, government, the professions, and the voluntary sector." They have brought to fruition the Foundation's vision to invest in two key areas of strategic importance to Canada's growth and well-being: bright and caring people committed to providing inspired leadership, and the world of creativity and ideas shaping positive change.

It is an honour and privilege for me to be a part of this critical process, and I hope that these papers will inspire further scholarship and dialogue.

Roy L. **Heenan,** OC
Chairman, The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation
October 2012

In Theory, in Practice

> "The struggle for democracy and the ongoing development of its political and social content was not solely a twentieth-century problem… it will continue to be one for the century to come, whatever concrete forms it adopts."
>
> Jorge Semprún, L'expérience du totalitarisme (1996)

When it comes down to it, all of the conversations at the Trudeau Foundation are about democracy. We mix disciplines, languages, and bases for knowledge; we celebrate their dialogue and we encourage them to intermarry. But our purpose is always to work together in the service of a certain promise of emancipation—an emancipation at once political, social, and cultural. This is the promise of which Pierre Elliott Trudeau wrote in 1958 that it "encourages each citizen and each group of citizens to protest against the defects of society to demand justice."

Those who have read previous editions of *The Trudeau Foundation Papers* know that the Foundation fears neither theory nor abstraction. We know and accept that to call people and things, however different, by their true names, to investigate and uncover the relationships between them, sometimes requires us to depart from what is commonly held to be true. At times, this means risking not

being immediately understood. In this new century—enamoured of the transparent and the immediate, valuing intuition over reason, and wary of knowledge that cannot be monetized—it has become audacious to celebrate erudition, to value the long, hard work of thinking about difficult issues, to invest the time necessary for sound research. Which is really the heart of the matter.

It is evident that this precludes moving quickly to reap the fruits of what we sow. In any event, democracy, to paraphrase Jorge Semprún, is in a permanent state of development. It requires constant attention, a continually renewed supply of ideas and images, and it ridicules definitive solutions and final answers. No matter how much circumstances change, the challenges remain: freedom, justice, law, solidarity, human dignity. Our true usefulness is therefore a function of our capacity to confront these crucial issues and, above all, to continue adhering to a demanding program despite rebuffs and roadblocks.

Of course, this poses a predictable problem: is speaking or writing enough to further democracy in Canada and abroad? If the Foundation is so attached to this ideal, why does it not fund more tangible projects, more direct initiatives, more concrete actions? Why waste time with studies and endless discussion when you could leap into the fray? The truth is that the Foundation does this *too*. It would be absurd to cloister oneself in the realm of words without ever descending into that of action. The authority conferred by knowledge – an authority for which the Foundation has the greatest respect – is not marred by the authority that comes from experience and commitment. *Au contraire*: it is only right that ideas are embodied and that the surfacing of new facts and realities topples standing convictions, no matter how entrenched.

But this line of reasoning is too abstract still. The fact is that the researchers and creators whom we invite to join the Trudeau community have already proven their ability to move freely and fluidly

between the world of ideas and that of practice. Their engagement and their intellectual work are as it were two sides of the same coin, not necessarily because these people defend a cause in particular—although this is sometimes the case—but because they simply have no time to linger over less important things. They are weighed down by persistent inequality, the degradation of nature, the violent attack on the rights and dignity of their fellows, the foolish risks taken by states in their quest for power.

The reader should look, for example, to Sujit Choudry's rigorous essay on constitutional law. It is the work of a lawyer, and we are not surprised to discern the author's propensity for principles, norms, and models. But Choudhry also reveals how working with countries in reconstruction, he has discovered at the heart of Canadian values an aspiration common to all peoples: the desire for "peace, order and good government," as in the famous preamble to Canada's Constitution Act of 1867. Better yet, by describing how his unique experience as an immigrant who is also the son of immigrants connects to his research, Professor Choudry shows us how it has been possible for cultural diversity to benefit Canadian society and how this approach can now help other nations presently in crisis.

The process espoused by Alain-G. Gagnon is not so very different. To be sure, the beginning of his text focuses on the question of one's roots, of humble and dignified resistance of people brutalized by modernity as manifested by involuntary unemployment, by de-industrialization, by cultural indifference. But we soon realize that the horizon is the same: in this global and plural world of ours, Gagnon aspires to ensure nothing less than that societies that wish to co-exist without merging or losing themselves can do so fruitfully and in peace. Indeed a new global movement in which Professor Gagnon is a major figure preaches a type of federalism that is exceedingly open and flexible (one is tempted to say "permeable"). As with Choudry, it is significant that this aspiration, while nourished by a

historical context that is uniquely Canadian, is emerging as a universal moral precept that transcends borders and generations.

In the case of Steven Loft, the dialectic of experience and thought is the very essence of the discourse. The powerful and disruptive power of art propels the author toward his destiny and transforms, as in a magnifying mirror, the social and political experience of Canada's Native peoples. As when Loft first read his text at the magnificent First Peoples House at the University of Victoria, it quickly becomes apparent that the author is not here to talk about a particular aesthetic, radical or otherwise. Rather, his drive is to show us the groundswell of emancipation, with all its attendant tensions and conflicts, and the subsequent return of First Nations to the forefront of history and national life after 50 years of struggle.

Only one of the five contributions to this volume is sombre, that of Janine Brodie. Some may even find despairing her insistence on the imbalance of power. This political scientist from Alberta sees everywhere the victory of social regression, of pettiness, of conformism; everywhere the triumph of the forces of order and profit; everywhere regression in culture and consciousness. Illustrations are not wanting, and we admit that we do not lack for evidence that progress has endured a long winter indeed since the beginning of the economic and financial crisis in 2008. But Professor Brodie does not remain bound to her critical position. She suggests ways to take back the initiative and to breathe new life into ideas such as equality and solidarity. Who would not agree with her call for the social sciences and humanities to think freely? Who can reject her urge to act as if history, far from being predetermined, is still wide open to our best hopes for the future?

This history, still largely open, always in progress, is at the core of the work of historian Jocelyn Létourneau. His subtle and thoughtful text demonstrates, not without paradox, that it is essential that we stand back from a history in particular—whether national, social,

or cultural—if we are to understand the richness and the complexity of the past, its effect on the present, its weight on the future. One could call his text a kind of manifesto for the historian's craft, its risks and its rewards, its morals and its methods. Not surprisingly, by choosing striking examples in the architecture of Jorn Utzon and the monumental sculpture of Alexander Calder, Létourneau also calls for a dialogue between practice—acts that occur in a given place and time—and theory, which belongs to the realm of creativity and imagination.

Not all of these texts can be accused of being what is known as easy reading. This is not accidental. Over the past 20 years, the notion of "public intellectual" has overtaken that of "engaged intellectual," both in deferment to the predominance of the media and, it must be said, to celebrate the debut of intellectuals on the right of the political spectrum. The public intellectual fears neither journalists nor television studios; indeed, we are sometimes astonished to observe that as long as she speaks clearly and writes well, the audience ceases to worry about the causes she defends. In today's marketplace, the moment that ideas are stated with authority, one is as good as the next and they all finish by finding a buyer.

This is not the case of the texts presented here. This volume, like the preceding ones, presents work that has the double advantage of being derived from research, with all the caveats and aporia that this implies, without mentioning the new perspectives, and of being connected in a direct and tangible way to the democratic conversation referred to at the beginning of this introduction.

The reader need not beware: with this book in hand, you risk neither losing your time, nor mistaking the apparent for the essential.

Pierre-Gerlier **Forest**
President, The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation
October 2012

Steven Loft

2010 Visiting Trudeau Fellow
Ryerson University

BIOGRAPHY

Steven Loft is a Mohawk of the Six Nations and a curator, scholar, writer, and media artist. In 2010, he was named a visiting Trudeau fellow at Ryerson University in Toronto, where he is continuing his research on Indigenous art and aesthetics. Formerly, he was the curator-in-residence for Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Canada. While there, he curated exhibitions including *Back to the Beginning: Indigenous Abstraction* and *Steeling the Gaze: Portraits by Aboriginal Artists* (co-curated with Andrea Kunard), among others. Previously, he was the director/curator of the Urban Shaman Gallery (Winnipeg), Canada's largest Aboriginal artist-run public gallery; the Aboriginal curator at the Art Gallery of Hamilton; and the artistic director of the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers' Association. Loft has written extensively on Indigenous art and aesthetics for various magazines, catalogues, and arts publications. Loft also co-edited *Transference, Technology, Tradition: Aboriginal Media and New Media Art*, published by the Banff Centre Press in 2005. This book of essays by artists, curators, and scholars frames the landscape of contemporary Aboriginal art, the influence of Western criticism and standards, and the liberating advent of inexpensive technologies, including video and online media. His video works, which include *A History in Two Parts*, *2510037901*, *TAX THIS!* and *Out of the Darkness* have been screened at festivals and galleries across Canada and the world. He has curated over 50 group and solo exhibitions and is a sought-after speaker and lecturer. His recent curated program "Culture Shock" screened at the 2008 *imagineNATIVE* Film and Media Arts Festival and subsequently at the Berlin International Film Festival.

ABSTRACT

An Indigenous art history constitutes a trajectory of adaptability and cultural connectivity perfectly in keeping with Indigenous world views and customary, as well as contemporary, artistic practices. It is tied up in histories that include both pre- and post-contact epistemologies. It is customary and contemporary, reserve based and urban, tribal and hybrid, empirical and cosmological, living, dynamic and in constant flux. In this lecture Steven Loft looks at some of the major contemporary developments in the field of Indigenous art in Canada.

LECTURE

"Reflections on 20 Years of Aboriginal Art"

University of Victoria

FEBRUARY 8, 2012

My name is Steven Loft. I am Kanienkehaka of the Haudenosaunee. I would like to acknowledge my Elders and ancestors: those who came before me and inform who I am as a person.

As I look back on 20 years of working in Indigenous art, I would like to reflect on some of the key moments in the development of an Indigenous contemporary and art historical movement in Canada, as well as some of the major events happening at the time. Understanding the relationship between Canada and the Indigenous nations of this land is integral to the development of a unique aesthetic in contemporary Aboriginal art. Some of these events I have been a part of, some only peripherally, some I was not involved in personally at all, but they all had an influence on my career, and on my life.

This is by no means a comprehensive history of Aboriginal art. It is just a journey, one that I have been lucky enough to be part of. For me, Aboriginal art is innately political. It is the culmination of lived experiences, from pre-contact customary societies through the colonial enterprise. It is tied up in histories that include both pre- and post-contact epistemologies, narratives empowered by continuity, inextricably linked; and it is the assertion of cultural autonomy and sovereignty.

As Jolene Rickard has written, "[t]he work of Indigenous artists needs to be understood through the clarifying lens of sovereignty

and self-determination, not just in terms of assimilation, colonization and identity politics… Sovereignty is the border that shifts Indigenous experience from victimized stance to a strategic one."[1]

1967: Expo and the Indians of Canada Pavilion

Summer of 1967: My grandparents took me to Expo in Montreal. It was a fascinating trip, and I am sure I had a great time. Now, did we visit the Indians of Canada pavilion? Undoubtedly. Do I remember it? No, I just wanted to ride the monorail. But what was going on inside that pavilion and behind the scenes would have a tremendous impact on my life without me knowing it.

Expo 67 was a major landmark, an opportunity for Canada to show itself off to the world, and the decision to have an "Indians of Canada" pavilion probably seemed like a really good idea at the time, a chance to portray Canada's wonderful relationship with its Indigenous peoples. It did not exactly turn out that way.

The Indians of Canada pavilion was a turning point at which Aboriginal—or "Indian art" as it was then called—and politics manifested themselves in the portrayal (and a very subversive one for the time) of histories and contemporary realities of Aboriginal people.

First Nations were one of only two "social" groups in the Canadian population that had separate representation in their own pavilion. The organizers had embarked on an ambitious series of consultations with Aboriginal groups, meant to represent answers to the question, "What do you want to tell the people of Canada and the world when they come to Expo 67?" Some key roles in the organization team were even held by Aboriginal people (several of them quite activist in their approach). The narrative that would ultimately emerge in the pavilion would confound and astound government officials and visitors alike.

1. Jolene Rickard, "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand," *Aperture* 139 (Spring 1995), 51.

That exhibition critically and cleverly enunciated the struggle of Aboriginal people for cultural integrity, primacy, and sovereignty, as much as they could in the 1960s. And it introduced the world to contemporary Aboriginal art. Following is an extract from a CBC broadcast from August 4, 1967:

> From the outside, it has all the benign symbols of the traditional North American Indian: a teepee, a totem pole, pounding drums and chanting. But inside, the Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67 tells a different story: one of poverty, unfulfilled treaties, forced religion and the unhappy experiences of children in residential schools. As a young hostess conducts a tour, a reporter from *Expodition* remarks on a tone of bitterness in the pavilion's exhibits.[2]

It would be a long time before I realized how important this event was. I knew about it, as a part of our art history, but it was not until recently that it really hit home for me. It was at a conference just last year, where several of the participants from the pavilion recounted their experiences. I began to realize just how much we owe to those artists who re-envisioned Aboriginal art and activism in such a profound way. The stories they told were funny, and poignant, and made us all realize how far we have come, and how far we still have to go. As Metis scholar David Garneau said in his introductory remarks, "[c]learly, it was and remains a profound site of dissent and the birth of new possibilities."[3]

The artists included in the pavilion were Tony and Henry Hunt (totem pole), George Clutesi, Noel Wuttunee, Gerald Tailfeathers, Ross Woods, Alex Janvier, Tom Hill, Norval Morrisseau, Francis Kagige, Jean-Marie Gros-Louis, Duke Redbird, and Robert Davidson. They were frontrunners and visionaries, and we owe them much.

2. "*Expodition*: Expo 67's Indians of Canada," CBC Digital Archives, http://www.cbc.ca/archives/discover/programs/e/expodition/expodition-july-7-1967.html (accessed May 9, 2012).

3. David Garneau, "Indian to Indigenous: Temporary Pavilions to Sovereign Display Territories," paper presented at the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective Conference, Toronto, Ontario, October 15-16, 2011.

1988: *The Spirit Sings*—Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples

Twenty-one years after the Indians of Canada pavilion, another exhibition of Aboriginal art would also incur much discussion and controversy. *The Spirit Sings*, organized by the Glenbow Museum and supported by Shell Oil Corporation, was the most expensive exhibition ever produced in Canada, with a budget of $2.6 million (almost half of it from Shell).[4]

The exhibition borrowed huge amounts of cultural property—what we would refer to as our art history—from museums all over North America, chosen and curated by non-Aboriginals with no consultation with Aboriginal communities. The curators' intent was to foster an appreciation of pre-contact Indigenous society and culture, all by borrowing looted objects from colonial institutions, while paying for it from money provided by a company that was actively fighting an Aboriginal land claim (the Lubicon Nation) and extracting resources from the disputed territory. A recipe for disaster? Most certainly! Although reasonably well attended, and of course supported by government and corporate interests, the exhibition has gone down as one of the lowest points in the museal history of Indigenous art in this country.

Rebecca Belmore's protest performance in support of the Lubicon and their call for a boycott was a telling and powerful response. She staged her performance in front of the museum without the museum's consent, holding a sign signifying her as artifact #671B. A museum code? Or a Liquor Control Board number for a cheap bottle of wine? She was intentionally ambiguous about this. Belmore was not only metaphorically codifying herself, she was constraining her body to a history of abuse and commodification

4. Ruth B. Phillips, "Show Times: De-Celebrating the Canadian Nation, Decolonising the Canadian Museum," in *Rethinking Settler Colonialism*, ed. Annie E. Coombes (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 129.

perpetrated against Aboriginal people, including by museums. But as site of resistance and subversion, she rose above the museological taxonomies epitomized in *The Spirit Sings* and emerged as strong, unbowed, and in complete control.[5]

I would not become aware of the impact of *The Spirit Sings* for several years, but as I became more immersed in Indigenous art years later, the *Spirit Sings* debacle would come up often. As a result of the exhibition, the protests, and the long history of misrepresentation in museums and galleries, a Task Force on Museums and First Peoples formed to make recommendations to government and the arts community on the exhibition and dissemination of works of historical and contemporary art by Aboriginal people. The ensuing report had a much more positive effect than *The Spirit Sings*.

I would meet Rebecca Belmore a few years after her performance and am proud to say that we are friends. Her passion, her profound intellect, and her ability to synthesize complex issues into beautiful, sometimes disturbing, and always challenging works of art make her one of the most exceptional artists this country has ever produced. She has had and continues to have a profound effect on Indigenous art and the formation of cultural aesthetics in Canada and beyond.

July 11, 1990: Oka

In a very real sense, 1990 would begin my personal journey into my own Indigeneity and into Indigenous art. Oka galvanized the Aboriginal population. It was our struggle, our fight, our war, all getting played out on network television, within the bias of the day and playing to a populace decidedly unmoved by the struggle for Aboriginal sovereignty.

It began as a peaceful vigil by the Mohawk citizens of Kanesatake who were protesting against a plan by the municipality of Oka to

5. As a side note, recently, the government labelled Aboriginal groups opposing the Northern Gateway pipeline as "radicals" and "enemies of the state." Some things never change!

enlarge a golf course on their ancestral territory. On July 11, 1990, the peaceful vigil took a drastic turn when the Quebec provincial police attacked the protesters, leading to a 78-day standoff between Mohawks, the Quebec police, and ultimately, the Canadian military.

> The incident is seared into the memory of almost every Canadian and First Nations citizen who witnessed the events. Simply mentioning "Oka" conjures up images of tanks and barricades; of a Mohawk warrior and Canadian soldier facing off eye to eye; of Mohawk figures burned in effigy by the angry residents of a nearby community; of the tragic loss of life and lingering injury. Bonds were slashed between communities and between first nations and Canadians.[6]

Watching it all unfold was devastating. And maddening. And in its way, liberating. Anger and rage resonated through Aboriginal communities across the country, and our artists responded accordingly. I would start to see culture from a different framework, one based on resistance and, as Gerald Vizenor coined, "survivance." Vizenor writes:

> The nature of survivance is unmistakable in native stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions and customs and is clearly observable in narrative resistance, and personal attributes, such as the native humanistic tease, vital irony, spirit, cast of mind and moral courage. The character of survivance creates a sense of native presence over absence, nihility, and victimry.[7]

I was on a path that would realize itself fully three years later, in 1993. That year would change everything for me, but other factors were at play before that.

The previous year marked the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in what would become known as "the Americas." Now, I

6. Shawn Atleo, "Oka, 20 Years Later: The Issues Remain," *The Globe and Mail*, July 12, 2010, accessed May 11, 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/oka-20-years-later-the-issues-remain/article1634811/print/

7. Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1.

could go on a lot about that particular bit of mis-navigation and the colonial legacy that resulted from it. Suffice it to say that Indigenous people in this part of the world have been living with the horrifying, genocidal, racist oppression engendered by it for these five centuries.

The year 1992 was an odd time to be Aboriginal! So much had happened recently and the Columbus quincentennial was a galvanizing time for good and bad. In 1992, two landmark exhibitions changed the landscape of Indigenous art in this country: *Land, Spirit, Power* at the National Gallery of Canada and *Indigena: Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on the Five Hundred Years* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.[8]

The exhibitions of 1992 marked a turning point in so many ways, but they were not without controversy. The fact that two of *Land, Spirit, Power*'s three curators were not Aboriginal pointed to a continued parochialism by the National Gallery concerning Aboriginal art. And there was that whole "What do we do about the Columbus celebration" thing? By not taking on the topic, the National Gallery did a disservice to the discourse of Indigenous sovereignty and anti-colonialism.

Indigena, on the other hand, was curated by two Aboriginal curators: Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin. It had a much more activist premise, and ultimately, it had the most impact on me. So I will concentrate on that one.

George Erasmus, former Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, wrote in the catalogue for *Indigena*:

> What are we going to celebrate? I don't like what has happened over the last 500 years, 125 years. I couldn't do a lot about it. But what are we going to do about the next 500 years? What are we going to do

8. At that time, the Canadian Museum of Civilization was the only national institution with a history of collecting and exhibiting contemporary Aboriginal art. Although the National Gallery presented *Land, Spirit, Power* that same year, it was another decade before the gallery committed fully to this practice.

> about the next 10 years? So that when the year 2000 comes, around there are some differences!
>
> I don't think that we have a solitary thing that we should be celebrating about unless we are going to do something different in the future. It's really time for some change. It's really time that the European people and their descendants, and the rest who are here and are Canadian, seriously begin to address the basic relationship they have with this land and the people who were here first. We can do things differently in this country—we can be leaders for the world![9]

I spoke with Lee-Ann Martin recently about that time and the exhibition. Here is what she said:

> Living in the US in the mid-1980s, I was working with colleagues to develop a national Native American arts project to de-celebrate the impending quincentennial, which was gaining considerable funding and press attention.
>
> While the Government of Canada focused on the country's impending 125th anniversary in 1992, not the quincentennial, Gerald and I were determined to focus the exhibition on this long colonial history since the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. It was unusual at that time for Aboriginal curators to organize a project of such large scope and so political in nature at a national institution. In retrospect, I see that we wanted to shock museum visitors out of their complacency and ignorance of Aboriginal history. Many visitors commented that they wanted to see the "beautiful old art" of Aboriginal peoples. Exhibitions of contemporary art at the museum still explode the expectations of many visitors by presenting contemporary art as a historical continuum and mediation on future possibilities.
>
> Our primary curatorial objective was to engage Indigenous artists, writers and performers in addressing issues of colonization and cultural tenacity, to reflect upon the colonial process. [Here she quotes from the curatorial statement:] "In a very real sense, this was a process in which a single culture came to dominate as never before

9. George Erasmus, "Forward," Lee-Ann Martin and Gerald McMaster (eds.), *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives in Canadian Art* (Hull, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1992).

> all the other cultures in the world and now enables it to determine nothing less than the destiny of the world".[10]

As an artistic project of reclamation and reaffirmation, *Indigena* asserted Indigenous presence in the political entity that is Canada.

1993: A Personal Turning Point

Art had always been part of my life. My maternal non-Aboriginal grandmother had started taking me to galleries, theatre, and concerts, when I was quite young. But what I was starting to see in 1992 in *Land, Spirit, Power* and even more in *Indigena* was unlike anything I had ever seen before. It got me thinking for the first time that art could be a way of forging identity, a bold, dynamic, in-your-face identity; fearless, sometimes angry, sometimes accusatory, but always unapologetically proud and rooted in a contemporary Aboriginality I had never really encountered before.

On March 20, 1993, my son Tyler was born and I got my first "real" job in the arts at the Native Indian/Inuit Photographers Association (NIIPA). It was quite a day, one that would profoundly change my life. That year also saw the release of Alanis Obomsawin's incredible and chilling, film *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. All three of these events would profoundly change me, all three forming the direction my life would take. And all are interwoven in the formation of my sense of myself as an artist, as a thinker, as an Aboriginal person, and as a father.

My job with NIIPA began a career I am happy to say that I am still deeply passionate about, committed to, and involved in. The birth of my son would help me recognize the deeper meaning of personal, social and cultural responsibility. He still reminds me about our place in this world, and the joys implicit in it as well as the struggles, and why the latter are just as important. Obomsawin's film

10. E-mail conversation between the author and Lee-Ann Martin, spring 2012.

would show me what it meant to be involved and implicated in the larger struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

What I learned was that when members of a community assert control over their own lives and culture politically, socially, and artistically, they go beyond oppression. Thus, control of our "image" becomes not only an act of subversion, but of resistance and ultimately liberation.

This is the fundamental challenge to Aboriginal artists and cultural producers, and the one most exemplified in the work of Obomsawin. In a genre dominated by a colonialist, patriarchal hegemony, her work raised fundamental questions, not just about the subjects she portrays, but also about the system of manipulation and control of image that exists within the institutional arts, culture, and media mainstream. *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* is a film, but it is also a site of power. It is a political and artistic statement that asserts an inalienable and inherent right to self-definition, self-awareness, and self-determination for Aboriginal people. It, and the films that followed it, are some of the most profound cultural works produced in this country.

Obomsawin's films lead us on journeys beyond the superficial, perfunctory attention normally accorded to the subjects she chooses. She examines the clash of cultures and their repercussions on Aboriginal people through the lives and the stories of those most often voiceless. This view of Aboriginal expressive culture asserts not only an independence of vision and thought, but an assumption of cultural sovereignty not normally accorded Aboriginal people. Obomsawin juxtaposes the outcomes of a dominant colonialist hegemony against the personal experiences of her subjects. The Indians in Obomsawin's films are not the homogeneous victims of an overbearing state, but are real people fighting a real battle to claim and reclaim themselves. For her subjects and for her, nationhood and sovereignty are not abstract concepts, but clearly identifiable aspects of cultural autonomy and survival.

From her earliest days at the National Film Board, Obomsawin has fought to tell the stories of Aboriginal people from a distinctly Indigenous vantage point. She establishes a non-linear, Indigenous aesthetic, one that references a shared and previously misrepresented history. She says, "History is crucial to me and to all of my work. In whatever I have done, in whatever I have made, I have always included history. History tells the story and educates. Otherwise how would we ever know how we have gotten to where we are now?"[11] She has consistently included herself within the structure of her documentaries, as interviewer, as narrator, and, in the case of *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, as eyewitness. This positions her not only as an observer but also as a participant in the stories she tells. This subjectivity creates a layer of meaning not constrained by anthropological concerns.

The events of 1990 at Oka had a profound effect on the Aboriginal people of this country. And although the media coverage was extensive, this is one of our stories and it needed to be told from our point of view. With *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, and the films that followed it, Obomsawin clearly established the "story" of Oka and its repercussions within the historiography of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations.

When I first saw *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, I was awestruck by the film's ability to relate to me on an emotional and cognitive level. What did I feel? Anger? Pride? Bitterness? Certainly all of these things, but even more, I felt the voice of a nation, the voice of a people, my voice. Not in some kind of abstract, pan-Indian or oppressed sense, but a passionate voice, a voice of struggle and the voice of "all my relations."

11. Steve Loft, "Sovereignty, Subjectivity and Social Action: The Films of Alanis Obomsawin," Canada Council Archives, 2001, http://canadacouncil.ca/canadacouncil/archives/prizes/ggvma/2001/2001-06-e.asp

1995 and 2005: The Venice Biennale

The Venice Biennale dates from 1895, the era of the great world fairs, places where it was not unusual to exhibit "exotic savages." These large international expositions were developed as opportunities for both the exchange of ideas and the patriotic display of artistic and technological innovation. Spectacular public displays became the norm within these symbolic extravaganzas of industrial and colonial expansion. And Venice is one of the biggest. Every two years, the countries of the world showcase artists in national pavilions.

The Venice Biennale is in many ways an anachronistic throwback to notions of nationalism and connoisseurship that do not represent contemporary art world realities. But it is still one of the largest, best-known, and best-attended international art fairs in the world.

In terms of the movement of Canadian Aboriginal art into the milieu of international discourses in art, the impact of the Venice Biennale cannot be underestimated. However, the fairs also remain places of exclusion, and this must be examined even as we celebrate those Aboriginal artists who do get invited. My own perception of the large international art fairs tends to be bemusement at this exclusion, but I have to say that in recent years I have seen a trend toward inclusion and an acknowledgement of differing aesthetic histories. While the fairs are often still problematic, I doubt that the trend will lose momentum. The metaphoric genie is indeed out of the bottle.

Metis artist Edward Poitras was the first Aboriginal person to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale and Anishnaabe artist Rebecca Belmore was the first Aboriginal woman to represent Canada there. A decade apart, these two artists both made bold, unapologetic statements about what it is to be Aboriginal today, yesterday, and tomorrow. Poitras's work for Venice was a meditation on the coyote as trickster, an iconic figure in many Aboriginal cultures. His work exposed visitors to a particularly Aboriginal

cosmology, something most of them had never seen before. For exhibition curator Gerald McMaster,

> Poitras' life and work epitomize the notion of place and the politics of identity. I argue that between the two (and more) communities—Reserve and urban—there exists a socially ambiguous zone, a site of articulation for Poitras and other contemporary (Native) artists that is frequently crossed, experienced, interrogated and negotiated.[12]

We would all celebrate Edward's triumph, but only until September of that year.

In September, an Ojibwa man, Dudley George, was gunned down by police in Ipperwash Provincial Park. He was an unarmed protestor and he was the first Aboriginal person in the 20th century to be killed during a land claim dispute. Twelve years later, in May 2007, Justice Sidney Linden, commissioner of the inquiry into George's death, ruled that the Ontario Provincial Police, the government of former Ontario premier Mike Harris, and the federal government all bore responsibility for the events that led to George's death.

The year 1995 had started so well, and we celebrated with Edward Poitras. By the end, we grieved and wondered if peace was ever possible, whether it was even desirable and what place art (and we) had in the struggle.

Almost a year later, in November 1996, the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was released. It was five years in the making, followed hearings from thousands of deputations, and told the stories of witnesses from across the country. The five-volume, 4,000-page report covered a vast range of issues; its 440 recommendations called for sweeping changes to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and governments in Canada. On art and culture, the report noted the following:

> Art is both the reflection and the extension of history, myth and spirituality. The arts are a bridge between traditional Aboriginal

12. Gerald McMaster, *Edward Poitras: Canada XLVI Biennale di Venezia* (Hull, QC : Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1995), 86.

> values and worldviews and contemporary Aboriginal lives. Whether they explore traditional forms, modern forms, or both, Aboriginal arts and artists are part of the evolving cultures of Aboriginal peoples. Their art not only defines distinct Aboriginal cultures but contributes greatly to the cultural definition and identity of Canada.[13]

Unfortunately, the large majority of the recommendations in the report have never been acted upon. It remains a profound and ignored document of Aboriginal/state relations in this country.

Rebecca Belmore's 2005 work for Venice, *Fountain,* was an elegy to the relationship of Indigenous people to land, to water, to blood, linked for Aboriginal people in a profound and cosmological way. Cathy Mattes describes Belmore's work:

> Unlike commemorative water fountains that ostensibly represent prosperity, Belmore's *Fountain* contains layers of personal and global meaning. It touches on the power of place, and our common needs as human beings. Taking from the local and moving into the global, it also acknowledges the hegemonic nature of globalization and the potential for violence over our most important natural resource, water.[14]

Reflecting on her experience in Venice, Belmore relates the following story:

> It was on the news. It was 1974. Indians with guns had taken over Anishnabe Park just outside of Kenora. A pulp and paper mill had dumped mercury into the river system throughout the 1960's. In 1970 the federal government acknowledged the contamination and banned commercial fishing. This loss of livelihood affected the social condition of the First Nations communities tied to those waters. The armed occupation manifested the anger and frustration experienced by the people. I recall my grandmother Maryanne watching small,

13. *Report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1996, vol. 3, chapter 6, http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071211060511/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/si61_e.html#5. Visual and Performing Arts

14. Cathy Mattes, "Feature: The Last Time I Saw Venice—Rebecca Belmore's *Fountain*", *ConunDrumOnline*, June 2006, accessed May 11, 2012, http://www.conundrumonline.org/Issue_3/Last_Venice.htm

> black and white, car-battery-operated television. She spoke, directing her Anishinabe words at the flickering screen. There was anger in her voice. "Mom, [I asked], what did Cocum just say?"
>
> "She said, 'If I wasn't an old woman I would be there, too.'"[15]

2006: Norval Morrisseau—Shaman Artist

Although the work of Aboriginal artists had been increasingly appearing in mainstream galleries since the 1960s, *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist* was the first solo retrospective of a First Nations artist in the National Gallery of Canada. It marked a turning point and an apogee in the trajectory of Aboriginal art in this country. Morrisseau's synthesis of Anishnaabe traditions and contemporary art provided a rich visual vocabulary in which human beings and animals interacted on spiritual and terrestrial planes of existence. Morrisseau's art was characterized by the bold use of colour, strong "power lines," and the stories and legends that were at the heart of his practice.

From his first sold-out exhibition at the Pollock Gallery in 1962 until the last few years before his death, Morrisseau was a prolific and committed artist, a man convinced of his own destiny and power to interpret and portray Anishnaabe culture. He brought a sensuality, a sexuality, and a spirituality that people had never before seen in Aboriginal art, and he taught Aboriginal artists not to be afraid to view themselves in relation to their history, their mythology, and their contemporary realities.

Morrisseau's beautiful, complex, and ever evolving worlds were meditations and revelations on everything from the magical transformation of the shaman to the death and plague brought by the col-

15. Rebecca Belmore, "Personal Reflections," presented at the symposium Vision, Space, Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity, Venice, Italy, December 2005, and published in *Vision, Space, Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity* (Washington, DC, and New York: NMAI Editions, 2005), 148-9.

onizers. He redefined Indigenous artistic presence in Canada by and through Aboriginal world views, cosmologies, artistic traditions, and ways of being. He created self-defining narratives of art and culture that located Anishnaabe traditions and specific historical and social dynamics within the worlds he created. He called them his "travels to the world of invention." I remember seeing him just a few months after his exhibition opened. Gaunt, frail, thin, this once robust man was now confined to a wheelchair. So weak was he that we all had to go out to the van he was riding in to pay our respects—respects due to an artist who was an originator and an innovator who had changed the way Aboriginal art was viewed in Canada. Morrisseau died on December 4, 2007, less than one year after his opening at the National Gallery.

He was not the first Aboriginal artist to have a solo exhibition at the National Gallery (that would be Inuit artist Pudlo Pudlat, in 1990[16]), but the scale, the size, and the reception of *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist* marked a turning point and a fundamental change at the National Gallery.

There have now been others—Daphne Odjig, Carl Beam, and the upcoming exhibition of the work of Dene Suline/Saulteaux artist Alex Janvier. For the first time in its history, the National Gallery of Canada has a department of Indigenous art. It's a long way from 1986, when that august institution bought its first work of "contemporary Indian art."

2011: Close Encounters

Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years, which opened in 2011, was the largest international exhibition of Indigenous artists ever mounted

16. In Canada, the term "Aboriginal" refers to the three "Indigenous peoples" identified in the Canadian constitution: First Nations (formerly known as Indians), Inuit (formerly known as Eskimos) and Metis. Pudlat (an Inuit artist) was the first Aboriginal person to have a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, while Morrisseau was the first First Nations artist.

in Canada, and perhaps anywhere. It was a time to reflect on the significance of Indigenous artists on the world art stage and here in North America, all while trying to stay warm in the numbing cold of a Winnipeg January night.

I was co-curator of the exhibition with Lee-Ann Martin, Candice Hopkins, and Jenny Western. This work was undoubtedly a highlight of my career, allowing me to work on a project of this size and scope with a brilliant group of collaborators. And, in one way it brought me back to 1992, as I had the chance to work with Lee-Ann Martin, the co-curator of the exhibition *Indigena*, which had such an impact on my thinking. *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* speculated about the future from the diverse perspectives of Indigenous artists and writers. For us, as curators, our feeling was that to date,

> Indigenous thoughts, images, and words have been omitted in discussions addressing the future. If they have been included, it has often been through pan-Indian prophecies and predictions that are poorly understood and have been appropriated by the dominant culture. Those academic disciplines most associated with the study of Aboriginal arts and culture—art history and anthropology—have largely succeeded in freezing us in the past. Popular culture and media tend to reinforce this notion. In *Close Encounters*, Indigenous people offer speculative, critical, and aesthetic mediations on our collective future.[17]

The artists and writers included in the project pose intriguing possibilities for the next 500 years. As Hopi photographer and filmmaker Victor Masayesva notes, "[w]e all in different measure have carved out the future. We are all clairvoyants, soothsayers, prophets, knowingly assuming our predictions."[18] The idea to organize the exhibition on ideas of the future came quite early in the process. It

17. Candice Hopkins, Steven Loft, Lee-Ann Martin, and Jenny Western, "Introduction," ed. Sherry Farrell-Racette, *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* (Winnipeg: Plug In Editions, 2011), 13.

18. Victor Masayesva, *Husk of Time: The Photographs of Victor Masayesva* (Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 64.

was a means of radically divorcing Indigenous art and culture from the past and making the exhibition into a platform to speculate what the world might be like half a millennium from now. The exhibition's name was specific, at once recalling encounter narratives between Native and non-Native people, and pointing to the genre of science fiction and its often highly romanticized notions of contact.

Certainly, a lot has changed in the art world. Indigenous artists are represented in the largest public and private collections, in exhibitions in major galleries and international art shows and biennales, but the question is still whether their voices are being heard amid the self-congratulatory backslapping of the art elite. Is the movement of Indigenous aesthetics and cultural sovereignty getting through?

The answer is yes and no. Indubitably, the number and impact of Indigenous artists, and the critical dialogue about them, have come to represent a real movement in the art world. But what is sometimes lost in the (rightful) celebration of these accomplishments is the role of Indigenous art as an assertion of cultural sovereignty. Without acknowledging the colonial violence and cultural oppression committed against Indigenous peoples by settler states, there can be no peace, no rapprochement, no moving forward. Jolene Rickard once called sovereignty "a line in the sand." Viewed from an Indigenous perspective, sovereignty is predicated on notions of communal responsibility, cultural autonomy, traditional knowledge, and nationhood. It disavows colonialism not by being predicated on it but by functioning in relation to it. A daunting position, to say the least, but a position of cultural self-awareness and philosophical as well as ontological strength.

In reading the works of Indigenous artists, we must always be cognizant of the artists' position as creators, interpreters, translators, and purveyors of an inherent cultural epistemology. To decolonize is to supplant racist patriarchies in favour of multi-contextual dialogues, while understanding and acknowledging the place of an

inherent Indigenous sovereignty rooted in land, language, culture, and ways of knowing and being. It is a progression, a progression based on mutual respect, mutual understanding, and the desire to explore the complexities of inter-relationships. A progression that is vast and rich, but challenging, too.

Close Encounters was one manifestation of that progression. It showed what Indigenous artists thought about the future: a future of cultural dialogue that is polycultural, intercultural, and resistant to racist hegemonies.

It was a call to continue the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty, while reminding us all of our shared responsibilities as Indigenous cultural producers.

The struggle for Indigenous rights and sovereignty continues, even as policies of assimilation and extinction still dominate government ideology. In our communities, in this country, and around the world, Indigenous peoples will continue to assert their inherent, treaty, and constitutional rights. And all along the way, accompanying them in their resistance, in their survivance, and into their future will be the artists.

> In determining our art history we name ourselves, thereby creating our own self-perception and freeing ourselves from colonialist concepts too often internalized by Aboriginal people. Furthermore, we give our artists a framework and a foundation rooted in their own traditions, histories, cultures and futures. Native artists have had to face the fact that they exist within a cultural hegemony. There has been little to encourage them to develop a unique aesthetic outside the confines of a Euro-centric art history…yet, they have done just that![19]

This quote was from my first major publication as a curator. I believed it then, and I believe it now. The journey continues.

19. Steven Loft, "Alt.Shift.Control," in eds. Steven Loft and Shirley Madill, *Alt.Shift.Control: Musings on Digital Identity* (Hamilton, ON: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 2000), 7.

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BIOGRAPHY

Jocelyn Létourneau is Canada Research Chair in Quebec's Contemporary History, Université Laval (Quebec City, Canada). A member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J., he's also fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and of the Trudeau Foundation. A regular visiting professor in foreign universities, he was the principal investigator in a SHRCC funded Community-University Research Alliance (Canadians and their Pasts). In 2010, he was a Fulbright scholar at both UC Berkeley and Stanford University, and a visiting scholar at the Institute for the Study of the Americas (University of London). Dr. Létourneau is the author or editor of many books. Among his major works are *Les Années sans guide: Le Canada à l'ère de l'économie migrante* (Boréal, 1996); *A History for the Future: Rewriting Memory and Identity in Quebec Today* (McGill-Queen's U. Press, 2004); *Le Québec, les Québécois: Un parcours historique* (Fides, 2004), *Le Coffre à outils du chercheur debutant. Guide d'initiation au travail intellectuel* (Boréal, 2006; transl. in Spanish and Portuguese) and *Que veulent les Québécois? Regard sur l'intention nationale au Québec (français) d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Boréal, 2006). In 2010, he published *Le Québec entre son passé et ses passages* (Fides, 2010). He is currently working on a manuscript tentatively titled *Je me souviens? Le Québec dans la conscience historique de sa jeunesse.*

ABSTRACT

In this personal, exploratory text, the author asks a delicate question: how, in narrating what has happened (which we call history), can we serve humanity without doing a disservice to science? His

basic premise is the following: There are many valid and valuable ways to recount what has happened. As such, which story of the past should we construct? The argument developed in the article consists of mapping out the historian's reflective space by acknowledging the social utility of the interpretive task: to recall that the past is above all a matter of change, which restores the power of hope over the hopes of the Powerful, and to show how, if we approach the past in the profusion of its diversity, it presents itself as a place full of passageways, rather than blockages, reminding us that human evolution is open-ended rather than closed.

LECTURE

"History and Social Hope"

McGill University

FEBRUARY 14, 2012

The question on my mind is both prosaic and complex: how, after a 30-year career as a professional historian, did I end up examining a subject as hazardous to scientific thought as the relationship between history and hope? Before I arrive at the crux of the matter, I need to take you on a little detour that will bring us back to 1997/98 at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J., where I was a fellow.

I have an indelible memory of my year at the institute, for a simple reason: it was there that I discovered the intimate connection between breaking scientific ground and reflective exploration. It could be that the intellectual environment at the institute—which really values innovative thinking—put my mind in gear. It could also be that I had decided, as I entered my 40s, to assume my true identity, which is that of a thinker rather than a researcher. I am not ascribing to some sort of false dichotomy. Of course researchers think, just as thinkers do research. It's a matter of predominance on either side. And I'd be the last to suggest that thinkers are the patricians of the learned world while researchers are the plebes. I do not see it that way. For me, knowledge progresses on several fronts simultaneously, in a complementary rather than oppositional fashion. My scientific sensibilities, which leave a lot of room for imaginative reasoning, are

just as inspired by the putatively specious sophists as by the famously boring platonists. Personally I just feel more at ease in the field of scholarly exploration than in other fields. It's as simple as that.

All the same, at the institute, I was fascinated not only by the freedom we had to foray into the realms of the supposedly unthinkable but also the scope and difficulty of the subjects everyone was exploring. At the School of Social Science, where I was holed up, Michael Walzer, for example, was investigating the issue of just and unjust wars. Clifford Geertz had delved into the immense problem of the interpretation of cultures. Albert Hirschmann was examining the moral and political confines of economics. And, using the concept of gender, Joan Scott was busy expanding both the territory of history and increasing the historical consciousness of women. The common denominator of these four pillars of contemporary social science was perfectly identifiable: none of them feared to rush into the slipperiest territories in the humanities, those places where plain facts confront creative thinking, where the scientific mind encounters political concerns, where the search for objectivity meets the assumption of subjectivity.

In these infamously uncomfortable places, I felt right at home. Basically, I became aware of a long-held penchant for ideas. But where did this veneration for ideas, including the most daring ideas, come from?

*

Here, I must admit something about myself: I am more of an optimist than a pessimist. I have faith in imagination. I believe that there are solutions to problems. Perhaps because I have children, I am not inhabited by the fear of the end of the world or the end of things. I believe, on the contrary, that the world and things will continue to evolve and change. Of course, I do not know whether the world is moving in a positive or negative direction—probably both at once, in an infinite bedlam of decay and regeneration. In any case, that question is not central to my concerns. What matters to me is to

know and above all to *assume* that change is an axial principle of the human condition, if not of life in general and the "inert" world—because even rocks have a life of sorts, an endless cycle that plays out in the torpor of its infinitesimal mutations.

Change carries within it the possibility of transformation. And transformation is at the heart of the human condition. It is up to humans to take advantage—gladly, one would hope—of the vital essence of change to make the world into something other than it is, if it's so rotten, and it most assuredly is. But that's not all that it is. Far from it. We humans can intervene in the world—and in ourselves, it goes without saying—thanks to our power of intelligence, which is an abundant resource the limits of which have yet to be established, now and in the future. That is why we can say that every living person, like every child yet to be born, has the potential to become a greater or lesser saviour.

Intelligence is the power to know and understand that occurs and plays out in and through the production of ideas and, for hundreds of thousands of years, in and through the production of symbols gathered together in the form of spoken or written sentences in different types of language. The confluence of ideas and symbols in the form of ideas expressed in symbols—which we could also call an enunciative regime—has historically proven itself a revolution for humankind. Every enunciative regime has its effect, whether small or large. Through ideas and words, worlds have been opened or closed, possibilities have bloomed or withered, "continents of knowledge"—to borrow Althusser's phrase—have emerged or remained unknown. Ideas and words transform the world.

Another point about intelligence: we tend to associate it exclusively with reason. As such, we oppose it to the orders of intuition, sensation, and fiction. To my way of thinking, separating the forms of knowledge is unsuited to the prehension of things.[1] What relates

1. Alberto Manguel, *The City of Words,* Massey Lectures Series collection (Toronto: Anansi, 2007).

to intelligence cannot be reduced to a simple Cartesian activity of knowledge production. Intelligence is the capacity to imagine, to find and create, by means of ideas expressed in symbols and without ruling out any mode of exploration, a passageway through anything that appears to be a blockage or limit.

The human capacity for ideas and language is therefore fundamental. From my point of view, this capacity is the source and resource of our freedom. Obviously we cannot deny the existence of determinisms affecting the condition of people living in our world. But inevitability has a rather spongy end, and destiny is an unpredictable destination. Believing or arguing that humans are prisoners of world order—or of some supernatural sequence of events—robs them of all possibility of transformative action. It denies their nature, which is to be able to change in order to raise themselves beyond what they are at a given moment.

The subjugation of humankind is a prospect I abhor. Humankind's emancipation is what attracts me. So how can I embody this personal premise, with its political overtones, while practising the profession of historian from a scientific standpoint?

*

As a historian, my field of study is the past. In this vast domain, what interests me chiefly is the way the mediator of history shapes the relationship between humans and the past. Let us define the past as *what was*, in its dual actantial and representational dimensions, with both valencies tightly interwoven. History is related to the representational dimension of things. It establishes the meaning of *what was*, usually in the form of a narrative or argumentative account. Of course, we cannot recount everything that was, because the past, like the universe, is literally without end and without borders. Likewise, the reconstitution of the past, immediately afterward or much later, is never either perfect or completely true. It is illusory to believe that we can faithfully reproduce *what was*. Historian Carlos Ginzburg once said very accurately and with admirable modesty

that as a scientific process, history can never be anything other than an indirect, evocative and conjectural knowledge of the past.[2]

The difficulty of grasping the past in its entirety forces us into a second act of humility. We can describe this as follows: there is no single valid point of entry into the complexity of *what was*, any more than there is a single valid point of exit from the complication of *what has been*. In other words, we cannot arrive at an exclusive, unequivocal, and transcendent interpretation of the past. In theory, this position does not usually pose any problem for historians. In practice, it's another matter. The thesis that history consists—or should consist—of an unaltered representation of the past is still, in effect, the basic postulate and the ultimate aim of the discipline. It is often on the basis of this positivist idealism: render the past as it was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*), so we can evaluate the respective merit of the various interpretations available on the academic market. Many learned critics rely fundamentally on the idea that there cannot be two different—that is, opposing—versions of a single reality, both of which are acceptable. It is fairly rare for a historian to recognize as valid a thesis that contradicts his or her own. If it were valid, the historian would adopt that opinion, or integrate it, in whole or in part. Most often, people entrench in their positions and turn a deaf ear to discussion.[3] The learned universe is marked more deeply by misunderstanding than by dialogue.

Some people assert that interpretive pluralism is the order of our age. In truth, pluralism is assailed by all the monisms of our time—left, right, and centre. And pluralism itself can become a monism, especially when it takes the form of radical relativism and trumpets one of the maxims of our century: to each his own history and every history is right!

2. Carlo Ginzburg, "Signes, traces, pistes. Racines d'un paradigme de l'indice," *Le Débat*, no. 6 (November 1980), 3-44.

3. Marc Angenot, *Dialogues de sourds. Traité de rhétorique antilogique* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2008).

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If it is true that we cannot recount the past in its entirety, if history is an exercise in constructing meaning and there can never be a single, complete interpretation of *what was*, then clearly the historian's journey is rife with choice. There is the choice to recount this or that. There is the choice to construct one meaning or another. There is the choice of advocating one interpretation or another. The problem is not admitting the plurality of paths that the history of the past can take. To even debate that thesis would be foolish. The question is to determine which history to build. In other words, of the abundance of possible histories of the past, which history should be put forward?

On a larger scale, such as that of a society, this question is somewhat meaningless. Interpretive pluralism is by far the most beneficial formula for allowing the members of a society to seek the historical meaning they need to live as members of a whole. By interpretive pluralism I don't mean the juxtaposition of histories that are fixed in their singular reasoning. In that case, we would be back to the perspective of radical relativism, which reinforces social anomie and political fragmentation and so justifiably frightens the editorialists of our day. By interpretive pluralism, I picture several histories dialoguing from the subjective position of interpreters gathered in an intellectual exchange, creating, by and through a conversation that follows the rules of deliberative ethics, a position of objectivity. We tend to oppose subjectivity and objectivity, but it would be better to view objectivity as the outcome of dissonant intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is the route most likely to lead to what we could call a fair history, a difficult and delicate notion I will come back to.

On the individual scale, such as that of the historian, the question of historial choice makes more sense than it does for society as a whole. In fact, it is inescapable. To grasp a perceived reality, we cannot expect an author to develop several equivalent and entangled theses in stereo. The argument would be cacophonic, and yet the

exercise of understanding demands a certain level of harmony, that is, a certain structure and organization. Because of the limits of understanding, a historian has no choice but to reduce the infinite complexity and scope of the past to the order of a story with a clear direction. This is why, in the past, we often imposed straight, specific, and logical forms even though the form of the past is anything but exact, rectilinear, and geometric.

The matter of the form of the past is highly interesting. We agree that binary, regular, or univalent outlines are too restrictive to represent the past, and we have no problem affirming that the past is a complex business. But how can we envisage that complexity? Having admitted the presence of complexity in *what is*, is science obliged to simplify things to enable understanding and explanation? Or can we espouse the complexity of the past and render it in its true form—that of convolution—thereby admitting that the past deals less with *what was* than with what slips past us, is more a matter of what inevitably escapes us, than what we can effectively grasp? The greater challenge of history, as an exercise in the narrative reconstitution of the past, may be to imagine the historial shapes that support the complexity of the past without losing sight of the overall horizon.

*

Here, I would like to relate two personal experiences that brought home to me the critical importance of the historial forms of the past. The first experience took place in Washington, DC. I happened to be at the National Gallery of Art during a retrospective of the works of Alexander Calder, the designer of mobile sculptures.[4] In the foyer hung a gigantic mobile comprising several components swinging in and out of time, in an irregular and asymmetrical but nevertheless perceptible, functional, and almost graceful harmony.

4. "Alexander Calder, 1898–1976," exhibit (March 29–July 12, 1998), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. A catalogue of the exhibit, with the same title, was produced under the direction of Alexander S.C. Rower and published by Yale University Press in March 1998.

I won't theorize on the movement of the mobile. Suffice it to say that this movement, driven by the tension of the fixed components with and against each other, created a form in continual reconfiguration, and that moving form, in perpetual transition and permanent incompletion, appeared to me to be a particularly apt depiction of the complexity of things and the world, both then and now. Actually, the image of that mobile, with the essence it expressed in movement, flow, instability, tension, inexactitude, multivalency, and so on, supports the narrative weft I used to produce my account of the historical experience of Quebec, published under the title *Le Québec, les Québécois: un parcours historique*.[5] The following quotation, which I take from the opening lines, demonstrates this:

> There are several ways to portray Quebec's trajectory from yesterday to today. The narrative I propose outlines a collective journey influenced by endogenous and exogenous factors, inspired by complementary and contradictory utopias, swept along by the complexity of the world and of itself. Rather than advocate an interpretive stance in which everything advances neatly toward the best or the worst, I have chosen to shed light on the tangled and ambivalent, dissonant and divergent, unique and universal processes by which society and the Québécois collectivity have taken shape and grown over time, in a kind of laudable indecision that means that, yesterday and today, the future of the Québécois has been and remains open to the multifaceted plans of Quebec's inhabitants.

It was in Sydney, Australia, that the importance of form became clear for me for the second time. I was quite simply overwhelmed by the external architecture of the Opera House. I won't speculate on the meaning that can be attributed to the building's structure. I will simply say that you have to see the Opera House to understand the extent to which form can push back the limits of what we conceive to exist and offer itself as a bridge to the unthinkable and the

5. Jocelyn Létourneau, *Le Québec, les Québécois: un parcours historique* (Montreal: Fides, 2004), 5. Translation.

impossible. Imagined by the late Jørn Utzon, the form of the Sydney Opera House, which took three years of rumination to develop, is the proof that unusual geometry is not discordant, that it can even create possibilities and lay waste to constraints.

This view of things—that the form we give to *what is* or *what might be* is of capital importance—clearly fuels reflections on the operation of history. Michel Foucault, who wrote the famous *The Order of Things*,[6] was not mistaken. Far be it for me to claim that form—and therefore, for the historian, the composition of a text, or history—can be independent from content, in this case, the past. Let me say, for once and for all: what happened and is known to have happened has a veto over anything that might be said about what happened. But the past never surrenders itself in its entirety. If it did, it would crush everything, including the present, by its sheer weight. A historian is both obliged to fill in the holes in the past, because otherwise there is no practical way to conceive of things, and to reduce the fullness of the past, because otherwise there is no possible way to understand things. The space carved out by the insufficiencies of the past, on one hand, and its overabundance, on the other, is the historian's territory. That territory can be envisaged as a site of relative immobility, since the historian is paralyzed either by the lack of sources or by their profusion. It can also be seen as a site of relative activity, because the operation of history, even founded on a method that is teetering on the brink of methodolatry, cannot free itself from either the humanity or the subjectivity of the historian. And this is the question that interests me the most: if I actually want to make the place I inhabit as a historian a place of activity and not allow myself to be paralyzed by its constraints, how shall I approach the possible actions that are open to me?

6. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences*, trans. A.M.S. Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970).

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Now we arrive at the heart of the matter, a lair peopled by all the demons of science—political, subjective, interpretive, speculative, fictional, moral, and many more besides.

Let us first agree on one point: scientific rigour, which entails a desire for truth and fairness (that is, balanced truth, not moulded truth), is a cardinal component of the scientific enterprise and a non-negotiable requirement in the operation of history. But the idea of rigour does not obliterate the historian's space of action. It simply sets limits to that space, which remains fairly wide. The question remains: how should the historian's "operactional" space be conceived? In other words, in the light of what principles should historians occupy the reflective space that is objectively granted to them by the irreducible complexity of their subject, which is the past?

One of the better responses to this question is to say that the intention of science is to find solutions to the problems of the world and of humankind in order to make the world a better place and people more accomplished beings. From this point of view, science is subject to the purpose of life. Its descriptive capacity is put at the service of the aim of elevation. Science is a resource that humankind has given itself, the primordial basis of which is not an idealistic search for truth but the pragmatic desire to establish an optimal link between truth and utility.[7]

This thesis, which stipulates that there is no contradiction between rigour and value, but rather a logical continuation from one to the other, is appealing and applies well to most natural and social sciences, and even to philosophy. But what about history? Can we assign history a utility in the pragmatic sense of the term? I say yes—with the proviso that we must be reasonable in the service we demand of Clio.

7. Richard Rorty explores this idea. His short volume titled *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 2000) offers a brief but interesting introduction to his thoughts.

We cannot, for example, study the past to draw lessons that, used in the present, become solutions for today's problems. What we call the specificity of historical contexts slams the brakes on this use of the past. The past does not repeat itself, and historical development obeys no law, so it is hard to find universal teachings in the past. The past is not a pharmacy where we can shop at leisure for remedies to cure the present day of its ills. If, as David Lowenthal wrote, the past is a foreign country to the present,[8] the inverse is also true: the present is a foreign country to the past. Although Terence's dictum "I am a man, I consider nothing that is human alien to me" (*Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*) makes a lot of sense, it has its limits.

Of course, the study of the past allows us to clarify and even understand certain contemporary movements or situations. So the past is never completely outmoded. And yet the past is not prescriptive. In the end, it is the choices and dynamics of the present, not those of our ancestors and the past, that orient the future. It is the action of our contemporaries, not their dead and buried predecessors, that allows us to clear out the bottlenecks of the present. In the equation of human destiny, the variable of the past does not and cannot assume an absolute and overdetermining position over the variables of the present or the future.

But while the past does not have the objective importance we ascribe to it, because it contains no timeless lessons and has no right to pre-empt the present, it is nevertheless there, visible in its material traces and carried along by the memories and histories that survive it. The past is *also* present. We cannot simply get rid of it at our own whim. So how can we use it in the service of life without doing a disservice to knowledge?

8. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Based on everything I've said so far, I will permit myself to advance an idea: given its inherent complexity, the past can support several histories. Following the principle that "form is formative," to borrow Leibniz's expression, these histories, in their composition, can be a resource for the future. Depending on the words used, the interpretations built, the meanings constructed from the past, it is possible to loosen certain entanglements of the present. Of course, in the history we make of the past, this is not a matter of triturating *what was* in order to purge *what is* of its afflictions. It is easy to abuse the past, as historians have endlessly reminded us.[9] The interpreter's challenge is something altogether different. It goes like this: how, without re-orienting the past to crudely align it with the aims of the present, can we make the study of *what was* useful?[10] My solution is this: by positioning the past as a matter of social passage.

There is at heart only one precept to be drawn from the past: that things change all the time and there is no status quo, that societies follow no normal evolutionary path, that the world's trajectory is subject to chance, that the panoply of conditioning and determination that weighs on humankind is neither opaque nor complete. This means that human destiny is so undefined as to be unpredictable. And yet, in the objective possibility of change, which the powerful have never stopped wanting to suppress or submit to their subjective interests, lies a germ of hope. The past is objectively hopeful because it is a place where there was change, its boisterous or muted presence creating breaches in the palisade of *what is*. Luckily, the dynamics of change persist in the present. In fact, change is the sole constant over time, carrying with it—even more luckily—the

9. One of the recent reminders of the sort comes from Margaret MacMillan in *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Viking, 2008).

10. Gianni Vattimo, *Éthique de l'interprétation* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991); David Carr, Thomas R. Flynn, and Rudolf A. Makkreel, eds., *The Ethics of History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004); Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney, eds., *Historians and Social Values* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000).

perpetuity of hope. We cannot deny that it is beneficial and precious to maintain the experience and the memory of change against the powers that want to erase its every trace, recollection, and effect.

Somewhere in that statement lies, perhaps, the value of Clio, if not her virtue, which I would sum up as follows: it is in the space between hope and power that history finds its true place. On one side, hope is what dawns but never succeeds because, on the other side, are the powers that constrict what emerges or redirect it toward designated ends. Researchers have amply shown that life as it plays out over time is an inexhaustible battle between lifeworlds and structures, the slender energies forever resisting the established powers that never tire of tyrannizing them. Approaching history as if it were hope does not mean writing a history of what did not happen or what we wish had happened. It means putting the variables of change and non-determination, the variables of openness and aspiration, back into the field of history. Approaching the history of the past from the point of view of non-determination means reopening the past to the idea that things didn't just naturally happen this way or that way. It means remembering that things can and do change because change is the very heart of destiny. Approaching history this way delivers the past from the stranglehold of the powerful, for whom the past is no more than the prerequisite of their advent or the logical sequence after their surge to power.

Stifling the change that is inherent to passing time so as to reduce the possibility of a passageway into the future: that is the objective of the powerful who scrutinize the past in order to appropriate it for themselves. Restoring the dynamic of change to time so as to throw open the potential passageways into the future: this is the objective of the historian who explores and respects the past. From this argumentative principle ensues an assertion: the primary function of the historian is to be for hope and against power.

Can we go further in our quest to make history useful? Can we, for example, draw on history as a link and a binder between the past

and the future? This would mean frankly asking, "Which history of the past for which future to build?"

Once again I would answer yes, we can, but on the condition that we do not overemphasize or neglect the parts of the past that suit the needs of the present or the future. From my point of view, the historical framework that is most likely to enable a society's passage to the future is the one that insists on the abundance of the past, without leaving it in a state of swarming unintelligibility. It cannot be repeated too often: the past is an untended lot that the historian cannot abandon to the creeping underbrush of facts. While the historian ought not impose an artificial order, the past should nevertheless be approached with the intention of shedding light on it, if not completely illuminating it.

Teeming life is interesting to examine because it is full of factual resources for the future. It holds narrative threads and historial forms capable of opening pathways to the future, even when the historical situations to be described are rigid, tragic, or absurd. In the mist of the past and its swamps, there are types of experience and places of action that carry change and therefore hope. But we need to acquire the means to see them and incorporate their dynamism into our interpretation of things, without subordinating the overall portrait of a situation to one of the single images that comprise it. We would never create a tender or rose-coloured history of the genocides that have punctuated human development. But at the very time of the worst atrocities, acts of humanity were also performed, even if only in the testimony of the survivors and the echoes of the dead, which all constitute bridges and precursors to regeneration. As Friedrich Hölderlin famously said, "Where danger is, deliverance also grows", meaning that within tragedy remain zones of humanism—Didier Fassin would add humanitarianism[11]—that resist the

11. Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

incursion of destructive powers. These need to be unearthed and presented. Of course, revealing them does not mean denying what is camouflaging them. Noting the presence of a flower in a sea of asphalt and including it in the description of the landscape does not change the panorama: blacktop still presides. But the flower in the dismal scene calls to mind an important, almost seditious reality in relation to the noxious power drawn in the portrait: tar is porous. Mentioning that porousness, which attests to the multiformity, imperfection, and incompletion of *what is*, raises the possibility of a historial passageway that gathers hope and the future in its wake. The historical narrative cannot be viewed as an end. It must be seen as a bridge. Or rather, it must *also* be conceived as a bridge.

Assuming that the question of a history of the future—or a history for the future—is allowable as a scholarly project because it is rooted in the attentive study of the luxuriant stream of the past, what form would a history of the future of Quebec take?

It would definitely be a history with nothing to hide, neither the conflicts that occurred nor the battles that took place, neither the discriminations that were cultivated nor the oppressions that were exerted, neither the powers that were deployed nor anything related to the miseries of human action, on either the collective or the individual scale. We do, however, have to ask ourselves whether a history based on such a constellation of facts provides a fair image of the historical experience of Quebec. It definitely provides an image. But is it the most accurate image? Can we produce a history of Quebec that, without omitting any fundamental part of that entity's past, carries the future for Quebec and its inhabitants?

In a recent text, I advanced the idea that three facets of Quebec's past, given their steadiness over time, have acquired the status of constants in the Québécois historical experience.[12] In my view, a

12. "Quelle histoire d'avenir?" in Jocelyn Létourneau, *Le Québec entre son passé et ses passages* (Montreal: Fides, 2010): chap. 8.

constant is neither transcending nor eternal. It is a historical value. Furthermore, the constants I identified are not independent of the other variables that make up the Quebec equation, but rather are related to them. Likewise, they are not always and unfailingly the determining values of the Quebec equation. These constants have quite simply been there, continuously and for a long time (although not forever), as the product of the interaction between the many variables that make up the Quebec equation, a sort of precipitate of its historical development, and that we could consider, since these constants are worthwhile, to be a heritage to preserve and pass on.

These constants are the following: the questioning of physical violence, the primacy of politics, and the quest for complex arrangements among diverse interests. Of course, these constants may not be unique to the Quebec experience. That matters little here. The question to resolve is whether they are a fair way to portray the Quebec experience. In other words, do these constants give us access to a truthful and nuanced version—that is, a version that is both established and balanced—of Quebec's past *in terms of what fundamentally was?*

Some would say no. For them, Quebec's experience consists mainly of the quest for emancipation of a people downtrodden by the Other and prevented from achieving their destiny. In its soft and hard versions, the thesis of national oppression, no matter what they say, has done the most to nourish Quebec's historiography, especially when the interpreters offer an overview of the Quebec experience. I would be the last to say that this thesis has no basis in reality. On the contrary. But if we enter into the complexity of Quebec's past, we discover that the concept of oppression skips over as much historical matter as it takes up. Before and beyond that oppression—which is patent and indisputable—there is in fact a many-sided and sometimes ambiguous reality that is cold comfort to the cut-and-dried, black-and-white visions that some have of *what was*. From my point of view, this many-sided reality is the principal location of

the Québécois historical experience, for two reasons: because that is where much of the past of Quebec society unfolded, and because that many-sided place is the magma from which the political culture and values of Quebec have sprung forth.

Quebec is, indeed, a supple, flexible, peaceable society that has developed within a general framework where excess, including interdiction, is renounced and moderation, including concession, is embraced. Radicalism and dogmatism, of the left-wing or right-wing variety, are two philosophies or practices that have never taken hold in Quebec. Quebecers have always reserved their enthusiasm for and given their support to liberal pragmatism, conservative progressivism, and quiet reformism. This paradoxical political order, which some people wrongly suggest is the product of choices that are forced rather than freely made and is therefore the outcome of alienating rather than consenting processes,[13] has positively embodied that which, in the long run, constitutes the essential Québécois historical experience: the questioning of physical violence, the primacy of politics, and the search for complex arrangements among diverse interests.

In Quebec's case, there is no need to coerce the past to establish a history for the future. This society has historically built itself around issues that form powerful and exhilarating vectors for posterity, even for its recent members. Narrating the Quebec experience with the

13. It is in the interpretation of this particular political order—the result of the domination and alienation of the Self by the Other, for Lamonde, and the outcome of a dynamic of forced interdependence with the Other and the Self's desire for cooperation/opposition with and against the Other, for me—that I differ from my McGill University colleague in our reading of the trajectory of Quebec history. See Yvan Lamonde, *Allégeances et dépendances: histoire d'une ambivalence identitaire* (Quebec City: Nota Bene, 2011); Jocelyn Létourneau, *Que veulent vraiment les Québécois? Regards sur l'intention nationale au Québec (français) d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Montreal: Boréal, 2006); and Lamonde's commentary on my work: "Ce que veulent les Québécois… Vraiment?," *Le Devoir*, December 14, 2006.

requisite accuracy means offering, to those who live in this society today, a depiction of the self that allows them to move forward into the future without having to deny anything that happened over time to create them. This is why, in Quebec's case, history can walk hand in hand with hope without the horizon of happiness usurping the obligation for scientific rigour. It establishes an interesting interpretive situation in which the truth of the past nourishes a useful history that, in return, gives the facts the chance to reveal their true measure. It closes the virtuous circle in which the historian, serving as thinker and *passeur*, builds on the meaning drawn from the detail and extent of *what was* to advance understanding and emancipation.

Alain-G. Gagnon

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BIOGRAPHY

Alain-G. Gagnon is a full professor of political science at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and has held the Canada Research Chair in Quebec and Canadian Studies since 2003. From 1982 to 2003, he taught at Queen's, Carleton, and McGill Universities. He is the founding director of the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la diversité (CRIDAQ) and the director of the Research Group on Plurinational Societies (GRSP).

An internationally renowned researcher and political scientist, Alain-G. Gagnon contributes actively to the debate on the organization and future of Western societies. His work spans different fields of analysis, from regional development to the sociology of intellectuals, political economy, and the questions of federalism and nationalism. His engagement is demonstrated in both his teaching of young researchers and his participation in public debate. His work has profoundly influenced researchers on federalism in Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Alain-G. Gagnon pioneered the comparative study of small nations and plurinational societies, a fast-growing field today, and has become one of the most influential experts on these issues. The collective work he co-edited with James Tully, *Multinational Democracies*, has become a must-read for political scientists. It assesses the capacity of different multinational states to combine justice and stability in the management of national and cultural diversity. His work on the multination—in particular his book *The Case for Multinational Federalism: Beyond the All-Encompassing Nation*—earned him the Josep Maria Vilaseca i Marcet award from

the Generalitat de Catalonia in 2007. Recently he edited a major work on Canadian federalism that gave shape to what can be called the Quebec school of federalism. This book, *Le fédéralisme canadien contemporain*, was released by University of Toronto Press under the title *Contemporary Canadian Federalism*. With Michael Burgess from Kent University (Canterbury, England), Gagnon has just published *Federal Democracies*, which is expected to become a critical element in the study of comparative federalism. He is currently editing, with James Bickerton of St. Francis Xavier University, the sixth edition of *Canadian Politics* (University of Toronto Press). This book quickly became an important reference work in the field of Canadian politics. Gagnon's most recent book, *L'âge des incertitudes : essais sur la diversité nationale et le fédéralisme* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011), is being translated into 10 languages.

Alain-G. Gagnon was elected a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 2008. The same year, he received the Award of Excellence of the Quebec Political Science Association. In 2010, he received the Santander Award of Excellence in Research from the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid. He was named a Trudeau fellow in 2010.

ABSTRACT

Born in Quebec's Lower St. Lawrence region in the mid-1950s, Alain-G. Gagnon has long felt a moral obligation to advance a politics of empowerment for communities in need of dignity. From his early work on local and regional development to his more recent research on multinational federalism, Gagnon has consistently advocated for the advent of a democracy that feeds justice. The decolonization movement in Africa and Asia, the Maritime Rights Movement, and—closer to home—Quebec's nationalist movement and First Nations' claims for recognition are some of the elements that have aroused Gagnon's concern for regional and cultural circumstances. What does empowerment mean in a world that is increasingly globalizing and encompassing? How can such empowerment be achieved? In his Trudeau lecture, Alain-G. Gagnon addresses three distinct ways to give meaning to empowerment: regional mobilization, nationalist expression, and federal pursuit.

LECTURE

"Empowerment Through Different Means: Regionalism, Nationalism, and Federalism"

St. Francis Xavier University

MARCH 21, 2012

In this paper, I engage the central idea of my discussion—the idea of empowerment—from three perspectives.[1] At the most general level, I illustrate how the idea of empowerment is in many ways a byproduct of my intellectual rapport with two iterations of Pierre Trudeau and his legacy. From a more personal and emotive perspective, I will try to shed light on the centrality of the idea of empowerment during my adolescence in Quebec and my years as a young academic in British Columbia. Finally, bringing this contribution into the 21st century, I will focus on my work as an academic in a new Quebec preoccupied both with the process of continual emancipation and with its commitment to enshrining an intercultural model of nationhood within a multinational political setting.

I strongly believe that there is a need to rethink Canada continually. This is what drives my research and social engagement as a public intellectual. I understand Canada primarily as three societies

1. Words of thanks go to Arjun Tremblay (PhD candidate, University of Toronto) and Alex Schwartz (Banting Fellow, Queen's University, Kingston), who provided me with feedback on the first drafts of this text. A final word of thanks goes to Eric Bergeron, translator, and to Bettina B. Cenerelli for her comments and final editing of this paper.

that continue to reimagine themselves on a day-to-day basis. I would argue that this can be achieved only via a political project that revolves around three pillars: moderation, dignity, and hospitality.

Introduction

The objective of empowerment has been the driving force behind most of my social and intellectual pursuits. It is an idea that has provided meaning and hope for so many disenfranchised groups and communities across the globe. The Maritime Rights Movement of the 1920s and 1930s is a clear example of the quest for empowerment.[2] So too are the decolonization movements in Africa and Asia and, more recently, the women's rights movements and the claims of First Nations peoples that have for too long fallen on deaf ears.

My interest in the politics of empowerment is inextricably linked to the period of political upheaval surrounding my youth and adolescence. I was born at the tail end of the Duplessis regime in Quebec and grew up during the Quiet Revolution. As such, I witnessed first-hand the emergence of a generation of political actors who launched major institutional reforms that have fundamentally altered Quebec's political and social landscape. Although there was no clear consensus on the road to be followed, virtually everyone agreed that things needed to change so that people could be properly educated, receive adequate health care, and find employment necessary for enjoying a decent life.

Levels of unemployment in my native Lower St. Lawrence region during the 1960s were as high as those then prevailing in the Atlantic provinces. Fortunately, my parents had a farm—which they had inherited from their own parents—that could easily feed a family of six. Our grandparents lived with us, as did an uncle that

2. For a thorough account of this movement, refer to James Bickerton, *Nova Scotia, Ottawa, and the Politics of Regional Development* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

had been severely injured in Italy during the war. He was a proud member of the 22nd Regiment of the Canadian Army. He had not been conscripted. He had served voluntarily. Like many Quebecers, he wanted to travel the world and be a righter of wrongs.

My uncle's capacity to empathize with others has left a lasting impression on me. He was buried on June 24, 1968. I remember this very clearly, as this was the day before Pierre Trudeau and the federal Liberal Party came into office following their landslide electoral victory. These two unrelated events became two defining moments for me and provide the backdrop for the ideas that I will be presenting below.

I will proceed in three steps with a view to exploring the concept of empowerment and conciliation under the ambit of three distinct domains: regionalism, nationalism, and federalism. But first, let me get a little more personal with respect to my connection to the Trudeau community.

A Trudeau Fellow

The main objectives of the Trudeau Foundation dovetail nicely with my own values. Those objectives are to advance a sense of responsible citizenship, to situate Canada in a globalizing world, and to advance the cause of human rights and social justice. I have had the good fortune to be associated with other Trudeau fellows who have dutifully taken up these objectives. James Tully, Roderick Macdonald, Donald Savoie, Will Kymlicka, Jane Jenson, Joseph Yvon Thériault, and Constance Backhouse are known from their contributions to the advancement of a just democracy in the areas of Aboriginal rights, respect for cultural diversity, regional development, citizenship regimes, identity politics, and women's rights. Not only are their contributions to the advancement of society unprecedented in the Canadian academy, but the conceptual tools they have developed have been adopted in many other countries. Each of these fellows brings something unique to the Foundation.

Pierre Trudeau's legacy has left no one in Canada indifferent. Among other things, he is remembered for his battle to secure Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, an instrument that primarily protects individual claims, as well as for his contribution in developing a collective Canadian identity that could stand its ground against the influence of both the United States and the United Kingdom. He is also remembered for the patriation of the Constitution, an event that took place 30 years ago, albeit against the will of the Quebec National Assembly. In Atlantic Canada, Trudeau's image as an engaged philosopher-king is generally well-received and contrasts sharply with the image of the current prime minister as a cold economist. In Western Canada, Trudeau's reputation is sewn of a different cloth. There, Trudeau is remembered for the National Energy Program, the collection of high tax revenues, and the appropriation of royalties from oil development. Former premier Peter Lougheed of Alberta, for example, accused Trudeau of having traded off Western Canada for the support of Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces. In Quebec, the name of Pierre Trudeau is associated with contradictory stances. On one hand is his determination to provide individual French- and English-speaking Canadians equal access to federal public services—where numbers warrant, in the language of their choice—to build pan-Canadian institutions such as CBC/Radio-Canada and to entrench a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. On the other hand, he is remembered for the War Measures Act, for his opposition to Quebec's special status within Canada, and for the 1982 patriation of the constitution. More than any other facet of his legacy, the latter two events have left a major imprint on Quebecers' mindset.

As a Quebec-based academic, I have had difficulty fully connecting with Trudeau as a political leader—this, despite having found him particularly inspiring at the 1968 convention. I spent the entire day of Saturday, April 6 in our living room, watching the convention that led to his election as leader of the Liberal Party. I was

glued to the television screen, totally immersed, checking each move by the contenders, including then health minister Allan McEachen, who, with a solid base from his native Nova Scotia, aligned himself with Trudeau on the second ballot, thus giving a clear indication of the camp to which he belonged. Negotiations between the contenders continued all day, in plain sight of the public. It was a thoroughly exciting time. Looking back, I realize that at the age of 14, I found this political process far more exciting than do today's youngsters enthralled by *Call of Duty* or other PlayStation video games. So it seems I have always been a nerd when it comes to politics.

Empowerment Through Regional Mobilization

In terms of geography and social capital, the Lower St. Lawrence and the Atlantic regions have much in common. People value hard work and are strongly connected to the land of their ancestors. Residents of the area can broadly be grouped into three categories: those involved in navigation and fisheries; those who plow the land, grow food, and raise cattle; and those who risk their lives mining coal and copper. Naturally, manufacturing and the service sectors have reached these regions, but the sea, forestry, and mines continue to do most to shape the region's personality. Under varying circumstances, people in these regions have mobilized to improve the conditions of their employment, to make mines safer, and to obtain respect from their employers.

In the early 1960s, the region of Eastern Quebec was selected for a pilot project known as the Eastern Quebec Planning Bureau (BAEQ). This was a time of particularly high social and political unrest in Quebec. My region was picked for the BAEQ pilot project for the simple reason that it was one of the most economically depressed areas in the country. Farming, fishing, and forestry operations were experiencing very tough times. The choice seemed to be between surviving in this remote land or abandoning the community in favour of urban service centres. Obviously, if a large number

of people chose to leave the area, it would be difficult if not impossible those who remained to make a living there. Tensions could be observed in local hall meetings as people expressed their concerns.

To get a better sense of the transformations that took place in the region, we can look to the fact that in 1931, the first census conducted in rural areas counted 135,000 farms. Twenty years later, this number had dropped to 100,000. Nowadays, there are less than 28,000.[3]

The driving idea behind the pilot project was that it was possible to bring about major economic transformations through technical and scientific advancements. State intervention had been gaining popularity in a province that had otherwise produced the least interventionist governments in the country. It became obvious that the changes being considered might have a negative impact on the region's social fabric, given that they were pointing towards industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization. These processes would further alienate and enrage people from the villages that formed the region's backbone.

It is worth noting that what seemed to matter most to decision makers was the need to inform people about the urgency to become more active, rather than to advance concrete measures to allow people to continue living in the region. Sociologist Edward Smith reminds us that "participation was carefully thought out, painstakingly structured, generously staffed and supported; more than half of the nearly 4 million dollars (under federal-provincial matching funds) was spent by the BAEQ on public information and consultation."[4] If nothing else, the BAEQ helped to sensitize people to the fact that they were a regional community and that their efforts could make a difference.

3. "Bernard Vachon : Un homme qui a la passion du rural," *Horizon*, 12 November 2011.

4. Edward Smith, "Planning for People: The Gaspé Project," in *Social and Cultural Change in Canada,* vol. 2, ed. W.E. Mann (Vancouver: Copp Clark, 1970), 21.

Governments in Ottawa and Quebec were also trying to reap the political benefits from these interventions, but they often wound up getting caught up in jurisdictional battles. In the end, in 1966, the BAEQ tabled 10 solidly documented volumes including a major inventory of the region's economic potential. These volumes were rooted in the language of program efficiency and advanced recommendations for the consolidation of economic vocations, the specialization of policy sectors, the selection of potential winners and losers, and the shifting of populations from remote and underpopulated areas to urban centres.

Despite having been picked for a pilot project designed to foster economic development and economic stability, the region experienced high political tensions.

I harken back to this period, and to the year 1970 in particular, for several reasons. For one, 1970 marked the election of Robert Bourassa (1933-96) as Quebec's premier. Bourassa fit perfectly with the spirit of the time. At 36, he became the youngest premier of Quebec. His strategy to gain power was simple and is strangely similar, at least in name, to a contemporary political project: A Plan for the North. During the spring election campaign of 1970, Bourassa declared that this initiative would create 100,000 jobs. In the Lower St. Lawrence region, a saviour had been found and, as a result, Liberals who had been out of power since 1966 took 8 of the 10 ridings, including my riding of Matapedia (won by Acadian-born Bona Arsenault) and that of Bonaventure (won by Gérard D. Lévesque).

That year, 1970, was also when I entered college in Rimouski. I remember taking courses in literature, geography, psychology, religious studies, and Quebec sociology, the last being the most stimulating for me. The course was taught by Alain Marcoux, a recent graduate of Laval University who was later elected Member of the National Assembly in the historic November 15, 1976 election of the Parti Québécois.

In addition to entering college in the fall of 1970, two other events are still very present in my mind. The first, which everyone has heard of, is the October Crisis. Many books, documentaries, and films have been produced about this event. Throughout the province and in various CEGEPs,[5] political science and sociology were gaining prominence as legitimate fields of research. One must recall that not long before, the fields of study most valued by francophones were law, medicine, and religious studies and theology. Now Quebec had become a laboratory for social science research; it was a concrete pilot project of social planning, economic modernization, and political and social innovations.

At the time of the October Crisis, the Canadian Armed Forces were present in urban centres and were to be seen on rural roads. I remembered seeing soldiers in my village of Saint-Gabriel and wondered who they were after. In the region, rumours and suspicions ran very high. Richard Amyot, Gilles Gauvin, Pierre Jobin, and Rodrigue Lévesque were well known for their acquaintances with a variety of progressive forces and were suspected of fomenting political disturbances and distributing political materials: all were jailed. More than 50 arrests took place in Rimouski alone.[6] At the time, Quebec and Ottawa teamed up to eradicate what politicians depicted as evil forces throughout the province. In doing so, however, not all actors demonstrated good judgment—incarcerating hundreds of people for no reason other than the police were said to have found anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, secessionist, or anarchist material on the suspects' bookshelves or that the incarcerated had spoken against the establishment. At the provincial election of November 1976, of the eight ridings still attributed to the region, only the riding of Bonaventure did not fall into the hands of the Parti Québécois.

5. CEGEPs in Quebec correspond to Grades 12 and 13 or to Grade 12 and the first year of university in the other provinces.

6. The names and the number of people arrested were confirmed by Pierre Jobin (Rimouski) on April 3, 2012, in a telephone interview.

I also remember October 1970 for an event that has loomed much larger in the minds of the people of the Lower St. Lawrence—an event that would prove central in my formative years as a master's and later a doctoral student at Simon Fraser University (1976-78) and Carleton University (1978-83), respectively. One might call it the moment of the "angry priests." In short, 19 priests published a manifesto that depicted government initiatives as being counterproductive and leading to the closing of municipalities throughout the region. Those angry priests denounced government initiatives for weakening the social milieu. Known as Operations Dignity I, II, and III, those social movements convinced many people to get involved in local, regional, Quebec, and federal politics. Of the 85 villages that the province had targeted for closure, only 10 finally closed down. Nevertheless, these closures left a very sour taste for the people of those regions.

State bureaucrats always followed the same pattern. After buying up the properties for a pittance, the government put its plan into action. First, the electricity was cut. Next, houses and barns were burned down under the supervision of government agents to make sure that residents would not return to their villages. Mail was delivered to neighbouring service centres, schools were closed, and snow removal and plowing ceased. In many cases, people moved to urban centres to live in low-income community housing; in some cases, they bought a piece of land on the outskirts of urban centres and hoped for a fresh start that never materialized because their very basic education made it difficult for them to find jobs and make a new start in life.

It was reminiscent of *le grand dérangement*—the Great Expulsion of the Acadians—but instead of removing the *habitant* (the inhabitant) from the land, the plan was to remove or burn the *habitations* (the housing). People would have no choice but to leave the region.

This state of affairs left a major impression on me and convinced me to focus my energy as a graduate student on issues pertaining to regional development. Along the way I met many colleagues who shared my concerns for people living in remote and unevenly developed regions.

This is the main reason why I hoped to give my Trudeau lecture at St. Francis Xavier University. The Bickerton-MacNeil family that is housing me tonight is surely the one that has sensitized me most to the fact that similar challenges had been faced by people from scattered towns and villages in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. My connection to this family goes back to 1979.

I have returned frequently to my native region. One of my most touching moments was on October, 15, 1981, when, with my long-time friend journalist Claude Morin, I went to Sainte-Paule to launch my first book.[7] This collaborative effort, recounting the story of courage and determination of the people of the region, brought together social actors and social scientists. The event took place in the local church where the first Operation Dignity had been launched on September 25, 1970. Through their continued resistance, and against all odds, the residents had managed to keep their village alive. This event made it clear to me that empowerment is a potent concept whose strength is drawn first and foremost from the minds and the will of the people.

Empowerment Through Nationalist Mobilization

I grew up in a family where politics mattered. My father was very involved in municipal and provincial politics. Very critical of the clergy, he identified closely with the provincial Liberals and hoped to improve our family's conditions following the defeat of the Union Nationale. Lesage's victory in 1960 brought much-needed

7. Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Les Opérations-Dignité: Naissance d'un mouvement social dans l'Est du Québec* (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1981).

work in the province as roads, hospitals, and schools were built with unprecedented urgency. My family benefitted from these infrastructural reforms: indeed, as a result of the election my father was hired as a foreman, taking over from a neighbour who was known to be a supporter of the Union Nationale.

Sociologist Marc Renaud has written a useful summary of the social and economic conditions prevailing in Quebec in the 1960s. At the time, francophone Quebecers represented 80 percent of the population of the province and owned 50 percent of the companies, but controlled barely 15 percent of the value of the industrial sector.[8] In short, francophones controlled the least profitable sectors of the economy, those sectors being primarily agriculture and, to a much lesser degree, retail trade, services, and construction. This excerpt is from Renaud's account:

> Quite a few French Canadians had the formal training enabling them to fulfill top managerial, professional, and technical jobs in the economy and, after the educational reforms of the mid-1960s, their number considerably increased. In effect a new middle class was born… This new middle class is, in essence, different from Quebec's old middle class and traditional elites whose power and status derived above all from their position vis-à-vis the religious order.
>
> In the early 1960s, this new middle class was confronted with a private economy quite incapable of generating new job outlets and quite inhospitable to certified French-Canadian skills. The expansion of the state in this context came as a miracle. It provided job outlets to university and technically trained French Canadians, thus securing the survival of that class within Quebec.[9]

The implementation of such overwhelming changes helped to give Quebec's state actors legitimacy as they were viewed as responsible for the upward mobility of francophone Quebecers. In turn,

8. Marc Renaud, "Quebec New Middle Class in Search of Social Hegemony," in Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Quebec: State and Society* (Scarborough: Methuen, 1984), 160.

9. Ibid., 169.

state nationalism was advanced as the main mechanism for transforming economic and political conditions, and for providing francophone Quebecers with equal job opportunities. The task was gargantuan considering that, in 1959, fewer than 50 specialists in the human and social sciences (including economists, urban planners, and social workers) were employed by the Quebec government, and that almost a third of all public sector employees had less than five years of formal education. At the same time, more than half of all public sector employees worked in the administration of justice, highways, Hydro-Québec, or the Liquor Commission.[10] It is in this context that the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec, better known as Parent commission, was set up to bring about a major reform.

The Parent commission was set up in 1961 to bring the key field of education under state control. Its report, tabled in 1966, found that the state

> must see to social and economic progress, provide for the general welfare, protect the community, correct injustice, help the weak. In view of this, it may be said that the modern state can no longer leave a part of its people in ignorance without jeopardizing the progress and peace of society and without complicity in inequities which it has a mission to redress. Thus it is obligated to provide, directly or indirectly, for the education of all, and this is one of its essential functions, of which it will never again be able to divest itself.[11]

The work of the Parent commission corresponds to a period in Quebec politics when state nationalism was also on the ascent in the public consciousness. For many francophone Quebecers, the only

10. Stephen Brooks and Alain-G. Gagnon, *Social Scientists and Politics in Canada: Between Clerisy and Vanguard* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

11. *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec* (Quebec City: Department of Education, Pierre de Marois Printer, 1966), 13-14.

way to reverse the power structure was to call upon the state to tame the forces of private capital.

Most francophone Quebecers also saw state nationalism as a potent instrument for advancing democratic practices, developing solidarity and social cohesion, attenuating discrimination, increasing social inclusion, stimulating public investment, advancing privatization, or undermining liberal economic practices. Within this context, I would submit that from the 1960s onwards, all of the political parties within the Quebec National Assembly have defended some form of state nationalism.

Francophone Quebecers have been spared from the dark side of nationalism; instead they have focused on its potential for transformative and emancipative politics. I remember very well the unfettered excitement of Québécois youth when René Lévesque was first elected premier on November 15, 1976. The feeling in the air was that things had begun to change for the better. A sense of confidence had been imprinted in the public consciousness.

At this time, I was pursuing a master's of arts degree in political science at Simon Fraser University. I remember clearly that Monday in November. A group of Quebec students gathered in the evening at the university's main quadrangle to wave the Quebec flag, emulating Italian-born Quebecers when their team advances to the World Soccer Cup. Several students were so excited by the Parti Québécois victory that, enraptured in their own euphoria, they jumped in their cars and drove eastwards.

To the best of my knowledge, none made it farther than Kamloops.

A couple of months later, Lévesque went to New York to address the prestigious Economic Club. Although he received a cool reception, I was nonetheless thrilled by this unprecedented move. Naturally, my anglophone compatriots at SFU were not as thrilled, but they nonetheless agreed that one could no longer envision Quebec as a priest-ridden province, a province made of cheap

labour, or a province where English could continue to dominate the commercial, financial, and industrial sectors.

Let me clarify Quebecers' enthusiasm for state nationalism. To be clear, nationalism is a polysemic concept. For some, it is a reactionary movement that seeks to advance an ethnic project based on certain primordial ties and in opposition to liberal values. For others, it is the expression of a social movement that seeks to transform power relations and redress past injustices. For others still, it is a quest for identity in a world that is caught between forces of integration and disintegration.[12] So, both Canadian majority nationalism and Quebec minority nationalism have at times adopted different postures with respect to culture, economy, and identity politics. That being said, my general understanding of these two forms of nationalisms in Canada is that, over the last 30 years, they have overwhelmingly tended to push for liberal values in their nationalist projects.

So nationalism is not always an ugly thing. American political scientist Craig Calhoun invites us to avoid discussing nationalism simply

> through instances of passionate excess or successful manipulation by demagogues. For nationalism is equally a discursive formation that facilitates mutual recognition among polities that mediate different histories, institutional arrangements, material conditions, cultures, and political projects in the context of intensifying globalisation. Nationalism offers both a mode of access to global affairs and a mode of resistance to aspects of globalization. To wish it away is more likely to invite the dominance of neoliberal capitalism than to usher in an era of world citizenship.[13]

12. Guy Laforest and Douglas Brown, eds., *Integration and Fragmentation. The Paradox of the Late Twentieth Century* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1994).

13. Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History, and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 166.

My own point then is simply to underline that we should not jump to conclusions too quickly when we address nationalism as a socio-political project. The requirement of national solidarity has been particularly well illustrated by pacifists such as Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) in the case of India, by Martin Buber (1878-1948) in the case of Israel, by protestant theologian Paul Tillich in Europe, and by Catholic theologian Jacques Grand'Maison in Quebec.[14]

As with regionalism, nationalism can help to empower communities that have been ignored, neglected, or taken for granted. This brings me to my discussion of federalism as a potent tool for recognition and the empowerment of communities and societal cultures in a pluralist context.

Empowerment Through Multinational Federalist Mobilization

In addition to regionalism and nationalism, federalism can be understood as an instrument for empowering communities. Federalism facilitates inter-state relations, intra-state linkages, and inter-community relations. Elsewhere I have identified five main uses of federalism in divided political settings[15]: federalism as a conflict management mechanism, federalism as a shield for minorities and territorial interests, federalism as a device to search for an equilibrium between forces of unity and forces of diversity, federalism as a system of representation in dual if not multiple expressions of democratic practices, and federalism as a social laboratory propitious for developing innovative socio-political programs. What has

14. For a detailed account of these individuals and their position on nationalism, refer to Gregory Baum, *Nationalism, Religion and Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

15. Alain-G. Gagnon, "The Political Uses of Federalism," in *Comparative Federalism and Federation: Competing Traditions and Future Directions*, eds. Michael Burgess and Alain-G. Gagnon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 15-44.

been lacking in most accounts of federalism is an understanding that federalism can also serve as a mechanism for empowering minority cultures and nations in complex political settings. I have tried to address this oversight in recent writings, including *Multinational Democracies; The Case for Multinational Federalism: Beyond the All-Encompassing State*; and, recently, *L'Âge des incertitudes : essais sur le fédéralisme et la diversité nationale*.

In *Multinational Democracies*, my colleague James Tully introduces this new distinctive type of political association in the following manner:

> First and foremost, multinational democracies, in contrast to single-nation democracies (which are often presumed to be the norm), are constitutional associations that contain two or more nations or peoples… Since the nations of a multinational democracy are nations, their members aspire to recognition not only in the larger multinational association of which they are a unit, but also to some degree in international law and other, supranational legal regimes (as for example, the four nations of the United Kingdom). Accordingly, multinational democracies are not traditional, single-nation democracies with internal, sub-national "minorities," seeking group rights within, but societies of two or more, often overlapping nations that are more or less equal in status.
>
> Second, multinational democracies are not confederations of independent nation-states, plural societies of separate peoples or multinational empires… The jurisdictions, modes of participation and representation, and the national and multinational identities of citizens overlap and are subject to negotiation…
>
> Third, the nations and the composite multination are constitutional democracies. That is, the legitimacy of both the nations and the multinational associations rests on their adherence to the legal and political values, principles and rights of constitutional democracy and international law…
>
> Fourth, multinational democracies are also multicultural. Both the nations and the multinational association as a whole are composed of individuals and cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities

> who struggle for and against distinctive forms of representation and accommodation of their cultural diversity. In response, the nations and the multinational association develop procedures and institutions for the democratic discussion and reconciliation of these forms of diversity…[16]

Tully has done a superb job of depicting and seeing the potential of this distinctive type of political association for the advancement of justice and political stability in advanced democracies.

Pierre Trudeau's writings prior to his entry into federal politics have much in common with Tully's perceptive account of multinational democracies. Trudeau, in fact, once argued in favour of a political project known as the *multinational option* in which federalism and democracy could be advanced simultaneously. For this younger Trudeau, the classic Westphalian model of the state could not provide a satisfying response to minority claims or contribute to the advancement of plural communities. Tully has recently revisited some of Trudeau's earlier writings on multinational federalism and found them deserving of high praise as they are based on "grassroots democratization, local and regional experiments in socialism, and a plurality of national, ethnic, democratic, regional and economic associations" and proposes that "English-Canadian and French-Canadian nationalisms… co-exist within the federation and be civic and plural rather than ethnically homogeneous."[17]

Following his entry into federal politics, however, Trudeau chose not to pursue his own conceptualization of the multinational option. He also clearly showed discomfort with the idea that

16. James Tully, "Introduction" in *Multinational Democracies,* eds. Alain-G. Gagnon and James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3-4.

17. James Tully, "Federations, Communities and Their Transformations," in *Dominant Nationalism, Dominant Ethnicity,* eds. André Lecours and Geneviève Nootens (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009), 196.

Canada could be imagined as a "community of communities."[18] Instead, he defended the idea that all Canadians should fall under the scope of undifferentiated recognition and that individual rights should prevail over all other forms of political recognition. In other words, institutions, culture, identity, belonging, history, gender, and Indigeneity should not interfere with concrete political life.

On these points, my view of politics is more in tune with the understanding of young Trudeau.

The Time of Uncertainties[19]

I feel it is crucial to connect with Trudeau's earlier writings, as we now find ourselves in an age of great uncertainty. This age is defined by the creation of a global market and economic standardization, by a rising tidal wave of cultural Americanization, by the decline of political literacy and civic engagement, by a growing uniformity between societies and cultures that used to be distinct, and by the continuing atomization of the individual. Taken together, these phenomena constitute an unprecedented threat to the survival of minority cultures, identities, and nations. There is thus a pressing need for minority groups to reassert themselves and to resist the homogenizing imperatives of in this age of uncertainty.

Within this context, I hope to identify how multinational polities can most effectively attend to the recognition of diversity and respond to the claims of minority nations. Since its inception, Canada has had to address these issues and, as such, the Canadian case provides an informative account of the manner in which minority and majority nations have been engaged in an evolving

18. See James Bickerton, Stephen Brooks, and Alain-G. Gagnon, *Freedom, Equality, Community: The Political Philosophy of Six Influential Canadians* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

19. This section borrows from my most recent book, *L'âge des incertitudes: Essais sur le fédéralisme et la diversité nationale* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011).

institutional and ideational dialogue. I in turn will attempt to elicit, from this particular context, broader lessons that may be applied both to other federal polities and to states undergoing the process of federalization. I will also link the Canadian case to the Spanish case. An examination of these two polities provides a new launching point from which I hope to advance a model for the continuing survival and advancement of minority nations. In doing so, I will attempt to sketch the principles that are vital to ensuring that national minorities and national majorities coexist under the auspices of just and equitable intercommunal relations and that allow minority nations to fulfill their legitimate and democratic aspirations.

The relationship between international organizations and national minorities underwent a significant transformation between 1995 and 2005. Instead of promoting the rights of national minorities, as they once did, international organizations now tend to focus on protecting the rights of individuals *within* minority nations. It is true that international organizations brought the plight of the national minorities of Kosovo and East Timor to public attention. But these cases are exceptions to the trend that has taken hold in the supranational sphere—that of a tradeoff between the recognition of national minorities and the promulgation of a global society constituted of culturally diverse groups. This development is perhaps best captured in a 2004 United Nations Development Programme Report on Human Development titled *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*.

To ensure their long-term survival, national minorities must overcome a major hurdle. National majorities have long downplayed or ignored national minority claims-making under the pretext that recognizing these claims would threaten the state's position in international organizations and/or in international economic competition. Confronted with threats emanating from minority groups, representatives of the encompassing state have demanded the

unquestioned loyalty of national minorities. Within the context of unfettered cultural and economic globalization, however, minority nations could find the dual threat of cultural erosion and declining international relevance far more devastating.

In other words, these nations must not only counteract the homogenizing forces of globalization, they must also resist the pressure for cultural uniformity from their own state. In Canada, Aboriginal peoples are arguably most affected by these global phenomena.

The loyalty and unity that national majorities demand of national minorities cannot be accepted unless it is accompanied by the adoption of measures to protect liberty, freedom, and democracy within the multinational polity. This is an issue of conditional trust.

Here the words of Lord Acton resonate across time. Lord Acton argued that modern multinational federalism entailed finding a balance between unity and liberty; avoiding the reconciliation of these two ideas would have damaging consequences on any state. On one hand, if the goals of unity are served at the expense of liberty, the logical outcome is despotism. On the other hand, the entrenchment of liberty without attention to unity inevitably leads to anarchy. For Lord Acton, the institutionalization of multinational federalism presented a means to avoid both of these paths. Lord Acton made clear that

> the presence of different nations under the same sovereignty… provides against the servility which flourishes under the shadow of a single authority, by balancing interests, multiplying associations, and giving to the subject the restraint and support of a combined opinion… Liberty provokes diversity, and diversity preserves liberty by supplying the means of organisation… The coexistence of several nations under the same State is a test, as well as the best security of its freedom.[20]

20. John Emerich Acton, "Nationality," in *Essays on Freedom and Power,* ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949), 185.

In the last segment of my lecture, I offer my take on how liberty, diversity, and unity can be reconciled in this age of uncertainty. I also outline the contours of a new political project for multinational states that is rooted in the ideals of liberty, recognition, and empowerment. I contend that a political project based on these ideals will open new vistas for minority and majority nations to engage in frank and honest dialogue and will allow for the mutual and compatible coexistence of difference, trust, and liberal communitarianism within the context of modern democracy.

The adoption of this new political project is not a given. It will require that minority nations follow the path laid before them by Indigenous movements and that they are vigorous in resisting those that seek to maintain or promote the status quo.

Toward a New Politics in Multinational Polities: Moderation, Dignity, and Hospitality

The enshrinement of a new political project for multinational polities requires cultivating three principles: the principle of moderation, the principle of dignity, and the principle of hospitality. These three principles are the fibres that, when sewn together, create the canvas of a politics based on liberty, recognition, and empowerment.

The Principle of Moderation

Montesquieu's excursus on creating balance in political societies provides the theoretical basis for the first principle. In the 18th century, Montesquieu argued both for the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers and for the unrelenting pursuit of diversity. The principle of balance, which underlies both of these objectives, is vital for the enshrinement of a new politics within the context of the age of uncertainty. Balance, according to Montesquieu, is a necessary buttress against the development of autocratic, totalitarian, and tyrannical systems of government. As such, the entrenchment of balance and good government, via the separation of powers and the

pursuit of diversity, requires that political ambitions and intentions be tempered or moderated.

History is, however, rife with countless instances where political actors have defied the principle of moderation and have instead attempted to impose their will on constituents and political subjects. The First Nations of the New World have paid the price for the unfettered ambition of colonial powers. So too have minority nations been subject to the creation of structures of domination. In the Canadian context, this phenomenon is most readily brought to light by the landmark works of Eugénie Brouillet, John Conway, Michel Seymour, and James Tully, which document the process of cultural, religious and linguistic homogenization that the Quebecois and the Acadian nations have had to resist since the foundation of the Canadian state.

The Principle of Dignity

Other great thinkers have focused on human nature and the conditions for the creation of a just society. David Hume (1748) and John Rawls (1971), in particular, have addressed the need to design rules that lead to and sustain justice. Alain Renault has attempted to apply these precepts to the contemporary context. In doing so, Renault has translated Hume's "condition of justice" as the "condition of diversity." To cite Renault: "I define the 'condition of diversity' as the totality of factors that have led contemporary societies to question the nature of the rules that they themselves must adopt in order to recognize that human nature is intrinsically differentiated and that it is only by acknowledging this fact that it can be treated with dignity.[21]" This acknowledgement constitutes the basis for the second principle that must undergird relations among nations in modern democratic societies.

21. Alain Renaut, *Un humanisme de la diversité: Essai sur la décolonisation des identités* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), 73.

While the rhetoric of dignity is no longer a core component of majority–minority interactions in Canada, it is central to the persistent international conflict in another multinational polity. In recent years, Spain has seen a growing conflict between state nationalist forces and sub-state national movements in the Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia. The nature of this conflict is captured in a comprehensive editorial (signed by 12 Catalan newspapers) published on the November 26, 2009. The editorial strikes at the heart of the conflict between Bourbon-style nationalists and advocates of multinational federalism.

> The foundational pact that has allowed Spain to prosper over the last thirty years is now being questioned. At this time it is best to remember one of the founding and indispensible principles, drawn from Ancient Rome, that underlies our legal system: *Pacta sunt servanda*. Agreements must be kept.
>
> Catalonia is in the grips of real fear and it is necessary for all of Spain to recognize this…Catalans fear, above all, a loss of dignity.[22]

These quotes reveal that majority–minority relations could very well be at a turning point. Whether in Catalonia, in Scotland, or in contexts where national minorities have engaged in similar political projects, the idea of dignity has become the rallying cry for the re-entrenchment of democracy.

In Spain, demands for the enshrinement of dignity have not fallen on deaf years. Although it is unclear what the future holds for the Catalan people, we have nonetheless witnessed a return to national mobilization that rivals the power and numbers of the movements that emerged in the waning years of the Soviet empire. Within this more recent context, dignity is inextricably linked to the recognition of national diversity.

22. "La dignidad de Catalunya," *La Vanguardia*, November 26, 2009; editorial published simultaneously by 12 newspapers with headquarters in Catalonia.

The Principle of Hospitality

The two first principles require that national majorities embrace moderation and respect national dignity. The third principle—and the most important of the three—that underlies the creation of a new political relationship between national groups requires that national minorities adopt an ethic of hospitality. The principle of hospitality is meant to enlarge contexts of choice and acts as a means to counteract the atomizing effects of procedural liberalism.

Philosopher Daniel Innerarity has recently devoted an entire book to the idea of an ethic of hospitality. According to Innerarity, adopting hospitality as a prime imperative permits one

> to appropriate an interpretive approach for understanding the rich strangeness of life, the ways of others, and the often opaque and hostile cultural context that we find ourselves immersed in and that, nonetheless, drives us to seek out what is new, to enter into contact with what is different and to seek out harmony in the disparity that constitutes our existence[23].

This way of understanding reality casts new light on the political world and gives primacy to a good life rooted in society and inter-communal relations.

The principle of hospitality will undoubtedly lead to deliberation and to periods of uncertainty. But all mature democratic societies must embrace a certain degree of uncertainty and for that reason must be open to the possibility of change. It is only through inter-communal interaction (or creative tensions, to use Trudeau's terminology) that a modern society can implement a political project that listens to all voices and encourages political participation within and across communities. Minority nations, even more than majority nations, must embrace the ethic of hospitality. They must address a series of challenges entailing, inter alia, accommodating

23. Daniel Innenarity, *Éthique de l'hospitalité* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 4.

and integrating migrant populations, maintaining the predominance of majority languages, addressing the disappearance of a sense of community, counteracting citizen disengagement, and moderating the cultural and economic impacts of globalization. When confronted with these phenomena, minority nations are at risk. As such, they must find new ways of sustaining mobilization and activism in both the intranational and the international arenas.

The principle of hospitality requires the adoption of a genuine politics of interculturalism. The intercultural model allows for healthy dialogue between the members of a diverse society as well as the articulation of an authentic pact between groups. This model also allows for the continued cultural and ideational diversification of the national minority, on one hand, and gives the national minority an opportunity to exist and thrive over time, on the other. While intercommunal dialogue may lead to the voicing of profound ideological disagreements, interculturalism is necessary for ensuring the survival and democratic evolution of minority nations. As Daniel Innerarity states,

> Democratic renewal will not be instigated by the drive for consensus but rather under the auspices of reasonable disagreement. Although democracy is impossible without a certain degree of consensus, it must nonetheless be open to the expression of diversity and to the articulation of collective identities rooted in different traditions.[24]

By Way of Conclusion

Throughout this lecture, I have presented the politics of recognition and the politics of empowerment as necessary for the deepening of democracy. By evoking the notions of regionalism, nationalism, and federalism, I have sought to question policies that lead to uneven development and regional disparities, to challenge policies

24. Daniel Innenarity, *La démocratie contre l'État. Essai sur le gouvernement des sociétés complexes* (Paris, Flammarion, 2006), 129.

insensitive to national minorities, and to suggest how we might advance political autonomy in line with a principle of the non-subordination of power in federal regimes.

My argument was developed through a series of four reflections. The first explored regional mobilization as a means to empower citizens inhabiting remote areas that are affected by uneven development. The second had to do with nationalist mobilization in a politico-economic context influenced by forces of globalization, forces that can undermine the life of national communities within the world order. The third reflection dealt with models for the management of linguistic and national diversity, focusing equally on models rooted in communal rights and models rooted in individual rights. In the third reflection, I was keen to examine multinational states as new institutional forms of constitutional association. I contended that political autonomy ought to be seen as a form of voluntary and consensual enfranchisement and not as a means to exclude the Other. The fourth reflection evaluated different conceptualizations of community, autonomy, and empowerment in nationally diverse states. I presented multinational federalism as the most promising framework for managing diversity within these states. In that reflection, I reassessed paths toward community reconciliation by reifying and deepening three federal instruments drawn from the past: the need to find a proper balance between forces in tension; the urgency to advance a politic of dignity that builds on a continually renewed trust; and the need to nourish a politics of hospitality so that no one feels excluded from the policy process and the path to democratic renewal.

In closing, and to go beyond the points I have addressed in this lecture, if there is one message I would like to communicate, it is that as individuals we have a key role to play in advancing principles of fairness and justice. Empathy, the quality I identified at the very outset in reference to my uncle, is an essential element to be emulated at all levels—that of municipal politics, as seen with Operation

Dignity; that of provincial affairs, as with the Maritime Rights Movement or Quebec's national affirmation; and that of multinational forums, as I have been advocating for some time in various arenas. Seeking to advance these causes can only bring dignity to people and make the Other aware of the importance to act in good faith, lest trust weaken and unravel.

My hope is that a new group of scholars will take it upon themselves to ensure that redressing past injustices and unfair practices is not an idea limited to the rights movements of the latter half of the 20th century. In doing so, I would like to see these young people not only follow in the footsteps of Trudeau fellows such as James Tully, Jane Jenson, Jeremy Webber, Will Kymlicka, and John McGarry, but also to tell us how and why we, the older generation, are wrong. Past Trudeau fellows have not shied away from their obligation to sensitize Canadians to the importance of "reimagining Canada" from different societal perspectives and political traditions. My hope is that the next generation of Trudeau scholars will not abandon this challenging, complex, unique, and noble endeavour.

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BIOGRAPHY

Sujit Choudhry is the Cecelia Goetz Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Center for Constitutional Transitions (www.constitutionaltransitions.org) at the New York University School of Law. He holds law degrees from the universities of Oxford, Toronto, and Harvard, was a Rhodes Scholar, and served as law clerk to Chief Justice Antonio Lamer of the Supreme Court of Canada. Professor Choudhry is one of Canada's leading constitutional scholars and an internationally recognized authority on comparative constitutional law. He has published over 60 articles, book chapters, and reports. Professor Choudhry is the editor of *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation* (Oxford University Press, 2008), *The Migration of Constitutional Ideas* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *Dilemmas of Solidarity: Rethinking Redistribution in the Canadian Federation* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), sits on the board of editors of the *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, is a member of the editorial board of the *Constitutional Court Review,* and is on the board of advisers for *Cambridge Studies in Constitutional Law*. Professor Choudhry is extensively involved in public policy development. Internationally, he is a member of the United Nations Mediation Roster, has been a consultant to the World Bank Institute at the World Bank, has worked as a foreign constitutional expert in support of constitutional transitions in Egypt, Jordan, Libya and Tunisia (with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), Nepal (with the United Nations Development Program and the Nepal Bar Association), and Sri Lanka (with the Forum of Federations and the Center for Policy

Alternatives). In Canada, Professor Choudhry was a member of the Governing Toronto Advisory Panel, which proposed major reforms to the structure of municipal government in Toronto, and sat on the Board of Directors of Legal Aid Ontario, one of the largest publicly funded legal assistance programs in the world. He was counsel of record before the Supreme Court of Canada in *Charkaoui* (security certificates), and in*Khadr 1* and K*hadr 2* (Guantanamo detainees). He was named a Trudeau fellow in 2010 and he was named Practitioner of the Year by the South Asian Bar Association of Toronto in 2011.

ABSTRACT

It has been argued that the constitution of a country is the embodiment of, or a response to, its particular history, political values, culture, and, indeed, its very identity. But in the last two decades, we have witnessed a dramatic resurgence in the study of comparative constitutional law. How should we understand the relationship between the widely held view that constitutions are the quintessential national documents and the increasing migration of constitutional ideas across the globe? Sujit Choudhry examines the importance of comparative engagement in the drafting of the Charter, and the rise of the "Canadian model" for managing secessionist conflict in the 1990s. He also reflects on the way in which his immigrant identity—itself the product of globalization—has shaped his scholarship on the Canadian constitution.

LECTURE

"The Globalization of the Canadian Constitution"

University of Alberta

APRIL 11, 2012

I once passed Pierre Trudeau while walking on Pine Avenue in Montreal on a wintry day in December 1991, and muttered good day. As fate would have it, he was very much on my mind. Canada was in the midst of one of its recurrent moments of constitutional introspection. The public engagement with these issues was particularly intense in Quebec. The Meech Lake Accord had failed in June 1990. The constitutional negotiations around the doomed Charlottetown Accord were underway.

I had arrived at McGill University in 1988 to study biology, set on a career in medical research. But being a student at McGill in the late 1980s and early 1990s was tantamount to taking a second degree in Canadian constitutional politics. We debated the finer points of the federal spending power, the technicalities of Senate reform, and the impact of the distinct society clause on the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the Charter). The protests over the adoption of Quebec's language legislation (Bill 178) closed downtown Montreal, and fuelled a heated debate on campus on the notwithstanding clause.

A few weeks before running into Trudeau, I spent a long evening poring over *Federalism and the French Canadians*.[1] I still remember

1. Pierre E. Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968).

my wonder at its erudition, confidence, range, and eerie prescience. But what was particularly striking was how Trudeau placed Canadian constitutional politics in a broader global perspective. One chapter, "New Treason of the Intellectuals," approached the constitutional politics of Quebec nationalism within the broader historical framework of state-directed projects of nation-building, the rise of minority nationalisms as defensive responses to these nation building projects, and constitutional politics as a product of these competing nationalisms. It was littered with illustrative examples from the new nations of Asia and Africa. The sense was that the Canadian dilemma was not just a Canadian issue.

This essay, and Trudeau's life, raise a question. Trudeau famously left Canada to study abroad in the 1940s—at Harvard, Paris, and the London School of Economics—and then travelled around the world before returning in 1949. He described himself as a "citizen of the world," a term that connotes a kind of rootless cosmopolitanism. But this stance is the antithesis of the dominant way in which constitutions are understood—as emerging from, and reflecting, a nation's distinct history, culture, and identity. And indeed, Trudeau was at the very centre of our constitutional politics for a quarter-century.

So if I were to meet Trudeau today, I would ask him this question: is there a way to marry global constitutional engagement with a commitment to national constitutional distinctiveness? What motivates this question is my own academic career. I am a student of the Canadian constitution. But I am also a scholar of comparative constitutional law. The two main issues that have fascinated me are the role of comparative materials in constitutional drafting and interpretation, and the constitutional politics of nationalism and secession. I have tried to show that comparative engagement is helpful to better understand both phenomena, within Canada and beyond. Trudeau's own life illustrates this point. The precursor to "New Treason of the Intellectuals" was a presentation Trudeau gave

at the École Normale in Paris in 1947.[2] I strongly suspect that being outside Canada, in a radically different political and constitutional context, made it easier for Trudeau to grasp the logic of Canada's multinational federalism.

In this lecture, I want to reflect on these two themes as well as a third. I am the child of immigrants who cannot trace their ancestry to any one of Canada's founding nations. I want to suggest that immigration, coupled with accelerating urbanization, is creating a host of new constitutional issues that will define Canada's constitutional agenda in the 21st century. The link with the overall theme for my lecture is that immigration is a manifestation of globalization, and will become another way to understand the globalization of the Canadian constitution.

The Migration of Constitutional Ideas

I became a scholar of comparative constitutional law by accident. At the same time that I decided to forsake a future in medical research for a career in the law, I won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. I decided to begin my legal education there. I eventually ended up collecting law degrees from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. In addition, I spent a summer as a student working on constitutional issues related to the South African transition. At each juncture in this journey, I naturally brought my constitutional training with me from my previous education and drew on it to better understand the problem at hand.

In microcosm my life reflected an important shift in constitutional practice. Political scientists conventionally argue that democratization has occurred in three waves. The first commenced in the 1800s in the United States and ended in 1926; the second ran from just prior to the Allied Victory in Europe and proceeded through

2. As revealed by Max and Monique Nemni in *Trudeau Transformed: The Shaping of a Statesman, 1944–1965* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 2011).

the postwar period with decolonization until the mid-1960s; and the third began in the mid-1970s with the overthrow of Portugal's dictatorship, continued with the end of military dictatorships in Spain, Greece, and Latin America, reached the communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, moved on to South Africa, and later spread to Asia and Africa. The Arab Spring may harken the beginning of the fourth wave of democratization, but it is far too early to tell.

Democratic transitions are usually accompanied by the adoption of new constitutions, and this process of constitution building is now thoroughly globalized. The globalization of contemporary constitutional practice means the reliance on comparative materials at all stages in the life cycle of modern constitutions—for example, during constitutional interpretation and the process of constitutional drafting.

The problem plaguing the field when I began to work in it is that students of comparative constitutional law had largely failed to ask the basic questions of what the point of comparative inquiry is, and how that enterprise is to be undertaken. There were two standard positions: particularism and universalism.

To particularists, the globalization of modern constitutional practice is wrong, because it contradicts the notion that a constitution of a nation emerges from, embodies, and aspires to sustain or respond to a nation's particular national circumstances. To participate in a national constitutional conversation is to engage in a particular and local political practice about *this* place, about who and what *we* are and want to become. Proponents of this view hold that constitutions should be framed and interpreted only by reference to sources internal to a nation's history and political traditions. Comparative engagement is a curiosity of no practical relevance, or even worse, is a form of legal imperialism.

At the other end of the spectrum are universalists, who posit that constitutional guarantees are cut from a universal cloth. An emerging

consensus among foreign legal systems is proof of a particular constitutional provision's truth or rightness. They exhort courts to regard themselves as interpreting constitutional texts that protect rights that transcend national boundaries. All constitutional courts are part of an interpretive community engaged in effecting the same set of principles.

This remains a surprisingly polarized debate, especially in the United States, where it has become yet another issue that divides conservatives and liberals. Conservatives accuse liberals of promoting a project of constitutional convergence that undermines American sovereignty. Liberals fuel these fears by viewing comparative engagement as a way of affirming America's membership in the community of liberal democracies. There is a transparently obvious politics to this.

This debate has become deadlocked, futile, and sterile. It also bears little connection to the real world. Over several years, I have closely examined how constitutional actors themselves—constitutional drafters, courts, and legal counsel—engage with comparative materials, and I have identified the reasons they give for comparative constitutional argumentation.[3] I have pursued this line of research

3. See Sujit Choudhry, "Globalization in Search of Justification: Toward a Theory of Comparative Constitutional Interpretation," *Indiana Law Journal* 74 (1999), 819-92; S. Choudhry, "The *Lochner* Era and Comparative Constitutionalism," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 2 (2004), 1-55; S. Choudhry, "Worse Than *Lochner*?," in *Access to Care, Access to Justice: The Legal Debate over Private Health Insurance in Canada,* eds. C.M. Flood, K. Roach, and L. Sossin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 75-100; S. Choudhry, "Migration as a New Metaphor in Comparative Constitutional Law," in *The Migration of Constitutional Ideas,* ed. S. Choudhry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-36; S. Choudhry, "How to Do Comparative Constitutional Law in India: Naz Foundation, Same Sex Rights, and Dialogical Interpretation," in *Comparative Constitutionalism in South Asia,* eds. S. Khilnani, V. Raghavanm, and A. Thiruvengadam (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, forthcoming).

with materials from Canada, India, South Africa, and the United States. What emerges is a third method of comparative engagement, which I term the dialogical model. The starting point is that a claim to constitutional distinctiveness of the kind the particularist would make is inherently relative; a constitution and its interpretation are only unique by comparison with other constitutions and interpretations. Comparative materials are interpretive foils, tools for constitutional self-reflection that help to identify what is special or distinctive about a constitutional order. If we engage comparatively and ask *why* a foreign constitution has been drafted and interpreted in a certain way, this better enables us to ask ourselves why *we* reason the way *we* do.

Constitutional actors may conclude that domestic and foreign assumptions are sufficiently similar to one another to warrant following a foreign model. However, constitutional actors follow that model not because they are bound by it, but because they are persuaded by it, in part because it coheres with national constitutional assumptions. Conversely, constitutional actors may conclude that comparative materials emerged from a fundamentally different constitutional order. A keener awareness and a better understanding of difference can be achieved through a process of comparison. Learning across jurisdictions does not simply mean transplanting positive constitutional models. Comparative constitutional experience can identify models of constitutional failure to be avoided.

I developed this framework in large part through a careful study of the history of the drafting of section 7 of the Charter. That provision guarantees everyone the right not to be deprived of life, liberty, and security of the person except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice. Over the course of nearly a decade and a half, what eventually became section 7 went through countless revisions. The constitutional experience of the United States loomed large to the Canadian drafters of the Charter, but in two very different ways.

The American analogues to section 7 are the due process clauses of the 5th and 14th amendments of the United States Constitution. They differ from section 7 by protecting property but not security of the person, and by subjecting deprivations of those interests to due process, not to the principles of fundamental justice. The United States Supreme Court has interpreted due process to encompass substantive restraints, but there are two lines of substantive due process cases: those that protect economic liberty from government regulation, and those that protect decisional autonomy over issues such as reproduction and child-rearing from government intrusion.

Canada experienced two competing sets of proposals, each of which took a different view of which parts of the American constitutional experience were to be avoided. One set of proposals argued that the Charter should avoid both the substantive protection of economic liberty and decisional autonomy, to deny the courts an open-ended power to second-guess legislative public policy judgments. The second—originally proposed by Trudeau—focused more narrowly on the potential danger posed by the Charter to economic regulation. Ultimately, the Charter is a composite of these proposals, and contains ambiguities that drove constitutional litigation for nearly two decades.

The broader point is that constitutional globalization need not deny the distinct character of national constitutional discourses nor homogenize political and legal order. As a practical matter, when foreign constitutional advisors support constitutional transitions, I think that they need to take the same approach. I have been fortunate to work on the ground in Sri Lanka and in Nepal, and will be soon providing expertise in support of transitions in Jordan, the broader Middle East and North Africa region, and Vietnam. The task of foreign experts is not to preach and promote an international best practice. Rather, our role is much more modest: to clarify the lessons

and implications of foreign constitutional experiences and options, in order to facilitate domestic constitutional choice.

Does the World Need More Canada?

In September 1996, I was a law clerk to Chief Justice Antonio Lamer of the Supreme Court of Canada. One day, the "Chief," as we called him, summoned my fellow clerks and me to his office. He waved a piece of paper and said, "Look what Mr. Rock has sent us!" On the page was a set of reference questions concerning the legal framework for the secession of Quebec. This was the beginning of the famous *Quebec Secession Reference*[4] that was handed down in 1998. I had nothing to do with the case while I was at the court. After my clerkship year, I went down to Harvard, become engrossed in my work, and did not give the case much thought.

The judgment was handed down in August 1998. The Supreme Court had been asked three questions: whether unilateral secession by Quebec was legal under Canadian constitutional law; whether it was legal under international law; and, in the event of a conflict between Canadian and international law, which body of law would prevail. I had expected a short judgment of a few pages on the first question, because the answer was crystal clear. The Canadian constitution creates Quebec, defines its territory and borders, brings into being its legislative and executive branches, confers limited areas of jurisdiction on them, and asserts its supremacy over all exercises of public power. The Constitution does not grant any province the right to unilaterally secede from Canada. Secession would require a constitutional amendment. Our constitution possesses five amending formulas. Save for one, all require the consent of the federal government. There is one amending procedure that provinces can deploy unilaterally, but it is limited in scope to matters internal to

4. *Reference re Secession of Quebec*, [1998] 2 S.C.R. 217, Supreme Court of Canada.

the province and its institutions, and does not extend to secession. So the answer to the first question should have been a brief, and firm, no.

The court's judgment was astonishing.[5] It resolved the case not on the basis of the text of the Constitution, but on the basis of four underlying principles: federalism, democracy, constitutionalism and the rule of law, and respect for minorities. The court used these principles to develop an unwritten, yet binding, constitutional framework for the secession of Quebec. If a clear majority of Quebecers votes in a referendum by a clear majority on a clear question in favour of secession, this would not have the effect of bringing about secession. Rather, this would trigger a reciprocal obligation on the other parts to Confederation to negotiate constitutional changes to respond to that desire. The four unwritten constitutional principles would have to be taken into account during the negotiations and would shape the final deal. Finally, the constitutional framework is legally binding but judicially unenforceable. The court clearly did not want to be drawn into this constitutional morass again.

This judgment is completely bizarre and departs from every convention of Canadian constitutional practice. The constitutional text is the starting point of all constitutional argument, and says nothing about referenda, clear majorities, clear questions, and secession. Moreover, the text offered a straightforward answer to question one. The only way to understand the judgment is that the court amended the constitution to create a secession clause. But under our constitution, the power of constitutional amendment rests with political institutions. So the real question raised by the judgment is why the court did not permit the political actors to amend the constitution, and took this task upon itself.

I spent a few years puzzling over the judgment. I ultimately concluded that the Court had acted in response to a deep and profound

5. Ibid.

breakdown in the Canadian constitutional order.[6] To understand why this breakdown occurred, we need to delve deep into constitutional theory. In politics, we frequently disagree about the substance of public policies. One of the basic functions of a constitution is to channel these disagreements into institutions that reach decisions that members of the political community will accept as authoritative. But for institutional decisions to yield political settlement, those institutional decisions must be made in a certain way. They must be made in a way that is viewed as constituting and regulating political life while also being indifferent among the policy positions on the table. If the procedures to manage political disagreement were themselves politically disputed, it would be difficult for institutional settlement to translate into political settlement. In parallel fashion, the rules governing constitutional amendment are a set of

6. See Sujit Choudhry and R. Howse, "Constitutional Theory and the *Quebec Secession Reference*," *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 13, no. 2 (2000), 143-69; S. Choudhry, "Old Imperial Dilemmas and the New Nation-Building: Constitutive Constitutional Politics in Multinational Polities," *Connecticut Law Review* 37 (2005), 933-45; S. Choudhry, "Popular Revolution or Popular Constitutionalism? Reflections on the Constitutional Politics of Quebec Secession," in *Legislatures and Constitutionalism: The Role of Legislatures in the Constitutional State*, eds. T. Kahana and R. Bauman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 480-98; S. Choudhry and J.-F. Gaudreault-DesBiens, "Frank Iacobucci as Constitution-Maker: From the *Quebec Veto Reference*, to the Meech Lake Accord and the *Quebec Secession Reference*," *University of Toronto Law Journal* (2007), 165-93; S. Choudhry, "Does the World Need More Canada? The Politics of the Canadian Model in Constitutional Politics and Political Theory," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 5 (2007), 606-38; S. Choudhry, "Referendum? What Referendum?," *Literary Review of Canada* 15, no. 3 (2007), 7-9; S. Choudhry, "Ackerman's Higher Lawmaking in Comparative Constitutional Perspective: Constitutional Moments as Constitutional Failures?," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6 (2008), 193-230; S. Choudhry and N. Hume, "Federalism, Devolution and Secession: From Classical to Post-Conflict Federalism," in *Research Handbook on Comparative Constitutional Law*, eds. T. Ginsburg and R. Dixon (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011).

procedures that cannot produce constitutional settlement unless they too are viewed as being impartial among the full range of substantive constitutional options at play.

The problem is that political procedures, including the procedures for constitutional amendment, are not substantively neutral. By determining which individuals and communities can participate in political decision making, and what role those individuals and communities may play, constitutional amending rules stipulate the ultimate locus of political sovereignty and are the most basic statement of a community's political identity. In debates over constitutional change, when the proposal at issue challenges the conception of political community that underlies the rules governing constitutional amendment, those rules will be drawn into constitutional politics and cannot do the work we expect of them. I coined a term for this type of situation: these are moments of *constitutive constitutional politics*. In these moments, maintaining agreement on the procedural rules of constitutional change among constitutional actors who disagree on what that change should be is very difficult. Indeed, the constitutional system as a whole may collapse.

This, in a nutshell, is what happened in Canada in the mid-1990s. The federal government's view was that secession required constitutional amendment. Quebec sovereignists responded by challenging the assumption that independence could be governed by the amending rules. Those rules presuppose that Quebec is a constituent component of the Canadian federation, functioning as a subnational political community with extensive but limited rights of self-government within Canada. But it is precisely this constitutional vision that the Quebec sovereignty movement challenged, because it raised the substantive question of whether Quebec should remain a part of Canada or become an independent state. Since the sovereignists wished to make a radical break from the Canadian constitutional order, it is hard to imagine them subscribing to a process governed by it.

The *Quebec Secession Reference* helps us to change our understanding of the Canadian constitutional crisis of the 1990s. The conventional wisdom is that the crisis was *substantive*—a struggle among the competing constitutional logics of the Charter, provincial equality, and Quebec's distinctive identity. But the *Quebec Secession Reference* points toward a procedural account of that crisis, in which the near-collapse of Canada's constitutional system can be traced to the lack of a shared agreement on the rules governing constitutional amendment.

There is an important global dimension to this story. In the early 1990s, the so-called Canadian model of multinational federal democracy began to be promoted internationally by Canadian political theorists such as Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor, and later by the federal government through the establishment of the Forum of Federations. The rise of the Canadian model was precipitated by events in Eastern and Central Europe. The collapse of the communist dictatorships was followed by the rise of profound ethnic conflict within these democratizing states between national majorities and minorities. In the search for solutions, multinational federalism was an obvious candidate.

But the advocates of multinational federalism were confronted with a major problem. Three of the former communist dictatorships of Eastern and Central Europe—Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia—had already been multinational federations prior to the transition to democracy, and all three began to disintegrate shortly after the transition. By contrast, unitary states in which nationalism served as the cleavage of internal political conflict did not fall apart. So, far from being the solution, multinational federalism may have done little or nothing to prevent state dissolution. Moreover, since only multinational federations broke up—and all of them did—multinational federalism may have had the perverse effect of fuelling the secession it was designed to prevent. The essence of the argument is that federal subunits provided an institutional

power base for national minorities that served as a springboard to statehood.

The region's experience posed a fundamental challenge to multinational federalism as a viable constitutional strategy in Eastern and Central Europe and elsewhere. The best way to respond to the negative examples of the failed multinational federations of Eastern and Central Europe was to identify places where multinational federalism had actually worked—such as Canada. The success or failure of Canada became a critical element in a global debate regarding the mere possibility of crafting an accommodation between majority and minority nationalisms within a single state.

What perplexed me was that the rise of the Canadian model in political theory and constitutional politics coincided with Canada's worst constitutional crisis. I concluded that this was not a coincidence. Many proponents of the Canadian model not only recognized the crisis gripping the Canadian constitutional order, but also viewed the international promotion of the Canadian model as an important element in resolving problems at home. Arguing for the necessary success of the Canadian model was a political intervention in two different but interrelated arenas. It was an intervention in international politics—to offer a practical, viable model dealing with the issue of minority nationalism, which had become a source of political instability in Eastern and Central Europe and beyond. Kofi Annan's and Mikhail Gorbachev's public interventions in the Canadian national unity debate demonstrated how important the success of the Canadian model was to an international community struggling with the destructive potential of nationalism.

But it was also an intervention in domestic constitutional politics—to argue that Canada had hit upon one of the few workable solutions to the accommodation of minority nationalism within a liberal democratic constitutional order, and that this was a reason for us to make our arrangements work. From time to time, Canada's politicians have sought to place the Canadian example at the heart

of Canada's foreign policy by offering it as a pillar of development assistance to deeply divided societies. Part of the motivation is to increase Canada's influence abroad through the exercise of soft power. But there a domestic agenda is at work here as well. As the prestige of the Canadian model is enhanced abroad, so too is its prestige at home.

Contextualizing the rise of the Canadian model against the backdrop of Canada's constitutional crisis has an important practical implication. When we promote the Canadian model abroad, there is the danger of lapsing into "peddling Canada"—to sanitize our constitutional experience and offer Canada as a perfect constitutional role model that all countries with similar problems would be wise to emulate. To be sure, Canada is a success story—it is one of the oldest countries in the world, it has responded imaginatively to forces that have torn other countries apart, and it has achieved a remarkable degree of prosperity and freedom. But our history shows us that we have had our existential crises as well. When Canadian experts go abroad, we should discuss these facets of the Canadian experience openly and courageously. It is simply not credible to do otherwise with foreign audiences, who are often very well informed of Canadian developments.

Ethnic Immigrants and the Canadian Constitution

In 1984, Ontario Premier Bill Davis rose in the Ontario legislature to announce a major shift in educational policy. For several decades, Ontario had funded Roman Catholic schools until the end of Grade 10, but not other religious schools. Premier Davis announced the expansion of public funding for Roman Catholic schools until the end of high school, while continuing to deny funding to other religious schools. The leaders of the opposition parties rose in the legislature to announce their support for the extension of full funding, making it a *fait accompli*. The measure became law the next year, and remains in place to this day.

I was in Grade 9 at the time and vividly recall my outrage. The existing arrangement discriminated on the basis of religion, and the extension of public funding merely amplified that discrimination. It was argued that the funding of Roman Catholic schools violated the Charter's equality rights provision, section 15, which was to come into effect the next year. The potential unconstitutionality of the policy led the provincial government to pose a set of reference questions to the Ontario Court of Appeal, and the case ultimately ended up before the Supreme Court of Canada.

The *Bill 30 Reference* was the first constitutional case I was ever interested in.[7] When the Supreme Court's judgment was handed down in 1987, I carefully read an extract in the *Toronto Star*. The decision rested on two grounds. First, while s. 15 applied to legislation, it did not apply to the Constitution itself. The Court held that full funding for Roman Catholic schools was required by the Constitution, and was a constitutionally mandated form of religious discrimination immune from Charter scrutiny. Second, the Court held that even if there was no constitutional duty to provide full funding for Roman Catholic schools, the provincial power to confer such funding was so fundamental to the Confederation compromise that it survived the enactment of the Charter.

What stood out in my mind was the way in which the Court conceptualized the discrimination at issue. To be sure, Ontario's funding arrangements discriminate on the basis of religion because they exclude schools operated by Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and other non-Catholics. But many of these faiths are new to Canada, as a result of immigration. This means the policy also has the effect of discriminating against new Canadians, on the basis of immigrant status. Moreover, because the Court held that these obli-

7. *Reference re Bill 30, An Act to Amend the Education Act (Ont.)*, [1987] 1 S.C.R. 1148.

gations were constitutionally entrenched, they cannot be changed through the ordinary legislative process.

The last point has important political implications. Demography is destiny. Demographic change eventually leads to shifts in political power. Absent constitutional barriers, demographic change would eventually lead to a change in the arrangements surrounding the funding of religious schools in Ontario. The constitutional entrenchment of these policies insulates them against changes that reflect the evolving nature of Canada.

But the lesson of Canadian history is that if we do not adapt our constitutional arrangements to respond to new demographic realities, we do so at our peril. Consider 1867. Confederation was the coming together of the separate colonies of British North America. But it also involved the division of one of those colonies, the United Province of Canada. That province was created in 1840, through the union of Lower and Upper Canada. Each half of Canada was represented by equal numbers of members in the Legislative Assembly. Initially, Canada East's population was larger than that of Upper Canada's. It opposed this system of representation, in the name of representation by population (rep by pop). A decade later, the positions had reversed, and Canada West had the greater population and was demanding rep by pop. Disagreement on this basic issue ultimately led to legislative deadlock in 1864. A new constitutional dispensation was needed to end political paralysis. Cartier and the Bleus initially opposed rep by pop. But they eventually came to see that the demographic trends that fuelled this demand were inevitable and irreversible.

What is the lesson of 1867? Above all, Confederation was a moment of clear-sightedness driven by demographic change that led us to adapt our institutions to better deal with the future. The clash between constitutional arrangements rooted in Canada's past on one hand, and Canada's changing demography on the other, is far from over.

These issues have become a major preoccupation of my scholarship for the last several years, but I frame the constitutional issues raised by demographic change somewhat differently from others. The dimension I want to add is Canada's ethnic diversity, which is largely a product of immigration, and is another way in which globalization will shape our constitutional development.

Our constitution is increasingly out of sync with some key demographic facts.

First, Canada's population is increasingly urbanizing, but is concentrated in a small number of provinces and major urban areas. Eighty-one percent of the population lives in urban areas (Census Agglomerations, or CAs), while 69 percent live in the largest urban areas (Census Metropolitan Areas, or CMAs). Forty-six percent live in metropolitan Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton. Between 1981 and 2011, the country's population grew from 24.3 million to 33.5 million. Of the total growth, 80 percent occurred in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. Every other province has seen its share decline over the same period.

Second, Canada's population is being transformed by visible minority immigration. Between 2001 and 2011, two-thirds of Canada's population growth was due to immigration. Projections indicate that nearly all population growth will be due to immigration by 2031. The proportion of foreign-born residents in Canada is approximately 20 percent and will continue to increase. These immigrants are primarily visible minorities, reflecting a shift in the source countries for immigration to Canada. In 2006, 16 percent of the population consisted of visible minorities, a figure that is projected to grow to 33 percent by 2031.

Finally, urbanization and visible minority immigration are intertwined. Between 2001 and 2006, 97 percent of immigrants chose to settle in CMAs, with 69 percent settling in the three largest metropolitan areas of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Patterns of immigrant settlement are creating a demographic divide between

urban and rural Canada. Some 95 percent of the foreign-born live in CMAs or CAs, versus 78 percent of the Canadian-born. Ninety-six percent of visible minorities live in CMAs, compared to 68 percent of the general population.

These demographic trends are now firmly set. In the short term, some variation may occur. But the long-term trend is clear and inevitable. A new issue for constitutional politics in the 21st century is how our institutions will respond to these profound demographic changes. At the most fundamental level, the question is this: will votes, political power and public expenditure follow people as they make choices about where to work and live, fundamentally altering the geographic distribution of Canada's population in the process?

The immigrant dimension of this new kind of constitutional politics is crucial. Canada's constitutional arrangements are legitimized by narratives that are firmly anchored in our constitutional past. These narratives are built around a set of historical agreements, compacts, and legal texts among Canada's founding nations, which constitute a kind of common sense of the purpose of the Canadian constitutional project. The Supreme Court's decision in the *Bill 30 Reference* is a reflection of this way of comprehending and articulating the logic inherent in our constitutional arrangements and political practices.

But to many new Canadians, this constitutional common sense does not resonate.[8] Employing the liberal values of equal dignity and non-discrimination, they have increasingly challenged these narratives in a number of areas. One example is the debate over the Distinct Society Clause in the Meech Lake Accord, and its replacement by the Canada Clause in the Charlottetown Accord. New Canadians have a distinctively modern stance toward Canada and

8. I first set out the theoretical basis for these arguments in S. Choudhry, "National Minorities and Ethnic Immigrants: Liberalism's Political Sociology," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10 (2002), 54-78.

its constitutional order that treats the past as undeserving of respect simply because of its "pastness." They feel that to be legitimate and relevant, Canada's fundamental law should reflect our nation's contemporary needs and sense of self. I am quite confident that I am not alone in sharing this view, and that an increasing number of Canadians of my demographic—urban, ethnic, immigrant—hold it as well. As immigration accelerates, this critical stance toward Canada's constitutional arrangements will only increase.

I have tried to bring these concerns to bear on the analysis of two sets of issues: *political representation* and *social policy*.[9]

First, consider political representation. The rules governing the allocation of seats in the House of Commons, both across and within provinces, have produced enormous disparities in the sizes of ridings. Although all adult Canadians enjoy formal equality with respect to the right to vote, the weight of their votes varies widely. These variations are deliberate. The traditional justification for the rules governing the allocation of seats is that they protect the minority of voters who live in smaller provinces and rural areas from being outvoted by urban voters and the residents of the larger provinces. I have argued that bringing visible minority status into

9. See S. Choudhry, "What Is a Canadian?," in *What Is a Canadian?*, ed. I. Studin (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart/Douglas Gibson Books, 2006), 117-23; S. Choudhry, "Redistribution in the Canadian Federation: The Impact of the Cities Agenda and the New Canada," in *Dilemmas of Solidarity: Redistribution in the Canadian Federation*, eds. S. Choudhry, J.-F. Gaudreault-DesBiens, and L. Sossin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 45-56; S. Choudhry and M. Pal, "Is Every Ballot Equal? Visible Minority Vote Dilution in Canada," *IRPP Choices* 13 (2007), 1-30; S. Choudhry, "Constitutional Change in the 21st Century: A New Debate over the Spending Power," *Queen's Law Journal* 34 (2008), 375-90; S. Choudhry and M. Mendelsohn, *Voter Equality and Other Canadian Values: Finding the Right Balance* (Toronto: Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation, 2011); S. Choudhry and M. Pal, *The Impact of Regionally Differentiated Entitlement to EI on Charter-Protected Canadians* (Toronto: Mowat Centre Employment Insurance Task Force, 2011).

the equation complicates this picture considerably. Members of visible minority communities overwhelmingly reside in urban areas in Canada's most populous provinces. The implication for the debate over electoral reform is that promoting the interests of Canada's rural minority and the minority of Canadians who live in smaller provinces comes at the cost of the interests of a visible minority, which are also worth protecting.

In the social policy arena, I have argued that these demographic shifts could play out in the following way. I have described the federal-provincial transfer system as Canada's 20th-century fiscal constitution, layered on top of our 19th century political constitution. This system is sustained by narratives of solidarity with the "Other Canada"—the idea that our fellow citizens in all parts of the country deserve a basic level of services, no matter where they are born or where they live. For a generation, the Other Canada was Corner Brook, Prince George, Rimouski, and Yellowknife. But increasingly, the Other Canada is also to be found closer to home, in the growing enclaves of poverty in urban areas that are taking on an increasingly racialized character, and that are at least partly a function of the well-documented difficulties that recent immigrants face in integrating into the labour market. If narratives of social citizenship undergird the federal-provincial transfer system, then changes to those narratives that emphasize bonds of solidarity that are much more local could have dramatic implications for Canada's fiscal constitution. There may be a demand that the kind of energy and resources we have long invested in regional development projects in Northern and Atlantic Canada now be directed to our deprived inner cities and immigrant populations. The growing chasm between our institutions of representation and the emerging patterns of political identity would be manifest in a new type of debate over fiscal federalism—a debate that would give voice to the larger demographic pressures that are building for constitutional change.

I have come to appreciate that these positions cut deeply against the grain of much of our way of constitutional thinking. As is so often the case, I had to leave Canada to grasp this. My moment of constitutional revelation occurred in Sri Lanka, where I was on mission as a foreign constitutional expert. My suggestion was that the Canadian system of ethnocultural accommodation was a potential model for Sri Lanka to deal with its own ethnic conflict among the Tamils and Sinhalese.

A common theme in our presentations was some form of territorial autonomy for the Tamil minority in the north-east of the island within a united Sri Lanka, analogous to Quebec's position in Canada. In the process of explaining why federalism was a potential solution to Sri Lanka's problems, we were often met with the objection that federalism in Sri Lanka would set the stage for secession. In response, I found myself making the case for Canadian federalism with gusto, through simultaneous translation into Sinhalese. Far from Quebec posing a threat to Canada's viability, had Quebec not been created in 1867, there would likely be no Canada today.

Over the course of my visit to Sri Lanka, I found myself repeating this argument time and time again. This was one of the most astonishing experiences of my academic career.

My own experience tells us something in microcosm about constitutional culture writ large. When citizens live under a constitutional order, we are engaged in highly complex and elaborate social practice. That practice emerges from the concrete political history of a society, a history that explains the origins of our governing institutions, why we have them, and how they operate. This practice is the beginning point of any constitutional conversation.

But the question is this: are Canadians forever doomed to move along the paths charted by our constitutional past?

Let me answer this question by returning to Trudeau. Trudeau burst onto the political scene in Quebec with the publication of

his landmark work, *The Asbestos Strike*, in 1956.[10] He offered an unapologetically modern critique of Quebec's elites, whom he accused of failing to grapple with the new realities of industrialization and urbanization. Trudeau's modernism was closely linked to his global outlook. He argued that Quebec should be open to new ideas: ideas from around the world, ideas that would challenge the veneration of tradition for the sake of tradition. I have no doubt that Trudeau would endorse a modernist critique of our constitutional framework. And as the champion of an open, tolerant, and welcoming Canada, he would welcome the right of all Canadians, both old and new, to engage actively in that constitutional conversation.

10. Pierre E. Trudeau, "The Province of Quebec at the Time of the Strike," in Pierre E. Trudeau, ed., *The Asbestos Strike* (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1974).

Janine Brodie

2010 Trudeau Fellow
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BIOGRAPHY

Janine Brodie holds the Canada Research Chair in Political Economy and Social Governance at the University of Alberta. She earned a PhD in Political Science at Carleton University in 1981, a year after accepting her first teaching position at Queen's University. In 1982, Dr. Brodie went to York University where within a decade she was appointed full professor, Faculty Fellow of the Institute for Social Research, inaugural director of the York Centre for Feminist Research, and John Robarts Chair in Canadian Studies. Dr. Brodie also held the University of Western Ontario's Visiting Chair in Public Policy in 1995. From 1997 to 2004, she chaired the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. In 2002, Dr. Brodie was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of "the breadth of her scholarship and the strength of her academic leadership." Currently, she serves as director of the Royal Society's Academy II Division 1. In 2011, the University of Alberta appointed her to the rank of Distinguished University Professor.

Dr. Brodie's research critically engages many of the core challenges in Canadian politics and public policy: citizenship, gender equality, political representation, social policy, globalization, and contemporary transformations in governance. Her influential and innovative work in these areas is substantial and extensive. To date, she has written or co-written eight books and edited or co-edited three others. Dr. Brodie publishes in a wide range of national and international scholarly journals and has written some 75 book chapters, most recently investigating the multiple and complex effects of neoliberal governing practices on citizenship, social equity, and

national governance. She co-edits *Critical Concepts*, an introductory political science text now in its fifth edition that has been widely adopted by political science departments across Canada. Dr. Brodie's current research focuses on contemporary social policies, provincial anti-poverty strategies, and challenges to democratic citizenship. She was named a Trudeau fellow in 2010.

ABSTRACT

This text explores the relationship between social literacy, social justice, and the social sciences, historically and in the contemporary era of financial insecurity and public austerity. Ongoing financial crises have undermined the legitimacy of the market-friendly governing assumptions, which have informed policy making for more than a generation. Citizens and their governments have entered unchartered waters, but pervasive uncertainty has not dampened popular demands for equity, voice, and social justice, in fact, these have intensified. The social sciences have been too timid in entering public debates in these uncertain times. They have been remarkably successful, however, in demonstrating the social and political costs of income disparities, financial insecurity, and social inequality, three critical markers of this moment. The social sciences have a great deal to say about just societies amid the growing uncertainties of the early 21st century. It is time for social science to rediscover its original mission of imagining better societies and, with robust critique and social research, opening windows on different choices about what is equitable, politically possible, and socially responsible.

LECTURE

"Social Literacy and Social Justice in Times of Crisis"

Organized in partnership with the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences and Congress 2012 (Big Thinking Lecture Series)

Wilfrid Laurier University/University of Waterloo

MAY 30, 2012

Introduction

The question of "Scholarship for an Uncertain World"—the theme of Congress 2012—is a pressing one for the humanities and social sciences.[1] This is an uncertain world that is unsettled by multiple and overlapping crises—economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental. We also live in an insecure and fearful world, fear born of loss of employment, fear of losing ground, fear of not being able to make ends meet, and fear of losing social programs, and, especially, fear that our governments have lost control of forces they do not fully understand.[2]

These crises are typically the conceptual and research terrains of the humanities and the social sciences, but our vocations are increasingly under attack. They are under attack from within our universities. Our governments discredit and ignore us as does the popular media. Some of the criticisms levelled against us are well taken, an issue that I will take up later in my lecture. The contemporary assault

1. I would like to express my deep thanks to Suzan Minosos for her careful reading of an earlier draft of this lecture, to Véronique Dassas for the translation, and to Bettina Cenerelli for her care in editing this paper.

2. Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 217.

on social knowledge, I argue today, is a symptom of the economic and political crises that now engulf advanced democracies.

Social innovators, social scientist, and equity seekers may be relegated to the sidelines of policy debates and their arguments, dismissed as unscientific, self-interested, and a threat to economic growth, but the genie, it seems to me, is out of the bottle. The social sciences and humanities find themselves in an intellectual and political space that they have not encountered in generations, certainly not since the Great Depression. Then, as now, scholarship for an uncertain world was charged with the task of revealing the hazards and interests that lurk in the shadows of common sense. Today I will address the scope of our uncertain world and outline what I call *social ways of seeing* the problems that confront us. Next, I place contemporary critiques of the academy within context, focusing particularly on the blame game being played out in the current political climate of Canada and on what I call the active production of social illiteracy. And, finally, I will return to the theme of this conference—scholarship *for* an uncertain world.

An Uncertain World

We are now five years into the longest, deepest, and most widespread economic contraction since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Like people in the '30s, we continue to stare into what Roosevelt called a vast "frontier of insecurity of human want and fear."[3] And, like our predecessors, we do not know when, how, or what kind of recovery will eventually gain traction. After massive public bailouts of global financial institutions and hefty public borrowing to stimulate economic growth and rounds of tax cutting, primarily for the rich and corporations, plus historically low interest rates, and, yes, stark

3. Quoted in Jacob Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008; revised edition), 43.

austerity programs, there are depressingly few signs of recovery. Our youth face a future in which they will be less likely than their parents' generation to earn to decent wage or to have a secure job or employment benefits or own a home. As it stands, the present global economic crisis denies the next generation the promise of social mobility, which is so critical to the implicit social contract of liberal democracies.

When the global economy began to implode in August 2007 with the American mortgage meltdown, there was a loud public clamour demanding that the perpetrators, many residing in the gilded corridors of Wall Street, be held accountable. Governments, so the cry went up, ought to regulate the financial sector to prevent future global crises. As they did in the early years of the Great Depression, governments ignored the growing liabilities of the prevailing economic orthodoxy, preferring to interpret the deep global shock as a temporary setback rather than as a systemic crisis. G8 and G20 leaders implemented a series of "restoration strategies," designed to stabilize the existing system and get on with "business as usual."[4] The optimists believed that "prosperity [was] just around the corner," echoing the unrealized aspirations of American president Herbert Hoover in 1932.[5] Then as now, prosperity has proved elusive and, looking at the first quarter of 2012, even the pessimists are depressed.

Five years into the quagmire, business is far from usual. So-called green shoots of recovery have withered on the vine. We see slowing Asian markets, ever harsher austerity programs, stubbornly high levels of unemployment, growing income inequality, and an ill-contained European debt crisis, which continues to teeter on the

4. John Clarke, "What Crisis Is This?", in *Soundings on the Neoliberal Crisis,* Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison (London: Soundings, 2012), 44-54; here 44.

5. History Learning Site, "Wall Street Crash of 1929 and its aftermath," http://HistoryLearningSite.co.uk/wall_street_crash.htm.

edge of what the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) obliquely referred to as a "1930s moment."[6] In Spain and Greece, for example, official unemployment rates are now in the range in 24 percent, reaching almost 50 percent among people under 25 years of age. In the United States, the full extent of under- and unemployment is unknown because official statistics do not count those who have quit looking for a job, but other studies estimate that jobless rates, especially among African Americans, have climbed to depression-like levels.[7]

Canadians feel shielded somewhat from the most egregious consequences the Great Recession. Yet, in an increasingly complex and interdependent global economy, Canada is neither protected nor immune from trouble. In fact, Canada has many of the precarious markers of this era. Income inequality is growing more quickly here than in the United States and surpasses levels set in the 1920s; personal debt has never been higher; savings have never been lower; and un- and underemployment are stubbornly high, especially in former manufacturing hubs and among the young, the racialized, and newcomers. This says nothing about those who, at the stroke of a government or corporate pen, find themselves without a paycheque.

In his recent book, *End This Depression Now*, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman argues that advanced economies are now mired in a depression, perhaps not a full replay of the Great Depression of the 1930s, but qualitatively similar to that last lost decade.[8] Krugman finds similarities in the depth and extent of hardship exacted on the working people, in the duration of the crisis, and in the wrongheadedness of orthodox economic austerity programs. Krugman's

6. Quoted in Bruce Campbell, "Massive public investment needed to avert a deep slump," *CCPA Monitor* 2012, 18, no. 9 (2012), 39.

7. Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012).

8. Idem.

analysis is firmly situated in mainstream economics, admittedly of the Keynesian rather than Friedman variety. He appeals to governments to be mindful of the lessons learned in the 1930s, specifically that government austerity programs only promise to further depress already depressed economies and to prolong the crisis. Instead of squeezing budgets, he argues, governments should focus on creating jobs and building public infrastructure. Governments should tackle debt reduction after the worst of the storm has passed. In April 2012, the IMF, once a bastion of neoliberal orthodoxy, also urged governments to go easy on austerity programs, arguing that "austerity alone cannot treat the economic malaise in the major advanced economies."[9] Britain's recent slide into a double-dip recession and the growing recessionary wave across an austerity-focused EU underscore the point the IMF is making.

The current era is qualitatively similar to the early 1930s, eerily so, in other important respects we ignore only at our peril. As Karl Polanyi argued in his enduring analysis of the Great Depression and the rise of European fascism, market governance was always a utopian experiment that tore at the "human and natural substance of society." Allowed to persist, "it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness." "Inevitably," he observed, "society took measures to protect itself."[10] In *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi describes how the dying days of laissez-faire saw the "spontaneous eruption" of all manner of counter movements, ranging from fascism to communism to social liberalism, each with its own analysis of how society should be protected and, just as important, from whom. It took almost two decades of grinding despair, fascist genocide, and a world war to finally build a

9. Quoted in "Too much austerity will be damaging, IMF," *The Guardian*, April, 17, 2012. http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/apr/17/too-much-austerity-damaging-imf

10. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Times* (New York: Beacon Press, 2001; first published 1944), 3.

consensus around a new regime of social protection variously called the postwar settlement, the welfare state, or social liberalism.

While history does not repeat itself measure for measure, Polanyi's work reminds us that the failure of the governing paradigm unleashes myriad alternative prognoses and social imaginaries, some progressive, some regressive, and some pathological. The Indignants in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Quebec student strike, the retail riots in the United Kingdom, the American Tea Party, and the rising popularity of xenophobic nationalism as expressed by the National Front in France, or the Golden Dawn in Greece, are examples of counter movements. Their shared analysis is that the system is broken. Political elites cannot or will not fix the problem. "Ordinary people," variously defined, need protection,[11] but they are not getting it. This message resonates more and more widely in the general public. They feel that no matter how hard they or their children try, they can no longer get ahead, in effect, that the system is rigged against them.[12] This is a volatile mix. All of us have a deep and critical investment in how the question of societal protection is resolved in the early 21st century.

The unravelling of elite consensus on the dominant governing paradigm provides another touchstone to the 1930s, and offers us perhaps the most persuasive evidence that we are approaching a tipping point in governing philosophies. As stated, there is growing disagreement inside mainstream economics about whether austerity or stimulus is the best way to respond to the Great Recession. This debate has now found its way into European party systems. Internationally, financial institutions and prominent economists, who once championed market governance, now actively disavow its

11. J. David Hulchaski, "The 99% Know All About Inequality," *Toronto Star*, October 25, 2011, www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/1075921--the-99-know-all-about-inequality

12. Robert Reich, *Beyond Outrage: What Has Gone Wrong with Our Economy and Our Democracy and How to Fix it* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 524.

core assumptions and outcomes. An early stray from the fold, Nobel Prize winner and former World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz, argues we have been governed by "a grab-bag of ideas based on the fundamentalist notion that markets are self-correcting, allocate resources effectively, and serve the public interest well." This grab-bag, he continues, was always "a political doctrine serving certain interests," and it was never supported either by "economic theory" or "by historical experience." "Learning this lesson," he says, "may be the silver lining in the cloud now hanging over the global economy."[13] Jeffrey Sachs, another astray from the fold, argues that the greatest illusion of market governance was that "a healthy society could be organized around the single-minded pursuit of wealth." This illusion has generated a moral crisis, leaving American society "deprived of the benefits of social trust, honesty, and compassion."[14]

The World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), two influential organizations that have served as hubs for the propagation of market governance for a generation, also appear to have changed their minds. The WEF's 2012 *Global Risks Report*, warns of a "dystopian future for much of humanity," explaining with uncharacteristic humility that "dystopia describes what happens when attempts to build a better world go wrong." The report envisions a future marked by chronic and large levels of unemployment, especially among youth. It predicts that indebted governments will be unable to honour social contracts with citizens. It warns about the growth of nationalism and populism, and the emergence of what it terms as "critical fragile states."[15] Critical fragile states are formerly wealthy

13. Joseph E. Stiglitz, "The End of Neo-liberalism?"(2008), http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-end-of-neo-liberalism

14. Jeffrey Sachs, *The Price of Civilization: Economics and Ethics After the Fall* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2011), 3, 9.

15. World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report:* Seventh Edition (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2012), 10; 16-19, http://www.weforum.org.

countries that will "descend into lawlessness and unrest" because they cannot meet their social and fiscal obligations. Critical fragile states fail to create opportunities for the young, reduce intergenerational inequalities, and/or tackle severe income disparities.[16]

In December 2011, the Secretary General of the OECD, Angel Gurria, unveiled *Divided We Stand*, a scathing report on neoliberalism. He explained how our winner-take-all culture has created deeply rooted social imbalances and pervasive fears of decline in the middle class. Inequality, he explained, is now a live political issue that threatens both economic recovery and social cohesion. He stressed that "the benefits of economic growth DO NOT trickle down automatically," and that "greater inequality DOES NOT foster social mobility." "Our policies," Gurria concluded, "have created a system that makes [inequalities] grow and it's time to change these policies." *Divided We Stand* recommended a new policy agenda, focused specifically on the employment of unrepresented groups, tax reform, and reinvestment in education, health, and family care. Gurria reminded member countries that income redistribution is "at the core of responsible governance" and that "addressing the question of fairness is the sine qua non for the necessary restoring of confidence today." For the OECD, it was time to "Go Social."[17]

Social Ways of Seeing

The idea of "going social" is a formative thread weaving through the development of both liberal democracies and the social sciences. The word "social" is now widely deployed as an adjective to identify a field of thought and action that has something to do with society. We tend to assume that the idea of the social has always been with us,

16. Ibid., 16.

17. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising," Remarks by Angel Gurria, OECD Secretary General, Paris, December 5, 2011, http://www.oecd.org/social/dividedwestandwhyinequalitykeepsrisingspeech.htm

but it is a relatively recent human invention, which is intimately tied to the intellectual and political history of modernity. Enlightenment thinkers began to use the social as a "vital descriptor" of human uniqueness and community, which marked "man" and the human condition off from fate, nature, and the transcendental. As Polanyi described, "people began to explore the meaning of life in a complex society."[18] But it was pauperism, in particular, that "fixed attention on the incomprehensible fact that poverty seemed to go with plenty." This revelation, Polanyi noted, was "as powerful as that of the most spectacular events of history."[19] "Social, not technical invention," he explained, "was the intellectual mainspring of the Industrial Revolution."[20] In the process of industrialization, capitalist societies began to develop a "moral imagination."[21]

By the mid-19th century, the idea of the social was shaped into a powerful transformative impulse when critical thinkers introduced the term social problem into the political lexicon. This term opened spaces for new ways of representing and intervening in the politics of industrialization. The idea of *le problem social* was attributed to the unequal distribution of wealth and power in early industrial capitalism, animating the 1848 revolution in France. New formulae for solving social problems began to appear in leaflets and the policy platforms of continental social democratic parties, and informed the essays of leading thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx.[22] The social thus became a distinctive idiom in the formative moments of modern democracies and the social sciences. The initial

18. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (2001), 88-9.

19. Ibid., 89.

20. Ibid., 124.

21. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of Late Victorians* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

22. Janine Brodie, "Rethinking the Social in Social Citizenship," in *Rethinking the Social in Citizenship*, ed. E. Isin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 22-50.

professional mission of the social sciences was to find some order "in the broken fragments of modernity, and to salvage the promise of progress."[23] Although we currently are dubious about the promises of modernity, the social sciences originated in the desire to make society better, and this mission has been an invariable factor in their evolution ever since.[24]

Social scientists have introduced such core concepts as alienation, mobility, stratification, inequality, and human rights into the political lexicon, gradually but progressively setting the foundations for what Margaret Somers has recently termed a "sociologically-driven knowledge culture."[25] From the outset, this knowledge culture did not and could not separate the scholarly from the moral enterprise.[26] The social sciences challenged hierarchy, fatalism, and ignorance, and generated new social imaginaries about the possibilities of democratic governance.[27]

This social way of seeing crystalized during the 1930s. The years leading up to the crash of 1929, similar to the contemporary period, were marked by profound income inequalities. Social scientists such as R.H. Tawney were among the first to ring the warning bells about the social and political liabilities of inequality. In *Equality*, first published in 1931, Tawney argued that democracy is an inherently unstable form of government unless it also is committed to the elimination of all forms of special privilege and to the taming of

23. Michael Burawoy, "2004 Presidential Address: For Public Sociology," *American Sociological Review* 70 (2005), 4-28; here 5.

24. Zygmunt Bauman, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 160.

25. Margaret Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

26. Burawoy, "2004 Presidential Address: For Public Sociology" (2005), 6.

27. Gerard Delanty, *Social Science: Beyond Constructivism and Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 25.

economic power.[28] As the depression drew on, he admonished those still clinging to the economic orthodoxy of the day:

> Innocent laymen are disposed to believe that [the] monstrosities [of inequality], though morally repulsive, are economically advantageous, and that, even were they not, the practical difficulties of abolishing them are too great to be overcome… The burden of proof rests today, not in the critics of economic and social inequalities… but on their defenders.[29]

During these same years, Lord Beveridge, capturing the mood of Charles Dickens, wrote about the Five Giant Evils of market governance—squalour, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease. Commissioned to provide a framework for the British social state in 1940, the Beveridge Report recommended an extensive network of social insurance programs for families, the unemployed, health care, and housing.[30] In Canada, the Depression years similarly motivated social scientists to critically engage in discourses of renewal. As historian Doug Owram recounts, social scientists did the lion's share of intellectual work during these dark years.[31] In 1932, academics at McGill University and the University of Toronto, among them Frank Underhill, F.R. Scott, and Eugene Forsey, launched the League for Social Reconstruction to foster research and advance public education about the Depression. The threads of this early intellectual work eventually wove through the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation's Regina Manifesto, the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, and the Marsh Report.

Leonard Marsh, a former student of Lord Beveridge and graduate of the London School of Economics, came to Canada in 1930

28. R.H. Tawney, *Equality* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), 30.

29. Ibid., 26; preface to 1939 edition.

30. Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Bibliography of the Welfare State* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

31. Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

after being hired as director of social research at McGill University, where he conducted pivotal research on unemployment and economic mobility. His 1943 report to the federal government provided the founding blueprint for Canadian postwar social policy. It embodied "the basic lessons to be learned from the thirties,"[32] not only in Canada but across all liberal democracies. "The only rational way to cope with the large and complicated problem of the insecurities of working and family life," the report explained, "is by recognizing and legislating for particular categories or areas of risk and need."[33] Anticipating resistance to the idea of social insurance, Marsh explained that "too much emphasis is placed on the second word [insurance] and too little on the first word of the phrase [social]." "The basic soundness of social insurance," the report emphasized, "is that it is underwritten by the community as a whole."[34]

Postwar social welfare regimes were simply one translation of the sociologically driven knowledge culture that took root in that period and, as feminist, critical race, and Aboriginal scholars have since established, the ambitions of social liberalism were never fully achieved and never without their own internal tensions and inequalities.[35] Public policies, by definition, are fields of power that enforce and reproduce gendered, racial, and cultural hierarchies, and historical understandings of the normal and the abnormal. The prevailing knowledge culture, however, provided a language and a literacy to contest those fields of power: the promise of equality and social security opened new political spaces for the excluded to make claims to equality and security.[36] The humanities and social sciences played

32. Leonard Marsh, *Report on Social Security for Canada* (1943), 9.

33. Idem.

34. Marsh, *Report on Social Security for Canada* (1943), 11.

35. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift* (2008), xvi.

36. Janine Brodie, "Reforming Social Justice in Neoliberal Times," *Studies in Social Justice* 2, no. 1 (2007), 93-107.

a key role in generating a new moral consensus[37] and building social literacy in a previous era similar to our own.

Social literacy does not refer to a particular set of postwar social policies but to the core commitments that inspire collective strategies of social protection. If you Google "social literacy," you will find that there is a field of research devoted to the promotion of sociability and emotional intelligence in children. I use the term somewhat differently to describe a particular political and ethical orientation to our collective relational capacities. The "social" in social literacy is irreducibly relational, as Geertz puts it, "all the way down"[38] while "literacy" refers to proficiency in a particular way of seeing and a particular kind of knowledge. We can see social literacy operating in an individual's reading of a situation (her daughter's unemployment), in political party platforms or the manifestos of protest movements that force the question "what is government for?"and in the dense text of bureaucratic reports and legislation, which are premised on the possibilities of collective responsibility. Social literacy is an evolving and a contested terrain, but it has consolidated around a series of orientations, which may have been subdued in recent decades but are not forgotten.

My list may be incomplete, but my research indicates that social literacy grows out of four fundamental commitments:

- First, a commitment to the primacy of political will over all forms of political fatalism, including market fundamentalism.[39] Markets are understood as inherently unstable and unequal; governments can and should intervene to create opportunities, cushion hardship and address systemic disadvantage.

37. Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 237.

38. Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship* (2008), 221; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books), 1973.

39. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift* (2008), 21.

- Second, a commitment to the idea of our shared fate, meaning that social risks are not the responsibility of individuals alone. Social insecurity can be reduced through collective insurance against misfortune and its consequences.[40]
- Third, a commitment to social rights, broadly defined, as a public good and a necessary correlate of democratic governance. "Political rights are necessary to set social rights in place" while social rights are indispensable to make political rights "real" and keep them in operation. "The two rights need each other for their survival."[41]
- Fourth, a commitment to social equality and social justice as an always already unfulfilled promise. The social is a field of unresolved antagonism and an open space for social change, where excluded and emerging subjectivities can make claims to equality, social justice, and social security, however these terms may come to be understood.

Blaming the Intellectual

Not since the 1930s has there been more space or more need for social scientists to provide analysis and critique. We should be engaging in social media with diverse publics about strategies for renewal. But, as I noted earlier, our disciplines have been under siege on a variety of fronts. Market-oriented governments dismiss our research as irrelevant. Shrinking arts funding and arts faculties in our universities convey a daily message to academics, students, and the broader public alike that the social disciplines are momentarily tolerated and ultimately expendable. In the right-wing media, commentators level stinging criticisms at academics and social researchers for their alleged pie-in-the-sky liberalism. Some critics, however, condemn the social disciplines for not being progressive enough. They say that we in the social sciences have let ourselves down. Frank Furedi, for example, holds intellectuals to account for failing to infuse contem-

40. Bauman, *Collateral Damage* (2011), 16.
41. Ibid., 14; Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship* (2008), 8.

porary political debates with progressive alternatives and for abandoning visions of a better world.[42]

Chris Hedges, in his compelling book, *The Death of the Liberal Class* (2010), admonishes intellectuals for abandoning their historic role of speaking the truth to power. Hedges argues that the American liberal class was seduced by the utopian promises of globalization and market governance, and by the trappings of power, which have been systematically conferred on those who bowed to the new governing orthodoxy. Hedges explains that universities, especially law and political science departments, "parrot[ed] the discredited ideology of unregulated capitalism and have no new ideas. The arts, just as hungry… for corporate money and sponsorship, refuse[d] to address the social and economic disparities that create suffering for tens of millions."[43] Our disciplines discredited and silenced critics within our own ranks, and then succumbed to opportunism and fear, all the while betraying a growing public that is struggling to make ends meet. Although the emperor of the market has been revealed as having no clothes, Hedges argues, the liberal class has no clothes either. That is to say, we have no alternative vision and no allies in the broader community. For Hedges, the liberal class lost its moral autonomy; it has betrayed others as it betrayed itself; it is a victim of its own complicity.

But do these admonishments really capture the issues of accountability and social literacy in these uncertain times? Can we really come to grips with our uncertain world without first interrogating the profoundly anti-social instincts of the market-driven knowledge culture that has informed our politics and our daily lives for more than a generation? Not likely. Many of us use the term

42. Frank Furedi, "The year when the word 'progressive' lost its meaning," December 29, 2011, http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/sitearticle/11931

43. Chris Hedges, *The Death of the Liberal Class* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2010), 11.

"neoliberalism" as shorthand for this market-driven knowledge culture, and the sea change in governing assumptions that took root globally in 1980s. Neoliberalism is a term that includes many different things (policies, class interests, discourses); it is also a moving target, being made and remade through a series of crises of its own creation.[44] Neoliberalism is a chameleon, lacking a core set of values, with the powerful exception of its consistent antipathy to the social and the four commitments of social literacy that I have discussed.[45] Since its inception in the 1920s, neoliberalism has been an unrelenting anti-social political doctrine that "reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to the practices of empire."[46] Over the course of a generation, our politics and our social imaginations have been "cleansed so that the public interest, public ownership, common goods, equality, the redistribution of wealth, the stubborn facts about poverty and inequality, etc., all became unspeakable."[47]

It is paradoxical, to say the least, that a branch of the social sciences, that being neo classical economics, has sidelined its core concerns. Neo classical governing principles were roundly rejected in the aftermath of laissez-faire. In the 1940s and 50s, as Susan George once mused, "you would have been laughed off the stage or sent off to the insane asylum, if you had seriously proposed any of the ideas and policies in today's standard neo-liberal

44. James Peck, Nick Theodore, and Neil Brenner, "Post-neoliberalism and Its Malcontents," *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2009), 94-116; here: 105; Stuart Hall, "The Neoliberal Crisis," in *Soundings on the Neoliberal Crisis,* eds. Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison (London: Soundings, 2012), 8-26.

45. John Clarke, "Living with/in and without neoliberalism," *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology* 51 (2008), 135-147; here: 140.

46. Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays in Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 39.

47. Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," in *Soundings on the Neoliberal Crisis,* eds. Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison, 55-69; here: 59.

toolkit."[48] During the stagflation in the late 1970s, however, neoclassical economics grew roots in leading economics departments and captured the imaginations of international financial institutions and national policy networks. Armed with the certainties of complex statistical modelling and theories of utility maximization and efficient markets, it promised to liberate markets and generate prosperity. Economics forgot its long tradition in political economy and moral philosophy.[49] It became more and more intolerant of alternative perspectives in teaching, research appointments, and publications, and blocked the professional advancement of its critics.[50]

Economics established technical supremacy in the social sciences by its own standards and, once concepts such as utility maximization were established as universal, its applications were unlimited.[51] The new model colonized the social sciences. Equity, collective provision, and aspirations for social justice were deemed incompatible with economic growth and international competitiveness. The new public management and policy models asked us to accept, as an article of faith, the maxim of all other things being equal when our theories, research, and lived experience told us precisely

48. Susan George, "A Short History of Neo-liberalism: Twenty Years of Elite Economics and Emerging Opportunities for Structural Change" (1999), http://www.globalexchange.org/resources/econ101/neoliberalismhist, quoted in Henry Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), xxiii.

49. Emanuel Derman, *Models Behaving Badly: Why Confusing Illusion with Reality Can Lead to Disaster on Wall Street and in Life* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

50. Ben Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory: Political Economy and Social Science at the Turn of the Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 11; Ira Basin, "Economics has met the enemy, and it is economics," *Globe and Mail*, October 15, 2011, F1, F6; Paecon, "A Brief History of the Post-Autistic Economics Movement," *Post-autistic Economics* (n.d.), http://www.paecon.net/HistoryPAE.htm.

51. Fine, *Social Capital versus Social Theory* (2001), 45-6.

the opposite.[52] We were asked to buy into the false premise that economic growth was a precondition for the realization of social goals of health, education, and social equality rather than the reverse.[53] In fact, acceptance of these fundamentally political tenets was the precondition for being invited into the policy-making process.

John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1935 that "practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back."[54] We have been set adrift by fatalistic scribblings, which told us that markets were self-regulating and beyond democratic comprehension or control. If left alone, we were told, markets would raise all the boats in the harbour: politics had no business in doing the business of doing business. But, if the social sciences and historical experience have taught us anything, it is that markets are, by definition, political creations, which and are made and remade through political struggles to serve the few or the many.

Blaming the Individual

We also bear the weight of neoliberal scribblings that continue to tell us that individuals must be self-sufficient market actors, who, as such, bear full responsibility for themselves, their families, and their futures. The incessant rhetoric and policies of individualization, which are intensifying in this age of austerity, place steeply rising demands on everyone to find personal causes and personal responses, what Beck terms as "biographic solutions," to what are,

52. Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 30.

53. Alex Himmelfarb, "Cutting taxes gives us an unjust society, not a free lunch," *CCPA Monitor* 18, no. 6 (2011), 1, 6-7.

54. John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 570.

in effect, the shared social challenges of our era. The list of social challenges is long: income disparities, racial inequalities, intergenerational inequalities, increasingly inaccessible education, child care, elderly care, environmental catastrophes.[55] Hacker calls this "The Great Risk Shift," whereby our governments have downloaded more and more economic risk onto the fragile balance sheets of individuals.[56] Individuals are expected to seek and find their own answers to societal problems. Individuals are expected to use their own individually managed resources to solve social problems. They are to bear the sole responsibility for their choices and the success or defeat of their actions.[57]

The problem with this formulation is not that individuals and families do not try to find solutions, or fail to comply with the individualized solutions forced upon them.[58] All of us struggle with these expectations on a daily basis. Finding employment, arranging child or elder care, or acquiring new skills are obvious examples. Rather, the problem, as Bauman explains, is that the very formulation of a "biographic solution to systemic contradictions is an oxymoron; it may be sought but it cannot be found."[59] The knowledge and resources that we bring to our life choices, however, are "not themselves matters of choice."[60] Our individual struggles are frustrated on two levels. First, typical families have fewer financial resources to

55. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage, 2002), 22-6; Janine Brodie "Rethinking the Social in Social Citizenship" (2008); Janine Brodie, "Globalization, Canadian Family Policy and the Omissions of Neoliberalism." *North Carolina Law Review* 88, no. 5 (2010), 1559-92.

56. Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift* (2008), xv.

57. Zygmunt Bauman, *Society under Siege* (London: Polity Press, 2002), 69.

58. Ibid., 68-9.

59. Ibid., 68.

60. Ibid., 69.

realize individualized solutions. Between 1980 and 2009, the market incomes of the top 20 percent of earners increased by 38 percent, remained stagnant for the middle 20 percent, and dropped by 11 percent for the bottom 20 percent.[61] Second, "our ignorance and impotence in finding individual solutions to socially produced problems result in a loss of self-esteem, the shame of inadequacy and the pains of humiliation."[62] The inescapable paradox of individualization is that it is a collective condition—almost everyone in the same boat, expected to chart our own course on treacherous waters, with rapidly shifting storm clouds, without a compass and without a life jacket.

The self-regulating market and the self-sufficient individual have lost their lustre in the face of protracted economic crisis. These icons cannot face down the staggering economic inequality, the specter of a lost generation, and the harsh austerity measures targeted directly at public services and social programs. The growing and diverse wave of counter movements sweeping the globe tells us that people no longer believe that their governments are working for them. Nothing has trickled down, except perhaps insecurity and uncertainty. The Occupy Wall Street movement, which erupted simultaneously in 900 cities last year, was dismissed in the media for failing to have a clear message or a coherent program for change. But, the message was clear enough for those willing to listen: it asserted a new collective identity—we the 99 percent—and the power of the collective. Social scientists must listen closely to what these countermovements are saying, whether mobilized behind the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Golden Dawn in Athens, or the Tea Party in Arizona. Focusing on the Tea Partiers, Chomsky argues that their obvious anger is "understandable." For over 30 years, people who thought they were doing all the right things have seen their real

61. Market incomes are from all sources before government transfers or taxes are taken into account (CCPA 2012).

62. Bauman, *Collateral Damage* (2011), 101.

incomes stagnate or decline; others have lost their homes. People want answers, but right-wing politicians and talk-show radio hosts seem to be the only ones providing them. "They have an answer to everything," he says, "a crazy answer, but it is an answer."[63] The Tea Party movement has been funded primarily by the libertarian wing of America's 1 percent. Neoliberalism has lost its coherence, but the economic and political interests that served it so well for the past three decades have "deep instincts for self-preservation."[64]

Blaming the Messenger

It has been 50 years since Thomas Kuhn wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). In it, he described how scientific paradigms eventually collapse under the weight of their own failures and their incapacity to grapple with new problems. Old ways of intervening in the world become discredited, but they live on for some time as zombie-like entities, living yet dead.[65] Their adherents, afraid to let go of the familiar, resist messengers with contrary evidence: the living yet dead refuse to ask new questions or adopt different priorities. Kuhn says it often takes a new generation to make the break with stale mind sets and vested organizational hierarchies. In politics, paradigmatic challenges are resisted by those in power. The ruling class refuses to concede failure because to do so would be an admission that they have lost control.[66] And, of course, as Upton Sinclair put it, "it is difficult to get a man [sic] to understand something when his salary depends on not understanding it."[67] It is far

63. Quoted in Matthew Rothschild, "Chomsky Warns of Risk of Fascism in America," *The Progressive*, April 12, 2010, http://progressive.org/wx041210.html

64. James Peck et al., "Post-neoliberalism and Its Malcontents" (2009), 105.

65. Ibid., 95.

66. Christopher Hedges, *The World As It Is: Dispatches on the Myth of Human Progress* (New York: Nation Books, 2011), 165.

67. Quoted in Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (2010), 168.

easier to try to change the subject or shoot the messenger: in short, to manufacture social illiteracy.

Social illiteracy appears on many fronts. William Greider's term, "rancid populism" has been revived to describe how powerful interests in the United States cultivate antipathy to the "other" and to divert public attention away from the economic crisis.[68] Benjamin DeMott also laments the proliferation of what he terms "Junk Politics." Typically, junk politics breeds contempt for experts and science, and asserts stark dichotomies in public discourses between taxpayers and freeloaders, public and private, and criminals and victims.[69] It also amplifies external threats at the expense of complex domestic problems. Junk politics feeds social illiteracy because it misidentifies our problems and turns people against each other. Junk politics erodes public trust in government, which is "the most powerful tool" that we have to shape our collective future.[70]

In Canada, we encounter social illiteracy in the staging of horizontal antagonisms, the silencing of equity-seeking groups, and the suppression of social knowledge. Like the United States, Canada has its fair share of junk politics, which juxtaposes so-called job creators against immigrants, the poor, equity seekers, public sector workers—any and all who can be represented as being dependent on the public sector. These are false and forced distinctions. We are all job creators when we fund public goods and public services, and when we redistribute income down the income ladder. We need a vibrant private sector and the employment that it can generate. But, we also need to be clear that the private sector grows on physical, political,

68. William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

69. Benjamin DeMott, *Junk Politics: The Trashing of the American Mind* (New York: Nation Books, 2003); Himmelfarb, "Cutting taxes gives us an unjust society, not a free lunch" (2011), 6.

70. Himmelfarb, "Cutting taxes gives us an unjust society, not a free lunch" (2011).

and intellectual infrastructures that were built by ordinary taxpayers, especially earlier generations, who believed that, collectively, they could shape a more humane and responsible future.[71]

The dismantling of equity-seeking and environmental groups is another vector in the active production of social illiteracy in contemporary Canada. A few years ago, I wrote about how the idea of the gender-equity agenda was systematically erased from our politics. I concluded that this erasure came in three stages—discrediting the message and the messengers, dismantling organizational infrastructures, and disappearance from public discourses.[72] We now see this strategy applied to an ever-wider spectrum of civil society groups. They have been labelled as special interests and radicals, as unrepresentative of their constituencies or of ordinary Canadians, or even as money launderers and the dupes of foreign interests. The discrediting of all manner of civil society organizations has been relentless. Organizations devoted to poverty reduction, Aboriginal health, immigrant settlement, and the environment have been defunded, their books audited, and their charitable status interrogated, and others have simply been dismantled. The systematic levelling of this social infrastructure is disconcerting in itself, but the reason cited for their exile—advocacy activities—gnaws at the very heart of a democratic polity. Independent of the very tangible services that many of these groups provide to their communities, advocacy is a necessary part of democratic pluralism and the thread that coheres and nurtures social and political rights. Shooting the messenger impoverishes us all.[73]

71. Ibid., 6.

72. Janine Brodie, "We Are All Equal Now: Contemporary Gender Politics in Canada," *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 2 (2008), 145-64.

73. Janine Brodie, "Manufactured Ignorance: Harper, the Census, and Social Inequality," *Canada Watch*, Spring 2011, 30-2, http://www.yorku.ca/robarts/projects/canada-watch/pdf/CW_Spring2011.pdf

The progressive suppression of social knowledge, however, is, I believe, the greatest challenge to scholarship in these uncertain times. Social science funding has declined, researchers have been constrained by various forms of conditionality, social policy branches in government have been shut down, research reports censored and shelved, and government scientists prevented from sharing their research with the public, the press, or other researchers. Earlier this year, the prestigious international journal *Nature* published an open letter urging the federal government to stop silencing its scientists. In the spring of 2012, hundreds of scientists, many dressed in white lab coats, marched on Parliament Hill with the same demand.

Silencing underlies the cancellation of the long-form census in 2010 and the progressive suppression of social data that has followed in the wake of this unprecedented decision. Despite the resignation of Canada's chief statistician and protests from over 300 groups, many from the business community itself, and subnational governments, the cancellation of the long-form census was just a tipping point. The government has terminated all kinds of data collection, ranging from climate measurement in the Arctic to surveys of Aboriginal Canadians and people living with disabilities. And now, under the banner of austerity, the Statistics Canada budget has been cut more deeply than other governmental departments and half of its staff has been put on notice that their jobs are at risk. This can only result in "fewer surveys, less data and less analysis."[74] In addition, funding has been eliminated from the National Council of Welfare, which was mandated by an act of Parliament to provide an annual report on poverty and welfare incomes.[75] The First Nations Statistical

74. Louise Egan, "Data Hounds Fearful of Canada Cuts Stats Budget," Reuters, May 2012, http://ca.reuters.com/article/businessNews/idCABRE84113S201205022

75. Steve Kersteller, "Scrapping Welfare Council is a cheap shot by government that does not care for the poor," *Toronto Star*, April 8, 2012.

Institute and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy were also axed.[76] Statistics of employment in universities and the federal contractors program are also gone. We will be unable to track whether our universities and the private sector partners have opened their doors to racial minorities, Aboriginal people, the differently abled, or women.

The destruction of critical sources of social knowledge promises to save taxpayers around $40 million dollars, a substantial figure to be sure but undoubtedly less than the cost of a wing on an F-35 fighter jet. Cuts are not the same as savings. Who benefits from the suppression of social data? Who bears the costs? Social statistics are a vital part of social literacy and social knowledge production. These data help us measure our progress toward collective goals, to compare well-being among diverse groups, across time, and with other OECD countries. Social data and social analysis are yardsticks that enable citizens, civil society organizations, and governments alike to track critical indicators of social integrity, including income gaps between the rich and poor, the differently abled, Aboriginal and other Canadians, men and women, recent immigrants and native born, and visible and non-visible minorities. These data also play a critical role in breaking down barriers for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Advances toward citizenship equality have been premised on the ability of equality-seeking groups both to make their case by demonstrating, not the least through reliable census data, that they have been systemically denied full inclusion in Canadian society, and, on that basis, seek redress.

Social data also subvert political agendas, especially those that conceal the growing social inequalities shaping our political landscapes. As researchers, we have to ask the obvious question: how can

76. Trish Hennessy, "Federal Budget 2012: Death by 1,000 Cuts," April 1, 2012, http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/federal-budget-2012-death-1000-cuts

we inform Canadians about changing social needs or contribute to evidence-based policy-making with outdated and insufficient information? We cannot. As citizens we all must ask: how can we have any confidence in public policies, so crucial to the well-being of our families and our neighbours, the changing needs of our diverse communities, or the sustainability of our physical environments for all species and for future generations, which are formulated with unreliable data or no scientific evidence at all. We simply cannot. More pointedly, how are we to understand any government that prefers *not to know* how its citizens are faring in this Great Recession?

Canadians have a right to know how we are faring during this economic crisis both in comparison with earlier times and with other countries. We also have a right to know whether policy interventions are working. The census and other data collection agencies send messages, to social researchers, to other governments, to civil society and advocacy groups, and to the public. Suppressing the message and messengers, however, is ultimately a pointless politics. The problems do not disappear. The inequalities and the insecurities we face in our daily lives, intergenerational inequalities, and deteriorating environments are here for all to see. Canada's plummeting position on so many international social and environmental rankings and the increasingly critical assessments of the international community cannot be hidden either. The genie is indeed out of the bottle.

Summing Up: Personal Reflections

The Trudeau Foundation asks us to talk a bit about our personal journey—how we got into the business, in my case political science, and why we study the things that we do. Describing one's personal journey is harder than it may appear at first glance. So much of our lives are shaped by serendipity—chance encounters with others who deeply influence the way we think about things, even if we don't realize it at the time. Over the course of a career, some doors open, others doors close, and some get slammed in our faces. And, unlike

researchers in the physical sciences, who may devote their entire career to the discovery of a distant star, a gene, or a cure for HIV/AIDS, the job of social sciences and the humanities is by necessity reflexive. Our critiques and our remedies are challenged by shifting vectors of power and possibility. The objects of our analyses—the social and the political—are in constant flux.

I can say that I was always interested in politics. I was raised in a small town, not too far from here, in "Alice Munro's Ontario" of the 1950s and 1960s. We took our partisan politics seriously back then, especially since my family was usually on the wrong side of the town's political fence. Elections were the stuff of schoolyard bantering and bravado. My mother and father were deeply engaged in the community. A newspaper always started the day and the CBC news was a constant companion at dinner time. My sisters and I were infused with the idea that we had social responsibilities and that politics mattered.

Our MP was conveniently bald, which meant that a schoolgirl, armed with only a felt marker, could quickly transform him into a dashing figure with a handlebar mustache and a curly head of hair. Sometimes the Honorable Member from Middlesex South assumed a striking resemblance to one of the Three Stooges and at other times to Charlie Chaplin. Of course, I now recognize that such tampering was a violation of Canadian election law, perhaps even an instance of voter suppression, but back then I was a rouge political operative and this was part of the sport of partisan politics in small town Ontario.

But with this confession finally off my chest, I admit partisanship was not the flame that ignited or sustained my interest in politics. Instead, it was social literacy, and especially the open-ended promise of advancing social equality and social justice through politics, that propelled me into political science. My formative political years were indelibly shaped by the struggles of the American civil rights movement, the early rumblings of the feminist movement,

and Trudeau's promise of a Just Society. Of course, Trudeau's rights-based notion of social justice was criticized from the outset, for example, by Harold Cardinal whose book *Unjust Society* fleshed out the stark realities of First Nations' societies. Feminist and critical race scholars also pointed out that liberal equality rights did not disrupt entrenched social hierarchies and life chances. But, the idea of a Just Society, nonetheless, had been placed squarely at the centre of the political stage. We all were invited to strive for this goal. And, for a teenage girl in Alice Munro's Ontario, Trudeau's declarations that "Canada Must Be a Just Society" resonated deeply. So did his depiction of politics "as a series of decisions to create this society."[77]

To borrow a line from American president Barack Obama, I was all fired up and ready to go into political science. Imagine my surprise when, on my first day in Poli Sci 101, my professor explained that politics was a system with inputs, outputs, and feedback loops and, moreover, that the idea of social justice more properly fit under the umbrella of philosophy where questions of "what if" were rightly entertained. Political science studied "what is"—the hard facts of political life. With many more courses and many great teachers, to whom I owe so much, I began to understand that politics is always about the enactment of somebody's idea of "what if"—like "what if" we let the market be the sole arbiter of social life? Theory always advances some vision of society and some interests over others.[78]

The social sciences have a lot to say about this economic crisis and the profound inequalities and insecurities with which we live. I began this lecture by recounting the repudiation of core tenets of market governance by leading social scientists, many of them econo-

77. Pierre Trudeau (1968), http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g02043/is_1_53/ai_n28826622/

78. Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. R.O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 204-54.

mists, working within such influential global policy networks as the World Economic Forum, the IMF, and the OECD. Solid social research tells us that equitable societies almost always do better on all manner of social indicators ranging from education to social mobility to crime rates to health outcomes.[79] Social researchers tell us that income inequality was an underlying cause of the Great Recession and, without social investments and redistribution, economic recovery will remain elusive.[80] Other comparative analyses demonstrate that social justice and economic performance are not mutually exclusive but instead reinforce one another.[81] These findings are based on hard empirical data and sound social science. Such findings also resonate with the political priorities of the Canadian public. A national poll conducted last year, for example, reported that the vast majority (82 percent) of Canadians believe that Canada should reduce the poverty gap and that the tax system is unfair. The majority also endorsed the view that taxes are a public good, meant to improve quality of life. Canadians do not fear crime in their neighbourhoods. Neither do they think that tougher punishments combat crime. Public health care remains the most important expression of their social literacy.[82]

79. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better for Everyone* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

80. Rajan Raghuram, *Fault Lines: How Hidden Fractures Still Threaten the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Robert Reich, *Beyond Outrage: What Has Gone Wrong with Our Economy and Our Democracy and How to Fix It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012); "Free exchange: Body of Evidence," *The Economist*, March 17, 2012.

81. Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation, "Strong Variations in Social Justice within the OECD" (October 27, 2011), www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/bst_eng/hs.xsl/nachrichten_11093.htm

82. Environics Institute, "Income Inequality and Tax Fairness: Canadian Public Opinion and Priorities" (2012), http://www.environicsinstitute.org/PDF-TaxFairnessSummit-PresentationPublicOpinion.pdf

The humanities and social sciences have a critical role to play in building a new social literacy for these uncertain times. We cannot provide instant or ready-made solutions to complex problems that ultimately require a democratic settlement. Our job is precisely to work, not only with government, but with diverse publics, to analyze and yes criticize social hierarchies and public policies that thwart a more sustainable and equitable present and future. These contributions are vital to an open and healthy democratic society. Scholarship for an uncertain world demands a marketplace of ideas that ignites social imaginaries about the possibilities of politics broadly defined. To paraphrase literary critic Northrop Frye, the fundamental job of the [social] imagination… is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in.[83]

83. Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1997), 86.

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