

H. V. Nelles. *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp 397

Del Muisse

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côté, bien que conscient de l'importance de cette métropole pour le développement du Québec dans son ensemble, est réticent à lui reconnaître des pouvoirs importants. Il est à souhaiter que *Montréal. The Quest for a Metropolis*, éclaire les débats entourant le destin de cette ville.

Michèle Dagenais  
Université de Montréal

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Ducoudray, Émile, Raymonde Monnier, et Daniel Roche (editors), graphic conceptualization by Alexandra Laclau. *Atlas de la Révolution française*, 11: Paris, Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2000. Pp. 132. Illustrations, maps, bibliography.

As the last in a series of atlases on the French Revolution begun in 1985, the topic of this final volume is well chosen: Paris is at the heart of the Revolution and, as the editors themselves note, its experience is often confounded with that of the Revolution itself (p. 9). The deep connection between the event and the city is evident in the relation between this volume and the rest of the collection. Many of the themes discussed in earlier instalments are taken up again here. Geography, demographics, economics, politics, religion, and culture are all considered in turn. But this last volume is more than just a reworking of what has come before: the editors wanted to bring to light Paris's particularity, to reflect on the unique experience of the capital. Given that the format is an historical atlas, the reflection takes on a specific character. Each of the seven chapters brings together text, maps and graphics with the aim of providing a highly readable synthesis of existing knowledge on the use of, and changes in, urban space.

What the editors have produced is an amazing tool for any historian working on the French Revolution. The wealth of information available is dizzying and no other atlas for the early modern period comes close to being as complete. Given the status of this particular period, this is not entirely surprising; the French Revolution is often taken to be the founding event of the modern era and the sheer amount of data accrued no doubt makes this atlas possible. Nonetheless, one cannot help but turn pages in complete admiration at the accomplishment. The atlas is organized according to Annales-school thinking, starting with chapters on geography and the urban milieu, followed by demographics and society, the economy and provision of the city, political life, Parisians in revolution, and ending with cultural practices. Thus, the atlas has a very long view of the historiography, stretching back past the scholarship on political culture, an approach that has dominated the field for the past twenty years. Given calls to return to more material considerations and the difficulty in representing discourse-based research through tables and charts, this seems a wise choice. This is not to say that culture has been left aside, though. The editors have included maps tracing festival routes and showing the location of Masonic lodges, theatres, and newspaper presses. Comparing these maps with those showing distribution of wealth, employment, and political clubs makes the relations between these fac-

tors immediately evident. This, of course, is the great virtue of the atlas format and is that which makes the maps the most compelling element of the work. For anyone interested in pursuing the research presented visually to the original source, all information is carefully referenced and often explained in more detail in the notes found at the end of the book.

As a reference guide, the atlas should appeal to a wide audience, ranging from first-year undergraduates to specialists in the field. For those just beginning their university careers, the editors have thought to include classic graphs showing the depreciation of the assignat (p. 43), the spike in death sentences during the Great Terror (p. 71), and the rise in the price of grain before the outbreak of the Revolution (p. 65). As for more advanced researchers, the atlas should be of particular interest to those in urban history. More specifically, the chapter on "le cadre urbain" shows road development, the evolution of public services, and construction and architecture in the city. Some of the graphs take a good deal of concentration to penetrate, and at times the editors may have been overly ambitious in attempting to include too much information in a single graphic. For example, the representation of the division of social hierarchies in the city (p. 31) could certainly have been presented more clearly. At other times, not enough information has been included, such as time periods covered by salaries and rents (p. 41, p. 30). North American audiences should also be aware that the bibliography has significant omissions of English-language literature, especially concerning work on women and gender, an important sub-field in North-American research. The editors have included gender as a category of analysis in many of the sections, often based on the work of Dominique Godineau. However masterful, Godineau's research does not cover all the bases on this issue and editors could have easily included the work of Harriet Branson Applewhite and Darline Gay Levy, and Lynn Hunt, all immensely influential scholars. Despite any deficiencies, however, I am sure that this is a collection that all libraries will acquire and this last volume in the set is one that all researchers interested in the Revolution should consult.

Susan Dalton  
Université de Montréal

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H. V. Nelles. *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp 397.

Consecrating spaces for historical commemoration, a practice that has lately received a great deal of scholarly attention in the United States and Europe, is also emerging as a distinct field of study in Canada as well.<sup>1</sup> Some earlier work in this country had dealt with crowd and mob action, parades and commemorations, and public holidays and ethnic- or class-centered activities, mostly conducted on city and town streets.<sup>2</sup> But this work was generally without a developed theoretical framework for considering the state's role in control of public space, or in historical commemoration and the consecration of public spaces as

legitimate carriers of historical traditions. This too is changing rapidly.

The state's interest in controlling public space was important in colonial Canada, as there was a long tradition within British North America of using public space to present political positions, or occasionally to work out hostilities of an underlying ethno-religious or class nature.

Saint Patrick's and Orange Day celebrations are the clearest example of this sort of occasional event, and the emergence of Ste Jean Baptiste Day celebrations reflected some of the same solidarity tendencies. Election riots and other public demonstrations requiring military intervention convinced the state to inhibit or at least control public demonstrations, since at the very least unregulated use of public space could threaten property.

Celebrations associated with the monarchy and its representatives acknowledged the importance of providing public occasions to allow for affirmations of loyalty as well as occasions for displays of public power in the streets. Arrival of a new governor or an important milestone for the monarchy was often an occasion for such reveling, though Victoria's long reign considerably reduced the number of coronation celebrations. The Prince of Wales triumphal visit to British North America in 1860 was a turning point of sorts, marking effective take-over of such celebrations by the self-conscious new urban middle classes of various colonies, who had just recently come to control their various governments. Determined to use appropriate public behavior as an occasion to consolidate their own trappings of power, they consolidated the use of urban spaces for commemorative endeavours. The last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the United States centennial and world's fairs leading the way, provided many more public occasions for heralding historical events and cemented a centennial compulsion at the centre of the business of public memory.<sup>3</sup>

The full marriage of state and event in Canada came with the tercentenary of Champlain's founding of Quebec, which provided a glorious opportunity for working out many ideas associated with the new trends in history-making. H. V. Nelles' *The Politics of Nation-Building*, all about the politics surrounding that event in 1908, marks a new stage for memory studies in Canada. He cloaks a rather mundane story with a nuanced analysis that manages, with wit and panache, to mine both its political dimensions and the rich ephemera left behind by the occasion.

Nelles' treatment of the two weeks of public celebration during that summer contextualizes events primarily as a series of political struggles over an appropriate identity for Canada as an emerging bilingual/bicultural nation. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's tangled relations with Quebec's nationalisms was a key factor in the effort to find the acceptable version of the country's foundations to celebrate. In the event, an account of Canada's historical evolution emerged to accommodate distinct French and English perspectives – partly it must be said by allowing each group to claim ownership over a distinct element of the proceedings – while leaving room for various other groups beside the French and English to assert some ownership of the event as well. Even

such generally excluded groups as first nations were included, though avoiding stereotypes was problematic.

Nelles exhibits a thorough appreciation of emerging scholarship on public pageantry.<sup>4</sup> His keen eye for the visual impact of that expansive celebration enable him to take advantage of emerging visual technologies, including some early film footage, used to good effect throughout the study. Nelles takes a serious approach to analysis of the illustrative as well as the written sources. The pageant, in the event, dealt not just with the 300th anniversary of the founding of the tiny outpost of Quebec in 1608, but with the entire history of the founding of the country, or at least the part of it that could be encompassed in a brief few days of re-enactments.

Quebec's city fathers and the province's own historians had in fact promoted tercentennial celebrations as an opportunity to promote tourism and perhaps erect a statue or two, particularly one to Bishop Laval, whose own anniversary was also being celebrated that year. When they sought funding and support from federal authorities, the idea of a celebration was hijacked to serve another agenda altogether. What had started out a modest attempt to celebrate the uniqueness of Quebec's origins and make a modest statement regarding the political issues of the day was turned into an international extravaganza propelled forward by issues related to Canadian-American and Britain-France relations that were more about solidarity in terms of the Europe arms race and the support of the colonies for the mother country than about the future of a bi-cultural country.

In the end, Nelles' book has these two dimensions. His treatment of the national and international contexts is strongest when dealing with the array of participants and problems associated with the celebration's agendas in the context of Canadian politics and the broader politics of empire. This required a delicate dance between the objectives of Quebec nationalists to use the occasion as a statement about their uniqueness and the federal and imperial requirements for solidarity. The selection of the pageant themes for celebration and the introduction of British directors to orchestrate the whole scenario was something of a last minute compromise. It also is presented as something of an anti-climax to the broad politics of the event with the arrival of British and French warships and no-one less than the Prince of Wales.

The central player was Lord Grey, Governor-General from 1904 through 1911 and a ceaseless advocate of Imperial ideals. Conscious of the delicate balance between British, French and American diplomacy in the emerging arms race in Europe, he was anxious to use the celebration to enmesh Canada in a common Imperial defence policy that could be advanced with some notion of the pomp and circumstance of a royal visit and a successful celebration. Grey was also a tireless advocate of urban reform and the preservation of green spaces within cities, especially if such spaces could be associated with historically important occasions or sites such as the Plains of Abraham. His seizure of control over plans to commemorate the founding of Quebec effectively turned it into Canada's first spectacle. It was unparalleled in the country's brief history and was designed to

propel us into the centre of commemorative fever sweeping Europe and North America.

He had to cajole Laurier into embracing the occasion and dealing with the delicate political issue of finding a version of the nation's history that could accommodate French preoccupations with Champlain and English Canada's fixation with the Battle of the Plains of Abraham as transitional moments in the formation of the nation.<sup>5</sup> These arguments over historical interpretations and commemoration were subjected to political machinations of a variety of actors. The use of a tried and true program – largely derivative of British and American pageant makers – of activities led to somewhat predictable results. In the end, apart from the excitement that was so much part of the spectacle on the part of many of the middle class who participated and attended, the pageant was something of an anti-climax. But that was better than the alternative, which might have been considerable disagreement.

Lost in the interplay between these diverse actors, and to some extent in Nelles' treatment is the impact of these events on the city itself. A number of "improvements" undertaken to make the site more suitable for the celebrations became permanent features of the city, including establishment of the Plains of Abraham park as one of the first major historic parks in the country, arguably the starting point of the Historic Sites and Monument's Board of Canada's long and distinguished history of identifying and commemorating our history. As well, considerable publicity for the city as one of the most attractive and historic in all of North America, emphasized its exotic French character. From that point onward Quebec would foreground that distinctiveness as an attraction for those seeking an authentic view of the past. There is a direct connection in this regard between the 1908 celebrations and subsequent crowning of Old Quebec as a cultural attraction culminating in its designation by UNESCO as a world heritage site. Quebec's recent incarnation as an armed camp for the North American Free Trade negotiations, along with the protests that ensued, carries forward the notion of the city as a backdrop to significant events, whether local, national or global. It is the city as locale for celebration and commemoration that this book is all about and it is well worth the reading for all urban historians for that reason alone.

Del Muise  
Department of History,  
Carleton University

#### Notes

1. A special issue of *Social History/Histoire Sociale* (Vol. XIX, no. 58, November, 1996) published a number of the papers from a conference held at York University in 1995. Nicholas Rogers and Adrian Shubert, "Introduction" (265–274) assesses research on memorialization in Canada relative to the rest of the western world.
2. A sampling of the literature would include Bonnie Huskins, "From Haute Cuisine to Ox Roasts: Public Feasting and the Negotiation of Class in mid-19th-century Saint John and Halifax," *Labour/Le Travail*, 37, 1996 pp. 9–36; and "A Tale of Two Cities": Boosterism and the Imagination of Community during the visit of the Prince of Wales to Saint John and Halifax in 1860," *Urban History Review* 28 (1) 1999 pp. 31–46; Peter Goheen, *Negotiating Access to Public Space in Mid-nineteenth Century Toronto*, *Journal of Historical Geography* 20 (4) 1994 pp. 430–49; and "Symbols in the Streets: Parades in Victorian Urban Canada," *Urban History Review* 18 (3) 1990 pp. 237–43; Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); and "Nineteenth-century Collective Violence: Toward a North American Context," *Labour/Le Travail* 1997 (39) pp. 13–38.
3. A Canadian response to American centennial celebrations is depicted in Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Invention of Usable Pasts* (Toronto, 1997).
4. The international literature on the politics of memory is approaching the dimensions of a new field of enquiry. For a sampling of the literature in this field see John R. Gillis, (ed.) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, 1994); and John Bodnar, (ed.) *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define their Patriotism* (Princeton, 1996). In Canada the field has been the subject of at least three national conferences over the past five years and more work on the consciousness of the past is in the offing.
5. Studies that elaborate ethnic-based conflicts over Quebec's public memory are: Ronald Rudin, "Marching and Memory in Early Twentieth-Century Quebec: La fete-dieu, la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and le Monument Laval," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 10, 1999 pp. 209–35; and Alan Gordon, "Heroes, History, and Two Nationalisms: Jacques Cartier," *Ibid.*, pp. 81–102; and Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montréal's Public Memories, 1891–1930* (Montreal, 2001).