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A Rare Bird on the Earth: Identities and Nationalisms in Ramsay Cook's Canada⁽¹⁾

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Introduction

On July 14, 2016, scholars of Canada learned in disbelief that renowned historian Ramsay Cook had passed away. Cook was a remarkable scholar, having published fifteen books, edited 11, and written more than 60 scholarly articles. He had received numerous honorary doctorates and prestigious awards, among them the Order of Canada, the Royal Society of Canada's Tyrrell Medal, the Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction for his book *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*, and had been named to Japan's Order of the Sacred Treasure. Several of his books were translated in French and in Japanese. Let me mention and thank professor Yuko Ohara, who died in 2017, for the translation of *The Maple Leaf Forever* and professors Norie Yazu and Takashi Konami for *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism*. He was a dedicated teacher and an outstanding supervisor for 37 doctoral students, including myself. Cook was a historian and public intellectual who helped his fellow citizens to understand the transformations that had affected Canada in the post-1945 era. In particular, he explained the challenges that the country faced when Quebec went through the period of profound social, economic and political change known as the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s.

While a doctoral student at York University in the late 1980s, I remember my first meeting with Ramsay Cook in his office, located in Vanier College on the Keele campus. On a shelf in his office there was a picture of the Quebec historian, Lionel Groulx. I never asked Cook why he kept a picture of Groulx in his office. After all, Groulx was the opposite of Cook: Cook was hostile to any form of ethnic nationalism, and very wary of the more benign form of nationalism called civic nationalism. Cook wrote in 1966 that Canada did not suffer from a weak national consciousness. On the contrary, there had been "too much, not too little, nationalism in Canada, and that our various nationalisms are the chief threat to the peace and survival

of Canada.”⁽²⁾ Cook repeated his argument in *The Maple Leaf Forever*, published five years later.⁽³⁾ Furthermore, Groulx was a priest, and Cook was a lay professor. Although Cook’s father, Russell Cook, had been a United Church minister in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Cook did not claim any adherence to institutionalized religion.⁽⁴⁾ However, despite the fact that Groulx did not have much in common with Cook in terms of ideology, they shared something important: a passion for history and for the causes that they supported.

Later on, after I joined the York University History Department as a faculty member in 1998, I visited Ramsay Cook’s office at the University of Toronto’s Robarts Library during his tenure as co-editor of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* from 1989 to 2005. He had retired from York University in 1995. This time, I discovered on his desk the photograph of another Quebec historian: Jean Hamelin, who had died in 1998. As before, I never asked why he had a picture of Hamelin on his desk, but I suspect that it was because the Université Laval historian was the co-editor of the *DCB* when Cook joined this important intellectual endeavour.

Why do I mention these photographs? Maybe they reveal something about Cook: his intellectual curiosity about French Canada and Quebec, and at the same time, his desire to analyze Quebec history. By publishing about French Canada and Quebec in English, he wanted to help other English-speaking people to better understand what was happening in Quebec in the 1960s. His first collections of essays, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question*, published in 1966, and *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada*, published in 1971, dealt with Quebec, the relations between French Canada and English Canada, and nationalism. According to Cook, the “mal canadien” was not due to a weak national consciousness. On the contrary, Canadians had had too much of nationalism. Because some politicians, intellectuals and media pundits lamented that Canadians had weak nationalist feelings in the 1960s, Cook insisted on the excess of nationalism as a way to remind everyone that they had a poor knowledge of their history. If they had been better informed, they would not conclude that Canada was suffering from weak nationalist sentiments. In *Canada and the French-Canadian Question*, Cook began his introduction by stating: “It has always seemed to me that the difficulties between French- and English-speaking Canadians would be less bewildering if each partner knew a little more of the other’s history.”⁽⁵⁾ For Cook, a lack of historical knowledge explained Canada’s problems in the 1960s,

and promoting nationalism was definitely not the solution. Because as Cook wrote, “nationalism is an emotion which hides real problems behind an abstraction.”⁽⁶⁾

My contribution in this paper is divided into three parts. First, the historical context. I begin by describing the 1960s, a period of turmoil in the Western Hemisphere with the rise of the counterculture movement, feminism, and the advent of hippies, as well as western society feeling the impact of the movement for decolonization in the so-called Third World. Although these cultural, social and political movements affected Canada, the development of what is known as the Quiet Revolution also shaped this period of time. Second, Ramsay Cook as a public historian. This second part will explore how Cook dealt with this period of turmoil, and his solutions to the challenges that the Canadian federation was facing. Finally, understanding Ramsay Cook. This last section deals with the other areas of study undertaken by Cook, because limiting his intellectual contribution to his work on Quebec is misleading. Cook published on women’s issues, the secularization process, the environment and Indigenous people.

Canada’s 1960s

Describing the 1960s in Canada as a period of turmoil is an understatement. According to the 1961 census, there were 18,238,247 people living in the country, and 70% lived in urban centres. The baby boom generation was about to transform Canada.⁽⁷⁾ Statistics Canada defines the baby boom as “a sudden rise in the number of births observed from year to year. It ends when a sudden drop in the number of births is observed.” Between 1945 and 1964, “more than 8.2 million babies were born, an average of close to 412,000 a year.”⁽⁸⁾ The birth of millions of babies became a demographic phenomenon. The educational system had an incredible challenge to deal with as the baby boomers moved through it. “In 1965/1966, there were 3.8 million Canadians in elementary schools, 1.3 million in secondary schools, and 210,000 in universities and colleges. In contrast, there were 2.8 million in elementary schools, 650,000 in secondary schools and only 79,000 in universities and colleges in 1956/1957.”⁽⁹⁾ Universities would expand in the Sixties, in order to accommodate the arrival of students. Born in 1931, Ramsay Cook was not part of the baby boom generation. However, he taught first at the University of Toronto, and then from 1969 at York University—these institutions, like many others in the country, went through a period of growth and change in order to accommodate this

turbulent generation of young people.

The baby boom generation would challenge what they defined as conservative social values that emphasized well-defined gender roles, which sought to constraining women to be housekeepers and men to be breadwinners. These young people would be defiant, some would say boldly, by questioning authorities and elites, by promoting equality, sexual freedom, and greater democracy. They denounced consumerism, colonialism, and imperialism. The American military involvement in Vietnam triggered social unrest mostly in the United States, but in Canada, where 50,000 American draft dodgers and deserters were more or less welcomed with open arms, baby boomers questioned the role of their country in this conflict. Baby boomers defied social conventions and socially acceptable behaviour, and hippies with their unkempt hair and unconventional clothing symbolized this “Zeitgeist” or “spirit of the time” or the “Sixties moment” of a new cultural era affecting Western countries. Canada was no exception. Baby boomers were vocal, politically active and defiant in the second half of the 1960s.⁽¹⁰⁾

It was during this period that Canadians took part in celebrations marking the foundation of their federation in 1967. This was the year of Expo, an International and Universal Exposition called “Man and His World” that took place in Montreal, but it was also the summer of love. According to Pierre Berton, writing thirty years later, it was “the last good year,” a moment of unity and optimism that would give way to political conflict and decline. Beside the counterculture movement, it was also a period of social and cultural transformation with the development of feminism and Indigenous self-assertion, but also Francophone political activism.

1967 was celebratory for Canadians, but Quebec and Canada were also in year 7 of the Quiet Revolution. The Quiet Revolution is defined as a period of profound political, economic, social, cultural and ideological transformation. Although scholars tend to agree that the starting point of this revolution was the election of the Liberal party in Quebec, led by Jean Lesage, they are still debating when it ended. If for some it was the defeat of the Liberals during the 1966 provincial elections, others have argued that it was 1970 with the October Crisis; still others contend that the election of the Parti Québécois led by René Lévesque in 1976 marked the end of the Quiet Revolution. For his part, Ramsay Cook made an original contribution to the debate by arguing that the Quiet Revolution ended with the major economic recession that hit North America in 1981. This meant that the Parti Québécois, still in power despite losing the 1980 referendum on

the sovereignty-association option, had to implement economic policies based on neoliberal principles such as cutting public services, welfare programs, and taxes, which was contrary to the social-democratic principles of the party. Since the Quiet Revolution meant that the provincial state would extend its activities notably by implementing welfare programs and expanding state services, having to reverse course by implementing budget cuts due to the economic recession meant that the Quiet Revolution had ended.

Without a doubt, the Quiet Revolution was a period of fundamental change in Quebec. The provincial state became the engine for implementing changes such as the nationalization of electricity in 1962, and welfare measures for families and youth among others. At the same time, French-speaking intellectuals and social activists expressed a sense of alienation. In his book *The Empire Within*,⁽¹¹⁾ Sean Mills documented how in 1960s Quebec, decolonization theory had fuelled a sense of alienation, and had helped make sense of the struggle faced by French Canadians, famously defined by Pierre Vallières as the “White Niggers” of America. French Canada and Quebec seemed to have reached a boiling point. The *Front de libération du Québec* was formed, resulting in dozens of bombing incidents in Quebec. In reaction to this turmoil, as well as the sense of alienation and frustration about the place of French Canada in Canada, Prime Minister Lester Pearson appointed a Royal Commission aimed at studying relations between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians.

In 1965, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism released its preliminary report. It gave ammunition to those who felt that Canada was going through more than just turmoil. Members of the Commission stated that “Canada without being fully conscious of the fact is passing through the greatest crisis in its history.”⁽¹²⁾ Writing about the release of the preliminary report, Ramsay Cook agreed with this statement.⁽¹³⁾

This sense of crisis continued to grow. In 1967, French President Charles de Gaulle visited Expo '67 and exclaimed “*Vive Le Québec Libre*” from the balcony of Montreal City Hall. This triggered a crisis in France-Canada relations, de Gaulle was criticized, and he decided to go back to France instead of continuing his trip. In November 1967, French Canadians from Quebec and outside the province gathered in Montreal as part of the *États généraux du Canada français*. Their representatives—some elected and others designated by various unions and cultural organizations—were invited to reflect on the future of the nation, and to update the

nationalist narrative. The adoption of a motion recognizing the right of French Canada to self-determination led to the fragmentation of the idea of French Canada. French Canada was no longer viewed as a common national reference for French-speaking people in the country. According to the new nationalist ideology known as neo-nationalism in Quebec, French-speaking minority groups outside Quebec were doomed to be soon assimilated. The survival of French Canada was now centered on Quebec, where French-speaking people formed the majority and, crucially, controlled state institutions. Furthermore, French Canadians in Quebec who were defining themselves as Québécois, transformed the theory of the two founding nations. Their theory came to form the basis of contemporary French Canadian nationalism, which had developed in reaction to school crises in New Brunswick in 1871, in Manitoba from 1890 to 1896, and in Ontario from 1912 to 1927. According to the neonationalists, Quebec had become one of the two nation states in Canada.⁽¹⁴⁾

At the same time, several scholars were publishing pessimistic assessments of French Canadians and how unsuccessful Confederation had been for them. In 1963, Father Richard Arès wrote in the journal *Relations* about “la grande pitié de nos minorités françaises.” Using the results of the 1961 Canadian census, Arès argued that Confederation had accelerated the process of linguistic assimilation, creating a situation in which more than half a million French-speaking people outside of Quebec had lost touch with their language. He stated that the cultural and linguistic assimilation of French Canadians in the rest of the country would have terrible consequences for the survival of Confederation: “le drame des minorités françaises au Canada est aussi celui de toute la Confédération canadienne; le destin de celle-ci est lié au sort de celles-là. Si les premières meurent, il ne restera plus à la seconde qu’ à descendre, elle aussi, dans la tombe...”⁽¹⁵⁾ In 1967, François Hertel published a book entitled *Cent ans d’injustice? Un beau rêve: le Canada* (One hundred years of injustice? A sweet dream: Canada). For its part, the *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* published a special issue on Confederation, in which the journal’s editor warned readers that there was not much to celebrate.

In reaction to the turmoil in 1960s Quebec, many politicians, intellectuals and average citizens in the rest of Canada began to ask: “What does Quebec want?”⁽¹⁶⁾ They received conflicting answers from Quebec political and nationalist elites and intellectuals: special status, associate states, equality between two nations, renewed federalism, and the independence of Quebec. There developed a battle over legitimacy: who was speaking on behalf of Quebec? Was Daniel Johnson,

Premier of Quebec, the legitimate voice of Quebec when he argued that the province wanted equality with the rest of Canada? In his 1965 book *Égalité ou indépendance*, he wrote about a new constitution that “should, in my opinion, be conceived so that Canada is not only a federation of 10 provinces but a federation in which two nations are equal in law and in fact.”⁽¹⁷⁾ Some pointed out that a majority of Quebeckers rejected Johnson’s views despite the fact that he was Premier of Quebec. Did Quebec want associate state status? This was also an expression used during the Quiet Revolution, and would be referred to as ‘special status’ and ‘distinct society’ in the 1970s and 1980s.

Other French-speaking people argued for the independence of Quebec. According to them, the British North America Act could not be amended, and the Canadian federation could not be reformed in order to accommodate demands expressed by Quebeckers who wanted to live in their own country. However, promoters of Quebec’s independence experienced a legitimacy gap in the 1960s. Political parties promoting this option, such as the *Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale* and the *Ralliement national*, attracted little support. Only 9 percent of the electorate supported this option during the 1966 provincial election.⁽¹⁸⁾

The fact that legitimate voices in Québec could promote special status, sovereignty association, and renewed federalism as possible answers to the what-does-Quebec-want-question, intrigued observers of the political scene. Perhaps this prompted Jacques Godbout to write *Les têtes à Papineau*.⁽¹⁹⁾ In his novel, his main character was born with two heads: Charles embraced the Anglo-Saxon culture, and François was a proud promoter of French. This individual with two heads was a curiosity, but at the same time his condition was unsustainable. Surgery was required, which meant that he was destined to lose one of his heads.

Ramsay Cook’s “Excitement”: Addressing Real Issues

Some could argue that this turmoil and the emergence of a viable political movement for the independence of Quebec had a goal: to trigger constitutional change. Other voices invited Canadians to pause, lower the rhetoric of mistreatment and colonialism, and reflect on ways to reconcile our differences and make our way through this latest crisis. Ramsay Cook was one of these latter voices. For Cook, this was a period of “excitement.”⁽²⁰⁾ He embraced the challenge, since he hoped that real debates would emerge, while the superficiality of politics would disappear, and

there would be an opportunity to tackle the “real issues,” such as French-Canadian nationalism, provincial-federal relations, and American influence.⁽²¹⁾ He became a bridge between Quebec and the rest of the country.

Born in Manitoba in 1931, Cook moved to Ontario to pursue a Master’s Degree at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. It was there that he encountered Quebec in an unusual way. Kingston was not known for being home to a large community of French-speaking people. On the contrary, Kingston was a unilingual city, better known for being the city where the first prime minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald grew up. Despite the fact that Kingston was not known for its French-speaking roots, Cook started reading about Quebec and French Canada on the advice of his MA supervisor, Arthur Lower. By becoming an avid reader of *Le Devoir*, the main daily favoured by the French-speaking intelligentsia, and *Cité Libre*, Cook became familiar with French Canada.

Eager to better understand Quebec, Cook developed a network of acquaintances. Who were they? Among them, there was André Laurendeau, editor of *Le Devoir* until his appointment as co-chair of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, in 1963. Following Laurendeau’s appointment, Cook got to know Claude Ryan, who succeeded Laurendeau, and he accepted his invitation to publish a weekly column in *Le Devoir*. Besides journalists, Cook became a friend of Michel Brunet, a scholar who taught American History at the Université de Montréal. However, Brunet was not known for his work on the United States. On the contrary, Brunet was a public historian, involved in French-speaking nationalist organizations such as Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, writing briefs on French Canada and its constitutional demands and expectations. Cook formed a close friendship with Marc Lalonde, who worked in the office of Prime Minister Lester Pearson. But it was his relationship with a professor of constitutional law, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, which over time became an intellectual friendship, an expression used by Cook.⁽²²⁾

In his book *The Teeth of Time*, Cook recounted his “discovery” of Trudeau. Cook first encountered Trudeau while studying at Queen’s University in 1955, when he read Trudeau’s famous essay on French Canadian nationalism, published in the book on the 1949 Asbestos Strike. Six years later, he met Trudeau at the wedding of Blair Neatby, an historian whom Cook had got to know while doing research in Ottawa. As he wrote in his book, Cook began to argue with Trudeau but not for too long. After all, they were at a wedding, and usually you do not engage in long

arguments at a wedding reception.⁽²³⁾ Following this encounter, Cook discovered in Trudeau an intellectual who held “many of the same basic ideas about major public questions, both Canadian and international.”⁽²⁴⁾ Cook translated Trudeau’s articles for the *Canadian Forum*, and Trudeau encouraged Cook to publish articles in the leading French-language intellectual magazine, *Cité Libre*.

As a public historian,⁽²⁵⁾ Cook wrote articles for various newspapers. He contributed to the *Canadian Forum*, and he became a commentator for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Cook wrote essays that analyzed the cause of the Canadian malaise or turmoil. At the same time, he argued that the apathy affecting the Canadian patient had been misdiagnosed. If the consensus was that Canada was suffering from a weak sense of self-identity, he argued the opposite, pointing out that Canada had endured too many nationalist episodes. For instance, the school crisis in Ontario from 1912 to 1927 and the conscription crisis of 1917 had divided French Canadians and English Canadians. For Cook, “two issues dominated Canadian public life: the French-Canadian question and the American question. They were not new issues for, indeed, they have dominated the whole of Canadian history.”⁽²⁶⁾ Not new issues? According to Cook, these issues “define our political life just as they defined Canadian Confederation. The French-Canadian presence, among other reasons, meant that Canada had to be a federal state. The American presence, among other reasons, meant that Canada had to be a highly centralized federal state.”⁽²⁷⁾ These were choices that the Fathers of Confederation had made over 100 years before. What was new in the 1960s was how these choices were reemerging, and how Canadians would deal with them. French Canadians had become critical of Confederation, and they denounced their treatment by the English-speaking majority. This led some Quebec nationalist leaders and politicians to argue that French Canadians were seen as second-class citizens. In July 1963, Cook published a remarkable piece for the *Canadian Forum*. Entitled “A Time to Break Silence,” he identified issues that the country would take almost 20 years to resolve, with the patriation of the Constitution in 1982:

The task before English Canadians who desire to prevent their country from lapsing into chaos is to break silence. First we must try to understand what is taking place in Quebec, and why it is taking place. Second we must try to respond positively by attempting to formulate for ourselves what we believe to be the reasons for the present ‘passive resistance’ of French Canadians toward

Confederation. Having done this, we must then — and this is more important — begin to think about what we are willing and able to do to redress the legitimate grievances of French Canada. There are a number of questions which we must seriously ask ourselves. Are we in the English-speaking provinces willing to reconsider our past, deplorable attitude to public support for the kind of schools that would satisfy the cultural aspirations of French Canadians outside Quebec? Are we ready to reconsider our attitude to the status of the French language in the legislatures, law courts and publicly owned corporations in English Canada? Are we willing to alter practices respecting the French language in business and commercial activities? Are we willing to make an offer to provide the means for increased bilingualism among at least the better educated groups in English Canada? Are we willing to explore even the possibility that our federal system may require some radical modification to meet the changed circumstances of the 1960s?⁽²⁸⁾

In his article, Cook acknowledged some of the grievances that French Canada had had with Confederation since 1867: inadequate access to French-language schools outside of Quebec, the lack of French-language services from the federal government and provinces, and the poor use of French in the country. Without referring to nationalism, Cook crafted these issues in terms of rights. French Canadians had to receive education and services in their language.

Cook was not the first Canadian intellectual to be critical of nationalism. He was in the company of Frank Scott and Harold Innis and inspired by Lord Acton, Elie Kedourie and George Orwell.⁽²⁹⁾ However, he seized on the Quebec moment in order to educate, to enlighten but at the same time to shape the public debate in such a way that society would not cave in to nationalist agendas. After all, Cook had been among the first scholars to bring new perspectives on Quebec. Since he was concerned about nationalism and what nationalists did in the rest of the world, he was afraid of how Canadian politicians were contemplating answering the Quebec challenge. Granting special status to Quebec or recognizing Quebec as a nation-state were dangerous strategies to consider. Cook believed that French Canadian demands could be answered without granting special constitutional status to Quebec. In the 1960s, Cook was a member of the New Democratic Party, but as soon as the NDP became supportive of granting special status to Quebec, Cook quit the party in 1968.⁽³⁰⁾ Amending the Canadian constitution in order to confer special

status had the potential to destroy the country. Maybe watching Trudeau and reading his views as expressed in *Cité Libre* and other publications, confirmed that constitutional change should address past grievances but at the same time should offer a way forward to all Canadians.

In the introduction to *The Craft of History*, published in 1973 and edited by his wife, Eleanor Cook, repositioned the famous “What Does Quebec Want?” by linking the future of English Canada and French Canada together. He wrote, “Why does Canada, divided as it is between French and English and living alongside the most powerful nation the world has ever known, exist? How does the past help to answer this question?”⁽³¹⁾ In reshaping the Quebec issue, Cook linked the survival of Quebec to the viability of a larger entity, Canada. At the same time, he pointed out that every generation had a tendency to revisit past issues, such as how to reconcile the rights and status of two important linguistic communities, as they had done in 1864 when representatives from French Canada, the Maritimes and what would become Ontario, met and designed the foundation of the Canadian federation. In his introduction, Cook observed that “the past is thought to be alive because it has something to say to the present.”⁽³²⁾ However, in looking to the past for guidance, Cook warned his readers that the past could be misleading, since we tend to look backward in order to find answers to the present. Since there often existed more than one interpretation of events that had occurred in the past, multiple outcomes were also possible, because the dialogue between the past and the present is usually shaped by the present.

Cook’s scholarly articles, monographs and commentaries were part of a larger debate about Canadian history and the rise of social history. Many young historians questioned the traditional Canadian narrative, and wondered why not much was written about regions, gender, race and ethnicity.⁽³³⁾ Cook made a remarkable contribution to this great debate. In revisiting the concept of limited identities, Philip Buckner wrote that Cook used this expression in 1967.⁽³⁴⁾ Writing on the issue of “lack of unity and identity”, Cook argued, “Perhaps instead of constantly deploring our lack of identity, we should attempt to understand and explain the regional, ethnic and class identities that we do have. It might just be that it is in these limited identities that ‘Canadianism’ is found.”⁽³⁵⁾ Three years later, Cook revisited this issue of weak national consciousness by attacking certain politicians and intellectuals. He concluded that Canada “stubbornly refuses to exchange its occasionally anarchic pluralism for a strait-jacket identity. Perhaps it is this

heterogeneous pluralism itself that is the Canadian identity.”⁽³⁶⁾

Cook published again on Quebec in the 1980s, when he opposed the Meech Lake Accord that granted distinct society status to Quebec. As Cook did in the 1960s, he used his best weapon: his pen. He published an extraordinary article entitled “Alice in Meechland or the Concept of Quebec as a ‘Distinct Society’ .” He demonstrated that the notion of distinct society was ill-defined, and as he wrote in *Teeth of Time*, “An undefined ‘distinct society’ could lead only to claims and counter claims about its meaning and to permanent conflict, exactly the contrary of what its supporters promised.”⁽³⁷⁾ To Cook, this ill-conceived concept would only disappoint everyone, starting with French Quebecers themselves.

Cook’s Other Areas of Study

It would be misleading to limit Cook’s intellectual contribution to French Canada, nationalism and constitutional politics. Among other fields, Cook published on women’s history. In 1974, he contributed the introduction to the new edition of Catherine L. Cleverdon’s *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada*. In his introduction, Cook emphasized the merits of this study, first published in 1950 when women’s history did not exist as a field of study. However, Cook insisted that studying social issues and the role of social actors reminds us that we should remain critical of our topic. If social movements had the ability to shape politics, these social movements were not necessarily mass movements. Cook observed, “The number of women who were active suffragists had always been small.”⁽³⁸⁾ Despite that, “the demand for woman suffrage was merely ‘a chapter in the great history of the emancipation of the individual, black or white, rich or poor, male or female, from social and political disabilities imposed upon him or her on account of birth alone’ .”⁽³⁹⁾

Cook also published a remarkable study on the relations between religion, social reforms and secularization, focusing on the late nineteenth century. Cook analyzed the actions of some influential Canadians and how their religious beliefs shaped their understanding of society in the context of the Industrial Revolution. With the development of urban centres and the social problems that came with industrial capitalism, such as poverty, class and ethnic divisions and tensions, as well as harsh working conditions, these Protestant men and women mobilized their resources to build what they believed to be the Kingdom of God on earth. By pushing for better housing and working conditions, a ban on child and female labour and alcohol and

drug use, these individuals accelerated, often without fully being aware of it, the process of secularization or at least the separation of Church and State, since the State would eventually take control of vast areas of social issues. Some readers questioned why these individuals did not perceive the ironic impact of their actions on religious belief. However, Cook was not ridiculing religion. On the contrary, as Donald Wright says in the introduction to the second edition of *The Regenerators*, Cook considered religion “as fundamental to the human experience and therefore to the writing of history.”⁽⁴⁰⁾

In the 1990s, Cook turned his attention to Jacques Cartier and the encounter between two worlds, editing Cartier’s North American journals describing his travels in 1534, 1535-36, and 1541. The introduction set the tone for Cook’s approach to the topic. Entitled “Donnacona Discovers Europe: Rereading Jacques Cartier’s *Voyages*,” Cook emphasized the descriptions of how Indigenous people understood the arrival of Cartier and his men, how they interacted with them, and how they would adjust to them. Instead of concentrating on Cartier, Cook decided to focus on the meeting between Europeans and Indigenous people, and how the Indigenous population interpreted this encounter. He concluded his introduction by reminding his readers that the Indigenous people were not too impressed with the foreigners who claimed to “discover” them. Although Cartier’s *Voyages* contained descriptions of wildlife, geography and landscapes, at the same time,

Their pages record the St Lawrence Iroquoians’ discovery of France, a country of overdressed and often underfed people, where men grew hair on their faces and did women’s work in the fields. . . . Theirs was a religion of churches, priests, and preachers warring over dogma. From French ports sailed creaking ships filled with self-confident adventurers and sharp traders who carried arms, ignorant of local customs. These suspicious, scheming intruders brought unknown illnesses, frightened native women, told lies, and shamelessly kidnapped even those who helped them. The French, Donnacona’s people might have concluded, ‘are wonderful thieves and steal everything they can carry off.’⁽⁴¹⁾

Who can tell what articles and essays Ramsay Cook might have written if he were still with us today? Perhaps on Indigenous people and the challenges that Canada faces in addressing the issues of governance, poverty, violence, mental health, and inequality that characterize Aboriginal societies.

Conclusion

We could argue that Ramsay Cook benefited from exceptional circumstances. Although born during the Great Depression, Cook grew up during a period of affluence. He joined academia when universities were about to embark on a period of rapid expansion. The Sixties offered hope but also turmoil. If some feared the Sixties and the counterculture movement, Cook seized the moment. He zeroed in on the issue of Quebec, which was part of the larger debate about Canadian identity. He became an intellectual force because of the clarity of his writing and views. He made an effort to learn about French Canadian demands, and he concluded that those demands should be addressed. His encounter with Trudeau allowed him to pursue his views.

Without question, Ramsay Cook's intellectual legacy is significant, and one can safely say that for years to come, scholars will debate and write about his views and ideas on the many issues that he brought to our attention. Graduate students will carry on from where he left off, and add new branches to the academic "family tree" that he created. And very soon, we hope, we will all be able to enjoy Ramsay Cook's biography, a much-anticipated undertaking that Donald Wright began with Cook's co-operation, not long before his untimely death.

John Maynard Keynes once said that "Ideas shape the course of history," and one might add, with regard to Ramsay Cook, that his ideas were able to shape our understanding of Canadian history.

Notes

- (1) I want to thank Benoit Longval, Serge Miville, Marlene Shore, Molly Ungar and Don Wright for their comments on this paper.
- (2) Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966), 4.
- (3) Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), x.
- (4) Cook told his friend, Carl Berger, that he could be described as an "atheist for Niebuhr." Donald Wright, "Introduction to the Second Edition," in Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), xxxv.
- (5) Cook, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question*, 1.
- (6) *Ibid.*, 4.
- (7) On baby boomers, see Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

- (8) Statistics Canada, « Generations in Canada », 30 Sept. 2017, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/98-311-x2011003_2-eng.cfm>.
- (9) Statistics Canada, “Canadian Statistics in 1967: One hundred years of Canadian Statistics!” 30 Sept. 2017, <https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb07/acyb07_0012-eng.htm>.
- (10) Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, 1958-1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Dimitry Anastakis ed., *The Sixties: Passion, Politics, and Style* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008); Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Jean-Philippe Warren, *Une douce anarchie: les années 68 au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal, 2008).
- (11) Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010).
- (12) Canada, Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *A Preliminary Report* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1965), 13.
- (13) Ramsay Cook, *The Teeth of Time: Remembering Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 27.
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