Culture, Canada, and the Nation

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The contributions to this special issue exemplify the cultural turn of the study of nationalism. Although a concern with the narrative construction of national identity runs through the articles in this volume, it is tempered by the authors' inclination to explore the middle ground of social and cultural practices. By asking how Canadians "internalized" notions of national identity, how they incorporated them in their everyday lives and material worlds, and how they constructed a sense of Canadian-ness in inter-cultural encounters, the authors bring to the fore a Canadian nationalism that revealed itself not in the grand national ideal, but in more tangible practices, encounters, and stories.

Les articles de ce numéro spécial témoignent du tournant culturel qu'a suivi l'étude du nationalisme. Le souci qu'on semble s'y faire pour la construction narrative de l'identité nationale y est tempéré par la propension des auteurs à chercher à comprendre le terrain mitoyen entre les pratiques sociales et culturelles. En se demandant comment les Canadiens ont « intériorisé » les notions d'identité nationale, comment ils les ont intégrées à leur quotidien et à leur monde matériel et comment ils ont forgé leur canadianité au fil des rencontres interculturelles, les auteurs révèlent un nationalisme canadien qui prend non pas la forme du grand idéal national, mais celui de pratiques, de rencontres et de récits plus tangibles.

AT THE BRITISH Empire Exhibition in 1925, visitors to the Canadian pavilion encountered the life-size sculpture of Edward, Prince of Wales. Carved "entirely out of Canadian butter", the sculpture depicted Edward "in full feathers as an Indian chief", flanked by several Native women, a tepee, and a

dog. While British newspapers marvelled at the masterful carving and the flattering likeness of the Prince (who professed himself pleased with the butter tableau), Canadian papers bemoaned the fact that "such clumsy publicity should be given to the few remaining Indians in Canada" and called for a celebration of the country's "modern and progressive character", as Anne Clendinning reveals in her contribution to this collection.[1]

The popular press was far from alone in chafing against the British inclination to conflate notions of Canadian identity and Aboriginality. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anglo-Canadians, who prided themselves on national narratives of progress, prosperity, and modernity, shifted uneasily under the imperial gaze that reduced their country to a frozen, barren landscape inhabited by Aboriginals — noble perhaps, but civilized not.

When we first embarked on a collaborative project to write culture into the history of Canadian nationalism, we had taken a cue from the burgeoning international literature on the cultural complexities of nation-building and the ideological efforts to create national unity out of diversity. Upon inviting 27 scholars from 10 disciplines to attend a conference on "Cultural Approaches to the Study of Canadian Nationalism" in the late summer of 2004, we listened to a series of fascinating papers that looked at Canadian nationalism through the lenses of post-colonial studies; that explored the construction of national identity in trans-national spaces; that revisited "realms of memory"; and that examined the branding of national identity.[2] Contrary to our initial expectations, discussion centred not so much on celebration, commemoration, and spectacle, whose history has been imaginatively examined elsewhere.[3] If there was a unifying theme, it could be discerned in the shared interest in the practices, encounters, and stories from which a Canadian sense of belonging emerged. In a manner reminiscent of Ian McKay's call to study both words and things, the authors of this collection are finely attuned to the webs of meaning out of which Canadians spun a national consciousness, yet they also emphasize the role of experience.[4] Examining culture as practice, as

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1 Anne Clendinning, "Exhibiting a Nation: Canada at the British Empire Exhibition, 1924–25", pp. 79–107.

2 We solicited the French-language contributions by Godefroy Desrosiers-Lauzon and Jocelyn Létourneau specifically for this volume. The term "realms of memory" is borrowed from Pierre Nora's magisterial *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, vol. III* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

3 Jonathan Vance, *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); H. V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891–1930* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Ronald Rudin, *Founding Fathers: The Celebration of Champlain and Laval in the Streets of Quebec, 1878–1908* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

4 Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

opposed to cultural norms and ideals, allows, in the words of Sonya Rose, for a "more flexible approach to symbolizing, one that begins with the idea that cultural practices and patterned social practices are indelibly interwoven".[5]

In examining the intimate connections between action and meaning, the authors of this special issue ground their contributions in the material world and everyday lives of Canadians. Cecilia Morgan describes women travellers who, through their actions and writings, were "revisioning — or at least questioning" — the "well-known script" of the grand European tour. Anne Clendinning uncovers exhibition commissioners who, almost single-handedly, crafted a national narrative at the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–1925, only to be reined in by a federal government more sensitive to regional claims. Godefroy Desrosiers-Lauzon follows the journey of Quebec and Ontario "snowbirds" whose yearly pilgrimages to Florida run counter to the strong strain of anti-Americanism in Canadian popular and political culture. Jarrett Rudy examines smoking rituals in Quebec, where a popular taste for *tabac canadien*, grounded in the "ebb and flow of the habitant household economy", transformed into "the taste of *la patrie*" by the late nineteenth century — a chance to declare allegiance to the French-Canadian nation by taking a puff.

If the contributors bring to the fore the interplay of rhetoric, ritual, and action — thus tracing a sense of national belonging in social and cultural practices rather than in the more abstract realm of ideology — they also direct attention to the sites of contact where German Canadians met Jewish Canadians, Anglo-Canadian Nile Voyageurs met Aboriginal and French-Canadian boatmen, and English-Canadian travellers met Britons.[6] As the authors show, cultural stereotypes could be subverted, or at least challenged, in the moment of encounter. The Mohawks who joined the Nile Expedition of 1884–1885, for instance, emerge from contemporary press coverage as skilled, emphatic, and articulate family men — quite different from the tragic, degenerate, and stoic figures of popular lore. English-Canadian tourists to Britain, in turn, challenged assumptions of colonial backwardness in fleeting encounters in trains and on cricket grounds, where Torontonian George Lindsey, for one, "dumbfounded [a] duchess-dowager spectator" by speaking English rather than "rubbing noses in Ojibway". German Canadians, finally, who migrated to Canada in the late 1940s and 1950s, had to confront the German past both in personal encounters with Canadians and in Canada's collective historical memory that neither made room for the wartime memories of German immigrants, nor offered them an "interpretative template" on how to "integrate their experiences into the nation".

To be sure, the acts of "negotiation, borrowing, and exchange" that characterized these encounters did not necessarily result in a breaking-down of

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5 Sonya Rose, "Cultural Analysis and Moral Discourses: Episodes, Continuities, and Transformations", in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 228.

6 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

stereotypes.[7] As Tony Michel concludes in his analysis of the Nile Voyageur expedition, the "expedition was probably too short and in too unimportant a location" to prompt "a cultural shift in attitudes towards First Nations peoples". Cecilia Morgan reveals that cricket player George Lindsey had "to laugh so immoderately" at the duchess's comment that "the venerable lady formed a mental estimate that even if we had learned to speak English we had not yet learned to be polite, and relapsed into her seat, quite satisfied that she really knew all about the ways of the aborigines of the great North American Continent". Alexander Freund, as well, sounds a cautionary note by observing that even German Canadians who had "lasting, intimate and positive relations with Jews" rarely used these personal relationships as "stepping-stones for learning more about the Nazi past and about other people's experiences, for sharing memories and thus grappling with the past in more constructive ways". Nonetheless, these studies of encounters point to the ways in which cultural meanings of "mainstream" and "margins", of "us" and "them", shifted in the "contact zone", thereby complicating established narratives of the nation.[8]

In turning to stories of nation and nationalism, the authors of this collection finally explore the middle ground where an overarching national narrative intersected with more personal reflections on the state and future of the nation. Jocelyn Létourneau proposes an exercise in collective psychology by delving into the 587 submissions to the *Commission sur l'avenir politique et constitutionnel du Québec* (1990). The "stories" Québécois tell of self and community, Létourneau argues, are intimately interwoven with narratives of the French-Canadian nation; both revolve around rhetorical tropes of survival, the quest for self, divine destiny, and the fault of the "Other", thus amounting to a tale of loss and victimization that unfolds in a series of "chapters". Catherine Carstairs recounts the story of the "Roots boys" who successfully branded Canadian symbols such as the beaver, the canoe, and the maple leaf in the 1980s and 1990s and enticed Canadians to purchase their very own piece of national identity. As the author suggests, the telling of the "Roots story" in advertisements, media profiles, and other popular sources became, in itself, a major marketing tool that exemplified the rise of a branded, commercialized, and "empty" nationalism. It is left to Patricia Vervoort to examine the symbolism of the grain elevator, a term that unceremoniously lumped together tall wooden country elevators and mammoth concrete terminal elevators. As an "ordinary industrial" building type imported from the United States, Canadian grain elevators achieved acclaim only after European architects discovered them as incarnations of modernity — those "magnificent first-fruits of the new age", in Le Corbusier's oft-quoted phrase.

7 Gilbert M. Joseph *et al.*, eds., *Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 5.

8 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

The contributions to this volume exemplify the cultural turn of the study of nationalism. Where proponents of the modernization theory in the 1960s and 1970s regarded nationalism as a practical solution to the social and economic needs of modern industrial society,[9] scholars writing in the past two decades have commonly acknowledged their debt to the cultural-anthropological accounts of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm.[10] In conceiving of culture as both a "set of practices" and a "system of symbols and meanings", this collection probes the intersection of the social and the cultural. Its authors are drawn to those areas "where culture takes concrete form and those concrete forms make cultural codes most explicit".[11]

If the vast body of recent scholarship on nationalism shares a unifying concern, it is with the fluidity, complexity, and shifting boundaries of national belonging, the role of gender and race in shaping narratives of empire and nation, and, indeed, the tendency to regard the nation itself as a "text" whose master narrative must forever "contend with a vast number of tensions, contradictions, and alien supplements".[12] Yet still, as the historian Alon Confino has wryly noted, the multiple and ambiguous meanings of nationalism stubbornly defy definition: "[W]hile it represents attachment to a defined territory, the *inter*national spread of nationalism appears to be its essence; while it is a new historical phenomenon, it is believed to be ancient; while it is part of modernity, it obsessively looks back to the past." A promising way to grapple with meanings of nationhood, Confino suggests, is to examine the "process

9 Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969). For a concise introduction to the voluminous literature, see Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation", in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming Nationalism: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 3–37.

10 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-–4. For a dissenting note, see Anthony D. Smith, "The Nation: Invented, Imagined, Reconstructed?" in Marjorie Ringrose and Adam H. Lerner, eds., *Reimagining the Nation* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 9–28.

11 Bonnell and Hunt, "Introduction" in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, pp. 11–12.

12 See Lloyd S. Kramer's incisive review essay, "Nations as Texts: Literary Theory and the History of Nationalism", *Maryland Historian*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1993), p. 74; Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990). In what must necessarily remain a selective list, we have found particularly stimulating Louis A. Perez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Cecilia E. O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Ryan Edwardson, "The Many Lives of Captain Canuck: Nationalism, Culture, and the Creation of a Canadian Comic Book Superhero", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2003), pp. 184–201.

by which people internalize the nation".[13] This, of course, is precisely the middle ground of cultural and social practices staked out by the authors of this collection, who are as interested in acts of "imagining" the nation as they are in acts of "internalizing" it.

Nation, Race, and Empire

Our theme issue opens with three essays that examine how the racial fantasies of nation collided with the racial fantasies of empire. Although Anglo-Canadians prided themselves on their "senior" position in the imperial family, the "British world" was far more ambiguous about the status of Canadian "colonials", as Anne Clendinning, Cecilia Morgan, and Tony Michel posit. If the imperial gaze took note of Canada at all, it was as an object of cultural fascination. In what was a recurring motif, the Empire offered homage to "Miss Canada" dressed in snowshoes and buckskin, a toboggan at her side (Morgan), or glorified "the hardy Canuck shaped by nature" into a virile and self-reliant soldier for the imperial cause (Michel).

To be sure, at times, Canadians themselves embraced Aboriginal imagery. In late-nineteenth-century Montreal, urban elites donned snowshoes, paddled canoes, and played lacrosse.[14] Yet, when such symbolic nods to the country's Aboriginal heritage shaped imperial stereotypes, Canadian indignation was palpable indeed; quite evidently, the British public had missed the ironic subtext of "playing Indian" in a nation that excluded Native Canadians not only from the civic polity, but also from the imagined national community. The British public also failed to appreciate references to Canadian modernity and prosperity. At the 1910 Festival of Empire, it was left to Canadian fair-goer Harriet Priddis from London (Ontario) to focus not on Kipling's "abominable 'Lady of the Snows' " that graced the Canada building, but instead on the "large collection of the most beautiful fruit grown in Canada" and the "fine dairy exhibit" (Morgan), just as it was left to Canadian commentators at the Wembley Exhibition to marvel at the enormous "cold storage display case" that housed Edward, the butter prince, a tribute to the "wonders of modern refrigeration" (Clendinning).

Nationalism, as Ernest Gellner has remarked, is a classifying discourse that both unifies and differentiates.[15] Anglophone European Canadians, who showed a strong desire to have their importance recognized by the British Empire, were equally quick to exclude Aboriginal peoples from the imagined Canadian nation, as Tony Michel argues. When the British General Garnet Wolseley requested Aboriginal boatmen for the Nile Expedition in 1884–1885, Lord Lansdowne, the Governor General of Canada, proved reluctant to comply: "[T]here is every reason for preferring a force composed of white

13 Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 3–4.

14 Gillian Poulter, "Montreal and its Environs: Imagining a National Landscape, c. 1867–1885", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 69–100.

15 Quoted in Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), p. 71.

men or partly of white men and partly of Indians to one composed exclusively of Indians and Halfbreeds." The War Office in London, however, insisted on its initial request. Visibly struggling to make sense of the "Aboriginal dimension" of the Nile Voyageur contingent, Lansdowne had to admit rhetorical defeat. In his parting words to the voyageurs, he commended Aboriginals for being a credit to their "race", while praising Anglo-Canadian and French-Canadian boatmen for representing "Canada" abroad. What emerges from the intersecting narratives of nation, race, and empire is a national identity constructed as both primal and modern. Where British observers perceived a people shaped by nature, namely the country's imposing wilderness, harsh climate, and wild rivers, Anglo-Canadians represented themselves as a country of culture that prided itself on its modern accomplishments and civilization.

Nations Unbound: Transnational Connections

Although the term nation implies "a definite social space" and a clearly demarcated territory, our authors analyse "national experiences on scales other than the nation", to borrow a phrase from Thomas Bender.[16] In exploring the construction of national identity in transnational spaces, Cecilia Morgan uncovers the story of English-Canadian tourists in Britain who gave the established script of the grand European tour a twist of their own. By participating in suffrage marches and rallies, Morgan suggests, women travellers from Canada found "a place to enact their conceptions of national and imperial subjectivity", thereby experiencing the "we" that, as much of the literature has argued, characterized the "British world". Anglo-Canadian women tourists also infused their reading of historical displays in Scotland and England — be it in museums, towers, or castles — with a particular feminine sensibility that rejected the "violence, terror, and despair" of historical narratives in favour of the more recent "accomplishments of parliamentary democracy". A few, in turn, embraced the even "better story" of modern and progressive womanhood, projected in suffrage rallies and parades, where a gendered nationalism carried an explicit transnational dimension, personified by Edith Chown from Kingston (Ontario), who marched in the 1910 suffrage procession to Albert Hall alongside her aunt Alice.

While Morgan describes English-Canadian tourists who proudly invoked a pan-Canadian identity when confronted with British stereotypes, Godefroy Desrosiers-Lauzon tells the story of Ontario and Quebec snowbirds who transplanted their local identities to Florida. Since the nineteenth century, Eastern Canadian elites had travelled to Florida in search of a "dreamscape of desire", as Desrosiers-Lauzon asserts. By the early 1950s, the trickle of travellers had swelled into a stream large enough to warrant the publication of a

16 Thomas Bender, "Introduction: Historians, the Nation, and the Plenitude of Narratives", in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 1–2; Smith, *National Identity*, p. 9.

French monthly, the *Floride française*, the first of many "Canadian" papers published in Florida. To American observers, street names like "Queensway" or "Muskoka" might have suggested the presence of "Canadians", just as the opening of a branch of the *Caisse populaire* in "Floribec" might have done. To the snowbirds, by contrast, they reflected the persistence of localized identities. The experience of living abroad, Desrosiers-Lauzon argues, did not result in the subsuming of "local" identities into an overarching "Canadian" one. Instead, snowbirds from Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland each kept to themselves in cohesive, yet fairly exclusive, communities in Florida.

German immigrants who arrived in Canada between the late 1940s and early 1960s had to navigate a transnational space of a different kind — one forged by conflicting public discourses over the meanings of the German past, and further complicated by encounters with other Canadians, many of whom had suffered from Nazi atrocities. As Alexander Freund suggests, German newcomers had to make sense of "North American published and media interpretations of the Third Reich that were either not present or marginal in 1950s Germany". While some immigrants continued to cultivate a "culture of grievance" that depicted Germans themselves as victims of Hitler's regime, others forged new identities by learning more about the Nazi past, joining the peace and anti-war movement, or emphasizing the values of empathy and good inter-ethnic relations. "Considering the continuing influx of migrants from dictatorial regimes and war-torn countries," Freund concludes, "one must ask whether Canadian society has nothing to learn from immigrants who grew up in a dictatorship and experienced war and flight as children or adolescents."

Realms of Memory

In drawing a distinction between communicative memory that resides in oral forms such as "anecdotes, jokes, gossip, and stories" and cultural memory that is captured in a culture's "lasting products such as texts, memorials, and institutional practices", Freund points to the interplay of individual and collective memories that also informs the contributions by Jocelyn Létourneau and Patricia Vervoort. Létourneau's concern is with the myths of decline in contemporary Quebec, both in the form of "national stories" and the more personal reflections on the role of loss in Quebec history. "Myths of decline", as the anthropologist Anthony Smith has told us, seek to explain "how the community lost its anchor in a living tradition, how the old values became ossified and meaningless, and how, as a result, common sentiment and beliefs faded to give way to rampant individualism and the triumph of partisan interests over collective ideals and communal solidarity".[17] In a similar vein, Létourneau interprets the "myths" of Quebec's decline as an empowering fiction, meant to encourage a national revival.

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17 Anthony D. Smith, "National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent", *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, vol. 7 (1984), p. 104.

Patricia Vervoort, in turn, delves into two streams of public acclaim for a Canadian landmark, the grain elevator. While large-scale terminal elevators in cities such as Montreal, Thunder Bay, and Calgary earned international praise for their "modern taste", as reflected in their clear geometric shape, functional design, and use of "concrete slip-form construction", the wooden country elevators elicited feelings of affection and, later, nostalgia, when the imposing rural landmarks turned into "towers of silence": "[T]he demolition of an elevator tugs at some memory, some emotion, that lies within us, no matter how distant our connection to the land." A generic industrial structure whose proper identification escaped even leading modernists of the time (Le Corbusier, for instance, commonly identified the Montreal terminal as "American") thus became enmeshed with notions of both modernity and nostalgia — a fitting tribute, perhaps, to the complex, fluid, and ambiguous nature of nationalism.

Branding the Nation
Our last two contributors examine more self-conscious attempts to imbue consumer products with meanings and memories of nation. Both analyse the branding of national identity and the co-option of national symbols for the sake of economic gain. There, however, the authors part company. Jarrett Rudy describes the folk nationalism that became closely associated with French Canadian smoking rituals and practices. Shaped by the rhythms of the *habitant* household economy (and, indeed, the very soil of the Quebec nation), *tabac canadien* became, for some, a national symbol. As Rudy suggests, "When Bourassa sat on stage smoking his short clay pipe as he waited to give a speech at a nationalist rally in Rimouski in 1907, his nationalist oratory had likely already begun with him smoking his pipe of *tabac canadien*." Notwithstanding the criticism of connoisseurs who derided French-Canadian tobacco as both tasteless and coarse, state and business embraced the nationalist allure of *tabac canadien*. In an "ironic highpoint in its advertising", Imperial Tobacco drew upon French-Canadian folk nationalism in the 1920s to promote its British brand of cigarettes, made with Virginia tobacco.

Catherine Carstairs, too, points to the irony of American entrepreneurs devising a "Canadian" line of clothing that Canadian consumers "embraced ... with gusto". Yet she finds little to recommend in the branded nationalism that Roots represents. "Roots nationalism", Carstairs asserts, "is empty of the positive aspects of Canadian nationalism — the emphasis on tolerance, diversity, and community." Having supplanted earlier and, the author holds, more meaningful manifestations of Canadian nationalism (namely a nationalism concerned about "promoting and protecting Canadian culture" and curbing the "influence of the United States on Canada's economy and foreign policy"), Roots nationalism "leaves Canadians with little sense of Canada's history or values".

Conclusion
In adopting cultural approaches to the study of Canadian nationalism, the authors have uncovered a wide range of national "actors", including tourists, voyageurs, snowbirds, migrants, architects, consumers, and exhibition commissioners. They have also unearthed, and carefully deciphered, "scripts" of national belonging. Indeed, a concern with the narrative construction of national identity runs, as the proverbial red thread, through the contribution in this volume. Yet the latter is always tempered by the authors' inclination to explore the middle ground of social and cultural practices, rather than venturing into the realm of nationalist ideology. By asking how Canadians "internalized" notions of national identity, how they incorporated them into their everyday lives and material worlds, and how they constructed a sense of Canadian-ness in inter-cultural encounters, our contributors bring to the fore a Canadian nationalism that revealed itself not in the grand national ideal, but in more tangible practices, encounters, and stories.