

topics we learn more from *Where Is My Home?* than from anywhere else. It is particularly gratifying to read a work of impartiality and balance. On the one hand, Stolarik makes no secret of his Slovak patriotism, in particular when it comes to Slovak and Czech relations in the former Czechoslovakia which as a state—whether non-Communist in the interwar years, or Communist from 1948 to 1989—did not respond adequately to Slovakia’s legitimate demands for self-rule. On the other hand, he deals even-handedly with what he describes as the three basic political orientations among Slovaks in North America: the Slovak nationalists, the Czechoslovaks, and the Communists.

A major underlying theme of *Where Is My Home?* is applicable to many immigrant groups in North America? Namely, that they are quintessentially North American in the sense that they have functioned largely as a community or communities with common interests that unite them, regardless of the fact that they may live in the United States or in Canada. Educated and professionally employed in both countries, M. Mark Stolarik was poised better than anyone to write a history of North American Slovak immigration. We are all grateful that he has taken up the challenge and done it so well.

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THOMPSON, Neville – *Canada and the End of the Imperial Dream: Beverley Baxter’s Reports from London through War and Peace, 1936-1960*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 394.

In a 1931 BBC radio broadcast entitled “That Commonwealth Feeling,” the British diplomat, politician, and writer Harold Nicolson declared that the dominions had recently “began to emerge above our horizon as something unaccountable, as something forlorn and strange and powerful; as something mysterious, compelling, imminent” (Harold Nicolson, *People and Things: Wireless Talks*, London, 1931, pp. 145-6). The same year as Nicolson’s wireless talk, the Statute of Westminster gave the dominions legislative equality with the United Kingdom by granting them autonomy in foreign affairs, a symbolic “end” to the imperial relationship. Yet imperialism, or more accurately an attachment to Britons, British affairs, and things British, remained centrally important for many English-speaking Canadians for another generation. Indeed, as Neville Thompson demonstrates in this wide-ranging and elegantly written book, the “imperial dream” of a shared Anglo-Canadian identity and purpose survived, if in a diminished form and for fewer and fewer people, into the early 1960s. Thompson’s medium for tracking this development is the bi-weekly London Letters column written by the Canadian journalist and British Member of Parliament Beverley Baxter for *Maclean’s* magazine between 1936 and 1960.

Beverley Baxter had a Methodist upbringing in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Toronto. The British Empire exerted a strong imaginative pull for the young Baxter. After work selling pianos and service in Europe during the First World War, Baxter stayed on in London and successfully lobbied the most famous Canadian expatriate in Britain, Lord Beaverbrook (Max Aiken), for a job in journalism. He went on to make his fortune, and never again returned full-time to live in Canada. Baxter even published an autobiography in 1935, telling the story of how he had ascended to a position of influence in the imperial metropole.

Canada and the End of the Imperial Dream is a hybrid, part biography of Baxter, part analysis of the high British political history which Baxter observed from the margins as a Conservative Member of Parliament from 1935 until his death in 1964. The books' central themes are symbolized by the two figures represented in the cover photograph, neither of whom is Baxter. Instead, we see Beaverbrook, then British Minister of Supply, and Winston Churchill standing on the deck of HMS *Prince of Wales* in 1941 during the Allied conference off the coast of Newfoundland which resulted in the Atlantic Charter. Far from a case of false advertising, the cover depicts the two figures whose imperial visions Baxter spent his career advancing. Beaverbrook was the more direct influence, giving Baxter his start in journalism at the *Daily Express*. As Baxter wrote of himself and Beaverbrook when looking back on his career in his final London Letter in 1960, they had "beat the Empire drum on all possible and even impossible occasions" (p. 355). While they sometimes fell out over other political questions, Baxter and Beaverbrook always remained simpatico over the importance for Canada of the imperial tie. It was only the debacle of the Suez Crisis and the subsequent promise of entering the European Community that finally persuaded Baxter that the imperial dream was over.

In his politics, Baxter was a journalistic weathervane. Always a conservative, he variously supported and opposed the successive grandees of the British Conservative party, from fellow Canadian Andrew Bonar Law through Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, Churchill, Anthony Eden, and Harold Macmillan. The central message he propagated throughout the period, however, was that of closer imperial union. This meant the old Joseph Chamberlain vision of imperial preference, as well as during the Second World War an imperial war cabinet and overseas conscription for Canadians. Beyond such formal manifestations of imperialism, even then somewhat dated, what Baxter really wished to convey to Canadians was the allure of English sophistication and culture. It is tempting to see Baxter's imperial arias as simple chauvinism, or in the words of the Labour politician and historian Roy Jenkins, quoted by Thompson, "higher meaninglessness" (p. 24), and this is partly true, but they also represented a genuine affection and longing for the broader British world of which he, and many English Canadians, felt a part.

Baxter's London Letters were a mix of political commentary and high society gossip. Thompson's judicious quotations from Baxter's "Letters" reveal a writer capable of both condescension and nostalgia for the Canada he had left behind. Here, as in many other ways, Baxter resembled his mentor Beaverbrook. Baxter

was also a conservative romantic, a trait that became particularly pronounced in his Second World War columns. Writing of British naval valour, he proclaimed that “the spirit of Elizabethan days has come back to these islands once more.” (p. 131) His tone became more muted after the war, when the Labour Party which he despised came to power and implemented many of the provisions of the 1942 Beveridge Report. Baxter was vehemently opposed to socialism and the welfare state, siding decisively with the former in what he called the “battle of the individual against the state” (p. 242). His most evocative columns, however, such as that on the 1936 Abdication crisis, brought home to Canadians those events gripping what many still saw as the “mother dominion.”

If I had one reservation about the book, it is that Baxter and the Canadian connection sometimes fades from view as Thompson sets out the context of successive British high political dramas. More might also be said about how, and in what ways, the ideas and sentiments Baxter espoused in his London Letters were received by his *Maclean's* readers. Thompson gives us circulation numbers which attest to the magazine's self-proclaimed status as “Canada's National Magazine,” but how Baxter's ideas shaped Canadians' political, economic, social and cultural activities is left mostly unsaid. Nonetheless, this is a fine book, closely researched and carefully written. It is particularly strong on Baxter during the appeasement years, reflecting Thompson's expertise in this period. Historians of the British world would benefit greatly from more transnational studies in the model of Thompson's work on Beverley Baxter.

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WEIL, François – *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy on America*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University press, 2013. Pp. 304.

With this book, well-respected François Weil proposes a history of the Americanization of genealogy as a (West) European practice and the transposition of its main concepts, such as lineage and forebears, into the North American context. Weil admits he was not interested in family history before taking on this project. The inspiration came in 2008, from his surprise at the “engrossing fascination” (p. 1) given by journalists and the public at Barack and Michelle Obama's respective ancestries. At the confluence of racial affiliation, the history of slavery and immigration, and issues of class, Weil argues that their genealogies beckoned enquiries into the meaning of personal and collective history, but most importantly on the importance of family history in the United States. As such, *Family Trees* casts its gaze broadly, over four centuries, tracing the evolution of the practice, the varying rationales of its actors, and the main institutions that led the way.