

relevance to the present” (p. 17), the concepts of resilience and vulnerability need to be imported into the past with some level of caution. Where Curtis points to an adaptive resilient response to crisis one could just as easily call it survival tactics. Furthermore, Curtis spins the classic Marxian base/superstructure argument as “the very base or foundation of pre-industrial society is made up of alignments in property and power” (p. 24). We are told that these structural conditions are ultimately responsible for settlement resilience or vulnerability; however, the model is disappointingly silent on issues of state and cultural formation, which seem to me to be important aspects of the historical ‘politics of resilience’.

Curtis’ focus on the dynamics between interest groups, coming close at times to a game analytic, is a methodological position that others attempting to grapple with resilience and vulnerability may find beneficial. Curtis’ discussion of material arrangements such as aqueducts, drains, and moats also opens up new questions around the historical materiality of resilience. Finally, while a book of this sort could have easily been written for a particular specialized audience in mind, Curtis is able to show some important empirical findings that should resonate with a broader audience.

One last, editorial, remark: the book’s 77 figures and tables and the 1,401 footnotes are met with a meager two and a half-page index, which is unfortunate for anyone wanting to easily explore the empirical tract laid down by Curtis.

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DI MASCIO, Anthony – *The Idea of Popular Schooling In Upper Canada: Print Culture, Public Discourse, and the Demand for Education*. Montreal and Kingston; McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012. Pp. 257.

Anthony Di Mascio’s *The Idea of Popular Schooling in Upper Canada* is a story of education in Upper Canada, the baptismal name of what we now know more familiarly as the province of Ontario. It responds to the following question: why did popular schooling begin in the province? More pointedly, it concerns the origins of the *idea* of popular schooling. In this distinction lies Di Mascio’s most important contribution to the historiographical record of Ontario’s schools. Educational historians have painted a vivid and detailed picture of the establishment of Ontario’s public system of education, drawing on the rich archival and prosopographical evidence that we can associate with a formal department of education and the great figures that are linked to its establishment, and yet more work needs to be done to explain why public education came to be at all? How was schooling conceptualized in the popular imaginary? *The Idea of Popular Schooling* begins to answer these questions by inquiring into the evidentiary basis for this system’s origins, proceeding to explore the reasons for its existence.

The narrative begins with a portrayal of Upper Canada that is reminiscent of rags to riches stories. A “backwoods...howling wilderness,” sparsely populated, managed in short order to enact provisions that would establish a public schooling act that would endeavor to reach the entire population. Through lobbying and pressures upon the press and upon the government by its inhabitants, Upper Canada was a forerunner in publicly funded education. The heroes of this story are the Upper Canadians. The author assumes the torch carried for decades by seminal Canadian historians of education such as J. Donald Wilson, Robert Stamp, Neil Sutherland, and Bruce Curtis who challenged the ‘great man’ narratives that frequented this country’s educational history. This is not to neglect the work of Alison Prentice, Jane Errington, Rosa Bruno-Jofré, Paul Axelrod, and other notable Canadian historians of education, who have demonstrated how people’s civic engagement with the state altered the landscape of public schooling.

The creation myth of Upper Canadian education posits Egerton Ryerson as a George Washington figure. I am partial to Ryerson. His place in the Canadian pantheon is well deserved; Di Mascio notes, quite correctly, however, that three common school acts had already been enacted in Upper Canada before Ryerson assumed office. Just as Lawrence Cremin sought to tie the history of schooling in the United States to broader social and intellectual movements rather than telling a story of linear progress, so Di Mascio seeks to situate his study within a broader tradition of historical narratives that challenge Whig history. This is a tradition that is decades old. It is revitalized here.

Di Mascio’s history begins before the establishment of a formal Department of Education in Upper Canada (at the time, Canada West; Canada East, in broad strokes, designated what is presently referred to as Quebec), which was born in 1841. In 1822, the General Board of Education was created as a central department. As the author notes, this board “was an afterthought to the Common School Act passed in 1816, and although a great deal of information concerning the administrative and institutional developments of the time, they tell us very little about the idea of popular schooling and its advocates” (p. 5).

As a result, his archival sources are quite unique. Di Mascio has few government documents to draw upon. Formal correspondence is scant. Rather than pursuing official records or emphasizing the establishment of schooling as system within Upper Canada, the author is primarily interested in explaining what the people of the province wanted out of an educational system, and what – at least with respect to formal rhetoric – its backers promoted.

Di Mascio argues, quite convincingly, that civic engagement within Upper Canada was higher than we might expect. High levels of engagement are not necessarily commonplace, particularly when we consider voter turnout statistics in elections at various levels of government. Yet the author describes a context in which the elite did not hold the political reins. He pursues a deliberative democracy model, seizing upon a robust print culture that advocated for and helped bring into effect common schooling within Upper Canada.

The book’s precincts highlight areas of future research that educational historians can explore. Firstly, it concentrates solely upon Upper Canada, which

does not offer a broad description of Canadian education as it was being established and becoming entrenched. This permits a study that avoids the pitfall of being a mile wide and an inch deep. Secondly, it is not an institutional history, contributing relatively little to our understanding of the systems that began to forge public schooling within the colony; this work is, however, explicitly directed towards the history of an idea than it is the history of an institution.

Di Mascio concentrates upon print media as primary sources to help him unravel the ways that the people of Upper Canada expressed their visions of what a public education could entail and how it could be realized. The media provided a discursive web, and the author seeks weave order and consistency out of its disparate strands. He does so by contextualizing the context within the broader North American and transatlantic landscape, which is important due to the explosion of rhetoric that could be found publicly and exchanged popularly.

The public used the media to project onto the sphere of public rhetoric visions of the educational ideal. These voices, it must be noted, were almost exclusively those of the male citizenry and are biased with respect to gender, nationality, and socio-economic status. There is little surprise that the people examined here are not all the persons who populated Upper Canada. Future historians have the challenge of telling these stories, and potentially challenging the ideas presented throughout Di Mascio's study. Just as Di Mascio has endeavored to mine material sources that had been unexamined in the past, we are reminded that there are other stories to tell and further sources to mine.

The book itself is structured chronologically, beginning in 1784 and ending in 1832. It encompasses wartime discourse (the War of 1812, Chapter 4), political radicalism and discord (Chapters 5 and 7), and the tensions between religious and political leadership with respect to schooling and educational ideas (Chapter 6). It makes for a quick read, as the concluding chapter begins on page 158, but this is another strength of the book. The subject matter is examined thoroughly, but in a tight, elegant style.

The necessity of being historically minded is as clear today as it was a century ago to critics of progressive, new, education. The history of education has never been more relevant in Ontario, as this province seems once more enamored of the idea of reform and is proceeding to detail a vision that is, in a manner of speaking, ahistorical. Di Mascio's text should be prescribed reading for teacher candidates and educationists in the province. It maps out the roots of the system that we tinker with today, whilst we amble on the branches, lost amongst the leaves.

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