

La question de l'indépendantisme de Groulx doit être abordée de la même manière. Même au plus fort de la célèbre querelle de « l'État français » des années 1920, alors qu'il envisageait la rupture plus ou moins immédiate du lien confédéral, Groulx continua de voir dans la nation canadienne-française une communauté de langue, de culture, d'histoire et de foi. L'indépendance du Québec (ou d'un éventuel « État français ») n'aurait rien modifié aux « frontières » de la nation. La question de l'avenir politique du Canada français aurait bénéficié, peut-être plus que toute autre, d'un traitement plus « contextualisé ». En 1922, par exemple, Groulx aurait imputé la dislocation du Canada aux agissements de l'Ouest mécontent de la relation mercantiliste inéquitable que lui imposait le Canada central de plus en plus industrialisé depuis la Première Guerre mondiale. Il n'est sans doute pas étonnant de constater que son « indépendantisme » se soit atténué, vers la fin de la décennie, en même temps que la « révolte » agraire de l'Ouest et la ferveur du Parti progressiste qui l'incarnait dans l'arène politique fédérale. Comme l'explique Jean-Claude Dupuis (*Les Cahiers d'histoire du Québec au XX^e siècle*, été 1994), les convictions théologiques de Groulx, l'idée que l'autorité suprême était celle de la Providence et non celle des hommes, lui interdisaient de revendiquer ouvertement l'indépendance au nom du principe de la souveraineté populaire. Que Groulx ait souvent brandi la perspective de l'indépendance pour tenter de mobiliser « son petit peuple », qu'il soit allé jusqu'à l'élever au rang de « mystique nationale », pour emprunter à Robert Comeau (*Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, juin 1972), cela contribue sans aucun doute à une ambiguïté bien réelle dans sa pensée. Mais la question de l'indépendance est somme toute relativement secondaire dans l'idéologie groulxiste. Groulx, avant d'être un séparatiste ou un fédéraliste, était un nationaliste. C'est donc sa définition de la nation canadienne-française qu'il faut d'abord chercher à comprendre avant de pouvoir en saisir les corollaires et les implications qui, eux, pouvaient varier selon le contexte.

Ce ne sont là que quelques exemples de la démarche de l'auteur qui nous autorisent à soulever certaines interrogations. S'il est vrai que l'œuvre de Groulx n'est pas dépourvue d'ambiguïtés, peut-on affirmer pour autant que la contradiction en constituait le principe structurant? Il est possible qu'une analyse tenant davantage compte des défis que les acteurs du passé vivaient concrètement et du contexte intellectuel dans lequel ils œuvraient permettrait de relativiser certains comportements qui, autrement, paraîtraient contradictoires à nos yeux de modernes. Ce livre, on le voit bien, soulève des questions et des débats passionnants dont l'intérêt déborde largement le cercle des spécialistes de l'œuvre de Groulx.

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BRIGGS, Asa, and Peter BURKE — *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002. Pp. 374.

The title of this book suggests that it is an amalgam of social history and media history, and that it covers the period from the mid-fifteenth century to the present. In

fact, it is even more ambitious, for “social history” includes much economic and political history, “media history” is actually “transportation and communication history”, and both aspects emphasize the history of technology. A massive task — not to mention the fact that more than passing attention is paid to preliterate societies and that the scope is multinational. A great deal is covered in 330 pages of text — indeed, too much.

Apparently, the book is aimed at communications and history students, and the illustrations, the extensive chronology, and the very lengthy (as well as impressive and useful) bibliographical survey for each chapter are targeted to those imagined readers. It also seems to be primarily intended for a British audience, although there is sufficient material about the United States to make it possibly appealing to American students and teachers, and there are also mentions of significant (and not-so-significant) events in many western European and Commonwealth countries.

To add to the complexity and density of the text, it operates at three intertwined levels. First, it provides a massive amount of detail about many aspects of media history, from the use of images by the Catholic Church to the steam engine to the Kodak camera and Yahoo (although, as examples of omissions, typewriters and video games receive only one very brief mention each). Secondly, the major themes of social and media history are discussed, and an argument is developed. Thirdly, major developments in the scholarship about social and media history are frequently (if briefly) inserted, and all the great names one might expect to encounter — Habermas, Gramsci, Darnton, Innis, McLuhan, Schramm, de Sola Pool, Bourdieu, James Carey, Raymond Williams, Elizabeth Eisenstein, among many others — are referenced. It makes for an enormous amount of information, argument, and theory. As a result, the text is dense, choppy, sometimes repetitive, with distracting mannerisms (like repetition of full titles and parenthetical references to other pages of the text), and generally hard to sort out. My guess is that the average undergraduate reader would find it confusing and would struggle to separate the major themes from the extra details. Let one example suffice. In a partial paragraph comprising 85 words on page 197, the author (Asa Briggs in this chapter) discusses entrepreneurial press owner William Randolph Hearst (with birth and death dates) and the concept of “yellow journalism”; comments on E. W. Scripps (ditto) and his more “pro-labour” papers; says they built up “huge chains”; and then throws in a reference to Hearst’s “fairy-tale palace in California”, his inamorata Marion Davies, and, of course, Orson Welles and *Citizen Kane* (again, with date). It seems Hearst’s love-life is historically more important than newspaper chains, although one does understand the desire to add some colour. To someone for whom most of this would be new information, however, it is simply too much — it is indeed “piling on”.

There is, nevertheless, an argument here, and some of the flaws just mentioned are a product of that argument. First, the authors are attempting to “sell” the significance of history to students who may not think it important to the study of communications, and vice versa. Secondly, they are trying to present a fairly sophisticated version of history, one that assumes neither continuous improvement nor steady deterioration in the media arena over time. Again and again, they emphasize that change is perpetual but not all-encompassing; that old media do not die when new

ones are developed; that context matters. In other words, the argument is subtle and nuanced and it ends, necessarily, in a question mark after the word cyberspace in the last chapter. There has been no single line of development, Briggs writes in the conclusion; the boundaries are blurred, and complexity is the byword. Or, as Burke puts it in an earlier chapter, no single theory of social change provides a complete guide to historical development; we must always keep several alternatives in mind, and continuous flux must always be assumed. We must view the media as “a system in perpetual change in which different elements play greater or smaller roles” (p. 5).

All this is at once impressive and somewhat disappointing. While the balanced position is admirable, it is also so even-handed that the authors' own views are usually submerged. Their biases are indeed evident in their decision to privilege certain themes such as the public sphere, the diffusion of information, and mediated entertainment, but on any specific question — including “the great question” of “the extent to which the media and their messages changed people's attitudes and mentalities” (p. 91) — there is only on-the-one-hand / on-the-other-hand prose, as pedestrian as the phrases quoted. As a Canadian broadcasting historian, I found the discussion of the differences between the development of radio regimes in Britain and the United States particularly frustrating. These differences are all described fully and reasonably accurately (although what is said about Canada is partially incorrect), but no attempt is made to probe beneath the surface to explain why these different approaches developed in the two main English-speaking countries. As with the variety of systems created in European countries and with the global village concept of Marshall McLuhan, they are all apparently the products of “unique national tradition[s] and perspective[s]” (p. 244), which there is of course no time to explore further.

Despite it being written by two historians whom I respect greatly, then, and despite their impressive erudition and ambition, this is not a book that I can wholeheartedly recommend. It surveys an important and relevant topic, but it is laborious to read and I am afraid will not convince many present-and-future-minded students of communications that history is interesting and important, nor, on the other hand, many empirically oriented history students that communication theory has much to offer them.

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CHARLAND, Jean-Pierre — *Les élèves, l'histoire et la citoyenneté*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2003, 333 p.

Suite au Rapport Lacoursière sur l'enseignement de l'histoire au Québec (1996), plusieurs questions importantes sur le lien qu'entretiennent les élèves avec l'histoire ont été soulevées. Ces questions ont, selon Jean-Pierre Charland, professeur au Département de didactique de l'Université de Montréal, quelquefois été laissées sans réponse satisfaisante.