

William Nairne, who had come to North America with General Wolfe, now had the choice of sending their letters through the busier year-round harbours of Halifax and New York. Nairne farmed just below Quebec City at Murray Bay from which port he could dispatch letters to Europe, but he also used two options further down the St. Lawrence: the canoe route through Lake Champlain and the Hudson River to New York, or the Madawaska and Saint John rivers to Halifax. Sleds carried the mails along these routes in winter. Nairne had good reason to employ a year-round mail service. His children were educated at Scottish schools, from which they regularly sought and received their father's guidance. By 1802 the ailing Nairne was confident enough in the swiftness and reliability of his mail delivery to write an Edinburgh friend asking him to consult a medical specialist on his behalf. Despite his obvious confidence in the mails, Nairne succumbed before receiving a reply.

Harrison uses letters in a novel way: to tell us what measures Canadians took to correspond at a time when links between Europe and North America were extremely important, but equally vulnerable. Colonists devised and exploited different means to ensure their letters were delivered in the absence of a reliable official government postal service. Her evidence is drawn almost entirely from the letters themselves, but Harrison has avoided the common social historians' trap by capably setting her evidence within its wider historical context. A series of maps plot the growth of settlements and canoe routes to the interior, while charts record the growth of trans-Atlantic shipping over these two centuries. The sum is a book which argues compellingly that letter writing was extremely important to early Canadians and that evidence contained in postal sources provides a greater understanding of the country's past.

Finally, this book is as physically appealing as the letters Harrison has studied. Harrison's prose is clear and her book's many illustrations make the story more vivid. *Until Next Year* is that most enjoyable form of scholarship: an academic study that explores new territory while remaining accessible and enjoyable to the common reader.

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E. A. Heaman — *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society During the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

The study of fairs and exhibitions has become a "suddenly fashionable topic" in historical circles, observes E. A. Heaman at the outset of her new book. Heaman joins H. V. Nelles (*The Art of Nation*) and Keith Walden (*Becoming Modern in Toronto*), who have recently published in this field. Having read — and thoroughly enjoyed — Nelles and Walden, I jumped at the chance to review *The Inglorious Arts of Peace*. The splendid jacket illustration of the Canadian agricultural trophy in London, England, in 1886 is surely one of the most attractive coming out of the University of Toronto Press.

Given the prominent position of the new cultural history, particularly among historians drawn to the study of exhibitions and fairs, I was surprised when Heaman indicated that her aim was the “traditional one of constructing a narrative to discover what happened”. The result is a very unfashionable book that documents in great detail the dozens of agricultural and international exhibitions held between 1789 and 1893, including the various prize winners. One is reminded of Keith Walden’s disclaimer that his intention in *Becoming Modern* “has not been to survey the contents of fair for their own sake. I have not paid much attention to the exhibitions’ beginnings or administrative development. I have not tried to catalogue every feature offered up for edification and enjoyment.” Heaman, however, does exactly that and refuses to engage in larger debates about modernity and the emergence of a consumer society. What little theoretical discussion that exists is grafted onto the narrative.

The book consists of ten chapters divided into three parts: exhibitions in Central Canada, Canada at the international exhibitions, and exhibitions and identities (mainly at these international fairs). To be sure, the exhibition was one of the great Enlightenment projects designed to uplift humanity. Yet the reasons for studying agricultural and international exhibitions together are not obvious. Why not include industrial exhibitions, especially when non-agricultural products are being discussed in the context of the international fair? In consequence, the reader is faced with two separate storylines: agricultural exhibitions on the one hand and international ones on the other.

The Inglorious Arts of Peace is at its strongest when dealing with the economic impact of the agricultural exhibitions in Central Canada. The comparative framework adopted in the first section allows us to discover some of the fundamental differences in the development of agricultural exhibitions in Ontario and Quebec. Most notably, agricultural fairs took hold in Ontario to a far greater degree than in its neighbouring province. This uneven development had important ramifications, as these exhibitions encouraged agricultural specialization by establishing role models to emulate and hierarchies of value. Quebec exhibition organizers, for example, dismissed French-Canadian livestock as sub-standard when judged against “pure” British livestock. Heaman is very convincing when she notes that agricultural exhibitions smoothed the transition to the market economy by symbolically re-enacting “those two rituals of the market: selection and purchase”. The author also demonstrates two distinct kinds of agricultural exhibitions: “distributive” exhibitions where prizes were awarded to a large number of exhibitors and “competitive” exhibitions that showcased a handful of farmers who reaped the financial rewards.

Unfortunately, the second and third parts of the book prove to be significantly less satisfying. Once again, the long parade of Canadian exhibitors to the major cities of the world tells us only so much about how the government enticed potential immigrants, investors, and customers for Canadian products. It would have been far more useful to have focused on fewer exhibitions in greater depth. This is especially true given the intriguing question that Heaman poses in this section: did international exhibitions before 1867 contribute to Confederation by promoting the idea of “Canada” among the British North American colonies? Unfortunately,

Heaman's conclusion that these fairs "helped" to establish a discourse about Canada remains unsubstantiated by the evidence. By largely restricting her research to the fairs themselves, Heaman is unable to offer a convincing answer. More attention to the context would have allowed for a thorough investigation of the political importance of exhibiting in the Confederation debates.

This discussion is followed by the most disappointing part of *The Inglorious Arts of Peace* dedicated to exhibitions and identities. Although one would be hard-pressed to find a more under-examined feature of these exhibitions than the depiction of First Nations people, this final chapter is not so much about their identities as it is a way to dismiss the exhibition as a means of hegemonic control by elites. In effect, Heaman sees a contradiction in the popularity of Native manufacturers and artifacts at these world fairs and the fair's objective of promoting human "progress". The chapter even goes so far as to claim that the presence of finely crafted aboriginal products subverted the forward-looking impulse of exhibiting. However, the growing literature on tourism and First Nation peoples has shown us that well-to-do Europeans (and Euro-Canadians) in the Victorian era craved the "wild" and the "primitive" in their travels. Indeed, they often judged themselves in relation to others. The presence of Native "crafts" in the exhibition halls is therefore entirely consistent with the times. Accordingly, one suspects that Heaman exaggerates the subversive potential of the Native presence.

On the face of it, Walden and Heaman do not agree on much. Even though they both indicate that fairs were designed by local and national elites to engineer consent from the populace (for what purpose is unclear in Heaman's book), they profoundly disagree as to their success. Did exhibitions mirror or mould culture? Walden claims that exhibitions were instruments of hegemony. By contrast, Heaman argues that agricultural and international exhibitions lost their "improving" mission to popular demands for entertainment. Indeed, the book's thesis maintains that exhibitions declined as they became more "frivolous" until the "carnavalesque aspects drowned out the statements of authoritative truth that the exhibition tried to promulgate". Inexplicably, Heaman restricts her study to the official exhibition of prize competition. As a result, we are told very little about the rising tension between this "official" exhibition and the popular "mid-way". We are therefore poorly situated to judge how successful elites were in imposing direction, or, as Heaman claims, whether exhibitions helped unleash popular culture. In the final analysis, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace* is a well-researched study that will serve as a useful reference to students of Canadian history interested in agricultural and international exhibitions. We will have to draw our own conclusions, for the time being, as to what it all means.

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