

L'historien Marcel Bellavance (1939-2017)

Docteur de la Sorbonne et de l'École pratique des hautes études, Marcel Bellavance a été professeur d'histoire au Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean de septembre 1986 à janvier 2008. C'était un enseignant dévoué et méticuleux qui préparait soigneusement ses cours et qui, en tant que directeur du Département des sciences sociales, était apprécié de ses collègues. Cet engagement était nourri par des recherches menées sur plusieurs fronts.

Marcel Bellavance a en effet été membre du premier Comité exécutif de l'Association québécoise d'histoire politique, et ses recherches s'inscrivent dans cette perspective. Je ne tenterai pas ici de discuter tous ses travaux, je me limiterai à trois livres importants qui correspondent à des étapes significatives de sa démarche : 1) *Un village en mutation : Compton, 1880-1920*, Parcs Canada, Hull, 1982, 2) *Le Québec et la confédération : un choix libre ? Le clergé et la constitution de 1867*, Les Éditions du Septentrion, Québec, 1992, et 3) *Le Québec au siècle des nationalités. Essai d'histoire comparée*, VLB Éditeurs, 2004.

Dans le premier ouvrage, comme en témoigne le titre, l'accent est mis sur ce que Paul Ricoeur appelait un « quasi-personnage », à savoir le village de Compton. C'est en effet autour de cette petite municipalité que M. Bellavance déploie son récit de l'évolution socio-économique de ce qu'on appelait autrefois les « Cantons de l'Est », évolution marquée par la construction d'un chemin de fer, l'essor de l'industrie et de l'agriculture commerciale et des changements démographiques importants. Plus largement il y montre comment la croissance d'une population canadienne-française au début du XXe siècle a entraîné des modifications structurelles et culturelles aux impacts nombreux, notamment pour la population d'origine britannique. D'un style vif et précis, l'ouvrage fourmille de références, de tableaux, de graphiques, de plans et de statistiques pour étayer son propos. Peignant par couches successives une réalité mouvante, l'auteur réussit toutefois à la rendre vivante malgré cette avalanche de chiffres et de schémas!

Le deuxième livre est très différent. M. Bellavance tente de montrer de manière détaillée l'influence qu'a eue le clergé catholique dans l'adhésion du Québec à la confédération, surtout lors de l'élection de 1867. Après avoir situé le cadre de son étude, l'auteur en présente les acteurs avant de se concentrer sur l'élection. Le point culminant de l'ouvrage est sûrement l'analyse minutieuse des mandements de mai-juin 1867, par lesquels les évêques prenaient publiquement la défense de la Confédération. La réussite de l'opération reposait essentiellement sur les curés, qui utiliseront surtout deux moyens : la chaire et le confessionnal. Tous les curés devaient ainsi lire au moins deux fois le mandement de leur évêque, puis le commenter afin de convaincre leurs ouailles de la portée de l'élection qui allait s'en suivre. Au besoin, ils ne devaient pas hésiter à refuser les sacrements aux récalcitrants, et même leur refuser l'absolution, le cas échéant. En contrepartie,



la nouvelle constitution protégeait les intérêts fondamentaux du clergé et garantissait sa domination sur la société canadienne-française conservatrice.

Enfin, le troisième livre représente l'une des plus belles synthèses jamais écrites sur l'idée de nation québécoise. Il replace ce concept dans le contexte du mouvement de construction d'États-nations qui se déploie un peu partout à l'échelle mondiale. Le Québec a ainsi connu.

dès le XIX^e siècle une première poussée de nationalisme. Mais il est important pour Bellavance de noter dès ce moment la convergence de la pensée libérale et de la pensée nationale au Québec, le « camp » du conservatisme étant occupé par l'alliance forgée entre le clergé catholique et les tenants du compromis fédéral. La nation au Québec a donc d'abord été incarnée par la tendance politique libérale. Par la suite, Marcel Bellavance s'attache aux moments forts de l'histoire nationale du Québec comme les Rébellions de 1837-1838, la Confédération ou la crise de la conscription de la Première Guerre mondiale en s'appuyant sur un modèle capable de prendre en compte les caractéristiques de toutes les histoires nationales. Modèle qu'il élabore principalement en utilisant une approche comparatiste susceptible de faire apparaître, selon l'auteur, la part de singularité et d'universalité qui caractériserait la démarche du Québec dans l'expression de sa spécificité. À la fin de son analyse, Bellavance constate que le projet national n'a pas encore abouti au Québec et qu'un nouveau repli sur la survivance s'est amorcé depuis le referendum perdu de 1995. Le Québec, demande-t-il, est-il encore, aujourd'hui, autre chose qu'une province canadienne où vivent de nombreux francophones? « Canadiens, Canadiens français, Québécois, Franco-Québécois sont des vocables qui évoquent la trajectoire suivie par le peuple québécois depuis quatre siècles. Cette évolution signifie peut-être la sortie définitive de ce dernier de l'histoire des nations. » Ce sont là les derniers mots du *Québec au siècle des nationalités*.



Marc Imbeault, docteur en philosophie Département des Humanités et sciences sociales Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean

John M. Beattie

Dear Colleagues,

We are saddened to share the news that Professor John M. Beattie has passed away. Professor Beattie earned his PhD from King's College, Cambridge and in 1961, he was appointed to the Department of History, University of Toronto. He was a member of our Department for 35 years, during which time he earned the rank of University Professor and was elected to the Royal Society of Canada. He served as Acting Chair of the Department, and two terms as Director of the Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies at the University of Toronto. Over the course of his career, Professor Beattie published five books including *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800* which was considered a foundational book for any student of the history of crime and law. The family has asked that any donations be sent to *Interval House*, a home for women in need based in Toronto.



Here is the obituary that was published in the *Globe and Mail*:

“James Beattie passed away from cancer on July 12, aged 85, in the comfort of his family...”

John Beattie was born and raised in Dunstan, England, near Newcastle upon Tyne. During the war, he and his sister were temporarily relocated to the countryside. After the war, Joyce married an American serviceman and the entire family moved to Napa, California.

John attended the University of San Francisco where he studied history and captained the soccer team. In 1988, he was inducted into the USF Sports Hall of Fame. John earned a master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley. It was there that he met Susan, the love of his life.

In 1957, they moved to the UK where Susan taught school while John earned his PhD. from King's College Cambridge, under the supervision of J. H. Plumb.

In 1961, he accepted a teaching position in the History department at the University of Toronto, the start of a thirty-five-year career. In the late 1960s John turned his academic attention to the subject that was to define his ground-breaking research, publishing career and reputation: crime and the administration of justice in 18th century England. He published many articles along with five books including his seminal work, 'Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800. 'In the 1970s, John's burgeoning academic pursuits happily coincided with the creation of the U of T's Centre of Crim-

inology, the beginning of what was for John a significant, decades-long association; one that included two stints as the Centre's Director.

Yet as important as research and writing were for him, John's great love was teaching. He believed this was a university's most essential mission and the truest test of what its core values should be: openness, curiosity and rigour.

John always took immense pleasure in the work of his graduate students and joy in all their successes, academic and otherwise. His spirit of generosity towards them extended to colleagues in the field, to his and Susan's neighbours and to their many friends, and their families. Above all else John's credo was fairness. He insisted on it in his own assessment of the past and lived it in his dealings with the people in his life, no matter how long or short his association with them.

Upon his retirement in 1996 John was a U of T University Professor emeritus. He and Susan spent many wonderful summers at their cottage on Pencil Lake where John played business manager, transportation director and chief glaze-consultant for Susan Beattie Pottery, happily assuming the supporting role for Susan's pottery-making that she had devoted to his academic work. It was a lifelong partnership in all the best ways.

It was at Pencil Lake, too, that he fell in with a group of golf buddies, found later in life, whose Tuesday rounds on courses across the Kawarthas gave him so much pleasure. John's work drew praise and many awards but his most truly important successes came elsewhere: devoted husband, loving father, nurturing grandfather and loyal friend. Cremation has taken place.

There will be a celebration of his life in the fall academic term, details to be announced.

The family would like to thank Dr. Russell Goldman and his wonderful team at the Temmy Latner Centre for Palliative Care and Nina and Emily from Saint Elizabeth, all of whom provided such loving care to John these past months.

The family is also so grateful to the staff at Kensington Hospice for making his final hours so peaceful.”

Best,

Nicholas Terpstra, FRSC
Professor & Chair
Department of History
University of Toronto

Michael Bliss

The University of Toronto’s Michael Bliss, “one of Canada’s most prominent public intellectuals” and a University Professor Emeritus, died yesterday [May 17, 2017]. He was 76.

The renowned historian was the award-winning author of 14 books on business, politics and medicine for both scholarly and popular audiences, including a book on the history of insulin. “He was a lovely man,” said Faculty of Medicine Professor Edward Shorter, who met Bliss in 1967 at U of T and was his colleague for 50 years. “His passing will be mourned by many friends and acutely by me. “He was one of Canada’s most prominent public intellectuals.”

Bliss entered University College at U of T in 1958, receiving his BA, MA and PhD from the university before joining the Faculty of Arts & Science in the department of history, where his career spanned 38 years. He later moved to the Faculty of Medicine, where Susan Bélanger said, “We were greatly honoured,” to have him as a colleague. “We are all deeply saddened to hear of his passing,” Bélanger said.

He earned U of T’s highest honour, the rank of University Professor – a distinction conferred upon less than two percent of tenured faculty – and was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. “What always really impressed me was Michael’s commitment to also being a public intellectual,” Professor Nick Terpstra, chair of the department of history, told *The Toronto Star*. “He was committed to being a historian. He was committed to research and writing . . . , but one of the reasons why his books were so popular was he was committed to being a Canadian who spoke to other Canadians. “He thought that was one of his obligations as a historian, to speak to a broader public.”

Perhaps best known for his book, *The Discovery of Insulin*, Bliss also published biographies of two Canadians, Sir Frederick Banting and the famous physician Sir William Osler. He also wrote the Governor General’s Award–nominated *Plague: A Story of Smallpox in Montreal*. In 2005, he published a biography of the American neurosurgeon, Harvey Cushing, which galvanized his place as an internationally-known historian. “He revived the genre of medical biographies with these massive, impressive books,” said Shorter. “It was a genre that really had been on its way out, replaced by social histories, until he moved back into the picture.”

Earlier in his career, Bliss wrote several business books including a major biography of Sir Joseph Flavelle, *A Canadian Millionaire: the Life and Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle* and a first history of business in Canada, *Northern Enterprise*. “Intellectually, the only word for him is brave – he ventured where others feared to tread,” said U of T historian, Professor Robert Bothwell. “Where most academic historians stick to narrow fields, Mike moved



Photo | Photographie : Erin Combs/Toronto Star via Getty Images.

from one to another. He can lay claim to having invented several, at least in Canada (Medical history being the most notable). He trod on many toes in his life, usually for the right reasons.” Bothwell says Bliss was one of the U of T figures who was known to embrace the public side of being a professor, connecting with the world at large. “If you asked people who was a U of T historian at that time, they would say, ‘Bliss,’” said Bothwell.

Canadians will also remember Bliss for his many columns in *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, addressing current affairs topics and issues of national unity and governance. “He was a beautiful writer and his columns were incisive. They got right to the heart of the question and had something wise to say about it, and there aren’t a lot of columnists who can do that,” said Shorter.

In 2011, Dundurn Press published Bliss’s memoir, *Writing History: A Professor’s Life*. “It encompasses social history, family tragedy, a critical insider’s view of university life, Canadian national politics and above all, a rare glimpse into the craftsmanship that goes into the research and writing of history in our time,” the publisher wrote. “Whether writing about pigs and millionaires, the discovery of insulin, sleazy Canadian politicians or the founders of modern medicine and brain surgery, Michael Bliss is noted for the clarity of his prose, the honesty of his opinions, and the breadth of his literary interests.”

Bliss, who received his BA from University College in 1962, gave a talk for his fellow alumni at the college in January. The UC Alumni Salon event, *Suicide and Sour Grapes: New Light on the Discovery of Insulin*, drew on discoveries at U of T’s Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. The Fisher Library is home to the manuscripts for Bliss’s books; his papers and diaries are housed at the U of T Archives. Among the many awards and accolades Bliss received was the Order of Canada. He was made a Member of The Order of Canada in 1998 and was promoted to Officer in 2013. As news of his death spread on Thursday evening, Canadians across the country took to Twitter to mourn his loss.

Hannah James, *U of T News*