

## EDITORS' NOTE NOTE DE LA RÉDACTION

I hardly believe that it's November already and that it's time for me to sit down and chat with you again. This time, I'm not quite so daunted by my blank screen. This time, I actually have a topic!

Last time, I introduced myself as an intrepid public historian. This time, I'd like to introduce myself as a slightly less intrepid part-time professor. Yes, I have a not-so-secret identity as Professor Amber Lloydlangston (sometimes, among friends and family who fail fully to appreciate the elevated and serious nature of my position, even "Professor Ambledore" or "Dramber" – such disrespect! "Tsk!" I say. Okay, no I don't. I actually like it.). Yes, when I'm lucky enough, I get to teach. And I do feel lucky when I receive a course.

Why, you may ask? Well, my motivations are many.

Heaven forbid that I should be less than completely frank with you. I accept teaching positions with alacrity for the most practical of reasons. The money is helpful because I'm remarkably skilled at spending it; opportunities to earn a little extra are never a bad thing. As well, public history is a wonderful and rewarding field but it isn't necessarily the highest paid of domains.

I also like to teach because it provides a different type of intellectual stimulation. My focus during my day job is not the same as that during my night job. I am quite manifestly feminist, teaching women's history and women's current experiences in Canadian society in the evening whereas in the day, I do Canadian peace history. There is some blurring between day job and night job, of course, but not a lot.

And I like to teach because I really enjoy the interaction with my students. I like them. I feel a particular sense of satisfaction when I know that I have taught them something that they did not know before about what I consider to be an immensely important subject.

And somehow, this term has been particularly good. Now don't get me wrong. I'm still counting down – just so you know, after this week, six more to go. But this term, I'm having more fun in the classroom than I ever have done before.

I think it's because it's taken me a frighteningly long time to adopt some new ideas and practices in my classroom. You should feel sympathy for my past students, I fear. But this year, I've tried to be much more dynamic. No more text-heavy power point slides for me! YouTube can be my friend! Students in large classes can give presentations if you only give them a format like Pecha Kucha to follow! I bet some of you are shaking your heads and thinking, "Well, duh!" (And feeling sorry for the poor

Pendant quelques jours cet automne, l'actualité a proposé deux débats à caractères historiques : la décision du gouvernement conservateur de commémorer, en 2012, le bicentenaire de la guerre anglo-américaine de 1812-1814 et le débat, au Québec, autour de la question de la place occupée par l'histoire nationale et politique dans l'enseignement public. Au-delà des clivages politiques, des confrontations épistémologiques et des positions politiques révélés par ces deux débats, ils possèdent d'indéniables qualités. En effet, pendant un certain temps, ils ont exposé sur la place publique la nature même du travail historique : celui de la critique, de la construction et du débat entourant la définition des « faits historiques ». En ce sens, l'historien français Antoine Prost identifie partiellement l'origine du débat en rappelant qu'« il est une conviction bien ancrée dans l'opinion publique, c'est qu'en histoire il y a des faits, et qu'il faut les savoir. » Il s'agit là, pour la plupart des historiens, d'un lieu commun. Toutefois, le débat sur la signification de l'histoire, en tant que connaissance socialement valable, tourne invariablement autour de ce point : est-ce la part empirique – les faits – ou méthodologique – l'esprit critique – qui doit prévaloir? Pour reprendre une seconde fois les mots de Prost, « [o]n touche ici sans doute la différence majeure entre l'enseignement et la recherche, entre l'histoire qui s'expose didactiquement et celle qui s'élabore. Dans l'enseignement, les faits sont tous faits. Dans la recherche, il faut les faire. »



*Picture taken in 1882 of the last surviving Six Nations warriors who took part in the War of 1812 / Photo prise en 1882 des guerriers survivants des Six-nations qui ont pris part à la guerre de 1812*

Également, ces deux débats ont le mérite de soulever la confusion qui existe parfois entre la notion d'histoire et celle de la mémoire. Par exemple, si la volonté du gouvernement canadien de commémorer la guerre de 1812-1814 permet de soulever auprès d'un large public de l'intérêt pour l'histoire, elle s'inscrit néanmoins dans une perspective mémorielle et il est apparu normal que des historiens de tout acabit montent au créneau pour rappeler la complexité de l'événement et, surtout, rappeler le contexte particulier de la période 1812-1814. Pierre Nora, rappelle ainsi que « [p]arce qu'elle est affective et magique,

victims in classes I have taught previously!) But for me, this year has been transformative.

I have to admit that my students may have a completely different take on my performance and whether the changes that I have tried to implement actually work. I guess that the student evaluations will give me the feedback I need – I do listen to their feedback. It's based on previous student evaluations that I have done my utmost to improve. Teaching is a learning process, too! And that, my friends, takes me to my main reason for teaching. I like to learn, to try new things, to develop my own skills and capacities. If it benefits others, then it's a win-win situation across the board!

All the best to you all until next time!

*Amber*

la mémoire ne s'accommode que de détails qui la confortent ; elle se nourrit de souvenirs flous, télescopants, globaux ou flottants, particuliers ou symboliques, sensibles à tous les transferts, écrans, censure ou projections. L'histoire, parce que opération intellectuelle et laïcisante, appelle analyse et discours critique. La mémoire installe le souvenir dans le sacré, l'histoire l'en débusque, elle prosaïse toujours. »

Pour le moment, il reste à voir quelles seront les conséquences de ces débats publics relatifs à l'histoire. Souhaitons que le *Bulletin* de la Société historique du Canada ne soit pas le seul à placer l'histoire à sa « une »!

*Martin*

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