

What's in a Name? The Gilbert Stuart Newton Plaque Error

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What's in a Name?

The Gilbert Stuart Newton Plaque Error

BRONZE PLAQUES WHICH COMMEMORATE THE PAST are mounted on buildings and cairns throughout the Atlantic Provinces. They provide information about people, sites and events which have played a role in the development of our communities. These indelible markers are visible, public texts documenting what was, and continues to be, considered important about our heritage, at least 'officially', as most of these plaques were erected by federal, provincial and municipal governments. In recent years, scholars have become interested in this practice of commemoration and its role in shaping historical identity, calling into question the way the past is presented for public consumption.² This research note will examine the 'story' behind one such act of commemoration, a plaque to the Nova Scotian painter Gilbert Stuart Newton, R.A., erected in 1952 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The erection of the plaque and the issue of the error which it contains are perhaps minor points within the broader context of the history of commemoration, regional historiography and historical revisionism, a footnote rather than the subject of a chapter. However, in setting forth details of the plaque's conception and erection and the subsequent discovery of the error — an act of micro-history — a contribution is made towards achieving a deeper understanding of the larger issues involved in historical commemoration. The focus of this research note is not so much an examination of how the plaque bespeaks the process of reconstituting or reinterpreting the past, though such issues are not ignored, but is rather an illustration of how a discrete, even minor, event in our commemoration of the past is related to a multitude of larger issues.³

On 24 October 1952, "a bronze tablet to commemorate the achievements of Gilbert Stuart Newton, R.A., erected by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada [HSMBC], was unveiled at the Nova Scotia College of Art in Halifax".⁴ The plaque's inscription reads:

- 1 This research note was first presented as a paper to The Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, 22 March 1995, Halifax, N.S.
- 2 See Ian McKay, "History and the Tourist Gaze: The Politics of Commemoration in Nova Scotia, 1935-1964", *Acadiensis*, XXII, 2 (Spring 1993). See also, C.J. Taylor, "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada", *The Canadian Historical Review*, LXIV, 1 (March 1983), pp. 3-24 and C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites* (Montreal, 1990).
- 3 This research note is intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive in its analysis of the implications of the plaque error. Whether the plaque is unique or representative is, of course, an important point. This note indirectly suggests that the plaque may, in fact, be both, depending on which aspect of the plaquing process one examines and which theoretical paradigm one brings to the analysis. However, the focus of the note is primarily the 'story' of the plaque itself.
- 4 Donald C. MacKay, "Gilbert Stuart Newton, R.A.", *Journal of Education*, 2, 2 (January 1953), pp. 42-6. Originally, the plaque was to go on the Halifax Memorial Library, but in 1952 the site was changed to the Art college. Letters from D.C. Harvey to G.W. Bryan, 2 October 1951 and 12 May 1952, D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS].

Sandra Barry, "What's in a Name? The Gilbert Stuart Newton Plaque Error", *Acadiensis*, XXV, 1 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 99-116.

Gilbert Stuart Newton 1794-1835

Born in Halifax, Newton had his first art lessons in Boston from his uncle Gilbert Stuart, painter of the George Washington portraits. Leaving for Europe in 1815 he settled in London and entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1817. He was elected to the Royal Academy in 1832. His career as a painter of genre and portraits was effectively ended in 1833 by insanity and he died in London of consumption two years later. A friend of the American writer Washington Irving and the Anglo-American painter Charles Robert Leslie, he was the subject of Israel Zangwill's novel *The Master* (1895).⁵

The brief announcement of the event in the *Halifax Mail Star* stated that "Rev. James W. Falconer, Professor Emeritus of Pine Hill Divinity Hall and President of the Board of Directors of the Art College", did the unveiling honours, and "Dr. Donald C. MacKay, Principal of the Nova Scotia College of Art, gave a brief and interesting account of the artist's life".⁶ Dr. MacKay commenced his speech by noting the significance of the artist and the purpose of the plaque:

We have gathered to honour the memory of a man who brought distinction to his native province. Although he spent only a few years of his short life here, he always described himself as a Nova Scotian. His eminence in the arts was internationally recognized during his lifetime. While the inscription on the bronze tablet states only the barest of facts, it should stimulate our curiosity about the man and his accomplishments.⁷

The other dignitary presiding at the ceremony was Dr. Daniel Cobb Harvey, Provincial Archivist and member of the HSMBC, acting on this occasion as official representative of the latter body. In a letter to G. W. Bryan, his Ottawa contact, regarding the Newton plaque,⁸ Harvey described the event: "The weather was favourable up to 15 minutes before the ceremony started but as rain then set in we had to hold the ceremony within the building except for the actual unveiling".⁹ He stated that about 100 people had attended and observed, "I suppose, as these things go, [it] can be regarded as successful". Harvey sent Bryan the programme and a clipping from the *Mail Star*, continuing, "Although the *Mail Star* took a

5 Transcribed from the actual plaque located on the School of Business Administration building, Dalhousie University, on the corner of Coburg Road and LeMarchant St., Halifax, N.S. The plaque also contains the same inscription in French.

6 *Mail Star* (Halifax), 25 October 1952, p. 12.

7 MacKay, "Gilbert Stuart Newton", p. 43.

8 Most of Harvey's correspondence on the Newton plaque was with G.W. Bryan and Col. C.G. Childe, at the National Parks and Historic Sites Services, National Parks Branch, Department of Resources and Development in Ottawa.

9 Letter from Harvey to Bryan, 27 October, D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS.

picture of the ceremony it seems to have been crowded out by the elaborate celebrations at Dalhousie over the Law School".¹⁰

Harvey's account of the event appears remarkably brief in light of the amount of time and effort spent in research and promotion, which culminated in this ceremony. Plans to erect a plaque in Newton's honour had been initiated as early as 1944. In that year, the recommendation to honour Newton was passed by the HSMBC, the resolution stating, "Moved by Professor Harvey, Seconded by Mr. [W.D.] Cromarty. That the name of Gilbert Stuart Newton be included in the list of distinguished Canadians whose birthplaces are to be marked".¹¹ However, for a variety of reasons, including delays in gaining approval for the inscription, difficulties in selecting an appropriate site (it was not known exactly where in Halifax Gilbert Stuart Newton was born) and logistical problems, the plaque was not erected until eight years later. Dr. Harvey was principally involved in all the various stages of the process.

An exchange between Bryan and Harvey in mid-October 1952 reveals the nature of the frustrations which attended this commemoration. On 16 October, Bryan wrote to Harvey, "I should be very much obliged if you would let me know if a definite date has been decided upon for the unveiling of the Gilbert Stuart Newton tablet".¹² Bryan informed Harvey that, "The tablet was forwarded last month to Major Borrett, on the understanding that he would have it placed in position on the Nova Scotia College of Arts [*sic*] building...a few days prior to the ceremony, in order to give the cement a chance to dry".¹³ On 20 October, Harvey pointedly replied,

I have just received word that the Gilbert Stuart Newton tablet is in place on the Nova Scotia College of Art, and I am arranging for the unveiling ceremony to take place next Friday....As you know, there has been a hitch in the proceedings owing first to the fact that the lugs were not sent down with the tablet, and secondly to the fact that some repair work had to be done on the corner of the building where the tablet was to be erected.¹⁴

Even when the plaque was firmly cemented into place its difficulties did not end. In 1957 the Nova Scotia College of Art moved from its Argyle-George Street

10 On 24 October 1952, the Dalhousie University Law School held "special ceremonies" marking its occupation of a new Law Building, now the Dalhousie University Faculty Club. The 12 hour celebration included special convocation, symposium, dinner, lectures, etc., *Mail Star*, 25 October 1951, p. 1.

11 Letter to author from Lawrence Friend, Executive Secretary, HSMBC, 18 July 1994. A letter from W.D. Cromarty to D.C. Harvey, 26 June 1945, shows that the HSMBC was then considering the proposed inscription. The inscription was confirmed and approved in 1946. Letter from C.G. Childe to D.C. Harvey, 22 November 1951, D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS.

12 Letter from Bryan to Harvey, 16 October 1952, D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS.

13 Major William Coates Borrett, V.D., whose work with the CBC and historical writings (such as *Tales Under the Old Town Clock*) had made him an influential man in Halifax, was Honourary Superintendent at the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site.

14 Letter from Harvey to Bryan, 20 October 1952, D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS.

premises to the renovated St. Andrews building on the southeast corner of Coburg Road and LeMarchant Street.¹⁵ The plaque was transferred to this building where it remains today, even though the College moved again in the 1970s to its present location in Historic Properties.¹⁶ The plaque (a recast version of the original)¹⁷ now incongruously adorns the School of Business Administration of Dalhousie University.

One might hope that after such a peripatetic existence the plaque would be left to hang in peace. Recently, however, a problem was discovered in the content of the inscription. The commemorative text contains an error. Gilbert Stuart Newton is not the subject of Israel Zangwill's novel *The Master*.¹⁸ Such a mistake does not alter the course of history or reduce the importance of the honouree. The error nevertheless speaks to issues of accuracy, reliability and fallibility in the presentation of our history for popular consumption. This observation is not meant to imply that the error was deliberately perpetrated, but rather to recognize that an error has been cast in bronze and proffered as fact. As a result, a disservice is done not only to Newton and Zangwill, but also to the actual subject of *The Master*, the painter George Wylie Hutchinson.

Credit for the discovery of the error goes to Dr. Lillian Falk, retired professor of English at Saint Mary's University. The plaque, in this instance, achieved what Dr. MacKay suggested it should, namely, to "stimulate our curiosity about the man and his accomplishments". Familiar with Zangwill's reputation, Dr. Falk was intrigued by the connection between Newton and Zangwill,¹⁹ and began to investigate the alleged link. It became increasingly apparent, as her investigation proceeded, that while *The Master* embodied some details paralleling Newton's biography, the text substantially diverged from the painter's life experience. In a paper presented to the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association in November 1993, Dr. Falk explained:

It is true that Matt's [the novel's protagonist] career resembles Newton's in its general outline, yet certain difficulties remain. The action of the novel is placed in Zangwill's own time, not in Newton's, the hero's home is Cobequid Village, not Halifax. As an artist the hero rebels against convention, whereas Newton followed the classical tradition of his time. In addition, even if some impulse did cause Zangwill to become interested in Newton, he would still need material for describing the place, the people,

15 *Mail Star*, 12 January 1957, p. 3; James Davies, "A Brief History", in *Rehoused in History: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design* (Halifax, [1979]), p. 7.

16 *Mail Star*, 5 June 1973, pp. 1 and 8; Davies, "A Brief History", p. 18.

17 The new plaque was installed on 15 June 1976. Letter to author from Eloi DeGrâce, Ceremonies Coordinator, Canadian Heritage, External relations, Halifax, N.S., 27 February 1995.

18 Israel Zangwill, *The Master* (London, 1895).

19 For an account of Dr. Falk's investigation of the Gilbert Stuart Newton plaque, see Renee Field, "Tracking down a Nova Scotia mystery", *Saint Mary's Times*, 24, 3 (December 1994), p. 10.

and their speech.²⁰

As Dr. Falk notes, in 1894, when the novel was first published in serial form, Zangwill had never been to North America, let alone Nova Scotia.

A trip to the Public Archives of Nova Scotia led to the solution of this literary-historical mystery. There Dr. Falk discovered a copy of the second edition of *The Master*, donated to the Archives in 1962 by Mr. D.C. Johnson of Halifax. The then Assistant Archivist, Phyllis Blakeley, had inscribed the following note on the flyleaf of the book: "Dr. D.C. Harvey says this is based on the life of Gilbert Stuart Newton. Mr. Johnson says he heard it was about a Hutchinson from Wolfville. The first part is about Economy".²¹ The crucial connection had been made. Upon investigating further, Dr. Falk discovered that the only Hutchinson painter documented was one George Hutchinson from Great Village, Nova Scotia, a name which her own files on Israel Zangwill contained. Undoubtedly, he was the same George Hutchinson who had illustrated many of Zangwill's stories during the 1890s and who was acknowledged in Zangwill's 1894 collection, *The King of Schnorrers*, as "my old friend George Hutchinson".²²

Dr. Falk presented her findings in a paper which examines the "words and expressions" Zangwill used in *The Master*. She suggests that Zangwill "relied in part on literary works" to accomplish his accurate rendition of Nova Scotian dialect and idiom. She also suggests that Zangwill must have relied "in part on personal contact" in developing the expressive dialogue and minute description which characterize the Nova Scotia sections of the novel, personal contact with his illustrator and friend George Hutchinson. As she concludes,

It is likely...that [Zangwill]...obtained a good deal of his knowledge from someone intimately acquainted with Nova Scotia, someone who was capable, observant, and gifted with a sense of humour, and that the book is a product of collaboration between the two friends.²³

Dr. Falk then began to research Hutchinson's life, uncovering facts about his career in England and about his personal and professional relationship with Zangwill, strengthening with each discovery her theory that Hutchinson was not only the subject of, but also the author's collaborator on, *The Master*. My research on the life of George Hutchinson, although conducted from a different perspective, confirmed these conclusions. The story of Hutchinson's family and Nova Scotia childhood finds a direct and resonant echo in the experiences of the novel's

20 Lillian Falk, "A Nineteenth Century Literary Representation of Nova Scotia Dialect", in Margaret Harry, ed., *Papers from the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association* (Halifax, 1993), p. 34.

21 The only other copy of *The Master* which is known to be publicly available in Halifax is held at the Killam Library, Dalhousie University.

22 Israel Zangwill, *The King of Schnorrers: Grotesques and Fantasies* (London, 1894), p. v.

23 Falk, "A Nineteenth Century Literary Representation", p. 38.

protagonist.²⁴ When a comparison between life and art is made, in this instance, what becomes apparent is that nearly every fact thus far discovered about George Hutchinson is incorporated in some manner into the novel. Thus, *The Master* is not just a story loosely based on Hutchinson's life, but is also a complex exploration of that life within the context of larger cultural, psycho-historical and aesthetic issues.

How is it that historian and archivist D.C. Harvey and artist and art historian D.C. MacKay, having researched Newton's life in primary source materials, could make such an error, while D.C. Johnson was essentially correct about the novel's origin? Both Harvey's and MacKay's research notes on the Newton plaque exist, at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and Dalhousie University Archives, respectively.²⁵ In his capacity as Nova Scotia representative on the HSMBC, Harvey was responsible for proposing "sites, structures, events or persons [which] should be commemorated" in the province and for "the work of composing suitable [plaque] inscriptions".²⁶ It is obvious from Harvey's file on the Newton plaque that he had done his own research on the painter.²⁷ Unfortunately, neither Harvey's nor MacKay's files reveal who suggested the commemoration idea. More frustrating, neither file reveals the basis for linking the early 19th-century painter to the late-19th-century novel.

Harvey's file shows that he consulted a variety of standard reference sources (such as *The Dictionary of National Biography*), early newspaper accounts and other documents, including a profile of the painter compiled by his great-grand-niece, Florence Seeley Knowles,²⁸ to develop a fairly comprehensive understanding of Newton's life and career. Harvey was also familiar with Harry Piers' 1914 essay, "Artists in Nova Scotia", in which Piers claimed that Newton "was unquestionably the greatest artist Nova Scotia has ever produced", but disqualified

24 My research into George Hutchinson's life was begun as part of a larger project to document the Nova Scotian connections of the American-born poet Elizabeth Bishop. Hutchinson was Bishop's maternal great-uncle. The convergence of my efforts with Dr. Falk's has proved exciting and beneficial for both of us and has allowed us to expand on our researches more quickly and fruitfully than might otherwise have been possible. I thank Dr. Falk for sharing her information with me.

25 Harvey's in MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS; MacKay's in MS-2-280, P-141, Dalhousie University Archives [DUA].

26 M.H. Long, "The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada", *The Canadian Historical Association Report* (1954), p. 6.

27 Though no evidence is extant to the contrary, it seems unlikely, given Harvey's agenda as a professional historian, that he had originally conceived the idea to commemorate Newton. Harvey's area of expertise was the French régime and British imperial history. He published dozens of articles about early settlement in Atlantic Canada and several books on the subject, including, *The French Régime in Prince Edward Island* (New Haven, 1926) and *The Colonization of Canada* (Toronto, 1936). It seems more likely that the idea could have come from Principal MacKay.

28 It is possible that Seeley Knowles was responsible for planting the seed in Harvey's mind. In her sketch she declares: "Surely Nova Scotia must be proud of her gifted son, and can anyone say that there is no Art belonging exclusively to this Province?" D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS. As the sketch is undated, however, it is impossible to know exactly when Harvey first saw it.

him for further study because "all of his work was done abroad".²⁹ Perusing Harvey's notes in the file, the reader's attention is caught by the line, "Newton appears in standard biographies...and is the subject of Israel Zangwill's *The Master*",³⁰ followed immediately by the observation, "He seems to be a distinguished Canadian whose birthplace should be marked". It is not clear whether Harvey read the entire novel, but it appears that he did make some study of *The Master*, as the file also contains several typed and handwritten extracts from its pages.

Principal MacKay's file on the Newton plaque includes similar working materials, which appear to have been created for the purpose of writing the speech he delivered at the unveiling ceremonies in 1952.³¹ Like Harvey, MacKay used both primary and secondary sources to develop an account of Newton's life, the focus being his career, aesthetics and paintings. And once again, mysteriously disembodied amid some handwritten scribbles floats the line, "Israel Zangwill's novel — 'The Master'".³² The novel is mentioned nowhere else in the file, except, of course, in the drafts and final version of the speech itself.

Moreover, evidence suggests that, in later years, MacKay may have begun to have some doubts about the legitimacy of the Zangwill connection. He spent years collecting information about Nova Scotia artists for his compendium "Portraits of a Province, Artists and their Pictures in Nova Scotia, 1605-1945".³³ In the section on Newton, MacKay stated: "Israel Zangwill's novel *The Master* is said to have been inspired by Newton's life but it bears no relation to his career".³⁴ This was surely a much more qualified statement than that in the plaque inscription. It is unclear whether MacKay had any knowledge of George Hutchinson at the time he wrote the 1952 speech. He did include a very brief reference to Hutchinson in "Portraits of a Province",³⁵ but the source of his information appears to have been the 1970 compendium, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada*, by J. Russell Harper.³⁶

29 Harry Piers, "Artists in Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Historical Society *Collections*, XVIII (1914), p. 145.

30 D.C. Harvey fonds, MG 1, Box 1793, no. 9, PANS.

31 The file contains multiple drafts of this speech and several copies of the final version published in the *Journal of Education*.

32 D.C. MacKay fonds, MS-2-280, P-141, DUA.

33 Information from this work comes from the unpublished, undated typescript copy at PANS. Although MacKay spent years compiling this compendium, it appears that the typescript post-dates the Newton speech and may date as late as the early 1970s.

34 MacKay, "Portraits of a Province", p. 287. It must be remembered that, at least in 1962, Dr. Harvey still believed that *The Master* was about Newton.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 199. MacKay wrote of Hutchinson: "Painter, born in Great Village, N.S. As a youth executed a portrait of Hon. Jonathan McCully on a shingle. Studied at Royal Academy School, London for three years. In 1885 awarded prizes for best set of three drawings from life at R.A." Hutchinson does not have a file among the hundreds MacKay compiled of painters in the province. See D.C. MacKay fonds, DUA.

36 J. Russell Harper, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (Toronto, 1970), p. 168. In the entry on Hutchinson in Harper (p. 168), the sources are listed as, "Morgan, H.J. DAR 1885". In MacKay's

Whichever of them was responsible for the commemoration idea, Harvey and MacKay were convinced of its validity. And, certainly, the decision to erect a HSMBC plaque honouring one of British North America's most distinguished and successful painters was a laudable one, especially considering that artists were rarely marked for such acknowledgement.³⁷ What is unfortunate about this otherwise commendable choice is that of all the many documented facts which Harvey could have selected for inclusion in the inscription,³⁸ he chose to memorialize a purely speculative connection. The only argument which could be made to link Newton to the novel's protagonist was tenuous, at best: the novel was written about a Nova Scotian painter who went to England; the only native Nova Scotian painter whose life seemed to fit the novel's framework was Gilbert Stuart Newton, who just happened to be Nova Scotia's most famous painter; *ergo*, the novel was about Newton. Any incongruities between life and art could easily be attributed to the fact that, after all, *The Master* was a novel. Once the Newtonian identification took hold in the imagination of these scholars, it became historical fact, inscribed on a bronze plaque.

Yet if the plaque error had not been made, Dr. Falk's curiosity would not have been piqued and her discoveries would, perhaps, not have been made. These discoveries have opened up a number of exciting possibilities for adding to the knowledge of Nova Scotia's literary and artistic history. They have, for example, renewed interest in Zangwill's Nova Scotian 'non-fiction' novel, not only as an important and unique work in his own canon, but also as a valuable literary and historical document about the province.³⁹ Dr. Falk's discoveries have also fundamentally contributed to the process of reclaiming George Hutchinson as an important Nova Scotian artist.

D.C. Johnson's claim about *The Master's* subject identified for later researchers an alternative local tradition concerning this neglected late-Victorian biographical novel and its explicit Nova Scotian setting. Whether Harvey or MacKay encountered this alternative tradition in their research is unknown. If they did, it certainly did not influence the inferences which they drew in their determined effort to plaque the more famous expatriate artist, Gilbert Stuart Newton. George Hutchinson (1852-*ca.*1937) was the maternal great-uncle of the American-born poet Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979). During her early childhood Bishop lived

entry on Hutchinson, the sources are listed as, "Morgan, H.J., DAR 1885, Harper 1970". Both men used *The Dominion Annual Register, 1885* (Toronto, 1886), p. 356, which was edited by H.J. Morgan. Harper repeats the Newton-Zangwill connection in his entry on Newton (p. 237). If he had seen MacKay's more qualified "Portraits" statement about the Newton-Zangwill connection perhaps Harper would not have asserted the connection so definitely.

37 Of the 477 sites marked by the HSMB by 1954, most fell "into particular categories: pre-historic sites, Indian forts, French memorials, Loyalist landing places and landmarks of immigration from the British Isles", a pattern which "emphasized a particular view of Canada as a British dominion". Taylor, "Some Early Problems", p. 9. Painters, poets, novelists and other artists rarely received recognition in the early years of the Board's activities. One notable exception was, of course, the poet Oliver Goldsmith, whose commemoration was approved in 1945.

38 Facts concerning Newton's distinguished Nova Scotia ancestry, his probable brief tutelage under Robert Field, or his connection with Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Moore.

39 For a discussion of the current state of literary history in Canada, see Graham Carr, "Literary History: Convergence or Resistance?" *Acadiensis*, XXIII, 1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 159-79.

intermittently in Great Village, Nova Scotia, with her maternal grandparents, William Brown Bulmer and Elizabeth Hutchinson Bulmer, the latter being George Hutchinson's sister. Several of Hutchinson's paintings hung in the Bulmer family home⁴⁰ and Bishop heard stories about him when she was a child. Hutchinson's life and work had a direct impact on the poet, two of whose major poems ("Large Bad Picture" and "Poem") take their inspiration from Hutchinson paintings. In a 1972 letter to her maternal aunt, Grace Bulmer Bowers (George Hutchinson's niece), Bishop wrote,

I got Frank [Bidart] to look for an Israel Zangwill book for me when I was sick — in the Harvard Library — one that is supposed to be based on...Great-Uncle George's Life. I've always meant to read it....(They were great friends, I was told long ago.)⁴¹

In 1896 George Hutchinson, who had been living in England for more than 20 years, returned home to Nova Scotia and spent nearly a year in Great Village painting and giving art lessons there and in Truro, the neighbouring shiretown. During the period of his residence, the *Truro Daily News* printed a review of *The Master*, which had been published in London the year before.⁴² Book reviews were highly unusual in this newspaper, which focused on local, provincial, national and international 'newsworthy' events. Hutchinson's presence in Great Village and the simultaneous publication of the review suggest that the family, and others, knew about the book and its connection with the expatriate painter. The reviewer did not make the connection between George Hutchinson and Matt Strang (at least not publicly), but instead dwelt on the fact that part of the setting of the novel was local: "*The Master*...has peculiar interest to us, as many of the scenes and incidents of the story, are laid in Five Islands, Economy, Great Village, Folly [Village: Glenholme], Truro, Halifax, Annapolis and other places in Nova Scotia".⁴³ A brief outline of Zangwill's career was given and a synopsis of the story's plot rendered. The reviewer concluded:

40 In fact, Hutchinson paintings can be found throughout the province. In 1896, for example, Hutchinson was commissioned to do a portrait of Joseph Howe for the Normal School in Truro, N.S. The painting still hung in the Board Room of the Nova Scotia Teachers' College in 1994. Descendants of the Hutchinson-Bulmer family still own numerous Hutchinson paintings. The Nova Scotia Museum holds in its history collection a painting which is attributed to George Hutchinson. It is a small portrait (head and shoulders) of Gloud Wilson McLelan (1796-1858), a member of the Legislative Assembly (ref. NSM 79.11.4). The Joseph Howe portrait was done from a photograph. The McLelan portrait was likely done from another portrait; but ferrotype photography had reached the Canadian market from Europe by 1857, so it is possible that McLelan had a "ferrotype" or "tintype" photograph done. Philippe Maurice, "Snippets of History: The Tintype and Prairie Canada", *Material History Review*, 41 (Spring 1995), p. 41.

41 Elizabeth Bishop to Grace Bulmer Bowers, 22 February 1972, Elizabeth Bishop Papers, Series I, no. 26.1, Vassar College Libraries Special Collections (VCLSpColl), Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

42 The novel had originally been serialized in Jerome K. Jerome's literary journal *To-day*, from May to November, 1894, and, simultaneously, in *Harper's Weekly*. The novel appeared in book form in 1895. Joseph H. Udelson, *Dreamer of the Ghetto: The Life and Works of Israel Zangwill* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1990), pp. 123 and 273.

43 *Truro Daily News*, 17 November 1896, p. 2.

The pages of the book are filled with humour and well-aimed sarcasm. Some of the author's local "hits," as Nova Scotians, we might prefer to have been omitted, and we do not believe ours is a "land of milk and molasses" alone....But there is not much to criticize — and every page of "The Master" has the imprint of an original and brilliant genius.⁴⁴

Interestingly, the reviewer did not express any surprise or curiosity about how an Anglo-Jewish novelist had written so accurately about Nova Scotia (his "brilliant genius" aside), undoubtedly because he or she knew that Zangwill had had help in formulating his colourful portrait of the province and its people. Evidence of this knowledge exists in a letter Hutchinson wrote to Zangwill shortly after his return to Great Village: "Here I am, once more in Mat [*sic*] Strang's native place...I have met several people who have read the book and they all speak most highly of it. My sister's family are greedily devouring it in turn".⁴⁵

Unquestionably, knowledge of the true connection existed from the beginning and was passed through the generations. Elizabeth Bishop acquired it as part of the oral tradition in her mother's family. D.C. Johnson also heard it from someone. When Dr. Falk examined the novel in light of the alleged connection between its protagonist and Newton, she questioned "how a man born in Whitechapel, London, in 1864, who never travelled to North America until several years after he published *The Master*, could write with such authority and detail about Nova Scotian life".⁴⁶ Furthermore, why would this cosmopolitan British Jew choose to base a novel on the long-dead Newton, and yet alter the plot and characterization so fundamentally that the story bore only the most superficial resemblance to his subject? Zangwill himself did not make matters easy. In 1924, for example, when addressing the Canadian Club of Toronto, he stated: "Canada figures in several of my books and in *The Master* the story begins in Nova Scotia. I have never been in Nova Scotia and people sometimes say, 'How do you do it?' Well, how did Dante describe hell?"⁴⁷ Certainly, Harvey and MacKay would have received no help from the author's comments regarding this subject.⁴⁸

Harvey and MacKay might, however, have been aware of other sources, readily available to them, which provide further evidence that an alternative tradition about *The Master* existed. In 1906 the author and critic Archibald MacMechan

44 *Ibid.*

45 George Hutchinson to Israel Zangwill, 30 May 1896, Zangwill Papers, File #A120, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem Israel. My thanks to Dr. Falk for bringing this letter to my attention.

46 Field, "Tracking down a Nova Scotia Mystery", p. 10.

47 Israel Zangwill, "Some American Impressions", *Addresses Delivered before the Canadian Club of Toronto* (Toronto, 1924), p. 207. I thank Dr. Falk for bringing this reference to my attention. By 1924 Zangwill and Hutchinson appear to have gone in different directions. During the late 1890s and the early decades of the 20th century, Zangwill was occupied with Zionist activities. By the 1920s his passion had become the theatre and he spent a great deal of time writing plays. By the 1910s and 1920s, Hutchinson appears to have been living in retirement in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. Zangwill died in 1926 after a period of hospitalization for a mental breakdown.

48 There are no references to Zangwill's remarks in either Harvey's or MacKay's files. In fact, neither scholar appears to have sought out much information about the author of *The Master*.

(1862-1933) unequivocally identified "The Master" is an article published in *Acadiensis*: "His prototype is George Hutchinson, a Folly Village boy, whose Father was master of a small vessel and was lost at sea".⁴⁹ Another source was an article by Asa James Crockett (1870-1966), a Judge of the Juvenile Court of Pictou County and an amateur historian and folklorist. In 1927 *The Dalhousie Review* published his "My Invisible Nova Scotia Library", in which the judge states, "What thoughts and questionings arise as I turn to *The Master*, that extraordinary book of I. Zangwill's — a book that fascinates one so much".⁵⁰ Like Dr. Falk so many years later, Crockett asks, "How did Zangwill ever come to know so much and so intimately about the life and aspirations of a Nova Scotia boy from the marshes of Masstown? Was he ever there, or did someone tell him, or did he read endless diaries, journals and letters detailing the struggles of that generation?" Crockett dismisses the latter possibility, "But where are such letters? The struggle [to survive in mid-19th century Nova Scotia] was too absorbing to afford much leisure to write, and the literary remains are consequently few".⁵¹ Crockett correctly identifies the locale of the protagonist's childhood; he knew that the French had called this area in Colchester County, especially around Masstown, Cobequid Village, the name Zangwill chose in the novel.⁵² Crockett's conclusion as to how Zangwill managed his feat of so accurately rendering Nova Scotia and the protagonist's life reveals that the judge was aware of the oral tradition which surrounded the novel: "I am told that the Nova Scotia boy with his yearning to express himself in the art of painting became one day a great painter in London, and spent a week with the famous author in a house-boat on the Thames, and that *The Master* is the result".⁵³ Dr. Falk's collaboration theory had an early precedent, though at the time she offered her theory Crockett's article was unknown to her. In fact, Crockett was so sure of the collaboration he continues, "Those with the instincts of the higher critic, after an examination of the style, confidently point out what portions were written by the artist and what was the work of the brilliant literary genius".⁵⁴

In the Asa Crockett fonds at PANS there is a file containing an undated, unfinished holograph manuscript about *The Master*, a critical assessment of the novel and its connection to Nova Scotia.⁵⁵ Neither in the manuscript nor in *The*

49 Archibald MacMechan, "Halifax in Books", *Acadiensis*, VI, 3 (July 1906), p. 215.

50 A.J. Crockett, "My Invisible Nova Scotia Library", *The Dalhousie Review*, VI, 4 (January 1927), p. 505.

51 *Ibid.*

52 "The name given to Great Village by the French was Cobequid, and this included, as well, all the country along the North Shore of the Bay....There were at this time also settlements along the South side of the Cobequids, and all gathered on Sundays at Masstown, then the leading, or shiretown for Chapel service. Masstown was then called Cobequid Village". *Truro Daily News*, 19 October 1900, p. 2.

53 Crockett, "My Invisible Nova Scotia Library", pp. 505-6.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 506.

55 Asa James Crockett fonds, MG 1, Vol. 994, no. 48, PANS. In this manuscript Crockett states that the novel was set in a time "roughly about 100 years ago [1860s]" (Part II, p. 3); thus, the manuscript probably dates from the early 1960s. It must be made clear that Asa Crockett's papers

Dalhousie Review article does Crockett name the "Nova Scotia boy", but it is obvious that he was not describing Gilbert Stuart Newton, who could not have spent a week in a house-boat on the Thames with Zangwill. Moreover, in the *Review* article Crockett notes: "You may still find in Nova Scotia homes portraits the proud possessors of which will inform you that *there* is a work of the artist whose boyhood and youth are depicted so realistically in this Nova Scotia romance".⁵⁶ This statement implies not only that Crockett did know who the "Nova Scotia boy" was, but also that, if the true identity of 'The Master' was not exactly common knowledge, it was known by a variety of people. Certainly George Hutchinson's paintings were to be found scattered throughout the province.

In his unpublished manuscript about the novel, Crockett recounts how he "became acquainted with the book...many years since...when a group of young people...sat around the ample fireplace in Mr. George B. Layton's house in New Glasgow".⁵⁷ On the wall over the fireplace "was the portrait of a man in his youth....it was a great attraction". Crockett recalled that upon inquiry, Layton "told us the story of the painting", a memento which he had brought with him from Great Village. According to Layton, "a youth of Great Village or its vicinity who had a passion for the drawing of pictures and the painting of portraits" went to London where he became "acquainted with the people of the artistic and literary groups of that large and wealthy city. Among these new friends [was] ...I. Zangwill". As Crockett records, Layton continued, "The two men had something in common and exchanged experiences and Z[angwill] learned about his life...and was impressed....He considered...a story based on those experiences could be a...success".⁵⁸ And so the story proceeded to the houseboat on the Thames and the collaboration. Clearly, a local tradition existed about *The Master* and was still vibrant well into the 20th century.⁵⁹

Neither Harvey nor MacKay was a literary historian and their primary concern was with the public commemoration of a great Nova Scotian artist rather than with correctly identifying the artist-prototype of *The Master*. However, that Harvey and MacKay used the novel as supporting evidence of Newton's importance implies that they believed not only that they had correctly identified the protagonist but that *The Master* held significance not only for Newton but also more broadly

were not available to Harvey or MacKay as they were not deposited at PANS until after Crockett's death in 1966. However, *The Dalhousie Review* article was available.

56 Crockett, "My Invisible Nova Scotia Library", p. 506.

57 Crockett, "The Master", Part I, p. 2. George Boardman Layton, a New Glasgow merchant, was born in Great Village, the son of Ezra Layton and his second wife Margaret Newcombe.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

59 Crockett also had interesting indirect links with the Hutchinson family. He was a graduate of Acadia University (1892, 1919) and continued to have close ties with the University until his death, serving on the Senate and Board of Governors for many years. Both of George Hutchinson's brothers, John Robert and William Bernard Hutchinson were also graduates of Acadia, William Bernard being the first Acadia graduate to serve as President of the University from 1907 to 1909. Crockett and William Bernard Hutchinson were also alumni of Rochester Theological Seminary in New York State. These connections may have been enough to give Crockett personal knowledge of the Hutchinson family; after all, he wrote the *Review* article when George Hutchinson was very much alive. Watson Kirkconnell, comp., *Acadia Record, 1838-1953* (Wolfville, 1953), pp. 30, 33-4 and 44-5. John Robert Hutchinson's son, Wallace Irving, also graduated from Acadia, p. 73.

within the context of Nova Scotia's literary and art history.⁶⁰ Otherwise, why include it at all in the plaque's text? One can hardly criticize Harvey and MacKay for ignoring someone of whom they were probably unaware (Hutchinson) at the time of the plaque's erection. Yet, evidence existed at the time, both in an established oral tradition and in published articles, which was directly contrary to their speculative assumption about the identity of Zangwill's hero. Moreover, the most significant evidence contrary to their assumption, the divergences between the novel and Newton's life, appears not to have troubled Harvey or MacKay at all.

The fact that Newton was chosen for commemoration is not so puzzling, though it, too, speaks to some idiosyncrasies in the minds of those involved in the selection. While literary and artistic personages were not absent from early HSMBC commemorations (in fact, on 16 January 1952, the Board had unveiled a plaque to the painter Maurice Galbraith Cullen, in St. John's, Newfoundland),⁶¹ such figures did not comprise even a large minority of commemoration selections.⁶² What made Newton most appealing (especially considering he had never worked professionally in Nova Scotia, nor, apparently, ever returned to the province during adulthood) was his pedigree. D.C. MacKay explained:

His father's family, the Newtons, came to Annapolis Royal with the first English-speaking settlers of Nova Scotia and at an early date rose to eminence in the province. In Halifax his uncle, John Newton, built the fine old house "Groveside" in the west end of the city. The Hon. Henry Newton, father of the artist, was Collector of His Majesty's Customs at Liverpool and later at Halifax. His aunt married the Hon. Jonathan Binney and their son, the Hon. Hibbert Newton Binney, Collector of Excise, was a prominent figure in the life of the province and a rather talented amateur artist as well. Elizabeth, daughter of a third brother, Captain Philip Newton of the 40th Regiment, married Richard John Uniacke.⁶³

Gilbert Stuart Newton's life and career proceeded in a manner in keeping with his lineage. When he was eight years old his father (who had been a member of the Council for 40 years) died⁶⁴ and his mother, Ann Stuart Newton⁶⁵, took her family

60 There is no indication in Harvey's or MacKay's files on the Newton plaque that they were aware of Crockett's article.

61 "National Historic Parks and Sites, 1952-53, by the National Parks Service, Lands and Development Branch, Department of Mines and Resources", *Canadian Historical Association Report* (1953), p. 92.

62 Other Maritime plaques or monuments erected in 1952 commemorated: the Alcock-Brown Transatlantic Flight; Scots Fort, Port Royal National Historic Park; George Munro Grant; The Pony Express, Victoria Beach, N.S.; and John Clarence Webster, *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3.

63 MacKay, "Gilbert Stuart Newton", p. 43.

64 MacKay states that the Hon. Henry Newton died in 1803, when actually he died in 1802, *Ibid.*, p. 44.

65 Anne Stuart Newton was the daughter of Gilbert Stuart, Sr., "who came from Newport, Rhode Island, to Nova Scotia, at the commencement of the American Revolution. It is recorded that Stuart

to Massachusetts where Newton trained with his maternal uncle and namesake Gilbert Stuart, Jr.⁶⁶ In spite of Newton's almost life-long absence from Nova Scotia, the contemporary press often carried notices of his career, announced his marriage⁶⁷ and recorded his death,⁶⁸ undoubtedly because his paternal family remained prominent in the social, cultural and political life of the province. In England Newton lived and worked among the aristocracy and was well received in both artistic and social circles. He was favourably compared to painters such as Hogarth and Sir David Wilkie and his paintings were commissioned by such notables as the Duke of Bedford and the Marquis of Lansdowne. In 1829 he was made an Associate of the Royal Academy and in 1832 he was elected an Academician. In the same year he returned briefly to the United States where he married Sally Sullivan, daughter of the Hon. William Sullivan of Boston. In 1833, "Newton was stricken with a mental disorder and for many months was confined in an institution in Chelsea".⁶⁹ He died of consumption in 1835. It was this élite Anglo-American quality of Newton's background and affiliation which made him particularly attractive to the imperialist historian Harvey, who suggested Newton's commemoration to the HSMBC, the plaquing practices of which suggest an imperial-oriented bias of its own.

Zangwill's novel presents a very different picture of the "Artist". *The Master* opens with a dream sequence. Young Matt Strang, an aspiring painter whose family lives a hand-to-mouth existence on a farm in Cobequid Village, is dreaming about a "muddin frolic" he has recently attended. His fantasy is interrupted by a series of people and events culminating in the arrival of news that his father, David Strang, a mariner, has been shipwrecked and is drowned, a tragedy which haunts the artist for the rest of his life. David Strang is shipwrecked while running a Union Blockade during the American Civil War; thus the novel begins sometime during the early 1860s. The rural poverty of the family, Matt's difficult and often bitter struggle to achieve his artistic dreams in both Nova Scotia and England, and the deep and abiding influence of his family and childhood home on his work, do not accord with Newton's experience, which bears the mark of urbane-urban wealth and privilege from his earliest years. These elements, however, resonate with particular significance in George Hutchinson's life. Hutchinson's father, Robert Hutchinson, a master mariner, was shipwrecked off Sable Island sometime in the mid- or late-1860s.⁷⁰ At the time of Robert Hutchinson's death the family lived in Folly Village (now Glenholme), the community adjacent to Great Village, on a small subsistence

operated a snuff mill on Camp Hill until his death in 1793", *Ibid.*, p. 43.

66 Gilbert Stuart Jr. himself spent time in London where he was very successful and this later helped open doors for his nephew.

67 *Novascotian* (Halifax), 22 November 1832, p. 375.

68 *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), 24 October 1835, p. 3.

69 MacKay, "Gilbert Stuart Newton", p. 45.

70 This information comes from an autobiographical sketch written by Elizabeth Bishop which drew on the oral tradition in her maternal family. Some discrepancy exists as to where Robert Hutchinson's ship actually went down, as Cape Sable Island is also mentioned in the family oral history. The name of his ship is unknown. Elizabeth Bishop, [Autobiographical Sketch], Elizabeth Bishop Papers, Series IV, no. 53.13, VCLSpColl.

farm.⁷¹

George Hutchinson removed to England in the early 1870s. He studied at the Royal Academy from 1880 to 1885, winning a first prize in an Academy competition in the latter year; but he was never elected a member. While he painted all his life, Hutchinson did not achieve the fame of Newton. The late 1880s and 1890s, when he worked as a cartoonist and illustrator, appear to mark the height of his career. He illustrated for several magazines in London, including *Ariel* and *The Idler* — stories by such writers as Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, Hall Caine and, of course, Zangwill.⁷² He drew cartoons for the *Illustrated London News*. Hutchinson also illustrated Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* when it appeared in serial in *Chums* in 1894-95.⁷³ By the 1910s, George Hutchinson appears to have entered retirement and eventually settled in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, where he died sometime in the late 1930s. He returned to Nova Scotia on at least three occasions between 1875 and 1897 and kept in contact with his sister, Elizabeth Hutchinson Bulmer, throughout the 1920s.

A detailed account of how the facts of George Hutchinson's life are reflected and recorded in *The Master* is beyond the scope of this research note, but suffice to say, the similarity between fact and its fictionalization in this instance is remarkable and no coincidence. Although their friendship primarily accounts for Zangwill's choice of Hutchinson as the model for his protagonist, George Hutchinson's life and career were compelling enough that the young, highly-respected Anglo-Jewish novelist deemed them proper subjects for Art.⁷⁴ It must be remembered that in the London of the 1890s Hutchinson was much more well known than his current obscurity would suggest. The poverty and struggle about which Zangwill (a social realist) wrote was literal and integral to the novel's plot; the rural setting of Matt's childhood was also literal and not merely an arcadian motif. In *The Master* Zangwill commemorates the life and work of George Hutchinson, not in the traditional manner of biography, but in a slightly fictionalized biographical novel, which, it can be argued, in some ways obscures the commemoration. In fact, so much so that the novel was believed to be about someone entirely different. Whether Harvey and MacKay knew or should have known about these aspects of the novel, a novel they employed to support their assertion of Newton's significance

71 Nova Scotia Census, 1861, Colchester Co., District 11, Lower Londonderry, no. 29. George Hutchinson was actually born in Saint John, N.B., on 29 May 1852. His family removed to Nova Scotia sometime between 1852 and 1858.

72 Zangwill discovered Hutchinson sometime in 1889 or 1890 and employed him as an illustrator in his magazine *Ariel*. *The Idler* was the work of Jerome K. Jerome and the Canadian Robert Barr. Zangwill was also closely connected with the latter magazine and its circle.

73 Simon Houfe, comp. *The Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists 1800-1914* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1979), p. 351. Houfe incorrectly dates the *Chums* serial in 1892. George Hutchinson continued to illustrate for the periodical for some time. Hutchinson's only son, Benjamin Jones Hutchinson, also an artist and illustrator, contributed cartoons and illustrations to *Chums* and *The Idler* as well.

74 In the mid-1890s Zangwill was at the height of his fiction-writing career. His most popular and critically successful novel, *Children of the Ghetto* (Philadelphia, 1892), had put him in the spotlight and placed him in the centre of London literary circles.

to Nova Scotia, is debatable. Yet, when this or any other "fact" is cast in bronze, the result is that it takes on an aura of truth, authenticity and accuracy which is not always borne out by further investigation.

The Gilbert Stuart Newton plaque error is but one incident in a complex history of public commemoration in Nova Scotia and Canada. In the Nova Scotia of the 1950s, plaques and memorial cairns had become a primary means "of public commemoration of the Nova Scotia past",⁷⁵ a phenomenon which Ian McKay has recently analysed. He examines how the provincial Historic Sites Advisory Council [HSAC], established in 1947, embarked on a concerted campaign, conducted primarily by novelist and bureaucrat Will R. Bird, to recognize, reclaim and recast Nova Scotia's history, all for the good of the "Tourist Gaze".⁷⁶ Combined with the Nova Scotia memorials erected by the HSMBC (sometimes in concert, sometimes in conflict with the provincial council), this era in Nova Scotia's cultural production profoundly shaped how Nova Scotians viewed themselves and presented their 'official history' to outsiders.

While the Gilbert Stuart Newton plaque error may be seen as a marginal issue in the broader context of the history of commemoration,⁷⁷ it is, nonetheless, illustrative of the political and cultural forces at work in the process of selecting monuments and sites, and also of the thornier problem of documentation: fact, fiction and fictionalized fact. George Hutchinson's grand niece, Elizabeth Bishop, once described knowledge as "historical, flowing and flown".⁷⁸ In our effort to reclaim for the present and record for posterity, we often force the mutable, contingent past into rigid form. As Ian McKay says of the rage to commemorate in Nova Scotia in the 1950s and after, it speaks "not about time but about timelessness" and seeks to confine our past in a "unifying narrative", which he argues is "profoundly anti-historical".⁷⁹ Such remoulding of the past tends to encourage social élitism and favour selectivity: a preference for firsts, great men (not, as a rule, great women) and sensational achievement (preferably in the military line). Proponents of this approach usually ignore the lives and accomplishments of those who are considered ordinary people.

McKay argues that

The medium of commemorative plaques itself has come to a point of exhaustion, for it assumes too many common memories, too much of a unifying narrative (such as the triumph of British Civilization), too coherent an historical identity....Any incredulity towards this official mnemonics calls into question a narrative which has been a powerful force

75 McKay, "History and the Tourist Gaze", p. 104.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

77 Certainly, both the national HSMBC and the provincial HSAC have been involved in more significant controversies. See Taylor, "Some early Problems", pp. 13-22, for a discussion of the controversies concerning the HSMBC plaques for "Cut Knife Battlefield" and "North West Rebellion, Batoche". See McKay, "History and the Tourist Gaze," for a discussion of some of the controversies relating to HSAC commemorations.

78 Elizabeth Bishop, "At the Fishhouses", *The Complete Poems: 1927-1979* (New York, 1983), p. 66.

79 McKay, "History and the Tourist Gaze", p. 138.

in the constitution of individual and group identities for three generations. In such a questioning, however, lies the only possibility of a more generous future narrative through which those who have suffered the most will claim from future generations the honour that is their due.⁸⁰

These conclusions are provocative and should fuel debate for some time. Ironically, however, some of McKay's "more generous future narrative" has emerged from the Newton plaque *because* of its very existence and the error it contains — demonstrating that even in our efforts to reconceptualize our approach to the past and renew its commemoration, we cannot discard the tangible reminders of previous efforts, for these markers contain much which must be both acknowledged and re-examined.

George Hutchinson's life, as portrayed in the pages of *The Master*, is an example of how a deceptively 'ordinary' individual moved through time and influenced the lives of those around him. His life shows how every individual, no matter how obscure or forgotten, has had an impact on "time's flow".⁸¹ In this instance, besides the obvious influence on Zangwill, we must look to the oral tradition within the Hutchinson-Bulmer family, for it was through oral tradition that George Hutchinson had his greatest impact. The most famous member of this family was Elizabeth Bishop, one of the most influential American poets of the second half of the 20th century. The impact of Great-Uncle George on Bishop's life and work was significant and enduring. Although Bishop appears not to have read the novel until late in life, if at all, *The Master* itself forms a component of this influence in as much as Bishop was aware that Great-Uncle George had already been deemed a worthy subject for Art.⁸² Thus, Bishop had precedent for the commemorations of George Hutchinson which form such an integral part of her *oeuvre*.

Undoubtedly, the plaque error should be corrected. However, simply removing the plaque or excising the offending statement risks erasing the fascinating process which surrounded the making of the error and the discovery of it. All lessons of history, no matter how small, are worth remembering. Further, though no connection between Gilbert Stuart Newton, dead nearly 30 years before Zangwill was born, and *The Master* exists, the connection between the novel and Nova Scotia is also still worth commemorating. If one is of McKay's mind, a new plaque is an exhausted solution. As the example of the Gilbert Stuart Newton plaque suggests, this type of monument does have its limitations; but what future 'official' commemoration will look like depends in part on the examination of commemorations which were done in the past. Such an examination can be done on the broad theoretical grounds of McKay. This research note has chosen to

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 The interconnections between Bishop's *oeuvre* and *The Master* are much more complex than can be delineated here. For a detailed exploration of these interconnections see unpublished paper by author, "Artist in the House", delivered at the Elizabeth Bishop Symposium, Vassar College, 22-25 September 1994.

illustrate one example of commemoration and draw some tentative conclusions about broader implications.

George Hutchinson painted landscapes commemorating his childhood home; Israel Zangwill wrote a novel based on Hutchinson's life, thus commemorating his friend; and Elizabeth Bishop wrote poems commemorating her Great-Uncle's art. These connections can be established from evidence which exists outside the issues of the Gilbert Stuart Newton plaque error. However, it was the discovery of the error which brought to light the full range of interconnections which exist among Hutchinson, Zangwill and Bishop. Perhaps one of the most important lessons to be learned from the type of commemoration which the Newton plaque represents is that such discrete monuments alone are inadequate for the task of recording and understanding the past. They do not necessarily have to be dispensed with, but they must be offered with greater care as, intended or not, they become indelible public markers of our identity. Through exploring the facts and fictions of the Gilbert Stuart Newton plaque error, it becomes apparent that whether it is 'official' or private, commemoration must take many forms. Elizabeth Bishop commemorated George Hutchinson in "Poem", a late work begun in the mid-1960s and included in her 1976 volume, *Geography III*. "Poem" describes a small oil painting of Great Village which Hutchinson probably painted in 1896. Bishop speaks of her connection with Hutchinson, of how their lives and art were intertwined, of how historical knowledge (official and private memory) is an ever-changing constant, of how monuments exist in many forms. "Poem" reads, in part:

I never knew him. We both knew this place,
apparently, this literal small backwater,
looked at it long enough to memorize it,
our years apart. How strange. And it's still loved,
or its memory is (it must have changed a lot).
Our visions coincided — "visions" is
too serious a word — our looks, two looks:
art "copying from life" and life itself,
life and the memory of it so compressed
they've turned into each other.

SANDRA BARRY

83 Elizabeth Bishop, *The Complete Poems, 1927-1979*, p. 177. In 1992 the community of Great Village erected a plaque to Elizabeth Bishop. It was placed on the front of St. James United Church.