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Gérard Bouchard. *Quelques arpents d'Amerique: Population, economie, famille au Saguenay, 1838-1971.* Montréal: Boréal, 1996. 635 pp. ISBN 978-2-89052-715-7.

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Quelques Arpents d'Amerique: Population, Economie, Famille au Saguenay, 1838-1971 is a study of the settlement and of the development of an agrarian population in a region of Quebec: the Saguenay, in the north-eastern part of the province. The Saguenay received its first white settlers in the 1830s. The great majority of the early and later immigrants came from Charlevoix county, immediately to the South. In the nineteenth century, its economy rested on agriculture and the forest industry. The twentieth century saw the development of hydro-electricity, pulp and paper, and aluminum production. An air-base also opened in the region. Aluminum and pulp and paper are still important sectors of the regional economy; nonetheless, to the visitor, the Saguenay still looks rural.

Professor Bouchard pursues several goals in this study. The broadest is to move away from existing approaches in Quebec history. After viewing their history as a story of "La Survivance" of a French and catholic population in the midst of an hostile Anglo-protestant continent, survival made possible by the "Conquest of the Soil," Quebec historians have become very insular. Like most American historians, they treat the object of their study as exceptional, as a unique society to discuss and analyze solely in reference to itself. Professor Bouchard decided that a "continentalist" approach was in order. His Saguenay is part of North America, and he studies it with explicit reference to other parts of the continent. As he states, looking for Quebec, he found North America (p. 10). The reason he found North America looking for Quebec is that the Saguenay, for most of the period he investigates, was a frontier society, characterized by an ample supply of farm land. The availability of land for settlement by white farmers was of course a characteristic of many North American regions in the nineteenth century, and remained a characteristic of some parts of Canada in the early twentieth.

More specifically, Prof. Bouchard wants to find out what impact land availability had on a rural society, on its social structure, on its economic choices and incidentally, on some aspects of its culture. To do so, he attacks his topic from an unusual angle: family reproduction, understood not only in its biological, but mostly in its social and economic dimensions. Family reproduction being the foundation of social reproduction, it affected all aspects of the life in the Saguenay, and in turn was shaped by them. Prof. Bouchard also wants to find out what happened when the Saguenay ran out of land to establish the next generation. How did this affect family reproduction, and in turn demographic behaviour, economic and social structures, and culture (p. 11)? To answer those questions, Prof. Bouchard relies extensively on a massive computerized data base of the Saguenay population between 1838 and 1871, and including about 125,000 families.

The book is divided into four parts. The first one, "Creation of a society" (pp. 15-153), sets the stage. It depicts the physical environment, the administrative divisions of the region, the timing of migration and finally describes the local economy in the nineteenth century. One chapter focuses on the "false start" of the dairy industry in the 1880s. The Saguenay is not particularly blessed with good soil, a balmy climate or easy access to urban markets. Those factors impeded its agriculture. In the 1880s, though, the arrival of the railway allowed Saguenay farmers to market perishable goods outside the region–at a time when the market for dairy products was expanding. Saguenay farmers shifted from mixed farming and general animal husbandry to dairy farming and fodder production. The shift remained limited in scope though. The herds were small (eight to ten heads), milk production slipshod and unhygienic, and cheese factories remained small, local affairs, relying on the average on the production of fifteen to twenty farms. Dairy production represented about a third of the farms' gross income. Yet, according to Prof. Bouchard, all the conditions needed for the unfolding of capitalist dairy production (that is, specialized and striving to improve productivity and geared towards maximizing profits) were there: the

technical knowledge was available, and so were institutional supports and markets and marketing channels (p. 83). Prof. Bouchard hypothesizes that the farmers engaged in market production for their own reasons, and when its expansion seemed to threaten their forms of social organization and their way of life, they stopped it. They obeyed a social, not an economic rationality. Only after the second world war did farmers adopt "another rationality," increase herds and use machines (p. 423). The Saguenay farms then ceased to be instruments of social reproduction and became economic production units.

The next chapter details the relationship between the two sectors of the local economy in the nineteenth century: agriculture and the forest industry. This relationship has been the object of a lengthy debate among Quebec historians. They usually conclude the relationship had been detrimental to the farmers, exploited by lumberers who knew farmers grew their own food, but could not get cash or credit (from wages or the sale of farm products) except from them. The "agro-forestry" system, as Quebec historians have called it, fostered poverty and underdevelopment. Prof. Bouchard believes the presence of the forest industry was positive to a point: it allowed farm households to earn an income during the agricultural off-season (trees are cut in winter), income which could be used to live on while one was clearing a new farm, or later used to acquire stock or equipment, and finally, to purchase additional acreage (p. 125-26). In the marginal districts of the Saguenay, the forest industry kept hardscrabble farmers scratching the Canadian shield alive. Although helpful, the forest industry could not promote economic development though. It created very few linkages and did not promote urban development and economic diversification: the logs were floated down the river, and everyone went back home.

Farming households and the forest industry were thus engaged in a quasi-symbiotic relationship which was not unique to this region. Prof. Bouchard devised the concept of "co-integration' to account for this type of relationship. Each economic sector used the other for its own end. The lumber industry relied on a labour force drawn from farm families to save money (it could pay sub-subsistence wages). The farmers relied on the forest industry for the additional income they needed to reach their social goals: get their own farm and establish their children on their own. Each sector thus obeyed a different rationality–the lumberers, a capitalist (profit maximizing) one, and the farmers a social one. Prof. Bouchard defines co-integration as a strategy used by traditional or marginal societies to perpetuate themselves using the surrounding capitalist economy, but without adopting its values or its goals (p. 149).

The second part (pp. 155-301) is devoted to an analysis of family reproduction, as it occurred before the 1920s. Farm families were very large. How were the parents going to ensure all children were settled on a farm? How were they going to provide for their own old age? Children were expected to work on the farm (thereby increasing production) or off-site, and turn their wages to their parents (thereby increasing family revenues). After working an average of ten years for their parents, sons married, and if all went well, were rewarded for their unpaid services with a piece of land (girls tried to marry boys with land, and got a few moveable). The difficulty, of course, was to find land for all those boys. Abundant land in the Saguenay, and opportunities for by-employment, allowed farmers to escape what had been an intractable problem for their European counterparts. As the families increased in size, they acquired additional pieces of land, either uncleared crown land or land purchased from other farmers who were moving out. Or, they sold out their farm in a now well-established settlement, and used the proceed to acquire enough acreage in a new settlement on the fringes of the region to carve out several farms. When the parents were getting too old to farm, they turned their land to one of the sons, in exchange of support (in kind in the nineteenth century). The transaction was protected by a contract written down by a lawyer. After the death of the second parents, the few moveable still in their possession were distributed among the children. The system was fairly successful. Three out of four sons born of parents married before 1860 became farmers in the region. One-third of the pre-1860 generation established all their sons. Half the sons of parents married between 1860 and 1900 were similarly established. The proportion dropped to one in four among those whose parents married after 1920. Interestingly, sons from families with lots of boys had roughly the same statistical chance of becoming farmers than only sons. More hands meant more resources, and therefore the possibility to acquire greater additional acreage.

According to Prof. Bouchard, this "reproduction a l'identique" was the overriding goal pursued by Saguenay farmers, the one to which they subordinated all their activities: each household wanted to produce as many clones of itself as possible. They were able to succeed because of the ethic of family labour, of the availability of by-employment, and of an abundance of land. The "terroir vide" (unoccupied land) made an "open system" (one where farm families can replicate themselves several times) possible. This was in sharp contrast to Europe,

where a "terroir plein" (a fully occupied land) made anything except a "systeme clos or ferme" (one thereby farm families could replicate themselves only once) difficult (p. 219).

Part Three (pp. 305-383) places the Saguenay system of family reproduction into broader contexts, comparing it with practices in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quebec, with nineteenth-century Ontario, with the United states, and with Ancien Regime France. Was there a North American "system ouvert" made possible by the presence of a colonization frontier? The existing literature suggests that the pattern of family reproduction uncovered in the Saguenay was not unique to this region, and that it could be found, in whole or in part, in most regions of North America during the settlement phase. It was on the other hand quite different from the ones existing in France. If "terroirs vides" seemed to have engendered a rather uniform system of social reproduction, the reverse was not true. A "terroir plein," as in France, could lead to a multitude of different strategies, some egalitarian, some transferring the patrimony to a single heir (p. 380). Prof. Bouchard also concludes that the Turnerian theory of the frontier is inapplicable to the Saguenay : here, the frontier allowed the perpetuation of a traditional society (pp. 331, 365).

Part Four (pp. 385-471) deals with the changes which occurred within the region, focusing mostly on the period after the 1920s. Two of the chapters measure the rate of increase in population density and time the closing of the local frontier; they also describe the consequences for family reproduction. As land became scarce, its value increased, forcing farmers to increase productivity and adopt the rationality of the market. Knowing they were less and less likely to receive land from their father, sons became less and less willing to work for them, depriving the farm households of sources of labour or income. More and more families established only one son, on the land they had themselves inherited. The traditional transfer of land in exchange of support gave way to outright sales. Establishment through relocation in a more peripheral parish became a thing of the past, and so did by-employment.

The last chapter assess the value of an explanatory model based on an opposition "terroir plein/terroir vide" and finds it wanting. It only partially explains changes in family reproduction, and inadequately accounts for changes in fertility, social practices and economic behaviour, although Prof. Bouchard believes the closing of the local frontier "destabilized" local society (p. 432). Prof. Bouchard concludes that single explanation models (such as the one relying on the population density of a given area) are inadequate, and that one must look for multicausal explanations (pp. 460, 471).

Prof. Bouchard is a very prolific author, and the readers already familiar with his numerous articles will find here the same meticulous attention to details and the same wealth of information (summarized in no less than 90 tables, 17 graphs and 27 maps). The book is invaluable for researchers interested in nineteenth-century processes of settlements and systems of property transmission. Prof. Bouchard's handling of the relationship between the farm households and the larger capitalist economy credit those people with more agency than most studies following such a "two worlds" model usually do. Finally, the placing of the Saguenay in a North American, as opposed to a national context, is definitely a fruitful strategy: Quebeckers, Ontarians, Maritimers, New Englanders and other Northeasterners more often than not adopted the same strategies when confronted with the same physical, human or economic environment. The notion Quebec HAD to be different because it was Catholic, French-speaking and living under a different code of law is simply not supported by empirical evidence (Bouchard's or others).

Despite its interest and usefulness, the book is not without a fair share of problems, though. First, the reader will probably wonder for the first six chapters why family reproduction is at the centre of the "problematique." Why did the author choose this approach rather than any other? The answer is provided only page 159. A impressive corpus of more than 900 interviews conducted with elderly Saguenayens between 1930 and 1980 reveals that establishing children on their own farms was indeed a major concern for those families. This should really have been the starting point of the book, because there is precious little other evidence, asides from the behaviour under investigation, that this was the case. It would also have been nice if greater use had been made of these interviews in the writing of the book, which is unrelieved quantitative history.

Second, the book fluctuates between too many details and not enough, and never really strikes a happy balance. Readers who do not have access to a well-stocked academic library will find the methodological explanations in part II frustrating. Chapter Eight for instance refers to an "indice m" which measures certain types of contraceptive behaviour, but without explaining what it really is. The footnotes refer to an article in "Population Index," not a journal commonly found in small libraries. Chapter Seven and Eight also use a literacy index which,

again, is not explained. The footnotes this time refer to two articles written by professor Bouchard and a collaborator (and published in Canadian journals hard to find in American universities). This latter omission is particularly unfortunate because Prof. Bouchard has designed this index which allows for a more precise measurement of literacy using signatures in parish registers than simply counting the signatures of the brides and grooms. This is ill-placed modesty. On the other hand, in other sections, the reader feels like a car buyer who is not only shown what is under the hood, but is made to watch a mechanic tearing the engine apart.

One also wonders what is the point of using population density (the opposition "terroir vide/terroir plein") as a framework through the entire book, to discard it in the last chapter as not satisfactorily explaining the data. A book is really not a diary of one's quest for understanding. It would have been much better to show the limits of population density as an explanation at the beginning of the book, and explore additional factors of changes in greater details (The example of France would have sufficed to make the point). This would probably have taken care of another problem with the book. It is very static, and despite its continentalist perspective, its Saguenay farmers seem strangely disconnected from the world outside their boundaries, and even from the non-agricultural one within. The off-farm world seems like a foreign land in which the farmers make occasional forays, but which remains alien to them and does not really affect their decisions.

As it stands, the book ignores, or barely mentions factors which could (and probably did) have a direct bearing on the decisions of farmers, their sons (and their potential daughters-in-law: women do not stay on the farm if there are better alternatives for them, like urban employment, as the example of post-war France clearly shows). Land availability matters tremendously when the only way to escape destitution is to have access to enough land to support a family, as was still the case in the middle of the nineteenth century. It matters much less when alternatives are available, and it would have been interesting to know how farmers responded to those. The Saguenay economy changed a great deal in the twentieth century. What was the relationship between those changes and the changing strategies of the farmers?

Three trends characterized the Saguenay from the 1880s onward. The first was a shrinking of the quantity of Crown land available for pioneers, as well as a steady decline in its quality (table XVII-1, p. 403). The second was a *steady* decline in the proportion of farmers' sons who became farmers in the region after the middle of the nineteenth century (table IX-5 p. 214 and graph IX-1 p. 219). The third, which is barely mentioned in the book, was the progressive urbanization of the region. In 1901, only 14 percent of the population lived in urban areas; in 1911: 24 percent; in 1921, 35 percent, in 1931, 46 percent, in 1941, 52 percent and 60 percent in 1951. Urbanization was the consequence of the growth of industries: hydro-electric production, pulp and paper, and aluminum. The Alcan plant, operated by an American concern, was built in the Saguenay in 1926. (Canada is one of the leading world's producer of aluminum.) As early as 1911, 2632 Saguenayens were wage/salary earners (out of a population of 50,485). In 1932, despite the Depression, there were 3243 wage/salary earners for a population of 105,977 (Igartua, 1983; pp. 293, 296). Industries needed workers, and workers needed housing, food, consumer goods and a variety of services. As can be expected, the Depression had a negative impact on the Saguenay rural and urban economy. The Second World War on the other ushered a boom: Aluminum was essential for planes. By 1941, the aluminum plant and the then under construction new hydro-electric plant it required for its expansion employed 12,000 workers. In 1943, the Saguenay was short of workers. The end of the war did not spell the end of the industrial boom either. And those workers developed a different attitude towards work. They unionized–the first Unions, Catholic and "International," that is American, appeared before the First World War. By 1918, the pulp and paper workers struck. The aluminum workers struck in 1941, war orders notwithstanding, and in 1947, 1948, 1953. Unions, and Unemployment Insurance, which started during the war, meant that industrial work was better paid, and a less risky way to support oneself. The days when wage work was provided mainly by the lumber barons, who paid their workers sub-standard wages for seasonal work, and paid them in company money were gone.

Farmers on the other hand seem to have had a difficult time. After the war, the herds were still small, too small to support a farm. In 1947, farmers were getting $4.32/100 litres of milk from the butter and cheese factories. It cost them $8.34 to produce that quantity (Girard, 1989: p 399). As late as the 1960s, the provincial government was still concerned by the low productivity of the Saguenay farms, and a third of the farmers still worked off-site. Farming in short was still not very profitable in absolute terms, and less and less attractive compared with non farm employments, except during the Depression, when any piece of land that could grow some potatoes and feed a cow and a couple of pigs was better than

the Dole and the work relief camps. Factory work per se may not have seemed very appealing to farmers' sons, but the new economic context created other opportunities. Farmers' sons could now envision a genuine career as a garage mechanic, a book keeper, a house carpenter or an insurance salesman, a bus driver or a municipal employee, an electrician or a store keeper. If they had some education, they could become professionals, in or out of private industry. I doubt farmers would have seen farming as the ideal future for their sons if the latter could make a better–and as secure–living as skilled workers, craftsmen or small town professionals. Even if they did, their sons (and their wives) likely felt otherwise.

There were other factors superimposing themselves on this long term evolution. For instance, old age pensions were established, and one became less dependent on one's children for one's old age security. School became compulsory till fourteen during the war–but shortly after the war, Canadian mothers began to receive family allowances. Those new social programs must have changed the relationship between parents and children, and have an impact on family strategies.

One should not fault an author for not writing the book he did not intend to write, but how can one discuss farmers' strategies for their children without looking at "all" the options that were available? This book, in short, walks straight past half the story it should have told, and I suspect past the most interesting half of the story.

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