

## Comptes rendus / Book Reviews 321

pelle la distinction dumontienne entre vérité et pertinence. L'étude du réel doit aussi viser à le transformer, avance l'auteur en parlant de Dumont, mais aussi à « recréer une véritable communauté humaine sur le fond d'une nostalgie de l'ancienne unanimité traditionnelle » (p. 343). Fernand Dumont, nostalgique de l'ancienne unanimité traditionnelle? Dumont s'inquiétait certes de ce qu'on appellerait dans un langage plus contemporain la qualité des liens sociaux, mais il n'était pas nostalgique de l'unanimité traditionnelle, qu'il lui est arrivé de critiquer, soit dit en passant. Plus largement, je ne pense pas qu'il faille mettre sur le même pied le rapport que fait Dumont entre vérité et pertinence (que Warren qualifie à tort « d'avoir fait long feu ») et l'opposition de Rioux entre sociologie aseptique et sociologie critique. Ce lien et cette opposition appartiennent à deux registres différents.

Warren soulève une question de fond qui a divisé la sociologie québécoise, soit le rapport entre science et engagement. Il situe ce débat sur un plan binaire (ce qu'il nomme le dualisme), alors qu'il se pose plutôt en termes d'une double opposition entre le scientifique et l'expressif, d'un côté, et le descriptif et le critique, de l'autre, soit plus qu'une simple opposition binaire. Si elle est juste, cette manière de voir les choses permet de distinguer la sociologie de Dumont et celle pratiquée par Rioux de manière plus fine, ou encore celle d'un Falardeau et celle d'un Grand'Maison. L'argument d'une opposition binaire qui caractériserait les trois courants de pensée analysés dans le livre ne peut-elle pas, par ailleurs, être remise en question au nom du principe du tiers exclus, un principe si souvent oublié dans les analyses de la pensée privilégiant les choix binaires?

Bref, voilà un beau livre d'histoire de ce que l'auteur appelle, dans la perspective qui est la sienne, un engagement sociologique, un livre qui éclaire les premières étapes de l'institutionnalisation de la sociologie au Québec, mais qui reste plus allusif sur l'histoire des idées sociologiques à proprement parler.

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WEAVER, John C. — *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650–1900*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. Pp. 497.

Today, even citizens of a highly urbanized society value property. Be they commuters from acreages or inhabitants of high-rise condominiums, people of the twenty-first century want a space they own. This desire to possess a place has its roots far back in ancient history when humans began to domesticate animals and plants and marked the property on which they worked to prevent intruders from ruining their labours. Concomitant with the need to demarcate a property of their own grew the belief that, by growing crops or by grazing animals on the spot they had set aside, they had made the terrain useful. They had turned wilderness into civilization. They had improved the land.

The evolution of property rights and the notion of improvement are the two inter-

twining themes that drive John C. Weaver's *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World*. Commencing his *tour de force* at a time in England when large landed estates managed by aristocrats were the norm, Weaver traces the development of property rights and improvement of land from the imperial trunk through a number of its branches, primarily the settlement colonies. He notes how the rise of democracy and the market economy influenced the methods of distributing frontier lands among a majority of the citizens of the new countries colonized by the descendants of the United Kingdom. Comparing and contrasting developments in North America, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand (with occasional side-trips to Argentina), he draws the general conclusion that development in all these countries, despite local variations, was remarkably similar.

One of the several sub-themes running through *The Great Land Rush* is the environment — how it affected the evolution of property rights and how the use of land modified the landscape. While Weaver pays sufficient attention to cultivators of the land, he favours grazers and ranchers as his examples. The free, open, and expansive grasslands of some of the settlement colonies attracted herders who could let their animals graze at little cost. Consequently, they were among the first Europeans to arrive on what became in some states the last frontier. As settlers began to trickle into the territory, however, ranchers and grazers needed to establish some title to the rangelands. In the first instance, they leased enormous tracts that still allowed their herds or flocks to roam freely, but, as the flow of colonizers became a rush, politicians and government regulators, driven by the improvement ethic and needing increased revenues, forced ranchers and grazers to buy land. Moreover, they had to guard their increasingly valuable holdings from squatter invasion. From its invention in 1874, barbed wire spread like a noxious weed across plains, prairies, and pampas. Cordoning the land not only confined their domesticated animals but prevented large wild mammals from following centuries-old migrations. Meanwhile, those who were unable to lease or purchase land moved onto less and less desirable places until stopped by the natural barriers of mountains, dense forests, swamps, or harsh climate. Increasingly, too, control of water became crucial; consequently, ranchers were instrumental in forcing governments to alter the definition of riparian water rights to crown ownership and the sale of adjoining lands to private interests. In the more arid regions, ranchers, as well as land companies, following the improvement mandate, defied climate and invested heavily in irrigation, thereby profoundly altering the landscape and in many instances degrading the environment.

Not only did the improvement mandate, in Weaver's view, degrade the environment; it also marginalized the indigenous people in the land-rush territories. While each of the settlement colonies in the United States may have been unique, the main theme and result were the same. In their frenzied quest for land, governments collaborated with colonizers to deprive Native peoples of their traditional hunting or agricultural lands and forced them onto ever smaller and more unsuitable, marginal parcels. In many cases, violence was the main technique. Weaver cites that, from the end of the Civil War to the closing of the frontier in 1891, the army of the United States clashed at least 800 times with the nation's indigenous peoples. Its overwhelming force was not what conquered them, however. Instead, the prime cause of their

defeat was the great westward migration of Euro-American settlers who deprived them of the resources to make a living.

Weaver's thesis applies very well to the western Canadian model, which sits on the peaceful end of the violence spectrum. The relative lack of bloody clashes between Euro-Canadians and First Nations owed more to isolation and a harsh climate than to restraint of government and colonists. The lack of efficient transport to markets, of farming techniques powerless to cope with prairie conditions, and of grains unable to mature in short, often dry and plague-infested summers made the Canadian Northwest uncompetitive with other arable places. Yet the battle of la Grenouillière, Red River, in 1816 was a disturbing portent of the future, repeated at Grand Couleau in 1851 and again in Red River in 1869–1870, to culminate on the Saskatchewan in 1885. By then, the introduction of steam technology and improved farming methods and crop species permitted thousands of European farmers to settle on the Canadian plains and ship their products to global markets. Meanwhile, the decimation of the enormous bison and other large mammal herds had whipped the starving original prairie dwellers into submission. Subsequently, government policies and heartless bureaucrats kept them on the peripheries of Canadian society while the newcomers took possession of the best lands.

*The Great Land Rush* deals with more than dispossession and environmental influence. Weaver traces in considerable detail the instruments devised by the imperial and colonial governments to facilitate the speedy and effective taking and transfer of lands. Systematic surveying, deed registration, and laws were constantly reformed to permit the rapid colonization of supposedly empty and unimproved arable lands. Thus within two and half centuries virtually all available tillable lands in the British settlement colonies and the United States were taken.

Weaver's comprehensive study is a monumental accomplishment. Based mainly on a huge bibliography of secondary works, amply supplemented with archival research and published government documents, it presents an important, informative analysis. A work of this magnitude, with its sweeping synthesis and broad generalizations, will probably attract the specialist criticism of local historians more familiar with the peculiar nuances of their regions. A South African historian, for example, may wish the author had used an editor to proofread Afrikaans titles. Generalist readers may prefer a more chronological rather than a topical organization. These as other cavils, however, will not detract from the book's main, weighty argument, and it will long remain an important reference.

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WILMOT, Laurence E. — *Through the Hitler Line: Memoirs of an Infantry Chaplain*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003. Pp. 148.

This memoir is a recent addition to the "Life Writing Series" from Wilfrid Laurier University Press. Reverend Wilmot was regimental chaplain to the West Nova Scotia