

DESSUREAULT, Christian – *Le monde rural québécois aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles : Cultures, hiérarchies, pouvoirs*. Montréal : Fides, 2018. Pp. 434.

As a social historian of rural eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Quebec, Christian Dessureault has consistently applied quantitative research methods at a localized scale to address broad historical questions. The mostly prepublished articles in this collection are preceded by a useful survey of his career written by four of his contemporaries. The book is divided into three sections, with the first one being generally socioeconomic in theme, the second more strictly social, and the third largely political. Dessureault takes a basically materialist approach to history, and his focus is on the class he refers to as the peasantry, but his main aim is to demonstrate that its members were economically and socially divided rather than being the homogeneous mass that historians of all ideological persuasions have depicted. The ramifications are significant, and one of the main strengths of the twelve chapters in this collection is their clear description and methodical critique of nationalist as well as antinationalist interpretations of a number of key themes in pre-industrial Quebec history.

Chapter one examines not the peasantry, however, but the seigneurial system they lived within. Focussing on the Sulpician-owned Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes seigneurie at the turn of the nineteenth century, Dessureault argues that the seigneurial system played a crucial role, not because the seigneurs were active agents of colonization but because they were vigilant in collecting rents. In a similar vein, chapter 4 challenges the now-prevailing theory that the seigneurial system adapted to the rise of industrial capitalism. Relevant to the question of the “rationalité capitaliste” of the seigneurial class, Dessureault might have added, is what its members did with the substantial monetary compensation they received from the state as a result of the abolition of their feudal rights in 1854.

The second chapter, based largely on an exhaustive analysis of the 1831 and 1861 manuscript census reports for the seigneurie of Saint-Hyacinthe, puts paid to Serge Courville’s influential thesis that village expansion in the seigneurial zone was “modernizing” Lower Canada’s economy. In words that apply equally to the work of other Quebec rural historians, Dessureault states that “cette nouvelle vision entrepreneuriale des campagnes présente une société québécoise trop rapidement gagnée par le progrès économique.” The increase in the number of grist mills, for example, simply reflected the expansion of the rural population. The capital invested in such industries was very limited, and between 1831 and 1861 the ratio of Saint-Hyacinthe household heads involved in various forms of manufacturing increased only from 6.0% to 6.8%.

That said, Dessureault does not accept Fernand Ouellet’s argument that the rural economy was in crisis during the early nineteenth century. In fact, chapter 7, coauthored by John Dickinson and based on postmortem inventories as well as the standard-of-living index devised by Micheline Baulant, concludes that the peasant standard of living in the Montreal region actually increased between 1740 and 1834. But that improvement was not shared equally, and chapters 5 and 6 focus on Dessureault’s main thesis, namely that historians have been wrong in

assuming that peasant society in Quebec was once socially homogenous and that whatever social differentiation took place in the early industrial era was essentially the product of Malthusian pressures and increased integration into the market economy. Dessureault's counter-argument is based on a convincingly detailed analysis of farm sizes and values, agricultural production, livestock numbers, and value of movable goods as well as cash in hand and debts and credits, all gleaned from postmortem inventories for Saint-Hyacinthe. The conclusion is that by 1834, as in the Montreal district examined in chapter 7, the peasant farmers in the older areas of the Saint-Hyacinthe seigneurie had generally become more prosperous as a result of market forces. All the arable land had been settled by 1825, however, with the result that farm sizes in the newer areas were smaller and an impoverished rural proletariat had emerged. In short, where Malthus argued that population pressure inevitably led to mass poverty, Dessureault found economic and geographic polarization instead. And, as other historians have shown, that would also be the story on a wider scale once families began to move beyond the seigneuries into the Laurentian and Appalachian colonization zones in the 1840s.

In chapter 10, Dessureault and Christine Hudon apply his social analysis of the peasantry to the struggle for control of the *fabrique* (parish council), which was the only representative local body prior to the introduction of elected municipal and school councils in the 1840s. They state that their examination of the Richelieu-Yamaska district revealed that this political contest was not essentially one of clergy versus local notables, or of the *petite bourgeoisie* versus either the landed elite or the peasantry, as different schools of interpretation have argued. Instead, relatively well-to-do peasant family groups who were allied with elements of the *petite bourgeoisie* competed against each other to establish local dominance as institutional elites.

Chapter 9, co-authored with Roch Legault, examines another locally based institution, the sedentary militia. Claiming that—in contrast to the rest of the north Atlantic world—the militia remained an important institution in Lower Canada, the authors argue that the main reason for that anomaly was that militia membership reinforced local family-based hierarchies, including within the peasantry. The historical ramifications of that internal dynamic are illustrated in chapter 11, which undermines previous interpretations of the 1812 mutiny of the Lachine militia by exposing the internal family-based networks of the leading figures who were involved on either side. Chapter 8 nevertheless reveals that in 1861 the family network in one old St. Lawrence parish was not as dense as historians have assumed, with the average household head being related to only 5% or 6% of his counterparts, including first cousins by blood or marriage. The more affluent household heads nevertheless had more extensive family networks than did the poorer ones.

The final chapter is a historiographical survey of the varying interpretations concerning social structures and institutional elites in the St Lawrence valley, interpretations that Dessureault categorizes as either Marxist or Weberian. In presenting his own interpretation, he reiterates his basic argument that control of local institutions such as the militia and the *fabrique* involved a political interplay

between external authorities and local elites (presumably with an extensive family network) who sometimes collaborated with external domination and sometimes led a resistance against it. In either case, the individuals and groups involved were motivated primarily by the desire to affirm their own status and power. As the meticulously researched and impressively analytical articles in this collection demonstrate, then, Christian Dessureault has made an important contribution to our understanding of Lower Canada's preindustrial rural society, one that challenges the somewhat romantic notion of an egalitarian and socially cohesive rural majority. The implications are far-reaching, not only for historical research on French-Canadian society, but for rural history well beyond the borders of Quebec.

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DYCK, Erika et Alex DEIGHTON – *Managing Madness: Weyburn Mental Hospital and the Transformation of Psychiatric Care in Canada*. Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2017.

Il est aisé, lorsqu'on s'attache à écrire l'histoire d'une institution de soins, de tomber dans l'hagiographie et la prosopographie, d'autant plus quand la demande ou l'idée d'un tel projet émane de l'administration ou, comme dans le cas présent, d'un ancien soignant de l'établissement. Mais ce n'est pas dans les habitudes de l'historienne Erika Dyck, titulaire de la chaire de recherche du Canada en histoire de la médecine à l'Université de la Saskatchewan, de s'engager dans des voies traditionnelles et trop souvent empruntées ; ses recherches sur le LSD, l'eugénisme et la psychiatrie des Prairies en témoignent. Nul doute, donc, qu'en s'attaquant à l'histoire du Weyburn Mental Hospital, le deuxième hôpital psychiatrique de la Saskatchewan, ouvert en 1921, elle allait produire une étude originale, qui sorte des sentiers battus. Et c'est peu dire que cet ouvrage est loin des classiques histoires d'hôpitaux qui hantent encore souvent les rayons d'histoire de la médecine de nos bibliothèques.

Avec *Managing Madness*, Erika Dyck relève avec une grande habileté un défi de taille : celui de produire une histoire institutionnelle passionnante qui soit également une histoire sociale, scientifique et politique particulièrement riche de la santé mentale en Saskatchewan, le tout en travaillant avec une équipe multidisciplinaire. Car en plus d'Alex Deighton, un de ses anciens étudiants de maîtrise avec qui elle signe l'ouvrage, Dyck s'est associée, pour écrire ce livre, avec un étudiant en médecine du nom d'Alex Dyck (aucun lien de parenté), le psychiatre Hugh Lafave, qui travailla dans l'établissement à partir des années 1960, ainsi que les psychologues Gary Gerber et John Mills. Enfin, à la mort de ce dernier, elle œuvra aux côtés de sa femme et de son fils pour finaliser sa contribution à l'ouvrage. Malgré cette équipe nombreuse et diverse, le résultat