

post World War II era and Panitch in his work on the Canadian state. A closer attention to wider political economy literature would have improved what is already a very fine, empirically based, analysis.

Peter A. Baskerville  
*University of Victoria*

\* \* \*

Chad Gaffield — *Language, Schooling and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987. Pp. xviii, 249.

This book is another welcome contribution to McGill-Queen's growing collection of volumes examining the history of Canadian education. It offers both less and more than its title suggests. It offers less because its focus is not province-wide but rather limited to Prescott County in the period from the mid-1800s until the turn of the century. It also offers more because it successfully demonstrates the rich historical detail and subtle nuances that can be gleaned from local histories — histories which both inform and contradict the aggregate historical context.

Gaffield defends his micro approach to the history of the french-language controversy in Ontario by arguing, justifiably I believe, that previous political studies of minority-language education too often simply "narrate the major electoral campaigns in which the school question has been a focus of debate" (130). In the process, they inappropriately convey the impression that the language question was an episodic dimension of Ontario's educational history rather than, as this study shows, an ongoing and dynamic issue in both the local and provincial arenas. Similarly, previous studies have tended to be elite-centered, emphasizing party platforms and leaders, instead of examining how the debate was experienced at the community level or how local social and economic conditions influenced both demands for minority-language education and the outcomes of electoral campaigns.

This study explores the development of the language controversy from the perspective of Prescott County which, in the later half of the nineteenth century, was the "buckle of the bilingual belt" (xiv) in Ontario. This unique lens enables the author to reinterpret the origins of the language controversy in three ways. First, he suggests that the coercive language policies implemented by the provincial government at the end of the century were informed by the experience of Prescott County. Second, he argues that demands for minority-language education in Prescott County arose directly out of its changing and complex material contexts and third, he traces the origins of a distinct Franco-Ontarian identity to the 1880s rather than, as other studies contend, the 1960s.

The book is straight-forward in its format. It begins with a survey of nineteenth-century provincial educational policy which had as its expressed goal the "voluntary assimilation" of the growing numbers of French Canadians in Ontario. The next two chapters make excellent use of census data to recreate the social and economic texture of the period. Here, students of Ontario social history will find a revealing account of how the rise and decline of the "système agro-forestier" affected both the family and demands on the educational system. In the beginning, this system of seasonal lumbering and subsistence farming required the full participation of all family members as economic producers. Since only a few families could afford to lose the productive contribution of their offspring, local schools were not well-attended while the family became the major medium for the preservation of language and culture. In the meantime, the nascent public school system in Prescott County remained underfunded, ill-equipped and dominated by women teachers because they could be hired inexpensively, at rates below labourers and servants and for "about half to two-thirds of what men received" (113). With the decline of the forest frontier and land availability in the 1870s, "demand for child labour within the family setting declined," thus making school attendance more possible (121).

The last four chapters of the book will especially interest students of Ontario's education system. Here, the author shows how changing demographic, political and economic patterns put increasing pressure on the local public school system to provide french language instruction and how, ultimately, in the face of hostile provincial regulations, francophones in Prescott County turned to the leadership of the Catholic Church to preserve french language instruction. The author draws a direct link between restrictive provincial language legislation and the growth of the separate school system. Until the mid-1880s, the separate school question was "not of great importance in Prescott County" (161) because the Catholic Church was not a strong institution there, schooling held a low priority for most residents and french instruction was accommodated within the public system. After 1885, and the official requirement to have some English taught in public schools, however, "the potential insulation offered by the separate system" became a powerful attraction for francophones and the separate system flourished (175).

Overall, this book is successful in its goals of linking provincial legislation to developments in Prescott County and demonstrating the interrelationship between changes in the local material environment and demands on the education system. The book would have been considerably strengthened, however, if the author had drawn on comparative examples from other counties with large francophone populations. Less well developed is the author's argument that the roots of the Franco-Ontarian identity can be traced back to the Prescott County of the 1880s. The disintegration of Prescott County in the late nineteenth century into "anglophone and francophone fragments" (186) may have been a necessary development for the emergence of the Franco-Ontarian identity, but does not, in and of itself, substantiate the existence of such an identity.

Janine Brodie  
York University

\* \* \*

Jacques Gélis — *L'arbre et le fruit. La naissance dans l'Occident moderne (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Paris, Fayard, 1984, 611 p.

En France, la naissance et la mort ont fait l'objet d'études historiques impressionnantes. Cette approche particulière des moments d'introduction dans l'existence et de sa conclusion y est autant privilégiée que l'approche psychologique l'est dans les pays anglo-saxons.

L'ouvrage de Jacques Gélis est un exemple remarquable de la tradition que les historiens français ont établie dans ce domaine. Représentant un éventail unique d'informations, surtout sur la France, *L'arbre et le fruit* évoque à travers tout ce qui concerne la naissance, un monde rural dont les traces sont devenues rares en Occident.

Le livre se compose de trois parties. La première est organisée selon la chronologie des événements et des états autres que la naissance : fertilité, conceptions, grossesse, accouchement... La deuxième traite des « dérèglements de la nature et des hommes », par exemple, la mort de l'enfant, la contraception, l'avortement, etc. La dernière, plus brève (489-546), présente d'une façon fort intéressante l'intégration métaphysique et sociale de l'enfant par le baptême et par l'attribution d'un nom.

Pour faire comprendre les rites, les croyances et les usages, l'auteur évoque sa conception de la métaphysique populaire. Basée sur les principes de la fécondité universelle, de la nature globale et mystérieuse du destin humain, de la qualité révélatrice de significations de tout ce qui se manifeste, cette métaphysique anime avec force chaque situation quotidienne, comme tout ce qui a trait à la venue au monde. La continuité, particulièrement, qui constitue l'esprit des choix de l'homme rural et sa façon d'être la plus profonde, assure le sens à la présence et au développement de l'enfant. Elle s'exprime notamment dans la coutume d'inaugurer la marche sur la terre des ancêtres : « La terre