

Québec, 1789-1989, edited by Michel Grenon. The historiographical debate remains open, especially because the authors presented so little evidence of public reception of the exhortations of either newspaper editors or bishops. There seems to be broad agreement that Lower Canada was not so immune from French-revolutionary influence as nineteenth-century historians believed. If the press is a valid guide, urban elites in 1789 were initially enthralled by self-government and the rights of man. As editor, Pierre Boule concludes, however, liberal ideals also came from the Whig tradition and from American-revolutionary sources, not exclusively from France. If Quebec furnished a willing audience for the counter-revolutionary writings of Burke and De Maistre, a key determinant was the massive rejection of the French Revolution by lay elites and the Church after 1793. The continuing challenge for social historians will be to define for other regions the socio-economic discontent related by authors such as Lalancette for La Malbaie, and to find usable definitions of the bourgeoisie and of commercialization of agriculture in the Quebec context. A class-struggle theory may be difficult to apply when the bourgeoisie is divided on national lines and, in some cases, intimately tied to the seigneurial system. Whether the restive peasantry in the face of commercializing seigneurs was insular, economically conservative and nationalist, or a harbinger of a modern-revolutionary consciousness, is another unsettled question. The social history of Lower Canada in the revolutionary era has no more produced a consensus than the social history of the revolutionary France.

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Michael D. Bristol — *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. Pp. 237.

Michael Bristol's *Carnival and Theater*, first published in a hard cover edition in 1985, has now been reprinted in this soft-bound version. The work sets out to document and explore the representation of carnival, and the ethos of popular culture expressed in carnival, as an integral element in Renaissance theater. In Bristol's view, theater itself recreates and expresses the traditions of the social collectivity. It does so either negatively (*e.g.*, by challenging the potential of authority to subvert collective tradition) or positively (*e.g.*, by reaffirming that collective tradition in the face of authority).

The discussion of these themes proceeds in four parts. In the first, Bristol locates his discussion in the historiographical development of ideas regarding the role of drama in society. Moving quickly on from the views of, *e.g.*, Brecht and Tillyard, who saw theater as useful in resolving conflicts or presenting a shared and harmonious world view, Bristol moves on to the critiques of Marxists and their modern acolytes, including Foucault, Bahktin, Greenblatt, Dollimore, Williams, *et al.* Here, he develops the notion that Renaissance theater could well be radical and subversive of the dominant ethos, while the carnivalesque, which it integrally embraced, functioned as much more than a safety valve. In fact, he continues, carnival and all which is implied therein provided nothing less than a purposeful working out of the plebeian cultural ethos. Thence, he sets forth to define plebeian culture itself, to access its accessibility to historical

analysis, and to suggest the consciousness of political outlook to which he considers that plebeian culture must be linked.

Having determined that the literary text might provide the least occluded window onto plebeian culture and the traditions of carnival, Bristol introduces in Part II several literary texts which bear useful witness to that culture. These are especially useful in elucidating three sorts of concerns which lie repressed in the popular ethos itself: a critique of privilege and hierarchy, an acknowledgement of the positive potential in social conflict and dissonant behaviour (typified by the battle between Carnival and Lent), and finally, a collective desire for material gain and security of possession. Perhaps the most stimulating application of those assertions comes in Chapter 6, in which the utopian writings of Thomas Nashe (*Lenten Stuffe*), Shakespeare (treating Jack Cade) and, of course, More's paradigmatic classic come to the fore.

In Part III, we move from carnival to theater. Bristol begins with the assumption that theater, as a public and licit institution, was and still is a matter of debate. Rapidly dismissing the recent thesis of Ann Cook that playgoers of the period were a privileged and well-heeled lot — a dismissal apparently based more on the inconvenience of such a view rather than on any consideration of its supporting evidence —, Bristol assures us that theater enjoyed wide social participation and support. Such support constantly rendered theater's potential for subversion very clearly to contemporary authorities. Only when such authors as Jonson pioneered the sense of authorship as ownership of, and thus responsibility for, the text could theater gain respectability.

Bristol concludes with a trio of chapters (Part IV) on 'Carnivalized Literature': a study of the penetration of carnival into the formal literary text of the day, as observed in several examples drawn from the RenLit canon. Here, we have a demonstration of three narrative forms making integral use of the carnivalesque: the mockery of marriage in the wedding feast and charivari, the mockery of death, and the festive struggles in the treatment of high political conflict, especially in Shakespeare.

In recent decades, historians of culture on the one hand and the practitioners of literary criticism on the other have often drawn closer to each other, and have explored together the theoretically informative work of social anthropologists and social theorists. Though obviously writing from the perspective of literary criticism, Bristol exemplifies this interdisciplinarity in a number of fortunate and some less fortunate ways.

From the perspective of the historian of society and culture, it is something of a disappointment that Bristol's discussion so rarely descends from the level of theory and from the methods of textual inference to some more empirical perspective. He largely ignores the growing accretion of evidence regarding the nature and context of performance, even though some of the best of such evidence has been compiled by his fellow literary scholars through the Records of Early English Drama series. He also neglects numerous and extended *historical* studies of particular events, issues and problems which figure prominently in his discussion. The work of Charles Phythian-Adams and Mervin James on civic ceremony, of this reviewer on the Yarmouth fishing industry which formed the setting for Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe*, of Susan Brigden and Steve Rappaport on the harmonious aspects of London society, and many more such studies could substantially have enriched (or perhaps usefully amended) Bristol's analysis.

In the same vein, neglect of archival and other non-literary sources, such as those conventionally employed by social historians, has frequently left Bristol discussing

carnival in Renaissance England through inference from the scholarship of, e.g., Davis, Leroy-Ladurie and others, based on French sources. This is all to say that the empirical foundations of this interesting work are often weak or misplaced, even when firmer support seems well within convenient reach. Finally, while Bristol makes a useful contribution to contemporary literary interpretation, many outside that immediate field will find the presentation inaccessible in several respects. A jargon-laden and needlessly obscure expression, an index devoid of much besides people's names, and a lack of a full summary and conclusion all detract from the whole and reduce the potential audience.

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Marie-Aimée Cliche — *Les pratiques de dévotion en Nouvelle-France*, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1988, 354 p.

Marie-Aimée Cliche a d'abord été séduite par une idée de Pierre Boglioni — auteur de la préface — voulant que le catholicisme des néo-Français ait été plus « apprivoisé », moins sauvage, paradoxalement, que celui des Français tout court à la même époque. Autrement dit, la religion du peuple y aurait été moins déviante par rapport à la norme tridentine. À la fin de son travail, elle conclut que l'idée était bonne et que, vérification faite, la piété des laïcs canadiens se moulaient presque sans reste dans les formes aménagées par le clergé local, acquis à la contre-réforme.

En passant, ce même Pierre Boglioni a aussi opposé la religion « popularisée » à la religion authentiquement populaire, distinction pertinente, en l'occurrence, mais que l'auteure ignore et que le préfacier choisit également d'ignorer.

Marie-Aimée Cliche, disions-nous, a vérifié l'hypothèse précitée. Sur quel donné ? Sur les actes surrogatoires, c'est-à-dire non obligatoires quoique conseillés, particulièrement la prière et l'aumône, actes posés par les laïcs de la ville de Québec et des environs sous le régime français. Ces gestes lui paraissaient de nature à révéler ce que la piété du peuple avait en propre, vu que ce que les gens feraient de la sorte, ils le feraient spontanément.

Sans doute, et pourtant, en focalisant sur le surrogatoire, sur ce qui dépasse le minimum requis, sur les laïcs-qui-ressemblent-aux-religieux, ne sera-t-on pas détourné de ce qui, ailleurs, s'avérerait plus nettement laïc ou populaire, de ce que la direction ecclésiastique stigmatise justement par le mot de superstition ? Cette difficulté est tellement réelle que l'auteure se trouve conduite, malgré elle, à inclure dans son chapitre II sur la piété un paragraphe sur les superstitions et un sur la sorcellerie qui ne sont sûrement pas des œuvres surrogatoires.

Revenons à celles-ci. Elles sont évoquées pour le Québec des XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles suivant les règles de l'histoire sérielle. L'auteure a dépouillé les archives, les récits d'époque, par exemple, les Relations des jésuites, les sources secondaires, etc. jusqu'à atteindre dans certains cas l'idéal de l'exhaustivité. Les faits qui en ressortent sont distribués en quatre catégories donnant lieu à autant de chapitres : les pratiques de piété, la pratique de l'aumône, les confréries et attitudes devant la mort. Un peu partout