

down from its original 850 pages. The present volume is slim and concise, and one assumes that quite a bit has been excised. This editing is a cause for concern; as reader, one feels that the book inadequately presents its aims and purposes. Reading the introductory chapter, one cannot help but wonder what the book is about: Booth or his subjects? Several phrases suggest that it is the interviewees of Booth's religious survey who are in focus, and yet the first chapters almost exclusively deal with Booth and his faith. The final lines of the introduction open up a thought-provoking line of inquiry, however, asking "Who hierarchised poor London?" and indicating that the working people "themselves were intent on creating and maintaining poor respectability and hierarchical relations on every rung of London society" (p. 17).

This struggle between various factions on claiming the prerogative to interpret the problems of poor London is the book's true topic, and it is revisited with increasing urgency throughout the empirical chapters. If one reads the book as a study of notions of morality and hierarchy in various social strata, then it is an insightful and confident foray into the complex relations among various viewpoints, dealing closely with several illuminating examples of how ministers and charity workers related to the people they encountered in their work and how the poor related to them in turn. In the sections detailing such relations towards the end of the book, Gibson-Brydon formulates a welcome criticism of received notions about the late-Victorian lower classes handed down almost unaltered from Marxist labour historians to post-Marxist, post-structuralist historians. Instead of trying to find proof of a "class consciousness" among the London poor or of progressive "radicalism" among working women, Gibson-Brydon is one of those rare historians who actually looks at how the lower classes of this age acted and thought, giving us fascinating insights into the internal relations of working-class life. At their most revealing, his findings certainly fulfil the aim he phrases of demonstrating "to historians that working-class social relations ran on hierarchical, not class lines, and Booth's survey gives scholars a good idea of how hierarchical relations worked" (p. 106). I only wish we would be given some more of these findings.

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GRENIER, Benoît et Michel MORISSETTE (eds) – *Nouveaux regards en histoire seigneuriale au Québec*. Québec: Septentrion, 2015. Pp. 483.

What images of the seigneurial regime, Jean-René Thuot asks in this volume, should we wish to preserve today? For many people outside Québec, and particularly non-historians, seigneurial tenure probably evokes an antiquated image from the distant past. If English-speakers have much notion of it, they likely conjure up the long lots spreading back from the banks of the St. Lawrence

and its tributaries but may fail to realize that the shapes of lots were not a required component of seigneurial tenure. Following the important works of Fernand Ouellet, Louise Dechêne, and Allan Greer, among others, historians are apt to associate the property regime with the exploitative relations of seigneurs and their tenants or *censitaires*. Some historians use the word “feudal” to typify the property regime, though they acknowledge the differences between practices in Québec and classic medieval systems.

After the British takeover of Québec, English-speaking merchants decried seigneurial tenure, comparing it unfavourably with freehold title where in theory individuals owned their land outright with no obligations to superiors. The seigneurial requirements to pay annual dues (often including a capon), take wheat to the seigneur’s gristmill, turn over one-twelfth of the purchase price after selling the property, maybe even supply specific days of labour to the seigneur, undoubtedly appeared foreign to the archetypical British yeoman farmer. Nonetheless, some British settlers believed they could benefit from seigneurial tenure, and many British merchants and colonial officials purchased seigneuries. As Alex Tremblay Lamarche notes, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the group of seigneurs of British origin had become more diverse than previously, reflecting their “creole” identities of having been born in the colony. (With the desire to shift the focus to individual seigneurs, this collection downplays the on-going significance of religious orders, although Jessica Barthe discusses the cloistered Ursuline order’s active administration of its seigneurie of Sainte-Croix.)

Despite British views concerning the backward nature of the system of tenure, it took an incredibly long time to eliminate it. In theory, the seigneurial history of Québec drew to a close in 1854. No longer did peasants have to make annual trips to the seigneur’s manor to pay their dues. But they did. Many tenants chose not to commute their obligations, as the costs of paying a notary appeared higher than the on-going need to pay the small annual sum, an amount that inflation would slowly eat away. Not until 1940 did the annual obligations to the local seigneur end, and, as Benoît Grenier shows, the prestige of former seigneurs could linger much longer. Edmond Joly de Lotbinière, who died in 2014, continued to occupy his seigneurial pew in the church of Saint-Louis de Lotbinière during his summer visits. Although the authors do not develop this theme, some features of seigneurial tenure survive: some agrarian commons near Berthierville still are used for grazing livestock today.

This collection of articles provides important reflections on the persistence of the seigneurial tenure. It originates from two key sites of production, Benoît Grenier’s seminars at the Université de Sherbrooke and Alain Laberge’s students at the Université Laval. The chapters in this volume explore a number of key topics that advance our understanding of seigneurial tenure in Québec and bordering territories. The collection is divided into three sections focusing on seigneurial property, the seigneurs themselves, and the memory and persistence of seigneurialism. By complicating any facile views of the meaning and longevity of seigneurial tenure, this collection fully reaches its goal. One of its key features is the shift in focus away from the French regime to the period after the British

Conquest. In some ways, British control, with the legal complications involved in the change in regime, may have extended some seigneurial practices and indeed opened up new opportunities.

Two chapters by David Gilles and Isabelle Bouchard discuss the *ad hoc* ways in which Abenaki and Haudenosaunee acted as tenants and seigneurs in the period of British control. Joseph Gagné examines seigneurial claims around Lake Champlain, that is, New York and Vermont today, in the period after the Royal Proclamation of 1763. André Larose provides valuable research notes concerning the information contained in nineteenth-century *terriers*, sources that can shed light on historical geography, environmental history, local history, and genealogy.

Collectively, these contributions underline the conservative implications of land holding. It is very difficult to change land tenure arrangements, the path dependency of past practices often overcoming desires for change. The question therefore becomes who benefits most from reforms. A particularly significant chapter by Michel Morissette identifies the payments that seigneurs, and particularly institutions, received during the drawn-out period of the abolition of seigneurial tenure.

One of the other fascinating, if perhaps discouraging, themes to emerge from this study is the dissonance between scholarly studies of seigneurialism and its representation in popular culture. The television series from the 1990s, *Marguerite Volant*, reflected few of the themes of contemporary scholarship, relying more on the pleasant images of beneficent seigneurs that date back to nineteenth-century author Philippe Aubert de Gaspé and that continued to be refracted through historian Marcel Trudel's presentation of the "régime seigneurial" in the 1950s. It is perhaps not surprising that tourist boards tend to accentuate seigneurial manor houses as a way of attracting visitors, rather than the more modest houses of peasant farmers. Still, as Jean-René Thuot shows, it is worth keeping in mind that the seigneurial relations revealed by extant manor houses reflect much more the post-Conquest period than the period of French control.

Seigneurial tenure, far from disappearing after the British Conquest or even its apparent abolition in the 1850s, continued to enjoy a long life. For an approach that many contemporaries saw as outmoded and retrogressive, seigneurial tenure actually continued to hold meaning for the people who lived within its frameworks, or at least it represented a system whose lingering traces did not occasion sustained opposition. This volume covers very well the historical flexibility of a type of land tenure that many English-speaking Canadians probably thought had no future at all.

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