

MAGNUSON, Roger P. — *The Two Worlds of Quebec Education During the Traditional Era, 1760–1940*. London, Ontario: The Althouse Press, 2005. Pp. 267.

The Two Worlds of Quebec Education aims to provide a general educational history for Quebec. This task was undertaken by Louis-Philippe Audet in *Histoire de l'enseignement au Québec, 1608–1971*, but, because Audet's work has not been translated into English, Roger Magnuson tells us that he wants to "fill a void" in the historiography. Over 35 years of scholarship in education history, most of which deals with Quebec, has placed Magnuson in good position to produce an ambitious study of this magnitude. Although intended as a general survey, this work has a focus, and the author insists, as the title implies, that the central feature of Quebec society and education since the Conquest in 1760 has been cultural dualism.

The study offers a glimpse into the dynamics of schooling and society in Quebec, but it is a small glimpse, and the view is from above. An understanding of the public debate and the experience of those affected by schools — teachers, parents, and especially students — will require further research. Newspapers, pamphlets, petitions, letters, and diaries are only scarcely considered, and the bulk of evidence is drawn from government records and superintendents' reports. How did the public react to these reports? How did the people of Quebec react to educational legislation? Did they help inform and shape educational developments? Or were they passive recipients? In a word, the author provides a public history without informing the reader through the public.

The first three chapters of the book examine, chronologically, Quebec education from the Conquest in 1760 to Confederation in 1867. In a study spanning from 1760 to 1940, the period to 1867 should have been awarded more than three of the 14 chapters. Nevertheless, in his analysis of the early years, Magnuson points out that government interest in education placed Quebec at the forefront of educational development with revolutionary proposals as early as 1787, including a public education system from elementary years to university, with free schools in every district and a bilingual university. He concludes that the proposed changes would have been too radical to work. In an era without public education, however, any proposal was a radical one, and so the author's easy dismissal of the proposals of 1787 is regrettable. In many ways the year 1841 marks the real point of departure of this study. The most important development the author identifies in the early years was the provision for dissident schools found in the 1841 *Common School Act*: "The impact of article XI on the future of Quebec public education cannot be overstated," Magnuson insists, "for it contained the seeds of what was to become a dual denominational school system" (p. 42). It is on this point that the study hinges.

In the decades following the 1841 act, the "two worlds" of Quebec education drifted apart. Marked by what Magnuson calls the "triumph of denominationalism", an ultramontane clergy put pressure on the Quebec government to reduce the state's role in education and accord the Catholic Church a favoured status, thus going against the trend of lay public educational development in most modern societies. The Protestant system managed to provide a more secular and academic curriculum, the author argues, and with its urban population was better suited to adapt to the

changes in the modern world. Insisting that French Quebec failed to provide a system conducive to the changing world raises concerns. If we accept the assertion that the reduced role of the state separated Quebec educational development from that of other modern societies, then this argument would apply equally to Protestant schools, which were, in fact, the dissident schools. Implicitly, the author laments not the reduced role of the state, but the increased role of the Catholic Church. This subtle attack upon the Catholic Church, however, is not made explicit and thus not adequately dealt with.

The dawn of the twentieth century brought new challenges to which Magnuson believes Quebec schools, and especially the Catholic schools, were even slower to respond. Secondary schools were scarcely populated, higher education proceeded at a “sluggish” pace, and rural education was seen in an even more “lamentable state”. To a greater degree than other societies, Magnuson insists, “Quebec ideologically resisted the thrusts of modernity” (p. 121). The study does not detail the educational developments in other societies, however, and thus there is little on which the reader may base the comparison. Were other societies manipulating education in response to modernity? If so, in what ways? By not situating Quebec within a broader worldwide public school movement, the author makes it virtually impossible to see the contrast with which the development of education in Quebec should be lamented. Were Quebec educational leaders blind to changes in other societies, or did they simply ignore them? Did Quebec education develop in a vacuum? Such questions are left lingering.

Indeed, Quebec differed from most western societies in that its dual population insisted upon a dual school system. Magnuson’s evidence is replete with educational reformers demanding such a separated system, which put a strain on Quebec that most modern societies did not inherit. But in an era of educational experimentation, all societies faced strains peculiar to their particular circumstances. A challenging, divided system is too simple an answer to Quebec’s educational questions, and, considering the comparable systemic developments in neighbouring Ontario, it may be no answer at all. A discussion of the transnational dialogue among educational leaders who collectively collaborated and addressed the strains of school design would have allowed us to situate and assess Quebec’s involvement in, or resistance to, the development of modern school systems. The author has succeeded in providing a general educational history of Quebec to an English audience, but his study raises more questions than it answers concerning Quebec’s dual cultural dynamic, and begs for future scholarship. The call for future scholarship, however, should be the mark of a good introductory study.

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MEEHAN, John — *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929–1941*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004. Pp. 250.

Just in time for the seventy-fifth anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between Canada and Japan comes John Meehan’s *The Dominion and the Rising Sun*, a lively