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(1988)

“Anthropological research and  
intervention at Laval University  
since the sixties”

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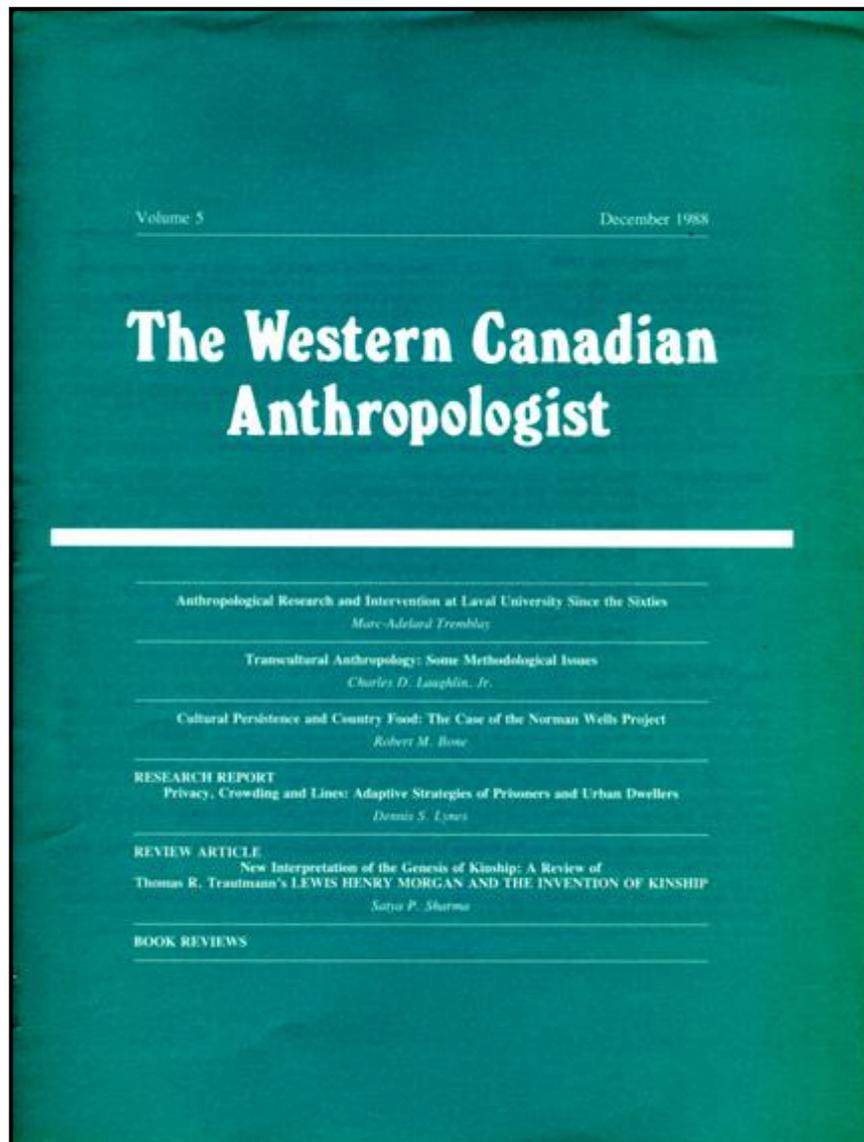
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Marc-Adélaré Tremblay (1922 - ) \*

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## Introduction

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There are many different ways to provide insight into the kind of anthropology practiced in Quebec province. A recent article by Serge Genest and Claude Bariteau (1988) which appeared in *Anthropologie et Sociétés* presents us with one avenue. Their analysis centres upon the 1980-1986 period which they consider as a turning point resulting from the fact that social anthropologists have now to secure jobs outside academe, have to widen their questionings, too exclusively centred in the past upon populations discriminated against, and have to insert better their professional production into the international realm. Tremblay and Gold (1983) followed a different path when they wrote for *Ethnos* an article on the theme of "National Anthropologies", that is, those growing at the periphery of the intellectual centres of production (England, France, and the United States). The historical

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\*\* An earlier version of this paper was presented by Dr. Marc-Adélaré Tremblay as an invited lecture at the Plenary Session on "ANTHROPOLOGY IN FRANCOPHONE QUEBEC/ANTHROPOLOGIE AU QUÉBEC FRANCOPHONE" during the Annual Conference of the Canadian Ethnology Society, Saskatoon, May 14, 1988.

reconstruction of Genest and Bariteau provides us with the kind of data helping us to understand the socio-political conditions which represent the very foundations for the kinds of trends able to reorient our anthropological thinking and practice. Tremblay and Gold's reconstruction adopted the same kind of theoretical frame of reference, that of historians of science, whose interests converge towards establishing the kinds of socio-cultural conditions that allowed for the emergence of new institutions, ideas or scientific practices, with the view of demonstrating continuities and discontinuities in anthropological trends. our analysis took into account the anthropological production of McGill, Montreal and Laval up to 1983. Genest and Bariteau added Concordia to these three universities. Other attempts of the same kind, made either by Maranda (1983) or by Salisbury (1976, 1983) on the topic of Quebec anthropology, provide us with other insights that are also interesting to grasp better the many observable trends.

[4]

My effort, today, is less ambitious, since it is restricted to Laval (we are very fortunate, indeed, that Gilles Bibeau \* has agreed to take on the Montreal facet) and belongs to the ethnographic style. This is not to imply that my observations will be restricted to describing different patterns. I shall inevitably propose some analytic schemes revealing the kinds of conceptual frameworks used to collect data. I shall even risk, at times, some interpretation without worrying about convergences or divergences.

I start from a list of priorities, established in recent years by my Department, and attempt at reconstructing the socio-political and phenomenological conditions which produced them. These research fields have been set out as major axes for our development. (Mind you, the order of the listing does not prejudge, however, their relative importance) : (a) ethnicity and cultural identity ; (b) gender studies ; (c)

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\* Gilles Bibeau also delivered an invited lecture at the same Plenary Session on "Anthropology in francophone Quebec/Anthropologie au Québec francophone" at the CES *Annual Conference* on May 14, 1988. A revised version of his lecture titled "Profile of Anthropology at the University of Montreal : Style, Theory, and Practice in a *Changing Society*" will be published in the next issue of this journal. (General Editor).

kinship studies in Quebec ; (d) social stratification in rural environments ; (e) northern and circumpolar studies ; and (f) semiotics. I am aware that the documentation of the kinds of historical conditions to which I referred earlier would necessitate long and rigorous reconstructions, especially if one wishes to establish relationships between these thematic orientations and the conditions which produced them. This is beyond my scope. Rather, I thought that one way of putting these departmental priorities in proper light would be to refer to the birth of a research tradition that appeared with the teaching of the first anthropological courses some thirty years ago. That research tradition grew in importance and complexity with regard to object, culture areas and conceptual models as the department increased in size and acquired greater sophistication. The main culture areas covered 'in the beginning were North America (Inuit, Amerindians and French speaking groups), French Black Africa and Latin America. Let's announce at the very beginning that all these field projects were team-centred, conceived as training stations, and were oriented towards studying the impact of technological and institutional changes on social organizations and value systems. A few of these data gathering initiatives became, with the course of time, action-oriented.

## 1. The ethnography of the north shore of the St. Lawrence River

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Two research projects have had a deep influence on the *orientations* of anthropological research at the start : the Hawthorn-Tremblay Study Committee on *Canadian Contemporary* Indians (Hawthorn 1966-1968) and a research program which lasted ten years (1965-1975) entitled "The Ethnography of the North Shore of the Saint Lawrence River" (Tremblay 1967, Tremblay and LePage 1970). That particular research enterprise [5] allowed for the training of a large number of graduate students. Some of the "North Coasters", as we refer to them today, are teachers with tenure either at the University or in the CEGEPS (that is, the collegial level). It provided also the data for the publication of a large number of scientific articles and set the

opportunity for the establishment in the Department of an Ethnographic Laboratory later to become a Laboratory of Anthropology. Even though that research team, which I had the good fortune to lead with Paul Charest, has not produced a published final report (it does exist, however, in a preliminary draft form) and used as a conceptual framework a culturalist model -noteworthy at that time taking into account the theoretical development of the discipline - the overall assessment of its quality, from my standpoint, is quite positive.

One has to take into account the fact that this particular research team started a research program at a time when it was innovative to do so ; it has allowed for the training of a large number of cultural anthropologists with well established careers and reputation ; finally, it built a field file of all codified materials gathered in the research area, following in this the model established by Clyde Kluckhohn in his Southwestern studies and by Alexander H. Leighton in his studies of the social epidemiology of mental disorders in Nova Scotia (Stirling County). One could argue, of course, that these highly organized field data have been underutilized ; unfortunately, that is the case. On the other hand, they have been extensively used all along by Paul Charest and his research teams on the Montagnais and more recently by Yvan Breton and his research team which produced in the Montagnais, English and French languages six descriptive brochures on the region with the aim of making local residents aware of their cultural environment - an interesting venture in knowledge transfer. Finally, as pointed out by Tremblay and Gold (1983 : 57), it provided the ground for the constructing of theoretical frameworks derived from cultural ecology (Charest 1973), ethnohistory (Dominique 1974), and historical materialism (Breton 1973b).

## 2. Inuit studies at Laval

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Like those on French Canada, Inuit studies were defined at the time of the establishment of an anthropology department in 1971 as a special culture area of study. Having received, from the very start, solid financial support, these studies were oriented towards gaining "a global

understanding of Inuit culture in Eastern Arctic, particularly, that of New-Quebec" (Dorais 1972 : 1). Even though that research team did not neglect to document technological, ecological and traditional as well as contemporary socio-economic aspects of Inuit culture, one does not fail to note, however, that there is a marked interest for symbolic representations and dialectology, which constituted, then, the two main research interests of the first two Inuit specialists of our Department, namely, Saladin d'Anglure and Dorais. The former had made field trips in that area in 1956, 1960, 1961, and 1962, prior to joining Laval. As a matter of fact from 1965 on, his research base was established in Montreal. "But in 1968, the project's centre of gravity [6] moved from Montreal to Quebec, since the research director and the majority of the team members had a Laval affiliation" (Dorais 1972 : 3).

From 1967 to 1971 Saladin d'Anglure was a guest lecturer at Laval. But he acquired a full teaching assignment upon becoming the Department Head in 1972. The same year, Dorais joined the departmental team whereas Trudel completed the Inuit group in 1975. The wealth of research grants received throughout those years by the Inuit team allowed for the hiring of a number of research assistants. One of the original features of this research team was the integration, as research assistants, translators, and editors-informants of Inuit personnel, allowing them, as they wished, to fully participate in research activities and in the publication of Inuit texts in syllabic. These research projects on Inuit New-Quebec had a visible impact on the larger community. Research on land occupancy and land traditional use, for instance, were of some utility to the Inuit during the negotiations leading to the James Bay Agreement.

Especially since 1979-1980, that team has produced a large number of articles. Saladin d'Anglure, for his part, produced an article on the Inuit of New-Quebec in the Fifth Volume of the Handbook of North American Indians (1984a) in addition to providing for Etudes/Inuit/Studies and other journals articles related to his circumpolar studies (Saladin d'Anglure 1983, 1984b, 1984c represent a few examples). Trudel, using an ethnohistorical perspective, has been the general editor of two issues of *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* : one on the caribou (Trudel 1979) and the other on the relationships between ethnology and history (Trudel 1978) in addition to publishing the research results of his ethnohistorical studies on the

north in other specialized journals. Dorais has just published the history of an Inuit village (Dorais 1984a) and a grammar of the Inuit language (Dorais 1983). He has sketched a critical inventory of Inuit studies bearing on Northern Quebec (1984b). He has also to his credit numerous articles in European and Canadian journals and in specialized publications.

In close cooperation with Inuit people, members of that team established in 1974 the INUKSIUTIIT KATIMAJIIT Inc., an independent Inuit association that groups just about the same individuals. In 1978, under the aegis of that association, appeared the first issue of *Etudes/Inuit/Studies*. In addition to producing published materials in syllabic, the corporation organizes every other year, on a university campus, a scientific congress attended by researchers, Inuit specialists and Inuit leaders.

### 3. Studies on French black Africa

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From the very start, this culture area represented one of importance at Laval. Graduate students of the first generations went to French Black Africa to carry out fieldwork and collect materials which they felt would be useful to write a thesis. Since most, if not all of [7] them, went there as lone researchers, it is more difficult to make an historical reconstruction of Africanist contributions. However, there exist two articles which throw some light on African studies carried out at Laval. I refer to those of Santerre (1974) and Lumsden (1983). It is not irrelevant, for that matter, to mention that Genest has been the editor of *The Canadian Review of African Studies* which represents an additional source of information.

The first Africanist to join Laval's Department of Sociology in 1963 was Albert Doutreloux, a Belgian who had worked in Zaire for one decade before his coming to Quebec (Doutreloux 1967). With Tremblay and European visiting professors, until his departure at the Free University of Brussels in 1969, he carried out the basic courses offered to students registered in the Anthropology option within the then joint Sociology and Anthropology Department (methodological

and theoretical courses, lectures related to culture areas, introductory courses, lectures on authors and levels of the anthropological analysis, etc). His hermeneutic perspective and his interest in establishing a link between philosophy, psychology and sociology as well as his main thoughts and observations on religious phenomena do represent his main contributions while being at Laval. He was the thesis director of students who had worked in such areas as Rwanda, Cameroun, High Volta and Zaire. Charest, for instance, before joining the Laval staff had completed, under Doutreloux's leadership, one field trip in Rwanda and under Robert Gessain's guidance (of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris) another one in Eastern Senegal.

The first real African research program was started in 1970, centred upon the transmission of knowledge and was led by Santerre, two years after he joined the Department. The objective of that program "is to study the modalities of knowledge transmission in various types of societies (those either with oral tradition, or written tradition, or those which represent a mixture of both oral and written) with the aim of contributing to a theory of knowledge that would parallel that of a power theory in political anthropology" (Santerre 1972 : 2). Santerre wrote his doctoral thesis on the Coranic school (1968) whereas Genest produced his on traditional knowledge (1976). The African research program lasted until 1980. It allowed a number of graduate students, coming from different disciplinary trainings, to undertake observational research, and in some instances, to produce a thesis. Santerre and Genest wrote a number of Articles related to that field program and the former published two books (Santerre 1973, 1982c) . The reader on the Anthropology of Cameroun education represents, indeed, a noteworthy contribution.

Chalifoux, who had joined the Department in 1974, conducted field research on the Piti of Central Nigeria. Stemming from his thirteen months of ethnographic research in Western Africa, he produced a doctoral thesis (Chalifoux 1976) and a number of articles on polyandry (1977 and 1979), on relationships between kinship and economy (1980b), on the impact of colonial history (1976), on relationships between generations (1985), on rituals and ideologies (1976) and on ethnicity [8] (1980a, 1982 and 1983). The originality of these scientific contributions relies upon comparative transformational analyses of peoples of these and other regions in close liaison with Jean-Claude

Muller and Chantale Collard, the latter having carried out research on homologous populations in Cameroun. These models made the way for redefining structural Marxist approaches to African societies and for demonstrating how the dialectical logic represented an operation that was independent of material relationships.

## 4. Studies on Central America

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Two areas in Central America (Mexico and the Caraibs) have been at the very centre of various *training phases* of teachers and students alike in the Department. Bariteau, Chalifoux, Dagenais and Pilon-Le, for instance, have written their master's theses within the Research Centre on the Caraibs at Montreal University which was then led by Dubreuil and Benoist. Chalifoux and Dagenais, later on, developed other research interests in the area : Dagenais on Guadeloup women and Chalifoux on ethnicity in French Guyana.

At the very *beginning*, the kinds of research conducted in Central America were either of the lone wolf type or group-based and they aimed at studying various topics rather than bearing on a unique theme. From that standpoint, one has to recognize "the pioneering work of Pierre Beaucage, now in the Department of Anthropology at Montreal, who, as early as 1966, undertook field studies in Honduras" (Breton 1972 : 1). His studies on Mexico in Sierra Norte de Puebla began in 1969 with a complete economic and demographic *inventory of* three communities when he became aware that political *constraints* in the area were to prevent him from pursuing his work in economic anthropology in the Black Caraibs. In 1970 the Mexican studies of the Beaucage team grew in importance and centred upon the analysis of social morphology and social dynamics in six different communities.

In the fall of 1970, Breton began his field studies on fishermenfarmers in the Northeast of Venezuela ; they represented a follow-up of his field studies at Saint Paul River on the Lower North Shore of the Saint Lawrence River (1973b) and were in close liaison with his doctoral studies at Michigan (1973a) . These Venezuelan communities had a traditional mixed subsistence economy (fishing and

farming) which was in a rapid phase of transformation. The research question dealt with the investigation of the adaptation mechanisms during the specialization process.

In 1972-1973 Breton started his field observations of Maya fishermen-farmers of the Tierras Bojas in Yucatan with the view "of studying problems associated with the economic specialization of Maya farmers in a particular sub-region, that of the coastal plain Northeast of the city of Merida, and *analyzing, with* the help of differentiated units of production, if the work sectors of farming and craftsmanship offered real possibilities for diversification" (Breton 1972 : 10). That particular work got its inspiration from the developments registered [9] in the field of economic anthropology, mainly by Eric Wolf, and challenges the functionalist foundations of studies on peasant studies carried out, for the most part, in tribal Africa. In closely examining factors and social relationships of production, the author wishes to demonstrate that the bettering of ways of living depends at the same time upon resource diversity and the direct control that one exerts on these resources. That study allowed for the publication of a French (Breton and Labrecque 1981) and a Spanish (Breton and Labrecque 1982) book and the production of a doctoral thesis (Labrecque 1982b).

Field studies began by Breton in 1970 were being followed by other studies in 1976 which centred on fishing villages and their process of economic production and using historical materialism as a conceptual framework. Let us add that other studies on Central America allowed for the spreading of research efforts outside that geographical boundary, that is in Latin America, through the efforts of Breton and his research teams and those of Arcand. The latter, with his work on the Cuivas of Colombia (Arcand, 1971, 1972, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979) has widened the research interests (ethnocide) and theoretical perspectives (structuralism and the symbolic approach) of our study program.

## 5. Native studies

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Native studies were at the core of the anthropological development at Laval. If one sets aside the investigations of the precursors (Tremblay 1982b) , major enterprises on that theme got a slow start. With a theoretical slant at the beginning, native studies evolved, in recent times, toward applied aspects which had a strong socio-political impact. It was in the fall of 1972 that a formal research group on native studies was established (Pothier 1972). it was planned "to make that (research) team an important centre for Quebec Indians themselves" (Pothier 1972 : 1). That objective would be reached, it was thought, "in associating Indians to the research work, in reaching Indian students and in creating services (like publications in native languages) that would be accessible to the whole community" (Ibid). These objectives served the purpose to better root a growing tradition that was firmed up some years later (and was to become one of Laval's trademarks). The first works to take place (after the establishment of the group) were those of Simonis on traditional pharmacopeia and myths of Quebec Mohawks (1972, 1973a, 1973b, 1977a and 1977b), those related to economic development among the James Bay Cree and those of Bouchard with his toponymic inventory among the Labrador and Lower North Coast Montagnais (1973).

In more recent years a number of colleagues in the Department have significantly contributed to the development of native studies : McNulty in ethnolinguistics (McNulty 1974 and 1978, McNulty and Basile 1981, McNulty and Taillon 1982) ; Trudel through his detailed ethnohistorical analyses either on Northern Quebec Inuit, on the exploitation of natural resources in the Quebec-Labrador peninsula (Trudel 1979), or cross-cultural relations in the North (Trudel 1981) ; Arcand, [10] particularly in his work on social representations (Arcand and Vincent 1979) ; and Charest, in his field research on native natural resources through an ecological perspective (1977, 1980a, 1980b, 1982b, 1986). In Charest's case, one has to mention his close association (through a service loan) with the Attikamek-Montagnais Council (the CAM in French) whose fallouts are highly important (Charest 1987) as much for the training of graduate students as for the

renown of our Department. With Trudel, Charest has undertaken the write-up of a dossier (Trudel et al. 1986) aimed at the establishment of a certificate program on native studies in the fall of 1986. Moreover, in association with McNulty and Huot (a biologist), Charest has been successful with the support of the CAM and Montagnais communities in getting one-half million dollars in research grant money for a research project bearing on "the exploitation and development of fauna resources by the Quebec Montagnais".

## 6. Studies on rural communities

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Theoretical orientations as well as methodological procedures of the early work on rural communities at Laval are extensively covered in a recent article by Tremblay and Gold (1984 : 263-274). Most of them can be seen as being in the footsteps of *functionalist trends* in anthropology. But as soon as the early seventies, other theoretical models, particularly that of historical materialism, were going to make their imprint on studies in rural Quebec. In agriculture as well as in fisheries, for instance, knowledge producers attempted to decode "the impact of the penetration of a capitalist mode of production" (Tremblay and Gold 1984 : 275). The neo-Marxist perspective, it is well known, attributes a major importance to the impact of capitalism on the process of social stratification associated with new power structures and to the ideological dynamisms accompanying them. Bariteau, in his analysis of fisheries on Magdalena Islands (1978 and 1979), and Breton (1979) and Pilon-Le (1979 and 1980), in their work on the agriculture of a modern Quebec, came to the conclusion of a greater insertion of capitalism as the motor of production, of a growing influence of the State on the process of production itself and of a weakening autonomy of the producer.

The research of the Breton team in Bellechasse, from that standpoint, is of interest for it aimed essentially at putting into relationships "the concepts of peasant societies, of social classes and of State infra-structures" (Breton 1979 : 312). That objective was set up after it was discovered that the main characteristics of the Quebec

peasant society consisted in (a) the diversity of the labor process among peasants ; (b) the absence of a major socioeconomic stratification among producers ; and (c) the prominent role of small commercial production units as a mode of economic organization (Ibid : 311).

Recent studies of Pilon-Le on rural Quebec bear on the inheritance process of farm lots. They are part of a France-Quebec cooperative venture centreing upon a comparative study of State agricultural food production policies and of the kinds of chain reactions they engender [11] on rural communities. The Quebec part of these studies attempts at finding the impact of agricultural policies on the handing down patterns of farmstead. Special attention is to be given to problems faced by families (with repercussions on units of production) during the process of handing down itself (Pilon-Le 1984).

Claude Bariteau has undertaken work on the effects of capitalist development on the fishing communities of Magdalena Islands. With the help of a Marxist model, he has illustrated how the constraints originating from the capitalist system reduce the efficiency of cooperatives. As a result, and following Bernier and Breton in this, Bariteau (1977) reveals the structural impediments to regional development. The latter is also of the opinion that the case of the Magdalena Islanders is typical. In a first move, cooperatives are being created with the aim of bringing corrective measures to an obvious economic disequilibrium. Then, as a further step, the State marginalizes cooperatives in order to allow for the establishment of multinational corporations. Thus, in that process, cooperatives become a subsidiary part of a capitalist mode of production (Ibid : 36). According to Bariteau, it is feasible, within the regional context, to better the understanding of the power structure and of the nature of conflicts through the study of the impact of changes brought about by a capitalist monopoly. Although Bariteau's conceptual paradigm on regional development reveals a slight determinist shade, it is firmly grounded in an ethnography of high quality on the structure of local and regional elites as well as on the industrialization process. Today, with the help of the same conceptual model, he continues his work in three Quebec municipalities having a different economic structure, with the view of comparing the variations which are being reflected in the various types of local power structure and, consequently, in class behaviour and relationships (Bariteau, Pilon-Le and Durand, 1980). Since the research

work beats as much on laborers as on managers, it is likely to enrich the wealth of data available for the comparative anthropological analysis on the consequences of industrialization in Quebec (Tremblay and Gold 1984 : 283-284).

## 7. Structuralism and the symbolic representation of Quebec

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According to Tremblay and Gold (1984 : 280) :

Structuralist models have served to study the symbolic representation of native and Euro-Quebec populations. They have been used both by European students of Lévi-Strauss who migrated to Quebec (Saladin d'Anglure, Simonis) and by Quebecers who studied at La Sorbonne (Savard). Structuralists and neo-Marxists, working in the study of Quebec, have entertained relationships of coexistence. As a matter of fact, some cultural anthropologists, in recent years, have attempted to integrate these two schools of thought in a unified theoretical paradigm. Whereas the Quebec Marxist anthropology, using an historical materialism of the universalist type, tries [12] to reveal how the precapitalist structures are being destroyed, the structuralists, on the other hand, build their interpretation with universalist type criteria to assess the ideological representations of the Quebec social structure with its ongoing changes.

The structural analysis of popular discourse by Pierre Maranda extends his former analysis on the myth through a rigorous study of the semantic back up of class differences and ethnic stratification (Maranda 1977d and 1979). Through a semantographic comparison of the labor universe in Upper Town and Lower Town Quebec, Maranda centres his analysis on the infra-discourse. By using the tools of the structural analysis and those of computer science, he demonstrates that the "clichés, stereotypes and experimental residues" (Maranda 1978 : 251) of the urban dweller reflect "the condition of the locutor" (Ibid) according to the socio-economic cleavages. A more substantial analysis

by the same author compares the semantic map of ethnic groups in Montreal according to sexual solidarity, masculinity, femininity and ethnic solidarity (Maranda 1979). Based upon many different types of analysis, the preliminary results of that study produce networks of associations between ethnic groups, bringing to evidence the fact that a "complex network of semantic intersections and complementarities between Montreal ethnic groups rest upon a common ground that expresses itself at the paradigmatic level (narrative). That study calls for replicative studies in other cities of the North-American continent" (Tremblay and Gold 1984 : 281-282). In the light of those results one can see that Maranda uses the conceptual perspectives and the operational tools of structuralism and semiotics in order to reveal the un verbalized codes which, while reflecting implicit cultural patterns, bring forth observations of great utility to better grasp the significance of inter-ethnic relationships in Quebec.

## 8. Feminist studies

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A recent article by Dagenais (1987) which bears on feminist methodology deserves special attention in that it gives an overall view of the terminology, the epistemological and deontological principles that support observational procedures. Moreover it provides us with some leads for further research. Here is what she says :

It is because there now exists a scientific feminist production, that is plentiful and of great quality, that I am in a position, today, to make a systematic presentation of its methodology. The principles, questions, contradictions, leads which are being referred to here, according to me, are those that one implicitly or explicitly finds in the scientific production of North American feminists, in particular, and those which have some recurrence in their discourse (Dagenais 1987 : 1).

As a field of study, the feminist perspective is a particular type of look on social reality and an analytical mode of observed phenomena, that is closely associated and is being nurtured by women's organizations, [13] a social movement whose primary objective is the

reconstructing of institutions, authority models and social relationships in order to build an egalitarian society. Some scientific circles maintain that this approach shows a political slant and, as a result, consider it as being non-scientific. In her article, Dagenais tries to document that feminist research, on the contrary, is rigorous in its procedures and can be characterized as integrating epistemological principles which, despite disciplinary traditions, are invested with a unitary view.

Most of Dagenais's studies, in the feminist perspective, were carried out either in Quebec (Dagenais 1979, 1980, 1981a, 1981b, 1985a, 1985b among others), or in Guadeloup (1985c, 1986 ; Dagenais and Poirier 1986). Some of Labrecque's work was carried out in Mexico where her main objective pertained to the domain of economic anthropology. As a matter of fact, a number of her studies there bear on economic production and on the proletarianization of Maya peasantry in Yucatan (Breton and Labrecque 1981 ; Labrecque 1982a, 1982b, 1985). While pursuing her studies from the historical materialist perspective on production relationships in Yucatan, she developed an interest in the status (condition) of women over there and their position in the social structure (Labrecque 1986, 1987). In a further move, she integrated the feminist and neo-Marxist perspectives in her studies on the Attikamek with the intent of showing better the state of dependence of native communities on the capitalist regime and of understanding better the nature of women-men relationships. With Drolet, she compiled an annotated guide of documentary sources on these populations (Labrecque and Drolet 1986).

## 9. Urban ethnicity

[Retour à la table des matières](#)

Urban anthropology and the anthropology of ethnicity have become in Quebec fields of study which entertain so many interconnections that I feel justified to provide you with a single overview. The emergence of these two sub-disciplines is as much the result of the development of anthropology as it is of the social transformations of Quebec society and of the coming to Quebec of anthropologists born elsewhere. The latter did not perceive in the same manner, as those born here, the

pressure of Quebec nationalism and the kinds of studies that were related to its growth. As a consequence, they widened the ideological and geographical horizons of field studies pertaining to that theme. That influence has been felt particularly in the choice of populations being studied, conceptual models being tested (Elbaz 1985a) and in the examination of personal trajectories of the social insertion process in Quebec institutions. In the case of Quebec, ethnic minorities settled in Montreal where they represent a growing segment of the population. The Francophones in metropolitan Montreal in 1987 represent about sixty-five percent of the total population, which reflects a decrease when compared to foregoing decades. The proportion of Anglophones in the Greater Montreal area is also on the decline. In Quebec, immigration patterns have acquired a status of primary importance for the French speaking group, especially in regard to the linguistic training and language use of the contingent of newcomers. [14] With the sharp decline in the birthrate among the French speaking group and the defeat of the Parti Québécois in 1985, the language question has become a major issue at stake.

In the early years of anthropological work at Laval, the research interest of colleagues centred upon native populations, the Acadians of Southwestern Nova Scotia and the Cajuns of Louisiana. These studies were mainly concerned with the foundations of cultural identity of these groups as well as with the social conditions for alienation and marginality. It was with that earlier experience that Tremblay has undertaken empirical studies of French-speaking groups in Quebec that allowed for the publishing of his recent essay on the threats which represent for survival the increase in cross-cultural contacts and the invasion of the American mass culture (Tremblay 1983b).

According to Elbaz, it was only in recent years that this field of investigation acquired a particular status in Quebec.

Ethnic studies in Quebec became a true field of investigation in recent years only. It was only with the coming of cohorts of non-Europeans immigrants in the Montreal urban network and problems raised by their social integration that a real interest for research developed and that questions were being raised about the role of ethnic groups in Quebec society (Elbaz 1985b : 24 ; See also Elbaz 1983).

In some way, recent field studies on ethnicity have been dependent upon the interests of government institutions at the provincial and federal levels. They used the results of these studies in their attempts at managing the kinds of problems raised by their coming upon local populations.

Since 1978 ethnic studies have become diversified both from the viewpoints of theoretical and methodological perspectives and of the objects under scrutiny. A number of studies try to reconstruct the process of ethnic, political and cultural communalization of immigrants who settled in an urban environment. The dimensions of symbolic interaction, of the building up of situational identities and of the integration in the political universe and on the work place are explored, notably in the studies of Dorais and Pilon-Le on Vietnamese communities (Dorais et al. 1984, 1985, 1987), as well as on Laotian and Cambodian communities and those of Elbaz on Quebec Jewish communities (Elbaz 1979b, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987). The latter has also conducted field studies on urban ethnicity in Israel (Elbaz 1979a, 1980a, 1980b and 1986). Schwimmer is another colleague who has carried out similar studies in New Guinea. Some other colleagues carry out work in the field of ethnic studies : Schmitz on the Irish and English speaking populations of Quebec and Chalifoux on the Anglophones of Quebec.

[15]

## 10. The anthropology of health, of death and of aging

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This particular field of study is the result of the convergence of three specific scientific traditions : (a) traditional ethnography interested in indigenous medical systems ; (b) cross-cultural studies on culture and personality to which equally well contributions were made by psychiatrists and social anthropologists ; and (c) the various actions and social experimentations associated with the expansion of international programs of public health. These traditions pinpointed the weaknesses associated with the use of a biomedical model to explain illness and

demonstrated the necessity to incorporate psychological as well as cultural factors in the etiological paradigm. It was that awareness that served as a background to studies at Laval in that field. Two articles throw some light on the kinds of work which was carried out at Laval and at other Quebec universities in the anthropology of health field : one of them represents an inventory of work done up to 1982 (Tremblay 1982a) and the other places the emphasis on the sociopolitical conditions of its emergence (Tremblay 1983a). Recent work by Tremblay is related to the operationalization of a systemic perspective on health (Tremblay 1982a) and to a critical evaluation of Quebec psychiatric services since the setting up of medicare (Tremblay 1987).

Genest, our Department chairman, oriented his studies in the ethnomedical field. He went to Northern Cameroun in 1979 to undertake studies on Mafa healers which lasted until 1985 (Genest 1981 and 1983). As early as 1974 he began fieldwork for his doctoral dissertation on traditional knowledge and knowledge transmission among Mafa blacksmiths (Genest 1974 and 1976). He became interested as well in phytotherapy in African ethnomedicine (Genest 1979a and 1979b). His ethnomedical knowledge and his familiarity with its general perspectives and tools are well reflected in an article which appeared in *Anthropologie et Sociétés* (Genest 1978).

Santerre, for his part, in his African studies on knowledge transmission became interested in the aging process. He became aware that old people are the depositories of traditional knowledge, have a status of authority and are invested with social prestige. Traditional rural Quebec gave its old people statuses and privileges similar to those observed in Africa. But in a post-industrial Quebec, which is undergoing deep transformations of its social institutions and of age related roles, the situation has drastically changed. That observation led Santerre to become interested here in the aging process and to the kinds of statuses relegated to the Quebec old people of both sexes, living either at home or in public institutions (Santerre 1982a, 1982b) .

Santerre's studies on aging unfold in three different directions. One aspect deals with the impact of the ethnic factor on aging. Another path is related to studies first led by Corin on the influence of social networks on the aging process. The third dimension deals with life trajectories and with attempts at uncovering the impact of occupational history. In the latter, the accent is being placed on the main trade of the aged and

on the manner in which they perceive and live their old [16] age. Santerre and Corin have been special editors of an issue of *Anthropologie et Sociétés* on old age (Vol. VI, No. 3, 1982).

## 11. Symbolic studies

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This conceptual paradigm, whose first applications were in studies of beliefs, rituals and religious practices, has been rejuvenated in the last quarter century, mainly through the efforts of Lévi-Strauss. The latter has claimed that it was a necessity to widen the universe of appearances and visible phenomena, be they of a religious or of a lay kind, in order to attain their foundations, their meaning and their symbolic outlook. A number of colleagues have carried out studies with that perspective and Laval is recognized for its many contributions in that field. For illustrative purpose, one can mention those of Saladin d'Anglure (1986) in his analysis of a "Third Sex" ; those of Arcand in his writings on the Cuivas (1976) or on White representations of native people (1979) ; those of Simonis whose book *La passion de l'inceste* (1968) is a classic on that topic and has been translated in many languages ; those of Schwimmer in his numerous authoritative articles on the functions of symbols and/or incorporating a semiotic perspective (1965, 1979, 1981a, 1981b, 1983 and 1985) ; and those of Maranda in the analysis of myths (1967, 1968, 1970, 1972a, 1972b, 1974, 1977a, 1977b, and 1977c) and in the fields of semiography (1977d, 1977e, 1978 and 1981) and semantics (1981a, 1982a, 1982b) . His semiographic work on symbolic representations is experimental in nature and requires the gathering of field data using the TAL-TAN protocol. These representations are being analyzed with the help of a matrix that he has elaborated He is carrying out also long-term studies on the oral traditions of the Lau of Malaita, Solomon Islands. These have allowed him to produce for the Granada Television in England the film "The Lau", which received last October an important international prize for a documentary.

Schwimmer's contributions on the Maori and the Orokaiva are of the utmost importance for Oceanian anthropology. His studies are being

carried out with the prestigious Parisian team of Louis Dumont (Schwimmer 1973, 1979, 1984, 1986a and 1986b). Most recently, he has started work on the symbolic aspects of the feast in Quebec. His overall work, which relates to many different cultures, either in following new analytical paths or in looking at research objects to which anthropology had given little if any importance up to now (the political construction of the aesthetic object, for instance, 1986b), widens the outlook and consolidates the roots of the symbolic perspective.

## Conclusions on the anthropological research at Laval

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The works to which I referred to up to now show the importance given to research activities by the professorial team at Laval. Research projects which were implemented in the early years of the Department in the privileged culture areas grew in importance with the hiring of new staff and with the growth in student population. The diversification of research interests has coincided with the appearance of anthropological [17] sub-disciplines and the widening up of research orientations. "Under the apparent diversity of particular research projects one can detect a certain number of main themes framed within a rather well-defined theoretical perspective which characterizes the kind of research being carried out nowadays" (Dorais 1980 : 7). The three-year departmental plan of development is quite explicit regarding this matter. Let me quote from it :

Within the scope of the two main theoretical schools which are being seen as complementary, structuralism and historical materialism, the essential part of our teaching and our research deals with four main themes : the study of minority groups, the analysis of the restructuring of primary production (hunting, fishing, trapping and farming) , urbanization phenomena and the study of symbolic and ideological production. The analysis of these themes stem from studies carried out in different culture areas, that is, the five traditional culture areas (French Quebec, Inuit,

Amerindians, Latin America and French Black Africa) coupled with new areas which reflect staff specialties, that is, The Caribs, Nigeria, Middle-East, Melanesia, Indonesia, Francophone North America and Quebec ethnic minorities (Plan de Développement 1979-1982).

Since 1982, when the above was written, the prominence of the two main theoretical currents has been attenuated and greater importance has been given to other conceptual paradigms, such as the symbolic approach, the systemic perspective, feminist studies, or yet to make room for theoretical horizons requiring the use of computers.

Sainte-Foy, April 28, 1988  
Revised, August 1, 1988

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