Migration and Regional Labour Markets, 1870–1915: the Quebec Case

Bruno Ramirez

The relationship between migration and the development of labour markets is an aspect of industrialization that has not received from labour and social historians the attention it deserves. Partly this has resulted from a tendency to view this type of issue as falling squarely within the realm of economic history, where the basic assumption has been that a sort of overarching economic rationality has allowed to match in time and space workers willing to sell their labour power with jobs waiting to be filled.

But the economistic perspective of the labour market, with its neoclassical penchant for only wanting to see the act whereby labour power is exchanged for wages is ill equipped to account for the larger social, demographic and cultural dynamics that allowed this exchange to concentrate itself at a given time and in a given place. More often than not, that exchange was possible because labour power, whether embodied in individuals, families, or entire communities, crossed city borders, mountain ranges or oceans, in order to turn wage prospects into life projects. The massive population transfers that industrialization produced — both internationally and interregionally — are therefore as much a domain of labour history as they have been of migration studies, economic history or demography.

This paper is a modest attempt to view labour markets as tips of icebergs in deep and turbulent historical oceans. One of the challenges in this type of analytical voyage is whether one can bring together within the historical scientific imagination massive aggregate data on wage fluctuations, population movements, indexes of regional economic development etc., with — on the other hand- the story of a young Quebecois who on a given winter of the 1870s hauls lumber in a Mauricie forest, or of an Italian immigrant worker who in 1909 washes cars at the Canadian Pacific Angus Shops in Montreal, or still of a French Canadian family who in the 1890 gets off the train in a New England mill town.

The Province of Quebec lends itself quite well for this kind of historical reflection; for, throughout its major stages of industrialization the
Province's social and economic space was crossed from one end to the other by significant population movements which helped shape the final regional configuration both within and outside Quebec's borders. That these population transfers were economically motivated and that they fed emerging or consolidating labour markets is only part of our reflection; the other part has to do with the migratory phenomenon itself, with the different ways in which it articulated itself temporally and spatially, and with some of the social and cultural dynamics on which it rested.

II

Throughout the second half of the 19th century and up to the onset of the Great Depression, three major population movements dominated the Quebec social and economic landscape. Two of these movements moved into opposite geographical directions, while the third one was responsible for linking some of Europe's most depressed and marginalized areas with Quebec's major pole of industrial development, i.e., Montreal.

The first of these movements — i.e., colonization — has traditionally been viewed as falling squarely within the rural universe of the vast Quebec hinterland. Of course, there is in this a basic truth that can hardly be denied. Colonization (or frontier settlement, as this is called in US historiography) was primarily the making of people leaving overcrowded rural parishes along the Lawrentian Valley and setting their compasses toward the backcountry, where vast forests still waited the civilizing axe and plough of French Canadian settlers.

There are, however, at least two types of relationships between this intrarural migratory movement and industrialization. The first is ideological and has to do with the prominent role that French Canadian clerical elites played not only in promoting and managing the settlement of the hinterland, but also in trying to make colonization a powerful antidote to the threat of urbanization, industrialization, and emigration. The other concerns the ways in which ultimately the regions of colonization became the seat of a particular industrial project marked by paternalism and marginality.

In the Mauricie region — as the works of Normand Séguin and René Hardy have recently shown — the colonization movement proceeded gradually from the ancient seigneurial territories to the almost inaccessible piedmont areas, some 60 miles to the interior. It was a movement that went hand in hand with the penetration of the forest by lumber companies. The latter, having to rely on a seasonal work force willing to submit to the intensity of the extractive cycle, turned logically to the nearby settlement areas where 'colons' survived throughout the initial forest-clearing period on a mere subsistence economy. But even where forest land had been turned into arable land, 'colons' found in the lumber sites an opportunity to
turn the dead season of their agricultural cycle into waged labour. Moreover, lumber chantiers constituted a convenient outlet for some of the colons' produces, particularly at a time when geographical isolation made access to the agricultural market all but impossible.

From mid-century to the turn of the 20th century, the colonization movement in Mauricie led to the formation of twenty new parishes, bringing the total population of the region to about 50,000. It was from this reservoir of population that the forestry industry drew most of its work force, whose number fluctuated from a low of 1,800 to a high of 6,000.

But the sociography of the colonization regions was also characterized by a reverse population movement. And this was true not only of Mauricie, but also of the other major colonization regions that have recently been studied, such as the Sagueney and the territories east of Rimouski. Overcrowded rural parishes were in fact sending off a portion of their population southward, where smokestacks and river-propelled machinery needed the arms and backs of growing armies of men, women and children. But this reverse movement could originate not only from the old parishes, but also from the frontier parishes, among a population that had tried colonization and had found it wanting. Séguin and Hardy argue that the significant population turnover they observed in some of the frontier parishes of the Mauricie was due to the fact that colonization entailed a process of population selection in terms of age. Younger rural Quebecers, single or with small families, were the more prone to try an option — such as colonization — that translated in a protracted life of strenuous physical work and of self-subsistence. But that once these families reached a size such as to make self-subsistence impossible, they quit and left the place to younger and stronger 'colons'.

Another explanation, not unrelated to the previous one, may be suggested by the high rate of desistance — i.e. prospective settlers giving up the colonization enterprise after realizing the physical and material difficulties it entailed. The testimony of a colonization agent to a commission of inquiry gives a clue concerning this type of problem; land hanger and the willingness to roll up one's sleeves were not sufficient. The settler more likely to succeed was the colon défricheur, as distinguished from the colon cultivateur, and clearing forest land in the particular quebecois context required work techniques and a type of life endurance that not all prospective settlers possessed or were capable of sustaining.

By the turn of the century, the St. Jean Colonization Society, one of the largest societies of its kind which distinguished itself for its aggressive advertising and recruiting methods, experienced great difficulties in keeping prospective colons on the frontier region; clearly, a great number of them were ill prepared to undergo an arduous period of forest-clearing that foreshadowed an uncertain future.

One should also add that the vision that many landless Quebecers had of becoming one day self-sufficient (if not prosperous) farmers entailed a
long-term investment in their own time and in their own physical resources. Government regulations for the sale of forest lots were particularly demanding. Before the settler could gain full legal possession of his lot, he had to take up residence there during the first six months after the sale transaction had occurred; he had to build a house not smaller than 26 by 20 feet, and he had to reside two full years; moreover he had to clear and farm a minimum of 10 percent of the surface of his lot during the four years following the sale transaction. It was a venture that increasingly showed its risky side as the forest frontier was pushed further to the interior, and as the convulsions occurring in the industrial geography to the South were making access to a wage a more appealing option.

One of the colonization regions I am presently studying, Rimouski County, shows clearly how the interaction between colonization and emigration is reflected in the population movements. During the 1870s and 1880s most of the movements that we have reconstituted occurred from parish to parish within the same county or to and from neighbouring counties. One can notice a few departures of families toward the USA or Montreal, but they are negligible. The geography of these population movements changes dramatically starting around the late 1880s, and throughout the 1890s nearly all the departures reported are toward the United States.

As the 19th century moved toward a close, tens of rural counties were in fact linked one after the other, directly or indirectly, to the great urban and industrial poles of the American Northeast. And for a growing number of rural Quebecers who might have been caught in the dilemma 'colonize-or-emigrate', emigration emerged as a better and more viable alternative to colonization because, among other things, it was an option containing a variety of possibilities. One could resort to it as a temporary strategy; one could move with the whole family; one could only send one or more children, boys or girls, of working age as a way of redressing the family economy; temporary emigration could also become a sort of testing period, in the course of which a final strategy could be decided upon. Perhaps, one dimension that has not yet been fully analysed and which made emigration appear as a better alternative to colonization, was the immediacy of the rewards one obtained for one's labour. One could almost say that the immediate cash reward that the manufacturing system provided had the effect of accelerating the social time during which life prospects had to be turned into concrete individual and family economic strategies. And by the 1880s for most rural Quebecers those cash rewards were only one-day travel away. It is not surprising then if during the two closing decades of the century when emigration to the USA took on the character of a mass exodus, all the possibilities that the emigration alternative foreshadowed turned into distinct patterns.

Economic historians have long explained these economically-motivated inter-regional population transfers in terms of the role played by both push
and pull factors. But the ‘push-pull’ model does not tell us much about why some rural Quebecers chose the forest while others opted for the factory beyond their country’s borders. Nor can it explain why some Quebec migration streams fed some regional manufacturing labour markets, while other streams converged toward different industrial regions. Our research on Berthier and Rimouski Counties show for instance that Quebecers from the former county went overwhelmingly to Rhode Island mill towns, while those departing from Rimouski tended to go to southern Massachusetts. Clearly, what linked scattered Quebec parishes to specific New England industrial centres was more than simply the making of an overarching economic rationality.

When on a late Summer day of 1899 the northern train arrived to Fall River, among the dozens, if not hundreds, Quebecers joining the local labour market there was the Boucher family. The Bouchers had waited before putting an end to a life of bare subsistence in a rural parish near Rimouski because only then their move could be based on a concrete knowledge of the conditions to be found at the other end of the trip, and on the assurance of a certain degree of assistance forthcoming from relatives already settled in Fall River. In Quebec Mr. Boucher had two cousins who had sojourned in the States “to make quick money”. On the other side of the border, relatives “had been advertising” to the Boucher the advantages of moving to Fall River. The day after their arrival to the Spindle City they could already lodge on their own; and three days later the school-year started and three Boucher children could be placed in the local French Canadian parish school. Our narrator, Elmire Boucher, was only five-year old at the time. When she reached the age of fourteen, in 1908, she began working in a local textile mill, making a starting salary of $7.77 per week.

The entry of the Bouchers into the Fall River labour market had been the culmination of a decision-making process that spanned over many years of rural life, and that was based on the working of solidarity mechanisms that stretched from a small and seemingly isolated Quebec parish to one of New England’s most important manufacturing centres.

The point to be stressed here is that what to contemporary observers appeared as an anarchic back-and-forth movement across the Canadian/US border had increasingly become the result of carefully pondered decisions based on an expanding cognitive map of the economic and cultural universe in which one’s strategy would be tried out. The current research aimed at reconstituting several migration networks linking a number of Quebec rural parishes with given industrial centres in New England should throw some much needed historical light on this dimension of labour-market development.

In his pioneering historical-geographical study, Ralph Vicero has shown how central French Canadian immigrants had become by 1900 to the labour markets of the New England textile industry. And more recently, Tamara Hareven has skillfully brought to light some of the social and
cultural mechanisms adopted by these immigrants to insert themselves into the labour market of a New Hampshire mill town. However, neither of these authors tell us much about the historical antecedents of this population, other than referring to some standard ‘push’ factors such as the reproducing vitality of French Canadians and the devastating effects of agricultural crisis.

But there are at least two aspects which, if sufficiently appreciated, should help us put in a richer historical perspective the encounter between French Canadian immigrants and the New England labour markets. One is that a significant number of rural Quebecers resorted to emigration only after having tried the colonization panacea. In Quebec, colonization was more than an ideology: it was a societal project whose initial appeal rested not only on the material promises it evoked but also on the duty to fulfill the destiny of the French Canadian race. French Canadian colonization was a sort of Turner’s frontier thesis in reverse: the taming of the forest would not produce a new, freer, protodemocratic homo; rather, it would preserve — and ultimately reinvigorate — a civilization that appeared threatened by political oppression and by social anarchy. Where this appeal managed to push the forest frontier and produce new social and cultural space, survival and conservation overruled the chances for novelty and transformation. In these cases — as Gérard Bouchard has observed — “la population s’en remet tout naturellement aux anciennes fidélités qui tissent les liens du sang, de l’entraide et de la tradition. Les élites locales trouvent là un terrain propice à l’application d’un projet de société qui met au premier rang la conservation de la foi, de la langue et des institutions, la protection de la famille, le respect des hiérarchies, l’attachement au sol, figure de la patrie, et au passé garant de l’avenir.”

And to a very large extent, this was the sociocultural universe that most of these regions of colonization delivered to industrial capital. As current local research is increasingly showing, in the emergence of the pulp and paper industry — whether in Mauricie or in the Sagueney region — the local clergy played a crucial role as a midwife in that process that saw the transformation of thousands of rural Quebecers into an industrial proletariat, setting ideological and organizational parameters for the nascent workers movement, and insuring that the workers’ social consciousness be nurtured by submission to authority and respect for the sacrosanct doctrine of class harmony. The colonization project had therefore the effect of dividing a significant portion of rural Quebecers into those who submitted to the duty of “Dieu, terre, et patrie”, and those who found the will and the means to seek an alternative.

In those cases in which the colonization project was deserted, leading thousands upon thousands to take the route southward, former ‘colons’ had to replace a collective, national project, with one that had to be of their own making; and they had to do it with little or no industrial skills. In the American industrial wage they found the essential means for their material
sustenance, but also the means that allowed them to reconstitute in a foreign land the community they had lost. Thus, the entry of Quebecers into many local labour markets in New England can hardly be divorced from the urgency to fill a communal void and to reconstitute a semblance of the social and cultural life they had known throughout their previous existence. It is not surprising then if a great deal of human investment in community building (through the creation of a rich ethnic institutional network) — much more than the search for emancipation through class activity — seems to have characterised the sociocultural dynamics of most emerging *Petits-Canadas*.

It is in this context, I feel, that the social consciousness of a newly constituted industrial proletariat and the particular ways in which ethnicity helped shape it have to be analyzed. And this, notwithstanding the fact that by the time this desire had become a new collective project, the Quebec clergy had caught up with the new reality and had positioned itself so as to hegemonize it.

The other point revolves around the question of how the emigration project affected the traditional sexual division of labour within the French Canadian immigrant family, and in particular: what was the impact on intrafamily relationships resulting from the valorization of women's work in the textile labour market. Here again, this question can hardly be tackled without proper references to the sociocultural context that had shaped economic and family life in 19th-century rural Quebec. Even the most sophisticated study such as Hareven's tells us little on the effects resulting from the rapid transition from a context in which women's economic contribution was primarily nonmonetary, to one in which women's and children's waged work constituted a major source of family earnings.

There are reasons to believe that the psychological cost, particularly for the family head, must have been a heavy one. We know for instance that — especially in the early stage of family migration to New England labour markets — in the great majority of cases the family head was not employed in textile. Based on a sample from 18 New England textile communities, Ralph Vicero found that in 1870 only about 19% of the French Canadian family heads were employed in textile mills, whereas 67% of such families had one or more members (other than the family head) employed in textiles.

Coupled with data showing the relative importance of the work of wives and children as a source of family income, one is led to suggest a process of economic marginalization of the family heads within the family units. A 1874 study of 29 French Canadian families, done by the Massachusetts Bureau of Labour Statistics, found that children contributed 38% of the family income. As late as 1908, the Immigration Commission found this to be still the case. Although the proportion of income coming from children's work had declined, it still constituted 33% of the total family income. Similarly although 91% of the French Canadian households surveyed the husband contributed to the family income, in only 24.3% of the cases did the husband's work represent the only source of income for
The marginalization of the family head may further be suspected from some data provided in 1880 by the Franco-American paper *Le Travailleur*. The inquiry found that in a Connecticut textile community about 50% of the French Canadian family heads averaged around six months work per year. In contrast, according to the author, their children in the mills were employed an average of 72 hours per week the year around. It was not rare to find — as John Crowell’s study pointed out — French Canadian unemployed fathers in Lowell and Lawrence attending to the housework while wives and children worked in the mills.

Thus as an economic unit, the relationship that the various members of the family had with such market was one that seemed to reverse the traditional economic hierarchy that characterized family life in rural Quebec. Whereas in Quebec the father was at the centre of the family’s economy, in the industrial and urban environment of New England textile communities his role was subordinate or at least complementary to that of his wife and children. The evidence is still too thin to assert conclusively the thesis of an economic marginalization of the French Canadian family head, but it seems to find some confirmation in oral history accounts. Many of these accounts stress that the major pressure to return to Quebec came from the fathers, and were often explained in terms of their difficulty in adapting to the economic recomposition which occurred within the family unit.

Access to the wage and to the role of co-bread-winner did not instantaneously turn French Canadian daughters and wives into independent women; but most likely set off a process of self-valorization whose ramifications into the intertwined universe of work and community have not yet been fully investigated.

III

By the time rural Quebec had become firmly integrated into the labour market configuration of industrial New England, Montreal and its surrounding region entered a cycle of unprecedented industrial expansion and economic growth which, among other things, greatly accelerated the internal migratory flow of Quebecers toward the metropolitan region. However considerable this internal population movement proved to be, clearly it was not sufficient to meet the labour needs of the urban economy, for this is the time that witnessed the development of massive immigration of Europeans to the Quebec metropolis.

Governmental statistical reports of yearly immigrant entries to Quebec for the period that concerns us are highly unreliable (no distinction was made between immigrants destined to the Province and those who just passed through on their way to other Canadian provinces or to the USA).
This makes it impossible to have accurate estimates of the actual volume of the immigrant population which, at a given year, resided in the Province. A partial quantitative view can only be deduced from the decennial census statistics which specified the ethnic origin of the enumerated populations. Thus, the immigrant-ethnic populations whose origins were other than French or British progressed from about 26,000 in 1901, to about 158,000 in 1931. In this latter census year, more than four fifths of that population was concentrated within the Montreal region, with Jews and Italians constituting the great majority.

The confluence of these two population movements — one originating in rural Quebec and the other in Europe — and its impact on labour-market developments in the Montreal region has remained largely outside the research agenda of either labour historians or economic historians. We know, for instance, very little of the social and occupational profile of those Quebecers who migrated to Montreal as compared to those who instead by-passed the metropolis and joined the labour market south of the Canadian border.

Similarly, a highly fragmented knowledge of the place of immigrant labour within the Montreal economy has emerged from the handful of studies dealing with particular industrial sectors or specific immigrant/ethnic groups. But this knowledge is totally inadequate to enlighten us on the kind of inter-ethnic dynamics existing within the urban labour force, and in particular on the degree of competition that may have existed between French Canadian workers and the newly arrived European workers.

One of the most important reasons for this major historical lacuna has to do with the lack of access to what constitutes by far the most basic source for the socio-historical study of the working class. Canadian regulations, in fact, prevent access to census manuscript schedules beyond the 1891 census (unlike the US situation, where the 1900 and 1910 federal census manuscript are open to researchers); which means that the massive inflow of immigrant population that marked Quebec (and Canada) from the turn of the century to the eve of W.W.I. cannot be subjected to in-depth structural analysis (residential patterns; occupational and demographic profiles; spatial and social mobility, etc.). It is in this context, therefore, that my comments on the relationship between labour-market dynamics and immigration should be read.

Aggregate statistical data on the Montreal active workforce, as well as the existing historical literature on trade unionism in Quebec, clearly suggest the existence of a certain degree of segmentation among the urban labour force. Like most North American industrial centres, Montreal seems to have produced a labour scenario in which internal boundaries based on gender, skill, immigrant status, and race, kept workers separated into distinct labour markets. And as in most other North American industrial centers (if not more), immigration and ethnicity were two crucial
elements feeding the segmentation process of the Montreal labour force. We have long known, for instance, of the central place occupied by British immigrants in the early stages of the Montreal manufacturing industries; or later, of the significant concentration of Jewish workers in the local clothing industry, or of Italian immigrants in the general unskilled labour market. But studying the performance of each group in the labour market in isolation from the other groups prevents us to capture some of the larger and more complex dynamics, of which labour-market segmentation was one.

Access to the employment records of what was probably Montreal’s largest single employer provides us with a rare opportunity to test the segmentation hypothesis, as well as to throw new light into this important historical issue. The employer in question — i.e., the Canadian Pacific Railway — penetrated the urban space of the Quebec metropolis through a network of a dozen or so sites, ranging from the mammoth “Angus Works” (production and maintenance of railway engines and equipment) to the various stations, railway yards, junctions and depots. Besides the mere large amount of workers the company recruited for its operations, the fact that these operations were highly diversified, give these data a strong degree of representation vis-a-vis the broader Montreal labour market.

In a recent article published in *Labour/Le Travail* I used these employment records to study the profile of Italian immigrants working at the various CPR sites during the first three decades of this century."26 This analysis brought to light the particular occupational universe marking the CP’s internal unskilled labour market. It was a market characterized by the highest degree of instability and precariousness, offering essentially dead-end jobs such as ‘laborer’, ‘car washer’, ‘car cleaner’, ‘general helper’ — jobs whose performance only required physical strength and a willingness to submit to the dictates of some foreman or departmental boss. It is not surprising that 60% of these employments lasted less than six months, and 41% less than three months; nor is it surprising to note that only one out of three Italian workers that made up our sample returned to the company for rehiring. What needs to be stressed, however, is that the segmentation mechanisms that we have observed in this particular labour market were as much a result of managerial policies as they were a function of the immigration phenomenon. In fact, for the thousands of Italian immigrants who entered and left the Montreal economy, the unskilled jobs that the CP offered served more as a way of gaining a foothold in their search for more desirable work opportunities than as employments that could be turned into stable careers. During the 1900-1915 years in particular, the period during which Italian immigration to Montreal was at its peak, more than half of the cases of separation were worker-initiated, showing that the transitory character of the CP’s unskilled labour market was also the making of the Italian immigrant workers themselves. It was thus an urban labour market made possible by the constant replenishments of fresh
immigrant arrivals, and by the latter's willingness to submit to its dictates for as long as they saw fit. Italian immigrants met these requirements — either out of necessity, or because nothing else was available at the moment, or still because their lack of readily marketable skills precluded better jobs; and in so doing, they kept the labour process of Montreal's largest industrial/commercial complex running.

This research is presently being enlarged to include all Montreal CPR workers regardless of their ethnic affiliations. An initial testing sample of nearly 200 randomly selected cases gives us some interesting insights into the relationship between immigration, ethnicity and occupational dynamics, as well as into the place occupied by French Canadian workers in the labour-market segmentation process.27

Tables I and II show the CPR workforce in terms of the major immigrant and ethnic groups that composed it, and the degree to which ethnic affiliation was reflected in the occupational hierarchy of the company. The first striking element that emerges is the underrepresentation of native Canadians (both French and English Canadians). Taken together, they made up 45% of the entire workforce, with French Canadians being, as expected, by far the largest ethnic component. Throughout the first three decades of the century, then, the CPR's Montreal facilities drew more than half their workforce from immigrant sources, with Southern and Eastern Europeans filling the bulk of the company's internal unskilled labour market.

The underrepresentation of French Canadians relative to their numerical strength within the city's labour force cannot be easily explained, unless one takes into consideration the occupational distribution of this workforce and the ethnic stratification that existed within it. Such an analysis, in fact, suggests that French Canadian workers tended to be positioned somewhat in the middle of the occupational ladder. With few exceptions, they were conspicuously absent from the white-collar positions and from some of the top skilled positions (particularly in the metal and machine sectors, where English Canadians and British immigrants tended to prevail). At the same time, they were considerably under-represented in the unskilled sectors, where as already pointed out immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were predominant.

If one digs a little deeper into these data, one finds that the most common skilled position among French Canadian CP workers was 'freight carpenter', and it is highly plausible that we are dealing with a skilled occupation that, much more easily than others, could be transferred from a nonindustrial setting and adapted to an industrial context. It is premature to suggest that the top skilled jobs in the metal and machine trades may have been precluded to French Canadians because of their lack of industrial skills, just as white-collar positions were, on account of English language requirements; but it is a leading hypothesis as our research progresses.

Looking at the other side of the occupational spectrum, our sample
shows clearly that the CPR attracted a significantly small proportion of French Canadian general labourers, to such an extent that the company had to resort massively to immigrant workers. Was this due to the fact that French Canadian unskilled labourers shunned the CPR and sought employment elsewhere, or was it due to the fact that the native unskilled labour force did not reproduce itself sufficiently to meet the demand of a rapidly expanding labour market? Probably both of these dynamics were operative. French Canadian unskilled labourers may have found culturally and economically more rewarding to seek a wage in sectors of the urban economy (for instance, building construction or small craft production) where work relations tended to be more personal and working conditions less regimented. At the same time, it is hard to neglect the fact that the occupational background of CP unskilled immigrant workers is so similar to that of young rural Quebeckers who during that period were feeding the exodus toward New England. Clearly, then, the demand for unskilled labour coming from employers such as the CP was being unheeded by significant numbers of Quebeckers who preferred to bypass the metropolitan labour market, thus choosing an American wage over an English Canadian wage.

In this paper an attempt has been made to show how the historical reconstitution of population movements can throw new light on some of the social and cultural dimensions of industrialization. Moreover, by looking at these population movements not separately but as interacting through time and space, this paper has sought to provide a more integrated understanding of the centrality of migration in the history of Quebec. Each of the three migration movements discussed in this paper had its own internal dynamics, fed particular labour markets, and contributed in its own way to the regionalization of the north Atlantic economy. But while their history has tended to be viewed primarily as part of the history of capital and of its power to dislocate socio-economies and force people on the move, it is also the history of people interpreting life prospects, activating communal solidarities, and trying to valorize themselves not just in the market place but also in the more complex universe of civil society.

Notes

This paper grows out of two research projects presently in progress. "Histoire sociale des Italiens de Montréal, 1870–1930" (funded by the Canadian Ethnic Studies Program, Multiculturalism Sector, and by the Université de Montréal), and "French Canadian Emigration to New England, 1870–1930: A Local and Comparative Analysis" (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada). The author expresses his gratitude to these agencies and institutions for their generous support, and thanks Jean Lamarre for his assistance in the latter project.
For an excellent overall assessment of the historiographical production on colonization in Quebec, see Normand Séguin, “L’histoire de l’agriculture et de la colonisation au Québec depuis 1850”, in Normand Séguin, ed., *Agriculture et colonisation au Québec: aspects historiques*. (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980), 9–37. Reference to more recent and specialized works will be made in later portions of this paper.


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Hardy and Séguin *Forêts et société*, 150–151.


Ibid., 402, ff.


A source permitting to follow these population movements is the ‘rapport pastoral’, i.e., the yearly reports that parish priests were required to send to the bishops of their diocese and which contained, among other things, the number of families departing from a given parish as well as the places of intended destination. The reports contained also information on the number of new families joining the parish and the locations these families came from. For a detailed discussion of this as well as other local archival sources and their relevance for migration research in the Quebec context see Bruno Ramirez and Jean Lamarre, “Du Québec vers les États-Unis: l’étude des lieux d’origine”, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, XXXVIII, 3 (Winter, 1985), 409–422.

Taped interview, Dept. of History, Université de Montréal, 1983. This interview is partially reproduced in Jacques Rouillard, *Ah les États!* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1985), 87–99.


Gerald Bouchard, “Ancient et nouveaux Québécois? Mutations de la société rurale et problèmes d’identité collective au XXe siècle”, *Questions de Culture*, 5

Historical studies on the emergence of French Canadian communities in New England have been proliferating in the past ten years. For an excellent overview of this historiographical production see Yves Roby, “Québec in the United States: A Historiographical Survey”, *Maine Historical Society Quarterly, XXVI*, 3 (Winter 1987), 126–139.


Ibid., 377.


La *Travailleur*, February 6, 1880.


The most recent attempt at measuring the ethnic composition of Montreal’s population in the 19th and 20th centuries is Paul-André Linteau, “La montée du cosmopolitisme montréalais”, *Questions de culture* 2 (1982), 23–54.


For a useful view of this literature see Yvan Lamonde, Lucia Ferretti et Daniel Leblanc, *La culture ouvrière à Montréal, 1880-1920: bilan historiographique* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture).

Bruno Ramirez, “Brief Encounters: Italian Immigrant Workers and the CPR, 1900–1930”, *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (Spring 1986), 9–27. The following paragraphs summarize some of the conclusions contained in that article.

The data used in this analysis come from: Canadian Pacific Railway, “Employees Pension Plan Records”, CPR Montreal Office. I am grateful to Mr. Omer Lavallée, CPR archivist, and to Mr. Walter Gregory, Head of the Pension and Actuarial Services, for graciously allowing me to consult this source.
Table 1. CPR's workforce by geographical and/or ethnic origins. Montreal, 1900-1930. N = 192.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnical Group</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Canadians</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Canadians</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other British</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italians</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other West Europeans</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europeans</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Canadian Pacific Railway, "Employees Pension Plan Records", CPR Montreal office. (Computed by the author)

Table 2. CPR's Workforce by Major Occupational Categories and Ethnic Groups. Montreal, 1900-1930.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>French-Can.</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>South &amp; East Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Collar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ibid (computed by the author)