

## Mark I Role Model and Inspiring Catalyst : Some Characteristics from a Perspective of Four Decades

Peter H. Nash

Volume 30, Number 80, 1986

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/021796ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/021796ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (print)

1708-8968 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Nash, P. H. (1986). Mark I Role Model and Inspiring Catalyst : Some Characteristics from a Perspective of Four Decades. *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 30(80), 151–160. <https://doi.org/10.7202/021796ar>

Article abstract

Raoul Blanchard's impact on geographic thought in Canada can be summarized in five major categories: 1) a methodical seeder of geographic ideas during regular visits in a land which he loved ; 2) a provider of a tangible methodology to colleagues and students in Québec ; 3) a regionalist who transplanted the approach acquired from his mentor and fused it with his own individual synthesizing technique; 4) a networker who possessed a remarkable personal style of communication; and 5) a philosopher *malgré lui* who embraced and intertwined a number of epistemologies and stated that he rejected them all. Blanchard's three thousand plus pages on Canada constitute a scholarly, reliable, and readable base for first generation Canadian (Mark I) francophone geography. He was an inspiring catalyst and personal friend of the author and many of his contemporaries, and more importantly a Promethean progenitor to second and third generation Canadian geographers.

## MARK I ROLE MODEL AND INSPIRING CATALYST : SOME CHARACTERISTICS FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF FOUR DECADES

by

Peter Hugh NASH

*Faculty of Environmental Studies,  
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario*

### ABSTRACT

Raoul Blanchard's impact on geographic thought in Canada can be summarized in five major categories: 1) a methodical seeder of geographic ideas during regular visits in a land which he loved; 2) a provider of a tangible methodology to colleagues and students in Québec; 3) a regionalist who transplanted the approach acquired from his mentor and fused it with his own individual synthesizing technique; 4) a networker who possessed a remarkable personal style of communication; and 5) a philosopher *malgré lui* who embraced and intertwined a number of epistemologies and stated that he rejected them all. Blanchard's three thousand plus pages on Canada constitute a scholarly, reliable, and readable base for first generation Canadian (Mark I) francophone geography. He was an inspiring catalyst and personal friend of the author and many of his contemporaries, and more importantly a Promethean progenitor to second and third generation Canadian geographers.

**KEY WORDS:** *Acral geography, Blanchardian characteristics, epistemological pluralism, genres de vie, Mark I geographer, microgeography, networking, Promethean progenitor, Vidalian tradition.*

### RÉSUMÉ

#### **Un modèle et un inspirateur: quelques caractéristiques vues à travers une perspective de quatre décennies**

L'impact de Raoul Blanchard sur la pensée géographique au Canada peut être résumé selon cinq catégories: 1) un semeur d'idées géographiques lors de ses visites régulières dans un pays qu'il aimait profondément; 2) le pourvoyeur d'une méthodologie tangible pour les étudiants et collègues du Québec; 3) un régionaliste qui transplanta une approche acquise de son mentor avec sa propre technique de synthèse; 4) un homme qui a réussi à construire un réseau d'information et un style de communication remarquable; et 5) un philosophe malgré lui, qui embrassa et combina de nombreuses épistémologies déclarant néanmoins qu'il les rejetait toutes. Les trois mille pages sur le Canada écrites par Blanchard représentent un ensemble érudit, fiable et très lisible pour la première génération de la géographie canadienne-française (Mark I). Il fut un catalyseur, un inspirateur et mon ami personnel ainsi que celui de beaucoup de ses contemporains, mais chose plus importante, il fut un géniteur prométhéen pour les géographes canadiens des deuxième et troisième générations.

**MOT-CLÉS:** *Caractéristiques blanchardiennes, genres de vie, « acral geography », géographe-inspirateur, microgéographie, pluralisme épistémologique, géniteur prométhéen, « réseautage », tradition vidalienne.*

\*

\*

\*

Every time I travel in Québec, whether briefly or for an extended period, my thoughts bring back memories of Raoul Blanchard. The fact that this issue of the *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* is devoted to celebrate this Promethean progenitor and peripatetic professor (1877-1965) shows that *le patron* affected scores of his descendants in a similar manner. We celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first publication of the first volume on French Canada of this inspiring catalyst. I feel it is an honour to represent an anglophone voice in this francophone chorus of gratitude and acclaim, not only as a symbol of an appreciative geographer residing in a different portion of Canada, but also of a devoted admirer who knew Raoul Blanchard during and after World War II. This modest contribution is an amalgam of my two 1985 papers on Blanchard, plus some thoughts from a book I am preparing, entitled *A Frenchman Who Did Not Like Cheese*, which focuses on research results obtained during a portion of my 1984-1985 Faculty Sabbatical Leave Fellowship awarded by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The prior articles involves are «Acral Geography Eschewed: A Prototype», *AAG Program Abstracts*, Association of American Geographers, Detroit, 1985, No. 280. (Geographic Thought II: Research Design, Behavioral, Marxist, and Realist), and «Raoul Blanchard: Promethean Progenitor and Peripatetic Professor», *Canadian Association of Geographers 1985 Annual Meeting*, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. May 1985, p. 65-66. (Abstract of 8 page mimeographed paper). It is hoped they add to the perspective being articulated in this volume on the role and influence of one of our intellectual forefathers.

\*  
\*            \*  
\*

The role of Raoul Blanchard can be described from five vantage points: the seeder, the methodologist, the regionalist, the networker, and the philosopher. The *first* involves his regular seeding of geographic ideas and concepts on his regular visits to Québec, to which he had an increasing paternal attachment and where he fathered numerous intellectual offsprings. The *second* describes him as a provider of a tangible methodology that was attuned to the scholars and the practitioners in Québec. The *third* focuses on Blanchard as the establisher of a regional focus, a particularly appropriate impetus in an area where regional studies had been done on an haphazard basis before. And the methodology was completely attuned to his regional elements of investigation. The *fourth* characteristic was that of the diligent networker, who wove a net of informants and resulting information, giving his field work substance and possibility of verification. The *fifth* thrust, though unaware during his lifetime that he might be considered an involuntary epistemological pluralist, was a pragmatic philosophical stance difficult to categorize even decades after the publication of his pregnant masterpieces showing concern with the sources and nature of geographical knowledge.

The fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II and my research during my sabbatical leave at the University of Waterloo brought back a multitude of reflections upon my military and academic associations with Raoul Blanchard. They are penetrating contemplations of an unforgettable character, one of the last of an almost extinct species. In the less sophisticated days of my youth I referred to him as a «real» geographer. Traversing and climbing the French Alps with «le Maître» when still in the U.S. Army in 1945 after VE (Victory in Europe) Day, I did not know (and if I did, I paid no attention to it!) that I was in the presence of one of the two «giants» who brought geographic thought to Canada: Griffith Taylor was the anglophone founder, and Raoul Blanchard the francophone counterpart.

Taylor had come across the Pacific and settled in Toronto. Blanchard traversed the Atlantic by boat twenty times and spent many months of each of his fifteen visits to Canada in Québec. I am pleased that now the time has come, two decades after his death, to analyze the contributions of the last protégé of Paul Vidal de La Blache and the first role model of francophone Canadian geographers, still revered by many living colleagues today on both sides of the Atlantic with gratitude and fondness.

The image of Blanchard remains clearly chiseled in my mind. Pierre Léon's (University of Lyon) description remains most apt, namely that of a

«... tall thin lanky figure, rather lost in a blue double-breasted suit which gave him a military air; a sympathetically ugly physiognomy, with piercing eyes sheltered by thick glasses; and, surmounted by a warlike moustache, a mouth alternatively teasing and authoritarian, dispensing sarcastic or rude remarks, using sententious, rather dogmatic but extremely forceful words!»

This was the awe-inspiring hulk I perceived when, in June 1945, I appeared in the vestibule of the mansion of the former archbishop of Grenoble, where as director of the Institute of Alpine Geography, Blanchard had been based for thirty years. Under his guidance I explored the Massif du Vercors to analyze the destructions by the German Army and the Waffen SS for the US Army Military Intelligence, whilst concomitantly stationed at the University of Grenoble, where Blanchard was also Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. «Le Patron» re-kindled in me the love of geography after months of bloody fighting, and the beauty of the French Alps have been a strong icon in my life ever since. A few months later I wrote my Master's Thesis at the University of California at Los Angeles on *The Vercors Massif: A Geographical Analysis of a French Alpine Region*, dedicated to Raoul Blanchard.

In 1984 I returned for the first time to Grenoble, to the Vercors Massif, to the French Alps, as a part of an SSHRC Faculty Leave Fellowship in relation to my sabbatical year activities. I was able to confirm the reality of a French influence on Canadian Geographic Thought via Blanchard. Publications concerning his contributions, such as this paper, will bring about a greater balance with the published emphases on anglophone influences from Great Britain and the United States. I hope my modest addition to Blanchardiana is a repayment of a debt to a mentor, savant, role model, and field guide from one of his many *beau souci*. Let us therefore glance briefly at Blanchard from the five vantage points indicated.

## THE SEEDER

In my compulsory third year «The Nature of Geography» course for undergraduate geography majors, I refer to Mark I, Mark II, and Mark III geographers with reference to the growth and development of Canadian geographic thought. The Mark I geographers are the original importers of thought seeds; they came, but did not stay in Canada. The Mark II contributors can be divided into two types: IIA — those born in Canada who received their advanced geographic education outside the country; and IIB — those born outside of Canada, who also received their advanced geographic education outside of Canada, but who came to Canada with thoroughly developed geographic thoughts. They settled permanently, in contrast to the Mark I geographers, who «colonized» Canada for a period of time and then left. It is only now that a generation of Mark III's is expanding: born in Canada, educated in Canada, permanently residing in Canada, that we have the beginnings of «Canadian Geographic Thought». The Mark III thought «profile» is no longer «immature» — it has

developed « horizons ». As indicated, Raoul Blanchard spent many months in Québec during his visits to Canada, which he undertook invariably after the termination of his teaching duties at Harvard University. His bibliography proves the fruitfulness of his writings on Québec, and other articles in this volume manifest the impact of these publications.

Without doubt, Blanchard was a Mark I Canadian geographer *par excellence*, with only Griffith Taylor as a possible rival. This role of the « seeder », from the vantage point of Canada, is perhaps the most unique activity of this « geographer's geographer ». Knowledge concerning it appears to be particularly relevant at a time when Canadian Geographic Thought is on the verge of maturity, with the third generation of scholars having a particular sensitivity for its *in situ* roots. And how is this Mark I geographer described by his youngest student, Jean Miège, professor of geography emeritus at the University of Nice and founder of the Laboratoire Raoul Blanchard in that city ?

« In actual fact he was an inveterate traveller and was fairly indifferent to the idea of his physical comfort; to a man of his standing the joys of discovery could not be spoiled by a frugal meal or a dilapidated lodging. Neither was he concerned with financial problems or the allocation of grants; his accountable receipts were accumulated in a file bearing the lamentable heading « Phynances » (*sic*). In his geographical teaching Blanchard was totally unselfish, sparing neither time nor effort to instruct or explain; he did not expect any personal recompense for the innumerable steps he took to support his *Revue de géographie alpine* or his Laboratory ».

How effective a role model has this thought seeder been to succeeding generations ?

## THE METHODOLOGIST

The often quoted Vidalian admonition that geographic library research can at best be mediocre, even when improved by maps, and that field work is essential, was marvellously perpetuated in his last disciple. Except for the French Alps, of course, Québec was Blanchard's favourite stamping ground, and the writings resulting from his studies are still considered outstanding examples of microgeography and detailed urban geography. Although the description of the region, which in the French Alps amounted to a page per square kilometer or for twelve inhabitants, was somewhat less detailed in Québec, especially from a physiographic viewpoint, it has not been equalled in pithiness and abundance of empirical data. The structure of the account always fully presents and analyzes the elements of the physical environment, followed by the elements of human occupation, leading to the synthesis of the human adjustment to physical conditions, and usually ending with some contemplative statements indicating possible and probable future directions. It is a fortuitous mix of Vidalian/Passargian concepts, with some Ratzelian overtones, giving a *Kulturlandschaft* « à la française » harmony.

It is not surprising that Blanchard's microgeographic technique was used in a very similar manner in his urban geographies on both sides of the Atlantic. Since he is considered by many the first of the great urban geographers of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, it is not surprising that even the very structure of his methodological outline was used by disciples and those who wanted to study urban complexes from a strictly « geographic » vantage point. After a succinct part one introduction, Blanchard described situation and site in the second part. The situation, the larger contiguous region, was the first

step and it included topography, soil, climate, vegetation, varied uses of watercourses, contact of natural regions, natural highways, industrial factors, and political frontiers. The site, the local area, was the second step, and also involved topography, climate, soil, and water — but with a strong emphasis on drinking-water, transportation, obstacles, defense, and, of course, power supply. Then, after a discussion of the «fixation elements», the relations between situation and site were analyzed in the third step. Part three focused on «urban evolution», a bridge between the concepts of William Morris Davis and the Blanchardian basis of Derwent Whittlesey's «sequent occupance». It involved the fluctuation in importance of various factors during the growth of an urban area, especially patterns of transportation. The fourth and final part was divided into two sections: tools and objectives. The «tools» section included city planning data and maps; census data; transportation statistics; reports by public agencies; and personal field findings. The «objectives» section always dealt with the nature, role, and character of the city, usually by land uses, such as commercial, industrial, agricultural, governmental, and educational. Finally it described the appearance, not only of the site, but the broader region, ending up with an analysis of the «natural» regions of the city. Even though the exact pattern of the methodology was not repeated in each regional and/or urban analysis and synthesis, the essential ingredients were everpresent and the Blanchardian outline is still used enthusiastically by many practitioners and will continue to be so.

## THE REGIONALIST

Blanchardian methodologies frequently culminated in the construction of a regional representation which carried his unique stamp of craftsmanship. His conceptualization of the «ensemble», an outgrowth of Vidalian «genre de vie» fused with some German additions (Schlüter, for example) was a pragmatic melding of the interaction of the natural and human, long before the concept of «ecosystem» became fashionable. In 1945 I experienced le Maître carefully deciphering the cultural landscape, which was to him a palimpsest of successive outcroppings of cultural strata superimposed on the physical background. His special emphasis on the style of life, whether Alpine farmers or Montréal industrial workers gave his regional descriptions an *élan vital*, which distinguishes it from the more mundane Vidalian *genre de vie* which nurtured and formed it. Without the culmination into a pregnant «ensemble», Blanchard felt that the essence of geographic field work was incomplete. Blanchard generally constructed the regional geography of the Alps and of Québec in two stages: first the detailed study of each region, and then he applied himself once more to the final syntheses, a large-scale study of the total area, including all the regions. As Hamelin has pointed out, this second view in relation to the first, is: ... «what a wide angle lens is to an ordinary one, in photography; the scruples of an author who will not look at the two views together until he has considered each separately, will guarantee the calibre of the finished work.» The Dionysian core of the ensemble gave coherence, personality, and vivid meaning to an Apollonian methodology structure. It is the essence of regional synthesis where Blanchard's master-craftsmanship was at its peak.

The unique fusion of methodological strength and flexible regional approach, as indicated, gave me a renewed interest in geography when I saw it practiced by this exemplar in 1945. I was in the U.S. Army, stationed in Grenoble on temporary duty at the TWCA Center and working for SHAEF Military Headquarters. It not only included

teaching at the University of Grenoble, but also involved the writing of a detailed report on French Resistance activities as well as the German devastations of the Vercors Massif in the French Alps. There, with some apprehensions, I met Raoul Blanchard and there was an immediate «chemistry» between us — one of the many fortunate occasions in life when I was unexpectedly, but strongly influenced by a magnetic scholar who broadened my horizons and increased my desire to learn by constantly bombarding me with pregnant questions. I confided in him that I was somewhat disenchanting with the narrowness of the discipline of geography. I related to him that I felt that I wanted to do something more useful, and described to him my feelings about the areal devastations I had seen and my thoughts about how the destroyed cities and towns might be rebuilt. Would City or Regional Planning not be a better activity for the post-World War II world? He was wise enough to stress in the beginning of our relationship, not his immense knowledge of physiography, but the fact that he was the founder of urban geography. He presented me with his early studies of Grenoble, Annecy, and Nice. The major point he made was that a good urban geographers would not only collect data, but that he would focus on intangibles, such as values, mores, and beliefs. In other words, according to Blanchard, urban studies could open the humanistic door to geographers, and they could give him even the opportunity to contemplate the future of such a growth. They could give directions for planners and planning. And he cited many examples. As we tramped through the Vercors Massif and other parts of the French Alps and surveyed the destroyed communities, such as Vassieux and La Chapelle, he made salient comments about the future land use, circulation patterns, and other directions these communities might take, based on the facts we had collected. Blanchard had a willingness to open the back door to the humanities not only through portions of his methodological approach, but also through his regional analyses and syntheses. He was not concerned whether a geographer should or should not contemplate the future. He did not discourage me from doing it. Yet he also knew who *he* was and what *he* wanted. He was not a conformist; his beliefs were implicit. Little did I imagine in 1945 that I would meet Blanchard at Harvard University and the University of Montréal under entirely different circumstances, or that I would visit the Vercors forty years later for a subsequent regional analysis and also devote time to studying Blanchard's half-century of productive life and its impact.

Always careful to make sure he was in the forefront of events, Blanchard did not rest on his laurels. Having analyzed each section, region by region, he satisfied the cartesian logic of his way of thinking by undertaking two major syntheses of his complete work on Canada. The first was published by Fayard in 1960, and the other by the Presses universitaires de France in 1964. His work was kept up to date, and according to Pierre Dagenais, «he wanted to know everything about the most salient new facts in the evolution of life in Québec.» In the actual synthesis he added a chapter in the final work, on the «Révolution tranquille».

## THE NETWORKER

Although the language of networks and «networking» is now common in geographic literature, these concepts were quite unusual during Blanchard's lifetime. Blanchard was one of the early geographers who realized that network are not only highways and railroads, but also telephones, and radio and television systems. He acknowledged and utilized formal and informal networks, especially of the personal

oral variety. He understood that «networking» is also a *verb*, not only a noun for research, and he practiced it on a professional and personal level. Blanchard grasped networking as a *skill*. To him this activity was not only useful to acquire information and to reach and maintain valuable contacts. He had a felt need for it, and it helped him to disregard formal rank, organizational boundaries, and institutional and national barriers. He disrespected the tidiness of bureaucratic relations. And he understood networking as a pattern of relationship between people, not a pattern of hardware. I believe he would not have been comfortable with computer-conferencing or computer-messaging. When Blanchard impacted, it was a *mutually* beneficial process; both he and those affected received information and support. It was a uniquely personal process of those involved. Louis-Edmond Hamelin, F.R.S.C., former rector of the University of Québec, (Trois-Rivières), Grenoble graduate, student and friend of Blanchard, has written about his mentor on various occasions. His following observation is particularly apt:

«Blanchard was quite sincere about French Canada. Pouring scorn quite legitimately on his fellow countrymen who did not believe one could write a book on Québec after only having stayed there "three" months, from the "30<sup>th</sup> January to the 2<sup>nd</sup> March", he was personally a precursor of the organization of cultural relations between France and Québec. It was not only the big towns that Blanchard wanted to get to know in detail; his research went down to the level of each parish where the priest and the town secretary could offer first-hand information. Blanchard walked in Québec, and said "you learn geography with your feet". To the people, Blanchard was a friend and in some people's eyes, he was even a "Canadian".»

Various accounts indicate that Blanchard became a legendary character in Québec academic circles. Every time he returned he was spontaneously welcomed by his friends, who say in him a distinguished compatriot who was back once again after a more or less prolonged stay in France.

One of the best recollections of Blanchard «in action» is by emeritus professor of geography Jean Dresch at the Sorbonne, who remembers him as:

«... the wandering geographer, tall thin silhouette travelling from valley to valley and from village to village... in the Alps as well as in Québec. His trail can still be followed as he wanted to go everywhere, and see everything, in his indefatigable manner; he would consult every document he could, listen to everyone and answer everyone with a good story told in his resonant voice. He liked to tell stories of his long rambles; those who knew and loved him liked to recount their meetings. A contact was soon established: with his sharp eyes and lively mind he was quick to extract the salient features of a physical landscape and to outline at least an interpretation of it; it did not take him long to gain one's friendship even if, to start with, his insatiable curiosity and his reputation rendered a negative first impression. His geography consisted of talking and walking, in the joy of discovering people and things and then describing and explaining them; a highly recommended method, nowadays all too often abandoned.»

Of course, the methodology and networking which produces regional geography has greatly changed since Blanchard's time. Even during the height of his success Blanchard scorned «new-fangled theories» and «modernistic trends» because they were too far removed from the evidence of facts as he could observe them, either personally or through networking.



## THE PHILOSOPHER

I can visualize the amused twinkle in Blanchard's eyes if he were to know that I have written a few lines about him as a « philosopher ». Or perhaps it could be scorn. It might depend on whether he was puffing on some Royal Dock tobacco in his favourite pipe. Anyhow, he often stated, and in a variety of ways, that he had « no philosophy », did not « design » his research, and took pride in his eschewal of « *acral* » research. He used this word « *acral* » in a condescending manner. Webster's International Dictionary actually defines it as « end, extremity, highest point »; also « of or belonging to the extremities of peripheral body parts. » I am sure, at least when he talked to me, that when he spoke of « *Acral Geography* » in a cynical manner, he did not refer to the « highest » forms of the geographer's art, but to those misguided souls who dabbled on the periphery of geography, those scholars concerned with the *extremities* rather than the heart of the subject. One of his often repeated dicta is: « Some geographers spend their lives trying to define geography. As for myself, I make it ! » This paper shows that he made it all right. But he also had a clear notion of who he was, what he was doing, and *why* he was doing it.

Blanchard's classic work, such as his volumes on the French Alps or on the Province of Québec were a « pretext for fighting for a vigorous confrontation of ideas and methods. » (Miège). He liked to compare geography to trees with « mighty branches », which had to be guided until they reached their full expansion. Therefore he admitted all research formulae, all methods of approach, all explorations in new directions. He was not a conformist. His publications numbering over four hundred, and ranging from microgeography to major « ensembles », could be classified in terms of many epistemologies, because *no* research takes place in a philosophical vacuum. Also all research is guided by a set of philosophical beliefs, whether expressed or implied.

Many observers state that Blanchard was a « Positivist », because he believed that theory is axiomatized when it possesses a set of definitions from which assertions can be deduced as consequences. Development of a theory in both human and physical geography were intimately linked. His values did not influence the interpretation of his data; at least he tried to keep his values separate from his facts. To some extent he was also a « Causationist », because he had an objective view of man in space and time, with considerable stress on causal concatenations and mutual relationship. He realized that environmental determinism can be applied towards the solution of large practical problems. His work in the Alps had developed in him a special kind of objectivity, which may be described as a religiously based humility. Most of the research was idiographic, and thus the conclusions were non-deterministic and non-mechanistic. Nevertheless his search for generalizations, though mostly disguised, implies also a nomothetic approach. The causationist thrust made him explore environmental limits in which human choice takes place.

Blanchard was also a « Functionalist », because, especially in his studies of French Canada and the « Holy Land », he saw social patterns as a part of larger systems of behaviour and belief. There are even mirrored some aspects of a teleological view of the world that explain situations from cataloguing of roles. Occasional organismic emphasis in Blanchard's writings yields pithiness, and its strength increases with distance from the French Alps.

Does this make Blanchard a « Pragmatist » ? Perhaps. One could say that he falls into this category because of his view that « reality » is a mixture of knowledge and

error. He demonstrated at times that the practical consequences of space give «meaning» attached to space and resulting movement. Long before it was more fashionable, one can perceive Blanchard's «scientific method» fused with a «humanistic» geography. That perspective brings him close to being a «Realist». This perception is particularly apt when one sees the naive realist as a «commonsense» geographer. He probably would agree that human science is an empirically based rational enterprise, and that the critical realist can be a logical positivist. Blanchard was still living during the early stage of the «Quantitative Revolution», implicitly rejected mathematization, but enjoyed using simple statistical data when necessary, especially for explanations of observable regularities by describing the hidden (not «real») structures that causally generate them.

«Marxist» geography was ignored by Blanchard. It was just not recognized a generation or two ago. But he would have had some sympathy for it had he understood its multiplicity of parameters. Via his networking activities he had a strong allegiance to ordinary people and their struggle against the «international ruling class» (not his label, he referred to «international corporations») and their often intolerable exploitation of the environment. Marxist geography provides a powerful base, both theoretical and political, for resistance to «virulent» capitalism. But Blanchard's eschewal of «acral» geography included the theoretical and political, and so the internationalization of commodity-capital, money-capital, and productive capital, and the elimination of transnational corporations with many bases of power were simply beyond the scope of his considerations. A case could be made that Blanchard had the makings of an «Idealist», especially since many of his writings focus on understanding human activity in its cultural context and his goal to produce fully integrated regional geographies, as explained above. His elucidation of the human significance of areas, especially from an historical perspective, are illuminating. He reconstructed human action of the past in most regions analyzed, and particularly in his known early urban geographies. Yet today's idealists probably would not accept him in their ranks because Blanchard would not tolerate the logical separation of human geography from physical geography and because he stressed generalization and valued nomothetic conclusions, even when partly hypothetical.

Blanchard probably would be amused by the label of «Existentialist», something he would consider very acral. Yet he indulged in «biographies» of landscapes, a type of historical geography which aims to reconstruct a landscape in the eyes of its occupants and users in the light of changing relationships. Certainly Blanchard, having written two self-analytical autobiographies (*Ma jeunesse sous l'aile de Péguy* and *Je découvre l'Université*), would agree with Sartre that «man defines himself after he encounters himself» and that he is existentially tied to the encounter with distance. In addition, Blanchard's expansion from his original identification with his alpine «Heimat» across the ocean to other «neo-Heimats», his frequent emphasis on «aloneness» in spite of his networking, and references to the «essence» of phenomena makes him sound at times like a disciple of Buber. Perhaps it would be going too far to attempt to pin a «Phenomenologist» label on him, but Blanchard did often focus on beginnings, first-lived experience, that was to him somewhat of an antidote to an initial scientific approach in areal analysis. He was a mild «soft core» phenomenologist in many ways, and he would roar with laughter today if he heard me say that — or turn in his grave! But he did focus on issues of existence and always maintained his sense of wonder. He was at times highly subjective, ego-centric, and personal. And all his life he suffered from this phenomenological affliction of topophilia.

## NOTES

From a broader perspective, I find a comparison with another inspiring catalyst useful. Carl Sauer was a kindred soul, in attitudinal approach though not in substance (*Cf.* Entrikin, J. Nicholas. Carl O. Sauer, *Philosopher in Spite of Himself*. *Geographical Review*, 1984, (4) p. 387-408). Blanchard and Sauer both have been referred to as «giants»: one was the «giant of the Alps»; the other the «giant of the West». Both strongly influenced the history of geographic thought. Both eschewed philosophical interpretations of their research. Entrikin states that Sauer «referred contemptuously to individuals who debated the logical bases of the human sciences as dialecticians and scholastics — purveyors of a normative orthodoxy that effectively discouraged curiosity and scientific discovery.» Sauer's goal was to work through conceptual problems that he encountered in his empirical, field-oriented studies, and not to establish a consistent logical framework or system. The same may be stated of Blanchard. He too was a charismatic Promethean progenitor and peripatetic professor, whose idiosyncratic philosophy of geography appears to have been given the cognitive status of non-acral common sense. That is the way he wanted it and thus it may well remain as long as people walking along Rue Raoul-Blanchard in Grenoble and fellow geographers remember him and his legacy.

As I have pointed out in detail in an essay *The Making of a Humanist Geography: A Circuitous Journey*, (*Cf.* Guelke, Leonard, ed. (1986) *Geography and Humanistic Knowledge*. University of Waterloo) Blanchard was a powerful influence on the course of my life and an unforgettable character. Four decades later I remember him vividly walking and climbing ahead of me with his lively step in the Massif du Vercors, despite his age. His clear, lucid, and memorable technical explanations of what we observed were interspersed with relaxing stops, where Le Maître expected you to sing along with him the merry (and often risqué) songs after several stanzas. And I will always remember our «celebration» at a farmhouse very high in the mountains when we «toasted» with a strong local product the unexpected news of VJ (Victory in Japan) Day, which the shepherds had just heard on the radio. I think of Blanchard often! But I not longer feel somewhat alone! As Louis-Edmond Hamelin phrased it so eloquently: «No other province in Canada possesses the geographic legacy that Blanchard voluntarily gave us here in Québec. We are all very grateful to him for having given us what was perhaps the best of himself.» This issue of the *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* is another tangible symbol of our lasting gratitude.

(acceptation définitive en mars 1986)