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**Author**

Travers, Karen J.

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of California. As well, high school students undoubtedly also could grasp the essence of archaeology as it is practiced from reading this book.

*Michael A. Glassow*

University of California—Santa Barbara

**Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State.** By Jennifer Reid. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. 314 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

Despite a voluminous body of literature and the publication of his personal papers in 1985, Louis Riel remains one of the most enigmatic figures in Canadian history. The profound legacy of the Métis leader, politician, and visionary is rendered complicated by his role in acts of resistance against the Canadian government during 1869 and 1885. In *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, Jennifer Reid argues that Riel “has become increasingly embedded in the Canadian cultural imagination” (1). The problematic creation of Canada as a confederation of disparate interests renders the search for a sense of collective identity enduring, difficult, and divisive. Thus during the years since his execution for high treason in 1885, Riel has appeared at various times as a symbol of indigenous resistance, Catholic rights, French-Canadian sovereignty, and Western alienation. Reid asks who better to unite these elements than Louis Riel? A man who—at least in myth—embodies them all.

Reid persuasively argues that Canada’s unique colonial origin precludes the formation of a cohesive identity. Throughout the twentieth century, Riel’s transformation from treasonous crank to visionary statesman has occurred as appeals to expansionist and imperialist discourses became increasingly irrelevant (136). More recent attempts to ameliorate our differences through official government policies, such as bilingualism and multiculturalism, did not prove to be unifying but instead worsened the dichotomies created by confederation. According to Reid, Riel, or more particularly the idea of “*metissage*” he embodies, is part of the elusive identity that Canadians seek. Riel’s status as someone “in between” fits “a variety of cultural agendas” as it simultaneously embraces minorities and the disadvantaged, French Canadians, Catholics, and proponents of provincial rights (32). That so many Canadians of diverse backgrounds and experiences can see something of themselves in Riel’s multifaceted image suggests that somewhere “in between” there is an alternative to the rigid extremes that traditionally divide us. In this respect, she cautions that it is unreasonable to expect national myths and heroes from a state-constitutional structure designed to integrate distinct regional interests. She observes that

Canada lacks a revolutionary, linguistic, or culturally based collective identity in the manner in which we traditionally understand European state formation. Canada, therefore, needs to develop a sense of itself as a nation that speaks to its unique origins rather than attempt to develop notions of statehood as defined by the very different historical experiences of others.

A “confederation” of sovereign or semi-independent entities, as Reid points out, was a sound choice in 1867 and continued a long tradition of ethnic and regional accommodation dating back to the Proclamation of 1763 and the Quebec Act of 1774. The voices of indigenous peoples and other minorities, however, were silenced in a confederation project driven by English-speaking business interests from Ontario and Quebec that were designed to facilitate technological and economic expansion. Thus Sir John A. Macdonald’s willingness to sacrifice Aboriginal sovereignty and land rights in the name of western expansion resulted in acts of indigenous resistance during 1869 and 1885. Reid calls these acts of resistance, “foundational moment[s] of violence,” in which Aboriginal peoples fought for their place in a nascent Canadian state (153). Reid believes the growing acceptance and commemoration of Riel for his role in creating a provisional government and facilitating the entry of Manitoba into the Confederation is symbolic of the acknowledgment of Canada’s indigenous roots. Though slow and woefully inadequate, she believes these small steps represent at least an attempt to “fix” the inequities of the Confederation.

Situated in theories of postcolonial discourse analysis and state formation, Reid states at the outset that this book is not a history of Riel; rather it is about his “rise to mythic hero” (8). Devoting little attention to Riel’s writings, she instead analyzes the Riel myth as it has unfolded in Canadian politics, newspapers, histories, documentaries, films, plays, operas, and literature. It is a worthy endeavor. However, her reliance on secondary sources—literary and historical—makes it difficult to discern whether the Riel she refers to is man or myth. As a result, exactly who this Riel is, how Canadians outside of politics and the academy might identify with him, and how he is a unifying force in a modern context can be unclear.

Much of Riel’s mystique and appeal is symbolic, and his legacy is not significantly different from that of other historical figures. As Reid demonstrates, the reimagining of Riel has historically ebbed and flowed in tandem with relevant cultural, historical, and political events. Whether he or the idea of *metissage* is the tie that binds us all, however, is less certain. Few Canadians today would agree that Riel received a fair trial in Regina, and even fewer would trust late-nineteenth-century definitions of *insanity*. But do Canadians as a whole share Reid’s vision of Riel? A recent survey conducted by pollsters Ipsos Reid (Dominion Institute, *Canadian Icons*, June 2009) shows that, nationally, fewer than one in four Canadians can even identify Riel from a photograph, and this

falls to one in five in Quebec—a province historically considered to be most sympathetic to him. Would these Canadians have a sense of the events of 1869 and 1885, and if so, what might Riel mean to them? Moreover, the cultural significance of memory and commemoration in Canadian society, and modern notions of justice and fairness in general, would seem to be important factors to consider in this transformation to “mythic hero.” Although Reid suggests that it is rare and unusual for a minority to rise to “cultural prominence” in media, politics, literature, and film, it is also worth noting that these are representative of a particular segment of Canadian society (8). Chester Brown’s dark but incredibly popular graphic novella series, *Louis Riel: A Comic Strip Biography* (1999–2003), for instance, does not appear in her bibliography, yet the medium and his portrayal of a divinely inspired but misunderstood Riel are ideally suited to her analysis. In this respect, it is interesting to consider the influence of Reid’s own choices vis-à-vis sources in terms of how they might contribute to the “mythicization” of Riel (5).

Although Reid briefly mentions the controversies concerning the portrayal of Riel in statuary and acknowledges the paucity of Métis voices in this symbolic remaking of Riel, a broader discussion of the appropriation of Riel’s image and myth would seem imperative to her argument. Though well-meaning, private members’ bills and statements made by government officials to pardon or exonerate Riel often mirror the language of nineteenth-century expansionists and are viewed in many quarters as nothing more than political posturing. At their worst, such gestures appear to expropriate Riel’s memory and history, not to extend tangible rights to Métis peoples but to appease a modern sense of guilt regarding what is now perceived as a historic wrong. Rather than a gesture of acceptance, Riel’s transformation from traitor to the Father of Confederation is suggestive of another attempt by the Canadian state to silence Canada’s Métis by co-opting dissent. A discussion of the dichotomy between the political and socioeconomic status of “Canada’s forgotten people” and the enduring presence of the Riel myth would have been an interesting addition to this study.

Along with studies on landscape, memory, and identity such as those by Brian S. Osbourne (“Re-presenting National Memory: Louis Riel, Traitor or Founder of Canada,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2002) and John Ralston Saul (*A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada*, 2008), *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada* is a lively addition to a large body of literature that seeks to interrogate traditional ideas of nationhood and the role of Métis peoples in the context of postcolonial realities. Although she does not state what form this might take, Reid suggests that any collective sense of what it means to be Canadian will only surface once we embrace our diverse New World origins. The very fact that Riel generates debate and discussion

more than a century after his death, suggests that there may be something to Reid's assertion that he is "emblematic of the fundamental dichotomies that define the specificity of Canadian cultural and political life" (70). So long as an understanding of Louis Riel "the man" remains stubbornly outside of our grasp and so long as his legacy remains fluid, undefined, and contested, Canadians will continue to engage in this collective "mythicization." The fundamental question, however, is whether we can ever understand Riel's impact on nonindigenous people and places if we do not fully understand who he was and what he means to Métis people based on his writings. Nonetheless, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada* is an important contribution to our elusive search for a collective understanding.

Karen J. Travers  
York University

**The Meskwaki and Anthropologists: Action Anthropology Reconsidered.** By Judith M. Daubenmier. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. 574 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

In *The Meskwaki and Anthropologists: Action Anthropology Reconsidered*, Judith Daubenmier credits Sol Tax and the Meskwaki community of Tama, Iowa, with the origins of "action anthropology." Daubenmier defines this method as "helping a group of people achieve the goals that they themselves set and simultaneously studying what occurred in order to draw general lessons from the process" (127). Among anthropologists, postwar disillusionment with the atomic age, coupled with decolonization movements, caused some to consider how their scholarship might contribute to the needs of the communities they studied. Daubenmier acknowledges these trends. However, she places even greater importance on sociologist Robert Lynd's *Knowledge for What?* (1939). In this essay, Lynd criticized social scientists for failing to create useful knowledge. The influence of Lynd's essay on Tax is indirect at best. However, Tax's graduate adviser, Robert Redfield, inspired Tax to immerse himself in the Guatemalan community that he studied for his dissertation. Such physical proximity to one's interlocutors brought with it lasting relationships, which, in Tax's case, lasted a lifetime. After graduate work in Guatemala and Mexico, Tax then created the University of Chicago field station on the Meskwaki settlement. Lasting from 1948 and 1958, this model of applied research forms the heart of Daubenmier's book.

*The Meskwaki and Anthropologists* is far more than a history of Tax and the field station near the settlement. Nearly two-thirds of the book is a descriptive