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From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Centuries
by Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk (review)

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up at archives,” determining first what is important work to the community rather than to the scholar. (291)

Labour, feminist, and working-class historians were among the first to embrace oral history as a method and theorize its potential. Joan Sangster offers a chapter on the politics and praxis of working-class oral histories, which cautions against embracing current cultural approaches that discourage “identifying the acuity of previous work or the limitations of current work.” (119) She argues that earlier recuperative efforts were often more reflexive than portrayed, when many oral historians were concerned about memory, narrativity, and subjectivity. And in the present, many oral historians continue to collect working-class interviews in order to understand the past and to challenge or build on existing written histories, much as their predecessors did.

In the strong final section of the book, the themes of listening, amnesia, contested memories, and advocacy are explored in essays by Bronwen Low and Emmanuelle Sonntag, who articulate a “pedagogy of listening” from their work with Montrealers displaced by war, genocide, and human rights violations; Pamela Sugiman, who describes how her Japanese Canadian narrators often challenged her own assessments; and Claudia Malacrida, who reveals the problems inherent in documenting the histories of people with intellectual disabilities when state officials inhibit research under the guise of “protection.” In the concluding chapter, Joy Parr challenges the idea that oral historians can advocate for their subjects. Evaluating the contributions of major oral historians, she sees oral history as ethnographic practice “seeking not objectivity but a highly disciplined subjectivity.” (338) It is a project of translation and long-term engagement and collaboration, yet there is always a line

that interviewers must recognize separates them from their subjects. As Parr was told by a First Nations physician, “Don’t Speak for me.” (341)

If there is a weakness in *The Canadian Oral History Reader* it is the absence of projects that emerge organically from community interests and from French and Atlantic Canada. But the selections here showcase model projects throughout much of Canada, raise questions about the complexities of interview practices and content, and reaffirm the potential of oral history collection, use, and preservation. This reader will serve as an important guide for North American oral historians for many years to come.

LAURIE MERCIER

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Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2016)

FROM NEW PEOPLES to New Nations, by Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk, offers an important update to Métis history and historiography through a metanarrative lens. A *longue durée* analysis synthesizes over 300 years of historical events, countless political choices, machinations by government(s), and the outcome of complex processes on the formation and transformation of Métis identity. The authors track the changes and continuities that shaped and reshaped Métis ethnicity from the genesis of an Indigenous post-contact nation to 2014. (5) Ens and Sawchuk’s novel approach to the topic allows them to convincingly posit that Métis ethnogenesis is perpetual and continues to the present day via “dialogical processes.” (514) Their undertaking is also significant because it has not been

attempted in a similar form since the mid-20th century. In so doing, they bring forth a considerable revision to Métis historiography and edify considerations of legal, political, and economic factors that influenced the historical development of the Métis nation. The condensed academic language in the beginning of the book thins out quickly, making understandings of Métis identity in Canada and the United States more accessible.

The authors' methodological approach distinguishes them from analyses heavily rooted in social histories and kinship. Instead, Ens and Sawchuk examine the history of Métis peoples' ethnicity, paying particular attention to the social construction of socioeconomic, cultural, legal, and imagined boundaries, shaped by both the people who self-identify as Métis and outsiders. This "instrumentalist approach" blends historical and anthropological research, enabling the authors to seamlessly blend numerous interviews with archival and historiographical texts, with a heavy penchant on secondary sources. The monograph unites content from twelve archives located across Canada and the United States. Because of the nature of the analysis, there are no bottom-up studies therein. The voices of women and the marginalized are absent, and the authors acknowledge this limitation. Although the authors provide no exploration of Quebec and British Columbia, Métis in Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and the United States borderlands each have at least one chapter summarizing their individual histories, even if their treatment varies greatly in tone and scope. The first half of the book is attributed in part to Gerhard Ens, while most of the second half is credited to Joe Sawchuk.

The analysis begins with a survey of early Métis history, from the 18th to the early 20th century. The monograph

examines how the labour of voyageurs, and later the Métis, made social and economic choices that set them on the path to a distinct national identity. This distinction crystallized with the wintering of men among Indigenous nations and, later, by becoming freemen – independent hunters and traders that not hired by fur trade consorts. With an economy heavily rooted in the bison robe trade, Métis communities were born following similar socioeconomic patterns, albeit in different places. Examining the Battle of Seven Oaks and its role in Métis identity creation, the authors explain that commercial interests were central to the conflict and influenced how it was remembered. (87)

Chapter 4 explains that Louis Riel's Métis nationalism diverges tremendously from the nationalist interpretations of contemporary Métis political elites. Although the historical argument put forth is an important contribution, its execution is a testament to the field's Anglocentrism. In attempting to make clear how Louis Riel's past is curated to define the Métis nation today, Ens and Sawchuk rely on an erroneous translation from a secondary source and anachronistic nationalisms. They state: "Even in his more private writing – his poetry – Riel put more emphasis on God's creation of the Métis Nation or People and Catholicism and Quebec Nationalism as the font of Métis identity." (102) And later: "Riel's actions and execution and the refusal of John A. Macdonald's cabinet to commute his sentence sharply divided English and French Canada and fuels heated controversy to this day. His execution served to encourage Quebec nationalism." (496) Equating Quebec nationalism, born after the Quiet Revolution, with 19th-century French Canadian Catholic (ultramontane) nationalism is rather problematic. It contradicts the French Canadian vision of *l'Amérique française*, a landscape

not bound by the territorial boundaries of Quebec, that Riel held dear. This French Canadian nationalism unified liberals, conservatives, and ultramontanes in Quebec following the state-sponsored execution of Riel. Furthermore, the authors support their classification of Riel's national identity by analyzing only four stanzas of the forty that form the ode *Le peuple Métis-Canadien-français*. The authors rely on a faulty translation of the word *trèfle*, or three-leafed clover, confusing it with the trillium, perhaps best known as the official flower of Ontario. The authors missed an opportunity to comment on an Irish Catholic symbol of religious conversion (110, 111). A closer look at Riel's *Collected Writings* (Vol. 4. University of Alberta Press 1985, 319–325) reveals both his strong theocratic leanings and the vital importance of Mechif language to his cultural vision of Métis identity in the aforementioned ode. The analysis accompanying the ode highlights the importance of the shamrock to Roman Catholicism. There was no trillium. Ens and Sawchuk's reliance on secondary source readings of Louis Riel's poetry weakens significant portions of the chapter's argument, and subsequent analyses of Riel's thoughts.

Chapters 6 to 18 emphasize the various contributions of state, church, and institutional actors – be they Métis, or outsiders, or academics – all of which, in discussion with each other, created and informed the meanings of Métis ethnicity until the present day. The importance of the *Manitoba Act* of 1870, which created a distinct status for Métis people, and the identity politics that followed its inception, is central throughout the book. The authors cogently explain the genesis of Métis and non-status associations, once a common meeting ground for Métis and non-status peoples. The authors skilfully explain the historical processes facilitating the purge of non-status members

from Métis organizations through a variety of political and ideational processes. Interviews with political leaders provide clear insights on the ethnic boundary shifts of the mid to late twentieth century. Also central is the exploration of Métis identity becoming racialized, and how this influenced self-identification through time. The authors consider the historical outcomes of people claiming Métis identity using mixed ancestry instead of self-ascription or community recognition in their fulsome study of provincial Métis associations. Caveats aside, this book is a definitive roadmap of the historical expressions of the Métis Nation from its beginning to the present day. In light of the uncertain legal landscape following the *Daniels v. Canada* judgment rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada in April 2016, “Who are the Métis?” is an increasingly asked question. As demonstrated in this book, the answer to that question depends on the historical context.

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Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu, eds., *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2015)

“THE WORLD NEEDS more Canada,” or so goes the line first concocted by the Canadian Tourism Commission, but since adopted by booksellers, rock stars, and presidents to promote Canada as a model of an open, peaceful, and pluralistic society. However, according to the authors and editors of *Within and Without the Nation*, when it comes to the writing of Canadian history the obverse is true: Canada's history has remained far too parochial in an age of globalization. To reframe Canadian history in light of the