

Heirs of an Ambivalent Empire: French-Indigenous Relations and the Rise of the Métis in the Hudson Bay Watershed by Scott Berthelette

Victor P. Lytwyn

Volume 115, numéro 2, fall 2023

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1106174ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1106174ar>

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Éditeur(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (imprimé)

2371-4654 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Lytwyn, V. P. (2023). Compte rendu de [*Heirs of an Ambivalent Empire: French-Indigenous Relations and the Rise of the Métis in the Hudson Bay Watershed* by Scott Berthelette]. *Ontario History*, 115(2), 365–367.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1106174ar>

the genocide, plus their experiences being racialized due to skin colour and ethnicity, means that “what constituted Rwandan-ness” (403) varied greatly both within Toronto and its Rwandan community.

Finally, in “Race, Community, and the Picturing of Identities,” (433-54) Cheryl Thompson and Julie Crooks examine “black agency and resistance” (434) using photographs taken between the 1860s and 1890s. Like Natasha Henry’s work, the photographs counter hegemonic narratives about Black lives by analyzing the sitters’ self-representation within the photographs’ composition. During a time when Black bodies were being commodified and fetishized to sell products and entertain White North Americans, the photo-artefacts offset stereotypical depictions, communicate the significance of having a photograph taken within the Black community, and demonstrate how the sitters wished to be represented in such a visual and permanent medium.

A common thread throughout the collection is the resilience vs. resistance dialectic, which is demonstrated in so many

compelling, diverse, and underexplored contexts. Indeed, *Unsettling the Great White North* reinforces how rich the field of Black Canadian history is, and why scholars must continue the critical work they are doing, especially “amid challenging and difficult public debate and conversation” (4). Every Canadian historian will benefit from this collection, especially its perspectives on colonialism, oppression, race, gender, and identity formation. The individual chapters can enrich conversations in upper-year undergraduate or graduate-level courses, especially where settlement, the state, and community are concerned. Altogether, this timely collection dismantles the ‘Great White North’ myth by recentring Black experiences and showing how Black men and women, as individuals and as communities, ‘unsettled’ or resisted the oppressive structures responsible for the “systemic and systematic erasure of Blackness/es from the Canadian narrative” (3).

Rebecca Beausaert, Adjunct Professor
Department of History, University of
Guelph

Heirs of an Ambivalent Empire

French-Indigenous Relations and the Rise of the Métis in the Hudson Bay Watershed

by Scott Berthelette

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022. 353 pages, \$39.95 paperback.
ISBN 978-0-2280-1059-3.

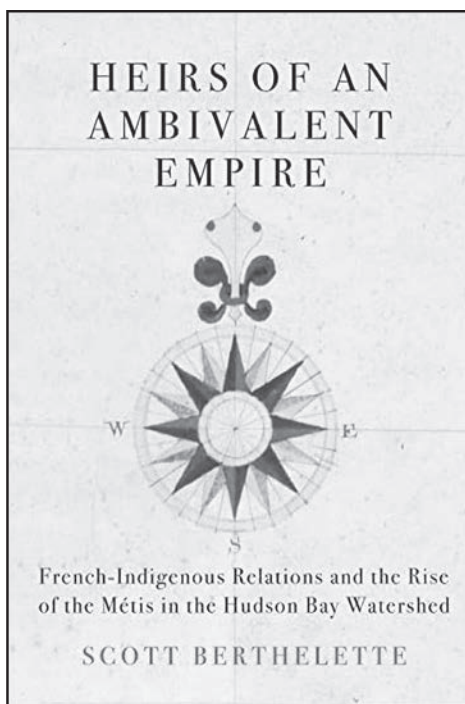
Scott Berthelette’s book offers new insights into the origins of the Métis in the western interior of Canada. Although the title of his book refers to the Hudson Bay Watershed, the focus is mainly on the

area from Red River north to Lake Winnipeg and west along the Saskatchewan River valley. Berthelette refutes claims made by other scholars that the origins of “Métissage” can be traced to the 1816 Battle of

Seven Oaks (at Frog Plain, or la Grenouillère). Instead, he provides a compelling argument that it began much earlier in the eighteenth century and took place in fur trade post communities throughout the western interior waterways. Building on his award-winning academic work, Berthelette frames his book within the contours of the recent scholarly debate about who is Métis. In his Introduction and Epilogue Berthelette reviews this historiography

and agrees with scholars who have ruled out Métis identity in areas east of Red River. These include Jacqueline Peterson, Chris Andersen, Darryl Leroux, and Adam Gaudry who argue that Métis identity was forged in Red River. Ironically Peterson initially championed Métis origins in the Great Lakes region.

Berthelette examines the beginnings of scholarship on Métis history but pays little attention to the important pioneering work of Marcel Giraud. He was the first to point out that the Métis developed along two different geographic "streams." One was forged in the region west of Lake Superior and the other had its origins along the shores of Hudson Bay. The latter (the northern nucleus), according to Giraud, "developed more slowly and its members, fewer in number, remained for a long time detached from the West proper and also



from the Métis of French origin, with whom they were never to establish a complete solidarity."¹ Although Giraud's focus was on the Red River Métis, his acknowledgement of a northern nucleus was novel. I was hoping that Berthelette would explore this overlooked regional development as his book title suggests. He does include a brief Appendix on the "Hudson's Bay Company and the Anglo-Métis," but this is very much an afterthought to his

primary narrative. Berthelette suggests that most Anglo-Métis were forced to migrate to Red River because of HBC policies after 1821. In this way, Red River conveniently becomes re-focussed as the centre of the Anglo-Métis homeland.

Berthelette organizes his book into six chapters covering the period 1663-1782. Although the term "Hudson Bay Watershed" is repeatedly used to describe the chapters, much of his narrative focusses on the fur trade routes of Montreal based fur traders in the Red River, Lake Winnipeg, and Saskatchewan River regions. Berthelette's main contribution is his masterful narrative of French Imperial policy and the La Vérendrye period of western exploration. The biographical information on French fur traders who built and managed the "Western Posts" is also essential reading for anyone interested in fur trade

history. Berthelette incorporates historical maps throughout his book which provide useful geographical information and reference points to aid his narrative.

Berthelette integrates Indigenous narratives into his work in a compelling fashion. This sheds new light on the interaction of French-origin fur traders and First Nations peoples in the western interior of Canada. His views on “Métissage” will provoke new debates among scholars who are trying to understand this process. Un-

fortunately, much of the Hudson Bay Watershed is untouched by Berthelette.

Victor P. Lytwyn

¹ Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West, Volume 1*, translated by George Woodcock, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press (1986 - originally published in 1945 as *Canadien Le métis canadien: Son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest*, Institut d'Ethnologie, Musée de l'Homme, Université de Paris, Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie XLIV, 1945).

The Boundaries of Ethnicity *German Immigration and the Language of Belonging in Ontario*

by Benjamin Bryce

Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. 264 pages. \$130.00 hardcover. ISBN 9780228013952 (www.mqup.ca).

Benjamin Bryce's latest book uses German speakers in Ontario in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a case study of how children, parents, teachers, and churches shaped the nature of cultural pluralism. Bryce convincingly argues for complex understandings of ethnicity by showing how people drew and redrew ethnic boundaries. His contention about the complexity of ethnicity aligns with the near consensus within the historiography of ethnicity and migration yet his choice of Germans as a case study makes this book a unique contribution to existing scholarship. Bryce contends that

by understanding how German speakers at this time used language, changed their definitions of ethnicity, and responded to government policy, one can see the origins of Canadian multiculturalism and policies that manage diversity.

The first chapter discusses how Ontario's education system went from being locally to centrally controlled and the resulting impact on the use of German. The second chapter looks at the experiences of German speakers in the First World War and “shows that Ontario society did not require the total elimination of German because of the war” (114). In chapter three,

