

Other papers in the collection are more traditional in method or interpretation although these serve a useful purpose in pointing out (by implication at least) the variety of questions which have been asked about the Métis. One of the basic issues for both historians and anthropologists has been the question of whether the North American Métis peoples can be said to constitute a distinct culture or an identifiable political nation. Although none of the papers in this volume directly addresses that general issue, it is the implicit concern of nearly all the authors. In a perceptive afterword, anthropologist Robert K. Thomas notes that generalizations about the Métis may not be possible, but the apparent absence of a continental community does not negate the possibility that group consciousness developed in separate "sociogeographic populations the studies of local and regional groups presented in this volume are an important beginning towards a better understanding of such developments.

Simply studying the internal dynamics of Métis communities is unlikely to reveal all the answers, however. Attitudes of others appear to have played a vital role in determining personal choices and social behaviour, while the broader pressures of fur trade rivalries and settlement were obviously so important that historians had assumed for many years that they were the primary determinants of Métis identity at Red River. Unfortunately, the impact of such external historical forces is not considered in this volume with the same degree of sophistication as the anthropological assessment of internal dynamics. Perhaps some of the new fur trade scholarship will soon be applied to Métis studies to strengthen the historical context and bring new interpretations to old materials.

Very little emerges from these essays about the Métis relationship to their Indian cousins. While Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown document Métis cultural ambivalence toward the EuroCanadian community, the question of relations with Indians certainly deserves further study. Did Indian communities accept the Métis as brothers, or were they more like the white communities in seeing the Métis as "outsiders"? Were there regional differences in their relationships? What were the economic and political implications of these relationships?

The reader is also left anxious for a better sense of what scholars consider to constitute Métis identity. Ted Brasser attempts to define Métis art, which he hopes to differentiate from that of the surrounding Indian communities, and John Crawford discusses Turtle Mountain "Michif" which may be a unique regional language, but there seems to be a wide and potentially rewarding field of study still open. What about religion, world view, styles of political leadership, and economic attitudes, to name a few possibilities? Did the Métis adopt their beliefs and behaviour wholesale from one "parent" or the other, or did they develop a synthesis which might be considered uniquely Métis?

Nevertheless, it is perhaps unreasonable to expect too much from what is still very much a preliminary study. *The New Peoples* is clearly an important and useful book. It is a good demonstration of the new methods being applied to Métis studies. It provides a clear argument that population "mixing" was an important factor across North America, not just at Red River. It is evidence that historians and anthropologists can communicate effectively with one another and enrich both disciplines in the process. It is also a physically attractive book which deserves to be widely read.

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Charles Rearick — *Pleasures of the Belle Epoque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the Century France*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985. Pp. xvi, 240.

The dozens of tour buses parked each evening near the Place Pigalle in Paris bear testimony to the continuing identification of the French capital with night life, at least in the minds of the Americans, Germans and Japanese who journey in those buses. Charles Rearick's *Pleasures of the Belle Epoque*

provides a detailed examination of an important period in the development of that reputation, the generation before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. He considers official festivals through the fourteenth of July; the commercialization of entertainment is examined through the development of the bohemian cabarets of Montmartre, especially the *Chat Noir*; the popular music halls such as the *Folies Bergère* allow a discussion of the democratization of entertainment; and the use of new technology to create spectacular entertainments is found in the Paris World's Fairs. The principal personalities involved in each of these forms of entertainment are highlighted and their place in the development of a French popular culture concerning entertainment is discussed. Other chapters consider popular attitudes towards leisure, the patterns of time involved in the new forms of entertainment that the Third Republic developed, and the way entertainment dealt with aspects of social relations such as conflict and the imminence of war. The book features many illustrations, including eight color reproductions of paintings and posters of the period, which help to flesh out the points made in the text. Rearick, his publisher, and his Dean are to be complimented for these illustrations, difficult to assemble and expensive to print, but which make this a very attractive book.

There are, however, many books that describe Montmartre, the cabarets and music halls of Paris, and even the World's Fairs, and if this was just another antiquarian re-rehearsal of the Hydropathes, Jeanne Bloch, Aristide Bruant, Yvette Guilbert, and the others who inhabited that world it could be considered just a coffee-table book aimed at popular audiences. It does, in fact, fulfill that role admirably. But there is more to Rearick's book than antiquarianism and nostalgia: he aims to look at entertainments to gain insights into:

broad changes and fundamental questions about modern popular culture — particularly a turn-of-the-century culture of entertainments immediately recognizable as modern" (pp. xii-xiii).

Central to his view of this popular is its emphasis to escapism rather than liberation. The implied contrast is with the role reversals characteristic of pre-modern popular culture, in which at least for a day, the world (and the social and political order) was turned upside down. In Belle Epoque France, in contrast, the government, fearful of popular disorders, carefully controlled celebrations such as Bastille Day; the commercialization of leisure bored those who could not afford the new entertainments as well as those who could afford them every night; technology turned participants into observers. A pervading sense of sadness behind the laughter is thus the keynote of this view of late nineteenth and early twentieth century French popular culture.

The difficulties involved in proving such an argument can be imagined. Arguments about popular culture and *mentalité* always seem to require relaxation of at least some of the historian's canons of evidence. Rearick presses his argument to the limit of the evidence that survives, although it is far easier to describe how many people attended cabarets and what performers sang about than why people attended performances and what their reactions to the performance were. In spite of these difficulties of evidence, which are handled well in the book, Rearick has made a valuable contribution. He has broadened the study of Belle Epoque entertainment in a valuable way: this is not only an attractive book on a subject of interest to anyone who knows France, but also one that provides an important contribution to the social and cultural history of the period.

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