

appréciable et mettrait en relief les différentes manières de traduire la même réalité moderne selon les différentes régions.

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*Louis 'David' Riel. "Prophet of the New World".* By Thomas FLANAGAN. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.

Here is a bold and fascinating book. Flanagan proposes to take Louis Riel's 'madness' seriously, to trace its origins and development, to dissect its every utterance, to calculate its numerology and to declare Riel a prophet. The book constitutes a novel addition to the political, historical, biographical, theatrical, operatic and now televised romantic accounts of one of the few tragic figures in Canadian history. That academics and writers should turn Riel into a veritable industry is merely an ironic comment on that tragedy.

Flanagan's approach allows him to look at old sources in a new light and to reveal new sources. Where others have scoffed at Riel's religious ravings, Flanagan subjects them to minute scrutiny, pursuing the imagery and the references through Biblical and historical texts. Where others have ignored Riel's poetry, Flanagan ferrets out the fable, the reality and, again, the religion. He has also uncovered material about the young Riel and about his years in the United States: religion and politics seem to have dominated Riel's life.

With the sober tone of a political scientist, Flanagan proceeds to develop an argument for Riel being a prophet in the Biblical sense, a millenarian in the religio-social sense of nineteenth century popular movements. He posits an internal coherence and a logical development of Riel's 'creed', 'teaching', 'doctrine', 'ideas' from a personal sense of mission to a schism with Rome and the establishment of a reformed Church and a theocratic new world in the Canadian northwest, the chosen people being the Métis. In the final chapter he spells out the surprising similarities between Riel and other popular 'cult' leaders of the nineteenth century.

The underlying plea of the book is that the reader suspend his disbelief. What looks like madness to one generation or one society may not be so to another. Fair enough. Flanagan may even have unwittingly supplied future Rielologists with another path to follow: the references to poor health and even poorer diet suggest that some of Riel's oddities could as well have been physically induced. But the argument leaves something to be desired. The author may provide intriguing parallels to the mind of his contemporaries, but he does not cope convincingly with Riel's contemporaries, almost all of whom, friend or enemy, thought Riel was 'cracked'. Nor does he draw the conclusion some of his evidence leads him to: Riel was very deliberate, calculating and designing in the expression of his mission; he knew when to say what to a given audience — usually the sign of a lucid, rational mind. Basically the author's approach is too secular; he does not provide a sufficiently *religious* explanation of Riel. Flanagan is a late twentieth century political scientist attempting psycho-history with the odd excursion into literary and biblical exegesis. He believes religion to be compensation for the wordly failures of frustrated individuals or endangered groups.

The view is perfectly acceptable, perhaps even normal in our time but it virtually eliminates the sensitivity essential to the convincing treatment of 'odd' historical characters.

Indeed, for all the novelty of approach and seriousness of purpose, Flanagan's study supports Stanley's long-standing interpretation of the Riel uprisings as a clash of cultures. Uproot from the prairie a Métis lad, sickly, highly stung, homesick but destined for the priesthood, place him for six years in a *collège classique* in Montreal at the height of ultramontane clashes with liberalism and something strange is bound to occur. Whether the result is genuine prophecy or genuine madness is still, despite this valiant effort, an open question.

After the military, the politicians, the hangman and the academics, it may be time for a poet to take a crack at Riel. We have yet to capture in words the strange half-harnessed being that sculptor Lemay has placed on the Assiniboine River in Winnipeg. Perhaps that is Riel's ultimate vengeance: in the end he may well defy the world.

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*Le rire précolombien dans le québec d'aujourd'hui.* Rémi SAVARD. Montréal: L'Hexagone/ Parti Pris, 1977.

L'auteur réunit dans ce volume trois études, intitulées «Carnet de voyage», «D'Hier à demain» et «Le rire-exorcisme».

«Carnet de voyage» raconte les premiers contacts de Savard avec les Montagnais de la Côte Nord, au moment où la crise d'Octobre secoue le Québec et le Canada. À La Romaine, Savard rencontre deux communautés vivant côte-à-côte: d'une part quelques 500 Indiens sédentarisés depuis moins de 25 ans, d'autre part quelques 200 Québécois. Deux communautés d'assistés sociaux. Deux communautés sises au cœur d'un réseau de sept rivières à saumon «clubées» pour les «messieurs», hommes d'affaires américains et autres qui visitent et exploitent la région. À La Romaine, un jeune professeur de Moncton enseigne le français aux Montagnais et leur demande si on dit «la» ou «le» marquis. Pendant que les Indiens subissent nos contraintes, la radio annonce l'enlèvement puis la mort de Laporte. L'armée occupe la métropole. Savard reçoit une lettre de ses enfants, accompagnée de desseins: des militaires et des fusils tracés au crayon noir. Contrainte de qui? En retraçant ces nombreux épisodes Savard montre comment deux peuples vivent toujours côte-à-côte sur un même territoire, soumis aux mêmes contraintes d'un développement qui puise sa dynamique à l'extérieur du pays. Les efforts du peuple québécois et du peuple montagnais pour s'identifier de plus en plus à leur territoire les amèneront inévitablement à se croiser et à examiner le droit des peuples à l'auto-détermination.

«D'Hier à Demain» constitue une étude du village de Saint-Augustin, situé à 1500 kilomètres à l'est de Montréal. Savard traite d'abord du peuplement indien de l'est du Québec, des premiers contacts montagnais avec les Européens, du rôle des missionnaires et de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson dans la sédentarisation progressive des bandes de chasseurs. Savard s'arrête ensuite à la population de St-Augustin, quelques 80 Montagnais qui se sont constitués récemment — il y a moins de 20 ans — en