

Non Compos Mentis: A Meta-Historical Survey of the Historiographic Narratives of Louis Riel's "Insanity"

Gregory Betts

Numéro 38, 2008

Borders, Migrations and Managing Diversity: New Mappings
Frontières, migrations et gestion de la diversité : nouvelles
cartographies

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/040805ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/040805ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Résumé de l'article

Face à l'accusation de haute trahison, l'avocat de la défense de Louis Riel plaida non coupable pour cause d'aliénation mentale. Toutefois, le prisonnier n'était pas du même avis et protesta de sa santé d'esprit trois fois au cours du procès. Ses propres avocats discréditèrent le bien-fondé de ses ambitions politiques et religieuses et Riel devint mécontent de son avocat de la défense. Les critiques, les activistes et les nationalistes eurent, eux aussi, du mal à réagir efficacement à la question de l'aliénation mentale. Le présent document traitera du recours à cette défense, et plus particulièrement des avis des différents psychologues qui scellèrent le destin de Riel, de son procès et des nombreuses réactions qui sont survenues après sa mort.

Éditeur(s)

Conseil international d'études canadiennes

ISSN

1180-3991 (imprimé)

1923-5291 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Betts, G. (2008). *Non Compos Mentis: A Meta-Historical Survey of the Historiographic Narratives of Louis Riel's "Insanity"*. *International Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*, (38), 15–40.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/040805ar>

**Non Compos Mentis: A Meta-Historical
Survey of the Historiographic Narratives
of Louis Riel's "Insanity"**

When I wrote my biography of Riel, I was inclined to see him as 'unstable,' but I could not bring myself to use the word 'insane.' I read many of Riel's prophecies, prayers, supplications, letters. I regarded his actions as irrational; but I did not, could not say positively, 'this man is insane.'

—George Stanley, 1988.

Let us drop the name and person of Riel out of our thoughts and put in their place an algebraic symbol to equal an unknown mental condition of an equally unknown person.... there is not an asylum in Christendom but would commit him as a lunatic.

—Dr. Daniel Clark, 1887.

How he would have responded to lithium is an interesting question.

—Dr. Irwin Perr, 1992.

Abstract

In light of charges of High Treason, Louis Riel's Defence Counsel pleaded non compos mentis, not guilty by reason of insanity. The prisoner disagreed with his counsel and protested his sanity three times during the trial. With his own lawyers discrediting the validity of his political and religious ambitions, Riel was unsatisfied with his counsel. Similarly, critics, activists, and nationalists also have had an awkward time effectively responding to the question of Riel's insanity. This paper considers the uses of Riel's insanity defense, in particular the opinions of the various psychologists whose judgments determined Riel's fate, his trial, and many of the posthumous responses.

Résumé

Face à l'accusation de haute trahison, l'avocat de la défense de Louis Riel plaida non coupable pour cause d'aliénation mentale. Toutefois, le prisonnier n'était pas du même avis et protesta de sa santé d'esprit trois fois au cours du procès. Ses propres avocats discréditèrent le bien-fondé de ses

ambitions politiques et religieuses et Riel devint mécontent de son avocat de la défense. Les critiques, les activistes et les nationalistes eurent, eux aussi, du mal à réagir efficacement à la question de l'aliénation mentale. Le présent document traitera du recours à cette défense, et plus particulièrement des avis des différents psychologues qui scellèrent le destin de Riel, de son procès et des nombreuses réactions qui sont survenues après sa mort.

In light of charges of High Treason against the Canadian Government and the Sovereign, Louis Riel's Defence Counsel pleaded *non compos mentis*, not guilty by reason of insanity, on his behalf. The prisoner, feeling maligned, disagreed with his counsel and protested his sanity three times during the trial: once in a dramatic interruption of the proceedings, and twice during his two addresses to the jury at the conclusion of the trial. The plea of insanity was perhaps the most logical strategy, for there was little chance of acquitting the prisoner of his most public crimes, broadcast as they had been across the world, and of which he was quite proud. As the Defence was well aware, there exists no excusatory framework for arguing the legality of treason by its moral justification: one cannot defy the government and then claim to have been acting in the government's own interest. A prisoner can submit, however, that he or she be absolved of the responsibility for specific actions by reason of his or her inability to satisfy the *mens rea* imperative of criminal guilt, which is what François-Xavier Lemieux and Charles Fitzpatrick tried and failed to do. Riel's religious aspirations and heresies against the doctrine of the Catholic Church were also quite well known, and certainly tested the boundaries of rational, normative self-consciousness. The court, however, despite three prominent psychologists testifying that they found him at least nominally insane, chose to interpret his fanaticism as not affecting his ability to determine right from wrong. A highly partisan psychological review team sent out by Sir John A. Macdonald following the trial confirmed Riel's mental culpability¹. Riel was hanged on 16 November 1885.

The implications of the insanity plea extend far beyond the court's verdict and have had a significant impact on how historians and activists of various stripes understand and represent both Louis Riel and the Rebellion. At the very least, all sides involved in the posthumous interpretative analysis have had to address Riel's supposed insanity and develop an appropriate response. Within the courtroom itself, the plea trained the court's focus onto the religious and personal dimensions of the case – onto Riel rather than onto his crimes against Canada – and effectively shifted the narrative of his transgression from the political arena to the personal arena. By doing so, however, and with little sympathy for the loss, Lemieux and Fitzpatrick undermined the moral justification of the Rebellion inasmuch as they constructed it as the product of Riel's mental

alienation rather than a reasonable response to a well-documented grievance. They did eventually attempt to justify the Métis grievances, but the Crown attorney rightly called them on the inconsistency: Crown Counsel Britton Bath Osler objected that "My learned friends have opened a case of treason, justified only by the insanity of the prisoner; they are now seeking to justify armed rebellion for the redress of these grievances. These two defences are inconsistent"; Stipendiary Magistrate Hugh Richardson agreed² (Morton 229). With his own lawyers discrediting the validity of his political and religious ambitions, it is little wonder that Riel was unsatisfied with his counsel, and similarly little wonder that critics, activists, and nationalists have had such an awkward time effectively responding to Riel's insanity. The stigma of madness, however, cannot be and has not been ignored by those wishing to re-examine Riel following his death.

In his 1986 paper "The Last Word on Louis Riel – The Man of Several Faces," George F.G. Stanley, the most influential Riel historiographer, laid down a series of thematic boundaries between critical assessments in this colourful summation of his career of research on the Métis leader. The boundaries separate the numerous branches of critical perspectives on Riel's life and its moral implications into four basic narrative categories – "Riel, the defender of French language and religious rights; Riel, the half-breed patriot; Riel, the first western Canadian leader; Riel, the prophet and visionary" (56) – as an effort to demonstrate the complexity of Riel's "story" and its various uses since the execution³. The boundaries he offers have been more or less endorsed, adopted, or shared by Riel scholars including Douglas Owsram, Donald Swainson, and Thomas Flanagan. Flanagan, I believe appropriately, collapses the Western Patriot and Half-Breed Patriot groups into one category, and resurrects the Canada party (see footnote 3). For though the Western Patriot and Half-Breed Patriot causes are fundamentally different, they both narrativize (or, as Stanley says, "romanticize") Riel as a similar type of hero contesting a similar type of enemy. The Canada party, on the other hand, considered Riel the enemy. However, as they were the most vocal constituency in English Canada for over a half century following Riel's execution, and their demands directly influenced the outcome of the trial, there is little to justify by-passing their voice entirely. On top of adopting this "tweak" proposed by Flanagan, this present consideration of the uses of Riel's insanity also adds to Stanley's boundaries the various psychologists who have examined Riel either directly or posthumously. This group influenced Riel's life, his trial, and many of the historiographic responses to Riel. The ideological paradigms that define each of these categories have led to surprisingly coherent depictions of insanity within each group, even though only the "prophet and visionary" category raises evidence relevant to contemporary conceptions of madness. While there are obvious

limitations to grouping disparate studies together, the similar explanations and justifications of Riel's insanity in Woodcock's rather militaristic biography of Gabriel Dumont (in which Riel plays a very prominent role) and Maggie Siggins' liberal-humanistic *Riel: A Life of Revolution*, for example, far outweigh their respective, irreconcilable, devotions to militarism and humanist pacifism, in this context.

Stanley's ideological boundaries represent one of the first meta-historical gestures at elevating Riel histories to a self-conscious awareness of how historians participate in determining the meaning of events. Considering the variety of the ideological uses of Riel in histories, Stanley openly wonders, "In our efforts to reconcile the past with the present, do we reveal the truth or create more illusions?" (56). His concern echoes the questions Hayden White raises in *The Content of the Form* about the influence of narrativizing on the "true story" of history. The scholars noted above accept the existence of ideological boundaries in the development of Riel scholarship and self-consciously locate their own historiographies within the discourse of one (or more) specific narrative category. They align the facts of Riel's life into positions within a plot – "a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole" (White 9) – that is corroborated by similar plots found the world over. The self-consciousness these critics display in identifying the narrative structure of their histories, and its comparative distinction from other narrative structures, facilitates the exercise in this paper: a comparative, meta-historical survey of the discursive structure of the narratives in relation to a pivotal "event" or "fact" – specifically, the question of Riel's insanity.

This paper hopes to draw attention to the discursive and relativist nature of insanity, and how the possibility of Riel's insanity functions within the context of the ideological categories of Riel scholarship. Despite the overt influence of Michel Foucault's perspective on the discursive formations of madness in many of the studies on Riel, few of the historians involved make any attempt to contextualise or clarify the means by which they reached their vociferous declarations of his mental health. Foucault's research provides a functional model to identify important questions that remain unanswered by Riel historians. By what standard do they define insanity? By what evidence do they evaluate Riel's relationship to that standard? By what logic is that standard defined? How does it relate to the ideological perspective of the historian? Most of these questions require mini-treatises far beyond the scope of the project here, especially as they relate to specific historical accounts of the Rebellions. In the context of a meta-historical approach to the literature, however, the logic by which histories use and respond to Riel's insanity demonstrates

the method by which historians manufacture the different conceptions of both madness and Louis Riel.

Riel the Defender/Traitor

The patriotic optimism of Confederation, fuelled by the rhetoric of youth and fresh beginnings, and by the dominant metaphor of an empty receptacle ("What past can match thy glorious youth, // Fair Canada of ours?" sang the poet James David Edgar), found its first test and application in the two Riel Rebellions, now known as the Red River Resistance, 1870 and the North-West Rebellion, 1885. Though contemporary opinions insist upon the novelty of the conflict, as is often the case, it took many years before that novelty was integrated into depictions of the strife. Ironically, despite the belief that Canada represented a break from Old World tribulations, and despite the unique dimensions of the conflict, the Rebellions were instantly encoded through the most obvious prejudices available: the ancient French/English and Catholic/Protestant conflicts restaged in the Canadian West. The fact of Aboriginal participation in the conflicts was easily connected to the stereotypes of aboriginal bloodlust to create monstrous and gothic resonances, thereby heightening popular fascination, but doing little to add nuance to the racial and religious binary of the conflict. In the English-Canadian media, Riel, the "Rebel Ringleader" (*The Globe* 21 July 1885), was reported to be "no fool, though he may be a fanatic" (*The Globe* 28 March 1885). In the French-Canadian media, before Riel's arrest, the newspapers generally expressed cautious support for Macdonald's military campaign (which Morton attributes to the memories of pre-Confederation Indian uprisings against French settlements (xii)). After the arrest, however, Riel rapidly transformed in the French-Canadian media into a sympathetic victim of English-Canadian intolerance. An editorial published in *L'Electeur* captures the spirit of praise and support for Riel:

Tes fautes personnelles s'effacent devant la sainteté de la cause dont tu t'es fait le champion. Jeanne d'Arc! Napoléon! Chénier! Riel!
C'est avec le plus profond respect que l'on prononce vos noms sacrés. Chénier a son monument, Riel tu auras le tien. (25 June 1885, quoted in Stanley 389).

The histories tend to focus on the jingoistic journalism from both camps, which was in fact rarer than one might expect throughout the course of the uprising: a surprisingly diplomatic voice, for instance, appears in *The Globe* to claim that "Sir John Macdonald is quite as much as his friend Riel responsible for all that has occurred within the last few weeks" (15 April 1885). *The Daily British Whig* reported on the hanging that "Any

man who saw him die could not doubt his sanity. A more rational, self-controlled, sequent mind could not be conceived than he displayed" (26 November 1885). Weeks after Riel's hanging, *The Weekly Globe* editorialized that "The Métis would have got nothing had they not rebelled" (4 December 1885). A more detailed account of French media response to the Rebellion by Arthur Silver includes the progress of French Canada's rather gradual adoption of the Métis as more than mere "sauvages" after the first uprising in 1870. Peter B. Waite's *Canada 1874-1896* and R.E. Lamb's *Thunder in the North* both review the English-Canadian media response, but a balanced, holistic review of the omnifarious voices still waits to be done⁴. The majority of journalistic accounts focused on military planning and incidents, much as present-day media outlets continue to do, only passively responding to or reporting information supplied by politicians, the police, and the military. The Aboriginal involvement – with their "fiery disposition" (MacBeth 1898 30-31) – amounted to little more than a vague threat of total destabilization into debacle, massacre, and other lurid imaginings – all carefully described in newspaper and fictionalized accounts.

In the English-Canadian histories of the Rebellion written in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, especially Charles P. Mulvaney's *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885* (1885), George Bryce's *A Short History of the Canadian People* (1887), R.G. MacBeth's *The Making of the Canadian West* (1898), works by Chester Martin, E.E. Kreutzweiser, and F.H. Schofield, as well as in the French-Canadian histories by Pierre-Adolphe Pinsonneault, J.H. Bellerose, A.G. Morice, and Auguste-Henri Trémaudan, Riel's possible insanity receives very little attention, except inasmuch as it corroborates the polemic of the authors, who are indeed substantially more polemic than the typical journalist. The general neglect has little to do with the legal claims made by either the Defence or the Crown during the trial, or the evidence and conclusions presented by the various psychologists. It has more to do with Riel's example being subsumed into the political antagonisms of the day. The depictions of insanity in these sources reveal little more than the ideological biases of Confederation-era Canada, as they existed in Ontario and Quebec. Bob Beal even suggests, "The most significant long-term results of the rebellion occurred not in the North-West but in the Province of Quebec" (342). The Rebellion revealed that unsettled racial, religious, and linguistic tensions between the French Catholics and English Protestants remained strong, despite the Confederation promise of a fresh start. The histories on both sides represent Louis Riel's insanity within the old discourse of Empire and Conquest, as either a loss of morality (for those who regard him as traitor) or will (for those who regard him as defender/victim).

During the course of his trial, Riel's Defence argued that the prisoner was not responsible for any treasonous actions because he was insane, or

in their direct words was "not in possession of a sound mind" (Morton 300), that he was "subject to... insane delusions" (302) and "devilish passions" (307). The language that describes insanity as a displacement or dispossession of one's own body arises from an ancient conception of mental illness as an unsuccessful negotiation of competing moral agencies within the body. As Judith S. Neaman reports, the doctrine of divine possession extends at least as far back as the Hellenic period and early Common Era, where reports of Dionysian cults transformed into "demonic possession by the old pagan gods who had become Christian demons" (15). In the Middle Ages the moral nature of possession shifted: St. Augustine described God as Reason, and human reason the tool by which to understand (or conceive) the extent of God's glory. Irrationality represents a "denial of the Creator" (41), a re-enactment of the Edenic fall⁵ and an absence of the influence of good – which, as C.S. Lewis often argued, essentially defines evil. Insanity, the extreme manifestation of irrationality, and thus an extreme "malfunction of the link between man and God" (42), introduces distinct parallels between the insane mind and the morally-deranged influence of Satan: a parallel that the language of possession explicitly bridges. Though possession was but one amongst many theories of insanity, its theological implications influenced the treatment of insanity up to Riel's time. The treatment for insanity in Quebec and Ontario throughout the 19th century was referred to as "moral therapy" (Moran 5), and was patterned after a strict hierarchy of privilege based on rationality and submission to Christian moral authority: a metaphoric repossession by the Church, followed by a not-so-metaphoric reintegration into society.

Theological implications also emerge explicitly in the language of the charge of High Treason, which, as read in the Regina court room, intertwines morality and the metaphor of possession:

That the said Louis Riel, then living within the Dominion of Canada and under the protection of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, not regarding the duty of his allegiance nor having the fear of God in his heart, but *being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil as a false traitor* against our said Lady the Queen, and wholly withdrawing the allegiance, fidelity and obedience which he should and of right ought to bear towards our said Lady the Queen....
(Morton 6, italics mine)

The phrase "instigation of the devil" is repeated 6 times in the list of charges. The demonic possession that is built into this particular legal definition of treason implies an Augustinian departure from rationality and an unpardonable moral transgression. The co-mingling of Christian faith ("the fear of God") with the Empire ("his allegiance") contributes an

unimpeachable moral imperative to the imperialist project found throughout the history of modern colonization in every colonizing and colonized nation. To challenge the Empire is to stand outside of its moral influence, and, as with insanity, to fall under the metaphorical possession of the Devil. While of no legal consequence, the moral and rational implications of possession effectively demonize those who dare oppose the progress of the Empire: the moral equivalent of challenging God. It is by the same logic that Alfred O. Legge hopes Manitoba's Aboriginal and half-breed populations will "embrace the blessings of civilisation and Christianity" and leave behind the ominous opposites (114).

The 1979 Coles facsimile reproduction of W.P. Collins' spiteful, colonialist fantasy *The Story of Louis Riel the Rebel Chief* (1885), has drawn a surprising amount of attention to the text – certainly more than it ever received during its initial printing. The tale is lurid, inconsistent, and amateurish, plucked directly from the worst of the newspaper reports, and fleshed out through the most banal conventions of the Gothic. The author interrupts the fictionalization with self-justifying intrusions, excessive "historical" details plagiarised directly from the daily press, alongside chapter-length editorials on the conflict. The logic of Collins' condemnation of Riel, the "bestly, murderous tyrant" (126), follows the pattern just introduced – however exaggerated it may be. Collins paints Riel as Satan, crushing the Edenic calm of the North-West by whispering wrathful messages into innocent Métis ears and inciting them to Rebellion: they do not hear "the wily traitor behind the rich, eloquent voice" (38). Riel "hisses" and rants, and generally conducts himself appropriately for "an ambitious demagogue" (90). Collins sets his unintentionally parodic use of the Miltonic anti-hero within a colonialist conflict: "Here was a madly ambitious adventurer 'resisting the power,' and, therefore, 'resisting the ordinances of God'" (47). The Biblical misquotations from Romans 13: 1-2 are not used to condemn Riel's heresy, but his "mad" anti-colonial challenge to the extension of the Dominion of Canada across the North-West. Collins melds the Canadian Dominion with the dominion granted Adam in the Psalms as a Christian rite of blessed expansion and possession. One must be careful with such a spurious resource as Collins to not make too broad a cultural generalization from his writing, but few writers expose their ideological agenda so well as the hack – and, indeed, his text grotesquely incarnates racist and colonialist logic. Riel's moment of paranoiac "brain fever" (102) symbolizes the perversion of his transgression; it is not a realistic biographic representation. Collins ends his book with an anti-French-Canadian diatribe.

Within colonialist rhetoric, the simple fact of uprising against "our country's honour"⁶ demonstrates moral dereliction and irrationality. Any insinuation of a more literal insanity within English-Canadian histories

emerges as further evidence of Riel's contract with immorality: further justification for both the total purgation of his influence in Canada, and the total occlusion of his political cause. His Métis background contributes only by enhancing the gothic tension of his demonic abomination, as well as corroborating English-Canadian racism against French Canadians. In MacBeth's racist anthropology, for instance, "[The Métis] were not people of a settled temperament. They did not take naturally to the form. There was enough of the Indian blood in them to make them nomadic hunters rather than settlers, and enough of the fiery volatility of French blood to make them susceptible to the appeals of aggressive agitation" (*Policing the Plains* 107).

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, French-Canadian historians forgive Riel's abnormal behaviour and heresies. In Lionel Groulx's *Le français au Canada* (1932), Auguste-Henri Trémaudan's *Histoire de la nation métisse* (1936), and Jean Bruchési's *Histoire du Canada pour tous* (1940), the political ambitions of French Canada to liberate itself from English-Canadian domination overrides and contradicts any moral complication in a hero of the cause⁷. Riel is a "martyr politique" – his political and religious values deemed impeccable. And while his irrational heresies cannot be easily overlooked (although Trémaudan's account manages to ignore them entirely), Riel's atonement and submission to the Church after his incarceration absolve him of the sin of his errancy. Neaman notes that most possession narratives involve a pinnacle moment of release through exorcism, followed by a full return to rationality and morality. The victim is thereby absolved of the moral implications of his or her contravention, much as a sinner receives absolution in the Catholic confessional tradition. Early French-Canadian histories of Riel, where any irrationality is admitted at all, accentuate the limited duration of his moments of derangement, minimize the extent of his folly, or else attribute his distraction to English-Canadian oppression and tyranny. Honoré Mercier, leader of the Quebec Liberals, captured the most radical passion of this tendency in his campaign against Macdonald, as when he claimed: "In killing Riel, Sir John has not only struck at the heart of our race but especially at the cause of justice and humanity which... demanded mercy for the prisoner of Regina, our poor friend" (quoted in Bumstead *Peoples* 29). Mercier, whom Beal describes as "an unprincipled demagogue" (343), attributes all sign of "poor" Riel's irrationality to the inhumanity suffered at the hands of his English-Canadian enemies – whose possession of his land awaits metaphoric exorcism.

Riel the Passionate Activist

In 1936, historical accounts of Riel make an important ideological shift. George F. Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada* emerges with a novel reconfiguration of the North-West Rebellion that accentuates the Métis as a distinct political group, and as a third racial category in which to envision Louis Riel. Though Stanley's book suffered the indignity of general neglect for almost thirty years, his history begins the process of integrating the novel dimensions of the strife into the narrative of the conflict:

The traditional French-English, Catholic-Protestant approach to western Canadian history appeared to me to be purely coincidental.... To interpret Riel as the defender of a native culture rather than as a rebel against constituted authority was to imply, on my part, a degree of sympathy unacceptable at that time to many Canadians. I was dismayed but not discouraged. ("Last Word" 50)

In previous accounts, the concerns of the Métis were understood in relation to larger French-Canadian issues, or lost in their betweenness and often-predicted collapse as a distinct racial category. They generated a great deal of sympathy from English Canada for the tragedy of their cultural absence, for being denied the certitude of being either French or Indian and left with nothing to compensate. Stanley proposed an independent Métis political perspective, with distinct political ambitions operating in response to a clash between industrialized and pre-industrialized civilizations happening the world over. Other books appeared that also stressed the independent politics and culture of the Métis, such as A.S. Morton's *A History of the Canadian West* (1936), A.G. Morice's *La race métisse, étude critique en marge d'un livre récent* (1938), and Marcel Giraud's *Le Métis Canadien* (1945).

The emergence of the Métis as a recognized political entity hastened with the radical shift in racial consciousness in the Western world following the Second World War. Owrain states that "The war itself created a new awareness of the dangers of racial injustice and had made the former casual assumptions about race less acceptable" (1988 18). After the Holocaust, racial oppression in the name of national imperialism could no longer be tolerated. Stanley's book, reissued by University of Toronto Press in 1960, opened the Rebellions to the discourse of racial oppression and recast Riel as an early Aboriginal rights activist struggling against racial and imperial oppression. Echoes of Stanley's work appear rapidly in Rebellion re-evaluations that cast Riel as "un héros" (MacEwan 156), "a national hero and a source of inspiration" (Association of Métis 3). Novelizations romanticize him even further, transforming him into a "Métis hero...symbol and spokesman of the oppressed but gallant minority; revolutionist, leader and

lord" (Howard quoted in Owsram 19), or, as in Osler's rendition, claiming "This was what he had been made for – this taking of other people's burdens upon his own broad shoulders!" (23). Political activist groups as diverse as Aboriginal rights activists, Québécois socialist-separatists, Western Canadian neo-conservative separatists, and Canadian post-colonial nationalists each construct Riel as a champion or early precursor of their cause. The figure that emerges from this writing appears almost secular, liberal, and humanist: or, as Swainson phrases it, "romanticized and sanitized...informed more by mission-oriented imaginations than a meticulous use of evidence" (37).

In a similar pattern of historical modulation, in some accounts the religious fundamentalism that inspires Riel's insanity becomes interpreted as either an eccentric response to environmental oppression⁸, or a carefully orchestrated motivation technique designed to inspire the Métis during war. Olive Knox argues that he acted "like the average man faced finally with open warfare, using every means in his power to achieve his aim.... His parables, when studied, show his attempts to keep his men, Indians and half-breeds, many of them uneducated, united and firm in their resolve to carry the rebellion through until the government came to terms" (191). This, of course, obscures the eccentric prophecies Riel continued to write while in captivity after the Rebellion was lost, as well as those written in privacy during times of peace.

With Riel's incorporation into the racial discourse of the post-Second World War era, for the first time Métis, English-Canadian and French-Canadian historians agreed on the moral configuration of the narrative: Riel became the uncontrovertible hero to Macdonald's and the Canada party's role as oppressive villains. The nature of that oppression shifts depending on the critic. Accordingly, the focus of Riel's political heroism changes with each critic and includes half-breed rights in books by the Association of Métis, Donald Purich, Duke Redbird, Maggie Siggins and numerous others, anti-imperialism in Stanley Ryerson's book, anti-capitalism in Léandre Bergeron's, liberal humanism in Terry Lusty's, and the challenge to anti-eastern chauvinism in works by W.L. Morton, William Davidson, E.B. Osler, Douglas Owsram, and Owen Anderson. Hartwell Bowsfield even proposes Riel as an early advocate of bilingualism (see his "Introduction" in particular). Stanley wryly notes that "to me, it remains an oddity to see Riel, the man who contested elections as a Conservative and who envisioned a theocratic state for western Canada, so readily welcomed to the ranks of left-wing Socialists" ("Last Word" 53).

Madness has little place in this hagiology of Riel's political activism. Accordingly, details of his insanity are dismissed outright, contextualised

within the cultural confrontation, or else distorted into personable character quirks. What minimalist depictions of Riel's insanity there are present a model of environmentally induced madness reminiscent of Hippocrates's Humoural Theory of medicine: an explanation of madness in psychology even more pervasive throughout post-Hellenic Western history than that of possession. Unlike possession, there are no moral implications attached to bilious and phlegmatic behaviour and therefore no need for ethical exorcism. Instead, afflicted patients are coaxed, often brutally, to balanced normalcy through dialectic methods and reward/punishment treatments established first by the ancient Arabs and enhanced over the centuries by medical pioneers like Galen, Constantine the African, Anaximenes, and Arnold of Villanova. The tradition distinguishes between incurables and those who will return to total rationality once the humours have been balanced and the disruptive environment calmed⁹. It is in this logic of a temporary, environmentally-induced disturbance that political historians admit Riel's insanity and construct a narrative denouement in his return to full mental clarity. As Siggins bluntly states, by the time of the trial, "Riel was not insane" (417)¹⁰.

Riel the Prophet

One difficulty with the politically motivated histories of Riel is their tendency to ignore the consistency of his religious thinking that led to his so-called mania. From 1874 through to the end of his life, Riel's religious cosmology and his place within it does change, but only by a small degree. Until his death, he retained the sense of himself as "Prophet of the New World," devoted to healing the Protestant-Catholic rift in the Christian Church, and to his belief in the Métis as a chosen people. A growing number of histories of Riel focus attentively on his sense of religious mission, and identify him as a rather typical example of the many millenarian leaders who have arisen – especially within sites of conflict between modern and pre-modern cultures. According to research by Flanagan, Bumstead, Mossman, and Stanley, Riel's peculiar behaviours and ideas must be understood in conjunction with other charismatic individuals championing religious movements in response to political conflict. Mossmann states that "Louis Riel in 1885 was primarily a millenarian leader, not a political one.... These movements see the rise of a prophetic leader, who through his charisma strikes a supernatural chord in his mainly peasant or semi-nomadic followers and through his exceptional personality is able to inspire his followers with a desperately needed hope for [his] god-like powers" (241). Gilles Martel's *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel* explores the same, with more attention to French ideology and history.

Madness, in this group of histories, is entirely discursive: a social mechanism by which competing ideologies control and limit challenges to their dominance. Flanagan outlines each of the specific beliefs for which Riel was classified insane, and locates similar beliefs within mainstream institutions. The return to Mosaic law, endorsement of polygamy, and belief in the Hebraic descent of North American aboriginal groups were beliefs all shared with the Mormons¹¹. Both the call for a "new Rome" in Canada and a rejection of the Canadian Confederation were ideas that circulated with marginal currency in Quebec's *ultramontane* movement, with whom Riel was intimately associated. All religions, of course, have prophets in direct communication with the divine. Flanagan argues that Riel was attempting to establish a new Christian sect, like the Mormons, but that his ultramontane associates fought him to control its development. His years in Quebec asylums amount, according to Flanagan, to kidnapping, social control, and extreme manipulation to prevent Riel's church from developing:

Riel's civil rights were not properly observed. He was certified on dubious grounds under a vague law which was bent if not broken in his case.... The novelty of his ideas about his mission, the role of the Métis, and the reform of Catholicism put him sharply at odds with the conventional thinking of his French-Canadian relatives and friends. Suddenly, he who had been a symbol of their racial and religious goals [that is, French and Catholic – not Métis] was no longer behaving appropriately. Persuaded that they were helping Riel, they took away his liberty. ("Involuntary Psychiatric" 463, 467)

J.M. Bumstead continues Flanagan's work, asserting that "Riel was not medically insane, but was instead a genuine religious prophet and visionary, to be judged by other criteria" (284). Riel's insanity, by this logic, becomes evidence of his loss within a competition between religious ideologies. Madness becomes an important and powerful tool of the dominant institution to control and disempower and discredit rivals – especially important in an era when religious institutions have lost the power to judge someone for heresy. In Quebec, the Catholic Church controlled the asylums with only limited governmental supervision. Foucault's influence can be felt in this reimagining of Riel's insanity as sign of a cultural conflict (reversing the effect of his Defence Counsel), and as an attempt to delegitimize his religious ambitions.

In his 1961 *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Foucault traces the development of European conceptions and depictions of madness from the Middle Ages into the period of "the Great Confinement," wherein the collapse of the transgressions of the poor, the unemployed, the criminals, and the insane obscured distinctions between

them and justified mass segregation from society: "confinement had become the abusive amalgam of heterogeneous elements" (45). Asylums, or their equivalent, sprang up across Europe from the mid 17th Century and solved an economic crisis as beggars, vagabonds, and "idlers," along with other social delinquents, were rounded up and confined indefinitely – and put to work on behalf of the state. Foucault describes the social function of asylums as a form of policing normality, but even more importantly, as a preventative measure against class insurrection: an "economic tactic" (52) staged within the logic of a moral imperative to labour; "idleness is rebellion.... Pride was the sin of man before the Fall; but the sin of idleness is the supreme pride of man once he has fallen" (56). Foucault highlights the discontinuity between specific discursive formations of madness over the past half millennium, but demonstrates a continuum of madness being used as a punitive tool of social control. Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz believes that the idea of madness continues to serve as a repressive mechanism of moral policing in the 20th century:

In vain does the alleged madman insist that he is not sick; his inability to 'recognize' that he is, is regarded as a hallmark of his illness.... In this medical rejection of the Other as a madman, we recognize, in up-to-date semantic and technical garb, but underneath it remarkably unchanged, his former religious rejection as heretic. (*Manufacture* xvi)

Of course, Riel was guilty of a double heresy – breaking both Canadian colonial and religious Weltanschauungen – and he thus, unknowingly, invited upon himself the supreme forces of social control. While the Church might have tried to use insanity to control Riel's messianism, Lewis Herbert Thomas argues that the government *fought* the charges of insanity in order to permanently silence Riel: the execution, he believes, was thus a "judicial murder." The "askesis" of "moral reform and constraint" at the hands of psychologists (Foucault 59-60) was trumped in this case by an even more permanent measure; capital punishment.

Historiographic accounts of Riel's insanity have been overwhelmed by the political contest in which it appeared. The ideological nature of that contest – and how certain ideological forces might have used insanity politically – have been meticulously documented and discussed by historians, scholars, and activists. Much less discussed is the ideological nature of insanity and psychological assessments that determine madness. The history of conceptions of insanity in the Western world reveals that madness has always functioned in accord with the ideological project of the dominant institutions and the dominant values of the time. Thus, while historians debate which narratives best explain Riel in relation to insanity, insanity is itself defined by broad cultural narratives. In particu-

lar, the anxiety surrounding insanity increases with the rising influence of the Cartesian triumph of mind over body inasmuch as the triumph is staged as a moral conquest of good over evil. Riel, himself, understood the relationship between body and mind in this way: "Here I have to defend myself against the accusation of high treason, or I have to consent to the animal life of an asylum. I don't care much about animal life if I am not allowed to carry with it the moral existence of an intellectual being" (Morton 212). The fear and shame of the moral influence of the body dates back, in Christian consciousness, to the Edenic fall – when Satan lured Eve, and then Adam through Eve, into an awareness of nudity. The body has since shared the vile association with the irrational figure that led to the schism between humanity and God.

One frequently cited proof of Riel's insanity was his tendency for many years to strip off his clothes and pray naked before his God. In light of Christian history, there is no greater affront to God than such a brazen confidence in the body, the symbol of the Fall. Flanagan argues that, for one as disempowered as Riel, the destruction of clothing was his only means to protest his disempowerment. I believe, however, the manoeuvre was more sincere and can be connected to the frame of Riel as visionary prophet: that Riel understood implicitly the social and moral implications of the naked human body and sought to overturn the shame wrought by the Devil since Eden. In a letter to Bourget, on 15 May 1876, from the asylum, Riel prophesized the word of God:

When man divests himself of himself, it will not be twenty-four hours before I complete in him the work of redemption and bring him into my presence, as were Adam and Eve before their sin, in the enjoyment of the delights of innocence.... He who is good should show himself entirely nude, for he is beautiful. He who is disobedient should hide himself, for he is ugly.... The day is coming when men will arise naked from the breast of the earth. (quoted in Flanagan *Louis 'David' Riel* 71)

The gesture can also be seen as a literal reading of the Old Testament, where nudity recurrently appears as an expression of devotion. Isaiah, for instance, wanders the world for three years in the nude under God's direct instruction (Isaiah 20:2). David, Saul, and many others also use nudity as a gesture to indicate moral purity. In the 12th century, St. Francis of Assisi stripped in a village square as a sign of his faith and rejection of earthly comforts, and preached without clothes on numerous occasions. Riel's nudity began before he was put into an asylum, and halted only after Bishop Bourget commanded him to stop. At Bourget's order, Riel stopped the practice entirely, thereby, at the least, demonstrating that he retained self-control. In the Christian tradition, the gesture of praying

while fully exposed contains a rare symbolic integrity, representing faith and trust and innocence. Despite which fact, in modern Western society, where discursive notions of *compos mentis* are determined by normative concepts of behaviour patterns, politically-influenced ideology, and a deeply-felt moral repugnance against both irrationality and the body, there is no question that Riel's behaviour was insane. For his religious fanaticism, he challenged the patterns of acceptable behaviour within his society. Fitzpatrick argued in the closing statement of the Defence that the simple fact that Riel believed he could challenge both Church and State, and change both, demonstrates a profound and utter madness. This conception of madness, however, all but admits that insanity is not a condition within the mind of an individual, but is rather a reactionary mechanism used by society against ideological, political, and religious challenge.

Riel the Psychiatric Patient

The ironic detail buried in the historical engagements with Riel's insanity is that historians have invariably shown little regard (or more often total disregard) for the opinions of psychologists and psychiatrists on the matter. There have been 16 different formal psychological assessments and posthumous reassessments made of Riel by professional psychologists and psychiatrists since 1876. The first was by Dr. Henry Howard, on 6 March 1876 at the Saint-Jean-de-Dieu asylum in Longue-Pointe, who admitted freely that "I believed him to be guilty of the murder he was accused of, and I believed every murderer to be either insane or a fool," (quoted in Flanagan, 1996, 59). Howard's idiosyncratic "teratologic" theory of madness was almost entirely uninformative and distinctly at odds with Canadian law. Riel was transferred on 19 May 1876 to the asylum at Beauport, where Medical Superintendent François-Elzéar Roy diagnosed Riel with megalomania, a particular form of psychosis limited to isolated topics and stimuli – such as religion in Riel's case. Despite Riel's release on 21 January 1878, Roy, the only doctor at the trial with extensive exposure to Riel, testified that the prisoner was "cured, more or less," and that "we did not succeed in changing the idea of the patient...he may have had intermissions...[but] the least contradiction excites" his megalomania (quoted in Morton 250-1). The admission suggests Roy believed Riel had a more chronic mental disease than either of the possession or humours models explains: that he was ineradicably sick, and would most likely worsen in a less favourable and controlled environment. Despite the psychologists, historians as diverse as Flanagan, Siggins, and Charlebois all discount the validity of these assessments for various political and religious reasons (not to mention Crown Prosecutor Osler's deft handling of Roy's testimony during the

trial, leading to Roy's devastating admission, "I am not an expert in insanity" (251). Knox, for instance, after reviewing the testimony a century after Riel's death, authoritatively declares, "I have come to the conclusion that Louis was not insane in 1885" (196).

Riel left Quebec, voyaged West and settled down into a teaching position in St. Peter's, Montana, outside of the Canadian political turmoil. Even in these calm days, however, Riel's papers indicate an unbroken commitment to his religious cosmology. As he had gained control over his eccentric behaviour during this period, the next psychologists to interview Riel only came after the Rebellion and his subsequent arrest. Dr. Daniel Clark, Superintendent of the Toronto Lunatic Asylum, Dr. James Wallace, Superintendent of the Asylum for the Insane at Hamilton Ontario, and Dr. Roy, as mentioned above, were all subpoenaed for the trial in Regina and given leave to interview him as they saw fit. From these captivity interviews, Clark found "that a man who held [Riel's] views and did these things must certainly be of insane mind" (257). Roy confirmed his earlier diagnosis of "megalomania" (244). Wallace, a witness for the Crown, testified that "I have not discovered any insanity about him, no indication of insanity" (262), but admitted there was little he could properly tell under the time constraints of his single half-hour interview: "I have only had a limited examination of him, and in any case of obscure mental disease, it sometimes takes a very long time before one can make up their mind" (263).

In response to the public outcry against Riel's death sentence in the French-Canadian and international media, Sir John A. Macdonald assigned two more prominent psychologists, Dr. Michael Lavell of Kingston and Dr. François-Xavier Valade of Ottawa, to test for themselves whether Riel could distinguish right from wrong on the specific issue of his crime. Not surprisingly, given the immense political pressure, the doctors reported to parliament in 1885 that Riel was lucid. Flanagan notes that an early version of Valade's report claimed Riel was insane – but was subsequently altered in its presentation to the House of Commons – clearly a scandalous distortion. Affidavits filed by Dr. F.X. Perrault and Dr. Brunelle, of the asylums in Longue-Pointe and Beauport, respectively, both found that Riel "pretended insanity" (quoted in Knox 193-4). Stanley, Siggins, Knox, Flanagan, and all others who have cared to discuss the unsavoury affair dismiss the report and the affidavits outright, citing the political nature of the exercise – even, in the case of Siggins and Knox, within essays that agree with their conclusion that Riel was sane.

Of the posthumous assessments, Dr. J. Bourque writes of Riel's "folie" in 1885, Dr. H. Gilson, in 1886, describes Riel's "manie chronique à forme religieuse" (51-60), Dr. Daniel Clark, in 1887, describes Riel as a

“lunatic” (33-51), Dr. Ireland, in 1889, describes his “religious delusions” (quoted in Littman 461), Dr. C.K. Clarke, in 1905, finds Riel “simply a case of evolutionary insanity...no doubt [properly] classed as one of the paranoiac forms of dementia” (205), Dr. Markson, in 1965, diagnoses “a psychosis with predominantly manic and paranoid features” (249), and the *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* declares that “Riel was insane” in the Forward to their special issue on Riel. In the issue, Dr. Littman writes, “Riel appears to fit the grandiose sub-type of paranoid schizophrenia” (“Pathology” 461). Dr. Irwin Perr diagnoses a “bipolar disorder, probably manic” and ponders a lithium treatment (“Strange Story” 582-583). Dr. Robert Patterson, in 1992, agrees with Markson’s earlier assessment. The motivations for these pathographies¹² are unclear, and seem to emerge from a nationalistic desire to engage, somehow, in Canadian history: or as Littman opines, “to sharpen our minds and to widen our culture” (“History” 431). Published almost exclusively in scientific journals, the reports each summarize Riel’s biography and base their assessments on details that are never questioned or tested for validity. The articles stand in stark contrast with the scientifically rigorous methods of data collection in the surrounding journal. Perr, for instance, cites the apocryphal legend of Riel self-identifying as David Mordecai, a Jew from Marseilles, in 1875, as if the story were of undeniable validity. He lists no sources for the tale, but yet uses it as the basis for an entire psychological assessment. Markson makes similar use of the story in 1965. Flanagan, on the other hand, investigated the claim and could only find one vague allusion to it in an 1878 apology Riel wrote to Father Taché ““for having called himself a Jew’ when he was ‘still young’” (*Louis ‘David’ Riel* 16). There are no other reliable documental sources for the anecdote.

The reviews make little attempt to imagine the cultural context in which Riel lived, or the political and social ramifications of his actions. The events by which they diagnose his psychosis are decontextualized eccentricities and easily integrated into the pre-existing discourse of mental illness. But, as Anne Digby emphatically argues, “Perceptions of madness are culturally responsive: definitions of what constitutes insanity are a reflection of ideas and values current at a particular time in contemporary society” (1). The moral implications of using shifting cultural values to destroy the intellectual credibility of Riel in the posthumous pathographies seem to be overlooked in the faith in the act of diagnosis – as evidenced by the casual approach to collecting data. Szasz, a psychiatrist and a critic of the entire psychiatric industry, likens the power and arrogance of psychiatric diagnosis to a familiar political paradigm: “In institutional psychiatry, disagreement is resolved by the psychiatrist coercing the patient. This is like the traditional imperialist or colonialist posture – a superior power crudely dominating an inferior one” (*Heresies*

114)¹³. More revealingly, Szasz describes the "insanity plea" in terms of the possession narrative:

[It is] a psychiatric alibi based on the scientificization of Christianity; evil deeds formerly attributed to the devil who possessed the defendant are transformed into 'irresistible impulses' which make him insane...when people believed in the devil, they believed that diabolical possession caused crime; when people believe in insanity, they believe that mental illness caused the crime. (117)

The 16 psychiatrists who have reviewed Riel's case all profess the kind of faith in insanity that Szasz lambastes throughout his books: a faith that enables eccentricity to be diagnosed as pathology with little to no consideration of non-traditional cultures or patterns of behaviour. The result echoes the colonialist and religious model of insanity documented earlier in this paper: defiance or non-conformity implies irrationality, which as we have already seen brings with it a moral condemnation of all acts stemming from that defiance. In both models, difference is not tolerated.

Conclusion

Across all the uses and depictions of Louis Riel's insanity, two beliefs remain constant: that insanity is morally repugnant, and that, had Riel been undeniably proven insane, it would undermine the moral integrity of his life and politics. Within these assumptions, all manner of perspectives emerge as possibilities. Indeed, some argue that Riel's insanity was an extension of his devilish rejection of Canada; others argue that Riel's insanity was the result of the devilish influence of Canada. Some argue that his insanity was feigned, was planned, was temporary, was a set-up, was an attempt to discredit him, was an attempt to control him and thus silence him. While there are other perspectives between these positions, these are the most salient of the recurring conceptions of Riel's madness. Flanagan and Bumstead, by simply raising the possibility of an ideological influence in psychiatric diagnosis, go the farthest in addressing the construction and deployment of insanity in Canadian society. While they do not go as far as Szasz in questioning the entire industry as a form of deviance management, they do raise the important distinction between medical insanity and the legal standard of *non compos mentis* on the nature of responsibility under the law. The definitions of both the medical and the legal terms are based on the presumption of *sanitas* – the implied, yet always undefined, standard of normality and reason by which insanity is defined. The anxiety all Riel historians betray about insanity was obvi-

ously felt by the prisoner himself, as he expressed delight at being proven sane – regardless of the cost of that vindication: “Even if I was going to be sentenced by you, gentlemen of the jury, I have this satisfaction if I die – that if I die I will not be reputed by all men as insane, as a lunatic” (Riel 157).

Foucault describes the most dramatic shift in conceptions of insanity between the Renaissance and the Age of Reason as an externalization, a bestialization of both the afflicted and the disease. What had once been seen as inherently part of the human experience, shifted into a brutal separation: “Madness became a thing to look at” (70) and incorporated into the rising sense of separation between human and animal. The madman was not a sick man, but a beast, a dehumanized animal presented as spectacle in the marketplace, and subject to horrid conditions, unspeakable experiments, and brutal disciplining. The transformation was not based on science, but on fear: many of the “insane” were not afflicted by mental disease at all. All manner of social deviants were collected and confined to quell society’s rising intolerance of dissidence. Foucault saw no improvement in the dehumanization of the insane in the modern era. In the case of Riel, beyond Foucault’s study, while efforts had begun to re-humanize patients by offering them better living conditions and more dignity, the stigma of madness as a moral transgression remained. To a lesser extent, it remains still, although we are much more willing to recognize a separation between the individual and the disease that afflicts him or her. The medicalization of insanity takes the responsibility of insanity away from the individual, and alters their chemical balance until the symptoms of insanity disappear. Like the possession mythology, medical insanity presents a narrative of return wherein the patient suffers a metaphorical invasion by an enemy presence. The patient must passively submit themselves to be cleansed of evil by medical doctors, contemporary heirs to the role of the high priest.

Many historians have speculated about what might have been if Riel’s jury – a panel of citizens with no psychiatric training – had found him insane and let him live. All agree that his influence would have suffered. The stigma of madness, as Riel himself predicted, would have ruined his reputation far more effectively than the ultimate silence of death. As Scott Simmie and Julia Nunes write, madness is “the last taboo... the misconceptions are *automatically* applied, denying the person any opportunity to disprove them” (301). A harrowing silence intermingled with doubt pervades all those touched by the asylum: regardless of the people they might have been or heroes they might become.

Notes

1. For a detailed account of the psychological team, see Flanagan's Chapter Seven "The Medical Commission" in *Riel and the Rebellion*.
2. All trial quotations are taken from Desmond Morton's transcript in *The Queen v. Louis Riel*.
3. Strangely, in this breakdown, and without explanation, Stanley drops the most prominent early English-Canadian category (one he outlines earlier in the article) of Riel as Canadian traitor. The omission seems understandable and justifiable as an extension of his use of Wiebe's concept of a "fictive presence" of historical studies: which is to approach the past as a means to preconceive the "seeds of future change" ("Last Word" 43-4). The four categories he presents retain contemporary currency, whereas the bigoted views of the fifth group, what Owrarn calls "the Canada party," do not. Owrarn notes that post-Second World War accounts overwhelmingly depict the Canada party as "positively evil" (Owrarn 25). These Anglo-Celtic Orangemen, found across the country, though primarily in Ontario, have also been called the Canada-Firsters.
4. Helma Mika and Nick Mika's facsimile collection of newspaper reports, in *The Riel Rebellion, 1885*, has made this project much more feasible and likely to occur. What is inevitably lost in their invaluable collection, however, is the contextual clues a newspaper uses to add innuendo to each story: what page does the story appear on, what section does the story appear in, how large is the headline? These are all conscious decisions by the editors. *The Globe*, for instance, rarely ran Rebellion stories as their lead in the daily news. It is easy to forget that on 16 November 1885 a potential visit of the Minister of Education to Hamilton (page 1) was deemed a more substantial news item than Louis Riel's impending execution that same day, which appeared with a headline only slightly larger than the proposal to make the "Local Improvement Law" general on page 2. It is hoped that such a study will attempt to incorporate such formalistic yet significant information into its consideration of English-Canadian (and French-Canadian) opinions of the Rebellion.
5. Though Augustine's logic notably reverses the implications of the parable of the Garden, where access to knowledge threatened humanity's connection to God.
6. From Annie Rothwell Christie's "Welcome Home," an occasional poem written in July, 1885. The poem is actually written to grieving war-widows, encouraging them to cheer upon the "glorious" return of the soldiers: "Ye surely will not fail them – will not shrink // To perfect now your sacrifice of love?" Christie wrote countless Patriotic Odes around the Rebellion theme, none of which admit to any voice behind the "shout of the savage" (from "After the Battle", both from *A Treasury of Canadian Verse*, 1900). The battle was entirely virtuous, and explicitly Christian.
7. Trémaudan stages the history in terms of a grand myth of liberation: "La race française peut être fière de ce rameau qui, dans l'Ouest canadien, fut fidèle à sa mission civilisatrice.... Quant au grand martyr qu'il avait donné à cette cause sacrée, le peuple métis resta longtemps seul à révéler, seul à voir se dresser, à l'ho-

- rizon, l'ombre de l'Émancipateur et du Libérateur" (quoted in Stanley, "Last Word" 48).
8. Maggie Siggins, for instance, partly blames the poverty Riel witnessed in Washington, his disastrous meeting with the President of the United States, and "the world that had wounded him so badly" (254) for, not his insanity, but in her words, "his overheated mind" (256).
 9. Neaman tells the story of a medical student who, after swimming in a stream, became convinced he had swallowed leeches. He lapsed into despair and utter mania. No amount of reasoning would quell him, until a physician faked a surgery and told him the leech had been removed. The student, who lived in 12th Century England, returned to lucidity immediately thereafter (1-2).
 10. Siggins published a long letter by Douglas Daniels as an addendum in her book in response to the issue of insanity. The letter proposed that theories of Riel's insanity amount to "the work of a modern Inquisitor" staged by social conservatives (453). Her earlier note about Riel's "overheated mind" admits of no further mania nor its influence. His "excitement" was quickly overcome.
 11. In this context, with all the references to Mormonism, it is interesting to note that during the trial, Dr. Clark claimed that "I don't think [Riel] would make a very good Brigham Young, or El Mahdi" co-founder of Mormonism, and a rebellious Sudanese religious leader, respectively. Riel was, even at the time of the trial, identified with or at least considered potentially comparable to other millenarian leaders.
 12. Littman explains, "Pathographies are special and partial biographies in which markedly abnormal or frankly ill aspects of historical persons are studied, either descriptively or, though the use of psychoanalytic principles psychodynamically" ("History" 431).
 13. He also describes a psychohistorian (our pathographer) as one who "pretends to describe great men and women, when, in fact, he despoils them" (116).

Works Cited

- Anderson, Owen and John Barr. Editors. *The Unfinished Revolt*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971.
- Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan. *Louis Riel, Justice Must Be Done*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press, 1979.
- Beal, Bob and Rod Macleod. *Prairie Fire: The 1885 Northwest Rebellion*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994.
- Benoit, Dom. *Vie de Mgr. Taché, archevêque de St. Boniface*. Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1904.
- Bellerose, Joseph H. *L'orangisme et le catholicisme : Sir George E. Cartier, le grand chef du Bas-Canada contre Sir John A. Macdonald, l'ennemi des catholiques et des Canadiens-français*. Ottawa: Publication by the Canadian Government. 2 March 1886.
- Bergeron, Léandre. *The History of Quebec: A Patriote's Handbook*. Trans. Baila Markus. Toronto: NC Press, 1978.

Non Compos Mentis: *A Meta-Historical Survey of the
Historiographic Narratives of Louis Riel's "Insanity"*

- Bourque, J and H. Gilson. "La folie de Riel et la justice anglaise." *L'Union Médicale du Canada*. 14 (1885): 561-64.
- Bruchési, Jean. *Histoire du Canada pour tous*. Montréal : Éditions A. Lévesque, 1939-1940.
- Bumstead, J.M. *Louis Riel v. Canada: The Making of a Rebel*. Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2001.
- . *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1992.
- . *The Red River Rebellion*. Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1996.
- Careless, J.M.S. *Canada: A Story of Challenge*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1991.
- Charlebois, Peter. *The Life of Louis Riel*. Toronto: NC Press, 1978.
- Clark, Daniel. "A Psycho-Medical History of Louis Riel." *American Journal of Insanity*. 44 (July 1887): 33-51.
- Clarke, C.K. "A Critical Study of the Case of Louis Riel." *Queen's Quarterly*. 13.1 (July 1905). Reprinted in *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*. Ed. Harwell Bowsfield. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988. 199-207.
- Creighton, Donald. *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1968.
- Cruise, David and Alison Griffiths. *Lords of the Line: The Men Who Built the CPR*. Toronto: Penguin, 1996.
- . *The Great Adventure: How the Mounties Conquered the West*. Toronto: Penguin, 1997.
- Digby, Anne. *Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.
- Dugas, Georges. *Histoire véridique des faits qui ont préparé le mouvement des Métis à la Rivière-Rouge en 1869*. Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1905.
- Fedoroff, J. and Irwin Perr. "Misidentification of Self and the Riel Phenomenon." *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. 37.6 (May 1992). 839-844.
- Flanagan, Thomas. "Louis Riel: Insanity and Prophecy." *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*. Ed. Harwell Bowsfield. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988. 208-226.
- . "Louis Riel: A Case of Involuntary Psychiatric Confinement." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*. 23.7 (November 1978). 463-8.
- . *Louis 'David' Riel: 'Prophet of the New World'*. Revised Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. 1961. New York: Pantheon Books, 1965.
- Garrioch, A.C. *First Furrows: A History of the Early Settlement of the Red River Country*. Winnipeg: Stovel, 1932.
- Gentilcore, R. Louis. Ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume 2: The Land Transformed, 1800-1891*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1993.
- Gilson, H. "Etude sur l'état mental de Louis Riel." *L'Encéphale*. 1886: 51-60.
- Greenland, Cyril. "The Life and Death of Louis Riel: A Study in Forensic Psychiatry. Part 2 – Surrender, Trial, Appeal and Execution." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*. 10.4 (August 1965). 253-259.
- Groulx, Lionel. *Le Français au Canada*. Paris: Delagrave, 1932.

- Howard, Henry. "Medical History of Louis David Riel during his Detention in Longue Pointe Asylum." *Canadian Medical and Surgical Journal*. June 1886.
- Howard, Joseph. *Strange Empire: The Story of Louis Riel*. Toronto: Swan, 1965.
- Ireland, William. *Through the Ivory Tower*. Edinburgh: Bell & Bradforte, 1889.
- Jonasson, Jonas. "The Background of the Riel Rebellions." *Pacific Historical Review*. 3.3 (1934).
- Kennedy, Howard Angus. "Louis Riel and the North-West Rebellion." *Builders of the West*. Ed. F.W. Horway. Toronto: Ryerson, 1929.
- Knox, Olive. "The Question of Louis Riel's Insanity." *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*. Ed. Harwell Bowsfield. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988. 181-198.
- Kreutzweiser, E.E. *The Red River Insurrection: Its Causes and Events*. Garden Vale: Garden City Press, 1936.
- Le Chevalier, Jules. *Batoche, les missionnaires du Nord-Ouest pendant les troubles de 1885*. Montréal: L'Œuvre de Presse dominicaine, 1941.
- Legge, Alfred O. *Sunny Manitoba: Its Peoples and Its Industries*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893.
- Littman, S.K. "History and the Psychiatrist." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*. 23.7 (November 1978): 430-431.
- . "A Pathology of Louis Riel." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*. 23.7 (November 1978): 449-462.
- Lusty, Terry. *Louis Riel: Humanitarian*. Edmonton: 1975.
- MacBeth, Roderick George. *The Making of the Canadian West: Being the Reminiscences of an Eyewitness*. Toronto: W. Briggs, 1898.
- . *Policing the Plains: Being the Real-life Record of the Famous Royal North-West Mounted Police*. Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921.
- MacEwan, Grant. *French in the West/Les Franco-Canadiens dans l'Ouest*. Saint-Boniface: Éditions des Plaines, 1984.
- Markson, E.R. "The Life and Death of Louis Riel: A Study in Forensic Psychiatry. Part 1 – A Psychoanalytic Commentary." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*. 10.4 (August 1965). 246-252.
- Martel, Gilles. *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1984.
- Martin, Chester. "The Red River Settlement." *The Prairie Provinces. Volume 19 of Canada and its Provinces*. Toronto: 1914.
- McLean, Don. *1885: Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?* Winnipeg: Pemmican, 1885.
- Mika, Helma and Nick Mika. *The Riel Rebellion, 1885*. Bellevue: Mika Silk Screening, 1972.
- Moran, James. *Committed to the State Asylum: Insanity and Society in Nineteenth-Century Quebec and Ontario*. Montreal: McGill-Queens, 2000.
- Morice, A.G. *A Critical History of the Red River Insurrection: After Official Documents and non-Catholic Sources*. Winnipeg: Canadian Publishers, 1935.
- Morton, Desmond. *Introduction and Editor. The Queen v. Louis Riel*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
- . *The Last War Drum: The Northwest Campaign of 1885*. Toronto: Hakkert, 1972.

Non Compos Mentis: A Meta-Historical Survey of the
Historiographic Narratives of Louis Riel's "Insanity"

- Morton, W.L. "Introduction." *Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870*. Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956.
- . "The Bias of Prairie Politics." *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*. 49 (June 1955).
- Mossmann, Manfred. "The Charismatic Pattern: Canada's Riel Rebellion of 1885 as a Millenarian Protest Movement." *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*. Ed. Harwell Bowsfield. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988. 227-245.
- Mousseau, J.O. *Une page d'histoire*. Montréal: W.F. Daniel, 1886.
- Mulvaney, Charles Pelham. *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*. Toronto: A.H. Hovey, 1885. Reprinted Toronto: Coles Reprints, 1971.
- Neaman, Judith S. *Suggestion of the Devil: Insanity in the Middle Ages and the Twentieth Century*. New York: Octagon Books, 1978.
- Nunes, Julie and Scott Simmie. *The Last Taboo: A Survival Guide to Mental Health Care in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001.
- Oppen, William. *The Riel Rebellions: A Cartographic History*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1980.
- Osler, E.B. *The Man Who Had To Hang: Louis Riel*. Toronto: Longman Greens, 1961.
- Owram, Doug. *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980.
- . "The Myth of Louis Riel." *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*. Ed. Harwell Bowsfield. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988. 11-29.
- Peel, Bruce. *A Bibliography of the Prairie Provinces*. Toronto: Published in Co-operation with the Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee Committee and the University of Saskatchewan by University of Toronto Press, 1973.
- Patterson, Robert with Alice Lee. "Louis Riel and the Insanity Plea that Never Came." *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. 147.1 (1 July 1992). 84-7.
- Perr, Irwin "Religion, Political Leadership, Charisma, and Mental Illness: The Strange Story of Louis Riel." *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. 37.2 (March 1992). 574-84.
- . "The Trial of Louis Riel: a Study in Canadian Psychiatry." *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. 37.3 (May 1992). 845-52.
- Pinsoeneault, Pierre-Adolphe. *L'entente cordiale, ou, Coup d'œil sur la situation présente du journalisme franco-canadien*. Montréal: C.O. Beauchemin et Valois, 1875.
- Pope, Joseph. *The Day of Sir John Macdonald: A Chronicle of the First Prime Minister of the Dominion*. Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, 1915.
- Prince Albert Old Timers. *Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885*. Prince Albert: 1935.
- Purich, Donald. *The Métis*. Toronto: Lorimer, 1988.
- Racette, Calvin. *Flags of the Métis*. Regina: Gabriel Dumont Inst. 1987.
- Rasky, Frank. *The Taming of the Canadian West*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967.
- Redbird, Duke. *We Are Métis: A Métis View of the Development of the Canadian People*. Willowdale: Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association, 1980.
- Riel, Louis. "The Testimony of Louis Riel." *Louis Riel: Selected Readings*. Ed. Harwell Bowsfield. Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988. 153-179.
-

- . *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*. Ed. George Stanley. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985.
- Ryerson, Stanley. "Riel vs. Anglo-Canadian Imperialism." *Canadian Dimension*. 7.1 (July 1970).
- . *Unequal Union: Confederation and the Roots of Conflict in the Canadas, 1815-1873*. Toronto: Progress, 1968.
- Schofield, F.H. *The Story of Manitoba*. Winnipeg: 1913.
- Siggins, Maggie. *Riel: A Life of Revolution*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Silver, Arthur. "French Quebec and the Métis Question." *The West and the Nation*. Editors R. Cook and C. Berger. Toronto: 1976.
- Sprague, Douglas Neil. *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1988.
- Stanley, George F.G. *The Birth of Western Canada, a History of the Riel Rebellions*. 1936. Reprinted Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961.
- . "The Last Word on Louis Riel." *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*. Ed. F. Laurie Barron and James B. Waldram. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1986.
- . *Louis Riel*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1963.
- Stonechild, Blair and Bill Waiser. *Loyal Till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion*. Calgary: Fifth House, 1997.
- Swainson, Donald. "Rieliana and the Structure of Canadian History." *Journal of Popular Culture*. 14 (Fall 1980): 286-297.
- Szasz, Thomas. *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- . *Heresies*. New York: Anchor Books, 1976.
- . *Insanity: The Idea and its Consequences*. Toronto: John Willey and Sons, 1987.
- Thomas, Lewis Herbert. *A Judicial Murder: The Trial of Louis Riel*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977.
- Trémaudan, Auguste-Henri. *Histoire de la nation métisse*. Montréal: Editions A. Lévesque, 1936.
- Trotter, R.G. *Canadian Federation: Its Origin and Achievement*. Toronto: Dent, 1924.
- Turner, R.E. "The Life and Death of Louis Riel: A Study in Forensic Psychiatry. Part III – Medico-Legal Issues." *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*. 10.4 (August 1965). 259-264.
- Waite, Peter B. *Canada 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1971.
- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1987.
- Windsor, Kenneth. "Historical Writing in Canada (to 1920)." *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*. Volume 1. Ed. Carl F. Klinck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.
- Woodcock, George. *Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and His Lost World*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1976.