

RACE, PERSONALITY AND HISTORY:
A REVIEW OF MARCEL GIRAUD'S
'THE METIS IN THE CANADIAN WEST'

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Marcel Giraud's The Metis In The Canadian West--George Woodcock's translation of Le Metis Canadien: Son role dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest--has all the appearances of unassailable scholarship. Two large volumes of 1008 pages of text are organized into 37 chapters. The study is supported by 7,260 reference notes. Many engaged in Native and fur trade history, handicapped like myself by unilingualism, need no longer ponder about the contents of this classical study.¹ The University of Alberta Press has published an English version, and George Woodcock, a prolific writer, served as translator.²

As an empirical study, Giraud has not been surpassed. Woodcock states that the study is "remarkable" because "it pieces together an objective history of the Metis as a people playing their part in a changing history of the Canadian West" (Volume I, p. xii). Although an ethnologist from France, Giraud had contact with contemporary Canadian scholars like Harold Innis, Chester Martin and A.S. Morton. He visited many western Metis communities in the 1930s. In addition to published primary and secondary sources, Giraud made exhaustive use of the Roman Catholic Archives and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. I would agree with Woodcock that its appeal lies in the social and economic information and that this study is not overly concerned about the insurrections. In a sense, this English version of Giraud's work indicates that some current research has an anterior origin, in the same way that many of Innis's off-hand comments in The Fur Trade of Canada have been developed by later research into important statements about the history and geography of

Canada. While the social and economic thrust makes Giraud's 1945 study current, readers will sense a certain time warp when his interpretation is examined closely. Giraud's research conveys a sense of history in which geographical determinism, collective personality, assimilation, genetics and inter-racial marriage are pervasive. To a certain extent, Giraud's study has been extended and used by others to support the status quo. By and large, the deep structure of explanation, often not set up in explicit terms needs to be identified if Giraud's work is to be placed in the context of ongoing work in Native Studies. If one listens carefully, the race theories of the 1920s and 1930s Europe can be heard echoing in the Northwest of Canada.

The organization of The Metis In The Canadian West is intricate; there are six parts and for some reason, part five is divided into three books. Giraud traces the story of the Metis from the physical and human environments through to their situation as he witnessed it in the 1930s. His prose supports an organization which is a mix of themes and chronology. With chapter titles, such as "The Appearance of the Metis People" or "The Consequence of Nomadism," the thematic content is clear. Giraud outlines the development of two major nuclei of Mixedbloods--one deriving from a southern current and the other from a northern current. (What has been renamed since Giraud's writing as the St. Lawrence and Hudson Bay traditions.) There can be a progressive tone to Giraud; on La Verendrye he states, "the establishment of regular commercial relations with the Indians [was] a manifestation of a philosophy of colonization rather than that of discovery" (I, p. 113). His discussion of the northern and southern penetrations of the White race provides a summary of the expansion of the fur trade. There is a good balance in his discussion of the French expansion west of Lake Superior and the Hudson's Bay Company exploration prior to 1774. Giraud is aware of the Great Lakes fur trade but he notes that the Metis claim to constitute "an independent nation endowed with a traditional and a glorious past allowed the collective personality of the Metis to

develop more vigorously in the Canadian West than anywhere else" (I, p. 211). As with his discussion of freemen, Giraud alludes to economic roles: "The Canadian voyageur gradually became a forgotten man, while a new ethnic group emerged in the West and in its turn became the personnel entrusted with the management of the boats. This was the group known as the Metis, formed during the last stages of penetration" (I, p. 207). After the birth of the Metis, his study is periodized as: the awakening of a national consciousness with the clash at Seven Oaks, years of uncertainty 1812-27, years of stabilization from 1828-67 and the disintegration of the Metis after the first provisional government. During the 19th-century Giraud makes a distinction between The Red River Metis and the Western Metis.

The first part, titled "The Primitive Environment" aptly identifies a European metropolitan viewpoint of the culture and geography of western Canada before contact. Nonetheless, there is a fine description of the physical geography of the three North Wests--prairie, parkland and woodland. The use of historical sources to describe the physical environment conveys the landscape impressions as seen by Europeans prior to the advent of settlers. This information does more than merely set the scene; a type of geographical determinism³ is central to Giraud's account of Metis history. He states that "To a great extent the human environments of the three Northwests echoed their primitive natural characters" and that for the Indians "even some of their mental characteristics were shaped in varying degrees by the influence of the environment that surrounded them" (I, p. 23). The physical setting was responsible for habitual nomadism which in turn "led to an essentially irregular life-style, in which idleness went side by side with effort, and abundance alternated with dearth" (I, pp. 54, 57). But it was a physical environment which had long term effects on the French Canadians and the Metis. A profusion of resources meant "the simple and happy life, satisfied, like that of primitive man, with resources offered by nature that seemed inexhaustible; its anachronistic image would be transmitted to the Metis

descendants..." (I, p. 269). Again, the environment could not be transformed. Giraud argues that: "With the Canadians' fecklessness a certain fatalism was mingled, the reaction of simple natures who resigned themselves, like the Indians, to the privations inherent in the environment that dominated them, awaiting patiently the moments of pleasure that it afforded, and remaining innocent of any thought of improving their condition" (I, p. 244). A geographical environment determined a nomadic lifestyle which influenced the mental characteristics of Natives.

One of the most truly provoking sections of Giraud's study concerns the birth of Metis nationalism and he devotes considerable attention to the events that lead up to the clash at Seven Oaks or La Grenouillere. Giraud argues that variations in the living standards of the freemen meant that the Metis were not homogeneous and as a consequence strong personalities were required to present national aspirations. He notes that the Chiefs of the Metis worked as clerks for the North West Company or belonged to families of the bourgeois. Giraud points to the North West Company's role in sponsoring nationalism: "The Metis had not derived such national aspirations either from the teachings of their Indian mothers or from those of their Canadian fathers..." (I, p. 479). For Giraud, Metis nationalism "found expression only in a sporadic fashion, under the effect of passing grievances. It was too fragile to constitute a principle of concession and to bring about among these men, without either education or political concepts, an ideal..." (I, p. 479). Giraud points to the failure of Cuthbert Grant to rally the Metis to oppose Selkirk troops, but, while discussing Seven Oaks, he concludes that Metis nationalism is doomed: "In brief, there existed, neither in their material culture, nor in their personality, nor in their achievements any element that was really likely to provide a solid foundation for the national ideal" (I, p. 479). Giraud does not dismiss Metis nationalism, but notes that "these feelings would show themselves, when they were put to the test, tenacious enough to prove their sincerity" (I, pp. 408-409). Today, nationalism is the foundation for Metis politics, and so Giraud's

argument should be looked at seriously. In a similar manner, Giraud states that the Metis claimed possession despite the anterior and more soundly based rights of the Indians and that the Metis "did not hesitate to harm the Indians' interests, to limit their possibilities of subsistence." (I, p. 476). Again we have another insight worthy of contemporary concerns.

Volume II of The Metis In The Canadian West is largely devoted to changes and developments in Metis society from 1818 to 1885. Giraud carefully reconstructs Red River society. He sees the missionary in an entirely positive light: "The moral regeneration which they owed to the influence of the clergy was at this time expressed in their conduct, more orderly than in the past, less subject to the excesses of the primitive life" (II, p. 105). Again, Giraud's concern about 'nomadism' defines his approach to the colony; there is a relationship between settler and buffalo hunter: "If contact with the Red River settler might encourage the nomad to adapt himself to the regular work of the farmer, the sedentary man for his part suffered from having as neighbors this group of hunters who created in the colony an atmosphere harmful to the progress of the agrarian life and the development of individual ambition" (II, p. 108). Giraud realizes that the fur trade origins of the Metis and their free trade struggle presented a contradiction. He summarizes this period by stating "On the one hand, by its [Metis] opposition, it led to the gradual dissolution of the Company's privileges; on the other, by its mutinies, by the delays it caused in the functioning of the brigades, by the support it gave the free traders, by its demands for ever higher wages, it contributed to the dismantling of the commercial organization whose days were already numbered" (II, p. 292). For Giraud, the future of the Metis and HBC were intertwined: "In this way they [the Metis] unconsciously prepared the ruin of the economy...and in doing so they prepared their own ruin" (II, p. 292). He demonstrates the connections between the free trade struggle and the opposition to annexation, but he sees a problem with Metis nationalism: "Yet, while the courageous attitude the Metis would adopt at this time marked the zenith of

their national life and affirmed the distinctness of their collective personality, the insurrection of 1869-70 was also unfortunately the beginning of the decomposition of their society and their economy" (II, pp. 271). Thus by 1885, the situation is very different, in part because "the cultural breakdown of the group had gone too far for it to submit to the idea of collective discipline" and thus the revolt actually "precipitated the disintegration of the group" (II, pp. 451, 449). With changes to the western economy after 1885, the Metis are marginalized and moral decay sets in.

Although I strongly disagree with his interpretation of history, there are a number of areas and topics in which modern research has not surpassed Giraud in any respect. The Metis In The Canadian West is very readable, and Giraud is very skillful at presenting detail. In particular he is especially competent at writing history at the level of the individual and the group. This is readily apparent in the discussion leading up to the account of Seven Oaks. Very useful information is provided on the origins of petty traders and freeman; and for some Metis families, this well-documented study would be a pertinent genealogical source. His discussion of individuals leads to some insights about social class and the Metis--an approach not appreciated by mainstream academics that were inspired by this volume or Metis politicians in the era of state-funded organizations. Perhaps the most forgotten people in Canadian history--the English-speaking Metis or Halfbreeds--are quite evident in this study, but Giraud concludes that the Scottish Mixedbloods were detached "from the Metis of French origin, with whom they were never to establish a complete solidarity" (I, p. 212). Empirically this study is very strong concerning the following topics: the reorganization of the fur trade in the 1820s, the economic development of the Red River colony in which periods of stagnation and progress are closely delineated, the amnesty question, and population dislocations and migrations. His account of the 1869-70 "insurrection" is useful and his incorporation of social class makes his narration of this important turning point more pertinent than Stanley's or W.L. Morton's version.⁴ There is considerable information on the

buffalo hunt, and his research determined that the last large buffalo hunt left Willowbunch in 1883. His discussion of the annexationist movement grapples with the problem of how the HBC managed to govern with so little support. Many details are provided on the post-1870 economy and there is a listing of Metis petitions for recognition. I can think of no topics, events or personalities not dealt with by Giraud.

Giraud's book is laden with what today we call 'stereotypes.' There may be some measure of balanced scholarship since Giraud projects stereotypes for all groups participating in the fur trade. Woodcock cannot avoid the problem that Giraud's language presents for the modern reader and an explanation is offered: "Le Metis Canadien inevitably reflects in some ways the prevailing attitudes of historians and ethnologists at the time and place when it was written" (I, p. xiii). Woodcock acknowledges the evolutionists' theme and that Giraud "appears to be judging them according to White standards of honesty, decency, and so on" (I, p. xiv). In defense of Le Metis Canadien, Woodcock draws attention to a footnote in which Giraud disclaims any intention of comparing Native and White societies in terms of inferiority or superiority. Woodcock argues that the "passages that seem to express judgments" are relative to a changing situation in the West and are not absolute (I, p. xiv). This defense by Woodcock, an author with progressive credentials, only partly rescues The Metis In The Canadian West from its time warp. It is not good enough to understand that Giraud's stereotyping was common place in the 1930s or that certain passages mislead the reader because no judgments were intended. Woodcock's defense has not been too persuasive; mainstream researchers, such as the historian Pannekoek, note that "Giraud's interpretation is undertaken within the general civilization/savagism dichotomy which has been rejected by today's anthropologists and historians."⁵ But this merely categorizes Giraud's work in convenient terms; it does little to deal with the intricacy of his explanation. How did Giraud arrive at the conclusion that: "The evident moral regression

which the Metis of the West suffer today is the fruit of the poverty to which they are reduced and of their weakness of will; it is the remote heritage of that failure of moral upbringing which is linked to the absence of any real culture in a group that has always been divided between two divergent moral codes and has never completely assimilated the prescription of either of them" (II, p. 502). The interpretation suffers not just from ethnocentric concepts; the subtext of The Metis In The Canadian West is insidious. Neither well-intended apologies nor quick, clichéd categories will do.

Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to outline a few of Giraud's stereotypes. To start with, the Canadien voyageurs were simple men without ambition, with a spontaneous docility, and "accustomed to the simplicity of Lower Canadian life" (I, pp. 178, 181). They were children following their own inclinations, and had savage tempers, indolent, vicarious spirits, a love of jesting, conversation and boasting but also had an easy affability (I, pp. 225). "Since the people of Lower Canada were hardly economical by nature" it is not surprising that the French Canadians in the west had a "predilection for somewhat ostentatious luxury," were heedless of the future and feckless (I, pp. 182, 225-226). These people, "devoid of education, and accustomed to the unpolished life of the Canadian country side took pleasure in "puerile amusements" (I, p. 244). Giraud describes the Canadians as generous and helpful, but their "cheerful simplicity" was accompanied by "a tendency toward superstition that had already manifested itself in Lower Canada" (I, pp. 244-245). A certain "state of mind was an element of weakness in the Canadian" and it included fatalism, awaiting patiently for movements of pleasure and an innocence of any thought of improving conditions (I, p. 244). Finally, the Church could do little to prevent the Canadian voyageurs from abandoning themselves and "under the influence of drink, they would be overcome by veritable paroxysms of savagery, almost as extreme as those of the Indian" (I, p. 245). Thus for Giraud, the Canadians "were too fragile not to suffer inevitable diminution in the West" (I, p. 245).

The freemen were keen observers, had retentive memories, but in the families of the freeman "regression was even more rapid..." (I, pp. 350, 349). The Mixedblood was a good trader, naturally benevolent but also had pillaging instincts (I, pp. 336, 441, 457). The Metis's weakness of will and lack of conviction came from "his emotional temperament" and "his unsettled upbringing in contact with two cultures only superficially assimilated" (I, p. 477). Due to the manipulations of the North West Company during the events of Seven Oaks, Giraud can draw attention to the Metis propensity for drinking, their freedom of manners, and the "absence of a clearly defined morality" (I, p. 477). The HBC's strategy of using the Metis as a go-between with the Indians is well documented but when tension exists between the Company and the Metis, Giraud hauls out the stereotypes: "calculating mentality," "unscrupulous capacity" and "atavistic impulses" (II, pp. 333-334). Giraud's scheme allows him to stereotype the Metis by compounding the stereotypes of both Indian and Canadian: "Yet they resembled the Indians in their emotional temperament. This was shown in their tendency to superstition, to irrational fears, in their belief in the supernatural character of dreams, and in the exaggerated affection which, like the Indians, they showed to their children" and the Metis "were distinguished by their carefree gaiety, their predilection for music and dancing, their taste for jests and long conversations, which marked them off from the more reserved Indians" (II, pp. 199, 155). Comparisons provide a means to describe: "The more neglected appearance of the homes of Canadian Metis showed the difference that separated them from the Scottish halfbreeds" and "the French part appeared both the poorer and less neat than the English. Though it was perhaps more friendly, because of the generous simplicity and natural cordiality of its inhabitants, it was much nearer to the primitive environment; less closely attached to the soil, its people also took less care in looking after their homes" (II, pp. 166, 120). Nomadism was antithetical to neatness.

The Anglo-Saxon, Scot, Orkney and Scottish Halfbreed had discernable traits. This Parisian notes a "lack of flexibility in the

Anglo-Saxon temperament" (I, p. 167). While many scholars explain the survival of the HBC in geographical, economic or organizational terms, Giraud reminds us, with a 'Churchillian' flare, that the Company "had succeeded by its thoroughly British stubbornness, by its refusal ever to give up..." (I, p. 205). Speculative reasoning flows from these stereotypes. To account for the murders connected to Peter Pond, Giraud states: "It is hard to imagine La Verendrye indulging in such excesses against his competitors, and it is undeniable that the onset of such behavior corresponded with the Scots and Anglo-Saxons..." (I, pp. 174-175). Montreal trading interests, composed of Scots and Canadians, obtained "the fidelity of the Indians by their tactful behaviour" and thus Canadians "formed the best guarantee of the allegiance of the primitive hunters" (I, p. 175). Divergent cultural characteristics were complementary: "the good nature of the Canadian seemed to exist side by side with the aggressive and calculating temperament of the Scot" (I, p. 175). Orkney men were mediocre, moderate, stubborn, clannish and lazy and Highlanders were bellicose (I, pp. 336, 292, 183, 201). Scottish Halfbreeds generally come off well in Giraud's story, but they were not entirely distinct from the French Metis because "they were equally prone to loose conduct, to drinking, to lack of self-discipline, to a touchy sensibility--and, in a modified way, to lack of will: in all, to that whole cluster of reflexes which stemmed from the quality of their origins..." (I, p. 481).

The chapter on the human environment, the most documented part of the study is devoted to a thorough construction of a stereotype of the Indian. Indians could suffer hardship, had good memories and powers of minute observation and were generous and hospitable (I, pp. 58-59, 56, 31, 64). Giraud also describes Indians by their ferocity, indolence, habitual nomadism, improvidence, idleness, docility, and haughty pride (I, pp. 247, 34, 57, 60, 61, 71, 34). Indians had a calculating mentality, a mercenary attitude and habitually used guile (I, pp. 63, 79, 75). Giraud argues that women were subordinate, poorly treated and the marriage system meant that the "ease with which separation

were made and new unions formed predisposed the women to an extreme looseness of morals" and that "looseness in sexual relations was inevitable..." (I, p. 72). Indian life amounted to periods of hard effort and idleness; therefore, regular and methodological work was alien and Giraud states that the Indian was "always the victim of his natural indolence" (I, pp. 62, 240). Although obstinate in bearing grudges, the Indian's "power of dissimulation," and capacity to control reactions, were expressions of an introverted temperament (I, pp. 76-77). A self-enclosed mentality meant that "the Indian would nurse his resentment until the appropriate moment for revenge" and that an indolent temperament "rendered the Indian unfitted [sic] for prolonged effort, even within an irregular, ill-disciplined pattern of activity" (I, p. 247). Giraud almost reluctantly observes that Indians were capable of feelings and yet he claims that their "superstitious beliefs" meant that they were "unaccustomed to metaphysical speculations" (I, 297,86). This thorough disembodiment of the Indian is then used selectively to explain the collective personality of the Metis.

At times The Metis In The Canadian West does not hold the Metis solely responsible for their "stereotypes." Giraud detected problems with HBC policies which influenced the development of the Metis. He states there existed "...an obvious contradiction between the desire expressed by [Governor] Simpson and the London Committee to convert the Metis to a more sedentary way of life, and the Company's need to call indefinitely on the resources of the nomadic economy" (II, pp. 134-135). Giraud recognizes that the Metis were more qualified than Whites for some fur trade tasks, on account of their way of life. A nomadic existence meant superior qualities for transport roles (II, p. 105). However, Giraud's historical explanation is compounded with inconsistencies, so while he may recognize economic factors, he can argue cultural determinism. Thus the ascendancy of nomadism was due to close ties to nearby Indians and not a revival of the fur trade or the stagnation of Red River agriculture. Giraud condemns the Metis for their nomadism, but does not fully

appreciate that a mobile population adept at hunting, trapping and trading was beneficial to a mercantile fur trade.⁶ Occasionally, he attributes negative influences to the Whites; for example he assigns to the North West Company a "special contribution to the development of this [Metis] lack of mortality" (I, p. 477). With respect to the stereotype of Indians, he notes that contact with Whites affected the moral code "which...soon lost its power to restrain individual caprices" (I, p. 78). By providing a whole variety of causes for his stereotypes, Giraud's narration appears only plausible; the lack of any real conceptual order reflects confusion: "The character of the Indian...is a complex mixture of spontaneous responses, partly dictated by the conditions of their existence and partly by a psychology whose pedigree is obscure, and of reflexes resulting from their contacts with whites and from the gradual disintegration of the indigenous culture" (I, p. 82).

It would be a long drawn out exercise to reconsider each of Giraud's stereotypes. But his arguments would provide considerable material for D.H. Fischer's Historians' Fallacies. Several of Fischer's categories of fallacies provide a useful approach to Giraud's stereotypes. The fallacy of composition refers to the use of an individual example to characterize a group, and Giraud's use of Cuthbert Grant illustrates this technique. When the special qualities of a group are stressed and generic qualities are ignored, the fallacy of difference occurs. Giraud most certainly stresses the differences between the Indian and the European. The converse fallacy of difference refers to the rendering of a special judgement on a group for a quality which is not special to it. Stress on the violent character of Natives, without hinting at European violence, is rather curious given the era in which Giraud was writing. Giraud's final fallacy in this area is known as the fallacy of ethnomorphism--conceptualization of another group's characteristics in one's own terms. Certainly the study is laden with this style, but even Giraud's comparison of Quebec and France reflects the same fallacy.⁷

An argument is made that the society that took shape in Quebec in the 17th century is one source of weakness which ultimately prevented the Metis from responding to post-1870 changes in the Northwest. The penetration by the southern current or the diffusion from Lower Canada transferred certain limitations to the Metis. Thus a closeness existed between the Indians and French and the "reasons must be sought in the conditions of Lower Canadian life and the mental attitude that evolved there" (I, p. 217). The physical environment and Indian culture transformed the French into something different, thus: "...conditions of living [St. Lawrence Valley]...as much as by the habitual contact with Indians to which it led, the primitive environment exercised on Canadian society a pervasive influence that changed its original character [French] and gave it, despite the strictness or refinement that lingered among certain sections of the population, a rougher tone, marked sometimes by disorders and acts of violence..." (I, p. 225). Thus those engaged in the fur trade adopted the culture of the Indians and beyond the Great Lakes there was the "lure of frontier and its limitless freedoms" and the civilizing influences of Lower Canada (such as they were) were distant (I, p. 234). Moreover, the more time spent in the West, the more the French Canadian and his children became Indian: "The longer he stayed in the West, the more accustomed the Canadian became to this intermittent pattern of activity [fur trade], so near to that of the Indian, and this tradition he would transmit to his Metis descendants" (I, p. 243). Giraud concludes that "more than any other race, the French Canadians were destined to become assimilated into the indigenous population of the West" (I, p. 277).

This argument that the Canadian was assimilated by the Indian may be seen by some as an interesting revision of the standard history of Indian/White relations, but Giraud was also concerned about the drawbacks of this assimilation. He notes: "sharing the native's existence, the Canadian showed the same ill-regulated ways, the same lack of ambition, the same heedlessness of the future; all these tendencies had been hatched

in Lower Canada, but they developed in the West through contact with nomadic peoples" (I, p. 243). If enough stereotypes are linked, an 'historical explanation' takes shape. He argues that: "Another and more lasting consequence of the tendency of the first Canadians to become completely absorbed into the primitive environment was that it attached many of their descendants to a way of life whose archaic character must inevitably resist economic revolution in the West and hinder their adaptation to white culture" (I, p. 279). Giraud is quite certain about the legacy of Lower Canada that "left a source of weakness from which today it is far from having detached itself and which it is doubtful that it will ever escape" (I, p. 213).

For the northern nucleus--the English-speaking Metis--the story is quite different. In essence, the Scot/Orkney was not predisposed to assimilation by the Indian. There was a distance between the Scot and Indian: "Here was a token of outlooks too fundamentally different from those of the native people for confidence to be possible between the two groups in the same way as it was between the Canadian and the primitive man" (I, p. 293). Traditional Scottish cultural values got in the way: "Because of his wish to economize, the Orkneyman or the Scot was repelled by the uncertainties of native existence, its habitual waste and the day-to-day life that implied, as well as the carelessness about the morrow and the absolute lack of foresight that were the most striking manifestations of the Indian character (I, pp. 293-294). HBC personnel lacked the "instinctive knowledge" of the Canadians, "never mastered the techniques of primitive living" and hence "arose an awkwardness and a timidity, and sometimes an excessive stiffness of manner" which not only separated the Scot/Orkney but also made him dependent upon the Indian (I, p. 310). Consequently, Giraud states that "Indians seem to have become reconciled to the kind of compromise that was developed by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and relations settled down to a peaceful and neutral level, accompanied neither by true intimacy nor by extreme hostility" (I, p. 308). The HBC system "did not give place to a true assimilation of races and cultures. A

demarcation remained...such as the Canadians had never conceived." (I, p. 317).

The separation of the Scot/Orkney and the Natives was reinforced because a number of Mixedblood sons were educated and 'civilized.' Giraud observes that the Scot had the desire to remove "their children from the influence of the primitive environment and give them a level of existence more in conformity with civilized ways of living" (I, p. 325). Giraud is certain about repeating the differences between the Scottish and French Mixedbloods: "Yet this educational process spread among a certain number of young people new concepts that were more in conformity with civilized society and superior to those of the young Canadian Metis who were deprived of such facilities" and education "seems to have contributed to giving a fair number of mixed bloods of Scottish origin an intellectual status superior to that of their French-speaking congeners" (I, pp. 343, 340). Giraud concludes: "It is also likely that the more rigid and steadfast character of the Scots, their less complete assimilation into the native races, and their more diligent preservation of their original culture, transmitted to their sons a personality less weakened by that constant contact with the Indians which from the beginning had been a characteristic trait of the Canadians in the West" (II, p. 207).⁸

In contrast to his contemporaries, Giraud took note of the importance of Native women. Their economic and social roles and relationship to traders, French Canadians and freemen were considered (I, pp. 237, 253, 264, 265). But of special interest to Giraud was the role Native women played in assimilating European men and Mixedblood children. Christianity was hardly known to the young Metis in the early years because their mothers "taught them a simple collection of superstitious notions without any moral implications" (I, p. 387). According to Giraud, the example of Rene Jusseume who was "sharing the life of the Mandans, leaving his Metis children to the influence of their Indian mothers, sharing her superstitions, adopting the Mandan habits of duplicity and devoting them to important and insignificant matters

alike, reveals the extent of the regression which the Canadians underwent if they were limited to the company of primitive men" (I, p. 274). Indian women were instrumental in assimilating the Canadians to Non-European ways; Giraud states that "unions with the native women were in reality the beginning of an increasingly close fusion between the two races of which the almost unavoidable consequence was that the Canadians were drawn rapidly toward the primitive way of existence" (I, p. 263).

The geographical determinism deployed by Giraud, a combination of the physical/human setting and distance from civilization, is very apparent in the comparison between the Western and Red River Metis. A distance of only a few miles can be significant. Giraud states that the "ascendancy of nomadism was perhaps more strongly exercised here [White Horse Prairies] than at Red River, if only because the settlement was situated on the threshold of the immense prairie" and "contact with native people was more direct here than in the colony of Red River..." (II, p. 174). Again Giraud describes the western Metis as "...a group more remote from white society than the Metis of Red River, more faithful to the concepts and customs of the Indians, and perhaps better trained in the difficulties of the primitive life and in the ruses and violences of native warfare" (II, p. 295). Geographical determinism is reinforced with speculation: "In the more primitive setting, the Metis lived in closer contact with the nomad tribes of the plains. Perhaps they derived from this contact a more violent nature, stamped with a kind of ferocity" (I, p. 430). Giraud tends to string a long series of 'causes' into an explanation; he compares the Western and Red River Metis once again: "Their nomadism was more complete than that of the Metis of Assiniboia, their contact with the Indians were more frequent; cultural intimacy was sustained by the widespread practice of mixed marriages, and the native mother played an important part in the upbringing of many children; a considerable group among the Metis of the West was unable, because of its mode of life, to dissociate itself from primitive society: all these factors emphasized the native side of their personality and subjected it

more directly to Indian attitudes" (II, p. 325). Finally, an explanation was offered concerning the diffusion of the free trade movement west of Red River: "...it remained more confused than on the Red River because of the absence of a bourgeoisie capable of directing the movement and because of the less developed intelligence of the western Metis" (II, p. 355).⁹ Thus many aspects of collective personality could be traced back to geographical determinism.

The Metis personality could not be explained entirely by geographical determinism or cultural assimilation. Giraud argues that for one group of Metis, "...their habitual laziness could not be effaced merely by contact with a different ambience" (II, p. 49). Giraud's narration employs racial trait description; thus he notes "Numerous children, whose tint varied from the deep yellow of the Indian to the fair coloring of the white..."; he uses the term "congeners" and he muses: "Perhaps the missionaries also found among such individuals of European ancestry, whose physical appearance often identified them, a ground for evangelization more permeable than the pure Indian" (II, p. 107, 474, 316). But the closest link between race, personality and history is revealed toward the end of the narrative. Giraud states: "By a kind of transposition of the Mendelian law into the moral domain, one can say that even if the personality of the leading Metis group [Red River upper class] in general obeyed the 'dominant factor' it derived from its upbringing, it could also suddenly give in to an atavistic return to the native past or to the weakness inherent in its dual origins" (II, p. 472). Clearly Giraud has linked genetics to the moral domain. Mendel's law refers to several possible outcomes of pairing of alternate characteristics. In this instance, Giraud seems to favour the law of dominance in which, within the pairs of hereditary units and on an all or nothing basis, one trait dominates the other. In terms of expression, characteristics are inherited alternatively. Amongst the Metis upper class, Giraud sees White traits; however, weakness can be inherited--and there is always the lurking prospect of atavistic impulses. Success is inherited from the White blood, and failure to adapt, or failure to

adjust, always originates with the Native. In this way, Giraud's application of Mendel's law of genetics is a deus ex machina, it conveniently explains all. In this sense, the existence of the Metis is unlikely--they merely have some combination of European or Indian qualities.

With section headings titled "The Canadian Personality and the Emotional Nature of the Metis" or "The Weakness of the Metis Personality" in this study, it is necessary to examine findings implicit in the use of Mendelian laws. For the Metis children of the Canadian, their future was predetermined. Giraud states: "The subordinate position which they occupied gave the men from Lower Canada no scope for ambition. Their style of life, their state of mind, the ease with which they adopted the existence, and the very attitude of the native people were bound to re-emerge in their Metis descendants... [T]hese children found themselves thrust in the direction of Indian society, and thus they paid the price for the assimilation that had drawn the Canadians so close to the primitive peoples" (I, p. 346). And this situation was not modified by the missionaries; he argues that "The adults, whether Canadians or Metis, were themselves very 'poor Christians', their religious notions consisted of superstitions rather than sincere convictions" (II, p. 56). Culture could not be transmitted by the non-Christian Indian mother: "It was reduced to little more than vague notions of Christianity tinged with superstition, while the Indian woman in her turn transmitted to her Metis children only the husk of a culture that was gravely disturbed by association with the whites and whose disciplines--which had once given the tribe its cohesion--were in her own case dissolved by union she had contracted with a Canadian" (I, p. 353). Here Giraud acknowledges the disruption of tribal society so that he can argue that no firm basis for the Metis existed. The partial assimilation of the Metis "assured him nothing better than a combination of two incomplete cultures without any firm foundation. It was logical that his moral development should feel the effects of this situation, that his will should thus be weakened, that his sense of honour should be diminished, and that

in the absence of any clearly defined directing principle, he should have been destined to suffer the ascendancy of conflicting influences" (I, p. 353). With such a construct, drawing on geographical determinism, racial and assimilation concepts, there is no place for a viable, independent Metis culture in The Metis in the Canadian West.

Racial origin, class position and personality all mingle in Giraud's account of the failure of Metis nationalism: "we must nevertheless conclude that the factors of regression play a more preponderant role in the attitudes of life of the Metis" and these contrary factors "shaped their attitudes, moderated their reactions and already, in part, determined their historic role" (II, p. 78). Giraud points to a split in the Metis nation: "The divergence that now emerged between the two parts of the people of mixed blood showed that there was no true national solidarity between them" because of "the greater diligence which the Scots brought to their farming, and the more limited role of nomadism in their lives, protected them from the heavy threat of despoilment..." (II, p. 267). Interestingly, the difference between the Scot and French Metis is less one of language and religion, but that of class and 'civilization.' This is not a trivial problem for Metis nationalism; Giraud builds upon his point: "In the case of the Scottish group, the bourgeoisie, who were numerous and mentally brighter, were more inclined to assume the leadership of the inferior ranks and to help further their evolution"; and the lower classes among the Scottish group "constituted, as a whole, a terrain more open to the example of the bourgeoisie and more receptive to civilized influences than the proletariat among the Canadian Metis" (II, p. 77). Giraud observes that the conflict was largely between the Scottish bourgeoisie and the HBC, but he does not interpret this struggle as an anti-colonial struggle led by a nascent national bourgeoisie. Instead Giraud sees an acquiescence on the part of the French Metis in personal terms: "the Canadian Metis adopted a more moderate attitude, which betrayed a weaker personality, a greater timidity of reactions in which the more modest character of their ancestry manifested itself..." and furthermore "the lower

class among the Metis, who had not so clearly defined their aspirations, were associated with the general discontent and hoped for the disappearance of the Company they were now accustomed to blindly struggling against" (II, pp. 207,261). The Scottish Mixedbloods "were mostly the children of superior officers and better prepared in consequence to deal with the representatives of the Company as equals" (II, p. 207). Politics and personality are intertwined in the free trade movement: "The national idea had been reincarnated in a more ambitious form fuelled as in the past by the propaganda of men largely alien to the group whose impressionable and suspicious nature they exploited in the interests of their own commercial operations or their personal grievances" (II, p. 221). Giraud observes that the Scottish bourgeoisie was not afraid to stand up to the Company and that the Metis habitually struggled against the Company, but fails to explain significant class and ethnic dimensions of participation in the national and anti-colonial struggles. Whilst in the 1850s the Scots actively opposed the Company, the French Metis opposition to the anti-Company annexationist movement eventually led to the most pronounced expression of Metis nationalism in October 1869. With less emphasis on the historical role of collective personality, topics such as the use of nationalism to obscure class conflicts or the fact that Riel's "List of Rights" represented the local bourgeoisie's desire to merge with the Canadian nation (not so much a list of Native rights), could have emerged.¹⁰ Giraud identifies some of the internal contradictions of Metis nationalism not generally recognized, but his emphasis on personality traits leads to the same weakness all such explanations of this genre suffer--it ultimately leads to an unfair condemnation.

The weakness of the Metis personality and the failure of Metis nationalism provide the main thrust of Giraud's account of the Metis in the post-1870 era.¹¹ Indeed, prior to the dislocation of Red River society, Giraud argues that Metis distrust, sensitivity and sense of inferiority lead the Metis to desire isolation (II, p. 81). Although Giraud outlines the separate development of the Western and Red River Metis, there was a common collective

personality: "Both suffered from the effects of their uncertain upbringing, their absence of a sharply defined culture, their emotional nature. Consequently, they have presented similar weaknesses: their intentions were never consistent and were subject to constant changes, and their morality lacked any solid foundation; on first contact with the sedentary economy their concepts of life would be shattered in a way that hindered any serious adaptation to the methods and the aims of white men." (II, p. 325). Clearly, personality shapes historical explanation. While he acknowledges that some of the Metis bourgeoisie benefitted from the post-1870 economy, he argues most Metis were incapable of changing: "In most cases, the Metis were victims of their attachment to an anachronistic economy and of the obsolete conceptions that dominated their way of living and prevented any possibility of adaptation to the methods and mentality of the whites" (II, pp. 384-385). Such a finding holds those dislocated responsible for their fate. This interpretation is reiterated in the account of scrip. Giraud explicitly connects personality deficiencies with a specific historical event: "...in their contact with Ontarians, they suffered the effects of their weakness of will and of their traditions of living which, by attaching them to nomadism, had prevented them from appreciating the true value of the land and from adapting gradually to the economy that was destined henceforward to impose itself on the plains of the West" (II, p. 380). Although Giraud mentions scrip speculators and criticizes government policy, he argues the Metis were doomed by their own culture and personality. Dispossession was certain.

Giraud acknowledges that the new order made little room for the Metis, but he offers a justification: "...the prejudices that indeed operated against them are the result only of their poverty, of the scantiness of their achievements and their education, of their mediocre social position and the weakness of their ambition, and in the last resort of the humbleness of their origins" (II, pp. 475-476). Morality becomes both the cause and outcome of Metis history. Giraud explains: "Gradually, their poverty divorced them from all ideas of honesty; it led them to contract endlessly

growing debts whose settlement they neglected; it disposed them to theft, and in general it hastened in them that moral decadence which the weakness of their natures could not check and whose symptoms had manifested themselves in Manitoba on the morrow of the province's annexation" (II, p. 460). Giraud refers to both Whites and Indians to explain Metis morality: "For that process of dissolution their contact with amoral whites cannot be held solely responsible: the loose morals of the Indians whom they habitually associated and who provided them with the spectacle of an already degraded culture, and the example in many cases of their own relatives who abandoned them even more freely than the Red River Metis to the excesses of the primitive milieu..." (II, p. 460). This 'moral' explanation of history accounted for the position of the Metis in the 1930s; he states: "...the Metis appear to us today as rejected equally by the two societies which their duality of origins evokes. In relation to the Indians, as well as in relation to the whites, they appear as an inferior group" (II, p. 514).

Giraud's 1945 study has had a lasting impact on the historiography of the Metis--a reason for the publication of an English language version in 1986. The initial reaction to the version was entirely enthusiastic. G.F.B. Stanley stated: "it is a positive contribution both to Canadian history and to Canadian sociology."¹² In 1950, W.L. Morton wrote that "The study is thorough, complete and definitive" and that it offered a "sociological analysis of the problems of racemixing."¹³ The lengthy reviews of Le Metis Canadien by Stanley and Morton were not just reports, but offer reflections on the conceptualization underlining academic Metis history. These reviews are worthy of consideration because Stanley and Morton amplified some of Giraud's ideas but neither provided criticism. Stanley's and Morton's reactions to Le Metis Canadien reveal the formulation of ideas which influenced the course of Native and fur trade history for several decades. Stanley extended the frontier thesis, outlined in The Birth of Western Canada, by making explicit an evolutionist theme: "but where one of the peoples involved has lagged far

NATIVE STUDIES REVIEW 5, No. 2 (1989).

behind the other in material and social development, the impact of the civilized upon the culturally retarded group leads, all too often, to the rapid moral disintegration and physical decline of the latter."¹⁴ In 1956, Morton criticized the civilization/savage theme,¹⁵ but he completely embraced Le Metis Canadien in 1950. Morton stated: "The central theme of Canadian history is perhaps that of the contrast of civilization with the wilderness of ancient culture and primitive barbarism."¹⁶ Thus "in the Red River colony civilization and barbarism met and mingled," and "society quaint and unique, in which were reconciled the savagery of the Indian and the culture of Europe."¹⁷ Essentially both Stanley and Morton played up the civilization/savagery version of the frontier thesis. Stanley seems to have been a bit uncomfortable with some of Giraud's notions about the problem of miscegenation and instead suggested that "incidence of maladjusted...may be regarded as the product of their environment."¹⁸

To a large extent, these Canadian historians used the civilization/savagery theme as a means to justify the outcome of Canadian history. Although Giraud had criticized scrip policies, Morton dismissed government responsibility for dispossession of the Metis by stating: "The Metis, a descendant of the Indian, had little concept of exclusive property in land. He wanted to retain his hunting grounds, but knew of no way of doing so except the traditional Indian method of warfare on intruders. It was a complex the Company was unable to resolve, as was the Canadian government after it."¹⁹ And a consensus on the outcome of Metis history developed; Morton wrote that "Civilization had triumphed over barbarism, the sedentary over the nomadic way of life, and the Metis who were intermediaries between the two--the personification of the equipoise of the Stone Age and the Industrial Revolution which was the fur trade--were shattered, and survived to-day as submerged communities and marginal persons."²⁰ Morton argued that Giraud's "magnificent" study meant that "the story of barbarism and civilization...is not finished; it has only entered upon a new chapter" and that "the history of the Metis nation is as significant as it is pathetic."²¹ Stanley's

interpretation led him, like Giraud, to comment on the contemporary situation. He argued: "The eventual assimilation of the halfbreed into white and native society seems certain in the long run; but there is still a lengthy period of marginal existence ahead of him. For the present he presents a pitiful spectacle, a constant reproach to both Dominion and provincial authorities."²² Woodcock, like Stanley and Morton, identifies the central thrust of the study: "Giraud extrapolates from history a plausible collective portrait of the Metis character, with the strengths that made him so well adapted to the free life of the hunter and the weakness that made him incapable of coping with the changes in the economic and social life of the West that came with the collapse of the fur trade and incursion of settlers" (I, p. xii). Contemporary scholars have not embraced Giraud's interpretation, but serious analysis has not been offered. Raymond Huel states that traditional interpretations have been altered but "Le Metis Canadien has yet to be superceded," and that it offered "food for thought."²³ He ranked Giraud with de Tocqueville and Siegfried as "three of the most perceptive accounts of North American society."²⁴ The encyclopedic quality of Le Metis Canadien continues to overshadow critical reflections.

Most reviewers of The Metis in the Canadian West have been overwhelmed by the volume of information, and consequently, questions about methods were not raised. By drawing attention to Giraud's methods, his racial interpretation of history can be more readily understood. Apart from the occasional statistic, Giraud favours the use of descriptive, qualitative sources. For example, documents gave the impression that "...most of the Metis of French origin were slower than the Scottish mixed bloods to adopt the agricultural life" (II, p. 172). In point of fact, sources such as the Red River census indicate that images of nomadic French Metis and sedentary Scottish Halfbreed are simplistic.²⁵ Moreover, the mainstream historians' division of agricultural and hunting economies was not as dichotomous or dysfunctional as certain documents suggest.²⁶ Despite the well-documented quality

of The Metis In The Canadian West, frequently, summary statements emerge without direct empirical support. With respect to the rehabilitation of the Metis, Giraud concludes that "The role of the church in this situation was basic and more effective than other factors pointing in the same direction" (II, p. 175). At times eloquence masks absurd comments. For example, the Metis' "observing mind found expression, like that of the primitive man, in the character of his jests, which turned on comparisons with the behaviour of wild animals, but it did not raise itself to the artistic levels achieved in the reproduction of animal motifs that decorated the clothes of the Indians" (II, p. 195). Speculative causation enters into Giraud's explanation: "It is doubtful if the mass of the Metis, composed of semi-nomads without enough education to understand the true course of events, would have adopted such a resolute attitude if there had not been enterprising and energetic men to lead them and to formulate their claims" (II, p. 270). In fact, Woodcock has identified the core of Giraud technique of explanation, "...we must rely, as Giraud did, on the objective data, and on probability when that data is scanty" (I, p. xii). This assumption about 'objective data' needs to be explored.

Two English historians, E.H. Carr and E.P. Thompson, can be called on to probe the problems of method. Carr skeptically commented on the central assumption of historians: "If you find it in the documents, it is so."²⁷ At the centre of Giraud's method is an uncritical acceptance of descriptive documents; he never seems to consider the problem of the ethnocentrism of the observer or instead, the 'objectivity' of purpose for traders, travellers or missionaries. Carr's comment that "The facts were on the whole satisfactory; and the inclination to ask and answer awkward question about them was correspondingly weak" seems to apply.²⁸ Giraud's confusing multi-causal account of Metis history might have had more conceptual order had he appreciated E.P. Thompson's concern that documents "be interrogated by minds trained in a discipline of attentive disbelief."²⁹ There is no sense, that Giraud's history has developed through an ongoing dialogue between sources and interpretation. The problem of sources and

interpretation led to his stereotypes; Woodcock argues that "...we tend always to see the Metis collectively rather than individually; this of course is usually the case with preliterate peoples existing in small communities far from the centres of the dominant culture" (I, p. xiii). This excuse does not stand up to the standards of historical inquiry. The French historian, Marc Bloch wrote in 1945 that "Because history has tended to make more and more frequent use of unintentional evidence, it can no longer confine itself to weighing the explicit assertions of the document. It has been necessary to wring from them further confessions which they had never intended to give."³⁰ This is an argument for the use of sources such as census, scrip registers and fur trade account books and a quantitative approach to social history.³¹ Given the times in which Giraud wrote, numerical analysis was labourious. The obvious lack of quantitative data in The Metis In The Canadian West cannot be a fair criticism. But the problem of his interpretation should alert those contemporary scholars who persist in constructing interpretations based solely on impressionistic sources.

A full appreciation of Giraud's scholarships cannot be achieved through critical contrasts with current interpretations. Carr's advice on this problem is worth recalling: "...you cannot fully understand or appreciate the work of the historian unless you have first grasped the standpoint from which he himself approached it" and "that standpoint is itself rooted in a social and historical background."³² In methodological terms, Carr suggested that "Before you study the historian, study his historical and social environment."³³ Very obviously, Giraud's historical and social environment during the writing of Le Metis Canadien would have been influenced in some manner by the Vichy collaboration with the Nazi occupation of France. However, it would be a grievous mistake to label and equate Giraud's concept of race and history with the fascist theories of race. It is, nonetheless, worthwhile to examine some of the 1920s and 1930s trends in the literature on race and 'civilization.' Because his bibliography includes a section titled "General Studies on the

Question of Racial Mingling," it is possible to specifically examine the literature pertaining to race during the formulation of his standpoint. Since Giraud does not cite this literature, it is not possible to explicitly connect Giraud's study of the Metis to any of the trends in theories of race, hereditary and history.

Giraud was certainly familiar with the main thrusts in miscegenation and eugenics research. Eugenics basically refers to a 'science' concerned about enhancing the average genetic endowment from one generation to another. Eugenic societies sought solutions to a wide variety of social problems by improving the "well-bred" and by discouraging the reproduction of those with genetic 'disorders.' Several scholarly and scientific journals flourished in this era: The Eugenics Review, Eugenical News: Current Record of Race Hygiene and Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment. In these and other academic journals during this time, the premise of racial superiority was not uncommon. Races can be biologically and psychologically arranged into a hierarchy. A circular argument is apparent--the superior accomplishments of the Europeans are the result of their superior talents and intelligence, which derived from their superiority as a race. For example, George Henry Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, an anthropologist, in The Clash of Cultures and the Contact Races identified 'cultural potential' as "innate constructive ability" and argued that "it can be shown that neither improved hygiene nor many of the other supposed ameliorative conditions are capable of preserving an unadapted race from extinction, while under the very same conditions and influences different and more adaptable strains survive and take the place of the former."³⁴ During the 1920s and 1930s, eugenics was a respected science,³⁵ and it did not lose influence until the full implications of Hitler's master race were widely understood. The Eugenics Review, for example, reported on Nazi sterilization programs in the 1930s but disagreed with the compulsory nature of German sterilization.³⁶

Eugenicists had an interest in miscegenation. The aims and objectives of the Eugenic Society warned that "In certain circumstances race mixture is known to be bad... Meanwhile,

since the process of race mixture cannot be reversed, great caution is advocated."³⁷ In 1933, The Eugenics Review published K.B. Aikmans's "Race Mixture," an unscientific indictment of miscegenation. Aikman concluded that "the effects of hybridization between Primary Races [Negro, Mongolian, Caucasian] are bad, both biologically and socially, and that they are likely to be especially bad if one race is primitive, while the other is in an advanced state of civilization."³⁸ This eugenicist was concerned about the "chaotic constitution" of the hybrid (a cross between two primary races) stating "When such constitutions are mixed by inter-breeding, a new constitution is produced, which is not adapted to the mode of life of either parent and too often is not fitted for any actual environment whatever."³⁹ Today, this argument does not merit a great deal of attention; the concern must be directed at the tolerance shown by mainstream thought for this kind of intellectual contribution to 'science.' The Brazilian R. Kehl expressed similar views: "The cross, in place of being a superior product is a non-consolidated product, a half-way between the two elements which have constituted it. These two elements separately have their physio-psychic characters, stable, harmonious and compatible...the crossings between different races are a disturbing element of natural evolution, and accordingly do constitute a means of ethic perfection. Those who affirm the contrary have not any scientific base. From the point of view of eugenics, I am opposed to all the unions of races, that is to say, those between individuals of the white race and the Negro, the Indian, the yellow man and so forth."⁴⁰ Eugenicists tended to see miscegenation as inherently harmful.

Not all race research in the 1920s and 1930s attempted to show that miscegenation inevitably lead to physical and social degeneration. A more tolerant approach argued that the offspring of race mixing had many vibrant qualities, although this position was premised on the superiority of one race over another. Some research on the Mulatto argued that this group occupied a middle position between White and Black.⁴¹ E.B. Reuter in "The Superiority of the Mulatto" argued that social selection by White

males for "the choicer females of a subject race," and not White blood per se, were the origin of the Mulatto's strength.⁴² Although Reuter argued that miscegenation was not harmful, his conceptualization was laden with ethnocentrism; for example, "The lower culture of the Negro is of course a simple observational fact and is to be accepted as such."⁴³ Similarly, F.H. Hankins's, in *The Racial Basis of Civilization: A Critique of the Nordic Doctrine*, argued that racially mixed populations accumulated traits needed for civilization, but he believed that "there are certain levels of mental power attained by the white man which are never attained by the negro and that the proportion of whites potentially able to achieve any of the higher grade of intellectual activity greatly exceeds the proportion of negroes similarly gifted."⁴⁴ Hankins suggested that unions between white males and negro females would elevate the Negro without affecting the fertility of the whites.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, he felt that the future of the European race required "the application of eugenic measurements to the existing populations."⁴⁶ There may be some comfort that Hankins's views were not just racist. He also stated that it "is not a question of preserving Anglo-Saxon stock. Much of that stock is utterly worthless and should be sterilized at the earliest possible date."⁴⁷

Fortunately, not all writing during this era expounded such racial views. *Half-caste* by Cedric Dover stands out as an empathic account of Mixedblood contributions to history and as a polemic against the eugenicists and racials. According to Dover, eugenics was "a welcome and inexpensive sop for proletarian distress" and under capitalism "...the rational application of scientific discovery is only too often superseded by the rationalized application of pseudo-scientific ineptitude, when it is not outrageously abused for the creation of more violent instruments of power, parasitism and banditry."⁴⁸ Dover's identification of racialism and eugenics with the prevailing economic structure could easily be dismissed as "Leftist," but his alarms about "the creation of more violent instruments of power" only partially anticipated the horror of Nazi 'science.' Indeed his

positive views of Mixedbloods included the linking of the "movement towards a classless society" with greater race mixing.⁴⁹

The Metis in the Canadian West does not resort to an historical explanation based solely on heredity or racial traits. In part, this is because the author invokes a multiplicity of causes, but explanations are built by pointing to "Mendelian laws" or "pedigrees of unknown origin." Giraud makes significant use of geographical determinism. This determinism remains something of a mildly amusing embarrassment for the discipline, but the heyday of geographical determinism corresponded to the flourishing of eugenic studies. Indeed one of the leading geographical determinists, Ellsworth Huntington, published in Eugenical News and participated in a serious symposium which addressed the question "Does America Need More Morons?"⁵⁰ Giraud's study is certainly more historical than the pseudo-positivist research carried out by the eugenicists who argued that race-mixing was so harmful, yet he employs the same descriptions: "regression," "atavism" (throwback), "not adaptable," "weakness," "primitive milieu," "inferior group," "degraded," "decadence," "quality of origins" and "combination of incomplete cultures." Racial explanations also tend to downplay environmental (economic, social, physical) factors which shape the development of individuals and groups. Giraud's narration diminishes the manner in which the fur trade encouraged the nomadic traits of the Metis and it disregards the forces that worked against the Metis in the post-1870 era.

The final topic which requires examination is the introduction of the concept of social class into Metis history. The term bourgeoisie is used to label some of the residents of Red River; the buffalo hunters are identified as a proletariat.⁵¹ The settlement was "a last process of selection" because it "offered the pattern of an upper class, thoroughly detached from its Indian affinities," and of "another class still attached to traditional notions and economy, doomed to poverty and demoralization" (II, p. 392). The various economic roles of the

Metis were acknowledged and Giraud suggests that the development of classes was an historical process: "the society of the Red River was dividing up into distinct classes," but only "according to whether their representatives were more or less receptive to civilizing influences; in this way they gave proof of an evolution that diminished the role of regressive factors" (II, p. 73). Assimilation is the basic explanation for the development of class; the willingness to emulate the European led to the formulation of a bourgeoisie.

Giraud's concept of class parallels that employed by Jim Brady, Metis nationalist and socialist. Brady and Giraud were acquaintances, but according to their biographer, Murray Dobbin, Brady was the sole originator of a dual class theory.⁵² Brady classified the Metis of the 1930s into two groups: there was a nomadic group--destitute, malnourished, uneducated and frequently former Treaty Indians; and a progressive class of small businessmen, workers and farmers, a group that generally traced their descent from the settlements of Red and South Saskatchewan rivers. Brady's political strategy for the salvation of the Metis nation rested on an alliance between these two classes. Both Giraud and Brady employed the term "nomad." Whilst the Metis bourgeoisie would have to be somewhat Europeanized to carry out their economic role, Giraud largely sees class in cultural terms. Giraud does not locate the Metis bourgeoisie in a world economy and this stems from his interpretation which is almost exclusively an involuted examination of the Metis. External factors are not subjected to investigation. Furthermore, Giraud does not acknowledge the relevance of the mode of production perspective in shaping definitions of Metis classes. The political and economic origins of the class dimensions of Metis society are an interesting topic in itself, but today, with few exceptions, the implications of class have been ignored by activists and academics alike.⁵³ With present state funding for Native political organizations and economic development, newer class forms are developing and the question of class takes on a pressing relevance.⁵⁴

Scholarly competence and eloquent presentation have caused the mainstream of history to embrace and to continue to embrace, The Metis of the Canadian West. Although some concern exists among today's academics about the stereotyping inherent in the civilization/primitive frontier thesis, the subtlety of Giraud's thesis has alluded many. The idea of explaining history in terms of weaknesses in collective personality has not been seriously critiqued. By criticizing various representatives (traders, missionaries, civil servants) of the frontier, contemporary research tends to be more balanced and certainly more interesting. Efforts are made to discern Native objectives and recognize their active participation in history. Additionally, consultants for Native political organizations have generated research which conflicts with the older, White interpretations. There have been many criticisms of Indian policy. Generally such revisions are predicated on racial terms such as White and Indian. The class bias of the Canadian state is not seen as relevant to Native history. There is even a strain of scholarships which demolished stereotypes by projecting the Native as a willing participant in a pluralistic partnership with European traders.⁵⁵ While shifting the emphasis of racial viewpoints has led to a more vibrant discourse, it largely remains a racial interpretation. In many respects, modern scholars are in the same racial trap as Giraud, Stanley and Morton. The problem that we have not dealt with no longer remains how the Native was marginalized, but why Natives became oppressed minorities within the Canadian nation state.

The Metis in the Canadian West provides an enormous amount of information and it can serve as a useful guide to archival sources. Giraud was one of the first to make extensive use of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives and Morton noted that "No one has used that depository to greater effect."⁵⁶ But Giraud's interpretation obliges us to look at this source more closely, especially the problem of reliance on the impressionistic records. Curiously all his information has produced precious little discourse. Thus his ongoing contribution to Metis and fur trade history has not been evaluated. If Giraud's interpretation about the

personality and history of the Metis people is discussed more closely, then perhaps his extensive research and careful compilation of detail will remain of interest to researchers. Giraud's thesis, which I believe is unbalanced and despairing, contrasts sharply with an interpretation outlined in 1936 by Metis activists Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady: "The history of the Metis of Western Canada is really the history of their attempts to defend their constitutional rights against the encroachment of nascent monopoly capital. It is incorrect to place them as bewildered victims who did not know how to protect themselves against the vicious features which marked the penetration of the white man into the Western prairies."⁵⁷ Norris and Brady also stated that: "Incidentally, the picture of the Metis as a sort of savage people has been deliberately presented by the conquerors in order to falsify issues and attempt to present some kind of justification for the treacherous way in which these original pioneers were treated."⁵⁸ Interestingly, these contrasting interpretations of Brady/Norris and Giraud both arose from the conditions of the Metis during the depression. Brady and Norris attempted to build a political strategy for improving the position of the Metis by employing an historical analysis. Giraud's travels to western Canada in the early 1930s exposed him to 'local' problems. He then "discovered that these problems were linked to the existence of a large population descended from the early contacts of the whites and natives during the fur trade era. The very hard fate of a considerable number of those of mixed breeds, their destitute condition in many cases, and the marginal status to which many were apparently reduced, coupled with the complete lack of sympathy which they encountered among white people, whether French or English speaking, struck my imagination and led me to the conclusion that a complete study of their origin and history was necessary to explain their present situation."⁵⁹ Clearly, Giraud was not uninterested in the fate of the Metis, and he made a submission to the Royal Commission to Investigate the Conditions of the Half-Breed Population of Alberta, in 1936.⁶⁰ As well, Giraud had met Brady in 1936 and, while serving

occupational duty with the Canadian army in 1945, Brady visited Giraud in Paris. At this time, Brady read the proofs to Le Metis Canadien and "found it interesting, although I found a few argumentative points to which I objected...."⁶¹

Certainly many valid criticism can be made of scholars cut-off from the people they study. But neither Giraud's travels to Metis communities in the 1930s, his concern about their problems nor his contact with activists like Brady, axiomatically produced an empathetic viewpoint. Nor did he produce an "objective study" as claimed by his translator, George Woodcock. In terms of method, his study began with an appraisal of the situation in the 1930s. Giraud states, "The first stage of my work was mainly on-the-spot observation among people whom I had no difficulty approaching and questioning, thanks to the help of missionaries of the various parishes which I visited."⁶² To what extent did Giraud's direct observations of the Metis in the 1930s, an era when, as Brady felt, "The Metis as a national unit [were] breaking down and disintegrating,"⁶³ influence his reading of the archival record and formulation of his interpretation? The last word on the question of method and interpretation should go to the French historian and Resistance martyr, Marc Bloch: "Compliance with universal prejudice had bested the habitual accuracy of his gaze; and his testimony, like that of so many others, tell us not what he actually saw but what his age thought it natural to see."⁶⁴

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NOTES

¹Saskatchewan History translated two chapters. See "Metis Settlement in the North-west Territories" in 7, 1 (1954) pp. 1-16. "The Western Metis After the Insurrection" in 9, 1 (1956) pp. 1-15.

²See George Woodcock, Gabriel Dumont (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976); and Gabriel Dumont and the Northwest Rebellion (Toronto: Playwrights Co-op, 1976).

³Geographical determinism was a popular strain of geographical thought in the 1920s and 1930s which argued that the natural determined the social. For example, the existence of civilization at midlatitudes was explained by favourable climatic conditions. Thus particular social and historical developments were necessitated by particular physical environmental circumstances. For an original statement on geographical determinism, see Ellsworth Huntington, Civilization and Climate (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915).

⁴George F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961, original 1936), pp. 67-106; and W.C. Morton, "Introduction," Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956), pp. 1-148.

⁵Frits Pannekoek, review of The Metis in the Canadian West by Marcel Giraud, Prairie Forum 12, 2 (1987), pp. 327-328.

⁶Giraud does not appreciate the paternalist dimension of the fur trade. He states, "The rather simplistic idea even spread among them that in extending its dominion over Rupert's Land, the Company had assumed the obligation of providing for the needs of its population" (II, p. 24).

⁷For example, "...the characteristics generally recognized among them [French Canadians]--which were sometimes very remote from those distinguishing The French rural classes of the same period--revealed themselves only in the natural setting of Lower Canada, with the kind of existence it involved and the contact with the native peoples it encouraged" (I, p. 226).

⁸Despite these differences between the Scot and French mixedbloods, backsliding could occur: "In fact, after the departure of their fathers, nomadism quickly became the customary way of life for officers' sons" (I, p. 327).

⁹Furthermore, the free trade movement "remained more confused than on the Red River because of the absence of a bourgeoisie capable of directing the movement and because the less developed intelligence of the western Metis" (II, p. 355).

¹⁰For documents on the debates of the Convention of Forty see W.C. Morton, ed., Manitoba: The Birth of a Province (Manitoba Record Society Publications, 1984).

¹¹He concludes, "Quick to attribute malevolent intentions toward them to the whites, ready to blame the authorities for the sufferings they endured in bad years and thoughtless enough to demand liberalities that would have been harmful to the community as a whole, they lacked in addition any clear sense of what they wanted and so were exposed to the maneuvers of those who know how to exploit their weakness of character. For these reasons they formed a community prone to disturbances, and arguments or methods that might succeed among the whites had little effect on them (II, p. 82).

¹²George F.G. Stanley, "The Metis And The Conflict of Cultures in Western Canada," Canadian Historical Review, 28, 4 (1947), p. 433.

¹³W.L. Morton, "The Canadian Metis," The Beaver, Outfit 281, (September 1950), p. 3. For a more contemporary comment J.E. Foster with Louise Zuk, "Introduction," Le Metis Canadian by Marcel Giraud (St. Boniface: Les Editions du Ble, 1984).

¹⁴Stanley, "Conflict," p. 428.

¹⁵Morton, "Introduction," pp. 3-5.

¹⁶Morton, "Canadian Metis," p. 4.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁸Stanley, "Conflict," p. 429.

¹⁹Morton, "Canadian Metis," p. 6.

²⁰Ibid., p. 7.

²¹Ibid.,

²²Stanley, "Conflict," p. 433.

²³Raymon Huel, review of The Metis in the Canadian West by Marcel Giraud, Alberta History 33, 3 (1985), p. 30.

²⁴Ibid., p. 29.

²⁵See D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983) for the Census of Red River for 1835. By using indices such as acres cultivated per farm, acres cultivated per person, cattle per person, percent of parish land cultivated and by comparing French and English parishes, it cannot be demonstrated that a complete ethnic split existed with respect to agricultural productivity.

²⁶See Robert Coutts, "The Role of Agriculture in an English Speaking Halfbreed Economy: The Case of St. Andrew's, Red River," Native Studies Review, 4, 1 and 2 (1988), pp. 67-94; W. Leland Clark, "The Place of the Metis within the Agricultural Economy of the Red River During the 1840s and the 1850s," Canadian Journal of Native Studies 3, 1 (1983), pp. 69-84; and G. Herman Sprenger, "The Metis Nation: Buffalo Hunting vs. Agriculture in the Red River Settlement (circa 1810-1870)," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, 3, 1 (1972), pp. 158-178).

²⁷E.H. Carr, What is History? (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964, original 1961), p. 16.

²⁸Ibid., p. 19.

²⁹E.P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), pp. 28-29.

³⁰Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 89.

³¹See Sprague and Frye; Arthur J. Ray, "The Early Hudson's Bay Account Books as Sources for Historical Research: An Analysis and Assessment," Archivaria, 1, 1 (1976), pp. 3-38; and Arthur J. Ray, "Reflections on Fur Trade Social History and Metis History in Canada," American Indian Culture and Research 6, 2 (1982), pp. 91-107.

³²Carr, p. 40.

³³Ibid., p. 44.

³⁴George Henry Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers, The Clash of Cultures and The Contact of Races (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd, 1927), p. 8.

³⁵Julian Huxley was connected to the Eugenics Society and J.M. Keynes gave a lecture to the society.

³⁶For example, see C.P. Blacker, "Eugenics in Germany," The Eugenics Review, 25, 3 (1933) pp. 157-159; see also The Eugenics Review 29, 2 (1937), p. 178.

³⁷Cited by Cedric Dover, in Half-Caste (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd., 1934), p. 110.

³⁸K.B. Aikman, "Race Mixture" The Eugenics Review 25, 3 (1933), p. 166. He also argued that "hybrids are usually worse than mongrels." (hybrids being crosses between primary race, and mongrels crosses between subdivisions of the same primary races)

³⁹Ibid., p. 161. Aikman alerted his readers that "when we turn to the Mongolian races of Asia, we must recognize that, speaking practically they are the most serious menace to the Caucasian race."

⁴⁰R. Kehl, "Ethnic Elements in the Population of Brazil," Eugenical News, 14 (1929), pp. 148-150, cited by Dover, pp. 95-96.

⁴¹See E.B. Reuter, "The Superiority of the Mulatto," American Journal of Sociology, 23, 1 (1917), pp. 83-106; and Robert E. Park, "Mentality of Race Hybrids," American Journal of Sociology, 36, 1 (1931), pp. 534-551. Park argued in favour of 'environmental' factors, stating "if the mulatto displays intellectual characteristics and personality traits superior to and different from those of the black man, it is not because of his biological inheritance merely, but rather more, I am inclined to believe, because of his more intimate association with a superior cultural group."

⁴²Reuter stated his argument: "The choicest females of a subject race have always been selected as the concubines and auxiliary wives of the master race," and "the choicest females of the black groups became the mothers of a race of half-breeds." Because "The females of this class represented both physically and mentally the best of the race" it meant that "on the whole it would seem that the mulattoes, because of this process of sexual selections, are somewhat superior to the black Negroes." Reuter, pp. 99-100.

⁴³Reuter, p. 87.

⁴⁴Frank H. Hankins, The Racial Basis of Civilization: A Critique of the Nordic Doctrine (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), pp. 321-322. He also claimed "...we have sought, using the negro-white comparison, to prove beyond peradventure of doubt that the races are unequal in mental equipment with consequent difference in cultural powers."

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 347. Hankins added: "...the malatto stock is not only more variable than the negro, but that in intellectual ability it rankings intermediate between white and negro norms" moreover, "Average mulattoes are doubtless superior to average pure negroes in general intelligence, but inferior to average whites"; and "But low-grade mulattoes prove inferior to average pure negroes while high-grade ones are distinctly superior to average whites."

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 374.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 375.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 108, 109.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 277. Dover characterized those opposed to race mixing by stating, "it is the attitude of those, possibly in a majority, who believe that all hybrids are the work of the devil, that they inherit the vices of both parents and the virtues of neither, that they are without exception infertile, unbalanced, indolent, immoral and universally degenerate." For a eugenic reaction, see Michael Fielding review of Half-Caste by Cedric Dover, The Eugenic Review, 29, 2 (1937), pp. 141-142.

⁵⁰Ellsworth Huntington, response to "Does America Need More Morons?" Eugenical News 2, 4 (1929), pp. 21-22.

⁵¹For some reason, Giraud shifts his terminology, descriptions of the Metis in the 1930s employs terms such as upper and middle class.

⁵²See Murray Dobbin, The One-And-A-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981), pp. 91-95.

⁵³Ron G. Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Metis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," Studies in Political Economy 12 (1983), pp. 45-80; Carol M. Judd, "Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department 1770-1870," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 17, 4 (1980), pp. 305-314; and Brian Gallagher, "A Re-examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River," Native Studies Review 4, 1 and 2 (1988), pp. 25-65.

⁵⁴Doug Daniels, "The Coming Crisis in the Aboriginal Rights Movement: From Colonialism to Neo-Colonialism to Renaissance," Native Studies Review 2, 2 (1986), pp. 97-115.

⁵⁵Paul C. Thistle, Indian European Trade Relations: In the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986); and Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay 1600-1870 (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

⁵⁶Morton, "The Canadian Metis," p. 3.

⁵⁷Dobbin, pp. 89-90, citing the Alberta Metis Association Brief (1935) to the Ewing commission.

⁵⁸Ibid. p. 90.

⁵⁹Marcel Giraud, "Forward," New Peoples, ed. Brown and Peterson, p. xii.

⁶⁰see Foster with Zuk, "Introduction."

⁶¹Dobbin, p. 165.

⁶²Giraud, Forward, p. xii.

⁶³Dobbin, p. 135.

⁶⁴Bloch, pp. 106-107.