

that what she did in all her work — fictional or otherwise — was to tell the truth as she saw it and as much as she could" (p. 228). Readers still respond to this quality in Laurence's work. *Challenging Territory* is a tribute to a woman who could inspire such heartfelt response, but is also a challenge to the reader to read Laurence as seriously and deeply as she deserves.

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*Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis*, by Gerhard J. Ens. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. xiv + 268 pp. Tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, and index. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-8020-035-6; \$18.95 (paper), ISBN 0-8020-7822-2.

*Homeland to Hinterland* is a provocative study. Gerhard J. Ens uses the concept of homeland to encompass the region of the Red River colony which was the hub of Métis economic life in the fur and provisions trade, but not considered an explicit political boundary prior to 1869, until it is politicized in the HBC transfer of Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada. Hinterland in contrast refers to the regions of staples subject to incorporation within a system of capitalist industrialism, which Ens suggests brings the demise of the Métis modes of production that he characterizes as "proto-industrial," "peasant" economic orientations, and which are reflected in the provisions and robe trade, the tripmen labour, and in the agricultural and pastoral adaptations practiced in the Red River country. Ens demonstrates his case for how these Métis orientations were both ill-suited to the new economic order organized in centre and periphery, metropolis and hinterland; therefore, the Métis populations post-1870 were increasingly relegated to the latter. Ens presents a reconstruction of a series of progressive demographic ranges of differences and similarities within Métis society that he links to patterns of land tenure, and triangulates with economic shifts in domestic and international trade, occupational demand changes in forms of labour, and roles of class within as well as among groups, communities and parishes.

Ens presents his version of origins for the Métis, specifically their rise as a distinguishable group within the early history of the Red River colony. Utilizing methods of the new social history, his comparative communities study focuses on the initial economic orientations, forms of social relations, and intra- and inter-group social formation, e.g., the French Métis vis-à-vis the English Métis. Ens presents his case for the Métis as a "peasantry," asserting "(r)egardless of origins, all Red River Métis came to be united by common land tenure, economy, and social structure" (p. 28). Unfortunately, Ens retreats to limited eurocentric formulations about the structure and function of peasant orientations, rather than following more innovative and culturally relative theoretical insights about peasant resistance movements of indigenous peoples. Ens also contends that "some patterns of ethnogenesis are discernible" but he omits discussing this in relation to his analysis. While Ens contends he is presenting a social history, drawing specifically on methods of demographic analysis, he reduces his focus to the two parishes of St. Francois Xavier and St. Andrew's, contending they are representative respectively of the French Métis and English Métis. Although it is important to understand the range of social variability within Métis society, nowhere is there a discussion of the nature and evolution of networks of social relations among Métis with Indians, individually or between societies. This is a critical omission considering the elastic and plastic qualities of Métis

economic formulations, particularly the role of *hivernant* hunters and independent traders, when understood amidst the growing stress by the 1860s and eventual collapse of the buffalo herds by the late 1870s on the northern Plains which are not factored into his reconstruction or interpretations.

Nowhere is there an explicit discussion of what results in interests and their instrumentality where issues of power and powerlessness are situated within the dynamics acting upon Métis society. Ens contends that the demographic shifts away from Red River are occurring in advance of the "rebellion" of 1869-70, rather than in interpretations of others happening in the mid-1870s, when efforts to maintain political influence are lost as Anglophone Ontarioan and other Canadian immigrants gain control of the new province and begin dismantling mechanisms embodied in principles of the *Manitoba Act*. This political development also occurs during the efforts to implement the land guarantees for the Métis. The issue of resistance to incorporation, whether it be escalated coercion to form labour pools when forced from the land by unprofitable tenure patterns, or a choice for isolation based upon interests based in self-sufficiency, scale and quality of life is given only passing credence, is given only minimal interpretation. Ens' key contribution is his case for the emergence of class as a factor of intra-group dynamics among the Métis, especially when coupled with the shifts in economic subsistence orientations and land utilization patterns. However, Ens dismisses race as an instrumental issue in social relations without supporting this assertion, other than to suggest that his larger analysis circumscribes all the relevant causal factors. In passing, he acknowledges the level of racism and cultural cum religious intolerance of immigrant Canadians unleashed against Métis after 1870, forever changing the atmosphere in Red River, but declines to demonstrate how this was a contributing causal factor in the dispersal of the Métis population from the Red River colony parishes. Ens contends that the role of scrip, both in its initial system and as amended, in practice and concept, became a means of capitalizing the Métis diaspora, which Ens does not want to probe this assertion other than in the most general of terms once elements of populations depart for points west and northwest. Suggestions of affluence upon the part of those who accept scrip is far from proven in his discussion or by others, especially irrespective of any comparison of the amounts of capital brought by immigrants to the prairie west to establish viable agricultural or mercantile endeavors. Ens does nothing with the issue of how a cash economy is introduced into the Red River colony as a region, and the degree of Métis integration for the years he discusses, which seemingly is essential to any assertion of a comparative scale of affluence or impoverishment between Métis and other groups.

Ens produces a monograph that must also be understood as part of an ongoing historiographical debate between opposing experts in the Manitoba Métis land claim court action, *Dumont, et al. vs. A.G. Canada and A.G. Manitoba*, of which Ens is one. Ens presents many interesting areas of data sets and demographic analyses, but limits his interpretations at many points rather than becoming expansive. Much as historian Gerald Friesen noted in a 1979 article also entitled "Homeland and Hinterland" about the political transition of Manitoba in the 1870s, often little attention is given to the actual means of transition. While Ens has tried to accept this challenge for the period he treats in the Red River colony, he falls short of connecting more explicitly his analysis of demographic, economic, and geographical means to the cultural, racial and political ones of the Métis dispersion. The Ens monograph is best read with the other authors and titles also at hand that he is debating, constructing a dialogue while reconstructing the changing world of the Métis in this critical junction in their past.

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