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Posted on 16 March 2019 By Chester Brown

This is an ambitious effort to deal with a very complex part of Canadian history. The artwork is excellent, but unfortunately the resulting story is over simplistic. Brown compensates for this somewhat in the extensive notes at the end of the comic book, where he goes so far as to admit that he made John A MacDonal appear villainous to improve the story. Not sure it is a good idea to take such liberties with important historical figures i.e Canada's first prime minister for something that doesn't explicitly present itself as fiction. Moreover, the reader doesn't come away with an adequate view of the real complexity of Riel as a historical figure. Perhaps this would be best described as historical fiction or fictionalized history. There is little doubt that the Métis and First Nations peoples were treated unfairly but I still can't really recommend reading this as a primary way to learn about Louis Riel or Canadian history, though it may inspire the reader to dig deeper. Either way, if you do read this comic book without any prior knowledge of Riel, you'd better also read the notes at the end. The author's 'Paying for It' is a much stronger and interesting work, because of the extremely frank autobiographical tone. Brown retells the history of Louis Riel using his unique drawing skills. Each of the characters are given blank eyes and expressionless faces, as well as enormous hands and small heads – deliberate choices by the artist. The story is a bit dusty for most of the book. This law was passed which meant this border changed which meant this happened which meant people had to move until this law was passed, blah blah. Unless

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you're really into 19th century Canadian history regarding the Metis people you'll gloss over these sections. Maps are included to show the shifting borders. What's interesting is when Louis Riel loses his mind and believes he's a prophet from God. There are some brilliant sections like the siege or when Louis and his men are held captive. There's quite a comedic scene with one of the racist prisoners shouting expletives you just see XXX in the caption balloon and coupled with his blank face and cavernous mouth it made me laugh. Louis Riel shows a confident storyteller in Brown and his drawing style has developed since *I Never Liked You*. It's a good, thorough read and reminded me of Rick Geary's work which is also brilliant. A must read for those interested in Canadian history. Being a graphic novel it does have obvious trade offs between completeness and artistic license. The cool thing is that Brown is upfront about that in the intro and the very thorough endnotes in true graphic novel these are handwritten very neatly but somewhat hard to read. These along with the bibliography make it a great starting point to learn about Louis Riel's tumultuous life and his role in history. Although I'm certain I would have been exposed to Louis Riel during my time in school, I have no recollection of learning about the man until I read *Bastards Boneheads* earlier this year and his story blew my mind. While author Will Ferguson wrote a compelling summary of his life in *Bastards Boneheads*, I spotted Chester Brown's comic strip biography and decided to check it out. Brown's artwork here is tremendous in its simplicity. In the foreword, the author notes that many assumed his style was influenced by Hergé, the artist behind *The Adventures of Tintin*. While that's a valid comparison, he says it was *Little Orphan Annie* that provided the inspiration and it shows I thought it was the perfect fit to represent both the time and the subject matter. The layouts are clean and clear with about nine panels per page to tell the Metis story. Riel's life is a strange one as it or less exists in two parts. The first being his leadership of what would become Winnipeg, the Red River Settlement, and the establishment of Manitoba. Brown details the trials and tribulations of Riel's role in the battle between French and English Canada as both battle for control of the fledgling province. Brown showcases Riel's quest for a peaceful resolution and a hope that both the Anglo and Francophones

Delta of Venus

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Kushiel's Dart

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Ideal Form

Thy Neighbor's Wife

can come together to fight for their rights against what they felt was a tyrannical Prime Minister, John A MacDonalD.The second part concerns his return to Canada following his complete mental breakdown Having spent time in a Montreal insane asylum, Riel believes himself to be a prophet sent from God and his ensuing actions lead to increased hostility between both the Metis of Manitoba and the Canadian government That s not to say the aggression was his fault the existing population of Manitoba clearly got the short end of the stick but it was a big departure from what he seemingly stood for before.With Louis Riel, Chester Brown has provided an accessible look into Canada s past that even those who find Canadian history dry will enjoy Riel s story is a tragic one that highlights the struggles that Canada s aboriginal population have gone through and continue to go through to achieve even equal footing to English speaking Canada. A factual, historical comic book about the early days of Canada and the story of Louis Riel He fought about the rights of the native people, with a bit of megalomania, a big of insanity that is needed to carry such a cause against the government Again the Rail road and financing the lines that connect the country and subsequently the money needed for such effort, was behind his execution Now days is a national hero for Canada, back then an insane A very good, fast, Sunday morning coffee read. Being French Canadian, Qu b cois, and Acadian, this story hit home for me.I don t know if I had family in Manitoba back then quite possibly, as the deportation of the Acadians took part a little prior to the story in Riel, and many Acadians did flee West One of the sad things about deportation, is that you tend to loose touch with family members and Neighbors, and they tend to be forgotten after a generation or two.Stories like that of Riel to help to refresh our memories and although I obviously had heard or maybe even read about Riel in high school no history course made it as clear as this poerwerful little book.Thank you Mr Brown for this glimpse into our ancestros lives.Your book is now on my prioritised shelf in good company, as it is right next to Spiegelman s Maus.Do you know another book that d look really nice up there on telling the history of the Acadian Cajun people hint hint hint Martyr Or Madman The Passionate Rebel History Can T Close The Book On Is This The Future Of Comics Respectably Penning The Dowdy Pages Of History

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Don T Be Fooled This Is One Of The Hippest Comics Going And Will Be A Controversial Must Have In Legendary Cartoonist Chester Brown Reveals In The Dusty Closet Of Canadian History There Are Some Skeletons That Won T Stop Rattling To Some Louis Riel Was One Of The Founding Fathers Of A Nation But To Others He Was A Murderer Who Nearly Tore A Country Apart A Man So Charismatic He Was Elected To Government Twice While In Exile With A Prize On His Head But So Impassioned His Dramatic Behavior Cast Serious Doubts On His Sanity Riel Took On The Army, The Government, The Queen, And Even The Church In The Name Of Freedom Will Riel S Visionary Democracy Ever Be Enough To Defend Him From The Verdict Of History Interesting graphic novel treatment of the North West Rebellion, focusing on the figure of Louis Riel Very simple black and white graphics in a distinctive style, coupled with simple, casual dialogue, but augmented with interesting maps and fascinating endnotes about the narrative choices and historical liberties taken by the author. In 1870, the Canadian government incorporated Manitoba, and the Powers That Be sought to disenfranchise the territory s French speaking M tis population Louis Riel petitioned for equitable M tis representation in the Canadian government, and when that failed, he escaped to the United States to organize an ill fated armed rebellion Throughout, Riel was both inspired and hampered by his own religious fanaticism Chester Brown tells this incredible true story in a unique way He uses rigid formalism and minimalism each page is a 2 x 3 panel grid with wide margins and gutters the characters faces are often blank and affectless to heighten both the humor and the heartbreak of this desperate, small scale rebellion In an early sequence, a M tis captive escapes from Anglo soldiers by breaking through an outhouse He then shoots an innocent bystander The soldiers recapture him and hack him to death with an ax, while the bystander bleeds to death nearby The scene blends comedy and horrific violence in a way that reminds me Stanley Kubrick or the Coen Brothers Louis Riel is a fascinating character He s a man who believes he communes with God and knows all the secrets of the universe, but he cannot grasp the scale of what he s up against, or how to deal with the combined forces of the Canadian government, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the

Hudson's Bay Trading company. In this way, he's a classic Western hero, a strong man made obsolete by capitalist progress. The extensive handwritten end notes make this an even richer reading experience. In them, Brown obsesses over his text's historical inaccuracies and questions how his own political/philosophical biases shaped the story. The comic is an engrossing, one-of-a-kind history, and the end notes are an impressive historiography and self-critique. That Chester Brown provides both in under 300 pages is a truly remarkable achievement. Really nice to re-learn this chapter of Canadian History, but as a novel, it didn't work for me. The visual style was very static, so it didn't convey the movement and chaos that I would expect to accompany an armed rebellion, and the dialogue was very stiff and emotionless. It gave me the impression of an illustrated list of facts, as opposed to a dramatic re-telling of fascinating real-world events. I didn't feel connected to any of the characters, like they were all two-dimensional comic strips, as opposed to real people with twisted, or confused motives. In general, I saw so much potential for this book to be better than it was, so I was disappointed with what was actually in front of me.

