

BOOK REVIEWS

Brown, Leslie and Susan Strega (Eds). *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005. 303 pages. ISBN – 13-978-1551302751. Paper \$39.95.

With the publication of *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, Leslie Brown, Susan Strega, and contributors have provided a valuable resource and point of reference for academics and practitioners who are operating *from, by, and within* the margins. Beyond contextualizing the discriminatory nature of dominant epistemologies and ontologies of traditional research, the critical framework adopted within this collected works further critiques the methodological privileging of objectivity, neutrality, the application of reason, and the adoption of quantitative methods. From an Indigenous standpoint, this publication serves as a stimulating extension to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*.¹ In her text, Smith challenges Indigenous scholars to 'research back,' demystify, and decolonize the inextricably imperial and colonial nature of scientific research. Building upon the work of Smith and other notable Indigenous scholars, *Research as Resistance* incorporates the works of those who are not only negotiating from positions of Indigenous marginality but also those who sit on their own respective 'borders of otherness.'

By including a diverse collection of critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches, Brown and Strega successfully reveal the breadth and possibility of innovative research methods and methodologies that can be shared between those who occupy discrete positions of marginality. Through their respective discussions on anti-oppressive approaches, Moosa-Mitha, Strega, and Potts and Brown bring theoretical continuity to this compilation of collected works. All three discussions critique the hegemonic nature of dominant ontological and epis-

temological norms. Indigenous contributors urge that culturally relevant research methods be infused within academic scholarship. Kovach encourages Indigenous scholars to ensure that dreams are legitimized as important sources of knowledge; Absolon and Willet suggest a provoking means of locating oneself in Aboriginal research and propose that we put ourselves forward by re-vising, re-claiming, re-naming, remembering, re-connecting, re-covering, and re-searching; and Qzul'sig'yah'maht-Thomas shares an inspiring reflection on the teachings of her grandmother and urges Indigenous scholars to honour the power of storytellers by positioning storytelling as a resistance methodology. While situated in quite different positions of marginality, Kimpson, Herising, and Miller use anti-oppressive approaches in respect to their own 'lived experiences' and assessments of their own locations, spaces, and thresholds. For Kimpson, the power of autobiographical narratives serves as an opportunity to construct herself and her research in ways that may be of methodological significance to other marginalized researchers. Herising proposes that the principles of queer theory be extended more broadly to other anti-oppressive approaches. Miller provides a heartening personal critique of institutional ethnography which challenges hegemonic notions of objectivity, neutrality, and distance. Finally, Rutman, Hubberstey, Barlow, and Brown provide an insightful synopsis and much needed discussion on the concerns and difficulties of putting anti-oppressive methods into practice.

In what began as a search to find a radical and progressive research text, Brown and Strega provide a central source for critical, Indigenous, anti-oppressive approaches and have paved the way for marginalized scholars to use research as resistance.

Note

1. Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 1999.

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Champagne, D., K. Torjesen & S. Steiner (Eds.). *Indigenous Peoples and the Modern State*, Toronto, Alta Mira Press, 2005. pp. 172. ISBN 978-0759-1079-91. \$26.95.

Anderson, T., B. Benson & T. Flanagan (Eds.) *Self Determination: The Other Path for Native Americans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. pp. 346. ISBN 978-0804-754415. \$35.00.

These two publications represent bi-polar conceptualizations about Aboriginal people in North America. How such different views of Aboriginal life emerge reflects both the disciplines and the literature read by the contributing authors. The contributors in *Indigenous Peoples and the Modern State* have, without exception, read extensively in the history and legal aspects of Aboriginal studies and engaged in field research focusing on Aboriginal issues for most of their academic careers in disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and history. On the other hand, the contributors to *Self Determination: The Other Path for Native Americans* represent scholars from the fields of economics, law, and business who have engaged in a narrow review of Aboriginal issues. There is little overlap in the list of citations between the two texts, confirming that the two sets of authors had drawn their ideas from vastly different sources.

Indigenous Peoples is comparative in that it presents material from Canadian, American, and Mexican perspectives on various issues facing Aboriginal people. The material also reflects a trans-disciplinary approach by the authors as they tackle issues such as sovereignty, Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous identity, culture and economics, language and education. The issue of colonization trauma is foremost on the minds of these authors as they couch their explanations within that historical context. The emergence of a stateless Indigenous identity and community looms large in their view of the poverty and marginalization exhibited by Aboriginal people.

The emerging Indigenous leadership and entrepreneurial activities of Aboriginal people are well documented. Other economic, justice and legal issues also are dealt with. The authors note that the national narrative in each country presumes an ever receding frontier in which, as one author put it, "the 'wild and primitive' were replaced by the 'tame and civilized.'" These narratives are as deeply embedded in the academy as in North American popular culture. In short, these "Grand Narratives" are those that all of us learned in grade school and continue to be the ones most people know, and that unfortunately tell only one side of the story. Until bridges are built between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal com-

munities, the dominant national narratives will continue to construct an exclusively heroic European settler profile and an ideology that continues to insist that Aboriginal people must come to resemble them.

The latter portion of the book is devoted to a discussion of the Mexican Aboriginal experience in a section titled "Trilateral Discussion: Canada, the United States and Mexico." Mexican scholars discuss how the Indigenous people of Mexico focus on the role of the United Nations as a counter to the biopiracy of other nations and transnational corporations. Language issues are crucial to the Mexican Indigenous people as well as environmental pollution, loss of forests, and the destruction of Indigenous social and community organizations.

Policy analyses carried out in each region reveal how Indigenous people are impacted by very different policies. In the end, the material provides innovative and substantive materials related to enhancing our understanding of Aboriginal people and their role in these three nation states. The formal papers are carefully crafted, well-organized and presented. Unfortunately, in between the sections of the book, the editors included short dialogues amongst the contributors. These were not edited and as a result can have major errors. For example, the Lubicon Indians are mistakenly located in Ontario rather than in Alberta. The lack of careful editing of these sections detracts somewhat from the success of the whole.

Self Determination, in contrast to the previous text, is a compilation of articles by economists and political scientists along with some legal experts offering their interpretations of events. Their approach is singular and they are in agreement as to the most appropriate road to Aboriginal self-determination. Beginning with an historical analysis that rejects the notion of "collective," the authors agree that Aboriginal people were basically individual capitalists from time immemorial. They go on to argue that Aboriginal communities were not environmentally friendly, had no land-animal ethos, were not nations, and valued the concept of private property. From this premise, the authors go on to argue that Aboriginal people need to stop living a lie and get back to their true roots that involve private property and capitalism. The only way in which Aboriginal people can emerge out of a culture of poverty and all its associated ills is through integration into the capitalist economy of North America.

Such a position of course once again makes the Aboriginal People victims of themselves as they have chosen to be poor and to enter a marginal existence within the nation state. We find, for example, that it was the Aboriginal people who killed off all the buffalo and brought about starvation and poverty. We learn that the insistence that treaties be hon-

oured is wishful thinking and Aboriginal people need to move on from these issues. One would have thought that such outdated thinking had long passed. Unfortunately this collection of papers reminds us that it has not. Some of the contributions remind me of the 1990 *Harper's* essay by Mario Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian novelist and presidential candidate who revived the old myth that the Inca Empire fell because it was an "anthill" society whose subjects had no free will. He argues that ancient Peruvians were so enthralled by their god-king that, without instructions to the contrary, they simply stood around and allowed themselves to be killed by a handful of Renaissance desperadoes. And then he concludes his essay by saying that it probably was all for the best anyway because the conquerors brought to Peru the pearls of individual freedom and capitalism.

Economists are neither historians nor experts in the complexity of Aboriginal issues, and they need to acknowledge it. They need to review the previous literature on the history of Aboriginal people as well as understand the structural and economic impacts of capitalism and neoliberalism. The work of Latin American and African political economists ought to have been high on the list of citations, but I could not find one citation of Dos Santos, Sunkel, Memmi, Freire and others such as Ronald Wright who have laid a careful framework on the issue of Aboriginal relations for others to build upon. While supply and demand might be appropriate for some commodities, it is woefully incompetent in explaining exploitation and structural racism. The authors lack all understanding of what it means to be White within such a system.

The text also founders on its many inconsistencies. In one chapter we are told that Aboriginal people should be good entrepreneurs. Later on, however, we are told why Aboriginals should not be allowed to run casinos and that they should be sharing their profits. In other cases we find out that when Aboriginal people win court cases, they really should have lost because winning is not good for them.

In the end, this text is frustrating because its authors focus on economic issues without an understanding of the history and structural context. Even when the articles become technical and present mathematical conceptualizations of the issues, none of them suggests that a multi-level analysis needs to take place to fully understand the impacts of various independent variables. The recent literature in the area of Aboriginal studies (Kawachi, Spence) has adequately demonstrated the need for such an analysis if we are to develop models that explain the poverty and marginality of Aboriginal people. In the end, the authors of *Self-Determination* point to a whole host of dimensions in Aboriginal culture that have resulted in their marginal position in North America, and yet

exempt the dominant culture from any responsibility. If scholars are to address the causes of Aboriginal poverty, poor health and marginalization, they need to assess the structural and historical conditions of the dominant culture to fully appreciate its contribution.

While both books focus on Aboriginal people, they are divergent in their assumptions, choice of literature and conclusions. Unfortunately, those authors in *Self-Determination* need to be more aware of the structural, historical and growing body of literature in the field.

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Hernández-Avila, Inés (Ed.), *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2005. 275 pages. ISBN 0-7591-0372-0. US \$29.95.

Reading Native American Women is a welcome contribution to Native American Women's Studies. Its collection of essays, both scholarly and creative, covers a range of topics: past colonization and present colonialism, issues of politics, law, and sovereignty, the study of religion and the appropriation of Native spirituality, and the work of individual writers and artists.

Native American Women's Studies is an emerging area of scholarship. Historically, the study of Indigenous peoples has been dominated by anthropology. In her contribution to the collection, Mary Churchill relates the experience of Hopi-Miwok writer Wendy Rose, who was required to pursue her study of American Indian literature in anthropology rather than in English or comparative literature. Native women, however, were long overlooked by anthropology. Churchill tactfully suggests that this neglect might be due to the limited opportunities of male anthropologists to observe and speak with Native women, but she also locates the source of that neglect in underlying epistemological reasons—an epistemology that Churchill then shows as informing her own discipline, Religious Studies.

Other contributors also discuss the failure of academia to recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge and the value of Native women's experience. In "Personalizing Methodology: Narratives of Imprisoned Native Women," Luana Ross draws a powerful parallel between

two closed institutions: the prison and the university. She relates how, while preparing a qualitative rather than quantitative study of imprisoned Native American women, she increasingly identified with the prisoners she interviewed, thereby producing a self-styled Indigenous methodology that also made it suspect in the eyes of her fellow sociologists. They “question the objectivity and generalizability of my study. They question whether the prisoners were telling me the ‘truth.’ I wonder: What truth? Whose truth?... I feel small, brown, stupid, ugly.” (56) Although Ross does not equate the constraints placed on her scholarship with those literally imposed on her imprisoned subjects, she concludes that Indigenous women are subjected to various forms of institutional violence.

Reid Gómez likewise notes how the regulation of methodology co-exists with the regulation of behaviour. As with most essays in *Reading Native American Women*, hers analyzes the continued presence of colonialism. Observing that Native American authors are still expected to distill an Indian essence in their work and in their appearance, she argues that “issues of representativeness, authenticity, and preservation of ancient tribal secrets (religious or cultural in slant) go hand in hand with the desire to stay and contain Native American mobility in colonial narratives and language.”(150) One version of colonial narrative is the myth of the Vanishing Indian, a myth forcefully deconstructed by Joanne Barker and Teresia Teaiwa, who identify two consequences of this narrative: “one, as Indian/Native we are made to represent an identity-as-authenticity of which we are not quite convinced; and two, even as we are present in the academy, we can only signify absence, the absence to which we have been reduced by the narratives of the Vanishing Indian.”(108) Another explicit expression of that narrative, whose clear goal is an Indigenous people who are indeed vanishing, is *Stiya: A Carlisle Indian Girl at Home*, a late nineteenth-century piece of propaganda sensitively discussed by Janice Gould. Given to graduates of the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, the book was intended to prevent them from backsliding into the “degradation” and “heathen ways” of their parents after they returned to their home reservations. As Gould notes, however, that indoctrination was resisted.

Resistance is the concern of other contributors to *Reading Native American Women* who investigate the works of specific Native American women writers to locate “a way of decolonizing the mind,” (93) in Gloria Bird’s apt phrase. Bird examines Leslie Marmon Silko’s fiction, as does Carolyn Dunn, who discusses Silko and Linda Hogan, and Reid Gómez, who discusses Silko and Luci Tapahonso. Inés Hernández-Avila addresses the connections among home, language, and homeland in

her essay on the poetry of Joy Harjo, Beth Brant, Chrystos, and herself. Chrystos is also the focus of Deborah Miranda's thought-provoking consideration of the subversive power of Native women's love poetry and erotica. A contribution from the visual arts is Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie's "Photographic Memoirs of an Aboriginal Savant," a series of fifteen digital prints on aged book stock that require the reader to consider carefully their content and context; it is therefore too bad that the superimposed text on each print is poorly reproduced, often making it difficult to read—the one flaw in this important book.

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Mills, Antonia (Ed.), *'Hang Onto These Words': Johnny David's Delgamuukw Evidence*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. 464 pp., ISBN 0-8020-85342. Paper \$45.00.

As a legal case, *Delgamuukw* has been already extensively documented and analysed, in particular by anthropologists. Antonia Mills' book focuses exclusively on the comprehensive testimony given by one knowledgeable Elder, *Chief Maxlalex*, Johnny David, Witsuwi'ten, who was over 90 years old at the time of examination in his home, 1985-86. *Delgamuukw* was a court case that primarily dealt with the issue of Aboriginal title. Oral evidence was totally disregarded by the court in the infamous decision by Chief Justice McEachen (1991), but his judgement was appealed and in a landmark ruling completely overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada (1997). Especially interesting was their unequivocal recognition of oral history as evidence in legal contests confirming Aboriginal title. The Supreme Court decision has established a precedent, and from now on it will be difficult to disregard testimonies based on oral history. This fact emphasizes why the transcripts of Johnny David's testimony continue to have such general interest in terms of legal anthropology and Indigenous rights.

The text is divided into eight volumes covering close to 400 pages. Given its detail of a way of life, the testimony can be seen as an ethnography in its own right, presented by Chief David in simple and straightforward language. Reading these transcripts one learns a great deal about

sustained Witsuwi'ten traditions, how they are valued, and to what extent they are still practiced. Such tradition relates to naming, allocation of territorial rights concerning hunting, trapping and fishing, potlatching and, finally, customary law, or the law of Witsuwi'ten.

The dynamics between the two lawyers add a dimension to the transcripts, and stand in salient contrast to the softspoken voice of the witness, Johnny David.

Antonia Mills has done a commendable job editing this hearing to be presented to a wider audience and preserved as a unique and important document for the future. Her introduction placing the transcripts in context appears most informative, not the least her discussion concerning methodology thereby making this documentary text a prominent contribution to legal anthropology. She points to the intricate issue of cross-cultural communication, well-illustrated in this testimony, which certainly is an important aspect of general anthropological interest far beyond the actual case.

To sum up, this is a unique text, not so much for its emphasis on oral history but for the context in which it appears. Nowadays it is far from unusual to be introduced to excellent autobiographies and life histories created by knowledgeable, insightful Elders. *'Hang onto these words'* is a text in the same fashion, but differs as it is presented as substantial evidence in a land claims case referring to two neighboring First Nations, the Gitskan and the Witsuwi'ten (1987-1997). Scholars and students in legal Anthropology and Native Studies in particular should without delay familiarize themselves with Johnny David and his testimony. His final words can be regarded as meant for all potential readers, "If you hang onto these words that I have told you, everything will be fine."

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