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Author

Oakly, Christopher Arris

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Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations. Edited by Ute Lischke and David T. McNab. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005. 377 pages. \$64.95 cloth.

In its 1996 report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) concluded that the Canadian mass media represent Aboriginal people almost exclusively from the perspective of outsiders, while excluding the voices of Aboriginal people themselves. It is this tension between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian representations of aboriginality that is the focus of *Walking a Tightrope*. Many of the essays in this edited collection emerged out of an August 2000 conference at Lake Tamagami and Bear Island, Ontario, entitled, "Representations of Aboriginal People by Themselves and Others." The book's structure—it is divided into sections on historical representation, portrayal in literature and cinema, and personal stories by Aboriginal authors—accommodates both a comprehensive critique of mainstream representations of Aboriginal people and an exploration of Aboriginal ideas about resistance and self-representation in all forms of public discourse.

In their introduction, the editors, Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, observe that the media routinely report on complex issues with long historical antecedents that are little known by the general public in a decontextualized fashion and conflate diverse Aboriginal nations and cultures into "Indians" or other generic labels that gloss over significant cultural differences. Many of the essays in this collection furnish contexts for diverse Aboriginal nations and cultures that have been missing in mainstream representations of Aboriginal people. These contemporary circumstances and historical backstories have the potential to help the Canadian public develop a solid grasp of the lives of actual Aboriginal people today as opposed to the imaginary Indians conjured up in the minds of Euro-Canadian people since first contact.

The incorporation of an Aboriginal understanding of history, according to Mark Doctstator in "Aboriginal Representations of History and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," is essential to a fair interpretation of the law. The author, a specialist in Native law, introduces a Societal Interactional Model that incorporates both Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal interpretations of history. Doctstator argues that this approach, which was employed by the RCAP in its five-year assessment of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians, can lead to a better appreciation of critical contemporary issues by both Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians. Somewhat controversial, the Societal Interactional Model encompasses both the Euro-Canadian belief that Aboriginal peoples were not organized into self-governing polities at the time of contact and the Aboriginal view that precontact societies *did* indeed possess the attributes of nationhood and all interaction since contact has proceeded on the basis of a "nation-to-nation" relationship. While Doctstator does not attempt to reconcile these divergent perspectives, he points out that any resolution would require a "change in perception." The implication is that the onus for this perceptual shift is on Euro-Canadians who, after all, imagined that Aboriginal people were a "single group of Indians who were a vanishing race" (108).

In "The Many Faces of Canada's History as It Relates to Aboriginal People," Métis historian Olive Patricia Dickason is also concerned with the retelling of history, especially with the incorporation of oral sources into the historical record. In her survey of Canadian historical writing, Dickason argues persuasively that since all histories are inextricably bound up with identity, the process of exposing the "many faces" of history to the public at large may be seen as tool of "self-discovery" for both Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians. The problem is that the Western approach to history is fundamentally different than that of Aboriginal peoples.

For mainstream historians, history consists of a chronological analysis of the linear history of "significant" events and actors. For Aboriginal people, history looks at the development of relationships among Aboriginal peoples and with land and the spirit world. Dickason insists that, in spite of the differences in these two methodologies, both share a similar purpose: to help "make sense of our collective experiences." However, because of the nearly exclusive reliance of Western historians on "official" sources, usually in written form, a great deal has been left out. Compounding the problem is the enduring myth that First Nations are peoples who have no history. For Dickason, these problems with the telling of history are closely connected to contemporary relations between Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians; the exclusion of Aboriginal people from official history has deprived the Canadian public of the opportunity to glean any real comprehension of the lives and experiences of Aboriginal people today.

Walking a Tightrope promotes a number of subversive ideas for how to transmit Aboriginal culture through various media in order to educate the Canadian public about Aboriginal people. In "A Way of Seeing the World," Bernie Harder notes that Aboriginal authors have been "appropriating the English language to express the meaning and knowledge of their cultures" (346). They aren't merely translating cultural knowledge into English; Aboriginal authors are *appropriating language into cultural knowledge*, knowledge that predates the English language itself. One example is the idea that language is not created by people but rather is given to them by the land, which holds all knowledge and is a "constant teacher." Harder cites Jeanette Armstrong as an example of an Aboriginal author who incorporates Aboriginal ideas of language into a revised usage of English syntax that includes "semantic differences" reflecting a distinctively Aboriginal view of reality. In this way, a symbol of oppression—the English language—becomes a tool for resistance and a means for reestablishing "the connections to land, community, history and culture that the colonial process attempts to sever" (348).

Walking a Tightrope is an important contribution to an emerging body of literature on the representation of Aboriginal people in Canada that includes Valerie Alia's *Un/Covering the North: News, Media and Aboriginal People* (1999) and, more recently, Sandra Lambertus's *Wartime Images, Peacetime Wounds* (2004). Whereas the latter two works focus on mainstream representations of Aboriginal people, Lischke and McNab's book examines mainstream representations of Aboriginal people as *other*, as well as the self-representation of Aboriginal people. *Walking the Tightrope* addresses not only the question

of what's wrong with mainstream representations of Aboriginal people but also its all-important corollary, what can be done about it. Perhaps the most significant element absent from representations of Aboriginal people in the popular press is an Aboriginal context that includes both the historical background of issues and the values held by Aboriginal people. It is only through a complete retelling of Aboriginal history, stories, and experiences that a mutual understanding between Aboriginal people and the "immigrant population in North America" is possible (14).

While it is difficult to argue with the editors' point that Aboriginal people are "not understood in their own contexts," in fact, stories about indigenous people, particularly in the news, are often not presented in any context whatsoever (1). Research on media representations of indigenous people in other places suggests that the ethics of professional journalism may be partially responsible for decontextualized coverage. John Hartley and Alan McKee, in a book about Aboriginal people in Australia, suggest that the journalistic tenet of giving people "identical treatment" precludes the provision of detailed descriptions of the very aspects of context and history of Aboriginal issues that would make events comprehensible to Euro-Canadian audiences (*The Indigenous Public Sphere*, 2000, 338). *Walking a Tightrope* supplies some of the stories, values, histories, and contexts that can help Aboriginal people and Euro-Canadians understand one another. Future research needs to explore ways of ensuring that Aboriginal voices, perspectives, and contexts are included in mainstream media representations of Aboriginal issues. Until then, as one Aboriginal woman puts it in the book's introduction, "The most we can hope for is that we are paraphrased correctly" (1).

Robert Harding

University College of the Fraser Valley

The Westo Indians: Slave Traders of the Early Colonial South. By Eric E. Bowne. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005. 160 pages. \$48.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Prior to contact with Europeans, Native Americans in what would become the southeastern United States lived in large, centrally organized, and socially stratified chiefdoms ruled by noble lineages. But in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the arrival of European explorers and colonists transformed Native American culture and society in the region. By the eighteenth century, Indians in the South, devastated by disease and warfare, had settled into new, independent, and autonomous towns with more egalitarian social structures. Previously scholars have overlooked, or at least underestimated, the significance of this dramatic transformation in the seventeenth century and its effect on European colonization. In 2002, however, Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson coedited a collection of essays entitled *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540–1760* (2002) that demanded a reexamination of the colonial South in the 1600s. In the introduction,