

Emma LaRocque. *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2010. 218 pp.; \$27.95 paperback; ISBN 978-0-88755-703-3

The past 100 years exemplifies a period of revolution in regards to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Fueled by social unrest, rejections of colonial racism, and powerful decolonization manifestos -- such as those by Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi or works created through the negritude or créolité movements -- a corpus of decolonial literature has emerged, demanding changes in the perception and treatment of subjugated races and peoples worldwide. Following in this tradition, Emma LaRocque, in her work *When the Other is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850-1990*, looks to authors such as Fanon and Memmi and continues this process of decolonial/resistance writing through an analysis of the representations of Native and Aboriginal peoples in Canadian literary and historical texts to show a history of dehumanization of this racial group through the use of an oppressive narrative and widespread institutionalization.

LaRocque begins her analysis of literary dehumanization by identifying the deeply-engrained and widely-accepted prejudices present in Canadian Native historical accounts, which she argues are still being perpetuated today. She introduces what she calls the “civ/sav” dichotomy, a binary used to maintain the oppression of Native peoples. Whereas white skin, European religions, literacy, and settled residences historically represented “civilizations”, Native values such as living off the land, nomadic tendencies, spirituality and passionate defense of their homelands branded the Natives “savage” and in need of European intervention -- a white man’s burden of sorts. Emma LaRocque argues that this “civ/sav” dichotomy stems from political and religious differences, although it ultimately boils down to the perceived moral standards of each group that invariably lead to generalizations about Native peoples, representing them as savages, while employing scientific racism and hate literature to codify and perpetuate stereotypes in history and literature.

Language choice and literary representations of Natives are of great importance to Emma LaRocque. Linguistic choices such as characterizing Native peoples as primitive, simple, ignorant or savage often come with subconscious prejudices which infantilize the Native Canadian and describe him as inferior to White people. LaRocque contends that these accounts of hate literature, which she defines as a racist point of view that has been transmitted over time, have become accepted as truth by mainstream Canadian society. What’s more, the oral tradition of Native peoples has further hurt their ability to fight this oppression as they are left without a way of combatting these misrepresentations in any language besides that of “the enemy”. Considering the abundance and institutionalized propagation of these views, LaRocque calls for not only a rewriting of the past, but also for a new way of rereading the past, of teaching critical comprehension skills that expose the literary misrepresentations and prejudiced language used by White, European colonizers, and that continue to dehumanize, and justify the oppression of, Native peoples.

In an attempt to overcome misleading colonizing literature, LaRocque ultimately advocates for a complete overhaul of Native literary representations in such a way that it is not a mere re-appropriation of the “enemy’s language” to explain Native ideals. She argues that literary Native representations must begin with a deconstruction of the current theory, and must be followed by a reconstruction of a true narrative that blends various literary tropes, such as novels or poetry, by native and non-native intellectuals. This process will ideally uncover literary distortions and reframe narratives to present a true and human account of Native peoples in the past and future.

The strength of this work lies in the range and breadth of material covered. There is no shortage of concrete examples of both positive and negative representations of Native Canadians in this text and LaRocque liberally cites theoretical and literary sources to succinctly situate and support her points. She makes it easy for interested parties to find a large variety of related works that have opinions on various aspects of the writing of Natives in literature and history. Having Cree-Metis heritage, poet, writer and professor of Native Studies, LaRocque shares strong ties to her subject matter and is clearly passionate about this topic, although on occasion her opinion leans towards the valuing of the Native experience as superior to European accounts and current White Canadian theory. This is not to say that she isn’t correct in her interpretations of this situation in Canada, but valuing one point of view over another on racial grounds can give the feel of reverse racism or

residual bitterness. This deference of Native experience is often accompanied with the assertion that intellectuals with Native ties have a privileged position in the writing of Native theory over non-Native theorists. There are cases when this text takes the point of view of romanticizing pre-European Native societies as utopian and pure, a claim that cannot be validated either way.

All in all, this book presents a passionate and historical account of the dehumanization of Native peoples through the power of charged language, and it proposes a convincing and tenable way to reverse and overcome these stereotypes. This work is and will continue to be relevant for a wide variety of readers interested in the representations of Native peoples in Canadian literatures, de-colonial literature and resistance writings. Scholars of Canadian and American Native cultures will find this text an important addition to their libraries, as well as those interested in the power of words to perpetuate or promote certain values through institutionalization. Students, professors and history buffs will appreciate this text, Native and non-Native alike.

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