
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Julia Harrison and Regna Darnell, eds., *Historicizing Canadian Anthropology*, Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2006, 338 pages.

Reviewer: *Harriet D. Lyons*
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This book contains a wealth of information and many of its contributors ask important questions that have the potential to define a framework for an edifice that might reasonably be called “the history of Canadian anthropology.” That framework would still have some interstitial spaces for the application of the wallboard and plaster of “thick description,” if we may move from an architectural metaphor to Darnell’s comparison of anthropological history-writing and the ethnography of anthropology’s past.

As with any collection of essays which had their origin as conference papers, the articles in this book are written from somewhat diverse perspectives and discuss an assortment of topics, but those topics do group themselves into themes which enable the volume to tell several coherent (and sometimes provocative) stories. These narratives recount both the challenges and successes Canadian anthropologists have encountered. The former include the fact that the founding generations of Canadian anthropologists were not trained in Canada. Several departmental histories contained in this volume mention the U.S., British (and other Commonwealth) or French training of pivotal figures. Some authors, like the late Richard Pope, discuss their own attempts to bridge the gap between their Canadian careers and their ties elsewhere. Vered Amit describes Canadian anthropology’s problem as being both too close and too far from the U.S. Amit argues that Canadian scholars, scattered thinly over a large country, are at least as likely to seek professional contacts and inspiration in the U.S. as in Canada, particularly if they were trained there, but that their peripheral position across the border causes them to be marginalized by their American colleagues. Penny van Esterik writes about a problem many of us have encountered in teaching—the prevalence of textbooks written from a U.S. perspective, albeit such texts are now frequently “Canadianized” after the fact. A particularly compelling section of this article

is a fascinating account of the writing and publishing history of Kroeber’s famous textbook, though some may see an irony in the fact that a narrative about arguably the most famous of American textbooks competes for the reader’s attention with the Canadian concern which is the essay’s central subject. For this reader, one of the most interesting pieces in the volume is David Nock’s article, “The Erasure of Horatio Hale’s Contribution to Boasian Anthropology,” which argues, among other things, that Hale prefigured many ideas which have come to be associated with Boas. Many readers, within and outside Canada, will no doubt be led to this article more because of an interest in Boas than an interest in Hale, but either way the article offers insights into a formative phase in the history of Canadian and U.S. anthropology—projects which Darnell, in this volume and elsewhere, has argued are, in any case, parts of a larger whole.

One consistent theme in Canadian anthropology has been the engagement with First Nations peoples, and several informative and thought-provoking articles in this volume are given over to documenting that history. Articles by Noel Dyck, Colin Buchanan and Evie Plaice describe various aspects of the relationship between anthropologists, First Nations peoples and government bodies. This is a relationship in which anthropologists have sometimes been powerful advocates of First Nations, sometimes more complicit in the production of hegemony than we like to think, sometimes simply frustrated when knowledge and advice was overlooked by policy makers, and more recently engaged in a struggle to remain relevant in the face of First Nations’ resolve to speak for themselves. Nelson Graburn’s article reveals some of the impacts of Cold War politics on anthropological research in Canada, particularly in the far North. Museology and First Nations studies in Canada have always been closely intertwined, and this volume offers several accounts of that history, including two comparisons of Canadian and U.S. praxis, one by Cory Willmott and another by Kathy McCloskey and Kevin Manuel. An interesting piece by Michelle Hamilton describes the cultural context in which First Nations artifacts were collected, displayed and transferred in the Victorian era.

A particular feature of this volume is departmental history. Darnell’s article, “Departmental Networks in Canadian

Anthropology” suggests that studying the intellectual genealogies of individual anthropologists and the linkages within and between the places where anthropologists work is essential to constructing a historically grounded ethnography of Canadian departments. She stipulates that such a history should not be limited to the superstars, and, indeed, the volume as a whole is less given over to “famous names” than most histories of anthropology. Although leading figures, like McIlwraith and Jenness, have sections dedicated to them within discussions of the topical and institutional contexts within which they worked, only Marius Barbeau has a whole chapter to himself—a fascinating account of his fieldwork methods, written by Andrew Nurse. Two chapters, on the other hand, are dedicated to the histories of specific departments: Whittaker and Ames’s essay on the University of British Columbia and Tremblay’s on Université Laval. Parts of several other chapters are given over to departmental history. Josephine and Alan Smart take a cross-departmental look at Canadian-based anthropologists studying China. James Waldram and Pamela Downe’s chapter on anthropologists who work outside university departments reminds us that we must look at the broader politics of academia to get a full sense of the forces which have shaped the history of anthropology in Canada. This article, as well as the work of several of the other authors, discusses some of the consequences for Canadian anthropology of the dearth of funding for departmental expansion during the years immediately following the discipline’s most intense period of institutionalization. Pope notes that the failure to hire new anthropologists at the University of Regina for twenty years meant that feminist and postmodernist colleagues did not appear to challenge the established curriculum, something which probably happened elsewhere as well, though the strong applied tradition in Canadian anthropology, noted by many of the authors, may also be a factor. This reviewer notes that a number of the authors in the volume express a rather automatic, almost hiccup-like distrust of the various critiques of empiricism which are loosely labeled “postmodernism,” though others, like Darnell herself, express some sympathy with such trends; Howes’s piece, in which he compares the controlling imaginary of Canadian anthropology to that of the Canadian constitution, might fairly be said to be grounded within them.

Overall, this is a valuable volume, which most Canadian anthropologists, and one hopes many anthropologists elsewhere, will want to read. Canadian anthropology is still a young field, and many of the people who will doubtless be canonical figures in the next generation of histories-to-be-written are still alive, teaching and writing. That history will doubtless be more detailed in its critiques of leading figures than this volume can be and contain more of the kinds of insights into consequential disputes that are restricted here to the account of the safely dead Boas and Hale. One hopes that those who have helped shape or who have been shaped by the history discussed in this volume have followed Darnell’s advice and preserved records of their collaborations, arguments, conversations, letters (and, perhaps more importantly, their emails),

so that the ethnographic description of Canadian anthropology will grow ever thicker over time.

Louis-Jacques Dorais et Eric Richard, *Les Vietnamiens de Montréal*, Montréal: Les Presses Universitaires de Montréal, 2007, 235 pages.

Recenseuse : *Catherine Choron-Baix*
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Plus de 25 000 Vietnamiens, principalement issus de la vague migratoire de la fin des années 1970 qui suivit les bouleversements politiques dans leur pays, vivent aujourd’hui à Montréal et dans ses environs. Sans en être la plus nombreuse, ils sont une importante composante du paysage multiculturel de la ville, en raison de leur dynamisme social, économique et culturel.

Louis-Jacques Dorais et Eric Richard enquêtent depuis plus de dix ans auprès de ces « Viéto-Montréalais », moins pour en brosser un tableau statistique exhaustif que pour en approcher les réalités internes. Ils livrent dans cet ouvrage les résultats d’une étude essentiellement qualitative, qui ne prétend à aucune représentativité, mais dévoile les logiques sociales favorisant l’intégration de ces immigrants au sein de la société québécoise et montréalaise.

Après un rappel des causes historiques et des différentes phases de cette immigration ainsi que de ses principaux lieux d’implantation à Montréal, le premier chapitre revient sur les concepts de « convergence culturelle » et d’« interculturelisme » au fondement de la politique locale et nationale dont les Vietnamiens tirent profit dès leur arrivée. Divers moyens incitatifs légaux et financiers encouragent en effet la préservation de leur langue et de leur culture tout en facilitant leur intégration économique, sociale et politique dans leur nouvel environnement. Ayant posé ces bases historiques et institutionnelles, les auteurs peuvent alors centrer leur analyse sur l’efficacité d’un capital social qui agit à la fois au niveau interne, au sein des groupes immigrés et notamment dans la famille, et à l’extérieur, à travers les relations de coopération établies avec la société globale.

Suit, au chapitre 2, une présentation de la situation socio-démographique des Viéto-Montréalais, qui se révèle globalement meilleure que celle de leurs compatriotes de l’Ontario ou de Colombie-Britannique et de l’ensemble du Canada plus largement. Les taux de scolarisation et les niveaux de qualification et de revenus sont supérieurs parmi les Viéto-Québécois et notamment à Montréal.

L’étude se concentre ensuite sur les structures familiales et le développement des réseaux sociaux et associatifs qui organisent la vie collective des Viéto-Montréalais. Elle montre la force des solidarités internes et l’importance des liens transnationaux. Les auteurs relèvent à cet égard de profondes divergences entre les classes d’âge, et consacrent un long dévelop-