

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance.*

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Within contemporary Indigenous Studies and its related fields, Robert Warrior's Indigenous Americas series has been home to a number of major contributions, including Glen Sean Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014) and Aileen Moreton-Robinson's *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (2015). Encompassing works of political theory, literary and media studies, and legal histories, among others, the series is notable for the variety of disciplines with which it is engaged. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* is both of the same calibre as earlier high-points in the series and deeply reflective of this interdisciplinary spirit. Expansive, challenging, and beautifully written, the book's theorization of Indigenous resurgence as a response to settler colonialism demonstrates how resurgence is intertwined with matters of political economy, gender and sexuality, pedagogy, and aesthetics. As is to be expected from a project of such scope, the book occasionally gestures to pressing issues without engaging with them in full. That being said, scholars with commitments to any of the above matters would do well to engage with Simpson's work. Film and media scholars, in particular, will find that the centrality to Simpson's analysis of representational and aesthetic

issues makes this an important text for thinking through the relationships between material anticolonial politics and artistic production.

In *As We Have Always Done*, Simpson develops what she calls "the Radical Resurgence Project" (Simpson 2017, 34). Simpson has been described as one of the foremost theorists of resurgence, and with this book she provides a critical account of resurgence theory at the same time as she confirms its importance (Coulthard 2014, 154). Prioritizing Indigenous leadership and Indigenous values over recognition on the terms of the liberal settler state, resurgence theory asserts that only re-empowered Indigenous nations, not colonial institutions, can lead to decolonization (Coulthard 2014, 154–56; Alfred 2005, 151–56; Simpson 2017, 47–49). Here Simpson articulates what she sees as resurgence theory's potential limitations: its deployment as an endpoint in Indigenous scholarship, rather than a practical theory in need of further development; its openness to queer and feminist critiques; and its co-option by the settler state and its institutions to refer to a cultural, rather than a political, process (Simpson 2017, 47–50). Nonetheless, resurgence for Simpson is not to be discarded; it "represent[s] a radical practice in Indigenous theorizing, writing, organizing, and thinking, one that is entirely consistent with and inherently from Indigenous thought" (Simpson 2017, 48). She therefore uses the term "radi-

cal resurgence” to clarify that her work is concerned with the “fundamental transformation” of Indigenous life in opposition to settler colonialism and the related systems of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and capitalism (48–49). This understanding of resurgence provides the foundation for the book’s subsequent contributions.

One of these contributions is to build on Glen Coulthard’s work in *Red Skin, White Masks*. In particular, Simpson’s work in this book is informed by the concept of “grounded normativity,” which Coulthard develops in reference to the ethical and relational understandings that stem from “Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge” (Coulthard 2014, 13). Coulthard first introduces the concept while theorizing how Marx’s ‘primitive accumulation’ thesis might be made useful for the analysis of settler colonialism; one of the key issues he raises in doing so is the primacy of dispossession (as opposed to proletarianization) in both the treatment of Indigenous peoples by the Canadian state and in Indigenous anticolonialism (Coulthard 2014, 13). Grounded normativity thus names the “place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice” (Coulthard 2014, 13). In her own use of the concept, Simpson intervenes with respect to the issues of dispossession and anticapitalism that are central to Coulthard’s work. Like Coulthard, she emphasizes both the relationship between dispossession and capitalism and the role of grounded normativity in Indigenous anticapitalism (Simpson 2017, 72–73; Coulthard 2014, 13–14). What is innovative about Simpson’s approach is the way in which she applies the concept of grounded normativity in order to re-conceptualize dispossession itself. Rather than conceiving of dispossession wholly in terms of land, she calls for an understanding

“of *expansive dispossession* as a gendered removal of [Indigenous] bodies and minds from [their] nation and place-based grounded normativities” (Simpson 2017, 43). By seizing on the interconnection between body, mind, and land inherent in grounded normativity, Simpson establishes a theorization of dispossession which is attentive to the settler-colonial commodification of both land and bodies and which emphasizes the centrality of heteropatriarchy to settler colonialism (41). The role of colonial gender and sexual norms in settler-colonial processes has been addressed by other scholars (see, among others: Hunt and Holmes 2015; Rifkin 2011). However, Simpson’s ‘expansive dispossession’ is unique in its succinct and holistic integration of Indigenous anticolonialism and anticapitalism with Indigenous queer and feminist thought. This combination of broad scope and conceptual elegance is one of the book’s key merits.

Having established her theorization of expansive dispossession, Simpson devotes a significant portion of her book (three of twelve main chapters) to exploring the deep interrelationship between heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism and asserting the importance of contesting heteropatriarchy as part of radical resurgence. In these chapters, she combines, among other methodologies, reflections on her experiences as a teacher, historical analysis, and literary criticism. The valuable contributions here are too numerous to discuss in the space of a review, so I would like to focus on one aspect of Simpson’s discussion that is particularly relevant to film and media scholars. For those of us whose research or teaching work involves the politics of representation, the issue of stereotypes as they are reified or subverted is foundational, perhaps even to the point of seeming banal to scholars invested in other theoretical avenues. However, Simpson weaves an analy-

sis of negative stereotypes throughout this section that usefully re-articulates the stakes and limitations of these issues. First, she links the internalization of racist and misogynistic ideas about Indigenous women with the dispossession of land (Simpson 2017, 86). She then returns to the subject via a reading of Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* and an engagement with the canonized book's treatment in settler literary scholarship. Simpson argues that Canadian literary scholars have neglected to discuss Moodie's textual racism or have otherwise, in a reflection of the dominant settler "Canadian narrative of the past," sought to absolve themselves of responsibility for Canadian settler colonialism (98–100).¹ They have done this by either situating the text in an isolated historical context (despite the continuity of the racist beliefs expressed in the text up to the present day) or by suggesting Moodie's similarity to Indigenous women on the basis of shared experiences of marginalization (99–100). Finally, Simpson identifies a tendency for liberal activists, post-Idle No More, to coalesce around representational issues in lieu of land issues. These "easy wins," she writes, "only give the illusion of real change": "It is not acceptable to wear a headdress to a dance party, but it is acceptable to dance on stolen land and to build pipelines over stolen land" (113). To read these chapters as a media scholar is to see both the importance of researching and teaching the politics of representation re-framed in the context of Indigenous women's experiences and the limitations of representation-focused research in that context. Whether critiquing dominant representations or theorizing liberatory alternatives, Simpson's work reminds us that we must be conscious of the ease with which our work (produced, in the Americas at least, on stolen land) might be appropriated by a liberal order interested in the 'easy win'

and antipathetic to 'real change.'

Following Simpson's examination of the relationship between heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism, the book turns to a consideration of Nishnaabeg pedagogy. Here the author contrasts the Nishnaabeg story of Binoojiinh (a child) learning to make maple sugar with the constraints imposed by the settler-colonial education system. In doing so, she articulates the nature and importance of Nishnaabeg theory and pedagogy and rejects the terms implicit in attempts to 'Indigenise the academy.' The Western academy, Simpson writes, has never truly recognized Indigenous knowledge. As a result, efforts to integrate Indigenous peoples and knowledges into the academy place Indigenous scholars in "a never-ending battle for recognition" in an institution whose "primary intention is to use Indigenous peoples and [their] knowledge systems to legitimize settler colonial authority" in both the education system and, by extension, Canadian society at large (171). On what really constitutes Indigenous education, Simpson is direct: "Indigenous education is not Indigenous or education from within [Indigenous] intellectual practices unless it comes through the land, unless it occurs in an Indigenous context using Indigenous processes" (154). The "[r]adical resurgent education" for which she advocates is thus threatened by, and in opposition to, settler-colonial dispossession (166, 170, 173).

Simpson's analysis is important and provocative, and her critique of the Western academy is matched by the form of her writing; this is a book that self-consciously eschews the conventions of Western academic writing in favour of Nishnaabeg intellectual practices and aesthetics (30–32). Reviewing it as a settler scholar, that is engaging its arguments and evaluating its usefulness in a Western settler academic context, is therefore a troubling task.

Warning of the academy's tendency to incorporate Indigenous knowledges only insofar as they can serve Western scientific norms, Bundjalung scholar Douglas L. Morgan writes: "What appears to be an accommodation of Indigenous knowledges is arguably a continuation of practices of appropriation" (Morgan 2003, 45). There is a very real risk of committing this sort of appropriation in a review. I can discuss and express my admiration for some of the book's many contributions, but it contains intellectual dimensions that should not be instrumentalized, at least not by me, and at least not in this context. As such, I will conclude my discussion of Simpson's treatment of Nishnaabeg theory and pedagogy by simply saying that it should be of interest to scholars invested in decolonial pedagogy in a settler-colonial context. How Simpson's work might relate to such scholars' research and teaching practices will depend on their positionalities and commitments.

The final chapters of *As We Have Always Done* are dedicated to a consideration of how radical resurgent organizing might function. "[P]lace based and local" as well as "networked and global," resurgent organizing follows Glen Coulthard's critique of the settler-colonial politics of recognition and Audra Simpson's theorization of generative refusal in its disinterest in state recognition and its emphasis on the possibilities inherent in refusing the settler-colonial frameworks provided by the state (Simpson 2017, 175–79). These chapters will be of particular interest to film and media scholars, as Simpson develops her argument through an in-depth consideration of Indigenous aesthetics. She discusses art as a medium for Nishnaabeg "reciprocal recognition" that could counter "shame as a tool of settler colonialism" (186–87). Furthermore, Simpson suggests that studying Indigenous artistic production is useful "as a mechanism

for moving from individual acts of resurgence to collective ones" (198). Building on Jarrett Martineau's scholarship, she writes that Indigenous aesthetics can be deployed for the purposes of the "coded disruption" of settler colonialism and the "affirmative refusal" of the "commodification and control" of Indigenous cultures, enabling direct communication and relationship-building between Indigenous artists and Indigenous audiences (198–99). In certain respects, Simpson's work here shares much with Michelle Raheja's theorization of visual sovereignty. Like Raheja, Simpson is interested in how Indigenous artists "speak to multiple audiences," in the integration of Indigenous aesthetics and epistemologies in artistic practice, and in the relationship between art and anticolonial resistance (Simpson 2017, 200; Raheja 2010, 193–94, 199–200). However, Simpson's approach to Indigenous aesthetics is valuable in its own right, particularly in its attention to relationality, colonial and anticolonial affects, and embodiment, not to mention its location in a broader conceptualization of Indigenous resurgence (Simpson 2017, 198–99). Scholars whose research addresses the relationships between media, settler colonialism, and anticolonialism will find in these passages a significant intervention.

One of the final arguments Simpson makes in *As We Have Always Done* exemplifies a key area in which the book falls slightly short of its ambitions. In a crucial examination of the role of solidarity with other movements in resurgent organizing, Simpson writes that "there is virtually no room for white people in resurgence" (228). Because "dispossession, capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy" are central to settler colonialism, possible allies for Indigenous resurgence are "not liberal white Canadians who uphold all four of these pillars but Black and brown individuals and com-

munities on Turtle Island and beyond that are struggling in their own localities against these same forces, building movements that contain the alternatives” (228–29). The author goes on to highlight a number of questions that would need to be addressed and work that would need to be accomplished in order to construct such “constellations of coresistance” (229–31). This, in and of itself, is not a fault but a set of issues to be addressed in another project (indeed, Simpson’s collaboration with Robyn Maynard, forthcoming at the time of writing, may be just such a project). However, the brevity of this section is emblematic of the references to anti-Black racism and Black scholarship throughout the book. Black intellectuals in a variety of disciplines, including Katherine McKittrick, Fred Moten, Christina Sharpe, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Dionne Brand are cited, but their work is seldom discussed in any kind of depth. As a result, the book’s analysis of settler colonialism in relationship to other manifestations of white supremacy feels somewhat underdeveloped.

Nonetheless, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resurgence* is vital reading for the many major contributions it does develop. Its theorization of how Indigenous resurgence is intertwined with matters of political economy, gender and sexuality, pedagogy, and aesthetics gives it an interdisciplinary significance that is matched by its substantial insights. Film and media scholars invested in the relationship between material anticolonial resistance and artistic practice should find the book an essential supplement to more discipline-specific scholarship.

Notes

1. Film and media studies, of course, has its own issues with scholars

neglecting to address the racism of canonical texts adequately. The most famous and best-addressed example is likely D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* “ha[ving] been canonized by decades of dominant film criticism that has insisted on the distinction between (or the paradox presented by) the film’s politics and aesthetics” (Stewart 2005, 27).

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