

Books Reviewed

Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl and Ian Peach (eds). 2013. *Metis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*.

Reviewed By Patrice LeClerc

Blyth, Mark. 2013. *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*.

Reviewed By Scott M. Aquanno

Dupuy, Jean-Pierre. 2012. *L'avenir de l'économie*.

Reviewed by Elaine Coburn

Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl and Ian Peach (eds). 2013. *Metis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press. ISBN 978-0-640-8. Paperback, 530pp. \$65, ebook \$51.99.

Reviewed By Patrice LeClerc
St. Lawrence University

It is impossible to read this volume of essays from a 2009 conference on “Aboriginal Policy Research” without consideration of which “eyes” the reader is wearing, and which “eyes” each of the authors present, especially considering the last issue of Socialist Studies’ Mini Symposium on Indigenous Research (Vol. 9, #1). Questions raised include identity (and who defines it), culture, diversity, tradition, rights and legitimacy. Also important are conceptions of laws, land, governance, nationalism, and gender. Of course, who is Metis (especially after the 2003 Powley decision) remains problematic; four of the 13 authors define themselves in the “Contributors” section as such (though one prefers “Half-Breed”). They are from the academy, government and arts community.

Each of the four major sections, and the cover, are introduced by depictions of patterns of Metis shawls (wish they had been reproduced in colour instead of black and white), and some essays include poems, photos, art, and letters. Some are strictly academic, others are self-reflective; some are both.

In the introduction, the editors do address some of the complexity of these issues. They are clear with those that are not discussed, and recognize that these essays cannot share a “theoretical terminological framework” (xv). They also indicate that identity still remains a contested term, as “it is not at all clear that the set of people who self-identify as Metis are exactly the same set of people who are affected by the issues raised”(xvii).

The Identity section ranges from issues of self-presentation: dress, jewelry, art, literature and material culture (Gloria Jane Bell), emphasizing fluidity and how these were perceived by the Metis and those viewing them (illustrated wonderfully by art). Laura-Lee Kearns offers discussions of women’s identities and how they relate to the “blood memories” of ancestors, and she supplements her stories in poetry. Editor Greg Dahl shares his pride in his choice of identity as a “half-breed” and an exploration of fluid meanings and their revisions and attempts at management, as well as ethnic racism and resistance to colonialism, using legal discussions and poetry. Overall, this section carefully expresses and examines some of the aforementioned issues in scholarly and personal ways.

History is examined in Darren O’Toole’s contribution “From Entity to Identity to Nation”, parsing collective identity, culture, ethnicity and collective action, strategies, institutions, manipulation, and possible use of social movement tools. Liam Haggarty takes on economic sharing and exchange, including combined systems of sharing and mercantilism, concluding with the changes and challenges brought about by externalities such as technologies (refrigeration) and government restrictions such as government licensing. Finally, Glen Campbell and Tom Flanagan offer three new letters by Louis Real (one when he was a boy), along with poetry (in English). The most interesting is one written in 1869, just after he took control of the Red River Colony in which he expresses his thrill with having “seized control and temporarily quelled opposition, and excite[ment] with the potential power that he sees awaiting the movement”. The letters are reproduced in the original French.

The Law section is primarily about court cases and rights/laws. Ian Peach provides a very useful overview of court cases related to identity, especially the confluence (or not) of Metis and Aboriginal classifications. Here again we see the problematics of interpretations of organized communities, modes of life, relationship to land, and self-identification. He has hopes that the Powley decision will lead to more positive outcomes than in the past. Jeremy Patzer continues the discussion of court cases and the problematics of defining cultural rights and definitions of authentic past. He is wary of the current position of the courts and their evaluations of authenticity and relationships with rights, and he calls for a more explicitly political-power analysis of the role of law.

The section on Politics begins with a discussion of how Metis people have organized to deal with provincial and the federal governments. Kelly L. Saunders describes how, while recognizing the tradition of self-government, the Metis have created western-style political structures. While she has hope for the future of such structures,

more reflection is needed on the persistent threat of co-optation. Siomonn F. Pulla's chapter describing the development of Metis political organizations, Christopher Adams' discussion of using interest group strategies, and Janique Dubois' focus on Metis governing structures in Saskatchewan, each in their own ways sensitive to self-government issues, all suggest that Metis political structures must become more reflective of western ones.

This collection, for the most part, does attempt to reflect the diversity of the Metis peoples, the importance of self-determination and identification, and the issues of legitimacy and representation. It also recognizes the reality of the long histories of the Metis, the variations within communities, and the conflicts of western laws and values in attempts to come to mutual understandings. It draws attention to the many outstanding problems, including that the definition of Metis still varies significantly among the Metis themselves and from the courts as well, whose interpretations not only essentialize but also fail to account for the contingent nature and realities of people's history and lives.

Blyth, Mark. 2013. *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. New York: Oxford University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0-19-982830. Hardcover: 24.95 CAD. Pages 288.

Reviewed By Scott M. Aquanno
University of Ontario

Mark Blyth's latest text examines the ongoing retrenchment of state budgets and responsibilities in the European periphery as a response to the 2008 financial crisis. The main premise of the book is to challenge the rise of austerity politics as an appropriate solution to the Eurozone crisis and to call out for new directions in economic planning. For Blyth the prescription of austerity - defined as voluntary deflation aimed at restoring competitiveness by cutting state budgets/debts - as an antidote to the current malaise rests on a misappraisal of the nature of the subprime financial crisis. Far from being a distinctly public sector crisis, the meltdown of the US housing market and the ensuing destabilization of the US and European banking system rather had its origins in a series of wrongheaded private sector decisions which served mainly to bolster bank profitability in the lead-up to the crisis. As a result, the image of profligate government spending undermining long-term economic prosperity does not align well with the socio-economic script surrounding the crisis. It is in this sense that the book blames the crisis on the