EDITORIAL

British Columbia has long been described as a marginal place – largely owing to the lateness of its incorporation into the Euro-Canadian world and its location on the western edge of the continent. Marginality was certainly in the air in 1847 and 1848, when the decision was made to colonize Vancouver Island. On 26 August 1848 the Dublin newspaper *The World* editorialized:

> Is land so scarce in Canada, Nova Scotia, the trackless leagues of fertile South Africa, and the endless plains of New Holland, New Zealand, Ceylon, and fifty other places more or less within hail of the haunts of men, that people should wander to the remoteness of Vancouver's Island? In Heaven's name what sane man would go there, or for what would he go? A Misanthrope or an Eremite might find congenial solitude, an industrious man might vegetate, a society might even exist, but as a colony to reciprocate with the Mother Country, the idea is, surely enough, a parliamentary imagination.

Perceptions of British Columbia's isolation and marginality continued. In 1881, when the first transcontinental railway was being considered, the journalist Henry Labouchère (nephew of his namesake, a colonial secretary) wrote:

> British Columbia is a barren, cold, mountain country that is not worth keeping. It would never have been inhabited at all, unless by trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company, had the "gold fever" not taken a party of mining adventurers there, and ever since that fever died down the place has been going from bad to worse. Fifty railroads would not galvanize it into prosperity.[1]

A century and more later, English writer Jonathan Raban invoked the physical and cultural marginality of British Columbia in his 1999 book entitled *Passage to Juneau*. The book concerns Raban's 1996 voyage along the Pacific coast of the continent, much of it through British Columbia. At the Jolly Roger Inn at Halfmoon Bay, on the Sunshine Coast, Raban observed:

[1] Henry Labouchère, "The Canadian Dominion Bubble," *Truth*, 1 September 1881, cited in John Robert Colombo, *Colombo's Concise Canadian Quotations* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976), 24.

> The homesick preference for the ersatz-European over the far-western real was, I thought, more a Canadian than an American affectation, producing pubs with horse brasses and plastic Tudor beams. So the eighteenth century explorers and fur traders were passed over in favour of pirates and smugglers from the banal imaginary history of Merrie England. Done with a giggle and meant to be cute, it betrayed the everlasting provincial anxiety that one's own experience, one's place and one's past, are somehow less real than those of people nearer the centre of the world.[2]

And from a pub wall at Vananda on Texada Island, Raban jotted down the following: "*Vananda*, n. *A place where loose-ends naturally collect, and where lost objects are likely to be found. A port in a storm, a bolt-hole, an asylum.*"[3]

These are arresting – and today perhaps somewhat amusing – commentaries. But they do provoke further thought, both about marginality and about its meanings. Many places have been described in similar terms. Some suffered this fate in the same country and at the same time as British Columbia was being found marginal. One thinks most notably here, perhaps, of the Canadian prairie west from whence W.L. Morton, one of the leading historians of his day, protested in an influential 1946 essay that the "concept of marginality" "reduces western history to the stature of purely regional history. For a marginal civilization is one which has its centre elsewhere."[4]

Can this – that it is a regional society with its centre elsewhere – still be said of British Columbia? The term "marginal" certainly echoes through the articles in this volume. Indeed, this issue suggests that perceptions and experiences of marginality are alive and well in this province. But here we encounter margins of different kinds.

Lynne Davis gets us under way with an article on the Great Bear Rainforest, previously part of "the central coast" of British Columbia. Here, late twentieth-century environmentalists wanted to create a park. This, they argued, was one of the last edges of the continent where pristine wildernesses could still be identified, struggled over, and, ideally, preserved, even as logging companies were approaching the central coast from north and south. But, Davis argues, in bringing us to think about marginality as a product of mind, the environmental movement's agenda threatened the indigenous Heiltsuk peoples, whose

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[2] Jonathan Raban, *Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 162.
[3] Ibid., 173.
[4] W.L. Morton, "Marginal," *Manitoba Arts Review* 5, 1 (1946), 28, reprinted in A.B. McKillop, *Contexts of Canada's Past: Selected Essays of W.L. Morton* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980), 43-44.

traditional territory this was, with cultural and economic marginality. The environmentalists' potential park on the coastal margin of Canada was home to the Heiltsuk.

Jack Little's focus is on the development of recreational activities on Bowen Island, and his lively contribution speaks to what we might think of as geographical marginality. Noting that Britain's seaside resorts have been described as "liminal" spaces, where land and sea meet, Little explores the local "excursion, or day-tripping phenomenon" from Vancouver early in the twentieth century, a time when the Union Steamship Company operated excursions to Bowen Island, just as the CPR did to Newcastle Island. Bowen Island contained little arable land, but there was space enough for Union Steamship to build cottages – variously called cottage bungalows, camp cottages, summer cottages, and waterfront cottages – as well as an inn, dance hall, and other resort facilities. Vancouver, the terminal city – hemmed in by the border to the south, Georgia Strait to the west, and mountains to the north (thus being a place on the margin) – found its own liminal space in its coastal offshore.

Ian Milligan explores the defeat of an activist political minority at Simon Fraser University in 1969 and its subsequent political marginalization. "It was apparent," he writes, "[that the radical students and their supporters] were largely alone, that the state was being marshalled against them, and that there was little reason to persist. In this context, students were not prepared to face imprisonment.… Both the student movement and on-campus New Left had been broken … SFU would become … a 'hotbed of quietism.' The action was elsewhere."

Ken Scott surveys the social and emotional marginality of mentally "unstable" British Columbians housed at the Provincial Asylum in New Westminster. The unusually high proportion of men in the asylum reflected the province's male-dominated resource industries. Within the asylum the Chinese – generally regarded as outside of, or at best marginal to, the host society – were increasingly segregated and marginalized: they got their own ward in 1882 and their own building in 1890. These patients, observes Scott, "were segregated and racialized in ways that were even more clearly distancing and negative than they were in society at large."

Finally, Ed Dutton explores the British Columbian origins of one of the defining terms of the twentieth century, itself a definition of psychological marginality: "culture shock." This concept was developed by social anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, born, Dutton reveals through some fascinating detective work, Kalervo Wuorinen in Nanaimo in 1901. The son of a founder of the Finnish commune at Sointula on Malcolm

Island, Oberg grew up in Tofino, on the very outer edge of Vancouver Island. But it was short-lived Sointula, remote and politically marginal – socialist, radical Christian, theosophist, utopian – that shaped his sense of culture shock. Drawing upon Oberg's long-neglected BA graduating essay, completed at UBC in 1928, Dutton argues that Oberg translated his initial sense of optimism in Sointula and the commune's ultimate failure into the first and second stages, respectively, of the four stages an immigrant traverses in adapting to a new land: honeymoon, reaction (dislike), resignation, and breakthrough (acceptance).

Paradoxically, though, each of these discussions of marginal locations – the Great Bear Rainforest, Bowen Island, the site of the SFU protests, the Provincial Asylum, Sointula and Tofino – also include frequent invocations of home. References to "home" appear in all the articles. For the Heiltsuk, "home" encompasses an ancient and indisputable connection to their land. Little's Bowen Island resort was a home away from home, with rustic cottages, carefully tended window boxes and fruit trees, and a hotel. Scott's Provincial Asylum contained Maple Cottage for men, Oak Cottage and Lawn House for women. Scott notes the pathetic attempts to make the asylum more like home: in 1894, the female enclave was the "brightest and least prison-like in the asylum." "Unlike the other wards, it was decorated with plants and contained stacks of books and newspapers, which gave it a more home-like décor." And the Finns who went to Sointula sought to make new homes as well as a new society in the new world. All these evocations of home on the margin – sometimes ancient and precious, sometimes fragile, sometimes futile or tragic – remind us of Northrop Frye's observation that "the centre of reality is wherever one happens to be, and its circumference is whatever one's imagination can make sense of."[5]

These words from one of Canada's greatest literary scholars also provide a springboard for our acknowledgment of the contributions of one of British Columbia's outstanding scholarly editors to this journal. A pillar of UBC Press between 1988 and 2008, Jean Wilson began to assist the editors of *BC Studies* a decade or so ago by helping with the book reviews, editing and proofreading copy to ensure the highest standards of clarity and presentation. Three years ago she assumed the full suite of our book review editor's responsibilities, ensuring that we reviewed important works on British Columbia, identifying and recruiting suitable reviewers, and then editing reviews as necessary and compiling them

[5] Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination,* 2nd edition (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1995), 129.

for each issue of the journal. This is largely unseen and often thankless work, but those of us close to the centre of this journal's production know the graciousness and warmth that Jean brought to this and to all the other publishing tasks that she undertook. We are delighted to acknowledge her considerable help and influence as she steps back from her involvement in *BC Studies*, confident that the circumference of her retirement will be as wide as her intellectual passions and hopeful that it will be as satisfying as she imagines. Thank you, Jean.

Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn