

Book Reviews

Simon Peter Gunanoot/Trapline Outlaw, by David Ricardo Williams.
Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1982. Pp. 186; illus.

In the early morning hours of 19 June 1906 Simon Peter Gunanoot, an Indian of the Tsimpsonian nation, was illegally drinking in the Two Mile Hotel near Hazelton, British Columbia. Gunanoot was a prosperous storekeeper at a nearby village, a substantial rancher and an outstanding hunter-trapper. A Christian businessman with wife and children, Gunanoot described himself as a “white man” and was considered by his white neighbours as one of the “good” Indians.

Both assumptions would be severely tested by events in the next few hours. The owner of the hotel, known as “the Geezer,” made a lifelong habit of disappearing when wanted. Now he was passed out drunk, with many of his cronies. Bartending in his stead was an unruly, loudmouthed packtrain cowboy named Alexander MacIntosh, by then approaching “la gloire” on free liquor. MacIntosh made the mistake of casting aspersions on Gunanoot’s wife Sarah. It seems certain he questioned her virtue and may well have claimed or implied that he himself had seduced her. Under the Indian code seduction of one’s spouse justified killing. A drunken brawl ensued. MacIntosh cut Gunanoot’s cheek with a knife and gave his opponent a bruised and bloody face with his fists. Mad with drink and humiliation, Gunanoot left, vowing to return with a gun and “fix” MacIntosh. At about 8 a.m. MacIntosh was found shot to death on a nearby trail. A short time later a second body was discovered about two miles away from the first: the remains of Maxwell Leclair, another packtrain cowboy, with whom neither Gunanoot nor MacIntosh had had any known previous connection. Both had been killed by a single shot upwards through the body; that is, they had apparently been ambushed while on horseback by a man on foot or lying prone. The Crown was unable to find any direct evidence — whether of footprints, ballistics or eyewitnesses — linking Gunanoot to either shooting.

Sloppy policework enabled Gunanoot to escape immediate arrest. In the next two days the prime suspect managed to gather up his wife and two children, his parents, Sarah's daughter by a previous liaison, his brother-in-law and fellow suspect Peter Himadam and the latter's wife and take them north out of reach of the white man's law. Gunanoot led this extended family — continually changing in numbers due to deaths, births and temporary absences of the Himadams — on a thirteen-year wandering over thousands of miles in harsh northwestern British Columbia. The severe winters provided the greatest challenge; the police search, the least. Gunanoot used his hunting and trapping skills as never before, sold furs for provisions through Indian intermediaries and established an intelligence network right back to Hazelton which kept him several comfortable steps ahead of the police. Tiring of the privations of the nomad and concerned about the education of his children, Gunanoot gave himself up at Hazelton on 24 June 1919. Defended by one of the shrewdest criminal lawyers of the day, Stuart Henderson, Gunanoot was acquitted of the murder of MacIntosh after a sensational trial in Vancouver. He died on the trapline in 1933.

David Williams obviously had a dramatic framework to work with, but was faced with serious evidentiary problems. On reading *Trapline Outlaw* the serious student asks what Gunanoot's personal feelings were as he oscillated between the Indian's and the white man's worlds, and what he thought about the white man's justice and the code of the Indian. Gunanoot apparently was never drawn out on these matters in his lifetime, and this intriguing story probably went with him to the grave. Had answers to these questions been available, the diligent Williams would likely have found them.

There are other stories told in detail. In describing the lengthy hue and cry for Gunanoot, the author brings to life the breathtaking and comic incompetence of the provincial police. Gunanoot's father escaped from a jailhouse privy to join his son. On the day the bodies were found, Gunanoot was spotted near his ranch by Constable Kirby of Hazelton and his assistants, but was assumed to be someone else. Posses searched everywhere up to but rarely beyond the fringes of uninhabited country. One party, more daring than most, was apparently tracked by a mocking Gunanoot who carved his initials on their trail blazes. Victoria headquarters employed a con artist who did his manhunting in bars. At one point the Hazelton detachment, believing gossip that Indian war was about to break out, had trenches dug in the town. The insurrection never passed from the apprehended stage. There is also the theme of wide-

spread reluctance to apprehend and punish Gunanoot. Indians, hostile over threats to aboriginal title, were left unmoved by an ever increasing reward. Sympathizers abounded at Hazelton. The local doctor, for example, treated Gunanoot's children in 1909 and did not report the incident to the police. Witnesses at the trial conveniently omitted damning details they had earlier sworn to or communicated to the police. This kind of sympathy has, of course, often been stimulated by successful outlaws, especially those whose romantic escapades can readily be given a moral justification. Such attitudes are usually very revealing of the perceptions of the law held by the people who do not administer it. An excellent Canadian example is Martin Robin's *The Bad and the Lonely* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1976), an account of the dispossessed and crazed Scot, Donald Morrison, folk hero and outlaw of Megantic, Quebec in the 1880s. Williams does provide many illustrations of sympathy and of legend building, but might have probed the subject to a fuller explanation.

Where Williams is strongest is in the two chapters treating the trial and the question of guilt and innocence. The author had no official record to work with. From my experience of writing on trials this means he had to be painstakingly careful in deciding on the basis of differing newspaper accounts just what was said in court. And, of course, he had to judge whether a witness was hedging or lying without perceiving his or her demeanour at first hand. These tasks were performed well, and in addition Williams was able to find illuminating bits from manuscript sources to corroborate a crucial segment of testimony and to reconstruct what Gunanoot told his lawyer. Williams makes good use of his background as a barrister to assess the weight of evidence, clarify technical points, evaluate the performance of counsel and judge the fairness of the verdict. Readers will be disappointed, however, that the author did not comment on Henderson's ethics in accepting the defence of a man he believed to be guilty. The result of Williams' research into extra-judicial sources bearing on innocence or guilt is convincing.

Trapline Outlaw is written for the general reader. It goes well beyond previous accounts, corrects some mistakes and provides a good read. It does not purport to be a sequel to Williams' prize-winning biography of Sir Mathew Begbie, *The Man for a New Country* (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing Ltd., 1977). There, much of the mainstream of British Columbia's history was explored and documented. Here, a peripheral though dramatic event and its aftermath are presented carefully but simply. The student of history will regret that the subject could not be made to yield deep insights into white-Indian contact. However, many

little windows into frontier life are opened, and the book includes a useful case study of the human element in the administration of criminal justice.

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F. MURRAY GREENWOOD

During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman, by Margaret B. Blackman. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press; Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1982. Pp. 172; illus.

During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman is a more complex book than its title reveals. The dust jacket tells us that it is "the first life history of a Northwest Coast Indian woman." Yet *During My Time* is certainly more than this. It is ethnography, life history and travelogue that frequently tells us more about the book's author-editor, Margaret Blackman, an associate professor of anthropology at the State University of New York, than it does about its subject, Florence Edenshaw Davidson.

Chapter 1 deals with the merits of the life history. It is useful in "the study of acculturation," in complementing "the ethnographic account by adding to the descriptive an affective or experimental dimension" and above all "as an anthropological form [which] is compatible with Haida tradition." Having justified the form, Blackman goes on to tell us about her friendship with Florence Davidson, who since 1970 has been her "main female teacher" in the study of the traditional and changing relationship of the Haida people to their natural environment. During the fifty or more hours of tape interviews, conducted mostly in the parlour of Florence Davidson's Old Masset home, Davidson avoided discussing such things as illicit sexual liaisons, witchcraft or feuds between families. Blackman steered her towards her interests: pollution taboos and Haida ceremonial life, among other subjects. The next chapter, however, discusses the life-cycle, economics and ceremonial division of labour, cultural specialists, values, contact and sex roles of Haida women in an admirable attempt to redress the volume of work that has chronicled the "male world seen through the eyes of male writers."

Now, thus prepared for Davidson's account, we are in chapter 3, still kept from it by a "Biographical Sketch" compiling dates and relatives and family movements — from the home in Masset to the canneries in

Alaska and to the potato gardens in Yatz — of this high-ranking daughter of the brilliant artist Charles Edenshaw.

Halfway through the book Florence Davidson's life history finally appears. It is divided into six sections: "Those Before Me (1862-1896)"; "Before I could Walk (1896-1897)"; "I Am Yet a Girl (1897-1909)"; "I Become a Woman and Marry (1909-1911)"; "I Become a Mother and Have Lots of Children (1912-1938)"; "I Quit Having Babies: My Later Years (1939-1979)." These chapters, portraying "an individual operating in a culture neither traditionally Haida nor fully Canadian," begin with an account of the smallpox epidemic of 1862, then fall into a rhythmic pace appropriate to a discussion of being a wife and mother dominated by work: gathering and preparing berries, collecting spruce roots, washing clothes, and preparing fish in the smoke house, among other things. There are some delightful touches, such as the story of Davidson's cradle, which was sold by her parents to the Victoria collector C. F. Newcombe in 1903 and now appears in N. Bancroft-Hunt's *People of the Totem* (1979). But by the time the reader gets to many of Davidson's recollections concerning puberty, menopause, the arranged marriage to Robert Davidson at the age of 14 and the bearing of thirteen children — some of which she herself delivered — he or she finds that they have already been discussed by Blackman. Other intrusions on Davidson's account are the newspaper clippings and ethnographers' accounts of the Haida interspersing the text. But these are quibbles compared with my major concern: how much of the life history section is a product of Margaret Blackman and how much of Florence Davidson? Herein lies the central difficulty of the book.

Blackman shaped the life history by choosing the questions and by editing the interviews. She admits that "to a large extent my own interests biased the life-history data I obtained." We are, for example, told that the church and Davidson's role in it are of great interest to her. Since we see little of this and much of Blackman's interest in Haida ceremonial life, what do we have in the end: the life of a Haida woman or an account of what the ethnologist wants to know about? This points to an additional question: what did Blackman choose to leave out of the edited version? Was there more information in the original on Charles Edenshaw and his art form, or on the role of slaves? Blackman gives us some idea of how Florence Davidson surrendered her way of speaking to the authors in an appendix which presents a portion of the interview. There we see such things as "My husband going-to-be" replaced by Blackman's "Husband to be." Again more Blackman and less Davidson.

The life history is followed by Blackman's "Discussion" of it. Can one discuss something one has edited and shaped in an objective manner? And do we really need another discussion?

I wonder if two separate books might not have been written: one on Haida women by Blackman and another dealing with the life of Florence Davidson taking a question-answer format. Had the latter course been followed, we could have been able to judge the relationship of Blackman and Davidson for ourselves; we would have seen the structure of question and answer; we would have been able to observe the ethnologist-informant at work; and, finally, we would have had more of Davidson's way of speaking preserved.

During My Time ends with the travelogue with which it began. Blackman has returned to the "Misty Isles on a journey that has become an annual ritual and renewal." Again we have more of Blackman than Davidson, who is portrayed modelling a velour robe — a present from Blackman — and giving her "real interesting" approval to the life history. One might ask, in conclusion, whether Florence Davidson's life presented in this way is any different from her cradle displayed between the glossy pages of the coffee table book. Both are rendered in a non-indigenous form, out of context, and in a way made for strangers.

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MARIA TIPPETT

The Way of the Masks, by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Translated from the French by Sylvia Modelski. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982.

With this book, Claude Lévi-Strauss brings his continuing demonstration of how the collective human mind works to some of the richest problems of Northwest Coast scholarship, including monsters, coppers, marriage and incest, the origins of artistic style, Kwakiutl social organization, Xwéxwé and Dzonokwa masks and the Coast Salish Swaihwé mask.

First published in 1975 as *La Voie des Masques*, the English edition is supplemented by three other articles in which the author expands his original investigation of the Swaihwé mask to reveal areal themes. Guiding these investigations is the structuralist maxim that any particular pattern, however basic it appears to be, usually gives rise to its opposite.

Under direct attack here is what Lévi-Strauss calls "one of the most pernicious notions bequeathed to us by functionalism" — that of "iso-

lated tribes, enclosed within themselves, each living on its own account a peculiar experience of an aesthetic, mythical, or ritual order" (pages 144-45). What he is doing is challenging the notion of society as a closed collection of functions with the structuralist notion of societies as systems of communication, each engaged in "an unceasing and vigorous dialogue" with its neighbours (page 145). A purpose of this dialogue seems to be to maintain cultural distinctions and identities by asserting that "We are not like you."

In Part I, Lévi-Strauss confronts the enigma of the Swaihwé mask, a puzzling form that has eluded previous attempts to fully explain its anomalous features — a long sagging jaw and lolling tongue, eyes protruding on cylindrical stalks, nose and horns in the shape of birds and, sometimes, animals, worn with a white feather costume. This mask "posed a problem to me which I could not resolve . . . until I realized that, as is the case with myths, masks, too, cannot be interpreted in and by themselves as separate objects. Looked upon from the semantic point of view, a myth acquires sense only after it is returned to its transformation set" (page 14).

Given the basic assumption of structuralism that elements in a transformational set are mutually complementary or contradictory, Lévi-Strauss predicts the opposite mask through which the Swaihwé's meaning can be revealed:

Let me try this experiment. Through its accessories and the costumes that goes with it, the Swaihwé mask manifests an affinity for the color white. The opposite mask will therefore be black, or will manifest an affinity for dark hues. The Swaihwé and its costume are adorned with feathers; if the other mask does entail trimmings of an animal origin, these should be in the nature of fur. The Swaihwé mask has a wide-open mouth, a sagging lower jaw, and it exhibits an enormous tongue; in the other type, the shape of the mouth should preclude the display of this organ. (page 57)

This black, fur-trimmed, poor-eyed, tongueless-mouthed mask is, of course, the Kwakiutl Dzonokwa, and the argument of Part I is a detailed look at the complementarity of the two mask types, including their mediation by the Xwéxwé, a mask clearly derived from the Swaihwé. Beginning with the opposition of form, the analysis also includes origin myths, purposes and ritual use.

Lévi-Strauss' examination of the Swaihwé/Dzonokwa unity in opposition leads to a new and startling hypothesis that a "mask is not primarily what it represents but what it transforms, that is to say, what it chooses not to represent. Like a myth, a mask denies as much as it affirms. It is

not made solely of what it says or thinks it is saying, but of what it excludes" (page 144).

In Part II the net is thrown wider, bringing in comparative material from the Tsimshian, Bella Bella, Tlingit, Haida, Shuswap Thompson and Dene. Brilliantly inductive, Lévi-Strauss weaves together myriad far-flung clues to create a rich tapestry of meanings throughout the entire semantic field of Northwest Coast culture.

Of course, the specific hypothesis about inversions at borders needs further testing, and other themes quite boldly asserted in this study need examining and deepening. But to focus exclusively upon problems of specific content would be to miss the greater value of this book. The depth of areal patterns, of shared and interlocking meanings in a cultural fabric extending from Alaska to California, has never before been so convincingly demonstrated.

Working essentially with what happens at the borders of many Northwest Coast cultures, rather than almost exclusively from within one or two of them, Lévi-Strauss has brought a unique and welcome coherence to our scholarship. This book should stimulate numerous challenges, refinements and further studies before its influence has run its course.

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An Account of a Voyage to the North West Coast of America in 1785 & 1786, by Alexander Walker. Edited by Robin Fisher and J. M. Bumsted. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, Ltd., 1982. Pp. 319.

Brigadier General Alexander Walker (1764-1831) died in Scotland after a varied career which had included service with the East India Company from 1780 to 1812 and the governorship of St. Helena from 1822 to 1828. In 1952 his personal papers, totalling nearly 600 volumes, were acquired by the National Library of Scotland. Among them was the MS of this book (of which the Provincial Archives of British Columbia has a microfilm).

The expedition to America, which Walker describes, sailed from Bombay and was commanded by James Strange. It consisted of two ships, the 350-ton *Captain Cook* and the 140-ton *Experiment*, and Walker sailed on the latter. Since Strange's account has also been published (the second edition in 1982), we now have the story of this voyage as told by two members of it.

If, as some may feel, Walker wrote the better book, it is perhaps not surprising. He had been well educated before joining the East India Company, and had served in the war of 1780-84 against Mysore (and for a while had been a prisoner of war). Indian army officers had, naturally, to be able to communicate with the sepoys they led, and a man who had done that successfully might be expected to acquire the knack of picking up languages. Walker certainly seems to have possessed such a knack, for his book ends with an appendix containing "A Vocabulary of the Language at Nootka Sound," covering twenty-five pages. This has been specially edited by B. F. Carlson, John Thomas and Francis Charlie, and they describe it as "the earliest extensive example of that language."

Walker's own observations of the natives are full and careful. He also did his best to learn more from a strange character called John Mackoy, a man who "had been brought up for the Medical Profession," but had become "a private Soldier in the Company's service." When Strange left America, Mackoy volunteered to remain "at Nootka Sound to observe the Manners of the Natives, to acquire their language, and to establish a friendly intercourse with them." But he was no more fitted to be an ethnologist than to be a doctor. The natives despised him, and when, after fourteen months among them, he was "rescued" and returned to the East India Company at Bombay, his "habits of drinking and a natural incapacity" made it nearly impossible to learn anything from him. Walker evidently did his best, but could not even discover from him whether the Nootka Indians were or were not cannibals.

This book is not a diary written from day to day throughout the expedition. Walker's original MS was lost and he composed this work "in his later years" from such notes as survived. It is described by the editors as a "blending of the first hand observations of a young observer with the critical understanding of the mature soldier." It is also an account of British Columbia's Indians when their opportunities of acculturation had been slight indeed. Since Captain James Cook had come to Nootka Sound in 1778, only one English seaman had been there, namely, Captain Hanna; and no account of what Hanna saw is known to exist.

It may seem odd that an exploration of western America should be launched from Bombay, as this one was, with backing from the East India Company, and that Anderson, though an officer in the Bombay army, should be one of its members. The answers are that the soldier was free to go because in 1785 India was at peace; and that the company's interest was due to the monopoly it then enjoyed of all Britain's far eastern trade, which included Canton — the only Chinese port to which

“foreign devils” were admitted. Moreover China, with her vast population, her wealthy mandarin class and her extremes of climate, was the world’s greatest market for fur. The Chinese likewise had a very understandable fondness for the wonderful fur of the Sea Otter — as Cook’s crew had learned when they entered Canton; and the Sea Otter is found only on the coasts of western North America. The official account of Cook’s third voyage was published posthumously in 1784, and Strange read it when it first came out. He saw the opportunity that the western American fur trade might offer his company in Canton, and therefore prepared this expedition in Bombay in 1785. When he returned from America, he presented the report of his travels to Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell, the Governor of Madras; and, after lying for over a century in the Madras Record Office, his story of his adventures in what is now British Columbia was first published in that Indian city in 1929 with A. V. Venkatarama Ayyah as its editor. Walker’s recently published volume now provides Canadian readers with a companion piece from Scotland.

This book has a useful index and bibliography and some well-chosen illustrations. Its footnotes are specially conveniently presented. They come at the end of the book, immediately before the appendix on the language of Nootka Sound; and they are numbered not chapter by chapter but consecutively throughout the whole volume from 1 to 490. This makes them much easier to find for anyone who is apt to lose count of his chapters.

Victoria

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