Book Reviews

A Guide to B.C. Indian Myth and Legend: A Short History of Myth Collecting and a Survey of Published Texts, by Ralph Maud. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1982. Pp. 218; illus.

The reader interested in B.C. Indian literature who has found Murdock and O'Leary's *Ethnographic Bibliography of North America* intimidating — or has not found it at all — will find Ralph Maud's *A Guide to B.C. Indian Myth and Legend* an entertaining introduction to the field. This book is a popular guide with an academic format. It also has an academic theme, i.e., that in the written presentation of myth, both in scholarly and popular contexts, much of the character of the original performance has been lost. In surveying works belonging to four genres of myth presentation — scholarly collections published by ethnologists, popular anthologies compiled by laymen, anthologies and other works authored or co-authored by Indian people, and text analyses presented by linguists — Maud looks for "reliable texts which are interesting *in themselves*" (p. 16; Maud's emphasis).

It is a very complex act of translation which is required to bring a myth from oral performance to written text, from one language to another, and from cne aesthetic tradition to another. Maud is aware of the recent work in ethnopoetics and he clearly favours the approaches to myth used by Dennis Tedlock, Barre Toelken and Dell Hymes. Everyone who writes down a myth engages in an art of translation, and while Maud is disappointed with what has been done in the past in regard to Indian mythology in British Columbia, it is not always clear what his criteria for successful translation are. He finds Boas' 1897 report of the Kwakiutl winter ceremonial magnificent, but criticizes it (justly) for being relatively impenetrable by the uninformed. He appreciates Clutesi's artistry in *Potlatch*, but would have preferred "a stark documentary."

It is the subtitle of this book, however, which actually sums up its approach. It is not a survey of the thematic or poetic aspects of B.C.

Indian mythology, but a brief history and assessment of the collecting of myth in British Columbia. Maud has used the collectors themselves as principal points of entry into the corpora, in some cases giving as much weight to their biographical characteristics as to the scope of their work. In consequence, the reader often just gets comfortably into consideration of one author's work before moving on to the next. This, in itself, is not serious, but Maud has approached aspects of his topic with a certain insouciant bias, which can make what he has written not only superficial but also unjust. This is particularly true in the case of Franz Boas.

Maud gives space in several chapters to consideration of Boas' work, for as co-ordinator of the Jesup Expedition Boas initiated, supervised, collected, collated or edited most of the scholarly compilations of myth which exist for British Columbia Indian people. In an earlier publication Maud brought together the works of Charles Hill-Tout, whose ethnological work Maud considers was unfairly condemned to obscurity by Boas' refusal to find a place for Hill-Tout in the Jesup Expedition. This concern is expressed again in the present book.

Ancestor worship makes for pretty dry reading, and Boas can take a little criticism. Many an ethnologist has lamented Boas' persistent refusal to synthesize; others have regretted his dry and heavy English prose style, and no doubt some have privately wished he had been a little more frivolous. But to say, as Maud does (p. 47),

> He resisted Hitler propaganda on the racial question with all the power of his mature authority; but the world does not associate the name of Boas with "racial equality," as it does Darwin's with "evolution," Marx's with "communism," and Freud's with "the unconscious."

is flatly unfair.

Boas was 75 years old when Hitler came to power. He had for many years fought against antisemitism in the United States. But if Darwin's business was evolution and Freud's was the unconscious, Boas' business was anthropology and its development. It would have been possible for him to concentrate on topics with anthropology (such as myth) which did not demand that he write specifically on the subject of racial equality. However, Boas gave as much energy to the study of physical anthropology as he did to myth scholarship, and between 1890 and 1915 he pursued studies which established, in scientific terms, that there was no basis for the theories which assigned different potential to individuals on the basis of race. He published his findings in both scholarly journals and popular articles.

Boas, and the reader, would have been better served had Maud placed Boas' writing within its own context, which was early twentieth-century anthropology, for in collecting myth Boas was interested in resolving questions pertinent not only in folklore scholarship but in anthropology at large. These interests had significant effect on the form in which the myths were published.

It is perfectly valid to wish that Boas and others had paid more attention to aspects of performance, but this underlines a perennial problem in ethnology. We are often forced to address today's questions to yesterday's data, and when we do we find that yesterday's data were gathered to answer yesterday's questions.

Maud is not afraid to consider the motives of scholars in recording myth or in choosing one text over another, but in place of analysis there is often freewheeling speculation. Some of it is very hard to accept, e.g., that Morice avoided full recording of Carrier mythology because "the old imaginative cosmology [was] too powerful. With their own epic intact, the Carrier would not be a lost tribe, needing to be saved" (p. 16). Surely when missionaries went to work among a people, their principal concern was not that their people had no cosmology but that they did not have the right one.

The history of anthropology in B.C. may have to await a treatment of greater balance and depth, but this book is intended to be a guide as well as a history. The interested reader will find references to virtually all of the salient collections of B.C. Indian myth. The emphasis is on collecting and presentation rather than on analysis, and while some analytical papers are mentioned, others, particularly the works of Lévi-Strauss, are omitted.

One of the major problems with the ethnological literature of British Columbia is that it is largely inaccessible to the layman. Ralph Maud's *Guide* will certainly help to correct this. There is no comprehensive bibliography, but publication data for the many works which are cited are given in the text and footnotes. The summary of the Jesup Expedition publications midway through the text and the summary of field trips and resultant publications at the end will also undoubtedly be useful.

National Museum of Man ANDREA LAFORET

Fur Trade and Exploration; Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852, by Theodore Karamanski. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983. Pp. 330.

Until recently, fur trade historians all but ignored northern British Columbia, the Yukon and Alaska. In the last few years, the appearance of several articles and a series of graduate theses have begun to redress this neglect. The publication six years ago of A. A. Wright's *Prelude to Bonanza*, a narrative description of early exploration based on published sources, provided a preliminary survey of the district. But the limitations of that book were clearly evident, and much important documentary material remained untapped. T. Karamanski's *Fur Trade and Exploration* is the latest attempt to bring this final frontier into the mainstream of Canadian historiography.

Fur Trade is a welcome, though not completely successful, attempt to explain the expansion of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Russian American Fur Company into the district Sir George Simpson once wistfully labelled a "new Athabasca." It is a fairly limited study, for Karamanski states it is "the story of the explorers and their explorations of a remote part of the continent. Their attitudes, actions, and adventures are the principal concerns of the book" (p. xvii). Those in search of a consideration of the economic and social dynamics of the northern fur trade will have to look elsewhere.

After setting these somewhat limited and outdated goals, Karamanski proceeds in a workmanlike fashion with his task. He does an able job of describing the corporate and diplomatic context of expansion and defining George Simpson's role in the encouragement of exploration. The book becomes more narrative as the author charts the travels of Samuel Black up the Finlay River and of John McLeod, Murdock McPherson and Robert Campbell along the Liard and describes the efforts of Campbell, John Bell and A. H. Murray to commence trading in the Yukon River valley. The book ends with the destruction of Campbell's Fort Selkirk by Chilcat Indians in 1852, an event Karamanski believes signals the end of Hudson's Bay Company expansion plans in the far northwest.

Karamanski is clearly at his best when describing in precise detail the actual voyages of exploration. His accounts are solidly based on traders' journals and letters and embellished by comments derived from his personal canoe travels in the district. Much of this, however, is already known and available in such works as C. Wilson's *Campbell of the Yukon* and the aforementioned *Prelude to Bonanza*. Several sections,

including the discussion of John McLeod's long-ignored but central exploration of the Liard in 1831, provide information rarely considered by other historians. More importantly, the author's use of the Hudson's Bay Company archives and fast-paced style puts this book a notch above previously published narrative accounts.

Given the author's extensive primary research, it is both surprising and unfortunate that he has overlooked much relevant secondary literature. For example, there are at least three Master's theses and one PhD dissertation from the University of Manitoba alone that address this topic and region directly. These studies, plus other graduate papers and Shepherd Krech's work on the Eastern Kutchin (only one of his articles is cited), would have saved the writer considerable effort and perhaps encouraged him to consider some of the interpretive issues raised about the northern fur trade. In a different vein, had Karamanski examined Robert Campbell's post journals for Pelly Banks and Fort Selkirk (available at the Public Archives of Canada), his consideration of the southern Yukon fur trade would have been more complete.

There are flaws with Karamanski's account of northwest exploration and fur trade expansion. His discussion of Robert Campbell adds little to current knowledge, drawing too heavily again on the explorer's well-known memoirs. The uncritical use of this source and the laudatory treatment of the man is most unfortunate. Company correspondence suggests that Campbell overestimated his importance, was at best a marginal trader and was not widely admired by his peers. By going little beyond Campbell's memoirs, Karamanski has simply reinforced old and incomplete images of this central figure. Similarly, his summary comment (pp. 277-78) that the HBC did not have clear plans for the Yukon River trade is not supported by detailed examination. Contrary to the author's claim, the HBC specifically decided against locating a route to the Pacific coast or establishing a separate district west of the Mackenzie River. His discussion of the function of the northern fur trade — as opposed to exploration — is less than successful and displays noticeable gaps in research and analysis.

Perhaps to justify this emphasis on exploration, Karamanski takes pains to document the importance of these early adventurers, suggesting that they "produced a blueprint of the Far Northwest which was the basis for later development of the area" (p. 280). While it is true that Robert Campbell ensured that British mapmakers knew of his travels, an act that allowed him to achieve much desired notoriety, the comment is

decidedly overstated. The HBC suppressed knowledge of the location of Fort Youcon for two decades because they knew it to be outside British territory, and kept to themselves information concerning gold discoveries in the district. More importantly, the vaunted HBC trade routes were deemed impractical and all but ignored during the Klondike Gold Rush. The "contribution" of the early fur trade explorers is questionable. Theirs was a distinct period in the history of the north, not a precursor of future developments, at least not the ones the author suggests. It is unfortunate that Karamanski attempts to claim more — and less — for his fur traders than they deserved.

By focusing on exploration and largely ignoring the mechanics of the fur trade, Karamanski has missed much of the significance. While the book will appeal to those interested in the processes and personalities of exploration, there is little here for those concerned with the broader substance of the northern fur trade. His Eurocentric focus hides the lasting implications of native response to trade, alterations in native material culture, the introduction of disease and the re-ordering of intertribal trade networks. Though ostensibly eager to fill a major gap in fur trade historiography, the author has nonetheless ignored most questions of current interest.

One must, however, give the author his due credit. *Fur Trade and Exploration* provides an adept narrative of European expansion into the northwest. According to his design, Karamanski does fill a gap in the fur trade literature, though in fact that gap is far smaller than the author believes. Though his summary comments are suspect and the tone of the book uncritical of HBC explorers, he has nicely detailed individual explorations and provided useful corporate and diplomatic context.

Several final notes. The book is generally well produced, although a garish cover and the inclusion of a series of unremarkable travel photographs taken by the author detract from an otherwise fine presentation. Originally published by the University of Oklahoma Press, the book is being distributed in Canada by the University of British Columbia Press, a collaborative venture one hopes will be repeated on future titles of interest to Canadian readers.

Brandon University KEN COATES

The Nine Lives of a Cowboy, by H. "Dude" Lavington. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1982. Pp. 216.

Told in a conversational style that lends both authenticity and charm, this autobiographical account makes an attractive addition to the small but growing body of literature on the ranching frontier in British Columbia. This is a book that also fits comfortably within what is perhaps the largest category of Western Canadiana — pioneer reminiscences. The author commences with recollections of his childhood on a cattle ranch near Big Valley in east-central Alberta. These memories, many of which have a humorous dimension, provide the reader with an attractive window through which to view the daily routine of ranch life and the rites of passage from youth to manhood in the cattle country. In addition to inculcating certain values and attitudes, such rites had much to do with demonstrating a competence in the traditional cowboy skills, especially the handling of horses.

Among the author's earliest memories is one of homesteaders moving in upon the cattle range in 1910 following the arrival of the railway in the vicinity of the family ranch. This occupation of traditional grazing areas, combined later with the onset of the depression, meant that the next generation of would-be cattlemen literally would have to look for new and greener pastures. For Lavington and his brother, new pastures were to be found in the Cariboo back-country west of Quesnel, and the greater portion of the book focuses upon their efforts between 1931 and 1945 to convert into a ranch several moose meadows along the upper reaches of Baker Creek. After filing pre-emptions on the hay meadows upon which they proposed to centre their ranching enterprise, the brothers' strategy was to obtain summer work as packers or freighters and helping to put up hay or "break" horses on nearby ranches. The money earned was for a winter grubstake that would allow them to spend the winter months isolated on their "ranch" where they could put up buildings, build fences, clear access roads and make other improvements that would eventually earn them title to their pre-emptions and prepare for the day when they might at last acquire cattle. This routine was repeated for a number of years and finally, in 1937, the Lavingtons obtained their first cow. The next stage was wintering the surplus stock of other cattlemen on a cash and share basis. In the autumn of 1938 there were three Lavington steers in the annual Nasko beef drive to Quesnel. They had become legitimate cattle ranchers at last!

In reading such an account one cannot but be impressed by the physical and mental stamina demanded of the pioneer. The back-breaking work, the constant pressures to innovate and adapt and the isolation were still hallmarks of the frontier experience in North America even in the third decade of the twentieth century. This example would seem to suggest that Frederick Jackson Turner's ascription of special formative qualities to the frontier environment may not have been too far off the mark. The frontier tolerated only those whose vigour and determination could endure the unrelenting routine of physical labour. Isolation and limited capital necessitated innovation and adaptation, the second key to survival. Both were qualities that the Lavingtons seem to have possessed in good measure.

Regrettably, the reader, after following the author through his pioneering trials, is left hanging. The story is unfinished, and one is left to speculate what happened once the ranch was operational. An epilogue outlining the subsequent history of Lavington and the L^{c} ranch would have solved the problem.

University of British Columbia DAVID H. BREEN

Vancouver's Fair: An Administrative and Political History of the Pacific National Exhibition, by David Breen and Kenneth Coates. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982. Pp. 192; illus.

The history of a fair like the PNE can provide "a glimpse of how people view themselves and their region, what they feel they have accomplished and what they see as still to be done" (p. 155). As Breen and Coates note in their brief introductory chapter, such a fair comprises a selection of traditional elements descending from English and European fairs of the eighteenth century and before — agricultural and industrial marketing, competition for rewards offered by government or other elites to encourage progress in agriculture and husbandry, entertainment *per se*. It is in the particular forms and relative importance of those elements in a fair that it displays the mentality of its time and place.

When the first Vancouver Exhibition (as the fair was styled before World War II) was held in 1910, its entertainment catered to frontier tastes for burlesque shows, games of chance, horse races and wrestling matches; by the late 1940s it was more family-oriented, featuring Shrine Circus, Miss PNE contest and stage shows by famous entertainers like

Jimmy Durante and Edgar Bergen in addition to the ever-popular races. Although the PNE now has pride of place among agricultural fairs in the lower mainland of British Columbia, this must be attributed to its general success as a public attraction and to the catastrophic failure of its predecessor in that role, the Royal Agricultural and Industrial Society exhibition, whose buildings at Queen's Park in New Westminster burned down in 1929. The Vancouver fair's promoters were reasonably diligent in seeking federal and provincial subsidies for the competitions in agriculture and husbandry which were always part of their show, but farm producers were a small minority of fairgoers and their competitions were important primarily for the country-outing atmosphere they supplied; this status is affirmed by the fair's August date, which was moved back to September in keeping with farm interests only for two years (1919 and 1920). Like many contemporary forms of entertainment, the fair always included a good measure of advertising — consumer-oriented exhibits by manufacturers and by associations of suppliers, a major recent example being the B.C. Federation of Agriculture's "Acres of Food" exhibit of samples and recipes. The relation between the marketing and entertainment functions of the fair could provide an important indication of mentality: if gate receipts plus government grants exceeded the expense of non-marketing entertainment ("attractions," at least some prize money, and a proportion of overhead), then the public can be said to have subsidized the marketing effort; in the contrary case, the advertisers were paying for entertainment to attract the public. This clue is unfortunately not discovered in the present "administrative & political history."

Vancouver's Fair is primarily a history of the association of businessmen which produced the fair, its negotiations for government support and its efforts to obtain the goodwill of local residents and to expand facilities at Hastings Park. The association sought financial independence from government and fickle voters by contracting its facilities out year-round for horseracing, trade shows, football, hockey and rock concerts. The enlarged economic base required the association "to function more as a business than a fair organization" (p. 153); this added new grounds for public criticism (traditionally focused on supposed immoralities in the fair itself) and helped lead to a takeover by the provincial NDP government in 1973. As a presentation of this history, the book is reasonably successful; the reader seeking to know the range of decisions that faced the association and the sequence of its actions will be satisfied.

Fortunately, *Vancouver's Fair* wanders from its narrow purpose to explore "the social dimension of the fair and what it reveals about the urban community" which the authors label "not an explicit part of this study" (p. 5). Unfortunately, these intrinsically valuable excursions are not well integrated and tend to deprive the book of shape. Furthermore, analysis of matters external to the association is inconsistent; the importance of economic conditions for passage of money bylaws for the exhibition is an example. Prosperity is credited for passage in 1910 (p. 16), but the severe depression of 1913 is not mentioned in connection with passage in that year. Defeat in prosperous 1927 is attributed to inadequate cultivation of public opinion, passage in 1930 to remedial action in that regard: "In a time of increasing economic distress, the exhibition association had succeeded in having its largest ever by-law request passed by the electorate" (p. 72).

There are annoying flaws at the level of detail, some involving factual error. The map of 1908 ward boundaries (p. 14) locates Hastings Park within the city, although (as suggested on p. 19) it was not. (The difficulty is that this map superimposes 1908 ward boundaries on the city outline of 1911, following annexation of Hastings Townsite.) The map of 1912 ward boundaries (p. 38) correctly locates Hastings Park in Ward 7, but shows five of the other seven wards with boundaries no ward ever had. The fair is said on page 4 to have "been held annually ... since 1910"; in the 1940s it was not held for five years (ch. 7). There are inconsistencies in the form of index entries: "Bethune, Alexander" (for an alderman and later mayor) *vs.* "McSpadden, Mr. (alderman)" (for George McSpadden).

Vancouver's Fair is a frustrating book. It is not merely an administrative and political history, but its "social dimension" is poorly integrated and as a whole it lacks sharpness of focus as a result. It could have been more satisfying if Breen and Coates had done either more or less.

Washington State University MARGARET W. ANDREWS

The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaskan Panhandle, by Lewis Green. Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1982. Pp. 214; maps and photographs.

A treaty between Great Britain and Russia signed at St. Petersburg in 1825 stipulated that the boundary between British and Russian territory

in northwestern North America would commence "from the southernmost point of the island called Prince of Wales Island, which point lies in the parallel of 54 degrees 40 minutes, north lattitude." From there it would follow the Portland Canal to 56 degrees north and then along "the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast as far as the point of intersection of the 141st degree of west longitude," which meridian it would follow to the Arctic Ocean. Should the summits of the mountains parallel to the coast prove to be more than ten leagues inland, the boundary "shall be formed by a line parallel to the windings of the coast, and which shall never exceed the distance of 10 marine leagues therefrom." In 1825, when neither Russians nor British quite knew what was island and what mainland or much more about the topography than that the whole coast was exceedingly rugged, this was probably as clear a statement as possible. It served well enough until some years after the United States purchased Alaska in 1867. But if the fur trade could get along without precisely defined boundaries, placer gold mining could not. With the mining rushes it became imperative to locate the boundary. The Canadian government, measuring ten leagues from the outer coast of the islands, thought it lay close along the mainland coast. The American government, measuring ten leagues from the mainland coast, thought it lay much farther inland. There could be no argument about the 141st meridian or about 54° 40′ North, but the landward boundary was an inevitable bone of contention. Finally in 1903, after much international wrangling, a fair amount of Canadian and American surveying in extraordinarily difficult terrain, and some years after Klondike, an Alaska Boundary Tribunal decided for a boundary that was closer to the American than the Canadian version. The two Canadians on the Tribunal refused to sign; Laurier felt that Canadian territory had been sacrificed in the interest of Anglo-American entente. Nevertheless, the boundary was settled — but only approximately and on paper. It still had to be surveyed. Over the next fifteen years, in some of the most rugged and least known terrain anywhere, this would be the work of Canadian and American survey parties.

Lewis Green, a geologist with some familiarity with the territory in question and an appreciation of the science of surveying, has told the story of these events. In his telling the tale is less about diplomatic manoeuvring than about men in the wilderness: at first trying to locate the 141st meridian approximately; then during the Klondike trying to establish the boundary on the Chilkoot and White Passes; then, meticu-

lously, surveying the boundary decision of 1903. The telling is full of rivers in flood and upturned boats, drenching rain and wet snow, crevasses, mosquitoes, starving horses and able men doing a job. Here and there Indians come into the story, but essentially the book is about the tracing of a line through wilderness. It rests on a good deal of research in various archives, it is clearly written and the text is usefully supplemented by maps (not quite enough of them) and photographs. All in all it is an attractive, interesting book about a topic of some importance and much intrinsic interest. But it is not a rivetting book, and it is not because it is neither by a master story teller nor by one who has mused about the implications and meaning of this particular venture into the wilderness.

Part of the problem of telling a good story rests with the documents. The surveyors were professionals used to hardship, and their letters and journals are an understated record that, much to the credit of these remarkable men, does make more difficult the telling of their story. Still, one wonders what a Pierre Berton would have done with the same material. And, for a university press publication, one wonders whether telling a story is all there is to it. Lewis Green is not looking for meaning, or even for principal themes, behind his record of events. The subject hardly seems to warrant such introspection, and yet a Canadian-Alaskan boundary survey was also a particular relationship between men and nature mediated by the cultural background of the surveyors and by their setting. So approached, an account of a boundary survey could also have been a study of an important strand of the Canadian experience with nature. The scientific survey of wilderness early became, and remains, a Canadian pattern. To be sure, such a book would have required an author who was rather more an intellectual historian than a geologist. Lewis Green has done what he could, and if *The Boundary Hunters* is taken for what it is and not for what it might have been then it is a solid account of brave men doing a daunting job in extraordinary circumstances. Just how extraordinary, it seems to me, is caught in the question of an amazed Porcupine River Indian when first confronted by a pack horse. "Where you catchum?" he asked the surveyors.

University of British Columbia COLE HARRIS