

## Book Reviews

*Coast Salish Essays*, by Wayne Suttles. Vancouver: Talonbooks; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987. Pp. xiv, 320; index, illus., end-maps, appendix, bibliography. \$29.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

Among the sixteen articles in *Coast Salish Essays*, readers will find both familiar, previously published works from the period between 1952 (e.g., "Notes on Coast Salish Sea-Mammal Hunting") and 1976 (e.g., "Productivity and its Constraints — a Coast Salish Case") and less well-known papers presented at conferences over the past thirty years but not previously published. Suttles arranges the articles thematically into four topical areas and then chronologically, so that they can be read from a topical perspective if desired. No matter how they are approached, the essays are a useful and long-needed collection by one of the most distinguished ethnographers on the Northwest Coast.

Suttles identifies three central concerns, beyond a common ethnographic focus on the central Coast Salish, that lend unity to the pieces:

First, . . . ethnographic description . . . with the goal of presenting the insider's view of the culture . . . [and seeing] how the whole thing works[;] second, . . . the reconstruction of culture history, prehistoric and historic . . . looking for something beyond cultural determinism[;] and third, . . . [dispelling] a stereotyping of 'the Coast Salish' as culturally homogeneous and a pale reflection of the 'real Northwest Coast' to the north. (p. xii)

As Michael Kew points out in the Foreword, Suttles employs a strong Boasian heritage of reliance on fieldwork and "attention to linguistics" (p. x) with a cultural ecological interest in evolution and adaptation (p. x) and a sense of historical reality to deal with these three concerns. For example, one of Suttles' strongest contributions to anthropology in general and Coast Salish ethnography in particular is his success in using linguistics in the service of ethnography. He really does use native language to get inside a culture, both for the insider's view and so that we can understand how sub-systems of that culture work. In "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and

Prestige among the Coast Salish," Suttles uncovers a series of key Halkomelem terms, including one which he translates as 'co-parent-in-law.' 'Co-parent-in-law' is conceptually related to an array of other native terms that together define an exchange of food for wealth among affines in distant villages. This exchange, Suttles finds, is an adaptive strategy that "plays an important part in the Native socio-economic system . . . [as a] link in the relationship between food, wealth, . . . high status" and, ultimately, the Coast Salish potlatch. Suttles has isolated native terms that are indeed keys, unlocking cultural doors and allowing us an enhanced understanding of process and pattern within central Coast Salish culture. Similarly, in a less well-known paper, "Time and Tide," he links native terminology for describing the characteristics of Pacific tides to location of resource sites and calendrical calculations. Both of these papers also demonstrate a cultural ecological perspective and are models of culture historical reconstruction.

Another of Suttles' major contributions is his unwavering affirmation of Coast Salish culture as anthropologically significant in its own right. Two articles illustrate particularly clearly this ethnographic uniqueness. In "Productivity and its Constraints — a Coast Salish Case," Suttles acknowledges that while carvings of high artistic quality were produced in the central Coast Salish area, "in historic times the area to the south of the Kwakiutl seems to have produced far less carving and painting than the area to the north" (p. 100). Further, he attempts to respond to Bill Reid, who, after viewing

. . . an especially fine Coast Salish spindle whorl . . . asked, in effect, when they could produce such a well designed and executed piece as this, why did the Coast Salish not produce more such pieces and more kinds of art? (p. 100)

Effectively dismissing the notion that Coast Salish art is a recent diffusion from the Wakashan (Kwakiutl or Nootka) area, Suttles examines the relationship between art and sources of power and prestige among the Central Coast Salish. He presents a convincing case of cultural reconstruction to show that concrete artistic expression and productivity, in the form of carving and painting, was constrained and restricted by a preoccupation among the wealthy with secrecy and the need to conceal from others even visual images of sources of supernatural power.

The second article, "Spirit Dancing and the Persistence of Native Culture among the Coast Salish" (pp. 199-208), recreates from fieldnotes a winter dance that Suttles attended in 1960 at Kuper Island, near Nanaimo. He emphasizes that the elaborate ceremonial gathering is not unusual or

infrequent on modern Coast Salish reserves, and he remarks that in spite of prolonged contact with white urban society,

... and the almost complete disappearance of Salish material culture, Salish ceremonial life is flourishing. Moreover, ... nothing like this degree of constant activity has been reported for any other part of the Northwest Coast in recent years. This calls for an explanation. What does this Coast Salish ceremonialism really consist of? ... [How] much of it is a direct survival from aboriginal culture, how much is revival, and how much is something newly developed in response to modern conditions? And why should any Native ceremonialism at all persist so vigorously among the Coast Salish here and not among any other group in the area? (p. 203)

Again, Suttles turns to reconstruction of culture history to contrast the modern spirit dance with its aboriginal counterpart and to find clues for its persistence. He points out that the modern version is actually an “uneasy ... alliance between two separate Native institutions” (p. 206) — the spirit dance and the potlatch. Here, his explanation for this “modern melange” (p. 207) becomes harder to follow and not entirely satisfactory. He accounts for the disappearance of the aboriginal form of the potlatch, usually held in late spring or early autumn, in terms of not only its legal suppression and the active opposition of Christian missionaries, but also the decline of the native economic system and the emergence of summer wage work that made winter ceremonies more practical.

On the other hand, Suttles attributes the persistence of spirit dancing to a nativistic expression of Indian identity. More important,

spirit dancing has become the vehicle for the survival of a good deal of potlatch behavior, if not the total potlatch ... [and] this survival implies more cultural isolation than casual observation would suggest. (p. 208)

Suttles seems to be suggesting that the original potlatch has disappeared as a complex socioeconomic adaptation to variation in the physical environment (p. 29) but that the religious and social aspects of the potlatch have survived, embedded in spirit dancing ceremonies, because the Central Coast Salish are not as affected by the proximity of white settlement and the impact of wage economy as we might think. Yet he is puzzled by the survival of some economic aspects of the old potlatch complex, and his tongue-in-cheek suggestion that the Central Coast Salish simply haven't acquired “the good Western virtues of banking, budgeting, and being miserly ...” (p. 208) is acknowledged as unsatisfying. What Suttles apparently does not consider is that the aboriginal environment which he describes with such insight in “Variation in Habitat and Culture on the Northwest Coast” has also changed since the coming of the Europeans.

The habitat of the Central Coast Salish now includes a new cultural dimension — the political economy of white society. Resources in that environment are still predictable, if highly inadequate, in some cases — access to and availability of government transfer payments, for example — and highly unpredictable in others, where employment and unemployment are concerned. Poverty, in the form of restricted and unstable access to adequate income, housing, and other essential resources is well documented for modern Northwest Coast reserves. Kin still help each other out on a daily basis and in times of emergency. When unexpected sources of wealth become available, recipients can put down a new dancer in the big house and potlatch, thereby enhancing their prestige by redistributing both cash and food resources, and ensuring that reciprocity will continue.

Aside from this lapse into cultural determinism, Suttles' work is a joy to read. He writes elegantly and cogently, whether applying his ethnographic skills to an impressive and fruitful analysis of the Sasquatch debate (pp. 73-99) or to more traditional topics.

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MARJORIE MITCHELL

*Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives,*  
by John Cove. Ottawa: Carleton University Press. Pp. 318.

Surprisingly, nothing formal had to be done other than a mental clearing. It was as if Cannibal was there to be reflected without any need to do visualizations or to engage in other beings. I experienced a pure emotion similar to an all-encompassing rage. The closest western metaphor I can think of to describe it would be like Freud's depiction of Id, so basic and indiscriminate that, if unrepressed, could swamp social and cultural overlays.

Rage and self were inseparable. (p. 273)

Thus Cove begins a description of his meditations on the Tsimshian Cannibal initiate, as known from texts collected by Henry Tate (and published by Boas) and Marius Barbeau and William Beynon (preserved in the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa). Earlier in this densely written book he describes trips to a Tsimshian shamanic reality experienced during meditations on shamanic texts and a reconstructed shaman's mirror (so-called; that shamans used these handled ground slate objects is conjectural; that they are mirrors at all seems unlikely insofar as they are poor reflecting surfaces, even when greased). Cove wet the object he used with water which, as it evaporated, produced a tunnel image through which

he entered a shamanic reality in which he encountered fearsome beings and acquired spirit-helpers (p. 173 ff.).

John Cove also spent fifteen years reading the thousand known Tsimshian texts, and eight years working part-time for the Gitksan-Wetsuwet'an Tribal Council. In his fourth visit to the Gitksan, whose "traditions were alive in a way I felt unable to capture," a native friend exposed him "as a games' player whose orientation was one in which Gitksan culture existed for my pleasure" (p. 4). A resulting midlife crisis, and the literature of "philosophical and theological anthropology, which I had not known existed," opened up the possibility of "learning about oneself through other cultures" (p. 5), and Cove embarked upon a new course using Tsimshian texts, and later the shaman's mirror, as tools for self-exploration. "Six years after my first encounter with Tsimshian myths, I had something to ask of them for both professional and personal reasons. I wanted to learn how the Tsimshian defined being human . . ." (p. 5).

Even though his "own field-work among the Gitksan indicates that much of their oral tradition has remained unchanged," Cove decided to work on narratives collected earlier in the century in order to reach back to a pre-contact and pre-reflexive tradition of thought in the early 1800s, the time of white settlement in the region.

My feeling was that there are Tsimshian who could provide the kinds of interpretations desired, or who could evaluate them in a critical way. Assuming they could be found, years would probably have to be spent with them to arrive at any comprehensive view of what it means to be human. Both the time and money needed for such an approach was beyond my resources, and I was limited to checking key points whenever possible. (pp. 47-48)

And so Cove returned to his armchair and his meditations to seek the humanity of the Tsimshian within himself.

There have been two ways to comment on mythological texts since the late Middle Ages. The first, essentially theological, is to mine them for insights into the sacred reality to which they point; the second, essentially anthropological, is to translate the thought of their authors into current categories of Western academic thought. Competence in the original language of the texts is the accepted scholarly methodology for such translations, although fewer and fewer anthropologists practise such humble work. Cove characterizes his own practice as phenomenology, which he calls "active reading," and meditation, and it is the latter "which permits replication of shamanic type experiences" (p. 192). "The major difference between transpersonalism and phenomenology is the former's emphasis on the states of consciousness necessary to experience non-ordinary realities,

and how these can be understood and used scientifically" (p. 165). Transpersonalism, as Cove demonstrates it, is a theological anthropology (formerly two opposed terms) in which the old psychic unity of mankind reappears as mystical sight.

The first words in *Shattered Images* are "This book presents a lie" (p. 1). Among its last are: "this entire book might be seen as a personal, if not cultural, set of projections" (p. 283). It is, I suggest, a cynical (although increasingly popular) anthropology that foregrounds the anthropologist instead of the Indians. Although Cove found it out late, anthropology has always been *about* discovering ourselves through the culturally Other. In return for the privilege we have (I think) a moral obligation to submerge our own concerns when telling their story. This story is, for Cove, a "blend of individual and academic concerns which are for me indistinguishable" (p. 6). Unfortunately, they are also indistinguishable for the reader.

By the way, being human for Cove's Tsimshian turns out to be very like what being human was for the late Ernest Becker.

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MARJORIE M. HALPIN

*Russia's American Colony*, ed. S. Frederick Starr. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1987. Pp. 420, illus.

British and American sovereignty along the northwest coast of North America emerged out of a complex web of economic and political relations among the British, Americans, Spanish, and Russians that by no means predetermined victory for the former two over the latter. Yet British Columbians have tended to see this contest from a British perspective. While Spain's presence in the region has of late become more sharply etched in our historical consciousness through the work of Christon Archer, the same cannot be said of Russia's bid for coastal ascendancy. *Russia's American Colony* is to be welcomed, then, for offering much that will expand our understanding of the context out of which British and American control of the northwest coast emerged.

The book consists mainly of papers offered at an international conference held in 1979 at Sitka, Alaska, where scholars from the Soviet Union, United States, and Canada met to discuss Russia's presence in North America from 1741 to 1867. Edited by S. Frederick Starr of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, which organized the conference, the volume offers fourteen essays sorted into six sections: the opening of the Pacific

Northwest; the tsarist government and its American colony; Russians and native Americans; cultural life in Russian America; Russian America and the United States; and published and unpublished sources.

Throughout the papers one theme supersedes others: the process by which Russians expanded their colonial reach across Asia into Alaska, and then retreated back across the Bering Sea. Soviet scholar B. P. Polevoi traces Russian expansion through Siberia, interpreting it as the “natural result” of Russia’s long-term drive “to meet the sun” (p. 30). York University geographer James Gibson compares Russian expansion in Siberia and America, illustrating both important similarities and crucial differences. In particular, he notes the greater vulnerability of Russian traders in Alaska: the economy was more uniformly based on the extraction of furs, the demographic structure was less mature, with a very small number of Russian women present to create a more balanced European society, and sources of supply remained vulnerable to outside control. More contentious is Russia’s departure from North America, with the tsarist government’s decision to sell Alaska to the United States long the subject of historical debate. New material presented here merely clarifies the sharply etched lines of historical controversy about the sale, three authors seeing it as a product of co-operation and mutual interest between the two Pacific powers, one other, Howard Kushner, restating his well-known case that seventy years of conflict left Russians no choice but to retire to Asia. Clearly written articles by James Gibson and Kushner outline the various factors to be considered in assessing this historiographical debate. From a British Columbia perspective the two essays also describe usefully the context of international politics in the North Pacific at the historical moment when B.C. was deciding its future relationship between the United States and the new Dominion of Canada.

Four other articles merit attention. Mary Wheeler reassesses the Imperial Government’s motives in 1799 for granting to the Russian American Company an exclusive right to hunt and trade in the North Pacific. Carefully tracing the unstable nature of commercial conflict after Grigorii Selikhov, the great Siberian and Alaskan trader, died in 1795, Wheeler argues that the granting of a monopoly not only brought order out of chaos but in so doing enlisted more, not fewer, Siberian traders into the Alaska market. Antoinette Shalkop uses previously neglected church records to illustrate the metropolitan reach of imperial Russia. The central government kept a tight rein on the colonial Russian Orthodox Church, never allowing authorities “to develop solutions that would have been more suitable to their peculiar conditions” (p. 217). The theme of metropolitan influence per-

vades Anatole Senkevitch's study of architecture in Russian America as well. As time passed, he argues, traders expressed "a greater concern for erecting structures that would reflect as closely as possible the architectural traditions of the mother country" (p. 148). Thus, for example, everywhere that Russians settled the ubiquitous *izba* type of structure, "with the characteristic log walls and steep, hipped plank roof . . . predominated" (p. 189). Finally, the best article in the volume, revised from a version published earlier in *Ethnohistory* (1978), is James Gibson's study of "Russian Dependence upon the Natives of Alaska." It traces native-white relations in Russian America through an analysis of structural data on the colony's population, labour force, and trade with the Tlingit Indians. In addition to providing invaluable insight into the nature of colonial Russian society, it is methodologically the most sophisticated piece in the collection.

In fact, Gibson's essay stands out because, by contrast, most of the authors continue to explore traditional historical problems in familiar ways. The latter impression is reinforced in particular by the laboured, essentially narrative, writing style of the Soviet contributors. A comparable volume of essays entitled *Captain James Cook and His Times* (1979), also the product of an international conference, is far more original in scope and method, breaking new ground in analyses of the medical, literary, and scientific implications of Cook's voyages to the south and north Pacific regions. Yet ironically, the differences may simply underline the achievement of the Sitka conference, for they highlight the smaller pool of scholars working on northwest coast studies and the greater difficulty of Russian American historians in gaining access to sources, especially material still unavailable in the Soviet Union.

Despite its limitations *Russia's American Colony* remains a valuable source of information and ideas for British Columbians about development to the 1860s of a geographically close and historically comparable region to the north. It certainly sharpened my sense of the context out of which British Columbia became British.

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ROBERT A. J. McDONALD



*A Progression of Judges: A History of the Supreme Court of British Columbia*, by the Hon. David R. Verchere. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. Pp. x, 196.

The expectations of professional historians and lay readers often diverge, and this has tended to isolate these two groups from one another. Most would-be historians must therefore write with a particular audience in mind and, just as important, academic book reviewers should take care that they review the book the author wrote and not one that they think he ought to have written. For his part, the Hon. David Verchere appears to have put pen to paper not for academics but for his professional colleagues, and they are likely to be well pleased.<sup>1</sup> The book is generally well written and informative, and succeeds in placing within a small compass many aspects of the hitherto untold story of an important institution. However, if his intentions were more ambitious, both he and his other readers are likely to be somewhat disappointed: the text is structurally uneven and only occasionally rises above chronology and anecdote. An astute counsel for the defence might argue that the best historians are interested in the events themselves rather than as manifestations of some larger truth,<sup>2</sup> but most events require more explanation than is to be found here.

That this first attempt at a history of the B.C. Supreme Court was not written for scholars is evident.<sup>3</sup> Well over one hundred pages are devoted to the period from 1853 to 1909, but less than thirty to the court's history since 1929. The result is that the book is somewhat top-heavy, and about two-thirds of the way through, its title becomes literally true: what is supposed to be a history of the court turns into a progression of brief judicial biographies. These begin with birth and end a paragraph or two later with quotations from bar magazine eulogies committed to the principle that one does not (usually) speak ill of the dead. (You know the sort of thing: he was a good judge, we'll all miss him, and were it not for the unfortunate incident involving the handcuffs, he would likely have been chief justice.) Then it is on to the next judge and his abbreviated 'bio,' an approach that

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the review by Justice Lloyd McKenzie of the B.C. Supreme Court published by *the Advocate* (1988), vol. 46 at 281, the bi-monthly magazine of the Vancouver Bar Association. Unfortunately, this review ends with a comma and, unless this is a printing error, it is therefore incomplete.

<sup>2</sup> This was the reason R. G. Collingwood gave for preferring Herodotus to Thucydides: *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1966), 30.

<sup>3</sup> It should also be noted that such histories are rare: the first book on the Supreme Court of Canada appeared only three years ago: see James G. Snell and Frederick Vaughan, *The Supreme Court of Canada: History of the Institution* (Toronto, 1985).

makes for a useful reference work but which detracts from the earlier and much more substantial chapters.

It is true that this judicial assembly line clanks to a halt now and then, but only as an aside. These range from the sort of amusing professional anecdotes that are told and re-told, Rumpole-style, at bar dinners, to public statements that are even more revealing. In the former category are incidents such as Chief Justice Morrison's description of his decision to heal a serious personal breach with a notoriously difficult colleague: "Christ-like of me, wasn't it?" (p. 122). In the latter, one might place Louis-Philippe de Grandpre's complaint, upon his resignation from the Supreme Court of Canada presumably to accept more lucrative employment, that "no other group in Canadian society has been so badly treated" as judges.<sup>4</sup> This nugget, which on its own is worth the price of the book, is in one of the few chapters that deal with topics rather than chronology and it will no doubt stimulate discussion among readers with a rather different view of the judiciary's financial plight. Other examples abound, and in this respect the social historian will find the book useful. But the author, who usually maintains a practised judicial distance, comments adversely only upon men and issues safely in their graves.

The first part of the book comes much closer to being a history of the court, but it suffers somewhat from the lack of a precise critical perspective and because some useful material has been overlooked. The first problem is understandable and can be easily forgiven: to criticize a judge too severely for writing a sympathetic history of his court would not only be silly, but would be to commit the error flagged at the outset of this review. However, an awareness of some recent work in B.C. history, and wider documentary sources, might have helped to shed more light on some of the events discussed.<sup>5</sup> For example, although James Douglas' first attempt to set up a supreme court for Vancouver Island is described, no mention is made of the fact that it was probably unconstitutional.<sup>6</sup> Nor is it true, as

<sup>4</sup> P. 112, quoting from the Canadian Bar Association's magazine, *The National*, March 1980. The reference is to judicial salaries.

<sup>5</sup> I am thinking here of such law-related studies as Robin Fisher's *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver, 1977), Barry Gough's *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians 1846-1890* (Vancouver, 1984), and H. Keith Ralston's work on the early coal miners and their contracts with the HBC.

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 9-13. See editor James E. Hendrickson's excellent introductory essay to the *Journals of the Colonial Legislatures of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1851-1871* (Victoria, 1980, 5 vols.), vol. I, xxiii at xxix-xxx. Douglas' similar attempt to establish a vice-admiralty court was also flawed: Lionel L. Laing, "An Unauthorized Admiralty Court in British Columbia" (1935), 26 *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 10-15.

the author suggests, that the Colonial Office's disapproval of Douglas' refusal to allow unlicensed trading vessels into the Fraser River was solely because the HBC's monopoly was soon to be terminated. The real reason was that their monopoly extended only to trade with the Indians, and it was therefore illegal to require licences of persons who simply wished to supply the miners.<sup>7</sup>

It may also be worth remarking that, although the trial of William King at Hope in 1858 is commented on, the illegality of these proceedings — a point noted some time ago by Walter Sage — is not.<sup>8</sup> Nor is there any mention of the fact that George Pearkes, one of the commissioners appointed to try the accused, was the first man to submit a proposal for establishing a supreme court in the new colony. He did so in his capacity as Crown Solicitor for Vancouver Island, and although his proposals were graciously received, they were in effect rejected as being too elaborate.<sup>9</sup> This was a criticism often made by those in London and, later, Ottawa who had to pay for the changes to B.C.'s justice system that local governments regularly requested.

It would be possible to list some other debatable assertions, but there would be little point because none of them are terribly serious.<sup>10</sup> So too on the technical side: both the index and the bibliography are incomplete (they do not list everything in the text), and there are too many typographical and textual errors which are clearly not the fault of the author.<sup>11</sup> However, much of the book is interesting and readable, and the chapters which deal with the bad relations between the supreme court and the pro-

<sup>7</sup> P. 22. Lytton to Douglas, *British Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 23 (hereafter *BPP*) at 60.

<sup>8</sup> P. 24. See Walter N. Sage, *Sir James Douglas and British Columbia* (Toronto, 1938), 228. The trial was reported to the Colonial Office by Douglas in a despatch dated 12 October 1858 (*BPP*, pp. 280-81), and the illegality lies in the fact that until 19 November 1858 imperial law required capital offences committed in the fur country to be tried in the Canadas.

<sup>9</sup> See Douglas to Lytton, 26 October 1858, and Lytton to Douglas, 30 December 1858, *BPP*, pp. 8, 11, and 74.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Sir Charles Tupper was Prime Minister for ten weeks, not ten months (p. 98), and it was the Judicature Act, not the Judicial Districts Act, that empowered the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to make rules of court (p. 79).

<sup>11</sup> For example: '1949' instead of '1849', p. 6; a misplaced indentation, p. 25; an incorrect insertion, p. 28; 'country' instead of 'county', p. 37; a missing period, p. 54; an incomplete quotation, p. 68; an incomplete citation, p. 89; 'anent' instead of 'about', p. 91; 'thw' instead of 'the', p. 93; and 'Smith' instead of 'Smithe', p. 95. Chapter 4 is missing endnote 4 and on page 68 there is a reference to note 2 in chapter 5 which, when looked up, does not correspond to the text. There is a similar mistaken reference at the bottom of page 52, and on page 131 the second letter quoted was written not by Justice Martin but by Chief Justice Hunter. (Two pages later the reverse occurs, and a reference to Hunter should be to Martin.)

vincial government in the early 1880s and the long-standing feud between Justices Gordon Hunter and Archer Martin a few decades later are exceptionally so.<sup>12</sup> These and the early ones on the establishing of judicial institutions in the colony are in fact the best in a book which, on the whole, makes a valuable contribution to B.C.'s legal history. In short, the Hon. David Verchere is to be congratulated for using his retirement to write a book that will bring pleasure to his fellow jurists and that will provide useful material for more critical scholars in the future.

<sup>12</sup> Chapters 8 and 12. Both episodes have been described elsewhere: on the first, see Foster, "The Struggle for the Supreme Court: Law and Politics in British Columbia, 1871-1885," in L. Knafla, ed., *Law and Justice in a New Land: Essays in Western Canadian Legal History*, 167-213; on the second, Robertson, "When Judges Disagree . . .", *the Advocate* (1957), vol. 15 at 181, and Williams, "Historic Dissents in the Court of Appeal," *the Advocate* (1981), vol. 39 at 115, and "Judges at War: Mr. Justice Martin vs. Chief Justice Hunter," *The Law Society Gazette* (1982), vol. 16 at 295.

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HAMAR FOSTER

*Class, Gender and Region: Essays in Canadian Historical Sociology*, ed. Gregory S. Kealey. St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1988.

It is no longer easy to do good history or good sociology without examining gender relations. The ultimate impact of advances in feminist politics, practice, scholarship, and theory will be radical and far-reaching. If one's research deals with the past two hundred years it is also difficult to ignore the effects of capitalist class relations and the distinctive regional contexts where capitalist expansion and class struggle take place.

The six papers which comprise Kealey's edited book were originally published as a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. They represent important directions taken by current Canadian historical and sociological research. McKay's discussion of worker discontent and militancy in the coalfields of late nineteenth-century Nova Scotia and Darroch's analysis of small property ownership in central Ontario at a slightly earlier time are solid contributions. McKay combines the historian's concern for accurate empirical detail with the sociologist's interest in explanation which uses theoretical models.

The three papers on B.C. history, each based on a doctoral dissertation in sociology, examine working-class formation, practices within the working class, and women's struggles. Conley's paper is theoretically significant.

He shows the value of studying working-class social reproduction in terms of the labour market, work, the consumption goods market, and consumption itself. He emphatically rejects the “teleological certainties” of a “functionalist Marxism” that treats social reproduction as mechanical. He is opposed to emphasizing social structure at the expense of human agency. Analyses of the “constraints and resources shaping the choices and strategies of workers” in their social practices and social relationships are seen by Conley as ways to address the complexity and historicity of class structure and class conflict. He advocates a sophisticated examination of antagonistic class interests, of social relations within the working class (including status groups, ethnic/racial divisions, and labour market competition), and of workers’ mobilization of resources for collective action; all should be seen in the contexts of opportunity and threat, repression and facilitation, power and resistance. Illustrations of this analysis are provided from Conley’s research on Vancouver’s working class in the early years of this century.

Muszinski’s article examines the creation of salmon cannery labour forces in this province, emphasizing native women as a major source of labour, made cheap in part by the continuation of pre-capitalist aboriginal economies as a source of subsistence and the pooling of wages for consumption use in whole villages. On the Fraser many native women were displaced by more subordinate Chinese men who were organized under powerful labour contractors and, following Conley’s analysis, less able to find alternative means of social reproduction. Muszinski’s discussion of gender and racial distinctions among cannery workers demonstrates the fruitfulness of analyzing status *within* capitalist class relations.

Creese deals with working-class practices surrounding the participation of women in the Vancouver labour movement before World War II. Although employed, women were essentially defined as primarily domestic labourers, a conception used to justify their low wages, weak political position in the labour movement, and lack of rights as workers. That many women supported dependents and many men did not was ignored by the labour movement in its pursuit of a family wage. Working-class women struggled for the right to work, for relief, and for equal pay; a growing number began to recognize that their inequalities as workers, as citizens, and as wives were linked together in the interests of the ruling class and of men generally.

Overton’s piece on public relief and social unrest during the Great Depression in Newfoundland is written from an alternative perspective to that found in the other papers. Instead of class relations, Overton discusses

the "elite" and the "poor," terms belonging to a rival theoretical tradition. He does not consider whose interests the government of the time and the Amulree Commission represented. His critique of Piven and Cloward's thesis on how relief payments regulate and control workers is convincing, and one can read in his conclusion the need for a dialectical treatment of social policy and programs as an outcome of resistance and struggle. But a combination of class and gender analysis with an application of Conley's social reproduction framework could make for a better explanation of Overton's subject matter.

It is worth emphasizing two inter-related themes in this timely book which can be usefully applied in future researches on class, gender, and region. One is the analysis of contradictory processes and their effects on consciousness-raising and collective action — e.g., Conley's emphasis on the contradiction between capital accumulation and workers' social reproduction. The other is the use of power by those ostensibly without it.

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RENNIE WARBURTON

*Ethel Wilson: Stories, Essays, and Letters*, ed. David Stouck. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987. Pp. xx, 260.

The most diverting and memorable session of the 1981 Ethel Wilson Symposium in Ottawa was the screening of a 1955 CBC interview of Wilson by Roy Daniells, head of the University of British Columbia English Department. The film delighted the audience for what we perceived to be Wilson's sly and subversive use of a persona of intellectual modesty and genteel decorum to toy gently with the earnest, hapless Daniells. In the absence thus far of a biography of the Vancouver novelist and short story writer, David Stouck's edition of her stories, essays, and letters affords us an opportunity to test this reading of Wilson. Its evidence (though it includes several appreciative comments by Wilson of Daniells) does nothing to disprove the hypothesis of an acute and sardonic intelligence adroitly coming to its own terms with a potentially unpropitious environment in the middle years of this century. "As for my tongue," she writes to John Gray of Macmillan in 1951, "you have revealed to me (and quite right) that perhaps it is congenitally set sideways in my cheek."

*Ethel Wilson: Stories, Essays, and Letters* contains a selection of previously uncollected stories (deleted chapters from *The Innocent Traveller*; three Lucy Forrester stories supplementing the three in *Mrs. Golightly*;

and "The Life and Death of Mrs. Grant," assembled by Wilson from a rejected didactic novel, "The Vat and the Brew"), stories which do not radically change our impression of Wilson's writing but which are welcome additions, particularly for the scholar. It also includes a brief sampling of her public lectures and her essays (including two of the four published in *Canadian Literature*), accompanied, like the stories, by editorial introductions providing a helpful context. A number of both the stories and articles are brief, and their effect is, therefore, rather disjointed. It is only with Wilson's letters, dated from 1944 to 1972 and occupying over half the book, that a coherent sense of her thinking and writing begins to coalesce. The letters, which are serviceably annotated (although some words remain indecipherable and some names and references unidentifiable), are limited, understandably but regrettably, according to Wilson's own wish, to those of a literary rather than personal nature. The collection is indexed and contains a few photographs, some poorly reproduced. It ends poignantly, after details of the Wilsons' extended struggle with health problems, with Ethel Wilson's inconsolable state in the years following her husband's death. "My darling died yesterday," she writes tersely, on that occasion. "How glad I would be to join him."

Ethel Wilson's correspondents here include her Macmillan editors and such familiar names as Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, Mazo de la Roche, Alan and Jean Crawley, Desmond Pacey, and, in later years, Margaret Laurence. Taken with the essays, the letters raise a number of literary issues still current today: the position of the women writer, regionalism, the limitations of creative writing programs, the problem of self-conscious symbolism, and the meaning of "Canadian" writing. Issues of the day — the atomic bomb, the Red Scare of the fifties, press coverage of crime, bilingualism, the 1963 election — appear more fleetingly, but always with a refreshing scepticism and absence of orthodoxy. The self-education Wilson defends in one letter is evident throughout, in her listing of the half-dozen periodical subscriptions she will reluctantly have to suspend during a move, in references to her current reading — Sir Thomas Browne, Pepys, Samuel Butler, Trevelyan — and in her spirited opinions on Richardson (whom she abandons in favour of Trollope), Arnold Bennett, Stendhal, Proust, Faulkner (whom she does not read), Lawrence, Forster, Ivy Compton-Burnett, and Joyce Cary, not to mention Brian Moore, Malcolm Lowry, and Margaret Laurence (whom she admires fiercely).

Readers and critics of Wilson's fiction will find in the collection, too, much thoughtful discussion of her own writing, of its recurring concerns — deceptions of self and others, the irrationality of cause and effect, uneasy

human relations — and its characteristic manner — an alternation, as she sees it, of lyricism and emotion on the one hand and compensatory flatness on the other. Wilson informs us of the genesis of *Lilly's Story* (inspired by a passing reference in *The Innocent Traveller*), discusses an early ending for the story, provides alternate endings for *Love and Salt Water*, and assesses the merits of various pieces (including several now lost) for possible inclusion in *Mrs. Golightly*. One letter seems to describe the storm which provided the inspiration for Mr. Cunningham's ordeal in *Swamp Angel*, permitting us an opportunity to compare originating impressions and final artistic transformation. We also receive Wilson's sometimes conflicting evaluations of her works, often moving from initial reservations to greater confidence but, in the case of *The Innocent Traveller*, expressing an abiding affection. Throughout, in her sensitivity to life's contradictoriness, her insistence on the centrality of voice, her strong feeling for the sentence as the essential bridge in writing (she even refers at one point to "eloquent prepositions" in a Chinese poem and firmly, unapologetically defends her own "sparing eccentricity" in punctuation), we see the sophisticated intelligence which gives her work its exactness of style and tone.

Given Wilson's articulateness about what she is doing, her concomitant, extravagant self-deprecation — the "abject humility," as she herself puts it, with which she downplays her writing or invites delay and rejection or dismisses her comments as mere "vaporizing" — strikes a decidedly odd note, at least from our perspective in time. Like the "slight attack of the shivers" that she acknowledges as an under-educated person writing for a learned journal, it can perhaps best be understood as a psychological reflex in no way interfering with her speaking of her mind. As she points out in that journal article, "one soon resumes the pleasure of ordinary conversation." The pleasure Wilson takes in this informed and thoughtful conversation is one the reader shares.

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*Alberta: Studies in the Arts and Sciences*, Volume 1, Number 1. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988.

In the face of warnings from the very originators of the concept of "limited identities" as an approach to the study of Canadian history and society, can we continue to welcome new provincial or regional journals? As early as 1980 J. M. S. Careless feared that after a vogue of only a



decade "limited identities threaten to take over, and settle the matter of Canadian national identity, by ending it outright. . . ." Five years ago Ramsay Cook declared that "'regionalism' is a concept whose time has gone." Now for many Canadians the decentralizing thrust of the Meech Lake Accord raises new apprehension about the consequences of embodying "limited identities" in the constitution. Conversely, the accord may provide fresh justification for the study of provinces and regions. Or do historians and social scientists exaggerate their own importance if they ask whether they have contributed to "consciousness raising" in "distinct" societies other than Quebec, and have thus helped to create a climate congenial to the acceptance of Meech Lake?

Evidently the founders of *Alberta* are uninhibited by such doubts or questions. The editorial in this first issue declares the journal's aim to "provide the means of seeing Alberta as distinctive not in some accidental particular such as resource revenue or Social Credit but in a unique interaction of the natural and cultural forces that have shaped other regions of Canada." *Alberta* is intended to be "actively . . . multidisciplinary" and its interests "will radiate outward to national and international issues of concern to Albertans."

In format *Alberta* resembles a museum year book or catalogue more than the usual scholarly journal. Excellently printed on glossy paper, its 250 pages contain a wealth of illustrations, many in colour. This reader regrets the journal's adoption of American spelling, as in "center" and "theater"; the defence of Canadian spelling seems to be a lost cause, at least in western Canada.

Although the journal is published by the University of Alberta Press and a majority of the editors and members of the editorial board are academics, several are from museums and other cultural agencies, and the editors note with evident satisfaction that two-thirds of the contributors to the first issue are drawn from the intellectual community outside the universities. To appear twice annually, *Alberta* will publish one issue each year with a special focus, while the other will feature the best articles submitted on any subject from any discipline. Every issue will include bibliographies, bibliographical essays, research notes, book reviews, and a "response section" for the promotion of dialogue among authors and readers. Altogether this is an ambitious plan.

How well does the first issue meet the journal's stated objectives? This one focuses on Alberta's dinosaurs, and especially on the foundation and work of the Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller. (Next year's theme issue will be on popular culture in Alberta.) Since it opened in the

fall of 1985 the Tyrrell Museum has achieved considerable international recognition as a major centre for the study of dinosaurs and as a museum embodying state-of-the-art architecture and display technology. The present reviewer can understand the current fascination with dinosaurs among members of the general public, ranging from young collectors of "dinosaur cards" from cereal boxes to adult fans of dinosaur movies, but has no qualifications for judging the scholarly value of the contributions to this issue. However, I can report that all but the most specialized held my interest, from the article on the extent and scientific importance of Alberta's dinosaur deposits, which are among the richest in the world, through the account of the Dinosaur Project being conducted co-operatively by Chinese and Canadian scientists in Central Asia and in Alberta and Canada's high Arctic.

Reflecting the breadth of the journal's interests, not all of the articles in this issue are concerned with palaeontology in its strictest definition. One article deals with the planning and building of the museum, another with its architecture, while yet another offers a tentative assessment of the economic impact of the museum on Drumheller. One whole section containing five articles is devoted to "The Dinosaur in Art." Whether imaged in sculpture for museum display, in paintings and murals, or providing the integrating theme of Robert Kroetsch's novel, *Badlands*, the artist's presentation of creatures who survived for over two hundred million years and died some seventy million years ago must make a profound impact on our understanding of human history. To some it suggests the possibility of another cataclysmic end in which we "go the way of the dinosaur" through our failure to adapt to a changing environment. "For others," to quote Kroetsch, "especially for those who build cities and plan conservation and create schools, Alberta is no longer a promise but a fact. Theirs is the historical view; and for them, man must make his own and continuing destiny."

The birth of *Alberta* will not settle the "limited identities" debate. On the evidence of the first issue the journal promises to portray a particular region in a large context, to be provincial in scope yet not parochial, and for that it is to be welcomed.

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