

# “THE QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TASK”:

## *Douglas Cole and the Ecumenical Challenge of British Columbia’s Cultural History*

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### INTRODUCTION

**I**N A SPIRIT OF SADNESS AND CELEBRATION, we present this special issue of *BC Studies* honouring the legacy of Douglas Lowell Cole.<sup>1</sup> As a major contributor to the cultural and intellectual history of the Northwest Coast, Cole’s sudden death on 18 August 1997 took everyone by surprise and left a gaping hole that cannot be filled. He was fifty-eight years old and at the peak of his academic productivity. Best known for chronicling the story of the scramble for Northwest

<sup>1</sup> The range of Douglas Cole’s research interests was broad. This *BC Studies* tribute touches on one small part of it – his contribution to the history of Boasian anthropology. Because of this, we were unable to draw from the large community of scholars whose work overlapped with Cole’s. To do so would require a volume much larger than this one.

I wish to extend my gratitude to the many people who have assisted with this special issue. First and foremost, I thank Jean Barman and Cole Harris, who supported the idea for this special volume from the beginning. They also read and commented on all submissions and generally kept the project on track. Joanne Hlina and Carlyn Craig ensured that the final production stage flowed smoothly. Their work on the issue is much appreciated. Alex Long, a former graduate student of Douglas Cole, deserves special mention. Until he was drawn into work commitments in California, he served as co-editor on this project, reading manuscripts and offering assistance in innumerable ways. I am particularly indebted to Heather Gleboff, who prepared the Douglas Cole bibliography and provided invaluable editorial assistance during the project’s final months. David Mattison deserves thanks for introducing the novel idea of a Douglas Cole “Digital Domain.” Dan Savard at the Royal British Columbia Museum gave us special assistance with many of the photographs featured in this issue. He and Kelly Nolan (British Columbia Archives) deserve thanks for producing prints in record time.

Special thanks go to Jack Bumsted, Ira Chaikin, Julie Cruikshank, Brian Dippie, Michael Fellman, Heather Gleboff, Cole Harris, Ira Jacknis, Alex Long, John Lutz, Michael M’Gonigle, Patricia Roy, Cari St. Pierre, and Bruce Stadfeld for taking time to comment on earlier drafts of this introductory essay. Their help has been invaluable. I take full responsibility, however, for any misinterpretations or inaccuracies. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Christine Mullins and Kate Cole, whose lives, more than any others, were affected on a deep personal level by the loss of Douglas Cole.

Coast artefacts during the “museum age,”<sup>2</sup> more recently Cole had turned his attention to documenting the lives of the collectors of these ethnological artefacts. At the time of his death, he had completed the first of an intended two-volume biography of Franz Boas.<sup>3</sup> Entitled *Franz Boas: The Early Years, 1858-1906*,<sup>4</sup> it appeared in November 1999.

*BC Studies* is an ideal venue for this special memorial issue. Douglas Cole was a valued contributor to the journal and a regular participant at the biennial BC Studies conferences. His research profile fulfills the journal’s mandate to be “argumentative ... idea-based, accessible to a range of readers, and in touch with the real ground of British Columbia.”<sup>5</sup> From his arrival here in 1966 from south of the border, Cole made British Columbia a central point of reference in both his work and his home life. He was fascinated by everything about this province but especially by its culture – its art, literature, films, architecture, music, museums, and galleries.

Few, however, even among his close colleagues, understood fully the logic of his intellectual choices. How could one move from Sigismund Bacstrom’s Northwest Coast drawings in 1980 to the letters and diaries of geologist George Dawson in 1989? What did landscape art have to do with BC history? And why was a historian writing about Franz Boas? Was this not the turf of anthropologists?

Cole, however, had a clear vision of how it all fit together. From his earliest writings on the problems of “nationalism” and “imperialism” in British settlement colonies<sup>6</sup> to his last essays on leisure, taste, and tradition,<sup>7</sup> he systematically studied the rich and largely uncharted tapestry of British Columbia’s cultural history. It was a solitary experience,

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the following: *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1985; reprinted with a new preface, Vancouver/Norman: UBC Press/University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Cole received the publisher’s initial edited copy just before he died. Two former graduate students, Ira Chaikin and Alex Long, undertook the final editorial work on the manuscript during the fall of 1998. It took them approximately four months to complete this task. “We read through the manuscript five times,” notes Long, “identifying problems, reviewing endnote and bibliographic sources, and preparing an index.” Chaikin and Long also assembled a collection of photographs for use in the book (Alex Long, personal communication, 6 March 2000; Ira Chaikin, personal communication, 7 March 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> “Editorial,” *BC Studies* 108 (Winter 1995-6): 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> “The Problem of ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Imperialism’ in British Settlement Colonies,” *Journal of British Studies* 10, 2 (1971): 160-82.

<sup>7</sup> “Leisure, Taste and Tradition in British Columbia,” in *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh Johnston (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), 344-81.

identifying blind spots in the historiography and crossing disciplinary boundaries at a time when such incursions were suspect.<sup>8</sup>

With such a broad contribution, the goal of this special issue is limited so as to highlight Douglas Cole's special contribution to the history of Boasian anthropology. He stimulated and inspired many scholars and students, some of whom have contributed essays to this volume. He was a risk-taker, with no fears either of venturing into other scholars' territories or of positioning himself on the wrong side of political correctness. A committed empiricist whose research was author- rather than theory-driven, he never wavered from the descriptive narrative genre, defending it openly against the new post-modernist challenge to its legitimacy.<sup>9</sup>

#### SCHOLARSHIP AND PLACE

Cole was born on 9 December 1938 near Spokane, Washington, where his father, a union activist, worked on the construction of the then secret Hanford nuclear facility.<sup>10</sup> In a *Globe and Mail* tribute published just after Cole's death, journalist Alex Rose drew attention to his insatiable intellectual curiosity. This was said to have been nurtured during his childhood by his parents.<sup>11</sup> But he quickly discovered the potential risks of being overly curious. "As a boy," notes Rose, "Douglas wrote a letter to *The Economist* innocently asking for information about the Communist Party; this led to a visit from Hanford security officials and the FBI."<sup>12</sup>

Cole carried a commitment to social justice throughout life. At a special memorial service hosted by Simon Fraser University on 9 October 1997 his colleagues lauded his work for the Faculty Association and the Department of History. "I think in the end," noted colleague Bill Cleveland, "what motivated him most deeply was his desire to ensure fairness. He could not abide secret fiscal arrangements, unfair labor practices, or slights to those who were powerless."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See "Publications by Douglas Cole" in this issue.

<sup>9</sup> See Douglas Cole, "Preface to the Reprint," in *Captured Heritage* (1995), vii-xvi.

<sup>10</sup> Alex Rose, "Douglas Lowell Cole," in "Lives Lived," *Globe and Mail*, 19 September 1997, A22.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> "So Very Human, So Very Exceptional," *SFU Faculty Newsletter*, 5. One of Cole's last projects was "a behind the scenes attempt to repair relations between the chair of the Board of Governors and a colleague from another faculty whom he had not even met" (Richard Boyer, "We Are the Better," in *SFU Faculty Newsletter*, 3).

Cole's interest in the Pacific Northwest had deep roots. Except for a brief period in the mid-1960s, while he attended George Washington University in Washington, DC, for a master's degree, Cole never left the region. He took his undergraduate degree in history at Whitman College (1960) in Walla Walla, Washington, and his doctorate at the University of Washington (1968) in Seattle. In 1966 he moved to British Columbia, leaving only for short periods of research or teaching.<sup>14</sup>

Canada loomed large in the mind of this young American long before he settled in British Columbia. It was the focus of both his master's thesis ("The United States and Canadian Diplomatic Independence, 1918-1926") and his doctoral dissertation ("John S. Ewart and the Canadian Nation").<sup>15</sup> The latter chronicled the contribution of the social activist/theorist John Ewart (1849-1933), a lawyer who, early in his career, argued for the right of Roman Catholics and Francophones in Manitoba to operate separate schools. A committed anti-colonialist, Ewart moved to Ottawa in 1904, where he mounted a full-scale nationalist campaign for an independent Canada.<sup>16</sup>

In 1966 Cole was hired as a Canadianist in the newly formed history department at Simon Fraser University. After publishing a series of essays on Ewart and Canadian nationalist movements, he began in the early 1970s to expand his research agenda to include the arts. This was due partly to the influence of Maria Tippett, whom he married in 1971. Tippett had a degree in history and a keen interest in Russian art and culture, which she put aside temporarily to collaborate with Cole on a large historical study of Canadian art and artists.<sup>17</sup>

#### ART AS LANDSCAPE TEXT

Cole and Tippett were particularly interested in artists' depictions of British Columbia's physical terrain throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.<sup>18</sup> Their concern was that the "landscape in the consciousness and identity of Canadians and its perceptions by artists and writers ha[d] been abundantly documented,

<sup>14</sup> In 1974, Cole took out Canadian citizenship.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Cole Curriculum Vitae, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> "John S. Ewart and Canadian Nationalism," in *Canadian Historical Association Papers* (1969): 62-73.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Tippett, *Becoming Myself: A Memoir* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1996), 179-80.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

described and debated”<sup>19</sup> but that “no one had attempted to put the landscape painting of British Columbia into a conceptual framework.”<sup>20</sup> With this gap in view, they published *From Desolation to Splendour: Changing Perceptions of the British Columbia Landscape* (1977), a study of the work of artists such as Paul Kane, the Group of Seven, C.J. Collings, W.J. Phillips, F.M. Bell-Smith, Emily Carr, Jack Shadbolt, and others who painted the BC landscape from the early years of exploration to 1945. The book had strong ties with Cole’s earlier work on Canadian nationalism. As the pair noted in their prefatory remarks, this was not art history, nor was it “a history of painting, even of landscape painting in British Columbia”; rather, this was “cultural and intellectual history” – an enquiry into the “idea of landscape.”<sup>21</sup> Although his work is often (incorrectly) characterized as merely descriptive, this book is typically ahead of its time in its attempt to “read” the paintings for the many and diverse perspectives these artists impose on the landscape.

Working on *From Desolation to Splendour* was a formative personal experience for Cole, drawing him out of the academy and giving him a chance to “make sense of the province he now called home.”<sup>22</sup> It introduced him to an elite circle of dealers, curators, and art critics; it put him in touch with artists such as Jack Shadbolt, author of its foreword; and it took him into museums and galleries throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe in search of art about British Columbia. It also introduced him to auctions, estate sales, and art shops, where he befriended collectors and other specialists knowledgeable about British Columbia art. It even turned him into a bit of an art collector himself. As Tippet explained, “We ... collect[ed] much of the art work in order to study it. We bought paintings, drawings, and prints on the auction block, in antique shops and private galleries, and from the homes of the relatives and friends of the deceased artists, as well as from the artists themselves.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, it demonstrated to him that academic topics could be effectively presented in popular prose. For the remainder of his career, he chose to straddle the academic/trade publishing divide. In this merger of the personal

<sup>19</sup> Maria Tippet and Douglas Cole, *From Desolation to Splendour: Changing Perceptions of the British Columbia Landscape* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1977), 9.

<sup>20</sup> Tippet, *Becoming Myself*, 179. This was the subject of their joint essay, “Art in British Columbia: The Historical Sources,” *BC Studies* 23 (Fall 1974): 25–33.

<sup>21</sup> Tippet and Cole, *From Desolation*, 9–10.

<sup>22</sup> Tippet, *Becoming Myself*, 180.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

and professional, Cole was to the end of his life at the forefront of academic practice.

After *From Desolation to Splendour*, Tippett and Cole pursued separate lines of research, although each was established through this joint book project.<sup>24</sup> While Tippett undertook a large study of the life of Emily Carr, one of the artists profiled in *From Desolation to Splendour*,<sup>25</sup> Cole began to document the history of art collectors and patrons. Within a year, he published "Artists, Patrons and Public: An Enquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven," an essay that foreshadowed his later work on ethnological collectors.<sup>26</sup> Like Tippett, however, Cole never ceased to be fascinated by Emily Carr. At the time of his death, he was completing an essay on Carr entitled, "The 'Invented Indian'/The 'Imagined Emily.'" We have included it in this issue.

#### COMMODIFICATION AS PROCESS

With his interest in the cultural history of British Columbia, Cole could not have been in Vancouver at a more exciting time. His workplace, Simon Fraser University, was a new campus staffed with a large crew of young scholars, many of whom were also transplanted Americans. Vancouver was similarly a haven for 1960s political activists, including war resisters, Vietnam War protesters, and environmentalists. It was the home of Greenpeace.

The province's Aboriginal peoples were attracting a great deal of public attention with the release of the federal government's White Paper on Indian policy in June 1969. The newly formed Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs had established a permanent base in Vancouver, providing its province-wide leadership with a centralized voice and meeting place. From 1967 until 1971 there was steady media attention on the Nisga'a Tribal Council's long dispute over the issue of title to the Nass River Valley, culminating in the Supreme Court of Canada's famous *Calder* decision. Wilson Duff, an expert witness in this landmark case, was now well established in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. From this

<sup>24</sup> Cole and Tippett did not entirely abandon their joint research. They later co-edited a collection of unpublished writings by Canadian artist Walter Phillips, *Phillips in Print: The Selected Writings of Walter J. Phillips on Canadian Nature and Art* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1982).

<sup>25</sup> Maria Tippett, *Emily Carr: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>26</sup> *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13, 2 (1978): 69-78.

base, he promoted the cause of the province's First Peoples while criticizing anthropologists and museums.<sup>27</sup>

Through all of this there emerged a dynamic indigenous arts movement.<sup>28</sup> While George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (featuring Chief Dan George) played to sell-out audiences for months at the Vancouver Playhouse, the Lower Mainland's museums and galleries turned their attention to Northwest Coast artists. As anthropologist Michael Harkin describes it:

The cultural winds of the 1960s were blowing and with them the new politics-of-identity movement ... [P]opular attention to traditional Northwest Coast culture ... and the benefits of traditional culture were being extolled by activists both in the United States and Canada, and most ironically, by white elites. Not only were "hippies" and other youthful members of the counterculture suddenly interested in Indian cultures, some elite institutions in the United States and Canada, especially museums and universities, were placing Northwest Coast art and culture on an elevated platform.<sup>29</sup>

The Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum in Seattle was one such institution. In 1965 Bill Holm, a curator at the Burke Museum, published *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form*, in which he codified Northwest Coast art forms, using as his source material artefacts along the Coast from Bella Coola to Yakutat Bay.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Michael M. Ames, "A Note on the Contributions of Wilson Duff to Northwest Ethnology and Art," in *The World As as Sharp as a Knife: An Anthology in Honour of Wilson Duff*, ed. Donald N. Abbott (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1981), 17.

<sup>28</sup> For more on the appreciation of Northwest Coast artefacts as art, see Ira Jacknis, "The Storage Box of Tradition: Museums, Anthropologists, and Kwakiutl Art, 1881-1981" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1989); see also W. Jackson Rushing, III, *Native American Art and the New York Avante-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

Totem pole restoration projects in the early 1950s initiated by Audrey Hawthorn at the Museum of Anthropology (University of British Columbia) and by Wilson Duff at the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum) helped to fuel the Northwest Coast art movement of the 1960s. For more on this, see: Audrey Hawthorn, *A Labour of Love: The Making of the Museum of Anthropology, UBC, The First Three Decades, 1947-1976* (Vancouver: Museum of Anthropology, 1993); Aaron Glass, "Cultural Salvage or Brokerage? The Emergence of Northwest Coast Art and the Mythologization of Mungo Martin" (unpublished paper); Hilary Stewart, *Looking at Totem Poles* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1993); and Robert Amos, "Mythology of the Hunts," *The Islander*, 2 April 2000, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Harkin, "Past Presence: Conceptions of History in Northwest Coast Studies," *Arctic Anthropology* 33, 2 (1996): 7.

<sup>30</sup> Holm explained that he was "unable to locate a qualified informant from the area covered" and that what he had seen of the contemporary work from the area suggested a general

He was assisted by Bill Reid, a rising artist of Haida descent, who had similarly “reconstructed the rules from examination and analysis of old pieces.”<sup>31</sup> Holm revolutionized Northwest Coast art by introducing, in book form, the means to reproduce it without having to go through the old apprenticeship system.<sup>32</sup>

A series of special exhibitions and art catalogues followed the release of *Northwest Coast Indian Art*.<sup>33</sup> During the two years from 1967 to 1969, the Vancouver Art Gallery opened *Arts of the Raven* (curated by Doris Shadbolt, with the assistance of Wilson Duff, Bill Holm, and Bill Reid); the Vancouver City Museum launched its *Age of Edenshaw* (curated by Wilson Duff); the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology opened a major display of Northwest Coast art at the Man and His World site in Montreal (under the direction of Audrey Hawthorn);<sup>34</sup> and the British Columbia Provincial Museum christened its new 10,000-square-foot facility, along with plans for a permanent exhibit entitled *First Peoples: Indian Cultures in British Columbia*.<sup>35</sup>

This was the context within which Cole undertook his study of BC art and artists. While he and Tippett finalized their review essay, “Art in British Columbia: The Historical Sources,”<sup>36</sup> for *BC Studies* in 1974, the Vancouver Art Gallery launched *Bill Reid: A Retrospective* (curated by Doris Shadbolt), and the University of British Columbia prepared for its move into the new Arthur Erikson-designed Museum of Anthropology (under the guidance of Audrey Hawthorn).<sup>37</sup>

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“lack of understanding by Indian craftsmen of the principles that are the subject of this study” (Vancouver: Douglas, 1965), vii.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., ix. The son of a Scottish-German father and a Haida mother, Reid was raised in Victoria, British Columbia, unaware of his Haida background until his teens. Prior to embarking on a career in art, he worked as a commentator for CBC in Toronto. Recently, Reid’s legacy has been at the centre of some controversy. See Jane O’Hara, “Trade Secrets,” in *Maclean’s*, 18 October 1999, 20–30.

<sup>32</sup> Holm and Reid formed a close collaboration, co-authoring *Form and Freedom: A Dialogue on Northwest Coast Indian Art* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1975).

<sup>33</sup> Michael Ames lists over thirty temporary exhibits and two permanent exhibits of Northwest Coast material culture at museums and art galleries in Vancouver and Victoria between 1956 and 1980. See his *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 65–6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> For more on this see Peter Corley-Smith, *The Ring of Time: The Story of the British Columbia Provincial Museum*, British Columbia Special Museum Publication 8, Victoria, BC, 1985, 27–46. The permanent *First Peoples* exhibit did not open officially until 7 January 1977 (ibid., 46). Unfortunately, Corley-Smith does not provide the names of key figures responsible for designing this permanent exhibit. Ira Jacknis, however, includes them in “Storage Box of Tradition.”

<sup>36</sup> *BC Studies* 23 (Fall 1974): 25–33.

<sup>37</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours*, 65–6.

Northwest Coast artefacts, regarded just two decades earlier as scarce and relatively valueless,<sup>38</sup> were suddenly transformed into “monumental masterpieces,” grand “works of art” fuelling a “multi-million dollar industry.”<sup>39</sup> Art shops and galleries throughout the region stocked all varieties of prints, jewellery, baskets, blankets, masks, rattles, drums, and other items created by a growing community of artists that included Bill Reid, Robert Davidson, Joe David, Roy Vickers, Walter Harris, Henry Hunt, Richard Hunt, Tony Hunt, and Norman Tait, to name but a few.

As Cole toured the galleries and museums for his research on *From Desolation to Splendour*, he observed that this cultural florescence ignored a key variable. In its concern for the study and reproduction of the old artefacts stored in museums, it failed to consider how these items got there in the first place. As he explained: “I stumbled upon this subject and became fascinated by the question of how all the artifices of the natives of the area in which I live got from here to ... a score and more museums as far distant as New York, Berlin, and Leningrad.”<sup>40</sup> Except for a couple of book chapters, “there [were] few precedents and no models,” he explained, “upon which I could lean in the writing of such a book.”<sup>41</sup> Cole began in earnest to fill this gap, publishing “The Bowls Are No Longer Here: Ethnological Collecting on the Northwest Coast” in 1978,<sup>42</sup> “Totem Pole Restoration on the Skeena, 1925-30” in 1980,<sup>43</sup> and “Tricks of the Trade: Northwest Coast Artifact Collecting, 1875-1925” in 1982.<sup>44</sup>

He could not have moved ahead quickly with his account of “white history about Indians and ... their procurable culture”<sup>45</sup> without the assistance of two important new works of BC history. The first was *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, published in 1977 by Robin Fisher, Cole’s colleague at Simon Fraser University.<sup>46</sup> A revision of a doctoral dissertation that was written under Margaret Ormsby and Wilson Duff, Fisher’s *Contact and Conflict* was the first comprehensive history of early “Native-White” relations in British Columbia. His thesis that Aboriginal

<sup>38</sup> Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ames, *Cannibal Tours*, 60.

<sup>40</sup> “Introduction,” *Captured Heritage*, 1985, x.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter* 18 (October 1978): 5-10.

<sup>43</sup> Co-authored with David Darling, *BC Studies* 47 (Autumn 1980): 29-48.

<sup>44</sup> *Canadian Historical Review* 63 (1982): 439-60.

<sup>45</sup> “Introduction,” *Captured Heritage*, xi.

<sup>46</sup> Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977.

peoples, particularly on the Coast, prospered during the fur trade, acting as intelligent and energetic traders quite capable of driving a hard bargain while developing new styles of art and ritual, provided just the context that Cole required for his own version of “contact history.” Indeed, Fisher’s enrichment thesis, which depicted British Columbia’s Aboriginal peoples as active players in their own cultural destiny, became a central theme in much of Cole’s work.

The other influential work was Rolf Knight’s *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930*, which was published the following year.<sup>47</sup> Knight’s goal was to dispel the popular myth that Aboriginal peoples were living a pre-contact lifestyle during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He systematically highlighted their presence in all facets of British Columbia’s industry (e.g., commercial fishing and cannery operations, logging, sawmilling and longshoring, prospecting, mining and railway work). His chapter, “The Ethnographic Trade and Tours,” provided the first analysis of the movement of artefacts between collectors and makers as a form of economic exchange. Knight documented the activities of little-known buyers and collectors – such as Aurel Krause, Adrian and Filip Jacobson, James Swan, Charles F. Newcombe, and Marius Barbeau – and their dealings with Aboriginal peoples. He described early ethnographic tours (e.g., the Nuxalk in Germany in 1885-6, the Kwakwaka’wakw at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, and the Kwakwaka’wakw and Nuuchahnulth at the St. Louis Universal Exposition in 1904). He also described the importance of Haida carvers in the early and later curio trade and the prominent roles played by First Nations cultural brokers – such as George Hunt, Charles Nowell, Charles Edenshaw, and Bob Harris – in the entire process.<sup>48</sup>

Although Cole did not credit Knight’s chapter directly, there is no doubt that it influenced *Captured Heritage*. A detailed history of ethnological collecting, showing how and why “the city of Washington contained more Northwest Coast material than the state of Washington and [why] New York City [held] ... more British Columbia material than British Columbia herself,”<sup>49</sup> *Captured Heritage* had strong links to Knight’s chapter. Although he focused mainly on the unequal nature of the exchange of artefacts between Europeans and First

<sup>47</sup> Vancouver: New Star, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> Knight, “Ethnographic Trade and Tours,” 41-52.

<sup>49</sup> Cole, *Captured Heritage*, 286.

Nations, Cole, like Knight, refused to present First Nations peoples as “naive victims of shrewd Westerners.”<sup>50</sup> First Nations peoples, he argued, were often active participants in the art and artefact market, exploiting it for their own purposes. Because a range of ethnographic trade items – such as horn spoons, stone tools, wooden bowls, and bows and arrows – were falling out of use when the museum collectors arrived, many people did not have great difficulty parting with them. Moreover, he noted, “Indians knew how to swing a deal to advance their advantage, how to capitalize upon a field collector’s haste, how to endow an article with a sacred function it may not have possessed, even how to fake old out of new.”<sup>51</sup>

Cole had concerns about his new book’s reception, which he aired openly in its introductory chapter. “It is white history about Indians,” he explained. “It is also contact history, not ethnohistory; it is partly cultural history, partly museum history, partly the history of anthropology, and even a little history of taste.”<sup>52</sup> He worried about his colleagues’ reactions to it:

It is written by a professional historian aiming at the (quite impossible) task of satisfying his peers, but with a realization that if it interests anyone, it will likely be anthropologists and ethnohistorians and that it is they, rather than my historical colleagues, who will make the most judgments upon it.<sup>53</sup>

Reviews by both anthropologists and historians, however, were uniformly positive, quickly dispelling any such fears.<sup>54</sup> Anthropologist Daniel Boxberger (Western Washington University) called it “a remarkable synthesis of previously unpublished information regarding the methods and motivations of collectors – German, French, British, Canadian, and American – who combed the Northwest Coast for items of native manufacture.”<sup>55</sup> Historian Barry Gough (Wilfrid Laurier University)

<sup>50</sup> Cole, “Preface to the Reprint,” 1995, xii.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Cole, “Introduction,” 1985, xi.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> The book was reviewed by a large number of scholars who represented a variety of disciplines: Joan Mark, *Journal of American History* 73, 1 (June 1986): 212–3; Marian Boelscher, *Anthropos* 82, 4/6 (1987): 674–5; Suzi Jones, *Winterthur Portfolio* 21, 4 (Winter 1986): 321–3; George Pierre Castile, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 77, 2 (April 1986): 72; Karen Duffek, *Anthropologica* 32, 3 (1990): 285–6; Ronald L. Weber, *American Indian Art Magazine* 12, 3 (Summer 1987): 71; Daniel Boxberger, *American Indian Quarterly* 11, 2 (Spring 1987): 168; Barry Gough, *American Historical Review* 91, 4 (October 1986): 995; Richard Mackie, *British Columbia Historical News* 9, 2 (1986): 31–2.

<sup>55</sup> Review of *Captured Heritage* in *American Indian Quarterly* 11, 2 (Spring 1987): 168.

described it as “brilliantly conceived and skillfully executed” and praised it for “going beyond the usual policy studies and cross-cultural research in which historians are commonly engaged.”<sup>56</sup>

#### POSTMODERN TURN AND TURN AGAIN

The release of *Captured Heritage* could not have been more timely. It appeared on the cusp of a postmodernist turn in the social sciences – a turn that shook the foundations of anthropology, unleashing a full-scale “crisis of representation.” From the mid- to late-1980s, everything the discipline stood for was systematically called into question: culture was no longer a scientific object but, rather, something “created, as is the reader’s view of it, by the active construction of a text.”<sup>57</sup> Fieldwork was “a complex interpretive process” rather than “a simple visual or auditory one.”<sup>58</sup> Whether defending the old paradigm or ushering in the new, anthropologists began systematically to reinterpret the history of their discipline, focusing on the classic works and authors.<sup>59</sup>

But Cole’s work was typically understated in its theoretical pretensions, written in a straightforward descriptive narrative style and incorporating none of the rhetoric of the new theory. Nevertheless, *Captured Heritage* is a deconstructive study of the colonial underpinnings of the discipline in that it illuminates the uneasy ties between the establishment of anthropology and the construction of museums in Europe, Russia, and the United States; explores the exploitative dynamics of the salvage ethnographic paradigm, particularly under the direction of German-American anthropologist Franz Boas; and exposes the politics behind such enterprises as live exhibits at world expositions. All of these themes were integral to the emerging postmodern analysis.

In 1985, George Stocking Jr., professor of anthropology and history at the University of Chicago, released *Objects and Others: Essays on*

<sup>56</sup> Review of *Captured Heritage* in *American Historical Review* 91, 4 (October 1986): 995.

<sup>57</sup> John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 7. Among the key figures in this movement were Johannes Fabian (*Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1983]); George Marcus and Michael Fischer (*Anthropology as Cultural Critique* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986]); James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>58</sup> Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*.

*Museums and Material Culture*, an edited collection of critical essays on museum culture.<sup>60</sup> In his introductory essay, Stocking apologized for the lack of a contribution on “the actual processes of collection of objects.”<sup>61</sup> James Clifford reiterated Stocking’s point in the volume’s concluding essay, noting that more work needed to be undertaken on the collecting and recontextualizing of non-Western objects in museum exhibits (e.g., the Boas Room of Northwest Coast artefacts in the American Museum of Natural History). “This ... beautiful, dated hall,” he noted, “reveals not merely a superb collection, but a moment in the history of collecting.”<sup>62</sup> Little did they realize that *Captured Heritage*, released within months of their volume, had already filled this gap.

Not surprisingly, the book was picked up by leading scholars. Within a year of its publication, Duke University anthropologist Virginia R. Dominguez made it the focus of an important review essay in *American Ethnologist*.<sup>63</sup> Her essay, entitled “The Marketing of Heritage,” described Cole’s “straightforward narrative about men with museum connections running up and down the Northwest Coast buying and hoarding Indian artifacts from about 1860 to 1935” as an “inspiration.”<sup>64</sup> On the trading abilities of Northwest Coast indigenous peoples, Dominguez noted: “I, for one, have never seen a more vivid picture of how it all worked and how it was transformed than in Cole’s detailed description of their prolonged encounter with ethnological collections.”<sup>65</sup> It is an illustration, she stressed, “of some of the *practical* consequences of what Michel Foucault might have called the 19th and 20th centuries’ emergent Euro-American discourse on ‘man.’”<sup>66</sup>

Although Cole was flattered by such attention, he remained sceptical of the postmodernist connection, rejecting the language of the latter as “fashionable and trendy.”<sup>67</sup> Despite his distaste for it, however, his work on the history of anthropology kept him within its theoretical sphere.

<sup>60</sup> Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

<sup>61</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., “Essays on Museums and Material Culture,” in Stocking, ed., *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Cultures*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 13.

<sup>62</sup> James Clifford, “Objects and Selves – An Afterword,” in Stocking, ed., *Objects and Others*, 245.

<sup>63</sup> Virginia R. Dominguez, “The Marketing of Heritage,” *American Ethnologist* 13, 3 (1986): 546–55.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 551.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 547.

<sup>67</sup> Personal communication with Douglas Cole, 1996.

## BEHIND THE MASK

In his research for *Captured Heritage*, Cole tracked the individual lives of major ethnographic collectors throughout British Columbia, most notably Franz Boas. A German by birth, Boas immigrated to the United States, where he held prominent positions at the American Museum of Natural History and Columbia University. He almost single-handedly turned Northwestern North America into one of the most important field sites in the history of the discipline. Cole became fascinated by Boas's part in shaping current perceptions of Canada's Northwest Coast. In many ways this new interest had ties to his earlier work on Canadian nationalism.

Interest in Boas was on the rise due to the work of scholars such as George W. Stocking Jr. and Ronald Rohner. Both provided important groundwork for Cole. Stocking's *Race, Culture, Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, published in 1968, was the first comprehensive historical analysis of Boasian anthropology.<sup>68</sup> Partly in reaction to the sharp criticism of Boas by such neo-evolutionist anthropologists as Leslie White and Marvin Harris,<sup>69</sup> Stocking set out to study the fundamental assumptions underlying Boasian anthropology, thereby situating Boas more broadly within the larger history of the discipline. "There was little solid scholarship on Boas at the time," Stocking noted in 1974. "There is still no single volume that treats the total range of Boas' anthropological endeavor during the decades in which he reshaped American anthropology."<sup>70</sup>

Shortly after Stocking embarked on this project, Rohner also turned his attention to Franz Boas, but from a different angle. Whereas Stocking had steered away from the personal side of Boas, focusing instead on intellectual history,<sup>71</sup> Rohner did the opposite. He focused on Boas's personal letters and diaries, which were written from the Northwest Coast between 1886 and 1931.<sup>72</sup> What he uncovered through this process had an unsettling effect on the anthropological community. While conducting his own fieldwork on the Central Coast

<sup>68</sup> New York: Free Press, 1968; see also George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911: A Franz Boas Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>69</sup> Leslie A. White, *The Ethnography and Ethnology of Franz Boas*, Bulletin of the Texas Memorial Museum 6 (Austin: Texas Memorial Museum, 1963); Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (New York: Crowell, 1968).

<sup>70</sup> George W. Stocking, Jr., "Preface," in Stocking, *A Franz Boas Reader*, v.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ronald Rohner, ed., *The Ethnography of Franz Boas: Letters and Diaries of Franz Boas Written on the Northwest Coast from 1886 to 1931* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

of British Columbia in 1962, Rohner had encountered elderly Aboriginal people who had conflicting opinions about Boas. Some insisted that "Boas was wrong" or that "Boas had been misled by George Hunt," his principal informant for over forty years.<sup>73</sup> Still others mused that "Boas' data related to some other 'Kwakiutl' group, but not to themselves."<sup>74</sup> Rohner found that even Boas's published reports were being challenged in the communities where he had worked. Rohner concluded from this that Boas's data must be more complex than originally assumed. It also appeared, from Boas's personal letters and diaries, that the profession's leading advocate of field research may not have been altogether comfortable doing fieldwork. It validated questions about Boas raised by anthropologist Leslie White some years earlier:

We do not know much about how Boas conducted himself in the field, what his relationships with the Indians were like and so on. Was he ever accompanied by his wife and children? This invariably affects profoundly the relationship of the ethnographer to the people he is studying. Did he take part in the daily life of the people? For one who "must be understood first of all as a field worker" (Lowie 1937, 131), we know precious little about his life and work in the field.<sup>75</sup>

Such details caught Cole's attention. With confirmation in print that Stocking would probably never undertake a personal biography of Boas, and that Rohner would probably go no further with his work on Boas's diaries, Cole moved quickly to fill this void. Intellectual biography, after all, had launched his historical career. More important, the Boas biography offered Cole an opportunity to draw on the rich research archive that he had assembled for his work on ethnographic collecting.

Using Rohner's *The Ethnography of Franz Boas* as a model, Cole published an abridged version of Boas's letter-diary written from Baffin Island during a fifteen-month period in 1883-4.<sup>76</sup> The lead essay in the first volume of a new international monograph series, "History of Anthropology," founded and edited by Stocking, it placed

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> White, *Ethnography and Ethnology of Franz Boas*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas Cole, "The Value of a Person Lies in His *Herzensbildung*": Franz Boas' Baffin Island Letter-Diary, 1883-1884," in *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 13-52.

Cole in a distinguished circle of international scholars writing on the history of anthropology.<sup>77</sup> But Cole did not restrict his research on individual ethnographers to Boas; he simultaneously worked on the careers of those contemporaries of Boas who figured prominently in the formation of early Canadian anthropology.

One of these was George M. Dawson. As a key player in the Canadian arm of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the organization that funded Boas's fieldwork in the Pacific Northwest from 1888 to 1897, Dawson occupied an important position in determining the direction of early ethnographic activity in that region. Cole discovered the unpublished letters and diaries of George Dawson among the Dawson family papers housed at the McGill University Archives in Montreal. A senior employee with the Canadian Geological Survey, Dawson had travelled throughout British Columbia in the 1870s, recording information on the distinctive mineral deposits, flora, and fauna of the region. Of interest to Cole were the ethnographic collections he assembled and the notes he made on indigenous peoples while doing his geological work.

With his colleague, Bradley Lockner, Cole edited this work and published it under two titles: *The Journals of George M. Dawson, 1875-1878* (two volumes)<sup>78</sup> and *To the Charlottes: George Dawson's 1878 Survey of the Queen Charlotte Islands*.<sup>79</sup> As with Rohner's *The Ethnography of Franz Boas*, these volumes offered rare glimpses of the province's landscape and its Aboriginal peoples through the eyes of an elite, White, nineteenth-century male observer. In the spirit of much current scholarship, Cole and Lockner cautioned readers to consider the "assumptions and prejudices" built into these observations:

Its value resides in its description of Haida customs as Dawson learned about them during his trip, partly from a few Haida and partly from the missionary Collison and others. His understanding is necessarily imperfect, especially of religious beliefs and ceremonial practices. The account is tinged with the almost inevitable condescension of a white, nineteenth-century observer. Readers must view the essay with caution, as a document that tells us a great deal about the Haida but also something about Dawson's own assumptions and prejudices.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> This was a *History of Anthropology* volume-series edited by Stocking. Its editorial board included a number of leading international scholars: Talal Asad, James Boon, James Clifford, Donna Haraway, Curtis Hinsley, Dell Hymes, Henrika Kuklick, and Bruce Trigger.

<sup>78</sup> Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989.

<sup>79</sup> Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

## AGAINST THE FLOW

While finalizing *Captured Heritage* and editing the Boas and Dawson material, Cole was invited to present a lecture on the potlatch ban at the Seattle Art Museum as part of the special exhibit *Box of Daylight: Northwest Coast Indian Art*, curated by Bill Holm. His preparation for this talk revealed that, although the potlatch ban was a powerful public symbol, there was little serious historical study of the subject beyond Forrest E. La Violette's somewhat superficial and dated *The Struggle For Survival: Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in British Columbia* (1961).<sup>81</sup> With this gap in view, Cole assigned a new graduate student, Ira Chaikin, to the topic in June 1985. Within a very short time, Chaikin turned up enough new material on the subject for a book-length study.<sup>82</sup> With a book contract from Douglas and McIntyre in hand, the two formed a co-authorship team that, in 1990, led to the publication of *An Iron Hand Upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast*.<sup>83</sup>

As the first historical work devoted entirely to potlatch legislation, the book was important and timely. And again, it took an unconventional approach. Cole and Chaikin argued that, although the anti-potlatch ban was a serious "instrument of coercion," its power and effect had been over-emphasized.<sup>84</sup> In fact, the "iron hand," they argued, never quite worked, and the reactions-at-large to the ban were highly nuanced. There were numerous cases in which, for example, some Christian First Nations had petitioned for the ban; in turn, they noted that government support for the ban was, in fact, quite limited. Federal government support came largely via the zealotry and stubbornness of one individual, Duncan Campbell Scott. Neither the provincial government nor the general public supported it. Most Indian agents did not enforce it, and more remote peoples were generally left alone. Only the Kwakwaka'wakw, they argued, suffered long-term direct consequences stemming from the ban.

This book, unlike *Captured Heritage*, generated divergent reviewer responses. Anthropologists Sergei Kan (Dartmouth College) and Jo-Anne Fiske (University of Northern British Columbia) argued that the authors had relied too heavily on a literal reading of the official written record, thus missing the subtle indigenous meanings of the potlatch – meanings that could have been elicited through interviews

<sup>81</sup> Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961.

<sup>82</sup> Personal communication, Ira Chaikin, 28 November 1999.

<sup>83</sup> Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1990.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

with elders in various communities.<sup>85</sup> Some of the Aboriginal statements against the potlatch, argued Kan, could well have been coerced or presented as rhetorical devices to “placate a powerful enemy.”<sup>86</sup> It was quite possible also, he noted, that “many of the conservative natives who refused to give up potlatching were never given any opportunity to speak on the subject.”<sup>87</sup> Anthropologist Michael Harkin (University of Wyoming) wrote that, although “the book will stand as the definitive account of the potlatch law and as an important contribution to the literature on Canadian Indian policy ... it cannot be said to contribute significantly to an understanding of Northwest Coast native peoples.”<sup>88</sup>

Although legal historians DeLloyd Guth (University of Manitoba) and Hamar Foster (University of Victoria) welcomed the book for its “clarity ... and balanced judgments”<sup>89</sup> and for doing for “both law and history a genuine service,”<sup>90</sup> they, too, expressed concerns about parts of it. Guth, like Kan and Fiske, pointed to its weak introduction to the definition of the potlatch, arguing that the authors treated that institution like a product rather than a process.<sup>91</sup> Foster noted the book’s failure to “identify with (or even identify) a particular theory of the relationship between law and social change.”<sup>92</sup>

Historians’ reviews were mixed. While J.R. Miller (University of Saskatchewan) and Kerry Abel (Carleton University) generally praised the book,<sup>93</sup> Robin Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm (University of Toronto) were less enthusiastic. In an extended review essay for the *Canadian Historical Review*, Brownlie and Kelm focused on the final chapter of the book, in which Cole and Chaikin stated that “it could be argued that ... the law could be justified to the extent that it sought to assist those victimized by a system that was itself sometimes coercive.”<sup>94</sup> Such a position, they argued, was blatantly Eurocentric, softening and even denying the impact of colonialism.

<sup>85</sup> Sergei Kan, review of *An Iron Hand*, *Anthropos* 87 (1992): 258; Jo-anne Fiske, review of *An Iron Hand*, *Canadian Historical Review* 73, 2 (1992): 249.

<sup>86</sup> Kan, review, 258.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Michael Harkin, review of *An Iron Hand*, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 15, 4 (1991): 147.

<sup>89</sup> DeLloyd J. Guth, Review of *An Iron Hand*, *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 9, 2 (1994): 229.

<sup>90</sup> Hamar Foster, review of *An Iron Hand*, *BC Studies* 91-92 (Autumn 1991-2): 224.

<sup>91</sup> Guth, review, 225.

<sup>92</sup> Foster, review, 223.

<sup>93</sup> Kerry Abel, review of *An Iron Hand*, *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 24, 1 (1992): 148-9; J.R. Miller, “Stamping Out a Way of Life,” *Star-Phoenix*, Saskatoon, 2 February 1991. D10.

<sup>94</sup> Brownlie and Kelm, “Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi?” in “Notes and Comments,” *Canadian Historical Review* 75, 4 (1994): 177.

Cole had at least one opportunity to respond in print to this criticism. "We knew that some of it would not be welcomed among the orthodox," he wrote, "and that a reaction was predictable. Indeed it was predicted."<sup>95</sup> Although he accepted the bulk of it, he lashed back at Brownlie and Kelm, arguing that their criticism was moralistic rather than substantive. Moreover, he explained, in places they were "just plain wrong."<sup>96</sup> They had overlooked, for instance, "the fact that the discussion of victimization and coercion" was focused on anthropologist Elwin Hatch's *Culture and Morality: The Relativity of Values in Anthropology* (1983), in which the latter "attempts to find a way out of the philosophical difficulties of ethical and cultural relativism."<sup>97</sup> As Cole explained:

In citing that children, the old, and women *may* have been victimized by the system, we were testing the applicability of Hatch's humanistic standard of avoiding coercion. All of this was then a ... dialogue with Hatch about applicable standards of ethical judgment. Brownlie and Kelm willfully ignore this context and pervert it as a caricature ... We were not taking stands that we had already announced the difficulties of doing. Brownlie and Kelm misconstrue our text.<sup>98</sup>

In a manner uncharacteristic of his interactions with graduate students, Cole publicly challenged the academic credibility of Brownlie and Kelm, both of whom were graduate students at the time. "In a real sense, they patronize those they seek to defend," he charged. "Their real interest lies not in understanding the past, but in condemning it."<sup>99</sup>

During this heated exchange over *An Iron Hand*, Cole's decade-old *Captured Heritage* was reissued by a new publisher, offering an opportunity for an updated preface.<sup>100</sup> Cole used this as a forum in which to defend his empiricist position. In a tone similar to that used in his *Canadian Historical Review* response, Cole criticized much of the new postmodernist museum scholarship as "relativist" and "Eurocentric," providing "valuable insights into the motivation of Western collectors" while virtually ignoring "the Native side of the collecting encounter."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Douglas Cole, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Responses and a Reply," in "Notes and Comments," *Canadian Historical Review* 76, 4 (1995): 632.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 629.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 632.

<sup>100</sup> Cole, "Preface to the Reprint."

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

He drew attention to the “eagerness of some readers,” journalists and scholars alike, to overlay the issue of theft, even though *Captured Heritage* had stressed that many objects had been purchased, not stolen, by museums. The reality was, in his view, that even though “museum collections can be seen as a product of a colonial encounter, an unequal trading relationship ... [which was] stacked in favour of the dominating economic system,” Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia “entered the art and artifact market themselves, exploited it for their own uses, and often welcomed the opportunities it offered.”<sup>102</sup>

To present museum collections as largely plunder, he argued, simply “makes a travesty of the past” by perpetuating the popular, but false, stereotype that Aboriginal peoples were “naive victims of shrewd Westerners.”<sup>103</sup> Many First Nations peoples became collectors and cultural brokers in their own right; others constructed in bulk many items that were no longer used but that were of interest and value to Westerners.

Cole challenged museologists and art historians to see the contradictions embedded in Western perceptions of “authenticity.” We need, he argued, to understand the different meanings and values assigned to ethnographic objects as they move through time and space:

When Western ethnologists and collectors enter, the objects move into another orbit of value, one determined by Europeans. In this orbit they have a different value, higher in monetary terms than the one they are given in their indigenous sphere. For a moment they are cross-cultural commodities, appropriated to science. But their biographies continue. They may become treasures of a European-conceived art, then also acquire a vicarious value as part of a heritage of Canadian and American societies, and then, in an evolution both remarkable and ironic, become transformed into a value to their former culture.<sup>104</sup>

#### AN UNFINISHED LIFE

Cole’s final project was a two-volume biography of Franz Boas.<sup>105</sup> As a study of one of the leading intellectuals of this century, touching on the history of anthropology and museums as well as on important points in North American and European cultural history, it rep-

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., xii.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., xi.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., xi-xii.

<sup>105</sup>*Franz Boas: The Early Years, 1858-1906* (Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1999)

resented the culmination of his academic career.<sup>106</sup> In his usual style, in the 1970s Cole had identified an important gap in the literature on Boas. Despite the magnitude of Franz Boas's reputation, no one had written a comprehensive biography of the man. The existing two book-length studies of Boas had made little use of family material.<sup>107</sup> The general view was in keeping with Verne Ray's 1953 statement that a biography of Boas would be difficult due "to a lack of writings, public or private, that would add color to the portrait."<sup>108</sup> Having looked at the Boas family papers, numbering more than 60,000 items, Cole knew that this was not the case. Indeed, the latter were rich and varied, consisting of notes, personal correspondence, and photographs. These and a range of German archival sources had been overlooked, in Cole's view, because so much of it was accessible only through the German language, which was "no longer commanded by North American scholars."<sup>109</sup>

Cole saw a pattern in this material that called for a two-volume study. Because of his untimely death, he left behind only the first half of this project, *Franz Boas: The Early Years, 1858-1906*.<sup>110</sup> Written as a straightforward chronological narrative, the account follows Boas from his birth in Minden, Westphalia (Germany), to a close middle-class Jewish-German family in 1858, to his early years as a museum curator and professor in New York City in 1906. It is a bleak story of hardship and disappointment, and it resonates, in places, with the North American immigrant experience of the times. In fact, the story of Boas's life up to 1906 has few of the trappings of outward success that we commonly associate with this legendary "father of American Anthropology." Perhaps Cole planned to highlight the latter in his second volume.

Much about Cole's profile of Boas will come as a surprise. He portrays Boas as a youth with little interest in, or aptitude for, formal schooling, barely graduating from high school and flitting from subject to subject before obtaining a PhD in physics in 1882. With few job prospects in Europe, he settled permanently in the United States

<sup>106</sup>In fact, his work on Boas spanned his entire career. See, for example, "The Origins of Canadian Anthropology, 1850-1910," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 8, 1 (1973): 33-45.

<sup>107</sup>Cole refers here to the following: Melville Herskovits, *Franz Boas: The Science of Man in the Making* (New York: Scribner's, 1953); and Marshall Hyatt, "The Emergence of a Discipline: Franz Boas and the Study of Man" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1979).

<sup>108</sup>Cited in Cole, *Franz Boas: The Early Years*, 4.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.* Cole, by way of contrast, had an excellent command of German. On occasion, he published in German. See, for example, "Kindheit und Jugend von Franz Boas: Minden in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Mindener Geschichtsvereins* 60 (1988): 111-34.

<sup>110</sup>Vanouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1999.

in 1886, hoping to find employment that would keep him there. Instead, during his first decade there, he secured only intermittent contracts for museum and ethnographic projects whenever they came available. None of these gave him much financial security or career opportunities. In Cole's view, Boas did not choose a profession in anthropology; rather, he drifted into it "partly by inclination, partly by chance and opportunity."<sup>111</sup> A low-level teaching position at the newly established Clark University in Worcester gave him entry into academia, but, after several years, this ended in disappointment. Until his appointment to the American Museum of Natural History in 1896, Boas had moved continuously – from New York to Worcester, to Chicago, to Washington, and finally back to New York – fitting in months of field research on the Northwest Coast when he could. Cole ends his biographical account in 1906, with Boas near fifty and finally occupying an established academic niche.

Cole's biography serves as an important aid in understanding the full trajectory of Boasian anthropology. As George Stocking notes in a recent review, Cole makes it "possible for readers to experience Boas as a living personality."<sup>112</sup> Knowing in detail how difficult it was for him to make his place in the academic community of North America, it is not surprising that he was so driven to carve out a permanent niche for himself and his fledgling discipline. He was frequently the victim of individuals in positions of power. Perhaps this accounts, at least partly, for his cold manner, his lack of tolerance for human weakness, and his relentless efforts to protect his own turf. The biography answers many concerns about his attitude towards field research. Knowing the family and financial concerns that plagued him while alone in remote regions of British Columbia, it is easier to understand why he often complained of loneliness and frustration with the pace of the work. He had a deep attachment to his family,

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 94-5.

<sup>112</sup>George W. Stocking, Jr., "Franz Boas and the Shaping of Anthropology," *Literary Review of Canada* 7, 14 (1999-2000): 9. Stocking's review is generally favourable. He does, however, question Cole's emphasis on the theme of failure throughout Boas's early career. "It could be countered," writes Stocking, "that what is most striking about Boas's ambition is his adaptive response to frustration and disappointment ... Despite the numerous personal and institutional frustrations that marked Boas's 'early years,' he did accomplish the discipline-creating goal that he had set for himself at the beginning of his career in the United States" (10). In Stocking's view, Cole could have made more of Boas's intellectual development, integrating this more effectively with the flow of his day-to-day personal life. The effect of the unfinished biography, notes Stocking, is unfortunate. It creates a somewhat "unbalanced" portrayal of this major intellectual figure – a portrayal that could obscure or minimize "the importance of Boas's early career in the shaping of modern American anthropology" (10).

especially his parents and siblings in Germany, whom he visited whenever he could. The demands that all of this placed on his personal, as well as his professional, life were enormous.

Cole's biography appears at a time of growing interest in Franz Boas.<sup>113</sup> Some of the authors in the present issue are part of this.<sup>114</sup> The essay by Regna Darnell, "The Pivotal Role of the Northwest Coast in the History of Americanist Anthropology," suggests that Boas's massive social scientific project in Northwestern North America not only facilitated the coming of age of Canadian anthropology, but also consolidated for American anthropology the study of all of the continent's Aboriginal peoples. Ira Jacknis's "Visualizing Kwakwaka'wakw Tradition: The Films of William Heck, 1951-1963" analyzes the impact of the Boasian salvage paradigm on the work of American film-maker William Heck in the 1950s. Judith Berman's

<sup>113</sup>See, for example, George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and German Anthropological Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); Regna Darnell, *And Along Came Boas: Continuity and Revolution in Americanist Anthropology* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1998); Regna Darnell, *Invisible Genealogies: Boasian Persistencies in Americanist Anthropology* (in press, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press); Ludger Müller-Wille, ed., *Franz Boas Among the Inuit of Baffin Island, 1883-1884: Journals and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Vernon Williams, *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996); William Fitzhugh and Igor Krupnik, eds., *Gateways to Jesup II: The Legacy of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, 1897-1902* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, forthcoming); Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, "The Foundation of All Future Researches': Franz Boas, George Hunt, Native American Texts, and the Construction of Modernity," *American Quarterly* 51, 3 (1999): 479-528; and Ralph Maud, *Transmission Difficulties: Franz Boas and Tsimshian Mythology* (Vancouver: Talon, 2000). Boas has also been the focus of interest at recent conferences. In November 1997 the American Museum of Natural History hosted an international conference on Boas entitled, *Constructing Cultures Then and Now: A Centenary Conference Celebrating Franz Boas and the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, 1897-1997*. At the 1997 American Anthropological Association meeting there was an important session on Boas entitled, *Franz Boas: New Perspectives on the Man and his Anthropology*. Similarly, at the 1999 meetings, there was a session entitled, *The Pasts, Presents and Futures of Boasian Anthropology*.

<sup>114</sup>See the work by Regna Darnell, above. See also Ira Jacknis, "The Ethnographic Object and the Object of Ethnology in the Early Career of Franz Boas," in George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic*; Judith Berman, "The Culture as It Appears to the Indian Himself': Boas, George Hunt, and the Methods of Ethnography," in Stocking, *Volksgeist as Method*; and Wendy Wickwire, "Beyond Boas? Re-assessing the Contribution of 'Informant' and 'Research Assistant,' James A. Teit," in *Gateways to Jesup II: The Legacy of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, 1897-1902*, ed. William Fitzhugh and Igor Krupnik (Seattle: University of Washington Press, forthcoming). Cole's posthumous work can be included in this list. See, for example, "The Greatest Thing Undertaken by Any Museum': Franz Boas, Morris Jesup and the Jesup North Pacific Expedition," in Fitzhugh and Krupnik, *Gateways to Jesup II*; and (with Alex Long), "The Boasian Anthropological Survey Tradition: The Role of Franz Boas in North American Anthropological Surveys," in *Surveying the Record: North American Scientific Exploration to 1930*, ed. Edward C Carter II (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1999), 225-49.

“Red Salmon and Red Cedar Bark: Another Look at the Nineteenth-Century Kwakwaka’wakw Winter Ceremonial” focuses on an aspect of this important winter ritual that other analyses of the Boas/Hunt legacy have overlooked; that is, the spiritual ecology of fish, especially salmon.

#### REAPPRECIATING DOUGLAS COLE

Many will remember Douglas Cole as a committed empiricist who meticulously chronicled the story of anthropology and museums at the turn of the century. Few will associate him with breaking new theoretical ground. And yet, in a quiet, understated way, his work engaged with theory on multiple levels. His approach to landscape art as a means of understanding diverse sets of European perceptions – an approach that he took in the 1970s – has just recently become part of a scholarly tradition that regards landscape art, like travel writing, as a means of providing important insights into ways in which metropolitan culture is produced by the colonies.<sup>115</sup> When the classic Northwest Coast art paradigm was in its prime, and a major focus of the 1980s art establishment, Cole took it in a new direction by portraying it as a powerful cultural artefact in and of itself (albeit with strong colonial underpinnings). Cole’s work was pathbreaking, considering that he formulated the framework for *Captured Heritage* prior to the publication of landmark works by James Clifford, George Marcus, and others<sup>116</sup> on the processes by which exotic objects over the last century have been contextualized and given value in the West.

In both *Captured Heritage* and *An Iron Hand* Cole refused to present First Nations peoples as freeze-dried survivals of some remote past. According to his reading of the historical record, numerous examples existed of First Nations participation in the ethnographic trade as collectors, artists, and cultural brokers. First Nations peoples had also engaged on many levels with the potlatch ban, in some cases even supporting it. His goal in both studies was to portray First Nations peoples as fully functioning members of a politically charged present.

<sup>115</sup>See, for example, Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

<sup>116</sup>See, for example, James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1991).

Whether consciously or not, his efforts to point out the limitations of anthropology's preoccupation with the remote past linked him to important theorists, such as Johannes Fabian (*Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*),<sup>117</sup> who argue that anthropology was rooted in a tradition that refused its subjects of study the same place in time as it took for itself.

Cole's scholarly contribution is only now being given the recognition it deserves. Just recently, Berkeley anthropologist Nelson Graburn described Douglas Cole's *Captured Heritage*, along with Arjun Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things*,<sup>118</sup> James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*,<sup>119</sup> and Nicholas Thomas's *Entangled Objects: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*,<sup>120</sup> as "landmark works of the last twenty years."<sup>121</sup> He praised it for increasing our understanding of "the sociocultural complexity of the production of most non-Western art forms with a full realization of the influence of the colonial or post-colonial, often touristic, context in which they were embedded and the far greater historical depth that is entailed."<sup>122</sup>

Graburn's tribute draws attention to Cole's interest in looking beyond the facade of the museum setting to the larger context underlying the items displayed. "Objects become 'artifacts' or 'treasures,'" Cole stressed, "by a particular process. In themselves, they are merely artificially contrived bits of wood, stone, fur, or bone. Within their original setting, they may possess whatever meaning that society may give them; they may even be valued as process rather than as products or possessions. They may be commodities or they may be sacred. Even these values will change as Native society changes."<sup>123</sup>

The work of a new generation of scholars is carrying on where Cole left off.<sup>124</sup> Art historians Ruth Phillips (University of British Columbia) and Christopher Steiner (University of Connecticut), in a new edited

<sup>117</sup>New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

<sup>118</sup>Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

<sup>119</sup>Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

<sup>120</sup>Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

<sup>121</sup>"Ethnic and Tourist Arts Revisited," in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 345.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Cole, "Preface to the Reprint," xiii.

<sup>124</sup>Three new studies have direct connections to Cole's *Captured Heritage*: Ira Jacknis's "The Storage Box of Tradition" (forthcoming); Aldona Jonaitis's *The Yuquot Whalers' Shrine* (Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/University of Washington Press, 1999); and Paige Raibmon's "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World's Fair," *Canadian Historical Review*, in press.

collection of essays on tourist art, stress, like Cole, the need to move our focus away from studying the properties of the “object” to studying the process of collection.<sup>125</sup>

The solution to defining the authenticity of an object circulating in the networks of world art exchange, lies not in the properties of the object itself but in the very process of collection, which inscribes, at the moment of acquisition, the character and qualities that are associated with the object in both individual and collective memories. In order to interpret such objects we must unpack the baggage of transcultural encounter with which they travel and search for the meanings and memories stored inside.<sup>126</sup>

In a new book, *Privileging the Past: Reconstructing History in Northwest Coast Art*, New York-based art historian Judith Ostrowitz pursues similar themes in her analysis of issues of authenticity as they relate to replicas, reproductions, and past forms of Northwest Coast dances, ceremonies, masks, painted screens, and houses.<sup>127</sup>

The influence of Cole’s ideas was clearly evident at the Native American Art Studies Association Conference (NAASA) held in Victoria, British Columbia, in October 1999. In a session on Northwest Coast art, Jennifer Kramer (Columbia University) presented a paper entitled, “The Sale and Repatriation of the Nuxalk Echo Mask: Appropriation or Revival?” in which she tracked the movement of a Nuxalk Echo mask as it passed in and out of various orbits of value – from its sale out of the Bella Coola Valley to its eventual repatriation back to its community of origin. Kramer revealed how accusations of cultural appropriation promoted vital, creative national identity. At the same conference, Aaron Glass (University of British Columbia) delivered a paper, “Cultural Salvage or Brokerage? The Emergence of Northwest Coast Art and the Mythologization of Mungo Martin,” highlighting one of Cole’s central concerns: the First Nations side of the collecting process. Glass’s focus was the under-documented role of Kwakwaka’wakw artist Mungo Martin in brokering material from his own community to UBC’s Museum of Anthropology in the early 1950s. “I suggest that in selling them [to Martin],” noted Glass, “people did not *devalue* their objects as much as they did *re-value* them as potential for com-

<sup>125</sup>Ruth Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, eds., *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>126</sup>Ruth Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, “Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter,” in Phillips and Steiner, *Unpacking Culture*, 19.

<sup>127</sup> Vancouver/Seattle: UBC Press/University of Washington Press, 1999.

mercial exchange became more apparent, just as in the larger public discourse the objects were being re-valued as fine art. Martin's role as a cultural broker aided in both of these processes."<sup>128</sup>

Cole took great interest in First Nations initiatives in the museum setting, noting that many First Nations peoples were "appropriating the museum context, investing it with meanings that contest values placed by others on objects as art or artifact."<sup>129</sup> As he predicted, First Nations involvement in museums has continued to grow. In 1999 alone, three major British Columbia exhibits incorporated significant input from contemporary First Nations peoples.<sup>130</sup> The Victoria NAASA conference included a session, "Nuu-chah-nulth Art Today," that gave several Nuu-chah-nulth artists an opportunity to engage with NAASA participants on the subject of their art and the *Out of the Mist: Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs* exhibit at the Royal British Columbia Museum. This exhibit has generated a wide range of responses from the First Nations community.<sup>131</sup> We have included one of these in this issue – a poem by Nusqimata (Jacinda Mack) entitled, "Requickening." Gloria Jean Frank adds to this with her essay entitled, "That's My Dinner on Display': A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture." Drawing on the work of Cole and other museum scholars, Frank analyzes the aging *First Peoples* exhibit at the Royal British Columbia Museum as a relic of the Boasian salvage paradigm.

The BC Studies conference held in Nanaimo in May 1997 provided the venue for one of Douglas Cole's final public talks. In a plenary session entitled "Reading Ethnographic Texts," he presented a version of a paper that he had prepared for a conference to commemorate the centenary of Franz Boas's Jesup North Pacific Expedition at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.<sup>132</sup> He was also scheduled to contribute to the panel, "Franz Boas: New Perspectives

<sup>128</sup>Unpublished paper in the author's possession.

<sup>129</sup>Cole, "Preface to the Reprint," xiv.

<sup>130</sup>One of these is the Royal British Columbia Museum's *Out of the Mist: Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs*; another is the Vancouver Museum's *Through My Eyes: Northwest Coast Artifacts through the Eyes of Contemporary First Nations Peoples*; a third is the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's *Emily Carr: To the Totem Forests*.

<sup>131</sup>One of the unique features of this exhibit is the inclusion of Nuu-chah-nulth guides. Stan Smith, my interpretive guide through the exhibit on 22 March 2000, was a wealth of information, having added to his own knowledge base the stories of his Nuu-chah-nulth friends and relatives who had toured the exhibit with him during the exhibit's nine months in Victoria.

<sup>132</sup>The paper is due to appear as "The Greatest Thing Undertaken by Any Museum': Franz Boas, Morris Jesup and the Jesup North Pacific Expedition," in Fitzhugh and Krupnik, *Gateways to Jesup II*.

on the Man and His Anthropology,” at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings held in Washington, DC, in November 1997. Sadly, he died just before both conferences.<sup>133</sup>

He leaves behind a host of memories. Bill Cleveland drew attention to one that is familiar to many: “one of Canada’s dis-tinguished historians trudging down the 6th floor of the AQ wearing jeans and a cardigan that hung to his knees, lugging a back pack full of books and papers as he rushed to catch the North Van bus.”<sup>134</sup>

Among this writer’s store of Douglas Cole stories is one that dates back ten years to the BC Studies conference hosted by the University of British Columbia in November 1990. Cole was the designated commentator for three papers in a session on Aboriginal history. One of the presenters was from a northern community. She was new to the conference format and had not been properly forewarned about the firm twenty-minute time restriction. Consequently, when her chair terminated her talk abruptly after twenty minutes, she had just barely begun to cover the main body of her paper. Visibly shaken, she quietly picked up her stack of untouched transparencies and returned to her seat. There was an uneasy hush throughout the conference room as Cole rose to comment. What a surprise, therefore, when he announced that “the time restrictions here do not do justice to the presentation you have just heard. In fact, this is an outstanding piece of work that represents years of careful research on primary sources that none of us has yet been able to decipher. We shall all be citing it for years to come.” He then distilled the essence of her paper and turned a potential disaster into huge success. In fact, this presenter became the toast of the conference.

But this was Douglas Cole’s way. He enjoyed empowering graduate students; and he delighted in sharing his ideas and even his research materials with anyone, whether a specialist in the area or an undergraduate student.<sup>135</sup> He loved the cultural landscape of British Columbia and all who walked it with him. His passion for it permeates the legacy he left behind.

<sup>133</sup>The author was present at both conferences, where she heard moving tributes to Douglas Cole.

<sup>134</sup>“So Very Human, So Very Exceptional,” *SFU Faculty Association Newsletter*, 6. Cole was forever running to catch a bus. “He decided at one point,” notes friend and colleague Richard Boyer, “to stop driving himself and to take the bus. He could mark papers, read the *TLS*, and avoid paying SFU’s ever-rising parking fees” (*ibid.*, 3).

<sup>135</sup>Cole was unusually supportive of graduate students, using funds from his own book sales to finance their travel to conferences, including them as co-authors without hesitation, and just generally “crediting their work and soliciting their input” (Ira Chaikin, personal communication, 7 March, 2000). “His students have the warmest memories of him and will always be in his debt” (Bruce Stadfeld, personal communication, 10 December 1999).