

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Homeplace: The Making of the  
Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries*

Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. 305 pp. Illus. \$24.95 paper.

*A History of Domestic Space:  
Privacy and the Canadian Home*

Peter Ward

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999. 182 pp. Illus. \$39.95 cloth.

By Joy Parr

*Simon Fraser University*

I ENJOY reading books about houses, and, if the capacious house and home sections of bookstores are any guide, I'm not alone. We dawdlers in this section are eager amateurs. Rarely do readers (or authors) of housing histories not have housing histories of their own. Thus, whether they write about big houses or little houses (perhaps, for contrast Marc Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* [1978], and Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* [1994]), from sprightly postmodern or dourly modernist perspectives (think of Witold Rybczynski, *Home* [1986] in contrast to Nicholas Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design* [1949]), the challenge for historians in the field has been to turn the little knowledge of their many readers into that delighted perplexity and surprise that makes them yearn to know more.

It is easy to underestimate the task. To assert that the spaces of everyday life have a history contradicts the eternal pieties of hearth and home and

the time-refusing assertions of those imaginative confectors of authenticity. Paradoxically, it is no mean trick to find good and convincingly answerable questions about topics for which the mass of artefactual and print evidence is so daunting and the incursion of "common-sense" reasoning so insidious. The authors of these two books have dealt with these welcome and wearying dilemmas in starkly different ways.

Much makes *Homeplaces* charming. Peter Ennals has graced their book with his own sketches of houses and housing types, the detail clearer from his drawing pen than it would be from photos, the images crafted to attend proximately to the textual discussion in which he and Holdsworth are engaged. And this is a book on housing in which the door is not closed. In their introduction the authors call attention to their retrospective regrets. Oh that the book were more "socially-focussed and archivally-based" (xii); I agree. And they are right that there

are more questions here than can be easily answered about how antecedents, ethnicity, economy, and social aspiration make and are remade in dwelling places. But, as they note, "therein lies the fun of placing the dwelling into the intellectual calculus" (xiii).

Ennals and Holdsworth begin with a taxonomy. This has the merit of suggesting from the start that housing comes in different forms, but also gives precedence to one analytical variable, the economic mode of production. To better comprehend the Canadian condition they add "gang" (a mode they usefully explore) and "aboriginal" (which they leave unaddressed) to the commonly used categories of folk, vernacular, and polite. They graph the incidence of these forms over time, thus gainsaying from the outset the commonplace that homeplaces always do the same thing and that, over time, privacy and domestic space are a common experience and goal. They keep wanting to be inclusive, to worry about spaces as gendered, classed, and ethnically informed; to tell us what was particular about the inspirations that informed the people who built the houses they study. Yet right from the beginning, there on the St. Lawrence in the polite houses of the seventeenth century, they accept the mode of economic production as the prime influence on style and housing form, and they note, regarding local sociability, only that it was less grandiose than it was in France. Whether the texture of sociability in these more modest homes would have been different is a question over which Raphael Samuel would have lingered and Rybcznski would have lyrically mused. We're left to wonder.

This orientation does drive Ennals and Holdsworth to follow the money

and track the pseudo-baronial masonry piles that washed up, often very far away from the accumulating wreckage of the resource extraction that sustained them. The juxtaposition is illuminating and we can hope for more social and cultural histories of Canadian housing which refuse contemporaries' separation of the sites where extraordinary wealth was displayed from the sites where it was accumulated. Parks interpreters long have linked workers' housing to their work and plainer migrants' housing preferences to their folk lineage. Re-fusing the coal and retail moguls with the pits and the shops where their wealth was made, and explicitly linking the built environment of the remittance men with the economic circumstances that propelled their departures and funded their remittances, is indispensable to a well made social and economic history of housing. The start that Ennals and Holdsworth make is tentative; their chapter on this phase, what they call the self-conscious house, is a nearly tedious list of names of houses, owners, neighbours, architects, and styles. There are gestures towards situating the panelled smoking rooms as comforting masculine markers during one of the periodic crises to which "manliness" has been prone, and to featuring the sheer bulk of the mansion as a weighty anchor against the contemporary currents of social uncertainty. But these are fleeting interludes. The authors acknowledge this limitation, reminding us that their real interest in the bombast of the big house is as an interpretive context for the vernacular and the folk.

The nineteenth-century folk house discussions, Ennals's illustrations apart, have much in common with Harris and Warkentin's *Canada Before Confederation* (1974). People and the cultural capital

that results in building practice migrate together, form following function. Refreshing as is their reminder of how the current status and material readings of housing forms divert our eye from the small, plain, run-down, and unconventional, their promised differentiation amongst the inhabitants of these folk dwellings is only episodically realized. They do not tarry interpretively over symbolic values. It is useful to be shown that modest economic resources lead to excised forms. It would be wonderful to know more about the other cultural resources inhabitants brought to their subsequent modest or racy work and play with these lean received enclosures.

The study of vernacular houses is based on pattern books, the commercial successor to the multiply informed initiatives of earlier owner-built dwellings. Pattern books are bountiful in Canadian repositories, as numerous as published sermons, which they disarmingly resemble. We learn about the regional dispersion of the Craftsman, the Four-Square and the Bay-N-Gables, but not about why which forms appeal where or to whom. The sheer mass of the pattern books seems to have overwhelmed the authors, amplifying the production-side emphasis of earlier chapters. I began to hanker to know more about residents' vernacular disruptions of the house-book patterns, their physical retrofitting and transgressive everyday performances within the patterned walls.

Apart from one mention of painterly variations in the facades of miners' cottages, industrial housing, too, is treated as inalienable, as produced once and for all by a specialized producer. The class variants are notable. Employers offer highly skilled immigrants sound housing that reminds them of home, and they offer marginal workers little

shelter at all. Though the authors reach for the influences of culture, tradition, family form, sexual orientation, and place, mostly these remain outside their grasp. Were there no material accommodations to the homoerotic practices we know about in the work camps? What would an aesthetic analysis of the Fraser Valley industrial village of Clayburn yield, this being the place of work and residence for the brick-making McLure, whose employees and neighbours were literally making the material of his architect brother Samuel's dreams? How do we read the distinctive self-built workshops and residences of Victoria's Chinatown, only now, as restored backbuildings, emerging from their prudent occlusion behind racially mediating commercial fronts?

What is plain to me at the end of this satisfying book, and probably more plain still to the self-questioning authors, is that an inhabitants' history of housing must be next on the agenda. We need a history of the house as a continuing indigenous project rather than as a builder's *fait accompli*. To do this, the source base must broaden to include evidence from novels and other literary forms, among them autobiographies. Henceforth an adequate social and cultural history of housing must look past what was built to what was renovated and remade, and to the performances of everyday life that symbolically reconfigured the houseroom.

Peter Ward's *A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home* is a lean, short book, geographically focused on examples from southern Alberta and eastern Ontario, and interpretively foreclosed. Ward begins with the assertion that domestic privacy is one of the fundamental elements of daily life "for individuals and

families, past and present alike" (4). Like the phenomenologist geographers of the 1970s, he is preoccupied with the pursuit of transhistorical essences. Here he frames his study to explore the nature, meaning, and experience of privacy and "their implications for family and social life, past and present," seeking out privacy and domestic space as a common experience over time. In these days, when the social and cultural construction of daily life widely (if contentiously) intrigues, holding fast to so idealist a premise is brazenly unfashionable. But Ward, whose earlier books on race and courtship have drawn querulous criticism for previous elaborations based on this stance, holds to his contrarian ground. He offers his readers a book comprised of two chapters, the first consisting of eighty pages on interiors, the second consisting of fifty pages on the setting of the house. Chapter 1 shows how the dwelling interior affects the relations of household members; Chapter 2 charts how location shapes interactions between the residents of the house and their neighbours. His thesis, which concerns the distinction between inside and outside, is built resolutely into the structure of the volume.

I expect that Ward is addressing readers of popular books on housing,

among whom I am an unabashed but perhaps uncharacteristic representative. The prose is accessible. He shares family recollections and lapses into a familiar tone in winking asides about kids' bedrooms, young libidos constrained on the front verandah swing, and the folly of certain architectural experiments. The professional historian will be irked that so many topic sentences write out vital protagonists through passive prose constructions, that photos from one time are used to buttress interpretations of another, and that prescriptive images pose as documents of common practice. When the legal and institutional histories of privacy are so convincingly documented to diverge at the 49th parallel, to those in the trade the casual use of American instances to forward arguments about Canadian patterns surely will seem ill-advised. General readers, I'd wager, will be more disappointed that the book has so few questions and, thus, so few trick answers that yield the engaging "whys" of good coffee-room banter. These are the forté of Rybczynski, Samuel, Girouard, and even Pevnser, foreclosed here by Ward's conviction that the experiences of privacy and domestic space endure resolutely across time.

*Lions Gate*

Lilia d'Acres and Donald Luxton

Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1999. 176 pp. Illus. \$29.95 cloth.

By Cyril Leonoff  
*Vancouver*

**L**IONS GATE is the rags to riches story of Alfred J.T. Taylor and the bridge that he promoted, which now spans the entrance to Vancouver harbour. Small by present-day standards, Lions Gate Bridge, with its graceful lines and high visibility, has nevertheless become a local icon.

Fred Taylor, born in Victoria in 1887, was the eldest of the four children of George Taylor, an itinerant scientist/preacher, and Elizabeth Williams, the daughter of an Anglican minister. At the age of nine, with the death of his mother in childbirth and the frequent absences of his father, Fred had the responsibility of caring for his younger siblings. He dropped out of school at fourteen and, with an interest in mechanics, he secured a position as apprentice at a Nanaimo foundry and later at a Vancouver shipyard. Brilliant at his jobs with various industrial companies, Fred quickly climbed the management ladder. At the age of twenty-five, principal of his own firm, Taylor was establishing international contacts in mining and engineering. In 1923 he moved to London with his Scottish wife and family, where he engaged in international entrepreneurial ventures. Overnight the Taylors moved up to "the manners and mansions of British high society" (28).

In 1928 A.J.T. Taylor formed British Pacific Securities as a tax haven for British investment capital in the Empire. For his most speculative venture he

looked homeward to 4,000 acres of prime residential properties in West Vancouver at the foot of the North Shore mountains. These British Pacific Properties were financed mainly by the Guinness brewing family. Taylor obtained civic approval for a private-enterprise bridge needed to gain access to these lands. However, because of the Depression and federal political manoeuvring, it took ten years before the bridge was built in 1937-8. The authors attribute delays to covert lobbying against the project by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which had its own lands to market on the South Shore. Taylor had a fallout with his financial backers, largely because of dormant land sales; the housing project would not take off until after the end of the Second World War. On completion of the bridge, he resigned from the presidency into obscurity and died of cancer at the age of fifty-seven. His only monument is Taylor Way, leading up to the British Properties.

In retrospect, Lions Gate Bridge has served its purpose in opening to development some of the best residential subdivisions in Canada. The negative impact has been the environmental damage caused by the south approach driveway, which bisects Stanley Park, and the north approach driveway, which trespasses on land belonging to the Squamish Indian Band. Sixty years later, the success of Taylor's venture may be measured by the incapacity of the bridge to cope with traffic.

The authors give short biographies of other minor players, including Charles Marega, sculptor of the pair of massive concrete lions who guard the south portal; Palmer and Bow, architects of the Taylor home at Kew Beach; and such incidental persons as the *News-Herald's* Evelyn Caldwell (Penny Wise), who hazarded a dizzying walk across the construction catwalk. Surprisingly, no background information is offered on the engineering designers, Monsarrat and Pratley of Montreal, who are described only as "the leading bridge design firm in Canada" (37), or on their associate, W.G. (Bill) Swan, Vancouver's foremost civil engineer of the day. And little information is provided on the contractors who built the bridge.

Admittedly, D'Acres and Luxton are out of their depth when it comes to describing the engineering features of the suspension bridge and "can only

wonder at the complexity of the calculations ... undertaken with nothing more than a slide rule" (65). Yet such problems as pier construction in the turbulent waters of the First Narrows, aerodynamic stability in the windy inlet, and earthquake resistance would be of interest to this reviewer. Also missing is a tabulation giving length of channel span, ships' clearance, and width and length of roadway and approaches – all statistics upon which great bridges are judged.

Handsomely designed and profusely illustrated, *Lions Gate* will appeal particularly to heritage conservers, the tourist industry, and nostalgic Vancouverites. The strength of the book lies in the excellent series of photographs taken throughout the construction period, many the work of industrial photographer Leonard Frank.

### *Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings*

Jonathan Raban

New York: Pantheon (Random), 1999. 435 pp. \$37.95 cloth

By Nancy Pagh

*Western Washington University*

**D**URING his cruise from Seattle to Juneau, Jonathan Raban stops at a Ketchikan restaurant, orders a glass of Merlot, and muses: "the dining room seemed a good perch from which to survey the voyage so far, and to try to see if anything resembling a pattern or story was discernible in its tumble of places and events. Not much, not yet. While a number of wispy narrative strands had begun to emerge, I knew that journeys hardly ever disclose their true

meaning until after – and sometimes years after – they are over" (366). Too impatient to allow this story to age into "true meaning," Raban seems rather quick to offer the loosely knit account of sailing his thirty-five-foot sailboat north. The narrative's shapelessness (even by the standards of the travel "ramble"), predictability, and occasional misinformation are irritating and disappointing. Yet for readers particularly interested in exploration, sea literature, and, more specifically, the layers

of meanings ascribed to Northwest Coast seascape, it offers worthwhile stops along the way.

What stands out as unusually inventive in Raban's book is his ability to write about water in new yet completely appropriate ways for the Northwest Coast. Editor of *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, Raban "sail[s] through a logjam of dead literary cliché" (184) and creates contemporary metaphors that offer finely detailed readings of the surface of the Inside Passage. "In Malaspina Strait," he writes, "between Texada Island and the mainland, the sea was covered, shore to shore, by the glossy membrane of its surface film. One could see stretch marks on it caused by the current, but it was distinct from the water on which it lay like an enormous sheet of Saran Wrap. Motoring into it, I made a long ragged tear in the film, and my roiling wake stretched back as far as I could see" (163). Raban goes beyond offering passages of well-wrought detail; as is reflected in its subtitle, an important part of the book concerns his thinking about how we humans see and define (and delude) ourselves through seascape. His writing about this theme in connection with early European artists along the Coast is not original. But when he writes of his own watery misreadings (e.g., discovering a "body" that turns into a discarded jacket), we experience this double vision of the sea with him. "All first-person narratives are like this," he writes. "I thought it was a body. You thought it was a body. We were wrong" (341). This effect is particularly appropriate during the parts of the book when Raban thinks about his father's life, about systems of faith and belief, about his own aging, and about the nature of human identity. Probably the most intriguing aspect of the entire book is his decision

to read Northwest Coast Aboriginal design as "art in thrall to ripples and reflections" (205). "The fundamental design unit in the art of all the Northwest coastal tribes," he says, is the ovoid. "I've watched ovoids form, in their millions, in almost-still water, under a breath of wind, or by the friction of the moving tide. The canoe Indians, living on this water as their primary habitat, saw ovoids in nature every day of their lives; and when they combined them in design, they made them do exactly what capillary waves do – reflect the world in smithereens" (203). Raban makes this idea make perfect sense to the reader. However, I found a degree of unintended irony in his certain and emphatic tone regarding this single idea ("the coastal tribes couldn't help but see ..." [207]), particularly given his emphasis in the rest of the text on the fact that humans are wont to misapprehend each other – and the Other.

Problems with the readability of the text are serious. It is never clear why Raban is taking this cruise and what he hopes to discover. At first it appears his goal is to trace the route of Seattle's fishers (why?), but soon the focus shifts to Captain Vancouver. Raban's misanthropic persona is well suited for cultivating an interesting connection to the man he repeatedly calls "Captain Van." The book seems out of control, however, as the focus shifts almost entirely to the Vancouver expedition (why?) for a few hundred pages, then forgets that thread entirely. Another strand is the family drama, concerning his wife and daughter left at home. This aspect of the narrative is forced, superficial, and entirely predictable – particularly in contrast to his writing about his father – and no meaning is made from it. The last pages of the book are a compilation of quotations,

allowing Raban to dodge addressing directly what this voyage has come to mean to him. Numerous relatively small errors combine to make a careful reader aware of sloppy editing; for instance, he misidentifies the popular park Bowman Bay as Cornet Bay, writes of the company "Microscroft," refers to bulb farmers as those in the cut-flower trade, misuses nautical terms ("rope," "pier") that any self-proclaimed captain – or his editor – should know, and equates local Shakers with the English and eastern American religious

sect (same name, different belief). The book design is also less than useful: the table of contents is missing, maps on the inside covers are out of order, and the photo on the bottom half of the cover should be transposed to mirror the top half (Raban discusses the effect this should have at length in the text). These minor irritations, when combined with a lack of cohesiveness, make the project seem hurried and less than meaningful as a whole. At its best, the book offers extremely interesting isolated reflections.

*Hideaway: Life on the  
Queen Charlotte Islands*

James Houston

Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999. 259 pp. Illus., map. \$29.99 cloth.

*Oar and Sail:  
An Odyssey of the West Coast*

Kenneth Macrae Leighton

Smithers: Creekstone, 1999. 152 pp. Illus., maps. \$24.95 cloth.

By Adam C. Waldie

*Emeritus University of British Columbia*

THESE two delightful books about life and adventure on the BC Coast appeared within days of each other in the fall of 1999. Both authors are aficionados of the area, but neither are native-born British Columbians. Both have an obvious love of the language, and both are excellent writers. The text and end papers of *Hideaway* are illustrated by striking black-and-white sketches by the author, and *Oar and Sail* has been enhanced by bold scratch board pieces reminiscent of lino block cuts. These

were provided by the author's son, Dr. Rod Leighton of Smithers.

*Hideaway*, by the well-known Canadian author, artist, and entrepreneur James Houston, is a personal essay relating the life he enjoys at his home on the Tlell River, Queen Charlotte Islands, where he spends six months of the year (when he is not travelling or living at his other home in Connecticut). An artist by profession, he studied print-making under one of the masters in Japan, and he is credited with having taught the art to the Inuit. George



Swinton, writing in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* (1999) states frankly that, "largely owing to the insights and promotional energy of James A. Houston, a young artist from Toronto, 'Eskimo art' or 'Inuit art' as we know it today, came into existence 1948-49." To many of us his name is known for his best seller, *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller*. His current book, *Hideaway*, brings his perceptive observations closer to home.

*Oar and Sail*, on the other hand, is the account of a long, dangerous row-boat trip from Vancouver to Prince Rupert taken over a period of two years by Kenneth Macrae Leighton, late professor of anesthesiology at the University of British Columbia, on his retirement in 1991. He describes warmly the legendary but evanescent friendships he struck up with fellow boaters he met on his odyssey, particularly those who came to his assistance. However stubborn and single-minded he might have been on occasion, he retained his good judgment and accepted needed assistance when it was proffered. He died in 1998 of hepatitis C, which may well have been an occupation-induced illness.

Both books are built on the authors' own narratives, but their endearing qualities for most British Columbians will likely be the vignettes involving local colour and history. In bygone days the Queen Charlotte Islands were familiar territory to thousands of migrant students, loggers, fishers, government and military personnel, and itinerant doctors like myself. With the severe curtailment of the resource industries, the recent closure of the armed forces station and hospital at Masset, the elimination (forty years ago) of scheduled passenger-boat service from the Lower Mainland, and the prohibitive cost of air fares, fewer and fewer residents of the province are familiar

with these fascinating islands. Similarly, the north central coast is not as vital to thousands of British Columbians as it was forty or fifty years ago. Forest industries have literally fled the mainland coast to cross the Gulf of Georgia and Johnstone Strait in favour of upper Vancouver Island. The huge pulp and paper operation at Ocean Falls has long since been abandoned, leaving but a ghost town, and commercial fishing is all but extinct.

Both authors, while describing life on the Coast as they see it today, include generous hints of what it has been in the past. Houston, particularly, refers en passant to the well known early Russian occupation of the Charlottes, and he describes in interesting detail one of the survivors of a little known influx of German settlers, which occurred fifty years ago. He relates with nostalgia the presence of an elitist club of medical doctors on the Tlell River, but he neglects to tell us that it was sold off two years ago, a victim of old age and high air fares.

However, Houston is at his best in describing the colourful local people. He provides a startling account of a couple of Native girls in their Sunday finery interrupting their trip to the local coffee shop in order to gather *gaaw*, which had appeared unexpectedly in the bay. *Gaaw* is the valuable herring spawn that clings to seaweed and sells for a fortune when dried and shipped to Japan. Any saltwater damage to their gowns, or to their friends' brand new pickup truck, would be more than rectified by their windfall profits.

Leighton became a marathon runner in later life, and his whole hair-raising adventure on the Coast makes us think that he is obsessed with "pushing the envelope," as the current expression goes. Anyone who has spent time in small boats between here and Prince

Rupert will appreciate the extremes of physical exertion and stamina that he demands of himself. Pete McMartin, in a recent discussion of Leighton's odyssey in the *Vancouver Sun*, ques-

tions what made him do it, but those of us who were privileged to know him in a professional capacity realize that, to him, dealing with risk was life itself.

## *The Spruces*

Rex Holmes

Prince George: Caitlin, 1999. 192 pp. \$15.95 paper.

By Jon Swainger

*University of Northern British Columbia*

SET in the Peace River country of the spring, summer, and winter of 1932, Rex Holmes's novel, *The Spruces*, relates the homesteading trials of Kevin and Joanne McCormack, a young couple fleeing the urbanized distress of Toronto in search of a new beginning in north-eastern British Columbia. Inexperienced, painfully naïve, and often too prideful to either solicit or accept help, the McCormacks file for an abandoned homestead boasting a house and a spruce forest. What they find, of course, is a shack in the midst of a swamp, twenty miles from town and distant from neighbours. Fortune, however, does not abandon them entirely. They are befriended by Ed Reed, a local dray man who moves them out to the homestead; offers some practical guidance on getting started; and, in the course of the novel, lends valued assistance, wise counsel, and encouragement.

Left on their own, the McCormacks stumble through the spring and summer, slowly becoming more adept at life on the land while, at the same time, surviving near-starvation, hovering insanity, the peculiarities of a bachelor

neighbour who lives in squalor, and the frenzied chatter of a neighbouring woman who craves companionship other than that of her husband and their brood of children. Winter and the hours of darkness it brings almost consume Joanne McCormick, who falls into a delirium that, in turn, tortures her husband who is at war with his own demons. The arrival of spring provides the opportunity for Kevin to strike out for town and finally ask for credit at the local store, where the proprietor begrudgingly offers charity along with a generous helping of sanctimony. Faced with the dilemma of either submitting to the merchant's dressing down or returning empty handed to his ailing wife, McCormack swallows his pride and accepts the charity.

Salvation, however, seemingly arrives in the uncollected mail that had accumulated since their arrival; for not only had McCormack's father sent a money order, but Ed Reed had left a note offering work and a cash advance. Only one day after his humiliating encounter with the local merchant, McCormack is able to triumphantly

pay off his outstanding balance and to return to the homestead well stocked with vegetables and supplies, heralding a victory, of sorts, over both the hardship of homestead life and winter. The good fortune is short-lived, and, within days of his return, both of the McCormacks are dead – she from an accidental gunshot wound at her husband's hands – he by grief-stricken suicide.

*The Spruces* fits neatly into the tradition of both fictional and non-fictional writing on the Peace River region of British Columbia. Holmes draws upon stock characters in the fictional construction of the Peace while relating a story that, with some variation, has been told before. Indeed, one can find in Georges Bugnet's 1935 novel, *La Foret*, a similar story of a young couple who arrive in northern Alberta only to find hardship, personal turmoil, and, in their case, tragedy in the drowning of their infant son. Or, in a similar vein, one can see the mythology of the Peace in Ralph Allen's 1958 novel *Peace River Country*, which is rooted in the appeal of a land promising peace, a second chance, but where only a chosen few attain redemption.

From a historical perspective, the familiarity of the story that Holmes relates is paradoxical. On the one hand, it is striking how often, in both fiction and non-fiction, the Peace

region has provided the backdrop for similar versions of returning to the land and the promise of a better life. Too often, the fictional versions end in tragedy and defeat, with the land, weather, and wilderness overwhelming faltering human efforts. On the other hand, the actual settlement history of the region provides uncounted examples of homesteaders who, despite everything, prevailed and achieved a measure of success. Those who persevered have far outnumbered those who were driven from the land.

Ultimately, Holmes's novel is interesting and worthy of note for at least two contradictory reasons. By framing the story in the fashion he did, he provides another example of how the mythology of the Peace region did pull aspiring farmers, ranchers, and other entrepreneurs from across North America and beyond. But in having the McCormacks suffer a crushing defeat, Holmes employs an all too familiar turn of events. Indeed, to that end, it might fairly be suggested that the next novelist who embraces the lure of the Peace as an opening proposition might consider an exploration of how the vast majority of homesteaders prevailed and how the harsh realities of pursuing peace compelled them to re-define the meaning of success on this northern frontier.

*Companions of the Peace:  
Diaries and Letters of Monica Storrs, 1931-1939*

Vera K. Fast, editor

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.  
246 pp. Illus., map. \$19.95 paper.

By Neil Sutherland  
*Emeritus University of British Columbia*

THE great merits of Monica Storrs's valuable account of her first decade in the Peace River District of British Columbia have been overshadowed by an unfortunate temptation to alliteration on the part of the editors of the first, earlier volume drawn from Storrs's manuscripts. The title *God's Galloping Girl: The Peace River Diaries of Monica Storrs, 1929-1931* (1979) conjures up the image of an evangelical circuit rider. It does not convey that its author was, as her present editor explains, "a cultured English gentlewoman," the daughter of the dean of an English cathedral, who was drawn to church and social service on a frontier of the Empire (3). In 1929, "middle-sized, middle-aged, and fatally English," as she described herself, Storrs arrived in the Fort St. John area of the Peace River District (6). There, what began as a missionary sojourn designed to help "Anglicanize" the frontier gradually became a permanent commitment to the "physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of women and children in the area" (24). In this work Storrs was joined by other like-minded Englishwomen, whom she called *Companions of the Peace*.

On her arrival Storrs began what became an extensive diary, written to circulate to family and friends in Britain and elsewhere. In it, Storrs described her wide-ranging travels in the district

making friends, organizing women's groups, and setting up activities for children and young people. Occasionally she became involved in the wider affairs of the area, but she avoided politics. Storrs provided her readers then and now with a sympathetic account of the conditions of the settlers and, especially, of the women and children in their midst. Since Storrs stayed in the area over the years covered in this and the previous collection, we see not the snapshot views of a casual visitor but an unfolding understanding emerging over time.

Representing, as it does, but a quarter of the total manuscript, we are less able in this than in the first volume to follow through on Storrs's relationship with an individual person or family. Nonetheless, in Storrs's various mentions of the Middleton family and other settlers one sees much of the role that she played in the community and something of her attitude towards its people. One evening in June 1932, Storrs is invited to have supper with Mrs. Middleton and her seven children. "Before supper they all washed in turns without being told, waited for grace, passed the food round spontaneously, talked politely, and asked to be excused before rising from the table — and Oh My! you would hardly understand how this nearly took my breath

away." Mr. Middleton lived "a mile or two away and never comes near them or takes the smallest interest in his children" (69). Mrs. Middleton appears again in June 1934, when she travelled south of the Peace to attend a meeting of Anglican women. There, Storrs reported, "for about a half an hour she talked to me with her broad Sheffield accent ... I was amazed at her understanding; for she is not at all an educated woman; but I have never been so deeply impressed as by her simple and utterly sincere expressions of faith and love and thankfulness." The meeting began with "a Sung Eucharist, not good music or well sung; but it was all right for all of us, and for her it was the Gate of Heaven" (125).

In her story of Leila we glimpse another aspect of Storrs's work. Some of Storrs's friends in England contributed to her Samaritan Fund, which she employed to help some of those for whom no other assistance was available. One life-saving case in 1938 involved

a little girl of 13 in my Sunday School who was suffering from acute ophthalmic goitre, with frightful nerve and heart symptoms. Nothing could be done for her at Fort St John; so I visited her mother, a woman separated from her husband and in wretched circumstances, and offered to send the child to Edmonton if she would give permission for an operation to be performed ... The operation was completely successful and Leila is rapidly returning to perfectly normal health ... But the Samaritan Fund is BROKE. (189)

Storrs's relations with the large non-English-speaking element in the population were necessarily less

intimate than were her relations with the English-speaking element, but they were, nonetheless, sympathetic. In May 1936, during the course of her visits, Storrs reported: "I saw two nice glimpses of rather primitive life ... The first was a man scraping an immense bear hide." The other was Mrs. Joe Selinka "thrashing with a hand flail." She was a "Bohemian with very little English but lovely manners and welcome. They can't get a thrashing machine across the Halfway River, so Mrs Selinka thrashes for most of her neighbours in the true Biblical way" (160). Two years later, Storrs arranged for an ailing Mrs. Selinka to go to Fort St. John to have all her teeth removed.

Over the two volumes we see Storrs shift from being a detached and sometimes critical outside observer to being someone who increasingly identifies herself with the community. The transition is never complete; her class and her means sharply differentiated Storrs both from those permanently settled in the Peace and those others who left with little assurance that they were moving to a better life. Storrs could, and did, occasionally free herself from the frontier and re-enter her life at "Home." As she wrote in England in 1938:

And so I came Home  
But I've got two Homes now  
Which is very puzzling. (197)

Storrs eventually retired to her English home in 1950 but visited her Canadian home twice more before her death in 1967.

Vera K. Fast and Mary Kinnear have provided an excellent introduction to Storrs's text. It succinctly describes and characterizes Storrs. It introduces each of her friends who became Companions, summarizes Storrs's relationships with the Anglican esta-

blishment, and portrays a Peace River District harder hit by the Depression than most other parts of Canada. While one wishes that one had the whole of Storrs's text to read, this and

its companion volume provide a rich evocation of a way of life and of an era not long gone but now completely disappeared.

### *First Son: Portraits by C.D. Hoy*

Faith Moosang

Vancouver/North Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp/Presentation House,  
1999. 159 pp. Illus. \$27.95 paper.

By Carol Williams

*University of New Mexico*

THE curvaceous lace-up boots worn by the unidentified elderly Chinese gentleman who is the subject of the photograph reproduced on the cover of Faith Moosang's volume *First Son: Portraits by CD Hoy* are compelling, as is the range of finery worn by Hoy's subjects: midi skirts secured by buttons and safety pins, fringed gloves, woolly chaps, suspenders, ornate buckles, cabled cardigans, pearl-buttoned blouses, silk umbrellas, embroidered wraps, gold pocket watches. In the background are the incidental and intentional, mass and hand-produced consumer goods – calendars, lithographs, and wrinkled drop cloths. These details, like the debris underfoot, pique curiosity. Access to goods signals the status or occupation of the subject(s), and we marvel at the means by which such items were acquired on remote frontiers. Quesnel-based photographer Chow Dong Hoy (1883-1973) adopted few commercially produced studio props, ubiquitous in urban studios, but the accoutrements Hoy included were significant: suspended



C.D.Hoy, self-portrait, P2064.

chrysanthemum-laden cloths and small tables set with books, potted plants, and clocks conveyed cultural messages such as good luck and longevity (133).

Hoy's subjects pose in pairs and triplets against backdrops hung in exterior settings "between the log wall of his store and his woodpile" or in simple interiors (135). More than one solitary and dignified male figure confronted the camera with hands spread wide upon his knees. This gesture emphasized confidence, as did the frontality derived from traditional Chinese portraiture (130). Hoy's portraits traverse the formality of imported portrait conventions and the casualness of incidental inclusions (128).

The eyes of Hoy's sitters, depicted in the ninety-seven photographs, commonly gaze directly at the lens and, less frequently, beyond. More unusual was an exchange of glances. In one portrait a young Indian boy stands gazing sideways at the distracted dreamer next to him (89). The closeness of the camera lends a false intimacy, and, in response to the profound silence of the photographic subject, Moosang retrieves fragments of their lives (108).

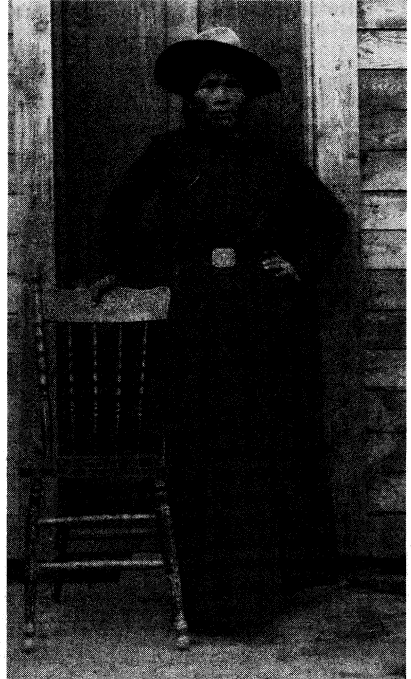
In combining a sophisticated textual analysis with oral accounts and biography, Moosang is concerned not only with Hoy as photographer, but also with rural existence. Too often photographic biography is confined to authorship, leaving the subjects of depiction and motives for the photograph unaddressed. Furthermore, documentary photographs that portrayed obvious signs of development – civic architecture, bridges, and industry – have been privileged in history. The former easily reinforces the myth of the frontier as an overwhelming environment conquered by the engineering feats of rugged individualists. Moosang's portrait analysis uncovers lives that conventional approaches have neglected. As she argues, Chinese labourers, who risked life and sacri-

ficed family with their contribution to the provincial infrastructure and public works, often stood at the periphery when noteworthy moments, such as the pounding of the last spike, were commemorated (109). Predictably the camera focused upon the "top-hatted industrialist" who wielded the pick for the purpose of pomp and political opportunism. Inevitably these men, not the unidentified "sojourners," were etched into historical memory. Hoy's photographs, closely examined, afford a heterogeneous picture of those rendered invisible by grandiose narratives of westward expansionism.

While countless hours were spent in collecting 1,531 photographs at the Barkerville public archives, Moosang exceeded the limits of the archives and met with descendants, including the Hoy sisters, and interviewed residents of the region. Biographical data, assembled from friends, family, primary sources, and the unpublished manuscript entitled *C.D. Hoy: Life History, 1883-1973*, reconstitutes Hoy not as a hero but as a person integral to a local community of labourers and entrepreneurs, as a devoted father, and as being in service to the modern appetite for self-representation. Hoy arrived in Quesnel in 1911 and lived there until his death in 1973. His immigration history rings familiar: he arrived on the *Empress of China* from Guangdong in October 1902, his family name was registered as Hoy rather than Chow by an immigration official, he paid the \$100 head tax to gain entry, he saved for his return to China to fulfil an arranged marriage to Lim Foon Hai in 1910, subsequently returning alone until able to sponsor her immigration in 1917 (111-2). Their first child was born in 1918. The Hoy family was blessed with ten daughters and two sons.

Hoy's varied labour history began with a job as houseboy at a monthly salary of five dollars. A six-day walk from Ashcroft initiated his journey to Quesnel, where he washed dishes at the Occidental Hotel and sent money home. By 1907 he operated a trading company (interacting in central Carrier dialect), and, eventually, he got to Barkerville, where he taught himself photography. By 1912 he was re-established as a shopkeeper and photographer in Quesnel. The keys to his success and longevity were diversification, adaptability, and the support of an extended family. By 1934, signs of his wealth and stability included the first stucco house built in Quesnel (122).

Moosang sought the genealogies of Hoy's subjects, speaking with those "who had some family connection to Quesnel in the 1910s and 1920s" and employing photographs to elicit memories from "at least 120 people ... looking for ancestors and old friends," including First Nations elders, elderly Chinese, and settler families (108). The photographs represent those "in a simple economy of farming, ranching, mining, and lumber jacking, supported by the industry of mothers, cooks, nurses, freight-carriers and store owners" (130). Portraits of Old George William with his wife, Annie William; Chief William Charleyboy with his wife, Elaine Charleyboy (Redstone); and Kong Shing Sing, a blacksmith, horseman, and freight-carrier expand our knowledge of Native and Chinese contributions to Interior ranch life (60, 61, 81). Apparently, Hoy's photographs were in demand during the Quesnel annual Dominion Day Stampede, when ranch-hands flocked to the town to compete on the rodeo circuit (136). These sitters, in their Sunday best, exude a sense of pride in their bond to agriculture, livestock, and the land. Moosang's approach succeeds because



Mathilda Joe (Alexandria). Mathilda Joe, wife of the hereditary chief at Alexandria, was known as an excellent hunter who provided meat for the entire community at Alexandria. (P1631)

she investigates not only the man behind the lens, but also those who stood before it.

Moosang heard less about inter-racial antagonism than she did about respect and camaraderie between Natives, Chinese, and Caucasians (140). Democratic in how he portrayed Hoy, one elderly Quesnel resident confided that he "was our photographer and everyone went to him" (126). Hoy's collection may be "the largest extant and publicly accessible record of Interior native people" (150). As evidence of ethnic heterogeneity, and the casual interactions between the various ethnic groups in rural settings, the photographs explode standard assumptions about racial conflict in the west.



*Nicholas Morant's Canadian Pacific*

J.F. Garden

Revelstoke: Footprint, 1999. 455 pp. Illus. \$89.95 cloth.

By Wallace Chung

*Emeritus University of British Columbia*

**N**ICHOLAS Morant's *Canadian Pacific*, by J.F. Garden, is a magnificent book of photography that was first published in 1991. The present book is the fourth printing, and it was issued in 1999 as a special edition to commemorate the life and work of Morant, who died on 13 March 1999.

Morant was a "special photographer" for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), and he was employed in the Department of Public Relations from 1929 to 1981. His employment spanned the tenure of seven CPR presidents, from Sir Edward Beatty to Ian Sinclair. Being a strong-willed individual, with good credentials as a photographic reporter, he was able to extract from the company privileges and freedom of activity that was granted to no other. In 1929, Beatty needed someone like Morant to strengthen his media battle with the Canadian National Railways (CNR). Morant's photographic duties covered the many and diverse activities of the CPR, but the book is predominantly concerned with his work along the tracks; that is, it is concerned with railway activities.

The book consists of 455 pages, with the first thirty-four containing the preface, introduction, and a brief description of Morant's career. The bibliography and glossary occupy the last six pages. The remaining 415 pages almost follow the format of a CPR-annotated guide, describing landmarks as the train travels from Montreal to

Vancouver, though on a much grander scale. Like a guidebook, it is divided into Eastern Lines and Western Lines, with the division at Current River just east of Thunder Bay. Only forty-four pages are devoted to the Eastern Lines, while 371 are devoted to the Western Lines. Of the latter, 265 pages (two-thirds of the book) are concerned with sites in British Columbia. The emphasis on British Columbia is hardly surprising. Where else in Canada could one find such awesome sights as the soaring peaks of the Rockies or such vivid changes of scenery between summers and winters? Perhaps more important, both Morant and Garden are natives of British Columbia. The book, therefore, should have great appeal to British Columbians.

Besides being a talented photographer, Morant was also a perfectionist. Everything had to be right. Fortunately, this prerequisite was aided by his uncanny ability to select the right time, place, and light for his photographs. Not only have some of his photographs become internationally renowned, but many of the places that he photographed have become famous. One such place was even named after him: Morant's Curve (20). One cold winter morning in 1976 he was driving some guests along Highway 1A between Banff and Lake Louise. He instinctively stopped at mile 113.0 of the Laggan Subdivision, just as the sun broke through the storm clouds. The valley and the five snow-covered

peaks in the background were then bathed in sunlight. A gentle mist was rising from the river. At that precise moment, the *Canadian*, with its gleaming aluminium body, emerged from the mist, gracefully following the gentle curve of the half-frozen Bow River. The ethereal effect of this world-famous photograph probably could only be duplicated by computer-generated photo-animation.

Another landmark made famous by Morant is the Stony Creek Bridge, an engineering feat of massive curving steel arches (277). Here, Morant exercised his ingenuity by using his personally built scaffolding in order to obtain the correct height and angle. And here, in a famous locale, he was able to publicize the CPR's supreme achievement in railroad building and to showcase any new rolling stock as it crossed over this imposing bridge.

On the dust jacket, the publisher offers the hope that the book will be the finest produced on the CPR. If the objective is for the reader to share and enjoy Morant's wonderful photographs, then what is achieved is way beyond the book's stated goal. There are pages upon pages of magnificent photographs, superbly reproduced. Many are in colour and many have never previously been printed. Around them, Garden has cleverly interwoven pertinent facts and interesting anecdotes. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but with the added description of time, place, and occasion, those thousand words are magnified in meaning and significance. An example of this is the picture on the title page. It depicts a cold, wintry day in 1951, with the entire landscape bathed in a bluish hue that created a beautiful scene. A *Selkirk* and a *Royal Hudson*, billowing steam into the frigid air, are pulling a train across the famous

Stoney Creek Bridge. This photograph takes on special significance when we learn that this is a royal train en route to Vancouver, carrying Princess Elizabeth (the future queen) and Prince Philip within its warm carriages. It is these short anecdotes and descriptions that I found most stimulating, for they enticed me to seek more information.

This book should appeal to a wide audience, including train lovers, photographers, historians, tourists, and the many thousands whose lives were directly or indirectly associated with the CPR. The technical buff, seeing "a dramatic picture of G3b class 4-6-2 No.2308 on a double-ended freight coming around Jackfish Curve" (70), would want to look up Omer Lavallee's book *Canadian Pacific Steam Locomotives* in order to obtain more detailed information about this steam train.

For the historian the book is a gold mine of information, and it encourages further research. Such research may, for example, focus on an eccentric chairman or a special occasion (such as the visit of the king and queen in 1939). Or it may focus on a special development that profoundly altered the profile of the CPR, like the transformation of its motive power from steam to diesel in the 1960s. In these pages we see the sad sight of hundreds of sidelined steam locomotives, formerly loyal work horses, rusting neglected in railyards, waiting to be scrapped (84-7). Scrapping proceeded rapidly in 1959, when N.R. Crump, a strong advocate of dieselization, became senior vice-president. He, one may add, is not a friend of those prairie residents who mourn the passing of the steam train. Crump, astute and having a will of iron, became one of the CPR's great chairmen. He would never allow sentimentality to interfere with the bottom line. He was said to have answered his

critics by saying: "When people talk to me about the lonely cry of the steam whistle in the middle of the night on the prairie, I say bullshit!"

The steam whistle has given way to the airhorn. The water tanks are all gone. The grain elevators, for decades the trademark of the prairie landscape, are rapidly vanishing. Fortunately, all these important artefacts of our Canadian heritage are faithfully preserved in this book.

*Nicholas Morant's Canadian Pacific* is an important addition to the historical literature of the CPR and, indeed, of Canada. It advertises itself as a book of photographs – as a book to be shared and enjoyed. But, in fact, it achieves a

much greater objective. It is a book that gives us more than just enjoyment. By using the medium of photography, a medium whose truthfulness and objectivity would be difficult to surpass, it documents the evolution of a great Canadian enterprise – one that, for over a century, pervaded every aspect of Canadian life, be it economic, political, or social. This book helps to preserve part of a vanishing Canadian heritage – the CPR steam trains that did so much to unite and develop Canada as a nation. Our profound gratitude goes not only to Morant, but also to Garden and all those dedicated individuals who helped to craft this wonderful work.

*The Forgotten Side of the Border:  
British Columbia's Elk Valley and Crownsnest Pass*

Wayne Norton and Naomi Miller, editors

Kamloops: Plateau, 1998. 238 pp. Illus., map. \$19.95 paper.

By Keith Ralston

*Emeritus University of British Columbia*

EARLY writing of BC history arose out of the pride of local residents in what they saw as the accomplishments of the comparatively short span of settler society. It reflected mainstream British Columbians' preoccupation with their own province and a traditional "million-miles-from-Ottawa" feeling (applicable also, on this marginal edge of European colonization, to London and New York). With the rise of institutions like the provincial library and archives and, later, the universities and colleges, scholarly insights have taken their place alongside popular history.

Strangely enough, British Columbia academic history has been a bit of a "scholarly deficit" field. Many of those trained in provincial history departments have sought their research topics in other specialties, while British Columbia has not had the influx of scholars from other areas and schools that has characterized, say, the twentieth-century study of the Canadian Prairies. The result has been a small number of academic historians confronting a dauntingly large endeavour.

Yet, in many respects, this picture is a lopsided one. British Columbians, as Margaret Ormsby, the doyenne of

BC historians, has reminded us, have always been literate – an immense body of popular history exists in tandem with academic writings. Some members of the academy have rejected these works, arguing that methodological deficiencies make them less than useful. This view, in itself, reflects a parochialism that they often condemn in non-academic writers. It also sounds somewhat like a case of sour grapes – envy at the much wider reception of popular works than of academic tomes: Pierre Berton rather than George Glazebrook or even Harold Innis. Popular historians, especially locally based ones, are not deserving of such condescension. They bring to their task an arguably superior sense of place and of the historical concerns of their fellow citizens. In any case, history as a discipline has been (and should continue to be) open to anyone prepared to make a strict examination of evidence without requiring either the Latin tags of lawyers or the special jargon of the social scientist. What the future writing of BC history in particular demands is the collaboration of academic and popular historians, a joint effort that can be productive in every sense.

*The Forgotten Side of the Border* presents the results of just such a collaboration exemplified in the persons of the editors and backed up by the list of contributors. Editors are Wayne Norton, who has graduate training in history and scholarly publications to his credit, and Naomi Miller, an enthusiastic historian of the region and long-time editor of the *B. C. Historical News*. “The forgotten side” is the British Columbia part of the Crowsnest Pass-Elk Valley corridor on the south-eastern border of the province, whose historical treatment the authors con-

sider to have been neglected, both compared to the rich literature dealing with the Alberta side and as a part of the BC historical record. This neglect they set out to rectify, at least in part.

The text is divided into two parts, the first giving a general picture of the area. Several of its articles are by professionally trained historians and present a conventional picture of “development” – stories of entrepreneurs like William Fernie, James Baker, and Michael Phillipps, and stories of the creation of railways and coal mines. However, also included in this section is an intriguing article by Noel Ratch, which neatly dissects the legend of a “curse” allegedly put by the Ktunaxa people on settler activities.

The heart of the book is Part 2, which features the often colourful highlights of individual communities, although these again echo patterns of birth, life, and death common to BC resource towns. The stories of the little settlements that came and went often consist of reminiscences by former citizens or accounts pieced together from fragmentary sources. The histories of hospitals and hotels, hockey teams and cultural groups, appear side by side with grim accounts of the mine disasters and the labour strife that haunt coalfields. Most captivating are the brief recollections of tiny places like Crowsnest – three pages that may be its only appearance in the historical record. Others, better known, like Michel, Natal, and Hosmer, also get their due. Overall, the pieces by sixteen of the twenty-four contributors give a picture of change, interesting in itself, but also available to be melded into larger studies of provincial history.

*Smelter Smoke in North America:  
The Politics of Transborder Pollution*

John D. Wirth

Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000.  
264 pp. Illus., maps. US\$35 cloth.

By Jeremy Mouat  
*Athabasca University*

JOHN Wirth's book on cross-border pollution compares the controversy surrounding the Trail smelter (1925-41) with a similar dispute involving smelter pollution along the American-Mexican border in the 1980s. The first three chapters examine events in Trail, followed by three of the events further south, on the Arizona-Mexico border. In the seventh and final chapter, Wirth argues that the second dispute shows that a growing awareness of the "continental commons" is emerging, although he feels that the mining industry has always operated in continental terms. Only recently – spurred in part by new regulatory regimes and trading agreements that are integrating the continent – have governments begun to follow industry and to think in similar terms.

The book's chapters on Trail provide interesting detail on the famous "smoke case" that ran from the late 1920s through to 1941, although James Allum's unpublished dissertation remains the best account.<sup>1</sup> Farmers in Washington State, with the support of the American government, sought compensation for damage to their land and crops caused by sulphur dioxide from the Trail smelter, which tended to drift down the Columbia River

valley and across the 49th parallel. Cominco, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) subsidiary that owned the smelter, accepted responsibility for the pollution and remained willing to provide compensation, although it disputed the amount of compensation that it should pay and maintained its right to continue operations, despite the adverse impact on the valley environment. While the two sides – with the assistance of their respective governments – argued before the International Joint Commission (IJC) and, later, before a tribunal appointed by the IJC, Cominco worked to contain the pollution by implementing a control regime to recover the sulphur dioxide before it went up the smelter stack. The company's efforts were reasonably effective, and by the 1940s it had considerably reduced the amount of sulphur dioxide going up the stack.

Cominco was also successful with its litigation. As Wirth chronicles, the IJC tribunal accepted the company's argument that its smoke control regime was adequate by the late 1930s and that the smelter emissions were no longer causing damage to plants. Wirth goes into some detail to draw out the essential point of contention between the competing experts that the two sides employed. This concerned the validity of the notion of invisible injury. Scientists with the United States Department of Agriculture, following

<sup>1</sup>James Robert Allum, "Smoke across the Border: The Environmental Politics of the Trail Smelter Investigation" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 1995).

earlier German studies on the impact of air pollution, argued that sulphur dioxide from the Trail smelter had both an immediate and obvious impact as well as a more subtle (“invisible”) one. Cominco’s experts – ironically, the company’s star expert was himself an American – rejected this notion and persuaded the tribunal to do so as well.

Wirth’s analysis is not always clear – and not always clearly written – but some intriguing detail does emerge. American smelters as well as the United States Bureau of Mines knew that if the farmers were successful with their suit against Cominco, then other suits would inevitably follow. They threw their support behind Cominco, a point Wirth notes (40-1) but subsequently downplays; instead, he tends to characterize the two sides in rather stark and nationalistic terms (the aggrieved American farmers seeking justice from the well connected Canadian company). Nor does he provide much context: the detail is minutely observed, but the larger picture is often obscured.

The focus of the book is implicitly American: “the border” is the American border, north and south. Other borders – such as those within the United States – are largely ignored, although it is instructive to compare these international pollution cases with similar instances of pollution within the United States. Washington farmers had far more success in calling Cominco to account than have American citizens when challenging domestic polluters. Consider the Trail plant’s closest neighbour in northern Idaho, for example: the Bunker Hill smelter polluted the region from 1917 to 1981, turning the bottom of Lake Coeur d’Alene – according to a 1992 report by the United States Geological Survey – into “the world’s

most heavy metal-contaminated site.” But by then the smelter owners had shifted their assets offshore and filed for bankruptcy, leaving the American government to clean up the mess. While in operation, the smelter had been responsible for “the highest levels of sulphur dioxide gas recorded in the United States.”<sup>2</sup> Only in 1998 did the United States Environmental Protection Agency enact regulations that would crack down on cross-border pollution from coal-fired power plants in the American Midwest, which were responsible for smog in New England and elsewhere (a move fought bitterly by utility and coal companies). Canada has been grappling with similar issues recently, as the federal government attempts to persuade the provinces to adopt Canada-wide standards for air quality.

Overall the book relies on extensive research, although Wirth occasionally makes some surprising gaffes. In the space of one page (117), for example, he manages to give Cominco’s *eminence grise*, Selwyn Blaylock, a new first name (George); wrongly attributes Blaylock’s grudging union recognition to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) instead of to PC 1003; mistakenly calls the Industrial Workers of the World the International Workers of the World; dates the founding of the United Mineworkers from the 1914 Ludlow Massacre (a quarter of a century late); and misleads his readers with a garbled account of labour relations in the mining industry during the 1980s and 1990s.

A more fundamental problem is the adequacy of the book’s central comparison. The two case studies do not

<sup>2</sup> Carlos Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), pp. 483-4.

pass the basic test for any meaningful comparison – that of commensurability. Granted, both involve cross-border pollution by smelters, but I find it hard to accept that a case from the Depression can be compared in such close detail with one from the 1980s. Nor does it seem possible to discuss either case without paying careful attention to power. In a book largely concerned with judicial and political decision making, *Smelter Smoke's* failure to examine authority and power in any detail is curious. To imagine – as the author does – that successive American governments treat Canadian or Mexican governments as equals in any but the strictly technical and formal sense is naive. However, this as-

sumed equality informs the book's argument about the emergence of the "continental commons," where jurisdictions happily cooperate in North American harmony. There is evidence of cross-border cooperation, if only at the level of publicizing our continentalist future: the dust jacket solemnly records that the book was "published with the assistance of the Government of Canada."

As an enthusiast for comparative history, mining history, and cross-border issues, I looked forward to reading this book. It proved a disappointing read: implicitly nationalistic in its approach, often naive in its analysis, and unconvincing in its prognosis concerning the brave new continentalist world ahead.

*A Young Man's Benefit:  
The Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Sickness  
Insurance in the United States and Canada, 1860-1929*

George Emery and J.C. Herbert Emery

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.  
184 pp. Illus. \$39.95 cloth.

By Lynne Bowen  
*University of British Columbia*

FATHER and son researchers historian George Emery and economist J.C. Herbert Emery have produced a clearly written book for a limited audience. The book is based on extensive research into the archives of six Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) grand lodges in Canada and the United States. The Emerys subject their data to the analysis of their respective disciplines "to discover when and why the IOOF ceased to be an important source of sickness

insurance" (3). They conclude that "a change in the character of the membership" (115) led to the benefit being abolished in 1925. They also note that the factors that led the IOOF to make this decision were among the reasons why the United States and Canada did not enact compulsory sickness insurance in the decade after the First World War.

An examination of the reasons why North America's interest in sickness insurance declined while Germany's

(1883) and Great Britain's (1911) rose should be of interest to a wide audience. But the juxtaposition of history and economics, and the failure to provide historical context, limits the appeal and usefulness of this book. The target audience could only be one that understands the theory, terminology, and formulae of economics and, in addition, is familiar with the origins of the self-help movement from which the 100F evolved – material that the Emerys fail to provide.

The self-help movement was the foundation of the modern welfare state. The movement's origins were in the pubs of Great Britain, where members contributed to a burial fund in order to avoid a pauper's grave. The story of how those early beginnings led to the science of the actuary and, from that, to the formation of the life insurance industry, medicare, unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and workers' compensation is a fascinating one. The inclusion of a brief account of this process would have enabled readers unfamiliar with the

story to place the Emerys' thesis in historical context and to judge it accordingly.

Scholars with knowledge of this context and an understanding of economic theory will welcome this book as an addition to the literature on friendly societies – a field in which, until the last twenty years, there have been few up-to-date publications. Those within this select group who have an interest in British Columbia will find sufficient reference to this province's experience to justify reading *A Young Man's Benefit*.

As the Canadian health care system struggles to adjust to changes in funding and demands for service, and as forty-five million Americans continue to be unable to afford health insurance, the analysis and conclusions of George and Herbert Emery should help us to gain an understanding of both the causes of, and solutions to, the problems we are currently facing. It is a pity that the audience they will reach will be such a limited one.

*Rebel Life: The Life and Times of Robert Gosden,  
Revolutionary, Mystic, Labour Spy*

Mark Leier

Vancouver: New Star, 1999. 238 pp. Illus. \$19 paper.

By Ivan Avakumovic

*Emeritus University of British Columbia*

**G**OVERNMENTS and big business have always been interested in revolutionary organizations and radical labour unions. Reliable information about them and, better still, their ability to

manipulate the ranks of opponents of the status quo were valuable tools in a struggle that never seemed to end. Canada was no exception, although the dearth of ample documentary evidence available to academics, jour-



nalists, and radicals dramatically reduced the number of potential biographies of labour spies.

Students of the Canadian Left will welcome Mark Leier's well-documented life of one of the informers. The author concentrates on the years when the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the One Big Union in Alberta and British Columbia attracted a fair amount of attention from police chiefs, mainstream politicians, and less militant labour leaders.

In some ways Robert Gosden was a fairly typical IWW activist in western Canada between 1910 and 1913. Born overseas, he had little formal education, worked in several branches of the economy, moved from place to place in search of work, and saw the inside of jails in the Dominion and the United States. In 1919 Gosden surfaced as one of the delegates to the Western Labour Conference in Calgary. By then he was a controversial figure among those who fought for major social changes. A miners' delegate accused him point blank of working for the police. Those who had followed legislative affairs in Victoria knew already that he had been involved in one of those scandals that periodically disfigure BC politics. During the First World War an electoral commission had found evidence that Gosden had been paid to "cajole real voters to support the Liberals and help others cast illegal ballots."

Gosden's career as a spy for the Mounties ended after labour unrest subsided in western Canada. The documents to which Leier had access show that the Mounties never employed him again. The British Columbia Provincial Police, however, used him as an informer at the height of the Depression.

Leier was unable to find out when Gosden first approached the Mounties, and he can only speculate about what made a former labour agitator betray his comrades. On the other hand, he shows that Gosden was not an ordinary informer. Reports to his paymasters include calls for social and economic reforms to combat the influence of those within whose ranks he had fought. Towards the end of the biographical part of *Rebel Spy*, Leier goes so far as to argue that "Gosden stands for millions of men and women in B.C. and Canada whose lives go largely unrecognized and unwritten." The last chapter, "Some Thoughts of Doing Labour History," is full of advice for those eager to enlarge the frontiers of traditional labour history. This section will be of primary interest to those with minimal knowledge of the field. As Leier states in the introduction, labour history is not "easily available" in British Columbia. Fortunately, four of his graduate students dealt with the problem in a fifty-odd-page appendix entitled "Bibliography of British Columbia Labour History."

*Early Human Occupation in British Columbia*

Roy L. Carlson and Luke Dalla Bona, editors

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996. Illus. 261 pp. \$65 cloth.

By Duncan McLaren  
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**B** RITISH COLUMBIA occupies a pivotal position in terms of the understanding of the peopling of the Americas. Both pioneering migration routes, the so-called ice-free corridor and the coastal migration route, pass through British Columbia. For this reason the contributions to *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* have the potential of being significant to understanding early cultural manifestations not only in British Columbia, but also in the Americas in general. It is within this framework that the book is set in the introduction written by Roy Carlson. Elements from five early American traditions are found in British Columbia: the fluted point, plano, intermontane stemmed point, pebble tool, and microblade traditions. However, the dates associated with these traditions in British Columbia are late in terms of palaeo-Indian occupations in the Americas.

Reports on the fluted point tradition are from northeastern British Columbia and are written by K.R. Fladmark, J.C. Driver, and I.R. Wilson, respectively. These sites, and, in particular, Charlie Lake Cave, are interpreted as representing a late backwash of the fluted style/technology into previously marginal regions. W. Choquette and D. Fedje contribute reports on the intermontane stemmed point tradition from southeastern British Columbia (Choquette) and Banff (Fedje). This tradition is better

defined from sites in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon (e.g., Rice 1972). Although both the fluted and stemmed point traditions were found in Banff, a reliable and accurate sequence between the two cultural manifestations could only be provisionally inferred. This is unfortunate, as some recent research in Idaho suggests that the two traditions may be contemporaneous (Wisner 1998).

The majority of contributions to *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* are from the coastal areas. The editors of the volume have divided these contributions into the pebble tool and microblade traditions, depending on whether or not microblades are present in early period assemblages. Recent publications have demonstrated that coastal refugia existed in British Columbia and Alaska during the Pleistocene (Heaton et al. 1996; Erlandson et al. 1996; Fedje and Josenhans 2000). Models concerning the coastal migration route into the Americas can be temporally contextualized through an understanding of the descendants of such migrants. The compiled reports on these traditions allow for efficient access to archaeologists' knowledge of the early period. The definition of these technological traditions is of considerable value, as they differ in many respects from those found around the same time period in the rest of North America.

The last section of this book is devoted to contributions organized

under the heading *Transitional Cultures*. A.R. Stryd and M.K. Rousseau's report on the early prehistory of the mid-Fraser-Thompson River area is of considerable value as a tool for defining the characteristics of particular phases in this region of British Columbia. However, I find their association of the Lochnore Phase with a distinct linguistic group (Salishan) to be based on dubious evidence and historical assumption.

It is of considerable interest that, of the twenty-five contributors to *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia*, only one of them is female. This would seem to be a reflection of the demographics of archaeological research, at least in terms of early period studies, during the past half century.

The cultural-historical focus of *Early Occupation in British Columbia* is complemented by palaeo-ecological studies and diet reconstruction, geomorphological data, and insights into lithic technology. All of these are important in understanding the early occupation of British Columbia. One important aspect of the historical record for this time period is unfortunately missing from this text: ethno-historical data. The value of origin stories and other oral historical narrative in coming to an understanding of major historical events during the early occupation in British Columbia is great.

*Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* will be of particular importance to archaeologists working with early period material in British Columbia and in neighbouring areas, including Washington, Alaska, Oregon, and Alberta. It will also be of interest to scholars investigating the peopling of the Americas. Many of the contributions in *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* relate technical

details or draw on terminology that may not be easily understood by non-archaeologists. Most of the contributions are accompanied by informative figures and tables that aid the reader in conceptualizing the subject matter and that will allow early period researchers to draw on valuable comparative data.

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*The Silent Debate:  
Asian Immigration and Racism in Canada*

Eleanor Laquian, Aprodicio Laquian,  
and Terry McGee, editors

Vancouver: Institute of Asian Research,  
University of British Columbia, 1998. 432 pp. Illus., maps. \$24.95 paper.

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I AGREED to review this book out of a sense of duty rather than of excitement. Given my research interests, I felt I could not say no to reviewing a volume on Asians and racism in Canada. However, by the time I got to the end, I was reading with genuine excitement. I even found myself having to reconsider some of the assumptions of my research.

*The Silent Debate* is an important contribution to an international literature on migrations and racism. It grows out of a 1997 conference organized by UBC's Institute of Asian Research. That conference brought together scholars and policy makers from around the Pacific Rim to explore patterns in migration, local racisms, and their implications for public policy in Canada. Judging by the quality of papers published here, that conference must have been exciting. The concerns of this volume are indeed topical.

Specific contributions establish that recent migrations from Asia to Canada are only a small part of a much larger movement of people within Asia itself. Following this, many chapters move beyond the usual "push/pull" studies of international migrations. Chapters by Zeng and Zhang, Pinnawala, and Brillantes explore the policies and economic conditions shaping migrations

from China, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, respectively. Meanwhile Kassim, Hugo, and Abella look at migrations within Asia, comparing the situations of multiple countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. These accounts establish a wider context within which to conduct debates over immigration to Canada. Kassim points out, for example, that Malaysia documented 1.6 million illegal immigrants between 1992 and 1995 (130), only part of what is believed to be a much larger movement of people. Canada's situation pales by comparison. The volume also contributes to the theory of human migrations. Skeldon's chapter on "diaspora," a must-read for scholars using the term, points out the gains and losses involved with thinking of diasporas rather than of migrations. Some of the more policy-oriented chapters, often written by key policy makers themselves, have a rather hortatory tone. For example, Tang's chapter on the immigration/settlement policies of the City of New York seems to give an all too rosy picture of that jurisdiction's treatment of illegal immigrants. However, even such chapters provide alternate policy models that can and should texture debates in Canada.

The chapters on racism are also of high quality. I was particularly interested

in Jones's chapter on Australia and Trlin, Henderson, and Pernice's chapter on New Zealand. The discourse on Asian "astronauts," the Pauline Hansen case, and so on, are all too familiar for readers in Canada. Indeed, continuities between such discourses in places like Australia and Canada cry out for further exploration. Are these artefacts of the behaviour of some Asian migrants themselves or are they the results of White supremacist nationalist imaginings common to both countries? Chapters on Canadian racism also raise important questions. Ley's chapter on the "monster homes" issue in Vancouver, the best account that I have read on the subject, successfully problematizes the political usages of allegations of racism. Other chapters examine anti-Asian immigration backlash (Simmons), multiculturalism policies (Tepper), and the experiences of Chinese migrants to Canada (Woo). Adam-Moodley develops an argument for linking efforts at anti-racist education to a broader political and social literacy. Indeed, so strong are many of these contributions that I found myself copying their references and looking up the authors' publications, adding further to that list of "things I should read." (I knew I should have said no!)

However, for all of *The Silent Debate's* textured exploration of Asian migrations and racisms, it does not really succeed in linking the two. There are several reasons for this failure. First, it is not entirely clear that anti-Asian racism in Canada is caused by the arrival of newcomers from Asia. Such racism may well have more to do with how that migration has been publicly represented than with its scale. Indeed, this racism may be enacted through such representation. Recent moral panics over "illegal

refugees," an oxymoron if there ever was one, seem to stem more from columnists for the *National Post* than from people living in close contact with newcomers. A significant literature on anti-racism suggests that racisms have more to do with creating exclusions than with the existence of difference per se. Thus, the prevailing wisdom that migrations need to be controlled so as to mitigate backlash in receiving populations remains to be demonstrated. Indeed, several contributors to this volume point out that public opinion polling has consistently indicated that 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the Canadian population are deeply prejudiced – a figure that has remained remarkably stable as levels of immigration have changed over the years.

Second, with the exception of Woo's chapter on business-class Chinese immigrants in Vancouver, the voices and experiences of Asian migrants themselves tend to be missing from this volume. In part, this reflects the disciplinary background of the contributors to the volume – demographers, human geographers, and urban planners. Pages are filled with presentations of so-called "hard data," charts, census figures, and quotes from policies. But when it comes to the study of racism, engaging the experiences of those subject to exclusion is key.

Third, with the exception of citing some opinion poll data, most of *The Silent Debate's* claims about popular racism in Canada are unsupported. Part of the problem here is that many scholars, and here I include myself, see their formal research as divorced from their lives. While we may have witnessed, or even been targeted by, expressions of popular racisms, we have often not documented such things. The result is that the most germane of issues can exist as little more than

urban legends in even the most critical scholarship. What the dimensions of popular anti-Asian racisms in Canada really are is a question that this volume does not answer.

Fourth, longer-term historical perspectives are missing from this volume. None of the things discussed here, Asian migrations or Canadian racisms, is particularly new. Issues of multicultural diversity, especially on the West Coast, were confronted long before UBC even existed. More than one student of history has been struck by the parallels between contemporary send-them-back-no-matter-what discourses about Chinese boat people and newspaper reactions to the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident, for example. Such perspectives might have drawn attention to the longer-term structures at work

and might also have shifted policy discussions. However, I suspect that this omission may have more to do with the unwillingness of historians to engage in contemporary policy-oriented discussions than it does with any failures on the part of the organizers of the volume.

In the end, these weaknesses show this volume's strength. They point to gaps within current research rather than to failings on the part of the contributors to, and organizers of, this book. Like all good scholarship, *The Silent Debate* points to the limits of existing knowledge and highlights areas for further exploration. This, in the end, may be its most important contribution. I hope that scholars in multiple fields will approach it with a sense of excitement rather than duty.