BOOK REVIEWS

Handmade Forests: The Treeplanter's Experience

Hélène Cyr

Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 1998.
143 pp. Illus. $24.95 paper.

BY BRIONY PENN AND DONALD GUNN
Saltspring Island

"STAB, PUSH, TWIST, bury, backcut, kick." This is the opening sentence on the back cover of Hélène Cyr's *Handmade Forests: The Treeplanter's Experience*, which, we are told, is the treeplanter's tai chi. Through a winning combination of black-and-white photographs and moving text, it could also be described as the reader's tai chi. I loved this book. It stabbed, pushed, twisted, buried, backcut, and kicked my heart around in honour of that enormous "camraderie of misery" and "rite-of-passage" for all my friends, cousins, students, and other young people who have created the treeplanting culture. *Handmade Forests* is a handmade book that is absolutely true to "the vibrant subculture" with "larger-than-life mythological aspects" that it describes. It is stark, raw, funny, poignant, elegant in the face of the savage monotony that is industrial forestry. Words and images are selected with the same mindful economy that treeplanters bring to the job to survive. Even the typeface is a sans serif without any dressing.

The book is divided into essays by Sioux Browning, Dave Wallinger, and John Cathro, along with a photo-essay by Hélène Cyr. Sioux Browning, a poet/treeplanter, writes an evocative preface about this "bizarre world of putting trees back where they belong, where they had always been before, so they can eventually be taken out again." She co-writes, with silviculture specialist Dave Wallinger (of the BC Forest Service), a history of how the renegade phenomenon of treeplanting emerged. This short essay sets the context for John Cathro's "Field Guide to the Treeplanter's Experience." If John Cathro is the new style of naturalist-forester working his way up in the industry from the bottom ranks of the treeplanting subculture, then there is hope. People who have spent time walking in the forest, cleaned up after someone else's mistakes, and "survived the vertical slash, horizontal rain, blinding sweat, deafening mosquitoes and maddening no-see-ums" ( ), have a humour, pragmatism, and broad perspective that is going to get us through this transitional time in BC forestry. He is a great writer to boot. What follows is an excerpt from the section that teaches you about "screefing":

> Screefing is the first thing learned, the last word spoken about treeplanting ... Screefing is all about removing the

> organic layer above the soil, about gardening a microsite for the seedling. Screefing is the bones of the operation. In tough ground the ability to locate and prepare a plantable spot is what makes someone a highballer. In open dirt you can plant screef-free. In moderate ground there is just enough diversity to ensure that the brain must remain engaged. The mind expands into the zone, a blend of obscure lyrics, the faces of old lovers, the bodies of potential new ones, flashbacks from previous contracts, previous lives. Not so much a case of life passing before one's eyes as significant episodes played and replayed, from one tree to the next, the exertion squeezing the meaning through pounding veins to drip from the forehead to the ground.

Hélène Cyr's photographs follow. Of course they are in black and white, true to the treeplanting perspective. In her preface, Sioux Browning writes: "The photographs are honest. They are fair. They do what they have to do. Mostly they show us out there, planting trees under that great big sky, bending toward the earth, filling in the empty spaces." Characteristically, what Browning doesn't say is that these are beautiful pictures that capture more than just a job; they capture what Merv Wilkinson, pioneer of eco-forestry, describes as "the hardships of working in a world of devastation left by the legal vandals of industry." The treeplanter's quotes that accompany the images will be reminiscent for every treeplanter. Ranging from "I don't miss it much except for an amazing cook named Mona, a few good parties and some pretty French girls" to a "a life beautiful in its lack of excess."

Treeplanting is changing as the move to unionize treeplanters and shift ex-loggers into the siviculture industry gathers steam. Browning and Wallinger predict that, if this happens, then "the renegade nature of the job [will] vanish" and the subculture that we experience so vividly between the pages of this book will disappear. Whatever emerges in the future, this book is a great tribute to this period of history and the motley crew of "students, foreigners, doctors, musicians, travelers, dreamers, outcasts, weirdos, the insane and the pure" who, at the end of the day, planted four billion trees in British Columbia alone and proved that "if you can plant trees you can do anything."

The Ecological Indian: Myth and History

Shepard Krech III

New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. 318 pp. $39.99 cloth.

TED BINNEMA
University of Northern British Columbia

EVERY DAY British Columbians confront issues related to the relationships between Native peoples and the environment, whether they be within the context of hunting and fishing rights, natural resource management issues, land claims, or parks policies. Much of the debate on these issues is conditioned by perceptions of historic relationships between Native peoples and the environment. In coffee shops, newspaper editorials, government offices, Native communities, the courts, and academia indigenous peoples are commonly portrayed as either natural environmentalists who always lived in harmony with nature or as rapacious plunderers who, once devastated by European diseases or given the requisite technology, easily plundered the environment for short-term gain.

Happily, in *The Ecological Indian*, Krech moves towards a deep understanding of the historic relationships between Native peoples and their environments, thus enabling his readers to understand that the question, "Were Indians ecologists and conservationists?" diverts attention away from far more interesting and important historical questions. For this reason, anyone interested in the issues surrounding the relationships between Native peoples and their environments should read *The Ecological Indian*; and any scholars, policy makers, politicians, lawyers, judges, and Native leaders who must make decisions related to these relationships should put the book on their reading list. As a masterful synthesis and historiography, Krech's book should now be seen as the single most important historical survey of the relationships between Native North Americans and their environments. As a bonus, although the book is broad in its scope, Krech, whose expertise is in the subarctic fur trade, discusses several topics of specific interest to Canadians and British Columbians.

Krech organized his book around analyses of some of the most hotly debated issues in the history of Native relationships with the environment, his aim being to "rekindle debate on the fit between one of the most durable images of the American Indian and American Indian behaviour, and [to] spawn detailed analyses of the myriad relationships between indigenous people and their environments in North America" (28). Having led his readers to believe that the book is centred around the idea of the ecological Indian, Krech quickly warns them that this image, like the many other stereotypes Westerners have invented about Native peoples, is "ultimately dehumanizing" (26). In order to help them understand the complexity of Native-environment interactions, Krech provides a sensitive and sympathetic survey of the historical debates. The book's chapters

provide careful analyses of the secondary literature relating to debates surrounding indigenous contributions to the Pleistocene extinctions, the environmental causes of the disappearance of the Hohokam, the demographic collapse brought about by the arrival of Old World diseases, Native use of fire, and Native participation in the near extermination of the bison, white-tailed deer, and beaver. In the end, readers preoccupied with the idea of the ecological Indian are led to understand that, although indigenous peoples have indeed long had unique, close, and respectful relationships with their environments, these relationships did not conform to nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions of conservation or environmentalism. While some experts in the field will find nothing new in this argument, they can rest assured that they will benefit from Krech's careful analysis as well as from his copious and detailed citations. Had the publisher decided to include a bibliography, the book would have been even more effective in meeting the authors' goals.

It is unfortunate that readers encounter an epilogue rather than a conclusion at the end of this book. The epilogue discusses, superficially, more case studies than Krech attempted to deal with in the entire body of the book. It is difficult to believe that his rapid-fire discussions of recent hotly contested issues, such as the Makah whale hunt, do justice to them. A conclusion that explored the implications of his arguments more fully would reinforce, rather than obscure, the contributions his book has to make. Nevertheless, *The Ecological Indian* should do much to familiarize scholars and the public with the important literature published on the history of Native-environmental relations in the last twenty years, to stimulate further research, and to improve our ability to make important decisions for the future. Given how many of these decisions British Columbians will be called upon to make in the next decades, they, in particular, should welcome this new book.

At a Crossroads: Archaeology and First Peoples in Canada

George P. Nicholas and Thomas D. Andrews, Editors

Burnaby: Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, 1997.
303 pp. Illus. $37.00 paper.

Quentin Mackie
University of Victoria

Archaeologists worldwide working within postcolonial contexts have increasingly come under pressure to adopt an explicitly political position – pressure they must balance against the pitfalls of feigning scientific neutrality. Conversely, as indigenous peoples have found, archaeology can be both an insidious foe and a powerful ally in the

fight for restorative justice. This recent book is a most welcome Canadian addition to the growing world literature on the conjunctions between different ways of knowing the past.

The book is organized into three sections: "Working Together," Traditional Knowledge and Archaeology," and "Curation, Presentation, and Ownership of the Past." The editors contribute excellent introductory and concluding chapters. Bruce Trigger, Canada's foremost archaeologist and a pioneer in examining the social context of archaeology, writes an impressive foreword to the book. As this book has some twenty-two chapters, it is clearly beyond the scope of this review to discuss all the points of view represented in it. The editors' efforts to present a plurality of voices is, however, much appreciated: of the twenty-six contributors, eight are identified as belonging to First Nations, six are academics (including two students), five are with governments, six are consultants, and nine have other institutional (mainly museum/cultural) affiliations (some authors fall into more than one category). Half the authors are women. Subjects covered range from ownership and legal issues surrounding a Coast Salish stone bowl to Native internships in Manitoba, from joint university-First Nations field schools to the place of archaeology in the Sechelt self-government act. The book is weighted towards Arctic and Subarctic case studies, perhaps because the high Aboriginal population density and relative lack of destructive development has reduced the frictions and allowed positive agendas to take the lead. Nonetheless, Canadian archaeology has seldom been revealed to have such a diverse set of socially relevant applications and such a broad base of knowledgeable stakeholders.

Indeed, in their introductory essay "Indigenous Archaeology in the Post-Modern World," the editors stress that hearing many voices in a respectful forum is tantamount to acknowledging the validity of the diversity of interests in the collective cultural heritage, and the collection of case studies and reflective pieces that they have gathered is powerful testimony to that effect. One wonders, however, if the bobbing and weaving of the postmodern ethos of polyvocality can be just as bereft of outright political conviction as its more aggressively naive scientistic counterparts. Trigger makes just this point in his introduction when he asserts that an overly relativistic and insufficiently positivist approach in archaeology leaves all interpretations of the past on an equal footing. All concerned are then unequipped to fight unsavoury "nationalist, colonialist and imperialist" archaeologies. This point may be understandably downplayed because of a central dilemma in contemporary archaeology: how do archaeologists juggle the moral right of peoples to have control over their own past with an equally strong desire to fight nationalistic misinterpretation of archaeological data? What is found *in* the land is, after all, powerful, enduring, yet contentious evidence for past activities *on* the land.

The resolution of the dilemma might seem simple when the topic is distant and unpleasant Balkan nationalisms, less so when it enters the realm of contemporary indigenous nationalism in Canada. Ultimately, perhaps, archaeologists must become explicitly engaged with the politics of the "past in the present" and drop at least some of their pretence of disengagement. As Hugh Brody notes in *Maps and Dreams*, in a country fuelled by development

of natural resources, it is often only years after doing their work that anthropologists will learn for whom they were really working. *At a Crossroads* provides several case studies, suitable for class discussion, of conflicts over the past and their creative resolution, and it points the way towards archaeologies of the future within a multicultural state.

In this regard, it is welcome that several authors try to integrate their contributions with contemporary archaeological theory, though the hollow centre of this book is surely the schism between the archaeologists' traditional focus on material and more holistic approaches to the past. It is this difference in approach to material that may lead to problems that are only now becoming apparent and that the book is thus unable to address. For example, why is concern about the destruction of the archaeological record so intermittent and patchy? In British Columbia, despite long-standing laws, to my knowledge there have been only two prosecutions for the destruction of archaeological sites. Why? The government may have little interest in slowing development, the developers little desire to trim their profits, the police little experience in this area of law, the consulting archaeologists little motivation to annoy their paymasters, and academic archaeologists little inclination to see beyond their ivory tower. Yet First Nations? Why are they apparently reluctant to use the law to protect the cultural heritage to which they lay claim? While this question remains unanswered, what emerges from this book are complex examples of alternative archaeologies that bear considerable reflection by all interested in how history is made and valued.

Perhaps it is inevitable that a polyvocal approach, when combined with apparently light editorial direction, means certain subjects will be poorly covered and others missed altogether. In particular, issues surrounding archaeological approaches to human remains and the resultant differing views over the appropriate treatment of the dead are surprisingly ill expressed. Over the years, no single topic has caused so much bad feeling between indigenous peoples and archaeologists, nor cast into such sharp relief the collision between scientific and humanistic approaches to the past. Human remains are mentioned in passing by several contributors, but there is no serious grappling with this issue. This makes the volume somewhat incomplete within a Canadian context and will doubtless be a disappointment to foreign readers. Nevertheless, even this shortcoming is a sign of the positive outlook of a fine book that stresses the pleasure rather than the pain of encounters that occur at archaeological/indigenous crossroads.

Glyphs and Gallows: The Rock Art of Clo-oose and the Wreck of the John Bright

Peter Johnson

Surrey: Heritage House, 1999. 254 pp. Illus., maps. $18.95 paper.

CHRIS ARNETT
Malaspina University College

THE ROCK ART OF North American First Nations, because of its visibility and cultural secrecy, has provided a fertile ground for the imagination and speculation of non-Natives and has spawned a literature with little consideration of First Nations perspectives and, as a consequence, little grounding in empirical reality. Following this genre is Peter Johnson's book *Glyphs and Gallows: The Rock Art of Clo-oose and the Wreck of the John Bight*, which attempts to interpret a particular set of tliiy'aa'a (Nuu-chah-nulth rock writing, or petroglyphs) found near the Ditidaht village of Clo-oose on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Following the lead of a 1926 newspaper article, Johnson tries to connect events surrounding the 1869 wreck of the *John Bight* 150 kilometres north at Hesquiat with specific images, particularly those of European sailing ships, found at the Clo-oose site.

The book is an example of what happens when a theory, based on false assumptions, is allowed to spin wildly out of control. Johnson's argument is convoluted and consists of a textual hodgepodge of colonial history and amateur archaeology juxtaposed with a "personal journal" that records the author's quest to fathom the meaning of the Clo-oose petroglyphs. The latter component of the book contains a lot of unfortunate language, such as: "The glyphs recorded much of the culture and spirituality of these ancient coastal peoples and, not surprisingly, marked some of the events that were to bring about their demise"(7). And then there is: "Think of it – ingenious lines, compelling circles, and sparse archetypal images – ancient indentations, crafted on coastal shelves, that could actually represent something so momentous as the passing of a race"(104). Or how about: "Petroglyphs: What do they mean? How can we crack their silent codes? How do we get at meaning? Do they have meaning beyond that contained in the beauty of their mysterious shapes?"(105). These comments, and there are many more, underline the book's major flaw, which is the complete lack of any First Nations input into the subject. Indeed, as the language Johnson uses seems to indicate, First Nations peoples are invisible. Invisible, that is, except for one telling scene at the Nitinat River where the author waits impatiently for the ferry service provided by the Edgar family, a Ditidaht family with ancient ties to the area: "There was no way to cross the Nitinat River save with the aid of a local Native who ran the aluminum skiff ferry for hikers. We waited, and waited, and waited. And then we waited some more. When he finally came, the next day, our numbers had swelled to a merry band of intrepid hikers from all over the world

... I had been thinking about the glyphs all morning after finally being ferried across" Too bad he didn't take the time to speak with the Edgars, who have intimate knowledge of the area and the tliiy'aa'a of Clo-oose.

Serious students will find little of value in this book, and it is unlikely that the general public, at whom the book is aimed, will be able to critically assess its lack of scholarship. This can only lead to entrenching preconceptions about, and ignorance of, First Nations in British Columbia. The sad thing is that, although this result is no doubt the furthest thing from Johnson's intention, it will be the legacy of his book.

Transmission Difficulties: Franz Boas and Tsimshian Mythology

Ralph Maud

Burnaby: Talonbooks, 2000. 174 pp. Illus. $16.95 paper.

Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Beynon's 1945 Field Notebooks

Margaret Anderson and Marjorie Halpin, Editors

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000. 283 pp. Illus., maps. $29.95 paper.

REGNA DARNELL
University of Western Ontario

BOTH VOLUMES REVIEWED here explore the present utility and quality of Tsimshian archival and published materials. There the resemblance ends. The scholarly methods and standpoints are diametrically opposed; a rhetoric of continuity and respect for tradition contrasts sharply with one of revolutionary discontinuity. Let us examine each product in turn.

The long overdue publication of William Beynon's four field notebooks from two weeks of potlatch and totem pole raising at the Gitksan village of Gitsegukla in 1945 reflects over two decades of collaboration between the editors and Tsimshian, Nisga'a, and Gitksan peoples. Their commentary respects the integrity of Beynon's participant-observation documentation, simultaneously reassessing and contextualizing it relative to other extant work on the Gitksan and closely related peoples. Beynon was invited to the potlatches primarily in his chiefly capacity, although he was also an ethnographer bringing thirty years experience to describing how the feast system organizes Gitksan daily lives through a great variety of publicly witnessed transactions. Beynon's fieldnotes are followed by a brief history of the Gitksan "encounter with the colonial world" (193) by James A. McDonald and Jennifer Joseph – particularly poignant given recent denigrations of

Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en land claims based in the feast system.

Introductory material focuses on how central cultural and linguistic categories played out in the 1945 events. We are told, for example, how cross-cousin marriage consolidates and recycles names and crests, how ceremonial forms are modified (consciously or inadvertently), how particular name images are dramatized in performance, how stagecraft is compatible with genuine religious feeling (as individuals respond to the same ceremonies at different levels of abstraction and engagement), and how aesthetic criteria are subordinated to the proclamation of inherited rights.

Anderson and Halpin are adamant that Beynon's ethnographic data must remain paramount. Whatever the flaws of earlier materials, more recent theory-driven works "may become dated as academic discourse moves on to other questions" (13). Exceptions include sometime Tsimshianists Franz Boas, Philip Drucker, Viola Garfield, and Wilson Duff, all of whom collaborated with Beynon or used his materials extensively.

Community permission was obtained to prepare the manuscript; its draft was returned to contemporary elders for clarification and approval; and the product is intended for use in reinvigorating traditional culture after a century of intense assimilative pressures. Both Beynon's recordings and their present publication are attributed to the commitment of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en to their culture.

Beynon (1888-1958), son of a Welsh father and high-ranking Tsimshian mother, began his ethnographic collaboration with Marius Barbeau in 1914. Edward Sapir, Canada's paramount anthropologist of the day, reassured Barbeau that Beynon's independent text collection provided an ideal method, with "no absolute reason why every bit of material that one utilizes in [one's] work should have been personally obtained" (6). Sapir's teacher, Franz Boas, applied this ethnography-at-a-distance method to Kwak'wala (with George Hunt) and to Tsimshian (with Henry Tate), as Sapir did to Nuu'chah'nulth (with Alex Thomas). Beynon began as an interpreter but, increasingly, his work stood on its own scientific merits, tempered by his personal engagement with the culture he documented – what Boas valorized as "the native point of view."

After considerable internal contestation, traditional potlatch forms were employed. Beynon watched carefully the young men who had wanted to modernize the ceremonies, revealing "the culturation expressions in the different generations" (69). He was fascinated by recent decreases in Christian influence, with ceremonies matter-of-factly being held on Sundays. Beynon produced the fullest record we have, both of a particular potlatch and of the processes underlying the form itself. Its publication is invaluable.

Ralph Maud's self-indulgent diatribe on Boas's Tsimshian work with Henry Tate contrasts at multiple levels with the meticulous, respectful scholarship of Anderson and Halpin. His title properly pinpoints the inevitability of "transmission difficulties" between English and Tsimshian. Maud goes on, however, to castigate Boas for being a man of his own time, an ethnographic pioneer, without whose collaboration with men like Beynon, Tate, Hunt, and Thomas, the BC ethnographic record would be decimated.

Maud's world comes in black and white. His heroes (Beynon, Barbeau, Tate, Hill-Tout, McIlwraith, Duff, and Halpin) are counterpoised with his villains (Hunt, Lévi-Strauss, and especially Boas). The choices are self-serving: Maud extols localism in BC anthropology, endorsing only those Ottawa anthropologists outside the Boasian tradition, thereby isolating British Columbia from the North American scholarly mainstream.

Maud is not a fieldworking anthropologist. Without himself attempting to command the Tsimshian language, he castigates Boas for errors in his attempts to do so. Maud lives in a house of glass, disrespectful both of the disciplines of ethnography and linguistics and of Native peoples themselves. His comments about Northwest Coast peoples are frequently insensitive at best: "Crest stories are boring to anyone not party to the one-upmanship of the potlatch game" (91).

Maud's analysis properly highlights the significant limitations of Boas's Tsimshian work, particularly his awareness that Tate recorded stories in English and only later translated them into Tsimshian. Maud equates authenticity with a "primary text" in "some old story-teller's Tsimshian words" (17). He fails to acknowledge the salvage project in which Boas believed himself to be engaged: any record was better than none. Maud rails about Boas's penchant for assuming that any knowledgeable Native person represented "the culture" rather than foregrounding the creativity of individual storytellers. Boas did, indeed, published Tate's texts quite uncritically. Ignoring the publishing standards and audience expectations of the time, Maud concludes that Boas was a prude because he left so-called obscene passages in untranslated Tsimshian.

In a particularly muddled passage, Maud "imagines" that Tate infers that Boas "hates Tsimshian culture, really hates it" because Boas urges him to include then scandalous material. Either this "disqualifies Boas as an anthropologist" (38) or he was "faking a like-mindedness in order to get more out of" Tate (39). Boas was "so ethically mixed up [about 'savage practices' versus professional distance] that one should hesitate to believe any single thing he said" (39). This overwrought hyperbole is compounded by a parody of cultural relativism. Maud's version of an anthropologist must admire and identify with "ethnic necessities," even "ethnic cleansing": "Northwest Coast anthropology is defined by head-hunting warfare, the cheating gluttony of the trickster, and the lineage boasting in the interminable garage sales called potlatches. If you cannot get into this stuff, then quit" (39). For most practitioners, anthropology is not defined by wallowing in the negative, formulated in terms external to the culture in question.

Maud is kinder to Tate than to Boas. Tate is a better English stylist, while Boas's native German, "officious superiority" (23), and "misplaced meticulousness" (31) obscure textual vitality. Maud fails to acknowledge that the translations were intended not as literature but as an elucidation of Tsimshian grammar. Maud wishes Boas had studied Tate's transition between oral and written cultures; however, such a project was inconceivable at the turn of the century. Maud's consideration of how to retrieve the original texts from the canons of an earlier scholarship is much more productive.

Tate is praised for doing what Boas wanted, and Boas is denigrated for requesting specific information, bizarrely

styled as "something of a no-no in the profession" (72). Tate was not culpable for what would now be considered plagiarism (i.e., borrowing from models that appeared in previous Boasian texts) because authorship was elusive in Northwest Coast cultures, and the borrowing of story elements was commonplace. Oral tradition included "innumerable acts of plagiarism ... Tate is following this old tradition" (66). Collaboration with Boas expanded his repertoire. Boas, however, should have known better, as Maud anachronistically interprets Boas's own scholarly standards.

Maud is irate that Boas declines a role he never claimed – that of literary critic. Indeed, Boas does not express personal opinions on the aesthetics or cultural value of the texts he records, translates, and publishes. Maud claims that Boas didn't understand fiction (120), although the texts in question are hardly "fiction" in Tsimshian terms. Maud's own efforts at literary criticism, with regard to Asdival for example, ignore the Native point of view. Comments such as "personally ... I find nobody to root for" (105) or "pasteboard supernatural" (113) are irrelevant to the integrity both of the storytellers and of the storied tradition. Boas should have pushed us towards "a radical apprenticeship" in "reverence for the workings of the natural world," the "archaic substratum" from which the stories emerge. Had Boas indulged in such New Age pseudohistory, his texts would scarcely have come down to us as exemplary!

Maud's venom apparently arises from the failure of his more civil critique of Boasian methodology, "where some suspicious activities of both Boas and Hunt were exposed" (129), to defrock the disciplinary hero. After deciding Boasians closed ranks to marginalize his work, Maud upped the ante. His book is more about himself than about Boas, Tate, or the Tsimshian. In contrast to Maud, most anthropologists recognize the foibles of their ancestors while building on their attainments.

Maud's polemical discourse – within which he uses rhetoric such as "charade," "chimera" (9); "annoying," "exasperating," "sleight-of-hand" (15); "disingenuous" (57); and "dishonesty" (59) – alienates his potential scholarly audience while encouraging the public, Native and non-Native alike, to ignore early ethnographic documents. Although he purports to render Boas's work useful for the future, Maud's bizarre combination of wishful thinking and snide disparagement has precisely the opposite effect. The substance of Maud's critique is lost in his unscholarly verbiage. To take this book seriously would be dangerous; it is merely tiresome.

Sun Dogs and Eagle Down: The Indian Paintings of Bill Holm

Steven C. Brown and Lloyd J. Averill

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.
198 pp. Illus. US$35 cloth.

AARON GLASS
New York University

I RECENTLY ATTENDED an exhibit of Plains Indian shirts at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York. Before any critical faculty had time to kick in, I was struck with a sense of wonder, an excited giddiness at the drama and beauty of the decorated mantles. For a moment I was transported back to a childhood fascination with the romance of the American Indian. Sitting down with *Sun Dogs and Eagle Down*, it strikes me that, despite decades of academic engagement and careful scholarship, Bill Holm has never lost that feeling.

Written by colleagues, friends, and former students Steven Brown and Lloyd Averill, this beautifully produced book celebrates the life and work of Bill Holm with the same enthusiasm that Holm celebrates the world of Native North America in his paintings. Holm combines the meticulous research of the academic with the passion of the hobbyist, the dedication of the skilled practitioner with the remove of the careful observer. He is truly a gentleman scholar, acquiring through personal exploration a lifetime of knowledge, with which he is very generous. While most are familiar with his large research and publication record on the Native arts of the Northwest Coast, Plains, and Plateau, this book further reveals Holm to be an accomplished painter, illustrator, and creator of indigenous-style objects.

Brown and Averill have put together for the first time forty-nine of Holm's paintings of historic Native scenes, most produced in the last two decades since his retirement from the Burke Museum and the University of Washington. The images are predominantly of figures (often riding horses or paddling canoes) in village or landscape settings; half depict Coastal Canadian and Alaskan peoples, and half Interior Plains and Plateau groups. Figures are foregrounded, allowing close scrutiny of clothing, regalia, and decorated accoutrements. A combination of Western genre painting and ethnographic visualization, Holm's "art is meant to be widely seen and enjoyed as a rich repository of information" (ix). To that end, paintings are paired with Holm's own captions – which narrate the scenes and set the historical context – and with Steven Brown's illuminating essay, which accounts for the major objects, images, and events in every painting. Most of the paintings reference specific objects from photographs and museum collections as well as Native materials collected or manufactured by Holm. Brown distinguishes Holm from other genre painters by his attention to historical detail, specificity, and authenticity,

down to the year certain articles were made and the direction of sunlight at certain times of day. Brown obviously shares Holm's enthusiasm about indigenous arts and cultures, and the reader is exposed to their shared wealth of information on everything from beadwork and weaving technique, to nineteenth-century firearms, to regional variations in canoe design and carving methods. We also learn the degree to which Holm's knowledge comes from making objects (from tanned hides and beaded shirts to transformation masks and totem poles) and participating in First Nations ceremonies (from potlatch to powwow). Lloyd Averill's useful chronology of Holm's life and full bibliography of his scholarship reveal, specifically, the extent of Holm's association with Kwakwaka'wakw communities.

The multifaceted nature of Holm's talent and engagement with indigenous arts makes this a somewhat peculiar book, unique in the vast library of Northwest Coast art studies. Speaking of his ability to work in diverse tribal styles, Brown suggests it is "as if he were many different artists and people" (39-40). Without diminishing the deservedly honorific quality of *Sun Dogs and Eagle Down*, I would like to suggest at least three ways in which these paintings – and Holm's various relationships with them – are complicated by the history of European representation of Native arts and culture.

At the most obvious level, the paintings are illustrations of indigenous life over the past two centuries. Holm's stated intention is to create images of Native cultures "as they would have appeared in color photographs ... as if a time-filter were on my camera" (76). This apparently neutral mode of depiction has a history that goes back to the Exploration Age shipboard artists and runs through George Catlin and Paul Kane to the salvage photography of Edward Curtis. Brown insists that these images are "born not of a romanticized retrospection, but rather of a profound respect" for the subject matter and of attention to historical detail (8). But romanticism in depiction of Native life necessitates neither disrespect nor inaccuracy; rather, it alludes to selectivity of subject matter (no residential schools or pox-blankets) and to the choice of aesthetic treatment (sunsets and stormy skies). The fact that a colleague had to defend Holm's inclusion of European clothing (28) indicates the degree to which patrons of genre painting prefer a specific vision of Native life.

At another level, the paintings function as a rich context for viewing the objects depicted. Like museum life groups, dioramas, and murals, Holm's images contextualize First Nations artworks, indicating how they appeared and were used before being collected. They give students and collectors of Native art a rare glimpse of the drama and beauty of its original presentation. Here Holm-the-camera gives way to Holm-the-author or curator, and both he and Brown speak with the ethnographic authority that comes from years of careful study, experience, and expertise. Holm even posed for study photographs for many of the paintings to ensure accuracy of position and handling of objects; this bring to my mind the famous photograph of Franz Boas posing for the Kwakwaka'wakw life group at the US National Museum in 1895.

The third issue centres on Holm's role as creator of both objects and paintings. His formal training is in fine arts and education, and he largely taught himself to manufacture indi-

genous-style objects based on careful study of photographs, museum artefacts, and ethnographic documents. He also encourages his students to try their hand at manufacture as a way of better understanding the stylistic and technical principles behind Native arts. These aspects of Holm's repertoire are presented here unproblematically, despite the complicated dialectic of appreciation and appropriation when it comes to non-Native creation or depiction of First Nations art forms. What was produced in the genuine spirit of celebration is often received as evidence of cultural theft or opportunism. In fact, Holm has been unwittingly (some would say unfairly) entangled in the complex, contemporary politics of representation, being criticized by some descendants of the very people who initiated him into Native communities. While Holm, in his characteristic modesty, would never make such self-aggrandizing claims, one can understand the animosity of Native artists towards his being credited with the "renaissance" of their cultures. That he signs all of his paintings (at least since the mid-1980s) with a copyright symbol may indicate his very personal awareness of the sensitivities involved in representing Native cultures; he may be trying to control as best he can the circulation of his very reproducible images.

Sun Dogs and Eagle Down conveys, very successfully, Bill Holm's unique skills and talents, intelligence and expertise. He has had a remarkable career as an educator, mentor, scholar, and curator. He helped foster public appreciation for, and knowledge of, First Nations art through his writing, his exhibits, and his example. Holm provided the vocabulary with which artists, scholars, and collectors (both Native and non-Native) engage with Northwest Coast objects and their histories. Yet the discourse of indigenous arts has developed beyond aesthetics and attribution, connoisseurship and historical reconstruction. We are now confronted with the politics of representation and identity, the negotiation of treaties and repatriation. Holm's somewhat problematic position within the contemporary discourse of Northwest Coast art is in some ways a testament to his success at helping to encourage it in the first place. Some will undoubtedly find Brown and Averill's bracketing of these larger contexts and issues refreshing; others will find it negligent. Ultimately, the lack of recognition of the cultural and political moment in which the paintings were created leaves the book appropriately celebratory but out of time – a bit like the paintings themselves.

Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision

Marie Battiste, Editor

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000. 314 pp. $29.95 paper.

JEANETTE VILLENEUVE
University of British Columbia

KWEYASK PIMOHTEWAK. Individually and in concert the contributors to this seminal collection of essays demonstrate the abundant spiritual, intellectual, and social harvest that is to be gleaned when indigenous voices and visions are revitalized and asserted. In this book, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal thinkers draw upon a broad range of disciplines and personal experiences to examine the roots of colonialism and to invite both oppressed and oppressor to envision a decolonized world. It is rare that readers are able to consult one text that will guide them through the deconstruction of colonialism as well as provide concrete strategies for resistance and transformative praxis. This book can aptly be described as a foundational text for the continued development of postcolonial indigenous thought.

A full appreciation of the writings in this book requires that the reader recognize the existence of Aboriginal knowledge. We currently live in a world where many people and institutions continue to argue that "there is no such thing as an Indigenous perspective" (xx). Challenging this assertion, Marie Battiste, a Mi'kmaw educator and editor of this volume, draws an important distinction between "postcolonial theory in literature" and "postcolonial Indigenous thought." She explains that although both bodies of thought share similar goals, postcolonial indigenous thought "is based on our pain and our experiences, and it refuses to allow others to appropriate this pain and these experiences" (xix). Battiste also clarifies that the contributors to this text are fully aware that colonial thought and structures continue to exist. Therefore, in this book, the term "postcolonial" is used to conceptualize a future where Aboriginal knowledge, languages, and cultures are legitimized and thriving.

The presentation of this collection of essays is, in itself, an affirmation of the existence and power of Aboriginal knowledge. The writings are organized according to the four directions of the Medicine Wheel. Starting with the Western Door and moving on to the Northern, Eastern, and Southern doors, the reader is encouraged to appreciate the interconnectedness of the stories and teachings offered by the contributors. The illuminating power of the Medicine Wheel can be appreciated by examining the essays of Chickasaw philosopher Sákéj Henderson. One of his papers appears at each of the four Sacred Directions. By themselves, Henderson's writings provide an insightful analysis of colonialism as well as an inspiring framework for the reclamation of Aboriginal worldviews. However, by situating his work within the realms of the Sacred Circle Wheel, Henderson ensures that his ideas are supported and thereby strengthened by the reflections of other contributors.

Reciprocally, Henderson's words honour and illuminate the ideas presented by his colleagues. Through its deliberate and respectful use of the teachings of the Medicine Wheel this book stands as a vibrant example of how Aboriginal knowledge may be restored and affirmed.

In considering the potential significance of this volume it is clear that the liberation of indigenous thought is vital to the future of indigenous peoples. However, as L.M. Findlay asks, why should the "cultural restoration of Aboriginal peoples" matter to non-Aboriginal peoples? (x). This particular question can be heard in various forms in courtrooms, coffee shops, and watering holes all across Canada. In British Columbia many of the debates surrounding the Nisga'a Treaty were fuelled by a fear of Aboriginal worldviews. By valuing collective over individual rights, Aboriginal peoples were interrogating the Eurocentric notion of universality. One of the key contributions of this book is the assurance that the restoration of indigenous languages, knowledge, and cultures will enrich the lives of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Marie Battiste explains that the restoration of indigenous voices and visions "will allow humanity to rebuild society based on diversity rather than on an ancient quest for singularity" (xviii).

Several of the essays in this collection provide descriptions of how individuals, institutions, and communities have found ways to revitalize indigenous knowledge. At the Southern Door people such as Gregory Cajete, Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith, and Marie Battiste demonstrate that throughout the world indigenous peoples are successfully reconnecting with their languages and heritage. The teachings of the Southern Door challenge each of us to consider how we might personally go about contributing to the restoration process.

I opened this book review with the Cree expression "kweyask pimohtewak." This phrase is used to describe individuals who are walking through life "in a good manner." In her 1992 article in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (19, 2: 209), Linda Akan learns from Elder Alvin Manitopeyes that "it is not enough for us to merely walk on the Earth, we must be mindful of how we are walking." Sákéj Henderson also explains that "Aboriginal law is the law of being in a sacred space: speaking softly, walking humbly, and acting compassionately" (273). The contributors to this book have persuasively and elegantly argued that active participation in the restoration of indigenous worldviews is a necessary component of walking through life "in a good manner."

The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Disease and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874

Robert Boyd

Vancouver/Seattle: UBC Press/University of Washington Press, 1999. 403 pp. $85 cloth.

ROBERT GALOIS
University of British Columbia

IN ASSESSING, or re-assessing, the history of Native-non Native encounters on the Northwest Coast, no question is more basic than the demographic decline of First Nations in the century following initial contact. How many people were there in 1770? When and why did the population decline after contact? No one, over the last two and a half decades, has done more to grapple with these complex and often intractable issues than anthropologist Robert Boyd. In a doctoral dissertation and a series of papers, Boyd has built upon and revised the work of earlier scholars (e.g., James Mooney, Herbert Taylor and Wilson Duff) to provide a basic outline of the demographic history of the Northwest Coast culture area. Of course, the topic invites, and sometimes requires, excursions into neighbouring Cordilleran regions – something Boyd has done far more extensively in the Plateau culture area than in the Subarctic. Publication of the *Spirit of Pestilence* is doubly welcome, both because it offers a broader audience for Boyd's work and because it provides him with an opportunity to revisit his earlier work.

While retaining the basic structure of his 1985 thesis, Boyd has used this new opportunity to incorporate subsequent developments into the literature. He begins with an informed review of the relevant epidemiological literature, including an expanded discussion of precontact diseases and ailments and a review of the evidence about tubercular and venereal afflictions. From here Boyd provides a broadly chronological analysis, epidemic by epidemic (primarily smallpox, malaria, and measles), from the 1770s to the 1870s. The account of the impact of malaria on the Lower Columbia is particularly good. Boyd then provides regional demographic histories for the North Coast and for the Lower Columbia, relying heavily on the Hudson's Bay Company "censuses" and the epidemic histories to construct demographic trajectories on a smaller canvas. The pattern Boyd presents is basically the same as that encountered in earlier works, although some important new evidence is included. Perhaps the best example of the latter is his discussion of the last major smallpox outbreak – the one that occurred between 1862 and 1863 in British Columbia and adjacent Russian America. His account represents by far the best description of this epidemic currently available. It is

regrettable, therefore, that Boyd limits his discussion to the boundaries of the Northwest Coast culture area, although, as he recognizes, the epidemic was not restricted to this area.

In the conclusion Boyd includes his revised estimates for the precontact population of the Northwest Coast. His approach is ethnohistorical, thus conservative and closely tied to the available empirical data. Using anchor figures (population estimates assumed to be reasonably reliable) and knowledge of the likely geography and impact of specific epidemics (per cent mortality), Boyd computes precontact populations for individual tribal groups. These figures yield a total population for the culture area of 183,661, some 5,000 less than he recorded in his Smithsonian article (188,344) of 1990. The unwary should be warned not to take the precision of Boyd's figures too seriously. He might have been better advised to have rounded his figures, or even to have given a range, in order to indicate the approximate nature of the data. Even so, some "tribal" components that contribute to Boyd's total seem rather peculiar. For the Halkomelem, Songhees, and Saanich speakers of British Columbia, Boyd reduces the figures given by James Mooney – a questionable interpretation, in my opinion. Putting such issues to one side, Boyd's findings may be contrasted with the superseded orthodoxy of Mooney, whose total was 114,000, and Henry Dobyns's fanciful projection, yielding a total population of c. 1,200,000.

The question about the estimates for the Halkomelem, Songhees, and Saanich raises my principal reservation about Boyd's work: his treatment of the BC section of the Northwest Coast. It is fair to say, I think, that Boyd is less sure-footed in dealing with British Columbia than in dealing with American territory. In a brief review it is not possible to provide chapter and verse, but a couple of examples may help to illustrate some of my concerns about his use of both primary and secondary sources. One involves Boyd's argument for a coast-wide smallpox epidemic in the 1770s. To support his case Boyd cites a missionary account of a Tsimshian narrative about an encounter with Whites, during which the Tsimshian "died." Boyd thinks that this was probably a reference to disease. While applauding his greater use of Native narratives in the present work, the choice in this instance is unfortunate. The account is a third-hand version of a well known first-contact narrative in which "died," as William Beynon explains, is a metaphor for Tsimshian surprise at encountering "Ghost People." Moreover, the encounter took place in 1787, thus, even read literally, it is not evidence for a 1770s epidemic.

This may seem a trivial complaint, but the "evidence" assumes a not insignificant part in Boyd's argument for a coast-wide epidemic. Other than some ambiguous accounts of abandoned villages, this is the only evidence presented to document the posited epidemic for the mainland of British Columbia between the Fraser and the Stikine Rivers (Map 2). It should be added that, partly in response to criticisms of his earlier accounts, Boyd is now less certain about the date and extent of the initial smallpox epidemic and is entertaining alternative explanations (regional epidemics in north and south and at different dates). However, in later sections of the *Spirit of Pestilence* this uncertainty tends to disappear. In discussing the geography of the 1836 smallpox epidemic on the Central Coast, Boyd uses immunity

acquired from the 1770s epidemic as a partial explanation of breaks in the distribution. Later, in the conclusions, he states that "the Tlingit, the Haida, the Tsimshian peoples, the Haisla, and the Nuxalk (Bella Coola) experienced three important smallpox epidemics, in the late 1700s, 1836 and 1862" (p. 267). Finally, on this topic, Boyd takes no account of the negative evidence – the absence of evidence of prior smallpox for well documented areas such as Nootka Sound (1778-95). In a recent study, not available to Boyd, Christon Archer found no evidence in Spanish manuscript sources of a 1770s pandemic or its transmission to the North Coast by Spanish vessels.

More surprising, perhaps, is Boyd's apparent unawareness of the manuscript nominal rolls of the Canadian census for 1881. Not an easy document to use, this is the first tolerably accurate enumeration of the population of British Columbia, Native and non-Native. In my opinion it is the single most important source for interpreting the demography of British Columbia in the second half of the nineteenth century; it has been available and utilized by scholars for almost twenty years. Boyd, however, relies upon data published by the Department of Indian Affairs and mistakenly states, for example, that the "Gitxsan were not formally enumerated until 1889" (p. 215). And of the Haida, he regrets that "we have only gross numbers for late nineteenth century Haida population. Census figures could be converted into sex ratios that would give more specific information on available mates; determining the percentage of children would be a clue to the fertility of the population" (p. 217). This is unfortunate because the nominal rolls for the Haida permit the construction of age-sex pyramids, providing glimpses of demographic history stretching back to the first decades of the nineteenth century. Utilization of this data would have permitted Boyd to test some of his speculations about both the geography of various epidemics and his reconstruction of the demographic history of the Northern Coast.

In a topic where recourse to uncertain and fragmentary data is the norm, disagreements about relevant sources and their interpretation are inevitable. Reservations notwithstanding, Boyd's study is a valuable and very welcome addition to the literature. For anyone doubting the impact of settler society on Native worlds of the Northwest Coast, it should be required reading. It will certainly provide the basis for future discussions of the historical demography of the region. From a British Columbian perspective, what is needed now, I believe, is a series of regional studies that will test Boyd's findings and utilize a fuller array of sources.

Boys in the Pits: Child Labour in Coal Mines

Robert McIntosh

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.
305 pp. Illus. $34.95 cloth.

JOHN DOUGLAS BELSHAW
University College of the Cariboo

THE BOY (to slightly modify an old saying) is father of the man. A few years ago Allen Seager, taking a chance on the family name, kindly sent me a hand-written report regarding the death of a "thorough practical miner" at Frank, NWT (later Alberta), in 1902. It describes a forty-seven-year-old English collier who had "been steadily working at the trade since he was eight years of age." A "shell of coal and rock" a half metre thick fell upon him and, according to the inspector of coal mines, was bound to prove fatal to "a man of his years, so long working in the mines." This two-page synopsis neatly cleared away the family mystery of whatever happened to great-granddad. It also serves to show how a youth spent in the mines simultaneously deducted years from "childhood" and subtracted years from adulthood. No three score and ten for Robert Belshaw, nor for many other Victorian-era boys who filed into pits around the globe before their tenth birthdays.

Industrial coal mines had a voracious appetite for labour, and this extended to boys. Employed to push tubs of coal along subterranean passageways, to mind ventilation doors, to work with cantankerous mules, and to sort and size coal on the surface, boys appeared in mines in Nova Scotia, on the Prairies, in the Rockies, and on Vancouver Island. Invariably they worked below an elder (e.g., a father or brother) who "won" the coal from the seam, and the lads were typically able to make a significant contribution to the household wage. In the late nineteenth century, pitboys' labour came under attack by reformers of many stripes as "a new model of appropriate childhood was constructed, underpinned by an emerging view of children as dependent, weak, vulnerable, and incompetent" (5). Contemporary morality was increasingly opposed to their presence in the mines, while other agendas – including mass education and Imperial war-readiness – also came into play. In British Columbia, where inexpensive Asian labour could be substituted for boy labour (thus undermining the White miners' control of entry into and seniority within the workforce), boy labourers were excluded less by law and more by capitalist economic opportunism. By the 1930s boys were no longer to be found in mine work anywhere in Canada.

Robert McIntosh has been working for several years on the subject of boys who toiled in Nova Scotian coal mines. Taking this study to the national level is an ambitious and welcome evolution of his work. McIntosh examines the intersections of childhood and mine work, technological change, state intervention, the family, the community, and class. Perhaps most surprising are the descriptions of lads of twelve and

younger downing tools to improve their wages or working conditions (despite the disapproval of employers and adult co-workers alike), a sobering reminder of how historic agency is not restricted to those who hold the franchise. By way of a bonus, the second chapter of this well researched book provides an extremely useful survey of the social reform/control movement of the period. The story of the boy miners exemplifies that systematic transformation of childhood.

Boys in the Pits is an unusual book in several respects. McIntosh courageously challenges the prevailing view that child labour was merely "a tragic record of forfeited childhood" (178). *Boys* is also exceptional in that, while it is a national study, its focus is essentially upon Nova Scotia and British Columbia. That is a rare combination. Scholars working in the histories of both province will benefit from the cogent discussion of legal frameworks and workplace dynamics that both link and distinguish the Atlantic and Pacific provinces.

I have several, perhaps petty, quibbles. Admittedly the subject is "boys," but the almost complete invisibility of girls in this study is disappointing. Mining coal was an extremely gendered, extremely male business, but girls' domestic, commercial, and farm work constituted the other part of the household income equation. In other words, boys pushed coal below ground because girls pulled their weight on the surface. Identifying the connections between these gendered experiences would provide a more complete picture of boys' lives without compromising the central focus of the study. At the risk of seeming to contradict myself, I must point out that, as the book stands, we lose sight of the boys for pages at a time. McIntosh successfully contextualizes boys' pitwork by devoting the balance of the book to the larger story of coal mining; however, in so doing he sometimes obscures what was specific to the boys' history. Finally, two technical quibbles: the bibliography includes dissertations under "published sources," and the book is pitched as part of McGill-Queen's Celtic Studies Series, although there is no discussion of Scottish culture sufficient to justify such an association.

Setting aside these minor flaws, *Boys in the Pits* will rightly appeal to a wide academic readership, including labour, social, legal, and family historians. It is crisply written, and, in defining the problem of Victorian child labour, McIntosh contrasts the call for "light, soap, and water" to cure social ills with the fact that "the pit boy laboured deep underground in the dark. And he was dirty" (41). Quite literally the "poster children" for exploitation in industrial society, Canada's pint-size proletarians have at last emerged into the light.

City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver

Douglas Coupland

Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2000.
152 pp. Illus. $24.95 paper.

GRAEME WYNN
University of British Columbia

WANT TO UNDERSTAND Vancouver? Hoping to learn what the city "feels like to someone who lives" there? Anxious to make a purchase that will remind you of the place? Need a gift for a distant relative? Looking for a guidebook that spares you details of museums and galleries, hotels and restaurants? Keen to show that you are up to date in the celebrity stakes? Searching for something to decorate the half-size coffee table in your tiny condominium or Kitsilano suite? Part of the postmodern crowd, a "slacker," a "microserf," or a "mallrat"? Then *City of Glass* is just what you need. Or so, it seems, Douglas Coupland and Douglas and McIntyre would have you believe.

City of Glass is a thin, soft-cover, small-format, brightly coloured little book designed to sell. The promise of its subtitle – *Douglas Coupland's Vancouver* – is alluring because Coupland is one of the city's famous young sons, raised in one of its tony north shore suburbs, a graduate of its college of art and design, a noted sculptor, and a prolific author whose most widely known work has earned him recognition as the midwife (if not, indeed, the inventor) of "Generation X." The book's layout is varied and often arresting. Most of its illustrations are fresh, and many have a whimsical quality. The text is short and light. And (in a nicely ironic twist) there is a Japanese translation of the book available – for sale, no doubt, in what Coupland refers to as "the gravitational warp of souvenir shops" (107).

The premise of the book is simple. Coupland offers a series of short textual commentaries on facets of the city, arranged somewhat quirkily into an alphabetical series. He has trouble with vowels. Although the book begins with "ABC ...," a brief (and alphabetically somewhat forced) meditation on the ignorance of Torontonians who refer to the city as "Van," there are no entries for "I," "O," and "U." Even "E" gets short shrift compared with "C" and "G" (four entries each) and "W" (five). But then "Q," "U', "X," and "Z" are also ignored. Musings on Feng Shui, Fleece, Monster Houses, Salmon, Sushi, Trees, Wreck Beach, "YVR," and some forty other topics are loosely matched with approximately twice as many illustrations, most of them contemporary and in colour. A few of these would not be out of place in more traditional "coffee-table books." But most are sui generis: among them are pictures of houses and streetscapes gone to seed; a stack of containers on a wharf; a close-up of a diner eating sushi, all chopsticks and gaping mouth; a marijuana "grow-op"; and syringe wrappers, tiny plastic bags, and bleach bottles – the detritus left behind by hard drug users. All of this is wrapped

around two short essays reprinted from Coupland's earlier collections, *Life after God* (1994) and *Polaroids from the Dead* (1996).

What then to make of this melange? Striking as some of the illustrations are, they hardly cohere. Too many of them are left to stand alone, unexplained. Coupland's two essays are very different, though both are intensely personal. "My Hotel Year" recalls acquaintances made when Coupland spent time, years ago, living in a cheap, "cold water" hotel downtown and is in some sense a rumination on "the meaning of life." "Lions Gate" – a.k.a. "This Bridge Is Ours" – celebrates the "endlessly renewing, endlessly glorious" view from the bridge (114) and the structure's metaphoric significance as "one last grand gesture of beauty, of charm, and of grace before we enter the hinterlands, before the air becomes too brittle and too cold to breathe" (119). Together these short sketches reveal something of Coupland, of his versatility, even of his Vancouver; but at best they are no more than tiny evanescent fragments.

Much the same is true of the short, vaguely alphabetical, commentaries. Coupland can write, and he is no fool. Occasionally he reminds us of this with an arresting phrase or a thought-provoking metaphor. On Wildlife, the coyotes and raccoons who inhabit the city: "they probably think of us as big, noisy insects that attack without even being provoked" (150). On Mt. Baker: "It's a metaphor for the United States: seductive but distant, powerful and at least temporarily benign" (91). But much of the text is flat, its engagement with the city superficial. Striving for effect, Coupland tumbles occasionally into banality and foolishness: should the question of Native land rights "come to a head the same week that various Asian scenarios go critical and the Big One hits, Vancouver is going to be one heck of an interesting place to be" (131). In placing "his" Vancouver on display, Coupland also reveals his ignorance of many parts of the city, and his partial and misunderstandings of many of the things about which he writes. Among many questionable assertions and plain inaccurate statements in the book, perhaps the most obvious and egregious are the repeated claim that the British handed over Hong Kong to China in 1999 (22, 126) and that members of the Sto:lo Nation were the first residents of Vancouver (although most Native communities at the mouth of the Fraser River have elected not to affiliate with this upriver Halkomelem group).

None of this may count for anything. In the end, and for all my criticisms of this book, it can be seen as an almost perfect postmodern reflection of "post-modern Vancouver." It is all about surfaces and effects, appearances and ornaments. Neither context nor coherence matter over much. History ("History ... or lack thereof") is simply a foil against which to indulge the new (the mountains north and east of Vancouver "act as buffers to keep away the taint of the Past" [58]). Pastiche and irony are favoured over systematic analysis and careful inquiry. Who cares if this or that is not quite right (or just plain wrong)? Why bother to separate truth from nonsense, insight from dross? These are only matters of personal opinion. No "grand theories" or "metanarratives" here. Just Coupland's casual, careless view of Vancouver as "a fractal city – a city of no repeats" (151). Thank goodness.

Encyclopedia of British Columbia
Daniel Francis, Editor

Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2000.
806 pp. Illus., maps. $100 cloth.

By Cole Harris
University of British Columbia

Encyclopedias are not my preferred medium, and I did not hold out much hope for this one. But my increasing experience is that prior judgments are usually wrong, as in this case. The *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* is a remarkable work. It contains a profusion of information on a vast array of topics, organized in entries ranging from a few sentences to 8,000 to 10,000 words. It is profusely illustrated, handsome, and packed. It can be consulted for quite specific information: about the results of provincial elections since 1903, nudibranchs (sea slugs), Jean Coulthard, Pit Polder, or the Ballard fuel cell. It can be browsed with much pleasure and a sense of discovery. It has taken a decade to make and has involved a great many people, a labour amply justified by the product.

Above all, the *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* has been exceedingly well edited. A work on this scale can easily dissolve into chaos marked by a profusion of writing styles, different densities of information, and erratic subject selection. Not, however, in this work. The writing is crisp and consistent, a fairly common level of information is maintained, and decisions about the categories of inclusion and exclusion that must have been taken fairly early in the project have been consistently adhered to. All of this bespeaks a strong editor who, in this case, has also written (by my estimation) some half of the entries – a monumental achievement.

The most basic challenge in making an encyclopedia is deciding what to exclude. This one excludes topics of universal relevance (there is no entry on oxygen) and treats topics of wide regional significance only in so far as they bear on the province (the cuckoo has a short entry because its range touches the Kootenays). But this still leaves an enormous latitude; the list of subjects that could be included is endless. Choices have to be made and lines drawn where there is no correct position. The more the entries, the more sketchy, necessarily, the treatment of each of them, and in this encyclopedia I would say that the line has been nudged towards inclusion. Most of the entries are short, in the range of 100 to 200 words. But general topics, like giant trees, commercial fishing, coal mining, or Conservative Protestantism, command longer entries. Then there are six major essays in the 5,000- to 10,000-word range, each offering a useful synthesis of its topic: economy, First Nations, history, literature, natural history, physical geography. The last of these is perhaps the encyclopedia's most complex and most academic piece of writing.

The overall result is an encyclopedia that is basically an accessible inventory of a great deal of information (as any encyclopedia must be) but that also offers a considerable opportunity for thoughtful engagement with the province. There is no correct way of making an encyclopedia, but – given the objective to produce an accessible work that a great many British Columbians would use, enjoy, and be instructed by – I find it hard to imagine a more successful result than this one. The attention it has attracted since its publication is eminently deserved, and academics who want fuller and more nuanced treatments need to go ahead and write them. Few if any of our works will find the audience that this book deserves.

The Paulo Freire Reader

Ana Maria Araújo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, Editors
New York: Continuum, 2000. 291 pp. US$18.95 paper.

SHAUNA BUTTERWICK
University of British Columbia

PAULO FREIRE WAS a passionate educator, one who embodied a love of humanity and commitment to social justice; and he was someone who played a significant role in my own life. I had the good fortune to take courses from him at the beginning of my graduate studies in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC). In the summer of 1984, Paulo Freire came to teach a course at UBC. It was my first master's degree course in adult education, and, at that point, I had only heard of Freire in passing. My mother had become very ill, and her health crisis was foremost in my mind as I began my graduate work. Within this context, I was oblivious to the excitement of his visit and his iconic status, and I asked him many questions. It is his grace, passion, and care that I remember from that summer as he listened deeply to my queries and responded with care and wisdom. In the following year, I had the privilege of again witnessing his dialogic approach, this time in a seminar in Recife, Brazil, his hometown. I was part of a small group of UBC students who toured Brazil studying its literacy policy and programs. Freire's ideas – that all education is political and key to achieving social justice – became the foundation for my master's thesis and have stayed with me as a source of inspiration and support. He died on 2 May 1997, but his ideas remain refreshing, radical, and important.

The Paulo Freire Reader begins with a forty-four-page introduction by Anna Maria Arujo Freire (his second wife) and Donaldo Macedo (a longtime colleague) that outlines Freire's life, ideas, career, and awards (he was once nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize). In this introduction, a dominant objective becomes clear – to situate Freire's writings and thought within the context of his life and to argue that

his work is more than a method; rather, it is a philosophy of education whose purpose is social justice. We learn details of Freire's life as well as his approach to writing. "Facing his desk, leaning over a leather support, with unruled paper and in his own handwriting, almost always without erasures or corrections, he would write out his text, encircling his topic, going deeper into it until he had fully exploited it" (34). The introduction presents something of a challenge as it moves between descriptive biographical details (sometimes presented as long lists within a single paragraph) and a passionate argument against the instrumental perspective of Freire's work and the poor state of literacy education in the United States. Schools of education are condemned for their failure to provide teachers with the tools to help themselves and their students engage in critical thinking. There are harsh words for experiential education as well, particularly for those activities that reduce Freire's notion of dialogue to an uncritical appeal to the discourse of experience.

The remaining chapters of the book include excerpts from Freire's most significant writings. First on offer are the first two chapters of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which outlines the foundation of Freire's understanding of oppression and the relationship between the oppressed and their oppressors. An excerpt from *Education for Critical Consciousness* constitutes the next chapter in the reader. In this selection, Freire discusses his design for literacy programs and his notion of creating a dialectical solidarity between reading the world and reading the word. The third chapter presents the introduction to *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau.* Freire emphasizes the difference between transplanting and reinventing a method, and the necessity of ensuring that the process is grounded in the particular context, culture, and history of that country. The goal does not concern giving knowledge; rather, it concerns returning knowledge in an organized form.

The next excerpt is from *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World.* Here Freire (in dialogue with Donaldo Macedo) continues with reflections upon his experiences in Guinea-Bissau, discussing the problems and "failure" of that literacy project – a failure that he believes stemmed from Portuguese being the only language used in the program. It is impossible, Freire asserts, to decolonize people using the same medium that colonized them. The fifth chapter in the reader includes a selection from *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation.* Here Freire, in dialogue with Antonio Faundez, discusses the experience of being an exile and his work with the World Council of Churches while he lived in Geneva. The importance of recognizing the signs of resistance, and of avoiding authoritarian proposals for action that ignore resistance, is part of this discussion, as is the educative power of questions. He comments sadly on how education is now dominated by a concern with providing answers rather than with asking questions. He refers to this as the "castration of curiosity" (219). The challenges of urban education are discussed in the next excerpt, which is taken from *Pedagogy of the City,* another "talking book" within which he responds to questions from Terra Nuova concerning his view of the problems facing Brazil and his process of becoming an educator.

In the fourth chapter, which is taken from *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving*

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire reflects upon the philosophical foundation for his literacy method, discussing the importance of content, dialogue between teachers and students, and what he means by "banking education." The final chapter of the reader includes three sections from *Pedagogy of the Heart*. The collapse of the left and the rise of the right are the focus of these pages, as is a plea for the left to work towards creating "unity within diversity" and developing a radical experience of tolerance – something Friere refers to as being "impatiently patient." Freire criticizes the sectarianism of the left – its tendency to defend its positions even when its errors are clear – and calls for greater humility.

Moving through this series of excerpts, written at different times in Freire's life, provides a sense of his philosophy and method as a creative and lived endeavour. This is a book I would recommend, with some reservations. Some reorganizing of the introductory chapter, with background information on the editors as well as information regarding the selection of excerpts, would have made the book more accessible. Short introductions at the beginning of each chapter, situating the excerpt in time and space, would have strengthened the text. This should be a required introductory reader for teacher training programs, where it could act as a tool to engage in dialogue about what it means to be an educator. "Any education based on standardization, which is laid bare in advance, on routine in which everything is predetermined, is bureaucratizing and anti-democratic" (228). Freire's ideas are a welcome antidote to the economic rationality dominating educational discourse, clarifying what it means to engage in education as a practice of freedom