

BOOK REVIEWS

*The Changing Presentation of the American Indian:
Museums and Native Cultures*

W. Richard West, editor

Washington, DC/Seattle: Smithsonian Institute/
University of Washington Press, 2000. 118 pp. US\$25 cloth

*Privileging the Past:
Historicism in the Art of the Northwest Coast*

Judith Ostrowitz

Vancouver/Seattle: UBC Press/University of Washington Press,
1999. 264 pp. \$49.95 cloth

BY BRENDA TROFANENKO
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POSTCOLONIAL SCHOLARSHIP is committed, almost by definition, to engaging the universals that define identity across a range of sites, with a view to distinguishing shared principles and problems in the ways that culturally diverse societies are being represented, or named, today. One institution that reflects how identity is defined by its imperial imperative is the museum that displays First Nations and Native American objects. If the legacy of imperialism is to be challenged, we should be grateful to W. Richard West, director of the Smithsonian, for his edited collection of symposium papers. In *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native Culture*, West presents a collection by Native and non-Native scholars and curators that focuses on their changing roles in working with

Native communities and their objects. The curator's authority is played out through the museum's imperial power, and secures the museum's traditional educational role through identifying and naming the American Indian.

Each of the symposium papers touches upon a facet of the ongoing debate concerning curating Native American exhibitions: the growth of Native-run institutions, the display of contemporary crafts or artworks alongside traditional artefacts, the clash of different narratives of museum presentation; and the limitations structured by museums. Each writer makes clear how curators, as agents for museums, are caught between being more responsive to the public and administrative communities they serve, the cultures and ethnic groups they represent, and the historically determined limitations of museums.

Having fashioned the concept of “American Indian” during the last century, in an effort to naturalize their educational imperative, museums had to struggle to keep it from becoming the source of their own educational undoing. Calls for self-representation and repatriation of objects from Native and non-Native groups both within and beyond the museum indicate that this display of identity is imbued with political and ideological questions. This book presents such questions as an impetus for extending and encouraging expressions of resistance to imperialism by Native and non-Native communities alike.

Yet are museum’s really organizing a “changing presentation” of the American Indian, as West’s title suggests? I am not convinced this was the most suitable title for the book. While West and the other writers do not dispel the American Indian’s sense of agency in defining their own identity, I would argue that the “changing presentation” is the result of changing mainstream attitudes concerning artefact ownership and display. In response to Native American long-served petitions to museums for the repatriation of sacred objects and security of sacred graves, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act passed in 1990 in the United States. Two years later, the *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* (1992) was presented in Canada. From the earlier depictions of Natives as savages and cannibals – which may be seen in de Bry’s illustrated book *America* (1591) – to the world fairs and exhibitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this book argues that Native agency is about being sensitive to how identity and culture is limited and defined by the museum.

A major contribution of this book is its inclusion of work by Michael Ames, former director of the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia. Presenting several examples of Native involvement with the MOA that show what he has termed an “aboriginal curatorial prerogative” (82), Ames makes explicit the need for museums to involve Native communities in preparing exhibitions and in creating new techniques better suited to presenting Native American culture. Beyond the “changing presentation” theme, Ames argues that museums are implicated in complex, multi-layered, and continually contentious relationships with First Nations. Museums are questioning their authoritative, realist, and objectivist style, which was once considered indisputable. How does a museum address the historically situated colonial project of defining Native culture and identity through displays, and work to become provocative and challenging with regard to its own rights and responsibilities? In answering these questions, Ames suggests that the museum’s authority needs to be reworked to insist upon an authentic Native voice and perspective that guides exhibition philosophy and Native curatorial policies.

With regard to the museum’s changing authority on the issue of Native identity and display, we would do well to study other academic contributions that touch on these issues. The museum’s stance, however, proves slightly different when it comes to dealing with Native art as distinct and separate from Native artefacts. In *Privileging the Past: Historicism in the Art of the Northwest Coast*, art historian Judith Ostrowitz examines case studies in which Northwest Coast historical and contemporary arts are displayed: an

Alaskan tourist destination, and displays at both the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the American Museum of Natural History. Ostrowitz contends that Northwest Coast art is perceived, judged against, and valued almost entirely by curators and audiences for their historicism; that is, for their resemblance to the styles, artists, and art objects of the past. Further, she contends that these contemporary Native arts, though much admired, cannot be compared with mainstream arts, where value is equated with originality and specific breaks from the past. While Ostrowitz suggests that contemporary Native artists are fully aware of the values of Western modernity, and the power of various public venues to define and maintain a canon, Northwest Coast artists are constrained from developing their arts in that direction. She suggests that there remains an imperative for predominantly non-Native museum authorities to possess and display Northwest Coast art as replicas of the past and that the reproduction process is a vital expression of identity and membership necessary for recognizing Native privilege to reproduce the art.

While Ostrowitz realizes the past/present dilemma facing Northwest Coast artists, she omits notable work done by the artists and institutions within the lower Mainland and Island areas of British Columbia – areas that are home to artists and institutions currently addressing the past/present tensions. The Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, the Nanaimo Art Gallery, and the U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, for example, are not mentioned by Ostrowitz for their work with Northwest Coast communities. Similarly, Northwest

Coast artists like Susan Pointe, Lyle Wilson, and Robert Davidson warrant no mention. Rather, Ostrowitz repeats her argument that the Northwest Coast art form is canonical in various institutions, limits her discussions to institutions that are canonical in themselves, and provides little insight into questioning their own practices and implications. This is a glaring absence, and limits and weakens Ostrowitz's argument. Much scholarly research within British Columbia provides a more progressive stance than Ostrowitz is willing to consider. Several years before Ostrowitz's work was published, Ruth Phillips (1988, 65), director of the Museum of Anthropology, stressed the need to "better contextualiz[e] historical objects ... connect[ing] the realities of contemporary Native life rather than a mythic past."

Perhaps it was because Ostrowitz translated her doctoral dissertation directly into an academic book bearing the same title that she was unable to re-examine the work's previous limitations. Academic research in anthropology (as noted in West's book above) and in art history (as Ruth Phillips indicates) succeeds in producing a reflexive analysis of the disciplinary limitations and advances in museum and First Nations relations. Ostrowitz makes apparent her limited understanding of the larger issue of identity and of how, for many First Nations artists, art may be a self-defining political act. This is what makes this book a shallow example. If we are looking for critical examination of how art galleries and tourist destinations address the tensions surrounding First Nations identity and culture, one would do best to look past this book.

*Trading Identities: The Souvenir of Native North
American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*

Ruth B. Phillips

Montreal and Kingston/Seattle: McGill-Queen's University Press/
University of Washington Press, 1998. 334 pp. Illus. \$49.95 cloth.

BRIAN S. OSBORNE
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READING THIS MAGISTERIAL work conjured up a personal image for me: Duncan Campbell Scott fingering his beaded tobacco pouch as he contemplated the implementation of government policies intended to address the "Indian problem." It serves to underscore the central thesis of this book: the "contradictions and absurdities" implicit in the dominant culture's appropriation of souvenir wares that were proxies for the complex construct of "Indianness." Phillips puts her case at the very outset:

This book is about souvenir arts and commoditization, and the ways in which this class of objects and this mode of production have historically inscribed images of otherness [that] are particularly illuminating of transcultural aesthetic processes articulated through the asymmetrical power relations of colonial regimes. (3)

Of course, these complex dialogic interrelationships were not static and, throughout the ensuing 300 pages and 280 images, Phillips demonstrates how they were renegotiated "as European ideologies shifted from late-Renaissance Christian cosmology to Enlightenment rationalism, romanticism, and the Victorian dogmas of

progress and cultural evolutionism" (13). In doing so, she underscores how Aboriginal people's participation in commoditization and tourism was an explicit strategy for economic and cultural survival that mediated the assimilationist forces of the dominant culture.

Phillips defines souvenir wares as "commoditized objects, market-oriented arts," predominantly female-produced and consumed "crafts" that have been relegated to "the edges of the canonically correct and the typologically pure" (x). More specifically, her focus is on the 200-year continuity of souvenir art production in three northeastern North American sites: the beadwork of the Mohawk reserve at Kahnawake (Caughnawaga) near Montreal, the ash splinter baskets produced by the Mikmaq of Eskasoni on Cape Breton Island, and the porcupine quill work on bark of the Odawa-Ojibwa (Anishnabek) of northwestern Michigan and Manitoulin Island. No mere lavishly illustrated catalogue, Phillips breaks "the silence of the objects themselves" by approaching her investigation from a rich interdisciplinary perspective informed by a Foucauldian analysis of power, Panofskian iconography, and modern critical theoretical approaches to colonialism, tourism, art history, and museum theory and praxis.

Thus, the public and private collecting practices of professional ethnologists, rare art collectors, Aboriginal agents, and tourists are considered as historically contingent systems that have permitted or excluded particular representational forms. In particular, Phillips exposes the “central contradiction that has run like a fault line” through museum presentations: the separation of materials that displayed the Aboriginal as passive, other, and marginalized from the premodern forms of commoditized art that demonstrated a dynamic negotiation of Western artistic and economic systems. The exclusion of souvenir art forms deprived the establishment-academy of insights into transcultural aesthetic expressions, silenced the producers and consumers of these objects, and obscured the transformative nature of their production and consumption. Transcending the distanced aesthetic and academic view, it is forcefully argued that “these souvenir and trade wares seem to be the most authentic representations of the courageous, innovative, and creative adaptation that Woodlands Aboriginal peoples made during one of the darkest periods in their histories” (69). Moreover, their recent inclusion in collections marks the postcolonial challenge of the museum as the principal agent of a colonial discourse that rendered the Native American as pre-modern, static, and dead.

Following this strong theoretical introduction, the core of the volume consists of four roughly chronological studies of genre and iconography that are diagnostic of major phases in the dynamics of souvenir production and consumption and which, taken together, elucidate complex processes of transculturation. First to be addressed is a staple of the northeastern souvenir

trade, the three-dimensional miniature. Whether they be dolls, canoes, tepees, or weapons, the advantages of the miniaturized form are quite evident: cognitive accessibility, ease of manipulation, aesthetic pleasure, portability, and – especially before the advent of photography and the picture-postcard – the capturing of the image as memento. Moreover, for Phillips, “the quality of reduction lent the illusion of simplification and intellectual control that has been repeatedly exploited in the context of colonial power relations” (102).

Phillips next turns to the “quintessential example of trans-cultural production” and a fascinating demonstration of the process of cultural exchange: the eighteenth-century invention of moosehair-embroidered birchbark curiosities by Quebec nuns and their nineteenth-century appropriation by the Huron-Wendat, Mi’kmaq, and Maliseet, who transformed them into the standard iconography of Indianness throughout northeast North America. Their graphic images are interrogated iconographically and semiotically to elucidate a pictorialism as it was negotiated by French-Canadian nuns; genteel Euro-American women; and Huron, Mi’kmaq, and Maliseet women. Their products incorporated both ideal images and contradictions as they represented emblematic images of the noble savage, Edenic wilderness, and the picturesque.

This is followed by an iconographic analysis of floral motifs displayed by the quilled bark wares of the Anishnabek of the central Great Lakes as a complex site of dual signification of Aboriginal cosmography and Western perceptions of a cultural inferiority. The increased use of floral images in souvenir wares was emblematic of widespread iconographic change in

northeastern visual cultures. By the mid-nineteenth century, floral iconography had displaced earlier geometric motifs and figurative depictions of *manitos*. Initially interpreted through the lens of a cultural evolutionist and racist perspective, the adoption of floral imagery was seen as both a sign of lost artistic integrity and also of progress towards civilization. But Phillips argues convincingly for a more sophisticated “contact perspective” of transcultural interaction and negotiation implicit in the emergent hybrid artistic styles. Recognizing the multivalency of floral motifs, she seeks out their dual signification. For Victorian consumers, they were signifiers of theories of primitive art, the feminine, and folk; for Native Americans, they connoted indigenous beliefs in cosmic powers immanent in vision-inspired images. Together, these forces constituted reformulations of older constructions of Indianness in response to the realities of nineteenth-century colonialism. More powerfully, it is argued that floral designs were part of a strategy to ensure cultural continuity in a period of cultural repression by camouflaging profound animistic beliefs with the artistic conventions of the dominant culture.

Next to be considered is the production and consumption of beaded and basketry domestic ornaments and clothing accessories in the Victorian era. Situated within the context of the prevailing ideologies of femininity and the home, attention is directed to the imposition of rigid gender roles upon Aboriginal communities. Again, a strategy of cultural resistance comes to the fore. In the face of expropriation of their lands, assimilationist educational and religious policies, and a generally oppressive power structure, a close reading of the visual text of

souvenir objects reveals the retention of powerful indigenous artistic concepts. No mere pandering to Victorian popular demand, art commodity productions were proactive negotiations of hybridity within the interstices of power. Thus, they demonstrated a cultural continuity through a canny marketing of signs of exotic difference that penetrated that inner sanctum of Victorian taste – the parlour. Perhaps this is the greatest irony of the ongoing transcultural contact zone: the celebration of the barbaric in the temple of perceived order and decorum!

In her final chapter, Phillips turns to six contemporary Aboriginal artists (Norval Morrisseau, Rebecca Baird, Rebecca Belmore, Rick Hill, Jolene Rickard, and Shelley Niro) to assess how they reinsert the commoditized arts into the continuity of Native American art and, in so doing, attempt to bridge the gap between formal art history and Native American art. At once epilogue and prologue, the chapter serves to underscore the links between historic souvenir production and contemporary Aboriginal art. Thus, nineteenth-century art commodities are located within a history of Woodlands art that is continuing to evolve as inclusive of gender, genre, and medium. This speaks well of “the value placed on the unique combination of skill, inventiveness, and strength these works embody and of their legitimate place in the Native art histories of the Northeast” (280).

What more could I expect of a scholarly study? A comprehensive array of empirical evidence has been subjected to a sophisticated and innovative theoretical analysis, the results presented in a provocatively written and lavishly illustrated text. Given the author’s powerful deconstruction of

visual imagery and form, the extensive array of representations of the several genre of the souvenir-art form are crucial to her ability to make her points. Accordingly, this volume is copiously illustrated with over 200 black-and-white images and a glo-

rious central collection of thirty-eight colour plates that celebrate the beauty and complexity of the commoditized objects of art. Simply put, this is a thought-provoking and groundbreaking study.

Solitary Raven: The Selected Writings of Bill Reid

Robert Bringhurst, editor

Vancouver/Seattle: Douglas and McIntyre/
University of Washington Press, 2000. 250 pp. Illus. \$40 cloth.

JOEL MARTINEAU

University of British Columbia

THE HAIDA ARTIST Bill Reid (1920-98) is arguably Canada's most renowned sculptor. Among his monumental works are the partial replica of a Haida village at the University of British Columbia (UBC); the band council housepole in Skidegate, the first pole raised in the village in a century; *The Raven and the First Men*, the large yellow cedar representation of a Haida creation myth that has become the signature piece of the Museum of Anthropology at UBC; *Chief of the Undersea World*, his cast bronze sculpture of a killer whale located at the Vancouver Aquarium; and *Loo Taa*, the 15.7-metre canoe featured at Expo '86, paddled to Skidegate in 1987, and later paddled up the Seine to Paris. Reid's greatest sculpture is *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*, installed at the Canadian Embassy in Washington in 1991. A replica, *The Jade Canoe*, graces the departure lounge of the Vancouver Airport.

Reid was raised in Hyder and Victoria without knowing that his

mother was Haida. Only as an adult, about to embark on a career with CBC Radio, did he visit Haida Gwaii and discover that his lineage included several great carvers. He made his life's ambition the exploration of art and of his cultural heritage. First, he acquired European, technical jeweller's skills. Then, he steeped himself in the vision of Haida artistic tradition. Finally, he transcended cultural boundaries to create art for all. As Reid matured and his art gained acclaim, he assumed an active role articulating Aboriginal rights. In the 1970s and 1980s, when Haida allied with preservationists to wage a thirteen-year campaign to save the southern portion of Haida Gwaii from clear-cut logging, Reid contributed to their cause as both fundraiser and advocate. Who will forget the March 1987 headline in the *Vancouver Sun*: "Haida Artist Abandons Carving for Embassy"? Reid informed the federal government: "I'm not prepared to enhance your international reputation when you treat my people

badly" (Ar). Only when the various levels of government agreed to preserve the South Moresby wilderness area did Reid resume work on *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*.

Most of the thirty pieces collected in *Solitary Raven* mark significant junctures in Reid's artistic career. Three are from the 1950s. The first recounts the awe Reid experienced as he participated in an expedition that salvaged several Haida housepoles from abandoned villages on southern Haida Gwaii. He argues that the removal was "necessary" to arrest the decay of these "beautiful, tragic reminders of a romantic past" so that they could be preserved in Victoria and Vancouver, where "contemporary carvers" could make exact replicas (39, 41). In the second and third pieces he begins to refine that initial awe, turning it into his argument that the finest Native art of the Northwest Coast "ranks with that of any fine artist past or present, anywhere in the world" (55). Two pieces from the 1960s anticipate Reid's theory that the sea shaped the form, lines, and symmetry that Native artists channelled into "the matchless grace of the Northwest Coast canoe" (61). Eight writings from the 1970s vary in form and purpose: a long poem relates Haida masterworks to the culture that produced them; an autobiographical essay describes the life journey that led to his retrospective exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery; a brief piece philosophizes about the plurality of truths; another eulogizes Wilson Duff; a

lecture delivered at UBC expands his treatment of the formline and ovoid; and the essay "Haida Means Human Being" pleads for respect between races. Fourteen pieces from the 1980s reflect Reid's artistic maturity. He leverages the wisdom gained during his decades of immersion in Northwest Coast artistic traditions and the esteem that his monumental artworks had earned into influential statements about environmental responsibilities, Department of Indian Affairs policy, Native land claims, appropriation, cultural regeneration, and the roles of academics in the preservation of Aboriginal cultures. In the final piece, written in 1991, Reid provides delightfully humorous, thought-provoking notes that describe the occupants of the great bronze canoes, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* and *The Jade Canoe*.

Solitary Raven will be a delight for aficionados of Bill Reid's art, whether their interests are primarily aesthetic, historical, literary, or political. Robert Bringhurst's introduction and notes, and Martine Reid's afterword, add to the warmth of spirit (or raven-like playfulness) that imbues Reid's writing and seems so consistent with his sculptures. The book is generously illustrated, with some three dozen black-and-white photographs, six colour plates, and more than two dozen reproductions of manuscript pages and drawings. It includes a chronology and bibliography. The publishers should be proud of this book and the reasonable price at which it is available.

*This Blessed Wilderness: Archibald McDonald's letters
from the Columbia River, 1822-44*

Jean Murray Cole, editor

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001. 297 pp. Illus., maps. \$75 cloth.

ARTHUR J. RAY

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IN 1821 ARCHIBALD McDONALD arrived on the Northwest Coast as an officer in the Hudson's Bay Company, which had just merged with its arch rival, the North West Company. He remained in the Columbia District for the next twenty-three years, first commanding Fort George (Astoria) (1826-9), then Fort Langley (1829-33), thereafter Fort Colville (1833-44). McDonald retired in 1844 due to failing health and settled at Lake of the Two Mountains, Lower Canada (Quebec), where he lived until his death in 1853. McDonald's career spanned a time when the European fur trade of the Pacific slope underwent major transformations. His position as a senior company officer gave him an excellent vantage point from which to view the changes that were under way. McDonald's letters from Forts George, Langley, and Colville, which comprise the first three parts of the collection Jean Murray Cole has put together from various archives (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, British Columbia Archives, Yale University Archives, and Kew Gardens Library) touch on all aspects of the business. And, as is generally the case with fur traders' correspondence, McDonald's letters also provide many valuable first-hand accounts of aspects of the local Native economies and offer insights into the relationships various First Nations had with the company.

It is the fourth section, covering the five years from 1845 to 1849, which is unusual for a collection of this sort; it is also a surprise, given the book's title. Here the editor has included letters McDonald wrote from his retirement home in Lower Canada. This correspondence offers a rare insight into the kinds of adjustments fur traders had to make when they retired from the "wilderness" to "civilization." McDonald reveals that he had a keen interest in the local political scene, which was undergoing wrenching changes. As an example, in a letter, dated 3 February 1848, to a correspondent in London, England, McDonald wrote: "our late electioneering excitement all over the two provinces is now about over & a pretty kettle of fish we conservatives made of it. The reformers (or rather the Rebels & Radicals) in the next House of Assembly will be two to one - so much for good sound Constitutional law & a lasting connexion with the Mother Country" (260).

Cole has followed all of the editorial conventions that have become commonplace to publications of fur traders' papers. In a general introduction she presents the reader with a concise biography of McDonald, who first arrived in North America at Fort Churchill in 1813 as the leader of the ill-fated second group of Red River-bound settlers that the earl of

Selkirk had dispatched to his colony. Subsequently McDonald became involved in the fur trade, and he served with George Simpson (later Sir George) in the Athabasca District just before his arrival in the Columbia District. McDonald favourably impressed Simpson, and this helped his career immediately afterward when Simpson assumed the governorship of the company. In addition to her biographical introduction, Cole opens each of the book's four parts with a succinct history that aims to put the group of letters that follow in their proper context. In footnotes throughout the work, she also provides essential biographical information about the people who are mentioned in McDonald's correspondence.

While Cole's adherence to editorial conventions is a strength of the collection, it also is one of its weaknesses.

She does not provide the reader with any information about the First Nations, who owned the territory where the company built its posts. This omission is most glaring on the map of the Columbia District (2), which shows only rivers and trading posts. It conveys the no longer acceptable impression that the land was vacant apart from the European establishments. Also, by failing to refer readers to the appropriate anthropological literature, those who are unfamiliar with the cultures of Pacific Slope First Nations are not provided with the background information they need to evaluate McDonald's descriptions and assessments of local Native customs. These shortcomings notwithstanding, Cole is to be congratulated for pulling together an extremely valuable collection.

*A Tour of Duty in the Pacific Northwest:
E.A. Porcher and H.M.S. Sparrowhawk, 1865-1868*

Dwight L. Smith, editor

Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2000.
172 pp. Illus., maps. US\$85 cloth

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IN THE MIDDLE YEARS of the nineteenth century the colony of British Columbia was a major producer of gold, and we tend to think of it in those terms. British Columbia played a second important role to which this book calls our attention. Thanks to its sources of coal and its secure harbour at Esquimalt, the colony served

as a nodal point in the web of steamship routes that bound the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans into a single strategic and commercial system. This role is brought to life by the private journal and water colours of Commander Edmund A. Porcher, captain of the gunboat *HMS Sparrowhawk* during a three-year turn of duty.

Leaving Portsmouth early in March 1865, the *Sparrowhawk* spent almost seven months on its way to British Columbia. It called at Madeira, Rio de Janeiro, the land Islands, the Straits of Magellan, Valaparaíso, Callao, and Honolulu. HMS *Sparrowhawk* used its engines only when sail did not serve. The slowness of the voyage and the frequent stops to take on coal show the inefficiency of early steamships. Since Porcher used the coaling stops to visit and paint local sites, this inefficiency is posterity's gain.

The heart of the journal focuses upon HMS *Sparrowhawk*'s time in British Columbia, from October 1866 to August 1868. As British gunboats were meant to do, the ship enforced the colonial order, visited settlements, investigated wrecked ships and rescued survivors, maintained communications, and carried mail. The *Sparrowhawk* was constantly on the move through dangerous waters not well charted. It made visits to San Francisco (once for repairs to its keel), the ports of Puget Sound, and Sitka (at the very end of Russian rule). A recurring theme is interaction with Aboriginal peoples along the Coast – peoples who displayed far more autonomy and initiative than Porcher expected or desired. He praised William Duncan and the Metlakatla settlement precisely because they resulted in Aboriginal peoples making “progress ... in the arts of civilized life” (135) – in other words, becoming deferential to British authority. Another theme involves providing transportation for the governor of the united colonies, often between Victoria and New Westminster. In 1867 Porcher accompanied Frederick Seymour on two inland trips, the first to Boston Bar and the second all the way to the Cariboo. After this last visit the journal's text offers more summary and

less information, in part because Porcher's life brought him few new experiences. The final pages record the return journey to England via Panama and St. Thomas.

Porcher possessed good powers of observation, and, precisely because his views were conventional, his account of what he saw and did is particularly useful. There are excellent descriptions of the military encampment on San Juan Island (which was to protect England's interests in the still unresolved dispute with the United States), the sawmill located at the future Vancouver felling spars, a price war between the Nanaimo Coal Company and a competitor at Bellingham Bay, and the way in which Frederick Dally operated to get the photographs that provided the principal visual record of these years. Ship desertions, common during these years, acquire a personal face. Porcher knew all of his men and, even while pursuing departees, could almost sympathize with their reasons for wanting to try life ashore. He even included the note of a fleeing lieutenant, who explained: “I am not leaving this Ship through any discontent ... but there are such temptations here for a young man that I cannot resist them any longer” (47).

The utility of the journal's text owes a good deal to the editing of Dwight L. Smith, professor emeritus of Miami (Ohio) University. Porcher's accounts of two voyages to the northern coasts have, for example, been supplemented by the inclusion, in brackets, of passages from two anonymous articles (probably by Porcher) that appeared in Victoria's *Daily Colonist* newspaper. On the other hand, the footnotes could be more thorough in identifying individuals and places, such as “Mr. Skinner” at Cowichan (41) and “Blenkinsop” (142) at Fort Rupert. A lack of familiarity

with the history of British Columbia is the likely cause, although the editor did consult archival and cartographic authorities in the province.

Interesting as is the text, the work's glory and its true value lies in the water colours that Porcher produced during his travels. The University of Alaska Press deserves all praise for reproducing fifty-four of these sketches at a very high standard. Porcher's paintings are notable for their fine

sense of colour. They convey the atmosphere and mood of the places they depict. By including human beings and animals in movement, Porcher gave a dramatic, personal touch to the scenes he painted. Particularly fine and historically significant are the paintings of New Westminster (facing, 64), Fort Simpson and Clinton (facing, 104), and "Nahritti" village on Hope Island (facing, 140). Porcher's water colours deserve wide circulation.

*Geography of British Columbia:
People and Landscapes in Transition*

Brett McGillivray

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000.
235 pp. Illus., maps. \$39.95 paper

KEN FAVRHOLDT

The University College of the Cariboo

THE *Geography of British Columbia: People and Landscapes in Transition* is intended as a textbook describing the geography of this "vertical landscape" in a comprehensive manner. It supersedes an earlier, similar book, *British Columbia: Its Resources and People*, edited by Charles N. Forward (Western Geographical Series, vol. 22). Brett McGillivray borrows from the format of the earlier compilation but, as the single author of this text, has created a more pleasing and more easily read treatment of British Columbia's geography. Well written in one voice, it doesn't suffer from the somewhat disjointed assembly of Forward's book. Still, McGillivray is aware of the necessity of omitting some topics and only touching on others.

Both Forward and McGillivray's books take a similar approach, beginning with a chapter providing regional profiles, although some of the regions have been redefined. This is one of the idiosyncrasies of regional geography: there are different and changing views. Unfortunately, the transitory regional names and boundaries don't lend themselves to spatial comparisons, although a full-page version of Figure 1.2 – showing the eight regions – could have been combined with census subdivisions, thus allowing for such analysis.

McGillivray's book begins with a general overview and introduction to regional geography. Chapter 2 deals with physical processes and, for the non-geographer, explains the basic tectonic and volcanic processes that

affect British Columbia's land forms, as well as the forces of weathering, erosion, and climate. Missing in this part is an overview of the biogeoclimatic system of landscape classification used by the Ministry of Forests, which would have provided a more satisfying picture of vegetation zones than does McGillivray's very generalized, short description of soils and vegetation (35-36). On the other hand, in Chapter 3 McGillivray offers far too much detail on living with risks. A few figures and tables, such as those pertaining to flood plains and hazards related to streams on the Squamish Highway (as well as general types of avalanches), although topical, could have been expended in favour of a full-page map of British Columbia (in Chapter 1) showing mountains and plateaux. A map showing major highways and rail lines would also be in order.

McGillivray, to his credit, devotes an entire chapter to European exploration, another to First Nations, and still another to Asians. While it is always difficult to leave out particular ethnic groups, these chapters offer important background to current, controversial cultural relations. The second half of the book offers a more traditional and topical treatment of the economic geography of the province, and it includes chapters on forestry, fishing, metal mining, energy, agriculture, water, tourism, single-resource communities, and urbanization. The final chapter (on urbanization) is intended as a kind of summation, reinforcing some of the concepts discussed in earlier chapters.

Geography of British Columbia is well laid out with a balance of maps, photographs, graphs, and tables – all of which form a rich resource. The references for each chapter, including Web sites, are nicely presented. There is a

glossary at the end that explains more fully some of the geographic terms that appear in the book. Although they do not detract from the book's overall usefulness, there are some flaws throughout the text. For example, the chapter on tourism unfortunately presents outdated regions and data. High Country is no longer the name for the tourism region centred on Kamloops, which is now connected with the Okanagan and is referred to as the Thompson-Okanagan. The names of the tourism regions are written in lower case in the text, which may confuse the reader (Figure 14.4). The schema of tourism regions – now only six, not nine – is a reminder of the vagaries of government changes and the need to date such maps. One major error must be noted: the lowest discharge rate of most rivers does not occur, as McGillivray states on page 184, at the times of highest demand. For example, the Thompson River at Kamloops is at its highest discharge from late spring through early summer. Demand is highest during Kamloops's hot summers but has no impact on the water supply. Here and there, *Geography of British Columbia* suffers from repetition. For example, figures could have been combined (Figure 11.7 with Figure 11.3, and Figure 11.1 with Figure 11.6), and text, especially the chapter on urbanization, could have dwelt more on urban structure and problems – the concern of 80 per cent of British Columbia's population – rather than recapping themes already covered. Unfortunately, McGillivray prognosticates about the immediate future, which is often subject to changing trends and reversals. For example, since the book's publication, the Sechelt First Nation has pulled out of treaty negotiations.

But most of the flaws consist of minor slips and typos. The Okanagan

region does not extend to the Fraser Canyon, as is shown in Figure 1.6. On the same map, Osoyoos is misplaced. Vernon does not belong on the map of the Kootenay region (Figure 1.7). The “modified Mediterranean climate” does not apply to the whole Coast but only to a small stretch around Victoria (31). Cherry Point Refinery is not in Puget Sound but on the Strait of Georgia (157). First Nations did domesticate dogs, and at least one crop – tobacco – was cultivated (169). The Provincial Museum and the Royal British Columbia Museum are the same institution (191). Typos include “Wells Gray Park” (23), “Wenatchee” (39), “Ootsa reservoir” (161), “Courtenay” (217), “Michel” (219), “Fort d’Original” (Figure 4.2, 58), and “Natural gas pipeline” (Figure 11.6).

Missing is a full-page overview map of British Columbia. McGillivray recognizes this and encourages students to acquire a map to use with the book; I recommend the Tourism BC road map of the province. Unfortunately,

there is no up-to-date atlas of the province, but A.L. Farley’s *Atlas of British Columbia* (1979) can be found in most libraries and is still a good resource from a historical point of view.

But there is a great deal to recommend this text. It is the best book on British Columbia’s geography to date and will, I hope, maintain its value as a text for many years. For best use in the classroom, however, it needs to be supplemented with other materials. It should be used as an overview in conjunction with other important books and articles on British Columbia, which McGillivray has utilized extensively. The Internet and films are also recognized sources of additional information.

A student workbook to accompany the text would be a welcome addition. Despite its minor problems, as an instructor who has used this text in a course on BC geography, I have found it very satisfactory. I hope that a future edition will fix those pesky errors and keep it up to date.

Radical Roots: The Shaping of British Columbia

Harold Griffin

Vancouver: Broadway Printers, 1999. 258 pp. Illus.
(Betty Griffin, 403-2222 Bellevue, West Vancouver)

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AS THE FOUNDING EDITOR of *The People*, the weekly newspaper of the BC branch of the Communist Party of Canada, the late Harold (Hal) Griffin made a key contribution to British Columbia’s radical past. After Hal’s death, his

widow Betty brought *Radical Roots* through to publication. The result is a book that deals with a diverse number of topics and takes the reader through British Columbia’s past from prehistory to the present. Readers will benefit from this well written and

thoroughly researched book, which provides alternative readings of many events in BC history.

Hal Griffin begins by discussing the physical origins of British Columbia as well as the experiences of the First Nations peoples. Griffin notes that the First Nations were a much more diverse group than many scholars have argued. He points out that “there are 160 linguistic stocks and more than 1,200 sub-dialects among the native peoples of the Americas.” Griffin moves on to the rise of exploration in Europe and how this led to the European colonial powers “discovering” British Columbia. He comments on the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company and on how issues of class, race, and ethnicity made their way into the history of these two enterprises. Griffin provides a stimulating discussion of the battles between English fur traders and settlers and the First Nations and the Métis. He adds to our knowledge of how issues of money and power played themselves out in the relations between White settlers and Native peoples.

A key point in Griffin’s text is the discovery of gold in California in the late 1840s and the subsequent migration of miners to British Columbia – a migration that helped to populate the colony. This led to the further disruption of the Native way of life, with diseases like smallpox being introduced into the First Nations population. Griffin also discusses the dislike of White elites for the Natives and their, ultimately successful, efforts at stripping the First Nations of their land. Throughout the book, the themes of moving, changing, exploration, and searching provide links between different topics.

British Columbia’s entry into Confederation plays a prominent role

in Griffin’s text. He is particularly interested in Amor De Cosmos’s role in attacking the elites that ruled British Columbia. De Cosmos fought for liberal reforms, such as responsible government, and provided the driving force for bringing British Columbia into Confederation. Griffin views British Columbia’s union with Canada as a progressive step. It prevented British Columbia’s annexation to the United States and served as an instrument of reform.

Griffin continues by discussing the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). In keeping with his left-wing sympathies, he argues that the building of the CPR was the “fulfilment of a dream of riches” for a small group of capitalists. Griffin offers an astute analysis of the plight of the Chinese workers. He also describes an early miners’ strike that, although it ended in failure, laid the groundwork for successful battles against capitalism. Griffin comments on the early contributions of the Knights of Labor and the Socialist Party of Canada to British Columbia’s radical heritage. There are also good discussions of the 1907 race riot against the Chinese workers and the *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914. Griffin demonstrates that British Columbia’s “development” was forged through the oppression of Natives, immigrants, and workers.

Hal Griffin provides an important account of BC history. He offers alternative readings of much studied events such as Confederation and the potlatch. And he does this in a writing style that is entertaining and engaging. Scholars and general readers will find much useful information in *Radical Roots*. However, there are two small problems that merit mentioning. Griffin’s choice of topics is somewhat

eccentric. In a book entitled *Radical Roots*, one would expect to find significant material surrounding the 1930s, a key decade in British Columbia's history. Events such as the On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Post Office Sit-Down Strike of 1938 are given short shrift. Similarly, there is virtually no mention of the post-Second World War period. A discussion of the Solidarity movement, for example, would have added a great deal.

Betty Griffin has said that Hal wanted to entitle this work *The Way*

to Cathay; after Betty took on the task of publishing the book, she decided to rename it *Radical Roots*. Given the book's themes of movement, change, and searching, *The Way to Cathay* would have been a better title. Despite these small caveats, *Radical Roots* provides an important and entertaining look at BC history. Betty Griffin should be commended for the effort that she put into getting the book published.

*The IWA in Canada:
The Life and Times of an Industrial Union*

Andrew Neufeld and Andrew Parnaby

Vancouver: IWA Canada/New Star Books, 2000. 321 pp. Illus. \$50 cloth

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BRITISH COLUMBIA'S HISTORY cannot be written without reference to trees: their use, their value, their presence or absence are central to the symbolic vision and material practices of the province. And there has been (arguably) no more important an organization related to the work done with the province's trees than the IWA (once the International Woodworkers of America; and, since 1994, the Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Canada). The publication of an official history of the IWA in Canada, then, is intrinsically important for BC historians.

Andrew Neufeld and Andrew Parnaby provide a story that, in its broad outlines, should be familiar to

many, rooted as it is in key developments of twentieth-century labour history. An entire chapter (perhaps the best) traces the pre-IWA origins of labour organization in the forests. The formation of the IWA in 1937, they argue, must be seen in the context of the efforts of previous workers and organizations – including the International Workers of the World, the One Big Union, the Lumber Workers Industrial Union (headed by later British Columbia Co-operative Commonwealth Federation leader Ernest Winch), and the Communist Party of Canada – to battle harsh working conditions. With these origins in place, the book's narrative moves on to the organizing efforts of the Depression and the breakthrough

brought by the Second World War. In the postwar years, the IWA's experience fits into the broader story of compromise, incremental gain, and struggle that characterizes much labour history of the period. However, the chapters on the 1950s are equally worth reading for the detail they provide on labour relations in what is commonly understood as an era of compromise between business and labour. For example, the story of the IWA's tense battles to organize in Newfoundland is a pertinent reminder to historians of the postwar years that consensus did not mean acquiescence. Beginning in the 1970s and continuing up to the 1990s, real challenges and setbacks seriously eroded even the contested postwar gains: the stagflation and wage and price controls debates of the 1970s were exacerbated by efforts from companies to contract out and to downsize operations. Overall, technological change, questions of sustainability, the environmental movement, and unfriendly employers and governments presented constant challenges to the union.

Altogether, this story is told in readable and, at times, entertaining prose. Neufeld and Parnaby present a determinedly upbeat perspective, emphasizing struggle, agency, and collective effort. The book's style supports this active perspective: inserted sections tell the history of particular locals; the text is filled with strike narratives and the work of individual leaders; and every tale of setback is balanced with a recognition of effort, sacrifice, and a realistic appreciation of past unionists' tough work.

But *The IWA in Canada* is not a scholarly book, at least not if we believe that scholarship's purpose is to

truly understand its object of inquiry. This is an official history. And this official status is, at times, a problem because it tends to lead to distortion. A couple of instances are particularly jarring. The role of IWA chief Jack Munro in putting an end to Operation Solidarity in 1983 is glossed over in three paragraphs. Without any discussion of opposing views, Munro's bargain with the Social Credit government, which ended what was possibly the most significant labour battle in Canada since the end of the Second World War, is explained away as an act of responsible foresight. The place of forestry workers in environmental politics receives more treatment but is equally frustrating. We are told that the environmental movement is the "Goliath" fighting against the workers' "David." Forestry workers are the real environmentalists, or, as the heading of one section puts it, "environmentalists with their working clothes on." The role of workers in battles over the environment is a fascinating topic that is often overlooked. But the posturing and name-calling that occurs in this book do not help us to explain how and why workers, environmentalists, governments, and forestry companies have created the kind of modern logging politics with which we are now so familiar. In both these and other instances, the book needed more questions and fewer assertions.

Overall, the last section of *The IWA in Canada* – "Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading" – is probably the most important. Within the context of the larger literature that Neufeld and Parnaby cite, and never forgetting its "official" status, *The IWA in Canada* is a very useful book for BC historians.