

“CALEDONIAN SUTTEE”?

*An Anatomy of Carrier Cremation Cruelty in the Historical Record*¹

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BETWEEN 1820 AND 1860 FOUR PUBLISHED STORIES about Native barbarity contributed to the demonization of the inhabitants of the Pacific Slope inland from coastal areas. The first was the record of a Carrier cremation in January 1812 at Stuart Lake; the second was an incident of Iroquois cannibalism in May 1817 on the upper Columbia River; the third was the murder by a vengeful Shuswap of Hudson’s Bay Company chief factor Samuel Black at Thompson River Fort on 8 February 1841; and the fourth was the massacre by Caiuse of the Whitmans at Waillatpu in November 1847.² These stories came to form readers’ perceptions of the barbarians of the Interior, and became instances of what has been called occupational folklore.³ Of these, Carrier cremation cruelty alone involved only Native people. It was “the subject of much jaundiced comment by Europeans,” whose

¹ An earlier version of this essay was read before the British Columbia Inside/Out Conference organized by *BC Studies* and the BC Political Studies Association, University of Northern British Columbia, 28–30 April 2005. I wish to thank Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy for generously permitting me access to their extensive library, which brought to my attention many sources cited herein.

² The first published appearances of each of the four occurred in Daniel Williams Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interiour of North America*, ed. Rev. Daniel Haskel (Andover, VT: Flagg and Gould, 1820), 215–18; Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 2:181–4; Sir George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey round the World during the Years 1841 and 1842*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 1:156–7 (on Black’s assailant, Kiskowsin, see John Tod, 5 October 1841, Fort Thompson Journal 1841–1843, BCARS, Old Manuscripts Series, A/B/20/K12); and *Oregon Spectator*, 10 December 1847, 20 January, 10 February, 24 February, 9 March 1848.

³ For the use of the term “occupational folklore” with respect to stories – often lurid ones about Native North Americans – that circulated in the fur trade, see Bruce M. White, “The Fear of Pillaging: Economic Folktales of the Great Lakes Fur Trade,” in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing, Mackinac Island, MI: Michigan State University Press, Mackinac State Historic Parks, 1994), 199–200.

rehearsal of it rendered it *the* “Indian” story in books that mentioned the pre-settlement Interior.⁴

The fur trade era’s readership would have been as offended by cremation itself as by the narrations of cruelty attendant upon it. Christianity, by emphasizing the sanctity of the human body as well as the doctrine of resurrection, had always opposed cremation and regarded the Roman Empire’s practice of it as barbaric. In this, Christians aligned with Jews and diverged from the ancient Greek conviction that “fire separated the pure soul from the impure body and freed it to ascend, phoenixlike, from its altar of flames to the heavens.”⁵ In the Christian tradition, the British Empire held that cremation was barbaric and that it spawned other barbaric practices.⁶

This review of the textual record of Carrier cremation practices questions the impression that the Carrier *routinely* inflicted cruel treatment on the widow. Why did the narratives insist on highlighting cruelty? Why did none of the accounts published after 1846 acknowledge a claim, published the next year, that the Carrier had stopped cremating their dead? If cruelty commonly formed part of their cremations, why have the Carrier seldom mentioned this in their oral histories? Why do most published studies by professional anthropologists working after Adrien Gabriel Morice, OMI (1859–1938) have no references to Carrier cremation cruelty, thus giving rise to the impression that it was the creation of fur-trade-era narratives? Finally, from an analysis of tales of Carrier cremation, what can be learned about the reliability of fur-trade-era narratives as sources of ethnographic data?

The story of cremation cruelty tends to centre on Stuart Lake because both the North West Company (NWC) and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) operated posts there. What Native peoples lived there? According to more than one source, it was the spouse’s forced carrying of the remains of the deceased that gave rise to the name “Porteur/Carrier.”⁷

⁴ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890* (1977), 2nd ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 92. Another early source that informs the present study is Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

⁵ Stephen Prothero, *Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

⁶ Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 71, 72. See also Timothy George, “Cremation Confusion,” *Christianity Today* 46, 6 (21 May 2002): 66; posted electronically 21 May 2002 at <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/006/27.66.htm>>.

⁷ Reverend A.G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* (Toronto: Briggs, 1904), 6; Diamond Jenness, *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River: Their Social Life and Religious Life* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 535.

However, other sources claim that the Carrier were thus dubbed only after the arrival of the fur trade, when they assumed the role of porters. A centennial celebration in 1928 highlighted this designation; however, dating the name only to the fur-trade era is implicitly disputed by a Carrier, who traces it to earlier times: “The name ‘Carrier’ ‘Aghelh Ne’ means ‘Ones who pack.’ In the very early days, the people had no means of transporting their goods except on their backs or by canoes. They also used dogs for packing. And so they were called ‘Aghelh Ne’ by the Sekanais.”⁸ All three of these explanations remain in play today.

Many subgroupings of Carrier have been identified. A distinction first drawn in 1981 and further refined since then is today widely acknowledged between, on the one hand, the Babine (or Northern Carrier-speaking Babine-Witsu Wit’én) located on the upper Skeena watershed and, on the other hand, the southern and central Carrier, including those who live in a vast region that takes in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and the Nechako River watershed, and that continues south and east to the rest of the upper Fraser River watershed, including Alexandria, Snowshoe, Dome Creek, Prince George, and Fort St. James/Stuart Lake.⁹

PART 1

In 1820 the first published rendition of Carrier cremation cruelty appeared in *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America*. This version of the journal of nwc trader Daniel Harmon (1778–1843) was issued under the editorship of Reverend Daniel Haskel. Harmon observed the ritual at Stuart Lake on 9 January 1812 and says that it occurred among “Sicauny” (modern Sekani).¹⁰ In both the book

(Anthropological Papers, no. 25, Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin 133). Although chiefly North American, the term cremains – the ashes of a cremated person – is anachronistic to the era of the fur trade, having been coined in 1951 (*OED*).

⁸ Frieda Esau Klippenstein, “The Challenge of James Douglas and the Carrier Chief Kwah,” *Reading beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. J.H.S. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1996), 144, fig. 3; Lizette Hall, *The Carrier, My People* (Quesnel, BC: L. Hall, 1992), 4.

⁹ Michael E. Krauss and Victor K. Golla, “Northern Athapaskan Languages,” in *Subarctic*, ed. Ruth Helm, vol. 6 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, gen. ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 83; James Kari and Sharon Hargus, “Dialectology, Ethnonymy and Prehistory in the Northwest Portion of the ‘Carrier’ Language Area,” paper, Alaska Native Language Center, Fairbanks, AK, and Department of Linguistics, University of Washington, Seattle, 1989 (this paper was once publicized as forthcoming in *Journal of Anthropological Research* 46 [1990] but one of its authors has confirmed that it was never published [James Kari to the author, 13 March 2005]).

¹⁰ Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels*, 215–18. Stuart Lake, the nwc’s name for this post, was changed to Fort St. James by the hbc in 1822, following the merger of the two companies.

and Harmon's own journal, published 137 years later, the ritual strikes the trader as a "disgusting, savage ceremony."¹¹ Haskel states in his preface that he had "written it [Harmon's journal] wholly over."¹² While Harmon's modern editor finds this an "exaggeration, for Harmon's own phraseology survives in many passages," he does note that "the changes made were numerous and drastic."¹³

One such change involves an addition introduced at the end of the account of cremation. The entry in Harmon's journal concluded by stating that the dead husband's two widows collected his remains "into a Box, which is put under a Shed erected for that purpose in the centre of the Village."¹⁴ However, a note written seven years later based on information sent, given, or told him by colleague George McDougall permitted Harmon to add under the date 28 February 1819 that "[a]mong the Carriers, widows are slaves to the relations of their deceased husbands, for the term of two or three years from the commencement of their widowhood, during which, they are generally treated in a cruel manner. Their heads are shaved, and it belongs to them to do all the drudgery, about the tent. They are frequently beaten with a club or an axe, or some such weapon."¹⁵ Haskel prints this later note under its proper date¹⁶ but also rounds out the original account from 1812 by adding a paragraph of details, the source of which is neither Harmon's journal nor any other known document. In it, the widows gather up the ashes and remaining pieces of bone in bags; these they are "compelled to carry upon their backs, and to lay by their sides, when they lie down at night, for about two years." During that time, the widows "are kept in a kind of slavery, and are required to daub their faces over with some black substance, and to appear clothed with rags, and frequently to go without any clothing, excepting round their waists." Thereafter, the deceased husband's relations hold a feast, place the remains in a box that is put under a shed "erected for that purpose, in the centre of the village," and set the widows "at liberty from these disagreeable restraints." The last two of these details appear in Harmon's journal.¹⁷ Haskel's preface confirms that Harmon was unavailable during the editing process, having returned to the fur trade. This circumstance apparently afforded

¹¹ Ibid., 216-17; W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957), 149.

¹² Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels*, x.

¹³ Lamb, *Sixteen Years*, ix.

¹⁴ Ibid., 149.

¹⁵ Lamb, *Sixteen Years*, 195.

¹⁶ Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels*, 271.

¹⁷ Ibid., 218.

Haskel a wider scope for his narration, the purpose of which, according to his preface, was to make known the need for bringing Christianity to the Natives of the continent's interior.¹⁸ The inference could be drawn that the more lurid and inhumane the treatment of the widow in the narrative, the greater and more urgent the need for missionaries to be sent to these "wretched" people. And who could gainsay the apparent testimony of an eyewitness? Other accounts of travel/exploration by fur traders preceded Harmon's – those by Samuel Hearne (1795), Alexander Mackenzie (1801), and Gabriel Franchère (1820) were also edited by non-traders. And the title of Harmon's book makes it sound like another travel narrative. However, Harmon's was the first book to contain lengthy accounts of residence with particular peoples of (as the title states) the "Interiour of North America." His observations would have been difficult to dispute or to dismiss.

Astorian Ross Cox (1793-1853) came no nearer to Carrier country than the upper Columbia River Valley. Nevertheless, his *Adventures on the Columbia River* (1831) concludes with a description of Carrier cremation cruelty, likely because a purple patch enhanced the book's sense of adventure.¹⁹ Cox states that his information about the "Talkotins" and their ceremony derives from fellow trader Joseph M'Gillivray's "friendly communications."²⁰ In Cox's extract, the body of the deceased – usually male (so that the humiliation is the woman's to bear) – must lie in state for nine days prior to cremation, during which time "the widow of the deceased is obliged to sleep alongside it from sunset to sunrise; and from this custom there is no relaxation, even during the hottest days of summer!" Once the pyre is ablaze, attention fastens on the female body, likely to arouse the prurient interest of male readers:

she must lie on the pile; and after the fire is applied to it, she cannot stir until the doctor orders her to be removed; which, however, is never done until her body is completely covered with blisters. After being placed on her legs, she is obliged to pass her hands gently through the flames, and collect some of the liquid fat which issues from the

¹⁸ Lamb, *Sixteen Years*, xi; George Woodcock, "Harmon, Daniel," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, ed. Mary P. Bentley and Jane E. Graham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 386.

¹⁹ Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2:387-92. Apparently, no manuscript for this book has survived.

J.A. Cuddon defines a "purple patch" as "an ornate, florid or over-written piece of writing which is incongruous. [The term] is nearly always used pejoratively" (*A Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4th ed., revised by C.E. Preston [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998], 716).

²⁰ Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2:358.

corpse, with which she is permitted to rub her face and body! When the friends of the deceased observe the sinews of the legs and arms beginning to contract, they compel the unfortunate widow to go again on the pile, and by dint of hard pressing to straighten those members.

If during her husband's lifetime she had been known to have committed any act of infidelity, or omitted administering to him savoury food, or neglected his clothing, &c., she is now made to suffer severely for such lapses of duty by his relations, who frequently fling her on the funeral pile, from which she is dragged by her friends; and thus, between alternate scorching and cooling, she is dragged backwards and forwards until she falls into a state of insensibility.²¹

The widow receives further beatings if she refuses to undertake any task assigned her by the other women or if she neglects to weed the grave into which she eventually deposits her husband's remains. The account assures its reader that many widows are driven to suicide at the mere prospect of undergoing such trauma.²² A potlatch eventually takes place, at which, contrary to the attestation that they are deposited in a grave, the remains incongruously resurface, carried by the widow.

A retired fur trader who had spent a decade in journalism after his retirement (but before the publication of his book, which frequently puts the traveller-persona "in the midst of adventures at which he could not have been present, and ... himself in charge when he was more likely an assistant"),²³ Cox offers a version of M'Gillivray's account that, in its focus on specific anatomical details, undeniably emphasizes the cruel treatment of the widow. Cox's main narrative concludes with the caveat, not mentioned in most other published versions, that "men are condemned to a similar ordeal; but they do not bear it with equal fortitude; and numbers fly to distant quarters to avoid the brutal treatment which custom has established as a kind of religious rite."²⁴ So the women remain the object of the reader's gaze, and the men are dismissed as cowards. All in all, the "savages" of *Adventures on the Columbia River* oblige their reader with pseudo-sexual attraction and moral repulsion.²⁵ In light of the sensationalism of this purple patch, it

²¹ Ibid., 2:389-90.

²² Ibid., 2:390.

²³ Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 35.

²⁴ Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2:392.

²⁵ Fur trade-era narratives regularly derided male incapacity or cowardice while indulging in voyeurism relating to female suffering, debauchery, or nudity. A parallel passage regarding a medicine man and his female patient, found in *Wanderings of an Artist* (discussed below), is discussed in I.S. MacLaren, "Exploration/Travel Literature and the Evolution of the

is worth noting that another version of M'Gillivray's account, written in 1827 but not published until 1947, begins with many of the same details but does not mention cruel treatment of the widow.²⁶ But, single-handedly, Cox's book had long before disseminated word of that cruelty.

The 1841 travels of Horatio Hale (1817-96) as part of Charles Wilkes's United States Exploring Expedition did not take him to New Caledonia, and yet his *Ethnology and Philology* included a description of Carrier cremation. He might have relied on Haskel/Harmon's account for he mentions *A Journal of Voyages and Travels* elsewhere in his book. His version resembles theirs in some respects, although an indebtedness to Cox's version of M'Gillivray is possible as well. The widow "is all but burned alive with the corpse" in *Ethnology and Philology*.²⁷ Despite its title, it offers a no more disinterested, empirical version than do traders' narratives, perhaps because Hale is only reporting what he has heard/been told.

Travelling one year later than Hale, Modeste Demers (1809-71), who in 1838 was one of the first two Roman Catholic missionaries to reach the Pacific Slope, wrote to the Bishop of Quebec on 20 December and reported on aspects of his journey in the company of veteran Pacific Slope fur trader Peter Skene Ogden (1790-1854). He arrived at Fort Alexandria in mid-August 1842 and was still there when he penned his letter. He met the "porteurs," "the principal object of my care; and it is also in their direction that I directed all the efforts of my ministry."²⁸ After characterizing the "barbarians" whose promiscuity leads to "suicide, murder and a thousand

Author," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 5 (Spring 1992): 39-68. Anne McClintock has identified "a long tradition of male travel as an erotics of ravishment" (*Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* [New York: Routledge, 1995], 22), while fictional renderings of the female Native as sexual object and her non-Native observer as spectator-owner of that object have been treated by Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 64ff. Elsewhere and with respect to earlier and later periods, see Rayna Green's discussion of what she calls the "Virgin-Whore paradox" in "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *Massachusetts Review* 16 (1975): 698-714; and Sarah Carter's discussion of the image of the mid-1880s stereotype of the Indian reserve woman on the Canadian Prairies in *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 158-93.

²⁶ Joseph M'Gillivray, "Report of Fort Alexandria Western Caledonia Columbia River District Outfit 1827," Province of Manitoba, HBC Archives B. 5/e/1, rpt. in *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson Esq' Governor of Ruperts Land to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company London*, ed. E.E. Rich, introd. W. Stewart Wallace (London: The Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1947), 207-8.

²⁷ Horatio Hale, *Ethnology and Philology* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1846), facsimile reprint, introd. Fred C. Sawyer (Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1968), 203, 534.

²⁸ Modeste Demers, *Notices and Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. and ed. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Oregon History Society, 1956), 155.

other disorders,” Demers describes cremation as an “impressive ceremony”; however, his final paragraph qualifies this view:

The ceremony of burning the bodies is often accompanied by acts of cruelty of a kind analogous to that practiced among some Asiatic nations. If the wife of the defunct has not merited the esteem of the operators by her conduct toward her husband, she is seized without pity, in spite of her outcries and groans, and thrown without compunction into the flame on the half roasted cadaver of the defunct, from which she is withdrawn without sympathy and without hair, more or less roasted, according to the discretionary will or judgment of her judges. She is then condemned to slavery until the expiration of the three years, after which the funeral feast takes place; and then she is free to abandon herself to the first comer. The period of her stigma is over.²⁹

When he wrote to his superior, Demers had been in Carrier country for only four months. Had he actually witnessed such cruelty? Perhaps his guide, Peter Skene Ogden, painted such a picture for him of this custom. Oddly, Demers’s account seems relatively restrained in other respects. Carrier character, he wrote, “differs much and for the better from that of the tribes on the Columbia, especially of those that border the sea. One does not see at all in them that shallowness and instability which characterize so particularly the latter. The Porteur and the Atnan let themselves easily be persuaded, confide in the whites, believe the truths of the faith with sincerity and without afterthought.”³⁰ The optimistic note that he sounds does not accord with the details of depravity that he recounts; yet the two in tandem suggest that a promising and needy mission field awaits a priest appointed to work among the Carrier. Did Demers see cruelty being perpetrated at a cremation or did Ogden gull him into believing as much and in repeating it to a sponsoring superior back in Canada who was awaiting news of success or at least of promise? Did he not realize the contradictory nature of the portrait he drew of the Carrier? It did not see published form until 1956, so its influence on the nineteenth-century view of the Carrier was restricted; however, the ambivalence it registers in its mixture of attraction and repulsion vis-à-vis Native lifeways is notable for its anticipation of the contradictions in Ogden’s published views.

Before Ogden came into print in the 1850s, two other accounts were written, and one of them was published. The *Notes* (1849) of HBC trader

²⁹ Ibid., 156, 157, 158.

³⁰ Ibid., 162-3.

John McLean (1798 or 1800–90) appeared in 1849. At Fort St. James (Stuart Lake) in 1834, he claimed success for prompting the Carrier to replace cremation with burial – a success contradicted by Demers’s account eight years later (if one allows that it was based on eyewitness experience). *Notes* presents McLean’s version at the end of a chapter. Having arrived in New Caledonia only in the fall of 1833, he remains vague as to whether or not he saw the ceremony himself – this despite the avowal that he “never beheld a more affecting scene.”³¹ By contrast, once he made his mark, he *is* clear about seeing the ceremony. His account adds two new details to the textual record: the widow was impelled to the fire by relatives armed with “spears,” and (perhaps here he is remembering Cox’s/M’Gillivray’s detail)³² she “anoint[ed] her breast with the fat that oozed from the body.” This appears under the running header: “Barbarous Treatment of Widows.”³³

In 1846, four years after Demers, another missionary reported that he had succeeded in securing a promise from the people at Stuart Lake to stop not only cruel treatment of the surviving spouse but also cremation itself. According to the declaration of Giovanni (John) Nobili, SJ (1812–56), which appeared in print several times during the 1840s, the cremations at Stuart Lake had stopped. Having disembarked at Fort Vancouver from Italy with Reverend Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, SJ (1801–73) on 6 August 1844, Nobili travelled as far as Fort St. James only ten months later, alone except for a Métis named Battiste.³⁴ Writing a letter in French on 1 June 1846 while at Fort Colville, he extracted the journal of his mission in the summer and fall of 1845 to New Caledonia, which he called “terra deserta et invia.”³⁵ An English translation of the letter appeared in De Smet’s *Oregon Missions*, which was published in English translation in 1847: “On the 14th, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, I ascended the river Nesqually [Nechako], and on the 24th, arrived at the Fort of Lake Stuart. I spent eleven days in giving

³¹ John McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years’ Service in the Hudson’s Bay Territory*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), 1:254. No manuscript for this book appears to have survived. It need hardly be added that this sort of care about staking a claim to having been an eyewitness is reminiscent of many second-hand accounts of apparent “eyewitness” observations of cannibalism in both North America and New Zealand.

³² Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2:389.

³³ McLean, *Notes*, 1:256.

³⁴ John Bernard McGloin, “John Nobili, S.J., Founder of California’s Santa Clara College: The New Caledonia Years, 1845–1848,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 17 (1953): 215–22. I thank Marie Elliott for drawing my attention to this source.

³⁵ Quoted in Gilbert J. Garraghan, SJ, *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*, 3 vols. (New York: America Press, 1938), 2:218. Nobili is quoting the Latin Vulgate version of Psalm 62:3, which David wrote when he was in the wilderness of Judah. The King James Version gives this as Psalm 63, the English of which reads “in a dry and thirsty land” (63:1).

instruction to the Indians, and had the happiness of abolishing the custom of burning the dead, and that of inflicting torments upon the bodies of the surviving wives or husbands. They solemnly renounced all their juggling and idolatries.”³⁶

Evidently, either this published account was unknown to those who published subsequent accounts of Carrier cremation or it was ignored by them. Its appearance certainly does not warrant the unqualified inclusion of purple patches in books published in the 1850s and later, years after it was published no less than four times during the 1840s – once in English (in New York), twice in French (in Paris and Ghent), and once in Flemish (in Ghent).³⁷ Nobili’s simple statement stands in sharp contrast to the emotionally charged accounts in other books from the fur-trade era. But his remarks were not even incorporated by Adrien Gabriel Morice, OMI, half a century later. Perhaps the suspension of the Jesuits’ efforts in New Caledonia after less than three years prompted subsequent neglect of their accounts.³⁸

³⁶ Journal of Reverend Father Giovanni Nobili, Rome Jesuit General Correspondence Collection, Nobili Personal Papers Collection, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA, 2b. The most pertinent passage in the original reads as follows: “J’eus le bonheur d’obtenir l’abolition de la coutume de brûlez [sic] les morts, et d’infliger des brûlures et d’autres tourments au mari ou à la femme du défunt. Ils renoncèrent solennellement à toutes les jongleries idolatriques.” (I have benefited from the assistance of David Kingma, archivist, Gonzaga University.) This extract was first published in the English translation quoted here, which formed no. xviii of Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-46* (New York: E. Dunigan, 1847), 225-6.

³⁷ *Missions de l’Orégon et Voyages dans les Montagnes Rocheuses en 1845 et 1846*, trans. M. Bourlez (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1848), 180; *Missions de l’Orégon, et voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses aux sources de la Colombie, de l’Athabasca et du Sascatsbarwin, en 1845-46* (Gand: Vander Schelden, 1848); *Missiën van den Orégon: en reizen naer de Rotsbergen en de bronnen der Colombia, der Athabasca en Sascatsbarwin in 1845-46*, trans. by a monk from Latrappe Monastery (Gand: Boek-en Steendrukkery van Wwe Vander Schelden, 1849). As the Flemish and French provinces of the Netherlands separated to form Belgium in 1848, all three variations – Ghent (Flemish), Gent (Dutch), and Gand (French) – are authoritative, but the title pages of both the Flemish translation and the non-Parisian French translation spell the place of publication as Gand. Of these, the French translation has as the title of Letter no. xvii (not xviii) “Extrait du Journal du Rév. P[ère]. Nobili,” and is indeed a word-for-word transcription (150-3), with grammatical corrections, of Nobili’s letter, whereas the French translation published in Paris (178-82) is Bourlez’s translation of the English edition from New York. Differences between the original and the French edition from Gand, on the one hand, and the New York and Paris editions, on the other, are differences of emphasis and substance: Nobili *obtains* the abolition of cremation (orig., French [Gand]) rather than himself abolishing it (New York, Paris); Nobili and the French (Gand) edition refer to the burnings and torments inflicted on husband or wife, whereas the New York and Paris editions have them inflicted specifically on the “bodies”/“corps” of the wives or husbands. This second difference is threefold: the punishment is corporeal, it is directed first at female bodies, and by being rendered in the plural rather than the singular (“au mari ou à la femme”) the cruelty implied by author is widespread (and, hence, even more sensational).

³⁸ Lizette Hall’s account of the Carrier at Stuart Lake mentions Nobili’s visits in June 1845 and a longer visit in 1846. She writes that, although he baptized children each year, he failed to

When Ogden came into print, his *Traits of American-Indian Life and Character. By A Fur Trader* (1853) did not bear his name – perhaps one of the little jokes for which he was known. The book appeared the year before he died.³⁹ What sort of person was Peter Skene Ogden? A “short, stout man, well known as a practical joker,” he was thought by some to be a mere needler, someone often prepared to foment contention solely for his own amusement.⁴⁰ When he met him at Ile à la Crosse in 1817, fellow nwc trader Ross Cox noted his “mercurial temperament”:

His accounts of his various rencontres with Orkney men and Indians would have filled a moderate-sized octavo, and if reduced to writing would undoubtedly stagger the credulity of any person unacquainted with the Indian country; and although some of his statements were slightly tinctured with the prevalent failing of *La Guienne*, there was *vraisemblance* enough throughout to command our belief in their general accuracy.⁴¹

Much later in Ogden’s career, Henry James Warre wrote a frank assessment of him – an assessment that was struck out of his journal but that remains legible. Warre crossed the continent in Ogden’s company in 1845. He identified a few more aspects of the factor’s character that confirm his being prone to indulge in exaggeration for the sake of his own entertainment and at the expense of easily duped newcomers to the Pacific Slope:

Ogden, a fat jolly good fellow reminding me of Falstaff both in appearance & in wit[,] always talking, always proving himself right – clever with a good knowledge of French and of most of the Indian Languages having been 30 years in the Indian Country, strongly prejudiced in favor of all the Indian Customs, and cannot imagine that anyone who has not had the same advantages can possibly know any thing about the Country ...

convert adults because he unintentionally frightened them with his use of matches, which they had not seen before (Hall, *The Carrier*, 85-6).

³⁹ Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American-Indian Life and Character. By a Fur Trader* (London: Smith, Elder, 1853).

⁴⁰ H.S. Patterson, “54-40 or Fight,” *The Beaver* 267 (June 1936): 42; Jean Murray Cole, ed., *This Blessed Wilderness: Archibald McDonald’s Letters from the Columbia, 1822-44* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 136.

⁴¹ Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2:243. *La Guyenne*, as it is more often spelled, is another name for the French province of Aquitaine (this was especially so during the nearly 200 years [1259-1453] when it lay under English rule). Soldiers of Gascoigny/*La Guyenne* were typically regarded as having a very assertive character, but Cox’s allusion seems also to imply a penchant for exaggeration.

Has read a vast number of works which he remembers well, but takes too much for Gospel[.] On the whole he is a very good & companionable fellow[,] full of information about the country which we are about to visit, but most difficult to obtain such information from[,] his partiality for joking and “selling” rendering it nearly impossible to know when he is earnest or not.⁴²

Along with these assessments of Ogden’s character, one must set the resolutely negative view of Indians that he presents in *Traits*, which features his own version of Carrier cremation cruelty. Negative in the extreme, this book gives one the impression that Ogden is ultimately ambivalent, if not confused or schizophrenic. “The Burning of the Dead” is the seventh chapter of *Traits*. Set in “the autumn of 1835,” when the author finds himself “strolling on the banks of Stuart’s Lake,”⁴³ the location of Nakazleh (Stuart’s Lake Post [NWC], Fort St. James [HBC]). A “succession of harrowing screams issuing from a neighbouring thicket of pines” takes him to the scene of a Carrier cremation (a year after, it should be noted, McLean claimed to have halted the practice there [Notes]). Despite the clear indication that his presence is unwanted, the intruder insists on observing the event and then proceeds with his “revolting narrative.” Given that it is known from another source that Ogden could not “say much in favour of the Carriers a brutish, ignorant, superstitious beggarly sett of beings,”⁴⁴ it is not surprising that his narrative emphasizes brutality:

The doleful howlings which my appearance had interrupted, recommenced, and I was advised to keep a respectful distance, as the danger of too near approach was imminent. This, however, did not affect my resolution to remain, and I accordingly secured myself a favourable position for witnessing the proceedings.

The near relations of the deceased now commenced erecting the funeral pyre. This was done by laying alternately transverse layers of the split wood before alluded to, till the pile attained the height of about four feet, being at the same time of a corresponding breadth, and more than six feet in length. On the top of the whole was placed the attenuated corpse to be consumed, on which were presently showered down offerings innumerable from the bystanders, in the shape of

⁴² Henry James Warre Papers, Library and Archives Canada, vol. 14:66-7; vol. 33:1030-1.

⁴³ Ogden, *Traits*, 126. No manuscript of this book appears to have survived.

⁴⁴ W.N. Sage, “Peter Skene Ogden’s Notes on Western Caledonia,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 1 (1937): 47-8.

blankets, shirts, coats, and indeed property of every description, the whole intended as a holocaust, propitiatory of the wandering spirit.

Meanwhile I had an opportunity of more narrowly observing the person and demeanour of the unfortunate widow, for whose sufferings now in prospect, every feeling of sympathy was excited in my mind. She was of youthful appearance, not more than eighteen years of age, and as far as I could judge through the disgusting fucus with which her face was besmeared, comparatively handsome. Her youth, the sorrow, feigned or real, depicted in her features, and the air of resignation exhibited by her whole figure, prepossessed me warmly in her favour, and from my heart I exclaimed, – Alas! poor unfortunate, your troubles commence early in life: may they weigh lightly on you! She advanced, and took her place at the head of the pyre, there to await the progress of events.⁴⁵

Perhaps Ogden took his cue from the notorious purple patch in the *Journey* of HBC trader Samuel Hearne (1745-92), posthumously published in 1795. In a passage that does not appear in surviving copies of Hearne's field notes,⁴⁶ its principal victim, an eighteen-year-old female Inuk, is tortured by Dene assailants. Ogden chooses to accord his widow no more than eighteen years. Every bit the sensitive traveller that Hearne is made out to be in his book, Ogden finds himself pushed over an emotional brink by a young woman's suffering. She is flogged by her dead husband's relations and then "flung violently among the flames. She fell backwards, singed and scorched, and only struggled forward into the cool air to be again and again subject to this exquisite torture, and ever at the instigation of her diabolical mother-in-law, who urged her party to the act." At the same time, imprecations are heaped upon her for "fifty imaginary offences against connubial propriety, which, I was afterwards informed, had not the slightest foundation in truth."⁴⁷ Thereafter, the mother-in-law wields an axe (this is perhaps borrowed from the passage about post-cremation drubbings in the account attributed to George McDougall and added to Harmon's book under

⁴⁵ Ogden, *Traits*, 131-3. "Fucus" is a paint or cosmetic for beautifying the skin (*OED*) and, in this context, is deployed for ironic effect.

⁴⁶ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1795), 153; I.S. MacLaren, "Samuel Hearne's Accounts of the Massacre at Bloody Fall, 17 July 1771," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 22, 1 (1991): 25-51; and I.S. MacLaren, "Notes on Samuel Hearne's *Journey* from a Bibliographical Perspective," *Papers/Cahiers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 31, 2 (1993): 21-45.

⁴⁷ Ogden, *Traits*, 134.

the date 28 February 1819).⁴⁸ With this weapon she inflicts a “serious wound” on the shoulders of the “hapless object of her wrath.”⁴⁹ At this point, onlooker Ogden, readily identifiable as the “sentimental traveller” so dear to his era’s travel literature, leaps into the fray and brings the ceremony to an abrupt halt. Both surveillance and entertainment play a role as the voyeur becomes the Foucauldian enforcer of the newcomer’s moral code. The chapter ends as follows:

the widow is made to carry the bones and ashes of her husband until the final inurning, and during this interval, sometimes of two or three years, she remains a slave to his nearest of kin. At her emancipation, when the ashes are disposed of, a grand feast is given, the materials of which are furnished by all the connections of the deceased. This ceremony over, the widow is at liberty to enter the connubial state again should she be so inclined; with the prospect of a repetition of her sufferings hanging *in terrorem* over her head, should it be her lot to undergo a second widowhood.⁵⁰

Ogden’s first-person narration, exaggerated even by the standards of the previous rehearsals of the rite, helps remind his reader that travel literature in English had long deployed exaggeration as a means of entertaining the “armchair” reader who wished not only to know about exotic lands from eyewitness observers but also to have confirmed his prejudice that foreigners acted bestially.⁵¹ As far back as *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (c. 1365) – written by an uncertain author about the travels of an unknown person (and the most popular book of travel in English until the eighteenth century) – the patronizing of readers’ prejudices was the way by which to provide entertainment.⁵² Ogden, who, according to Warre, had read a “vast number of works which he remember[ed] well,” panders to the genre’s normative demands, although it is fair to regard him as more interested in (if not obsessed by) violence than were other fur traders.⁵³ Despite his being the son of

⁴⁸ Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels*, 271.

⁴⁹ Ogden, *Traits*, 135.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵¹ This is, of course, the essential tenet of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

⁵² The most pertinent such passage of entertainment offered by this book is set on an island somewhere near India and concerns the willing immolation of widows and children on the funeral pyre of the husband and father in the faith that refinement by fire will render them perfect (*The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. and introd. C.W.R.D. Moseley [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983], 175–6).

⁵³ John Phillip Reid, *Patterns of Vengeance: Crosscultural Homicide in the North American Fur Trade* ([Pasadena, CA]: Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, 1999), 99, 194 (I thank Alan Grove

a judge and the brother of two lawyers (or perhaps because of it), his predilection for meting out violent vigilante justice, his penchant for lurid details, and his tendency towards exaggeration inclined him more than others towards purple accounts of Natives, whether oral or written. He takes up the mantle of the imperial subaltern who interrupts and forces an end to the cruel treatment of the widow: “Springing forward, I wrested the weapon from the hands of the old woman [the widow’s mother-in-law, who was busy beating her], whom I flung violently aside.”⁵⁴ Those histrionics of mercy, which echo similar escapes or rescues from funeral pyres in early travel narratives of India, perhaps satisfied the publishing house – Smith, Elder – which was well known for being committed to furthering the aims of Christian missions.⁵⁵

Ogden exhibits contradictory stances towards Native North Americans and their customs: he prides himself on his familiarity with them even as he abhors and denigrates them. This contradiction illustrates well that schizophrenic Victorian trait: attraction and repulsion towards the Other. Did this fur-trade factor, marooned on the periphery of empire, who never attained preeminent power in either the NWC or the HBC, intensely and simultaneously (1) realize that few people could claim as extensive a knowledge of the Pacific Slope and its peoples as he, and (2) fear that few would care to? He resented the arrival of newcomers destined to make only a short visit, return to the imperial centre, and declaim (usually inaccurately as far as he was concerned) on the peoples of the country that had for him become home. However, when it came to sharing his knowledge with others, whether in conversation or in

for drawing my attention to this source); John Phillip Reid, *Contested Empire: Peter Skene Ogden and the Snake River Expeditions*, fwd. by Martin Ridge (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

⁵⁴ Ogden, *Traits*, 135.

⁵⁵ Accounts of Hindu widows’ escapes or rescues from immolation might not have been plentiful in the libraries of fur traders, but eighteenth-century collections of narratives of exploration and travel were sufficiently common to render probable the presence of copies of them in the lending library that William Fraser Tolmie, Alexander Caulfield Anderson, and Donald Manson operated through Fort Vancouver between 1833 and 1843 (Tolmie, “History of Puget Sound and the Northwest Coast ... Victoria 1878,” 60 pp. MS [Bancroft Library, University of California], 59-60). The narrative of the Dominican monk Domingo Fernández Navarrete (1618-86), which had first appeared in Spanish in Madrid in 1676 and in English in London (under the misspelled name of “Navarette”) in 1704, is the first narrative found in the six-volume *Collection of Voyages and Travels ...*, ed. Awnsham and John Churchill (1704), 6 vols. (London: Printed by assignment from Messrs. Churchill for John Walthoe, Tho. Wotton, Samuel Birt, Daniel Browne, Thomas Osborn, John Shuckburgh and Henry Lintot, 1732), 1: 1-380. In late November 1670, after sailing around Cape Cormorin and arriving at Cannanore en route up the Malabar Coast towards Goa and Surat, Navarrete is told of marriage and mortuary customs on the coast, including the rescue by Portuguese travellers of a widow from her husband’s pyre (*Collection of Voyages*, 1:285-6).

narrative – when, that is, it was his turn to inscribe colonized peoples into the discourse that brings them into being within First World consciousness – he aped the conventions of all those books he had read and remembered so well: books featuring stories about violence and degradation of every sort. He kowtowed to his British audience’s expectations about denizens of the “wilderness.”

There is little ambivalence in the portraits of Natives in each of Ogden’s chapters. Indeed, were he to have exhibited a more complex, less certain understanding of “Indians” in the 1850s, he would have run the risk of giving the impression that he had “gone Indian.” This metamorphosis is what many imperial agents most feared – agents who had spent their entire careers in the hinterlands of North America, who had married Native women or women of mixed blood, and who had sired children of mixed blood.⁵⁶ No one paints as bleak a series of Native traits as *Traits* does. But compound Ogden’s narrative display with what Warre reported of his attitude towards incoming imperial agents (not forgetting his penchant for stretching the truth in order to gull unwary newcomers or people whose status he might envy [Demers and Warre, for example]) and one is left facing tangled questions about Ogden’s representation of Pacific Slope peoples to readers and/or travellers – questions that would seem to point to a radical (if unconscious) ambivalence, and perhaps to outright contradiction or incoherence.

PART 2

If Ogden’s motives are difficult to discern, the case of Paul Kane (1810–71) is more challenging yet. Although he never visited the Carrier, sometime during his western travels between 1846 and 1848 the early Canadian artist entered into his field notes a story he was told about Carrier cremation. Kane aimed to sketch the chiefs, lifeways, and landscapes of as many Native groups as he could manage to meet during a twenty-nine-month trip west from Toronto; however, if he heard an interesting story about Indians whom he did not meet, he would occasionally record it.⁵⁷ In

⁵⁶ See, for example, Archibald McDonald to Edward Ermatinger, 1 April 1836, Cole, *This Blessed Wilderness*, 112.

⁵⁷ Paul Kane, Field Notes 1846–48, Stark Museum of Art, Orange, TX, 11.85/5; Portrait Log and Landscape Log 1846–48, and Field Notes 1845, Stark Museum of Art, Orange, TX, 11.85/4. Field Notes 1846–48 have been published: “I came to rite thare portraits’: Paul Kane’s Journal of His Western Travels, 1846–1848,” ed. I.S. MacLaren, *American Art Journal* 21, 2 (1989): 6–88. The Portrait Log (but not the Landscape Log) was published in revised and abridged form as App. 2 in the most frequently consulted edition of Kane’s work, *Paul Kane’s Frontier. Including “Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America,”* ed., biog. introd., and catalogue

contrast to *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America* (1859) – the book about his travels that appeared under his name more than a decade after his wanderings had ended but that he probably did not write – his field notes contain few pejorative accounts or lurid stories about Indians. And when they do, as with his note about Carrier cremation, he resists censoriousness.

Much more opinionated than his notes, *Wanderings of an Artist* presents Kane as a conventional mid-Victorian gentleman who is both attracted to and repelled by Indians. This persona rehearses the cremation story on pages bearing the running headers “Caledonian Suttee” and “Price of a Second Spouse.”⁵⁸ Still, unlike many of the other purple patches in *Wanderings of an Artist*, this one at least has a basis in Kane’s notes, which read as follows:

When a Taw-waugh tim dies and leves a wife they burn his boddy on a large hepe of rasines wods the lay the boddy nacked nacked on top and the wife on top of him covered over with a scin the then sit fire to the wood and she remanes on untill she is almost suficated of this ^{she} neeles down by the fire and has to paw the boddey while burning she sufering the grateest pane from the hete if she is not able she is held up untill the boddey is consumed she then colects th ashis and bits of boanes and puts them in a bag made for the purpus she then becomes a slave to his relations and obiged to carry the bag for about 3 years she is obliged to cepe allwys crying if not they bete them untill ~~the dos~~ she dos at ^{the} end of her slavery they give a grate feest and invite all they frends on boath sides the then deposit the ashis in a box whitch is on top of a pole they then take samon ckin filled with oil and pore the contence on her hed another stands by with a swans sking filled with down whitch ^{he} emteys on top of the oil and she is obliged to dance oll th while after this she is free to marry wome she ~~ptse~~ plases the woman of the nation has a pece of wood inserted in thare lowr lip—⁵⁹

raisonné by J. Russell Harper (Austin: University of Texas Press; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 35-7.

⁵⁸ [Paul Kane], *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and back again* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 243, 245.

⁵⁹ Paul Kane, Field Notes, Stark Museum, n.85/5, [127-9]. There is no date associated with this entry because it forms part of a separate set of entries at the back of the field notebook. Beginning at the far end and working towards the chronologically ordered notes are thirteen pages of writing. The cremation rite is rehearsed after two other matters, which Kane assigns to the “Taw-waugh-tin” or “Tau-waugh tim.” The first is a description of how moss bread is made (probably from black tree lichen, *Bryoria fremontii* [Nancy J. Turner, *Food Plants of Interior First Peoples* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 33-6]); the second is a description of a poplar bark net made by women “of this nation.”

As to the identification of peoples at both ends of this note, the nation whose women wear a labret is Babine, and “Ta-waugh tim” is recognizable from other writing of the period (e.g., the “Tauten,” “Tahow-tin,” and “Toohow-tin” referred to by nwc trader/explorer Simon Fraser in 1808).⁶⁰ The draft manuscript of *Wanderings of an Artist*, which is not written in Kane’s hand, empurples the field notes. Retaining its additions, *Wanderings* describes widows who may not wash during the period of mourning and thus become disgusting, who are naked when doused in oil and swansdown at the ensuing potlatch, and who tend to commit suicide. All of these depictions are predictable amplifications of the original, and engage in the customary demonization of Natives for the vicarious gratification and titillation of readers of mid-nineteenth-century Indian life:

In the interior of New Caledonia, which is east of Vancouver’s Island and north of the Columbia, among the tribe called “Taw-wa-tins,” who are also Babines, and also among other tribes in their neighbourhood, the custom prevails of burning the bodies, with circumstances of peculiar barbarity to the widows of the deceased. The dead body of the husband is laid naked upon a large heap of resinous wood, his wife is then placed upon the body and covered over with a skin; the pile is then lighted, and the poor woman is compelled to remain until she is nearly suffocated, when she is allowed to descend as best she can through the smoke and flames. No sooner, however, does she reach the ground, than she is expected to prevent the body from becoming distorted by the action of the fire on the muscles and sinews; and whenever such an event takes place she must, with her bare hands, restore the burning corpse to its proper position; her person being the whole time exposed to the scorching effects of the intense heat. Should she fail in the due performance of this indispensable rite, from weakness or the intensity of her pain, she is held up by some one until the body is consumed. A continual singing and beating of drums is kept up throughout the ceremony, which drowns her cries. Afterwards she must collect the unconsumed pieces of bone and ashes and put them into a bag made for the purpose, which she has to carry on her back for three years; remaining for the time a slave to her husband’s relations, and being neither allowed to wash nor comb herself for the whole time, so that she soon becomes a most disgusting object. At the expiration of the three years, a feast is given by her tormentors,

⁶⁰ W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806–1808* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), 64–6. The spelling given in *Wanderings of an Artist* is “Taw-wa-tins” (243).

who invite all the friends and relations of her and themselves. At the commencement they deposit with great ceremony the remains of the burnt dead in a box, which they affix to the top of a high pole, and dance around it. The widow is then stripped naked and smeared from head to foot with fish oil, over which one of the by-standers throws a quantity of swan's down, covering her entire person. She is then obliged to dance with the others. After all this is over she is free to marry again, if she have the inclination, and courage enough to venture on a second risk of being roasted alive and the subsequent horrors.

It has often happened that a widow who has married a second husband, in the hope perhaps of not outliving him, committed suicide in the event of her second husband's death, rather than undergo a second ordeal. I was unable to learn any explanation of the motive for these cruel rites, and can only account for them in the natural selfishness, laziness, and cruelty of the Indians, who probably hope by these means to render their wives more attentive to their personal ease and comfort; whilst, at the same time, it secures them from assassination either by a jealous or an errant spouse.⁶¹

Thus sensationally ends the fifteenth chapter of *Wanderings of an Artist*, the fur-trade era's last prominent narrative. The chapter concludes Kane's time at Fort Victoria and environs, geographically the most remote point of his travels from Toronto. Given its position, the story takes on prominence by serving as the literary climax of the book,⁶² even though it is unclear where Kane heard it. His travels in the Interior were confined to the watershed of the Columbia River and its tributaries. They did not extend to New Caledonia. So the Victorian reader gazes on the hapless, suicidal Carrier widow without any context. The narrative simply halts at chapter's end, much like John McLean's book. By opening a new chapter with a pedestrian diary entry about Kane's departure from Fort Victoria on 9 June 1847 en route back to Fort Vancouver, *Wanderings* implies that the widow no longer warrants attention. Having played her momentary role and furnished the needed

⁶¹ [Kane], *Wanderings of an Artist*, 242-5.

⁶² Climaxing the geographical extent of one's travels or explorations with a purple patch was not uncommon in the genre. Another "Canadian" example is the massacre scene in Hearne's *Journey*, 147-62. See MacLaren, "Samuel Hearne's Accounts," and "Notes on Samuel Hearne's *Journey*." For the discussion of earlier examples, see Jonathan Hart, "Images of the Native in Renaissance Encounter Narratives," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 25, 4 (1994): 55-76; and Mary C. Fuller, *Voyages in Print: English Travel to America 1576-1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

climax, she is discarded. Meanwhile, all male Carrier are judged to be lazy, selfish, and cruel.

As mentioned, the field note indicates that Kane heard of the cremation rite himself. An editor only enhanced (but did not introduce) this note into *Wanderings* at a later date. Perhaps Kane heard it from Ogden. Kane met him at several points during his time on the Pacific Slope (from mid-November 1846 to October 1847) and came to know him well enough to correspond with him upon leaving the country. In some of Ogden's letters to Kane, the fur trader's friendship seems evident from his characteristic joking, as Warre called it.⁶³ Although he might have been Kane's oral source for the story, the version in *Traits* differs from Kane's more than it resembles it. Of all the extant accounts available to Kane's informant and his editors, none particularly resembles the version in his field notes or the one found in both the draft manuscript of *Wanderings of an Artist* and the version that appeared in the book. Appearing in 1853 *Traits* came between the writing of the field note, apparently sometime in 1847, and the publication of *Wanderings* in 1859. So Kane made his note after hearing the story, not after reading it in Ogden's book. If he had any further involvement in his own book, it was no more than to refer whoever helped bring his narrative into print to one or another of its published versions. If Ogden told Kane the story, then the artist's presentation of it differed widely from the one that would appear six years later in *Traits*; not only that, but Ogden uses the name "Carrier" while Kane's field note, draft manuscript, and book do not.

In all three versions associated with Kane – field note, draft manuscript, and book – a few details resemble those of M'Gillivray's account in Cox's *Adventures*: M'Gillivray's "gummy wood" would seem to be Kane's "rasines wods"; the wife is placed directly on the pyre; she is required to restore muscle and sinew that fall out of place during cremation; and second-time widows frequently commit suicide rather than submit to a second ordeal by fire. However, Kane's widow does not smear "liquid fat" on herself.⁶⁴ None of these details appears in

⁶³ An example of teasing that confirms Ogden's familiarity with Kane is the trader's news that a woman had arrived at Fort Vancouver who was prettier than a married woman for whom Kane perhaps had affection: "but now comes sad news indeed alas poor M^{rs} Coving has been entirely eclipsed and thrown into the shade you Artists understand the meaning of this better much better [sic] than I can describe it and [so I] shall leave it to you, ... M^r and M^{rs} Coving still continue to reside within our Stockades in the same house (East End) that you so often visited" (Ogden to Kane, 2 September 1847, Province of Manitoba, HBC Archives E.42/1 fos. 55-55d, 56; transcribed differently in Harper, *Paul Kane's Frontier*, 329).

⁶⁴ Cox's book was found in Paul Kane's library at the time of the painter's death (Harper, *Paul Kane's Frontier*, 326).

Ogden's version, nor does the bag into which the bones and ashes are deposited, although this may be found in Harmon's/Haskel's book. Meanwhile, the nakedness of the widow and the dousing of her in fish oil and swansdown at the ensuing potlatch seem to be original to Kane's book. Interestingly, such comparisons are left to critical readers; that is, each of the fur traders or missionaries rehearses his story of Carrier cremation cruelty as though reporting it for the first time. Like all the accounts published before it, *Wanderings* neglects to acknowledge previously published versions of the story. More than anything else, this silence betrays authors' and publishers' anxiety to appear as the first transmitters of sensational news. Finally, "Caledonian Suttee" marks an innovation (albeit an inaccurate one) in published sources, since suttee, the Hindu rite, required the burning of the dead husband and living wife, not her torture and survival.⁶⁵

PART 3

Ogden could have influenced Demers directly, and his contemporaries John McLean and Paul Kane indirectly, but to what extent did the alleged cruelty inflicted upon the widow (and perhaps the widower) have a basis in fact? Did Harmon witness some cruelty? And was that a sufficient basis from which to form a general rule about the practice of the rite, which occupational folklore repeated and empurpled down through the years? Was the cruelty a routine dimension of the rite or did Harmon happen upon an exceptional case in which families brought together by a marriage but otherwise engaged in longstanding enmity exploited the rite as the occasion for vengeance (or for abuse prompted by some other motive)?⁶⁶ Alternatively, if it was standard practice, did the cruelty hold some deeper doctrinal significance – for example that the sins of the deceased could be expiated if borne to some extent by the surviving spouse through her or his being singed? Or was Carrier culture particularly misogynistic, as the later missionary, Morice, thought?⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Although Demers's letter refers to the practices of Asiatic nations, *Wanderings of an Artist* is the first book to refer to a "Caledonian suttee." Another fur trader, John Tod (1794-1882), mentioned the "Hindu 'Sati,'" but only in a conversation towards the end of his life, and no published version appeared before 1905 ("John Tod: Career of a Scotch Boy," ed. Madge Wolfenden, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 18 [1954]: 133-238; "Sati" ctd. 172).

⁶⁶ This possibility, however slight, seems to be broached in the passage from the account by M'Gillivray published in Cox's *Adventures* concerning reprisal for acts of infidelity or neglect (2:389-90).

⁶⁷ D.L.S. [A.G. Morice], *Fifty Years in Western Canada: Being the Abridged Memoirs of Rev. A.G. Morice* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1930), 57; cited in David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 72.

Such questions might occupy us today, but there is no evidence that they engaged traders, missionaries, and fur-trade travellers, who exhibited no interest in inquiring into motives, only in vehemently denouncing the rite while arousing their readers. The Carrier had given traders to understand as early as 1823, if not as early as Harmon's time, that violence against them would be met with violent vengeance.⁶⁸ However, as the decades wore on, they did not give whites cause to think of them as being particularly prone to violence.

Any effort to understand the cruel treatment of the surviving spouse at Carrier cremations or to determine whether such treatment was meted out so frequently as to be regarded as routine must consider Carrier oral history. According to published oral history, there seems no warrant for the cruelty found in the empurpled accounts. *The Carrier, My People* is Lizette Hall's compilation of facts about the Nak'azdlit'en Ne Carrier and the community of Nak'azdli (Fort St. James) passed on to her by her father, who was Chief Louis Billy Prince (1863 or 1864-1962), grandson of Chief K'wah (also 'Kwah and Quâs, c. 1755-1840), a Carrier leader during the first three decades of the fur-trade period. Her discussions of the treatment of girls and women and of Carrier funeral rites are sufficiently extensive to disappoint a reader in search of evidence for routine Carrier cremation cruelty. Normally, polygamy was practised only by a duneza', or nobleman⁶⁹ (only Harmon's account mentions more than a single widow). A potlatch was grander following the period of mourning for the death of a nobleman, but a post-mourning potlatch was routine for all deceased people. After it, "a widow or widower, could remarry."⁷⁰ Although she does not rehearse a cremation ceremony, Hall provides a detailed description of widows and widowers, which deserves to be quoted at length:

To show bereavement, a widow smeared below her eyes with liquid spruce pitch. Her hair was cut just below her ears by one of her in-laws or a member of her late husband's clan. Her hair would then be allowed to grow, but it was worn loose, and hung around her face for the whole year. Usually a woman wore braids, but loose hair around the face was a sign of mourning.

A young widow was subject to her in-laws more than an older woman would be. A widow was not to laugh or raise her voice till the

⁶⁸ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 37.

⁶⁹ Hall, *The Carrier*, 24.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19. The lengthy discussion of the respectful treatment of girls and women runs from 25 to 34.

mourning period was over. But she was allowed to marry at the end of the year. Bereaved widows who had been good spouses were treated with respect and kindness.

When a man became a widower, he rubbed his face with charcoal every day, and dressed in rags. He also mourned for a year. He did not laugh, nor showed any flippancy during that time. All these demonstrations of grief was to show the world that nothing mattered to them because they had lost their spouses. The widower was also subject to his in-laws. At the end of the year, he cleaned up and could remarry, if he wished. Of course, in some cases, a widow or widower never remarried.

You will notice, I do not mention the widow packing the bones of her late husband on her back. I had read somewhere that a widow carried the bones on her back. So I asked my father about it, and also mentioned to him that Father Morice said so in his book “History of Northern Central B.C.” He and other authors said the name “Carrier” came from this custom. He said he had no knowledge of such a practise, in fact he had not even heard of it from his elders.⁷¹

Hall’s account stands in stark contrast to the fur-trade-era books’ persistent narration of cruelty during the cremation and torment during the period of mourning. Some of her details are not unfamiliar to readers with a Judeo-Christian background: the wearing of a death mask and the sober behaviour of the bereaved spouse. These practices – together, presumably, with the community’s attendance at the cremation, which would have had to last for from three to four hours before a body was fully transformed into about four pounds of ash – could have served, without any attendant cruelty, to reaffirm a belief in the cycle of mortality and rebirth.⁷² Hall’s and her father’s version would not raise an eyebrow were it not in competition with what has been regarded as the historical record – a record deemed sufficiently reliable that, as will be seen, it prompted at least one continental institution to repeat it in the subsequent era of anthropological research.

It seems probable that a spouse’s bearing of the cremains for a prescribed period before interring them would remind any faith community of its past (a literal burden of the past) and its present. This might be the case if the cremains were being transported back to the winter settlement of

⁷¹ Ibid., 33-4.

⁷² Current cremations are carried out in a retort heated to between 700°C and 879°C (Felix Carroll, “The Final Burn: Once Taboo, Cremation Now Commonplace,” *Edmonton Journal*, 13 March 2005, B9). Ogden’s claim that the open-air cremation he witnessed lasted for only some “twenty minutes” (*Traits*, 135) seems untenable.

the deceased to reaffirm his property rights and obligations.⁷³ Similarly, would cruel treatment of the surviving spouse be regarded as a way for the community to remember the vale of tears of human life generally? Did it mark an effort to express what was thought to be “a full, perfect, and sufficient” grief? If so, the expression of torment by the surviving spouse would have acknowledged the agony of death experienced by the deceased, and, thus, hallowed it. This seems far-fetched if one can credit Nobili, who claimed that his exhortation that the practice of inflicting pain on the widow/widower be stopped apparently resulted in its immediate cessation, without any regret. Did the community know that it had gone too far? And did the foreigner’s identification of the rite as evil offer the opportunity for a wholesale and sudden correction of custom by a people who were subsequently characterized by anthropologists as comparatively willing to make cultural changes? If so, the cessation could be regarded as a first revision – a revision of a practice denounced by one cultural group (i.e., fur traders), while Prince’s and Hall’s account could be regarded as a second revision – a revision of the oral historical record to align it with the norms of another cultural group (i.e., missionaries and the settlers who followed in the traders’ wake). Looked at in this way, how much Hall’s and her father’s descriptions represent a sanitized version of past customs in order to align them with the desires of contemporary Carrier to accord with Christian or other Canadian societal norms deserves consideration. In the face of the vehement denunciation of past Native customs by fur-trade-era narratives, together with missionaries’ threats of death through disease or eternal damnation if customs were not discontinued, the motive to suppress details of customs would have been strong.⁷⁴

PART 4

Once the fur-trade era drew to a close, how was Carrier cremation cruelty represented? Cremation was not mentioned by either a telegraph line builder, geologist, or land surveyor who reported in the 1860s and 1870s.⁷⁵ One might expect that, when ethnography began overtaking

⁷³ I am indebted for this suggestion to one of the anonymous referees of this article.

⁷⁴ Regarding the use of threats by Morice and other missionaries on Carrier peoples, see Antonia Mills, *Eagle Down Is Our Law: Witsuwit'en Law, Feasts, and Land Claims* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 94–9, 170–3.

⁷⁵ “Report of the Exploration from Quesnel to Lake Tatla, via Natla [Fraser Lake] and Nakosla [Stuart Lake], by Maj. Frank L. Pope” (1865), pt 2 of “Reports of Western Union Telegraph Company explorations in western Canada, 1865–1866,” National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, MS #1682; George M. Dawson, *Report of an*

travel narratives as the genre in which Native North Americans were reported by non-Natives, the cremation-with-torture story would lose its purple hue or even disappear. After all, even early ethnography did not claim as one of its goals what travel literature always did: the entertainment of its reader. But, as might be anticipated from Horatio Hale's example in the 1840s, occupational folklore succeeded in trespassing into ethnography, expanding its repertoire of Carrier cremation cruelty into an illustrated description. In 1880 Harry Crécy Yarrow deployed both word and image to feature the Carrier in the ten pages that he devoted to cremation in his *Introduction to the Study of Mortuary Customs among the North American Indians* (1880) and his "Further Contribution" (1880), both prepared for the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of Ethnology. Yarrow's failing stems from the fact that, in attempting to cover the subject across the entire continent, he carried out no fieldwork – at least not in the interior of British Columbia. Necessarily, he only compiled summaries of others' accounts. Happening to choose Cox's *Adventures* as his source, he rehearsed what occupational folklore had given to readers of travel literature.⁷⁶ Yarrow attracts his readers' attention to several aspects of the account and does not avoid the cruelty. He draws comparisons between Carrier customs and those of other groups: "the cruel manner in which the widow is treated seems to be a modification of the Hindoo suttee, but if the account be true, it would appear that death might be preferable to such torments."⁷⁷

In "A Further Contribution," Yarrow repeats the text on cremation from his *Introduction* but also includes a lithograph entitled *Tolkotin Cremation* and describes it as "an ideal sketch of the cremation according

Exploration from Port Simpson on the Pacific Coast to Edmonton on the Saskatchewan ... 1879 (Montreal: Dawson Bros., 1881); *The Journals of George M. Dawson: British Columbia, 1875-1878*, ed. Douglas Cole and Bradley Lockner, 2 vols. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); "Report of N.B. Gauvreau, Exploration Survey of New Caledonia," pt. 2. of British Columbia, *British Columbia Crown Land Survey for the Year ending 31st December 1891. Sessional Papers. Second Session, Sixth Parliament, Session, 1892* (Victoria: Richard Wolfenden, 1892), 381.

⁷⁶ The same dependency occurred in Herbert Spencer's vast project, *Descriptive Sociology* (1873-1919), which began the discipline of sociology. In that case, *Wanderings of an Artist* served as an authoritative source for entries about Clallam and Chinook peoples. See I.S. MacLaren, "Herbert Spencer, Paul Kane, and the Making of 'The Chinook,'" in *Myth and Memory: Rethinking Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, ed. John Lutz (Vancouver: UBC Press, forthcoming).

⁷⁷ H.C. Yarrow, *Introduction to the Study of Mortuary Customs among the North American Indians*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1880), 54. Yarrow served in 1874-75 as the surgeon and naturalist on the US Geographical Survey under Captain George M. Wheeler.



H. C. Yarrow, *Tolkotin Cremation*, “A Further Contribution to the Study of the Mortuary Customs of the North American Indians,” facing 145.

to the description given.”⁷⁸ Naked from the waist up, the widow is featured prominently in the centre foreground, kneeling against the smoking pyre, her right arm uplifted to cover her face, thereby exposing her right breast to the viewer. No figure is forcing her onto the burning body, however. Some of the fourteen near and seven distant onlookers are dancing, as they are in M’Gillivray’s account in Cox: “during the process of burning the by-standers appear to be in a high state of merriment.” The depiction of a small heap of the husband’s property in front of the pyre depicts M’Gillivray’s textual detail: “whatever property the deceased possessed is placed about the corpse.”⁷⁹ Other details are original to the illustration. Two couples, parents and in-laws perhaps, flank the pyre, while a man fans the smoke of the fire. No flames appear and there is no evidence that either the husband’s or wife’s body is burning. She is not lying beside the body, the dead body looks far from nine days old (as M’Gillivray’s account stipulates),⁸⁰ and the widow is naked from the waist up (a detail not included in M’Gillivray’s version). All in all, the rendering is benign if voyeuristic; the cruelty is left to be inferred by the reader. Perhaps even ethnographic reports required

⁷⁸ H.C. Yarrow, “A Further Contribution to the Study of the Mortuary Customs of the North American Indians,” *First Annual Report* [1880], *Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1880), 87–203; illustration, facing 145; text, 146.

⁷⁹ Cox, *Adventures*, 2:388.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:387.

illustrations in order to retain their readers' attention as they grew out of and distanced themselves from manners-and-customs chapters in travel narratives.

Still, one cannot but notice the ideological work accomplished by the visual "record." Based on a single account, which Yarrow implies some hesitation in crediting – "if the account be true" hardly strikes a chord of assurance – an "ideal" sketch becomes a matter of ethnohistorical record as issued under the imprimatur of the Smithsonian Institution. The reiteration of the stereotype freezes people who, in other respects, would be reported as being adaptable to cultural change. This paralysis served to relegate them to oblivion, numbering them among the vanishing race because of their incapacity for regeneration. They became easy to forget, like the widow at the end of the fifteenth chapter of *Wanderings of an Artist*. Franz Boas, who admittedly only touched on the inland peoples in his researches, either had forgotten, did not know, or silently dismissed Yarrow's publications when, in reporting on fieldwork conducted between September and December 1894, he made only a single, unelaborated remark about the neighbouring Nishga: "in olden times cremation was prevalent."⁸¹

The best known student of Carrier people, Reverend Adrien Gabriel Morice, OMI, began his publications in 1889, four years after arriving among the Carrier and long after they were "the unspoilt noble savages that he liked to tell his readers about."⁸² Among the reasons for the cultural change experienced by the Carrier must be included the effect of missionaries like Demers and Nobili, who had preceded Morice by several decades. One apparently paramount Carrier trait was the alacrity with which they would change their cultural practices if they saw such change as advantageous. Prior to, during, and after the fur-trade era, they appeared more opportunistic, flexible, and willing to accommodate other cultures' practices than did many Native groups. "Since the advent of the whites," Morice wrote, the Carrier "have proved to be the most amenable to civilization."⁸³ They likely viewed their accommodations/incorporations differently from those outsiders who wished to find proof of their "civilizing" influence on the "savages," but there is little doubt that change was incorporated into both lifestyle and spiritual beliefs

⁸¹ Franz Boas, *Fifth Report on the Indians of British Columbia*, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Committee on North-Western Tribes of the Dominion of Canada, *Tenth Report on the North-Western Tribes of Canada* (Ipswich: The Association, 1895), 60.

⁸² Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 37.

⁸³ A.G. Morice, "The Western Dénés: Their Manners and Customs," *Proceedings of the Canadian Institute*, 3d ser., vol. vii (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1889), 136.

and practices, to the extent that Morice's biographer, in reference to the Carrier adoption of the Prophet Dance, noted that "[s]omething of a religious 'reformation' had in fact taken place even prior to the establishment of an Oblate mission at Fort St. James." Indeed, the Carrier *recruited* the Oblates in 1867, and Reverend Father J.M. Lejacq established a permanent mission at Fort St. James in 1873, when they built the church of Our Lady of Good Hope.⁸⁴ Yarrow's Smithsonian publications seven years later would doubtless have struck the Carrier as supremely outdated.

For his part, Morice tended to mistake Carrier openness to change for "tractability, naïve simplicity, and a childish credulity, especially with regard to their confidence in the power of the priest and his prayers."⁸⁵ He had no doubt that, especially through his introduction of syllabics to the Carrier culture, he was making great strides in civilizing his flock. But he pushed his agenda too far when he tried to ban potlatches. Of course, potlatches had officially been made a misdemeanor throughout the Pacific Slope on 1 January 1885, but the local Indian agent preferred to let the custom die out rather than to enforce a ban. Morice, probably not understanding that Roman Catholicism had introduced a welcome ceremonialism to Carrier culture – one that could be genuinely integrated into older customs – confused integration with substitution: "The European priest preached total subordination and a wholesale religious transformation; the Indian parishioner practised pluralism despite proclaiming submission and Christian orthodoxy."⁸⁶

Morice knew some if not all of the published accounts that dealt with the Carrier. He blamed the persistence of "potlaching [sic] and old-fashioned dancing" on fur traders, "who, the better to keep the natives under subjection, gave themselves every year a kind of tobacco potlach, in connection wherewith the traditional differences of rank among the receivers were scrupulously observed, and more than once found a welcome recreation in attending the dances and other amusements of the Indians." This ascription of blame forms part of a pattern by which Morice accounts for changes to Carrier culture. He argued that Carrier males embraced monogamy in order to emulate fur traders: "So they acted with regard to the cremation of the dead, which, to imitate the whites, they replaced by interment, and that so soon and

⁸⁴ Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 38, 42.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 47, citing A.G. Morice, *Au Pays de l'Ours noir: Chez les Sauvages de la Colombie Britannique; Récits d'un missionnaire* (Paris and Lyon: Delhomme et Briguët, 1897), 93; Morice, "The Western Dénés," 166.

⁸⁶ Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 50.

so spontaneously that I doubt whether there now [1892] lives among them an eyewitness of the traditional ceremony.”⁸⁷ So, according to this Oblate, the practices of upstanding fur traders, not the efforts of previous missionaries, explain the disappearance of the custom of cremation. However arbitrary Morice’s reasoning may sound, it does make clear the fact that he witnessed no cremations, and certainly no scorching of widows, in his early years among the Carrier people. Why he ignores Nobili’s efforts remains unclear (unless it was a simple matter of Jesuit/Oblate competitiveness). His recapitulation of earlier missionary activity among the Carrier in Chapter 15 of his well known later work, *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* (1904), deprecates Nobili as a man of “very modest stature” and diffident character, who had little effect on the Carrier. Morice neither mentions Nobili’s claim to have secured a promise from the Carrier at Stuart Lake to end cremation nor refers to Nobili’s letter in DeSmet’s *Oregon Missions*.⁸⁸ If Nobili was not exaggerating or prevaricating, did the Carrier promise to him not exemplify willingness to make cultural alterations? For Morice to admit as much would have required him to admit as well that he was not the first missionary to bring about change in Carrier customs.

Morice *does* explain Carrier cremation cruelty in a less histrionic fashion than do his published predecessors, even if he had no occasion to witness it first-hand. Indeed, he refers to the ways of “Dénés of the old stock” in a passage that includes many details. For two or three years, the widow undergoes ill-treatment from her in-laws, the women in particular being intent on “render[ing] her life as unbearable as possible.” “Men who had lost their wives were obliged to undergo the same ordeal, though treated somewhat more humanely than the weaker sex.” At the cremation potlatch,

the widow was obliged by custom to embrace the remains of her late husband even though surrounded by the flames, amidst the howlings and wailing of his fellow-clansmen. When momentarily withdrawn by the bystanders, etiquette demanded from her repeated endeavours to burn herself along with the remains. Supposing she had not been a good wife, she was in many cases jostled by the mourners, and sometimes horribly disfigured with the view to diminish her chances of remarriage.

⁸⁷ A.G. Morice, “Are the Carrier Sociology and Mythology Indigenous or Exotic?” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada for the Year 1892*, vol. 10 (Ottawa: John Durie and Son, 1893), 115.

⁸⁸ Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior*, 232-4.

... [T]he late notable's relations would, on the morrow, while shedding many a dutiful tear, carefully pick up from among the ashes of the pyre, the few remaining charred bones and hand them to the widow, who would, till the time of her liberation from her widow's bondage, constantly pack or carry them in a small satchel. Hence the name (Carriers) of these Indians. Men though reduced to a modified bondage during the mourning period for their wives, had not, however, to submit to this latter formality.⁸⁹

In 1889, then, after Yarrow kept it alive through the start of the decade, Morice narratively resurrects the custom for the benefit of his audience – members of the Royal Canadian Institute. Even though, only a few years later, Morice would tell readers of his doubt that an eyewitness to the ceremony was still alive, in 1889 he apparently contented himself with postulating traders' versions of the custom. He refers to no informants who provided him with details, and most of the details in his version can be found in one or another of his predecessors' work⁹⁰ (although, to be sure, his is slightly more dispassionate and is able to stop short of accentuating the widow's nakedness). By 1904, when he published his *History*, Morice was still at it, denouncing fur traders for taking more than twenty years to end the practice (presumably, from Harmon's report of witnessing it in 1812 to McLean's claim of curtailing it in 1834).⁹¹

PART 5

It would appear that academic ethnography largely resisted the temptation to resurrect the fur-trade version of Carrier cremation rites, but it is difficult to know whether the fieldwork done in particular places applies to all Carrier. For example, in 1935 and 1936, Irving Goldman conducted important work on potlatches, including how they relate to cremation and mourning, but he did so in Ulkatcho, south of Qualcho

⁸⁹ Morice, "The Western Dénés," 145-6.

⁹⁰ Harmon's *Journal*, Cox's *Adventures*, and McLean's *Notes* number among "Authorities Quoted or Consulted" in *The History of the Northern Interior*, 341.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 89. Morice impugns McLean's reliability on page 164, 143. Morice both relies on and condemns traders' accounts. In 1925, for instance, in refuting an argument advanced by an academic (William Christie MacLeod, "Certain Mortuary Aspects of Northwest Coast Culture," *American Anthropologist* 27 [1925]: 122-48), who appears to have coined the term "incipient suttee" (122), Morice wrote, "it is a well-known fact, that that worthy's [Harmon's] little book had been considerably 'edited' by a Protestant minister of New England before it was deemed worthy to be presented to the 'christian publick.' And then I personally know of statements by other such traders which are entirely worthless, even when found in regular books" (Morice, "About Cremation," *American Anthropologist* 27 [1925]: 577).

Lake and just outside the eastern boundary of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park.⁹² How practices in that quarter of Carrier country might have resembled those in far-distant Stuart Lake is difficult to assess. On the one hand, Goldman states that his “informants claim that they haven’t practised cremation for at least a hundred years”;⁹³ on the other hand, the fact that his study of the 100-member community of Ulkatcho states that “religious theory and practice still follow the Mackenzie Basin and Plateau forms” suggests a uniformity across Carrier groups in this regard. But then his informants mention details not found elsewhere. For example, at the time of cremation, the widow “was required to slash her face and to fling herself at the burning corpse.”⁹⁴ Yet, while the slashing of the face marks an original detail in the textual record and thus suggests that Goldman, unlike Yarrow, is doing more than rehearsing details from books, the treatment of the widow that he records resembles those in most accounts from the fur-trade era. This resemblance suggests that practices in Ulkatcho and Stuart Lake were similar, if not identical. Moreover, Goldman’s record shows that at least some twentieth-century Carrier could remember observing or hearing about a tradition of cruelty-enhanced cremation.⁹⁵

In 1946 Diamond Jenness noted that in 1924–25 at Moricetown and Hagwilgate “both widows and widowers were required to serve the kinsmen of their deceased spouses for at least one year.”⁹⁶ Two years later, J.B. Munro conducted fieldwork among people whom he called the “Na’katzli’tenne” of Fort St. James, and with whom he enjoyed “twenty years of close association.”⁹⁷ Munro mentions no cruelty inflicted on the widow of a “Tooneza” (Hall’s duneza’) at his cremation, only the requirement that she carry about her husband’s bones (he does not say for how long).⁹⁸ Whether he is relating the fruits of fieldwork or condensing the historical record is not any more clear in this than

⁹² Irving Goldman, “The Alkatcho Carrier of British Columbia,” *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Linton (1940) (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1960), 333. See also Goldman, “The Alkatcho Carrier: Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives,” *American Anthropologist* 43 (1941): 396–418.

⁹³ Irving Goldman, “The Alkatcho Carrier of British Columbia,” typescript dated 1953, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY, 208.

⁹⁴ Goldman, “The Alkatcho Carrier” (1940/1960), 335.

⁹⁵ Clearly, Lizette Hall’s account from 1992, based in Stuart Lake, contradicts this.

⁹⁶ Diamond Jenness, “The Carrier Indians,” 534–5; Diamond Jenness, “The Ancient Education of a Carrier Indian,” *Bulletin of the Canadian Department of Mines* 62 (1947): 22–7; Margaret L. Tobey, “Carrier,” in Helm, ed., *Subarctic*, 428, depends on Jenness’s work.

⁹⁷ J.B. Munro, *Language, Legends, and Lore of the Carrier Indians* (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1948), 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

it is in the assertion that “[t]he burial custom was instituted shortly after the arrival of the Christian priests” and that Nobili “succeeded in abolishing the customs of burning the dead and of inflicting torments upon the surviving spouse, and obtained a solemn renunciation of all their juggling idolatries.”⁹⁹ However, his reference for this statement is worrisome: it is to Scholefield’s and Howay’s compendious history of British Columbia, which relies on Morice, who relied on fur traders’ accounts. Moreover, one has to pause and ask of this detailed work whether Munro merely took Nobili’s statement at face value because, submitting his dissertation to his university’s Roman Catholic priests (albeit Oblates, not Jesuits), he might have found it prudent to forego scrutiny of it.¹⁰⁰

Wilson Duff made trips into Carrier country in 1951 and 1957. The first hurried trip was occasioned by the submergence of about 400 square miles of the Nechako River drainage basin for the Alcan project at Kitimat. Duff thus had no need to visit Stuart Lake but, rather, concentrated on the communities of Vanderhoof, Nautley, Fraser Lake, Cheslatta, and Stella. His field notes register disappointment over the quality of material that he was able to gather from informants: “These people live very much in the present, little conscious of their past cultural background.”¹⁰¹ In response to his efforts with the Cheslatta subtribe, he sounds an even more exasperated note: “Unlike the Coast Indians

⁹⁹ Ibid., 7, 8.

¹⁰⁰ E.O.S. Scholefield and F.W. Howay, *British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 4 vols. (Vancouver: S.J. Clarke, 1914), 2:607-8.

¹⁰¹ Wilson Duff, “Preliminary Report on Survey of Southern Carrier Area. University of British Columbia Museum of Archaeology, Lab Archives, Tweedsmuir Survey 52” [1951?], [4]. See also Duff, “7. SEKANI Carrier,” MSS [1951?], Wilson Duff Collection, University of British Columbia Museum, Ethnological Archives, box E, file 63; Duff, Field Notes, Ethnology Division, Royal British Columbia Museum, CAR-w-001, Notebook no. 15 [1951]; Duff, “Notes on Carrier Social Organization,” *Anthropology in British Columbia* 2 (1951): 28-34; and Duff, Field Notes, Ethnology Division, Royal British Columbia Museum, CAR-w-002, Notebook no. 16 [1957].

Archaeologist Charles Borden made a similar trip for the same reason in the summer of 1951, and he expressed disappointment at the 130 sites he identified that would soon lie under water. See Charles E. Borden, “An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Tweedsmuir Park, BC, July and August, 1951,” typescript, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Archaeology Lab Archives, “Tweedsmuir Survey 1951” file; Borden, “Results of Archaeological Investigations in Central British Columbia,” *Anthropology in British Columbia* 3 (1952): 31-41; and Borden, “An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Tweedsmuir Park, British Columbia, during July and August, 1951,” *Museum and Art Notes*, 2nd ser., 2, 2 (1953): 9-15. Finally, an article published at the end of the decade, while it made no reference to death, mourning, burial, or cremation, held that there were 1,666 Carrier living on twenty-three reserves in 1940 (Julian H. Steward, “Carrier Acculturation: The Direct Historical Approach,” *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond [New York: Columbia University Press, for Brandeis University, 1960], 732-44).

they seem to take no interest in past traditions or the old way of life.[.] They live in the present, and their life is a blend of old and new. The old includes language, trapping, and vestiges of social organization; the new gives them their religion (Roman Catholic), their summer activities, etc. Present informants can seldom go back beyond their own memory span."¹⁰²

Relying upon historical materials rather than upon extensive fieldwork, two master's theses, from the 1950s and 1970s, respectively, add little to our knowledge about the Carrier cremation ceremony. However, Douglas Hudson implies that the cruelty inflicted on the widow had to do with expiating shame before a succession potlatch could pass the status of the deceased on to the next of kin.¹⁰³ It stands to reason that some such understanding would attach to the cremation rite in the case of prominent community members. All in all, then, as the twentieth century evolved, the textual record on Carrier cremation and (particularly) its cruelty died out, apparently accurately reflecting the Carrier's move away from cremation and towards interment. Morice was the last to discuss cremation, and he only did so by referring to older published sources. The name "Carrier" itself is now the strongest link to the old cremation ceremony. The nineteenth century's dramatization of Carrier cremation and its attendant cruelty served certain narrative and ideological purposes, and then, with the end of Morice's career, it lapsed into neglect except as a textual artifact of the contact period, its foundation in eyewitness observation very much in doubt.

PART 6

A deep irony about the descriptions and depiction of Carrier cremation and cruelty lies in the fact that the stigma against cremation as a barbaric act was beginning to lift in western Europe just after it was being denounced and apparently brought to an end among the Carrier. In 1856, three years before the publication of *Wanderings of an Artist* and five years before the publication of its French translation in Paris, *La Cremation* began publishing in the French capital in order to advocate for the decriminalization of cremation.¹⁰⁴ In England, an enlightened minority

¹⁰² Duff, "Preliminary Report," 8.

¹⁰³ James Courtland Hackler, "Factors Leading to Social Disorganization among the Carrier Indians at Lake Babine" (MA thesis, San Jose State College, 1958); and Douglas Ridley Hudson, "The Historical Determinants of Carrier Social Organization: A Study of Northwest Athabaskan Matriliney" (MA thesis, McMaster University, 1972), 83.

¹⁰⁴ Prothero, *Purified*, 9. [Paul Kane], *Les Indiens de la baie d'Hudson*, transl. Édouard Delessert (Paris: Amyot, 1861).

took up the cause about two decades later.¹⁰⁵ But the wider European and Euro-North American cultures still denounced cremation on the strength of Christianity's criminalization of it – notwithstanding the fact that the Bible says nothing about it one way or the other. When the first crematorium opened in Canada, at Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal, in 1901, it promoted cremation as being more discreet, sterile, hygienic, and private than burial: “The purging fire of cremation had clear links to purity, soap, and what the Methodist *Christian Guardian* called ‘the gospel of the toothbrush.’”¹⁰⁶ (This is a far cry indeed from the unkempt widow who disgusts the persona of Paul Kane in *Wanderings of an Artist*.) Roman Catholicism played no role in this development, in part because of its doctrine of purgatory, first proclaimed in 1274. Roman Catholicism did not officially end its prohibition of cremation until an instruction was issued on 5 July 1963. Only in 1966 did it begin permitting priests to officiate at cremation ceremonies. That the missionaries who made their way to Carrier country were all Roman Catholic thus likely holds considerable significance.

Meanwhile, the rising support for cremation among other Christian denominations and secular society took no notice of Indians; rather than seeing them as forward-thinking and worthy of emulation, narratives insisted on stasis, even when evidence of their adaptability stared observers in the face. Carrier who were willing to change – whether through embracing the Tshimshian potlatch or the European concept of luxuries (e.g., tea, tobacco, sugar, music boxes, and cowboy hats) – made little impression on devotees of the myth of progress.¹⁰⁷ Such evidence, like that found in the 1836 report of the American commissioner of Indian Affairs, to the effect that no “race” was increasing its population in the USA faster than “Indians,” was buried by the rhetoric of the vanishing Indian. Indeed, *Wanderings of an Artist* faithfully rehearses this trope, even in opposition to its putative author's field notes, which it claims faithfully to present.¹⁰⁸ Fur traders had effected in Indians the only change they wanted to see; other signs of adaptability threatened

¹⁰⁵ “Cremation,” wikipedia.org, as quoted at <<http://www.explainplease.com/cremation.htm>>, 7 Nov. 2005. This history is also rehearsed by Prothero, *Purified*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Brian J. Young, *Respectable Burial: Montreal's Mount Royal Cemetery* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 129.

¹⁰⁷ The concept of luxuries is discussed by Mulhall, *Will to Power*, 38.

¹⁰⁸ “The following pages are the notes of my daily journey, with little alteration from the original wording, as I jotted them down in pencil at the time” ([Kane], *Wanderings of an Artist*, viii).

them and their self-characterization as the only civilized presence in northwestern North America.¹⁰⁹

To the irony that the stigma against cremation gradually began to lift during the late nineteenth century, we may add a further, more recent, irony: in North America in the twenty-first century, the highest incidence of the practice of cremation occurs on the Pacific Slope. Whereas data dated August 2003 indicate that 48 percent of deaths in Canada resulted in cremation, more than three-quarters of British Columbians who died in that year were cremated.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, cremation is not as commonly practised among Native Canadians as it is among the populace as a whole.

¹⁰⁹ Notably, fur traders did not discourage practices (such as the potlatch) that functioned to their advantage, any more than they insisted that Non-Natives follow white practices (such as not labouring on the Sabbath) that would have disadvantaged fur-trade operations.

¹¹⁰ Cremation Association of North America, <<http://www.cremationassociation.org/html/statistics.htm>>, 7 Nov. 2005. Generally, cremation in Canada increases from east to west. In the United States, a similar pattern is discernible: “the cremation rate exceeded 50% in 1999 in Hawaii, Washington, Nevada, Oregon, Montana, Arizona, Alaska, and New Hampshire” (Prothero, *Purified*, 10).