

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Commerce by a Frozen Sea:  
Native Americans and the  
European Fur Trade*

Ann M. Carlos and  
Frank D. Lewis

Philadelphia: University of Penn-  
sylvania Press, 2010. 264 pp. Illus.  
\$49.95 cloth.

TED BINNEMA  
*University of Northern British  
Columbia*

THIS MAY BE the most important book on the history of the fur trade in the Hudson's Bay Company territories published in a generation. Although its purview does not include British Columbia, all historians of the fur trade, and anyone who lectures on fur trade history, should nevertheless take notice. Those familiar with the authors – both are economists who have been publishing in fur trade economic history for decades – will not be surprised to learn that this book is based on a sophisticated analysis of the quantitative records of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). But those for whom long mathematical equations are inscrutable will be relieved to know that

the quantitative analysis is relegated to four appendices. The chapters are easy to read.

*Commerce by a Frozen Sea* deals with the portion of Rupert's Land west of Hudson Bay during the eighteenth century. Some of its conclusions confirm or expand upon prevailing wisdom. The authors come down firmly on the side of those scholars – best exemplified by Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman in *Give Us Good Measure* (1978) – who argue that HBC traders and Aboriginal people were sophisticated traders who well knew how to seize opportunities to secure advantageous trade terms. But Carlos and Lewis elaborate on the older literature. For example, they are able to show that the degree to which the HBC had to compete with French traders (depending on time and place) had a marked influence on the prices Aboriginal people could get for their furs. The authors also use quantitative analysis to argue that, as early as the eighteenth century, Aboriginal people hunted beavers unsustainably. Their conclusions are based on some questionable assumptions. For example, they erroneously assert that beaver have “no significant non-human predators” (115). However, their findings conform with those of the literature published by

the last generation, which is summed up well in Shepard Krech's *Ecological Indian* (1999).

Carlos and Lewis also undermine some long-standing assumptions about Aboriginal behaviour. Even those scholars who have portrayed Aboriginal traders as strongly motivated by economic needs have accepted the qualitative evidence that Aboriginal people had relatively fixed demand and, therefore, responded to more advantageous trade terms by reducing their trapping activities. Carlos and Lewis provide compelling evidence to the contrary: that Aboriginal people increased their trapping efforts when they were offered better prices for their furs. They further explain that, as the eighteenth century went on, the percentage of Aboriginal expenditure on "producer" goods (the most important being guns and ammunition) and "household" goods (dominated by kettles and blankets) declined, while expenditure on "luxury" goods (with tobacco being more important than alcohol) grew.

The authors also put forward entirely new arguments. Reminiscent of Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman's (1974) controversial attempt to compare the standard of living of African American slaves in the antebellum American south with white labourers in the North (Carlos and Lewis thank Engerman in their acknowledgements), Carlos and Lewis argue that "the real incomes of Native Americans and low-income English families were not very different" (182). In fact, although they concede the difficulty of comparing standards of living in contexts so different from one another, they argue that the diet of Aboriginal people was far superior to that of English workers and their clothing of somewhat higher quality, while their housing was

inferior. It is difficult to know what to make of such comparisons, but their assertion that the average North American Aboriginal person consumed fewer luxuries – including considerably less alcohol – than his/her counterpart in England is noteworthy.

Although Carlos and Lewis do not discuss the region west of the Rocky Mountains, the implications of their work are significant for our general understanding of the history of the fur trade. It seems as though the images of Aboriginal people as unaffected by economic motives, and as "environmental conservationists" during the fur trade era – already questioned in recent literature – can now be retained only by those who are willing to ignore the overwhelming evidence, qualitative and quantitative, to the contrary. Furthermore, this book offers fascinating insight into the HBC as a business – something that has received little attention over the last several decades.

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*Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921*

Renisa Mawani

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009. 288 pp.  
\$85.00 cloth; \$32.95 paper.

HAMAR FOSTER  
*University of Victoria*

*Colonial Proximities* is a good book about an important subject: how colonial authorities, anxious about racial difference, tried to use legal and other strategies to regulate and restrict interracial “encounters” during the half-century after confederation with Canada in 1871. Its strengths are primarily three.

The first is that Prof. Mawani eschews binary oppositions and looks at how complicated relations were among the European colonists, aboriginal peoples, the Chinese, and those of mixed race.

The second is that she makes this come alive by situating these interactions in three distinct spatial and social arenas: venues of alleged sexual slavery and prostitution, the murky terrain of the illicit liquor trade, and the salmon cannery. (As someone who spent the summer of 1966 toiling in a salmon cannery in Tsimshian territory, that chapter had a particular resonance for me. It was also when I first saw the unfortunately named “Iron Chink,” a device the origins and function of which Prof. Mawani explains for the uninitiated.)

The third, and perhaps best of all, is her chapter on “mixed bloods” and the varying degrees of anxiety that this phenomenon and its implications caused the authorities, both spiritual and temporal. Yet, as she notes in her

conclusion, these interracial encounters “were in some ways ungovernable, producing friendships, affinities, and intimacies that are now being reclaimed and celebrated” (204).

All of this deserves more space than a short review permits. *Colonial Proximities* is a book that anyone interested in BC history, or the history of colonialism generally, will want to have on the shelf.

Of course I have, as reviewers inevitably do, a few quibbles. Prof. Mawani displays a mastery of the literature but, given that her subject includes aboriginal participation in the capitalist economy, I think she would have found such studies as Rolf Knight’s *Indians at Work* and John Lutz’s *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (and his PhD dissertation), of interest.

It is also a little odd that, although the book’s subtitle refers to “juridical truths,” only three sources are cited in the bibliography under “Jurisprudence”: the Indian Act and two reported cases, one by a lay magistrate and the other by a county court judge. The former is hardly jurisprudence and the latter are somewhat thin gruel for a subtitle. I think the explanation is that the juridical truths in question may be more “low” than “high” law, gleaned primarily from newspaper accounts, letters, and other less formal sources, including some unreported cases. This is fair enough; but the subtitle suggests something more formal.

A third is not so much a quibble as a heartfelt plea that scholars read David Williams’ biography of Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie, published nearly 35 years ago, before casually describing him (148) as someone who “came to be known as the ‘hanging judge’.” Williams deals with this in chapter 9 of *The Man for a New Country: Sir Matthew Baillie*

*Begbie* and, whether one agrees with him or not, the question of *Begbie's* role in BC's legal history is more nuanced than any posthumous journalistic epithet, however entrenched, can convey. Having said that, for those who have yet to read *Begbie's* eccentric testimony before the 1894 Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic, Prof. Mawani's account is a head-scratching highlight. An articulate opponent of prohibition, the judge had some odd theories about the superiority of "races" that drink alcohol over those who confine themselves to water; but, in his defence, he also heaped scorn on the hypocrisy of "whites" who regularly insisted on generous financial marriage settlements but were indignant about the Chinese practice of purchasing parental consent to marriage (Williams at 127-128).

Quibbles and pleas aside, I have only one real complaint, and I readily acknowledge that it is unfair to single out Prof. Mawani, because she is not alone.

In 1936 Fred Rodell, in a hyperbolic lament that applies with just as much force to interdisciplinary scholarship as it does to law, rather famously wrote that there were only two things wrong with almost all legal writing. "One is its style. The other is its content." The content of *Colonial Proximities*, as I have said, is very good; and there are portions that are very nicely written.

But in common with too much academic writing, some sections of the book made this reader work far too hard. Consider the following sentence, one of a number of possible examples, from the two paragraph conclusion to Chapter 3: "Conceptualizing aboriginal and Chinese slavery as conjunctive problematics enables an analytic approach that moves beyond the idea of racial crisis and opens up possibilities for tracking the internal workings of

state racisms; racial exigencies and their constitutive truths did not entirely disappear but were folded into and informed emergent ones" (120-121). This is not nearly as bad as some academic writing and I know there are people who habitually write, and perhaps even talk, like this. But if we want important work – and this *is* important work – to be read by more than a handful of like-minded specialists, we need to start writing less like Hegel and more like Orwell.

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*Brokering Belonging: Chinese  
in Canada's Exclusion Era,  
1885-1945*

Lisa Rose Mar

Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2010. xv; 230 pp. \$99.00 cloth;  
\$24.95 paper

ZHONGPING CHEN  
*University of Victoria*

THIS IS A GROUNDBREAKING book in Chinese Canadian History and in the history of the global Chinese diaspora. It challenges conventional perceptions of Chinese relations with the mainstream society in Canada during the historical era of racist rampage, and it sheds new light on the transnational connections of community leaders in Canadian Chinatowns.

This book focuses on the "individual ethnic leaders who acted as intermediaries between Chinese and Anglo worlds of North America's West Coast" (4), including British Columbia and, especially, Vancouver. The most fascinating portion of the book is its narrative and analysis of the rivalry between Yip On, a Chinese immigration interpreter in Vancouver, and David Lew, a competitor for his position, in 1910-11. They respectively formed alliances with different factions of the ruling Liberal Party and used these cross-racial alliances, and their trans-Pacific connections, to secure or pursue patronage appointments inside the immigration system. But both of them made legal or illegal attempts to foil anti-Chinese immigration policies in Canada, especially the head tax, which had been imposed by the Canadian government in 1885. It is equally interesting to read how Lew

and other Chinese legal brokers swayed the Anglo-Canadian judicial system in favour of immigrants, especially the illegal ones, from China, and how, through their efforts to resolve disputes inside their ethnic communities, they also helped to expand Caucasian legal culture into Chinatowns. In particular, from 1922 to 1924, Lew's rivalry with Yip for the control of Nanaimo's Chinatown evolved into a legal battle in the Supreme Court of Canada, until an unsolved assassination ended Lew's colourful career.

*Brokering Belonging* also details how a new generation of Chinese power brokers – intellectuals, labour leaders, and civil rights activists – appeared in Canadian Chinatowns after the First World War. In 1922-23, they used anti-imperialist slogans and social movement politics to mobilize mass protests against school separation in British Columbia. Starting in 1924, they organized the Chinese community to prepare for a survey of race relations in Vancouver that was to be conducted by the Chicago School of sociologists. They set a precedent for their counterparts on the Pacific coast of North America and helped to create the image of Asian immigrants as a model minority. Eventually, their mobilization of Chinese labour and other mass movements against unpopular policies during the Second World War contributed to the 1947 repeal of Canada's Chinese exclusion acts (n.b., the book ends its historical narrative in 1945).

In general, Mar's book convincingly shows how, between 1885 and 1945, Chinese Canadians, especially their power brokers, became deeply involved in Canada's political and legal institutions as well as in social movements, even though they faced the head tax, disfranchisement, exclusion

acts, and other discriminatory barriers. To a significant extent, their political activities in Canada were based on their transnational connections in North America, the trans-Pacific arena, and the British Empire. Certainly, more rigorous and systematic research is still needed to rectify the few errors and to develop the seminal themes in Mar's pioneer work. For example, in its first chapter, *Brokering Belonging* identifies a major historical figure, Yip On, who has two Chinese names – Ye En and Ye Ting Sam [Ye Tingsan] (6, 38). However, a careful reading of relevant Chinese documents indicates that Ye En and Ye Tingsan were two individuals rather than one (see [http://www.cinarc.org/Associations.html#anchor\\_243](http://www.cinarc.org/Associations.html#anchor_243)). More important, a systematic examination of the activities of new political organizations in Canadian Chinatowns during the early twentieth century, such as the Chinese Empire Reform Association and the Chinese Nationalist League, would greatly strengthen Mar's arguments, which are mainly based on selected cases studies of individual brokers and social movements.



*Contesting White Supremacy:  
School Segregation, Anti-  
Racism, and the Making of  
Chinese Canadians*

Timothy J. Stanley

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011.  
xiii; 326 pp. Illus. \$95.00 cloth;  
\$34.95 paper.

PATRICIA ROY  
*University of Victoria*

IN SEPTEMBER 1922, the Victoria, British Columbia, school board ordered 155 Chinese children (ninety-seven were Canadian-born and many spoke only English) to leave its regular elementary schools and move to segregated schools that only they would attend. The Chinese community responded by boycotting the schools. Timothy Stanley has carefully documented this incident and its background to illustrate and analyze his argument that, “by the 1920s in British Columbia, anti-Chinese racism shaped the lives of people racialized as Chinese and those of all others living in British Columbia” (17). He cites what Hannah Arendt called “a texture of life” (5). His assertion that *all* (my emphasis) British Columbians were affected by “anti-Chinese racism” is rather sweeping, although a superficial reading of the existing literature might suggest that conclusion. Stanley, however, goes beyond that literature in many respects.

Not only does he demonstrate that British Columbians were not the only Canadians to object to the presence of the Chinese but, as the reference to Arendt suggests, his work is informed by the theoretical literature on “race” and “racism” and by the extensive literature on Asian Americans. Except in the introduction, theory and external

examples, while never forgotten, seldom intrude on the narrative, thus making the book very accessible save for Stanley's insistence on repeatedly referring to "racialized Chinese." In the context, the adjective is redundant.

Stanley has long promoted the concept of anti-racism education, in which the "privileged group" is encouraged "to come to terms with the very different experiences of the excluded" (233) in the hope that it will permit an understanding of "the constructed nature of seemingly permanent categories" (15). To examine the experiences of the "excluded," he has drawn on Chinese-language sources, albeit, as he recognizes, somewhat limited and sometimes biased. He has also cautiously used English-language records created by the Chinese, including interviews conducted by Winifred Raushenbush for the University of Chicago's 1924 Survey of Race Relations. Through such sources, he shows not only how the attempted school segregation of 1922 reflected the many disabilities imposed on the Chinese but also how the ensuing strike contributed to the formation of a Chinese-Canadian identity. His focus on education, however, downplays Chinese agitation against the contemporaneous exclusionary Chinese Immigration Act.

Stanley credits the Chinese Canadian Club, a group of mainly Canadian-born and educated young adults, for initiating the strike and maintaining its solidarity, securing the support of the Chinese community and others, and challenging the school board and negotiating with it. The words "Chinese Canadian" seemed mutually incompatible as these young people were keenly aware of how they "were caught between their desire to participate in the dominant society and their exclusion from it" (152)

while at the same time they were not really part of the society of the first-generation immigrants.

Contrary to "white supremacist discourse," Stanley points out that not all Chinese were alike. Political disputes in China crossed the Pacific. Moreover, the Chinese in British Columbia spoke a number of mutually unintelligible dialects and tended to identify themselves with their local place of origin or their clan or surname group rather than as Chinese. By the late nineteenth century, however, in response to discrimination in Canada, Victoria's Chinese merchants developed a sense of Chinese nationalism even before it appeared in China. By 1899, they had established a school in Victoria primarily to teach Chinese language and culture, including nationalism. During the students' strike, the Chinese Benevolent Association arranged to educate the striking children in a Chinese nationalist curriculum and in Chinese. If they could not be Canadian they would be Chinese.

That was a Chinese expression of anti-racism; however, Stanley notes that, within the white community, some clergy, educators, and a few others protested segregation. So, too, did the fascinating and controversial Eurasian Harry Hastings, who concluded that he was an internationalist, neither a Chinese nor a Briton.

The last word on the history of racism in Canada is yet to be said. For example, as Stanley hints, more could be done to follow up, in a comparative way, how the First Nations were racialized. The historiography on the Chinese in Canada, however, is growing. Lisa Rose Mar's recent book, *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885-1945*, covers some of the same territory; the subtle differences in their interpretations

invite exploration. In the meantime, as Stanley intended, *Contesting White Supremacy* has made a valuable contribution to an understanding of the history of the Chinese in Canada and of “racialization.”

*Victoria: Crown Jewel of British Columbia, Including Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Saanich and the Peninsula*

Susan Mayse,  
photos by Chris Cheadle

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2010. 160 pp. Illus. \$34.95 cloth.

WILL GARNETT  
*Kendall, Cumbria, England*

THIS BOOK CLAIMS to be a “multi-faceted photo-essay” that combines historical detail with compelling narrative to provide the visitor with new insights into the many wonders of Victoria and its environs. As a bonus, the region’s “green” credentials are placed under a rigorous microscope. It is a novel approach. Does it work?

For this reviewer and recent visitor to Victoria, the answer is “No.” A photo-essay is surely a work in which our perceptions of an area are illuminated by stunning photographs that enable us to see our surroundings from a new perspective. In *Victoria*, too many of the photos are, to be blunt, unremarkable: people on a beach, a dog with sheep, people playing bowls, a close-up of apple blossoms. These pictures could have been taken anywhere. The subject matter is puzzling. Why choose a mute swan, rabbits, or a peacock – commonly

seen throughout the world – instead of the hummingbird that makes a Herculean effort to come here; or a raven, so important in the traditions of the coastal First Nations?

In addition, a photo-essay is a story told in pictures, supplemented by a commentary. If the photos do their job, then few words of commentary are needed; indeed, the fewer the number of words the better. In this book, the photos are swamped by words. To make matters worse, the writer seems comfortable with conventional clichés. We find a “carpet” of leaves, a “patchwork” of green forest, “delightful” countryside. The clichés, far from making the area seem jewel-like, make it appear mundane. Fewer photos, each one exceptional in its concept and execution, would have significantly reduced the need for superfluous commentary – and would have allowed this reader to have focused on the other, more successful aspects of the book. For much scholarship and research has gone into *Victoria*’s production. Historical details and anecdotes abound, though again the book’s format makes it difficult to follow the historical thread. By breaking the Victoria region up into smaller areas, and looking separately at each area’s history, geography, geology, and lifestyle, the writer makes it harder for the reader to relate one incident to another, to keep the historical timeline in his or her head.

The format of the book creates another major problem. Most visitors to Victoria are not looking for whatever is best to see in Esquimalt or Oak Bay or Saanich or West Shore; rather, they want to know what is interesting in the Victoria area as a whole. The admirable final chapter, entitled “Discovery: Things to See and Do,” recognizes this fact and provides a comprehensive, easy to understand, extremely helpful list of



activities and events to suit all visitors, of whatever age, whatever interest, for the whole Victoria area.

Why, then, was this format not followed in the rest of the book? Why was it not divided into concepts – history, gardens, important landmarks, wildlife, and so on – with references to where these could be found in each of the areas identified? For example, the history section could point out the enormous benefits of spending considerable time in the Royal British Columbia Museum, but it could also point historically minded visitors to the other sites of historical interest in Esquimalt, Oak Bay, and so on, giving visitors snippets of information to encourage them to broaden their horizons. Likewise, gardeners could have been directed towards the inevitable favourites, such as Butchart Gardens, but could also have been encouraged towards less well-known garden areas within the region.

A better format would have made it so much easier for the reader of the book. Instead of ploughing through page after page, trawling through paragraph after paragraph to find one's particular interest, the information would have been satisfyingly and easily accessible. And a visitor who understands clearly what is available to be seen and why particular places are worth visiting is far more likely to adventure further afield than the harbour area and to truly understand what a jewel of a place the Victoria region really is. In trying to cover so many different subject areas, the author and photographer have failed to achieve the goals they set themselves. A crown jewel, I am afraid, *Victoria* is not.

*Quiet Reformers: The Legacy of  
Early Victoria's Bishop Edward  
and Mary Cridge*

Ian Macdonald and  
Betty O'Keefe

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2010.  
196 pp. \$21.95 paper.

DIANA CHOWN  
*North Saanich*

EDWARD AND Mary Cridge's life in Victoria began in 1855, when the Hudson's Bay Company's James Douglas still reigned supreme. By the time Edward died in 1913, the most significant sign of the HBC in Victoria was the construction site where the new department store was going up. British Columbia, no longer a colony, had been a province of Canada for forty-two years.

Ian Macdonald and Betty O'Keefe, who have written several books on various aspects of British Columbia and other topics, are the first to publish a book about the Cridges. They have succeeded in showing that the couple made a significant contribution to the development of Victoria during the second half of the nineteenth century. Edward Cridge arrived to replace the colony's first HBC clergyman, Edward Staines, who had clashed with Douglas and resigned his position. Soon after, Cridge's two sisters arrived to help. For the first few years he was the only Protestant minister in the community.

Christ Church, which was named after Cridge's church in England, was completed in 1856. It became the cathedral in 1865; the bishop, George Hills, then appointed Cridge as dean. This situation lasted until 1874, when Cridge left the Church of England to join the Reformed Episcopal Church,

which had recently established itself in Canada. The two strong-willed men had collided over the question of High Church practices' being promoted in the cathedral and had engaged in a protracted conflict that ended up in court.

The Cridges served the people of Victoria for half a century. During the early years they experienced tragedy. Four of their children died of black measles in the mid-1860s, and, at the end of the decade, they suffered the loss by fire of the cathedral. Their work included developing education in the new colony. Mary taught school and Edward was, in effect, the superintendent of education until a non-sectarian position was created after Douglas's retirement in 1864. The couple, with members of Christ Church, opened the first hospital, which operated out of a series of buildings while Edward tried, sometimes desperately, to raise funds to operate it. Mary championed the addition of a women's ward, spending much time organizing on its behalf. The Cridges also founded the BC Protestant Orphans' Home. This was an initiative of both Mary Cridge and Catherine Macdonald, wife of Senator Macdonald, who were responding to the number of homeless children on the streets of Victoria.

Anyone interested in the history of Victoria will appreciate this well-written story of Mary and Edward Cridge and their accomplishments. I did wish that there had been more space given to some of these accomplishments – the hospital and the orphanage, in particular. The book does include one factual error: the assertion that two of the Cridge children were twins. Still, the authors provide a helpful political and social context for the events unfolding in Victoria in the

latter part of the nineteenth century, and they include a welcome chronology.

*Rumble Seat: A Victorian  
Childhood Remembered*

Helen Piddington

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2010. 320 pp. Illus.  
\$9.95 cloth.

CHRISTOPHER J.P. HANNA  
*Victoria*

HELEN PIDDINGTON'S *Rumble Seat: A Victorian Childhood Remembered* is a collection of 117 brief reminiscences of the author's childhood on southern Vancouver Island during the Depression and the Second World War. Born in 1931, Piddington was the youngest of ten children born to Arthur Grosvenor Piddington, the wealthy only son of a Quebec City soap manufacturer, and Helen Mary De Tessier Piddington (*née* Porteous), a banker's daughter. The Piddingtons had come to British Columbia in 1924 and settled in Esquimalt, a semi-rural municipality adjoining the City of Victoria, after buying Wychbury, a large residence designed by Victoria's pre-eminent architect Samuel Maclure. Sitting on several acres of land, the house, with its tennis court, croquet lawn, stables, and horse paddock, would be Helen Piddington's birthplace and childhood home.

Piddington's reminiscences begin as her father's failed investments (he was fleeced in a sheep ranch promotion and several other ventures) and the deepening Depression compelled the family to open a riding school behind Wychbury. Despite the loss of most of

their servants, the Piddingtons' dances, polo matches, and tennis parties suggest that a rather comfortable lifestyle was maintained for some time. Piddington's recollections of her relationships with her parents, siblings, servants, friends, and others are interesting for their variety and the insights they provide into the multicultural society of southern Vancouver Island. Piddington also provides some sharp observations on family, friends, and members of the wider community, such as Emily Carr.

The Second World War saw the Piddingtons devastated by the deaths of two sons in military service. At the end of the war the family's increasing poverty compelled them to sell their beloved Wychbury and retire to their vacation home on Shawnigan Lake, some forty-five kilometres north of Victoria, and some rural acreage near Victoria.

As an artistic youngest daughter in a large Victoria family sinking into the middle class, Piddington's reminiscences must inevitably be compared to those classic memoirs of childhood in Victoria: Emily Carr's *The Book of Small* and *Growing Pains: An Autobiography*. Like Carr, Piddington's reminiscences record a somewhat difficult family life and an enchantment, beginning in childhood, with the physical beauty of coastal British Columbia. Unlike Carr, Piddington, who lives on Loughborough Inlet on British Columbia's remote central coast, apparently lacked an Ira Dilworth to provide careful editorial attention to her manuscript. One does not, for example, learn the name of the author's father until Chapter 15, despite many previous references to "Dad," while her mother, having lost two sons in the war, is described not as a Silver Cross mother but as a "Silver Threads" mother (233). While Piddington thanks

this reviewer for his research assistance, his contribution was limited and readers with some knowledge of the topics covered will find that errors remain.

This book will be of interest to residents of Greater Victoria and readers who are seeking reminiscences of childhood in early/mid-twentieth century Canada.

Readers outside the Victoria region will also gain an understanding of the physical environment that so entranced the Piddingtons, Emily Carr, and others.

*A Thoroughly Wicked Woman:  
Murder, Perjury and Trial by  
Newspaper*  
Betty Keller

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,  
2010. 232 pp. \$19.95 paper.

DANIEL FRANCIS  
*Vancouver*

BETTY KELLER HAS a fascination with the early social history of Vancouver that dates back at least to 1986, when she published *On the Shady Side*, her lively study of crooks and cops in the pre-war city. In *A Thoroughly Wicked Woman* her interest in the bad apples on the family tree continues, though with this new book Keller has exchanged roles, moving from historian to novelist. That said, it is really not much of a switch. Her earlier book was history that at times read like fiction; her latest is a novel that keeps scrupulously close to real events.

*A Thoroughly Wicked Woman* is based on a murder that occurred in Vancouver in November 1905. Thomas Jackson, a middle-aged prospector who had just

returned from the field to his Vancouver home, died when someone spiked his morning cocktail of Epsom salts and beer with strychnine. There were several suspects, including his young wife Theresa and her mother Esther Jones, who lived with the couple at their boarding house on Melville Street. Eventually Theresa and Esther went to trial, not for murder but for perjury. Convicted, they both served several months in the provincial penitentiary. But the murder remained unsolved.

The *dramatis personae* of Keller's story are all actual historical figures, including newspaper publishers Walter Nichol and Louis Taylor, Mayor Frederick Buscombe, and police chief Sam North. Keller bases her narrative on the newspaper accounts of the murder and the courtroom dramatics that followed. It is when these sources fail her that she invents, imagining the domestic life in the victim's home and the conversations between many of the characters.

Keller pursues several themes in her book. One is the social role of women and their dependence on, and independence from, their spouses. Another is the changing dynamic of the daily press. The pre-war period was an exciting time for newspapers, which were losing their strict affiliations with political parties and becoming populist vehicles of news and information. The Jackson murder provides an interesting case study of how this transformation was playing itself out in Vancouver. Another issue is prostitution, which was openly practised in Vancouver at the time and which police and local politicians were attempting to accommodate and/or eradicate. All of these themes provide the larger context within which Keller's crime story unfolds.

Choosing to tell her story as fiction, Keller allows herself the freedom to invent, but it is a freedom of which she does not take enough advantage, instead sticking so close to the main facts of the actual crime that a reader might wonder why she chose fiction at all. The choice means that she cannot offer the kind of context and analysis that non-fiction allows, and the result is that none of her themes is pursued in much depth. That said, her book rescues a curious legal case from obscurity and provides a lively snapshot of the city and several of its leading citizens as it came of age during the heady decade of prosperity and growth that preceded the First World War.

*Opening Doors in Vancouver's  
East End: Strathcona*

Foreword by  
James C. Johnstone,  
Daphne Marlatt and  
Carole Itter, eds.

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2011. 240 pp. \$24.95 paper.

JOHN DOUGLAS BELSHAW  
*Langara College*

DIANE BARBARA PURVEY  
*Thompson Rivers University*

IN 1978 THE Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC) added a pair of volumes on early Vancouver to its series of aural history publications. These were subsequently brought together as a single monograph in 1979. It quickly became ubiquitous on the bookshelves of Vancouverites,

particularly those in the east side neighbourhood whose stories it shares.

*Opening Doors* has always been a book into which one dips. Marlatt and Itter were much more than editors: they interviewed with patience and persistence, listening for the tone, the accents, the nuances of each voice. They interviewed a handful of luminaries such as Angelo Branca, and many more people in and of the community (such as Strathcona school teachers and grocery store owners). They augmented the interviews with photographs, including portraits of the interviewees, archival photos of Strathcona, and family photos from their personal albums. And they prefaced the collection with an introduction each. Marlatt, the poet and novelist, provides a historic context to the collection, while Itter, the artist, speaks to the process of the interviews. Each encounter with the nearly sixty interviewees remains fresh and authentic more than thirty years on. And, because many of these voices have now fallen silent, the collection serves to extend memory across generations. Clearly, the City of Vancouver's 125th anniversary committee thought so: they funded this new edition.

Apart from the brightly written foreword by James Johnstone, this is very much a reprint of the original. It is slightly larger physically (that's okay), and the pagination has changed (that's annoying). Otherwise the book remains a wealth of information about the community, one that will be tapped again and again by students of the city's history and residents alike. Indeed, we have used our own earlier edition so aggressively that, like Johnstone's, "it is falling apart" (9).

Without delving into the contents and currents of the interviews, the nature of this text merits consideration. This was the product of a 1960s and

1970s enthusiasm for recording first-hand accounts of the past – typically on cumbersome reel-to-reel recorders or on more portable cassette machines that consumed dry-cell batteries at a fearsome rate. What set the PABC's Aural History project apart from many others was its delight in sound in addition to data.

Could something of this order be attempted now? Ethics review boards would likely flinch at the thought of an army of microphone-bearing scholars descending on the homes of the less privileged. And yet recording devices are more widespread, more reliable, more portable, and more affordable than ever before. Anyone could assemble family and neighbourhood stories. Then again, Marlatt and Itter were much more than just anyone. There's a place for the light and consistent touch, the guardianship that the editor assumes over her collaborators' tales, and the intimacy each had with her neighbourhood.

The book – that is, the bundle of sequentially ordered papers bound together at a spine – is also in some jeopardy. Of course one could read *Opening Doors* on an electronic device, but it is very much one of those volumes that cries out to be dog-eared and bookmarked, to be read physically. In this regard, too, a project like *Opening Doors* might be less likely to find its way into print today.

Finally, in this respect, the Sound Heritage initiative of which this was a part is long gone. It was, in the 1970s, a visionary undertaking supported by a government that had just celebrated the province's centennial. Good on the City of Vancouver for recognizing this book – and many others – as deserving of reproduction, but initiatives aimed at capturing the fragile and fleeting stories of our experience are still needed.

Why? Johnstone provides the answer. Three decades on from its publication, *Opening Doors* serves to give strength and succour to the East End. It is a portal through which newcomers may pass into the community's shared experiences. This book is not a litany of events. It is, read properly, a contract with the past. In its frankness, its celebration of piety and misbehaviour, and its multiple-patois, it says to other Vancouverites and to those who come to Strathcona to live that they have an obligation to know something about their community and no excuse not to do so. It makes locals.

*Mountain Timber: The Comox Logging Company in the Vancouver Island Mountains*

Richard Somerset Mackie

Winlaw, BC: Sono Nis Press, 2009.  
320 pp. \$42.95 paper.

CHRISTOPHER J.P. HANNA  
*Victoria*

RICHARD MACKIE's *Mountain Timber* is the second volume of a projected three-volume history of the Comox Logging and Railway Company's operations on Vancouver Island. This volume begins ca. 1927, with the company's expansion of its steam-powered high-lead skidder and railway logging operations into the mountainous terrain of central Vancouver Island to the west of Comox, and ends ca. 1946, when operations were moved to the Ladysmith area on southern Vancouver Island.

While Mackie provides readers with an excellent survey of the scope and techniques of the company's operations

between ca. 1925 and ca. 1946 by tracing its "stump to dump" movement of trees from their harvesting to their dumping in the Strait of Georgia, the focus of his attention is upon the lives of the people who were drawn into the orbit of the company. In the early 1920s the company's managers in the Comox Valley, led by Robert "Bob" Filberg, decided to meet the company's personnel needs by hiring local men for long terms of employment in place of the unskilled labour hired previously through Vancouver hiring halls. This policy transformed much of the company's workforce into a "home guard" of long-service employees who lived in the Comox Valley. Through interviews with these former employees, their families, and their descendants, Mackie has produced a most informative and illuminating history of the community formed among the company's long-term employees.

Mackie's reliance upon oral history will probably leave some readers slightly ill at ease due to the fact that his assertions and conclusions are based upon the memories of only those Comox employees who remained in the Comox Valley and, therefore, are not representative of the experiences of all employees. Throughout the period under study, the company continued to use the hiring halls of Vancouver for less-skilled labour, especially in the grading and track-laying gangs. It is clear from Mackie's interviews that working conditions were harsh at the bottom of the company's labour force, and one must wonder how many of the less-skilled labourers remained in the Comox Valley to be interviewed decades later by Mackie and others.

Throughout *Mountain Timber*, Mackie includes transcriptions of many of his interviews with Comox Logging

& Railway Company (hereafter Comox Logging) employees and families. Coupled with his own writing, these interviews provide the reader with a wealth of historical voices free of the anonymity and homogenization of sources found in most historical writing.

To illustrate his history, Mackie has tapped not only the usual collections and public archives but also the photograph collections of Comox Logging families. Reproduced in a large format on glossy paper with informative and often extensive captions (and, where necessary, enlargements to show details), the scores of hitherto unpublished photographs Mackie has located form the heart of his history and establish a new standard for the use of visual imagery in such work.

Mackie places the operations of Comox Logging within the context of Canada's extractive staple economy but provides no information about the ownership of either Comox Logging or its parent company, Canadian Western Lumber Co. Ltd., after ca. 1920. Before the demise of their Canadian Northern Railway ca. 1918, Mackenzie and Mann appear to have controlled both Canadian Western Lumber and Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir) Limited, Comox Logging's neighbour and operational partner during the 1920s in hauling logs to tidewater. It would be interesting, in light of the earlier linkages between the firms, to know what linkages existed during the years under study.

The book contains a number of generally minor errors and omissions having to do with the technology of coastal logging: the highly dangerous, manually braked disconnected logging (railway) trucks are invariably confused with flatcars equipped with air brakes, while Hyster logging arches and Clyde

track-laying machines are not identified as such. The maps and diagrams provided are informative but not quite up to the standards of the previous volume in either detail or accuracy.

While not a definitive history of Comox Logging, Mackie has produced an insightful and visually impressive history of a steam-powered, high-lead skidder and geared locomotive logging operation on British Columbia's coast. As a visual record of the coastal logging industry, Mackie's work ranks with the best efforts of Leonard Frank, Wilmer Gold, and Darius Kinsey, and it should be required reading for anyone who has an interest in the steam-powered coastal logging industry of the Pacific Northwest in the early twentieth century.

*Campbell River: Gateway to the Inside Passage, Including Strathcona, the Discovery Islands and the Mainland Inlets*

Ian Douglas,

photos by Boomer Jerritt

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2010. 144 pp. \$34.95 cloth.

CATHERINE MARIE GILBERT  
*Museum at Campbell River*

*Campbell River: Gateway to the Inside Passage* offers a fresh look at the Campbell River area, mainly seen through the lens of Boomer Jerritt, whose striking images comprise a large portion of the book. The text is written by Ian Douglas, a resident of Quadra Island. If the intention of the book is to be a combination travel guide/coffee table book as opposed

to a scholarly work, then it succeeds very well. Douglas's prose is light and entertaining and moves quickly without dwelling on too much detail. Except for a few lengthy sentences that may have benefitted from more careful editing, the text is pleasing without being pedantic. Douglas has a vast territory to cover: not only does he describe the City of Campbell River but he also covers the region between Oyster River and Sayward in the first chapter alone, and Quadra Island, Cortes Island, and some of the outer islands in the remaining chapters. The chapters are nicely divided into sections that, generally, take the reader from south to north both geographically and by topic.

While the stories of early Campbell River pioneers like Fred Nunns and the Thulin brothers have been well documented elsewhere, *Campbell River* contains some vital new material. Most refreshing are Douglas's first-hand experiences of fishing for Tyee salmon and participating in a traditional potlatch ceremony.

One or two facts are misleading. On page 53, Douglas states that "the last Strathcona mine is scheduled to expire in 2012." It is uncertain where he found this information since the book lacks footnotes or endnotes to indicate sources. In any event, employees of the mine have had no forewarning that this is to be the case. Also, on page 85, marine gas is listed as one of the amenities offered at the Kelsey Bay dock, but there is no fuel depot at that dock.

In his treatment of Quadra Island, Cortes Island, and lesser-known islands like Maurelle, Douglas truly hits his stride and presents updated material that offers a glimpse into current island life and the economic challenges faced by island dwellers today. It is heartening that he gives exposure to modern-day pioneers like Rob and Laurie Wood,

who carved out their own place in the BC wilderness both as homesteaders and as wilderness outdoor leaders.

The images used in the book are quite beautiful and, for the most part, serve to augment and enhance the text. However, the section on First Nations history would have been enhanced with archival photos of First Nations villages or people; the two-page photo spread of Landslide Lake in Strathcona Provincial Park seems excessive; and the photograph used on page 49 to illustrate Canada Day was recently used on the cover of the Campbell River regional tourism guide and perhaps has been over-exposed.

Many readers are sure to treasure this book as a memento of Campbell River and its nearby communities. It also marks the end of an era. Since, as Douglas states throughout the book, the primary industries driving the economy of the Campbell River area (such as pulp and paper and commercial fishing) are now part of the past, the region must look to tourism to maintain its economy. It is to be hoped that this book will induce more visitors to come and see this exceptional region for themselves.

*Adventures in Solitude:  
What Not to Wear to a Nude  
Potluck and Other Stories from  
Desolation Sound*

Grant Lawrence

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2010. 288 pp. \$26.95 paper.

HOWARD STEWART  
*University of British Columbia*

**T**HIS IS A BOOK of stories, mostly frothy, engaging, and well told.



It's also a sort of not-quite postmodern coming-of-age tale that is much enhanced by Grant Lawrence's mixing of his own stories with those of the place. It's a little like a late twentieth-century version of M. Wylie Blanchet's *Curve of Time* (1961) if it had been written by one of the kids. Lawrence apparently set out to declare his love of this special place and its special people through their stories, and he has succeeded. Like all good love stories it is not without struggle. Lawrence makes us understand that he started out an awkward city child, hard-pressed to even make the road journey to Okeover Arm, let alone face the rigours of life on the still, dark waters of Desolation Sound itself. This was his father's dream, not his. Unlike many of the love stories about British Columbia and its magic waters that have been written over the years, the real estate developer in Lawrence's story (his father) is a hero of sorts, making things happen for people against daunting odds. But otherwise, most of the story is familiar. The Salish-speaking ghosts are mentioned in passing but seem to have no role on the Sound of today. The extraordinary and eccentric settlers who replaced them live their tales of struggle, hardship, and (occasionally) madness in a place that is a playground only for a handful of warm months and a dark, brooding place of intense isolation through the long rainy season. Lawrence's most important stories, though, tell of the next wave of inhabitants – the quirky refugees from the outside world who replaced the original white settlers and were there to witness the arrival of the real estate developer's family. The author makes no bones about his respect and love for his father – a reassurance to all fathers of grown sons. But the teacher and spiritual guide who will

help Lawrence become one with the sound – in the summer at least – is a hippie philosopher named Russell who walked across the Coast Mountains to get there and then stayed.

Lawrence weaves himself through the stories, growing up, learning to overcome his fear of things like cougars and to replace it with healthy fears of things like fire and forest grow-ops. We watch his mentors and other denizens of the place get old even as he becomes the one to rush out naked to greet awkward new arrivals, much as he was once greeted. The story ends happily, with the author, now fully of this place – in summer at least – finally able to share it with a love partner. Knowing the ending won't spoil the book: you'll enjoy each step along the way. If you're looking for a history of the Sound in the resettlement era, then read Heather Harbord's *Desolation Sound: A History* (2007). But if you want to get a feel for the place it has become today – for those of us who mostly go to these places in the bright months – you could do a lot worse than Grant Lawrence's *Adventures in Solitude*.

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*Whitewater Devils: Adventure  
on Wild Waters*

Jack Boudreau

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press,  
2010. 216 pp. \$22.95 paper.

ANTHONY DALTON  
*Delta, BC*

WITH *Whitewater Devils*, retired forestry worker Jack Boudreau has written his eighth book of adventurous tales. Set mostly in British Columbia, *Whitewater Devils* – while not his best work – is an interesting complement to Boudreau's previous books, many of which have become regional bestsellers. The title, however, is misleading, as is the subtitle (*Adventure on Wild Waters*), and the two photographs on the book's cover perpetuate the misconception about the contents.

Of the nine essays, only three have more than a passing reference to white water. The other six essays focus on wildlife encounters by wildlife photographers, wilderness reminiscences from an eclectic collection of characters, and the stark realism of a dangerous life as a deep-water diver from Prince George. The tenth chapter is a collection of poems that reflect life in the interior of British Columbia, combined with a few mildly humorous anecdotes.

Whether discussing the habits of grizzly bears or wolves in the wild, or recounting the outdoor experiences of the redoubtable wilderness adventurer Betty Frank (55), Boudreau knows how to set a scene. For example, in Chapter 6, "Oddities of Nature," he writes: "Now came the dirty part. Anyone who has ever trailed a wounded adult grizzly knows what we had to contend

with. We followed the bear's blood trail and soon noticed that it headed into the thickest brush around" (140). He concludes that anecdote by expressing a real concern for the welfare of the unlucky bear.

Boudreau launches his readers into the white water of the book's title with his memories of barrel races on the Fraser River near Prince George, canoe races on the Nechako and Stuart rivers, and others. He takes a good look at the centennial cross-Canada canoe race of 1967, and, in a chapter entitled "Wild Water," he follows the adventures of a young Victoria couple as they embark on their own arduous trans-Canada canoe voyage. He continues with a brief look at jet-boating and kayaking on British Columbia's wildest rivers.

Jack Boudreau is a fine historian, with an obvious passion for tales from his home province. He is also a better than average storyteller. There is a sense that many of the tales in this work would have been better told around a campfire, perhaps beside a whitewater river in the forest. Despite that, *Whitewater Devils* both educates and entertains its readers.

*Whoever Gives Us Bread: The  
Story of Italians in British  
Columbia*

Lynne Bowen

Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre,  
2011. 368 pp. \$32.95 cloth.

STEPHEN A. FIELDING  
*University of Victoria*

MORE THAN twenty years ago, Gabriele Scardellato lamented

the dearth of attention to Italian Canadians living “beyond the frozen wastes” (Scardellato 1989). There have been modest advances since that time, including Patricia K. Wood’s *Nationalism from the Margins: Italians in Alberta and British Columbia* (2002), the local histories of Raymond Culos, and a couple of MA theses (mine included). *Whoever Gives Us Bread* does much to fill this gap, introducing the general and academic reader alike to the colourful and precarious experiences of Italian residents who lived when the province was young.

Bowen takes us into the everyday lives of Italian arrivals and the dear ones they left behind in Italy. Her book reads like a series of vignettes, tied together thematically into a general trajectory that begins in the 1850s and concludes a century later. The earliest accounts are particularly intriguing, describing in lively prose the unpredictable nature of work in the nascent province, where lives and profits could improve or deteriorate in short course. We meet Carlo Bossi, the miner-cum-Victorian hotelier who died a millionaire in 1895; Felice Valle, a mule train packer found dead on a mountain trail to Barkerville; Tobia Castellarin, who sent back remittances to his family for five years only to return and discover that his brother had squandered the money; or the even less fortunate six Italian men who perished in the Protection Island mining disaster. Despite the dangers, Italians kept coming to British Columbia – some to stay, but more looking for temporary employment in the frontier towns, mines, and railway gangs in order to earn enough to improve their situation back in Italy.

*Whoever Gives Us Bread* is history for a general audience, but there is much embedded in these stories to interest the historian of migration or

ethnicity. Woven into the narrative are the familiar debates of transnational migrant networks, class tensions, gender relations in transnational families, the position of “white ethnics” in late nineteenth-century racial discourse, social-economic and diplomatic conditions in Canada and Italy, policy restrictions and their subterfuge, and ethnic relations in resource towns. Unlike other accounts of Italians during this period (e.g., by John Zucchi or Patricia K. Wood), however, questions of Italian ethnicity and nationalism are left out. But, to be fair, such analysis would have demanded more space than the book allows.

Bowen’s enthusiasm for her subjects is unmistakable and of great benefit to the reader. Her prose is supported by eighteen years of travel and research that took her the length of the Italian peninsula to the agrotowns that her subjects departed, the cities and outposts of British Columbia in which they worked and settled, and the various archives that documented their presence. She uncovers valuable information from a staggering number of sources, including monographs, obscure or out-of-print books, genealogical records, commemorative booklets, payroll and inventory lists, and oral testimonies both old and recent. One particularly useful source is tombstones, the layout of which she links to the level of ethnic integration in mining towns from one period to the next (101).

On a more critical note, the storytelling format struggles when a chapter’s contents are loosely woven into a common theme. In one chapter, accounts of stereotyping cover a span of two or three generations (73 and 127), and the final paragraph reads like a patchwork of topics, ranging from superstitions, gender issues,

tensions between early and later Italian arrivals, and the social and economic difference between contemporary Italy and that before the 1970s. A second area of concern is Bowen's handling of the discrimination faced by Italian migrants and their kin. Her effort to combat accusations of Italians as "violent, impulsive stiletto-wielders" runs into trouble when the reader is given a large number of stories that fit this description. In fairness, this discrepancy is likely the product of limited records and the preference of past newspapers for sensational stories. Still, Bowen could more forcefully demonstrate the extent to which her subjects were pariahs (55 and 146) of mainstream scrutiny, perhaps by comparing the number of criminal charges and incarcerations among Italians to those among other groups. Finally, I suggest a different title for the book. *Whoever Gives Us Bread* comes from an interview with an anonymous subject in another book rather than from an Italian migrant to British Columbia. It implies, unintentionally, that Italian arrivals were looking for handouts, when, as Bowen herself carefully shows, they worked hard to sustain themselves and their families, both in Canada and in Italy.

These comments aside, *Whoever Gives Us Bread* is a well-sourced, timely, and highly readable book. It colours the familiar and lesser-travelled places of British Columbia with the imprint of Italian experiences. The backwoods, mountain passes, city streets, mine shafts, railway lines, and neighbourhoods of this province tell more Italian stories than we ever imagined. Thanks to Lynne Bowen, we know much more about the Italians who sojourned or settled "beyond the frozen wastes."

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*Health and Aging in British  
Columbia: Vulnerability and  
Resilience*

Denise Cloutier-Fisher,  
Leslie T. Foster, and  
David Hultsch, eds.

Victoria: Western Geographical  
Press, 2009. 379 pp. \$30.00 paper.

JAMES E. THORNTON  
*University of British Columbia*

*Health and Aging in British Columbia: Vulnerability and Resilience*, edited by Denise Cloutier-Fisher, Leslie T. Foster, and David Hultsch, is a collection of seventeen chapters on health and aging in British Columbia prepared by thirty authors with multiple academic, research, professional, and policy perspectives on health and aging. Each chapter is grounded in one or more academic disciplines involved in studies of healthy aging: regional geography, human and social development, psychology, anthropology, sociology, physical education, Aboriginal, and environmental issues. The collection is based on notions of vulnerability and resilience. The editors suggest that these complex ideas vary across multiple social configurations – individuals, families, communities, and health regions – and that they are essential in studies of physical, mental, and social health. The editors further suggest that the collection is weighted more towards resiliency and that “this is important as a more authentic and defining characteristic of today’s older adults, who are more resilient than vulnerable” (2). The majority of authors are from the University of Victoria and are associated with its Centre on Aging and the BC Ministry of Health. Their data are extracted from recent studies and

reports specific to British Columbia.

The book is organized in three parts. The editors’ introductory chapter is in Part 1 and outlines the thematic scope of the volume. It sketches the conceptual foundation of “vulnerability and resilience” in healthy aging and the major issues presented in each chapter. Three other chapters in Part 1 provide, respectively, a demographic profile of British Columbia’s population over the age of sixty-five, based on 2001 and 2005 data; a methodology for developing a framework to plan and evaluate health services; and a research study of primary health care versus primary care in Richmond, British Columbia. Part 2, entitled “Social, Cultural, and Cognitive Influences on Vulnerability and Resilience,” contains nine chapters that address, respectively, aging, agency, and intentional communities; Aboriginal elders’ health in remote regions of British Columbia; predicting and preventing falls among older persons; the “mothering work” of grandparents raising grandchildren; mental health practices, policies, and research supporting older adults; cognition and older driver safety; benefits and correlates of the physical activity of older adults; reducing social isolation and enhancing friendships of vulnerable older women; and older adults’ attitudes towards their own aging. In Part 3, entitled “Social Policy,” three chapters explore, respectively, geography, home care, and health care reform in British Columbia; healthy living for healthy aging; and a wellness-based approach to resilience and vulnerability. A fourth chapter offers a final critique of and discourse on social issues, now and in the future, for an aging population.

This is an outstanding collection and a solid foundation for studies on health and aging. Each chapter is

an essential read for anyone hoping to understand the various views on healthy aging, professional responses, and public policies needed to enhance personal health and social well-being. As I reviewed this collection, it became clear that the boundaries surrounding academic disciplines, interdisciplinary research topics, professional territories, and public policies have changed dramatically since the early 1990s. Then interdisciplinary studies of aging were not readily supported. At the time, however, conceptions of the life course, lifespan, and lifecycle were robust, offering cross-paradigmatic views of human development for studies and research of aging and health that would reshape the boundaries, reluctantly in some cases, of academic and professional education, community practices, and public policy. In this 2009 collection, authors have further penetrated these boundaries. Nonetheless, as Chappell (Chapter 17) notes: "There has also been widespread recognition of the need to dismantle the fragmented silos within which the health care system operates, but there is little evidence to date that this is happening and some evidence that greater fragmentation may be occurring" (371).

*Health and Aging in British Columbia* is timely as the major demographic shifts projected in the 1980s and their social-economic impacts, suggested in the 1990s, are now here: the "age-quake" is a reality. The baby boomer generation's impact on health and social programs at the beginning of the twenty-first century was anticipated, but "social lag" hinders initiatives in education, research, program development, and public policy. Health and aging are developmental issues with personal and social depth, width, and complexity over time. It is hoped that the editors and authors will continue to explore

these complexities – including lifelong learning and educational initiatives for individuals, families, communities, and professions – in a future volume.

It is appropriate that I share some personal information that shaped my views of aging and health as I read this book. I am eighty-four years old, retired in 1993, and have dealt with vulnerability and resilience. While at UBC I promoted gerontological studies and lifelong learning during the last twenty years of an academic career in adult education and educational gerontology. Then and now, programmatic methods of gaining access to new knowledge, innovation, adaptation, and adoption, all of which are essential for personal and social development, interest me.

*Rebel Women of the West Coast:  
Their Triumphs, Tragedies and  
Lasting Legacies*

Rich Mole

Surrey/Victoria: Heritage House,  
2010. 144 pp. \$9.95 paper.

ROSE FINE-MEYER  
*Ontario Institute for Studies in  
Education*

*Rebel Women of the West Coast* comprises stories about individual women who, through their talent, perseverance, and determination, were able to overcome patriarchal systems designed to keep them out of professional organizations. Author Rich Mole has created a celebratory book for the general public but has done so by constructing the narratives within traditional masculine structures of understanding.

Each chapter of *Rebel Women* examines women in various fields,

including “Rebel Doctor,” “Rebel Lawyer,” and “Rebel Scientist.” The book begins by defining a “rebel” as “a person who resists any authority, control or tradition” but then proceeds to provide narratives of women who are anything but (7). These women are gifted, talented, and determined individuals with an innate ability to work within the traditional systems that rejected them. For example, Mary Richardson married a man, “a mere stranger a few hours before,” only to fulfill her missionary dream to travel to unknown territories (11). Dr. Margaret (Dixie) Ray used television in the 1950s to promote her work in science, and Irene Baird got the scoop for a novel about the life of unemployed men during the Depression by masquerading as a nurse in order to accompany a doctor on his rounds. These women had strong characters and demonstrated great skill at negotiating their way through the discriminatory societies in which they lived in order to achieve personal goals. They knew that if they were viewed as too radical their dreams of success would not have been possible.

The stories begin in the nineteenth century and move through to modern times. All the women publicly and privately challenged the dominant male society as well as an “unscrupulous and manipulative” media (a common theme for the author) in order to achieve success. The women were outspoken, tough-minded, and hardworking, taking risks to improve their lives. Rich Mole presents these stories as part of a recurring theme: a woman is disadvantaged but has a dream. To achieve her dream, she faces many challenges but finds success; however, in the end, it comes at a cost. This “cost” creates something contradictory within the book: on the one hand, it celebrates women’s accomplishments;

on the other, it includes reflections that undercut these women’s achievements. For example, Abigail Duniway became a teacher despite having “less than a year’s formal education.” The author adds, “Obviously she owed her career to the frontier environment rather than her credentials” (32). Later in the book, the author presents Bethenia Owens-Adair, “Rebel Doctor,” who, despite her professional success, marries later in her career. She sustains her relationship despite her husband’s disastrous financial schemes, and the story ends by reflecting on her work to support eugenic laws in Oregon, under which women became victims of sterilization. Mole notes: “In the end, Bethenia’s legacy was one of tragedy. Through her zealous actions, this champion of gender equity actually helped sabotage the rights of hundreds of Oregon women” (62).

Is Mole suggesting that women who challenge traditional trajectories and demand gender equity risk great personal or professional loss? According to Mole, the women discussed in his book create their own troubles by marrying the wrong man or turning away professional opportunities or personal relationships. A benefactor had offered Bethenia Owens financial assistance to complete her education, but her pride and independence made her turn down it down, thus subjecting her to “years of penny-pinching drudgery” (49). In the chapter on Grace McCarthy, “Rebel Politician,” Mole notes that the 1940s was “an era when few women ran anything beyond a vacuum cleaner or washing machine” (105). This statement comes as a surprise after the previous chapter, which acknowledges how women successfully worked in aircraft factories during the Second World War.

Although *Rebel Women of the West Coast* begins with the genuine objective of celebrating the achievements of independent women, it leaves the reader troubled. Current scholarship in history examines women's contributions to society within altered frameworks that reflect on gendered hierarchies of authority and power. Women intersect with all parts of society in an interconnected world, but chronicling their stories requires alternate interpretations that allow for their unique lived experiences.

*Making Waves: Reading BC and Pacific Northwest Literature*

Trevor Carolan, ed.

Vancouver: UFV-Anvil Press, 2010.  
272 pp. \$20.00 paper.

*The Essentials: 150 Great BC Books and Authors*

Alan Twigg, ed.

Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2010.  
318 pp. \$24.95 paper.

CAROLE GERSON

*Simon Fraser University*

FOR THIS FOURTH volume in his series on the *Literary History of British Columbia*, Alan Twigg has set himself the impossible task of selecting 150 "Great BC Books and Authors," designated as "The Essentials," from his ABC Bookworld database of more than nine thousand names. The results are necessarily idiosyncratic: in his preface, he rationalizes the absence of many names that might be expected, including major literary figures such as Margaret Laurence and P.K. Page

and significant scholars like Jean Barman and W.H. New. Instead, Twigg has sought to highlight original contributors to "a broad spectrum of literature," making choices that are sometimes unexpectedly informative and sometimes rather curious. For example, while it is certainly of interest to learn about the important 1944 "Vrba-Wetzler report" on Nazi atrocities, whose author became a BC resident in 1975, does Rudolf Vrba merit a full entry when Joy Kogawa receives only passing mention (in Ken Adachi's entry), despite the crucial role of *Obasan* in enlightening Canadians about our wartime treatment of the Japanese?

The book proceeds chronologically, beginning with the first European writings about the land that would become British Columbia. The initial sections cover great swaths of time until 1950, after which the entries are arranged by decade. Foundational texts by eighteenth-century Spanish visitors, John Jewitt's captivity narrative, various travel accounts, and works dealing with pragmatic issues ranging from mining and geology to Native languages and anthropology (Boas and Teit) quickly establish the range of inclusion. The write-ups are characterized by superlatives and an emphasis on firsts: Martha Douglas Harris was "the first female author to be born in BC" (58), Frederick Niven was British Columbia's "first professional man of letters and the first significant literary figure of the Kootenays" (74), and A.M. Stephen was "the first BC author to double prominently as a social reformer" (81), a claim that might be disputed by admirers of the "crusading spirit" (64) of Agnes Deans Cameron, who racks up an impressive five "firsts." As Twigg proceeds through the twentieth century, he informs us about some authors and books we should know



better: for example, Andrew Roddan's *God in the Jungles: The Story of a Man without a Home* (1931) complements Irene Baird's canonical Depression novel, *Waste Heritage* (1939). It is nice to see the inclusion of librarians W.K. Lamb and Sheila Egoff, who receive deservedly warm tributes for their publications and career contributions to the realm of literary and historical studies.

One outcome of Twigg's sidelining of literary writers in favour of those concerned with specific aspects of BC life, such as fishing, railways, ranching, logging, and public issues, is the book's surprising paucity of women – fewer than 25 percent of the selected writers are female, a proportion that would be substantially different if more authors of fiction, drama, and poetry had been included, or more authors in genres associated with women, such as life-writing, cookbooks, and books for or about children. The greatest number of women occurs in the section covering the 1960s, and it is disturbing to find only one woman (Ivan E. Coyote) among the dozen writers in the final section, which is entitled "New Millennium." Some compensation is offered with the huge list of "other authors pertaining to women's issues and lives in British Columbia" (65-66) inserted in a tiny font as an appendix to the entry on Agnes Deans Cameron. Similar, briefer "see also" lists, directing readers to entries on the ABC Bookworld website, appear at various points throughout the volume, as do photos of many undiscussed writers. This strategy works well to situate the chosen 150 within the larger context that Twigg has documented in other media.

Those who feel that the literary avant-garde is under-represented among Twigg's "essential" 150 will be comforted by *Making Waves: Reading*

*BC and Pacific Northwest Literature*, a collection of fifteen essays that examines a variety of literary figures and endeavours from the 1950s to the present. The volume sets the stage with Hilary Turner's essay, which draws on published biographies of Roy Daniells (by Sandra Djwa) and Earle Birney (by Elspeth Cameron) to recount the conflict at UBC in 1954-63 between Daniells's traditionalist approach to literary criticism and Birney's advocacy of creative writing. The resulting split initiated Canada's first Department of Creative Writing and laid the ground for the innovative era that was to come, as described in Colin James Sanders's discussion of the "San Francisco-Vancouver Axis" that connected West Coast poets in the 1960s and 1970s through the pivotal figure of Robin Blaser. Subsequent essays pick up these threads in Michael Barnholden's account of the heady blending of poetry and politics that characterized the *Georgia Straight Writing Supplement* and other publications of the early 1970s, Ron Dart's description of clashes between nationalist and international literary ideologies during the 1960s and 1970s, and George McWhirter's probing examination of enduring tensions between UBC's departments of English and creative writing.

Interspersed among these historical studies are the more personal notes struck in other contributions. In an interview, P.K. Page recalls her exclusion from Robin Skelton's poetry circles in Victoria in the 1960s ("I was not part of anything," 69), her dislike of Irving Layton ("a wretched man," 74), and her admiration for Dorothy Livesay ("We didn't get on, Dorothy and I, but I admired her," 75). Memory also informs Mike Doyle's description of working with George Woodcock and Judith Copithorne's list of poetry events that

took place in Vancouver in the 1960s. Most personal is Carolyn Zonailo's captivating memoir about growing up as a poet and her experiences in largely feminist West Coast literary and publishing circles. The remaining essays can be grouped under the themes of environmentalism, nature, and Aboriginality, in Susan McAslin's close analysis of the eco-poetics of Don McKay, Tim Lilburn, and Russell Thornton; Trevor Carolan's essay on Gary Snyder's ecological concerns; Paul Falardeau's discussion of Robert Bringhurst's attention to Haida oral culture; Chelsea Thornton's analysis of the inner and outer landscapes of Northern poets; and Martin Van Woudenberg's concluding thoughts about deep ecology.

Literary history is a highly selective endeavour, and it is always easy for critics to find gaps in inclusive volumes such as the two under review. For example, Daphne Marlatt might have figured more prominently in both. To their credit, these two books cover considerable ground in their mappings of British Columbia's literary history from very different perspectives, and they substantially enrich our understanding of this province's cultural complexity.

