

EDITORIAL

IT IS A PLEASANT SURPRISE when articles slated for publication in *BC Studies* are found, by happy accident, to be united by certain themes, topics, or commonalities and can appear next to each other in print. This is one such occasion. The first four articles in this issue fall naturally into pairs. One pair concerns the analysis of artifact types – the lip ornaments (labrets) of coastal First Nations and the birch bark artifacts of the Interior. The other concerns the political responses to what some saw as dangerous social movements – the Doukhobor settlers of the early twentieth century and the hippie counterculture of the late 1960s.

In “Labrets and Their Social Context in Coastal British Columbia,” Marina La Salle builds on her master’s thesis, completed in 2008 at the University of British Columbia and based on 220 labrets in four major Canadian museum collections. Indigenous men and women of the BC coast have worn labrets for at least five thousand years. La Salle constructs a typology of these labrets, naming them by reference to their basic forms as: tee, spool, disc, pendulant, knob, double-knob, pulley, plate, and bowl. Labrets were made of an astonishing range of locally available material, including stone (basalt, clay, coal, copper, limestone, mudstone, pumice, quartz crystal, quartzite, sandstone, schist, serpentine, siltstone, slate, soapstone, steatite, talc); land or sea mammals (bone, antler, horn, ivory); marine bivalves (abalone and purple-hinged scallop shells); and wood.

On the south coast, La Salle suggests, labrets were used between 5000 and 2000 BP and were especially common from roughly 3500 to 2500 BP. Labrets were then gradually abandoned over the next thousand years as cranial deformation became a more important marker of status. By contrast, on the north coast, late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century explorers and ethnographers found high-status women wearing labrets.

Accepting that labrets represented an exclusionary tradition and had status associations, La Salle nonetheless refines the simple “high-status-women-wore-labrets” message of Northwest Coast anthropology textbooks. She argues that this characterization “underestimates the complexity and ambiguity of meaning” conveyed by a “far from static” form of social expression.

In “Barking up the Right Tree: Understanding Birch Bark Artifacts from the Canadian Plateau, British Columbia,” Shannon Croft and Rolf Mathewes focus our attention on the ubiquitous birch bark ar-

tifacts created by the people of interior British Columbia, especially the Stl'atl'imx, or Lillooet, people. Bark from the paper birch, *Betula papyrifera*, was used to construct containers for storing and carrying food and water, for construction material, in burials, in transport (including canoes and toboggans), in fire preparation, and as body ornament. From archaeological excavations alone, Croft and Mathewes assert, "birch bark technologies were of major importance to First Nations, yet little attention has been paid to them as a category of artifacts." They also note that birch bark basketry is a technology associated with women ethnographically, in both economic and spiritual spheres, and is therefore "an artifact type that can increase the visibility of women in the past."

Croft and Mathewes examine a neglected collection of 923 birch bark artifacts excavated from eighteen sites. Between 1969 and 1976, the Lillooet Archaeological Project, under the direction of Arnoud Stryd, dated these artifacts between 2400 BP and the early contact era. Croft and Mathewes divide them into bark baskets, bark fragments with stitching, incised bark fragments, perforated bark fragments, bark rolls, and bark strips. Generally these items are remarkably well preserved because "birch bark is dense, with bituminous resin deposits containing terpene hydrocarbons that make it both impermeable to water and highly flammable." Charred and uncharred birch bark can last thousands of years underground.

Croft and Mathewes take us on a remarkable tour illustrating the use of birch bark containers in utilitarian and ritual contexts. In the absence of pottery, they note that "birch bark containers were an essential part of plant harvesting, cooking, and storage technologies on the Canadian Plateau." One of the Lillooet Archaeological Project's baskets excavated from a housepit contained the seeds of Saskatoon berries and raspberries. Other containers have been recovered from cache pits and earth ovens. Birch bark containers also had ceremonial and spiritual uses in girls' puberty rituals and in graves: "Making birch bark baskets was a strongly gendered activity and was, specifically, a woman's technology ... [P]roducing and using birch bark basketry was part of a suite of activities that expressed femininity."

Together, these articles demonstrate the material basis of archaeology and remind us not only of the astonishing reach, range, and access of First Nations peoples with regard to the resources of the natural world but also of their ability to transform that raw material into a great array of objects of utilitarian, spiritual, and/or ceremonial value.

The second pair of articles in this issue addresses political, policy, and social responses to cultural and social unorthodoxy. In “Oregon’s Doukhobors: The Hidden History of a Russian Religious Sect’s Attempts to Found Colonies in the Beaver State,” Ron Verzuh follows the Russian Doukhobors, who were initially supported by Tolstoy, as they sought a spiritual and material home, first in Saskatchewan in 1899, second around Castlegar and Grand Forks in 1908 in the Kootenay-Boundary region, and finally – and most briefly – in 1913 and in 1924 in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. Their 1913 attempt was resisted by local farmers and their 1924 colony was scuttled by the Ku Klux Klan. Verzuh documents the virulent racism and xenophobia aimed at these newly Canadian migrants by Oregon journalists, Legionnaires, the Lions Club, local citizens and government, and, most sensationally, by the misleadingly named George Love and his fellow Klansmen. “Doukhobors, with their reputation for communalism and their loyalty to a religion that seemed odd to Americans, would have been ideal targets for Klan bigotry, racism, and vigilantism,” notes Verzuh. The Lane County settlement, which they had named *Druzhelyubaya Dolina*, or “Friendly Valley,” was abandoned by 1928; the settlers returned to British Columbia or settled elsewhere in the United States; and all that remains of their presence in Oregon is the characteristic outline of a communal Doukhobor village and a misspelled road sign – “Dukhobar Road.”

In “Panic on Love Street...,” Daniel Ross explores the initial responses of citizens and local politicians to the hippies who congregated in certain parts of Vancouver in the late 1960s. “Rather than looking primarily at the people or the experiments in alternative living that made up the Kitsilano scene,” Ross focuses on “how actors wielding social and political power interpreted and reacted to it.” He captures the flashpoint of social conflict in countercultural Vancouver, when young people frequented the Fourth Avenue hippie strip during and after the Summer of Love (1967). Ross deploys sociologist Stanley Cohen’s notion of “moral panic” to portray a period of momentary panic when local homeowners, businesses, and police voiced moral outrage at what they termed the “hippie problem” and responded with a range of interventions that included policing, zoning, licencing, and fire inspecting, as well as with social welfare agency programs aimed at ameliorating youth and economic issues.

Finally, in “Seaspawn and Seawrack...,” Nicholas Bradley reflects upon the Vancouver Island fiction produced by Jack Hodgins in an extraordinary creative outpouring between 1976 and 1981: *Spit Delaney’s*

Island, The Invention of the World, The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, and The Barclay Family Theatre, all of which have been reprinted by Ronsdale Press. We don't normally review works of fiction at *BC Studies*, but, as Bradley points out, Hodgins's fiction contains a healthy infusion of Vancouver Island history and culture: "His stories and novels ... are moreover increasingly valuable for historical as well as aesthetic reasons in allowing glimpses of the Island's recent past." Hodgins's regionalism has been compared to that of Faulkner and Steinbeck, but in his concern for local traditions, in his exploration of tensions between insular worlds and the cosmopolis, and in the clash of rural customs and metropolitan power, his work also resembles that of Thomas Hardy.

From the archaeologists' fascination with lip ornaments and birch baskets to the historians' concerns with the virulent reactions spawned by expressions of difference and communalism, the rich and varied contents of the pages that follow both echo and confirm novelist Hodgins's conviction that understanding British Columbia and those who live within its confines depends upon a deep appreciation of the manifold entanglements of past and present, people and place, history and culture.

This is a form of knowledge increasingly devalued by the neoliberalist impulses of our times, with their overwhelming emphases upon market efficiency, practical relevance, and short-term profitability. These are arguments couched in terms of cold hard cash: national prosperity depends on more and better training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (the so-called STEM subjects); we can no longer afford to educate people but, rather, must fit them, cog-like, into the productive machine; is it worth spending thousands of dollars a year for a degree that does not lead to a job (although even highly trained MDs and many a lawyer can be heard complaining bitterly about the lack of suitable employment opportunities these days)?

There is far too much wrong with this rhetorical argument for us to explore here, but it is worth reflecting that the current aversion to humanistic scholarship – an aversion that is transforming the very fabric and purpose of universities everywhere – may well have its roots in those heady days of the counterculture discussed by Dan Ross, when universities were seedbeds of criticism aimed at the ways in which the world was being run. Dissent spawned many forms of opposition. In late 1960s Kitsilano, as in Lane County in the 1920s, it was immediate and often visceral. Opposition to critiques of Western capitalism, corporate hegemony, patriarchal power, and so on built more slowly and

subtly in the larger intellectual and societal milieu of the late twentieth century, but it was perhaps more effective for that. By shifting the basis of discourse to focus narrowly on those powerful fictions we call “the economy” and the “invisible hand of the market place,” it has, to echo Bradley, wracked the social fabric and changed the very parameters by which intellectual and other endeavours are measured, elevating profit over fulfillment and personal benefit over the commonweal.

In this context it is heartening to find new insights into societal mores, and heightened understandings of people who occupied the territory now known as British Columbia thousands of years ago, in long-buried fragments of birch bark and ancient decorative objects. Deepening our grasp of the ways in which others made their ways through the world enriches us as humans and sows new seeds of tolerance and understanding. This way lies some hope for the development of the generosity and compassion that will only become more vital to humanity in the increasingly competitive and instrumental world that threatens to bring us all within its sway.

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