EDITORIAL

Metaphorical foxes and hedgehogs lurk in this issue of *BC Studies,* cerebral invasives set loose by the English historian-philosopher Isaiah Berlin in a 1953 essay on Leo Tolstoy's view of history in *War and Peace*. Referencing a fragment attributed to an ancient Greek poet – "The fox knows many things – the hedgehog knows one big thing" – and with a full quota of that exquisite intellectual confidence associated with the dreaming spires of Oxford, Berlin blithely sorted prominent thinkers into two camps: Plato, Hegel, Fernand Braudel, and others he identified as hedgehogs, and Aristotle, Shakespeare, James Joyce, and the like he described as foxes. This characterization is now something of a commonplace among students of history, and it has found various forms of expression, not least in the distinction between "lumpers" and "splitters" invoked in a memorable 1975 spat between eminent historians J.H. Hexter and Christopher Hill over the latter's interpretation of seventeenth-century England. Reducing these different formulations to their essence, we might say that "lumpers" (and hedgehogs) tend to find meaning in the world by abstracting its complexity, while "splitters" (and foxes) incline to honour the diversity and disorderliness of all they survey.[1]

But is this not all too neat? Perhaps Berlin's distinction between those who know one big thing and those who know many smaller things is a hedgehog-like perspective formulated precisely to make the point that Tolstoy – a natural fox who believed in being a hedgehog – failed to fit the pattern identified by Archilochus. When Charles Darwin referred to lumpers and splitters in a mid-nineteenth-century letter to J.D. Hooker – "Those who make many species are the 'splitters,' and those who make few are the 'lumpers'" – he never doubted the value of having "hair-splitters and lumpers" and recognized that both groups were trying to create order out of complexity. The difference between them lay in where they drew the line necessary to proclaim taxonomic distinctiveness.[2]

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[1] Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953); J.H. Hexter, "The Burden of Proof," *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 October 1975, with responses by Hill and Hexter (7 and 28 November 1975); also William G. Palmer, "The Burden of Proof: J.H. Hexter and Christopher Hill," *Journal of British Studies* 19, 1 (1979), 122–29.

[2] Charles Darwin to J.D. Hooker, Down, August (1857). See "The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin – Day 153 of 188," at http://www.turtlereader.com/authors/charles-darwin/the-life-and-letters-of-charles-darwin-day-153-of-188/.

Are we not all in some way, then, akin to taxonomists, necessarily seeking coherence between a single big idea and a thousand tiny details? Working this middle ground, are we not mere shadows of Tolstoy, hybrids reflecting the tendencies of both *erinaceinae* and *vulpes*? Experience tells us that the world is complicated, but can we navigate its everyday clutter without some (imposed) sense of orderliness, purpose, design? We urge upon ourselves and others the need to see the forest (an idea) for the profusion of trees that press in upon us. Are not universities devoted, in some sense, to finding the order in things? Why heed a past that lacks pattern? And so on.

The articles that follow prompt reflection on such matters. Diverse as they are, they seem to us to raise important concerns about the nature of the world and the ways in which we seek to understand it. In essence, the question turns on finding a balance between the "great blooming, buzzing confusion" that confronts us and the need to domesticate, or simplify and organize, this complexity in order to understand and respond to it. To associate or to discriminate? To lump or to split? These are fundamental choices, and both individual scholars and broader modes of scholarly practice have elected for different points on the continuum between abstraction and detail that they define. Still, the value of whatever standpoint is chosen is relational. At base (we might elaborate by drawing an analogy from statistics), trend lines are abstractions that rest on, and have no meaning without, the data points from which they are drawn; and data points alone can be hard to decipher without the smoothing and interpolation involved in curve-fitting. For the New Zealand historian of empire, Tony Ballantyne, anxious to offer a compelling interpretation of the past without losing sight of its complex, lumpy character, the challenge comes down, eventually, to the development of "synthetic arguments that connect particular case studies and identify deep-seated processes."[3]

Consider each of the following contributions against this backdrop. The "Uplands" district of Victoria, the focus of Larry McCann's luminous photo-essay with which we open this issue, is often described, in general terms, as a distinctive landscape, an elite enclave, and a residential park. Under McCann's informed and attentive gaze, however, this space resolves into an architecturally, spatially, and aesthetically varied place. Yet analytical or interpretive themes help make sense of this diversity. The landscape was built around the notion that there was

[3] For blooming, buzzing see William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt,1890), 488; Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 295.

a proper "spatial hierarchy of views"; artistry and practicality shaped the overall design; unrealized plans left their imprint on the suburb. Deftly interwoven words and pictures allow us to see this complex territory as a product of different impulses and shifting circumstances without losing sight of its overall distinctive form. Individual elements of the Uplands, seemingly disparate when confronted in situ without the guiding narrative of an accomplished landscape interpreter, here take their place in an account that renders both the whole and its parts coherent without obscuring the intricacy of the scene.

In a very different vein, in a remarkable, skilfully executed essay, Jordan Stanger-Ross reminds us of the dangers of thinking too categorically about the past (about being committed to one big idea about the shape of things) even as he offers important new insight into the disposal of property belonging to Japanese Canadians interned during the Second World War. The focus of Stanger-Ross's article is a hitherto neglected and untranslated memoir written by Kishizo Kimura to explain his involvement in the Canadian government committees that liquidated the fishing vessels and homes of his fellow Japanese Canadians. There is no dodging the political violence and racist underpinnings of these events or the internment, but in Stanger-Ross's hands Kimura's memoir "reveals a history far more complex than stories of heroes and villains, oppressors, victims, and resisters." Here we come to appreciate the difficult challenges entailed in living life as it unfolds as opposed to writing about it later, aware of outcomes and with sensibilities shaped by circumstances beyond the ken or experience of those alive at the time. Though the committees on which he served implemented policies that were unquestionably racist, Kimura cannot be reduced to an "abstract agent of racism." At the time, he believed that cooperation was a form, and perhaps the most effective form, of resistance, and his memoir suggests that immoral consequences could flow, almost unconsidered, from the most banal of deliberations. That Kimura felt the need to explain all of this to following generations, and the manner in which he did so, adds a poignant tone to this profoundly humanistic account of a troubling and important moment in British Columbia's past.

Life's complexities, and the challenges of understanding them, also draw Lynne Marks's attention. More specifically, she is concerned with the difficulties, inconsistencies, meaning, and value of religious observance among Jews in British Columbia before 1930. Drawing upon personal recollections of members of the province's early Jewish families, she reveals that Jewish practice and belief varied enormously

not only among families and in different communities but also within households in which particular forms of observance might be honoured while others were ignored. There were many reasons for this, including the small number of Jews in many settlements, the difficulties of keeping kosher in remote locations, and so on; however, the fundamental point is that, on this margin of the continent, the "lived religion" of many Jews mixed sacred and secular practices in ways that undermined such well-established characterizations of the larger Jewish population as Orthodox (observant) or "socialist" (atheist). Again the challenge of understanding a complex, multi-faceted reality reveals the limitations of too readily placing people and practices within neat interpretive categories.

Jennifer Silver's examination of shellfish and coastal change in modern-day British Columbia is also, in its way, a challenge to hedgehog-like conviction. It offers a focus radically different from those of the articles that precede it, and it urges us to see and to represent the past in new ways. Beyond its specific concern with shellfish aquaculture – with farming oysters and clams in Nuu-chah-nulth territories on the west coast of Vancouver Island – this article draws attention to the "tangled and cross-cutting political relationships" of both human and non-human actors. Reflecting recent enthusiasm for the study of "more-than-human" geographies, Silver asks us to lump, as it were, humans and non-humans together as we think about the world. Drawing from the post-structuralist lexicon of Donna Haraway and others, this work moves to extend the usual attribution of agency beyond human individuals to locate it in historical and spatial relations among heterogeneous elements such as "humans, animals, plants, machines," maps, diagrams, and other things. The intent, so to speak, is to encourage new ways of thinking about arguments and activities otherwise likely to be seen as uncomplicated.

Finally, Chris Herbert's history of the development of gay ski week at Whistler in the two decades after 1992 offers an important reminder of the value of a splitter's perspective by moving beyond established ways of thinking about sport and seeing gay ski week not simply as a particular holiday event but, rather, as a complex "profit-seeking business [venture], a civil rights vehicle, a queer space, and a sporting event challenging heterosexual gender norms." More than this, Herbert uses his detailed examination of Whistler's gay ski week to challenge the well established notion that the marketplace has generally functioned to undercut the movement towards gay rights.

There is, in short, and as usual, much to think about in these pages. Each of the contributions to this issue makes its own particular and substantive contribution to thinking about the development of British Columbia. But individually and together they also raise important questions about the ways in which inquiries are framed and interpretations are reported. To recognize this is perhaps also to acknowledge the importance of the middle ground, where understanding is neither blinded by all-consuming conviction nor obscured by an endless fascination with detail and difference – or, to put it more pointedly, where theory is tempered by the world and ideology by substance.

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