

The plays themselves are delightfully heterogeneous. A few canonical works anchor the collection: George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Gray's *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, Betty Lambert's *Under the Skin*, and MacLeod's *The Hope Slide* – all but *Billy Bishop* firmly grounded in local history and culture, and all widely produced across Canada. Other major playwrights are represented by lesser known works: Lazarus's clever *Babel Rap*, a staple of student productions; Panych's marvelous first play, *Last Call*; Margaret Hollingsworth's monologue, *Diving*; Sally Clark's bleakly funny *Ten Ways to Abuse an Old Woman*. Perhaps most interesting are the plays that readers might be meeting here for the first time: Beverley Simons's *Crabdance*, once considered a masterpiece but now largely ignored; *Horseplay*, a witty Brechtian script nicely complemented by Caravan Theatre's unique production style; Sherman Snukal's long-running 1980s comedy, *Talking Dirty*; the smart and moving *Sex Is My Religion*. Race and ethnicity loom large in *Rita Joe*, *Komagata Maru*,

and *Skin*; in Diamond's land claims play *NO XYA*, created in collaboration with Gitxan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs; in Quan's *Mother Tongue*, a meditation on language and family; and in *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, whose awful story of the deaths of Aboriginal women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is as fresh as the daily news.

As with all anthologies some obvious candidates for inclusion are missing, among them Tom Cone, Rod Langley, Nicola Cavendish. The most glaring omission is Gwen Pharis Ringwood, British Columbia's pre-eminent playwright until the arrival of George Ryga. Although she did her best work pre-1967, she continued writing plays into the 1980s. And why begin with 1967 anyway? Although reasons are suggested, the date is never clearly justified. Still, seventeen plays is a treasure trove. With all but two of the writers still living, and eight of the plays authored by women, *Playing the Pacific Province* promises continued vitality and diversity in BC theatre for years to come.

Faces in the Forest: First Nations Art Created on Living Trees

Michael D. Blackstock

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. 224 pp.,
Illus., maps. \$44.95 cloth.

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IN RECENT YEARS, a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Aboriginal cultures has become a common model in museum exhibits and academic volumes. Most often,

this is accomplished through the participation of scholars and artists from varied backgrounds and fields. Rarely is it found in a single-author work. Michael Blackstock's *Faces in the*

Forest is a much richer volume than its book jacket classification – “Native Studies” – suggests. Blackstock’s training as a forester and his Gitksan heritage inform his methodology at least as much as does his familiarity with both art historical and anthropological methods – a familiarity gained during his MA studies at the University of Northern British Columbia. This book is an expanded version of his master’s thesis; it explores Northwest Coast tree carvings, oral history, and the concept of landscape as well as proposing a new model for the preservation of “trees of Aboriginal interest” within forestry practices in British Columbia.

The foreword, by Antonia Mills, sets up the important nature of Blackstock’s work, particularly with regard to the Gitksan community. First Nations communities can use documentation of forest art and other culturally modified trees in land claims and forestry practice negotiations (xvii). Thus Blackstock occupies a middle ground between (1) an unwavering acceptance of and respect for cultural knowledge and *adaawk* (Tsimshian oral history) and (2) a defensible academic position. The presence of the Gitksan is felt throughout the book; Mills relates how Blackstock’s thesis defence took place in the village of Kispiox in front of family, chiefs, and elders. His commitment to their concerns and his respect for the knowledge the elders shared with him shines brightly throughout the text. Blackstock pondered the consequences of publicizing tree art and worried that interest in the topic might endanger the artworks. His decision to publish stemmed from his desire to provide the knowledge he had gained to younger generations of First Nations as well as from his desire to make

professionals aware of tree art so that it can be protected from logging (156). His allegiance to the secret and sometimes sacred nature of tree art results in his offering detailed discussions of the artworks without revealing their exact location. This lack of specificity is not inherently problematic. Of course, one wants to witness firsthand the carvings that Blackstock discusses and illustrates, but the poor quality of the images and the black-and-white reproductions that appear on the recycled paper on which the book has been printed are less than satisfying. Given that the carvings are the heart of Blackstock’s study, this is a distinct drawback. The volume would have been much improved with good quality photographs illustrated on glossy stock. One can see just how much is lost when one compares the alluring full-color image on the dust jacket with the image of same tree presented in a black-and-white illustration within the text (131).

Blackstock prefaces his text with a detailed discussion of his methodology and the ways in which art historical and anthropological theory can be combined with a First Nations perspective and oral history. He developed his model through personal experience, research, and a sensitivity to his own cultural epistemology and the difficulty of presenting it within an academic discourse (xxi). The first chapters of the book present Blackstock’s “preparations” for understanding. Each preparation addresses issues related to tree art: the nature of Gitksan art; the literature on tree art; the meaning of crests, poles, masks, and dolls; and finally the role of the sacred tree as an artistic medium. Chapter 3 takes a tour of tree art sites, mostly in British Columbia with brief stops in the Yukon and Manitoba for comparative

purposes. Most interesting in this section is Blackstock's comparison between the tree art's original purpose and its "second journey of meaning," which it has undertaken in recent years. Interviews with elders provide a glimpse into both these worlds: traditional purposes and the little known but important role that these trees can play in generating a renewed understanding of First Nations cultures and their need to protect their lands. The final chapter reflects on Blackstock's journey and provides his vision for a new forestry model, which includes an artist's respect for the trees. It is here that Blackstock's multidisciplinary

approach is most apparent. While the contrast between land-use plans, artists' reflections, and elders' stories is sometimes jarring, the text proves that "Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)" can be integrated into forestry practices. This is shown in how Blackstock uses TEK to bolster his new vision for a sustainable management plan. *Faces in the Forest* is a revealing text that discusses a little known art form, and it also offers scholars an important model when attempting to accord First Nations knowledge the agency it deserves within academic discourse.

All Amazed for Roy Kiyooka

Edited by John O'Brian,
Naomi Sawada, and Scott Watson

Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002. 160 pp.

Illus., US\$15.95/CND\$19.95 paper.

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ROY KIYOOKA is one of the most important yet most under-analyzed Canadian artists of the postwar period. Kiyooka, who was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in 1926 and who died in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1994 at the age of sixty-eight was an accomplished artist in a variety of media, including painting, performance, music, poetry, sculpture, photography, and film. He was also widely known as one of Canada's most important studio instructors, influencing generations of young Canadian artists during a teaching career that spanned over five

decades, beginning at Regina College in the late 1950s and ending with his retirement from the University of British Columbia in 1991. However, his career did not have the kind of spectacular visibility enjoyed by those artists associated with the Painters Eleven or the Regina Five. As Roy Miki, one of the contributors to *All Amazed for Roy Kiyooka*, notes: "Though a central figure in whatever artistic localisms he moved in – from the important Regina years of the late 1950s, to the initial Vancouver years of the early 1960s, and through the Montreal years that led to the Expo