and from a poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko:

> I am like a train
> rushing for many years now
> between the city of Yes
> and the city of No.

"Yes" was also the name of the VIEE's last camp on Vancouver Island, MacDonald's journal of the trip being the only one to mention this fact.

Oliva's narrator is as curious to learn more about the alien Japanese culture as was Ranald MacDonald, and when he learns about MacDonald and his experience in the country almost 200 years earlier, he is struck by the parallels in their encounters with the Japanese. MacDonald's experience becomes a metaphor for the narrator's own search to become more than just "an outside person – an apparition made real" (57) and for Japan itself to become more than "an affectionate prison" (287). He is trying, instead, to become part of the world he has adopted, even if only for the term of a one-year teaching contract. His life as an English teacher, his interaction with other teachers and students, his portrayal of Santa Claus and other attempts to portray North American customs, his whimsical tending of a colony of praying mantises, his sexual relationship with the charismatic Hiroko – all these experiences are interspersed with lyrical descriptions of MacDonald's experiences.

Reading these two books in tandem is yet another parallel complementing those in *The City of Yes*. It was particularly interesting to read first the biography and then the novel. Peter Oliva dextrously weaves fact and fiction; Jo Ann Roe assiduously presents all the facts of MacDonald's life, from which Oliva so successfully draws. There is certainly still room for a scholarly version of MacDonald's life, but in the meantime *Ranald MacDonald: Pacific Rim Adventurer* and *The City of Yes* bring this attractive and venturesome man vividly to life.

The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community

Elizabeth Furniss

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999. 237 pp. $29.95 paper.

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IMAGES OF PIONEERS figure largely in the identity of central British Columbia communities. Tales of extraordinary self-reliance, unparalleled feats of courage, personal sacrifice, and enviable economic success saturate local histories and community celebrations and mark a pioneer era as both heroic and the foundation of a stable and meaningful rural culture. In *Burden of History*, Furniss unravels the underlying assumptions and symbols of these narratives, conceived as "the frontier myth," in order to demonstrate how

this historical discourse has come to shape, and be shaped by, contemporary racialized politics in the central Interior community of Williams Lake. Contemporary political culture, she asserts, is rooted in a "frontier cultural complex"; thematic analysis of the frontier myth "reveal[s] how deeply imprinted it is by Canada's colonial legacy." Furniss seeks to offer "a worthwhile and interesting critique of our own society" that will reveal the nature of racial tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (primarily Euro-Canadian) residents of this hinterland city. She argues the assumptions of frontier culture work to displace and marginalize the First Nations of the region – the Carrier, Secwepemc, and Tsilhqot'in – and to affect the daily lives of all the residents of the region, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

The "frontier" is characterized not as a place or historic point but, rather, as a sensibility of difference that is distinctive from urban culture both in its pioneer history and in its contemporary culture, which Furniss marks, inter alia, by a preference for driving pick-up trucks rather than cars, veneration of the "self-made man," working-class values, and right-wing populism. The frontier myth is a selected historical discourse, a manifestation of colonial culture that, in turn, is marked by "intense energy devoted to contemporary Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations either through the assignation of difference ... or through the denial of difference."

While the frontier myth is shown to be highly flexible, it is sufficiently cohesive to be capable of containing contrary historic accounts and perceptions and, thus, is able to sustain an enduring narrative of racial superiority and a taken for granted historic benevolence towards a vulnerable race. The frontier myth of benevolence frames both (1) the historic Euro-Canadian conquest of Aboriginal peoples and lands and (2) contemporary opposition to Aboriginal rights and treaty settlements as being in the best interests of the colonized peoples. Interwoven with a consciousness of pioneer sacrifice, hard work, and a faith in evolutionary principles of progress, which justifies a sense of Euro-Canadian entitlement and inheritance, perceptions of Canadian benevolence allow an overt anti-Aboriginal stance to be voiced as a defence of a democratic equality that is to be achieved through assimilation and the rule of individual rights over collective rights.

Furniss develops her argument in stages: She opens with a critique of the "landscape" of public history and identifies prominent racial stereotypes and cultural values in secondary school history texts and popular histories. She then moves to a discussion of how ordinary life and political discourses of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region, within which Williams Lake is located, reinforce and are reinforced by the dominant historic narratives of the frontier. Through interview data and anecdotal description, Furniss illuminates the ways in which "commonsense" racism emerges in daily living. Public meetings held by the Reform Party to debate the merits of the current BC Treaty process are presented to further illustrate the complexities of racialization and its foundation in the frontier myth. Political discourses that view conquest as natural, she argues, reduce history to the "axiom of 'survival of the fittest' and rationalizes arguments that Aboriginal peoples themselves are responsible for their economic dependency, social problems, and marginalization.

Finally, Furniss turns to cultural spectacle, the Williams Lake Stampede,

to illustrate the popular enactment of the frontier myth as a historic hybrid of the American myth of "regeneration through violence" and the Canadian myth of benevolence. Aboriginal peoples take up paradoxical positions in this spectacle as they seek to represent themselves as culturally unique, often by strategically deploying symbols that have accumulated the moral stigma of cultural stereotypes under the gaze of colonialism. Symbolic representations of "Indianness" through Indian Princess pageants, colourful parade floats, and cultural sites at the stampede grounds complement the struggles embodied in the "strategic equivalences" rhetoric of First Nations leaders. Through this rhetoric they make common claim to mainstream values while showing how the dominant society has either ignored this commonality or has failed to uphold the social values of democracy and equality.

However, as the political manoeuvres of the Reform Party's opposition to Aboriginal rights treaties attests, racist discourses of benevolence and assimilation are by no means restricted to the local politics of the economic and geographical hinterland; rather, benevolent paternalism imbues national myths of social progress and Canadian identity. The thematics of the frontier myth prevail in urban racist discourses just as they do in rural racist discourses. Examples are commonplace in judicial history (Justice McEachern's specious reference to a "vast wilderness" is perhaps the most commonly cited instance), in national political discourse, and in the resource industries, with the corporate elite and the "working man" both speaking against "race" privileges while extolling the virtues of individualism and the "self-made man." Symbols and performances of the frontier cultural complex are powerful because they resonate with, rather than oppose (or differ from), a national sensibility of benevolence, progress, and "equality." While Furniss does not ignore this, she does underplay it and, in consequence, tends to overstate the differences of rural and urban racial identity formation. What I hear said in Williams Lake and other hinterland communities regarding racial relations and Aboriginal rights, I also hear in urban/suburban private and public spaces. The ubiquity of the myth of conquest by benevolence empowers the political manoeuvres of the hinterland. This aside, *The Burden of History* is compelling reading. Its ethnographic insight into racial tensions and national politics provides an important contribution to our understanding of life in a hinterland community and to our efforts to theorize the origins and consequences of settler society.