

It is the biases in the voters' list that makes the volume fascinating reading, rather like constructing a jigsaw puzzle on the exercise of power. What did it mean that CPR promoters Donald Smith and Richard Angus, and such household names in British Columbia history as John Robson, Robert Dunsmuir, and the Oppenheimer brothers, voted alongside long-time Burrard Inlet residents Ben Springer and Joseph Mannion and likely newcomer "Mrs. M. A. Coffey," a woman whom even the BCGS could not track down?

The research that went into *Vancouver Voters, 1886* is overwhelming. Footnotes confirm the authenticity of each piece of information, thus maximizing its utility. The research model used to link past and present is exemplary in terms of the now-familiar dialectic between freedom of information and right to privacy. In the first stage of research, BCGS members scoured the public record, including the City of Vancouver Archives, newspapers, and cemetery lists. In the second, descendants who could be located were invited to fill out, in as much detail as possible, a questionnaire on their family. Another round of research confirmed the accuracy of responses to the questionnaire and followed up new leads. Descendants were then asked to check the resulting family history for accuracy, confidentiality, and omissions. In practice, only a small minority of descendants could be tracked down.

As a work of genealogy, *Vancouver Voters, 1886* is a tour de force. Its date of publication was originally scheduled to coincide with the 1986 Vancouver centennial, but it did not appear until nine years later. There was always one more branch of a family to locate, one more birth or death date to verify. The BCGS's decision to bring families up to the present day also extended the task, perhaps a bit more than was necessary to reveal the significance of the 1886 voters' list. Nonetheless, we are all in the BCGS's debt.

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On the Highest Hill, by Roderick Haig-Brown. Introduction by Laurie Ricou. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1994. Photos. xxvii, 319 pp. \$27.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

Best known for his naturalist writing and juvenile fiction, genres which have not received much serious consideration in the Canadian literary canon, Roderick Haig-Brown also wrote two adult novels:

Timber: A Novel of Pacific Coast Loggers (1942), previously issued in the Northwest Reprint Series emanating from the University of Oregon Press, and *On the Highest Hill*, first published in 1949 and now reprinted in the same series, with an introduction by Laurie Ricou. Dismissed as "regional idylls" by Desmond Pacey in 1961, these two books have received scant attention. The 1940s are rather a lost decade in Canadian literary studies; lacking the singular urgency of the Depression thirties and the cohesive buoyancy of the postwar fifties, the period was dominated by two canonical novels published in 1945, Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* and Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*. These icons of national literary identity, along with Gwethalyn Graham's best-selling *Earth and High Heaven* (1944) and the poetry of A. M. Klein, posit a Canada whose mythic centre is Montreal. Few works arose at this time from Atlantic Canada to disrupt this Laurentian centrism; and, while a number of writers, such as Earle Birney, Emily Carr, W. O. Mitchell, and Ethel Wilson, initiated a challenge from the West, their work did little to dislodge mid-century Central Canadian notions of literary significance. Hence the virtual vacuum surrounding the fiction of Roderick Haig-Brown, whose novels, while not quite reclaimable as lost masterpieces, equal in technical accomplishment the work of many of his better-known eastern Canadian peers. However, British Columbia would not figure noticeably on the Canadian canonical bookcase (as selected by the Ontario university classroom) until several decades later, beginning with Sheila Watson's avant-garde *The Double Hook* (1959), becoming more fully visible with the work of Jack Hodgins and George Bowering in the 1970s, and achieving a shelf of its own in the mid-1980s.

The importance of audience to the creation of literary value is signalled in Laurie Ricou's Introduction, which participates in the move currently popular among many critics to dismantle the nationalist frameworks that, for more than a century, justified the academic study of literature. While I am situating Haig-Brown in a general Canadian context, Ricou pitches his comments to the largely American readership of the particular series in which this book now appears. A traditional Canadianist would affiliate Haig-Brown's "mountain man," Colin Ensley, with Howard O'Hagan's Tay John (*Tay John* 1939) in his mythical identification with the wilderness, and with Ernest Buckler's David Canaan (*The Mountain and the Valley* 1952) in his social alienation. Ricou, in contrast, blurs the forty-ninth parallel and discusses Haig-Brown in relation to a body of writers associated with a region that Americans refer to as the Pacific Northwest, thus

privileging continental geography over political history. How does this reorientation serve the text? At a time when many novelists who sought economic success in the United States refrained from specifying their settings as Canadian (e.g., no geographical identifications appear in Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* [1941] and very few appear in the urban stories of Morley Callaghan), Haig-Brown wrote passionately specific fiction about Vancouver Island, which he overtly names, just as he does Vancouver, the Prairie provinces, and Nijmegen as Colin passes through these places during the Depression and the Second World War. Haig-Brown's use of "mythical map names" (p. xix) applies only to Vancouver Island sites, in part to deter local readers from treating fiction as history or autobiography.

As an "accumulation of unfinished narratives" (p. xiv), to use Ricou's apt phrase, *On the Highest Hill* shares the ethos of many Canadian novels of its era, including most of those mentioned in this review. Like these books, Haig-Brown's is of interest today as much for its efforts as for its accomplishments. Its hero symbolizes the individual's alienation from the increasing complexity of the modern age. Caught in the transition from handlogging to industrial processing (and its accompanying union politics), in the upheavals of the Depression, and in his own social and sexual uncertainty, Colin retreats far into his beloved mountains, his superb wilderness skills ironically contributing to his eventual self-destruction. The book's "first-stage regionalism" (p. xxiv) mediates between the semi-fiction of Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West* (1908) and the complex layering of Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* (1988). The next time I have an opportunity to teach a course on BC literature, this is where I would like to place this book, grateful to Laurie Ricou and the Oregon State University Press for making it available in a handsome, affordable edition.

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A Dedicated Team: Klohn Leonoff Consulting Engineers, 1951-1991, by Cyril E. Leonoff. Richmond: Bi-Tech Publishers, 1994. viii, 252 pp. Photos. \$49.95 cloth.

Of all the materials used by the civil engineer, the most common is earth. Dams and highways are built of it, industrial plants and tall buildings are founded on it, and, occasionally, structures are destroyed