

## Book Reviews

*Simon Peter Gunanoot/Trapline Outlaw*, by David Ricardo Williams.  
Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1982. Pp. 186; illus.

In the early morning hours of 19 June 1906 Simon Peter Gunanoot, an Indian of the Tsimpsonian nation, was illegally drinking in the Two Mile Hotel near Hazelton, British Columbia. Gunanoot was a prosperous storekeeper at a nearby village, a substantial rancher and an outstanding hunter-trapper. A Christian businessman with wife and children, Gunanoot described himself as a “white man” and was considered by his white neighbours as one of the “good” Indians.

Both assumptions would be severely tested by events in the next few hours. The owner of the hotel, known as “the Geezer,” made a lifelong habit of disappearing when wanted. Now he was passed out drunk, with many of his cronies. Bartending in his stead was an unruly, loudmouthed packtrain cowboy named Alexander MacIntosh, by then approaching “la gloire” on free liquor. MacIntosh made the mistake of casting aspersions on Gunanoot’s wife Sarah. It seems certain he questioned her virtue and may well have claimed or implied that he himself had seduced her. Under the Indian code seduction of one’s spouse justified killing. A drunken brawl ensued. MacIntosh cut Gunanoot’s cheek with a knife and gave his opponent a bruised and bloody face with his fists. Mad with drink and humiliation, Gunanoot left, vowing to return with a gun and “fix” MacIntosh. At about 8 a.m. MacIntosh was found shot to death on a nearby trail. A short time later a second body was discovered about two miles away from the first: the remains of Maxwell Leclair, another packtrain cowboy, with whom neither Gunanoot nor MacIntosh had had any known previous connection. Both had been killed by a single shot upwards through the body; that is, they had apparently been ambushed while on horseback by a man on foot or lying prone. The Crown was unable to find any direct evidence — whether of footprints, ballistics or eyewitnesses — linking Gunanoot to either shooting.

Sloppy policework enabled Gunanoot to escape immediate arrest. In the next two days the prime suspect managed to gather up his wife and two children, his parents, Sarah's daughter by a previous liaison, his brother-in-law and fellow suspect Peter Himadam and the latter's wife and take them north out of reach of the white man's law. Gunanoot led this extended family — continually changing in numbers due to deaths, births and temporary absences of the Himadams — on a thirteen-year wandering over thousands of miles in harsh northwestern British Columbia. The severe winters provided the greatest challenge; the police search, the least. Gunanoot used his hunting and trapping skills as never before, sold furs for provisions through Indian intermediaries and established an intelligence network right back to Hazelton which kept him several comfortable steps ahead of the police. Tiring of the privations of the nomad and concerned about the education of his children, Gunanoot gave himself up at Hazelton on 24 June 1919. Defended by one of the shrewdest criminal lawyers of the day, Stuart Henderson, Gunanoot was acquitted of the murder of MacIntosh after a sensational trial in Vancouver. He died on the trapline in 1933.

David Williams obviously had a dramatic framework to work with, but was faced with serious evidentiary problems. On reading *Trapline Outlaw* the serious student asks what Gunanoot's personal feelings were as he oscillated between the Indian's and the white man's worlds, and what he thought about the white man's justice and the code of the Indian. Gunanoot apparently was never drawn out on these matters in his lifetime, and this intriguing story probably went with him to the grave. Had answers to these questions been available, the diligent Williams would likely have found them.

There are other stories told in detail. In describing the lengthy hue and cry for Gunanoot, the author brings to life the breathtaking and comic incompetence of the provincial police. Gunanoot's father escaped from a jailhouse privy to join his son. On the day the bodies were found, Gunanoot was spotted near his ranch by Constable Kirby of Hazelton and his assistants, but was assumed to be someone else. Posses searched everywhere up to but rarely beyond the fringes of uninhabited country. One party, more daring than most, was apparently tracked by a mocking Gunanoot who carved his initials on their trail blazes. Victoria headquarters employed a con artist who did his manhunting in bars. At one point the Hazelton detachment, believing gossip that Indian war was about to break out, had trenches dug in the town. The insurrection never passed from the apprehended stage. There is also the theme of wide-

spread reluctance to apprehend and punish Gunanoot. Indians, hostile over threats to aboriginal title, were left unmoved by an ever increasing reward. Sympathizers abounded at Hazelton. The local doctor, for example, treated Gunanoot's children in 1909 and did not report the incident to the police. Witnesses at the trial conveniently omitted damning details they had earlier sworn to or communicated to the police. This kind of sympathy has, of course, often been stimulated by successful outlaws, especially those whose romantic escapades can readily be given a moral justification. Such attitudes are usually very revealing of the perceptions of the law held by the people who do not administer it. An excellent Canadian example is Martin Robin's *The Bad and the Lonely* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1976), an account of the dispossessed and crazed Scot, Donald Morrison, folk hero and outlaw of Megantic, Quebec in the 1880s. Williams does provide many illustrations of sympathy and of legend building, but might have probed the subject to a fuller explanation.

Where Williams is strongest is in the two chapters treating the trial and the question of guilt and innocence. The author had no official record to work with. From my experience of writing on trials this means he had to be painstakingly careful in deciding on the basis of differing newspaper accounts just what was said in court. And, of course, he had to judge whether a witness was hedging or lying without perceiving his or her demeanour at first hand. These tasks were performed well, and in addition Williams was able to find illuminating bits from manuscript sources to corroborate a crucial segment of testimony and to reconstruct what Gunanoot told his lawyer. Williams makes good use of his background as a barrister to assess the weight of evidence, clarify technical points, evaluate the performance of counsel and judge the fairness of the verdict. Readers will be disappointed, however, that the author did not comment on Henderson's ethics in accepting the defence of a man he believed to be guilty. The result of Williams' research into extra-judicial sources bearing on innocence or guilt is convincing.

*Trapline Outlaw* is written for the general reader. It goes well beyond previous accounts, corrects some mistakes and provides a good read. It does not purport to be a sequel to Williams' prize-winning biography of Sir Mathew Begbie, *The Man for a New Country* (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Publishing Ltd., 1977). There, much of the mainstream of British Columbia's history was explored and documented. Here, a peripheral though dramatic event and its aftermath are presented carefully but simply. The student of history will regret that the subject could not be made to yield deep insights into white-Indian contact. However, many

little windows into frontier life are opened, and the book includes a useful case study of the human element in the administration of criminal justice.

*University of British Columbia*

F. MURRAY GREENWOOD

*During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman*, by Margaret B. Blackman. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press; Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1982. Pp. 172; illus.

*During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman* is a more complex book than its title reveals. The dust jacket tells us that it is "the first life history of a Northwest Coast Indian woman." Yet *During My Time* is certainly more than this. It is ethnography, life history and travelogue that frequently tells us more about the book's author-editor, Margaret Blackman, an associate professor of anthropology at the State University of New York, than it does about its subject, Florence Edenshaw Davidson.

Chapter 1 deals with the merits of the life history. It is useful in "the study of acculturation," in complementing "the ethnographic account by adding to the descriptive an affective or experimental dimension" and above all "as an anthropological form [which] is compatible with Haida tradition." Having justified the form, Blackman goes on to tell us about her friendship with Florence Davidson, who since 1970 has been her "main female teacher" in the study of the traditional and changing relationship of the Haida people to their natural environment. During the fifty or more hours of tape interviews, conducted mostly in the parlour of Florence Davidson's Old Masset home, Davidson avoided discussing such things as illicit sexual liaisons, witchcraft or feuds between families. Blackman steered her towards her interests: pollution taboos and Haida ceremonial life, among other subjects. The next chapter, however, discusses the life-cycle, economics and ceremonial division of labour, cultural specialists, values, contact and sex roles of Haida women in an admirable attempt to redress the volume of work that has chronicled the "male world seen through the eyes of male writers."

Now, thus prepared for Davidson's account, we are in chapter 3, still kept from it by a "Biographical Sketch" compiling dates and relatives and family movements — from the home in Masset to the canneries in