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DOUGLAS R. HUDSON

Early Maritime Artists of the Pacific Northwest Coast, 1741-1841, by John Frazier Henry. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984. Pp. xvi, 240; 16 colour plates. \$40.00. Cloth.

Although specialists in northwest coast history may have access to a portion of the printed drawings and illustrations of some early expeditions, this is the first major compilation that brings together the product of many voyages of Russia, Britain, France, Spain and the United States. The overall impact of Henry's study is considerable — both in terms of the plates reproduced from a diversity of artists and for the detailed biographies of the individuals who sketched their impressions of the North Pacific littoral and its inhabitants. While only a few of the artists

possessed great talent in drawing or painting, their contributions become quite evident when their works are assembled in one volume rather than scattered in printed works, archives and private collections. Unfortunately, many of the expeditions did not have the services of an individual sufficiently talented to draw pictures or with leisure time enough away from the heavy demands of exploration, commerce or navigation. Some of the Russian sources remain unavailable to Western researchers, and other valuable materials either have been lost or remain hidden and unrecognized in family collections.

Official scientific expeditions of all the participant nations produced by far the richest sources of drawings, sketches and watercolour paintings. Russian artists worked under specific instructions to stress accuracy and to avoid the embellishments and exaggerations of memory. John Webber, who accompanied James Cook, was a gifted landscape painter, and there were others in the expedition who possessed artistic talents. The French sent Gaspard Duché de Vancy with the La Pérouse expedition with orders to draw coastal profiles so important in early navigation and to record "all unusual happenings." While the first Spanish expeditions dispatched from Mexico lacked the trappings of the scientific expeditions including artists, this was overcome by the rich production of Tomás de Suría, José Cardero and others who accompanied Alejandro Malaspina. The American fur traders produced some good graphic materials from their commercial voyages, but it was not until the official expedition led by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes (1836-1842) that they made significant artistic and ethnological contributions employing the camera lucida on some occasions to improve accuracy.

Anthropologists and historians have criticized the early artists for depictions of northwest coast Indians and scenery which sometimes appears to be more European than American. Problems developed between the sketches made on the northwest coast and the final printed illustrations or when artists and lithographers in Europe, Mexico and the United States "improved" the rough draft originals. Artists of the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City made the northwest coast people look like Aztecs who inhabited a country where the vegetation was more Mexican or Californian than northern marine. In many instances, later pictures were unnatural composites of early sketches designed to interest the European viewer rather than to be accurate in ethnological aspects. In England, for example, engraver Joseph Woodcock added palm trees to a Tlingit site and had the natives of Cook Inlet paddling planked boats rather than kayaks. Even greater liberties were taken by French lithog-

raphers who added a Greek athlete holding a discus as well as a trade axe to a Tlingit scene drawn by Duché de Vancy! Despite these distortions, the author is close to the truth when he notes that sketches of native faces were "reasonably correct."

To meet market needs for book sales and to satisfy European ideas about barbarism and civilization, the engravers tampered with original drawings. The unknown North Pacific coastline populated by strange peoples was the perfect scene for published voyages. The illustrators added dramatic elements, mystery and romanticism. Taking original Spanish sketches by José Cardero, Fernando Brambila added skulls, wind-damaged trees tossed about without order, and other touches that would capture the imagination of readers and enhance the mood of primeval barbarism of the northwest coast. By the time of the later Russian expeditions or of the American Wilkes expedition, however, artists such as Louis Choris, Mikhail Tikhanov, Pavel Mikhailov, Alfred Agate, James Dana, Joseph Drayton and Henry Eld produced drawings that even after engraving portrayed real life and stressed accuracy.

Considering the length of the period under consideration and the diversity of the expeditions, Henry has done an excellent job of presenting his subject. Certain themes emerge as common factors in the drawings and sketches of each nation. The magnificent and almost overpowering scenery of the Pacific coastline challenged all artists equally. The indigenous peoples appear in familiar settings in canoes and kayaks offering to engage in commerce and in their houses, which intrigued all of the Europeans. A French drawing of 1786 by Blondela of a large Tlingit canoe with paddlers is similar in every detail to a Spanish sketch by Ignacio Arteaga of 1779 from Bucareli Sound. Even though there are no other known drawings from the Arteaga expedition, the commander was so taken by the Tlingit canoes that he made a valiant effort to portray one in a drawing attached to his written description.

For some expeditions, the author enjoyed a real wealth of materials from which to select samples. One might quibble about some choices, but most are excellent. The maritime fur traders left behind much less artistic material, but their role is not neglected. Unfortunately, some of the sketches and drawings reproduced in the volume are not quite as clear as they might have been. This criticism might be directed to the printer, but the author could have enhanced some of the reproductions by having new photographs made from the originals rather than using existing copies. In the case of the Spanish 1792 drawings from Madrid, Parks Canada in Ottawa has a complete set of slightly different originals that

reproduce much better than the Spanish versions. The 1837 engraving of Chief Maquinna was much better reproduced in another recent publication. Despite these minor complaints, the volume is a most welcome addition to the northwest coast bibliography. It will find an important place in the collection of anyone who is interested in the early history of the coastline from the Oregon-California boundary to Point Barrow, Alaska.

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CHRISTON I. ARCHER

Above Tide: Reflections on Roderick Haig-Brown, by Anthony Robertson. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1984. 136 pp.

This is a modest book. It is neither a biography nor a real critical study of Roderick Haig-Brown; its author describes it as a book of "Reflections," and this unassuming description is correct. It is a brief and tentative look at Haig-Brown's life and works.

Haig-Brown has been dead too short a time for memories of him to have settled enough for a full and frank biography to be feasible. At the same time he is a writer in whose work a transparent simplicity and a fine artistry are so mingled that criticism is difficult unless it recognizes how far Haig-Brown's writing was dependent on and derived from his experience. Like George Orwell, Haig-Brown was one of the writers whose work demonstrates that the doctrine of the "biographical fallacy" is not universally applicable.

Whenever Haig-Brown moved out of experience into the invented space of fiction, he wrote clumsily and unconvincingly. When he wrote of experience, using the kind of personal essay whose form he polished and perfected, he was a convincing and moving writer whose evocation of remembered scenes was superb and whose imagery vibrated with life and colour. To consider his work outside the experience he rendered so powerfully, through a combination of recollection and artifice, is to lose not only its intent but also half its meaning. So, in the end, any criticism of Haig-Brown has to take into account the life of a writer whose social conscience made him a rural magistrate and whose emotional needs made him a complete and perpetual countryman.

Tentative approaches, like that of Mr. Robertson, who gives us the barest of external facts and never tries to probe deeply into the mind of Haig-Brown, a reticent man and very guarded about his private feelings, only reveal how difficult it is, without the biographical data, to go