

# VIEWS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## BC Studies and *The Curve of Time*: *A Reckoning*

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The invitation to contribute to this anniversary issue leads me to wonder how *BC Studies* reflects and refracts its context. How has the journal been shaped by the time and place of its establishment, the changing circumstances of the institution and city in which it has been based these fifty years, and the massively transformed province to which it has ostensibly addressed itself through that period? Tight word limits, along with changes in our understandings of time, memory, and history, mean that some artifice is required to construct this story. To proceed, I adopt and adapt the title of a poetic narrative about life on the BC coast before the Second World War, to frame time not as an arrow or a cycle but as a curve. Second, I select four vantage points along this curve to shape an episodic commentary on the matters at hand. Third, I reflect on what these vantage points reveal to draw a bead on the future. Finally, by marking this reflection as a reckoning I signal it as a point of view, an estimate of position, a holding to account.<sup>1</sup>

*The Curve of Time* belongs (as a title) to M. Wylie Blanchet, who chose it for her account of summers spent cruising British Columbia's Inside Passage with her five children in a small motor boat.<sup>2</sup> She drew

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\* I thank the current editors of *BC Studies* for the invitation to contribute to issue 200. I also much appreciate the helpful comments of former *BC Studies* editors Cole Harris, R.A.J. McDonald, and Richard Mackie, as well as of my colleague Matthew Evenden, on an earlier, longer draft of this essay. None of them would have written either version quite as I have done. I remain solely responsible for this interpretation.

<sup>1</sup> For a very different attempt to find some order in the work published in *BC Studies* through its first forty-four years, see Richard Mackie and Graeme Wynn, eds., *Home Truths: Highlights from BC History* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2012). In this publication with a commercial press, the editors adopted a socio-geographical rather than an analytical, intellectual-historical approach, selecting eleven articles focused on peoples' efforts to make their "homes" in various localities across the province.

<sup>2</sup> M. Wylie Blanchet, *The Curve of Time* (Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing, 1968). The book was first published in England by Blackwood and Sons in 1961 but was little noticed until this Canadian edition. Blanchet's "Foreword" begins: "This is neither a story nor a log; it is just an account" (7).

inspiration from the Belgian playwright and poet Maurice Maeterlinck's adaptation of British philosopher J.W. Dunne's arguments that linear conceptions of time were flawed.<sup>3</sup> In Blanchet's recollection, Maeterlinck showed that "Time is just a dimension of Space, and that there is no difference between the two, except that our consciousness roves along this Curve of Time."<sup>4</sup> Extending this notion, I suggest that views of the past (and the understandings that flow from them) shift as memories are jogged, sharpened, or worn down by accumulating experience and by ever-changing angles of vision as one looks back from different points along the curve.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> According to Blanchet, "On board our boat one summer we had a book by Maurice Maeterlinck called *The Fourth Dimension*"; Maeterlinck's book was, in fact, *The Life of Space*, translated by Bernard Miall (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928), of which "The Fourth Dimension" was the opening section. Maeterlinck borrowed from J.W. Dunne, *An Experiment with Time* (London: A.C. Black, 1927), which argues that linear conceptions of time (including Einstein's fixed spacetime) are flawed. Although this book was often reissued, it and others by Dunne on the theory of serialism had less influence in science than upon literature: J.B. Priestley, H.G. Wells, John Buchan, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and others were influenced by Dunne's ideas, and it has been said that he "undoubtedly helped to form something of the imaginative climate" of the interwar years (see V. Stewart, "J. W. Dunne and literary culture in the 1930s and 1940s," *Literature and History* 17, 2 [2008]: 62–81).

<sup>4</sup> Blanchet, *Curve of Time*, 13. The book has appeared in several editions and its author has been the subject of a separate study: Cathy Converse, *Following the Curve of Time: The Legendary M. Wylie Blanchet* (Victoria: TouchWood, 2008). Maleea Acker, "A World Apart and Kindred: M. Wylie Blanchet's *The Curve of Time*," *Canadian Literature*, 222 (Autumn 2014): 198–203 helpfully suggests that Blanchet thought that one moves through the world and time as one travels through water, and that both the world and time are marked by eddies, whirlpools, calms, backwaters, and shoals. On another curve of time, my sometime associate editor, Richard Mackie, informs me that he grew up down the road from Blanchet and that at age thirteen he dug up her bottle dump; he still has some of her interwar jam jars.

<sup>5</sup> In doing this I am also influenced by Stephen J. Gould's observation that humans are embedded in the passage of time. In his view, Judeo-Christians have generally resolved this "buzzing complexity" into a dichotomy, either casting time as "an irreversible sequence of unrepeatable events" or taking fundamental states as ever present and immutable. Conceiving of time in linear terms, as an arrow linking past, present, and future, emphasizes the distinctiveness of particular moments, fosters a sense of change, and opens the way to ideas of evolution and progress. Adopting a cyclical view of time renders it directionless and denies the causal effects and historical meaning of particular events. Modern societies generally hold to the linear view, pre-modern societies typically espoused some form of cyclical conception. But, as Gould notes, "Western people who hope to understand history must wrestle intimately with both" because, whereas the former makes distinct and irreversible events intelligible, the latter allows comprehension of "timeless order and lawlike structure." Stephen J. Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 15–16.

## WAY STATION 1: 1968–69

*BC Studies* began without ceremony or explanation. It took a decade for UBC colleagues, historian Margaret Prang and political scientist Walter Young (who shared editorial responsibility for the journal between 1968 and 1983), to offer an account of its origins and purpose. The demise of the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* in 1958, and the growing number of scholars from several disciplines “in need of a magazine to publish their research,” propelled the establishment of the journal as an outlet for well-written scholarly work on the province by academics and others.

These were pragmatic and profoundly local justifications for the journal. Expansion was in the educational air.<sup>6</sup> In a dozen years, the government granted full university status to Victoria University College (1963), established BCIT (1964) and Simon Fraser University (1965), and inaugurated two-year university transfer programs in ten community colleges (1965–75). UBC student enrolment doubled (to approximately twenty thousand) in the decade after 1958. In 1969, British Columbia had 2,270 full-time university teachers (twice the number of 1964), and UBC employed fifteen hundred or so.<sup>7</sup> In these five years UBC expenditures on buildings and facilities topped \$70 million.<sup>8</sup> Still, the president reported that 1968–69 was full of vigorous debate about the shortage of funds, the increasing number of students, and the role and function of the university in contemporary society. There was notably little discussion of the latter issue in presidential reports, however.

In the 1960s, UBC was a provincial university focused on undergraduate education. Almost 88 percent of its students were from British Columbia, and well over half of them came from Greater Vancouver. About 7 percent came from other Canadian provinces, and one in twenty from beyond Canada. Walter Gage’s 1968–69 President’s Report noted curriculum innovations and portrayed a university training young people to make useful contributions to the economy and society of the province. But not even relatively provincial educational backwaters were spared the challenges of student unrest in the late 1960s. Early in 1968, the UBC Alma Mater Society sought greater student participation in a range of university affairs, from academic appointments to student discipline and the evaluation of teaching. In October, American activist Jerry Rubin

<sup>6</sup> John B. MacDonald, *Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 1962).

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada, Historical Statistics of Canada, Section W: Education, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionw/4147445-eng.htm#3>.

<sup>8</sup> Walter H. Gage, *The Report of the President of the University of British Columbia for the Academic Year 1968–69* (Vancouver, 1969), 10, <https://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/pdfs/presidents/1969.pdf>.

encouraged UBC students to “cast off the shackles of society” and led them to occupy the Faculty Club.<sup>9</sup> Amid all of this (though of marginal relevance to the protests) were signs of a quickening interest in research at UBC. Enrolment in graduate studies climbed rapidly during the decade to almost 2,500 in 1969. Still, there were barely 100 PhDs among the 4,100 or so UBC degrees conferred in 1969; about 400 students received master’s qualifications.<sup>10</sup>

All of this places the establishment of *BC Studies* in a period of intense local change, though the journal hardly marked the fact. An article in issue 2, on “Vancouver Civic Party Leadership,” captured something of the political excitement, even turmoil, of the times. It began: “During 1968 there was more political activity in Vancouver than at any other time in recent decades.” A separate discussion of the 1922 student campaign to hasten building on the Point Grey campus noted that “struggle between the universities and the provincial government of British Columbia for increased assistance to higher education is not new.”<sup>11</sup> For the most part, however, the journal carried just the sort of work its founding editors envisaged: research reports from multiple academic fields on BC topics. Through the first four years, contributions came from a dozen disciplines and a small handful were by schoolteachers and lay-enthusiasts. Historians appeared most often and most regularly, ahead of political scientists. There were two special issues, one focused on archeology and the other on “National Economic Issues: A View from the West Coast,” with thirteen contributions from the UBC Department of Economics.

The inherent tension between national and regional perspectives implicit in the title of the second special issue points to the larger context out of which *BC Studies* emerged. Amid the euphoria of 1967, historian Ramsay Cook urged Canadians to “understand and explain the regional, ethnic and class identities” that constituted their country rather than continue their search for an elusive national identity.<sup>12</sup> A couple of years later, as opposition to the Americanization of Canada gained traction, Maurice Careless repurposed these sentiments in the

<sup>9</sup> More detail and photographs can be found in Sheldon Goldfarb, *The Hundred-Year Trek: A History of Student Life at UBC* (Victoria: Heritage House, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> Gage, *Report of the President*.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Easton and Paul Tennant, “Vancouver Civic Party Leadership: Backgrounds, Attitudes, and Non-Civic Party Affiliations,” *BC Studies* 2 (Summer 1969): 19–29; John Rodenhizer, “The Student Campaign of 1922 to ‘Build the University’ of British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 4 (Spring 1970): 21–37.

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion of the issues in this paragraph, see P.A. Buckner, “‘Limited Identities’ Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History,” *Acadiensis* 30, 1 (2000): 4–15; Ramsay Cook, “Canadian Centennial Celebrations,” *International Journal* 22, 1 (1967): 659–63.

*Canadian Historical Review*. He argued that the “limited identities” framed by “region, culture and class” set Canadian society apart from that in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Such sentiments also chimed well with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s antipathy towards nationalism in all its guises, and it encouraged acceptance of the “federal, sectional and pluralist” character of the country as Quebec separatism became a force. As Canada experienced “a growth of regionalism in the formulation of economic and social policies, and in politics,” new niches for regional scholarship opened up across the country.<sup>14</sup> The arrival of *BC Studies* was followed in relatively quick succession by *Acadiensis: A Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* (1971) and *Prairie Forum* (1976).

#### WAY STATION 2: 1993–94

Twenty-five years after the inception of *BC Studies*, editor Allan Smith pondered the implications, for the journal, of changes in scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. The convictions upon which regional scholarship rested – that local study provided a window onto universal experience, that case studies could illuminate general truths, that the devil lay in the details – were being challenged. New claims insisted that knowledge derived from concerted, rigorous engagement with local sources was just as indeterminate as that derived from necessarily more partial encounters with vastly larger places and seemingly more complex societies. In part this was because scholars came to their tasks from radically different circumstances, with all sorts of presuppositions, bearing numerous and sundry conceptual and linguistic tools, all of which shaped ideas about and interpretations of the things under study. All knowledge is contingent and uncertain. Hayden White’s linguistic turn, and all that followed immediately in its wake, was making a mark in British Columbia and reforming scholarship on the province.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> J.M.S. Careless, “‘Limited Identities’ in Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 50, 1 (1969): 1–10.

<sup>14</sup> Margaret Prang, “Twenty-Five Years of *BC Studies*,” *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993–94): 13

<sup>15</sup> Hayden White, “The Burden of History,” *History and Theory* 5 (1966): 111–34; Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 113. For an assessment of White’s contributions, see Herman Paul, *Hayden White* (London: Polity Press, 2011). Keith Jenkins was perhaps the most vigorous advocate of postmodern history in the wake of White. His books include: *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991); *On “What Is History?”: From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995); *Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999); *Refiguring History: New Thoughts on an Old Discipline* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); and *At the Limits of History: Essays in History and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009). These are usefully reviewed in Alexander Macfie, “Keith Jenkins Retrospective,” *Reviews in History* 1266, <https://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1266>. Some sense of the responses to these developments (which were many) can be gained from Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997); Joyce Appleby,

Debate about the nature of nations also contributed to this process. The celebrations of 1967 reified the idea of Canada. Twenty-five years on, it was common to insist that nations – along with many other concepts – were constructions.<sup>16</sup> At much the same time, the inexorable march of globalization; increasing interest in studies focused on gender, class, and race; and new enthusiasm for “social theory” combined to weaken the place of the nation in scholarly discourse. Work at the local scale continued, because people lived in places, sources pertained to them, and they were the locus of experience, but inquiries tended to turn on general constructs (gender, race, etc.) as research was shaped by what Allan Smith termed a “data-concept polarity.” All of this began to undo the easy, earlier assumption that regions were constituent parts of the national whole and that knowing them better would improve our understanding of that larger entity.<sup>17</sup>

In Smith’s assessment disciplines differed in their readiness to adapt. Students of literature were already accustomed to reading texts as sites of “multiple ‘truths’ and significations,” and anthropologists neither assumed determinacy nor “characteristically framed their activities in terms of the national.” Sociologists sometimes held “exaggerated notions of structure, stability, and pattern,” but they accepted that social phenomena are situated and dynamic, and they were well attuned to considering institutions and behaviour “in terms of interest, class, racialization and the gendering of roles.” Researchers in history and economics were reluctant to “confront established ways of thinking,” and political scientists were going against the flow as they forsook the study of provincial party systems and political culture to identify what British Columbia shared with the rest of the country.

#### WAY STATION 3: 1996–2002

When Cole Harris and Jean Barman took the editorial reins they thanked Allan Smith for making *BC Studies* into an indispensable forum for interpretations of this “booming fractious” province that constituted “a large, fascinating corner of the world.”<sup>18</sup> The journal was thriving, its steady progression evident. Yet there were new prospects to entertain:

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Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: WW Norton, 1994); and Gertrude Himmelfarb, “Telling It as You Like It: Postmodernist History and the Flight from Fact,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 October 1992: 12–15.

<sup>16</sup> Allan Smith, “Editorial,” *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993–94): 6–8.

<sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 1983).

<sup>18</sup> The Editors, “Editorial,” *BC Studies* 108 (Winter 1995–96): 3–4.

among those mooted were short essays with fewer than two thousand words; occasional exceptionally long articles; “good poems with obvious British Columbian content”; and small collections of drawings or photographs accompanied by brief commentaries. Echoing Robin Fisher’s lament in issue 100, Harris and Barman also thought that *BC Studies* could (and should) be more argumentative and “more explicitly caught up with the current cultural, economic, and political life of the province.”<sup>19</sup> Changes were obvious immediately, and most of the editors’ aspirations were realized in the last four years of the twentieth century. The four issues that appeared in 1996 (109 to 112) included poems by Patrick Lane, Susan Musgrave, Stephanie Bolster, Peter Trower, and others. There were discussions of maps, by Cole Harris and Robert Harris, and a lively forum on the (disputed) importance of class and class struggle in the writing of BC history. Three articles focused on the BC economy and its forestry sector in issue 113 were illustrated and amplified by two “photoscapes” prepared by the editors. One of these exemplified the editors’ desire for a more challenging tone by finding “two rhetorics” in photographs of “the machines, men, and landscapes associated with industrial logging” in the postwar years: “one of progress and the other of dehumanization and destruction.”<sup>20</sup>

Still, the tension that had stretched – and at times invigorated – the journal since its inception remained. Was it an academic publication with tightly circumscribed geographical scope? Or was it an outlet for good, accessible writing that would appeal to and inform the people of British Columbia about their place in the world? Historian Chad Reimer confronted this question in a seven-page review essay: “A Sense of Place: The Local in British Columbia History.”<sup>21</sup> Noting the public appetite for history in British Columbia evidenced by the commercial success of local publishers producing “accessible, well-written, engaging, and human history,” Reimer lamented that academics had “largely abdicated the field of popularized history.” University, college, and departmental committees and even fellow scholars tended to look askance at “generalized historical writing” when assessing the value of “learned publications.” By insisting that historical findings are useful only insofar as they deal with “common historical processes or forces” and “only if they can be applied elsewhere,” academic historians tended to “denigrate the local

<sup>19</sup> For Fisher, see Robin Fisher, “Matter for Reflection: *BC Studies* and British Columbia History,” *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993–94): 59–77.

<sup>20</sup> The Editors, “Photoscape: Fordism in the Woods,” *BC Studies* 113 (Spring 1997): 65.

<sup>21</sup> Chad Reimer, “A Sense of Place: The Local in British Columbia History,” *BC Studies* 127 (Autumn 2000): 109–15.

by devaluing the particular.” Calling into question the sense, prevalent in the late 1960s, that regional scholarship was important because case studies could illuminate general truths, Reimer cautioned against “seeing the local as significant only as it reflects or reveals the larger context or similar developments elsewhere.” Hewing to this line meant that one was likely to miss “the diversity, ambiguity, and proximity of the past.”

Two years on, Harris and Barman picked up this thread in their final editorial, although they spun it quite differently from Reimer. Regional journals such as *BC Studies* must, they insisted, “write from the local out into the world.” More than this, they identified “the pressing contemporary intellectual challenge” as bringing “both the local and the theoretical into rigorous focus.” National and international journals were not propitious places in which to work out the balance between general theory and local intricacies. Readers of these journals might be au fait with the latest theoretical positions, but most of them would have little specific knowledge of the complexities of distant places such as British Columbia. There lay the “tantalizing opportunity” of *BC Studies* – to ground general theory in the particularities of this place.<sup>22</sup>

#### WAY STATION 4: 2008–09

The context in which *BC Studies* approached its fortieth anniversary was very different from that in which it had begun.<sup>23</sup> In forty years, the population of the province had doubled and diversified. In 1968, Indigenous peoples accounted for about 3 percent and visible minorities for about 20 percent of the province’s population of 2 million. In the early 2000s, people of European origin accounted for less than two-thirds of British Columbians, visible minorities made up about 30 percent, and Indigenous people almost 6 percent. Although there were 4.2 million residents of the province, print subscriptions to *BC Studies* were down appreciably.

<sup>22</sup> The Editors, “Editorial,” *BC Studies* 133 (Spring 2002): 3–4. Cole Harris illuminated the nature of this tantalizing opportunity with his “How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, 1 (2004): 165–82.

<sup>23</sup> For further discussion of some aspects of this transformation, see H. Craig Davis and Thomas A. Hutton, “The Two Economies of British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 82 (Summer 1989): 3–15; H. Craig Davis, “Is the Metropolitan Vancouver Economy Uncoupling from the Rest of the Province?” *BC Studies* 98 (Summer 1993): 3–19; H. Craig Davis and Thomas A. Hutton, *Structural Change in the British Columbia Economy: Regional Diversification and Metropolitan Transition* (Victoria: Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, 1992); T. Behrish, R. Hayter, and T.J. Barnes, “Resource Town Restructuring, Youth and Changing Labour Market Expectations: The Case of Grade 12 Students in Powell River, BC,” *BC Studies* 103 (2003): 75–103.

Early in the new millennium UBC's leaders proclaimed the institution one of the world's best universities and declared their commitment to producing "a new generation of global citizens." According to UBC's annual report for 2003–04, there was "a new energy pulsing through ... [the university] community." Student numbers were up. Research funding had more than doubled. UBC boasted "hundreds of academic agreements with the world's best universities," was "Canada's foremost centre for Asian Studies," and believed that "the best university education ... [was] innovative in nature and international in scope." Circumstances and location had conspired to generate "a certain alchemy that, in turn, [was] creating a whole new realm of global possibility." A year or so later, as UBC Vancouver moved to integrate its new Okanagan campus, a planning document fleshed out the qualities of the global citizens the university would graduate. They would be people "willing to think beyond boundaries of place, identity and category, and recognize all human beings as their equals while respecting humanity's inherent diversity."<sup>24</sup>

Such ambitions reflected both the strategic commitments of institutional leaders and the zeitgeist of the times. Administrators embraced the need to "internationalize" the campus in the 1990s and developed sometimes innovative (though not always painless) intercultural exchange programs that brought dozens of students each year from Japan (and then, early in the new millennium, from Korea and Mexico) to study in Vancouver.<sup>25</sup> Such efforts – and the broader rhetoric of global citizenship – were given new impetus after the World Trade Center attack in New York in September 2001. They also fit, comfortably, with the increasing globalization of world economies and international trade. In the last days of 2005, the *Globe and Mail* carried a story about UBC president Martha Piper under the headline: "Knowledge Has No Geographic Boundaries." Hitherto, Rod Mickleburgh observed, the west coast institution had been known as "a comfortable Ivory Tower, cut off from the city and forever looking inward rather than outward to the world beyond." This was no longer the case. The tireless president had transformed "the formerly

<sup>24</sup> The University of British Columbia, 2003–04 *Annual Report*. Global citizens as defined by the UBC Okanagan Academic Planning Team, March 2005, quoted in the "Defining – and Modeling – Global Citizenship" section of The University of British Columbia, 2004–05 *Annual Report, Towards 2010*, <http://news.ubc.ca/annualreports/2005/citizenship.html>

<sup>25</sup> The UBC–Ritsumeikan Academic Exchange Program began in 1991. I was the UBC Arts representative on the Joint Steering Committee for the better part of a decade, but the sometimes tumultuous (although also successful) history of these years seems to have escaped public record.

laid-back university.”<sup>26</sup> Not everyone was as sanguine. As one critic noted, many of those who embraced the notion of global citizenship seemed to find its exemplars in the “growing cadre of multi-national lawyers, accountants and executives” who jetted across the globe in service of “the ruthlessly capitalist economic system that now dominates the planet.”<sup>27</sup>

That system had been a long time building, but it became widely established and generally known, late in the twentieth century, as neoliberalism. Marked by intense faith in the benefit of free market arrangements, a commitment to the deregulation of enterprise, and a desire to privatize almost everything, it worked in various ways to “hollow out the state.”<sup>28</sup> As the geographer David Harvey and others pointed out, neoliberal priorities tend to seep beyond economics and politics so that even institutions ostensibly devoted to the public sphere come to “mimic and extend neoliberal principles.”<sup>29</sup> So universities increasingly measured their value by benchmarks and competitive rankings. As public funding of universities declined, new competitive strategies emerged to fill the shortfall. Institutional competition on a global scale trickled down to influence the behaviour of faculty members by particularly esteeming publications in highly ranked international journals, encouraging the acquisition of research funding, and promoting partnerships with industry. By 2008, UBC was well embarked on this path. Instrumental and financial agendas grew more powerful, even if they were sometimes

<sup>26</sup> Rod Mickleburgh, “‘Knowledge Has No Geographic Boundaries’ Martha Piper: UBC President Has Transformed the Formerly Laid-Back School into a Major Player,” *Globe and Mail*, 27 December 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Byers, “Are You a ‘Global Citizen’? Really? What Does That Mean?” *The Tyee*, 5 October 2005. David Jefferess, “Global Citizenship and the Cultural Politics of Benevolence,” *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices* 2, 1 (2008): 7–36 is more specific in noting: “Significantly, the primary and most visible ways in which global citizenship is articulated on the campuses of UBC all but ignore material relations of global power and presume the privileged place of UBC students and faculty to ‘make a difference’ as outside of history.” For a similar assessment of the US situation, see T. Zemach-Bersin, “Global Citizenship and Study Abroad: It’s All about US,” *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices* 1, 2 (2007): 16–28. In a 2012 study, two Canadian researchers concluded that “global citizenship” had become an “empty signifier and an overflowing container of discourse, practice, and policy.” Shelane Jorgeson and Lynette Shultz, “Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Post-Secondary Institutions: What Is Protected and What Is Hidden under the Umbrella of GCE?” *Journal of Global Citizenship and Equity Education* 2, 1 (2012): 1–22. These authors also note: “Searching the online presence of higher educational institutions for the keyword ‘global citizenship’ during annual literature reviews between 2007 and 2011, we have observed an increase in programs claiming to educate students to become global citizens, predominantly in North America, England and Australia” (5).

<sup>28</sup> Jeremy Wilson, “For the Birds? Neoliberalism and the Protection of Biodiversity in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 142–43 (Summer/Autumn 2004): 241–77.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Fish, “Neoliberalism and Higher Education,” *New York Times*, 8 March 2009, offers a concise summary of these developments and sounds a note of caution about the too glib and generally pejorative use of the term “neoliberal ideology.”

wrapped in the rhetoric of civic purpose. So fine words about global citizenship have provided cover for an internationalization strategy that has transformed the UBC student body. Today one in four of the fifty-five thousand students on the Vancouver campus are “international”; their tuition fees are substantially higher than those for domestic students, and the university has become heavily dependent on their continuation.<sup>30</sup>

When Robert McDonald indicated, in 2007, that he planned to take a research (sabbatical) leave in 2008–09 after six productive years at the helm of *BC Studies*, the dean of arts convened a search committee to appoint his successor.<sup>31</sup> When advertisements and personal approaches failed to produce a viable candidate, the committee found itself at an impasse. After consulting the dean, the committee chair reported that support for the journal would be terminated unless an editor were found. Bushes were beaten again, to no avail; McDonald indicated that he might continue, but those above demurred.

The challenge of finding a new editor was real. Career-stage and other commitments precluded some from stepping up. There were also financial and intellectual concerns. With a print circulation of just over five hundred copies and subscription fees that had not increased in five years, the costs of producing and mailing each issue of *BC Studies* exceeded what people were paying to receive it. This, at least, could be addressed. More intractable was the loss of BC expertise in the UBC Faculty of Arts. A two-decade quest for global eminence had favoured “international” or theoretical rather than supposedly “local and parochial” interests in faculty hiring. The writing on the wall should have been obvious when a dean questioned the quality of the three short-listed candidates for a position in Canadian history because none of them held a doctorate from a highly ranked university outside Canada.

Word of “the impending demise” of *BC Studies* began to seep out as I agreed to assume the editorship on a *pro tem* basis for one year. Two or three sharp-minded, emeritus colleagues assured me that they were ready and willing to mount a sit-in at the president’s office should “nonsense talk” about closing the journal continue. I was gratified by the support but doubtful about the effectiveness of the proposed action. Although

<sup>30</sup> Some examples for the 2018–19 academic year: For undergraduate students in Arts and Science, per academic credit (full-time = 30 credits per year): Domestic (D) \$176.45, International (I) \$1,256.33. For full-time standard master’s degree programs, per year, D \$4,897.86, I \$13,502.52; master of museum education, minimum fee: D \$15,541.04, I \$25,541.98; master of occupational therapy, minimum fee: D \$14,514.27, I \$82,796.20; standard doctoral program, minimum fee (two years), D \$9,795.72, I \$27,005.04; doctor of education in educational leadership, minimum fee, D \$33,611.78, I \$48,170.74.

<sup>31</sup> I served on this committee, which met sporadically across the better part of an academic year.

they espoused tactics fine-tuned in the radical 1960s, my colleagues' commitment to *BC Studies* was deeply conservative. It valued the traditional form of the journal, even as rapid, threatening, and incompletely understood changes in journal publishing spawned a rising chorus of agitation for "open access" to research.

As the co-editor of an Elsevier journal, I had seen the advantages of digital editorial systems. With Leanne Coughlin's able assistance, *BC Studies* was moved to the Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform developed by the Public Knowledge Project. That saved time and money and vastly expanded the journal's global reach. To balance our continuing dependence on subscription revenue with calls for open access, we established a "moving window" that made the content of *BC Studies* freely available, online, two years after its publication. As this transition unfolded, my one-year appointment turned into two. Then it was commuted into a life sentence, happily and satisfyingly served until my retirement in 2016.

Recruiting Richard Mackie as book reviews editor and then associate editor allowed us to publish at least four articles and twenty-five book reviews in every issue. "Photoscapes" evolved into "photoessays"; we introduced Case Comments to contextualize and explain, in accessible prose, legal decisions of broad public importance; we added occasional, invited retrospective reflections by senior scholars who have made important contributions to BC scholarship; and we took advantage of improvements in printing technology (and the lower costs that flowed from them) to run some colour in the journal's pages. Rather than attempting to square the circle of theory and locality, we edited hard for clarity of exposition and sought to remedy gaps in the literature by encouraging submissions and generating special issues. Five articles published in the journal between 2011 and 2016 won national or international awards for scholarship. When we applied in 2014 for renewal of our SSHRC funding, we were able to report a five-year pattern of about nine thousand downloads a month of articles from the OJS platform; about three thousand visits a month to the *BC Studies* website; and almost 100,000 visits to *BC Studies* between 2012 and 2014 on the sites of commercial journal aggregators. (These patterns continue. The latest data show 7,500 article downloads a month on OJS, over 4,000 visits per month to the BCS website, and about 33,000 hits per year on the Ebsco and Proquest aggregator sites. Numbers following *BC Studies* on Twitter and Facebook have more than doubled in the last few years.)

## THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Scholars once eschewed the possibility of writing a history of the present. They insisted that historical distance – the passage of time – is required to develop the perspective and detachment required to grasp the nature and implications of changes that envelop us. Yet change is ongoing, and we are often told that “what’s past is prologue.” Retrospection invites an appraisal of where we are now and prompts reflection on what lies ahead. Any use of the past to understand the present and divine the future is surely sharpened by attention to the immediate antecedents of current circumstances. With forethought and intent, specific changes along the curve of time can be focused in upon, calibrated, and analyzed; their trajectory can be estimated. Broader shifts are much more difficult to identify clearly. Framed by comparisons of experience and expectation, their interpretation depends upon memories (usually partial and selective) of the past, perceptions of a shifting present, and anticipations of an uncertain future.

The narrative structures by which people interpret their shifting circumstances are also freighted with consequences. Some smooth perturbations and minimize the enormity of change; others emphasize disruption and make changes appear more radical than they are. The first of these choices places the current moment on a continuum. The second conjures images of tipping points and the conviction that today (and tomorrow) are (going to be) quite different from the days that came before. Perhaps this helps us to understand why broad currents of contemporary change often threaten to sweep up everything in their path. Excited by prospects of change, and keen to see them realized, those who embrace the new dawn almost invariably draw more attention to their characterization of the times than do those who see the present as much like the past. But enthusiasm for the shiny and new should not consign what came before to unjust neglect.

Both *BC Studies* and UBC have changed of late and offer new faces to the world. In broad terms it is clear that our current postcolonial moment and changes brought about by new media technologies are reshaping the journal. At UBC the discourse of internationalization and global citizenship has ceded ground, in recent years, to a discourse centred on reconciliation. “Inclusion, collaboration and innovation” are the watchwords of the university’s new strategic plan.<sup>32</sup> Mirroring the federal

<sup>32</sup> The University of British Columbia, *Shaping UBC’s Next Century. Strategic Plan 2018–2028*, [https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018\\_UBC\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Full-20180425.pdf](https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018_UBC_Strategic_Plan_Full-20180425.pdf).

government's strong commitment to this agenda following the report of Justice Sinclair's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, the very space of the campus has been restyled, and much enhanced, by new physical structures: most markedly the thirty-four-foot tall Musqueam *s̓i:łqəy' qeqən* (double-headed serpent post), carved by Musqueam artist Brent Sparrow Jr. and erected near the eastern entrance to the campus in 2016; the fifty-five-foot Reconciliation Pole, carved in red cedar by Haida hereditary chief and master carver ʔidansuu (Edenshaw) James Hart, and raised at the south end of campus in 2017; and the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, opened in the heart of campus in 2018 to provide residential school survivors and their families access to the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and to give UBC students and visitors ways to understand the history and lasting effects of Indian residential schools.<sup>33</sup>

Such new developments are worthy of celebration. But inertia – the tendency to sustain an existing state – remains a force. Neither UBC nor *BC Studies* has sloughed its past. Now sixty-five thousand students strong, and keen to proclaim itself “Canada’s most international university,” UBC remains firmly wedded to the neoliberal principles that have shaped so much of the world through the last several decades. World rankings, citation counts, growing numbers of research projects with industrial partners, even the fact that 56 percent of UBC research publications involve international co-authors, are all highlighted in the most recent annual report.<sup>34</sup> *BC Studies* remains dependent, to greater or lesser degree, on the work that colleagues choose to submit to its pages.

In this context, it is worth recognizing that UBC and many of its faculty members have long demonstrated a strong commitment to Indigenous issues. Harry Hawthorne, UBC’s first anthropologist, was appointed to the university in 1947. Between 1954 and 1956, he led a comprehensive study of the Indians of British Columbia for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. In the 1960s, he organized another large interdisciplinary and influential project published as *The Survey of Contemporary*

<sup>33</sup> Linc Kesler, director of UBC’s First Nations House of Learning, commented in February 2018 that Indigenous visitors to UBC “really feel that, in some really important ways, the campus is a different place in their experience of it, and they see a kind of different way of addressing issues and thinking about things here than it was here previously.” Joshua Azizi, “UBC’s impending Indigenous Strategic Plan to Complement Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” *Ubysey*, 7 February 2018, <https://www.ubyssey.ca/news/ubc-to-develop-indigenous-strategic-plan/>.

<sup>34</sup> The University of British Columbia, *Annual Report, 2017–2018*, <https://news.ubc.ca/2018/07/23/ubc-2017-2018-annual-report/>.

*Indians of Canada*.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Audrey Hawthorn served for twenty unremunerated years as curator of the university's ethnography teaching collection. Indigenous carvers, including Mungo Martin, Bill Reid, and Robert Davidson, were employed and encouraged by the Hawthorns over the years. Lacking space at UBC, Audrey Hawthorn mounted displays in the windows of a downtown department store and at the Vancouver Art Gallery in the 1950s and in the Terre Des Hommes/Man and his World pavilion in Montreal in 1969 and 1970. The enthusiastic response to the latter, in major media outlets, helped to secure funding for the Arthur Erickson-designed Museum of Anthropology building, which opened in 1976.<sup>36</sup>

*BC Studies* has a similar, if shorter, history of concern with Indigenous issues. Fifteen special issues have focused on the First Nations of British Columbia. Three deal with First Nations archeology. Two deal explicitly with colonialism. Two with courts and the treaty process. Ethnographic practices and Aboriginal geographies are each the subject of special double issues. One special issue deals with ethnobotany. Another half-dozen range across varied topics from Aboriginal land claims, through First Nations uprisings and politics, to missionary activity and potlatch law. Beyond this, numerous articles on similar topics have appeared in regular issues across the decades.

These are important markers on the long path to the present. They remind us that we build on the past, and they help to frame both

<sup>35</sup> Harry B. Hawthorn, *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958); Harry B. Hawthorn, *The Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: A Report on Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, 1966–67). There were others whose work might find a place in a fuller commentary, including Wilson Duff and Mike Kew (see note 34), Carl (Robert) Borden, UBC professor of German but BC's first major archaeologist. Also worth notice is UBC's conferral of an honorary doctorate on Alice Ravenhill in 1948 – for more on Ravenhill, see LiLynn Wan, “A Nation of Artists: Alice Ravenhill and the Society for the Furtherance of British Columbia Indian Arts and Crafts,” *BC Studies* 178 (Summer 2013): 51–70; Mary Leah de Zwart, “Alice Ravenhill: Making Friends with the Powers That Be,” *BC Studies* 191 (Autumn 2016): 35–57; and Mary Leah de Zwart, *Alice Ravenhill: Never Say Die*, Ormsby Review Press, 15 December 2016, <https://bcbooklook.com/2016/12/15/alice-ravenhill-never-say-die-by-mary-leah-de-zwart/>.

<sup>36</sup> Audrey Hawthorn, *A Labour of Love: the Making of the Museum of Anthropology, UBC, the First Three Decades, 1947–1976* (Vancouver: Museum of Anthropology, 1993). See also Michael M. Ames, “A Note on the Contributions of Wilson Duff to Northwest Ethnology and Art,” *BC Studies* 31 (Autumn 1976): 3–12. Donald N. Abbott, ed., *The World Is as Sharp as a Knife: An Anthology in Honour of Wilson Duff* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1981); J.E. Michael Kew, “Anthropology and First Nations in British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 100 (Winter 1993–94): 78–105; Wendy Wickwire, “The Quite Impossible Task: Douglas Cole and the Ecumenical Challenge of British Columbia's Cultural History,” *BC Studies* 125–126 (Spring/Summer 2000): 10–12; J.E. Michael Kew, “Reflections on Anthropology at the University of British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 193 (Spring 2017): 163–85.

the distinctiveness of postcolonial perspectives and the urgency of reconciliation. The challenges ahead are by no means easy. When UBC sought to improve Indigenous engagement and opened the striking First Nations Longhouse in 1993, institutional leaders talked of enrolling one thousand Indigenous students by the year 2000. Fifteen years later, the first UBC Aboriginal Strategic Plan lamented that barely five hundred Indigenous students attended the university.<sup>37</sup> In the last decade, renewed commitments and the addition of UBC Okanagan have more than tripled that number. In 2018, there are “1,720 Aboriginal undergraduate and graduate students and medical residents at UBC.”<sup>38</sup> This is approximately 2.5 percent of the total.

As the curve of time carries us – individuals, British Columbians, Canadians, First Nations, and newcomers – deeper into the twenty-first century, we will have to resolve conflicting interests and priorities to forge a viable future together. Some of these issues – such as the perennial economy-versus-environment debate – have fallen beyond consideration in this brief essay. They are no less pressing for that. However, as we look back over way stations passed in the previous few pages, and peer ahead from our present vantage, both the value of, and challenges before, *BC Studies* seem clear. If the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama is anywhere near the mark with his claim (in his new book *Identity*) that “democratic societies are fracturing into segments based on ever-narrower identities, threatening the possibilities of deliberation and collective action by society as a whole,” the journal has an important role to play.<sup>39</sup>

Broadly and inclusively conceived – either as a window, through which all British Columbians can see themselves in relation to their fellow inhabitants of the province, or as a forum in which different voices bearing upon the issues that confront us are heard and considered with respect – *BC Studies* should be central to the promotion of citizenship and civic virtue in this province and beyond. The journal has danced through time to variants of this tune despite substantial changes in its intellectual, institutional, provincial, national, and global contexts. Continuing that course will depend on strong and continuing efforts to address the challenges that have confronted the journal’s editors since 1968: providing satisfying fare for local readers and those beyond; holding the interest and rewarding the attention of both academicians

<sup>37</sup> The University of British Columbia, Aboriginal Strategic Plan, 17 December 2008, <https://aboriginal.ubc.ca/files/2013/01/ASP-FinalComplete.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> The University of British Columbia, *2017–2018 Annual Report*, <https://annualreport.ubc.ca>.

<sup>39</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “Against Politics: The New Tribalism and the Crisis of Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs* 97, 5 (Sep/Oct 2018): 93.

and citizens; and maintaining a respected place in a public institution with global aspirations. These are no easy tasks. They may never be accomplished entirely. Yet a half-century of commitment suggests that the game is worth the candle. If it is played right, and the pages of *BC Studies* regularly engage the wide range of issues of concern to people in this province (and beyond) from the broad range of perspectives that have been represented in the journal over the years, each and all of us might come to better understand our roles and responsibilities in this place, and contribute with new resolve to realizing a just, satisfying, and enticing future for all British Columbians.