BOOK REVIEWS

On the Cusp of Contact: Gender, Space and Race in the Colonization of British Columbia

Jean Barman
Edited by Margery Fee

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2020. 496 pp.
$34.95 paper.

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No historian has been able to capture the unique history and diversity of British Columbia as has University of British Columbia professor emeritus Jean Barman, whose brilliant career is encapsulated in a select collection of essays entitled *On the Cusp of Contact: Gender, Space and Race in the Colonization of British Columbia*. Years before institutionalized redress, scholars such as Barman were delving into the untold stories of the colonization of her adopted home of British Columbia (since 1971). Her feminist and outsider perspective allowed her to move beyond the dominant and reiterated British and Canadian tropes of our history to reveal the multiple narratives of a colonial society in which Indigenous people were forced to negotiate new social and economic realities, first within the British colonial administrations and then, following 1871, within the Canadian state.

The sixteen essays, written between 1995 and 2014, capture the essence of Barman's historical method, which is to consider the past on its own terms as opposed to what we might like, or think, it to be. Such a task requires attention to multiple sources and methods of analysis. Barman, who describes herself primarily as an archivist and librarian, not only plumbs obscure historical accounts and statistical records but also seeks out the descendants of historical figures to fill in the many gaps of our received history. She makes sense of people's actions based not on the written opinions of European males but on the historical and social contexts in which they operated. Editor Margery Fee, who provides an excellent introduction and welcome overview of Barman's work, notes Barman's ability to cross the boundaries between history, life writing, sociology, and, I would add, anthropology. This is particularly evident in her ethnographic collaboration with descendant communities and in her exploration of the interplay between individual agency and social structure, which, as Fee observes, "is unusual for many historians" (xix).

As Barman observes in the preface, she was privileged to teach in the Department of Education, where she was free of disciplinary restraints and so able to see British Columbia for what it was or, rather, for what was missing from its story. Barman's 1991 breakthrough publication, *The West beyond the West*, finally replaced Margaret Ormbsy's thoroughly Eurocentric 1958 history of British Columbia with a more inclusive history that more people could recognize as their place in the world.

On the Cusp of Contact is divided into four thematic parts that reflect the chronology and impact of colonization in British Columbia. "Making White Space" compares the erasure of two Indigenous villages in British Columbia's two major cities, Vancouver and Victoria, highlighting the similarities and differences peculiar to time and place. "Indigenous Women" showcases Barman's pioneering essays documenting nineteenth-century Indigenous female agency in the face of colonization, racism, and sexism. The narrative of the first white settler in the Okanagan and elsewhere is turned on its head in "Finding Solace in Families," which explores the lives and mixed-race communities in Fort Langley and on the Gulf Islands, and documents the little-known unions of Chinese miners and Indigenous women throughout the province. The last section, "Navigating Schooling," is pertinent, enlightening, and shocking – not in a sense of horror at the physical and sexual abuse but, rather, at the institutional neglect, the "federal parsimony and white prejudice," that competed with and eliminated a local ideology of common schooling.

The book is particularly appropriate in this day of Truth and Reconciliation, when there is so little understanding of the past and its complexity. According to the old adage, such neglect forces us to repeat our ignorance with each generation. Fortunately, with scholars such as Jean Barman as our guide, and with knowledge of the past in front of us, we can better negotiate an uncertain future.

Creating Indigenous Property: Power, Rights, and Relationships

Edited by Angela Cameron, Sari Graben, and Val Napoleon

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020. 384 pp. $39.95 paper.

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Is it possible for two entirely different legal frameworks, built by ontologically diverse and frequently disparate parties, to coexist under one judicial system? This question would be difficult enough when considering two parties on equal footing, but in the case of Canada it encompasses a history of the oppression and attempted eradication of hundreds of Indigenous nations by colonial settlers, and Indigenous attempts to reassert autonomies they were promised would never be infringed upon.

Creating Indigenous Property brings together a diverse group of scholars who draw on legal, historic, and ethnographic sources to address this monumental challenge and to identify the potential pitfalls in attempting to create viable protections for land and property. Through engaged analysis and comparative studies, the contributors give stark insight into the immense task faced by Indigenous people attempting to gain recognition in a system designed to thwart individual expression when it subverts Western ideals. Carter and Kermoal in particular draw attention to the abhorrent perpetuation of seemingly benign calls to turn Indigenous people into "contributing" members of Canadian society – acts of assimilation in the guise of alleviating poverty (itself only present due to forced repression of pre-existing Indigenous economies).

The contributors repeatedly show how Indigenous values and legal traditions are denigrated whenever they challenge colonial power, problematizing the idea of Canada as a "legally pluralistic state" (121) and demonstrating how attempts to corral Indigenous ontologies into Western legal precedents serve only to perpetuate existing hierarchies. Moving beyond commentary, this volume seeks to conceptualize methods for creating a truly enmeshed system that allows for Indigenous self-determination without assimilation. It problematizes definitions of land title (292), highlights systemic gender inequality, and, through contributors openly disagreeing (122), creates frank discussion that does not pretend to be easily resolvable.

Given the complexity of the subjects attended to in this volume, it remains for the most part impressively accessible to readers without a legal background. Jobin, Morales, and Thom, and Odumosu-Ayanu in particular, take intricate matters and present them in ways that evoke the frustration that Indigenous people must feel when attempting to navigate legal systems. And, for the most part, they do this while retaining narrative clarity. Occasionally, however, the attention to legal detail has the potential to obscure content to all but the most legally astute, with Morin and Baxter presenting incredibly technical analyses with which non-specialists may struggle to engage. Also problematic is Daly's assertion that "the level of technological sophistication [among Indigenous communities] did not allow for human domination over other species" (201). I suggest instead that ontological priority, not technological lack, accounted for this balance. Meanwhile, I found his argument for social obligation and gift reciprocity as tax systems utterly compelling.

By placing the concept of property in Canadian, Indigenous, and global contexts, this volume provides a nuanced and critical analysis of issues that will shape Indigenous experience for generations to come. And it highlights the need for continued, open engagement on the part of people of all backgrounds if the next century is to finally bring an end to an anachronistic and damaging colonial legacy.

The Theatre of Regret: Literature, Art and the Politics of Reconciliation in Canada

David Gaertner

Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021. 320 pp.
$34.95 Epub.

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In *The Theatre of Regret: Literature, Art and the Politics of Reconciliation in Canada,* David Gaertner, an academic author and settler-scholar, centres Indigenous literary and artistic works in order to contribute to critiques of reconciliation. The book is a mobilization of Gaertner's attempt to uplift the voices of Indigenous Peoples as a means of scratching at structural racism and white supremacy. The text aims to trouble Canada's version of reconciliation by interfacing with critical Indigenous studies, Canadian studies, and Indigenous literature, and it highlights ways in which "the discourse of reconciliation enables resource extraction and protects settler fragility" (15).

Gaertner amplifies the brilliance of creative artists such as Sky Dancer Louise Bernice Halfe, Thomas King, Marie Clements, Richard Wagamese, Billy-Ray Belcourt, and Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson in dialogue with critical thinkers Patricia Barkaskas, Daniel Heath Justice, Glen Coulthard, Sarah Hunt, Val Napoleon, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark. Also woven in are opinions from authors of colour, such as Roy Miki, Nalo Hopkinson, and Joy Kogawa, related to critiques of redress and apology from the Canadian settler state.

In Chapter 2, Gaertner points out the idea of static as a kind of interference that can hinder settler understanding of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC is the only commission that, internationally, has eliminated the identities of the potential perpetrators of crimes – blocking the names from even entering the record through survivor narratives and "maintaining their invisibility and anonymity all the way through the Commission's activities" (76). The absence of perpetrator testimony places undue burdens on survivors to bear the full weight of the testimony, and this has real physical, emotional, and ongoing consequences. Furthermore, the Canadian state plays the leading role in a theatre of regret, where survivors are positioned to give testimony and the state is not only acknowledged but also distances itself from "historical" injustice while still maintaining power within an unchanged colonial system. The author cites Dallas Hunt, who comments, "state-sponsored reconciliation efforts tend to require that Indigenous Peoples 'reconcile' themselves to their continued colonization" (83).

Poetics become ceremony in the poems of Sky Dancer Louise Halfe. The poem entitled "Crying for Voice" depicts the silencing effects of colonialism: "I must pull frog / pry its webbed feet / from snails in / my throat" (91). The poem "Der Poop" is a letter to the Pope written in "rez English" that couches anger towards apologies with humour and makes clear the Roman Catholic Church's interference with Cree ways of knowing and being: "dese men, pope, don't know what / tobacco mean, what suffer mean, / … I dired of all dis *kimoti [Cree word for stealing]*, pope" These lines allow the poet to speak truth in a distinct voice using the Cree language. The narrator clears her throat (an expulsion of colonialism) and makes space for Cree expression, while also critiquing what has been stolen and by whom. Readers of Halfe's poems become witnesses to Cree poetics and the vitality of the Cree language by resisting colonial "whiteout" static through love and the resurgence of life, land, and language. Indigenous women, trans, and queer creators expand the boundaries of recognition and representation outside the calcified context of the TRC.

The Theatre of Regret is a timely book that implores Canadian settlers to look at the uncomfortable truth of the narratives we tell ourselves: the truth of residential schools and the truth of ongoing settler colonialism and violence. Through reading and witnessing Indigenous artists, critics, and poets, we can hold space for land, language, culture, and community in order to make structural and systemic change that actualizes Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination and decentres the empty performances of reconciliation.

Against the Current and into the Light: Performing History and Land in Coast Salish Territories and Vancouver's Stanley Park

Selena Couture

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020.
272 pp. $32.95 paper.

Sean Kheraj
York University

Coast Salish Indigenous people never ceded their lands and resources to settlers and have always asserted their sovereignty. Over time, those assertions have taken various forms: petitions, protests, litigation. There have also been cultural assertions of sovereignty, particularly the use of performance and dance. Between 1884 and 1951, the Canadian government outlawed the potlatch and other Indigenous ceremonies as part of its assimilationist *Indian Act* policy, an effort to eradicate Indigenous cultures. Despite the legal prohibition, dance, ceremony, and performance continued to be powerful tools of resistance to colonialism and expressions of sovereignty among Coast Salish nations. As Selena Couture shows in her new book, "the fact that performances were banned whereas visual arts were encouraged is an indication that performance had the power to unsettle colonialist operations" (144). This book draws attention to the historical significance of performance in Indigenous resistance to colonialism in British Columbia.

Against the Current and into the Light is organized into four main chapters. The first lays out the conceptual frameworks that Couture uses to analyze Indigenous performance and its connections to land and place through language. The remaining chapters examine historical case studies of Indigenous and settler performances. Chapter 2 critically reassesses the dedication of Stanley Park and the re-enactment event held in 1943 as acts of creating white settler space in Vancouver. The third chapter focuses on the city's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1946, including *The Diamond Jubilee Show* near x̌ʷay̓x̌ʷəy̓ in Stanley Park and *The Indian and Village Show* across English Bay at sən̓aʔqʷ/Sen'ákw (now Vanier Park). The final chapter considers a more recent example of Indigenous performance in Stanley Park at the short-lived Klahowya Village, an Indigenous cultural tourism site that operated at the former children's farmyard and miniature train from 2010 to 2014.

Between each of the main chapters, Couture deviates from the historical analysis to examine early twenty-first-century theatrical performances written by or performed by Indigenous women. This, she argues, is intended to link the past and the present "to avoid the still common colonial view of Indigenous peoples as being of the past and seek to rectify the absence of Indigenous women from the archival record" (11). The performances analyzed in these interventions include Quelemia Sparrow's podplay *Ashes on the Water* (2011), Western Canada Theatre's 2014 production of Michel Tremblay's *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again* (1998), Marie Clements's production of *The Road Forward* (2014), and Inuit throat singer

Tanya Tagaq's performance at the 2014 PuSh Festival.

This book successfully brings together theatre scholarship with historical analysis of Indigenous and settler performance, raising exciting possibilities for thinking about performance as a form of Indigenous historiography. This interdisciplinary approach adds much to our understanding of the ways in which Coast Salish people adapted performance to the changing contexts of settler colonialism and the persistence of Indigenous sovereignty. Using Stanley Park and adjacent areas in Vancouver as sites of study, Couture provides examples of continued Coast Salish occupation of the land and assertion of Indigenous sovereignty expressed through performance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The chronology is, unfortunately, limited to case studies from the 1940s and one example from the recent past. Broadening the geographic scope of the study might have yielded more chronological depth and evidence of the use of performance as an expression of sovereignty beyond Stanley Park and nearby areas in Vancouver. Certainly, casting a view to Vancouver's suburbs on the North Shore, along the Fraser River, and into the Fraser River Valley might have shed light on what was likely a wider phenomenon. Still, this book offers a useful model for future research that integrates theatre scholarship with historical analysis.

Couture attempts to decolonize the archive in this study by deconstructing the creation of the Vancouver Archives by the founding city archivist, James Skitt Matthews. She makes a good case for rethinking how archives are created in the context of settler colonialism and the historical construction of whiteness. No doubt city leaders in Vancouver constructed Stanley Park as a white space, as Jean Barman and Renisa Mawani have previously argued. Couture's examination of the dedication of Stanley Park and the re-enactment of this event in 1943 adds to these previous studies, reveals the apocryphal nature of the dedication, and ties it to broader efforts to construct white settler identity through commemorative acts and monuments.

While there are elements of Matthews's work on Indigenous history that are problematic forms of salvage anthropology, his oral histories with early settlers and Indigenous people remain indispensable, if flawed, sources of knowledge of both precolonial and early settler-colonial histories of the Lower Mainland. They capture stories that are vital to understanding histories of dispossession, which are the foundations upon which a settler-colonial society was established in British Columbia's Lower Mainland. They also provide knowledge and voices of Indigenous people in this history, however mediated through Matthews. In order to understand the limits of these sources, historians must, as Couture shows, be mindful of the context in which Matthews and his interviewees created them.

Whereas this book excels in applying novel interdisciplinary approaches to the study of historical performance, its structure can feel disjointed, particularly for readers whose main concern is historical analysis. The interventions that move readers from past to present can be abrupt. The effort to bring past and present into conversation isn't always successful as the selected contemporary performances are only remotely connected to Coast Salish histories and instead take a pan-Indigenous perspective. What's lost, it seems, is the specificity of the Coast Salish experience examined in the historical case studies of the main chapters.

Nevertheless, *Against the Current and into the Light* has much to offer readers who are interested in both historical scholarship and theatre/performance studies. For example, Chapter 2, which examines Matthews and the construction of the city archives, is provocative and well worth the consideration of any historian who works in the collections that Matthews arranged so many years ago. The book also invites a closer examination of Indigenous performance histories in other places and across time in Canada.

Searching for Pitt Lake Gold: Facts and Fantasy in the Legend of Slumach
Fred Braches

Victoria: Heritage House, 2019. 144 pp. $9.95 paper.

Alice Gorton
Columbia University

Searching for Pitt Lake Gold: Facts and Fantasy in the Legend of Slumach, by local historian Fred Braches, deconstructs the myth of Slumach's lost gold mine. Perpetuated by a handful of "creative" journalists and seized upon by scores of hopeful prospectors, the tale runs something like this: from as early as 1858, rumours of a rich placer deposit lured prospectors to Pitt Lake, though few hopefuls ever found it. A Katzie man named Slumach (sometimes spelled "Slum.ook") was said to be the sole possessor of knowledge about the mineral-rich mine, but this knowledge went with him to the grave when he was tried and executed in 1891 after a deadly altercation with Louie Bee. In the years following his death, journalists transformed Slumach's legacy, framing the elderly man as a young, hard-drinking serial murderer, epitomized by the creation of an alter ego that Braches calls Slumach's "evil-twin," "Slummock." In time, the legend came to fixate on how Slumach's ghost stood watch over the mine, condemning settlers greedy enough to seek it out – a myth in some ways bolstered by a series of failed attempts to find Pitt Lake's gold.

As it turns out, this legend, which has entranced prospectors and locals since it first gained currency in the press in 1915, has very little, if any, basis in the extant archival documents. But Braches traces the lives of those men who believed the stories. He has done well not only to recount their narratives but also to set out the rumours against the realities, revealing the rift between what actually happened and what has been passed down. The idea that historians should disentangle the facts and fictions underpinning such legends is the book's central claim. The first myth that Braches deconstructs is that surrounding Slumach himself. Surveying the documents associated with Slumach's trial, Braches argues that the association of Slumach with gold came into being only well after his death as virtually no evidence produced during his lifetime corroborates the claim that he possessed special knowledge of the mine. Braches demonstrates how journalists and pulp writers distorted Slumach's image in order to sell a sizzling story before going on, in successive chapters, to analyze the principal figures who devoted their lives to finding gold at Pitt Lake, many of whom died or disappeared in the process. These ranged from Robert Allan Brown – known variously as "Doc" or "Volcanic" Brown – in the 1930s and Stu Brown in the 1970s to a failed expedition in the 1990s.

The book raises questions about what scholars are to do with such fine-grained, popular historical analyses. Without question, Braches has produced a well-researched and engaging book, but the granular level of detail so familiar to the local historian eschews any explicit analysis of how, in this case, journalistic flourishes came to take on a life of their own, often serving to perpetuate and reinforce stereotypes about Indigenous Peoples. Braches has debunked the myth of the mine in a narrow sense, but his passionate project has left in place another: the idea that gold rush stories can be understood without reference to broader structural change in British Columbia's colonial history. The book will be of interest to those with a stake in the region's history, though its limited scope makes it difficult to foresee a wider readership, a point that Braches, with good humour, points out in his acknowledgments. These criticisms aside, the narrowness of Braches's book is heartening in some ways, for it is a reminder that it is often the small, local stories – both fact and fiction – that provide the texture of British Columbia's history.

Cataline: The Life of BC's Legendary Packer

Susan Smith-Josephy with Irene Bjerky

Halfmoon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press, 2020. 240 pp. $22.95 paper.

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The early history of British Columbia is replete with enigmatic and unusual figures, but few rival the man popularly known as Cataline. Anyone who has spent time exploring the history of the province will have caught at least a passing reference to Jean Caux; indeed, passing references to a man who spent fifty-four years packing in some of the most rugged BC terrain is about all that most researchers have been able to piece together. Despite playing a key role in everything from the Cariboo Gold Rush to the Yukon Telegraph Line, the Cataline in the historical record is like the Cataline of the past: appearing for short moments, leaving a profound impression, and then disappearing again. This is what makes Smith-Josephy and Bjerky's work so impressive: the way that they have painstaking collected what we know of Cataline to piece together a story of a life interwoven with the early development of the province.

This relatively short book follows the chronology of Cataline's life. It starts with Cataline's likely childhood in the city today known as Oloron-Sainte-Marie in the Bearn region of Southern France, mere kilometres away from Basque country and the Spanish border. It was from here that Cataline and his brother travelled to New York in 1857, worked their way to California, and then north to British Columbia in 1858, where they were employed from the start as packers. Though Cataline's brother would eventually return to France, Cataline would spend the next five decades packing supplies ranging from food to mining equipment to billiard tables into some of the most remote spots in the province before his death in Hazelton in 1922.

Men who do hard manual labour in remote areas, socialize with people of colour, and are likely functionally illiterate rarely enter the historical record. It was Cataline's character that made him stand out to his contemporaries. He famously spoke in a garbled pidgin language that few, if any, could fully understand. He was renowned for his physical toughness, his near-photographic memory, his odd personal routines, and his generosity. Beyond that, though, Cataline enjoyed an unparalleled reputation as a reliable and professional packer, earning himself long-standing acclaim in an industry that saw frequent change and turnover. This is how Cataline has usually appeared in histories of British Columbia: a strange and romantic figure embodying the quirky toughness of the BC frontier, useful mainly for a few anecdotes to add character to any particular story.

Smith-Josephy and Bjerky's *Cataline* certainly has amusing anecdotes and stories enough to entertain any reader, but it is when they place Jean Caux in the context of his times that the book begins to reach its full potential. In Smith-Josephy and Bjerky's hands, what is known about Cataline's life begins to tell a larger story of the social interactions that animated day-to-day life in the remote corners of the colony and how technology and economic development gradually and unevenly transformed those relationships and the people of the province. In this way, it is easy to imagine undergraduate BC history courses using passages from *Cataline* to enrich their understanding of the early history of the province while more general readers will find it an amusing and quick exploration of a long-neglected piece of BC history.

Fishes of the Salish Sea: Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca

Theodore Wells Pietsch and
James Wilder Orr
Illustrated by
Joseph R. Tomelleri

Victoria: Heritage House, 2019.
1032 pp. $179.00 hardcover.

Leo Bodensteiner
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Having studied fish for more than forty years, I have accumulated more than fifty "fishes of …" books, latitudinally arranged on my office shelf, and none of them can compare in the quality, quantity, and aesthetics with the boxed three-volume *Fishes of the Salish Sea*. This 1,048-page compilation of the history, taxonomy, and ecology of its 240 fishes is a crowning achievement in the genre and far exceeds the authors' stated goals: a practical, useful guide for professional and amateur fish enthusiasts. With such a broad and comprehensive scope of material, it will certainly appeal not only to those engaged in the scientific study of fish but also to those who appreciate the exquisite artistry of scientific illustration.

Volume 1 stands apart from typical regional fish books in that it provides a comprehensive overview of natural and human elements related to the origins of the fishes, their discovery, and their changing distribution. The contributions of the scientists who described these fishes are encompassed in seventy-three biographies, including that of Rosa Smith Eigenmann, a distinguished ichthyologist of the late 1800s who advocated for women as scientists. Another highlight is Joseph Tomelleri's use of coloured pencils to accurately portray anatomical features and colour patterns in images that are often far superior to photographs and line drawings for identification and descriptive purposes.

Volumes 2 and 3 present essential ichthyological information in the manner of Hart (1973, out of print) – synonymy and etymology, physical appearance, morphometrics, distinguishing features, life history, distribution, and familybased keys – but are prominently distinguished by an attractive contemporary presentation, additions of key references with subject areas, and a biogeography that distinguishes among eight regions within the Salish Sea. The colour illustrations, and eighty-one separate larger plates, display an intricate level of detail for each fish and give the set a unique utility and beauty. Throughout, use of common language in an articulate, engaging style make these volumes accessible to those more casually acquainted with fishes; necessary technical terms are defined in an eight-page glossary. And for those using this as a jumping-off point for a deeper scientific dive, eighty-four pages with approximately twenty-two hundred references support the information provided.

The geographically bounded scope of this book set, with its subset of North Pacific fishes, enables a much more nuanced understanding of the relation of the physical environment to ecology in this diverse environment than do other books, which primarily serve as field guides for identification. It fulfills this purpose in an exceptional fashion, with its concise descriptions and intricate, accurate illustrations, and goes well beyond this with well-referenced descriptions of distribution, habitat, and life history. The scholarly basis for the subject matter clearly distinguishes it from the two commonly used regional field guides – *A Field Guide to Coastal Fishes* (Kells et al. 2016) and *Coastal Fishes of the Pacific Northwest* (Lamb and Edgell 2010). While you might carry one of these in your dive gear bag for quick identification, the information contained in the three volumes of *Fishes of the Salish Sea* renders it an essential addition to the laboratories and libraries of those who study fishes in this Pacific Northwest ecosystem.

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