IN MEMORY

Cole Harris

Richard Colebrook Harris (1936–2022) was a historical geographer in the Department of Geography at UBC from 1971 to 2001, and co-editor of *BC Studies* from 1995 to 2002. Photo by Joanna Reid.

JEAN BARMAN

Professor Emeritus, Department of Educational Studies, UBC, and former editor of *BC Studies*

The years in which Cole Harris and I co-edited the journal *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, 1995–2002, in a shared UBC office were a high point in my scholarly career for witnessing and learning from his generosity of spirit with hopeful contributors needing just that much tending, he hoped, to reach the potential he saw in their submissions. Cole was a scholar par excellence for whose presence in our lives we can each in our own way be thankful and grateful.

JULIE CRUIKSHANK
Professor Emeritus, Department of Educational Studies, UBC

During my time at the University of British Columbia, Cole Harris was always someone I could rely on to explain both the complex history of British Columbia – and the mysterious workings of UBC. His counsel was always smart – and inevitably helpful – and our friendship over the years was a gift I will always fondly remember.

WENDY WICKWIRE
Professor Emeritus, Department of History, University of Victoria

With the death of Cole Harris last fall, Canada's academic community lost a treasured member. Over the course of a long, illustrious career, first at UofT and later at UBC, Harris transformed the way we think about history. From his book projects, university courses, and graduate supervisions, to his home seminars, journal editorships, and field trips, Harris showed by example that good history-telling must stem from the experiences and values of the history-teller. He also argued that good history-telling must speak directly to the colonial construction of *space*. That his signature concepts – "dispossession and repossession" – became mainstays of the BC historical lexicon is a testament to the power and precision of the Cole Harris research paradigm.

Cole Harris will be remembered best by academics across Canada and beyond for his massive scholarly output and his countless awards and distinctions. He will be remembered best by friends and colleagues, however, for his endearing twinkle, his boundless energy, and his pure delight – right to the end – in engaging in lively debate about a theme in his latest article or the thesis of a current book project or an intriguing idea for the next project. Many will recall fondly his Wiltshire Street home seminars where he loved nothing more than pairing up guest speakers with opposing views and watching them argue it out; or his editorship of *BC Studies* where, with his colleague Jean Barman, he took such pleasure in fostering healthy debate; or his legendary field trips where, in addition to good fun and food, he insisted on serious daily seminars. I experienced this firsthand on a Fraser River rafting trip where, when hit with torrential rain, most of us ran to our tents for cover.

Not so with Cole, however. He rigged up tarps on the sandy riverbank and happily proceeded with his seminar plans as if nothing was amiss. This is the side of our dear friend Cole Harris that will remain with us always.

Nancy J. Turner
PhD, CM, OBC, RSC, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, School of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria

Remembering Cole …

Many years ago, I had the privilege of meeting Cole Harris for the first time at a Colonial History Conference organized by Richard Mackie, on Salt Spring Island. To me, as an ethnobotanist, Cole was already an iconic figure, as a historical geographer focusing on Indigenous Peoples and Colonialism, and obviously well loved by many. I can picture him now, as I first encountered him: a tall man with a kind face and warm smile. He was, as I recall, instrumental, along with Richard, in bringing so many of us together to discuss the history of Salt Spring. We all visited the Museum, developed by local pioneer resident Bob Akerman, whose grandmother was a Quw'utsun midwife. Through Cole's introduction, Mr. Akerman showed us an entire range of artifacts, from arrow points to plowshares. He told us about how the Quw'utsun used to burn over the areas around Burgoyne Bay to enhance the growth and productivity of lacamas (edible blue camas) and berries like trailing blackberry, blackcap, and wild strawberries. With Cole and the other conference attendees, we visited Beaver Point and other locales on the island. Cole was interested in everything we encountered, including the plants and habitats. In short, Cole did then what he always did for people: bring us together and help us to meet and educate each other. He was a bridge across worlds and across time.

Since that time, we kept in touch over the years, and later I had the privilege of working with his son, Douglas Harris, through our "Coasts Under Stress" collaborative research project. I have relied on Cole's publications – especially *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*. Such an important book! Most recently, his work with and interest in the Sinixt Nation of southern British Columbia have helped to bring recognition to their history and to disprove the notion that they are extinct. Thus, his work was not only in geography and history but in law and justice.

Robert D. Turner
LLD, FRCGS, Curator Emeritus, Royal BC Museum

Cole was a breath of fresh air at a history conference I attended over thirty years ago. And after a session where people literally were snoring in the audience, unnoticed by the speaker (who must remain anonymous), Cole gave a really interesting and captivating program. He didn't use PowerPoint slides in those days. He just stood there, not behind the lectern but closer to us, with one or two cards in his hand, and talked to us. He held everyone's attention for the entire presentation. It was such a remarkable contrast to the previous speaker.

I never had the pleasure of being one of Cole's students, but many, many times I wish I had been. I admired his work, and we shared interests, especially in the history of the Kootenays where his family home was and where he lived in retirement. His interests were so wide that they covered many fields, and I always admired his breadth of perception. I know many people with whom I worked over the years had studied under Cole or knew him well. And over decades, I never heard a single word other than deep appreciation of his thoughtfulness, kindness, and scholarship.

Patricia A. Shaw
Professor Emeritus, Department of Anthropology, UBC

A Cole Harris Trademark: The "Unconventional" Field Trip

Cole came to be known for – and will certainly be fondly remembered for – his "unconventional" field trips. It therefore seems particularly appropriate to reflect in this issue of *BC Studies* on the incomparable field trip, grandly entitled "Scientific Expedition into BC Interior," that Cole, then co-editor of *BC Studies*, organized in 2001 for those of us who were members of the editorial board at that time.

As heartwarming (indeed hilarious) as so many experiences on that trip were, it was no frivolous adventure. The mere five-day itinerary covered a huge swath of the BC Interior, with destinations way off the beaten track, demanding not just unremitting physical endurance to keep pace, but also intense emotional and intellectual courage to process the complexities of the historical geography and colonial legacies of these places and peoples.

In essence, the concept of the "unconventional field trip" instantiates so much of "Cole" himself: inexhaustible; utterly exuberant when out on the land; delighting in the interdisciplinary context of the wonderfully collegial group of other curious minds; eager to share his extensive knowledge in the mentoring of others; sincerely engaged in trying to better understand the world and to contribute to making it a better place, drawing on vast depths of knowledge intermingled with inimitable gentleness, wit, and joy.

Not to mention the numerous opportunities that an "unconventional field trip" provides for "enthusiastic singing"!

A persistent interest in Cole's thoughts and writings over many years has been that of Indigenous-settler relations (cf. *Making Native Space*). Although it's not really possible to travel through much of British Columbia at this point in time without an acute awareness of Indigenous land and identity concerns, these issues figured particularly prominently on our 2001 field trip, as several points of call in our travels were specifically arranged to involve direct engagement with First Nations leaders, teachers, and scholars. Against the relentlessly present backdrop of colonialism and dispossession throughout the traditional Indigenous territories that we travelled across, we were warmly welcomed into the lives and homes and sacred spaces of Nlaka'pamux and Upper Nicola peoples. We were guided along ancient trails and shown how to identify plants to eat in the spring. We were deeply honoured to be invited into a ceremonial sweat lodge along the Coldwater River. We were generously fed traditional foods harvested from the local lands and waters. Most fundamentally, we were not simply the grateful beneficiaries of the generosity of our Indigenous hosts in making us feel so welcome on their traditional unceded territory. We were extraordinarily privileged witnesses to the strength of these peoples rooted in a cultural integrity that has nurtured their survival through the many generations of colonial upheaval and injustices.

The price of admission to this field trip was steep but brilliant: everyone who participated had to contribute a "research report" to the next issue of the journal! Consequently, the unique collocation of articles in the *BC Studies* 131 Autumn 2001 volume stands as a highly original legacy of yet another kind of contribution that Cole made to the scholarship of this province that he deeply loved, and to all of us who were so fortunate as to have shared that unconventional journey.

Submitted with enduring gratitude to Cole Harris, consumate scholar and profound humanist.

Graeme Wynn
FRSC, Professor Emeritus of Geography, and former editor of *BC Studies* (2008–2016)

Coming Home to a Peculiar Place

Cole Harris was on sabbatical leave from UBC in 1975–76 when I joined the Department of Geography there. As he later explained to me, he had received, near the turn of the year, a letter from the American historian James Axtell. The communication was prompted by Axtell's developing interest in North American Indigenous history and his hope that Cole, the recent co-author with John Warkentin of *Canada Before Confederation,* might further his understanding of Canada. Cole replied at length, welcoming Axtell's inquiries and explaining his own personal circumstances. He wrote, he explained early in 1976, from the "vast, snowy isolation of the Cordilleran Canadian wilderness." He had been born, schooled, and attended university in Vancouver, but left British Columbia for graduate work in Wisconsin. His dissertation focused on Quebec, and after a year of sessional teaching at UBC, an appointment at the University of Toronto embedded him in the east. Then family circumstances called him, and his wife Muriel, back to British Columbia. Five years later he confessed – from that snowy wilderness also known as the "mountainside terrace that, years ago, my English grandfather tried to turn into an orchard" – that he had "found it difficult these last years to work out a balance between my eastern North American interests, and my sense of the need to say something about the peculiar place where I am and where I grew up."

There were plans in the paragraph that followed: two or three years of work on early British Columbia and then a comparative historical geography of the British and French experience in North America. But circumstances – the immense work of editing the first volume of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* (1987) – conspired against these designs. British Columbia was also an enigma. For all his familiarity with and affection for the province, Cole found it a hard place to know. In a review for this journal in 1981, he summed up his frustration: "Writing on early BC is rather like watching water skimmers. The object of scrutiny is both near at hand and elusive, individuals appear and are lost in general movement, and activity is more obvious than pattern or purpose." At that point he had written little on British Columbia: a chapter describing the fur trade and the gold rush in *Canada Before Confederation*; and an essay in *BC Studies* on the challenge of finding a site for the University

of British Columbia, "where the flux of pioneering was as much spatial as temporal, [and] 'where' could be as unknown as 'when'."

With the *Atlas* done, Cole was finally able to focus his full attention on his native province. The timing was propitious. Many of Cole's colleagues in geography at UBC had embraced social theory. Lively debate filled departmental halls. Discussions with able students in the graduate program, such as Brett Christophers, Dan Clayton, Bruce Willems-Braun, and others (who made their own contributions to BC studies) quickly brought him to recognize that the ideas of Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Anthony Giddens, and others interested in the relations between power and modernity could help solve the conundrums presented by this peculiar place. A flurry of groundbreaking essays soon appeared in this journal and elsewhere. Revised and assembled, they formed the core of *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (1997). Between 1995 and 2002 Cole did much, as co-editor of this journal, to encourage and improve scholarship on the province. In 2002, his own *Making Native Space* radically recast understandings of colonialism and dispossession in British Columbia. This surely stands as Cole's most polished and important work, not least for its powerful conclusion arguing "the case, in justice, for redressing the drastic imbalances of colonialism" (303).

As these ideas developed, they were shared with students in lecture rooms and on field trips, with colleagues on campus walks or "over a glass of beer," and through incisive comments on numerous theses and manuscripts. Cole's passion for clear-headed scholarship, lucid prose, and sympathetic understanding of British Columbia's past and present reverberates and constitutes a powerful legacy. In a manner that will not surprise those who knew him, the "two or three years of work" Cole planned for British Columbia ultimately encompassed four decades. It brought him, eventually, to examine his familial roots in that sometimes snowy, still rather isolated, mountainside terrace at the heart of his grandparent's *Ranch in the Slocan*, that "more than anything else," he claimed, "made … [him] a historical geographer." All of us who live in this province should value his particular contributions to understanding this peculiar place.

REFERENCES

Cole, Harris, and John Warkentin. *Canada Before Confederation: A Study in Historical Geography*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991.

PAT ROY
Professor Emeritus, Department of History, University of Victoria

Inexplicably, when it was published in 2018, I didn't buy a copy of Cole's *Ranch in the Slocan: A Biography of a Kootenay Farm, 1896–2017,*[1] the history of the Bosun Ranch at New Denver. The ranch, established by his grandfather, gave Cole much joy over the years and may have stimulated his interest in history and geography. Recently, I won a copy at a Victoria Historical Society raffle. I read it with pleasure but regretted that Cole had died so I could not tell him how much I enjoyed learning more about the Harris family and the ranch and how it recalled happy memories of my visit there.

Cole firmly believed that scholars should not confine their research to archives and libraries,[2] but must actually see the places they study. Thus, he and Jean Barman, the co-editor of *BC Studies,* invited members of the editorial board to join them on a field trip to the Fraser Canyon in 1999. I was unable to participate in that venture but was delighted to be part of the May 2001 "Scientific Expedition" that saw and experienced much more than we could do on our own. Moreover, the itinerary was subtly planned to highlight the differences found within short distances in British Columbia. Cole had explored that theme in his much reprinted article, "Industry and Good Life around Idaho Peak" which contrasted life in Sandon, a mining town, and New Denver, a service centre.[3] After a tour of the Coldwater Reserve near Merritt and high tea with one of Jean's students, a night at the comfortable and historic Quilchena Hotel, and a morning at the Spaxomin School, we travelled over back roads through the Douglas Lake Cattle Ranch to the genteel setting of Coldstream on Kalamalka Lake and a chilly night in a rustic summer retreat at Sugar Lake. It was then on to New Denver. Our only obligations were to contribute a modest sum towards the cost of meals and to write a scholarly article on some aspect of the trip. And, despite many walks, the first requirement stretched our waistbands; the results of the second, as well as details of the expedition and of our many gracious and informative hosts along the way, are in No. 131 (Autumn 2001) of *BC Studies.*

[1] Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2018.
[2] In 2001, the internet was just beginning to become a major research tool.
[3] The article was originally published in the *Canadian Historical Review*, 66 (September 1985): 325–43. Cole included it, with some corrections based on later research, in *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 194–218.

From library and archival research for what became *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941–67*,[4] I knew that the British Columbia Security Commission, a federal agency, had housed some of the Japanese Canadians removed from the coast in 1942 on the Bosun Ranch. I was also aware of the Nikkei Internment Memorial Site, a museum in New Denver. Thus, I was confident of finding a subject.

Cole, however, produced a bonus. In the course of touring the ranch, he took us to a part that belonged to a relative. There we saw a modest wooden building with cedar trees in the background. It was too elaborate for a woodshed and too tiny to be a survivor of one of the 14-foot-by-28-foot shacks built by the Security Commission. Cole explained it was of recent vintage, left over from a set for the film, "Snow Falling on Cedars" based on David Guterson's novel of the same name. The producers substituted a site overlooking Slocan Lake for Bainbridge Island in Puget Sound. The film company promised to remove the sets after competing filming. Cole's relative, recognizing that the structure could be useful for storage or as a summer guesthouse, allowed the film company to leave it in place.

There was the hook for my article. I had read the book and seen the film, but on a plane where interruptions and an edited version gave little sense of the whole. A local video store had one for rent so I saw the full version. My visit to the Nikkei museum also informed my understanding of the story and the site. The result, after some more archival and library research, was the article, "If the Cedars Could Speak: Japanese and Caucasians Meet at New Denver." The experience had given me some sense of the relative isolation that the wartime Japanese Canadian residents of New Denver and other West Kootenay places must have felt. Many had come from Vancouver and other urban communities.

But what I remember best of the Expedition was the warm and generous hospitality of three generations of the Harris family: Cole and Muriel, Douglas and his wife Candy, and Thomson, their toddler, who hosted us for a wonderful two days, the delicious meals they provided, and the lively after-dinner singsongs. Thank you Cole for expanding my understanding of the lay of British Columbia's land and for introducing me to the Bosun Ranch on the ground and on the page. I am only sorry that I cannot thank you in person.

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[4] Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.

TREVOR BARNES, Professor and Distinguished University Scholar, Department of Geography, UBC
AND JOAN SEIDL

Into the Field

Cole's field trips were legendary. Believing that "being there," being on the land, was paramount to understanding it, to knowing something of the lives and travails of its former inhabitants, Cole thought it his obligation to take students, colleagues, visitors, and friends into the field. As newbies to British Columbia, we were initially invited to visit his family ranch in the Slocan, then later and separately to join his famously loosely organized field trips.

For Trevor, that was a three-day excursion to the headwaters of the Stein in July 1987. It was accessible via a logging road off the then unpaved Duffy Lake Road. We were a two-car convoy. Very gingerly we made our way along the uneven, rutted, and slash-strewn logging road until we could go no farther. For reasons I've now forgotten, I had rented a large Chevy sedan, one of the rental conditions being no off-road driving. Each time the car bottomed out, I winced. We parked literally at the end of the road and set up the first night's camp in the clear cut. A fire was lit and, after a dinner of pasta, Cole asked who wanted tea. I was desperate, parched. "Yes, please," I said, although I had not seen a teapot, or a kettle, or for that matter a teacup. Cole began by heating water in the pasta pot, into which, after it came to a boil, he poured an indeterminate amount of loose black tea. Some more boiling. Then he dipped a metal mug into the brew, and handing it to me said, "Here, a nice cup of tea." I couldn't handle it. I had just witnessed tea-making travesty. But I didn't want to be outrightly rude. So, I said, "Have you read George Orwell's *Tribune* essay on the twelve steps of making a perfect cup of tea?" It begins with taking fresh cold water from the tap, using a porcelain teapot that is first scalded, with one teaspoon of tea for every person and one for the pot. "The controversial step," I continued, "is whether you put the milk in first or the tea." Then the denouement: "Cole, I am afraid you broke every one of Orwell's twelve rules." Thankfully Cole burst into laughter rather than pouring the cauldron of tea over my head. He loved that story and told it several times, including on the last occasion we saw one another, about six weeks before he died when he and Muriel came over for lunch. We knew it would be the last time we would see each other. But the occasion was not mournful. It was about remembering, for retelling

stories about a life lived "thoughtfully" and "gently," his aspiration (*The Resettlement of British Columbia,* 1997, 275).

For Joan, in May 1988 it was to go up the Fraser Valley with Cole along with a crew of grad students and interested parties – Bob Galois, Richard Mackie, Dan Clayton, Ed Higginbottom, and myself. There was no itinerary, beyond spending the first night at the Alexandria Hotel. We spent time in Lytton looking at remnants of pit houses and early Chinese mining, and then carried on to Lillooet to see the outcome of over-grazing. Cole directed us to the Oblate cemetery high above the confluence of the Bridge River and the Fraser, a breathtaking setting where he reflected on the long reach of Christian missionizing among Indigenous people. The temperature rose, and Cole started to talk about maybe taking the reaction ferry across the Fraser to camp at Big Bar. We didn't have a single piece of camping gear so we stopped at a Sally Ann to stock up – a beat-up fry pan and a coffee pot held together with duct tape. We reached Big Bar in the late afternoon, left the car, and were dropped on the left bank of the Fraser on the edge of a vast ranch. Cole suggested Dan and Bob might catch fish for dinner. Richard, Ed, and I went exploring, and eventually happened upon a soddy that housed a young cowboy working for the ranch. He invited us in. He was raising very young chicks crowded into his stifling hot kitchen. The mantel held tiny film canisters containing miniscule flakes of gold he had panned from the Fraser. When we told Cole about the still-in-use soddy, he determined to visit too. Cole took a house gift – our last remaining package of cookies. For dinner that night, we shared two small fish and Bob's cache of whiskey. We slept on the ground, trying to avoid cow pies. In the morning we woke up to cattle inspecting us, this invasion of geographers. In those few days Cole opened the door to experiences that continue to furnish my imagination and feed my understanding of British Columbia.

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Entanglements in Cole Harris's British Columbia: Circumstance, Translation, Conviction, and Performance

Cole Harris was Canada's pre-eminent historical geographer and British Columbia was fortunate that he devoted the second half of his long and distinguished career to its study. He did so from his academic home in the UBC Geography Department, and with steadfast support of *BC Studies* (as co-editor, 1995–2002) and UBC Press, which he saw as vital to the public and intellectual life of the province. I was one of his graduate students, meeting him in 'the exhausted aftermath' of his *Historical Atlas of Canada* project (1987), as he put it, and 'keen to get back to BC' (here and in what follows I shall be recalling conversations and correspondence with him with single quotation marks). He was the most brilliant of supervisors and fatherly of figures for a young English lad far away from home, and he wore his heart on his sleeve while exuding a certain mystique. I was lucky to be able to live some of his BC journey with him, writing a masters' thesis on the Skeena River and PhD dissertation on Vancouver Island (Clayton 1992, 2000), as he was working on the essays that were collected in *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (1997). We spent spells working together in various archives and travelled widely together (from Lytton to London, and Chicoutimi to Crail on the east coast of Scotland).

This commentary starts with this meeting point (circumstance), which has two sides and that Cole, ever mischievously, dubbed his 'BC turn,' and then reflects on three further 'entanglements' – of translation, conviction, and performance – in his work, as I read it and knew him; entanglements in the sense that these ways of thinking about what he did and who he was were multifaceted and interlocking.

Circumstance

In the late 1980s 'aftermath' of the *Atlas*, Cole immersed himself in both new archives and new bodies of theory, chiefly on modernity and colonialism. His aim, he reaffirmed to me shortly before died, was to 'combine rigorous archival investigations with a range of theoretical connections.' He engaged the postmodern and postcolonial 'turns' then in geography's air (and that helped to make the UBC department a

fulcrum of critical exploration in the discipline) and became absorbed by some of the theorists that his colleagues and students were reading. He was particularly drawn to the work of Anthony Giddens (especially *The Nation State and Violence*), Michel Foucault's arguments about power (in *Discipline and Punish*, which he read in French, saying it 'made even more sense that way'), Jürgen Habermas's thesis about 'lifeworld and system' (which he saw as akin to Giddens's interest in agency and structure, and geography's own distinctive and vexed concern with environmental opportunity and constraint), Michael Mann's sweeping study of ancient and modern sources of social power, and Edward Said's analysis (in *Orientalism*) of how Western imperial mindsets and colonial practices operated through 'imaginative geographies.'

His engagement with theory was selective. He said so. It did not encompass feminist theory, nor Marxism directly, and he had reservations about postcolonial thought. He also soon ventured into the writing of a new, and spatially attuned, generation of US historians (especially William Cronon and Richard White), read widely in the fields of BC anthropology, environmental studies, history, law, and political science, and studied and promoted the work of a growing number of Indigenous scholars. Yet these five thinkers, he quickly surmised, were 'key' to understanding British Columbia because each was concerned, in one way and another, he thought, with the geographical imagination and exercise of power, and processes of social and spatial transformation. I don't think that social theory opened Cole's eyes to many radically new things; it was more a question of theory enabling him to see more clearly and sharply what he knew intuitively and had 'flailed around with' before. He confided in me that it 'presented new horizons of investigation' and gave him 'a new interpretative repertoire.' Or as he later reflected, while "no one body of theory explains colonialism, several theoretical perspectives yield crucial insights" (Harris 2004, 165).

This was the first element of his 'turn.' The second was the way Cole read, explored, and wrote with these new theoretical inflections at a moment when "the issue of Indigenous title was in the air and the courts … [and] it had become impossible to think about British Columbia without considering its Indigenous character" (Harris 2020, 167). Impossible, he thought, in a threefold sense: first, in that British Columbia, and Canadian political efforts at redress and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples had floundered because they "ignored the destruction wrought by colonialism"; second, because Indigenous Peoples were "speaking back to settler Canada as never before and in a great

variety of ways"; and third, and crucially for Cole, because the uneven and fractious dynamics of power, voice, recognition and disregard that had helped to make British Columbia "predominantly an immigrant, settler society" begged basic, but much understudied, questions about how Indigenous space had been "recalibrated" by "the intrusive power of settler society" (Harris 2020, 168, 280–81; cf. Harris 1997, 182–193).

Translation

Cole read social theory (in fact, any literature) in translation, and with the integrity of place and question of translation itself – what he had earlier, in a staunch defence of geography's place in the humanities, termed "synthesis" (meaning material processes of adaptation and regeneration, and interpretative projects of reconstruction and amalgamation) – of prime concern (Harris 1971).

On the first matter, of theory, there was, for example, a potent twist in the tail of his plenary 1991 essay "Power, Modernity, and Historical Geography": in surveying the critical import of the social theory he was reading to his subdiscipline, he also pointed to its European provenance and urged that its chief insights – for him about power, state and society, human agency and mechanisms of social control – needed to be "adapted" when used in non-European colonial settings. He read postcolonial theory, too, but took to it less enthusiastically, perhaps ironically given where he was going. This was partly because he struggled with its arcane language (it only heightened his demand, of himself and others, for 'simple, lucid prose'); but also, he later disclosed, because he was not enamoured with its inclination to make specific situations and figures speak too readily and summarily for colonialism at large.

In an influential 2004 essay, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments From an Edge of Empire" (that edge being British Columbia), he insisted (as he later phrased things) that "settler colonialism is most inclusively studied on the ground" and that such study should proceed "from sites of dispossession" rather than via grand theories about colonial discourse, which he regarded as partial rather than necessarily wrong (Harris 2020, 162–164; Harris 2004, 166-169). While acknowledging the important critical strides that postcolonial theory and scholarship were making, he cautioned that "the emphasis on culture in studies of colonialism tends to obscure other forms of colonial power while making it impossible to contextualize the cultural argument and assess its salience" (Harris 2004, 165). He felt that much of an allied critical (postcolonial) geographical literature on empire was distant from his concerns and

marred by an intangible concern with text, representation, and knowledge production, and fixation on tropes of othering, contradiction, and ambivalence. Much of this literature still tended to revolve, ultimately, he figured, around London and Paris, and not enough around places like Lytton or Prince Rupert.

There remained, at least in British Columbia, a need to attend to "colonialism's basic geographical dispossessions of the colonized" (Harris 2004, 165). I argued quite long and hard with him about all of this, not so much in an attempt to defend postcolonial geography as to impress (and try to show in my own work), that there was a need for both 'ground and text.' He did of course grasp that colonial discourses had material referents and the most worldly of effects. For him, it was more a matter of the 'balance' of critical forces from where he stood – of what made most sense for British Columbia, and especially how postcolonialism approached questions of violence, which, I guess with Frantz Fanon looking over his shoulder (although I don't remember discussing Fanon with him at length), Cole saw, quintessentially, as questions of geographical violence. Aspects of this moment of debate in geography and our time together now seems quite old; but the issues raised then have not gone away and continue to rear their head in new circumstances.

But there was a deeper ontology to Cole's concern with translation. In colonial North America, he declared time and again, "everything was somewhat altered" – relations between land and life, and land, labour, and capital; and cultural and geographical reference points. European ways could not be fully reproduced in the alluring yet alien environments, and vast and diverse spaces, of North America, Canada, and British Columbia. Newness and the piecemeal nature of immigration exerted "selective pressures" on the configuration of colonial economies and societies, on settler-Indigenous relations, and on what was "real or fanciful" about the connections between distant and adjacent places (metropole and colony, and nations and regions) (Harris 2020, 29, 122, 172). British Columbia had its own defining "struggle with distance" (Harris 1997, Ch. 6). Cole's thesis was that European societies became "simplified" overseas: stripped back and newly synthesized in changed circumstances, with some European ways becoming lost and others that were being eroded in Europe (by capitalism and modernity) nestling themselves anew overseas and becoming "ossified" (see Harris 2020, Part 3).

While the "basic questions about social and cultural change in places where migration had abruptly changed the context of individual lives" pertained to all of North America, British Columbia was a region in acute

translation, if you will, and for two reasons. First, and in aggregate terms, because British Columbia had "a larger and more diverse body of immigrants, [and] a more dispersed and varied pattern of settlement" than other parts of Canada; and second, and qualitatively and comparatively, since Indigenous people and settlers/immigrants came into contact, competition, and conflict over land and resources in 'pinched, niggardly spaces' (one of Cole's favourite field trip refrains and an interpretative bulwark of his writing) (Harris 2020, 201; 1997, 250–275). "Whereas a generous relationship with an ongoing land underlay the United States," he declared, "Canada was underlain by pinched relationships within bounded patches of land that stretched discontinuously across the continent" – and no more so than in British Columbia (Harris 2020, 9; cf. Harris 1987, Introduction).

Conviction

Land was everywhere in Cole's thinking and writing. He regarded it as the central problem of Canadian historical geography. It was also as a matter of personal conviction: etched into the store he placed by human experience and creativity, by family and dwelling (the right to dwell), and into his abiding concern with what made a 'good life', how it might be lead, and who had the opportunity to lead one, and who did not. He, we, spoke a lot about this over many years, and in some radically different spots. As I opined to him, and observed in a review of his last book, *A Bounded Land*, "land is a kind of magic lantern in his work, flickering an array of messages" (Clayton 2022, 1124). One of these messages was about the matter of human fulfilment – or dwelling in French and German philosophical traditions. Land also flickers through Cole's deep interest in how settlers and Indigenous people have been, and remain, both "proximate" to and "distant" from one another – "detached" yet "juxtaposed" – and with this formulation both complicating the idea of settler colonialism as a 'logic of elimination,' as some read it, and showing how and why discrepant attachments to land fracture the postcolonial quest to bring metropole and colony, and colonizer and coloniszd, into a single analytical frame (Harris 2020, 5–9; cf. Harris 2002, 284–291).

He identified himself "a product of settler colonialism": his English grandfather established a modest, and barely viable, orchard and house on a rocky bench in the Slocan Valley in the late nineteenth century (Harris 2020, 9), and he began *The Resettlement of British Columbia* by noting that "The ranch has always been near the heart of my life, and more than anything else, I think, made me a historical geographer.

Most of the essays in this volume probably revolve around it" (Harris 1997, xviii; cf. Clayton 2018). The ranch (with the original dwelling now lovingly restored, and to which Harris hospitality was very much extended) remains a family treasure (although no longer a working farm) and it ripples through Cole's assessment of possibility and precarity as a "primal" tension in settler colonial experience in British Columbia.

In making these various tracks and writing about colonialism as a live matter, Cole's work foreshadowed much of what is now delineated as a 'decolonial' agenda. His critical concern was with the forked effects and actualities of colonial power in British Columbia, where questions of settlement (as dwelling and dispossession, property and possession, and land and life) remain paramount. He saw his work on the making of the BC Indian reserve system as a basic and necessarily uncomfortable step in coming to terms with the colonial past. "I do not know whether the settler society of British Columbia will be willing to redress some of the damage that has been the by-product of its own achievement," he observed at the end of *Making Native Space*: "At times I am exceedingly pessimistic … [yet] there is now a large momentum, generated first by Native people … [and] however fitfully, we are probably in the process of redrawing the map" (Harris 2002, 323). Indigenous people are "ever more sophisticated users of power in a modern society, partly because their numbers are growing rapidly, but most basically because settler colonialism in Canada has been a bounded enterprise," he reflected twenty years on (Harris 2020, 284), acknowledging the vexed politics of enunciation bound up with his own positionality.

He sought an inclusionary decolonial outlook: one that aimed to both challenge settler disregard and eschew the idea of a pure decoloniality (or completely autonomous Indigeneity), again by showing how Indigenous people and settlers/immigrants need to be seen as 'juxtaposed,' meaning in a contrasting and contending relationship of power rather than in implacable opposition or linked through some rosy dialectical aspiration for theoretical unity-through-recognition. While the settler colonialism literature bases itself, in part, on the difficulties of bridging and reconciling diverging epistemologies, voices, and experiences, difference does not diminish the need to study, represent, and learn, and there was little wrong (I thought) with Cole's exhortation to me to look at and read things as they are, and closely, but knowing that they are never quite as they seem, and that we need to be humble in how we look, know, and listen. As for British Columbia, while there was a place for global thought and cosmopolitan struggle – for example, around matters

of environmental and social justice, it was also vital, Cole thought, 'to attend to one's corner of the world and not make an example of it.' In other words, there was nothing wrong with saying that place mattered.

And so it was that he worked, and in considerable detail, on how "one human geography [that of Indigenous people] was superceded by another [settler-colonial] one, both on the ground and in the imagination" (Harris 2002, 5–9). There were two sides to this. On the one hand, colonialism "spoke with many voices," indeed differently flawed tongues, and as Don Mitchell (2002) also notes in a perceptive review of *Making Native Space*, Cole was keen to use his close analysis of sites' and agents' dispossession, and not least the work of Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to explore how brash disregard (racism) was, in places, freighted with apprehension and a degree of awareness (with Sproat cast as "a colonizer who eventually listened" – Harris 2002, dedication, 3–7). In this regard, Cole's work brushes along the archival grain of Ann Laura Stoler's (2008, 238–55) questioning of the premise found in postcolonial studies "that we who study the colonial know both what imperial rule looks like and the dispositions of those it empowers," and her cautioning against "the smug sense that colonial sensibilities are a given and we can now quickly move on to the complexities and more subtle, troubled dispositions of the postcolonial present."

On the other hand, Cole urged that "it may be important not to be too fancy with colonialism" (Harris 2002, xiii, 4). Mobilizing Foucault, he argued that "the allocation of reserves in British Columbia defined two primal spaces; one for Indigenous peoples and the other for virtually everyone else," and with the "spatial logic" and "discipline imparted by a land system" (the holy alliance between colonial governance and settler private property) having a wholly deleterious impact on "mobile Indigenous peoples" who used "many different places in many different ways" (Harris 2020, 193); "the line separating the Indian reserves from the rest … [the line] that facilitated and constrained all others … is, in its way, the province's internal boundary between the desert and the sown" (Harris 2002, xviii).

Cole's summary judgment about the spatial momentum and logic of colonialism in British Columbia is worth citing in full (and I do not think it has been surpassed):

> the initial ability to dispossess rested primarily on physical power and the supporting infrastructure of the state; the momentum to dispossess derived from the interest of capital in profit and of settlers in forging new livelihoods; the legitimation and moral justification

> for dispossession lay in a cultural discourse that located civilization and savagery and identified land uses associated with each; and the management of dispossession rested with a set of disciplinary technologies of which maps, numbers, law, and the geography of resettlement itself were the most important. (Harris 2004, 165)

Performance

Cole's central problem of land became his platform for opening up new – and in many respects inimitable – interdisciplinary conversations, and dialogue with policymakers, and Indigenous and environmental groups. Moreover, it came with a spirited and crafted sense of place and self, even spectacle, with Cole 'performing' (which is the most succinct way I can describe it) what he was thinking and writing about. Such performativity came through the 'occasional discussions in BC history' evening meetings he hosted in his own home, his UBC 'historical geography of BC' course, which he ran in the evening, too, to make it accessible to the public, and most memorably and illustriously (for many) the many field trips he led, chiefly into the interior of British Columbia (although Richard Mackie and I managed to divert him to Vancouver Island for a while), with 'gangs' (as he fondly called them) of students, colleagues, and guests (including many academic 'A-listers').

Cole was at once pensive and playful in performance, and as I came to see (and as with every good artiste) with much of what was so marvellously and inspiringly impromptu and imaginative about his teaching in the classroom and field more scripted and rehearsed than many knew or imagined. I (and not just I) often wondered whether Cole wrote like he spoke, or spoke like he wrote. Whichever way around, he had a seamless ability to take himself between word and world, make the one the other, and take others with him on his journey. As Emilie Cameron (2022, 1117) attests about his teaching:

> He had a particular way of entering a room – he would make his way to the lectern or seminar table, set down his papers, and then peer over his reading glasses and down his long nose, surveying the room, with a hint of a smile peeking through his very serious frown. This would last longer than you might think. It was intimidating and warm at once, a kind of initiation ritual that immediately quieted the room and opened our hearts to whatever would follow. As a lecturer he was, it will surprise no one, both lyrical and pointed, deeply knowledgeable, a gifted storyteller, and a pleasure to listen to."

Let me add the following (related in Clayton 2022, 1122):

> I have an abiding memory of reaching his office door, there to marvel at how he was trying to "figure things out" (as he often put it) from where he sat: bowed under an Anglepoise lamp in a dimly lit room, with unlined paper and pencil to hand, archival file cards hewn from hither and yon spread out before him, crafting a paragraph, fiddling with a sentence, alighting upon a telling piece of evidence, telling a story, yes, drawing maps, and with hand occasionally placed on brow in thought. This is of course a profoundly modern-Western representation of the intellectual operating in what Michel Foucault described as a "new imaginative space" of reason, supplanting fable and fantasy, and residing "between the book and the lamp" – or more accurately in Harris's case, between the archive, the field, and the study."

A modern conceit with an obvious bias, of course, but a remarkably creative and prodigious one in Cole's hands. Such imagery, and his various entanglements, were the craft elements of what we termed "archival fieldwork" (Harris 2001) – the field, archive, classroom, and study were all important in the making of his historical geography and the way he imparted it to others, each spurring and supported by the others, and with Cole looking, reading, studying, recording, listening, writing, and crafting at once open-mindedly and single-mindedly.

For me, much of what I have been commenting upon, and this project of archival fieldwork, comes together in his essay "The Fraser River Encountered," which was published in *BC Studies* in the summer of 1992 (the year of the Columbus Centenary) and which I (and many others) see as one of finest ever pieces of writing by a geographer. It was one of the first products of his 'BC turn,' and he opened the essay with an "ellipsis" that became as important to how he would study British Columbia as matters of land and translation. The essay begins with what happened, in June 1808, when "Simon Fraser, explorer/trader for the Montreal-based Northwest Company and some of his men reached the native village of Nx'ômi'n on the west bank of what he thought was the Columbia River." What ensues from there revolves around a double entendre of 'meeting.' Cole represents this event as a meeting of cultures very differently embedded in space and time, and across lines of power, but the essay is also about the meeting in this place of different theories and historical literatures for interpreting such a scene. He assembles a dossier encapsulating the two sides of this encounter, without making

any judgements about the direction of history or fate of geography, and then comments:

> It is hard to imagine two more different accounts of the same event, both told not very long ago. Time is telescoped in British Columbia; the place rests on a vast ellipsis. In Europe the equivalent of Coyote and his band are too far back in time to have any reality, and so, invented and abstracted, they appear as noble savages (Rousseau) or as members of traditional lifeworlds (Habermas). But in this new corner of the New World abstractions become realities, and the long story of emerging modernity, extending back through European millennia, is compressed into a hundred years or so years (Harris 1992, 5–6).

He goes on to theory (and where I started this commentary) by way of maps – presenting what he could piece together of Indigenous settlement and a settler colonial presence (presaged by the gold rushes) through the Fraser Canyon, hewn from his extensive fieldwork and assiduous archival investigation – and pointing to the possibility that maps, which theory tells us were instruments of colonial power par excellence (and needing to be treated as such), might now be theoretically and empirically re-purposed as tools of understanding, if not redemption.

To be sure, scholarship and debate about British Columbia will continue to grapple with this ellipsis, and the ongoing condition of translation (of mapping and re-mapping) shaping the past and its relations with the present and future that was imagined and expedited by the remarkable Cole Harris.

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