

BOOK REVIEWS

*The Thin Edge of Innovation:
Metro Vancouver's
Evolving Economy*

Roger Hayter, Jerry Patchell,
and Kevin Rees

UBC Press, 2025, 344 pp.
\$34.95 paper.

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"SILICON ENVY" has been a persistent trope in the urban and regional development community for decades now, reflecting a widespread desire to emulate the storied high-tech growth model of Silicon Valley in California. Scotland has a silicon glen, New Orleans its silicon bayou, and there are numerous silicon prairies and savannas. Canada has periodically laid claim to a nebulous silicon north. But there is nothing to match the Californian original, which has surged through decades of reinvention (from hardware and then networks to software and platforms) in a peerless fashion. In truth, Metro Vancouver has never been a serious player in this world. *The Thin Edge of Innovation*, by economic geographers Roger Hayter, Jerry

Patchell, and Kevin Rees, shows why.

Metro Vancouver's story is ultimately one of "arrested development," which could have been an alternative title for this book. There is a reasonable record of homegrown entrepreneurship, the region's modestly sized tech sector being mostly populated by microenterprises. But hardly any have grown into so-called core firms capable of anchoring an innovation ecosystem, and virtually none of the self-reinforcing agglomeration economies depicted in the innovation literature. This book strives to make the most of Vancouver's scattered achievements, but there is no escaping its sobering conclusions: that the metropolitan region's tech economy is "distinctive" but not "substantial," that it is "limited in size and spread thin without sinking many local roots" (229), that clustering effects are "modest" (213), and that public-policy efforts have been "ad hoc" (64).

Guided by the expansive literature on innovation economies – which has more than its fair share of tautological and circular reasoning, reading back from demonstrated success stories for causal factors and replicable formulas – Hayter and colleagues embark on a determined search for anything that might credibly be framed in such terms. They leave no

stone unturned in documenting all that there is, providing pen portraits of local firms, mapping financial relations and export markets, and putting a positive gloss on the efforts of local institutions. But these are thick descriptions of substantially thin processes.

The authors show that British Columbia's resource economy, downsized and heavily restructured since the 1980s, left behind a legacy ill-suited to the needs and priorities of the knowledge-based industries of today. On the other hand, most of Vancouver's best-known companies – such as Lululemon, Mountain Equipment Co-op (now Company), Aritzia, and Arc'teryx (Table 6.1, 202–4) – are brand-led players occupying the pricier parts of “lifestyle” markets. These companies trade on the image of Vancouver, placing an accent on design, but they are “not necessarily high tech” (196). If there is a bona fide high-tech sector, it is the “new media” cluster that grew up around video game production with close links to the movie industry. This is arguably the only part of Metro Vancouver's bits-and-pieces economy that resembles the textbook cases of creative dynamism, talent pooling, innovation-rich commercialization, and dense interfirm networking. But even this sector struggles to sustain forward momentum in a metropolitan region burdened by a long-term affordability crisis, shortages of local venture capital, and limited institutional capacity.

In effect, *The Thin Edge of Innovation* conclusively demonstrates its null hypothesis, providing a stock-take of Metro Vancouver's arrested development in high tech. Less than one-tenth of the size of the Silicon Valley original, Vancouver barely registers on the list of wannabes, and it is not difficult to see why. There are good universities, but not many commercial spin-offs.

There is plenty of talent, but not enough decent-paying jobs. There are generally supportive politicians, agencies, and civic leaders, but more self-congratulatory rhetoric than substantive institutional or financial support. It's said that Vancouver gets by on its wits and its good looks, which may be about right. There are surface trappings of success – such as busy restaurants and above-average ownership of luxury cars (200) – but to look beneath the surface, as Hayter and colleagues do, is to raise more troubling questions.

A telling episode not mentioned in the book is Vancouver's ill-fated (and ill-conceived) bid to host Amazon's second headquarters in 2017, which laid claim to a curious competitive asset: “We have the lowest wages of all North American tech hubs” (Vancouver Economic Commission 2017, 2, 51). A point that Hayter and colleagues mention, but do not dwell upon, is that in North America, only Mississippi and South Dakota have lower tech-sector wages than Metro Vancouver (112). Yet they dismiss as “churlish” the suggestion that Metro Vancouver has been stuck on a “low-road” development path (8). Although this is anything but a typical cheap-labour economy, the (unnamed) development model that the city has been pursuing does not appear to have been working – at least not for the majority of local workers. Despite the fact that Hayter and colleagues prefer to pull their punches, chasing the holy grail of high-tech growth, on this evidence, is not going to be the answer.

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*Broken City: Land Speculation,
Inequality, and Urban Crisis*

Patrick M. Condon

UBC Press, 2024. 274 pp.
\$32.95 paper.

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THE ROLE of land in the economy, social inequality, and the housing crisis is often overlooked (Ryan-Collins et al. 2017). Patrick M. Condon seeks to address this gap by centring his book on the concept of “urban land” and its role in perpetuating inequality.

Tracing the roots of disparities in wealth, employment, health, and landownership to systems such as slavery and colonialism, Condon argues that the highly uneven control over land lies at the core of these enduring inequalities. The book’s starting point is inequalities in a broad context, leading its way towards inequalities in access to housing. After demonstrating the role of land in housing systems, he evaluates different policies in terms of their impact on housing affordability.

The underlying issue of the housing problem, according to Condon, is not a problem of supply and demand, but the rising share of land prices in the overall cost of housing. In many countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, the cost of housing has doubled in less than ten years, and Condon links this increase to the appreciation of land value. When land not only becomes the main driver of costs but also absorbs all efforts to decrease construction costs, simply increasing supply cannot improve affordability.

Debates over the role of government in the housing market have long produced two contrasting systems worldwide

(Stephens 2020; Kemeny 2006). One protects the private market, by all means necessary, from competition with the nonmarket sector; the other builds a strong nonmarket sector to balance the private market. These two systems echo the current divide between those who argue that the solution lies in more supply, mainly through deregulation and relying on the filtering effect (Glaeser and Gyourko 2003), and those who believe that only the right kind of supply can address the structural issues that create inequalities in our housing systems. Condon clearly aligns with the latter view, advocating for measures that condition the increase in residential capacity for providing affordability.

It is important to highlight that the author does not dismiss efforts to reduce the cost of construction or residential capacity increase. Rather, he shows, quite convincingly, that without concrete strategies for controlling land rent, all the gains we might have from these efforts would be absorbed by rising land prices.

Adam Smith saw land as one of three production factors alongside capital and labour (1776). As land was subsumed under capital at the end of the eighteenth century, economic debates became void of the singularities of this form of capital and the monopoly that is inherent in its scarcity and fixed location. Condon reminds the reader of these unique features, urging for a renewed understanding of land’s role in our housing markets, particularly within the English-speaking world.

From this perspective, any effort to make housing more affordable must restrict the flow of capital and labour into land rents. In exploring how this might be achieved, Condon goes beyond the purist single-tax position that most Georgists recommend. Drawing lessons from successful housing policies in cities such as Vienna, Cambridge, and Portland,

he demonstrates that coordinated strategies – limiting land value inflation, asserting public control over land, and strengthening the protected housing sector – can yield permanent affordability.

Measures such as conditioning upzoning with resident income or adding development taxes can drive down land prices. Yet, as Condon cautions, “the wider the gap between current wages and current land prices, the fewer the social benefits that can be demanded without rendering projects unprofitable in the absence of a subsidy” (192).

Condon’s *Broken City* is more than a critique of housing policy – it is a call to re-examine one of the most fundamental yet overlooked dimensions of modern capitalism. His argument is both timely and persuasive. While the book offers limited discussion of the political and institutional barriers to reform, the clarity of its arguments provides valuable insight for decision makers seeking to understand why efforts to achieve affordability continue to fall short – and how renewed political will could chart a more equitable path forward.

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- Nature-First Cities: Restoring Relationships with Ecosystems and with Each Other*
Cam Brewer, Herb Hammond,
and Sean Markey
UBC Press, 2024.
258 pp. \$39.95 paper.
- PAUL STANGL
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- THE NATURAL environment permeates the city in myriad ways, yet we tend to think of cities and nature as separate entities. *Nature-First Cities* breaks significant ground, pointing out that the city-nature dichotomy is a false one and offering a strategic approach to radically transform cities to optimize the best of both the urban and natural worlds. In this sense, the book updates Ebenezer Howard’s “Town-Country” concept for the twenty-first century.
- The book examines how our dominant city-building traditions have sought to suppress and subjugate nature to the detriment of both urban residents and the nonhuman world. The authors review considerable evidence that this approach to urban nature is expensive and harmful to the physical and mental health of urban residents, particularly those in low-income areas. Long-running efforts by reformers and city planners to better incorporate nature into cities are portrayed as a small step in the right direction. The authors’ ambitious goal is the wholesale reshaping of cities to restore ecosystems. Careful design will allow for medium to high urban densities while erasing any sharp distinction between nature and the city. New green spaces, as focal points for planning efforts and recreational activities, will also facilitate social interaction and community building.

Their solution is nature directed stewardship (NDS), which was developed by one of the authors to protect forest ecosystems threatened by resource extraction. Transferring this to metropolitan areas means putting "nature first in cities, creating ... nature-first cities." The boundaries of planning efforts will no longer be those of the municipality or the metropolitan area, but a target watershed. The long-term goal is to restore "ecological integrity, wild biodiversity, and ecosystems" throughout the city, with the presettlement conditions as a target. The authors recognize the immensity of this task, assigning a planning horizon of 250 to 500 years or more. They propose working in a stepwise manner with a broad range of participants, including residents, government agencies, scientists, and Indigenous knowledge holders. To balance urbanity with nature, they propose the widespread use of green roofs, green walls, raingardens, and bioswales, while reclaiming minor roads and alleys as natural areas; and covering the city with multi-layered vegetation, along with daylighting streams and lining them with planted areas. The resulting network could eliminate flooding and greatly reduce water pollution by restoring the hydrological cycles. It could also restore vegetation throughout the city, reduce air pollution, and reinstate wildlife to the city through well-connected habitats.

A range of case studies from cities around the world demonstrate effective efforts to improve natural conditions in cities. The authors' more ambitious goal is illustrated with a case study on the application of NDS to restore the Still Creek watershed in East Vancouver. Once a "sea of green and blue veins and arteries of water connecting the complex biological diversity of a temperate rainforest," the

area has undergone successive eras of development culminating in a bland, rather suburban sea of concrete and buildings. The authors describe this as an "ecologically impoverished watershed," lacking vegetation and wildlife while facilitating water pollution and enhanced temperature swings. The restoration plan builds upon preserved fragments of nature and creates linkages to restore water movement and rebuild ecosystems with design solutions tailored to different land uses. This case study provides a clear image of the successful application of NDS in terms of physical planning and community involvement. Even the chum salmon concur, returning to spawn after an eighty-year absence.

Nature-First Cities is to be commended for challenging the city-nature dichotomy and demonstrating how urban areas can welcome nature for the benefit of city residents and the surrounding environment. However, the grand scale of this issue raises many questions. The authors make a forceful claim for the expansive restoration of nature in cities and cite many benefits, but could go much further in examining negative consequences. In what ways does the widespread introduction of vegetation and wildlife into cities result in damage to buildings and conflict with human activities? How would the design approaches for NDS be altered for different climates? While NDS greatly improved a suburban area in the case study, would it be suitable for dense, vital urban centres, or would it result in their dissolution? Debates between modernist and traditionalist architects and city planners can shed light on this issue. What would result if professionals from different fields developed their own approaches to balancing nature and cities? One could imagine books written by different combinations of specialists. A team composed of an urban

historian, an environmental engineer and an urban sociologist would create a very different vision than a team composed of a landscape historian, an architect and an urban economist. This topic is too large and complex for a definitive solution, but efforts such as *Nature-First Cities* provide much-needed thoughtful guides for approaching the nature-city relationship.

*The Trees Are Speaking:
Dispatches from the
Salmon Forests*

Lynda V. Mapes

University of Washington Press,
2025. 272 pp. \$41.00 paper.

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University of Victoria

IN *The Trees Are Speaking: Dispatches from the Salmon Forests*, journalist and naturalist Lynda V. Mapes asks what it means to listen to trees, to watersheds, and to Indigenous histories held in these living landscapes. While reading this superb book, I was reminded of my friend Sut'othma, an Elder from the Songhees Nation, who has long advised me to go to the forest and listen to the trees: to put a hand on their bark, sit among them, and deeply listen. She teaches: "Be quiet in this place and listen." That guidance shapes my reading of Mapes's work. Listening, in her account, is not a metaphor but a method – a disciplined way of learning from the more-than-human world and of acknowledging our participation in its systems of interdependence.

The Trees Are Speaking is both a culmination and an evolution of Mapes's broader work – an inquiry into how attention itself can become a form of

ecological and ethical repair. Grounded in the temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, the book follows scientists, Indigenous knowledge holders, and restoration practitioners across the salmon forests of Oregon and Washington. Here, marine nutrients carried inland by salmon feed the trees, while those same trees stabilize the streams that sustain the salmon. In this way, Mapes mirrors the listening that Sut'othma describes – attentive, embodied, and reciprocal. She shows that listening is not symbolic but material: ecological systems themselves communicate through cycles of exchange. Listening becomes a framework for understanding reciprocity as both process and principle.

This attention to relationship recalls Mapes's *Witness Tree: Seasons of Change with a Century-Old Oak* (2017), in which she spent a year observing a single oak in the Harvard Forest to document how climate change impresses itself on living matter. That project established her method – combining scientific observation, patient immersion, and narrative clarity. The oak stood as an individual witness to global transformation. In *The Trees Are Speaking*, she scales that attentiveness from one organism to an entire bioregion. Where *Witness Tree* was intimate and meditative, this new work is networked and collective, portraying forests as communities of communication rather than isolated organisms. In doing so, Mapes challenges Western taxonomies that separate people from trees – and, by extension, from our ethical responsibilities toward them.

Threaded through these ecological stories is another register of listening – one that Mapes first explored in *Breaking Ground: The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and the Unearthing of Tse-whit-zen Village* (2009). That earlier work examined how the Lower Elwha Klallam People

affirmed that listening to the land means recognizing it as a living record of deep Indigenous history and resilience – and that repair requires ceremony, collaboration, and respect for Indigenous sovereignty. From that experience, Mapes learned that ethical listening requires acknowledgment of colonial histories and movement toward reconciliation. In *The Trees Are Speaking*, this insight extends to forest and river restoration efforts led by Indigenous nations. She listens not only to scientists but to Coast Salish and Quinault Elders whose knowledge reframes environmental management as relational stewardship rather than technical control.

Mapes's strength lies in her ability to combine journalistic insight with ethical reflection. Her prose is clear and unsentimental, balancing data with empathy. She resists nostalgia and avoids the romantic impulse to treat forests as untouched refuges. Instead, she portrays them as dynamic, altered systems with deep histories of human presence, whose recovery depends on conscious responsibility. In presenting listening as a disciplined form of attention – anchored in observation, humility, and accountability – Mapes shifts environmental reporting from description to relationship, from witnessing to ethical participation.

Across *Witness Tree*, *Breaking Ground*, and *The Trees Are Speaking*, Mapes develops a philosophy of attention. Each book deepens her commitment to reciprocity – between people and trees, history and ecology, knowledge and care. The new work stands as her most integrated and urgent: a narrative of forests as living archives, as kin, and as interlocutors requiring our response. Listening, Mapes suggests, is how we begin to reinhabit those relationships rightly. For readers, it is also an invitation to slow down, to notice, and to recognize

that hearing the world around us is the first step toward living well within it – not as detached observers, but as participants in a shared and fragile conversation.

*Raincoast Chronicles 25:
m'am'ata Goes Fishing*

Alan Haig-Brown

Harbour Publishing, 2025.

112 pp. \$24.95 paper.

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University of Victoria

ALAN HAIG-BROWN'S *m'am'ata Goes Fishing* is a nostalgic look at the semi-independent BC fishery of the 1960s and into the 1970s, especially in the waters of Johnstone Strait. Haig-Brown had a privileged perspective on this time, place, and set of practices by virtue of marrying into the family of Herb Assu, one of the last semi-independent Indigenous fishers plying those waters. As a white settler – *m'am'ata* means “white man” – Haig-Brown got to see the hard work that Indigenous fishers put into sustaining the province's thriving salmon and herring fisheries. He also saw the racist and inequitable practices by which ever-larger corporate fishing entities controlled fishers and gradually pushed them out of business. Across its pages, *m'am'ata Goes Fishing* traces this process while indulging in soft-focus nostalgia about huge meals prepared in a tiny galley by Herb Assu's wife Mitzi, some perilous journeys, and a semi-mythologized account of Assu's skills.

m'am'ata Goes Fishing is really three stories, then. First, it's a personal memoir that follows Haig-Brown from dropping out of high school to find work, to marrying into the Assu family, labouring

on Herb's boats, and a stint living on a boat in False Creek, and finally to his emergence as a prominent writer. Second, it tells the tale of the Assu family's long-standing role as fishers in coastal waters, invoking their ancestral practices and documenting how debt-finance and technological advances first made their approach obsolete and then forced them to sell the family fishing license to escape bankruptcy. Third, *m'am'ata Goes Fishing* chronicles the larger changes in the Pacific salmon fishery during those crucial years, tracking the influx of European fishers, the trend towards ever-larger boats, ever-more-efficient machinery, and ever-more-aggressive fishing methods in the race to make a buck. This is the true bass note that sustains the book: the transition from forms of fishing that were anchored in stewardship towards cold-blooded exploitation of salmon and herring as simple commodities. Accompanying this note is a leitmotif that condemns the shift away from careful Indigenous practices to a mode of capitalist settler exploitation underwritten by racism, the profit motive, and market consolidation.

It's a book from which I learned a lot, and on that basis alone I recommend it. I fish some of the same waters myself, and it's fascinating to read about how seiners from an earlier time flirted with shorelines to anchor nets to trees and rocks while setting nets out into the current. I can only imagine the nerve and skill it must have taken to do that without ending up in the drink at least once in a while, if not outright killed by a snapping line or simple misstep on the slippery shore. Haig-Brown brings these practices home with plain language that conveys the matter-of-fact attitude those working on the boats must have had to adopt, even as it dares us to imagine the smells, movements, and dangers.

If I have one qualm about *m'am'ata Goes Fishing* it's how Haig-Brown leans rather too heavily on the trope of the strong, silent, knowing Indigenous man. Herb Assu may well have been the strong silent type, but Haig-Brown's tendency to attribute Assu's knowledge and ability to racial memory is troubling. Why must Assu's intimate knowledge of the waterways and coastlines be a product of his Indigenous identity rather than a lifetime of close study and memory? Mythologizing Assu as Haig-Brown does undermines Assu's abilities by naturalizing them: he is born with them rather than acquiring them. The portrait of Assu's grim, silent authority contributes to this romanticism and, I think, detracts from the respect Haig-Brown urges us to feel for Assu.

That said, *m'am'ata Goes Fishing* is a hugely valuable read. It illuminates the day-to-day life of a bygone era in the salmon and herring fisheries of the Johnstone Strait and situates them in the larger contexts of creeping capitalism and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people trying against the odds to maintain their traditional practices. The book's ending is infuriating. And that's as it should be.

*After Redress: Japanese
Canadian and Indigenous
Struggles for Justice*

Edited by Kirsten Emiko
McAllister and Mona Oikawa

UBC Press, 2025. 302 pp.
\$34.95 paper.

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*A*fter Redress brings together Japanese Canadian and Indigenous scholars

as well as a specialist of Canadian literature to examine the legacies and implications of community-based political activism. Edited by Kirsten Emiko McAllister and Mona Oikawa, it is the first book-length academic work that bridges Indigenous and Japanese Canadian struggles to hold the state accountable for historical and ongoing injustices. Featuring contributions by eight authors, it is mightily critical, theoretically dense, and rich in interpretive frameworks. It embraces diverse positions and outlooks, both of the contributors themselves and of the subjects they seek to represent. There is simply no way to do justice to its contents in a short review like this. But a question posed by Dorothy Cucw-la7 Christian in her chapter helps to highlight its key ideational thrust: "What is it going to take to transform the embedded national colonial narrative so that the grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of both Indigenous and settler peoples can share a sustainable future on these lands that could be mutually beneficial to all?" (101).

The book marks a milestone in the formation of an antiracist coalition that is necessary to effectively counter the hegemonic forces entrenched in state apparatuses. To be sure, the contributors emphasize the "incommensurability" of Indigenous peoples and Japanese Canadians who, in McAllister's words, are "racialized settlers profiting from the genocidal occupation of the unceded territories of hundreds of sovereign Nations whose rights Canada continues to violate" (214). Bearing this "foundational difference" in mind, it is still possible to examine Indigenous and Japanese Canadian calls for justice in cross-pollinating ways (14). Bonita Lawrence writes, "In examining the largest redress settlement in Canadian

history – the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) – I have found it useful to first of all consider the Japanese Canadian struggles for redress, as it was the first successful struggle toward restitution for past wrongs that profoundly shaped the possibilities for the IRSSA, as well as the latter struggles of survivors of the Sixties Scoop" (28). Both were woefully inadequate.

What the book explicitly opposes includes settler colonialism, multiculturalism in its official manifestation, liberalism, state apologies, linear and homogenizing conceptions of time, historians' valorization of "objectivity" and their treatment of the past as finished, and subject formation in its universalizing Western variant. Each tacitly packs the power to exclude and erase, and they are woven together in some of the "insidious ways that power can incorporate what it seeks to destroy" (6). Communities are siloed and selfhoods are depoliticized, paving the way for dominant conceptions that bolster the ruling power to extend further and deeper. Much of the book is devoted to outlining communal practices for thwarting and debasing these effects. If redress implies a closure, that is a fallacy induced by what Smaro Kamboureli calls the "liberal script" mobilized by the state (166). This is why the "after of redress" becomes critical (192). The said script is foregrounded with a linear and homogenized "Canadian settler state's time" which holds within, or is inextricable from, "the Western mould of subject formation, when in fact these subjects [who are redressed] have been typically those whose difference Western liberal states have tried to eradicate or contain" (186, 170). By lingering on the "after," we can open pathways to disrupt the pull towards closure and recognize the different temporal orders that are active in given moments. Kamboureli

offers an eye-opening analysis of Anishinaabe Elder Fred Kelly's and Japanese Canadian scholar Roy Miki's brilliant strategies to resist, undermine, and subvert power's hold.

As McAllister and Oikawa note, recent critical scholarship frames state apologies as "motivated primarily by the desire to preserve their reputations nationally and internationally ... States apologize and agree to reparations while avoiding the implementation of structural changes that ensure justice for survivors and ending further violations" (3). *After Redress* works with this line of understanding, but it is distinctive in that its contributors "write from and about the positionalities 'inside the call[s] for justice' for Indigenous peoples and Japanese Canadians" by accessing "insider knowledge" not available in public archives (5, 12). What is more, they are wary of a trend wherein activism is grasped as being co-opted by the state, after all. This signals a danger of "these movements [being reduced] to some scholars' assessments of their co-option" (7). What can hard-fought struggles of communities teach us? Who are we, as outsiders, to take the posture of aloofness and discuss, in a totalizing and preordained manner, their functional effects? At stake is not so much coming to know some reality out there, but rather, how we come to understand "our constitution as (a)political subjects today" (8). McAllister and Oikawa call for a rigorous self-reflexivity, for, if we ignore how our selves are formed in relation to the encompassing schemes of power that surround us, how is it possible to bring about structural change?

The book successfully demonstrates that activism and legacies thereof deserve full scholarly attention especially when they fuse and promote solidarity among Indigenous and other marginalized groups in Canada's settler colonial order.

It is a superbly enriching read, and it should move and inspire scholars and activists as well as storytellers and artists for years to come. Much more work is needed to expand the scope of this kind of discourse.

Indigenous Rights in One Minute: What You Need to Know to Talk Reconciliation

Bruce McIvor

Harbour Publishing, 2025.
224 pp. \$22.95 paper.

TREVOR GREEN
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IN A RECENT interview, Bruce McIvor quipped that he wrote *Indigenous Rights in One Minute: What You Need to Know to Talk Reconciliation* for people with short attention spans. At just over two hundred pages, his latest work is a quick, enjoyable, even breezy read. Written as a series of Q&As, the book is meant for readers outside the legal profession who want to learn about Aboriginal law, Indigenous rights, and how the court interprets its duties.

What's refreshing about McIvor's book is that he makes no qualms about the contents of the book being *his* take on the legal system. Although always striving for accuracy, he emphasizes that he "never tries to be objective" (4). He accepts that lawyers, judges, and dissenting scholars might disagree with his interpretations and opinions; he is not only willing to have others disagree with him, but welcomes debate, inspiring trust and confidence in the reader.

In aim and scope, McIvor's book joins a growing body of literature that has appeared since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls*

to Action in 2015. It can be placed next to informative, reader-friendly works meant for people who are perhaps unsure or hesitant about how to contribute to reconciliation – works such as Bob Joseph's *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, Jody Wilson-Raybould's *True Reconciliation: How to Be a Force for Change*, and David Alexander Robertson's *52 Ways to Reconcile: How to Walk with Indigenous Peoples on the Path to Healing*. It's important that these books be read, because I am weary of reconciliation being a sort of buzzword and not being followed up by concrete action. By reading *Indigenous Rights*, you can start to have informed, meaningful conversations about issues that matter not only to Indigenous people, but to all Canadians.

An adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia's law school and a founding partner of First Peoples Law firm in Vancouver, McIvor has spent nearly three decades working on behalf of Indigenous communities. In providing concise answers to a plethora of questions, he draws primarily upon Supreme Court decisions.

The book is divided into two parts. The first section includes questions the author is most frequently asked as a lawyer, such as "What is the Doctrine of Discovery?", "Who qualifies as Métis?", and "Why does the Crown have a duty to consult?" These are responded to with one-sentence answers and further expanded upon in pithy summaries that can be read in a minute or less, so have your egg timer ready. In the second section, McIvor provides answers to questions about specific court cases, and this section is worth delving into to learn about the inner workings of the Supreme Court. Perhaps because his law practice is in British Columbia, land claims in the province and emerging issues are particularly well represented, adding

regional depth and special value to the book.

Although both sections are informative and accurate, McIvor is at his best when he takes on common misconceptions and persistent stereotypes. For example, most Indigenous people *do* pay taxes, "lots of taxes" (29); and no, they "did not surrender their land through treaties" (56). As he made palpably clear in his first book, *Standoff*, McIvor is all too aware of the limitations of the law, having represented Indigenous people who are rightly sceptical of a colonizing, Western legal system.

With certain entries, McIvor's self-inflicted brevity means some of his summaries are not expanded upon in an altogether satisfying manner. For example, in an entry about the importance of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, he mentions the "so-called Oka Crisis" without providing a few more sentences for context (98). Also, at times, I would have appreciated more background on Inuit and their relationship with the law. But these minor quibbles aside, his latest book is learned and well written, and the sections on treaties and treaty rights are especially well done. McIvor set out to write an accessible overview of Aboriginal law, and by this yardstick, his book is a success. *Indigenous Rights* is a useful addition to the growing body of resources written for a general audience by Indigenous authors who hope to advance reconciliation and Indigenous resurgence.

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A Gentleman of Considerable Talent: William Brown and the Fur Trade, 1811–1827

Geoff Mynett

Caitlin Press, 2024. 204 pp.
 \$26.00 paper.

TYLER MCCREARY
Florida State University

IN HIS NEWEST book, *A Gentleman of Considerable Talent*, Geoff Mynett focuses on the life of Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trader William Brown. Neither a prominent figure in the fur trade nor an accomplished explorer, Brown's story is significant precisely for its ordinariness. Through his peripatetic career in the fur trade, Mynett captures the precarious existence of a middling trader living through an era of imperial upheaval and corporate rivalry.

In the opening chapters, Brown first appears as a roguish protagonist of modest means whose story showcases HBC indifference to its lower ranks. Born in Kilmaurs, Scotland, Brown was recruited to the HBC in 1811 on a three-year contract. Chaos erupted even before his departure. Agents of the rival North West Company interfered with port paperwork and fomented dissent among recruits. Stalled in port, events escalated, with fights and desertions. After leaving port, circumstances remained harrowing

as the barely seaworthy vessel Brown was aboard made a perilous Atlantic crossing.

Conditions worsened upon arrival at York Factory. As a consequence of travel delays, the passengers only disembarked as winter began. The mix of Red River settlers and new fur trade recruits who had made the journey were forced to overwinter in an encampment on the Nelson River. Freezing temperatures, scarce provisions, limited fish and game, and eventually the onset of scurvy defined the experience. Ethnic tensions between Irish and Scottish contingents boiled over into violence. Leadership was divided, and mutiny ensued, with Brown emerging as its leader. Lacking food and supplies, the mutineers ultimately relented. For the HBC, a desperate need of labour overrode its desire for discipline, and the men were readmitted into its employ.

Although Mynett provides a compelling recounting of these events, he did not pen a picaresque adventure. Rather, the narrative pivots toward Brown's rehabilitation as loyal servant of the company. Posted to a remote Arctic outpost on Reindeer Lake, he endured years of isolation and privation before returning to Scotland in 1815. There he married his old paramour. She had already borne him a daughter in 1810 and birthed a second in 1816. Brown, however, remained restless and returned to HBC employ in 1818.

Brown's second term thrust him into the fur trade wars between the HBC and the Nor'Westers. Brown initially coordinated four forts around Lake Manitoba. Amid escalating conflicts, rivals from the competing companies ambushed and arrested (read: kidnapped) one another. Transferred north to the Great Slave District in 1819, Brown was tasked with opening a new fort. Yet company parsimony and weak leadership left him under-resourced, and

he spent a desperate winter starving at Fort Resolution. The following year he moved to Fort Wedderburn, near the strategic North West Company hub at Fort Chipewyan, where he became embroiled in further intrigues, including the capture and detention of Nor'Wester chief Simon McGillivray. In 1821, the companies merged. Brown took a post in New Caledonia, founding Fort Kilmaurs on Babine Lake and seeking to extend the trade into Gitxsan territories. The five years at Fort Kilmaurs were less austere than his Arctic service, although conflict with his district superior, a former Nor'Wester John Stuart, persisted.

Stuart vehemently opposed the HBC practice of fur traders taking "country wives" from local Indigenous communities. Brown had at least one such wife, Josette, and possibly a second, Fanny. While this practice was common, it was rarely mentioned in fur trade journals. Thus, Stuart's campaign against it provides valuable documentation of interracial relationships during the fur trade. As Mynett recounts, these relationships could become a source of disputes not only between HBC traders but also with the surrounding Indigenous community. Stuart also opposed Brown's designs to travel down the Babine River and upper Skeena River to open trade with the Gitxsan. Brown nonetheless appealed directly to the HBC governor, arguing that Skeena exploration was necessary to counter the influence of coastal traders. He made preliminary journeys to the Gitxsan villages along the Babine canyon, but illness ultimately restricted his travel. Forced to abandon his ambitions, he returned to Scotland in 1826, and died just six months later.

Mynett's biography of Brown is an engaging portrait of an ordinary fur trader negotiating the brutal contingencies of imperial commerce. The book's strength lies in the author's close and careful

reading of archival sources. His prose is clear and economical, and he brings an impressive range of documentation together in a coherent narrative. Yet his account also has gaps. Indigenous peoples, though central to the fur trade, appear largely at the margins of the story. Mynett provides glimpses into their practices – for instance, describing ritual gift exchanges among the Dakelh and Gitxsan. But his steady focus remains on the intrigues and interpersonal conflicts among the fur traders. The result is a history that vividly depicts the world within the fort while leaving the surrounding Indigenous world faintly sketched.

Still, Mynett succeeds in humanizing a figure who would otherwise remain unknown. Brown's story is less about heroic discovery than about endurance, adaptation, and the ambiguous loyalties of men at the edge of empire. *A Gentleman of Considerable Talent* thus helps recognize the lives of the ordinary actors of the colonial past – even as it leaves open questions of how those lives were entangled with the Indigenous worlds that made them possible.

*Mining Camp Tales of the
Silvery Slocan: A History of
British Columbia's Silver Rush*

Peter Smith

Heritage House, 2025. 384 pp.
\$34.95 paper.

ARN KEELING
*Memorial University of
Newfoundland*

BUILDING ON his previous book *Silver Rush*, Peter Smith presents a comprehensive, even encyclopedic account of the history of the Slocan

district silver rush of the 1890s. Combining detailed and wide-ranging documentation of the rush's key figures and events with rollicking "mining camp tales," this volume is likely to appeal to historians interested in British Columbia's mining frontier settlement as well as more casual mining history enthusiasts.

In just a few short years, the rush for silver in the West Kootenay transformed this mountainous, sparsely settled region. Like so many frontier mineral rushes, it sparked mass non-Indigenous in-migration, the creation of new settlements, and wild economic speculation before almost as quickly collapsing. The Slocan silver boom, roughly between 1891 and 1900, traced this familiar arc, leaving behind small, contemporary postmining towns and the celebrated "ghost town" of Sandon, once the region's "urban oasis."

Drawing on extensive source work in historical newspapers, local histories, and archival sources, Smith recounts the origins, boom times, and bust(s) of this period with flair. While focusing on the major personalities of the region, from prospector Eli Carpenter to the controversial "king" of Sandon Johnny Harris, the book also tracks the experiences of lesser-known Slocan figures from packers to sex workers to hoteliers. While not quite a "social history" study in the scholarly sense, Smith's account does include broadly social concerns often omitted from many popular and celebratory mining histories, including the impacts of the invasion of miners on the Sinixt and Ktunaxa Peoples, the violent racism directed at Chinese workers, and the role of women in the mining towns of Kaslo, New Denver, and Sandon. Mine workers, too, get their due, as later chapters explore the dangers associated with underground

mining and the advent of unionism in the Slocan in the late 1890s.

Another strength of the book is its placement of the Slocan boom and bust in the context of British Columbia's frontier history and mining history more broadly. Relatively remote from British Columbian and Canadian centres of power and population, the Slocan retained a resolutely American character for much of this period, influencing everything from local politics to sporting preferences (baseball, rather than lacrosse). The flows of capital and labour ran significantly north-south, although as the district became established, London investors played a greater role. Smith's account also shows how the decline of silver mining in the Slocan was tied to the mania for gold sparked by discoveries both near (Rossland) and far (the Klondike), as well as the waning fortunes (and prices) for silver itself.

As reflected in the scores of names in the book's index, *Mining Camp Tales of the Silvery Slocan* presents an extremely detailed, panoramic account of a colourful period in the history of this remote (and beautiful) part of the province. If at times difficult to discern in the blizzard of names and stories, it also offers insight into the importance of the Slocan rush to British Columbia's settlement history, and will remain a useful reference for students of the period's social and economic history.

*Stewards of Splendour:
A History of Wildlife and People
in British Columbia*

Jennifer Bonnell

Royal BC Museum, 2023.
496 pp. \$34.95 paper.

GLENN ICETON

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BRITISH COLUMBIA is the most ecologically diverse province in Canada, as evidenced by a colourful biogeoclimatic zone map in one of the glossy centre plates of *Stewards of Splendour*. This diversity renders the task of writing a coherent environmental history of the province difficult. However, in *Stewards of Splendour*, Jennifer Bonnell rises to the occasion, providing a detailed and nuanced analysis of wildlife and people in British Columbia without leaving a corner of the province untouched. The result is a monograph that provides a solid general overview of changes in wildlife-human history in the province while also capturing its unique local dynamics.

Stewards of Splendour follows a chronological trajectory from Indigenous wildlife stewardship prior to the arrival of Europeans to more contemporary wildlife concerns. This narrative is divided into five parts and thirteen chapters. Beginning with a discussion of Indigenous wildlife stewardship, Bonnell then transitions into examining the arrival of Europeans with the fur trade and the emergence of the commercial exploitation of wildlife as well as the exploitation of the wildlife commons with the increase in settlers during the gold rushes. The book then considers the emergence of wildlife conservation

in the early part of the twentieth century, its connections to sport hunting, and its consequent effects on Indigenous and other subsistence hunters. Following the emergence of wildlife conservation, Bonnell tracks the evolution of scientific wildlife management. This development entailed a movement away from sporting groups' dominant positions with respect to wildlife legislation and initiatives. Bonnell also highlights the role of certain individuals, such as Ian McTaggart Cowan, in facilitating these transitions. As Bonnell documents changes in wildlife conservation, she also analyzes emerging threats to wildlife habitat, such as expanding settlement and the forestry industry. Towards the end of the book, Bonnell identifies important turning points influencing more contemporary wildlife-human attitudes, policies, and legislation. These turning points include changing public attitudes towards wildlife as well as developments around the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the province, which have resulted in the latter assuming a more significant role in contemporary wildlife stewardship. Bonnell concludes *Stewards of Splendour* by reflecting on potential historical lessons. To this end, she draws attention to British Columbians' mixed record on stewardship. In so doing, she highlights lessons from the past that need to be relearned, the need for a long-term vision, and the implications of changing public attitudes. Finally, recognizing that "individual actors can drive remarkable change," Bonnell draws attention to three "change makers" charting the course of future wildlife stewardship (422).

While *Stewards of Splendour* primarily focuses on wildlife, Bonnell brings it together with the histories of forestry, mining, energy infrastructure, settlement, and land use in general. Moreover, the book examines broader social, cultural, and political developments occurring

in the province, such as the gradual recognition of Aboriginal rights and title by the federal and provincial governments and the province's adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. This approach produces a truly ecological approach to understanding the history of wildlife. Bonnell is particularly effective at drawing attention to the pressures that the cumulative impacts of land use in its various forms have imposed on wildlife. This approach is particularly pertinent in the wake of the relatively recent *Yahey v. British Columbia* case.

Bonnell uses a wide range of provincial and federal government records as well as legal decisions relating to Aboriginal rights in order to track wildlife-related developments in the province. Moreover, she draws on interviews with a myriad of participants in various initiatives. These interviews are significant as they allow readers to understand the rationales behind certain actions as well as the obstacles faced in these efforts that might otherwise not be apparent in the archival record.

One of the book's most enjoyable features is the various profiles peppered throughout the general narrative relating to specific species, initiatives, and individuals. These profiles offer readers an opportunity to explore individual facets of wildlife-related matters in the province in greater depth. Species profiles draw attention to specific animal species, such as sea otters and grizzly bears, and their distinct histories. For example, the species profile on sea otters (a keystone species) traces their extirpation from the North Pacific from the introduction of the maritime fur trade to efforts to restore the population in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Meanwhile, initiative profiles draw attention to a vast array of projects and programs that have been used in British Columbia to

protect, reintroduce, or repopulate certain wildlife species. These initiatives range from finding more humane ways to trap fur-bearing animals, to efforts to reintroduce certain animals (such as the California big horn sheep), to innovative comanagement and land use planning projects. One particularly entertaining initiative was a brief effort to designate Ogopogo as "wildlife." Finally, individual profiles draw attention to the role of various individuals in protecting wildlife. These profiles are significant as they demonstrate the potential of individuals to effect change. This is a theme that Bonnell returns to in the conclusion. It is through these profiles that Bonnell captures many of the nuances of wildlife history in the province.

Still another useful feature of this book is its comprehensive glossary. As much of *Stewards of Splendour* discusses wildlife conservation efforts, Bonnell frequently introduces technical jargon, such as *seral stage* in reference to the growth of plant communities. Moreover, given both the provincial and federal governments' prominent roles in wildlife stewardship and their inclination to use acronyms, the glossary is a helpful tool for navigating these terms.

Overall, *Stewards of Splendour* makes a valuable contribution to Canadian environmental history and the history of British Columbia. Bonnell captures the ecological, cultural, and social diversity of the province and how these intersect to inform approaches to wildlife stewardship. The book is a well-illustrated, engaging, and accessible read. While it does contain some technical jargon, the glossary allows the lay reader to navigate these terms. The book will likely have a broad appeal to environmental and animal historians, general outdoor enthusiasts, and, ideally, policy makers.

Meltdown: The Making and Breaking of a Field Scientist

Sarah Boon

University of Alberta Press, 2025.
312 pp. \$27.99 paper.

MICHELE KOPPE

University of British Columbia

IN *Meltdown: The Making and Breaking of a Field Scientist*, Sarah Boon shares her fraught journey through academia, fieldwork, science, womanhood, and struggles with mental and physical wellness. Blending science writing and creative nonfiction, the author shares her adventures doing field research on the forests and glaciers of British Columbia, the High Arctic, and the Canadian Rockies, and of finding her way on – and off – the academic career path. Through candid accounts of fieldwork, interactions with colleagues in grad school and beyond, and the elusive pursuit of academic work-life balance, Boon offers readers an intimate look at the highs and lows of a scientific research career.

At a time when the STEM disciplines, particularly the geosciences, are confronting a lack of diversity and a leaky pipeline for women and people of colour, Boon offers a deeply personal narrative of navigating the “glass obstacle course” women scientists so often face in academic settings (NASEM 2018; King et al. 2018; Marin-Spiotta et al. 2020). Woven into her own narrative are similar successes and struggles of other Canadian women scientists, including contemporaries Alison Criscitiello, Bea Alt, and Rita Winkler, and pioneers Mary Vaux, Mary Schäffer, and Phyllis Munday. As she battles both challenging physical environments and the interpersonal dynamics of being

thrown together with challenging field companions, Boon’s personal experiences spotlight the misogynistic attitudes that are still pervasive in glaciology and other remote field disciplines (as also seen in the 2020 documentary *Picture a Scientist*). Boon’s unflinching honesty about the barriers and undue expectations placed on women in science will resonate with many others in academia. Indeed, her story resonated – at times a little too painfully – with my own experiences as a female scientist navigating the twin minefields of remote polar fieldwork and hostile academic settings.

Meltdown is also a cautionary tale for graduate students embarking on an academic career, providing an intimate portrait of struggles with lack of mentorship, imposter syndrome, and mental illness in academic spaces, parts of the hidden curriculum of graduate school not often talked about (Calarco 2020). She summarizes the graduate experience in a single sentence: “If there’s one universal truth about a graduate degree, it’s that it will tear you down and then build you back up again in the shape of an academic who questions everything – including yourself ... I started to question my intelligence: was I smart enough to do a PhD?” (111).

Armchair adventurers will be drawn to the detailed passages of seasons spent planning and conducting fieldwork in the remote outposts of Ellesmere Island and the Canadian Rockies, of living on a glacier as it comes to life, and of rescuing equipment, tents, and teammates from raging rivers and curious bears. Boon’s experiences are also a reminder that the process of discovering new knowledge is inevitably messy, fraught, and uncertain. As she shares, “science doesn’t always provide cut-and-dried answers to difficult questions ... Sometimes there is no alternate hypothesis for your results, and

... things often don't work out quite as expected" (51).

Meltdown is as engaging and readable as it is academically rigorous. Each of the ten chapters is organized and generously supplemented with relevant academic literature and photographs from the author's many forays into the field. Beyond sharing her lived experience, Boon offers critical insights into the complexities of documenting climate change in Canada's icy places and the toxicity found in academia. Readers drawn to narratives of adventure and scientific exploration, as well as those looking for a raw and honest look at the challenges of being a woman in academia, will find much of interest in this book.

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Guilty of Everything: 21st Anniversary Edition

John Armstrong

New Star Books, 2022.

135 pp. \$18.00 paper.

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MEMOIRS of punk are rarely works of art. They don't need to be. The promise of eyewitness accounts and the capacity to organize the chaos of one's salad days is usually enough. John Armstrong provides exactly what one would expect from a founding figure of punk in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in the 1970s. *Guilty of Everything* has been substantially expanded for this anniversary edition and includes stories of tours to points east and south, sabotage and revenge against promoters, sexual exploits, and petty crime, all set to the gnawing hunger for food that even fame could not abate for musicians living in poverty. But what is really special is how genuinely artful and well written the book is. *Guilty of Everything* is once again a significant addition to the now burgeoning archive of published memoirs and firsthand accounts of punk that it helped establish and especially notable because it achieves a level of sophistication few attain.

It is less and less commonplace to say that punk died with the end of its first wave. Punk continues to this day to provide a space for cultural innovation and self-expression worldwide, and memoirs are – perhaps surprisingly for something once thought of as a youth subculture – cementing themselves as a key facet of punk cultural production alongside zines, fashion, records, and

concerts. Retrospective writing about punk is a booming genre that is shaping how participants and scholars in the present understand punk, its legacies, and possible futures.

Punk in Canada remains an underanalyzed phenomenon despite the surge in academic research on punk globally, and this makes Armstrong's memoir an especially important work. Where Sam Sutherland surveys the various manifestations of first wave punk across Canada in *Perfect Youth: The Birth of Canadian Punk*, Armstrong offers a story that is distinct to the Vancouver scene; *Guilty of Everything* ought to be read alongside *I, Shithead* by Joe Keithley for the way it reflects on the origins of punk and the contributions of the Modernettes, DOA, Subhumans, Pointed Sticks, the Young Canadians, and Los Popularos. Typical perhaps of Western Canada, Armstrong shows that punk in British Columbia is often more firmly connected to activities along the western coast of the United States than with scenes in Toronto or Montreal. More significantly, *Guilty of Everything* is compellingly attentive to how deeply integrated punk is within mainstream economic realities despite its promise of rebellion and the creation of legitimate alternative cultural networks. Where punk memoirs are almost always attuned to the social complications involved in championing a genre that challenges mainstream aesthetics, *Guilty of Everything* is especially notable for its focus on the financial realities of being a touring musician in the punk scene. Perhaps for related reasons, it also offers a deeply thoughtful depiction of the romance between cultural rebellion and minor crime.

For those interested in the social and cultural life of British Columbia, Armstrong's memoir situates punk in Vancouver alongside queer culture, the

unhoused and hustler cultures of the Downtown Eastside, Little Mountain recording studio, and the earliest days of the opioid epidemic. Indeed, one of the most powerful effects of the narrative is how richly and fully it humanizes people who are aggressively dismissed by a world that is too often uninterested in the creative talent of people who amplify both joy and suffering, especially when their creative practice does not align with existing financial imperatives.

*Frances Oldham Kelsey,
the FDA, and the
Battle Against Thalidomide*
Cheryl Krasnick Warsh

Oxford University Press, 2024.
424 pp. \$34.99 hardcover.

LAUREN MACIVER THOMPSON
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IN THE EARLY 1960s, Dr. Frances Kelsey was an officer at the US Food and Drug Administration who famously prevented the dangerous drug thalidomide from formally entering the American market. For this book, Warsh interviewed not only Kelsey herself but also her family members, and closely mined Kelsey's voluminous papers. The result is an authoritative biography that seamlessly weaves Kelsey's life story with a broader history of twentieth-century pharmaceutical regulation and consumer protection efforts.

The book is organized chronologically into twenty chapters, exploring Kelsey's journey from her childhood in British Columbia to her career in the United States. She eventually began her doctoral studies under the direction of Dr. Eugene Geiling, the chair of the Department of Pharmacology at the University of

Chicago. Kelsey completed her PhD in 1938, but it was difficult for her to cobble together employment. At one point, she was offered a position at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia as a graduate assistant, but the wages were abysmally low. Warsh asks, "Should Frankie have taken graduate student wages for the opportunity of employment? If she had, she would have followed in the footsteps of many female scientists ... who were forced to submit to low wages and status to keep a foot in the door of the profession" (47). After her marriage to Ellis Kelsey, a pharmacology professor whom she had met in Geiling's lab, she decided to earn an MD. Kelsey herself pointed out, "Of course, as a woman, I needed the extra credentials" (69). Her husband eventually landed a position as chair of the pharmacology department at the University of South Dakota, while Kelsey took care of their two daughters and was relegated to temporary or unpaid research positions and part-time work as a physician.

The Kelseys arrived in Washington, DC, in 1960 after both receiving better career offers. Kelsey began as a medical officer at the FDA, reviewing new drug applications and quickly discovering that in the approvals process, "science was only one factor, and often a minor one" (92). Warsh deftly explains the landscape of pharmaceutical regulation in the mid-twentieth century, wherein drug representatives offered big honoraria to government agents to get their product past FDA's red tape. Clinical trial records were haphazard, samples were widely distributed, and injuries and deaths were mostly unreported. Kelsey dealt with a heavy caseload and immense pressure, making her intervention in the thalidomide crisis even more remarkable for her persistence.

Warsh compellingly lays out the stakes of thalidomide's side effects

of birth defects and miscarriages. Originally developed in the late 1950s by a German company, thalidomide functioned as a sedative and anti-nausea therapy. Marketed under the brand name Contergan, it was advertised as "so harmless that children could be dosed with it so that parents could go to the movies" (105) and was prescribed in pregnancy. In the US, the company William S. Merrell was licensed to market thalidomide under the name Kevadon. With a target date of December 1960, Merrell "had ten million tablets of Kevadon waiting in American warehouses to be shipped out" (104). In the meantime, however, Merrell also distributed the drug to American physicians, which was legal at the time under loose regulations. Individual physicians often did not keep records of the prescriptions.

Warsh deftly navigates through a maze of regulatory and chronological detail with the skill of a suspense novelist. When Kelsey reviewed the application, her team had sixty days to make a decision. They immediately identified serious issues with the studies submitted. For the next few months, Kelsey continued to push back against Merrell's negotiations to bring Kevadon to market, citing both the need for more data on its absorption rates and the worrisome reports from Europe of babies born with phocomelia. Merrell ultimately withdrew their application. For this, Kelsey was hailed as a hero and helped expand the FDA's regulatory authority.

Throughout the book, Warsh evaluates Kelsey's career as a woman scientist through a critical lens of postwar gender politics. Kelsey was praised for her work in preventing tragedy, but always through a framing that identified her first as a mother and wife. A typical news story noted her success was due to "luck, scientific know-how and her

bio-chemist husband's backing" (129). Warsh explains, "In this Cold War period of domestic containment, where the maintenance of clearly defined gender roles was portrayed as the first line of vital defense against Communist incursion, Kelsey's persona was an affirmation that even women in the most unorthodox of roles could be assets to the nation without threatening the home" (129).

Warsh warns readers at the outset that this is not a history of the FDA or drug regulation more broadly. But Warsh offers us an important look at

an agency that served as a space for women to become involved in scientific research. Throughout her career, Kelsey "maneuvered around and through political intervenors and demands on her time and energies from her superiors, the public, and the pharmaceutical companies." Yet we also are treated to a glimpse into how Kelsey's private life was a rich one, full of "interesting sights to see, engaging people to meet, and a warm home to unwind in at the end of the day" (208).