

## EDITORIAL

---

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY discussions of class, race, and gender in the pages of *BC Studies* over the years. Scholars have contested the primacy of one or another of these themes for understanding the province and have considered, among many other things: the ways in which “Vancouver Workers Confront[ed] the ‘Oriental Problem’”; the links between “Feminism and Environmentalism”; the “Role of Myth in the Formation of an Urban Middle Class”; and the value of both the “scarcity model” and “volcano theory” to studies of “Gender Imbalance, Race, Sexuality, and Sociability” in nineteenth-century British Columbia.

The four principal articles and the Case Comment in this issue extend and refine *BC Studies*’ enduring interest in class, race, and gender. These innovative and well-executed pieces bring novel theoretical perspectives, new means of analysis, and fresh intellectual commitments to bear on their chosen topics. Taken together, they say a great deal about the past of this place even as they give us much to ponder with respect to present and future societal arrangements.

Though very different, our first two articles gain purchase from the work of French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who argued, as the *Dictionary of Human Geography* has it, that social spaces are “created, coded and used through social, political and everyday processes.” In this view, social spaces such as cities or neighbourhoods can be understood as *perceived* (i.e., in material, physical terms – or as “real”), as *conceived* (i.e., abstractly, in plans and thoughts – or as “imagined”), and as *lived* (i.e., experienced and reinterpreted by those who occupy and use them – or as “real-and-imagined” or “realized”). Unfolded in detail in Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, published in 1974 and translated into English in 1991, these ideas are complex and challenging, but they are decoded and applied fruitfully in analyses of the Grandview-Woodland area in Vancouver and “Chinatown” in Victoria, by Karen Murray and by Patrick Dunae and his collaborators, respectively.

Given this background, it is, no surprise that both articles use the word “making” in their titles. In a richly textured and fine-grained analysis of a neglected part of Vancouver’s east end, by tracing the radically different “ways in which local space and poverty were twinned as interlocking governmental concerns” for a half-century or so after the 1950s, Murray helps readers understand how a distinctive social district came to be. Starting with Leonard Marsh, one of Canada’s

leading social planners, who valued “civic morale” and supported state policies of income redistribution to alleviate poverty, and ending with the Vancouver Agreement (2000–2010), which sought to address poverty “by working on the aspirations and competencies of individuals through community agencies in the interest of economic development,” Murray carries her story from a time in which a broad Keynesian consensus prevailed to one in which neoliberal approaches to governance dominate. However, this is not a straightforward declensionist narrative in which things go from good to bad. Murray’s analysis is always more subtle and judicious than that. But it produces the sobering conclusion that the essential relationship between poverty and local spaces, so often cited in contemporary policy discourse, pays insufficient attention to history and leads well-intentioned people to shape and perpetuate the very phenomenon they hope to challenge. Only by recognizing as much can we hope, as did Marsh, to work towards a world in which poverty is not a naturalized part of urban life and in which there are better prospects for a more egalitarian society.

In seeking to make the often seemingly inscrutable space of Victoria’s late nineteenth-century Chinatown more transparent, Dunae et al. also frame their inquiry with ideas drawn from Lefebvre and Foucault, but their insights derive, in large part, from their skilful deployment of geographic information systems to disaggregate and locate the Chinese population of the city in 1891. Their findings reveal a Chinatown that was not exclusively Chinese, a Chinese population that was not confined to Chinatown, and a city in which “the boundaries of race were not as fixed as they have often been assumed to be.” In other words, the rhetoric of racism that conceived of Chinatown as a “Forbidden City” is belied by the materiality of residential locations, which indicate that the lives of Victoria’s residents were shaped in complex ways by the interplay of the “real” and the “imagined” geographies of their place.

Emma Battell Lowman’s essay examining the life and work of missionary Stanley Higgs, and Sean Carleton’s discussion of representations of indigenous peoples in BC school textbooks also work the ground between real and imagined geographies, lives, and experiences, though less theoretically and less explicitly. In Battell Lowman’s nuanced and thoughtful telling, Higgs emerges as a somewhat paradoxical figure, someone whose copious account of a life largely devoted to helping the Nlha7kápmx people offers many insights into the shifting, syncretic, social, intellectual, and emotional terrain created by the colonial encounter, but someone whose life remains at the margins of scholarly

interests today. Rather than seeking simply to “rehabilitate” Higgs’s memoir as an object of study, however, Battell Lowman asks larger questions of scholarly practice and urges scholars to remember that the things we exclude from our stories about who we are and how we got here are as important as those that we include in shaping and defining our collective futures.

This point is demonstrated retrospectively by Carleton’s interrogation of the textual and visual representations of indigenous peoples in almost three dozen social studies texts approved for use in BC schools in the fifty years after 1920. Many of the claims and illustrations that Carleton examines are shocking to present sensibilities. But they need to be engaged because they were, in his view, important manifestations of colonial power, prestige, and privilege, integral to the project of normalizing, in the minds of British Columbia’s non-indigenous youth population, both settler colonialism and the continued existence of a capitalist settler society in British Columbia. Reading Carleton, one cannot help but wonder about the historical processes and assumptions reflected in present-day texts and other media that shape common understandings of politics and society and the roles of class, race, and gender therein.

Finally, Robert Russo’s Case Comment on the struggle between Greenway Farms and the United Food and Commercial Workers of Canada Union Local 1518 over efforts to unionize people in Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program is of considerable interest. It reminds us of the long histories of dangerous farm work in Canada and resistance to unionization in agriculture even as it demonstrates the contemporary relevance of race and class issues in British Columbia.

\* \* \*

*BC Studies* continues to respond to the challenges and advantages offered by the so-called digital age. Consider the value bestowed by having all but the last two years of *BC Studies* issues available online at: [www.bcstudies.com](http://www.bcstudies.com). This open access, easily searchable archive enables anyone to track down the articles mentioned, obliquely, in the first paragraph of this editorial (or to find other similar works published in *BC Studies*) by simply typing “race,” “class,” or “gender” (or combinations thereof) in the search box on the right side of the opening page.

With this issue we mark a re-composition of our Editorial Board, which is comprised of scholars committed to expanding the scope and vitality of the journal. Collectively, they assist in ensuring that *BC Studies*

provides a timely outlet for well-written scholarship that deepens our understanding of British Columbia and is of interest to a broad audience. To those who have agreed to step down from the board to allow renewal, I offer thanks, both personal and on behalf of the wider community of *BC Studies* readers, for the service and support they have provided the journal and its editors (often for many years). Those continuing on and those joining the board have all agreed to serve for specific terms, of between one and three years, so there will be a steady rotation of new people, and with them new ideas, onto the board, current members of which are listed on the inside front cover of this issue. Welcome aboard (so to speak).

We also welcome, with this issue, Dr. Richard Mackie, as associate editor of *BC Studies*. Richard has a PhD in history from the University of British Columbia and held a postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Geography there. He has taught history and writing in a number of colleges and universities in the province and has published several books and articles (including in *BC Studies*) on various aspects of British Columbia's past. So we will be enriched by his knowledge, wisdom, and skills. I will continue my involvement with the journal, but with a somewhat reduced role, as I take up the Brenda and David McLean Chair in Canadian Studies at UBC for the period 2011 to 2013. I look forward to working with Dr. Mackie on articles and reviews, and with Dr. Douglas Harris, who will continue as associate editor for our occasional series of Case Comments, through the next few years, and to the continuing growth and development of this journal. Please send us your articles, ideas, and suggestions.