

## BOOK REVIEWS

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*British Columbia:  
Spirit of the People*

Jean Barman

Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing,  
2008. 192 pp. Illus. \$49.95 cloth.

*Free Spirit: Stories of  
You, Me and BC*

Gerald Truscott

Vancouver: UBC Press for the  
Royal BC Museum, 2008. 166 pp.  
Illus. \$39.95 cloth.

Includes provincial travelogue DVD

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TWO BOOKS HAVE been released this year marking the sesquicentennial, or 150 years, since the creation of the Colony of British Columbia. The first, *British Columbia: Spirit of a People*, was written by Jean Barman and vetted by Premier Gordon Campbell. The second is a companion publication to the Royal British Columbia Museum Exhibit of the same title, *Free Spirit: Stories of You, Me and BC*, which runs from March 2008 to January 2009. Both are lavish

coffee-table books filled with full-page colour photographs and prints. Both are also official “BC 150” commemorative provincial histories. Each author utilizes the concept of a common “spirit” of the people to unify the province. According to this framing of the sesquicentennial celebrations, British Columbians are a diverse people who nonetheless share a common connection to place, a passionate determination to succeed, and a sense of provincial belonging. The theme of unity in diversity pervades both publications, which raises important questions about both the intent of these official heritage scripts and their relationship to their presumed audiences. Both texts contain what Clifford (1997, 137) has referred to as the “sweep” and “nonoppositional completeness of majority history.” Histories of extensive ethnic and environmental exploitation in the province are not omitted, but they are not soberly assessed by either author. The celebratory thrust of the BC 150 declaration – that the province is “The Best Place on Earth” – overwhelms any such reflection.

Each book takes a very different approach to the task of commemoration. Jean Barman uses a traditional historical chronology that traverses the distance

from first contact to the large-scale economic base shift from resource extraction to service-sector work in fewer than two hundred short paragraphs. In contrast, both the Royal BC Museum Exhibit and its companion book by Gerald Truscott attempt historical pastiche, presenting a “collection of tales, vignettes and anecdotes” of “ordinary life” in the province as a “conversation among friends” (5). The exhibit also involves a website where the public can contribute stories, some of which were featured in full-page spreads in the *Vancouver Sun* in 2008.

Truscott’s book has the appearance of a scrapbook, with the historical narrative led by objects and images interpreted with brief captions. While the online *Free Spirit* project attempts to generate a feeling of provincial inclusion by inviting stories from the public, submitted stories are edited and made to fit the dominant trope of an entrepreneurial, “pioneering” province enshrined by the previous centennial celebrations (1958, 1966/67, and 1971) initiated by the Social Credit government of W.A.C. Bennett (see Reimer 2007). A lack of chronology doesn’t mitigate the privileging of some histories over others, despite claims to the contrary: Governor James Douglas, Colonel Richard Moody, Judge Matthew Baillie Begbie, and the creation of a provincial police force occupy the bulk of the first twenty pages. The selection of objects and events to profile for the 2008 celebrations and museum exhibit irreverently juxtaposes kitsch with prolonged struggles for the rights of citizenship. In Truscott’s text the decimation of First Nations populations by smallpox is given as much space as the Steller’s jay (British Columbia’s provincial bird) and drive-in movie theatres. Truscott

invites us to claim all of these as a part of “our collective heritage” (64). Struggle is consigned to the historical past, and we are asked to simply consume and comprehend objects from and pictures of “our” past. Often, as with the vintage travelogue videos, the point appears to be to giggle at how much more sophisticated and modern we are today than we were then. It is worth noting that, spatially, the Royal BC Museum’s *Free Spirit* exhibition is laid out so that access to multicultural foods and travelogue videos is direct, while poems carved into prison walls by Chinese immigrants and discussion of First Nations land claims must be approached indirectly, through the food exhibit or a road trip display.

Barman is much more careful in her presentation of information, assiduously presenting First Nations peoples as possessed of complex living cultures with ongoing legitimate claims to the territory currently being celebrated as British Columbia. She profiles the contributions of *many* immigrant populations to the province, not simply those of white settlers, and she does not camouflage First Nations peoples as one minority among many. Barman manages, at the very least, to flag that this celebrated, multicultural unity in diversity has come, in large part, from the unity in adversity of minority and marginalized groups. The centennial frame demands a narrative of progress and inclusion, an assessment of the past with an eye towards the future, and so credit must be given to Barman for adding a much-needed qualification to this narrative structure, at least insofar as this is possible in a coffee-table format.

As both texts rely predominantly upon images to tell the story of the province, it is vital to scrutinize the selection and arrangement of photos,

paintings, and objects. The glossy prints of monumental landscapes and diverse smiling faces foster speculation that the provincial boosterism of the sesquicentennial celebrations is predominantly about economic generation through tourism promotion. As Reimer (2007) convincingly argues with regard to previous centennial celebrations, government-led efforts to promote a provincially specific nationalism and identity serve a valuable function in branding place and preparing the population to host visitors. The preferred iconography for British Columbia is made abundantly clear on the cover of Barman's text: in the background the Coast Mountains; in the foreground Emily Carr, James Douglas, a grizzly bear, a hand-logger, a Nuu-chah-nulth man in traditional dress, a Japanese-Canadian woman in a kimono, and the currently overdetermined 2010 Olympic imagery of an inukshuk and snowboarder.

Arguably, the sesquicentennial celebrations showcase Gordon Campbell's taking a page from W.A.C. Bennett's playbook, preparing and promoting the province for the international stage. The real value of these books to scholars is perhaps less as histories than as historical artefacts, marking the official heritage scripting of British Columbia in 2008.

#### WORKS CITED

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- Reimer, Mia. 2007. "'BC at its most sparkling, colourful best': Post-War Province Building through Centennial Celebrations." PhD diss., University of Victoria.

### *The Trail of 1858: British Columbia's Gold Rush Past*

Mark Forsythe and  
Greg Dickson

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2008. 223 pp. Illus. \$26.95 paper.

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AFTER THE California and Australia gold rushes, the Fraser River rush of 1858 was considered the third great exodus of gold seekers in search of a New El Dorado. At the time, it was said: "Never, perhaps, was there so large an immigration in so short a space of time into so small a place."<sup>1</sup> Not only was the Fraser rush the impetus for the formation of the Crown Colony of British Columbia, but significant Native-Newcomer conflict had effectively broken the back of full-scale Native resistance in both British Columbia and Washington State. Surely an event of this magnitude might receive the scholarly attention of our academic institutions – especially during this, the Province of British Columbia's sesquicentennial – and yet, compared to the immense outpouring of California gold rush literature during the Golden State's sesquicentennial in 1999, there has been no such attention given to this formative and cataclysmic year in our history.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Waddington, *The Fraser Mines Vindicated* (Victoria: Paul de Garro, 1858), 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> See Daniel Marshall, "No Parallel: American Miner-Soldiers at War with the Nlaka'pamux of the Canadian West," in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, ed. John M.

This being the case, the CBC Radio One authors Mark Forsythe and Greg Dickson must be given both hearty congratulations and sincere thanks for their book *The Trail of 1858: British Columbia's Gold Rush Past*. In many ways, the book is Forsythe and Dickson's personal journey of rediscovery through British Columbia's gold rush past, assisted by the memories and anecdotes of CBC listeners, wide-ranging contributions from both popular (Branwen Patenaude, Sonny McHalsie, Mike Cleven, et al.) and academic (Cole Harris, Patricia Roy, Mike Kennedy, Daniel Marshall et al.,) historians, in addition to the recollections of descendants of British Columbia's pioneer gold rush society.

While *The Trail of 1858* follows a well-known chronological path of events and personalities (Governor James Douglas, Judge Matthew Begbie, and so forth), the narrative is clearly revisionist in tone and in its attempt to provide a more inclusive story. As former lieutenant-governor Iona Campagnolo stresses in her foreword, "perhaps it is time for our province ... to incorporate the story of the human family who have lived here since time immemorial" (7), and this is exactly what the authors have sought to accomplish in stressing the themes of First Nations history and multiculturalism. Considering that just fifty years ago these critical themes were non-existent in the province's centennial celebrations (which continued to promote a largely Eurocentric story), it is clear that the authors saw the need to provide an updated narrative – one that highlights the active agency of indigenous gold mining and discovery, with the active resistance to non-Native gold seekers forming just one aspect

of the darker legacies of the rush. In addition, there is the acknowledgment that British Columbia has not just become a multicultural province but, rather, has been one for 150 years. A myriad of races and ethnicities flooded the goldfields in 1858, including Asian, Central American and South American, European, and Anglo- and Afro-American peoples. In many ways, Forsythe and Dickson have provided a popular history that often counters the self-legitimizing discourse of previous BC historiography through the inclusion of previously forgotten voices.

As a fifth-generation British Columbian whose own Cornish ancestors joined the rush from California, I was particularly pleased to find evidence of other people who can trace their roots back to 1858 in the many CBC listener contributions that are found throughout this volume. Though we are comparatively few in number, such traces of the gold rush are still to be found hidden throughout the province!

There are two important caveats to mention in this otherwise impressive popular volume. First, while not academics, the authors have grappled with the often confusing nomenclature of First Nations people and places, using a variety of both archaic and modern spellings. For instance, the Nlaka'pamux Nation is variously referred to as the "Couteau" (a fur trade era designation) or the Thompson people without the readers being informed that they are one and the same. Presumably, time did not permit for standardizing the spelling according to modern-day equivalents. Second, throughout, there are occasional errors with respect to historical accuracy that might have been remedied with a bit more research and vigorous editing. For example,

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Findlay and Ken S. Coates (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

the authors state that “Fort Victoria, the only ocean port, was the gateway to the diggings” (14), thus forgetting that there were three competing ports in American territory: those at Port Townsend as well as Whatcom and Sehome in Bellingham Bay. On more than one occasion “Kumsheen” rather than “Camchin” is given as the Native name for present-day Lytton (52-53). And while James Douglas negotiated treaties on Vancouver Island, the authors are mistaken in their assertion that the governor undertook to establish treaties on the mainland “when he could” (45). Though Douglas was certainly giving verbal guarantees to indigenous people – promises largely unrecorded – there were no instances of treaty-making before, during, or after the 1858 rush.

These few caveats aside, the authors have prepared an impressive BC 150 commemorative book that reasserts the importance of the gold rush to our historical understanding of the province and the proceeds of which are to be donated to the British Columbia Historical Federation. Now, if we just could commence emulating the important work of academics in California and Australia with respect to the gold rush experience, perhaps the world would rush in once more – this time in the form of international conferences and comparative studies devoted to exploring this signal event. And, quite possibly, *The Trail of 1858* will indeed serve to spark renewed interest in the subject.

*Simon Fraser: In Search of  
Modern British Columbia*

Steven Hume

Madeira Park, BC: Harbour  
Publishing, 2008. 336 pp. \$36.95  
cloth.

BRETT MCGILLIVRAY  
*Capilano University*

THIS BOOK IS NOT the traditional academic, well-documented research dissertation on the life of Simon Fraser. As Steven Hume states at the beginning, there was no intention of making this a “conventional biography.” This text is a narrative in which Hume traces the life and times of Simon Fraser for British Columbia’s sesquicentennial. There are no footnotes and few formal references in his account of this early North West Company explorer, but Hume has done the academic legwork in assessing over 350 texts, letters, journals, and reports, along with weaving in First Nations oral history that has been passed down from generation to generation. I expected to be immersed in the detailed life of Simon Fraser and his adventures, but there is much more in this book. Hume provides insight into Simon Fraser’s boyhood and his progression to full partnership with the North West Company as well as into the establishment of the first fur trade forts on this side of the Rockies. He details the treacherous and near-fatal journey down the river that bears Fraser’s name.

The book is also a travelogue of people, places, and events in areas where Simon Fraser used to live and travel. At times it is encyclopaedic, dealing with various topics some of which bear little relation to the life of Simon Fraser; at other times it reads like a newspaper

article (bits of it were originally published in the *Vancouver Sun*). It is also a personal story of Hume's struggle to find reliable information on the life of Simon Fraser. He finds, as have many academics, that a great deal of Fraser's life remains a mystery. Hume is an experienced writer with an impressive understanding of history, and he weaves together many stories (along with his own interpretations of Fraser's life) to keep the reader interested and informed of both the past and the present.

The book comprises thirty chapters plus a valuable summation of the various First Nations encountered by Simon Fraser. As well, there are numerous illustrations, including pictures, maps, and documents, mainly from the provincial and federal archives, along with *Vancouver Sun* photos – all of which provide an important visual connection to the many stories.

*Simon Fraser* has taken Hume four years and 20,000 kilometres to assemble. He takes us back to the original Fraser family farm site, which is where the states of New York and Vermont intersect. Fraser's father was a Roman Catholic immigrant from Scotland who sided and fought for the British Loyalists in the US War of Independence. Hume gives us examples of Loyalist brutality and persecution in these turbulent times, during which Fraser's father died in captivity, and he tells how the future explorer's mother and seven children were forced to leave for Canada (British North America). The reader is reminded how important the Loyalists were to Canada: "these newcomers represented a massive infusion of intellectual and entrepreneurial capital" (66), which included the formation of the North West Company. Hume also does a superb job of making the reader aware of the radical differences between life now and life then: "Fraser

lived in a world powered by wind, water and muscle" (13), whereas we live in a world of instant information and communication, where travel is measured in hours and minutes rather than weeks, months, and years.

There are few records of Simon Fraser's journey across the Rockies, but Hume uses some seven chapters to trace his path and to immerse us in the lives and struggles of fur traders. He tells us how to build a birch-bark canoe, discusses the importance of the paddle, and indicates the precise ration of rum for each paddler at the end of the day. In his detailed description of a past way of life, Hume often interjects comments concerning how we have modified and transformed landscapes as well as comments aimed at the trivia buff (e.g., how the Dionne quintuplets were turned into a "human zoo" (94), how Flin Flon got its name from a science fiction novel, and the status of present-day energy issues such as the potential for building the Site C dam on the Peace River). We are also made aware of how, since Fraser's day, global warming has dramatically changed climatic conditions. He describes the extreme winter conditions faced by fur traders, the differences in Native and non-Native values, the importance of women in the fur trade, and violence between First Nations.

Hume's discussion of the voyage down the Fraser River relies upon Simon Fraser's journal. We are offered insight into how difficult the river was to navigate by canoe, Fraser's thoughts on food, and his confusion regarding whether or not they were actually on the Columbia River. We are informed of the importance of locations such as Fort Alexandria, which, in the 1830s, "was the metropolis of the Interior" (232); the devastating impact of smallpox epidemics on First

Nations; and Fraser's dependence upon First Nations to guide him down the river. This is the river that defeated Alexander Mackenzie, forcing him to go overland to the Pacific. Simon Fraser is determined, and the story Hume tells is a fascinating one of adventure, near-death experiences, and decisions to abandon canoes and portage around the Fraser River's many rapids. Hume also does an admirable job of describing the life of First Nations and their view of Simon Fraser and his crew, including their speculation that "a white-skinned transformer had returned" (271).

It is questionable whether Simon Fraser actually saw the Pacific Ocean (i.e., the Strait of Georgia) as the friendly relationships he enjoyed upriver turned confrontational at the mouth of the river, forcing him to retreat. He did realize that this was not the Columbia River and he certainly realized that it was not an easy river to navigate for the purpose of transporting furs (this was a disappointment to him). However, he did not lose any of his men and did not kill any First Nations people. As Hume notes, Fraser was responsible for establishing the beginnings of modern British Columbia, transforming the land according to entrepreneurial and capitalist values. The downside of this transformation is that it ended the traditional ways of life of various Aboriginal populations.

Many chapters in this book are in bite-size pieces (likely because it was first designed as a newspaper publication), and there are chapters in which the link to Simon Fraser is somewhat tenuous. Nevertheless, there are good stories here, and *Simon Fraser* is well worth the read.

*The Importance of Being  
Monogamous: Marriage and  
Nation Building in Western  
Canada to 1915*

Sarah Carter

Edmonton: University of Alberta  
Press, 2008. 400 pp. \$34.95 paper.

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THIS SOPHISTICATED and engaging book has much to offer a number of scholarly areas, including Canadian history, gender studies, and political and legal studies. Working from a massive bedrock of diverse primary materials, Sarah Carter challenges assumptions about the institution of marriage, revealing its complexities and importance in the colonial past. In command of a multidisciplinary secondary literature, including legal studies and anthropology, her immediate focus is on western Canada, defined as the three prairie provinces, with particular focus on the region of southern Alberta. Throughout the book there is occasional discussion of British Columbia, especially in relation to the administration of "Indian affairs," but Carter is hyper-aware of the complexities and distinctiveness of the local. Where relevant, she does, however, draw salient provincial and international comparisons (e.g., aside from British Columbia, with Washington State and Iraq).

At the most general level, Carter's book demonstrates that the monogamous model is not ancient and universal, as was advocated by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonizers and remains a commonly held view of many conservative thinkers. For Carter, there is no single definition of marriage: it

changes over time and varies by culture. Her book documents the “importance of being monogamous” during her chosen time period, through the views of missionaries, government officials, and first-wave feminists. While Aboriginal peoples are her focus, she extends her coverage interculturally to consider those in western Canada who were also deemed polygamous by hegemonic settlers – in particular, Mormons, Doukhobors, and Ukrainians.

In a book about morals, Carter, while not shying from indicating inequities and prejudices, attempts to be non-judgemental with regard to the myriad of attitudes and laws towards marriage that clashed, with massive effect, in western Canada from European colonization until 1915. She is keen to capture and to understand precolonial marital relationships. She argues that Plains Aboriginal marriages were far removed from the narrow definition found in English common law. Economically grounded, Aboriginal family law allowed for easier divorce than did the English model and also permitted same-sex marriage. Considering marriage as an inherently gendered enterprise, Carter takes the position of women well beyond “victim” history, deconstructing the adamant views of some first-wave feminists, which held that there was Aboriginal child marriage and “traffic in Indian girls” as well as that polygamy disempowered, or “caged” women.

Carter argues that colonization entailed the construction of “manly space” (283) and saw Aboriginal women newly caught between patriarchy and imperialism. Throughout the period under examination Aboriginal peoples were increasingly compelled to conform to the laws, attitudes, and expectations that governed all married people in the rest of Canada. Despite strong

resistance, the attempt to entrench monogamy had devastating effects for many. Aboriginal women outside of the monogamous model were “put away,” becoming deserted women with children who were unable to marry. So strong was the dogma surrounding monogamy that the welfare of women and children was not the primary concern of officials.

A theme throughout this book is Aboriginal resistance to the attempts of colonial authorities to enforce compulsory monogamy. Aboriginal peoples persistently fought to retain Aboriginal laws. The late nineteenth-century climate was one of Aboriginal defiance of and protest over efforts to abolish polygamy. Carter documents the widespread indifference and opposition of Aboriginal peoples to Christian marriage, with the first marriage of a Blackfoot couple not taking place through the “proper” channel of a marriage certificate until 1895. The colonial past was complicated: officials had to be pragmatic and recognize the need to change slowly. Legal concessions also had to be made. For example, in 1887, it was necessary to recognize Aboriginal marriage (if monogamous) as valid but not Aboriginal divorce. Complete control over Aboriginal intimate relationships was not a feature of the period under study.

From 1893, deliberate, concerted, and invasive attempts to eradicate polygamy became prominent, as enforced by the Department of Indian Affairs. Carter’s book documents the increasing arm of the state through the establishment of residential schools, which implemented methods common throughout Canada. As Carter writes, state officials considered it “Best to not only keep them [Aboriginals] on their reserves, as isolated as possible, but to

keep them under the control of their husbands, as in the cherished colonial monogamous model of marriage" (153). Aboriginals were wards to be colonized. The efforts to instill monogamous marriage included matchmaking at residential schools and the organization of mass weddings.

This book has many strengths. It draws upon an excellent command of legal history, the depth and breadth of knowledge it displays on the topic is truly impressive, and it is written with a measured, yet passionate voice. It makes excellent use of photographs, and the text's handsome layout makes for ease of reading. It is an important study that opens up multiple areas for further research; in particular, exploration of the limits of the law to control the intimate histories of people going about their everyday lives.

*The Origin of the Wolf Ritual:  
The Whaling Indians, West  
Coast Legends and Stories*

Edward Sapir

Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, Mercury Series Ethnology  
144, 2007. 278 pp. \$45.00 paper.

REGNA DARNELL

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THE NUU-CHAH-NULTH (formerly known as the Nootka) Wolf Ritual texts re-presented here have had a complex history of authorship and availability within the BC communities from which they were collected for the Anthropological Division of the Geological Survey of Canada in Ottawa by Edward Sapir, who was Canada's first professional anthropologist and the pre-eminent linguistic student of

Franz Boas (within the Americanist tradition). British Columbia was critical to the Boasian program of salvage ethnology. Indeed, the Northwest Coast became the primary laboratory for anthropological inference about culture history and "the Native point of view." Boas, Sapir, and others working within this tradition established methods of collaboration with elders who remembered the old traditions and with younger Aboriginal people who could translate and record their knowledge. Although Sapir's willingness to ride roughshod over the sensitivities of the hereditary owners of Wolf Ritual (and other) secret knowledge does not meet contemporary ethical standards, both he and his collaborators believed that the knowledge would be lost if it were not recorded in their generation.

Sapir worked most closely with Alexander Thomas (1895-1971), whose traditional name means "Turning-into-Wolf-at-Intervals." Three of the four Wolf Ritual texts come from Alex's grandfather Sa:ya:ci'apis, or Old Tom, and the fourth comes from To:tisim. John Thomas and Frank Williams also contributed to these texts. Three texts deal with the origins of the ritual at Ucluelet Inlet, British Columbia, while the fourth catalogues the prerogatives of Sa:ya:ci'apis. Sapir visited Alberni only twice, in 1910 and in 1913-14, but he maintained contact, correspondence, and collaboration with Alex Thomas and others at least through 1923. In 1934, Alex Thomas visited New Haven, Connecticut, to work on the long unpublished texts with Sapir and Morris Swadesh. They were published in 1939, the year of Sapir's death, but have long remained unavailable. The present edition, in Nuu-chah-nulth and English translation, was prepared by Eugene Aarima, Terry Klokeid, and Katherine Robinson. They have

returned to the archival sources at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa and the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia to correct errors and to illuminate the production of the texts. These scholars are particularly concerned that the texts be made available to contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth communities so that they may use them in their effort to maintain cultural continuity. The quality and magnitude of the texts also ensure that they will remain a significant resource for American Indian linguistic scholarship.

An appendix presents the correspondence between Sapir and Alex Thomas regarding the texts the latter was recording and sending to the former in Ottawa. Thomas attempted to follow Sapir's instructions to document group divisions, family and clan histories, and ceremonial events. He also collected artifacts for the museum and place names for mapping (updated and expanded here using contemporary data). The correspondence frequently centres around the failure of the Canadian government to pay its accounts promptly. Thomas used his proceeds to pay the people who worked with him and was thus dependent on that income (fifty cents per page of handwritten notebook). His letters faithfully convey news of people Sapir knew in Alberni and environs and report on the growth and well-being of Thomas's family. Sapir shares considerably less information about his own personal affairs than does Thomas. The contemporary editors emphasize the patronizing tone of Sapir's relationship with Alex Thomas, but it should be noted that, given the anthropological discourse of the period, he was quite respectful of the latter's expertise and dignity. Sapir also attempted to intervene in the anti-

potlatch laws and to defend the value of First Nations ceremonies.

Another appendix presents Sapir's ethnographic notes on his attendance at an eight-day Tlo:kwa:na, or Wolf Ritual, in 1910. Although not his first fieldwork experience, this was his first venture into the rich, ongoing ceremonial life of the Nuu-chah-nulth. Also appended are Sapir's "particularistic" ethnographic notes on the Wolf Ritual (131) and excerpts from a much later (fragmentary) life history interview with Alex Thomas.

This project is an example of productive collaboration between linguists, anthropologists, and Native communities over successive generations of scholarly production and community life. It amends, expands, and makes accessible an unusually full account of the key ceremonial of the Nuu-chah-nulth. This volume will be useful to wide audiences in British Columbia and beyond.



*Extraordinary Anthropology:  
Transformations in the Field*

Jean-Guy Goulet and  
Bruce G. Miller, editors

University of Nebraska Press, 2007.  
456 pp. \$43.95 paper.

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Anthropology is unquestionably a discipline with well-known intellectual traditions, or histories ... [It is] not a social science *tout court*, but something else. What that something else is has been notoriously difficult to name, precisely because it involves less a subject matter ... than a sensibility.

Liisa Malkki (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007, 162-63)

SURELY AN anthropological “sensibility” is nowhere more evident than in its signature methodology – ethnographic fieldwork. As the primary site of knowledge production, ethnography has long been the source of self-critical innovation within the discipline. Sceptics (outside of the discipline) sometimes critique the multi-method approach for generating accounts that are too particular, or not theoretically transparent, or not contributing to the present widely accepted project of informing policy. But, as Johannes Fabian remarks, ethnography is currently “a matter of concern” (ix) for students and practitioners (across disciplines) who are freely adopting it. In his preface to *Extraordinary Anthropology*, Fabian invokes a disciplinary history rocked by decolonization in the 1950s and later reshaped by a reflexive turn towards

representation, by attention to multiple genres of writing, and by a reluctance to engage in interventionist projects. Fabian’s disciplinary history is too brief, but it forms the backdrop of the philosophy, theory, and practice within which the contributors to this volume write. As the title suggests, however, these are no *ordinary* accounts from the field – a recognized genre in the discipline – they are, rather, “an exceptional harvest” of “involved narration” that attends to central debates in anthropology surrounding the subject/object binary, to matters of epistemology and ontology, as well as to the “ecstatic moments,” the “anxieties and aversions,” that characterize our research praxis (x-xi).

The sixteen contributions to this volume are forays into what editors Jean-Guy Goulet and Bruce Miller introduce as a “radical anthropology of cross-cultural encounters” intended to “deepen our knowledge of the ethnographic self in interaction with others, and within the field” (2). This is no introductory text on anthropological fieldwork (see Robben and Sluka 2007); rather, it is a theoretically informed collection of essays that reflect upon ethnographic knowledge production, upon the ways that researchers are affected by fieldwork, and upon how these researchers reconstitute ideas about “the field.”

At the heart of *Extraordinary Anthropology* is Fabian’s concept of “ecstasis”: a “quality of human action and interaction – one that creates a common ground” upon which ethnographic selves and Others meet (5). In an informative introduction, the editors situate concepts like “coactivity,” “transformation,” and “radical participation” firmly within a phenomenological trajectory of anthropological enquiry that has

sought out the experiential grist (à la Victor Turner) of fieldwork and cross-cultural dialogue. The central ethical and epistemological quandaries of research praxis are well represented in *Extraordinary Anthropology*, but this volume also attends to a “creative engagement” that spills outward from intensive periods of fieldwork (usually over a year) into our professional and personal lives. More than current works in auto-ethnography or traditional field accounts, these chapters focus on the quotidian realities of research relationships – relationships that are formed with individuals in host communities, with their physical and psychic landscapes and within their imaginative horizons. It is this careful attention to such relationships that is most striking in the contributions to *Extraordinary Anthropology* – the ways that field experience comes to inhabit ethnographers, and the ways that people in host communities open themselves to engage with researchers in an immediate field of experience.

Conceptually, contributors converge in their deep engagement with “the field” as a site for personal, ethical, and intellectual transformation wherein the co-production of ethnographic knowledge involves processes of “coming back to our senses” (ii) that are sometimes darkly enigmatic, usually challenging, and always “mindful.” The volume is arranged into five parts, and chapters are grounded in various social, geographical, and temporal contexts, with a slight emphasis on research within indigenous communities. The ethnographic range includes the Russian Far East (Petra Rethman), Australia (Deborah Bird Rose), Canada (Jean-Guy Goulet, Peter Gardner, Guy Lanoue, Barbara Wilkes, Edmund Searles), the United States (Bruce Miller), Guatemala (Janferic

Stone and Duncan Earle), and Mexico (Edward Abse). Other chapters deal with spiritualists in Montreal (Diedre Meintel), Argentine tango artists and their customers in New York City (Anahí Viladrich), Indian Hindustani and North American diaspora tabla players (Denise Nuttall), and women in Japan (Millie Creighton). One chapter addresses professional apprenticeship in ethnographic fieldwork (Jeanne Simonelli, Erin McCulley, and Rachel Simonelli).

In what appears to be the spine of the volume, Bruce Miller, Jean-Guy Goulet, and Guy Lanoue focus on the vital realm of power in their research with North American Aboriginal communities. Power here refers to political and representational action (or inaction), to supernatural power recognized in host communities, and to ethical decision making that is complicated by the “adoption” of indigenous epistemologies and a departure from academic habits (ii). The chapters in Part 3, entitled “Epistemological and Ethical Thresholds,” confront the intellectual collisions brought on by “embodied participation.” Miller (186-207) addresses the double edge of a radical engagement with the belief systems of others, importantly outlining the representational risk of dehistoricizing, homogenizing, or exoticizing indigenous experiences. He offers an explicitly political analysis (welcome at this point in the volume) of “experience-near anthropology” (187), one that is grounded in his long-term relationships with – and obligations to – several Coast Salish communities. Goulet (208-36) brings the realities of participating in other “lifeworlds” (208) into a dialogue with the Tri Council Policy Statement on Ethics – a dialogue about dreaming and decolonization that questions the

status of “true” knowledge. He asks: “What are the limitations in the field of foreign-bound ethical guidelines?” (211) Perhaps more than any other, Goulet’s discussion challenges anthropological tenets and boundaries that are currently so securely framed by ethics. Guy Lanoue’s chapter (237-53) addresses another primary theme of the volume, focusing squarely on the disciplinary conceptualization of “the field” as “a special instance of space and time” (239). He critiques this “essentialist” (239) notion, looking instead to the ways in which epiphanies and understandings accrue long after a researcher leaves “the field.” Lanoue turns over the idea of “power” learned from his engagement in the 1970s with Sekani people in British Columbia, assessing his own deepening understanding through a personal narrative of mobility, space, and time.

There is a vulnerability in *Extraordinary Anthropology* that will be recognized by those who share the ethnographic “sensibility.” This work is a refreshing counter to an increasingly neopositivist academy, a must-read for those interested in what a critical, phenomenological ethnography looks and *feels* like in anthropology today.

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### *Being and Place among the Tlingit*

Thomas F. Thornton

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008. 224 pp. \$29.95 paper.

SERGI KAN

*Dartmouth College*

*Being and Place among the Tlingit* is a long-awaited book that draws on two decades of the author’s field research in Tlingit country. Working closely with a number of knowledgeable Tlingit elders, younger Aboriginal colleagues, fellow anthropologists, and other professionals, Thomas Thornton explores a broad range of topics, from the subsistence use of brown bear to the patterns of berry picking in Glacier Bay. His book also draws on a variety of theoretical work, from Martin Heidegger’s concept of “being-in-the-world” to Keith Basso’s pioneering study of Apache place names and moral narratives.

Thornton explores the Alaska Tlingit concept of place with regard to social organization, language/cognition, economy, and ceremonialism, and he demonstrates convincingly that, for this First Nation, place not only signifies a specific geographical location but also reveals how individuals and social groups define themselves. The Tlingit notion of space consists of three dimensions – space, time, and experience – each of which is both ecologically and culturally constituted. By carefully analyzing each of these dimensions the author demonstrates how individual and collective notions of place, being, and identity are formed and maintained over time. He also argues that, in spite of the dramatic environmental and sociocultural

changes that have occurred in the postcontact era, many Tlingit continue to connect themselves, their society, and their culture to places and landscapes in a way that is quite distinct from that of their non-Aboriginal neighbours.

Following a chapter on theory, which some readers of *BC Studies* might find to be rather heavy going, Thornton presents my favourite chapter, which happens to be on the social organization of geographical knowledge. While the basic principles of Tlingit social structure, which he presents here, have long been known to us, the detailed information Thornton presents on the relationship between the names of clans, lineages, houses, and persons, on the one hand, and place names, on the other, is both new and extremely valuable. His conclusion to this chapter summarizes one of the most fundamental principles of Tlingit culture: "There are two important geographies in Tlingit: the physical and the social. The basis of claims to ownership and use of territory and resources was founded in knowledge of both geographies and their interrelationship. Tlingit place-names were an important link between the two landscapes" (66).

Chapter 3 is probably the most difficult for a lay reader but should be of great interest to linguists and linguistic anthropologist. In it Thornton analyzes Tlingit place-names "both as a universal domain of human knowledge and as a particular system of meanings" (69). Drawing again on his own data, he explores the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic dimensions of Tlingit place-names in detail, searching for patterns and regularities. While more work remains to be done in this area, Thornton's findings (e.g., on the use of the body and kinship terms as metaphors for toponyms) are very interesting.

Chapter 4 explores the significance of material production in the Tlingit sense of place. As Thornton eloquently states, "As a fundamental element of experience, production – the paths and projects pursued in nourishing and sustaining human life – is central to the process of perceiving and conceptualizing the landscape" (170). Since subsistence activities took the Tlingit to places inherited and repeatedly visited by their ancestors as well as inhabited by spirits, these activities were clearly sacred as well as mundane. It should also be noted that a place-name often carried valuable practical information regarding the subsistence activities that one could pursue there.

The book's last chapter is brief but very important. It shows how the memorial potlatch – the central ritual of the Tlingit sociocultural order – brought together individuals, their respective social groups, their ancestral names, their sacred regalia (which depicted their ancestral lands), and the foods derived from their lands. The main goal of the ritual was to repair the breach in the social order caused by the death of a clan member and to pass on his or her name and social identity. The potlatch also gave hosts and guests a major opportunity to display and wear their crests/regalia, sing their sacred songs, and so forth. Although Thornton follows this accepted interpretation of the potlatch (developed by this reviewer on the basis of the work of Frederica de Laguna and Marcel Mauss), he eloquently refers to it as a "total emplacement phenomenon." I agree with his take on the potlatch, and his argument that the potlatch's survival and fluorescence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has had a lot to do with its "emplacement" function. Thus, while fewer Tlingit individuals today

know the traditional place-names or pursue traditional subsistence activities, an increasing number take part in memorial potlatches. As Thornton says, "as Tlingit senses of place are continually being reconfigured in new constellations of relationships, Tlingit ritual continues to answer, forcefully, questions of how Tlingits belong to places and how ancestral places continue to define their identity, community, and cosmos" (188).

This thoroughly researched, well-organized, and well-written book is a pioneering study of the ethnogeography of the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast. Its methods and many of its conclusions could fruitfully be used in studying the toponymy of the Aboriginal nations of coastal British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. It would work well as a text in upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses in anthropology and First Nations studies. It will also be an invaluable resource for the Tlingit people themselves.

*Two Houses Half-Buried in Sand: Oral Traditions of the Hul'q'umi'num' Coast Salish of Kuper Island and Vancouver Island*

Beryl Mildred Cryer, edited by  
Chris Arnett

Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2007. 352  
pp. \$24.95 paper

SARAH MORALES  
Cowichan Bay, BC

Huy tseep q'u, ah siem

**I**N A PERIOD marred by unemployment and economic hardships, Beryl Mildred Cryer, a Chemainus housewife,

mother, and part-time journalist, set out to introduce the world to the oral traditions of the local Hul'q'umi'num people on Vancouver Island. This book is a result of a unique project that she undertook during the Depression era. Between 1932 and 1935 she met with well-known Hul'q'umi'num individuals and recorded their histories and mythologies, and she published more than sixty stories in Victoria's *Daily Colonist Sunday Magazine*.

Although, until a few years ago, Beryl Cryer had only managed to get a thin volume of children's stories published, Chris Arnett, heritage consultant and author of *Terror of the Coast: Land Alienation and Colonial War on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, 1849-1863* (1999), heard about her work and retrieved it from the BC Archives. He compiled and edited its contents, and wrote a brief introduction and biography of Cryer's life. He also provides valuable annotations and translations of the Hul'q'umi'num' names for people, places, and things that Cryer recorded. The result is a book that provides some of the best accounts of Coast Salish mythology and oral history available.

It could be argued that one of the greatest strengths of this book is Beryl Cryer's interview and recording style. Although she often visited individuals when working to obtain a particular story, she never guided her interviews; instead, she listened carefully to the storyteller who related it and recorded the narratives just as they were told to her by Hul'q'umi'num' elders. One can see the difference that this style made when one compares it to the works of other anthropologists who also recorded the oral traditions of the Coast Salish peoples. For example, whereas some of Boas's accounts in *Indian Myths and Legends from the North Pacific Coast of*

*America: A Translation of Franz Boas' 1895 Edition of Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pazifischen Kuste Amerikas* (Bouchard and Kennedy 2002) are not complete narratives but, rather, brief notes, Cryer's accounts not only include complete oral histories but also provide the reader with a background of the storyteller's life and the interactions and conversations that took place between her and the narrator while the story was being told. For example, the story of *Qāls* as recounted by Boas in *Indian Myths and Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America* (135-38) lacks the detail of Cryer's recording of "Xeel's – The Sun God" in *Two Houses Half-Buried In Sand* (175-77). Although Boas's recording arguably includes more of the encounters of the great Transformer, Cryer's recording of Mary Rice's account gives a more in-depth explanation of the motivations behind *Xeel's* judgements and transformations. As such, the reader is afforded some insight into the original legal traditions of the Hul'q'umi'num' people of Vancouver Island and Kuper Island.

Another strength of this book is Cryer's relationships with the Hul'q'umi'num' elders and storytellers with whom she met. Although Aboriginal stereotypes are occasionally invoked in her writing (145), through the written accounts of her interactions with the elders, especially Mary Rice, one can see that Beryl Cryer was genuinely interested in the oral traditions of the Hul'q'umi'num' people and saw the value in both publishing and preserving them. Many Hul'q'umi'num' people actively sought her (182), and because they trusted her, they were eager to have her document their history. This implies that the Hul'q'umi'num' people were keenly aware of the impact of contact on their culture and that they recognized the importance of documenting their oral

traditions, relating both to precontact and to contact times.

In addition to this book being a significant contribution to the ethnography of Vancouver Island, Salt Spring Island, and Kuper Island, it could also be of great benefit to the Hul'q'umi'num' peoples themselves. As previously mentioned, the oral stories recorded in it could help to strengthen Hul'q'umi'num' legal traditions. Furthermore, these histories could be used to help strengthen the land claims in which many Hul'q'umi'num' communities are currently engaged. With its verbatim accounts of family stories, historical conflicts, and photographs, this book could facilitate Hul'q'umi'num' peoples' attempts to reappropriate elements of their culture from the academic sphere. As a Coast Salish scholar, I see great value in these oral traditions that were gifted to Beryl Cryer and which she, in return, has gifted to us all.

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*Exalted Subjects: Studies in the  
Making of Race and Nation in  
Canada*

Sunera Thobani

Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2007. 410 pp. \$35.00 paper.

FRANCES HENRY  
*Toronto, ON*

THIS IS AN interesting and provocative book that will motivate readers to rethink the role of the state in directing and managing a multicultural society. *Exalted Subjects* is divided into a number of sections labelled Law, Citizenship, Compassion, Diversity, Reform, and Terror, and each contains a major essay. The basic question Thobani attempts to answer is how people come to be “constituted as Canadian nationals” (4). Exalted subjects are those who hold power, and, in fact, the dynamic of power “has been central to the processes of modern national formation” (5). Exalted subjects, or those who hold power, are distinct from “strangers to this community.” Drawing upon Anderson’s communities of imagination, Thobani raises a number of questions about what constitutes Canadian nationality. For example, what are the characteristics that the Canadian nation imagines itself to have? What impact have these articulations of Canadian nationhood had on its Native peoples and on its settlers, colonizers, and immigrants, all of whom were citizens or subjects of other states? What disciplinary and regulatory practices helped in the reproduction of these kinds of human subjects? She notes that the Canadian national character is defined by the belief that the national obeys laws whereas the outsider is disposed to lawlessness; that the national is

compassionate, while the outsider “has a tendency to resort to deceit”; that the national is tolerant regarding cultural diversity, while the outsider is intolerant; and that the national is tolerant regarding gender equality, while the outsider is inclined towards patriarchy. These beliefs constitute the master narrative of Canadian nationality. Nationals who do not live up to these characteristics are aberrant, and the weaknesses of outsiders is a result of their cultural characteristics and even of their “race.”

The goal of *Exalted Subjects* is to show how Canadian society, using the dynamic of “politicized social processes,” governs and manages its population through state policies and popular practices that fall into three categories: exalted nationals, “Indians” who are marked for either extinction or extreme marginalization, and immigrants, migrants, and refugees who are either estranged or only conditionally included in Canadian society.

Thobani discusses at length the unequal relationship between Native Canadians and the Canadian state, and she demonstrates convincingly that the former are basically subdued colonials in Canada. She challenges migration policies by noting that many of the underdeveloped areas of the world are also prime targets for Canadian investment and “high-flying” trade missions, yet their nationals either have difficulty migrating to Canada or are treated as different when they do arrive. Thobani states categorically that the real crisis in migration today is the problem of controlling “persons-of-colour-on-the-move, those who refuse to stay where they belong.” She makes the familiar point that multiculturalism has less to do with humanitarian concerns and more to do with Canadian labour

needs. The point system that opened up immigration was put into practice only after the “racial character of nationals, and national institutions” (147) had been consolidated. Multicultural policies demonstrate a more politically acceptable form of white supremacy. Of particular interest is Thobani’s view that the racist and fascist dynamics that motivated the Second World War had to be disavowed by other Western countries, whose policies also reflected racialized politics. Multiculturalism met that need because it maintained white privilege. I basically agree with all these assertions, but I do find major weaknesses in this book, and these undermine its value.

The problem in dealing with the idea of a “master narrative” or even a “national character” involves trying to fit every detail and historical dynamic within its framework. Thobani’s approach clearly highlights the problem of grand theory and implicitly calls attention to the importance of middle-range theorizing. The overall grand theory is made to work by dismissing or ignoring what does not fit and including all of what does fit. To demonstrate that a master narrative really exists, supporting empirical evidence is selectively chosen. This is the major weakness of *Exalted Subjects*. The master narrative and its major instrument, the Canadian state, are made into a pervasive and evil presence that is largely responsible for all that ails Canadian nation building. This approach is too limited, in my opinion, because it neglects not only what is positive about the state but also the many tensions that occur in the institutions, communities, and other divisions of this society – tensions that also lead to the marginalization and exclusion of those who are not part of the elite.

The chapter on multiculturalism, in particular, makes many assertions without providing evidence. For example, Thobani states that the discourse of multiculturalism suppresses references to race and racism but wholeheartedly accepts the “dubious assumptions regarding the immutability of cultural differences” (156), but she provides no empirical evidence for this. Furthermore, she states that the socio-economic problems of immigrants have been defined as being the result of their cultural deficiencies. Again, she provides little evidence to support this assertion. She relies heavily on Himani Bannerjee’s critique of multiculturalism but appears to ignore the empirical evidence that her writings provide. It is unfair to blame only multiculturalism for the co-option and derailment of explicitly anti-racist activism on the part of peoples of colour. Long before the proclamation of multiculturalism, historical colonialism played a strong role in creating enmities among groups of “natives” in their home societies – enmities that were brought to the new country. Witness the famous divide-and-rule policies of colonizers, which, through utilizing earlier colonial and precolonial experiences, result in some ethnic groups being biased and even racist towards other ethnic groups. In fact, the whole issue of differences within ethnic communities is not handled well by Thobani, and many salient facts are omitted.

There are numerous statements in this book that involve huge leaps of the imagination. For example, Thobani notes that multiculturalism helps middle-class immigrants become mobile and also helps Canadian firms maximize overseas assets. The “costs of such advancements,” however, lead “to the marginality of Aboriginal peoples” (162).

Another weakness of *Exalted Subjects* is that many of the references listed in the notes are from non-Canadian sources, such as the United Kingdom and Australia. I agree with the use of comparative materials, but not to the exclusion of relevant Canadian sources. For a book whose main focus is the exclusion of peoples of colour from access to desired social resources in Canada, it is curious that so much Canadian literature on this subject is neither cited nor noted. Aside from being a sign of inadequate scholarship, this practice limits the book's usefulness for students.

In sum, its rather limited theoretical perspective on the making of race and nation in Canada results in the many weaknesses of this book. Its subject is extremely important, both for students and for professionals, but its analysis is narrow, one-sided, and open to considerable criticism.



*Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin  
Three*

Karla Decker, editor

Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2008.  
256 pp. Illus. \$19.95 paper.

*Buckaroos and Mud Pups: The  
Early Days of Ranching in  
British Columbia*

Ken Mather

Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 2006.  
222 pp. Illus. \$19.95 paper.

JOANNA REID

*University of British Columbia*

IF TRADITIONAL historical writing is about “maps and chaps,” most writing about British Columbia’s interior ranching landscapes could be characterized as about “hats and chaps”: ten-litre Stetsons and leather or woolly chaps. Most works present rough, idiosyncratic characters who struggle against an unforgiving landscape. Two new books, both published by Heritage House – *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Three*, edited by Karla Decker, and *Buckaroos and Mud Pups* by Ken Mather – continue this tradition. While *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Three* is an edited collection of excerpts of local history and *Buckaroos and Mud Pups* is a “history of early ranching in BC,” both describe the distinctive lives that people forged in the challenging landscapes of the BC interior.

In the *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin* series, the rough frontier life of the region emerges in excerpts from local histories and memoirs. A journalist’s experiences in the Cariboo gold rush, a historian’s description of Chinatown

at Barkerville, a rancher's famous long-distance cattle drive, a Secwepemc woman's memories of residential school, and a pioneer's description of a stranded "loonlet" are but five of thirty-one narratives reproduced in the third volume. Stories are organized roughly chronologically. The short biographies of the authors are fascinating, too; the writers are, for example, journalists, ranchers, or people who had unique interactions with the characters they describe. The result is a collection of narrative snapshots, rather like a prose scrapbook. Though some of the stories may be known to readers familiar with the region, the *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Three* is useful for researchers who want an introduction to many sources or to a general reader interested in a cross-section of local histories.

In pursuit of glorious "hats and chaps" tales, local histories are regularly silent on the issue of colonial dispossession (cf. Furniss 1999). Anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss (1999, 70) argues that, in pioneer narratives, "the success of the colonial endeavour, it is suggested, was due to the courage, determination, and drive of the pioneers, whereas the broader political and economic contexts that enabled their success, and that functioned to suppress Aboriginal resistance to settlers' appropriation of Aboriginal lands, go unmentioned." Only one narrative in *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Three* problematizes the incursions of non-Aboriginal people into non-Aboriginal space. More Aboriginal voices (rather than pioneer descriptions of Aboriginal people), including Aboriginal narratives about ranching life, would provide further much-needed insight into the challenging colonial history of frontier life.

Like *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Three*, *Buckaroos and Mud Pups*

demonstrates the convergence of diverse peoples and cultures in BC grasslands. However, this book emphasizes ranching history and the unique form that the industry developed in the BC interior between the 1858 gold rush and the First World War. The quirky title gestures towards the intermixing of cultures. "Buckaroos" is an Anglicized version of the Spanish term "vaquero," which originally described cattle herders of Andalusia, Spain. During colonization, these herders and their culture came to the Caribbean and Mexico and eventually moved north along the west coast of North America, all the way to British Columbia. "Mud Pups" refers to "educated and energetic young men" who came from England "at their parents' expense"; it is a term that "initially expressed the disdain of those who had paid, and continued to pay, their own way through life" (145). Mather shows how many different people came to own and work on ranches. He also describes how First Nations were involved in the development of the industry.

Mather first provides a history of the early industry before moving on to describe different ranchers and cowboys and life on the range. He provides many textured narratives about cattle drives and working life. The details of early ranching – from hemp whips to polo games to towering haystacks – are very present in *Buckaroos and Mud Pups*. In the final chapter, Mather describes ranching at the end of the nineteenth century as "big business." Ranches such as the Douglas Lake Cattle Ranch and the Gang Ranch had large holdings and specialized labour forces.

Little has been written about the overall history of the provincial ranching industry, and *Buckaroos and Mud Pups* is a useful intervention. However, the book's approach is roughly

chronological and character-centred; Mather only briefly engages with larger arguments about the environment or the structure of the industry. (Further, Mather does not comprehensively address Aboriginal dispossession, though ranch development was an integral part of colonial resettlement [see Harris 2002, chap. 7].) I found the book at times disjointed and lacking in thematic analysis, thus making it difficult to see how different parts of the story fit into a big picture. At the end, though, I was left with a basic overview and a colourful pastiche of ranching lives during a particular era, which was what I believe Mather intended.

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*Citizen Docker: Making a  
New Deal on the Vancouver  
Waterfront 1919-1939*

Andrew Parnaby

Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2008. 304 pp. Illus. \$27.95.  
paper.

GORDON HAK

*Vancouver Island University*

**I**N *Citizen Docker* Andrew Parnaby explores industrial relations on the Vancouver waterfront during the interwar years. The analysis is linked

to a broader consideration of the transition to the welfare state and the new industrial relations regime that emerged in the 1940s. Longshoremen have not been ignored in BC labour history: their stories have been told in a worker-produced history entitled *"Man Along the Shore!"* and in a scholarly 1974 article by Richard McCandless that documents the big 1935 strike. But Parnaby offers something new by locating the interwar history of dockworkers in the context of recent historical literature on citizenship, race, gender, and communism.

In Parnaby's account, the overall story is straightforward: Vancouver longshoremen were militant in the labour upheaval after the First World War, although it must be noted that, in dealing with the events of 1919, Parnaby is not very forthcoming. The narrative really begins in 1923, when employers smashed the union, the International Longshoremen's Association, in a major strike. In the wake of this strike, employers restructured relations with their workers. Drawing on the model of North American welfare capitalism, waterfront employers sought to stabilize the workforce, getting rid of the casual labour market (in which workers were picked out of lineups to load and unload ships) and replacing this arrangement with an efficient, organized system that provided workers security and recognized them as participants with rights – citizens – in the industrial and social order. For their part, workers drew on the labourist vision of the crucial role of workers in society as well as on memories of the sacrifices that they had made in the Great War to develop a growing notion of entitlement and to demand fair treatment. The cornerstone of the new order was a company union, the Vancouver and District Waterfront Workers' Association (VDWWA), which

was initially composed of many strikebreakers. The BC Shipping Federation (BCSF), the organization that represented employers, carefully monitored the VDWWA, ensuring that radical, militant workers were barred. Since most of the work on the docks was reserved for the VDWWA members, “malcontents” were kept away. First Nations longshoremen, who had been a significant minority in the waterfront workforce, were also excised in the new order, which defined participation along racial as well as political lines.

The new arrangement produced harmony in the 1920s but collapsed in the Depression. The impact of the economic downturn was such that “40 percent fewer longshoremen plied their trade in 1932 than did so in 1928” (101). Employers, struggling to survive, broke the deal of the 1920s, returning to coercion. Within the VDWWA a cadre of militants with links to the Communist Party of Canada took a prominent role. As the VDWWA moved left, the waterfront union became enmeshed in the broader communist world of activism. The showdown came in 1935 in a brutal strike that included the bloody Battle of Ballentyne Pier. The workers lost and the VDWWA was eliminated. However, a new social and industrial order was on the horizon, and, Parnaby argues, it rested on the ideas associated with the earlier development of the company union that flowed from the First World War and the postwar upheaval: “the irony, here, is arresting. Crafted as a means to curtail working-class political action and deflect state intervention, welfare capitalism and decasualization helped, in the end, to produce a stronger political appetite amongst waterfront workers that, in time, underwrote the state’s very expansion” (165).

Three themes are particularly interesting. First, Parnaby puts a somewhat positive spin on company unions. Rather than being a wrong turn for workers – collaborationist sellouts that deterred workers from radical action – they did not completely submerge protest, according to Parnaby, and indeed helped set the stage for the emergence of a new labour relations order and the welfare state after 1940. Second, Aboriginal longshoremen get a detailed history. Parnaby stresses the importance of their labour to the industry and their communities as well as the racial divide that separated their history from that of other longshoremen. Third, the book treats the Communist Party in British Columbia as being made up of individuals capable of independent action in response to local circumstances, not merely as a group of stooges slavishly following the line laid down in Moscow. Here Parnaby makes good use of Ontario archives to get at the internal workings of west coast communism.

This is not a book that sees worker action as a simple response to material conditions. The negotiated terrain of competing and changing ideas and understandings are at the core of Parnaby’s exploration. The discourse of citizenship informs the book’s title, posing questions regarding who legitimately belongs in the society and what is owed to these citizens. Within this construct, masculinity is important as employers sought to reshape its meaning in order to create stable, loyal, politically moderate employees. Real men were patriotic, sober, family-oriented, and dedicated to home ownership. Real men were also loyal to Canada and the British Empire. In the 1920s and 1930s, workers asserted their identity and needs in relation to their wartime sacrifices. Because

they had gone to war they deserved a square deal at home. Finally, racism clearly distinguished the experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers. In the 1920s, employers and union leaders drew on and shaped these embedded social and cultural discourses in the pursuit of different ends. In the 1930s, the CPC, too, mobilized senses of masculinity and the war sacrifice to forge a fighting union, while employers used the union's association with communism to portray strikers as beyond the pale of citizenship and thus undeserving of better treatment.

Here are a few quibbles. Major William Claude David Crombie was the employers' labour manager, the man responsible for the corporate welfare program, throughout the interwar period, and his ideas are well documented. But the position of his employers, those who held the hammer, is less clear. The discourse of sacrifice and national loyalty emanating from the experience of the First World War is developed, but there is little on the ethnic makeup of the workforce or the wartime participation rates of dockworkers. Was it only war veterans of British descent who appealed to entitlement based on the wartime activities? The family-oriented, respectable masculinity that was apparently created also raises questions. Did the rougher version of masculinity disappear? One wonders, too, about the non-communist leftist discourse of the era, most notably the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which had a role in shaping political action and discourse in the 1930s. The party does not even merit a mention. Presumably the CCF is part of Parnaby's larger category of moderates.

Overall, *Citizen Docker* addresses important historical questions. Understanding the arrival of

interventionist governments and the circumscribed welfare state in the mid-twentieth century remains relevant in today's political economy. Parnaby offers a coherent account of a complex story, and there is pleasure in reading his skilled engagement with the interlocking themes of family, work, gender, race, and class.

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*The Man Who Saved Vancouver:  
Major James Skitt Matthews*  
Daphne Sleigh

Vancouver: Heritage House, 2008.  
240 pp. Illus. \$19.95 paper.

TERRY EASTWOOD  
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THE PUBLICATION of Daphne Sleigh's biography of James Matthews coincides with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the City of Vancouver Archives, which he founded. The work is remarkable for being the first book-length biography of a Canadian archivist. Sleigh presents as complete a picture of the man as, one imagines, it is possible to present, from his youth and family life in Wales and New Zealand to his arrival in Vancouver in 1898, his family and work life, his service in the Great War, and, above all, his avid interest in the history of his adopted city. All of this is told with considerable sympathy for the man and his times.

In the winter of 1929-30, being fifty years old and at loose ends, Matthews began to consider making a career of his long-time habit of collecting historical material. Sleigh estimates that he had a ton of it by 1930. "His antiquarian pursuits, his historical writing, his family research, and his dabbling in heraldry" (100), along with encouragement from friends in the Vancouver Art, Historical and Scientific Association and the provincial archivist John Hosie, propelled him to seek to establish the city's archives. Sleigh covers Matthews struggles over the next forty years to gain the support of an impoverished 1930s city council, to establish a foothold in the Vancouver Public Library, and to have himself appointed city archivist and installed

in a city office. He also wrestled with officials over innumerable issues, particularly the city's recognition of his title to parts of his collection (this was finally resolved by agreement with the city in 1938). He interviewed important people in the city's history, hired assistants, and continued collecting and organizing holdings of printed material, transcriptions of interviews, private manuscripts, portraits and photographs, and artefacts that evoked his vision of the city's past. Sleigh is right to honour him for establishing Vancouver's city archives, which were established far earlier than were those of any other city in Canada, and for building the foundation of an institution that would, three years after his death, occupy its own building – one that was built exclusively for this purpose. Vancouver's archives are still the only ones in the country to be housed in such a building. She also brings to light the man's many contributions to the Vancouver's understanding and appreciation of its history. That Matthews could be a difficult man there is no doubt (for instance, the city had to go to court to exert control over "the unruly Archives" (167), but his persistence and single-minded devotion to his cause overcame various obstacles and ensured that, unlike many other cities, Vancouver would not ignore its archives.

In one way Matthews himself was an obstacle, although Sleigh cannot bring herself to admit it. Throughout his tenure as archivist, he expressed no interest in preserving records of the city, and, given his obstinate behaviour, officials were absolutely against giving him any. In Matthews' day, Canada's public archival institutions all preserved both public and private records. On the private side, he collected odd documents here and there, and pursued

his fascination with Vancouver's early days. There is no doubt that, as Jean Barman observes in her foreword, Matthews himself created documents, notably his notes of interviews, providing precious information about the early days and people of Vancouver that is not available from any other source. However, as reports to City Council after his departure made clear, the archives needed to move into the mainstream.

In the early days, in communities all over North America fervent collectors like Matthews began various programs whose purpose was the preservation of archives. Naturally enough, like Matthews, they were transfixed by the origins of the still youthful communities they served. They concentrated on preserving documentation of all kinds that would memorialize the people and events of the founding era of their communities and become the core holdings of institutions that would mature as time passed. Sleigh paints an exceptionally vivid and interesting picture of how this happened in Vancouver and of the pivotal role Matthews played in the outcome – a very favourable one indeed in the long term, for the city and its people now have one of the best municipal archives in the country and, indeed, the world. And this is Matthews's lasting legacy.

*No Laughing Matter:  
Adventure, Activism and Politics*  
Margaret Mitchell

Vancouver: Granville Island Publishing, 2008.  
242 pp. photos, \$24.95 paper.

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FOR SOME READERS, Margaret Mitchell's title will bring to mind a turning point in Canadian feminists' struggle for women's equality: an outrageous uproar of male shouting and laughing when Mitchell, MP for Vancouver East, told the House of Commons that "one in ten Canadian husbands beat their wives regularly." She was reporting only one of the findings of a parliamentary committee that had heard input across the country for months. The furor cost the Speaker a major effort to calm the House and amused mostly male MPs until the evening, when the incident topped the national news. The video clip itself became part of a nationwide campaign to protect women from spousal abuse, and it brought Mitchell nationwide recognition. An NDP MP for fourteen years, Mitchell was a devoted supporter of equality for women. When women formed the Ad Hoc Committee that forced the entrenchment of women's equality in the Charter of Rights in 1982, she loaned them her assistant, her phone, and her office. Both incidents typify her dedication as a politician, although that career takes up only one part of her life and book.

Her memoir begins in small-town Ontario, where she was born and raised, follows her to Japan and Korea, to Vancouver, then to Vienna, and back to Vancouver (all this before she

became involved in politics). She also tells of her life after retirement, when she travelled extensively. Mitchell's adventurous spirit first prompted her to get a social work degree in Toronto, the training that landed her a job with the Canadian Red Cross (CRC), which involved working with Commonwealth troops serving in Korea. On travels in the South Pacific, she met her future husband before going to Vancouver to do what was then called "group work" rather than "case work." It was the dawn of community development in Vancouver, and Mitchell returned there after having another stint with the CRC in Vienna, working with Hungarian refugees, and getting married and having a motorcycle honeymoon in Europe.

At the age of thirty-two, Mitchell suffered ovarian cancer, which meant that she could have no children; however, she returned to her social work with enthusiasm. One of the rewards of her book is reading her description of how she learned community development by activating individuals, of how communities can be motivated into action in order to get better housing, schools, playgrounds, and other amenities that too often escape the poor and dependent. Mitchell was central to the work done in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and she credits her acquaintances and experiences there with her successful run for Parliament in 1979. As an MP, she continued to encourage people to help themselves by pushing for the creation of environments within which they could work. She refers to herself as someone who is "usually an indirect facilitator."

Mitchell's story is ordinary in that she comes from a middle-class family and marries a man from a working-

class family: no putting on airs. She is direct about the fact that her husband's showy personality did not always mesh with her quieter manner, but they had a reciprocally loving marriage. She was fortunate to have many nieces and nephews to nurture, and her sense of humour shows through in many occasional details.

Her ordinary background belies her achievements both as an activist and as a politician. She reports that Harold Winch, a long-time member of the CCF-NDP and CCF-NDP leader in British Columbia, once told her, "Never be humble." While she found that advice impossible to follow, she wisely eschews any false humility in her memoir, and readers will enjoy her satisfaction as she relates her accomplishments in working for the disadvantaged not only in Vancouver but also across the country.

All proceeds of the book will go to the Margaret Mitchell Fund for Women, which she founded with the money that accumulated when she opposed an MP pay raise that was nevertheless approved by Parliament. Women who live in Mitchell's former riding, Vancouver East, can apply for scholarships and self-help programs. Because Mitchell self-published this book, it is not in all bookstores, but it is available at [www.granvilleislandpublishing.com](http://www.granvilleislandpublishing.com).



*Awful Splendour: A Fire History  
of Canada*

Stephen J. Pyne

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007. 584 pp.  
\$34.95 paper.

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FOR ANYONE familiar with environmental history, Stephen J. Pyne is as synonymous with the word “fire” as is Smokey the Bear. As a former firefighter in the Grand Canyon, a renowned historian at Arizona State University, and a member of the UN’s Wildfire Advisory Group, Pyne probably has more experience with the history of wildfires the world over than anyone alive. Indeed, his Cycle of Fire series – what Pyne has referred to as his “Leatherstocking Tales” – include fire histories of the United States (*Fire in America*, 1982), Antarctica (*The Ice*, 1986), Australia (*Burning Bush*, 1991), Europe (*Vestal Fire*, 1997), and the globe (*World Fire*, 1995). It is not surprising, then, that since the 1980s the Canadian Forest Service has urged Pyne to turn his prodigious talents to the history of fire in Canada. It is also not surprising that Pyne eventually agreed to such a project since Canada, as he explains, “is a big country with abundant fires and a literature to describe them” (xxv).

Of course, Pyne is not the first to write about wildfire in Canada. At the provincial level, Peter J. Murphy (*History of Forest and Prairie Fire Control Policy in Alberta*, 1985) and Patrick Blanchet (*Forest Fires: The Story of a War*, 2003), for example, have studied wildfire suppression in Alberta and Quebec, respectively. In British Columbia, the major point of reference remains John Parminter’s

1978 UBC master’s thesis “An Historical Review of Forest Fire Management in British Columbia.” Richard Rajala’s recent study, *Feds, Forests, and Fire: A Century of Canadian Forestry Innovation* (2005), on the other hand, examines forest fire management at the federal level by focusing on the evolution of the Canadian Forest Service in the twentieth century and its various experts, theories, and technologies. *Awful Splendour* bravely goes beyond all of these studies, however, incorporating their separate insights into exhaustive original research to form a sweeping narrative that examines the roles of fire and humans as agents of historical and environmental change.

To tackle the immensely complicated task of sorting through Canada’s overlapping bioregional, political, and institutional borders, Pyne organizes *Awful Splendour* chronologically into three successively larger sections: “Torch,” “Axe,” and “Engine.” Each tells the story of how a human technological revolution changed “fire regimes” in Canada. The first section, “Torch,” reflects on how the geophysical make-up of Canada and the effects of climate formed the Canadian landscape into a series of “fire rings” – tundra, boreal forest, prairie, mountain and hill, and coastal. Pyne also describes how Aboriginal groups used fire for agriculture and wildlife management, which affected the nature of these fire rings as well. In “Axe,” Pyne details how European settlement changed the relationship that humans had with fire and thus with the Canadian landscape. Colonial farming and settlement patterns, through massive amounts of clearing and cutting, increased the amount of combustible materials that could feed wildfires. This increased the size of fires and started Canadians down the path of fire suppression,

which included controlling indigenous and pioneer uses of fire. The third – and by far the largest – section (302 pages), “Engine,” examines how industrialization fundamentally altered relationships with fire in Canada at both the federal and the provincial levels. Through the invention and use of such technologies as airplanes, chemical retardants, and computer simulations, fire suppression became an ever more technical and sophisticated endeavour as forestry experts and institutions participated in a global effort to fight wildfires. This caused fire suppression budgets to balloon, while alternative fire science and management experiments remained underfunded and understaffed. Meanwhile, the size and intensity of fires continued to grow. In the end, fire suppression became an institution unto itself, with a complicated network of experts and equipment spread among the provinces, the federal government, and into the United States. Such networks and firefighting practices are difficult to change due to the amount of resources invested in them, even though current ecological views now advocate the importance of wildfire. More recent Parks Canada experiments with controlled burnings in Banff that mirror earlier First Nations techniques, however, provide evidence that Canada’s fire history is perhaps changing again.

The strength of *Awful Splendour* lies in the prodigious narrative talents of its author. Pyne is a master historian whose command of language is elegant and evocative, and he uses it to great effect in each section to describe recurring and intertwining themes – what he calls “nested narratives” – such as climate, fire as a historical agent, and humans and the institutions they have created to manage fire. Thus we learn of the constant battle between fire and ice to

form Canada’s fire rings (to which global warming adds an interesting new twist); Canada’s most famous fires, such as the 1825 Mirimachi fire in New Brunswick or the 2003 fires near Kelowna; and of how a continuum of fire witnesses and “experts” – including naturalist Henry Hind (whose description of prairie fire as “an awful splendour” provides Pyne’s title), Canadian geological surveyor Robert Bell, and “tracer index” creators James Wright and Herbert Beall – described and tried to grapple with Canadian wildfire. These “nested narratives” are told in a poetic style that is all Pyne’s own and that lends a powerful sense of detail to his larger narrative.

This attention to detail in *Awful Splendour*, however, also reflects a weakness – one that often afflicts such sweeping studies of Canadian history. Pyne’s decision to present the complicated nature of provincial-federal fire history region by region and province by province rather than through a case study approach renders the narrative at times redundant and makes the third section a chore to read (at least in places). Still, such a strategy supplies plenty of interest for the BC aficionado as its history of fire suppression is told in greater detail than it could have been had a case-study approach been utilized.

Overall, *Awful Splendour* is a formidable and impressive book that complements Pyne’s other Cycle of Fire works, and it is sure to be a must-read for Canadian environmental historians, historical geographers, and forestry and wildfire specialists.